

New Democracy

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Theoretical Organ of the New Democratic Party

தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணச் சுவடிகள்

From the Editor's Desk

This issue of New Democracy is a few months overdue and the Editorial Board apologises to its readers for the long silence. At first sight much may seem to have happened in the country in the past seven months, but in real terms little has changed in the overall situation and the trend in national politics.

Since developments in the past few months are broadly dealt with in *Sri Lankan Events*, we chose to comment on the state of the media in the country. While there has never been reason for illusion about the neutrality of the media, there is a case for demanding ethical behaviour, about which a sizeable section of the media seems to have no concern.

What is particularly worrying about the national media is neither that the media are selective in presenting facts nor that opinion takes precedence over fact but that the media is able to get away with far too many misdeeds. The Island-Divayina group of newspapers has been notorious for its chauvinistic venom and its opposition to the peaceful settlement of the national question. It seems to want a chauvinistic alliance of the UNP, the SLFP and the Hela Urumaya to run this country, and the only good thing that it sees in the JVP is its opposition to the peace process. Its editorials, contributed articles and correspondence vie in their talent for chauvinistic mischief.

The Times group of newspapers, now back in the daily English newspaper market with its Daily Mirror, is particularly mischievous in the more popular Sunday Times, with regular columns that stir communal tension and seek to create a sense of panic among the Sinhalese. Its Sinhala daily and weekly, despite an eye towards the chauvinistic sections of the readership, is marginally more cautious than its rival, the Divayina.

The Sunday Leader's concern for the peace process has more to do with bringing down the government than love for peace. Its scurrilous and sensational style are part of its attraction for the

opponents of the government, and its exposés of fraud, although selective, have a semblance of neutrality because of its wide range of targets. Raavaya, could be considered to be the Sinhala counterpart of the Sunday Leader, with no less venom reserved for the President. Objectivity is not the aim of either.

The Tamil newspapers, with the exception of the state-controlled Thinakaran, cater to Tamil nationalism, with the Veerakesari group, and Sudaroli and its sister paper in Jaffna try hard to conceal their UNP loyalties, but unsuccessfully. None of the Tamil newspapers dare to criticise Indian meddling in regional affairs, and especially the Sri Lankan National question, while they seem to allow slightly more criticism of US behaviour in the Middle East than their Sinhala and English counterparts, perhaps to appease the Muslim readership.

The pattern of behaviour of the TV channels and radio stations is no less pleasing, and it is the conduct of certain sections of the private sector media that is used to justify the current unethical conduct of the state-controlled media.

The way the state-controlled media is manipulated has met with general disapproval from the public, excluding a small section of ardent supporters of the government. The line of defence of the manipulators of the state media is that the privately owned media is campaigning for the major opposition party and therefore it is not only necessary but also correct for the state-controlled media to be partial in the way they are. But they are doing a bad job of it.

What is pathetic is that the state-controlled media are unconvincing and, even worse, they fail to realise it. The bigger danger is that, in the event of electoral defeat of the government in a future general election, the state media too could be turned against the PA, which will be totally isolated.

The media are overwhelmingly anti-communist, irrespective of the language of communication. They endorse globalisation and privatisation in principle and are reluctant to take the side of the oppressed peoples of the world. The absence of an alternative news medium for the left is a serious shortcoming. The parliamentary left has relied for too long and too heavily on state sponsorship when available and on the backing of its national

bourgeois partner so that for decades its publications lacked credibility as much as the state-controlled media.

The genuine left has failed to unite politically and to pool resources to combat right-wing propaganda in the news media. This gap has been exploited by NGOs to provide the alternative media, which was no alternative but fake. Only a few years ago, the withdrawal of NGO funding led to the collapse of certain 'alternative' newspapers that were used for free ride by fringe groups and individuals.

The danger of fascism is lurking, not far away and awaiting an opportunity to seize state power. Fascism has come to power in Europe with seemingly leftist populist slogans seventy years ago. More recently, it has exploited religious and nationalistic sentiments, and especially hatred towards ethnic groups.

Renewed American interest in establishing US propaganda centres in the country does not happen independently of strategic interests. Also the recent threat by an Indian embassy official against Tamil newspapers accommodating articles 'hostile to India' cannot be dismissed lightly.

With the bulk of the population unaware of the existence of hegemonic interests and the way in which they operate, and with its concerns diverted towards chauvinistic and nationalistic politics, while feeding on trivia for amusement, the task of political awakening will be all the more harder in the event of a fascist take over.

The genuine left should work towards a system of mass communication to deliver its message for liberation and national salvation for all nationalities. Broad-based unity, un-deflected by electoral ambitions, sectarianism and personal gain, could achieve this. There is space and scope for a leftist and progressive medium in the current state of political bankruptcy of the national media. It would be useful in the political awakening of the broad masses as well as providing the forum for dialogue among genuine leftists seeking to work on a common programme.

