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Peace and Democracy

In Memory of Comrade Navam

Comrade SK Senthivel

U.N. Millennium Development Goals

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GOOD DAYS COMING

Ho Chi Minh

Everything changes, the wheel
of the law turns without pause.
After the rain, good weather.
In the wink of an eye
The universe throws off
its muddy cloths.
For ten thousand miles
the landscape
Spreads out like
a beautiful brocade.
Gentle sunshine.
Light breezes. Smiling flowers,
Hang in the trees, amongst the
sparkling leaves,
All the birds sing at once.
Men and animals rise up reborn.
What could be more natural?
After sorrow comes happiness.

Courtesy: *Poems from the Prison Diary of Ho Chi Minh*
translated by Steve Bradbury

**NEW DEMOCRACY JOINS THE NEW
DEMOCRATIC PARTY TO EXPRESS ITS
DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE KITH
AND KIN OF THE OVER SEVENTY
THOUSAND KILLED AND TO THE MANY
HUNDRED THOUSANDS INJURED OR
RENDERED HOMELESS BY THE
EARTHQUAKE IN INDIA, PAKISTAN AND
KASHMIR.**

**IT ALSO JOINS THE PARTY TO EXPRESS
ITS DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE KITH
AND KIN OF THE SEVERAL THOUSANDS
KILLED AND TO THE MANY MORE
INJURED OR RENDERED HOMELESS BY
THE RECENT SERIES OF CYCLONES,
FLOODING AND MUDSLIDES IN THE
CARRIBEAN, THE U.S. AND CENRAL
AMERICA.**

From the Editor's Desk

No straight thinking Marxist has illusions about bourgeois parliamentary democracy. While parliamentary elections and representation may be used tactically, there are times when the true nature of the electoral process should be exposed and the process rejected outright. The forthcoming presidential election is one such occasion.

The inability and the lack of will of the two main chauvinistic capitalist parties to find a solution to the main problem facing the country, namely the national question, has been amply demonstrated by their conduct during the past several decades. Not only has each been unwilling to find a just and lasting solution, but even when one seems to address some of the grievances of the oppressed nationalities, the other places obstacles in the path.

On the question of safeguarding the national economy, governments led by the two parties have, since 1978, taken turns to implement the will of the imperialists handed down to the country through its agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. The war has been used as the smokescreen behind with the policies of privatisation, liberalisation and open economy have been implemented to enact the structural changes necessary for the smooth implementation of the imperialist programme of globalisation, or in fact a system of total neo-colonial monopoly of the imperialists.

Qualified support in the presidential election of 1994 for Chandrika Kumaratunga by the genuine left and many people who were tired of the war was justified on two counts: the need to bring to an end seventeen years of dictatorial misrule by the UNP, and the promise of unconditionally initiating peace talks with the LTTE. The peace candidate became a president who declared a 'war for peace' and plunged the country into even greater misery.

The UNP secured a parliamentary majority in 2001, and a most welcome ceasefire agreement and a memorandum of understanding between the government and the LTTE came into being soon after. Although the ceasefire has held despite the ouster of the UNP at the general elections in April 2004 and the formation of the UPFA government through an alliance between the SLFP and the JVP, the UNP was responsible for the breakdown in early 2003 of the negotiations with the LTTE to on finding a solution to the national question. The UPFA, the JVP in particular, was reluctant to carry forward the peace process. The refusal of the JVP to accept a joint

mechanism to provide relief to the victims of the tsunami in the North East led to their departure from government.

However, we have before us today an opportunistic alliance of the SLFP candidate, Mahinda Rajapaksha with the pseudo-left chauvinist JVP and the right-wing chauvinistic JHU facing the unreliable UNP candidate Ranil Wickramasinghe. The only difference that the election would make is whether the country will take orders from the US directly or through India, now a close ally of the US in its plans to dominate Asia.

The only meaningful option for the genuine left was to field a common candidate, representing the left and the oppressed national minorities, and to use the candidature to explain to the people the absurdity of electing another executive president, under the constitution of 1978 which has miserably failed the people in every respect for 27 years. Unfortunately, leaders of the fragmented left in the South are still suffering illusions of grandeur and there are three Trotskyite candidates in the field, each calling the other a fake, and a fourth, deluded Trotskyite leader supporting Rajapaksha in the vain belief that Rajapaksha will not honour his pledges to the JVP and the JHU. Such naïve vision has also been displayed by the leader of the revisionist Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the now very much subdued LSSP.

Neither candidate has a programme to bring lasting peace to the country or to rebuild the national economy ravages by imperialist and expansionist intervention.

In this context, the New Democracy endorses fully the position taken by the New Democratic Party to call upon the people to boycott the election, by spoiling their ballot papers, thus giving expression to their rejection of the pointless exercise of continuing with the executive presidential system.

In this Issue

This issue carries two articles by Comrade SK Senthivel, one a tribute to the late Comrade S Navaratnam (Navam), which also deals with the attributes of a good Marxist Leninist, and the other, the text of a Comrade Navaratnam Memorial Lecture, dealing with the question of peace and democracy in the current situation in Sri Lanka.

We reproduce with pride and with the kind permission of Professor Jose Maria Sison, Chief Political Consultant to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, a recent critique of the Millennium Development Goals of the UN, where he exposes how the declared goals are furthering the interests of imperialism and deepening the misery of the masses of the Third World; and the text of a recent address at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo on the socio-economic situation in the Philippines and the status of the peace negotiations between the government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. The first article is of relevance to the Third World as a whole, and to Sri Lanka, in view of the implications of the Millennium Development Goals to the country. The second article has valuable lessons to Sri Lanka on the state of an economy that is being ruined by imperialist domination and the subservience of the ruling class as well on issues of war and peace, although concerning a conflict of a different nature, but involving an oppressive state.

The issue also includes besides the regular features a summary of the course of events in the campaign against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project.

The section on international events since issue no. 17 deals with events in greater detail and will continue to do so, in order that readers could catch up on news and analysis that the main media and many local journals fail to touch upon.

THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES AGAINST THE UPPER KOTMALE SCHEME

(A diary of events)

23rd September

Police arrest five young campaigners of the People's Campaign Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project when they were putting up posters announcing a public meeting organised by the PCAUKHP.

24th September

A highly successful picket campaign was carried out in Ragala in protest to the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project.

25th September

A very well attended meeting organised by the People's Campaign Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project was held at the site of the Kathiresan Temple, Talawakelle, despite pressure from the police and mischievous elements.

26th September

Delegates from the People's Campaign Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project handed in at the Embassy of Japan a petition addressed to the Japanese Ambassador, explaining in detail the grounds for the opposition to the project.

27th September

A conference was held in Colombo as part of the Campaign, with the participation of several trade union representatives.

2nd October

A mass protest demonstration was held in Talawakelle town in a strong show of public protest against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project.

13th & 14th October

An extensive awareness and fund raising campaign was carried out in Colombo and in the Hill Country to mobilise support for the campaign.

17th & 18th October

A mass picketing campaign was successfully carried out across the hill country with wide support from the public.

Footnote

The People's Campaign Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project is aware that the moves are afoot to start work on the project and that Japanese engineers are already in the country and quarters for the Japanese construction company staff are being put up without much publicity.

The time has come for the people of the hill country to rise in unity against the ill-conceived project and in defiance of the treacherous hill country trade union and parliamentary political leaders. It is thus urgently necessary to heighten public awareness on the issue and to intensify the campaign.

Peace and Democracy in the Current Context

by

Comrade SK Senthivel

General Secretary of the NDP

[The Comrade Navaratnam Memorial Address delivered on the occasion of the commemoration of the First Death Anniversary of Comrade Navaratnamon 16th October 2005 in Colombo]

Comrades and Friends,

The economic, political and social problems of the country manifest themselves as big burdens upon the people, as crises and struggles. Meanwhile, the national question, which developed into a war, has caused irreparable losses. The situation continues where there is no proper cure or just solution for any of the problems.

I think that it is appropriate under the circumstances to deliver the Memorial Address under the heading “Peace and Democracy in the Current Context” at the meeting to commemorate the first death anniversary of the late Comrade S Navaratnam, the Marxist Leninist and servant of the masses. Before I speak about the conditions created by the present political situation, let me clarify the essential Marxist Leninist view about two matters, namely peace and democracy, that appear in the title assigned to me. The opposite of the term peace is struggle or war. Struggle and war, the highpoint of struggle, are caused by contradictions. The emergence of contradictions and their continuation as struggles is the basis of the functioning, change and development of society. That is why the Marxist world outlook points out that “Contradiction and struggle are universal”. Here, one should notice that contradiction and struggle are not always of one kind or unchanging.

Contradictions do not proceed in parallel. At some stage they clash to lead to struggles and at their peak explode into war.

Violence becomes necessary during this process. Many are agitated by the term violence. But violence plays its role to different degrees in the functioning of nature. When contradictions clash among themselves and take a new form at some stage, violence plays a decisive role in bringing about change. Marxism has illustrated from natural phenomena and historical development that violence is necessary for the emergence of a new society. Marx said, "Violence is the midwife who delivers the new society from the womb of the old society". Marxism, which announced this to the proletariat, which is capable of creating a new society, and the political parties and leaderships that came in its tradition have handled the matter with much care. Thus, Marxist Leninists, in their practice, distinguish between the use of violence to resolve the contradiction with their enemy, the reactionary ruling class, and the methods for handling contradictions emerging from among the people.

Thus it is necessary not to view peace superficially, but in the context of oppression, contradiction and struggle based on class, race, caste and gender. Real peace will emerge only when a just solution for the demands that are put forward in struggles and war, are secured through conclusive dialogue.

In their view of democracy too Marxists differ from others. It is said that the essence of the democratic principle was derived from the ancient Greek society. Even the democracy there was not one for all. The declaration of the French revolution "Liberty, equality, fraternity" could not endure as one for all the French people. The American democratic concept of 'for the people, by the people, of the people' that is oft stated even now is not applied to all the people there. From the time of the slave and master, through the feudal

society to the capitalist era, the various forms and practices of democracy have been for a minority comprising the upper class elite.

It was only after the 1917 October revolution made possible by Marxism and the emergence of socialist systems that the democracy of the working class and other toiling masses blossomed and developed as the democracy of the vast majority of the people. These democratic systems under working class state power, referred to as People's Democracy and New Democracy, came into practice as a true democracy that rejected the interests of the property owning capitalist classes. It is with this outlook that it we need to view the contemporary problems of our country under the heading "Peace and Democracy in the Current Context".

