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On Receiving News of the War

Isaac Rosenberg

Snow is a strange white word.
No ice or frost
Has asked of bud or bird
For Winter's cost.

Yet ice and frost and snow
From earth to sky
This Summer land doth know.
No man knows why.

In all men's hearts it is.
Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould.

Red fangs have torn His face.
God's blood is shed.
He mourns from His lone place
His children dead.

O! ancient crimson curse!
Corrode, consume.
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom.

[Isaac Rosenberg (1890 –1918) was a poet of the First World War. His "*Poems from the Trenches*" are recognised as some of the most outstanding written during the First World War.]

From the Editor's Desk

The brutal attack by the police on workers of the Katunayaka Free Trade Zone protesting against the private pension scheme proposal of the government is further evidence that the Sri Lankan government, for all its patriotic pretences and claims to uphold the sovereignty of the country, is a reactionary oppressive government dancing to the tune of imperialist financial organisations, in this instance the IMF, which has since 2002 demanded pension reforms globally and criticised the Sri Lankan government in 2007 for not implementing pension reforms.

It was not by chance that the proposed scheme, an ill-designed package by which employees risk losing part or all of their accumulated savings, had features in common with one adopted by Ireland to meet the conditions of the IMF 'rescue package'.

Job security is a thing of the past in the private sector in Sri Lanka, with employment increasingly on contract or casual basis. This has further weakened the already weak and compromised trade union movement in the private sector. Thus, private sector workers, who are particularly vulnerable to market forces, are in even greater need than their state sector counterparts to develop and mobilise their resources to struggle for their fundamental rights and social security.

The proposed state pension scheme is a poor substitute for existing retirement benefit schemes. It was certainly not the intention of the government to improve on existing benefits. The intended beneficiaries were foreign and local employers, and the government, which would have ready access to the savings of the workers to deal with its cash flow problems. However, any scheme to which an employee is required to contribute should be part of the terms and conditions of employment and based on collective consultation and individual consent.

The struggle of the FTZ workers has halted the passing into law of the proposed scheme. But the government has not yet given up on the scheme, and the workers should be on even greater alert. Any alternative retirement benefit scheme is unacceptable if it is not collectively and individually more beneficial to the employees. A worker should have the right to keep out of any new scheme and remain with an existing scheme if he/she so desires. It is the responsibility of the trade unions to ensure that its members do not lose out. But the record of the trade union movement in Sri Lanka has been disappointing in that respect. It should be noted that the workers initiated the walk out on 24th May, outside the control of the vacillating trade union leadership, and that the trade unions caught up

subsequently to claim leadership. This has lessons for the entire working class, and especially in the plantations, where workers have been regularly let down in their demands for higher wages by leading trade unions who act in collaboration with the employers.

The struggle of the FTZ workers is very significant in two ways. Firstly, it has shown that the workers are capable of mobilising themselves in struggle pushing aside all obstacles, including their own trade union bosses. Secondly, and more importantly, it has shown that they can stand up to an oppressive state and win. Such victories for the masses have been rare in the recent history of Sri Lanka, given the prospect of using the issue of 'terrorism' to subdue any protest. Thus the victory of the FTZ workers is a great inspiration to the oppressed workers, peasants, and other toiling masses as well as to the oppressed nationalities.

It is at the same time sad to note that the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil leaders have not shown any interest in the pension issue and, even worse, failed to denounce the police attack on unarmed workers and the killing of an innocent youth. While the loyalty of all nationalists in Sri Lanka has been to the exploiting classes, the record of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalists has been wanting in not only their attitude towards their own working classes but also the attitude towards imperialist exploitation and oppression.

It is in this context that the silence of the Tamil National Alliance, the only minority nationality party that is not part of the government, raises serious concerns. Does it mean that the TNA endorses the pension scheme as originally intended? Does it mean that it approves of the handling of the protests by the state? Or, does the TNA, as in its past (when it was known as ACTC, FP, TULF etc.), refuse to take a stand on issues with no direct bearing on the Tamil nationalist agenda?

What was true of Tamil narrow nationalism all along was that it counted on imperialism to resolve the national question. Thus the indifference of the TNA on the private pension scheme and police violence makes one wonder if the attitude of the TNA is conditioned by its desire not to antagonise imperialism.

The current situation is one where the 'old left' has mortgaged its soul to the bourgeoisie and the leadership of the nationalities is with the most reactionary sections of the population. Thus there is a pressing need for an alternate leadership for the oppressed working masses and nationalities. All genuine progressive, democratic and left forces should rise to the occasion.

Autonomy must be Achieved based on the Right to Self-Determination within a United Sri Lanka

[This report contains a summary of the address by Comrade SK Senthivel and the resolutions adopted at the Fifth Northern Regional Congress of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party held in Jaffna on 26th February 2011 with delegates participating from five districts.]

Although it is more than twenty months since the war was brought to an end, the Mahinda Chinthanaya government has been unable put forward any solution to the national question, which continued to be the cause for that cruel war. The fundamental reason for it is the chauvinistic capitalist ruling class stand. The national contradiction and national oppression continue as a result. As a result the national contradiction and national oppression are prolonged. Thus, the denial of democracy and the politics of concession and development cannot obscure the reality that the national question occupies a central place in Sri Lankan politics. That is why the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party continues to emphasise the need to find a just political solution to the national question through autonomy, based on the right to self-determination within a united Sri Lanka.

The Tamil people have experienced unprecedented misery and ruin as a result of the cruelty of the war and the wrong theory and practice of their struggle. The entire responsibility for it has to be borne by the chauvinistic capitalist ruling classes of the South and the narrow nationalists of the North who have been advocating

Tamil nationalism. Nationalism, be it that of a country or of a nationality, could be upheld from either of two standpoints. One is progressive and the other is reactionary. The nationalism of the country that was talked about since well before independence has been developed and put forward on a reactionary footing as chauvinism. Likewise, Tamil ethnic nationalism too has been developed and put forward on a reactionary footing as narrow nationalism. The Sinhala ruling class forces and the forces of Tamil elitist political domination benefitted from them. The consequent misery and the losses were, however, suffered by the ordinary Tamil toiling masses.

Therefore, the Tamil people should henceforth reject the blood stained policies that seek to carry forward Tamil nationalism along the beaten track of emotional politics as reactionary, narrow Tamil nationalism with the aim of gathering votes. The younger generation should understand the Tamil nationalist authoritarian political trend and come forward to adopt progressive Tamil nationalism. The Tamil people have experienced, in the form of a bloodbath with heavy loss of life during the final stages of the war, the consequences of the submission of the Tamil leadership to the forces of foreign imperialism and regional hegemony. Despite that bitter experience, for the Tamil National Alliance to wait with slavish devotion on India and the US to deliver a political solution is only to mislead the Tamil people along their reactionary, narrow-nationalist path.

All the policies and forms of struggle adopted by the Tamil leaders in the name of Tamil nationalism during the past century have met with total failure. Those leaders are now seeking to carry forward the same policies and forms of struggle under different names. They are dusting up their Tamil nationalist politics once more to present it to the people to get their votes. Some of them mask their politics of absolute surrender with a facade of empty boast. Yet others pin their faith on the 'Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam' and indulge in directionless politics. But the Tamil people observe political silence in a mood of despair. The reasons are not only the denial of democracy, the shattering of normal life, the absence of a political solution, oppression, anxiety and fear. The real and essential reason is bitterness and revulsion about the politics of the entire leadership that upheld Tamil nationalism and desired Tamil Eelam.

Under these conditions, the only remaining political path for the Tamil people is the path of mass struggle. Let us make our own policies and programmes. Let us mobilise. Let us create our own

leadership. Let us ensure that the policies evolved, based on past experience, serve the interests of the working people who comprise the vast majority of the Tamil people. Let us unite the broad masses on the basis of a general programme that can rid society of caste based hierarchy, denial of social justice, oppression of women and other forms of discrimination. Let us blast away the slavish faith in foreign forces. Let us abandon narrow nationalism and join hands with the Sinhalese working masses. Let us explain the rights of the oppressed Tamil nationality to the Sinhalese people and make them unite with us in our path of mass struggle. This alone could be the correct political choice before the Tamil people.

In a climate in which, the policies and practices adopted thus far among the Tamil people in three stages have failed leading to ruin, the opening of a fourth front based on the above approach alone could serve as a correct and far sighted approach. Unless such fresh alternative policies and practices are not considered among the Tamil people, there will be no opening to a path for liberation.

Hence, the Party declares through this Congress that, while carrying forward its own policy and programme, it is willing to collaborate on the basis of a common programme with a progressive Tamil nationalism that would emerge through the rejection of Tamil narrow nationalism.

Resolutions adopted at the Fifth Northern Regional Congress of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

1. Although it is nearly two years since the end of the war, the people have not fully recovered from the impact of the war and the misery caused by it. The national contradiction and oppression still persist. Hence, we emphasise that a political solution to the national question should be put forward without procrastination. We also emphasise that such a solution should be one of full autonomy within a united Sri Lanka, based on the right to self determination.
2. Resettlement, restoration and rehabilitation should not merely be in name and a situation should be created soon in which the people could live freely and normally in their areas of residence without any form of interference, threat or pressure.
3. Resettlement should be expedited in Valikaamam North and other regions where High Security Zones continue to exist.

4. The state of emergency should be lifted forthwith and the Prevention of Terrorism Act should be rescinded.
5. All political prisoners should be freed and particulars of missing persons should be published.
6. Due steps should be taken to put an end to murders, robberies and kidnappings said to be carried out by unidentified persons, and the culprits brought before the law.
7. Democracy and normal life should be re-established, and full civilian administration should be implemented.
8. Basic democratic and human rights and trade union rights should be protected, and the freedom of the media and freedom of expression should be established.
9. The rising prices of goods should be arrested and the rise in cost of living should be controlled. Wage increases should be granted to all employees in keeping with the rise in prices and cost of living.
10. A normal environment should be ensured where the peasants, daily wage earners and fisher folk could carry out their work freely and without fear.
11. The people should be awakened to and mobilised against the venomous effects of the consumer culture resulting from the open economy under imperialist globalisation.
12. The people should be awakened against infiltration by the US imperialist and Indian hegemonic powers that are undermining the sovereignty of Sri Lanka and unity among its nationalities.
13. Let us build up a new Sri Lanka of unity, equality, freedom and prosperity by putting forward basic demands for the welfare of the toiling Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil masses and mobilising them along the path of mass struggle.
14. Let us join hands with the anti-imperialist struggles of the suppressed and oppressed countries and people of the world.

Nationalism and Nationhood under Neo-colonialism - 3

Multi Ethnic Nationhood

Imayavaramban

While the concept of the nation state developed alongside capitalism, the development of the modern capitalist state led to the suppression of a number of ethnic as well as national identities through a variety of instruments.

The British national identity emerged at the cost of ethnic/national identities such as the Cornish, Welsh and Scottish identities. The assimilation of the Irish to the British identity was, however, successfully resisted, despite the oppressive rule forcibly replacing the Gaelic language of the Irish with English. Besides the resentment of the cruel oppression and exploitation by the British, religion and geography played their respective roles in the resistance to integration.

