

NEW Democracy

9

ISSUE No : 9

1ST MARCH 2002

- ☛ **PEACE: PROMISES AND PROSPECTS**
- ☛ **THE BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENTARY
RULE AND THE RESULTS OF
THE GENERAL ELECTIONS**
- ☛ **JVP: LESSONS FOR THE GENUINE LEFT**
- ☛ **THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND
THE PARLIAMENTARY PATH**
- ☛ **SRI LANKAN EVENTS**
- ☛ **THE NDP DIARY**
- ☛ **INTERNATIONAL EVENTS**
- ☛ **LET US CELEBRATE THE MIRACLE
OF CUBA**

QUARTERLY THEORETICAL ORGAN OF N.D.P, SRI LANKA

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

PEACE: PROMISES AND PROSPECTS

There seem to be fewer visible obstacles to the peaceful resolution of the national problem than in earlier years. The ceasefire held into the third month without serious violations, and a Memorandum of Understanding for a lasting ceasefire has been signed. Removal of restrictions on the movement of people and goods means a slight easing of the burdens on the people of the Vanni and Jaffna. The Norwegian initiative has some positive encouragement from the US, and even India has shown less reluctance in endorsing the negotiations than a year ago.

The LTTE has continued to express its confidence in the willingness of the UNP to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, and the government has been generally positive in its comments about the LTTE's intentions, although utterances of the Foreign Minister, like those of the earlier Foreign Minister, had at times caused concern among the Tamil political parties. That there is still deep distrust beneath the pleasantries exchanged is something that one has to expect. Neither the government nor the LTTE has stopped recruitment to its armed forces or building up its armoury. Nevertheless, there is desire for peace on both sides, for different reasons.

The parties of Sinhala chauvinism are more subdued than in previous years, with the exception of the JVP, which is attempting to

link its campaign on economic issues with its chauvinistic anti-peace campaign. The Sinhala Urumaya has been deflated by the outcome of the elections, with a sizeable section of the Sinhala elite forming the core of the organisation rediscovering their true class roots in the UNP. This is a latent threat to the peace process, as these elements will give full expression to their chauvinistic politics at every critical stage of the negotiations. The PA, with the position of the President seriously undermined by the outcome of the elections, is in no mood for confrontation and is not keen on playing the chauvinistic card in the immediate future, although signals from sections of the PA leadership often hint at mischief.

The media, most of which is either loyal to the UNP or under state control, is positive about the peace process, except for the Island and the Divayina belonging to the Upali Group, which have raised the pitch of their anti-LTTE tirade, to sow more suspicion among the Sinhala masses at every possible turn.

The fortunes of the peace process are linked increasingly and inextricably with that of the economy of the country. The ability of the government to resolve the deepening economic crisis is in doubt, since the economic policy pursued by successive governments since 1977 has not changed. Surrender to the World Bank and the IMF is a guarantee of misery for the masses and the government is planning a series of privatisation measures for the near future. Given the state of ruin of the national industry and poor infrastructure development, the anticipated benefits from the proposed links with Singapore and India are likely to be less than the losses to the country's economic performance.

Thus, the threat to the peace process could also come from unexpected quarters and because of problems arising from the failure of the government to address the real issues. The JVP is waiting to capitalise on every failure of the government and every setback to the peace process, and is doing its best to ensure that

the peace process is undermined, so that it can usurp power through a chauvinistic coalition at the first available opportunity.

The Tamil nationalist parties that swept to victory at the elections without a programme of action and on the strength of their promise that they will endorse the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamil people in all negotiations, in reality, have thrown their lot with the UNP even before the elections. They have placed them in a predicament that they cannot make a positive contribution to the resolution of the national problem. In fact, they have shown utmost reluctance to stand up in support of the various just demands of the Tamils of the North East.

The equally opportunist nature of the Muslim and the Hill Country Tamil leaders has been evident from the ease with which their loyalties have been bought and sold by the two major Sinhala chauvinistic parties. One cannot disregard the possibility of government manipulation of these leaders to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the Tamil people's demand for autonomy and self-determination.

Thus, the position that the genuine left and democratic forces should take about the peace process has to be positive and objective. It is necessary to support and encourage every move by the government and the LTTE towards a peaceful resolution of the national question. Expression of concern about the words and deeds that run counter to the peaceful resolution of the problem should be constructive and in the spirit of encouraging the peace process. The masses should be encouraged to impress upon the political parties and the militants the importance of a just and peaceful solution and to reject chauvinism and extremist positions that would undermine the peace process.

At the same time, no effort should be spared to emphasise the importance of the principle of self-determination, its interpretation in its true spirit and its implementation in the most demo-

cratic fashion. Recognition of traditional homelands of nationalities should be upheld. The setting up of autonomous regions and units to protect, defend and develop the identity and individuality of different nationalities and national and ethnic minority groups is essential for a lasting solution. The case for devolution of power is stronger than ever before in protecting the rights of every nationality and ethnic group. The democratic and left forces should realise that the bourgeois parties and the opportunist JVP and other chauvinists and narrow nationalists will undermine if not oppose such democratisation. It is through popular pressure that political changes of this nature come about, and educating the masses and learning from them is important for any historically progressive force.

To press for the resolution of outstanding issues concerning other nationalities and ethnic minorities is correct. That, if done in a constructive and democratic spirit, will, rather than weaken the peace process as some argue, give it added impetus and render the solution more robust.

(T)he struggle of the capitalist countries for markets and their desire to crush their competitors proved in practice to be stronger than the contradictions between the capitalist camp and the socialist camp.

What guarantee is there, then, that Japan and Germany will not rise to their feet again, will not attempt to break out of American bondage and live their own independent lives? I think that there is no such guarantee.

But it follows from this that the inevitability of wars between capitalist countries remains in force.

To eliminate the inevitability of war, it is necessary to abolish imperialism.

JV Stalin

Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, 1952

THE BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENTARY RULE AND THE RESULTS OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

Comrade S.K. SENTHIVEL,
General Secretary of the NDP

The twelfth general election for the Parliament of Sri Lanka took place on the 5th of December 2001. It has been the case in parliamentary politics over the past half century that the two feudal-capitalist parties, namely the UNP and the SLFP, took turns in coming to power. In that fashion, the UNP has returned to power after seven years.

Sri Lanka is one of the few third world countries where the bourgeois parliamentary system has continued to exist for a long time. This system of government was neither one that the people of Sri Lanka created for themselves nor something that the people won through a prolonged struggle for independence or through a war for liberation. It has been a system imposed upon us by the British colonialists, who made this country their property, enforced colonial rule over it and plundered its resources.

It is seventy years since universal franchise was granted to Sri Lanka. It is fifty-four years since the parliamentary system came into existence. The entire male and female adult population has participated in and voted repeatedly, from the time of the State Council, in parliamentary as well as local council elections.

Although elections have been held, rulers elected and state power wielded, the country has not developed. The lives of the people has deteriorated rather than developed. Poverty, unemployment, poor wages, shortage of housing and non-fulfilment of basic needs such as education and health services have made more severe the burden on the people.

The bourgeois parliamentary rule has failed to arrest the boundless growth of such serious economic problems. The national question has been thrust forward to divert the attention of the masses from this situation. National contradictions have been intensified to the extent of developing into the nationalist war of today. The concept of Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic country has been negated and Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism has been put into practice, with the result that the country is engulfed by the flames of war.

Who is responsible for the descent of Sri Lanka to this sad state? What are the causes for these conditions to continue? What are the ways and means of rescuing the country and its people from it? These fundamental questions need to be raised in the political arena.

The British colonialist rulers who had Sri Lanka in their grip had introduced minor political reforms in stages from the beginning of the last century. Two matters received particular attention in the political reforms introduced by them. One was the long-term interest of ensuring that their imperialist, capitalist interests were in no way harmed. The other was to ensure by the creation a system of state political power and a transfer of that political power in a way that it always remained in the hands of the feudal-capitalist elite. Thus, it was sought to find ways of keeping the working masses, who comprise the vast majority of the population of the country, furthest away from the centre of political power. A constitution and administrative machinery that suited this purpose were put in place and the

state machinery was strengthened in a way that it safeguarded the ruling elite classes and their private property. It comprised the armed forces, the courts of law and the prisons. They are the watchdogs of the feudal-capitalist elite ruling classes and their wealth and well being. It is they again that protect the forces of imperialism, including the multinational companies.

The invisible dictatorship of the ruling classes over the working masses, who comprise the vast majority of the population of the country, is being exercised through the rule of law and the constitution. All rights including democratic and human rights for the people are defined and limited or denied. At the same time, there is unlimited freedom, democracy and legal protection for the minority that comprises the upper class elite to obtain, possess and enjoy anything that they need.

These form the basis of the bourgeois parliamentary system of government. The white sahibs when they handed over power to the black sahibs, they also gifted to them this system of parliamentary government that guaranteed that they could exercise power through it to impose and implement their will over the people.

Between the two political parties of the ruling classes, namely the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, one surpassed the other in jealously preserving this order, with loyalty to the master and in a way characteristic of its class. Although the SLFP carried through some reforms, these reforms did not lead to any change of a fundamental nature. In subsequent years, one witnessed the SLFP follow in the footsteps of the UNP.

Much is made of the multi-party system and broad-based democracy under the bourgeois parliamentary system of government. However, in countries with the bourgeois parliamentary system, the system is effectively reduced to a two-party system through subtle manipulations, the constitution and electoral

regulations. It should not take one much effort to recognise that Sri Lanka is no exception.