In 1948, the British colonialists handed over state power to the feudal-capitalist upper class elite who enjoyed their confidence and trust. They left only after putting in place the Soulbury constitution, designed as a bourgeois parliamentary constitution. It is a consequence of the purposely drafted constitution of the white imperialists, who have been expert at the art of divide and rule, that provided the basis for this country to be plunged into ethnic war.

The people of Sri Lanka have been constrained to political life under such bourgeois democracy for fifty-seven years, using the parliament, the right to vote and elections. The earlier Soulbury constitution was changed slightly to yield the new constitution of 1972. Although it was claimed to have been developed by the people of the country on their own, it did not offer any form of rights or equality to the working masses of the country or to nationalities including the Tamil nationality. At the same time, the constitution was one that safeguarded the interests of the capitalist class that descended from the feudal gentry and the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinists. It became possible through it for the early aspects of chauvinistic capitalist oppression to come to the fore. The LSSP and Communist Party leaders, who once had the reputation of being anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist heroes, played an important role in bringing out this constitution. The entirety of their final years between 1970 and 1977 ended in surrender and service to capitalism and chauvinism. They are today an appendage of the SLFP; and the reactionaries, to attack Marxist Leninists, have found a convenient weapon in pointing to them.

It was after this that JR Jayawardane came to power with a 5/6th parliamentary majority. He used that majority to introduce the new constitution, with a system of presidential rule that enabled the dictatorship of an individual over and above the parliament. It was under this constitution that events took place that opened wide all doors of the country to liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. The national economy that was developed from time to time after 'independence', national interests, the policy of non-alignment etc. were abandoned. The country was swept into re-colonisation. Multinationals and foreign capital entered without restriction. Alongside the World Bank, the IMF and the Asian Development

Bank, countless NGOs from the West swarmed into the country. Today it is their plans and activities that seem to be the main factor determining everything in the country.

Under such conditions, twenty-seven years of the system of executive presidential rule none of the serious problems faced by the country has been solved. No remedy has been sought for the national question, which is the main problem of the country that has been transformed into war, or to the day-to-day economic issues faced by the entire population. Yet, the two main parties in contention are the same two political parties that exercised power, one after the other, from the presidential seat. It is the individuals that have been changed, while the parties and their policies are a continuation from the past. From whichever of the two parties may the president come to power, neither the peace nor the democratic environment nor the economic upturn that the people expect will be achieved. The country will be dragged along the same path by state power as it was during

the past twenty-seven years. Despite this reality, to take the same old path of being fooled by voting for one and then the other, because the grass on the other side is always greener, will not bring a new dawn or redemption to the country, the people or the oppressed nationalities.

A look into the past will demonstrate the bankruptcy of the right to vote, elections, parliament and presidential elections. Universal franchise was granted in 1931 so that everyone of age in this country had the right to vote.

On that basis people voted on two occasions to the State Council. It is worth remembering that nobody contested four electorates in the elections to the first State Council as a result of the revolutionary action of completely boycotting the elections in the north. Afterwards, the people voted for the first parliament in 1947. So far, people have voted in thirteen parliamentary elections. Since 1978, they voted in four presidential elections to elect the President. The forthcoming election is the fifth. The present age barrier for voting is eighteen. From that angle, the third generation of the country is also participating in the elections. An important question that we may raise here is whether any problem of the country has been solved by the elections that have been held in the name of democracy and freedom or by the elected leadership of the ruling classes. Until the reason for this is considered politically, people will go round and round in circles, while being subjected to problems, crises and war, and drowned in sorrow and misery.

It was under the constitution that introduced presidential rule that the chauvinistic oppression was imposed as war on the North East. The UNP and its leader JR Jayawardane initiated it. In the seventeen-year rule of darkness by

the UNP, peace and democracy were shattered. The SLFP and President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who succeeded, carried forward the war along the path of the UNP. As a result of an unsuccessful war called 'the war for peace', the North East and the Tamil people suffered further destruction. Thus far up to a hundred thousand Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala people of the North East have been killed by the war. Besides that, During 1988-89 and earlier during the 1971 insurrection, up to a hundred thousand Sinhala youth were killed as a result of being misled by the leadership of the JVP, now living in luxury and indulging in chauvinistic parliamentary politics. They went behind the JVP and perished because of the economic crisis and unemployment.

Thus, the presidential system has headed and carried forward oppression and war over the past twenty-seven years. At the same time, the two main political parties have lent support and cooperation to the capitalist forces of the US, Europe and Japan to re-colonise the country through implementing liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation behind the curtain of war. Under the rule of the two parties, so far a hundred or so state corporations and public establishments have been privatised. Besides sacrificing the economy to the multinationals, the path has been paved for the plunder of human effort and resources. The disastrous Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project and the Nuraicholai Coal Power Project are to be implemented.

Silence is observed about the disastrous consequences of the Sethusamudram Canal Project. Meantime, Indo-US rivalry is gathering force. The US and India are each visibly behind one or the other of the candidates from the two main parties.

Neither of the two candidates is willing to find a solution to the country's main problem, the national question, in the form of autonomy based on the right to self-determination. They are playing hide-and-seek with terms like federalism and unitary government. Only promises are offered about controlling the cost of living and lightening the burdens on the people. The reality is that the problems of food, clothing, shelter, employment, education and health faced by the vast majority of the people cannot be solved by the presidential election or by the president who is elected. Under these conditions, what is the sense in voting for either of the candidates? Therefore the only firm conclusion would be to fully reject this presidential election. The New Democratic Party recommends this with determination.

[Translated from Tamil]

MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE U.N. –

A SCHEME TO AGGRAVATE IMPERIALIST PLUNDER AND POVERTY

by

Prof. Jose Maria Sison

**Chairperson, International Coordinating Committee of the
International League of Peoples' Struggle**

12 September 2005

The scheduled high-level review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations (UN) on 14-16 September is merely another attempt to further legitimize the sham being peddled by the UN and the international financial institutions (IFIs) under the auspices of the most predatory imperialist powers.

Far from promoting global economic and social justice, the MDGs is a shrewd scheme of the imperialist powers to distract attention from structural issues that are the root cause of the chronic and worsening poverty which afflicts billions of people around the world today. Worse, the MDGs is being used to promote the same policy prescriptions of imperialist globalization that have hastened and aggravated the massive destruction of livelihood and economic opportunities in poor countries where more than 1 billion people are forced to survive on less than US\$1 a day.

Originally conceived by the imperialist countries through the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996 and picked up by the UN in its 2000

Millennium Declaration, the MDGs conveniently distorted the issue of poverty, and ignored its causes and conditions. Thus, it did not only set token and selective targets to eradicate poverty but also twisted the very concept of poverty eradication to accommodate the corporate agenda of imperialist globalization while avoiding such crucial demands as unconditional cancellation of debt of all poor countries, the reversal of World Trade Organization (WTO)-type international trade regime, and the reversal of International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank-imposed neo-liberal economic reforms.

The scale of debt in the poorest countries has so crippled their economies that development has become impossible because much of the limited resources are being deflected to debt servicing. In 2002, the level of debt of the poorest countries was almost 21 times its size in 1970. The international usury perpetrated by the IFIs has siphoned off US\$550 billion in interest and principal payments for US\$540 billion of loans, yet the poorest countries still owe foreign creditors US\$523 billion as of 2002. [1]

The declaration last June of the Group of Seven (G7), the principal cabal of imperialist powers, to cancel 100% of the US\$40 billion owed by 18 heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) is a vain attempt to fend off criticisms on the sincerity of their much-ballyhooed 'making poverty history' publicity stunt. By imposing the terms of the debt cancellation including disastrous neo-liberal reforms, the G7 initiative merely legitimized the odious and illegitimate debt incurred by the puppet regimes of these poor countries and debt which facilitated their economic plunder by imperialist corporations and banks.

In fact, the MDGs systematically make semi-colonial and colonial countries even more beholden to their imperialist patrons rather than promoting self-reliance through genuine national industrialization. While the MDGs commit to achieve universal access to primary education and improve health services, it promotes the same post-Washington consensus (i.e. liberalization, deregulation, and privatization plus 'good governance') policies that have, in the first place, intensified the bankruptcy and indebtedness of national governments in the Third World, and obliterated their capacity to provide vital social services including health and education. To finance such services, the rich countries promised to provide more aid money such as the US\$5-billion Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) of the US. But the problem with the MCA is not simply the doubtful commitment of the US to the MDGs with the

Bush administration's recent statement that it only supports the Millennium Declaration but not the specific targets of the MDGs. [2]

Worse, poor countries have to first implement US-imposed preconditions including economic liberalization to have access to the MCA.

The liberalization of trade and investment, the drastic reduction in government spending on vital social services, the privatization and deregulation of strategic economic activities all have pushed the workers, peasants, urban and rural poor, indigenous people, women, youth, and other marginalized sectors not only in poverty but also in unspeakable desolation while generating unimaginable wealth and power for the few. According to the UN's Human Development Report 2005, in 1990, the average American was 38 times richer than the average Tanzanian, while today the average American is now 61 times richer. [3]

It is clear from the onset that poor countries should never hope that the MDGs will truly address the issue of poverty precisely because the MDGs was designed to deodorize the imperialist plunder that has impoverished and dehumanized the people of the poor world. The MDGs runs counter to the peoples' fight against poverty precisely because it does not attend to the structural issues of global poverty, namely the neo-colonial relations between the rich and the poor in terms of development cooperation, trade, diplomacy, etc. that is at the core of the permanent crisis of backwardness and poverty in the semi-colonies and colonies, but even perpetrates the exploitative relations between the semi-colonies and colonies and their imperialist masters.

The only way to fight poverty is the assertion of the poor people's inalienable human right not simply to live but to live decently and this entails the struggle to bring to an end all structures of exploitation and poverty. At the minimum, this means freeing all the poor countries from the debt bondage without conditions, reversing all WTO and IMF-World Bank neo-liberal policies, and creating a global environment which recognizes and respects the sovereign right of poor countries and their people to determine their own development agenda and needs. Any effort to combat poverty should not be without these minimum requisites.

But we should recognize that these reforms will not be given to the poor on a silver platter by imperialist institutions including and even the UN. Like all the hard-earned victories of the people in the past, it can only be borne out by the

militant and uncompromising struggle for national liberation, social justice and peace of the anti-imperialist movement. This is what the International League of Peoples' Struggle is striving to advance.