The French national identity forged under Napoleon too implied the suppression of all languages spoken in France other than official French, an essentially urban language in which only a minority was fluent. The Spanish state was, however, less successful in the suppression of ethnic and linguistic identities, with some regional languages including Catalan and Basque now enjoying semi-official status and some enjoying formal recognition. Portugal, on the other hand, recognises only Mirandese as a regional language. In Italy, Italian, which was the dominant language/dialect of Tuscany, became the main language of Italy since its unification in 1861. Dialects/regional languages persist, and the adoption of Italian as the official language of the state in 2007, met with significant dissent in parliament. The German language has been more successfully unified to become the standard language in Germany and elsewhere. Russia has Russian as the official language of the federal government, while more than twenty regional languages continue to enjoy co-official status since the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

The emergence of the nation state and the development of capitalism have, together, led to the emergence of a dominant, if not common, language in each of several countries of Europe. While the expansion of capitalist economic activity has been a decisive factor in the marginalisation of minority languages and —to a considerable extent— ethnic identity, the state has often been instrumental in the suppression of ethnic and linguistic identities. Ethno linguistic identities have emerged as nationalist and secessionist movements in parts of Europe against a background of oppression by the state and a relatively less developed industrial capitalist economy.

What distinguishes a language from a dialect is still disputed by linguists. However, a rise in literacy, a common educational system, industrial development, expansion of economic activity and mobility of the population have often weakened and/or marginalised dialects and regional languages. Thus, in advanced capitalist countries, capitalism has been the driving force in the emergence of a common language. Although there still are developed capitalist countries with multiple linguistic identities, the situation has been rather different in the Third World.

Feudal imperial rule in Asia even under powerful empires like the Mauryan Empire —which at its peak was instrumental in the spread of Buddhism across the Indian subcontinent and afar— and the Mogul Empire —with rulers ranging from intolerant expansionists to tolerant rulers like Akbar— despite aggressive propagation of religion at times, did not suppress ethnic and linguistic identities. The empire of Rajaraja, the most powerful that South India ever saw, despite its record of ruthless plunder in conquered territories, did not seek to eradicate ethno-linguistic identities. Yet religious conversion and cultural hegemony have had a lasting impact on communities under foreign domination. The same could be said of the Chinese and other empires of East Asia. Even the highly destructive expansion of the early Mongolian empire did not eliminate local identities.

If a feudal empire did not indulge in genocide, that was probably not due to the benevolence of the ruler but because it was unnecessary and not in the interest of the empire. European colonial expansion indulged in genocide in the Americas and Australia for territorial expansion. Africa was to become a massive resource of not only raw materials but also labour in the form of slaves, as were parts of Asia in the form of indentured labour. While the nature of the impact of European colonialism on ethnic and linguistic identity varied from region to region as well as period of history, the magnitude of the impact was greater than under earlier imperial invasions and territorial expansion. This

was due to the combination of capitalist economic expansion and colonial conquest.

Thus, where part or whole of a community was drawn into the economic activity of the colonial power, it was also subjected to the cultural hegemony of the latter. That led to major changes in the cultural identity of sections of the community as well as to the emergence of distinct ethnic groups, based on newly acquired religious, linguistic and cultural identities. Communities that were not directly exposed to colonialism remained relatively isolated. Economic exploitation of such communities has, despite their isolation and even marginalisation, intensified since the transformation of colonialism into neo-colonialism, and reached new peaks since the globalisation of monopoly capital.

Once initial resistance to colonial conquest was overcome, colonial intervention, especially under conditions of capitalist expansion, became accommodative of the existing feudal or pre-feudal social order in most of the Third World. It suited colonialism to preserve the old social hierarchy to the extent that it served colonial interests. As a result, there was no integration of ethnic groups or local communities into larger social groups, unlike under capitalism in west Europe. Thus even relatively small regions and countries have a large number of distinct ethnic groups as well as communities, including religious and caste groups.

There is a tendency among some to treat each distinct ethnic group as a nation or nationality and prescribe secession as the remedy for oppression and exploitation. This reflects a poor understanding of the concept of nation and its historical development. Questions relating to a sustainable economy and to the nature of the state are rarely considered in such prescriptions. While it is just and correct for an ethnic group to assert its right of to determine its mode of political existence, the right to self determination cannot be reduced to merely the right to secession. From a Marxist perspective, the right to self determination is an effective means of uniting nations and nationalities with a common interest, which in today's context is to resist imperialist and hegemonic domination and exploitation. Thus it is important to view the right to self determination in its true spirit and apply it to nationalities, national minorities and other socio-ethnic groups that are individually not in a position to become independent nation states.

At another extreme is the chauvinism of a dominant or a majority nationality that seeks to suppress all other national and ethnic identities by the denial of contiguous territory, forced assimilation of sections of the population and the denial of cultural, linguistic and religious rights.

Such oppression divides the people while strengthening the hands of the local exploiting classes and their imperialist masters.

There are situations, especially in the tribal regions of many countries, where several ethnic groups share a territory while preserving their identities. The level of economic activity and the nature of the interaction between the groups have, thus far, not necessitated the merging or elimination of identities. Commerce and urbanisation have further contributed to the blurring of geographical boundaries based on ethno-linguistic identity, as well as led to the coexistence of several ethnic groups in one region and to multi-lingualism.

Multi-lingualism does not mean that each member of a multi-ethnic community is fluent in several languages, but that a large section of the population uses different languages for different social activities. It is well known that, many Italians and American Blacks use the formal or standard language for official and business purposes and in dealings with members of other communities but revert to their 'dialect' —often unintelligible to members of other communities— for communication within their community. Although modernisation and migration have diminished the role of the dialects, what is significant is that linguistic identities have endured even in advanced capitalist countries.

While a local language or dialect became the common language in advanced capitalist countries, in several countries of the Third World the language of the colonial masters assumed the role of the common or link language, despite the prevalence of strong linguistic nationalist sentiments, as in several states of India. In the colonial and early post-colonial period, dominance of the language of the colonial power was the result of its foremost position in the affairs of the state, in the economic and political activities of the local elite, in the spheres of education and modern professions, and in the print media. Even as colonialism gave way to neo-colonialism, English had consolidated its position in the former British colonies and, under globalised imperialism, its US version has, besides gradually edging out other European languages from ex-colonies, also gained importance in parts of the Third World that were outside direct colonial control.

Thus we are in a situation where the elite classes of many Third World countries are comfortable with English as the dominant language in business activities as well as in inter-state as well as intra-state affairs. Also, despite the strong nationalist sentiments expressed by the elite classes of South and Southeast Asia, the *de facto* 'common language' for the affairs of the state is not any of the national languages. The question of language, therefore, remains important in the struggle against neo-colonialism, not by way of rejection of foreign

languages as unnecessary or undesirable, but to assert the voice of the oppressed masses. But, the way in which the language question has been posed in multi-ethnic societies of the Third World has led to bitter competition for hegemony with each other while meekly accepting the dominance of English or another language of the neo-colonial masters.

Thus, in dealing with the national question in the Third World in the context of neo-colonial domination and exploitation and the struggle for liberation, there is a need to review and, where necessary, redefine national identity in terms of the objective reality in countries and regions subject to oppression by a coalition of neo-colonial forces and the feudal-capitalist elite classes.

There is a dangerous tendency to define a nation as comprising a single 'race' or ethnic group and proceeding from there to demand secession or the right to secession for that 'nation'. The logical end of this approach would be to demand the fragmentation of most countries of the Third World into many—in some cases several hundred— nation states. Such fragmentation is certainly not in the interest of the oppressed masses.

It is necessary therefore to attempt to recognise nations and nationalities in societies lacking in capitalist development in the context of the common interest of a people who share, besides a contiguous territory, a sense of community, despite ethnic distinctions, and a need to protect themselves from globalised capital and 'great nation' oppression. Language need not be a divisive force: where ethnic groups coexist and share a group of languages, that commonality could serve to define a nation or a nationality in terms of common or shared languages in place of a single common or dominant language.

Multi-ethnic societies are a greater reality today than ever before, owing to the migration of labour as well as the forced migration of populations caused by war, national oppression, natural disaster and economic crises among other reasons. What is important in the context of imperialist domination, however, is the encouragement of multi ethnic societies to preserve themselves as multi-ethnic nations or countries with a multitude of nationalities.

It is particularly important to be on the guard against attempts to divide them based on ethnic identity and at the same time against the denial of the right to the identity of any ethnic group in the name of national unity.

(To be continued)

What Does “Peace” Really Mean?

Reflections on Post-War Sri Lanka

Asvaththamaa

Introduction

Sri Lanka is enjoying a relative peace —rather negative peace— after a thirty year civil war which has devastated and fragmented the Sri Lankan society and left a lasting impression on the society. More than eighteen months have passed since the end of war and several initiatives have been taken in the post-war period to ensure lasting peace. Against this backdrop, ‘peace-building’ is at a crossroads, as theory as well as practice. The term ‘peace-building’ in the era of ‘war of terror’ is an oxymoron. The question remains ‘what kind of peace is being built in the post 9/11 era’. Peace-building does not occur in a vacuum, so it is important to look at the ambit of realpolitik in order to understand peace in post-war Sri Lanka. National security is preferred to human security in a world that seems to be moving from prevention to pre-emption. The post-war period and the initiatives to maintain and to make peace itself a process —the peace process— need to be thoroughly understood to achieve long lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

Like many civil wars having transnational and international characteristics, most peacemaking processes have significant cross-border dimensions. Regional neighbours could regard a post-war peace as an opportunity to bring stability to the region or as a threat to what has been a profitable status quo. Importantly, political actors in a country torn by civil war could become subject to a series of external events and processes over which they have no control. This seems to be the situation in Sri Lanka, where external aid from regional and global actors has, in the name of assistance, dominated the development discourse in the post-war setting. Does such ‘assistance’ comprise genuine aid or a tussle for dominance in Sri Lanka? Are our policy makers conscious of the long term consequences of this help from ‘friendly states’. It is wrong to assume that development will bring peace and to see assistance from ‘friendly states’ as mere goodwill measures. At present Sri Lankan peace is built on a heavily militarised state where development is the watchword and way for lasting peace. It is widely believed that a key element of peace and reconstruction

interventions is the acceptance of neo-liberal economic norms. Thus peace-building is often accompanied by marketisation, privatisation, the formalisation of the economy, curtailment of the public sector, and the opening up of the economy to international economic forces. International reconstruction assistance is usually explicitly linked to an acceptance of World Bank and International Monetary Fund stipulations that emphasise the foregoing. The role of the market in post-war societies is decidedly mixed. In a significant number of cases 'peace' has been accompanied by mass unemployment, a brain-drain, aid dependency, rural-urban migration, and the failure of the economy to find a model for sustainable development in the context of unrestrained international market forces. Is Sri Lanka heading in same direction?

Another shortcoming of the current post-war peace process in Sri Lanka is that it fails to address the underlying causes of conflict. Instead, it concentrates on the manifestations of conflict. Ministering to conflict manifestations often could make a qualitative difference to people's lives (e.g., through the repatriation of refugees or the reconstruction of homes), without dealing with underlying causes of conflict, the conflict may be stored for future generations. Internationally supported efforts to deal with conflict manifestations are often reduced to technocratic interventions (such as the reform of government institutions under the 'good governance' agenda) but are less well-equipped to deal with behaviour and perceptions. This affective dimension of conflict, and the related attitudes of hatred, prejudice, grievance, fear, and insecurity, hold the key to the transformation of violent conflict but are yet often overlooked by technocratic interventions.

Post-war peace has reinforced power-holders and replicates exclusive patterns of social and political relations. Peace has a strong tendency to entrench the legitimacy and position of the antagonists. Those who held the guns or the dominant position on the battlefield when the war was won, become partners in power, regardless of their authority to represent their community. Other voices, often those without firepower, tend to go unheard. If we look around the structure of many post-war peace building experiences, peace prevents the break-up of the 'civil war cartel' and the development of political parties not based on exclusive ethnic programmes. So while the form of the conflict may change, the essence of the conflict remains. Moreover, in many peace processes, participants have been unwilling or unable to challenge prevailing patterns of social and political organisation. Although violence ends, patterns of property ownership, patriarchy, and political participation remain unchanged. As a result, the 'peace' becomes essentially conservative rather than transformative.