Over the past fifty-four years, the two parties of the ruling classes have alternately been in power. The people have been trained over many years to wield the pencil to mark a cross so that they teach the party power a lesson by bringing it down at the next general election, whenever they are dissatisfied with or dislike its rule. Beyond that, the bourgeois parliamentary system of government does not permit any mass uprising or revolutionary struggle.

Mass uprisings and struggles, and the class-consciousness of the workers and peasants have been sacrificed by the parliamentary leftists in the interest of their electoral success. Struggles have been restricted in extent and scope within the limits that ensured their electoral success. In the end, the parliamentary leftists buried themselves in the mire of parliamentary politics to the point where they would form an alliance with anyone as long as it enabled them to be elected to parliament. While such degeneration, on the one hand, led to their political self-destruction, it also led, on the other, to abandoning the people to the mercy of the ruling class forces, out of desperation that there was no solace or salvation besides the two ruling class parties. The result is that the two feudal-capitalist parties are taking turns in seizing parliamentary power.

The factors that favour the alternation of parliamentary political power between the above two parties have continued to be strong. Both of the UNP and the SLFP have remained the representatives of the upper class elite. Similarly, the Tamil political parties have remained the representatives of the domineering, conservative, upper classes. However much they may talk of Tamil nationalism, the Tamil parties have continued to demonstrate their commitment to preserving the bourgeois parliamentary system by linking hands with the ruling capitalist classes

The above political parties have plenty of access to the wealth and financial power of their class. They are also blessed with not only the moral support of the foreign imperialists but also their financial support. In addition, the caste, class and regional consciousness inherited from the feudal tradition and violence, blackmail and murder have become part of the parliamentary electoral process.

The facilities for campaign and communication are entirely in the hands of the forces of the upper classes. They are able, through subtle propaganda, to impose upon the people their views in support of the political party that they favour. All the media of mass communication bleat that they are neutral and unbiased. However, they are always biased towards one or the other of the two parties of the ruling classes. The UNP has always remained the more favoured. The reason for this is that the media of mass communication have been under the control of families belonging to that party.

The system of freely exercising one's vote to elect the members of parliament has existed within the environment of such a bourgeois parliamentary system. Nevertheless, it is public knowledge that these 'democratic elections' were won with the help of violence, corrupt practices and cheating and through the exercise of a variety of pressure on the people.

The corruption and decay of parliamentary democracy was clear in the recently concluded elections. The people, willingly or otherwise and owing to the absence of a viable alternative, were compelled to express their preference among a limited choice.

The People's Alliance led by the SLFP was voted to power by the people in 1994 to put an end to seventeen-year rule of darkness. However, the frustration, pain and misery suffered by the people during the seven-year rule of the PA under the leadership of Chandrika Badaranaike Kumaratunge made the people vote the old devil, the UNP back to power. For the

parties of the ruling classes to cheat and for the people to be cheated is an unavoidable part of the bourgeois parliamentary political game.

The UNP returned to power with the backing of the elitist forces among the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people. It sought public support on the basis of three major promises: The first was the securing of peace by ending the war and finding a political solution to the national question through negotiations with the LTTE. The second was the rehabilitation of the economy that is in a state of decline. The third is the restoration and defence of democracy. All know that none of these problems has a simplistic solution. These problems have been major challenges facing the country and its people. It was with the very same promises that the PA under the leadership of Chandrika Badaranaike Kumaratunge came to power in 1994. All reactionaries, including the UNP, contributed, each in its own way, to worsen the problems. Those around Chandrika Badaranaike Kumaratunge and the PA stubbornly prevented them from taking the correct path and made them succumb to local and foreign forces of reaction. The defeat of the PA was a direct result of this.

Then, how is the leadership of the UNP that came to power now to resolve the three major issues? It will not go too far, since it is not new to parliamentary political power. Even now, they do not have any new alternative programme.

The basis for ending the war and finding a solution to the national question needs to be a wholesome solution that the Tamil people could accept. Can the UNP put forward such a solution? They have already started to emphasise that the solution will be within the framework of a unitary state. Neither the Tamil nationality nor the LTTE is in a position to accept it.

At the same time, the UNP government is active in creating the impression that solutions are being sought for day-to-day is-

ues. There can be relaxation and removal of earlier restrictions, but these are inadequate to satisfy the Tamil people. Under these circumstances, the alliance of Tamil parties (the TNA) is lending support to the UNP in order to justify the basis of their electoral success. In their political history, loyalty and friendship towards the UNP has always been firm.

Thus, the talks initiated by the UNP with the LTTE with a view to solving the national question should not be blocked or thrown into disarray by anyone. The UNP should be encouraged to go as far as it can in a constructive fashion. However, we Marxist Leninists and the genuine forces of democracy know very well the inherent class nature of the UNP and the extent to which the UNP will go.

Similarly, on the question of economic reconstruction, the UNP cannot have an alternative programme. While there could be some concessions for the people in the forthcoming budget, little can be done in defiance of the advice given and conditions imposed by the World Bank and the IMF. Moves to privatise the remaining public sector ventures under state control will be accelerated under this government. Plans are already afoot for that.

In addition, domination by multi-national companies is to be expanded under the guise of competitive economic growth. Opportunity is to be provided under this scheme for not only European companies but also Indian companies to worm their way in. For example, it is understood that plans exist to invite foreign multi-national companies to set up thermal power stations in order to meet the shortage of electricity and consequent problems. Thus, the danger now exists that every sector that faces a crisis will be handed over to foreigners.

Equally, it cannot be expected that the UNP that initiated the policy of uncontrolled liberal imports will now control it. It will

be foolish to expect the UNP to do something that the PA failed to do. Thus, local manufacturers and manufactures are likely face more severe problems and the national economy faces the prospect of obliteration without a trace. Thus, it will not be long before the people realise that the blind faith that they had that the burdens upon the people will be lightened and rise in cost of living will be moderated by the ascent of UNP to power has been shattered.

The third promise of restoration and protection of democracy is empty talk. The seventeen-year experience of democracy as implemented by the UNP has been forgotten by many. Already the UNP has claimed that the setting up of independent commissions for the Police, Elections, Justice and Public Services will restore democracy in the country. The very same thing was passed as the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution by the former government towards the tail end of its rule. Leaving alone how that is to be enforced, the claim that democracy will blossom through them is sheer myth.

Democracy is not mere political terminology. For it to have real meaning, it has to be linked with the development of the country, sharing of resources, improving the living conditions of the people, the establishment and preservation of equality among the nationalities, ensuring independent life and other such things. Can a chauvinistic, big-bourgeois, ruling class party like the UNP establish such a democracy? Really, the democracy that they demand and declare is one that is just adequate for the survival of the upper class forces and to meet the needs of that class. The democracy that is owing to the people cannot be secured under the existing parliamentary system. That is something that needs to be struggled for, and defended and extended under a people's democratic rule.

Thus, it is necessary to view the parliamentary political system and the elections under that system based on class rather than

the easy option of the idea of a change of government. When viewed that way, one sees that a chauvinistic, big-bourgeois, ruling class party that is loyal to imperialism has been restored to power. It will be particularly useful to consider this in the context of the seventeen-year rule of darkness.

Under these conditions, the need has arisen for the Marxist Leninists and leftist forces of democracy to fulfil the historical task of taking up greater responsibilities and face the challenges confronting them in order that they initiate waves of mass struggle and surge forward. It is therefore imperative to abandon short-term opportunistic stances and create broad-based unity, a common programme and an unwavering joint leadership.

No, that is not the way we are setting out to build socialism. We are doing so while still standing on the soil of capitalist society, combating all those weaknesses and shortcomings with which the working people are also affected and which tend to drag the proletariat down.

VI Lenin

Report at the 2nd All-Russian Trade Union Congress, 20.02.1919

The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at the communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

K Marx & F Engels

Manifesto of the Communist Party, February 1848

JVP: LESSONS FOR THE GENUINE LEFT

by IMAYAVARAMBAN

THE DECLINE OF THE LEFT

The greatest tragedy of the left movement in Sri Lanka was that the leadership has consistently demonstrated an unwillingness to learn from mistakes. The old guard, in particular, has always thought of itself as infallible and shown bitter hostility towards any criticism. The decay and degeneration of the Trotskyite tradition occurred almost as a matter of course with the great names of an earlier era queuing up before the two parties of Sinhala nationalism to secure for themselves a cabinet post or a seat in parliament. This fate was slower to befall the revisionist communists, but not much slower.

Once the LSSP and the revisionist Communist Party decided to take the parliamentary road to socialism, in the footsteps of the father of Trotskyism, Philip Gunawardane who abandoned revolution at least as early as 1956, there was no looking back. Every compromise that they made with the bourgeoisie led to further weakening of the two parties and the affiliated mass organisations, including the powerful trade union organisations that they had behind them. Instead of the LSSP and the revisionists making inroads into the mass base of the bourgeois parties, the bourgeois parties were able to take over large chunks of the trade

union membership in the left-led trade unions. What was amazing was that the UNP, the more reactionary of the two bourgeois parties and well known for its bitter hostility towards trade union rights, was able to build a trade union base that proved to be bigger than that of any left party. This undoubtedly was the result of the stripping of the trade union movement of working class ideology.

The old left was in trouble either way, since acknowledgement of the revolutionary line would mean abandoning the parliamentary path, for which they were ill prepared, while continuing with the manipulation of the state apparatus to secure their position of influence would mean that the already corrupt trade union leadership could not compete with the ruling parties in dispensing favours.