Notes*

- [1] 'The scale of the debt crisis' by Anup Shah, Global Issues website (<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Debt/Scale.asp>), page last updated on 2 July 2005
- [2] 'US, UN escalate global aid squabble' by Column Lynch, The Washington Post http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2002466174_un02.html, 2 September 2005
- [3] Chapter 1: The State of Human Development, Human Development Report 2005, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALITIES AND THE NEED FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

By
Prof. Jose Maria Sison
Chief Political Consultant
National Democratic Front of the Philippines

*Speech at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Norway
1 June 2005*

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Greetings of solidarity!

Thank you for inviting me to speak at your well-known institution. I am delighted and honoured by your invitation. I have long appreciated your work in peace research and in providing support to peace negotiations.

I wish to describe the socio-economic and political realities in the Philippines and proceed to a discussion of the need for peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

Socio-Economic Realities

Many people, including Filipinos, think that the Philippines is a small country. In fact, it has a population of 84 million, which is the 12th largest or within the top 6 per cent of national populations. It has an area of 300,000 square kilometres, which is the 73rd largest land area or within the top 38 per cent of the 191 member-states of the United Nations. At nominal prices, the gross domestic product for 2004 is PhP 4.843 trillion or USD 86.482 billion. It includes a lot of overvaluation in the industrial sector and a lot of false estimates in the agriculture and service sectors.

The estimated output value share of agriculture is 14.8 percent, industry, 31.9 percent and services, 53.2 percent. The output value share of agriculture is understated. It does not cover the considerable part of the agricultural product which the peasants consume. The estimated employment share of agriculture is 36 percent, of industry 16 percent and of services 48 percent. Based on this, the peasants are responsible for more than 69 percent of the basic production of goods and the industrial workers for nearly 31 percent.

The Philippine social economy remains underdeveloped, despite all previous official rhetoric about development. It is still basically agrarian and pre-industrial in terms of the development of the productive forces. The principal means of production is still agricultural land, which is used to produce mainly for domestic food consumption and secondarily for export crops (coconut, sugar, bananas, pineapple, etc.).

The degree of mechanization in agriculture is limited and is concentrated on estates for export crops. In 2001, only some 11,500 tractors and 700 powered harvester-threshers were available for over 13 million hectares of agricultural land. Only 30 percent of the country's total farm area is irrigated as of 2002. Land ownership is heavily concentrated with less than 1/3 of landowners owning more than 80 percent of all agricultural land.

The Philippines has rich natural resources and most of the minerals for industrialization. But after extraction, the mineral ores do not go beyond the primary stage of processing and are exported as raw materials. There is a certain amount of modern industry but this is based on equipment, fuel and other inputs from abroad. The industrial sector produces neither capital goods nor basic metals and chemicals.

Export-oriented low-value added semi-manufacturing, which has come into favour with policymakers and investors since the 1970s, is far more import-dependent and provides less regular employment than the repackaging and reassembly for import-substitution and domestic consumption in the 1950s and 1960s. It has reduced output value and employment since the 1997 economic and financial crisis in Southeast Asia.

The crisis of overproduction of semi-manufactures for re-export since the middle of the 1990s (1994 for garments and 1996 for electronic assembly) has come on top of the earlier crisis of overproduction of raw materials since the late 1970s. However, despite the continuing global oversupply of low value-added semi-manufactures, the Philippines has continued to stick to electronic

assembly and garments. These account for 75 per cent of gross export earnings. However, the high imported content of the semi-manufactures – up to 85-95 percent in the case of electronic equipment – yield a very small amount of net export earnings.

The Philippine economy is a neo-colonial adjunct of the US and world capitalist system. It is exceedingly dependent on direct investments, loans and trade with the global centres of capitalism. It is bound by policies dictated by major capitalist countries bilaterally or through multilateral agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Despite its external linkages, the Philippines retains a distinct system of socio-economic relations. These are precisely called semi-feudal. The comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class are the basic exploiting classes and together constitute a fraction of one per cent of the population. The basic exploited classes of workers and peasants are 15 and 75 per cent of the population, respectively. The intermediate social strata are the middle bourgeoisie and the far more numerous urban petty bourgeoisie.

The Filipino people have long clamoured for genuine land reform and national industrialization as integral factors for breaking the persistence of large feudal holdings and realizing Filipino-owned industrialization in order to raise the level of economic development and change social relations for the better. But one reactionary regime after another has done nothing more than to pay lip service to land reform and national industrialization.

After the US and other capitalist powers shifted policy stress from Keynesianism to “free market” globalization, the reactionary regimes in the Philippines have obscured the need for land reform and national industrialization by harping on the need for raising productivity for the global market. In this regard, the real drive has been to further allow the foreign monopolies to take over natural resources, privatize public assets, get more tax exemptions and tariff cuts, and dump their surplus goods on the Philippines.

The Philippine economy is in a chronic state of crisis. This has rapidly deepened and aggravated under the current policy regime of unbridled “free market” globalization under which foreign monopoly capitalism is actually on a rampage. The semi-feudal economy is incurring huge foreign trade deficits faster than ever from the unequal exchange of its raw-material exports and consumption-driven manufactured imports. The foreign trade deficits have not

been relieved but in fact been aggravated by the export-oriented low-value added semi-manufacturing because this involves a high amount of overvalued imported content.

The huge trade deficits and rising debt service result in chronic current accounts deficits and unfavourable balance of payments. But the deficits are often covered by new debts at more onerous terms, including short-term portfolio investments and the flotation of bonds by state corporations in the capital market. These render the economy more vulnerable. The foreign debt is ever mounting. The foreign exchange remittances of overseas contract workers are in fact used for further import-dependent consumption but are often cited as a resource for paying a major part of the foreign debt.

The high level of government budgetary deficit is due to economic depression, the sale of income-generating state assets, reduction of tariffs, tax evasion by the exploiting classes including tax holidays and exemptions, bureaucratic corruption and high military expenditures. Moreover, the reactionary government and its various corporations enter into onerous loan and supply contracts with foreign banks and companies that aggravate the deficits to be covered by local public and foreign borrowing.

The Philippine economy and the reactionary government in particular are bankrupt. But they are kept afloat by exporting ever larger volumes of certain goods whose prices keep on sinking, by rescheduling of old debts and incurring new debts at ever more onerous terms under various programs dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, by privatization of government assets and by capturing the foreign exchange remittances of Filipino overseas contract workers who now constitute 10 per cent of the population and whose annual remittances have grown to USD 8.5 billion in 2004.

We can trace the deterioration of the Philippine economy by looking at the growth and uses of foreign and domestic borrowing, from one regime to another. The Marcos regime was the very first one to dramatically raise the level of foreign borrowing from the level of USD 600 million in 1965 to USD 27.2 billion in 1986. The regime used the foreign funds to finance the graft-ridden construction of sugar, coconut, copper and nickel mills, irrigation systems, roads and bridges and tourist facilities. This was mainly under the auspices of the Keynesian policy stress of the World Bank before 1980.

But at the onset of the 1980s, economic policy stress would shift to monetarism and neo-liberalism in the US and in the world capitalist system.

Supposedly the time had come to act decisively against so-called wage inflation and social spending by the state. Both were blamed as the cause of the stagflation problem. While the US sought to attract funds from abroad by offering high interest rates in the market, the World Bank was made to cut down on concessionary official lending and the IMF was made to whip up trade and investment liberalization, privatization and deregulation as payback from the third world debtors.

The tight international credit situation in the 1980s compelled the Aquino regime to raise the level of local public debt from PhP 144.4 billion in 1986 to PhP 521 billion in 1992. The Aquino regime restricted imports and brought the level of foreign debt to USD 29.9 billion in 1992. To countervail depressed prices in the global market, the raw material exports of the Philippines had to be increased. Still the financial crisis sharpened in the early 1990s.

The Ramos regime harped on “free market” globalization. It outstripped the Marcos regime in foreign borrowing and the Aquino regime in local borrowing. It brought the level of the country’s foreign debt to USD 46.2 billion and total domestic public sector debt to PhP 922 billion in 1998. These borrowings were made in order to cover foreign trade and budgetary deficits, respectively. The deficits grew as the regime promoted the export-oriented low-value added semi-manufacturing and private construction of high rise office buildings, residential towers, hotels, golf courses and other recreational facilities. The economic and financial collapse came as a major part of the 1997 Southeast Asia crisis.

The bankruptcy of the Philippine economy and state was conspicuous when the Estrada regime took over. Government expenditures went too far ahead of tax revenues. The IMF kept on pressing the regime to reduce government expenditures, adopt new tax measures and give priority to debt service. To pursue its bureaucrat capitalist purposes, the regime engaged in scams by raiding the pension funds of state and private employees and collecting money from the underworld. The Estrada regime raised the level of the country’s foreign debt to USD 51.2 billion and local public debt to PhP 1.068 trillion by year end 2000.

The Arroyo regime raised the level of the country’s foreign debt to USD 56.3 billion and the local public debt to PhP 1.833 in June 2004. The compounded foreign and local public debt is PhP 6 trillion. In fact, the foreign debt has gone beyond USD 60 billion and the local public debt beyond PhP 2.5 trillion. In

terms of the size of the total public debt, the Philippines is in a worse situation than Argentina. The Philippine public debt/GDP ratio has risen from 56 per cent in 1997 to 80 per cent in 2004. Last year, the reactionary government paid 81 per cent of its revenues for both interest and principal amortization. This year it is allocating 94 per cent of revenues for debt service.

Since 2001, the Arroyo regime has over borrowed from the private capital market, mainly US, by floating bonds. It is now given a low credit rating and is being forced by the IMF to raise taxes amid a depressed economy. The value added tax is being raised by 20 percent. Other measures for raising taxes are being implemented. Under conditions of deregulation, the oil companies are allowed to freely raise their prices and so are the power, water and other public utilities, their service rates. The reactionary government is raising the fees for services it provides.

The IMF and WTO require the regime to undertake further denationalization, liberalization, privatization and deregulation. State assets such as those in the National Power Corporation are being bargained away. Debts of state corporations being auctioned off remain as sovereign debt and do not become the liability of the new private owners. The mineral, forest and water resources of the country are further being opened up for unrestricted exploitation by the foreign monopolies. Mimicking the Bush regime, the Arroyo regime is planning to privatize the social security agencies of the state.

Major official statistical data in the Philippines are falsified to conjure the illusion of achievement. The Arroyo regime claims that the GDP grew by 6.1 percent in 2004. The Employers Confederation of the Philippines describes this as jobless and industry-less growth. The regime pretends to surpass by so many times the stagnant growth rates in the most advanced capitalist countries. It absurdly cites the heavy electoral spending last year, the proliferation of international call centres and false estimates of production rises in agriculture and service sectors of the economy as major items in the GDP growth.

