

# *New Democracy*

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**Theoretical Organ of the New Democratic Party**

## Problems Confronting Peace

While on the hand, the pace of the peace process seems to cause concern to different people for different forces, it is clear that those opposed to the peaceful resolution of the national question are hard at work to wreck it. Sections of the information industry under the strong influence, if not control, of rabid Sinhala Buddhist nationalism are busy manufacturing news to serve their chauvinistic agenda. Name-board organisations parading as champions of human rights are continuing with their mission of tarring the LTTE while whitewashing the misdeeds of certain sections of the armed forces.

The intentions of the UNF government seem unclear with the Prime Minister and cabinet colleagues rushing to meet the Indian and American leaders, whose reputation in promoting the peace process has been highly questionable. The former ruling party, apparently in total disarray about the strategy to adopt towards the government, is on the one hand making an unholy alliance with the chauvinist JVP, which is unashamedly opposed to the Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the LTTE and out to wreck the proposed peace talks. On the other hand, one hears noises to the effect that the opposition wants the peace talks to be accelerated while at the same time wanting to revise the terms of the MoU. This interest in the peace process seems cynical since organisations allied to the PA are campaigning against the peace process alongside certain members of the PA, including Anura Bandaranaike and Dinesh Gunawardane.

The delay in commencement of the talks seems to be due to the failure to implementing important commitments relating to the MoU, and the armed forces have been slow to act. However, there is an attempt on the part of the media to blame the LTTE for the delays.

There have been reported breaches of the MoU and, while a count of the number of incidents would tend to fault the LTTE more, the gravity of the offences in the context of the spirit of the MoU may say otherwise. However, there are matters where the LTTE leadership needs to give more importance to the political aspects than to military aspects. In fact, many of them are issues to which Marxist-Leninists have constantly drawn the attention of the Tamil nationalist struggle.

The Tamil-Muslim clashes during July cannot be lightly dismissed as the work of miscreants. The deterioration of the relationship between the Muslims and the Tamils cannot be brushed aside as the doing the Sinhala chauvinist regime. Tamil nationalists as a whole have failed to appreciate the needs and aspirations of the Muslims, even at the time that the Tamil nationalists sought to represent all "Tamil-speaking people". Scant attention was paid to the fact that the Muslims are scattered all over the island and that this demographic difference with the Tamils who lived in large concentrations in the North-East had important political implications.

The stubborn refusal by most Tamil nationalists until recently, and by some even now, to accept that the Muslims are a distinct nationality has been the source of some problems. As much as in the anti-Muslim violence early last century, rivalry between the business elite of the two communities too played a role in inducing communal friction. The class nature of the leading militant Tamil nationalist organisations also ensured that the leadership served the interests of the Tamil elite. Anti-Muslim incidents during the period of Indian army occupation in 1987-89 and after were a result of a wrong attitude and no leading Tamil militant organisation was an exception to an unhealthy attitude.

This is not to say that there was no mischief on the part of the chauvinistic government or its armed forces or that there are no Muslim organisations that are in the pay of Sinhala chauvinism. Then, there had been former Tamil militant organisations that had done worse. The LTTE seriously erred in several of its dealings with the Muslim community in the past. The expulsion of the Muslims from the North twelve years ago was the worst of these. While the LTTE leadership admitted fault nearly five years ago, it took another five years for it to welcome the Muslims back to their homes in the North. However belated, this positive gesture was welcomed by all those who believed in peace and social justice.

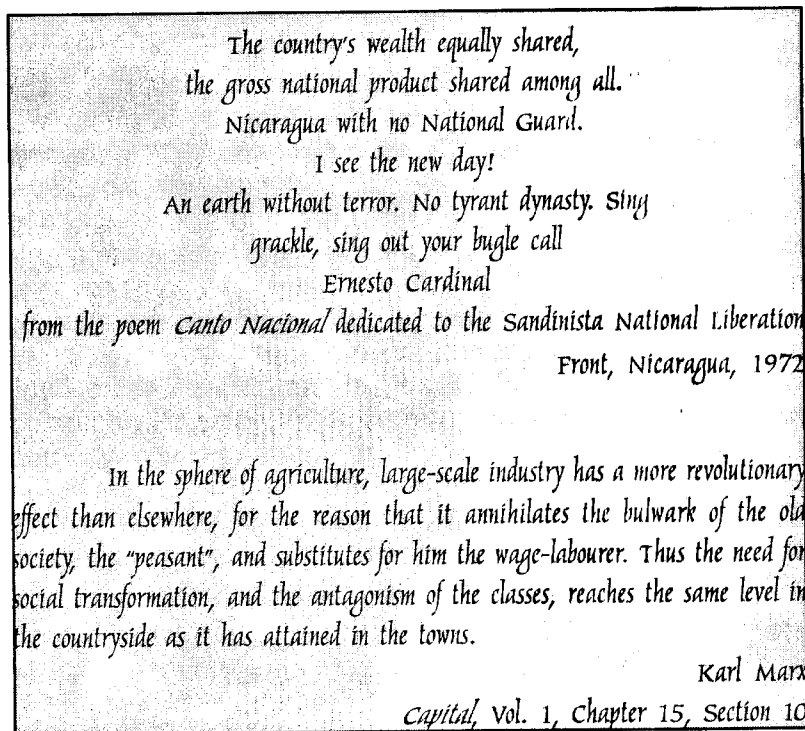
Understandably, suspicion lingered in the minds of many Muslims, but there was hope that the relations between the Tamils and Muslims will return to their earlier warmth. The accord between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress were seen as a positive sign. At the same time, there were forces within the PA and its allies who wanted to wreck the peace process and who saw their opportunity in the deterioration of Tamil-Muslim relations.

The Tamil National Alliance and the local LTTE leadership in the East are blaming certain sections of the Muslims and their leadership for the most deplorable events of Valaichenai and Muthur. The Muslims had suffered had because of these events more than the Tamils. The harm it has done to the just cause of the Tamil nationality is immense. The struggle of the Muslims against national oppression is also affected with certain forces wanting to portray not only the LTTE but also the entire Tamil nationality as the main oppressor of the Muslims. Of what good can any of this to be anyone but the forces of chauvinism and opponents of the present peace process. The contradiction between the Tamils and Muslims is a contradiction among the people and to allow it to deteriorate into a hostile contradiction would be to betray the Tamil and Muslim people and, through damage to the resolution of the national question, betray the Sinhalese too.

Loss of the goodwill of the Muslims will isolate and weaken the struggle of the Tamil people, and the lack of Tamil support will harm the island-wide struggle of the Muslims for their rights as a nationality. To win back the goodwill of the Muslim masses is more valuable than all pacts with political leaders of any hue, and much remains to be repaired politically since the damage of June 2002.

Placing politics in command is the need of the hour, and the LTTE leadership should not allow anything to squander the hard-earned goodwill resulting from their admission of mistake about the Muslims of the North. The LTTE leadership is still in a good position to prevent the recurrence of such events and should act with greater wisdom to ensure that Tamil-Muslim relations are handled with the sensitivity and **mutual** respect it deserves.

Editorial Board, *New Democracy*  
01.08 2002



## Defend and Carry Forward the Climate of Peace!

### Demand a Just Political Solution!

(Address by Comrade S.K. Senthivel  
at the May Day Rally in Jaffna)

Comrades and Friends,

I express my revolutionary salutation and greetings to you on this glorious day of revolutionary struggle of the working class. We are celebrating this May Day in the wake of two important events that have taken place on the national and the international scene. The first concerns the climate of peace which marks a respite from the nineteen years' long war of national conflict in the country, with the North-East at its core. The second concerns the new international situation consequent to the attacks in American cities on the 11th of September last year. It is important to take our stand on both these matters on a Marxist-Leninist basis and with a proletarian class outlook. Let us at the same time firmly resolve to be determined in our decisions, our political stance and their implementation.

Comrades,

The nineteen years' long war has taken a break because of the Memorandum of Understanding made between the government and the LTTE. As a result, guns and cannons have taken a rest. People in the North-East and in the rest of the country have gladly welcomed the fresh breeze of peace. The ceasefire and consequent lifting of embargoes, after a long spell, have



created an opportunity for the people to heave a great sigh of relief. This new environment is most welcome. Thus, our party emphasises that this environment of peace should be protected without ulterior motive by both parties, with the support of other popular political forces.

The environment of peace that has come about on a national scale is one that the country deserves and one that seems to be the last opportunity for peace. A similar good opportunity was there in 1994, but Mrs Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaratunge seriously blundered then in protecting it and carrying it forward with calm. As a result, she destroyed the environment of peace and transformed her posture as an angel of peace to that of a war dancer. An opportunity for peace once lost has returned to us. All of us should be aware that, if we fail to carry it forward properly, the result would be great damage and disaster.

Nobody need consider the Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the LTTE to be 100% perfect. It has positive and negative features. But we should view it from the point of view of the people and grasp the favourable features present in good measure. For our people who have suffered damage, destruction, despair and displacement because of the nineteen years long war, the ceasefire and the lifting of embargoes are highly favourable things. We should welcome these features, which were made possible through mediation by Norway. But one cannot be blindly faithful and careless. Every step should be taken with careful observation.

The move towards negotiations is correct. It should not merely be for short-term solutions. The negotiations should progress towards building up a lasting peace and restoration of normal life for the people. Only negotiations that could make way for full autonomy in the Tamil homeland comprising the merged North-East province could be meaningful.