Re-orienting Peace

Peace is often used as a concept to refer to what Plato would have described as an 'ideal form', or to depict a condition where there is no overt violence, particularly between or within states. Peace is rarely conceptualised, even by those who often allude to it. Not only has it rarely been addressed in detail as a concept, its theorisation is normally tucked away in debates about responding to war and conflict (Richmond 2005). This is true of states, institutions, organisations, and agencies, whose officials and representatives often present peace as an ideal form worth striving to achieve, and which dominate the many discourses of International relations in policy and in intellectual terms. But the matter of the fact is that it is not in ideal form as it is perceived. In the international system, making peace has mainly been conceptualised as a Western activity derived from war, from grand peace conferences, and more recently, the sophisticated contemporary institutionalisation of key norms associated with liberal peace (Stokke 2009). Where theorists attempt to engage with peace as a concept, they often emphasise units such as states and empire as its main building blocks, generally discounting the role and agency of individuals and societies in its construction and sustainability (Richmond 2005).

It is particularly important to examine the concept of peace as a subjective ontology, as well as a subjective political and ideological framework. Edward Said investigated a similar point in his seminal text 'Orientalism' in which he argued that Western conceptions of the other (in this case specifically of the East) underlined the Western habit of absolutism in the creation of negative perceptions of the other (Said 1995). The implication was that imperialism had had effectively unforeseen continuities in what was supposed to be a post-imperial world. In the following discussion of peace, there is also a similar point to be made, both in intellectual terms and also in terms of the practices deployed to create 'peace'. Indeed, in deploying Said's humanism for a study of peace, similar insights arise relating to the dangers of assuming that peace is a Platonic ideal form. Yet this ideal form has been subject to the kind of 'print capitalism' outlined by Benedict Anderson in the context of nationalism (Anderson 1991).

The discourses and concepts of peace lack a research agenda that might clarify the contestation of the concept of peace (Korf 2006). Instead, where there should be research agendas there are silences and assumptions. Contemporary approaches to creating peace, from first generation conflict management approaches to third generation peace-building approaches, rarely stop to imagine the kind of peace

they may actually create, or question the conceptualisation inherent in their deployment.

Major trends of post-war peace

Do societies ever become truly 'post-conflict'? Should we be looking to 'reconstruct' societies or to 'transform' them? There are also major tensions between goals, not least between the need to establish peace (meaning the absence of large-scale violence) and the need to achieve development (in its broadest sense, as a process that reduces absolute poverty and, perhaps, social inequality). Addressing these issues requires one to look to the economics and the politics of conflict and reconstruction as well as forces one to move out of comfortable disciplinary boxes to address complex ethical dilemmas: the political economy of priority-setting, as well as the international dimensions of rebuilding nations.

War is fundamentally a breakdown in moral values. While, from an economic point of view, war can be defined as organised mass violence aimed at challenging or defending established property rights, war is, at its heart, a degeneration of the individual and common values of a society. Values change during wars, especially during prolonged wars when young children are mobilised and grow to adulthood in a climate of pervasive fear and violence, sometimes involving them in the murder of their own parents and siblings as an initiation right into the forces of warlords (Beah 2007). In this way, war creates a 'moral conflict trap' akin to the economic or developmental conflict traps that have been emphasised in the economics literature on conflict (Collier *et al.* 2003).

War can overturn the old social order, opening up opportunities for people previously at a disadvantage; war is also one way to escape poverty (and, exceptionally, to become very rich). But sometimes there is a sharp disjuncture between wartime and post-war values that can lead to the emergence of double standards. Wartime actors should not only been seen as military or political agents in pursuit of strategic objectives, but also as economic – even moral – agents with complex and shifting motives (Berdal and Keen 1997; Berdal and Malone 2000; Keen 1997). To summarise, at the individual level, participants in war often pursue a mixture of economic, political and social objectives.

History also matters greatly. Both the causes and the nature of war shape the post-war economy and society – particularly, why war happened, how it ended (if, indeed, it has actually ceased before reconstruction begins) and the prospects for it resuming. This is a vast subject and one with which historians continue to engage (Ferguson 2006; Hobsbawm 1995; Judt 2005). What needs to be emphasised here is that a country's history is central to determining its post-war

development potential, and the trajectory that it is likely to take. This is particularly so in the area of social inequality; income and asset inequality generally have deep historical roots, with societies of high inequality experiencing a large measure of violence in their creation and the maintenance of inequality by pervasive state violence (Cornia 2004; Cramer 2006; Gat 2006).

Economics of post-war peace

Peace in a post-war setting takes place in a global economy that is undergoing a relentless (and accelerating) rate of change across all the dimensions of globalisation in finance, trade, technology, and migration (Nayyar 2006; Stiglitz 2006). The largely free movement of capital, the rules of the game as set by the WTO membership, and the emerging dominance of China in many areas of export manufacturing (and its seemingly insatiable demand for primary commodities) are the parameters with which the policy makers of small, low income countries must work. This not only provides opportunities —being a commodity producer is no longer such a dismal story as the sector attracts plenty of private investment— but also constraints.

In summary, today's conflict economies are well integrated into the world economy, despite the high transaction costs that war imposes on economic activity, including trade with the rest of the world. It is a mixed blessing. On the positive side, it offers a chance for intervention: for example, as trade and investment sanctions, and by using the carrot (or stick) of aid to raise the returns to peace (Addison *et al.* 2002). On the negative side, although the widening gap between an underdeveloped war economy and its peaceful peers raises the opportunity cost of conflict (peace is socially more profitable, especially when countries trade) the war economy is privately profitable.

Political participation is a key factor for successful post-war transition. Political participation has many dimensions; such as constitutional design, electoral politics, human rights protection, the legal and justice system, decentralisation, and political culture. Political participation can occur at the individual or the institutional level and might vary across groups within a country. It is therefore a far wider concept than democracy as represented by national parliamentary elections, which is the element of participation most focused on by the media and many donors. The relationship between peace and participation is less clear; the absence of conflict could help to build participation but participation does not necessarily lead to peace in a linear fashion (and elections themselves can be a flash point for conflict, as Angola and Kenya demonstrated in 1992 and 2007 respectively). The link between economic prosperity and participation

is unclear, and continues to be debated; both dictatorship and democracy can be associated with economic success as well as failure. Peace seems a necessary but not sufficient condition for early democratization. Participation is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for peace or for prosperity, although long-standing democracies tend to be more peaceful than authoritarian regimes: the issue is therefore how to sustain initial democratic success long enough for its consolidation.

Competitive democracy could lead to conflict for a variety of reasons. With an intermediate number of political groups, politics might become very divisive; for example, by emphasising ethnic or religious divisions. Furthermore, the political changes implemented to achieve greater democracy could themselves trigger violence, which then stalls the consolidation of democracy. Rising prosperity provides scope for accumulation outside the realm of politics.

Conclusion

Militarised views of the world still dominate its politics. The capacity and the will of the global society to solve conflicts and address injustice peacefully is desperately inadequate in the face of today's need, let alone tomorrow's; the risk of intense conflict arising from a nexus of four core issues —climate change and energy constraints; economic injustice and poverty; denial of rights and participation in society; and armed violence— is paid scant attention (Fisher & Zimina 2009). Peace is more than the absence of visible violence, and requires addressing underlying drivers and dynamics. It is not an easy task but not hard either, if there is will to achieve peace in a positive sense. The peace-building message seems too muted, weak and fragmented to capitalise on its potential advantages (Francis 2004). It seems that post-war Sri Lanka is more concerned about development than peace, and peace-builders are failing to make the political impact necessary to convince others and, perhaps, even themselves, while corporate political power exerts ever more undemocratic control over the essential components of peace. This is the reality that we face.

There is current global reflection as to what peace and wellbeing mean for the world, and who should be responsible for them. The catchphrase 'the more you have the happier you are', which has been the motor for economic and political development, is increasingly seen as not only unsound in terms of human development but also impracticable and self-defeating on a global scale. But the peace-building community does not seem interested in such debates. Many who continue to subscribe to the idea of liberal peace (defined by a democratic system, human rights and free market economy) seem afraid of venturing into areas which may label them as utopians, or

socialists. There are no viable straightforward alternatives, but the peace-building community, by refusing to name or explore the issues or incorporate them into its work, runs the risk of becoming complicit in the maintenance of the current, unsustainable global system (Fisher & Zamina 2009). The reality in the case of Sri Lanka is no different: resolving the national question or finding ways of healing the wounds of national oppression and war do not seem to be seriously considered. It is wrong to treat finding a solution to the national question and bringing peace as distinct entities, since the struggle for democracy, human rights and economic recovery are becoming increasingly inseparable from a just and lasting solution to the national question.

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NDMLP Diary

NDMLP Statement to the Media

2nd June 2011

Brutal Anti-Worker Attack

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued on behalf of the Politburo of the Party the following statement to the media denouncing the attack on workers in the Katunayaka Free Trade Zone.

The planned brutal attack on the workers in the Katunayaka Free Trade Zone clearly shows that the Mahinda Chinthanaya Government is an oppressive bourgeois government upholding an anti-people, anti-worker stand. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly condemns the beastly attack by the police that led to the killing of a young worker and injuring of several hundred workers, some of them seriously. At the same time the Party urges the immediate withdrawal of the proposed private pension scheme legislation that has met with bitter protest and condemnation from the workers and employees.

The police attack on the workers in Katunayake has shown that, however much the Mahinda Chinthanaya Government poses as a pro-worker government and the parliamentary leftists nod in approval for the sake of parliamentary posts, it is not possible to conceal its authoritarian conduct as an anti-people, anti-working class, oppressive regime. The Workers' Charter which the current President attempted to implement when he was Minister of Industries was to some extent favourable to the workers, but was abandoned under pressure from large local and foreign capitalist establishments and the IMF. The President, now at the peak of executive power, is unable to say anything about it. But to strive to introduce at the same time a private pension legislation which will pave the way for further exploitation by local and foreign capitalist establishments and to deprive the workers of their hard won rights and rob their savings only exposes the government's anti-worker stand and partiality for foreign imperialism.

To divert attention from price increases and the rising cost of living the government portrayed the national question as a terrorist question and justified the oppression of the people of the North-East to the Sinhala working people. The Katunayake attack shows that the trend of applying the oppressive laws and armed forces used then to oppress the Sinhala working people and blatantly deny their just demands is now obvious and intensifying. The Party firmly supports the resistance and the firm militant stand of the workers of the Katunayake Free Trade

Zone and other private sector businesses. For all their talk about Buddhist values and the greatness of the Sinhala race and language, the governments of the ruling classes are basically capitalist by class and loyal to imperialism. The Party points out that it is important for the majority of the Sinhala working people to realise this through practical experience and unite with the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people and the workers to win their respective rights.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDMLP Statement to the Media
22nd May 2011

Arrogance of Power

**Private Sector Pension Scheme
Leadership Training for Undergraduates
Wage increase for Plantation Workers
Denial of Wage Increase to University Academics**

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

The Mahinda Chinthanaya Government is persisting with its attitude of arrogance and arbitrariness in its proposed private sector pension legislation, the leadership training scheme in military camps for university entrants, indifference towards wage increase for plantation workers and refusal to increase the wages of university academics. It is evident that the government is preparing itself for the suppression of the workers, students and academics demanding justice. Hence the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly denounces the anti-democratic and authoritarian repressive approach of the government. It also extends its support and solidarity to all forces that have mobilised against the repressive attitude of the government.

The private sector pension legislation proposed by the government is mere pretence. It is in essence legislation designed to exploit the toil of six and a half million workers and deny their rights. If this piece of legislation is put into practice only the employers, comprising big capitalists and multinational corporations, will benefit. The workers will get a measly sum as pension and a situation will be created in which the workers face the pathetic prospect of forfeiting their Provident Fund and Employees Trust Fund benefits.