The chronic rate of mass unemployment in the Philippines goes beyond 40 per cent. One can arrive at this rate by compounding the officially admitted unemployment and underemployment rates (the latter is actually unemployed). Unemployment has increased conspicuously since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, with the formal sector shrinking fast. The claimed unemployment rate of 11.7 per cent in 2004, which is comparable to that of Germany, is simply unbelievable. Supposedly “employed” by some specious definition are 30.635

million workers out of total labour force of 34.571 million. But only 18.62 percent (5.067 million) are verifiably employed in the formal sector, while 67.47 per cent (20.670 million) are in the informal sector, which is a realm of random surveys and false estimates.

The real value of nominal wages has drastically gone down due to the rapidly soaring prices of basic commodities and services. Inflation has been pushed by the peso devaluation, the scarcities in import-dependent basic producer and consumer goods and the heavy electoral spending by the regime. The inflation rate of 5.4 per cent for 2004 in IMF and government statistics is simply unbelievable.

The peso has been devalued *vis a vis* the US dollar and is now less than half its value in 1996 and only a third its value in 1985. Funds for essential producer and consumer imports have become scarce because of super profit-taking by the monopoly firms, the huge amounts of debt service, spending for foreign-made luxuries and weapons and salting away of dollars by big Filipino businessmen and high bureaucrats.

The broad masses of the people suffer the rising costs of basic commodities and such services as transport, water and electricity. Since the privatization and deregulation of public utilities in the 1990s, the price of oil products has increased on average by 160 percent, of electricity by 175 percent, and of water services by 450 percent. The social infrastructure is breaking down and the allocations for such social services as health, education, unemployment relief and housing are being cut back. The Arroyo regime has drastically slashed real spending on education by 3.2 percent, on health by 24.5 percent and on housing by 61.0 percent from 2001-2004.

Contrary to absurd government claims that poverty has fallen from 40 per cent to just 30.4 percent of the population in 2003, some 90 percent of the population live on the equivalent of around USD 3 a day. A recent report by the Asian Development Bank points out that the Philippine government achieved the reduction of the poverty level not by raising the people's income but by lowering the poverty line. Indeed, while the general price level supposedly rose by some 15 percent between 2000 and 2003, the government raised the poverty line by just 7 percent – to just PhP 33.60 or some USD 0.60 a day.

Millions of children are subjected to forced labour, malnutrition, deprivation of education, military assaults on rural communities and forced evacuation.

Women are degraded and forced to leave their families in order to earn a living abroad. Large numbers of women and children are forced into prostitution. The environment is being damaged by logging for export and foreign mining pesticide-dependent plantations and other pollutant enterprises.

Social discontent is acute and widespread among the toiling masses of workers and peasants and the middle social strata of entrepreneurs, traders and intelligentsia. They are increasingly engaged in strikes, protest rallies and other forms of concerted action. But the regime always tries to intimidate the people and orders the military and police to attack them. Human rights violations are rampant. There is more than enough of socio-economic exploitation and political oppression to drive so many people to wage revolutionary resistance.

The Filipino people demand such bourgeois democratic measures as land reform and national industrialization in order to break the agrarian, pre-industrial and semi-feudal character of the economy. They demand measures to be undertaken to uphold national sovereignty, conserve and use wisely the rich natural resources of the country and make sure that the social wealth created serves the material and spiritual well-being of the current and future generations.

Political Realities

The Philippine ruling system is semi-colonial. It has been so since the US formally ended its colonial rule, granted nominal independence on 4 July 1946 to the Philippines and turned over the reins of national administration to Filipino bureaucrats and politicians from the exploiting classes. At the same time, it has retained strategic control over the Philippines in the economic, financial, security and other fields.

Unequal treaties have ensured the subservience of the Philippine ruling system to the US. The Treaty of General Relations of 1946 guaranteed that US corporations and citizens retained their property rights and that US military forces kept their military bases and their radar and loran stations. A series of bilateral economic and trade agreements gave US corporations and citizens so-called parity rights to exploit natural resources and operate public utilities. The predecessor agencies of the USAID started the practice of planting agents in key agencies of the puppet government.

A series of bilateral military agreements on US military bases, military assistance and mutual defence has bound the Philippines to US military power. Even after the dismantling of the US military bases in 1992, following the non-renewal of the military bases agreement by the Philippine Senate in 1991, the US continues to exercise military control over the Philippines through control of military supplies, planning, indoctrination and training of military officers.

It continues to encroach on Philippine territory and use Philippine military facilities under the Visiting Forces Agreement ratified by the Philippine Senate in May 1999 and the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement signed by US and RP defence officials in November 2002. It uses various general pretexts such as mutual defence, regional security and war on terrorism and more specific pretexts like joint military training exercises, civic action, humanitarian mission and the like.

The key binding factor of the Philippine ruling system is US hegemony. But the politicians and bureaucrats of the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords have their relative autonomy from the neo-colonial master. They feed on the common trough of bureaucrat capitalism and compete in pretending to be for public service. They are divided into factional parties of the same dominant classes.

From 1946 to 1972, a two party system or a duopoly existed, patterned after that of the US. In this system, the political factions of the exploiting classes engaged in political and electoral struggle in an increasingly violent way. Subsequently, the Marcos ruling clique usurped all powers of government through a fascist dictatorship from 1972 to 1986. Since the fall of the Marcos regime, there has been a proliferation of reactionary political parties and coalitions. There is not a single reactionary party or coalition that can claim a majority of the electoral votes at the national level.

The instability of the ruling system has worsened from the period of 1946 to 1972 through the Marcos fascist dictatorship and further on to the period of the post-Marcos regimes. The political crisis is chronic and it involves the contradictions within the ruling system becoming more violent. It is a reflection of the ever worsening socio-economic crisis. As the pie for bureaucrat capitalist looting decreases, the struggle over it becomes more bitter and more conspicuous.

There is of course a semblance of civility and *noblesse oblige* among the reactionary political factions in the ruling system when they utter platitudes to

the public and try to show good behaviour to the US, the chambers of commerce and the dominant church. But they do have their own violent factional strife. To consolidate and expand their power and wealth against their rivals, they cultivate links with groups of military and police officers and they operate armed groups and security agencies.

The coercive apparatuses of the state, the military and police, are themselves divided into factions. These reflect the major political factions whose patronage is necessary to ensure promotions in rank and assignments to lucrative posts. They also arise from rivalries in operating or taking payoffs from criminal syndicates of various types, including those engaged in the numbers game (*jueteng*), illegal logging, drugs, kidnapping for ransom, bank heists, smuggling and so on.

At this moment, the Arroyo regime is extremely unstable and isolated. The sentiment is widespread that Arroyo was not really elected as president last year. She is widely perceived to have bought the votes and cheated in the counting. But what is really most damaging about the regime is the crudity and conspicuousness of its puppetry to the US, the corruption of gargantuan proportions, the imposition of a heavier tax burden on the people in a depressed economy, the soaring prices of basic commodities and services and the escalation of human rights violations in the urban and rural areas under the pretext of counterterrorism.

A broad united front of opposition forces is growing against the Arroyo regime. The key forces in this broad united front are the political parties and groups that have demonstrated significant electoral following, military and police officers that dissociate themselves from rampant corruption and other criminality of their colleagues and the patriotic and progressive forces with the organized masses willing to confront the regime and cause its downfall, as in the case of Marcos in 1986 and Estrada in 2001.

The broad united front is reportedly trying to form a revolutionary council of patriotic and progressive forces to succeed the Arroyo regime and to lay the basis for the election of a new government in six months to one year after the ouster of Arroyo. It seeks to unite the military and police officers in upholding the principle of civilian supremacy, withdrawing their support from the regime, letting the masses rise up in protest and causing the regime to resign.

In reaction, the Arroyo regime has become even more servile to the US, more corrupt, more arrogant and more ruthless in the face of the developing broad

united front. It believes that it can continue borrowing from abroad by complying with the demands of the IMF for increasing the tax burden and giving priority to debt service and that it can receive huge amounts of US military and financial assistance in exchange for its support for the Bush “war on terrorism”, the rise of US military intervention, the reestablishment of US military bases and the inflow of foreign investments.

There is a trend towards an unbridled rule of open terror, without any proclamation of martial law. The minions of the regime are now busy pushing the enactment of an anti-terrorism law and the removal from the 1987 constitution of the provisions that put limitations on the declaration of martial law, that guarantee the basic rights of a criminal suspect under the Miranda doctrine, that assert economic sovereignty and limit foreign investments, that protect the national patrimony and that prohibit foreign military bases and foreign troops.

To say the least, the extremely pro-imperialist and reactionary elements in the Arroyo regime wish to prevent the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and the negotiation of social, economic and political reforms and would rather scuttle the peace negotiations than address the roots of the civil war in the Philippines. The terrorist-listing is calculated to extort from the NDFP the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces either under the guise of a “final peace agreement” of empty generalities and a prolonged ceasefire without the substance of a just and lasting peace.

In a related way, the most vicious kinds of pressure are being exerted on the NDFP. Under the direction of US psywar experts, the military and police have unleashed a campaign vilifying the most respectable institutions, organizations and personages as “terrorists” and then telling them to clear themselves by denouncing the revolutionary forces. This psywar campaign is combined with a campaign of assassinations and abductions directed against patriotic and progressive religious, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists, leaders of the party list parties (like Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela) and leaders and members of the mass organizations of workers, peasants, urban poor, women, youth and others.

It is reprehensible that the Arroyo regime has collaborated with the US government in demonizing and listing as “terrorists” the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People’s Army and the chief political consultant of

the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. In the current wave of assassinations and abductions, the NDFP senior legal adviser Justice Romeo T. Capulong has been clearly targeted for assassination. NDFP consultants residing in Philippines are experiencing increased surveillance and intimidating actions from armed agents of the GRP.

This “terrorist” listing violates the mutually acceptable principle of national sovereignty and the non-capitulation principle in the Hague Joint Declaration, the safety and immunity guarantees for all duly-authorized persons in the peace negotiations under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and the basic democratic rights and the Hernandez political offence doctrine as affirmed by the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Since August last year, when the US renewed the “terrorist” label and listing of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant, the NDFP has expected the GRP to join it in condemning the unjust act of the US and to comply with all the aforesaid agreements as well as with the related agreements in the Oslo Joint Statements I and II. The GRP must comply with existing agreements or else the NDFP sees no point in negotiating with it.

At whatever rate the GRP complies with mutual agreements or whether the formal talks in the peace negotiations will resume sooner or later or never, the NDFP is committed to upholding, defending and promoting the national sovereignty of the Filipino people. This is the main guiding principle of the NDFP in seeking political and constitutional reforms through the peace negotiations.