This is one of the prime demands that our party has made in every May Day declaration over the past eighteen years. We did not stop at declarations, but carried forward struggles in support of the demand in the North-East, among the Sinhalese in the South and in the Hill Country.

The demands that we pressed for are beginning to materialise in the form of a ceasefire, the lifting of embargoes, negotiation with the LTTE, third party facilitation and a move towards a just solution. That is a great victory for the people.

Now, our party remembers the mass movements and struggles that were carried forward unremittingly to make possible the dawn of peace. We have always firmly opposed the acts of racist violence initiated by the UNP in 1977 and the acts of barbarism in 1979, 1981 and 1983.

We have consistently opposed the Prevention of Terrorism Act that was designed to defend chauvinistic oppression and suppress the struggles of the Tamil people. Besides that, we warned of the danger that this very act could be turned against the Sinhalese. It happened as predicted, and in the cruellest possible way amid the Sinhalese. Even today, around 3000 Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people are detained in various prisons across the country under this Act. On this May Day, we demand their release.

We campaigned against the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution of the Country that made it obligatory to take an oath rejecting secession. In the mid-1980s, we founded the Mass Movement for Human Rights and carried out several campaigns and struggles against the above pieces of legislation and demanding the removal of embargo on fuel and other essential goods. Reminding ourselves of these activities today would further affirm the consistently pro-people stand of our party.

We have all along put forward a policy that would enable the exercising of the right to self-determination in our country in a realistic and practical way. We have suggested ways in which

it could be constitutionally guaranteed that the Tamil nationality and other nationalities could exercise their right to self-determination through the setting up of autonomous regions and internal autonomous structures so that the need for secession is averted, and consistently argued for it. It is most welcome that there are signs that the LTTE and the government are starting to think on those lines. However, we know that the outcome will not be complete or up to our expectations, and should remember that the UNP would never arrive at a position where it has fully abandoned its chauvinist stand.

The UNP, while adhering to its chauvinist position, remains a party that stands for the strengthening of the policies of the big bourgeoisie. While the circumstances under which it has been forced to call for peace need to be viewed from our perspective, its moves towards peace should not be hampered. We should act with a clear distinction drawn between the two aspects.

The UNP is displaying its loyalty to imperialism by continuing with its policies of the past towards the open economic policy and privatisation, and accelerating their implementation. As a result, increased prices of goods and charges for services are being imposed on the people. The peasants and the workers have been deceived by the UNP government. Therefore, a ruthless struggle has to be launched against all anti-people practices of the UNP.

### **Comrades,**

While we are clear that the present environment of peace should be defended and carried forward, we also need to carry out a vigorous campaign among the people against the JVP, the Sinhala Urumaya and sections of the People's Alliance who are obsessively chauvinistic and out to wreck the peace process. We need to carry forward a campaign among the Sinhala proletariat and working masses to impress upon them the need for a just solution in order to make the climate of peace last.

At the same time, we should not underestimate the significance of the relentless struggle of the LTTE. Nearly 16,000 of their cadres have laid down their lives, and their sacrifice and dedication is the basis for the present climate of peace.

Thousands of cadres from other movements too have struggled with a thirst for liberation and sacrificed their lives. Nearly 25,000 have sacrificed their lives from all the movements concerned. Besides this, over 70,000 members of the public have been killed. We should always bear in mind that, in the past quarter of a century, nearly a hundred thousand have laid down their lives in the struggle against chauvinistic oppression.

The LTTE is the foremost representative of the Tamil liberation struggle. They have learnt valuable lessons through experience in the past 20 years. Therefore, our party asks the LTTE to distinguish right from wrong on the basis of their past experience, correctly appreciate the current international situation, and carry forward their political line with clarity.

In particular, the US wants to exploit the current climate of peace to establish itself among us to serve its interests of global hegemony. The Palaly air base and the Trincomalee naval base are among its important targets. The Tamil people as well as the people of the entire country should be particularly vigilant about this.

Equally, the forces of Indian hegemony are in the course of advancing their regional interests trying to wreck the present climate of peace. The resolution proposed by Ms Jayalalitha in the Tamilnadu State Assembly calling for the deportation of the leader of the LTTE is just one manifestation of this. One has to be extremely cautious and not submit to the Indian ruling classes.

We should also remember that the forces of conservatism and social reaction, traders and merchants, and other exploiting classes are out to exploit the present climate of peace for their own gain. Forces that accumulated tremendous wealth through war will not be idle during peace. Again, we need to be alive to the fact that forces of caste arrogance still exist, and continue the struggle against them.

It was the workers, peasants, fisher folk and other working people that stood firm on their land and persevered in struggle amid the war during the past 19 years. Any struggle that fails to remember that they are the fundamental force is doomed

to fail. Therefore, let us firmly resolve on this May Day that all of us will unite and advance far with calm, clarity and determination to establish peace and to ensure the success of a political solution.

### **Comrades,**

It is necessary to say a few words about the international situation now. Following the attacks in American cities on the 11th of September last year, America has sought to expand and establish its dominance. It is waging attack in the name of 'combating terrorism'. Its every move is an effort for economic and military domination of the world. America while fantasising that it has put an end to Marxism and socialism has declared that it will put an end to Islamic extremism. This too is an attack on the people of the world.

Thus, the blow delivered to America on September 11 should be seen as a blow at its imperialist world domination. The anger welling up in the West, including America, against globalisation, the World Bank and the IMF and manifesting itself as a surge of mass struggles is a welcome feature. On the American soil where a mass struggle was born to press for the working class demand for an eight-hour working day, today a mighty storm surges in opposition to imperialist globalisation.

Therefore, let us link ourselves with the uprising against American-led imperialism. Let us revive and nurture the revolutionary sentiments of our tradition of communist struggle and forge a link between that tradition and the new generation. The final victory is to the working class and the masses, and not to the reactionaries. Let us firmly resolve on this May Day to hold aloft the glorious banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and advance without fear of sacrifice along the path of revolutionary struggle.

I conclude by expressing once again to all of you revolutionary salutation and greetings on behalf of the Central Committee of the New Democratic Party and my behalf.

Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought!

Glory to the New Democratic Party!

## **The Life and Class Status of Tamil Expatriates in Europe**

**by : Asian (Translation from Tamil, *Puthiya Poomi*, August 2002)**

Most of the Tamils who fled Sri Lanka for Europe and North America during the war for Tamil Eelam have permanently settled in the countries where they sought refuge. They live as minorities in the countries there and, as long as the states consider them as one among several ethnic minorities in their country, they would confront the problems faced by minorities in all countries.

The plight of new refugees is more pathetic than that of other minorities. Since they are not classified as 'minorities', 'aliens' or 'immigrants', they are treated like nonentities. It is only when they gain refugee status or made 'permanent residents' that they would fit into any of the above categories. In the case of these refugees, the opening statement of the constitution that "All are equal before the law" is observed in the breach. Owing to their non-entitlement to legal rights in their fullness or the state interpreting the laws in a way that suits it, these refugees are pushed to the point of abandoning the host country. This goes to show that state oppression in Europe now has begun with the refugees. Why does the native population not object to this? That is because of the divisive tactics used by European governments.

The native population, i.e. the white Europeans, are treated as one group and the multitude of races from other parts of the world are treated as another. The new refugees are not included in either and treated as some kind of 'untouchables'. The Euro-centric states are thus implementing their programme of establishing a modern European 'caste system' to keep the immigrant population eternally under their domination. Any question on the subject addressed to the state receives the evasive reply that the people of the country are that way and the state can do little about it. Nearly 50 years ago, relatively light skinned Jews and white races from other parts of Europe comprised the immigrant population. Since their linguistic and cultural assimilation into the country of domicile, they have been acknowledged as natives. Of those who immigrated after the Second World War, the Asians and Africans in particular had readily distinguishable skin colour, language, religion and culture and were classified as aliens, and that situation continues to this day. This is further reinforced by the reference in common language to African and South Asian immigrants as 'blacks'. This social structuring also facilitates the racist politics of the neo-nazis. This article does not seek to explore that issue.

All Lankan Tamils who arrived in Europe had secured status as refugee or permanent resident, permission for employment or some such authorisation, or permission to reunite with family. This applies to immigrants of other ethnic groups too. As indicated earlier, Lankan Tamils too fall within the category of foreign settlers. Thus, all the ethnic groups collectively referred to as ethnic minorities face similar problems. If one were to elaborate on this, all of them do lowly jobs that local whites are unwilling to do, and the employers are able to pay them low wages. Their children are sent to what are called 'schools for the blacks' that are low in standard and attended by children from low-income families. The foregoing shows that the Tamil émigré population has found itself to be within the section of the working class that is considered socially low and viewed with contempt. 'Globalisation' is among reasons why the Tamil émigré

population arrived in Europe. Before turning to that, let us examine how the modern class system came into being. That could explain the current repatriation of Tamil refugees.

When the Second World War ended in 1945, it left Europe in ruin. The highest priority of European states was rebuilding countries out of rubble. As war had taken away many millions of lives, there was dearth of manpower. The problem of financial resources was, however, less since America granted billions of dollars as financial aid under the Marshall Plan, which led to the emergence of the IMF.

The problem faced by the European countries that received the funds was to find the work-force to carry out reconstruction. Agreements were made with Turkey and Morocco to secure cheap labour. Thus, contract labour from Turkey and Morocco arrived by the tens of thousands. They carried out the heavy tasks of building and road construction and jobs such as cleaning. Such jobs were considered too hard or demeaning for the native population, and that situation continues to this day.