It has become the practice of the three main trade union leaderships and the Employers' Federation to frustrate the wage demand of the plantation workers by agreeing on an increase by a few rupees every two years. A handful of trade unions and the government have been continually supportive of the Employers' Federation in deciding on such low wage increases. Hence the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party emphasises that a daily wage of 500 rupees and other payments be granted to the plantation workers.

The decision of the government to give "Leadership Training" in army camps for students to be admitted to university will only make way for the students to think with a military outlook and strengthen the prevailing trend of militarisation. The government is seeking to use this military training camp as a form of brainwash to prevent the recovery of the democracy that is already denied in the country. The Party strongly condemns it the above programme and demands its withdrawal.

Equally condemnable is the government's refusal to award university lecturers and professors the wage rise that it had earlier agreed to grant. The Party strongly condemns the suppressive actions of the government to threaten into submission the university academics who have launched minimal trade union action.

In the above matters, the Mahinda Chinthanaya Government is acting according to the advice, guidance and wishes of the World Bank, the IMF and big capitalists. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party therefore emphasises that the workers, employees, students and academics should unite as one front and carry out struggles that transcend differences of race, religion, language and region.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDMLP Statement to the Media

20th April 2011

The UN Panel Report

The Central Committee of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, having discussed the statements issued by the Senate of the US and by the UN Panel of Experts on the Government of Sri Lanka has issued the following statement to the media on the issues concerned.

The Government of Sri Lanka is obliged to respond to charges of denial of democracy to the entire people of Sri Lanka, alleged acts of violation of human rights and alleged war crimes committed against the Tamil people, and that to dismiss the report of the UN Panel of Experts

as a violation of the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, rather than address the issues is frivolous as well as dangerous. The sovereignty of Sri Lanka means the sum total of the sovereignty of the sovereignties of the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities as well as of other minority communities of the country. It is necessary to arrest the encroachment upon such sovereignty through the UN, against a background of ulterior motives of the US and other Western imperialist powers. The only way to achieve it is for the Government to take the responsibility of responding meaningfully to the matters put forward by the Panel of Experts appointed by the Secretary General of the UN. It is thus that the efforts driven by ulterior motives of the US and other Western imperialist powers.

It should be noted that, since the Government of Sri Lanka is a client of imperialist neo-colonialist organisations including the UN and accepts their rules and regulations, it is committed to be answerable to them. Infringement of the sovereignty of countries is nothing new to US imperialism and the UN. It is not therefore necessary to accept such infringements. However, to avert and to resist such infringements, governments should be under obligation to provide honest answers to their own people. People know that leaders of countries who are in the embrace of imperialism praise imperialist powers when they are supportive of their oppressive regime and display great anti-imperialist and patriotic passion when the imperialist powers act in ways hostile to or in disagreement with their oppressive regime. Reports have been released in quick succession by the Senate of the US and by the Panel of Experts appointed by the Secretary General of the UN claiming that human rights have been violated and democracy has been denied by the Government of Sri Lanka and the defence forces of the Sri Lankan state; that, in the final stages of the war between the Sri Lankan defence forces and the LTTE, there have been violations of international humanitarian law by the defence forces of the Sri Lankan state; and that the Government of Sri Lanka is obliged to answer these charges.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party has never endorsed the acts of personal terror by the LTTE and its call for a separate state. But it had the duty to point out that the fundamental reason for that organisation to indulge in armed struggle was the chauvinistic oppression against the Tamil people and that the oppression still continues.

The Party has been advocating a state structure in which all the nationalities of Sri Lanka can live in unity as a multi-ethnic society, based on the right to self determination, equality and autonomy. The Party has consistently pointed out that it is only when such

arrangements do not exist that the oppressed nationalities are driven to call for secession and a separate state.

National oppression by the chauvinistic capitalist governments that have continuously ruled Sri Lanka and the narrow nationalistic stand of the reactionary, conservative forces among the Tamils provided the basis to justify the call for secession.

Imperialist and regional hegemonic powers have pretended to be supportive of the secession of Tamil Eelam to deflect the struggle of the Tamil people and finally drowned that struggle in Nanthikkadal. They also directly and indirectly supported the chauvinistic Sri Lankan government. The US and other Western imperialists, who despite all of it, have been unable to bring the Mahinda Rajapaksa government entirely to their side, are now posing an expression of support for the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam formed by the elite of the Tamil diaspora.

Besides, the continuing threat of subjecting the Government of Sri Lanka to a war crimes inquiry is not motivated by a desire to provide justice to the affected Tamils but by the imperialist aim to intimidate the Government headed by Rajapaksa and thereby take control of the whole of Sri Lanka. Although Rajapaksa's government presents an anti-imperialist façade to the Sinhalese, it has situated the state of Sri Lanka as a client to neocolonialism. One finds now, under these conditions, that the rejection of the right of nationalities to self determination, comprising an aspect of his feudal attitude, is in conflict with imperialist concerns. But there is no anti-imperialism in Rajapaksa and there is no imperialist interest in self determination for the Tamils.

The failure of the Rajapaksa government to find a just solution for the national question as well as its refusal to accept answerability to the affected people on matters of war crimes and violation of human rights has created a situation in which imperialist and hegemonic forces are able to exert pressure on Sri Lanka.

The report of the senate of the US has imperialist intentions. The report of Panel of Experts appointed by Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the UN, which is a neo-colonial instrument, has neo-colonial motives. Blunt denial by the Government of Sri Lanka is no answer to the questions raised in the reports. The Government of Sri Lanka has the responsibility to conduct extensive inquiries and report on whether civilians had not been killed, international humanitarian laws were not breached and human and democratic rights had not been violated, during the military action of the government against the LTTE. If it fails to do so, it risks surrendering to its imperialist masters.

Thus, beyond the humbug of the US, the UN and others and beyond the Sri Lankan government's denial, the Government headed by Rajapaksa should come forward to conduct a just inquiry into war crimes, violations of human and fundamental rights, and other such matters. Meantime, initiatives should be taken to find a political solution that will ensure power sharing between nationalities. That will unite the entire people to resist pressure and intervention from the US and the West.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDMLP Statement to the Media
25th March 2011

Stop the Imperialist War against Libya

Comrade E Thambiah, International Organiser of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, issued the following statement to the media on behalf of the Politburo of the Party on the mass uprisings taking place in the Arab countries and imperialist intervention in them.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly denounces the imperialist war waged by imperialism on Libya. The war waged on Libya by the US and its allies, claiming that they are acting against the anti-people, dictatorial suppressive actions of Colonel Gaddafi, cannot be justified on any basis. The motive behind these acts of war concerns imperialist interests and not the interests of the Libyan people. Hence we strongly denounce this imperialist war against Libya. But this denunciation does not in any way award of a certificate of merit to the authoritarian rule of Gaddafi.

The popular upsurge against the dictatorial acts by the leadership of the ruling classes of the Arab countries was inevitable. Since the uprisings lack political guidance and political programme, the imperialists are able to make a number of moves related to them so as to take advantage of them.

The dictators of the Arab countries have the blessings of imperialism either directly or indirectly. When these dictators cannot last any longer amid the people, the US takes steps to remove them from leadership of the state and replace them with ones who could openly be its puppets. When that is not possible, it resorts to military intervention. It is such a military intervention that has occurred in Libya. Neither democracy nor freedom nor peace has been established in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq through imperialist military intervention.

The Palestinian problem is getting aggravated further by imperialist intervention.

Thus, those who respect the sovereignty, independence and democracy of countries cannot in any way endorse the imperialist war against Libya. But it is true that people like Gaddafi invite such interventions and wars through their own stands and actions that are anti-democratic, anti-people and in violation of human rights.

It is necessary for the people of the world to understand this and act in a planned way, nationally and internationally, to save the independence and sovereignty of countries and people from the reactionary local ruling classes and imperialist forces. The ruling classes of the countries of the world go against imperialism only when they face a threat from the people and when imperialism is not favourable to their interests. The truth is that the reactionary ruling classes are on the side of imperialism. Hence their anti-imperialism cannot be trusted.

Likewise, imperialism claims to be speaking up and intervening in support of the independence, rights and freedom of the people merely to secure imperialist interests, and not in the interests of the people. Hence it is dangerous to trust imperialism to be a protector of struggles and uprisings.

It is true that the people, for their liberation, will certainly need to deal with contradictions between imperialism and the local reactionary classes. But to believe that one can be used against the other is unhealthy, and will only invite disaster. Hence the people involved in uprisings in Arab countries including Libya should carry forward their struggles for liberation without giving room for imperialist conspiracies to engulf their interests and carrying forward their struggles with the correct political leadership and appropriate programme.

The position of the Party is that the people of the Arab countries have their legitimate right to rise in struggle against the dictators of their respective countries. At the same time, it is not permissible for imperialism to intervene in a way that snatches that right from them.

E Thambiah
International Organiser

May Day Meetings of the NDMLP

Jaffna

The NDMLP May Day meeting, held at the auditorium of the Jaffna MPCs, was chaired by Comrade K Kathirgamanathan. Comrade SK

Senthivel, Party General Secretary, said in his address that charges of war crimes and violations of human rights levelled by the US Senate and the UN Panel of Experts against the Sri Lankan government are only to exert pressure on the government with a view to meddle in the affairs of the country. The government, instead of responding to the charges or seeking a solution to the national question, is trying to rationalise its actions by protesting against the violation of the sovereignty of the country. Comrade Senthivel pointed out that the government is using the UN report as a broad canvass to divert the attention of the people from the real issues facing them: it is, on the one hand, pursuing the chauvinist propaganda that it adopted during the war and its victory, and is whipping up chauvinist sentiments in the South, while, on the other, takes advantage of the diversion to continue to increase prices and to deny the working people their rights.

He added that, while the war crimes and violations committed by the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka need to be inquired into and the offenders punished, neither the US nor the UN will act in the matter, and that the US is pretending to threaten the Sri Lankan government using the UN report while enabling loans of billions of rupees through the World Bank and the IMF. He warned the Tamil people to be wary of the double dealing of the US and the UN, and urged an independent judicial inquiry in Sri Lanka and finding a proper political solution.

He warned of the danger of the cycle of chauvinism and narrow nationalism thriving on each other and drew attention to attempts to deprive private sector employees of their rights one after the other, including the proposed IMF inspired private sector pension scheme designed to eliminate the provident fund and employees' trust fund. He appealed to the people to reject the purely nationalistic and racist views of their leaders and take their destiny into their own hands.

Comrades M Thiyagarajah, former teachers' trade unionist, K Thanikasalam, Editor Thaayakam, K Panchalingam and KA Seevaratnam, trade unionists, and T Prakash and S Dhanujan on behalf of the Party's Youth Front also addressed the meeting. The meeting also included revolutionary cultural events.

Hatton

The events of the Revolutionary Red May Day of the Party, chaired by Comrade Panneerselvam, commenced at 11.00 a.m. in the Sakthi Hall in Hatton. Comrades V Mahendran, National Organiser and E Thambiah, International Organiser and officials of mass organisations of the Party addressed the gathering. Also a cultural programme was provided by the Sevvoli Art Group.

Comrade Panneerselvam in his opening address called for the removal of the Hill Country Tamil leadership which has become accustomed to backing every Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist government that has ruled the country. He added that people should not fall for their pompously pretentious political theatre and instead unite to build an alternative leadership.

Comrade Mahendran in his address said that a thirty-year long chauvinistic war has come to an end after sacrificing thousands of ordinary people in the name of humanitarian action, with the blessing of imperialist and regional powers. The claim by the government that the country since then is on the path of development is not credible. The war and the open economy have destabilised the economy and ruined the national economy and national production. He asked whether it is development to be without a national economy and national production and beg from powers. Asserting the need for an independent united front to fight for wage increase for plantation workers, he added that the Party is always willing to fight as part of a united front.