The NDFP can consider the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations worthwhile and useful only if these can become the way for asserting the national sovereignty and empowering the workers and peasants who comprise ninety per cent of the Filipino people. The toiling masses should have all the conditions and possibilities for expressing and realizing their national and democratic rights and interests.

Need for Peace Negotiations

The two contending and negotiating parties, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines

(NDFP) have in their respective ways recognized the need for peace negotiations and have set forth the objectives they wish to achieve.

According to the stalwarts of the national security division of the Arroyo cabinet, the maximum objective of the GRP in pursuing the peace negotiations is to cause the capitulation of the NDFP or facilitate the military victory of GRP and the minimum objective is to conjure false illusions, befuddle the consciousness of the revolutionary forces and people and split the ranks of the revolutionary movement.

The NDFP has been quite open in declaring that the line of struggle for national liberation and democracy is the same line that it pursues in the negotiations for a just and lasting peace. This is the maximum objective of the NDFP in the peace negotiations. The NDFP also has the minimum objective of propagating the national democratic line on issues, arousing the people in their millions to raise the level of revolutionary struggle and seeking allies within the ruling system for the purpose of isolating and defeating the intractable enemy.

Since the time of the Marcos fascist dictatorship, I have been privileged to be involved in discreet and public discussions about the question of peace negotiations. I can use the historical method to demonstrate clearly the development of the position and attitude of both the GRP and NDFP about the question of peace negotiations. But such an approach might only ignite a speculative debate about the motivations and calculations of the contending parties. We are on more solid ground if we look at the existing agreements of the two negotiating parties.

Since 1992 the GRP and NDFP have forged twelve agreements. We can use these agreements to determine and measure what the two parties are willing to consider and agree upon as matters in the interest of the Filipino people. The preliminary stage of 1992 to 1995 yielded serious agreements that paved the way for the stage of formal talks from 1995 to the present.

The Hague Joint Declaration was mutually approved by the principals of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels in 1992. It proclaims the need for peace negotiations in order to address the roots of the armed conflict and arrive at reforms for laying the stable foundation for a just and lasting peace.

It declares the mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice as the guiding principles for the negotiations. It is

against any precondition that negates the inherent character and purpose of peace negotiations. It sets the substantive agenda, to include respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms.

The Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) was mutually approved in 1995 by the principals of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels. It protects the panelists, consultants and all other persons duly-authorized in the peace negotiations and provides the mechanism for terminating the peace negotiations by any of the two parties and for allowing persons duly-authorized to participate in the peace negotiation to go to their safe positions within 30 days after the date of the notice of termination.

The Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalisation of the Reciprocal Working Committees was mutually approved in 1995 to guide the drafting of the tentative comprehensive agreements one after the other in accordance with the substantive agenda as set forth by The Hague Joint Declaration. A supplementary agreement was mutually approved in 1997 to require mutual approval by the principals of the comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms before there can be a negotiation of political and constitutional reforms.

The Comprehensive Agreement of Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) was approved by the principals of the NDFP and GRP in 1998. This is the first of the four comprehensive agreements in accordance with the substantive agenda. Since 2004, the GRP and NDFP have agreed on the operating guidelines of the Joint Monitoring Committee and have fully constituted it, together with its Joint Secretariat in Manila, to monitor the joint and separate implementation of the CARHRIHL.

At the opening session of the resumption of formal talks in Oslo in April 2001, the NDFP Negotiating Panel and the GRP Negotiating Panel agreed to cooperate in trying to finish the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms within six months from June 2001. Had the GRP cooperated with NDFP, this comprehensive agreement would have been finished a long time ago. There would have been a chance to finish the comprehensive agreement on political and constitutional reforms in 2002 and that on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces in 2003.

Unfortunately, in June 2001 the GRP suspended indefinitely the formal talks until 2004 avowedly in protest to the killing of Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo by

the New People's Army. He was one among the most notorious torturers and murderers of the Marcos fascist dictatorship. Even while in civilian office, he continued to participate in military operations against the NPA and the people in Cagayan province. The NPA therefore had long regarded him as an armed combatant with abundant blood death.

To further complicate matters, the GRP agreed with the US government in November 2001 to put the CPP/NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant in the "terrorist" list in a bid to pressure the NDFP to capitulate by signing the so-called final peace agreement which the GRP had unilaterally drafted. The US made the "terrorist" listing in August 2002, followed by various other governments (Netherlands, Britain, Australia and Canada) and by the European Council.

There are now two major obstacles blocking the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations:

1. The "terrorist" listing. It is a malicious act which seeks to blackmail and pressure the NDFP to capitulate. It violates the principle of national sovereignty and non-capitulation principle in The Hague Joint Declaration; the protection to persons duly-authorized to participate in the peace negotiations under the JASIG and the basic democratic rights and the Hernandez political offence doctrine in the CARHRIHL.

The GRP has made the resumption of the formal talks impossible by failing to end its complicity with the US in labelling and listing the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as "terrorist." It has also failed to join the NDFP in upholding the Oslo Statements I and II against the "terrorist" listing. Worst of all, it has repeatedly sung duet with the US on the line that the NDFP must capitulate in order to have the names of revolutionary forces removed from the list. It must join the NDFP in complying with the existing agreements to pave the way for the resumption of the formal talks.

2. The demand for capitulation. The NDFP rejects the demand for capitulation carried by the so-called final peace agreement drafted by the GRP. This violates the non-capitulation and substantive agenda provisions in The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalisation of the Reciprocal Working Committees. The NDFP also rejects any attempt to convert the peace negotiations into ceasefire negotiations that lay aside the principle of addressing the root causes of the armed conflict through the negotiations on social, economic and political reforms.

The GRP must comply with the existing agreements. If it does not, how can the NDFP expect that the GRP will ever comply with the comprehensive agreements on the substantive agenda? But it is highly probable that the GRP is already looking for a way to prevent the negotiation of social and economic forms and to scuttle the peace negotiations. It is trying to make the NDFP capitulate and, if the latter does not capitulate, to subsequently escalate the war against the revolutionary forces and people.

It should be realistic and reasonable for the Arroyo regime to agree to the resumption of the formal talks on social and economic reforms. The broad masses of the people expect this; they are looking for way out of the current social, economic and political crisis. After resumption of the formal talks, conversations between special representatives of the GRP and NDFP principals on how to accelerate negotiations and agreements are possible, without violating the existing agreements.

But the problem of the Arroyo regime might be the false illusion that the US can provide it with economic and military assistance sufficient for buoying up the ruling system and defeating the revolutionary forces and people. In the meantime, the regime is becoming more and more isolated, weak and vulnerable to the rising resistance of the people and broad united front of opposition forces. This is the worst time for the Arroyo regime to be arrogant and shun the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

In Memory of Comrade Navam

by

Comrade SK Senthivel

General Secretary of the NDP

It is a year since Comrade Navam (C Navaratnam) passed away on 8th October 2004. The New Democratic Party commemorates his death with revolutionary sentiment. Comrade Navam lived to his last breath as an honest Marxist Leninist. One should make serious note of the fact that it is not an easy task to lead such a life in the current climate. It is of fundamental importance to see one's Marxist Leninist position from one's deeds rather than one's words.

The contemporary national and international situations are complex and involve grave risks. Nationalist positions are upheld vengefully and wickedly. As a result, national oppression assumed the form of war to become the main problem of the country. As a result, each adopts a negative approach of viewing every issue based on one's national feelings. This nationalist viewpoint conceals class exploitation and oppression. Since chauvinistic oppression is the main problem of today, it has to be exposed and opposed. At the same time, the inequalities of the social structure and the class oppression that underlie it cannot be denied. Other forms of oppression too cannot be brushed aside. In the same way, globalisation and economic and military infiltration by imperialism need to be exposed and opposed. It is necessary to emphasise and to advance the struggle for the right to self-determination. At the same time, democracy and human rights should not be denied. These are the positions that we as Marxist Leninists have been emphasising.

Comrade Navam was one who was firm in his stand as a Marxist Leninist. It cannot be concealed that there is a situation of some setback for Marxism Leninism and Socialism. Meantime, imperialism is presenting an illusive impression that it is winning through its programme of globalisation. It is in such a climate that a Marxist Leninist needs to move ahead by demonstrating his determination in policy and firmness in action, and not fall into the traps of illusion set by imperialism. Each Marxist Leninist who has adopted scientific

Marxism as his world outlook should approach everything that is put forward by capitalism with utmost care, and duly recognise the economic proposals and the political strategies that go with them. Capitalism in order to establish itself through these steps also introduces poisonous features on a daily basis into the cultural domain. Each Marxist Leninist needs to clearly recognise and firmly oppose them. It is thus that people could by word and deed be educated and induced to action. Comrade Navam adopted such a position to the end.

Based on historical materialism, Marxist Leninists see clearly the inequality, the nature of exploitation and its sources as manifested in the society of today. They do not in the current social set up suddenly awaken to receive enlightenment in Marxism Leninism. Each is born and grows with the stamp of a class. One's class characteristic and consciousness also develop alongside. At some stage in the course of development when gathered knowledge becomes rational knowledge, people take a closer look at the world and social organisation. The oppressed people in particular, through addressing the problems faced by them based on the questions of why, how, and what for asked repeatedly, become socially aware. A significant section of such socially aware individuals become attracted to the Marxist world outlook. They link themselves with its scientific, practical and realistic functions. They will not remain mere textbook Marxists but, in recognition of the need for a Marxist party that put Marxism into practice, act through joining a Marxist Leninist party.

When one starts to act in this manner, one makes it one's goal to overthrow violently the cruel social structure full of inequality, exploitation and oppression. They take an oath that, besides overthrowing, they will create a new socialist social structure and carry it forward towards a communist structure.

Such Marxist Leninists consider it the duty of their life to struggle against every social injustice and oppression that they see. Besides acting individually, they carry forward struggles by mobilising the people under the party organisation and other mass movements. The battlefields of mass struggle serve as testing grounds for revolutionary struggle of Marxist Leninists for social transformation. Through the struggles each revolutionary fighter is tempered through a variety of experiences. Thus mass struggles play an important part in the growth of the party and in the strengthening of the revolutionary struggle. It is a wrong outlook to seek to build up the party and then carry out mass struggles. It is also a wrong approach to argue that mass

struggles by themselves could bring about social change and that there is no need to emphasise the role of the party. These are issues that concern theory and practice. Comrade Stalin summed it up pithily as “Practice without theory is blind. Theory without practice is sterile”.