Sri Lankan Events

In the overall political context of Sri Lanka, the outcome of the parliamentary elections was of minimal significance. The transfer of government from the UNP-led United National Front, already in a state of limbo and unable to deal with the hostile actions of the President, to the United People's Freedom Alliance PA-JVP alliance, brokered by certain noted Sinhala chauvinists and the notoriously anti-Tamil Tamil politician Laxman Kadirgamar.

Equally meaningless was the total sweep to power of the PA, first in the Provincial Council elections for the North Western Province held shortly after the parliamentary elections and more recently in the remaining six provinces excluding the North-East. The lack of public enthusiasm reflected in the poor polling percentage, and the mood of post-election dejection in the UNP camp made the task easier for the PA-JVP alliance.

The defeat of the UNF in the parliamentary elections was anticipated for a variety of reasons, including the failure of the UNF government to translate the ceasefire and the talks that followed it into concrete action towards the resolution of the national question. The UNP had none to blame than its reluctance to implement what was agreed upon in the peace negotiations, thus creating the conditions under which the LTTE withdrew from the talks. The LTTE withdrawal and the half-hearted approach of the UNP leadership to bring the LTTE back to the negotiating table diminished in the eyes of the people the significance of the only remarkable achievement of the UNF government, namely the ceasefire and the initiation of the peace process.

The UNF government, already under threat of dismissal by the President and facing the prospect of fresh elections at the convenience of the all powerful executive president of the country, who was also the leader of the opposition PA, was grossly insensitive to the sufferings of the poor, especially in

the rural areas. For instance, the increase in price of chemical fertiliser only a few months before the dissolution of parliament, which was expected at any time since President Chandrika Kumaratunge became more aggressive in her approach, was seen as folly by several political observers. But then, the UNP had important masters to please in the World Bank and the IMF whose 'support' for any government in the Third World was contingent upon the government implementing their 'economic reforms', no matter the implications for the people.

The overwhelming electoral success of the TNA, forced by an internal crisis to resort to the symbol of the Federal Party (strictly, Iankai Tamil Aracuk Katci), the until now defunct senior member organisation of the TULF and to use that name for all official purposes, much to the chagrin of its partners, was as predictable as the claims of the badly defeated opponents that the victory was entirely as a result of LTTE bullying tactics and electoral fraud, methods now routinely employed by all major parliamentary political parties.

The voting patterns of the Muslims of the East and the Hill Country Tamils did not show any significant change since the earlier parliamentary election, although the leaders had to work harder and spend more to gather the votes.

The only significant outcome of the elections was the stronger emergence of the forces of naked Sinhala chauvinism to the right and the 'left' of the political divide. The JVP outmanoeuvred its partner, the PA to gain a disproportionately large number of parliamentary seats for the number of candidates fielded by it. The Hela Urumaya (earlier Sihala Urumaya) chose to field Buddhist clergy as candidates in all electoral districts and managed to secure an unexpected total of 9 seats as opposed to none in the last parliament and one previously. As before, the votes came from constituencies with a large Sinhala elite presence, a class comprising professionals who use far more English in their day-to-day activities than the overwhelming majority of the rest of the Sinhalese. The voters

mainly comprised those disillusioned with the UNP for its 'concessions to the minorities'.

The government remains a minority government despite declarations to the contrary by the government's spokespersons and the tireless horse-trading to buy support from the smaller parties earlier allied to the UNF. The reluctance of the leader of the CWC has been based less on principle or policy than on unsuccessful bargaining for cabinet posts. The clergymen of the Hela Urumaya seem to be in two minds, in view of their hostility towards the JVP and their pro-UNP leanings on the one hand and fear of facing parliamentary polls so soon after a show of poor conduct and their desire to strength the pro-war faction of the PA on the other.

Other more significant things happened against the backdrop of the elections that still seem to haunt the political landscape. The uneasy nature of the alliance between the PA and the JVP is still evident in the approach to the national question, with the JVP increasingly asserting its opposition to negotiations on the basis of the demand for an interim self-governing authority (ISGA) for the North-East by the LTTE. Meantime, the PA leadership seems to be in two minds on the issue of negotiating with the LTTE, the reality of the government's dependence on financial support from foreign governments to avert the impending economic crisis has made it necessary to at least present an appearance of pursuit of a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the national question.

Utterances by government ministers from the PA as well as the President have given a general impression to the national minorities that the government is only playing for time while acting in ways that would weaken the LTTE politically and, if possible, militarily, while preparing for war with external support.