The economies of Europe flourished owing to contract labour. In the decades that followed, the need increased for human resources to secure economic development. Those who sought these resources found them in the refugees who came from the Third World.

Let us examine briefly why, when and how the scheme to welcome and accommodate refugees came into being. The end of the Second World War saw Europe polarised between capitalist states in the west and socialist states in the east. West European capitalist countries called themselves "free democracies" and claimed that the East European countries were "dictatorships lacking in freedom". The scheme to welcome and accommodate refugees came out of the claim that people who were "oppressed and denied freedom" in the "socialist dictatorships" should be allowed refuge in Western Europe and to breathe the air of freedom. As expected, tens of thousands left Eastern Europe to find asylum and were given all the



necessary facilities. The system of granting asylum was also used as part of their political propaganda.

Granting asylum only to refugees from socialist countries was an unwritten rule. It was feared that spelling it out openly would lead to charges of discrimination. It was under such conditions that refugees began to turn up, rather unexpectedly, from Third World countries as well. Many arrived from former colonies to the countries of the former colonial masters, as political and economic problems in the post-colonial era had led to civil war in many former colonies. Although the former colonial masters knew well that people from their former colonies had a right to seek asylum in the land of their former masters, they concealed that truth and instead portrayed the issue as a "refugee problem". The politics of the "refugee problem" persists.

Although these refugees are unwanted guests in the host country, West European states realised that the "multi-ethnic" refugees could be used for their economic purposes. As the demand for labour increased, the shortages were met by offering employment to the refugees as cleaners and gardeners. The salient difference from the earlier situation was that, with contract labour, the employer bore the cost of travel of the employee while the "new labour force" came at its own expense. The following example alone would suffice to appreciate that the employer allows refugees to work only out of self-interest. Until recently, the Netherlands forbade refugees pending grant of asylum to seek employment. Two years ago, there was a severe shortage of labour in flower gardens and orchards. The owners appealed to the government to allow the refugees to work for them. The government accepted the plea and allowed refugees to work for three months in a year (the approximate duration of the fruit-picking season).

Hearing of comforts and employment opportunities in European countries would persuade waves of new refugees to migrate to Europe. This is especially so since refugees come from the poorer countries. Under such conditions, it may prove

impossible to arrest the "invasion by refugees". The European states are ready for that eventuality. This could be illustrated with an example from Switzerland. Until 1990, no refugee who entered Switzerland was repatriated, while no inquiry was conducted or decision taken about asylum. Shock awaited those who admired the "generosity" of the Swiss government. Refugees arriving after 1900 were promptly subject to inquiries and deported. Once this shock treatment paid dividends, the number seeking asylum in Switzerland declined sharply. Why was this sudden change in policy? Refugees were exploited lawfully by being employed for low wages in restaurants across Switzerland. However, the economic slowdown that set in by the late 1980's led to increased unemployment rate and to redundancies. Swiss officials were reluctant to import more labour with Switzerland in the middle of a recession. Refugees who entered Switzerland unaware of this reality fell victim to the change in policy.

West European countries have another problem besides the above. Refugees granted asylum would settle permanently in the host country. Their numbers would increase with time and, if that trend continued, Europe would comprise multi-ethnic countries. Therefore, they adopted a wicked approach: the neo-nazis were spurred into action. The German state is ignored the growth of nazi terror in Germany. While the problem today comprises an occasional incident here and there, in a future situation where the economy takes a turn for the worse, nazi terror will be unleashed with full force on all aliens. Then, the Tamil émigré population will recognize the class to which they belong.

Why is there no class-consciousness among Tamils émigrés yet? We see an upsurge in ethno-linguistic sentiments the world over. It is natural for people who speak the same language, share one culture, and belong to the same nationality to get together. Tamils are no exception. However, many do not realise that sentiments about language and nationality came about only within the last 200 years or so. Earlier, religious sentiments dominated. Nationalism is mostly language-based.

Cultural organisations and the media play a big role in advancing language and nationalism. However, the media do not go beyond that. The main aim of cultural organisations and the media is to make money: they do not act out of social concern. That is precisely why they do not devote a-hundredth of the time that they allocate for discussing cinema to deal with the problems of refugees. When people are intoxicated with such tripe, they do not care what problems await them. The pathetic situation in which they rely heavily on these media for information, for lack of knowledge of a European language and reliance on Tamil only, makes them ignorant of European politics. Living like little islands in the ocean, they remain unaware of what is happening around them. This is why Tamil émigrés do not know what their class is.

The children who grow up in these countries, however, have some awareness of their class. Parents who seek to preserve the caste structure even in exile face ridicule from their offspring. Tomorrow the children would talk about class. Besides, Tamils who are subjected to racism will be compelled to seek the support of the progressive forces of Europe. There are signs that such forces that are re-emerging slowly now will become a major political force tomorrow. It is to this that some refer as the "reserve force of the revolution to come". People do not get hold of politics, but politics gets hold of people.

Poverty will be the force propelling Tamil émigrés towards politics. In answer to those who ask, "Where is poverty in Europe?" I can give the following illustration: European governments count as poor the unemployed and those earning very low wages. Such people suffer because of the rising cost of living. The fact that thousands go to shops dealing in used goods is a sign of poverty. Unlike what some believe, the possession of a refrigerator, a car or a television is not a sign of affluence or social status. Consumerist economic culture persuades the population that everyone needs to own such goods. To ensure that the goods are purchased, credit facilities are offered, enabling payment over a long period so that every ordinary citizen could afford them. Many are entrapped by this illusory web to end up as debtors for

life. Some have been doomed to work for the money-lending banks until they die. It is no secret that many Tamil émigrés too have become slaves to consumer culture.

Globalisation has created "new poor" not only in poor countries but also in affluent countries. Several German companies have shut their German factories down because of the high cost of production and set up factories in neighbouring Poland to reduce cost of production with cheaper labour. As a result, thousands of German workers have lost their jobs. The unemployed, in course of time, become unable to meet their living expenses and impoverished. The fury of such affected innocent people is turned against foreign workers and refugees by the neo-nazis. It is not only the neo-nazis but also the governments that gain from this.

The neo-nazis have the satisfaction of gaining converts to their side. The government has the satisfaction of driving a wedge between the native and immigrant workers. The (uncertain) future of the Tamil émigrés depends on the development of this situation. If people continue to be divided on an ethnic basis, it will again lead to fascist killings. If the European workers remain firm without being distracted by the fascists, the immigrant workers will join hands with them in struggle.

Already, class distinction in Europe is also racial distinction. I have explained at the start how this came into being. To summarise, the low social class of the poor European workers before the Second World War was elevated to that of a middle class after the war. Government grants transformed poor peasants into farm owners. Even the uneducated were offered jobs with good wages. To fill the vacuum created by this, workers were invited from abroad. This was how class distinction became racial distinction. The state is trying in several ways to preserve this status quo. One such device used by the state is the "Black/White" school system. Parents with high income (predominantly white Europeans) send their children to schools of high standard that levy large sums as fees. Such schools are called 'White

Schools". Parents with low income (predominantly immigrant workers of various ethnic groups) are compelled to send their children to state schools. These are called "Black Schools". In Europe, at a time when almost everything but the state is being privatised, such divisions are bound to increase.

There has been "class harmony" in Europe for the past 50 years, i.e. ways have been found to prevent class contradictions from transforming into class conflict and for the different classes to coexist peacefully. This is the aim of the "welfare state" too. The state of European Union to come is, nevertheless, set to deprive the people of their rights one after the other. Class contradictions become sharper when people become impoverished. As a result, the working class, comprising immigrant workers mainly, will be acutely affected. Under those conditions, no one can prevent the Tamil people from being propelled into working class politics.

The Palestinian struggle has always been about freedom and democracy; it is a secular, and for a long time—indeed up to the Gulf War—it was fairly democratic. By signing the Oslo Declaration, Arafat rescued himself, throwing himself and his unconsulted people into an alliance with Israel but with possible results in further dislocations, disappointments, and conflict that bode poorly for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Edward W. Said

in his introduction to *The Politics of Dispossession*, 1995

The modern history of the postcolonial world is disfigured with one-party tyrannies, rapacious oligarchies, economic ruin, the distortion of society caused by Western "investments" and large-scale pauperisation through famine, civil war, outright robbery. Any more than religious fundamentalism, mere nationalism is not and can never be "the answer" to the problems of the new secular states.

Edward W. Said

in his introduction to *The Politics of Dispossession*, 1995

[Comrade S.K. Senthivel was invited to Paris to address the K. Daniel Commemorative Symposium organised by Uyirizhal-Exil, Assaie Literary Movement for Social Change, Europe and East Co-ordination Centre (CDC) and the Europe Branch of the Thesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai and held on 12.5.2002. We give below a summary of the address.]

## The Marxist-Leninist Approach to Resolving Contradictions

(Translated from a summary of the address by Comrade S.K. Senthivel at the Comrade K. Daniel Commemorative Symposium, 2002)

### The Marxist-Leninist approach and method of struggle

To identify social contradictions on the basis of the social structure, to analyse the different modes of oppression, to struggle against the main mode of oppression while uniting with people struggling against other modes of oppression, to link their struggles with the main struggle, and to determine who the enemy is and who the friend is, so as to carry the struggle towards final victory, comprise the underlying policy and tactic of any struggle. That is also the Marxist-Leninist approach.