The treachery of the old left reached its peak in 1963 when a united left front was formed and a set of 21 demands were put forward by the trade unions behind the left parties. Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, the then Prime Minister of a troubled SLFP government, made a shrewd move of negotiating a coalition with the left parties. She cunningly carried out separate negotiations with Philip Gunawardane, the leader of the MEP, and with NM Perera, the leader of the LSSP, exploiting their weakness for power and position, and thereby wrecking left unity. The parliamentary left never recovered from the damage done by this let down of a working class struggle.

There were genuine leftists within the LSSP who resented what the leadership did, but were reluctant to abandon it for fear of losing touch with the working class base of the party. Those who split and formed a rival party were soon isolated and further weakened by internal quarrels and further splits. In this climate, the only credible revolutionary left party was the Marxist Leninist section of the Communist Party led by N Sanmugathasan. Political work done by the Marxist Leninists, Sanmugathasan in particular, enabled the Marxist Leninists to be a major political force

that posed a serious challenge to the bourgeois parties as well as to the treacherous old guard.

It is significant that the split that occurred in the Ceylon Communist Party was part of the split in the world communist movement: a split between a revisionist camp led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union led by Nikita Khrushchev and the revolutionary camp led by the Communist Party of China, led by Mao Zedong. It was natural that the leaders of the CPSU and of the Soviet Union spared no effort to wreck the revolutionary Marxist Leninist party before it could overshadow the parliamentary left.

Within the country, Pieter Keuneman, the chief culprit in pushing the revisionist line, spat venom at Sanmugathasan and even went to the extent of drawing special attention to the fact that the Marxist Leninists were led by a member of a minority nationality. Such efforts of the revisionists failed to have any effect on the growing strength of the Marxist Leninists, and the goodwill that existed between China and Sri Lanka at state-to-state and people-to-people levels did not help to give credibility to the anti-China campaign by the revisionists. Among the Tamils, however, the Tamil nationalists and the reactionaries alike exploited the cultural affinity to South India to create a substantial body of anti-China opinion.

The emergence of the JVP

The revisionists failed to hurt the Marxist-Leninist-led Ceylon Communist Party in direct political confrontation. They were, however, more successful in damaging it by subversion. Certain individuals encouraged by the Soviet revisionists to sabotage the party from within, including Rohana Wijeweera who was trained in the Soviet Union, infiltrated the party and sowed the seeds of Sinhala chauvinism within the organisation. While the more seasoned and politically mature members of the party were immune to the virus of chauvinism, the new, the young and the uninitiated

fell prey to it. Before Wijeweera was discovered much damage was done to the youth sections of the party, and agents had been planted in various mass organisations of the party.

Wijeweera and a few others, including elements from the revisionist party, founded the Janathaa Vimukthi Peramuna around 1968. It operated as a 'clandestine' organisation initially, and functioned openly following the victory of the SLFP-LSSP-CP alliance in 1970. Even during its early years, the JVP betrayed its chauvinistic streaks. Serious political criticism of the JVP came from the Marxist Leninists, Sanmugathasan in particular. This was readily dismissed by the parliamentary left, which was intoxicated by its electoral success in 1970 and unwilling to recognise the potential threat that the JVP posed to their political survival.

Waving the red flag to subvert the red flag

Among the main features to which the Marxist Leninist criticism drew attention was the fact that the JVP rejected the working class not only as the vanguard of the revolution but even as a revolutionary force. The hostility of the JVP to the working class was partly because the JVP conspirators who wormed their way into the Marxist-Leninist section of the Communist Party failed to gain any influence in the trade unions allied to the party. The hostility was, more importantly, because accepting working class leadership meant acknowledging a leading role for the Hill Country Tamil workers, who were employed predominantly in the plantation sector and the worst exploited section of the Sri Lankan working class. The JVP portrayed these descendants of landless South Indian Tamil peasants, who were uprooted from their soil over a century ago by the British colonialists to serve as indentured labour in the plantations, as arms of Indian expansionism. The phrase Indian expansionism used by the Chinese leadership to describe the behaviour of the Indian ruling class was cynically taken out of context and applied to a most oppressed section of the Sri Lankan population, who had been robbed of their citizenship by the UNP in 1947.

The cynicism of the JVP was clear in many other matters as well. It stood beside chauvinists in the UNP and the SLFP in provoking a public outcry about university admissions in 1970 that led to the now infamous 'standardisation' of marks, and remained silent on the issue when Tamil students were systematically discriminated against in the years that followed.

The adventurism of the JVP in 1971 April led to the massacre of over 5000 youth (over 15,000 according to some estimates) by the armed forces. The JVP proudly talked of the sacrifice of as many as twenty or thirty thousand youth, but never explained how such an insurrection that was doomed in its womb could have been launched by a leadership that very well knew that it was ill prepared for a confrontation and admitted later that it was 'forced into' confrontation. What was most significant was that its supreme leader, Wijeweera got himself arrested a few days before the insurrection and several important leaders made sure that they did not get directly involved in the armed conflict that took the lives of thousands of their lesser comrades.

The 'curiouser and curiouser' politics of the JVP

The strange allies that the JVP gained during the years of incarceration of Wijeweera were the late JR Jayawardane, a most reactionary leader of the UNP, and Bala Tampoe, then a Trotskyite and white-collar trade unionist and now an NGO favourite. The electoral success of the UNP in 1977 led to the release of Wijeweera who declared his conversion to Trotskyism and received the blessings of one of many Fourth Internationals to which Tampoe had access. At home, they served as the handyman for the UNP government in wrecking mass political activities of the SLFP and the left parties in the South, including the bogus left.

That the JVP leadership was a clique of unprincipled demagogues was demonstrated in the presidential election of 1982. Wijeweera who tried to woo the North with the pledge of support for self-determination also pledged to crowds in the South that he would

under no condition consent to secession. As much as the failure to win over the working class in its early years made the JVP leadership bitterly anti working class and anti Hill Country Tamil, the failure to secure a base among the Tamils of the North and East made it turn to Sinhala chauvinism with a vengeance.

JVP's hostility towards the cause of Tamil liberation struggle did not prevent it from striking deals with certain Tamil militant groups under the patronage of the Indian counter-insurgency and espionage agencies such as the notorious Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). The Indian government under Indira Gandhi spared no effort to put pressure on the UNP government led by Jayawardane for reasons ranging from the personal animosity between the leaders to Indian concerns about the pro-US policies of the Jayawardane government that would undermine Indian plans for regional hegemony.

Accord and discord

At no stage during the long history of oppression of the Tamil people had the JVP supported the right of the Tamil people to defend themselves, except for the insincere and short-lived pledge of support in 1982 for the Tamil nationalist cause. The anti Tamil carnage unleashed by the UNP government in 1983 did not bring the JVP to the side of the oppressed Tamils. Instead, the JVP saw its opportunity to pander to Sinhala chauvinism. At best, the JVP was indifferent to the Indian-sponsored peace negotiations between the UNP government and the Tamil nationalists. In reality, they waited to capitalise on the Sinhala chauvinistic sentiments that had for decades been cultivated by the two Sinhala capitalist parties and which the opportunist parliamentary left failed to combat. Their opportunity arrived in 1987, when the Indian government headed by Rajeev Gandhi, who succeeded his mother Indira, created a situation under which the Sri Lankan and Indian governments struck a deal in the pretext of solving the Sri Lankan national question.

Features that appeared to yield to the demands of the Tamils angered the Sinhala chauvinists and there was opposition to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. Interestingly, the objections of the then national bourgeois party, the SLFP, based on Sinhala chauvinist thinking, also concerned concessions to India that meant partial surrender of the sovereignty of the country to India. The JVP campaign was purely based on the national question. The JVP demanded that the accord be scrapped.

The initiative in the campaign against the accord went to the JVP. Soon the SLFP was upstaged, and the JVP became the sole player in the anti-accord campaign, which turned into a virulent anti-Indian and anti-government assault.

Although the 'old left' comprising the LSSP and the CP did not oppose the accord, they did not actively campaign against the chauvinists. Parties such as the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP), which split from the SLFP earlier and whose leaders included the late Vijaya Kumaranatunga and his spouse Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, and the NSSP led by Vasudeva Nanayakkara and Vickramabahu Karunaratne gave unqualified support for the accord. Only the New Democratic Party, a successor to the Marxist Leninist tradition of the Communist Party, known as the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) and led by the late comrade KA Subramaniam, took a balanced view of the accord. The Party welcomed the positive features of the accord, but drew attention to its inadequacies and to Indian hegemonic interests entrenched in it. It was particularly opposed to the use of Indian armed forces, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), in the North-East to implement the accord.

The Tamil nationalists, with the exception of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were enthusiastic about the accord. The LTTE, which formally endorsed the accord, had its undeclared reservations to which it gave vent when it found that India was more interested in appeasing the Sri Lankan government than in implementing the aspects of the accord that concerned

the Tamils of the North-East. To the LTTE, the only worthwhile outcome of the accord was the merging of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, but it suspected all along that the Indian government was keen to have its own agents in power there.

Packaging chauvinist terror as patriotism

The accord also had its opponents within the UNP, most significantly the then Prime Minister, R. Premadasa. Thus, several forces were opposed to the accord, but each for its own reason. There was understanding between the JVP and Prime Minister Premadasa, and JVP opposition to the accord had the blessings of Premadasa, but the alliance was not destined to last. The JVP, while proclaiming opposition to the UNP, did all it could to ensure that Premadasa won the presidential election that held in 1988 when President Jayawardane, cleverly outmanoeuvred by Premadasa, stepped down.