Comrade Navam was one who carried forward theory and practice in the above discussed manner through the party organisation and mass struggles. Comrades of today should learn well from his experiences. They are important to our day-to-day practice of Marxism Leninism.

- 1 We should rid ourselves of the conservatism deposited in our minds and finding expression as thoughts and replace them with a scientific Marxist outlook. If we fail to sharpen daily our understanding of Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought in thought and in deed, we are at the risk of being deflected by conservative thinking.
- 2 It is essential to make our daily activities consistent with Marxism Leninism.
- 3 Sheer selfishness is the source of all manner of revisionist and reactionary thought. Hence we should keep ourselves on the guard against selfishness.
- 4 Within and outside the party, every Marxist Leninist should firmly adhere to the method of criticism and self-criticism.
- 5 Every Marxist Leninist should approach matters from objective reality based on Marxist world outlook, and realise that arriving at subjective conclusions is dangerous.
- 6 Every Marxist Leninist should daily and on every important occasion demonstrate progress fearlessly, bravely and confidently, and be an example to others. One should temper himself as a hero in practice rather than as a mere man of words. Mass struggles are the arenas for such training.
- 7 It is important to learn as an object lesson through practice that Marxist Leninists have acted and succeeded through the process of collective decision and individual responsibility in party organisation and in the domain of mass struggle.
- 8 In ideology and in developing policy and carrying it forward, Marxist Leninists should, through practical struggle and day-to-day life style, become newly moulded in one foundry to speak the same language.

- 9 The fundamental duty of Marxist Leninists is to prepare people for the revolution for social change by understanding the essential Marxist truth that the people and only the people are the motive force of history and serving the people among the people.
- 10 Comrade Mao Zedong stated that perfect materialists are fearless, and that it is only conscience that Marxist Leninists need fear, and acted accordingly. Comrade Mao stated clearly and firmly that Marxist Leninists are answerable to the party and the people by their every word and deed. It is important and necessary today for us to act by integrating these ideas into our thinking and actions.

Comrade Navam was an excellent comrade who had in him the aforesaid characteristics, adhered to the Marxist Leninist line, and acted with honesty, determination and confidence. At the same time he was not beyond mistakes or failings. There have been occasions when he put forward conclusions which were subjective and extremist. But, collective debates and practical experience enabled him to recognise such errors and failings through self-criticism. He never hesitated to face criticism or to self-criticise. This has been the basis of the victories of Marxist Leninists. It was an outstanding Marxist Leninist characteristic of Comrade Navam that whatever was put forward by him arose from the needs and interests of the Party and the oppressed people. Our young comrades should acquire this characteristic.

Thoughts of the valuable role of Comrade Navam will spread out wide before us on the occasion of his first death anniversary and whenever we recall memories of him. The most valuable way of remembering Comrade Navam will be to carry out the duties of Marxist Leninists with firmness and confidence, and without any form of reluctance, hesitation or laziness.

[Translation of article in Puthiya Poomi, October 2005]

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International Events

US and Cuba: Katrina Tells the Difference

The cyclone Katrina was not preventable, but its consequences for the lives and livelihoods of its victims were a social disaster that could have been. The flooding due to Katrina was avoidable, and the failure of the government to prevent the suffering was because US capitalism puts profits before human lives, and expects the most vulnerable people to bear the brunt of the consequences.

Experts had repeatedly cautioned that the protective system was inadequate to face a Category 4 or Category 5 cyclone like Katrina hit New Orleans. But, despite a severe cyclone season in 2004, the US government made huge cuts in cyclone and flood-control funding, preventing the completion of millions of dollar's worth of essential work. It is untrue that there was no money to make the city safe because of the imperialist occupation of Iraq. It is not that the funds were being used elsewhere but that the priority for the imperialist rulers is ensuring their resources and markets across the world at gunpoint and not protecting workers and farmers and their homes and livelihoods.

The flooding around New Orleans the day after the cyclone struck caused most deaths. Critics who point to the lack of troops and vehicles for rescue work do not explain why thousands of mostly working-class Black people remained in the area throughout the storm. Katrina Struck Florida on Thursday, 25th August but New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin urged residents to leave only on Saturday, and ordered "mandatory evacuation" on Sunday. Despite the federal government declaring an "emergency" for the region, residents were on their own to get somewhere else to stay, and those with more economic resources fared better.

Before Katrina struck, thousands flocked to the Superdome and the convention centre, the designated shelters, where the conditions were inhuman and degrading without food, water, electricity, hygiene or medical care, and dead bodies were abandoned for days. People fainted in 90-degree heat waiting in vain for transportation. There were robberies during the night. People trapped in the water now got trapped at the 'shelters' for days for lack of transport.

What was worse was the tendency of the establishment and the media to deflect attention from the incompetence of the state by declaring that 'crime and lawlessness' were the problem so that the victims were instantly transformed into the culprits. George Bush added his weight by declaring on ABC's Good Morning America, "I think there ought to be zero tolerance of people breaking the law during an emergency such as this..." –lawlessness thus became the pretext for inaction.

Cyclone Rita struck the region and led to further flooding while relief work progressed at its lethargic pace, serving as further proof that capitalist greed does not care for the environment or human life. Even by big-business media commentators could not help comparing the US response to natural disasters with that of Cuba.

Michael Sneed in a Chicago Sun-Times of 1st September cited a source who has lived in Cuba on and off for 20 years who told him that in Cuba, there is a system in place to bus everybody out of harm's way before the cyclone strikes. The US government had full and advance knowledge of the cyclone approaching New Orleans and Mississippi. It spends millions on recovery and rescue while it could have averted most of the death.

Ben Wisner, a disaster expert from Ohio in a Guardian article in 2001 noted that when Michelle hit Cuba that year, authorities evacuated 700,000 of the country's 11 million people –quite an achievement for a country with a dilapidated fleet of vehicles, fuel shortage and poor road system, and made possible only because of advance preparations and planning, a cadre of local personnel, trust in warnings given and cooperation with the Red Cross.

Similar mobilization took place in 2004 and 2005 for two devastating cyclones, Ivan and Dennis. Destruction by Dennis was valued at \$1 billion, with 70,000 homes demolished, and entire mountaintops razed. But only sixteen were killed. Third World Cuba, with a 45-year economic embargo against it, does what the richest imperialist country cannot, because the Revolution puts lives first while capitalism puts profits first.

US: Anti-War Protest Grows

Thousands have continued to protest in several major cities of the US protesting against the unjust war in Iraq. In Washington DC, around 370

demonstrators against the war in Iraq, including Cindy Sheehan, now a symbol of the U.S. peace movement, courted arrest on Monday 26th September during a protest outside the White House.

AFL-CIO, the largest trade union umbrella organisation in the US, at its convention in August passed a resolution demanding a rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq –the first time that the AFL-CIO has ever taken a public stance against an ongoing U.S. war.

To add to the woes of the US presidency, public confidence in the Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq has slumped to levels comparable with the worst during the Vietnam War. Doubts about the conduct of the war have now spread to some of the main media and even right-wing Republicans like Newt Gingrich are beginning to have their doubts about US policy in Iraq.

Iran: Confronting Nuclear Hypocrisy

After much controversy and repeated threats by the United States and the European Union, the draft resolution against Iran, proposed by Britain, France, Germany and the U.S. was ratified at the meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in September. The ratification of the resolution with 22 votes for, 12 abstentions, and one against went to indicate strong divisions among the 35 member of the Board of Governors.

Observers have questioned the legality of the resolution, since the draft of any resolution should be registered at the IAEA Secretariat 24 hours before any vote, and this procedure was not followed, and the draft directly submitted to the Board of Governors. Although the draft resolution, already a compromise between the US and a less willing EU, was further weakened by the efforts of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) group, Ryma Jama' Hussein, the Malaysian representative on the IAEA board and head of NAM group complained that the draft failed to take on board its suggestion that time and diplomacy be allowed for the matter to be deliberated at the November board meeting and for negotiations to proceed with a view to reaching a consensus decision.

It was a shame that the US, UK and France despite their failure to show that Iran has ever pursued a nuclear weapons programme successfully bullied several countries into denouncing Iran which only exercises the right of a

sovereign country to develop peaceful nuclear power as a source of energy. Fittingly, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2005 has gone to the IAEA and its chief for services rendered to imperialism by faulting Iran.

India, having refused to join the NPT, turned its back on accepting full-scope IAEA safeguards, conducted six nuclear explosions (between 1974 and 1998), and a declared nuclear weapons state, has now, unashamedly, embraced the imperialist double standards on nuclear proliferation indictment of Iran. India's vote in favour of the resolution has embarrassed a section of the Indian establishment and the left parties that support the UPA Government, which are now at a loss to explain the foreign policy of the Government, which is nothing but playing the role of a junior partner to the only global superpower.

UK: More to Conceal than to Reveal

Michael Meacher, UK cabinet minister from 1997 to 2003, who wrote in 2003 that the war on terrorism was bogus and that the 9/11 attacks were only a pretext for the US to use force to secure its global domination, has in his article in the Guardian of 10th September expressed concern that the intelligence agency MI6 could thwart the London bombings investigation.

He draws attention to links between the security services and Muslim groups that may be linked to the London bombs, citing a recent report by the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation, pointing out that an estimated 200 UK resident Pakistani Muslims belonging to the Harkat-ul Ansar terrorist group fought in Bosnia to weaken the Serb government's hold on Yugoslavia, with the full knowledge and complicity of British intelligence agencies. He points out that the UK government's ties with a wider Islamist terrorist network is less well known. Also, former US Federal Prosecutor John Loftus, during a Fox TV interview this summer, reported that British intelligence had used the al-Muhajiroun group in London to recruit Islamist militants with British passports to fight the Serbs in Kosovo.

The Observer Research Foundation argues that individuals who probably orchestrated the London bombings are still not being investigated. Meacher wonders whether the hunt for those behind the London bombings can prevail

against powerful political forces, unless Scotland Yard, in its attempts to uncover the truth, can prevail over MI6, which is trying to cover its tracks and in practice has every opportunity to operate beyond the law under cover of national security.

Palestine: The Struggle Persists

The Israeli pullout from the desperately poor and densely populated Gaza Strip with over 1.3 million Palestinians packed into a thin strip of land 5 miles wide by 25 miles long ended 38 years of military rule in the impoverished territory. The occupied territory comprised over 30 percent of the land with 8,000 Zionist settlers in 21 militarized Israeli settlements and specialized roads, checkpoints, security perimeters, military bases and guard towers, heavily financed and supported by the US. Meanwhile, over a million Palestinians, of whom more than half were refugees of past Israeli expropriations, lived in prison-like conditions with their land and homes constantly bulldozed in efforts to break Palestinian resistance.