It was on the above basis that mass struggles were launched under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninists in the early 1960's against caste oppression, which is the manifestation of a sharp contradiction among the Tamil people, and carried forward along the revolutionary path. The basis for the rise and

advance of those struggles was the people referred to as those of the depressed castes who comprised the fundamental forces of class struggle and the section of the population who faced caste oppression. They were the main fighting force. The struggles did not merely limit themselves to the narrow confines of equality. They were also waged against the caste system that was jealously guarded and defended as the two millennia old burden of tradition and a machinery of oppression.

The struggles made the elite and the dominant forces among the Tamils tremble, and rendered shaky the position of those who exercised monopoly over the political affairs of the Tamils. At the opposite pole to this was the school of thought that deflected the younger generation that would have advanced along the path of progressive thinking on the national question. It persuaded the youth to mouth slogans of extreme nationalism and think in terms of support from Israel, US and India. The net consequence of this is the negative experiences on the struggle of the Tamil people, which deserves to be dealt with separately and in detail.

### **The legacy of the caste system: India and Lank**

The caste system prevalent in India, Lanka and other South Asian countries is a two millennia old burdensome legacy and a cruel system of oppression. Recent studies indicate that the basis for the caste structure preceded Aryan-Dravidian interaction and has its roots in early tribal societies. The caste system that was defended by the interests of the economically dominant classes and state power has been protected to this day through a system of endogamous marriage.

A caste system that initially defined one's caste by one's profession and established itself as a system of rights and responsibilities assigned to each caste group evolved into and survived as a system that defined one's caste by one's birth. The ideological tradition that supports its survival is interwoven with the lives of each member of society. It is thus necessary to view

the caste system historically and not superficially. It has to be identified with social contradictions. Only then will it be possible to link caste oppression with other forms of oppression.

Whereas in India, it was Brahminism that was the standard-bearer and defender of the caste system and the practice of untouchability, in Lanka, Saiva-Vellaala domination upheld and defended the caste system and untouchability. This was further consolidated by the dominant land owning classes among the Tamils. The position of this elite was reinforced by the services and contributions of Aarumuga Naavalur. Not long after, the Saiva-Vellaala elite was joined by the upper crust of the Vellaala Christians. While this unique situation is distinct from that obtaining in India, the Saiva and Christian Vellaala elitism played the principal role in marginalizing the members of the depressed castes in the fields of politics, economy, culture and education, and exercising caste oppression over them.

### **Struggles against caste oppression**

Struggles in the modern era against the caste system date back to the 1920s and have taken a variety of forms. Of these struggles, the firm position taken by the Jaffna Youth Congress against untouchability was remarkable. At the same time, a few educated and socially conscious Christian members of the depressed castes too had spoken out and worked against the caste system.

The next stage of the struggle that opened in the early 1940s saw the founding of the Sirupaanmaith Thamizhar Mahaasabai (Society of Minority Tamils), which united the people of depressed castes. This organisation functioned with the support of leftists, members of the communist movement in particular, and carried out campaigns within a limited scope. The campaigns of the Mahaasabai against the caste system and untouchability in the 1940s and 50s initiated awareness among the people subject to caste oppression. The Mahaasabai, nevertheless, was dominated by a reformist parliamentary approach.



Since the split in the Communist movement since 1963 along the lines of the parliamentary road and the revolutionary road to socialism, however, the struggle against caste oppression entered a new phase. Marxist-Leninists mobilised along the revolutionary road under the leadership of Comrade N. Sanmugathan, and the Communist Party of the Marxist-Leninists took upon itself the task of carrying out a struggle against the caste system. The situation where the issues were seen as 'their problems' and 'their struggles' was radically transformed when the Communist Party of Marxist-Leninists, which was the vanguard of the oppressed people, decided to take responsibility for and carry forward the struggle. The consequent historical turning point occurred when the uprising of 21st October 1966 was launched under the red banner proclaiming, "Let the caste system be destroyed! Let egalitarian justice rise high!" On that basis, mass campaigns advanced along the revolutionary path to launch attack on the bastions of caste domination.

Another important aspect of the struggles of 1966-72 was the Mass Movement for the Elimination of Untouchability that was set up to carry forward the mass struggles. This organisation was unlike the caste-based organisations of earlier times. It is remarkable that this organisation broadly united the progressive and democratic forces that were opposed to the caste system and untouchability. The Communist Party of Marxist-Leninists provided leadership and guidance to the Mass Movement.

The rights that were denied for centuries to the people of the depressed castes were won through the struggles against the caste system and untouchability. The social status of a people that comprised a third of the Tamil population was established beyond the control of caste domination. Awakening and new thinking started to take hold of their economic, social, cultural and educational conditions. These struggles led to the emergence of a new stand, which proclaimed that, "We are equal citizens of this country and shall not allow us to be subjugated ever again"

### **Implications for the struggle against national oppression**

These struggles also led to changes in the approach to the national question that got aggravated with time. The method of armed struggle used in the mass struggles led to new thinking among the Tamil youth. It made them wonder why, if the people subject to caste oppression could win their rights through struggle, the Tamils, the youth in particular, could not struggle against national oppression to secure their rights, and made them act on those lines.

Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism, rather than seek a political solution to this problem, unleashed armed oppression upon the Tamils. The state used the armed forces to go on a murderous rampage to oppress and dominate the Tamils. Under these conditions, the armed struggle of the Tamil youth developed along nationalistic lines. Several youth organisations came forward to take up arms. Their ideology and policies were, however, clouded by narrow nationalism, and they were tempted to join these organisation by romanticising the carrying of weapons and emphasising the need to oppose the armed forces of the state. The armed struggle of the Tamils advanced without any long-term view of social liberation. Thus, there is a need to carefully review it and subject it to criticism and self-criticism. It will only then be possible to get the next phase of the struggle for self-determination on the right track.

### **National oppression overshadows caste oppression**

The upsurge of the nationalist Tamil youth against chauvinism meant that the struggle against the caste system was put on hold after the success in securing some of the basic rights of the people of depressed castes. National oppression became the dominant contradiction. Since it was the struggle against the caste system that paved the way for the Tamils to unite as a nationality, it is important to ask ourselves to what extent the national struggle has contributed in the past twenty years to eliminate caste ideology from amidst the Tamils or to weaken it. Even today, there are temples here and there in various

regions, including the Vadamaraatchi region of the Jaffna peninsula that deny entry to people on the basis of caste. Clashes have taken place because of caste fanaticism. Those who dominated society based on caste seek to exploit the present climate of peace by using their financial might and control through land ownership to continue to oppress the people of depressed castes. Acts based on caste domination are common not only in schools but even in the University of Jaffna.

Besides this, the caste system is also protected and practised among the Tamil émigré population. While there are exceptions, caste ideology seems to represent the main trend. Inquiry into caste origins and endogamous matrimony seem to be the fundamental factors favouring its continuation. Thus, emigration has not ended the caste system. In the same way, the economic advancement of the émigré population supposed to belong to the depressed castes did not lead to the disappearance of the caste system. It is true that they have elevated their class status a little by economic advancement, but little else has been achieved with respect to caste. Some indulge in building temples and erecting towers and boundary walls for the temples to trumpet their social status. At the same time, the people who have for long been at the lowest level as a caste and as a class continue their meagre existence in shacks without the most basic of facilities. The chauvinistic war has pushed down their living conditions a few steps further.

Another matter should be mentioned at this point. The dominant forces among the Tamil people demanded Tamil Eelam proclaiming "What is improper about those who once ruled wanting to rule again?" but those who staked a claim for Tamil Eelam, their offspring and their kith and kin have gone off in all directions. It is the children of the ordinary workers, peasants and members of the depressed castes who are fighting against the chauvinists in the battlefield. The martyrs and those who bore the scars of sacrifice to become crippled are the youth of ordinary families.

## **From war to ceasefire to lasting peace?**

It is said that, over the past two decades, 16,700 fighters belonging to the LTTE have been martyred. Nearly another 10,000 who set out to struggle for liberation have been killed by the armed forces, by bitter internecine rivalry and by internal contradictions within the different movements. I.e., over 25,000 lives have been lost under the class of militants. It is estimated that around 75,000 civilians in the North-East have been killed. Thus a hundred thousand Tamils have been killed during the liberation struggle, property worth many millions has been destroyed, and an estimated one million Tamils have been displaced within the country or are living in exile as refugees.

The memorandum of understanding between the government and the LTTE has come about under these conditions and there is a ceasefire in place. This is most welcome. However, let us not forget that the UNP is the party loyal to big capital, chauvinism and imperialism. There is still uncertainty as to whether what is to be put in place is an interim council or a lasting solution. The internal and external situations have compelled both parties to arrive at a memorandum of understanding. Nevertheless, the ceasefire and the lifting of various restrictions have offered the people a sense of relief.

At the same time, one cannot fail to notice that America and India have stepped into the arena to advance their global and regional interests, respectively. Therefore, our party has been emphasising the need to preserve the climate of peace and the establishment of autonomy in the traditional homeland of the Tamils in the merged North-East, and based on the principle of self-determination. What form the political, economic and social solutions for the four modes of oppression concerning class, nationality, caste and gender would assume is the question that follows from there. What are the policies and ideological positions for dealing with these issues? These are matters for all of us to ponder.

## Contribution of comrade Daniel

It is important to say a few words about the late comrade Daniel in this forum held in his honour. Comrade Daniel was an important activist of the communist movement and a fighter against the caste system. When I was a student in the 1960's, he published a booklet by him entitled "Let us smash the fetters of slavery". That booklet demonstrated the vehemence with which he wanted a struggle against caste oppression.