Comrade Thambiah in his address stated that the international and UN pressures on Sri Lanka regarding war crimes are neither to investigate war crimes nor to find a just solution for the problems of the Tamil people but to fulfil their imperialist intentions. He added that the Party strongly opposes this and calls upon the government to undertake sincere steps and inquiries regarding war crimes, and insists that it is the responsibility of the government to resolve the national question which persists even after the end of the war. In conclusion, he said that socialism alone has the solution to the crises of capitalism and called for the intensification of mass struggles to achieve it.

Vavuniya

The May Day meeting in Vavuniya was chaired by Comrade N Pakeerathan, a leading northern regional party comrade. Workers and peasants from several villages in the district attended the meeting.

Comrade Don Bosco, a long standing leading party comrade in Vavuniya, addressing the workers who attended the meeting, outlined the historical impact of the May Day, from its militant beginnings to the environment in which it is commemorated today.

Comrade Pradeepan, another leading party comrade in Vavuniya, in his talk explained how the elite classes among the Sinhala and Tamil the nationalities are deceiving the people and drew attention to their reluctance to talk about the pressing issues facing the workers in the country. He drew particular attention to the failure of the Tamil national

alliance to speak up even on matters concerning the Tamil people like defending fishing resources, security at sea and Indian expansionist activities, and contrasted it with the principled stand of the Party on issues affecting the people. He also warned that the Tamil people should guard against being cheated by imperialist and hegemonic powers. He outlined the progress being made by the Party in carrying its programme to the people and called upon the people to mobilise along the line of mass unity and mass struggle.

Comrade RK Soodamani, a party veteran and former member of the Central Committee, who participated as honorary comrade, greeted young activists and encouraged them in their activities.

This meeting, held amid the tense situation in Vavuniya, was a highly inspiring event.

Colombo

The May Day meeting in Colombo, held at the auditorium of the Dhesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai in Colombo 6, was chaired by Comrade S Thevarajah, member of the Politburo of the NDMLP. Comrade Thevarajah in his opening address summed up the political situation in the country since the end of the war and explained the demands of the Party calling upon the government to address the grievances of the people arising from the war and the resolution of the national question, to deal with the pressing problems of the economy and to restore the rights of the workers. He also emphasised the need for broad-based unity to defend the sovereignty of the country through mass mobilisation and struggle against imperialism and hegemony.

Comrade Sri Manoharan in a brief comment following the opening address summed up the role of the Party in defending the rights of the working people against reaction and narrow nationalism.

Comrade S Nanthamohan explained the importance of the May Day in the context of a political situation clouded by chauvinist and narrow nationalist politics and foreign meddling.

Comrade M Mauran explained how the agenda of the left is being hijacked and deflected by the forces of reaction through a variety of devices and emphasised the need for the people to be on the alert.

Comrade Ramalingam Ranjan denounced the continuing betrayal of the plantation workers by the political and trade union leadership in the Hill Country and called for a new leadership led by Marxist Leninists.

Sri Lankan Events

Peddling War Victory

Celebration of the victory of the “War against Terrorism” appears to have overtaken the National Day (formerly Independence Day) celebrations in pomp and public inconvenience. The government also organised a 3-day conference titled “Defeating Terrorism - Sri Lanka Experience” from 31st May to 2nd June.

Whatever a ruling party hopes to gain from glorifying a cruel war could be lost if it fails to deliver on the economy and social stability. Civilian regimes that have relied on the armed forces for survival have been overthrown by the very armed forces that supported them, and it has not taken long for a military junta to discredit a former ruler.

Undermining Higher Education

The response of the government to the wage demands of university academics has fluctuated between confrontation and callous indifference. Since the 1990s, a number of state-run universities have been established for political reasons without adequate resources even as existing universities were choked by decades of severe under-funding. Meantime, foreign universities have made inroads in many ways, mostly as extensions of foreign universities, whose interest is purely commercial. The government is under pressure from foreign funding agencies to privatise education, and ruining state-run higher education institutions, which once boasted the highest academic standards in the region, is one way to promote privatisation. It makes one fear that the confrontational attitude towards university academics is part of a grand plan.

Strange Silence

Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil parties have been disgustingly silent on the question of the private pension proposal of the government. Even more disgusting is the silence on the police brutality that shocked the entire country. Does the silence mean that there are no Tamil, Muslim or Hill Country Tamil workers in the private sector? Or is it a continuation of their age old reactionary politics of evading issues that affect the working class, except when it is necessary to side with local and foreign capitalists?

War Crimes and Patriotism

Neither the JVP nor the deeply divided UNP dares to challenge the government on its handling of its “War against Terrorism” (also known as “Humanitarian Action”). They seem to echo the government in their responses to the report of the UN Panel of Experts, which points to serious war crimes and human rights violations by the government. The differences in the responses seem to concern how the government should have responded to the report and dealt with foreign powers.

It is strange that no Sinhala nationalist party wants to know the casualty figures for civilians and combatants and the causes of death. Is it because they fear being branded unpatriotic?

Opposing Indian Meddling

The JVP and the pro-government Patriotic National Movement have threatened to campaign against the joint agreement said to have been reached between India and Sri Lanka —following the Delhi visit of the Minister for External Affairs GL Peiris in mid-May— to amend the constitution, probe human rights abuses and finalise Indian commercial projects in the country. The protest mainly concerns possible amendments to the constitution to resolve the national question.

It is somewhat puzzling why patriotic feelings fail to surge when India exerts pressure on Sri Lanka on economic matters, when Indian fishing vessels violate Sri Lankan territorial waters, and when India brazenly interferes in the judicial system to secure the release of Indian fishermen arrested for illegally fishing in Sri Lankan territorial waters.

Making Sri Lanka another Singapore

JR Jayawardane pledged that he will transform Sri Lanka into another Singapore. But things went awfully wrong somewhere, despite the opening up of the country to foreign capital, lifting import restrictions and privatising state companies. The Mahinda Chintanaya government seems to have finally spotted the missing piece in the Singapore jigsaw. It is compulsory military training.

Sri Lanka is making a humble start with those who seek education in state run universities. Nevertheless, the country is getting close to becoming a police state like Singapore, although not a prosperous police state.

Book Review

Perpetual Ferment. Kumari Jayawardena, Social Scientists' Association, Colombo, 2010, pp 176+. Rs 850.00.

This well written book is a useful record of rebellions in Sri Lanka against colonial rule during the 18th and 19th Centuries covering substantial parts of Dutch and British colonial rule. It is especially valuable by way of reminding that there has been resistance to foreign domination preceding the well known "Kandyan Rebellions" of 1818 and 1848, to which reference is frequently made in anti-colonial writings, and that the two were not isolated incidents.

An important difference between rebellions in the 'Low Country' under Dutch rule and those in the 'Up Country' (what was the Kandyan Kingdom brought under British rule in 1815) is that the former were in response to cruel economic exploitation of labour, heavy taxation and harsh penalties associated with them while the latter were largely uprisings based on resentment of British rule and nostalgia for the bygone kingdom. To the extent that the Kandyan uprisings often involved the claims of a pretender to the Kandyan throne, they were political and anti-colonial in content. However, economic factors began to play a significant role by the time of the rebellion of 1848, since expropriation of land for developing coffee plantations hurt the Kandyan peasantry, besides economic issues relating to the plantation economy including the impact of the slump in coffee prices. The revolt in the Low Country, mainly in Colombo, in 1848 was in response to taxation.

While individual members of the clergy and of the elite classes have acted commendably in fighting British rule, the roles of clergy and the elite as social entities have rather been collaborationist than anti imperialist. I also wonder whether the protests of 1948 against taxes would constitute an anti colonial revolt, since they were not against the system itself and failed to sustain themselves.

The author could have gone deeper into factors that failed to unite the people against foreign rule, like caste, since despite various caste groups rising in revolt against the Dutch, there was a lack of coordination as well as a lack of cross-caste sympathy and support for just struggles. Also there is a need to explore why the Kandyan rebellion of 1948 and the first protests in the Low Country against the British in that year failed to find common cause.

-SJS-

World Events

ASIA

Japan: Nuclear Aftershocks

According to official figures, the 9.0 magnitude earthquake that struck north-east Japan on 11th March and the tsunami caused by it killed nearly 13,000 persons; and a comparable number are listed as missing. The impact of this great tragedy faded into insignificance in the global media when news came out about the damage caused by the earthquake to nuclear power plants in Fukushima. Although the initial tendency was to understate the scale of the nuclear disaster, measurements of radioactivity on land and sea suggested that the disaster was on par with the one in Chernobyl in Belorussia (USSR) in April 1986. On 7th April, Japan announced that the declared 20-kilometer evacuation zone around the plant may need to be enlarged as it had been established in relation to short-term exposure. Although the immediate risk of uncontrolled nuclear reactions has been eliminated, long term effects of radiation on the environment and people exposed to radiation remain a challenge.

The nuclear disaster has once again raised questions about health and safety issues relating to nuclear power. There have been strong public protests across Europe demanding a freeze on new reactors and the eventual closing down of existing ones. Massive protests took place in Brazil, Chile, Hong Kong, Taiwan and India against proposed nuclear power plants. In the US, however, the Obama administration has proposed 36 billion dollars in federal loan guarantees to jump-start the construction of nuclear power plants. It has been said in this connection that the nuclear operator Exelon Corporation was a major contributor to Obama's election campaign.

Recommended reading: testimony of David Lochbaum, Director, Nuclear Safety, Union of Concerned Scientists before the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee 29th March 2011.

(<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/lochbaum300311.html>)

[Other sources: chinaworker.info/en/; english.aljazeera.net/; dawn.com/]

Afghanistan: NATO Killing Fields

Relations between Afghanistan and the US took a turn for the worse in early March after a NATO airstrike killed nine boys ages 8 to 12 and wounded one. The military had inaccurately identified the area from which the base was fired on, and a retaliatory missile fired from the air hit children who were gathering firewood. Gen. David Petraeus, Commander of NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan, apologised, but President Hamid Karzai refusing to accept the apology said: “We can no longer consider civilian casualties in Afghanistan acceptable”.

That was followed by another blunder. A NATO air strike on two houses killed 14 civilians (seven boys, five girls and two women) and injured six in the province of Helmand 28th May following the ambush of a NATO convoy by the Taliban. The assault almost completely destroyed the village from which the convoy was attacked. Angered by the killings, Karzai said on 31st May 2011, in his strongest statement yet against air strikes, that he will no longer allow NATO airstrikes on houses, which the NATO forces claim are essential to the war.

Afghan parliamentarians have for a decade placed the bodies of victims of air raids outside the governors’ houses in their respective provinces in protest and demanded a halt to the killing of civilians. Karzai has on several occasions told Gen. McChrystal, the former US Commander in Afghanistan that it was civilian casualties during air raids that led to mass disenchantment with the government, but to no avail. (Source: *www.dawn.com*).

The conduct of the occupying forces seems to be a continuation of colonial and racist attitudes, as revealed by the confession of a US soldier that his brigade had faked combat situations so that they could kill ‘for sport’ unarmed civilians who posed no threat to them. (See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/23/us-soldier-admits-killing-afghans>).

Pakistan: Fallout of a Foul Murder

The murder of Osama Bin Laden on 2nd May by US forces inside Pakistan has further strained ties between the two governments. The claim that Bin Laden’s killing was a landmark victory in the ‘War against Terrorism’ was given the lie by the daring attack on the Mehran naval base in Karachi on 22nd May by six Taliban fighters, that killed ten security personnel and destroyed two P-3C Orion aircraft, costing an estimated 36 million US dollars. It should also be noted that bombers killed 98 people on 13th May outside a police training centre in the northwest, the deadliest attack in Pakistan since the beginning of 2010.