The JVP's call for a boycott of the presidential election was most effective in the Southern Province, where the UNP was least popular. This ensured that the main opposition candidate, former Prime Minister and leader of the SLFP, Sirima Bandaranaike was deprived of votes in that province, which could have been decisive in the outcome of the election.

The election of Premadasa as President was to be the unravelling of the JVP's campaign of violence and terror against its opponents. It led to a major bloodbath in which not only well over 50,000 suspected members and supporters of the JVP as well as members of their families were mercilessly killed by the armed forces of the government and goon squads loyal to the President. The justification for this unprecedented act of state terror was provided by the JVP's own actions.

The JVP's campaign against the accord went on for two years, during which it created a terror organisation called the Deshapremi Janathaa Vyapaaraya (DJV), meaning patriotic people's move-

ment. Not only supporters of the government and the armed forces were the targets of the DJV. Potential rivals of the JVP were annihilated. Victims of JVP violence ranged from leaders of rival student organisations to leaders like Vijaya Kumaranatunga, the popular leader of the up and coming SLMP. Vickramabahu Karunaratne of the NSSP survived a near fatal gunshot wound at the hands of the DJV. Karunaratne chose to cover up for the JVP in subsequent years, when between 1992 and 2001, he sought to make deals with the JVP, in the hope that the JVP would help to make him an MP. He argued that one had to make a distinction between the JVP and the DJV, one that really did not exist as far as the intentions of the JVP went.

Paying the price

The JVP seriously misjudged its own strength when through the DJV it called for the killing of the members of the families of army personnel. This destroyed the small but significant amount of support that it enjoyed among the lower ranks of the armed forces, and made it possible for the government to justify its campaign of terror. A wide range of acts of cruelty including the torture and mass murder of school children were carried out by the state. One mass grave in Sooriyakanda was uncovered a year or so after the killing of President Premadasa allegedly by an LTTE assassin on May Day 1993.

The climax of state terror was the arrest and the unlawful execution in 1989 of JVP leaders including Wijeweera, the party leader, who had by then been abandoned by all his former colleagues in the leadership at the time of the 1971 April insurrection and whose following was by now a group of hardened Sinhala chauvinists. The killing of Wijeweera and other JVP leaders, many thought, was the end of JVP. That was not to be as subsequent events proved.

The resurrection

The revival of the JVP was enabled by several factors. The people were tired of the UNP and bitter about the seventeen years of dictatorial misrule under which they experienced untold suffering. More importantly, the burden of the decade long war in the North-East had its effects in the south of the country in economic terms. Equally importantly, the people were angered by the death and disablement in large numbers of soldiers, who were mostly from poor rural families. There was a rise in crime, mainly a result of the open economic policy that upheld profiteering as a virtue. This policy encouraged corruption and the growth of a powerful underworld of crime and extortion, supported by the proliferation of illegally possessed arms and the turning to crime of army deserters, which were direct outcomes of the war. The people wanted an end to war.

The popular thirst for change brought the People's Alliance, comprising the SLFP and several other political parties, including the long discredited LSSP, CP and the chauvinistic MEP, to power, contrary to the claim that this alliance enabled the overthrow of the UNP. The PA won a parliamentary majority in 1994 and President Kumaratunga secured an unprecedented majority in the presidential election that followed, by riding the wave of popular frustration at the consequences of war, privatisation and liberalisation and gross violation of democratic and human rights by the UNP. In response to the public mood, the PA had promised a negotiated end to the war and a peaceful resolution of the national question. It also pledged a change in the economic policy, but its intentions in this respect were suspect even before the presidential election.

The PA did not take long to prove that it was no different from the UNP, when it came to the main issues that concerned the country. One may argue that there is greater democratic freedom, especially for the media, under the PA, but this was something that an assertive opposition exercised in increasing doses

since around 1992, in the months preceding the decline in power of President Premadasa prior to his assassination. The human rights of people in the North-East suffered greater abuse at the hands of the armed forces, and police harassment of members of the Tamil and Hill Country Tamil nationalities got worse.

The bankruptcy of the PA and the absence of a credible and viable parliamentary left option made a sizeable section of disillusioned voters turn to the JVP, which saw an opportunity for influence if not power in parliament. Its performance at the provincial council elections of 1999 indicated the prospect of securing a few seats in parliament, and the JVP modified its electoral strategy accordingly. Parts of the Sinhala chauvinist agenda became part of the JVP's election manifesto, and metamorphosis from a pseudo Marxist revolutionary organisation to a chauvinistic parliamentary party occurred quickly, but clumsily.

Back to conspiracy

The formation of the New Left Front (NLF) in 1998 and the steady growth in support for the NLF caused concern for the capitalist parties and for the JVP. They did everything they could to undermine the NLF, but the JVP succeeded where the others failed. The JVP strategy of driving a wedge between the parties and groups that formed the NLF succeeded mainly because of the avarice of the leader of the NSSP, Vickramabahu Karunaratne. His ambition for power in preceding years had led to a series of splits in the NSSP, including one where Vasudeva Nanayakkara was 'expelled' in 1994 for wanting to contest parliamentary elections as an ally of the PA. The very same Karunaratne negotiated with the JVP, behind the backs of his own party colleagues, to worm his way into parliament with the backing of the JVP.

The JVP proposed negotiations with member organisations of the NLF, but without formally recognising of the NLF. The NLF joint leadership, with the exception of Karunaratne, rejected this approach and insisted that while informal discussion with a mem-

ber organisation was permissible, formal negotiations had to be with the NLF as a body. The JVP rejected this position with impunity, knowing very well that Karunaratne's loyalty was more to his personal glory than to a genuine left alternative. As a result, the NSSP alone joined the JVP in demonstrations. The NLF partners did not object strongly in the interest of preserving unity.

There is an interesting parallel between the JVP strategy in splitting the NLF and Sirima Bandaranaike's in splitting the ULF in 1963, despite the important difference that the ULF was an opportunistic parliamentary political alliance while the NLF was not an alliance for electoral purposes. In both cases, the enemy used the strategy of negotiating with individual partners rather than with the group as a whole. The result was the same, except that the conduct of the leader of the NSSP was less dignified than that of his Trotskyite predecessors, Philip Gunawardane and NM Perera.

Having achieved their objective of splitting the NLF, the JVP gave Karunaratne the short shrift when the latter sought their support to get him elected to parliament. It was after his miserable failure in persuading the JVP to offer him a seat that he chose to support the PA. Another left alliance emerged as a result, comprising the discredited LSSP and CP, the chauvinistic MEP and the NSSP (now masquerading as the NLF with only the NSSP in it). This alliance is patronised by President Kumaratunga, and it is no secret what the choice of the three partners from the PA would be, if it came to deciding between Kumaratunga and Karunaratne.

The hazard of opportunistic alliances seems an inalienable aspect of the politics of the parliamentary left, and will be inevitable in any left alliance unless the left parties concerned are sincere about the role of parliamentary politics in advancing the revolutionary movement. This is important, since the growing strength of the JVP as a parliamentary political party has the potential to tempt the more fickle of the left leaders with parliamentary ambitions.

Another opportunistic alliance

The JVP, worked hand-in-glove with the UNP to oppose the antidemocratic actions of the PA in early-mid 2001. However, within weeks, it struck an alliance with the PA, in the wake of the crisis precipitated by the desertion of the PA by a large section of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and by the prospect of some prominent members of the PA leaving the government. The poor handling of the anti Muslim violence in Mawanella in May 2001 by the President angered the Muslim community and the UNP capitalised on their frustration as well as that of the Tamil political parties other than the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which was a partner in government.

Another factor that made the JVP warm up to the PA government was that the latter had scheduled a series of photographic exhibitions to expose the JVP's acts of terror against innocent masses and, thus, expose as false JVP's claims to democratic principles. The JVP used the weakness of the government to extract concessions and bullied the desperate PA into making some cosmetic changes to the government including a reduction in the number of cabinet members. It even dared to dub the PA regime a 'government on probation'. However, despite the bragging by the JVP that it had save the government from being overthrown by a reactionary conspiracy, desertions from the PA continued and parliament was dissolved.

The JVP leadership, which became devout Buddhists overnight before the general election of October 2000, grew into a fully-fledged Sinhala chauvinist party by the time of the election of December 2001. It was clear by November 2001 that the JVP more than matched the Sihala Urumaya as a Sinhala chauvinist party, and one of its main campaign slogans was that it would oppose any devolution of power based on a traditional homeland for the Tamils in the North-East.

One concession that the JVP extracted from the President, namely enabling its leader-in-exile, Somawansa Amarasinghe, who lived

in exile for fear of being arrested in connection with acts of terror by the DJV, to visit Sri Lanka, misfired. Amarasinghe's first campaign speech in support of the JVP contradicted the position of the JVP leadership that they had abandoned violence forever. On the national question, however, his position was no less chauvinistic than that of the 'new JVP'.

The JVP leadership was embarrassed by the militancy of the speeches of the returnee leader, but the speeches themselves did not have a significant effect on the outcome of the elections. The decline in support for the PA boosted the position of the JVP, which increased its representation from 10 to 16 in the new parliament. The departure of the leader to his land of exile, the day after the election, was more to the relief of the JVP leadership than to any other.