Attempts to weaken the LTTE politically have also been carried out covertly by the former UNF government, led by the UNP, whose failure to implement decisions agreed upon during the negotiations with the LTTE in 2002 led to the LTTE pulling

out of the negotiations in 2003. The intentions of the UNP were suspect right from the outset, and its policy of appeasing India and the US, while strengthening and equipping the armed forces with foreign aid was no secret. Acts of provocation by sections of the armed forces were not acted upon and, for most part, unchecked.

Indian involvement with Sinhala chauvinist organisations like the Hela Urumaya (formerly Sihala Urumaya) and the JVP has been suspected for several years, while Indian efforts to encourage conflict between the Tamils and the Muslims through certain Muslim political leaders of the East became evident only in the past two or three years.

The split in the ranks of the LTTE in the East with the 'Karuna' faction declaring independence from the LTTE and subsequently drifting rapidly towards a pro-government position was suspected to be a US-sponsored mischief mediated by former minister Milinda Moragoda, who had lost favour with the LTTE leadership well ahead of the LTTE withdrawal from the talks. Denials from the US Embassy in Colombo that it had no knowledge of who Karuna was only deepened that suspicion.

The LTTE has accused the Army of protecting Karuna while enabling members of his faction to carry out attacks on LTTE cadres, if not carrying out the attacks through its own agents. While the fact that a national list Muslim MP from the UNP arranged the safe transport of Karuna to Colombo pointed to a double-game by the UNP, contradictory positions taken by leading members of the government only confirmed LTTE suspicions that the army and the government were deeply involved in using Karuna against it.

The consequence of the turn of events has been a spate of killings of persons identified as members of the 'Karuna' faction, army informants, and persons belonging to Tamil political parties and groups allied to the government. This trend is feared to be on the rise while the prospects of resumption of

peace negotiations between the government and the LTTE clearly receding.

Although the Karuna faction has been militarily defeated and politically weakened, and the significance of the faction itself is likely to be small, the conflict brought out divisions based on regional interests, that have long been dismissed as irrelevant by Tamil nationalism. If these issues are not addressed politically, not only these differences but also those based on caste and religion too could emerge as serious contradictions within Tamil nationalism and weaken the struggle for national rights.

The change of government in India, seen as a sign of hope by the Tamil parliamentary politicians, has proved to be of little consequence to India's expansionist agenda was concerned. Much meaning was read into the posting of the offensively officious ambassador Sen to Norway. However, it seems that Sen still has a say in Sri Lankan affairs, especially concerning the national question. India has not changed its stand of formal support for the peace negotiations and actual undermining of the process with the aim of substituting the LTTE with a more pliable leadership.

In all, the prospects for peace have become gloomier and the only interest of the government, with the JVP, some members of the PA and other allies including the EPDP increasingly expressing reservations, seems to be in making a show of interest in the peace process to secure badly needed foreign 'aid' to keep the economy going until the next elections.

The so-called apology by President Kumaratunge to the Tamils for the atrocities of 1983, made at no more a profound occasion than a school prize giving in Kandy, about which there was much state-media hype and follow-up by pro-government elements among the national minorities, was no more than a cheap political point scoring exercise. With discrimination against the minorities continuing in education, employment and other matters, her words ring all the more hollow.

The declaration by the government that it intends to implement the environmentally detrimental Upper Kotmale hydropower project that would lead to the displacement of a large number of Hill Country Tamils, although seen by some observers as a bargaining chip in securing the support of the CWC, the largest parliamentary political party now seated with the opposition, is also an indicator of the chauvinistic approach of the government. Unwarranted attacks against Hill Country Tamils in recent months and police involvement in the incidents point to the strengthening of the forces of chauvinism in the government, against a background of a cynical and equally chauvinistic UNP in opposition playing for time till the next elections, while the parliamentary leadership of the minority nationalities show no resolve to mobilise the people against social injustice.

While the government is playing to the gallery by making a show of bringing to book the members of the former government accused of corruption and gross misconduct, all manner of deals are being made to forget and forgive mutual sins, once again confirming that parliamentary politics, however roughly played and however high the individual stakes may seem to be, is still a game played according to rules made by the bourgeoisie to serve their class interests.

The declaration of the President on 2nd August that there will be no negotiations with the LTTE on the basis of the LTTE proposals for an interim administration for the North-East was seen as a further concession to the JVP by several political observers, who were taken by surprise by her stepping down from the leadership of the UPFA two days later. Whatever the reason for her decision, the indications are that the relationship between the major partners in the UPFA has started to sour sooner than expected, and her replacement by the discredited former prime minister Ratnasiri Wikramanayake is a sign that the power struggle within the PA itself is far from over.