The departure of Israeli forces on Sept. 12 was followed by a salvo of Palestinian rockets aimed at southern Israel and, on Sept 18; over 10,000 armed members of Hamas celebrated the event by marching in Gaza City to the cheers of hundreds of thousands. The demonstration, coming one week after Israel completed the evacuation of its forces from the Gaza Strip, was the largest armed Palestinian protest ever and the first where commanders of the armed wing of Hamas made a public appearance. It poses a political challenge to Israeli Premier Sharon, who demands the disarming of all militias and declares that Israel will not allow elections for the Palestinian legislature scheduled for 25th January 2006, if Hamas participates without disarming.

Israel was forced to withdraw, despite years of use of high-tech surveillance, drones and helicopter gunships to hunt down and kill hundreds of Palestinian militants and leaders, more in the way it was forced out of southern Lebanon rather by way of friendly persuasion by its imperialist backers.

Since the Israeli departure the border between southern Gaza and Egypt that was under Israeli control has been opened and the Palestinians celebrated by tearing down sections of the wall. Israel has demanded that Egypt secure the

buffer zone. But that is hard to achieve, given the feeling of solidarity among the Egyptian masses for the Palestinians.

Although the withdrawal is a clear victory for the armed and steadfast resistance of the nearly five-year *Intifada*, all of Gaza's borders, the sea, and even the airspace above still remain under Israeli occupation so that the Palestinian people are still under daily siege. Several observers expect that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza would lead to intensification of its hold on the rest of Palestine under Israeli occupation since 1967: the West Bank with about 210 000 Israeli settlers and areas of Jerusalem and environs with a quarter million. As in Gaza, the Palestinians here face bulldozing of homes, destruction of olive groves and expropriation of water resources so Israel could expand its system of exclusive roads, settlements and security parameters that have taken over 47 percent of the West Bank, and designed to surround and isolate Palestinian towns and cities and deny contiguity of land area.

'Disengagement' in Gaza does not mean that Israel has given up on tightening its grip over Palestine or weakening Palestinian resistance. The resistance knows that this is the time to heighten its efforts in the West Bank and, on 15th September, the day Sharon addressed the UN, protest to Israeli occupation was marked in several cities of the West Bank, with the main demonstration in Ramallah. Other protests were in Jerusalem, Jenin, Tulkarem, Hebron, Salfit, Jericho and Bethlehem. All Palestinian political parties and mass organizations went to the UN head office in Ramallah to hand in a statement of protest.

Sharon, to whose criminal record is now added the building of the several hundred miles long Apartheid Wall in the West Bank for turning Palestinian villages and towns into walled ghettos, responded to the growing resistance in West Bank and to the challenge to his leadership from hardliners within his own party by bombing Hamas targets in Gaza as well as the West Bank. But this is doomed to fail like all earlier attempts of the most heavily armed and technically equipped military force in the world to subdue the Palestinian struggle for justice, despite massive infusions of U.S. economic and military aid to the oppressor for 57 years. The determination of the Palestinian people, like that of the people of Vietnam not long ago, is too formidable for any oppressor.

The Philippines

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) today extended its offer of possible alliance and cooperation with patriotic, democratic and critical-minded officials and soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) even as it cited widespread restiveness within the AFP made worse by desperate measures in the past days by President Arroyo to stop military officials from testifying on the rigging of the 2004 elections.

Nepal:

The unilateral declaration of a three-month ceasefire by the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal in early September has wrong footed King Gyanendra. Every trick played by the dictator since dissolution of parliament in February has exploded in his face. Within the country, he is now politically more isolated than ever, with the major political parties nearing consensus among them as well as with the Maoists about democracy in Nepal and the future of the now discredited monarchy. Meantime, the Maoists have, though recent interviews with the Indian media and discussions with political parties made some progress in dispelling the wrong impression that they are a group of terrorists acting to convert Nepal into a one party dictatorship and destabilise India.

The dictator's much publicised 'walk about' among the people in mid September, in company of soldiers and bodyguards on full alert, hardly convinced any. However, he could count on the support of all forces opposed to democracy in Nepal, the Indian ruling classes and the US imperialists, in particular.

The dictator has clearly become even more desperate to the point of making new legislation in October that criticising the King is a criminal offence. This is now legally challenged by journalists and lawyers.

NDP Diary

Press Communiqué of the NDP

NDP Opposes the State of Emergency

22nd August 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party in his press communiqué of 22nd August 2005 made the following statement.

The action of the President in imposing a State of Emergency and extending it with parliamentary approval points to the prospect of the Government putting into effect several of its ulterior motives. This poses a threat to the three and a half years' old Memorandum of Understanding and the Ceasefire Agreement. A fearful situation has arisen in which the State of Emergency could be used to deny and to violate the basic democratic and human rights of the people, especially in the North East and the Hill Country, workers and peasants. Hence the New Democratic Party strongly condemns the imposition of the State of Emergency, which gives additional powers to the police and the armed forces, and demands its withdrawal.

The killing of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 12th of August has been used as the pretext for the declaration of the State of Emergency. It has been extended to a month with the support of a parliamentary majority. The parties constituting the government, the opposition UNP, the JVP and the JHU have voted together to express their chauvinistic ruling class stand. The police and the armed forces are certain to use the powers granted to them under the Emergency Regulations to carry out abuses that transcend normal laws. Searches, roundups, inspections, arrests, detention torture and false charges will occur as in the past. As a result there is the danger of the disruption of the three and a half year's long environment of peace and the emergence a dark period of people living in fear and a state of terror. The Government has created a situation in which democratic and trade union struggles by the peasants and workers, and employees of the state and private sectors and other protests will be stopped and defeated using the same emergency regulations.

Therefore, the New Democratic Party demands that the State of Emergency, which will be used in a way detrimental to the people of the North East and the Hill Country, workers and peasants, state and private sector employees and the people as a whole, should be retracted. At the same time it emphasises that the government and the LTTE should without delay take part in discussions and arrive at the necessary agreement for all concerned to stop forthwith the killings that take place on a daily basis and to refrain from acts in breach of the Ceasefire Agreement.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

NDP Condemns Attack on Newspaper Office

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party in his press communiqué of 25th August 2005 made the following statement.

The hand-bomb attack on the office of the ‘Sudar Oli’ and ‘Udhayan’ newspapers last week and the attack on the ‘Sudar Oli’ journalist at the JVP demonstration two days ago are acts chauvinistic fervour that are hostile to democracy and media freedom. These are not merely unruly attempts to intimidate Tamil media and media persons into submission but also to threaten the entire Tamil population. The New Democratic Party strongly condemns both incidents. It insists that the government should conduct the necessary inquiries and take appropriate action concerning these two fierce acts.

Hand-bombing the branch office of the ‘Sudar Oli’ and ‘Udhayan’ newspapers and attacking the ‘Sudar Oli’ journalist at the JVP demonstration are unruly acts of intimidation that deny democracy, freedom of opinion and the right to gather news, and demonstrate the bitter hostility of the JVP towards Tamil journalists. One could see that the JVP seeks to stir feelings of ethnic tension, hatred and fanaticism between the Tamil and Sinhalese people to strengthen its vote bank. The New Democratic Party points out that the Sinhalese people should not fall prey to the chauvinistic fanatical acts of the JVP.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

The Central Committee of the NDP Calls for the Boycott of the Presidential Polls

6th September 2005

The Central Committee of the New Democratic Party has passed the following unanimous resolution regarding the forthcoming Presidential Election.

The system of presidential rule has not failed to produce any results or benefits concerning the development of the country, the elevation of the living standard of the people or the basic right to existence of the nationalities. At the same time the executive presidential system has been one that has denied the demands and rights of the entire working people and the nationalities to exercise oppression in its various forms. It was the wish of the Party that a common candidate was put forward on behalf of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities and the left and democratic forces of in the South, in opposition to that system and the constitution that enabled it, and calling for a change. The Party appeals to the entire population to spoil their ballot papers as an expression of their protest.

The late JR Jayawardane and the UNP introduced the system of executive presidential rule introduced into this country in 1978. They exercised a 17-year long rule of darkness using that constitution. From 1994, the SLFP and its allied have under the leadership of the President Chandrika Kumaratunga have ruled the country under that system. After a total of 27 years of presidential rule, the country has not moved in the direction of progress or welfare for its people. Instead, the people of the country have experienced problems, crises and degeneration of the economy, of the political and social systems, and of education, health and culture, as burdens, sorrow and cruelty. Meanwhile, the presidential system has paved the way and welcomed the infiltration of imperialist and regional hegemonic capital and their political and military intervention.

It was especially under this presidential system that the quarter century long war of chauvinistic oppression was imposed on the North East and the Tamil nationality. Its impact had severe consequences for the Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities. It did not spare the Sinhalese people in regions bordering the North East. That is why the Party totally rejects the process of electing someone as President under a system of executive presidency, which

has neither brought any benefit to nor solved the problems of the workers, peasants, intellectuals and other working people and the nationalities of the country. It calls upon the people to invalidate their votes and thereby express their protest.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

NDP Condemns Arrest of Youth in Hill Country

25th September 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party in his press communiqué of 25th September 2005 made the following observations.

The government has started to make use of the Emergency Rules to defeat the people's movement that is being carried forward democratically to oppose the Upper Kotmale Scheme with disastrous consequences. It is as a consequence that the police arrested five youth who were putting up lawfully printed posters issued by the People's Movement Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Scheme announcing its forthcoming conference, confiscated the van used by them and surrendered it to the law court. The New Democratic Party strongly condemns this action of the police and the inducement by the government. The Party views this undemocratic action by the police as an attempt to use threat to force the abandonment of the people's movement against the Upper Kotmale Scheme. There is also suspicion whether the leadership of certain political and trade unions are behind the police action, for the purpose of disrupting the conference of 25th September organised to express democratic protest and other related protest movements. Therefore all the people should cooperate to enable the people's movement against the Upper Kotmale Scheme to overcome all obstacles and achieve success.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

NDP's Call to Mobilise in the Demonstration

30th September 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party in his press communiqué of 30th September 2005 made the following public appeal.

If the people of the Hill Country do not stop the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project, several more disastrous projects of a similar nature will be introduced in the Hill Country in the name of development, and the land and the people of the Hill Country will face destruction. The people, workers, youth and students should mobilise to defeat the conspiracy of the ruling classes to achieve their ulterior motives by destroying natural splendour and pollute the environment in order to generate 150 MW of electricity. It is necessary for the entire people to stand up against the Upper Kotmale project being given away to a Japanese company. Hence, the New Democratic Party calls upon the people to join in the demonstration and rally on 4th October in Talawakelle Town in protest of the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project.