Indian hopes of capitalising on the strained US-Pakistan ties found expression in utterances by Home Minister Chidambaram and Foreign Minister Krishna repeating their concern about safe havens in Pakistan for terrorists belonging to different organisations, and demanding their elimination. Some US lawmakers accused Pakistan of playing a double game and demanded answers from Pakistan over how Bin Laden could have stayed where he was and evaded detection for so long.

Political analysts point out that the prospect of the US taking a tougher line with Pakistan to force it to crack down on militants is marred by the heavy logistic and military dependence of the US on Pakistan, to sustain its war on the people of Afghanistan. They also noted that, it is unlikely that the US will risk alienating Pakistan, despite its desire for a long-term strategic relationship with India and the commercial incentives offered by India. Following the wave of mass protests denouncing the murder of Bin Laden, Pakistani leaders are under intense public pressure to disallow US military action on Pakistani soil, and the conciliatory visit by Hillary Clinton on 27th May confirms that the US needs the status quo in its ties with Pakistan.

[Source: <http://www.asianage.com/international/no-advantage-india-us-pakistan-troubles-analysts-669>]

India

Binayak Sen Released on Bail

Following the ruling of the Supreme Court of India dismissing charge of sedition against Dr Binayak Sen as ridiculous and ordering suspension of the sentence and his release on bail, the Chhattisgarh government was forced to release him. It is expected that all charges against him will soon be dropped and the sentence quashed.

That does not mean that the sorry state of affairs in the judicial system in Chhattisgarh and the lack of independence of the state-level judiciary will change. The delivery of an outrageous sentence of life in prison with hard labour for Dr Sen, based on outlandish charges and flimsy evidence, is just an illustration of the deeply flawed judicial system in Chhattisgarh. His co-accused, Piyush Guha and Narayan Sanyal, and other human rights activists are among the hundreds detained unjustly by the state of Chhattisgarh, which is not alone in the abuse of human rights. Thus the struggle for formal justice is far from over in Chhattisgarh and much of India.

[Source: <http://southasiarev.wordpress.com/2011/04/18/india-binayak-sen-granted-bail/>]

Operation Witch Hunt at JNU

“Operation Green Hunt” launched in central and eastern India in the latter part of 2009 is a war against the people to facilitate the plunder of peoples’ land, forests and other resources. Crimes committed by the Indian state and its armed forces during the Operation — including the murder of tribal villagers and activists, brutal torture, burning and looting of villages, arrests and forced displacement on a mass scale met with strong opposition from vast sections of the people.

The JNU Forum against War on People, formed by the students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi in 2009 to oppose “Operation Green Hunt” has been actively exposing state terror and repression, amid attempts by the state and the corporate media to hide facts. Student and teacher participation in large numbers in activities of the Forum, including the public meeting addressed by Arundhati Roy and Amit Bhaduri on 5th March 2011 has angered the Indian state and the JNU administration.

A JNU administration initiated a Proctorial Inquiry against the Forum for ‘violating the Official Emblem Act’ by ‘misuse of the official symbol of the Indian state’ on 5th March by the portrayal of the jackboot of the Indian state coming down to crush the people protesting repressive state policies. The move to punish the members of the Forum, has given further publicity to the cartoon depicting the use of brutal force by the Indian state against people resisting Operation Green Hunt, and available on the internet and in other public domains in India.

The inquiry is, reportedly based on a complaint by the *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad*, a right-wing student outfit backed by the BJP. The JNU administration, hesitant to punish Hindutva goons for their violence against the Forum in April, is cynically using the farcical enquiry to persecute the Forum with a string of circulars including a stay on the functioning of the Forum. An all-organisation meeting on 24th May denounced the circular ‘restraining’ the Forum from all activities, and demanded the immediate withdrawal of the circulars.

The JNU enquiry and repressive actions against the Forum is a symptom of emergent McCarthyism in India, and must be resisted and defeated. The JNU Forum against War on People has called upon the students and teachers of JNU, and democratic individuals and organisations outside to come out in protest against the undemocratic, authoritarian and repressive attempts by the administration to silence the voice of the students of this campus.

[Source: <http://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2011/05/29/india-the-operation-green-hunt-war-on-the-people-moves-against-delhi-students-at-jnu/>]

CPI(M) Pays the Price for its Folly

The defeat of the CPI(M) led Left Front that ruled West Bengal for 34 years was no surprise after the severe reverses suffered by the alliance, especially the CPI(M), at the elections to the Panchayats in 2008. The CPI(M) leadership in West Bengal could not have missed the message but persisted with its wrong policies towards the rural masses, as evident from its conduct in Lalgarh in early 2009.

The CPI(M) is now not even a social democratic party in the style of post-Soviet revisionist parties of Europe but a reformist bourgeois parliamentary party for all practical purposes. With seven terms of uninterrupted power in the Legislative Assembly, made possible initially by rural land distribution and later by coercive practices in both rural and urban areas, and a large and loyal membership, winning elections became its sole political objective. Given the restrictions that a regional administration with no real fiscal powers is subject to in a pseudo-federal system, growing urban employment demanded the initiation of large scale industrialisation, for which the CPI(M) relied on Indian compradors. The CPI(M) created its own crisis by forcibly acquiring lands from the very beneficiaries of its land reforms, by using an archaic colonial legislation. The peasants resisted the move, and the 'left' government responded like an instrument of class collaboration—rather than class struggle—with the bourgeoisie to oppress the peasantry and tribal people.

It saw the Maoists as the main enemy and it defended as well as demanded the suppression of the Maoists and their mass base by the reactionary Indian state. Today it is clutching at straws like 'secularism' and renegotiation of the terms of India's status as a client of the US. It has no plans for mass struggle; and its blaming others for a tragedy of its own making is of no help. With its power based on patronisation and coercion in West Bengal weakened by electoral defeat, the future is bleak for the CPI(M), unless the genuine left elements within it revive it as a voice of the people.

The performance of the CPI(M) in Kerala was not as bad as in West Bengal, partly because its conduct, although wanting in many ways, was not anti-people as in West Bengal. There was no glory, however, in the winning of 19 seats in Tamilnadu by the CPI(M) and CPI at the mercy of the reactionary AIADMK, whose landslide victory was due to mass resentment of the DMK regime.

Bahrain: Attacking Civilians

Nowhere else has the shamelessly repeated lie of the US and its allies that they are acting from humanitarian motives to "prevent attacks on civilians" been exposed more thoroughly than in Bahrain, an absolute monarchy, where the US Fifth Fleet is based. Its people have been valiantly fighting for weeks to change their government, and had some initial success: the sultan who responded with fierce repression soon hinted at reforms. But following the visit of US Defence Secretary Robert Gates on 14th March, the government commenced a brutal crackdown, backed up by Saudi Arabian troops. Helicopters, tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition have been used, killing and injuring many people. The Bahraini people, unlike the Libyan rebels, are unarmed, but there is no talk of a no-fly zone over Bahrain or of action against the murderous Bahraini security forces —comprising foreign mercenaries— and the Saudi Arabian armed forces.

Yemen: Dumping a Client?

Anti-government protests that began in January against Ali Abdullah Saleh's nearly 33-year rule led to a proposal on 2nd March for a smooth transition of power, offering Saleh a graceful exit. But Saleh has since been manoeuvring to find ways of holding on to power.

Saleh fast became a liability to his Saudi and US patrons, who let events take their own course, despite the opposition comprising tribal leaders with strong Islamist leanings as well as groups linked to Al Qaida. It is likely that the US and Saudi Arabia will let Saleh dig his own grave unless he agrees to a smooth transition of power to the opposition, amid conditions of intensifying civil war and political isolation, worsened since his being flown out to Saudi Arabia on 5th June for treatment of injuries suffered in a rocket attack on the presidential palace two days before.

To the US and Saudi Arabia the present opposition is more amenable to manipulation than the kind that they sought to put down only an year ago. The US attitude in Yemen thus shows a 'humanitarian' concern altogether different from that in Libya as well as that in Bahrain.

Syria: Fighting Foreign Meddling

The Syrian Communist Party (Unified) asserted in its message to the communists of the world issued on 31st May 2011 (<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/scp310511.html>) that it was the

legitimate grievances of the people in the governorate of Daraa that led to the protest movement which drew attention to pressing political and socio-economic issues. The statement added that the protests led to decrees abolishing the state of emergency, dissolving the State Security Court and legalising peaceful demonstrations, and to steps to draft new election, party, media, and other laws. It attributed the spread of protests to other cities to the disproportionate security responses which led to a number of casualties. The statement drew particular attention to the vicious campaign of lies by mainly US-based foreign media to destabilise Syria, and called for the convening of a national conference of all political parties, including the national opposition inside Syria, and other community leaders, for dialogue and reconciliation, with the aim to create a new democratic Syria under the rule of law and ensuring social justice.

Undoubtedly, the failure of the government to address pressing domestic issues has enabled the powers bent on global domination to manipulate the country's internal situation and seek to derail its course to serve their interests. As a result, armed gangs have emerged that target army and police personnel and ransack public and private properties. They have, with continued support from the US and its agents, brought normal life to a standstill in several cities; and their actions now overshadow the peaceful protest movement. They want a 'regime change' as desired by the US and Zionism.

Sara Flounders in her article titled "Syria and US Imperialism" (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=24659>) notes that the US and its collaborators, while trying to divide and undermine the Islamic forces and the secular nationalist forces which together overthrew the US-backed dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia, are using the same political forces against two regimes in the region, namely Libya and Syria, that once stood in the way of US domination.

She draws attention to an article titled "U.S. secretly backed Syrian opposition groups" by Craig Whitlock (Washington Post, 18th April) giving a summary of the contents of US diplomatic cables that Wikileaks has brought to light and revealing secret funding of Syrian political opposition groups by the US and the beaming of anti-government programming into the country via satellite television.

The article has also exposed the role of Qatar-based Al Jazeera TV News in the destabilisation campaigns in Libya and Syria, while ignoring the brutal repression of the mass movement in the absolute monarchy of Bahrain, neighbouring Qatar. It suggests that the partiality could be because Al Jazeera is funded by the absolute monarch of Qatar, the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Founders points out that the CIA and National Endowment for Democracy have become expert at utilising a barrage of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube to overwhelm targeted governments with tons of false information. Fabricated alerts about struggles and splits among rival factions in Syria's military leading to resignations have turned out to be false.

Syria is neither socialist nor revolutionary. There is a capitalist class there that has gained from "reforms" that sold state-owned industries to private capital. The regime has harshly repressed efforts of Lebanon- and Syria-based mass movements to take the anti-imperialist struggle further. Yet, the Syrian state has also defended the gains of the anti-colonial struggles and upheavals by the Arab masses in 1960s and 1970s. It has also been burdened by refugee problems created by Zionism (500,000 Palestinian refugees and descendants) and by the US (1,500,000 Iraqis escaping US occupation).

In the context of imperialist meddling in Syria, it is the duty of all Marxist and anti-imperialist forces of the world to demand a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Syria to the exclusion of foreign meddling.

AFRICA

Ivory Coast: Imperialism Wins

The story that the mainstream media tell the world about the disputed elections in the Ivory coast is that when Alassane Ouattara defeated the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo, the latter refused to accept the verdict of the electorate and Western military intervention was needed to place Ouattara in power and arrest Gbagbo for his misdeeds.