To his last breath, comrade Daniel identified himself as a communist rather than a *dalitist*. There are, however, criticisms about his position and about his writings. However, the question of the standards that should be used to assess one's social contributions, position in struggle and writings is of prime importance. We view the contributions of comrade Daniel as 70 parts positive and 30 parts negative. This assessment is based on Marxist-Leninist standards. What concerns us are his contribution to the struggles against caste oppression and untouchability.

Comrade Daniel was from a rural family that was kept down by caste and class oppression. As a result, he instinctively possessed strong feelings of hostility towards oppression and militant tendencies. If comrade Daniel, who left school after primary education, could emerge as an excellent mass orator, a popular writer and fighter in the caste-ridden Jaffna environment, one cannot deny that it was the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Communist Party that provided the basis for it. At the same time, most of the efforts of comrade Daniel were exerted through the communist movement in the campaign against the caste system and untouchability. Thus, today, and especially in the context of life in exile, there is meaning and necessity in remembering comrade Daniel.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and good wishes to the four organisations and their office bearers for inviting me and enabling me to participate in this full-day symposium.

## Hindutva Fanaticism and the Struggle for Sanity

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(An updated translation of an unsigned article from Puthiya Poomi, May 2002)

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### Transforming religion into an anti-human force

It is said that all religions preach love, but wars have been waged in the name of every religion, and riots and killings have been occurred in the name of religion. The fact that nearly all the charges laid against one religion by followers of another apply in one way or another to every religion is seldom acknowledged by those who point an accusing finger at practitioners of another religion.

Karl Marx's comment that "Religion was the opium of the masses" was not meant in the sense that religion was a harmful thing in a way similar to narcotic substances. He saw religion as a refuge from the agony of life and an escapist shelter from painful reality. In his time, opium was not contraband, and had medicinal applications. Today, unlike in the way Marx meant, religion is being consciously transformed into an evil narcotic substance to intoxicate and enslave people and make man hate man.

We know that throughout history there have been conflicts and wars, not only between religions but also between factions within a religion. However, the religious fanaticism that we witness today, is far less motivated by the desire to win people over to the 'correct path'. On the contrary, it is a device to persuade people to apply their religious identity to the elimination of people of other faiths. In Northern Ireland, the Catholic who hardly goes to church and the Protestant who never attends church destroyed each other in the name of religion. When Yugoslavia was dismembered, the bulk of the population did not have religious faith. Nevertheless, two Christian communities and a Muslim community, which had much in common, embarked on a genocidal war against each other.

## Forces behind fanaticism

It is true that there is Islamic fundamentalism. However, it was 'Christian' America that induced, supported and trained Islamic fanatics in acts of violence and terror. They were used by America, with the support of Saudi Arabia, in subversive activities against the Soviet Union and China. Today America is reaping what it sowed.

Christian fundamentalism has deeper roots, and it has maintained close links with the right wing political establishment of America. Although not much is spoken on the subject, it is well known that Christian fundamentalists are responsible for a number of acts of violence in America and abroad, ranging from mass suicide to mass killings such as the bombing in Ohio a few years ago.

Hinduism is said to be a pacifist religion, but it has been within the framework of Hinduism that the practice of untouchability existed. Although there are doubts as to whether Hinduism is a religion, some are actively at work to build a common Hindu identity. This, however, is unlike the progressive identity that men of humane vision like Vivekaananda tried to build in colonial India.

The Hindutva gang emphasises a new identity that rejects outright the progressive stand of unity of all mankind, gender equality, elimination of the caste system and the treatment of all religions alike. What is its motive? It is none other than imposing a common identity on the whole of India.

How does it seek to address the reality that India comprises a multitude of nations, nationalities, indigenous tribes and religions? How does it propose to deal with the system of caste hierarchy?

## The Hindutva view of the world

The dominant social classes in India enjoy domination over other, based on caste as well as wealth. They are not willing

to part with privilege and power, and need the religious identity of Hinduism to continue in power.

Hinduism holds that the Brahmins are high born and the others low born. Among the others, the Shudras, the caste group comprising manual workers, are placed lowest. Besides that, there is a section of the population comprising nearly a quarter of the Indian population that is too low to be placed within the Hindu hierarchical order. They are referred to as the Panchama, meaning fifth group, who are considered lower than the lowliest Shudra and treated with contempt. Hindutva endorses this view and seeks to prolong its existence.

The group of religions called Hinduism has nothing in common by way of a concept of god, prescribed practices, rituals, faith or even a moral code. What has thus far been known as Hindu is an identity referring to a historical region and not one based on philosophy or ideology. Now, there is concerted effort to impose the Bhagavad Gita as a common religious text for Hindus. On the one hand, the systems of worship of the depressed communities are denounced as superstition and the people are under pressure to accept the Brahminist system of worship. On the other hand, all manner of superstition among the high castes are encouraged as means of exploring the supernatural.

## The politics of Hindutva

Hindutva is not a ploy that that was created by the BJP for mere electoral advantage. Its roots run deep. Hatred towards other religions has been systematically cultivated for over a century. The Hindu Mahaa Sabha and the Jan Sangh of the past were organisations that rejected Hindu-Muslim unity. Their goal was Hindu, in reality Brahmin, domination. Then as much as now, in every organisation that preaches Hindutva, Brahmins are in control. Hindutva was designed to ensure that the Brahmin elite that comprises a few percent of the population could forever lord it over the rest of the society.



Religion proved to be a powerful tool in securing Brahminist domination. Hindutva needed the Hindu-Muslim conflict to divert the attention of the oppressed people and prevent them from uniting as landless peasants, workers or people deprived of their basic rights.

India needed Hindu-Muslim unity in its campaign for independence from British Colonial rule. That was why the Indian National Congress under the leadership of M.K. Gandhi sought Hindu-Muslim unity. It even went to the point of conceding that caste oppression was a bad thing. However, its loyalty to the elite classes ensured that it did not go much beyond a nominal campaign against untouchability. That was why Ambedhkar and E.V. Raamaswami (Periyar) rejected Gandhi and deserted the Congress.

It was because the roots of Hindutva ran through the Congress establishment that the Congress, especially since the death of the agnostic Nehru, readily yielded to the politics of religion. The need to please the majority in parliamentary politics made such compromises essential.

Once a political party makes a deal with religious or nationalistic fanaticism, the forces of fanaticism begin to dominate. Each of these forces has wreaked havoc to different degrees in Indian politics in various parts of India. The list of major acts of violence resulting from caste conflicts, disputes based on language and nationality, and communal violence in the name of religion is long and ever growing. Today, however, a form of politics with Hindutva at its centre and portrays Muslims and to a lesser extent Christians as the enemy is the biggest social evil in India.

### **The rise of Hindu fascist violence**

This is the tenth year since the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. For over two months, anti-Muslim violence raged unabated in Gujarat. Even now, serious incidents of violence are reported from different parts of, mostly urban, Gujarat. Not only did the BJP government of Narendra Modi in

that state fail to control the violence, but also encouraged it. The central government has been reluctant to act on this matter, and it got away with its irresponsible approach owing to the lack of will of its 'secular' partners, especially the DMK, MDMK, and Teugu Desam, to challenge the BJP on this matter. The Congress and some of the left parties demonstrated their inherent weakness that arose from their stakes in electoral politics by asking for the removal of Narendra Modi rather than the dismissal of the state government.

Doubts were expressed by some observers soon after the February 2002 incident of arson in Godhra, where a train carrying Hindu volunteers returning from Ayodhya was set alight, led to the wave of violence against the Muslims in Gujarat, about the chances of the arsonists being Muslims. The major political parties did not consider the possibility that it could have been a Hindutva conspiracy to sacrifice a few women and children as moral justification for a well-planned anti-Muslim pogrom. In fact, there are plenty of Nazi and other precedents for staging acts of criminal violence to justify subsequent repression by their forces.

Forensic inquiry into the fire has indicated that the fire was started within the train. It also ruled out an accident. This leads to the possibility that it was a Hindutva conspiracy. In either event, the Muslims are innocent, but the acts of violence have gone too far for the truth to be of any good in restoring good communal relations.

It is true that the BJP government faces embarrassment internationally because of the violence in Gujarat. It is true that the 'secular' image of India is further tarnished. However, the BJP is hoping to make some capital out of the Hindu-Muslim conflict. It plans to hold fresh elections in Gujarat state with the BJP government in charge of the state. Portrayal of the BJP as the 'true defender' of the Hindus is likely to work in an emotionally charged atmosphere than when people have time to appreciate what really happened. The forces of Hindutva are not wasting time in whipping up anti-Muslim feeling and even the local

Gujaraati media is party to the campaign. Their style of work is populist and chauvinistic, and in the style of European fascism three-quarters of a century ago.

## Looking to the future

If the criminal violence in Gujaraat in the name of Hindutva continues, it would lead to communal violence across the whole of India, and that is not for the benefit of any other than a handful of mischief-makers. Therefore, this madness should be halted now. Defeating the BJP or the Shiva Senaa at the polls is not the answer. Organisations such as the Bajrang Dhal, Raashtrya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) have grown to the point that nothing will be achieved by imposing a ban on any of them.

The issue cannot be defined in terms of the dispute over the building the Ram temple at the site of the Baabri Masjid or the violence in Gujaraat. These are symptoms of a bigger ill, like blisters on the skin caused by blood poisoning. Treating the symptoms is often needed, but not a substitute for curing the illness, in this instance, Hindutva fascism. The entire society needs to be healed. Immediately, it is necessary to carry the campaign against the ideologies of Hindutva and caste hegemony to the masses through every feasible form of mass struggle.