Abandoning pretences

The JVP leadership's claim to frugal living and simplicity and the carefully cultivated image of angry young men in search of justice have been thrown to the wind since the JVP increased its representation in parliament. The only significant difference between the JVP and other parliamentary parties is that the JVP leadership decides who is to be MP, rather than let the election rules decide. There is, nevertheless, an advantage in this approach in that squabbles among candidates for 'preference votes' is avoided. What this means for the future and how well it will hold when the JVP makes further compromises to ensure electoral success remains to be seen. If the emergence of the more chauvinistic and charismatic Weerawansa forging ahead of the 'Marxist' theoretician Tilvin de Silva as the chief spokesperson, and increasingly chauvinistic utterances by the latter are anything to go by, this method of appointing MPs could pave the way to new power struggles within the JVP.

Doubts also exist about the JVP's commitment to non-violent parliamentary politics. In fact, the JVP has not rebutted the state-

March 2002

New Democracy

ments made by their leader. What is of concern to the oppressed masses and the left and democratic forces of the country is the nature of the violence. The JVP is still prone to using violence to secure or to hold on to power in the student's unions of the universities.

What is of serious concern is that, with the JVP abandoning even its occasional Marxist phraseology and increasingly pandering to Sinhala chauvinism and given its petit-bourgeois power base, its populist style of work suggests the possibility of its emergence as a neo-fascist party.

The JVP has again enjoyed Indian patronage since 1995 and refrained from criticising the Indian government on a number of issues in which India had acted in ways that infringed upon the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. The possibility is also strong that the Indian expansionist state would use the JVP as a cat's paw in destabilising the peace process if it goes against Indian interests.

The task ahead of genuine left

It is significant that the genuine left of Sri Lanka has unreservedly condemned the opposition of the JVP to the truce signed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and LTTE leader V. Pirabakaran, and its plans to wreck the peace process initiated by Norway. For example, the statements issued by the Left and Democratic Alliance and the New Democratic Party are clear and unqualified in their support for the peace process and denunciation of JVP mischief.

There are still elements among the left parties outside the PA who are misled by the growth in support for the JVP. They should remember that the JVP is not building itself anymore as a leftist party, let alone Marxist. The kind of populism of the JVP is more akin to that of certain national socialist outfits in the 1930's in Europe. The more successful fascists in Germany and their less successful counterparts in the UK used underprivileged sections

of the population to build their organisations. Even today, the neo-fascists the world over have a popular base among the underprivileged sections, especially the *lumpen* proletariat. History has taught us that every concession to and compromise with chauvinism has cost the left dearly.

The responsibility on the shoulders of the left is even heavier now. The openly pro-imperialist UNP is in power. Its search for peace if more out of force of circumstances than out of good will. Opposition to the selling out of the country to the foreigners by the UNP should not mean a stint in support to its efforts to restore peace. What matters is to ensure that the peace process leads to a lasting peace with justice, based on respect for the right to self determination of the nationalities.

The UNP is not likely to solve the economic problems of the country. Its class interests will not allow it to address the issues that concern the working people, and the World Bank and the IMF are not likely to permit any slacking in the policy of privatisation and liberalised trade. The JVP will combine its demands concerning the economic problems of the masses with its chauvinistic anti-peace slogans in order to destabilise the peace process. Without a credible left alternative to address the national question and the economic issues related to the imperialist scheme of globalisation, the JVP would profit from the economic crisis and advance its neo-fascist programme.

It is time that parties, organisations and individuals representing the left and democratic forces came together, put mass politics above elitist bourgeois parliamentary politics and launch a joint programme to face the major issues facing the country.

I closed the door to terror
and the terror remained inside

Maria Teresa Guarneros

from *Lovers and Comrades*,

Women's Resistance Poetry from Central America

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE PARLIAMENTARY PATH

Answers by Comrade S.K. SENTHIVEL, General Secretary of the NDP to questions from a discussion group in Paris in October 2002

Q: *What is your position regarding the parliament?*

A: The New Democratic Party does not believe in any policy or theory that claims that it is possible to bring about social transformation or to solve in a wholesome way the problems of the people of the country. It believes, on the contrary, that it is only a revolutionary mass struggle beyond the scope of the parliament that can bring about social transformation, and that it is the implementation of the correct programmes with a long-term perspective that are possible thereby that can solve the problems of the people of the country in a wholesome way.

Q: *Why are you then participating in the parliamentary elections?*

A: Our party, which has social transformation and the path of revolutionary mass struggle as its basis, has developed two kinds of programme of work: one a long-term programme and the other a current programme. It contests the election from the point of view of the current programme, which recognises that it is possible to use parliament as a device.

Q: *Is this not what the likes of Pieter Keuneman and S.A. Wickremasinghe too said?*

A: They never said so, and they did not do so either.

Q: *Can you elaborate on this?*

A: A Marxist political and ideological debate had been initiated at an international level in and around the 1960's. The central issue of this conflict concerned the possibility of achieving social transformation and communist society through parliament and without armed struggle. This idea was put forward by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. All revolutionary forces of the world, including the Communist Party of China, rejected this theory. Because of the conflict, communist parties throughout the world underwent splits. In Sri Lanka, the split was between sections led by Keuneman and Wickremasinghe on the one hand and comrade Sanmugathasan on the other.

After the general election in 1970, the Keuneman-Wickremasinghe leadership accepted ministerial posts in the government led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike, with a view to achieving social transformation and socialism. During their seven-year period of partnership in power, they were party to anti-people actions and anti-people legislations. They were party to the introduction of the infamous 'standardisation' (of examination marks to discriminate against Tamil students) and oppressive legislation against the Tamil people and to their implementation. In all, they became the enemies of the Tamil and Sinhala masses.

Q: *Is this not what other mainstream (Tamil) democratic parties are doing?*

A: In relative terms, it will not be an overstatement to say that all the movements that set out to establish Tamil Eelam

have played and are still playing a more prominent role than the parliamentary left parties in hurting and causing difficulties for the Tamil and Muslim masses. In addition, these mainstream democratic parties had gone to the extent of compelling the Tamil People (living in areas controlled by the armed forces of the government) to subserviently abide by their word and to blunt the militancy of the masses. They have, thus, alienated themselves from a life of militant struggle. The masses who are oppressed on the basis of race, religion, colour and caste can win liberation only through revolutionary mass struggles (armed struggles). The Tamil parties, with no understanding of this or any interest in taking the initiative, seek to become partners of the chauvinistic governments that oppress the Tamil masses and collaborators in the acts of repression. They have been infected with this political disease.

Q: *Following the split in the Communist Party, did the party led by comrade Sanmugathasan function along the lines of long- and short-term programmes as indicated by you?*

A: Yes. Both methods of work were there. In the period close to 1965, the party studied the problem of caste and untouchability, which was a major issue among the Tamil people of the North and launched mass struggles (movements for the right of entry to temples and to cafes), against the caste system and untouchability. Also, in view of the need to use parliament as a tool, it fielded comrade Sanmugathasan as a candidate in the general election of 1965.

Q: *But comrade Sanmugathasan did not win in that election.*

A: To a revolutionary party, using the elections as a platform is more important than the outcome of the election. What is also important is how it uses the parliament if it is elected.

Q: *How does the New Democratic Party plan to use this election?*

A: The aim of our party is not to lend support to or to serve either chauvinistic party, but to build up the political and moral fibre of the people and lead the way to political awakening. Our intention is to use the parliamentary representation as an arena of struggle to carry this forward.

Q: *What is your position on the national question?*

A: Our intention is to enable the setting up of an autonomous structure comprising the North and East, in the true spirit of the principle of self-determination and within the region to set up an internal autonomy of the Muslims so that they can administer their affairs without any outside control or condition.

Q: *National oppression has become the main issue of the political life of Sri Lanka, and on an unprecedented scale. Is there a way to ameliorate it?*

A: Yes. There should be an immediate ceasefire and the initiation of sincere talks, with no ulterior motives, and bearing in mind the welfare of the people.

Q: *But, should not there be talks with the LTTE about a ceasefire?*

A: Not only ceasefire, but even talks need to be with them, because they are integrated with the life of struggle of the Tamil People.

Q: *The chauvinists and their allies argue that the problems of the Tamil people can be solved only under a united Sri Lanka, whereas the Tamil nationalists argue that only through a separate state of Tamil Eelam that all the problems of the Tamil people will be solved. What is your position?*

A: The united Sri Lanka that chauvinists and their allies have in mind is a unitary Sinhala-Buddhist state (that does not recognise Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic society) and the Tamil people accepting whatever that state may offer them out of its own will. This has been the politics of the past half a century. The demand for Tamil Eelam was an outcome of this. Thus, there is no meaning in talking about a unitary Sri Lankan state. On the other hand, one has to think deeply as to how correct is the claim that all the problems of the Tamil people will be solved through the setting up of a state of Tamil Eelam.

The demand for an independent Tamil Eelam, put forward by the TULF as the Vattukkottai Resolution in 1976 and as the election pledge in 1977, was adopted without any review and carried forward as armed struggle by the youth movements. In fact, the demand for an independent Tamil Eelam did not encompass the aspirations of the entire Tamil population (which includes the Muslims, Hill country Tamils and those oppressed on caste basis). We can see this clearly.

If domination of one nationality by another can solve problems, the problems of the Sinhala people should have been solved today. Besides, there are several states where one nationality dominates over another. However, the problems of the people have not been solved.

Thus, there is the need today for the creation of a third political force. Based on a common programme and broad-based unity on several fronts, this force should carry forward (without in any way standing in the way of the armed struggle of the LTTE) a determined armed mass struggle against the forces of chauvinistic oppression.