On 2nd December 2010 the Independent Election Commission (CEI) declared Ouattara as the winner. On 3rd December, the Constitutional Council (CC), responsible to proclaim the final results, invalidated the CEI declaration because it came more than 72 hours after the CC had annulled the votes in 7 departments, mainly in the north and centre. The CC declared Gbagbo the winner. The UN Mission in the Ivory Coast rejected the results of the CC and was followed by the Western powers to recognise the results of the CEI. As a result there were two claimants to the presidency and the country was in danger of a new civil war.

Gbagbo was an oppressive ruler, but the reason why the West found him unacceptable was not its love for democracy but that Ouattara was

a loyal puppet of the West, especially French imperialism. The Communist Party of Benin, although strongly critical of Gbagbo, pointed out in its statement of 10th December 2010 that the French had decided to do everything for Ouattara to be elected as President to serve their interests. It pointed out that the "international community", in true colonial fashion, invented the concept that the UNOCI was above national agencies, and denounced this shameless interference by foreign powers in the Ivory Coast as inadmissible.

[Source: *revolutionarydemocracy.org*]

A more recent comment by Kwame Osei in a detailed article which appeared in Global Research on 17th April but written a few days before the arrest of Gbagbo on 11th April, exposes the role of French imperialism in deciding the final outcome of elections in the Ivory Coast. (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=24368>).

He points out that the real issue behind impasse in the Ivory Coast was a battle relating to French imperialism and control of the Ivory Coast, since Gbagbo was hostile to French interests in Ivory Coast and was championing the cause of Pan-Africanism as opposed to Ouattara who was very accommodating to safeguard French interests. He also notes that western educated Ouattara is a former employee of the IMF/World Bank and is thus seen as a safe pair of hands by the West.

The article also explains how the independence of Francophone Africa was throttled at birth in the 1950s by De Gaulle who ensured that French domination of its former mineral rich colonies continued.

Egypt: The Democratic Struggle

Subverting the Struggle

Angry demonstrations followed the burning down of a Coptic church in the Imbaba neighbourhood in Cairo on 7th May 2011, and Muslim-Christian clashes left 12 dead and nearly 200 injured, casting a cloud over hopes for genuine democratic change. Although the military-backed transitional government moved quickly to defuse tensions and announced compensation payments for the dead and the injured, and stern action against those who participated in the violence, its proposal of tough new laws prohibiting gatherings outside places of worship raises other concerns.

Meanwhile, Egyptian media described the Imbaba attackers as Salafis — fundamentalist Muslims with links to Saudi Arabia who have become more visible under conditions of less intense internal security.

The Muslim Brotherhood has denounced the Salafis, while it is widely held that elements of the Mubarak regime are encouraging them.

[Source: *guardian.co.uk*]

The Second “Day of Anger”

On 27th May a renewed wave of protests began with a rally organised by the Coalition of the Revolution Youth comprising several movements behind the revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak from power. Nationwide rallies were held calling for a quick transition to full democracy, a new constitution and a civilian government. The rally in Cairo drew tens of thousands to Tahrir Square, where masses gathered on 28th January to be rid of Mubarak. The demonstrators pledged to gather every Friday until their demands were met, among which were:

- *Immediate return of the Army to the barracks and establishment of a civilian presidential council to manage the transitional phase*
- *Election of a constituent assembly to draw up the country's new constitution before any other elections*
- *Release of all political prisoners and abolition of military tribunals for civilians*
- *Prosecution of the symbols of the former regime on charges of corruption and the looting of Egypt*
- *Suspension and prosecution of all police officers accused of killing and injuring protesters*
- *Re-nationalisation of companies and factories that were sold to the private sector at less than their real value*
- *Establishment of a minimum wage of no less than 1,500 Egyptian pounds and maximum wage no higher than 15 times the minimum*

The demonstrations have taken place amid active subversion of the Egyptian revolution by the US and the West in the pretext of helping the democratic cause. The demonstrators rightly fear that the electoral process would yield a pro-US, pro-Israeli regime like the overthrown Mubarak regime if elections were held under a military council headed by Defence Minister Gen. Mohammed Tantawi, a Mubarak ally for 20 years, despite its promise of lifting the 30-year long state of emergency.

The proposed legal action and other moves against Mubarak, his family and some of his allies as well as the opening of the Gaza border, although welcome are viewed with suspicion by many in Egypt. The overall picture seems that the Army has managed the ‘transition’ in a

way that ensures that the power structure will not change in substance, without another major upheaval against the Army itself.

[Also view comments by Peter Eyre, Middle East Correspondent of PressTV at <http://www.presstv.com/detail/182224.html>; and http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=OAVKr4uWsXs#t=0s]

Libya: A Different Set of Norms

The comment titled “Libya is neither Tunisia nor Egypt” by Samir Amin in MRZine (mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/amin240511.html) is a sober statement amid calls for the overthrow of Muammer al-Qaddafi (Gaddafi) by several Trotskyites and the defence of Gaddafi as a true anti-imperialist by some members of the ‘soft’ left. Amin points out that Libya, a geographic region that separates Maghreb (Arab West) and Mashreq (Arab East), has never truly existed as a nation, and that this has always been a basis for regionalism in Libya. He explains how Gaddafi’s embrace of “liberalism” following his successive “nationalist and socialist” discourses, although lacking in substance, aggravated social difficulties for the majority and contributed to his present plight.

He points out that, from the outset, “the movement” in Libya was an armed revolt, and not a wave of civilian protests as in Tunisia and Egypt, and that, although Western companies controlled Libyan oil following Gaddafi’s turn to “liberalism”, the West could not count on his loyalty in the long-term. Another major factor is the wish of the US to transfer the Africa Command (AFRICOM) to Africa. AFRICOM, a part of the US scheme for global military control, is still located in Stuttgart since the African Union rejects it and no African state so far wants to have it. A lackey installed in Tripoli (or Benghazi) could play along with the demands of the US and its NATO allies.

Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya’s interview by Xu Jingjing on the threat of war against Libya for the Beijing based ‘Life Week’ on 10th March (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=23642>) gives an insightful picture. It suggests that the vast energy reserves of Libya and the growing Chinese influence in Africa influenced the decision to target Gaddafi. (Also see “Libya: Is Washington Pushing for Civil War to Justify a US-NATO Military Intervention?” by Nazemroaya in (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=23375>))

In his view, ‘differences’ within the NATO on military intervention reflect competing interests —and hence rival strategies— as well as a ‘good cop - bad cop’ strategy for public consumption, while all sides work towards the objective of a regime change. He claims that, while

the US had no ethical problem about going to war with Libya, it is reluctant to be seen as the main aggressor owing to the beating taken by its international reputation as a result of the long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. (General Wesley Clark, former commander of NATO, has claimed that an attack on Libya has been planned since 2001, with targets also including Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, Syria and Iran).

Nazemroaya points out that the US had started its operations such as mapping and marking targets in Libya very early, but in secrecy. Its main concerns were public reaction and ramifications of negative international public opinion, since another war could trigger mass protests and acts of civil disobedience reminiscent of the days of the US war in Vietnam. Its three-fold strategy comprised:

1. A massive media misinformation campaign to give the impression of a humanitarian crisis as a pretext to start a war. Reports that Libyan military jets attacked civilians and protesters at the start of the upheaval were later found to be false. Reports that the Libyan military executed many of its own soldiers were also false: there is video evidence that the executions were by the opposition forces.
2. Getting the Libyans to do most the fighting on the ground. A civil war would give the US and allies an excuse to attack Libya or to isolate it internationally, and generate internal Libyan support for US and NATO intervention. The US was reportedly funnelling weapons from Egypt and Saudi Arabia into Libya for the opposition forces.
3. Engaging in an air war with limited ground combat. Troops would be sent only to secure strategic locations, like oil facilities and coastal ports, and small commando units for operations against Libyan infrastructure and Libya's command and control apparatus.

He also suggests that the US desire to use Libyan proxy forces to fight Tripoli was to avert a large number of US casualties. If war broke out and Libya was invaded there could be a prominent presence of NATO troops from Europe, which the US military forces may shadow.

Other relevant comments:

The International Action Center in its comment on 17th March drew attention to the campaign of deception that was being used to push for armed intervention by the West in Libya (http://www.iacenter.org/anti-war/stop_the_us_war_on_libya_and_bahrain/). It pointed out that besides the demonisation campaign against Gadaffi, every form of fraud and propaganda was used to that end, including a supposed "vote" by the Arab League supporting the UN resolution declaring a 'no-fly zone'. It also said that the fact that only 11 of the 22 members of the League attended the meeting held behind closed doors and two of the eleven, Syria and Algeria, were clearly opposed to military

intervention in Libya was suppressed by the corporate media, which also chose to ignore a resolution by the African Union, representing 53 countries, adamantly rejecting a no-fly zone or other intervention.

In an article titled "The Counter-Revolution Club" in Asia Times (<http://www.globalrights.info/reports-a-publications/world/1514-the-counter-revolution-club-.html>), Pepe Escobar discusses the devious role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), formed in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, in the attacks on Libya. Significantly, Jordan and Morocco, not bordering the Persian Gulf, have been invited to join the GCC.

African leaders demanded on 26th May an outright end to NATO air strikes on Libya, accusing the West of sidelining African nations in efforts to end a conflict on their home turf. On 25th May, African Union Commission chief Jean Ping said at a summit in Addis Ababa: "Some international players seem to be denying Africa any significant role in the search for a solution to the Libyan conflict". He warned the African leaders who gathered for the special summit that "Africa is not going to be reduced to the status of an observer of its own calamities" referring to conflicts on the continent, notably Libya and Sudan. It is relevant here that the ceasefire plan put forward by the AU that included a transition period to organise elections, was accepted by Gadaffi himself but rejected by the Libyan rebels who insisted on Gadaffi's departure first. The AU's proposals for resolving the crisis, including the mediation team made up of African heads of state, have largely been snubbed, most recently even by South Africa. However, Ping insisted that "the roadmap proposed by the AU has all the elements for a solution. We need to be given the opportunity to effect it".

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Honduras:

Mark Weisbrot while welcoming President Zelaya's return in his article [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/may/28/honduras-usforeignpolicy>] warns that it is only a partial reversal of the effect of the coup that ousted him on 28th June 2010.

No hard evidence has yet emerged of direct US involvement in the coup, but the US worked hard for the survival of the coup government

and its legitimisation through elections that were neither free nor fair and rejected by most of Latin America, and the world.

The agreement for Zelaya's return was mediated through Venezuela and Colombia, with the unanimous support of Latin America and the Caribbean, through Celac (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) comprising all countries of the Organisation of American States (OAS) except the US and Canada.

Honduras was expelled from the OAS after the coup and efforts by the US to get it readmitted failed, and it is expected that the new accord will pave the way for its readmission. The agreement, however, meets only some of the demands of President Zelaya and his allies, including the participation of the National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP), which struggled against the coup and subsequent repression, as a legal political party. It also permits the people to organise plebiscites of the kind that Zelaya was overthrown for organising and has, besides certain non-enforceable human rights guarantees, assurances for the safety and security of Zelaya as well as others who fled after the coup and are in exile.

Less than an year ago, Human Rights Watch, citing the murder of eight journalists and ten members of the FNRP since Porfirio Lobo took office as President, said that Honduras had failed to address serious human rights abuses since the coup. The repression has worsened since then, and in May three Honduran journalists have been shot, and two of them fatally.

While the return of Zelaya and the Latin American countries taking control of the mediation, relegating the US to the sidelines are good signs, many struggles face the pro-democracy movement, which deserves the fullest support from outside to combat repression.

Ecuador: Defying US pressure

Following the release of a diplomatic cable by WikiLeaks revealing that US Ambassador Heather Hodges had alleged that Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa had knowledge of corruption by a former head of the national police, she was declared "persona non grata" and asked on 6th April to leave Ecuador "as soon as possible". In retaliation, the US expelled the ambassador for Ecuador, depriving itself of ambassadorial relations in three South American countries now, the other two being Bolivia and Venezuela.