He also requested the Party and mass organisations led by it to join with the people to express their protest and condemnation.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

NDP Strongly Condemns Attack on Demonstrators by Thugs

3rd October 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party issued the following press communiqué of 3rd October 2005 condemning the attack by thugs on demonstrators against the Upper Kotmale Scheme.

The two chauvinistic parties have from time to time used thugs and hooligans to crush the just demands and struggles of the Hill Country Tamils. The melee caused by setting thugs on the protest demonstration organised on last Sunday by the People's Movement Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Scheme is one such act. The New Democratic Party strongly condemns it. The party with

foresight draws attention to the risk of such unruly acts being directed against future demands of the Hill Country Tamils. Our appeal to the Hill Country Tamils is that they should not in any way allow room for such acts.

The two main political cum trade union organisations of the Hill Country are competing to support one or the other of the presidential candidates of two chauvinistic political parties. But on the question of the Upper Kotmale scheme that would spell doom to Talawakelle an important region of the Hill Country , they are on retreat rather than oppose the scheme. Neither the members of the Hill Country People's Front nor its leader, who issued a statement in support of the protest struggle of Sunday participated in the struggle. Meantime, the Party, under the leadership of its General secretary SK Senthivel and Hill Country Regional Secretary S Panneerselvam participated in large numbers and gave strong support to the struggle. Similarly, Mr Joseph, leader of the Si Lanka Teachers Union, Sarath Fernando, leader of the Railway Employees Union, S Vijayaratnam, leader of the Association of Fishermen's Unions, Mekala Shanmugam, social activist and Rev Fr Geetha Vongalen participated alongside workers and youth to express their protest.

Remembering Comrade Navam

Meetings to commemorate the first death anniversary (8th October 2005) of Comrade S Navaratnam (Navam) were held in Colombo and in Jaffna. The meeting in Colombo was held at the Auditorium of the Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo 6 on 16th October and chaired by Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the NDP. Comrade S Thevarajah, Attorney-at-Law delivered the address on the life and contributions of Comrade Navam, and Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the NDP delivered the memorial address titled "Peace and Democracy in the Current Circumstances". [An English translation of the memorial address is included in this issue].

Sri Lankan Events

The forthcoming presidential election was not anticipated by the outgoing president, who hoped that the Supreme Court would rule in favour of her serving as president until close to the end of 2006. Mahinda Rajapaksha was named as the SLFP candidate amid controversy concerning his alleged mishandling of tsunami related funds, and reservations that President Chandrika Kumaratunga is known to have had about his being her successor.

Rajapaksha, justified the fears of Kumaratunga by signing separate deals with the JVP and the JHU, in each of which he yielded to pressures from the two prospective allies on issues relating to the resolution of the national question and even the matter of setting up a joint mechanism (PTOMS) to provide relief to the tsunami victims in the North East. This has deepened divisions within the SLFP, with leading figures in the SLFP, including Kumaratunga and Anura Bandaranaike and several ministers, openly expressing their displeasure about the involvement of the JVP and to a less extent the JHU, as partners in the presidential election campaign.

It is particularly embarrassing for Kumaratunga, because it was as a result of disagreement on the signing of the PTOMS agreement by the government that the JVP left the coalition, and the presidential candidate has given into the JVP demand for abandoning the PTOMS to secure its support. The JVP is exploiting the opportunity to return to the fold of the government, although it may be at the cost of splitting the SLFP down the middle. Thus, the JVP is likely to be the main beneficiary of the presidential election, whatever may its outcome be, since the crisis in the SLFP will only serve to strengthen the JVP's bid to become the second main Sinhala chauvinist party in the country.

The UNP candidate and Leader of the Opposition, Ranil Wickramasinghe, has not made clear how he intends to find a solution for the national question. His programme is full of promises which could have been fulfilled by the UNP during its seventeen years of absolute power. While taking advantage of the lack of appeal of Rajapaksha's line on the national question to the minority

nationalities, Wickramasinghe does not commit himself to the principle of self-determination. His record during the year and a half from the start of the negotiations with the LTTE is no more convincing than his conduct in the years preceding his election as prime minister.

A significant difference between the two concerns the foreign power that will dictate policy if either is elected. Neither candidate has credible plans for pulling the country out of the mess in which it has been landed by the war of national oppression or for ridding the country of the disastrous economic policy pursued by successive governments under pressure from the imperialist funding agencies. Nor do the candidates have any intention of replacing the executive presidency and the constitution that made it possible with one that allows democratic devolution of power.

The elections offered an excellent opportunity to expose the bankruptcy of the executive presidency and the prevailing system of government, through the fielding of a common candidate of the left in consultation with the national minorities. It would have allowed the left to impress upon the masses the urgency of finding a just and lasting solution to the national question and dealing with the issues of national economy and state sovereignty, thereby demonstrating the indifference of the two main candidates towards these key issues. But that was not to be. Three Trotskyite candidates have entered the fray without the slightest consultation with potential allies, while a fourth joined the LSSP and the CP in rallying behind Rajapaksha, despite their declared distaste for the alliance with the JVP. The New Democratic Party, which advocated fielding a common candidate, has recommended that the people should, under the circumstances, boycott the polls, which will not yield a beneficial outcome.

Interestingly, the LTTE, from a purely nationalistic point of view, has declared the election as a matter for the 'Sinhala nation' and refused to endorse any candidate, while denouncing the two main candidates as unreliable. The LTTE, however, has stopped short of calling for a boycott, although fringe organisations close to the LTTE are doing so, much to the embarrassment of the Tamil parliamentarians, of whom some are already canvassing for Wickramasinghe.

The conduct of the Muslim parliamentarians from the East in deciding between the two candidates, demonstrated that political issues are the least of concerns

and that personal rivalries and scrambling for position dominates political decisions. Thus they are likely to continue to be willing to be manipulated by interested parties within and outside the country.

The Hill Country Tamil leaders, after some horse-trading, are to support Wickramasinghe. They claim to have laid down several conditions for their support. But scrapping the Upper Kotmale project is not among them. It is significant that the two leading presidential candidates have yielded to pressure from the local public in Nuraicholai and the Catholic Church against the coal power station and pledged to move it to another site, although there are moves behind the scene to go ahead with the project, since President Kumaratunga has already got an agreement signed with the Chinese government to implement the project in Nuraicholai only weeks ago. The parliamentary representatives of the Hill Country Tamils, on the other hand, have not shown the slightest concern or care to register their strong protest on behalf of the Hill Country Tamils and urge the presidential candidate they support to pledge to stop the Upper Kotmale Project before it is too late to act.

The popular movement against the Upper Kotmale project completed its planned round of campaign, despite betrayal by the leaders of the opportunist trade unions and the main political parties. Planned harassment of the campaigners failed to dampen their enthusiasm, and thuggery and intimidation by the forces of Sinhala chauvinism only hardened the resolve of the campaigners.

The ceasefire agreement between the government and the LTTE is observed increasingly in the breach, following the split engineered in the ranks of the LTTE in the East last year by foreign agents. Indian expansionist meddling continues, while the US feigns better accommodation of the LTTE in anticipation of the election of a government favourable to it and a climate to further intensify infiltration.

The spate of tit-for-tat killings that had intensified in the East has now spread to the North and killings occurring in Colombo as well. While the people expect a more tolerant approach from the LTTE, the conduct of the armed forces and its allies among the Tamil militia is of little help to ease the situation, while the ceasefire becomes even more fragile.

* * * * *

When will this rainstorm cease?

by
Mavai Varothian

The sound of guns loud as thunder
The agony of people in pain
Our heads crushed by legs in boots
A shower of bullets taking lives

A shell accepts its command to go
Lightening strikes the route that it takes
A bird makes sketches in the sky
It quenches the thirst of a flying ball

News of the conflict is announced
in words contradicting themselves
Rain falls announcing the glory
of mankind perishing into earth

Where is the rain to fill the belly of
the poor starved of his rice
living in the hope of salvation for
this land tomorrow, not today?

When will this rainstorm of fire cease
for an end to the sorrow of the
folk that crossed the seas
fleeing from bad life on this land

The old sore of war has led to gangrene
It has cause rot in the main root
Will not this long war ever end?
Will Tamils not live on this land?

Change after change leading to disappointment
Alternate routes leading to disappointment
Today is the opposite of yesterday
Each day determined by destruction

Until our hearts change to
accept multi-ethnic variety of human life
goodwill among men will never come
the rainstorm on this land will never cease

A Prism: Wet with Wars

Sinan Antoon

this is the chapter of
devastation
this is our oasis
an angle where wars intersect
tyrants accumulate around our eyes
and in the shackle's verandah
there is enough space for
applause
let us applaud
another evening climbs
the city's candles
technological hoofs crush the night
a people is being slaughtered across short waves:
but local radio vomits raw statements
and urges us to
applaud
with a skeleton of a burning umbrella
we receive this rain
a god sleeps on our flag
but the horizon is prophetless
maybe they will come if we
applaud
let us applaud
we will baptize our infants with smoke
plough their tongues
with flagrant war songs
teach them the bray of slogans
and leave them beside burning nipples
in an imminent wreckage
and applaud
before we weave an autumn for tyrants
we must cross this galaxy of barbed wires
and keep on repeating
HAPPY NEW YEAR

[Baghdad, March 1991]

Courtesy: Iraqi Poetry Today (Zephyr Press, 2003)
translated from the Arabic by the poet

The Chain

R Murukaiyan

There is a chain around our neck
Made of gold that scatters glitter.
We stroke our moustaches with pride
We rejoice in the goldenness of the chain.
We stroke the golden ornament
In the impoverished hope
Of gently tucking away the intensity
Of the suffereng from hunger and thirst
And always try hard
To praise the ornament.
Do you know the truth my friends?
The causes for the embers in your stomachs
And the parching of your tongues
Live in palaces
They sleep as women surrounding them
Wave the fans gently.
But you know not.
The last bit of the chain around our necks
Is of iron.
Behind,
Starting from the lock at the nape of the neck,
The long link extending far too is rough tough iron.
The last link of the tough steel chain
Is locked on to the loom by the palace dwellers
And the key is in their pocket.
While the palace dwellers
Sleep as women surrounding them
Wave the fans gently,
We rejoice in the goldenness of the chain
Even in the long drawn day of sorrow.
With hope, we always try hard
To praise the ornament.
There is a chain around our neck
Made of gold that scatters glitter.