Q: *What is your position on the Hill Country Tamils?*

A: We stand for the creation of internal autonomous units for the Hill Country Tamils, who have been living continuously in the hill country for the past one and a half centuries, so

that they are able to safeguard and develop features that are unique to their nationality and their identity. These autonomous units will embrace regions in the Central, Uva and Sabragamuwa provinces where they live in large concentrations.

Q: *You seem to be firm in your stand on an issue, namely the caste problem, that the Tamil nationalist parties seem to be rather unconcerned. Can you elaborate on it?*

A: We do not exaggerate this issue. We only state the actual conditions that exist. When we bring out the truth, some are annoyed with us and charge that Senthivel and the NDP are doing unnecessary and wasteful things.

The oppressed castes comprise a third of the Tamil population of the North. The Tamil leadership cannot understand how they were dominated and oppressed by the caste system and untouchability (the system of bondage and serfdom), because they (who mouth the slogan "What is wrong in the desire of those that ruled once to rule again") and their ancestors were those who dominated over and oppressed these masses. They cannot therefore take much notice of this problem.

The North is not entirely rid of the caste system and untouchability. They find expression even now. Owing to landlessness and economic, educational and professional backwardness, they remain a backward and depressed community. We demand that this should be changed and facilities and opportunities provided for them to advance socially. This is what we emphasise.

Q: *What do you expect out of your dialogue such as the present one with the Tamil people in exile?*

A: We wish to explain to the Tamil people in exile our position in connection with the elections and hope that those here

would get in touch with their kith and kin back in Sri Lanka and persuade them to vote for the clock (our symbol). They should make this contribution. This is what we fraternally ask of the Tamil people in exile. Also, unlike the other, parliamentary political parties, we will not terminate our meetings and dialogue with the end of the elections. We will persevere in discussions of this nature irrespective of the outcome of the elections.

The revolutionary will accept a reform in order to use it as an aid to in combining legal work with illegal work and to intensify, under its cover, the illegal work for the revolutionary preparation of the masses for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

That is the essence of making revolutionary use of reforms and agreements under conditions of imperialism

JV Stalin

The Foundations of Leninism, 1924

Historical materialism eclipses all the methods that went before it, on the one hand, inasmuch as it conceives reality as a whole consistently as a historical process, and on the other hand, inasmuch as it is in a position to understand the starting point of knowledge at any one time. Knowledge itself is understood to be just as much a product of the objective process of history.

Georg Lukacs

A Defence of "History and Class Consciousness"

SRI LANKAN EVENTS

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WELCOMED

The signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) by V Pirabakaran, the leader of the LTTE and Ranil Wickremasinghe, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka as a result of facilitation by Norway has been received with a sigh of relief by the vast majority of the people. Despite differences in views on the prospects of a just and lasting solution to the national question, there is overwhelming support for the bold step taken by the parties involved.

The temptation to derail the peace process is strong within the PA, although the LSSP has expressed unreserved support for the process. The President and important leaders of the PA are not explicit in their opposition to the MoU, largely because the public mood favours the MoU.

The somewhat subdued Sihala Urumaya and the vociferous JVP are campaigning against the MoU and against a negotiated settlement based on the recognition of a traditional homeland of the Tamil people. Although the JVP rallies draw crowds, public support for its campaign is less than expected by the JVP. It would remain so, until the JVP is in a position to use the weak economic performance of the government to implement its chauvinistic agenda. The Upali Group of Newspapers, known for its anti-Tamil stance since its founding over two decades ago, is actively campaigning against the MoU with a view to sabotage the talks between the government and LTTE. Media

hostility to the peace process is a major hazard that the peace process is likely to face and the only way to counter that is mass political work by left and democratic forces of the country.

COMRADE SANMUGATHASAN REMEMBERED

The death anniversary of Comrade N. Sanmugathasan was marked on 17th February 2002 at the Ramakrishna Mission Lecture Hall, Colombo-6 by the Sanmugathasan Centre for Marxist Studies, Colombo. Comrade T. Satchithanandan, Attorney at Law, chaired the meeting. Following the welcome address by comrade E. Thambiah, the book, 'The Life and Teachings of Karl Marx' by Comrade Sanmugathasan published by the Centre as a bilingual edition in English and Tamil was released by Professor S. Sivasegaram, who also had provided the Tamil translation of the English text of Comrade Sanmugathasan, and Mr. Ashraf Azeez received the first copy.

Comrade S.K. Senthivel delivered the publication address and comrade Sarath Fernando delivered the Sanmugathasan Memorial Address in English. The address by comrade Fernando was summarised in Tamil for the benefit of those who were not fluent in English.

The very well attended meeting concluded following the vote of thanks delivered by Comrade Thambiah.

JVP: THE NEW MASK

The opportunism of the JVP has become naked within a period of a year between the two parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2001. The JVP parliamentarians who entered parliament in 2000 vowing that they will not squander public funds by purchasing luxury motor vehicles using public funds, soon changed their minds and went for the same luxury 4-wheel

drive vehicles that have become a favourite with the MPs and ministers. They have continued to whip up Sinhala chauvinism and done little to deal with the consequences. In fact, they exploited the opportunity created by the anti-Muslim violence stirred up by chauvinists in the ruling PA to fill the vacuum created by the breaking away of a large section of the Muslim Congress MPs from the PA. In the pretext of supporting the government, they undermined the authority of the PA, by imposing on it various conditions that led to even bigger problems and ultimately the dissolution of parliament.

Although JVP's hopes of enjoying the fruits of power as partners of the PA did not materialise owing to the crisis in the PA, the JVP benefited from the election that resulted from it. Disillusioned supporters of the PA who did not want to vote for the UNP switched to the JVP as a lesser evil and that led to an increase in the parliamentary representation from 10 to 16 in 2001.

The JVP's switching of loyalties from a loose alliance with the UNP against the 'anti-democratic' policies of the PA to a nominally conditional support for the PA was also motivated by other factors. The PA government had launched an all out propaganda assault on the JVP in response to its campaign against the government. A series of nationwide exhibitions were initiated around August-September 2001 to expose the anti-democratic and inhuman acts of terror by the JVP against innocent civilians during the mayhem of 1997-1999. JVP's intolerance to dissent was also a subject of comment at the time. The government even went to the extent of giving the fullest media publicity to the denunciation of the JVP by the 'International Leninist Current', a Trotskyite patron of the JVP in the West, for the chauvinistic line adapted by the JVP. All this changed with the JVP support for the PA government under probation.

The JVP is now masquerading as a bourgeois democratic party with left leanings. Accordingly, the rustic image of the JVP leaders has given way to a more elitist attire and appearance. When the JVP fell at the feet of the Mahanayakes in 2001 and submitted their election manifesto to the clergymen before releasing it to the public, it was clear that its once proclaimed loyalty to the communism of Marx had given way to the communalism of the Mahanayake. What followed was what would when opportunism gets the better of idealism, however misguided it might have been.

The degeneration that took decades to conquer Philip Gunawardane, NM Perera, Colvin R de Silva, Pieter Keuneman and their likes took less than a decade to vanquish the successors to Rohana Wijeweera. What we have before us today is an ruthlessly opportunistic party that is waiting to play upon middle class frustrations to come to power. The chauvinism and the populism of the JVP uses to conceal an anti-democratic undercurrent is a characteristic that the JVP of today shares with the National Socialists of Germany in the 1930s.

GROPING IN THE DARK

The four Tamil nationalist parties, the TULF, Tamil Congress, TELO and EPRLF (Suresh Faction), declared that they were jointly contesting the elections only to demonstrate that the LTTE was the only organisation with which the government could negotiate a peaceful settlement of the national question and an end to the war. Although the declaration sounded altruistic, in reality, the battle rages on for power and position, with as much fury as it did before the Tamil National Alliance was formed just before nominations were called for the parliamentary elections.

More significantly, the subservience of each of the parties to the UNP gets clearer by the day, while the UNP government

treats them with the contempt that they deserve. Their demand that local elections should not be held in the North-East was dismissed by the UNP government because they did not object to parliamentary elections being held a few months earlier. The inability of the four allies to put together a slate of candidates in time for the nominations for two important local bodies goes to demonstrate the dubious nature of the alliance.

THE SOURCES OF THE POWER CRISIS

The country is now suffering power cuts for the eighth month, except for a short spell close to the elections. The number of hours of power cut is now extended to five hours per day from the initial one hour that went up to four hours under the PA government.

The Minister for Power, Karu Jayasuriya pledged an end to all power cut by the end of February, but February passed by the power cut that got prolonged. The UNP government argues that the cause of the power cut was corruption in the Electricity Board and government mismanagement. However, that fails to explain the mismatch between the installed power supply and the demand for power, which is the source of the problem.

Solutions are sought in the short term by buying power from generators installed in offshore barges and there is confusion about the long term. The choice between nominally low-cost but environmentally expensive coal power and 'cleaner' but seemingly costlier options appears to involve considerations that are not quite 'clean'.

What all the pundits fail to admit is that the increased demand for electricity in urban Sri Lanka, especially in and around Colombo in the wake of the economic policies of liberalisation and consumerism adopted in 1978, the sale of electricity at subsidised prices to favoured foreign investors, and the state of

the economy are the real reasons. Neither this nor the previous government would dare to take the tough measures needed to control the use of energy guzzling air conditioners in the cities, including the diesel operated ones that add to the pollution of the urban atmosphere.

The solutions that are being sought are designed to pamper the urban elite and to quieten the middle classes, while most of the peasantry and plantation workers continue to be denied access to electricity from the national grid.

There is no possibility of a united front against terrorism. Only the development of a united front against international and social injustice can serve to make such desperate acts by victims of the system useless on their part and so no longer possible.