History tells us that no political party steeped in parliamentary politics has approached, on the basis of social justice, the resolution of contradictions among the people. There are plenty of instances in the political history of Sri Lanka to illustrate this point. That is why it is necessary to clearly identify and thoroughly expose the class origin and class interests of those who incite hatred in the name of caste, religion and nationality and to carry out relentless mass struggles against them. In India, only the Marxist-Leninists are ideologically equipped to deal with the issue. Thus, it is urgent and essential that the Marxist-Leninist forces unite and join hands with other progressive forces in the struggle against Hindutva fascism.

The struggle against any form of fascism cannot be in isolation and without mobilising the masses. Unity of all forces that can be united is essential to any just struggle. It is also important that the struggle against Hindutva fascism should be made an integral component of every just struggle, whether it be a trade union struggle, the struggle of agricultural workers, struggle against caste oppression, environmental protection, women's rights or national liberation.

Not only the potential for this course of action but also the mass support base exists in India. Without the progressive forces acting properly and promptly, screaming about India falling victim to Hindutva fascism will bear no fruit. Thus, the immediate agenda should be the building up under proletarian leadership an anti-fascist united front. This is the biggest challenge facing the Indian proletariat today and the anti-fascist struggle will be the foundry in which the arms that ensure the victory of the proletariat in India would be forged.

[Postscript: After the article was re-rendered in English, L.K. Advaani, the man faulted by a judicial inquiry into the demolition of the Baabri Masjid, has been elevated to the re-created post of Deputy Prime Minister of India. Since then, Narendra Modi has stepped down as Chief Minister of Gujaraat, but the BJP will stay in power until elections are held next year.]

One consistent [US] tactic is to confuse lies among the Arabs, thus making the states with sharply different constitutions, populations, economies, and avowed foreign policies (Israel, right-wing Arab states) unwittingly similar in positions they adopt. Any force challenging these regimes, either externally or internally, is labelled radical, and an unspoken alliance develops, for economic and class balances are deeply threatened by change.

Edward W. Said  
*US Policy and Conflict of Powers in the Middle East, 1973*  
reproduced in *The Politics of Disgression, 1995*

Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the sky? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, class struggle and scientific experiment.

Mao Zedong  
*Where do Correct Ideas Come From? May 1963*

# The NDP Diary

(Important party statements and other documents in recent months)

25 02 2002

## **Press release**

Comrade S.K Senthivel, in his statement following the meeting of the Politburo of the New Democratic Party, said that 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 statement further added:

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 a 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 is 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 slip every chance it had to achieve an end to the war and initiate negotiations, 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.

S.K. Senthivel  
General Secretary, New Democratic Party

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18-03-2002

**PRESS RELEASE**

The General Secretary of the New Democratic Party, S.K. Senthivel issued the following statement on behalf of the Central Committee of the Party:

The recent statements and actions of the US ambassador, Ashley Wills indicate that the US has decided to crush and eliminate the demand and the struggle of the Tamil nationality for autonomy, based on the principle of self-determination, and that it is seeking to transform Sri Lanka into a base for establishing US presence in the South Asian region. The recent visit of the US Deputy Minister of State, Christina Rocca and her visit to Jaffna, accompanied by the US Naval Commander did not happen by chance. They imply a grave threat not only to the Tamil people who have sacrificed thousands of lives and shed much blood in their struggle for self-determination but also to the sovereignty, independence and integrity of the whole country. It is the duty of all far-sighted and sincere political forces to recognize and oppose this plan of the US for hegemonic infiltration. The New Democratic Party strongly condemns the statements made and views expressed by the US ambassador in a domineering manner.

The statement further added that the memorandum of understanding has come into effect because of third party facilitation by Norway. As a result, the war has ceased and several constructive measures have been undertaken. A climate has been created in which the LTTE and the government could initiate talks. However, the US has chosen to intervene with its uncalled for statements and views and to conduct itself in a way that makes the US appear to be the agent of peace.

It is common knowledge that it was the US that, during the past twenty years, lent all manner of assistance and cooperation, first to the UNP government and then to the PA government, to intensify the war. Besides that, the US acted most indifferently at a stage when, under the previous government, the parties in conflict were agreeable to peace efforts by Norway.

Today, the US is seeking to overwhelm Norway and to subdue the Tamil people, their struggle and the LTTE with the threat to wield its big stick.

The new attitude of the US towards our national question is a serious threat not only to the Tamil people, the LTTE and Sri Lanka but also to India. The US, by posing as the angel of peace, is trying to fulfill its hegemonic intentions, which it could not earlier through war. Thus, our party emphasizes that it is essential that the LTTE, the government and the people of all nationalities act with calm and far-sight to avoid falling into the conspiratorial trap set up by the US and carry forward the negotiations to achieve peace through a lasting political solution.

S.K. Senthivel  
General Secretary, New Democratic Party

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## **Party leaflet on the MoU**

**Let us Demand a Political Solution and Peace!**

**Let us Oppose American Meddling!**

**The People Should Reject the Enemies of Peace!**

- \* The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Government Sri Lanka and the LTTE should be welcomed. The removal of restrictions and controls and the opening of land routes are fair actions that give relief and hope to the entire people of the country, especially the people of the North-East.
- \* Both sides should respect this agreement and the relevant procedures to make the ceasefire permanent. Both sides should not for any reason retreat from the agreement, break it or give in to pressure, and progress with firmness.
- \* The People's Alliance and the President should not become partners in the moves to disrupt last opportunity for peace and the new climate of peace. They should abandon the revengeful approach that they had adopted towards efforts to resolve the national question and carry forward their political work with far sight. The PA should realise that the country as well as the people of the different nationalities expect this of them and co-operate in the peace process.
- \* The Sinhala people should criticise and reject the JVP, the Sihala Urumaya and other forces of chauvinism with ulterior motives that act to disrupt and wreck the MoU and the ceasefire and the peace negotiations that follow from it and the various protests organised by these forces.
- \* The government and the LTTE should not procrastinate but start forthwith the negotiations for a political solution. Both sides should appreciate the political and economic realities that have come about as a consequence of the of the prevailing national and international conditions and should progress towards a just solution in the spirit of give and take and mutual understanding.
- \* The government should stop insisting on a unitary form of government as it had done in the past and come forward to accept a united autonomous North-East region based on the principle of self-determination. At the same time, the LTTE

should act in the spirit of give and take, respect democratic freedom, human rights and dissenting views, and act to unite with all democratic and progressive forces. They should also acknowledge and affirm the fundamental democratic rights of the Singhalese who live in the North-East. It is only through such an approach that the fruits of past struggles characterised by dedication and sacrifice will materialise in the form of a just solution.

- \* A solution thus achieved should embody essential features that ensure the preservation and protection of the identity and the distinctness of the Muslims of the North-East. Solutions should also be sought on this occasion for the issues of national rights and the right to existence of the Hill Country Tamils.
- \* The government and the LTTE should not fall victim to the ulterior motives of the forces of global and regional hegemony. They should learn from experience and carry forward the peace negotiations in a beneficial way with calm and far sight.
- \* Over and above the third party facilitation by Norway, America is putting forward views and taking steps in ways that would facilitate intervention to serve its hegemonic interests. The country and the people know well that, during the twenty years of national conflict, it was America that gave advise, support, guidance and co-operation to the oppressor. But today, the very same America is donning the robe of peace merely to ensure its domination. Therefore, it is essential that the Tamil, Singhalese and Muslim people and their political and social organisations unite against the efforts of American meddling and infiltration. The progressive left and democratic forces, with their long tradition of anti-imperialism, need to take a leading part in this struggle.

Let the ceasefire continue!  
Let the negotiations commence!  
Let political negotiations succeed!  
Let there be peace!

New Democratic Party

25.03.2002

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New Democracy

## A letter to the leader of the LTTE

18th April 2002

Mr. Velupillai Pirapakaran

Leader, LTTE

Kilinochchi

Dear Mr. Pirapakaran,

Greetings. Our party heartily welcomes the recent steps taken by the LTTE under your leadership, with facilitation by Norway, to secure peace. You would be aware that our party has continued to carry forward several mass movements to emphasise a ceasefire, talks with the LTTE and a just political solution. In that respect, the present climate is one in which we join in the joy of the masses.

Your clarification of your position to the country and the world at the recent press conference convened by you was very useful. Also, your inviting Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil parliamentary leaders and carrying out discussions with them with a view to achieve broad-based unity is commendable. Also, your coming to an agreement with the leadership of the Muslim Congress and finding a way for the return of the displaced Muslims is particularly welcome.

At the same time, I wish to draw your kind attention to some unfavourable aspects of the answers given by you to a few of the questions during your meeting with the media.

1. It is regrettable that you failed to respond to the question about the left and democratic forces of the South campaigning among the Sinhala masses against the war, in support of you and emphasising a political solution. We wish to point out that this has led to a feeling of regret that the anti-war forces among the Sinhala have not been acknowledged, and to the feeling that a powerful message to the Sinhala people has thus been sidelined.
2. In response to the question about working class parties in the North-East, you had bluntly stated that there are no working class or capitalist class parties there. It is well known to all that besides our party, there have been other left parties and

trade unions that have continued to represent the workers and peasants there. I also wish to draw your attention to the fact that it is on record that, at the same time, our party has been at the forefront of the struggles against chauvinistic governments and against Indian expansionist aggression.