The results of the ten-question referendum, held on 7th May have since added to the discomfiture of the US, since Correa had public

approval on each issue with a comfortable majority and thereby strengthened his position. Among likely consequences of the referendum are a major overhaul of the judicial system and making the media answerable to the public.

[Sources: www.guardian.co.uk; www.plenglish.com]

Venezuela: Winning Friends

US attempts to use Colombia to subdue Hugo Chávez are failing. Having failed to oust Chávez by a military coup in 2002 and later through the electoral process, the US banked on the escalation of tension between Colombia and Venezuela leading to an armed conflict. It had a head start on the project since the 2000 km border between the countries has been plagued by paramilitary violence and leftist guerrilla activity for decades. But things went wrong after Juan Manuel Santos became President of Colombia. Claims by the US that Chávez supports leftist FARC guerrillas failed to impress Santos.

The change in Colombian attitude towards Venezuela reflects firstly the recognition of the importance of regional economic integration to peace and stability. With most of South America including Brazil, concerned about the US military expansion in Colombia —especially after US Air Force documents made it clear that the expansion was for "mobility operations ... on the South American continent" and against the "constant threat" from anti-US governments"— Santos was forced to choose between being the puppet of the US and being part of South America; and he chose the latter.

Recently, the US demanded the extradition of Walid Makled, an accused Venezuelan narco-trafficker arrested in Colombia, to the US. To the fury of the US, Colombia refused on the bases that it has an extradition treaty with Venezuela and not the United States, and that Venezuela made the extradition request before the US for more serious crimes (including murder) in Venezuela than in the US (drug-trafficking). The US demand for Santos was not to punish him but to make use of him to tarnish the image of Chavez using his 'confessions' in time for the forthcoming presidential elections in Venezuela. But Santos is not co-operating, despite much pressure and pending "free trade" agreement between the US and Colombia, which perhaps the US wants more desperately than Colombia does.

Out of desperation the US has now sought to impose sanctions on Venezuela's state oil company PdVSA, supposedly in an attempt to put further pressure on Iran to halt its nuclear programme by penalising

companies which continue to trade with Iran. But there were other things in mind. Congress Member and Chair of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Connie Mack let the cat out of the bag by saying: “The US needs to move quickly to cut off Chávez’s source of revenue, and bring an end to both his influence in Latin America and his dangerous relationship with the terrorist-supporting Iranian regime before it’s too late”.

The Venezuelan government defiantly rejected the sanctions, which also met with strong condemnation by a wide section of Venezuelan mass organisations. Even opposition politicians felt compelled to denounce the sanctions.

[Sources: <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20110530-704865.html>, venezuelanalysis.com]

Peru: A Left Leaning President

Former army commander and left populist candidate Ollante Humala won the presidential election of 5th June with a slim majority over Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the discredited former authoritarian president Alberto Fujimori now serving a 25-year prison sentence for multiple political murders. His victory against the right wing candidate had the expected reaction from the stock market which tumbled by 12% following the result. The implication for the US is further isolation in South America, where it is now left with only Chile as a reliable ally.

The victory has been seen favourably even by conservatives like the Peruvian Nobel literature laureate Mario Vargas Llosa and former president Alejandro Toledo, as having saved democracy, partly because he has pledged not to upset the existing economic order while pledging a more equal distribution of wealth. Although the Peruvian economy (average GDP growth at 5.7%) and living conditions (lower infant mortality and rise in life expectancy) are said to have improved since 2000, an estimated 62% of the population living on less than \$3 a day. Thus, how the Humla regime will deal with the grievances of the poor and the indigenous people who continue to be oppressed by the armed forces of Peru remains to be seen.

[Sources: guardian.co.uk, venezuelanalysis.com]

NORTH AMERICA

Canada: Left Displaces Liberals

The political landscape of Canada has changed, perhaps irrevocably with the Liberal Party which dominated Canadian politics for decades reduced to 34 seats in the 308-seat Parliament, having received only 19% of the vote and the separatist Bloc Quebecois, which dominated Quebec for two decades left with only four seats. The New Democratic Party, Canada's left party, became the main opposition party with 102 seats, and 31% of the vote. The main beneficiary of the failure of the Liberal Party is the Conservative Party which, with the last minute backing of right-wing liberals, won 168 seats with 40% of the vote.

The prospect of four years of conservative government is not pleasant to the working people. It will mean cuts to public services, privatisation, and attacks on living standards. The NDP's response to conservative politics will decide if it will be yet another centre-left party like ones in Europe or a voice of the working class.

EUROPE

Turkey: Continuing Oppression

The Turkish government, despite its estrangement with the US on regional issues and its improvement of ties with Iran and Syria, remains a reactionary and repressive regime. State repression of the left persists despite the referendum of September 2010 endorsing democratic reforms. The sentencing of Necati Abay, an editor and contributor to the newspaper Atilim and spokesperson of the Solidarity Platform of Imprisoned Journalists to 18 years and 9 months by the 12th Assize Court of Istanbul on charges of managing the Marxist Leninist Communist Party (MLKP) is only one of many acts by the Turkish regime against democratic, communist, anti-imperialist and pacifist individuals struggling against the violence and crimes of capitalist exploitation and genocide against Kurdish people.

The Association for Proletarian Solidarity (ASP) based in Italy (www.solidarietaproletaria.org) in its statement of 3rd June 2011 denounced the sentence against Nacati Abay as a vicious attack on democratic freedoms, and called for his immediate and unconditional release. The statement further pointed out that he has been sentenced

for his activities as a journalist, his effective struggle for eight years as spokesperson for the Solidarity Platform for Imprisoned Journalists and his central role in signature campaigns as an intellectual.

It added that political and judicial persecution of the revolutionary and democratic opposition in Turkey is worsening as a result of the global crisis of capitalism affecting Turkey, since there is an upsurge in mass struggles in the face of loss of jobs, wage reduction, depletion of savings, growing debts and loss of democratic rights.

Spain: Growing Defiance

Since mid-May, Spain has seen massive demonstrations against the 'socialist' government's austerity measures. The protests came after the government of Prime Minister Zapatero introduced a series of drastic austerity measures, including a wage cut for civil servants, as part of plans to reduce the budget deficit from 11% to within the limit of 3% of the GDP, set by the European Union, by 2013. From 15th May, thousands of people in several Spanish cities continued with their protests against the political and economic system, despite a ban by the Central Electoral Board (JEC), which ordered a ban on the protests. The General Assembly of the Sol Camp resolved on 22nd May to continue the encampment at Puerta del Sol, Madrid until, at least, Sunday, 29th May and the occupation has continued into June.

The protests are also significant for their call for the boycott of existing political parties and the demand for an electoral system that will be inclusive of minority political interests.

The regional and local elections that ended on 22nd May delivered a heavy blow to the ruling Socialist Party with conservatives emerging as winners. The 'socialists' paid the price for burdening the poor and for high unemployment. Whether the government will be able to impose the will of the European Union on the people remains to be seen. Going by the experience of Greece, tough times await the rulers of Spain.

[Sources: *plenglish.com*, *mrzine.monthlyreview.org*]

Greece: Protesting Privatisation

Greece imposed strict austerity measures in 2010, including public salary cuts, pension reductions and broad tax hikes as part of a €110-billion (\$160-billion) bailout package it accepted in May 2010 from the IMF and European Union. The measures angered ordinary Greeks,

sparking frequent protests. Protests have intensified in Greece against planned privatisations that the government has agreed to speed up in order to make up for a shortfall in projected revenue.

On 30th May hundreds of workers from the OTE telecommunications company took to the streets to reject the privatisation plans that the government is considering. Bank workers launched a 24 hour strike against the bailout package before parliament. On 1st June protesters set up a camp in the central square of the capital, in a move modeled after the Spanish May 15th movement and the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa.

On 3rd June protesters belonging to the All-Workers Militant Front took over the finance ministry building in Athens and unfolded a giant banner from the roof calling for a nationwide strike against the new austerity measures.

[Sources: *presstv.ir*; *irishtimes.com*]

PORTUGAL: Trouble Ahead

Portugal's ruling Socialist Party was defeated in a general election with poor voter turnout (less than 60%) and held amid severe recession, rising unemployment and the impending implementation of a €78bn EU-IMF bailout. The result leaves only four left-of centre heads of government among the EU's 27 member countries, which is the exact opposite of the situation in Latin America.

The centre-right Social Democrats (PSD) and the conservative Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party (CDS-PP) which are expected to form the government will be only too willing to implement the demanding austerity programme as a condition for an EU bail-out. The months to come will see increased EU and IMF intervention, attempts by the state to deny workers' rights and reduce wages, cut back in social welfare spending, and privatisation of state-owned companies while subsidising banks and big businesses.

[Source: *guardian.co.uk*]

Red Will Arise

Ragala Mohan

*The election campaign
opens at dark
The cockerels* spin in inebriation
Wine bars cheer up
Election is by midnight
Meantime
at home the stove lights inside the belly
water boils in the pot and
poverty plays its tunes
The election results come – at dawn
the cockerel
will make a policy declaration:
Always the ruling party – except for a few.
Parliament is dissolved the next day.
The situation is the same.
Nothing changes:
the same empty stomach - bony body - empty pot -
boastful leadership.
People will arise for a change
The evening sky will redden
Its impact extends into the morning.
The red will be there
until people change their heart.
When the people change to the red
there will be full moon
death of the cockerel - end of corruption
- burial of poverty
It will come. The day will come
when red will rule and
the bellies of the people will calm.
Red will arise.
The sorrows of the people will cease.*

[*The cockerel is the election symbol of the opportunist CWC, a trade union cum political party dominating the Hill Country.]

We Will Dare

Kaavaththaiyur Mahendran

*We climbed the hills and toiled
and planted crop on the soil.
But we live on the earth
bearing cruel poverty*

*Sky high hills narrate
the story of our lives.
The tea bushes narrate
a history of cruelty.*

*Packs of jackals
we made them our leaders.
By cunning they toppled us
and live in luxury.*

*A crowd that dances
to the of the master's tune
lives like beasts of burden.
It wants not to be clear in mind*

*The bravado of the tricksters
when it is time for elections
we know is old nonsense.
Let us dare to do things anew.*

*The wages are small change.
Life is like dying days.
Having made their deal
The leaders go on joy rides.*

*To sell out our rights, they plead:
"The companies have hard times".
If we fail to take account
when will there be respect?*

*Let us kick off these
packs of chameleons
Let us join hands with workers
and dare to advance*

Somehow We Survive

Dennis Brutus (1924 – 2009)

*Somehow we survive
and tenderness, frustrated, does not wither.*

*Investigating searchlights rake
our naked unprotected contours. . . .
boots club the peeling door.*

*But somehow we survive
severance, deprivation, loss.*

*Patrols uncoil along the asphalt dark
hissing their menace to our lives,*

*most cruel, all our land is scarred with terror,
rendered unlovely and unlovable;
sundered are we and all our passionate
surrender*

but somehow tenderness survives.

*(Dennis Brutus was an anti-apartheid campaigner in
South Africa who in the early 1960s served a 16
month sentence for his political views.)*

Realisation

Agostinho Neto

**Fear in the air!
On each street corner
vigilant sentries light incendiary glances
in each house.
Hasty replacement of the old bolts
of the doors.
In each conscience
seethes the fear of listening to itself.
History is to be told anew!
Fear in the air!
It happens that I
humble man,
still more humble —in my dark skin
come back to Africa,
to myself
with dry eyes.**

The late Agostinho Neto, Freedom Fighter, leader of MPLA and the first President of free Angola, ranks among the greatest poets of modern Africa

New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party

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