Samir Amin

US Hegemony and the Response to Terror (comment on the events of 11.9.2001), Monthly Review, November 2001

At this time, the world capitalist system is in grave crisis and yet its supporters ceaselessly try to denigrate the proletariat and the people with the negative examples of socialist countries that have degenerated and become capitalist. In this regards, it is absolutely necessary for us to have a sharp sense of the revolutionary history of the proletariat, grasp the basic principles and learn the positive and negative lessons from experience. With these, we are ready to take advantage of new conditions in order to advance the socialist cause.

Jose Maria Sison

from Contradictions in the World Capitalist System and the Necessity of Socialist Revolution, May 2001

THE NDP DIARY

PARTY ACTIVITIES & STATEMENTS

- © The National Day of Cuba was commemorated by the NDP on 01 01 2002 in Colombo.

It was remembered with pride that it was a remarkable feat that the Cuban people and the socialist state remain firm in the face of the military threat, economic embargo, conspiratorial moves and false propaganda by the US against Cuba and its people. Cuba is a shining example of a country that has demonstrated to the world that imperialism is powerless against a small country that advances on the political, economic and socio-cultural fronts, based on socialism.

The Cuban National Day was organised by the Central Committee of the Party to communicate to the people, and in particular to introduce to the younger generation, the anti-imperialist sentiment and the faith in socialism of this country, and to express to the people of Cuba the solidarity and revolutionary greetings of our people and of the Party.

The Cuban National Day Meeting held at the Narayana Guru Hall on 1st January 2002 was chaired by Comrade E. Thambiah, National Organiser of the Party. Comrades S. K. Senthivel, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, S. Thevarajah and Vasantha Dissanayake addressed the meeting. The

meeting was preceded by an anti-US-imperialist street play by the theatre group 'Cem Malarkal' (Red Flowers) and a large number of people gathered to watch this anti-US-imperialist play. The meeting was concluded with the recital of revolutionary songs.

- ◎ The NDP submitted a detailed petition to the Government Agent for Jaffna on 18th December 2001, expressing its strong condemnation of the hoarding of essential goods, black marketeering and profiteering. A delegation led by Comrade S. Kathirgamanathan, Jaffna District Organiser of the NDP submitted the petition to the GA and explained to him the importance of taking firm action. The petition contained a comprehensive list of the prices charged for essential goods. It also warned the GA of the prospect of mass protest in the event of government failure to take effective action.

Following the above action by the NDP, other political parties and groups too expressed their condemnation against the increase in prices. On 18th January 2002, a hartal was called to protest against the shortage and the increase in price of essential goods and the hoarding of goods in the Jaffna Peninsula. The NDP expressed its fullest support for the hartal, appealed to the people of Jaffna to give it their fullest support, and participated in it, alongside other political parties and mass organisations. People demonstrated in their hundreds opposite the Jaffna Secretariat and, in most parts of the Jaffna peninsula, shops and markets remained closed and very few schools were open, and with a small number of students attending. The arrest of some of the organisers of the protest failed to achieve the purpose of the police, namely to disrupt the peaceful demonstration by the people at the

entrance to the Secretariat. It was significant that representatives of all political parties, excluding the ruling UNP and more significantly the Tamil National Alliance, joined in expressing their protest.

At the end of the demonstration, Comrade S. Kathirgamanathan, Jaffna District Organiser of the NDP addressed the gathering on behalf of the Party.

- ◎ The NDP in its press release of 21st January 2002 issued by Comrade S.K. Senthivel, the General Secretary of the Party made the following observations.

The New Democratic Party strongly condemns the unprincipled political moves of the JVP through its chauvinistic propaganda to undermine the efforts of the present United National Front government to initiate peaceful negotiations. The JVP, because of its greed for parliamentary political power, has descended to lower depths than the traditional chauvinistic political parties and is spitting chauvinistic political venom. This is designed to drag the new generation of Sinhala youth among the Sinhala people into the swamp of chauvinism. The left and democratic forces should come forward to defeat this counterproductive campaign by the JVP.

The statement also pointed out that the people were forced out of desperation to restore the UNP, leading the United National Alliance, to power, because of the failure of the PA rule during its past seven years in power to deliver the peace and economic prosperity that they expected. This had the fullest blessings and active support of the forces of big capitalist and conservative dominance. In the current situation of dual power and the absence of alternative plans for peace or alternative economic or political

programmes, the extent to which the expectations of the people will be fulfilled remains in doubt. However, it would only be appropriate to allow people time to find out through experience.

The UNF government's initiative to start negotiations with the LTTE is materialising on several fronts. This has caused shoots of expectation to sprout among the people, especially in the North-East. These trends remind us of the initial activities of the PA regime that came to power in 1994.

Whoever be that takes the initiative for peace, no leftist party that stands for the Tamil people who have been subjected to chauvinistic oppression and war can stand in the way of such peace efforts. It should not participate under any pretext in any activity that would disrupt the peace efforts. Any left political party that fails to conduct itself with a sense of responsibility does not deserve to call itself a leftist party.

In that sense, the JVP, through its anti-peace propaganda campaign, has wholly demonstrated that it is not a leftist party. The red masks and the red cloaks donned by the JVP in the past have come apart because of it. It has demonstrated at the same time that it is just a third parliamentary political force that has taken the chauvinistic road to fulfil its great desire for parliamentary power. Our Party would like to remind the public that it in fact had, many years ago, pointed out that the JVP had already taken this degenerate, reactionary stand.

- © The NDP in its press release of 25th February 2002 issued by Comrade S.K. Senthivel, the General Secretary of the Party made the following observations.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) for peace signed last week by V. Pirabakaran, the leader of the LTTE and Ranil Wickremasinghe, Prime Minister of the United National Front government is a most welcome initial step. The MoU has brought into effect an indefinite ceasefire, and foundation has been laid for peace negotiations. The New Democratic Party gladly welcomes it. This MoU is an expression of the need and the desire of the entire population of this country for peace. Therefore, this agreement should be defended and carried forward to achieve a lasting and peaceful political solution without retreat or disruption, and using every favourable means. At the same time, the Party condemns the chauvinistic reactionary forces that are bent on disrupting the process, for narrow political gain.

The NDP has opposed the war from the time that the national question was transformed into a war by the government of the chauvinistic ruling classes of the country, with the backing of the forces of foreign imperialism. The Party has been emphatic that no solution could be found for the national question through war and that a political solution had to be found for it, based on the principle of self-determination. The Party has consistently held that the war should be ended and that the government should conduct negotiations with the LTTE, which has been the principal representative of the forces struggling for the liberation of the Tamil nationality, to secure peace and a solution to the national question. The Party has also vigorously campaigned for this purpose, on its own as well as jointly with other left and democratic forces.

Thus, the Party recognises and welcomes this MoU as an initial step to address the matters of bringing the war to an end, negotiations, political solution and lasting peace, which have for long been the hope and aspiration of the

Tamil and Muslim people of the North-East, who have been worst affected by the war. The Party emphasises that the two sides that have authored and adopted the MoU, which has been based on the needs, expectations and faith of the people, should carry forward the MoU sincerely and with attention to experience, and not as a means of fulfilling their ulterior motives. At the same time, the Party appeals to the PA, which had a mandate from the people and adequate opportunity during its seven years in power but, owing to its erroneous approach, let every chance it had to achieve an end to the war and initiate negotiations slip through, not to wreck the present MoU and its positive aspects. The Party also points out to all concerned that, in view of the current national and international situation, that they should desist from making room for foreign hegemonic interests merely to serve the narrow interest of anyone, and that they should act with far sight.

The conversion of socialist countries to capitalism does not simply mean more ground for capitalist expansion. Under conditions of monopoly capitalism, the increase in the number of capitalist countries with some industrial base means the increased recurrence of the crisis of overproduction. This leads to economic stagnation, destruction of productive forces and political turmoil, not only in the less developed industrial capitalist countries, but also in the entire capitalist world.

Jose Maria Sison

*from Contradictions in the World Capitalist System
and the Necessity of Socialist Revolution
May 2001*

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

US IMPERIALISM VS THE WORLD

The Bush administration is using the tragedy of 11th September to pursue an even more bellicose foreign policy towards those it sees as its enemies. The declaration by President Bush that the three terrorist states Iraq, Iran and North Korea are on its hit list has angered the people in all three countries. The reformist Iranian government of Khatami, which has been seeking to improve relations with the US, has been embarrassed by the American attitude, which only strengthened the hands of the anti-reformist mullahs. Condemnation of the US and its president was quick to come from the masses of Iran. Demonstrators representing all shades of political opinion have come out in protest and the US, even if it wants to rectify the damage done, will take many years to get things moving in that direction.

The threat against Iraq is growing stronger and there is already an open threat to oust Iraq's President, Saddam Hussain. This move has failed to find support among the European nations, and even the loyal British Prime Minister has not much eagerness about this move, although it is likely that he will follow the American master wherever he goes.

It appears that North Korea was added to the list to avoid appearing particularly anti-Muslim. As far as popular anger goes there seems to be more anti-American feeling now in South

Korea than there is in North Korea. The US needs to vilify North Korea for a whole wide range of reasons that concern the presence of US troops in that part of the world and a justification for US meddling in East Asia.

What is most important for the US government is to keep the US in a permanent state of war. If the US war in Afghanistan were to end, the US needs another 'enemy' that poses a threat to the 'American way of life and to the security of the US. War, not peace, is the best friend of a struggling government. The Argentine generals gave Mrs Thatcher a new lease of life when the popularity of her government was flagging and it was IRA bombing in 1984 of the hotel in Brighton, the venue of the Tory Party conference, that salvaged her popularity during her troubles the second time round.