3. We also wish to draw your attention to the fact that the view expressed by Mr. Anton Balasingam that under the interim administration, the economy of the North-East will be an 'open market economy' is in sharp contrast to the stand taken by you in your endeavour to have a national economic policy in Tamil areas.
4. The positions of India and the US have come to the open following your meeting with the media. The US has sought to use the national question in our country through war as well as peace to serve the interests of its global hegemony and India that of its regional hegemony. We believe that you recognise the inherent dangers in this and will act with far-sight.

Further, the present climate of peace has come about because of the unrelenting struggle against the chauvinistic oppressors by the LTTE under your leadership. You are aware that all genuine left parties and democratic forces, including our party, have voiced support for that struggle at various times, and at critical moments. We wish to assure that the support of our party will continue for your efforts in the negotiations for peace.

At the same time, our party appeals to you take appropriate action against the forces of conservative political domination and the greedy rich who are seeking to enrich themselves further by exploiting the present climate of peace and thereby protect the people.

Thanking you,

S.K. Senthivel

General Secretary, New Democratic Party

\* \* \* \* \*

New Democracy

## Press Release

### May Day Message of the New Democratic Party

The General Secretary of the New Democratic Party, SK Senthivel and its National Organiser, E Thambiah stated in their May Day message that the fact that the May Day of this year is being celebrated amid cessation of hostilities and preparations for negotiations based on the Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE gives a sense of great relief to the party and to the people of the country. The New Democratic Party during the past eighteen years had stood firmly against the war and given prominence to its demand for a negotiated settlement for the national question in each of its May Day messages. It had also continued to carry out campaigns in the North and in the South in support of that demand. The fulfillment of its wishes on this May Day is a great victory for the Tamil people and for all oppressed masses. The people should oppose and reject outright the forces of chauvinism that are hell bent on wrecking this initial victory scored as a result of a prolonged struggle. Thus, we put forward on behalf of the people the demand that it is necessary to make further efforts without delay or hindrance to safeguard the current climate of peace and to secure a lasting peace and a lasting political solution.

The message further stated that the government, while it was making an effort to achieve peace, was also loading the workers and peasants with heavy economic burdens and making their living conditions worse. The prices of essential goods have been raised sky high while the wages of workers in the plantation sector and the state and private sectors have been held down without a rise. The government has increased the fees and cost of services through the introduction of the value added tax (VAT). Such actions expose its big-bourgeois, pro-imperialist nature and seem to be a continuation of the anti-people policies of the past. Also, the open economic policy and the privatisation policy are being carried out under the guidance of the World Bank and the IMF in a way that suits the US scheme for globalisation.

One cannot fail to notice that besides its activities on the economic front, the US is also, under the cover of support for the peace process, seeking to set up army and naval bases under its direct control in Sri Lanka. Therefore, on this May Day, the New Democratic Party calls upon the workers, peasants and all other working people to mobilise themselves against the anti-people activities of the government and the actions of the US to dominate and control Sri Lanka.

S.K Senthivel, General Secretary &  
E. Thambiah, National Organiser

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*Often, a correct idea can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter, that is leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge.*

*Mao Zedong*

*Where do Correct Ideas Come From? May 1963*

*Only those who are subjective, one-sided and superficial will smugly issue orders or directives the moment they arrive on the scene, without considering circumstances, without viewing things in their totality (their history and their present state as a whole) and without getting into the essence of things (their nature and the internal relations between one thing and another). Such people are bound to try and fail.*

*Mao Zedong*

*On Practice, July 1937*

30 May 2002  
Press Release

■he General Secretary of the New Democratic Party, S.K Senthivel made the following observation in his statement, issued on behalf of the Party, on the proposed defence treaty between the Sri Lankan and US governments.

The Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people voted the UNF into power not to surrender the country and the people to America. The UNP which, before its coming to power, posed as if it was speaking on behalf of the people, has, after coming to power, reverted to its pro-imperialist line and is acting as a puppet of the US. The proposed defence treaty with the US is one outcome of that course of action. There can be no doubt that this treaty will be used to strangle to death the struggle of the people for self-determination. At the same time, it has also led to the danger of the independence and sovereignty of the entire people of Sri Lanka being captured by the US. The defence treaty represents a situation in which US hegemonism, to which our party has already drawn attention and about which it has warned, poses a threat to every one of our people. This threat is something that the entire population, including the Tamil people, should unitedly oppose.

The statement added that the US is working hard to realise its dream of global hegemony by branding the just struggles for liberation by the people in various countries as terrorism and seeking to eliminate them. It is as a part of this scheme that the US has chosen to establish foothold in Sri Lanka in order to gain control over the South Asian region. The defence treaty is designed to ensure and enable its implementation. Under this treaty, there would be opportunity for the US to secure the interests of its multi-national companies as part of its scheme of globalisation and to establish military and air bases in Sri Lanka.

Thus, the US chose to make this defence treaty with the UNF government in order to suppress the struggle of the Tamil people for self-determination as well as other anti-imperialist struggles and to bring the whole of Sri Lanka under its control. The UNF government, by agreeing to such a treaty, has demonstrated its usual loyalty to imperialism. It has deceived the Tamil people and betrayed the entire people of Sri Lanka. The entire people should rise in protest against this. The NDP affirms that it will be with the people and be at the forefront of this opposition to this treaty.

S.K. Senthivel, General Secretary, NDP

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*The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, and relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute.*

V.I. Lenin

*On the Question of Dialectics*

*When imperialism carries on its oppression not by war but by milder means—political, economic and cultural—the ruling class in semi-colonial countries capitulates to imperialism, and the two form an alliance for joint oppression of the masses of the people. At such a time, the masses often resort to civil war against the alliance of imperialism and the feudal classes, while imperialism often employs indirect methods rather than direct action in helping the reactionaries in the semi-colonial countries to oppress the people, and thus the internal contradictions become particularly sharp.*

Mao Zedong

*On Contradiction, August 1937*



## Sri Lankan Events

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### The NDP celebrates May Day in Jaffna and Ragala

The New Democratic Party celebrated May Day in Jaffna and Ragala. The well-attended rally in Jaffna was held at the auditorium of the Jaffna Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society. Comrades Senthivel, Thanikasalam, Kathirgamanathan, Ananda Kumaraswamy, Thiagarajah and Kumar addressed the rally. The emphasis of the addresses was on support for the peace process while firmly opposing the attempts of the UNF government to sell out the country to imperialism and to make deals with global and regional super powers, and on improving the living conditions of the people, especially those in war affected areas. The need to isolate the chauvinists represented by the JVP and Sihala Urumaya and certain sections of the PA was also underscored.

The enthusiastic May Day rally held at the Ragala town centre was preceded by a May Day procession from Ragala Nadukkanakku Bazaar. Comrades Thambiah, Pannerselvam, Chandrakumar, Shanmugaraja, Subramaniam and Rajendran addressed the rally. Comrade Nagarajan summed up the proceedings. Demands included fair wages for the plantation workers, a halt to the Upper Kotmale hydropower project, and an end to acts of discrimination against the Hill Country Tamils. Support was expressed for the peace process and the chauvinism of the JVP and the bourgeois political parties was denounced.

### Breaching peace in the North-East

Attempts to provoke unrest in the North-East and thus hinder the peace process have been carried out from the very moment of the signing of the MoU. Certain political parties that benefited by being allies of the former government and sections of the armed forces have acted in ways that have threatened the prevailing climate of peace in the Jaffna peninsula. An incident in which a fishing boat was perhaps mistakenly attacked by the Sri Lankan Navy was purposely distorted as an attack on a boat carrying arms for the LTTE. The reluctance of the armed forces to evacuate the schools and places of worship occupied by them as agreed under the MoU too is an obstacle to the initiation of peace talks. However, the ceasefire has held to the relief of all peace loving people. The chauvinistic media and mischief makers have, nevertheless been, all out to exaggerate minor incidents and thereby create a mood of hostility towards the peace process by casting doubts of the intentions of the LTTE in seeking to negotiate for a peaceful settlement.

The unfortunate violence that flared up between the Muslims and Tamils in Muthur and Valaicchenai during July has sown distrust between the two oppressed minority nationalities and the situation is exploited to the utmost by the opponents of peace and opportunists. (See editorial).

### Opposing Peace Talks

If the JVP has been consistent about anything during its post-Wijeweera politics, that would be its reluctance to concede the rights of the minority nationalities. The politics of the JVP has become more cynically chauvinistic that it has effectively replaced the upper-middle class dominated Sihala Urumaya as the most venomous chauvinistic party. Frustration has also pushed a sizeable section of the PA towards forming an unholy alliance with the JVP. The strange alliance of Anura Bandaranaike, once a most bitter critic of the JVP, Dinesh Gunawardane (the chauvinistic successor to Philip Gunawardane, who fathered him and Sri Lankan Trotskyism) and the NUA, comprising the Ferial

Ashroff faction of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, with the JVP is a sad verdict on the degeneration of nationalist politics in Sri Lanka.

### **Up in Arms against the Upper Kothmale Scheme**

The Hill Country Tamils are furious about government plans to reactivate the programme for a 150 MW hydroelectric power plant by building a dam across the Upper Kothmale River. The proposed dam will drown the Talawakelle town, displace at least 5000 Hill Country Tamils, and affect their livelihood directly and that of many more indirectly. Leaders of various political parties and trade unions, including the partners in power with the UNF government, and environmental groups, have expressed their opposition. The government, under pressure from the World Bank, seems hell bent on implementing the scheme, despite existence of both demographically and environmentally less harmful options. The scheme will bring only misery to the plantation workers and much wanted electricity to the foreign investors and the idle rich in Colombo. The Hill Country Tamils suspect that the scheme will also be used to settle more Sinhalese in the region and alter the ethnic balance in a way that threatens the security of the already harassed Hill Country Tamils.