The war is good for the arms industry, an important component of the US economy. It helps people forget and forgive many misdeeds, including the very recent Enron scandal, where the energy business which was very close to the Bush family and to Vice President Dick Cheney suddenly folded up to the shock of ordinary share holders, while the directors and other major partners had pulled out their investments in time.

INDIA: RIDING THE TIGER OF COMMUNALISM

The evil genie that came out of the BJP bottle to demolish the Babar Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, led to the worst communal violence since India's independence from direct British rule, divided much of India on religious lines, reinforced communal politics, and brought the BJP to power. It would not go back into the bottle it seems at the call of the 'moderate' Premier Vajpayee or his able lieutenant Union Home Minister Advani, the leading spokesperson for Hindutva in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government and a prime culprit in the demolition of the Masjid. The question is how sincere the government is about the Ram temple project in Ayodhya.

The BJP is dominated by forces of Hindi-Hindu-Brahminist reaction, but struck alliances with opportunist regional parties to capture and to hold on to power. It even cultivated for itself a more moderate image with Vajpayee projected as a symbol of moderation. In the wake of its failure to control the rebellion in Kashmir, its ambiguous foreign policy towards Pakistan turned clearly hostile and got tied up with its revived anti-Muslim agenda. One problem for the BJP could be that it likes to project itself as modernist to the West, with its heart in its Hindutva programme, but that should not matter to the US, now at war with 'Islamic' terror.

The Hindu fanatic Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) with international contacts that include reactionary, influential, and well-to-do Hindus living abroad is determined to fulfil its pledge that it made ten years ago to build the Temple for Ram in the vicinity of the demolished Babar Masjid. The BJP itself, especially since the war in Kargil, has whipped up anti-Pakistani sentiments, which mean anti-Muslim sentiments for those misled by Hindutva ideology and communal politics. This helps the VHP to push for an accelerated temple-building programme.

The VHP threat to act unilaterally to start building the temple on 15th March was followed up by its gacns arriving in Ayodhya in late February. The despicable act of setting alight a train carrying VHP campaigners from Ayodhya, in fact, led to the killing of innocent people only, mostly women and children, and led to the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim violence and killings in the state of Gujarat, initially in Ahmedabad, then other major cities, and later rural Gujarat. The question as to who the perpetrators of the original act of arson were will probably be resolved in the light of subsequent events.

The BJP rulers in Gujarat have played an active role in fanning the fires of anti-Muslim violence and some observers have suggested that setting alight the train at Godhra was a BJP in-

spired conspiracy. The BJP, having suffered severe setbacks in the recent state elections in Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Uttaranchal, is desirous on the one hand to build up its popular base using Hindu fanaticism and on the other to avert political instability that could lead to an early fall the government, especially with the chances of re-election rather poor. Thus, it may feel secure as long as it is able to pin the blame on the Muslims and the Pakistani intelligence service, ISI, so that the actions of the VHP goons in Ayodhya will pass unnoticed.

The VHP agenda is explicit: it needs to build the temple to maintain its credibility among its influential and affluent sponsors at home and abroad. Thus, the necessary show of a stand-off between the 'moderate' BJP-led coalition and the neo-fascist VHP will end soon. Given the control that the VHP exercises over the BJP, the BJP can never 'control the VHP'. The resultant crisis for the coalition, because of protests from its allies, could be postponed by promises of action and enquiry, until the BJP feels secure enough to face an election.

What concern the left and democratic forces in India and abroad are the implications of the growing communal conflict for the oppressed masses. It is time that the passive anti-communalism of the left and democratic forces of India transformed itself into mass politics and their electoral agenda gave way to one of struggle against Hindutva fascism and reaction. It has been the experience of left and democratic forces over the past century that fascism wins when the left and democratic forces abandon militant struggle against all forms of reaction.

ARGENTINA: MASS ANGER

The impoverishment of Argentina cannot be isolated from US domination in that part of the world. What was one of the world's richest countries a century ago is now facing total economic ruin. The crisis has brought out people by the millions to

the streets and made stable government not possible unless there is a radical change.

The mass protest against the government, the IMF and the World Bank, and US imperialism was spontaneous and the fire is still raging. Wave after wave of protest of this kind and on this scale was unprecedented for that country in its history and rare for that part of the world in the past two decades.

The newfound militancy of the masses is an excellent thing, but it can do them good only if there is direction and leadership from the left and democratic forces. The left is present in the protests, but only as individuals or as small groups and not in a leading role. If the left and democratic forces do not take the initiative to carry the struggle forward to lead the country out of imperialist domination under working class leadership, the opposite could happen. Populist nationalism could subvert the struggle and divert it in the direction of a fascist dictatorship, the kinds of which Argentina has experienced several times in the past century.

PALESTINE: COMBATING ZIONIST TERROR

Every attempt by Israel to bomb and bulldoze the Palestinians into submission was doomed to fail, and fail it did. The Sharon government trapped by its ideology of Zionist oppression of the Palestinians is committing more and more atrocities in its hope to annex more Palestinian territory by driving out more and more Palestinians from their land in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. It also seeks to create in the PLO led by Yasser Arafat a subservient Palestinian authority that will do the dirty work of keeping Palestinian militants under control.

However, every move of the Sharon government is having an effect opposed to what was desired. There is massive support among the Palestinian masses for every act of defiance and any

organisation that dares to defy Israel. Israel is reluctant to kill of Arafat or to see him replaced by another, because it is uncertain what a post-Arafat leadership will be like.

One thing is certain, that is, that as long as the Zionist policy of expansionism and oppression continues and the Palestinians are not given their right to rule themselves, without Israeli interference, the struggle will go on and Israel will know no peace for its people.

NEPAL: STATE AND REVOLUTION

The government of Nepal has now unleashed its armed forces on the Maoist Communist revolutionary forces. The revolutionary forces were correct in their demand for a democratic republic of Nepal and a repeal of all oppressive laws and state oppression.

The ruling classes always assume that when revolutionaries offer to negotiate that they do so because they are militarily weak. The insincerity of the King and the government of Nepal were exposed when they decided to declare war on the revolutionaries. Having launched the offensive, with the blessings and logistical support of its dominant neighbour to the west, the Nepali authorities are now in deeper trouble than before. The rebels have stood up to the army and the armed struggle has spread even wider.

The choice before the parliamentary communist parties of Nepal is simple: will they take the side of the oppressive state that will rely increasingly on its expansionist neighbour and be passive supporters of the oppressors, or will they take the side of the revolution and campaign in defence of democracy and social justice?

LET US CELEBRATE THE MIRACLE OF CUBA

Comrade VASUDEVA NANAYAKARA

A poem to mark the occasion of the Cuban National Day 2002

Cuba, the island country once colonised like ours
How fortunate and blessed you are,
as you dazzle with courage and commitment
showing a way to the third world.
Beside the giant of imperialism
you stood up courageously
and in your determination hot and red,
as imperialists encircled you with embargo
you emerged victorious isolating the super power.
The Soviet block fell
confronting you with an impossible challenge
the spirit of the revolution
raised from your inner depth of history.
With a renewed revolutionary consciousness
you faced the imperialist onslaughts,
harassments, violence and conspiracy
with glowing success.

Dear Cuba who gave you this inspiration?
The towering strength of Fiedel and others?
Che Guevara and all those who sacrificed their lives
whispering 'patria O mute'
for the revolution and the idealism of humanity

Is the eternal song of the revolution
echoing through the winds of the Sierra Maestre
embracing the hearts and minds of the people?

As the tidal wave of globalisation lashed across the world
Fidel it is your voice that rang across the globe
'globalise the struggle against imperialism'
carrying it with the power of resistance.

When he said "If the red flag of our struggle
will not fall to the ground
and if we can go to death amidst the voices
of resistance and defiance, we can embrace death'

A flame of inspiration was kindled by Che
among millions of people across the world
to make scarifies for the struggle of liberation
against imperialism, oppression and exploitation.

Let us celebrate the miracle of Cuba
born out of the strength of the struggle of her people,
and the inspiration of their leaders.

IN THE NEW COUNTRY

Pain has been our challenge,
and the future our hope.
We build as though composing a poem:
writing, erasing, and creating anew.

Vidaluz Meneses

Nicaraguan Poet, 1982

from *Lovers and Comrades*,

Women's Resistance Poetry from Central America

March 2002

IF I WERE TO TELL MY FRIENDS

by *Cira Andrés*

If I were to tell my friends
that I am my mother's mother
I know for sure
they will not believe me,
but if I explained to them
that this is the most beautiful birth that I have ever known,
that I have been nurturing it like a poem,
that at night I have laid her to sleep
explaining the evolution of humankind
while she laughs like a real child
at the monkey's tale,
that after the literacy campaign I showed her
how to make sentences connect
and that the world is a round,
I taught her to love Communism
when I left for Havana
and she did not see me return
with a child in my arms.
only with many in my heart,
then at last, I am sure,
that if I told my friends
I am my mother's mother
they would believe me.

Courtesy:

Lovers and Comrades: Women's Resistance Poetry from Central America,
(Ed.) Amanda Hopkinson, The Women's Press, London EC1V 0DX, 1989

Published by E.Thambiah of No 47, C.C.S.M.Complex, Colombo - 11.

T.P. : 435117 Fax : 075 524358 E-mail : Thera@slk.lk

Printed at Techno Printers, 077-301920.

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org