The NDP has fully endorsed, supported and cooperated with the campaign to resist the scheme and warned the people about sell out by any section of the leadership as in the past on issues affecting the welfare of the plantation workers.

### **Against Coal Pollution of Trincomalee**

Government efforts to set up a coal power plant in Nuraicholai on the west coast were thwarted by public anger, and amid selling out by some of the leaders of the anti-coal campaign the government has decided to set up the plant in Trincomalee, by exploiting the complacent mood created by the ceasefire.

Environmental groups in Trincomalee have expressed their anger and opposition, and opposition is building up. The TNA leadership has been persuaded to oppose the setting up of the plant in the east, near Trincomalee, which would bring pollution to Trincomalee and suburbs but take all the benefits to the foreign investors on the west coast.

It is also pointed out that the false economics of coal power generation is misleading and that the clean-up cost of coal would more than wipe out the so-called benefits of low cost of raw fuel if any.

### **British Embassy to Grab Meteorology Department Headquarters Land**

The Department of Meteorology (successor to the Colombo Observatory) has its premises in Colombo 7. The site has observations dating back to 1853, that include some of the most carefully controlled measurements and the longest history of precise records in the South Asian region. The proliferation of tall buildings in its periphery could contaminate the measurements, especially wind measurements.

The latest one will take over a third of the Meteorological Department land, which for undisclosed reasons has been to provided by the government to the British Embassy. Many scientists fear that in the usual style of Western Embassies in the Third World, the embassy will erect high walls and destroy the value of future meteorological data. This is worrying in view of the need for precise measurements to sort out the actual impacts of global warming and climate change. Scientists have expressed their protest to the Government of Sri Lanka and to the British High Commission and have sought the support of British meteorologists.

This is a sign of the times, and a warning of what lies ahead for all national institutions and the need for intellectuals to be on the alert.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **FOURTH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

The Fourth Congress of the New Democratic Party is to be held in the first week of October 2002. The Congress will be dealing with the most pressing political and economic issues facing the country and the international situation, especially in the context of the situation following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on American cities.

*Movements for socialism and communism, which brought forth the proletariat and the peasantry as the central agents of history, returned to 'democracy', in a radically modern form, its Aristotelian meaning of rule by the poor so as to safeguard their own interests against the rich.*

Aijaz Ahmad  
*The Century of Democratic Demand* (Courtesy: *Frontline* 7 July 2000)

*When Professor Amartya Sen argues that 'liberalisation' offers us opportunities and it is up to us to exploit these opportunities by doing various things internally, he too fails to see that 'liberalisation' necessarily brings in its train submergence in the vortex of 'global finance' and that it becomes impossible for the state (the only agency capable of doing so) to display any activism in the social sector.*

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik  
*Market Morals and the Media*  
Convocation Address at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, 3 July 2002.  
(Courtesy *Frontline* 2 August 2002)

## **International Events**

### **Palestine: defiance in the face of destruction**

Again, the people of Palestine have demonstrated to the world the collective might of a people determined to fight oppression. The US-Zionist conspiracy was tricked the politically weakened leadership of the PLO to agree to a peace accord and, having extracted all the possible concessions from the PLO, systematically undermined every crucial aspect of the agreement.

Having failed to subdue the Palestinian masses directly, the oppressors sought to use a corrupt PLO leadership to do the dirty work for them. When that failed, they punished the PLO leadership and hoped to come out as winners. Every move by the oppressors backfired miserably. The wave of counterattacks by the Palestinians, including suicide bombings, has not ceased even after murderous bombing and shelling by the Israeli armed forces.

The attempt to dispose of Arafat as leader of the Palestinian Authority as a face saving measure for the mass murderer Ariel Sharon and his patron George Bush too have misfired. The war in Palestine has hardened attitudes among the Arab people so much that even America's client regimes in the Arab world are forced to oppose American behaviour. The issue has also deepened the rift between the US and the EU.

However, the oppressor is still strong and the struggle may have to go on for longer. However, one thing is certain, the Palestinians will not be subdued, and remain an inspiration to all the freedom fighters of the world for even longer.

Nepal: an oppressor desperate for allies

The reactionary Nepali government is desperate for allies in its 'war against terror'. Unable to stem the tide of mass support for the revolutionary forces led by the Maoist Communist Party, it has sought

support from India, then the US, then Britain and then China, which too has denounced the revolutionaries as terrorists.

All the weapons and war technology dumped into Nepal by the US and the British will neither make the Nepali economy any better nor the regime any stronger. Indian involvement will only make things more complicated for India, already facing growing militancy in the northeast. China has yet to be directly involved on the side of the oppressor in the armed conflict. The words of support for an oppressive regime, and against a struggle for emancipation of the masses much like that of China's millions half a century ago, are disgraceful.

Again, as in pre-revolutionary China, the people and not advanced weapons, wherever they are from, that would be decisive.

### India: politics of presidency

The sudden decision of the BJP to have the 'scientist' Abdul Kalaam as the presidential candidate was more than tokenism. It was a cynical pretence that the BJP is not anti-Muslim, designed to fool an international community still pained by the shock of anti-Muslim terror in Gujarat.

The man himself is a jingoist, and despite being a Muslim, has done everything to appease the Hindu fanatics, to the extent that he kept mum about the Ayodya issue and all anti-Muslim violence. His careerism has been rewarded.

The Congress, taken by shock, could not think of another candidate and, given its own line of Indian hegemonism, could not think of an alternative. The CPI and CPI (M) acted at the last minute to show their protest by fielding a candidate, but it was all too late to have any impact. The initiative had already been lost to the BJP.

It is not a matter of whether a president of greater character would make a difference to India, but a matter of taking a political message across, especially at a time that the BJP stands thoroughly exposed as the embodiment of Hindu fascism. The elevation of the Hindu fanatic and friend of US imperialism L.K. Advani to Deputy Prime Minister was even more symbolic of BJP's position, and the world should take note. Even if it does, Advani will make sure of that by his actions.

### Venezuela: America's old tricks

Having failed once to oust President Chavez earlier in the year, using the well-planned political street theatre, with the theme of a popular unrest and military intervening to restore control, fashioned after the one staged successfully in Chile nearly three decades ago, the US imperialists have not given up.

A second attempt was made in July 2002 but fizzled out. That does not mean that the reactionary forces give up. There is trouble awaiting Venezuela, and given the strength of the reactionary forces and an army, which is loyal to Chavez, but not politicised in a progressive way as in the case of Cuba, the task is harder. However, every moment of defiance of US imperialism is worth the effort, and would be a telling blow to the imperialists, who in the process would entangle themselves in a bigger mess as they have elsewhere in the past.

*(T)he failure to see the primacy of practice leads [Sir Karl] Popper to some rather reactionary political conclusions. Marxists believe that there are laws of society; that these laws can be known; and that men can and should act on this knowledge. It is not my intention to argue that this Marxist view is correct; but surely, any view that rules this out a priori is reactionary. Yet this is precisely what Popper does—and in the name of an anti-a priori theory of knowledge.*

Hilary Putnam  
*The 'Corroboration' of Theories*  
from *Scientific Revolutions*, Oxford University Press 1981

*The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics in relation to some detail of party organisation may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principles are capable of changing in twenty-four hours, or twenty-four months for that matter, their views as to whether it is in general, always and absolutely, necessary to have a militant organisation, and to conduct agitation among the masses*

V.I. Lenin  
*Where to Begin*





## the ghost and the mighty tree



-by : S. Thevarajah-

the cloud transfigured into a ghost  
shook the mighty tree that stood in defiance –  
having failed to uproot  
took revenge by knocking to the ground  
each flower and fruit tender and ripe  
for the floodwater to drag away.

in the ditches, palmyra groves and street junctions  
the scorching sun stacked firewood.

arguing against wasting time  
to make distinction between flower, tender fruit,  
the ripe and unripe,  
the "practical" ones plucked unripe fruit  
and tucked away beneath hay  
in cane baskets and wooden chests  
in vain and wasteful efforts that spoil the fruit.

the mighty tree with roots deep in the soil  
extracted nutrition from the very earth  
in which lay buried its decomposed seeds of life,  
waved its head in the gentle breeze,  
joyously fed its fresh flower and tender fruit  
resting on its erect shoulders  
to bear ripening fruit –  
the seeds went underground to  
rise anew and endure.

Courtesy: *Thaayakam*,  
April-May 1984)



## **A DIALOGUE**

**Ivo Andrich** (Yugoslav poet)

“You are too much alone my son, and keep long silence. You are tortured by dreams, and weary of the paths of the spirit. Your form is bent, your cheeks are pale, your eyelids droop, your voice sounds like the creek of a prison gate. Go out into the summer day, my son”.

“What did you see in the summer day my son?”

“I saw that earth is strong, and the sky eternal, but man is weak and short-lived”.

“What else did you see, my son, in the summer day?”

“I saw that love is brief and hunger has no end”.

“What else did you see, my son, in the summer day?”

“I saw what a painful thing life is. A shoddy mixture of misery and sin, deceit piled on deceit”.

“You want to rest my son?”

“No, father. I will go out and live”.

*(Courtesy: An Anthology of Modern Yugoslav poetry,  
John Calder, London, 1962)*

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