The country faces a serious economic crisis and the chauvinists are out to take the country along the route to an even fiercer

war. The few national assets that have remained unsold to foreign capital by successive governments in the past quarter of a century of economic liberalisation are slowly and surreptitiously being surrendered to foreign control, with no plans for revival of the national economy. Meanwhile, military agreements with the only global superpower and the domineering expansionist neighbour continue to be made in the name of defending the territorial integrity of the country erode the sovereignty of the country and its people.

What is particularly disappointing is that much of the left movement, excluding the revisionist CP and the reformist LSSP, remains victim to illusions of parliamentary power. Parliamentary ambitions of certain individuals that led to the break-up of the New Left Front hardly two years after its founding in 1998 still plague the left parties in the South. Sectarianism and the exposure of the opportunism of some of the left leaders led to a fall in support for the two rival left groups that contested the parliamentary and provincial council elections. The failure of these parties to address the more pressing issues concerning imperialist globalisation and national oppression to launch mass struggles against them will only weaken them further. The lack of a viable left movement carries the implicit threat that it would be fascism, rather than revolution, that is round the corner, irrespectively of whether its agent will be the JVP, the Hela Urumaya or a reactivated UNP, with the armed forces playing a major role.

International Events

Iraq: the Long Shadow of the War

The war in Iraq took the expected turn towards a prolonged civil war. The US-installed Governing Council led by puppet al-Yawer and CIA informer Allawi, despite UN blessings for its legitimacy, is struggling to keep control of the affairs and even Chalabi, once the handpicked US agent to run Iraq on their behalf, is now 'wanted' for 'corruption'. The US armed forces have vowed to stay on in Iraq, backed by its allies, until there is an end to anti-government terror, in other words, forever. Resistance to occupation is growing hand in hand with opposition to the puppet government, while US retaliation against civilians goes on in the name of war on terror.

Photographs of acts of torture of Iraqi captives by US soldiers shocked the world, but failed to surprise those who know of the behaviour of forces of occupation. Among important consequences were that similar actions in Afghanistan came to light and the plight of the Muslim detainees in the US Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay attracted much international attention.

Guerrilla attacks and kidnappings are rendering the hearts of the weaker allies in the Third World even feebler. The Spanish troop withdrawal earlier in the year, in the wake of a terrorist attack on the railway and the subsequent defeat of the rightist government, has emboldened opposition to US occupation. Kidnapping of nationals of various countries seen to be collaborating with the occupiers knowingly or otherwise and threatening to kill them seems to work, and the aggressor, unable to give any assurance about the safety of foreign personnel, is unable to do little more than cry 'Foul!' However, even the most gruesome act of terror by the extremist kidnappers is seen by many political observers in the context of US terror in Iraq, despite their disapproval of terror and blackmail tactics.

Sabotage of oil supply lines by guerrilla fighters has in August brought pumping of oil out of Iraq to a halt and sent oil prices sky rocketing, delivering a further blow to US hopes for a domestic economic recovery.

UK Prime Minister Blair and his party were humiliated in the local elections held in June as a direct result of public anger about Blair's misleading the country to take it to war against Iraq. In an effort to whitewash Blair in the inquiry into the Iraq affair, Lord Butler, a former Cabinet Secretary, while not blaming the Prime Minister, laid bare the facts that have further dented Blair's credibility, as demonstrated by a disastrous performance by the Labour Party in two parliamentary by-elections.

Kerry, the Democratic Party candidate for the forthcoming presidential election in November is making good capital of the fallout from the war in Iraq, but whether replacement of Bush by Kerry would mean a change in US attitude is a matter of serious doubt. A change in tactics in the short run is likely, in case of a Kerry victory, but past experience has been that Clinton, a Democrat, got more bombs dropped in Iraq than his predecessor George Bush (Sr.) who started the first war on Iraq.

Nepal

The King of Nepal has yielded to opposition pressure to cobble up an interim government with the participation by the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party (UML) among others. The King's intention appears to pass the burden of political negotiations with the Maoists to his parliamentary political critics, while encouraging factional fighting within each party for the crumbs of political power thrown at them by the monarchy, while strengthening the military with the help of India and the US, not to mention Chinese collaboration, to subdue the Maoists whose influence has strengthened across the country, now including the Terai, the major agricultural base of the country.

India has made no secret of its desire not only to see that the monarchy holds out against the Maoists but also to eliminate Maoist influence on Nepali government policy, and is therefore likely to undermine the peace process and back every anti-democratic move of the king, as it has been doing in other parts of South Asia.

Indian Elections: Change but No Change

The defeat of the BJP at the polls in May 2004, although not the total rout that the winners claim it to be, is a welcome event. The gains of the left are again restricted largely to traditional strongholds of the two parliamentary left parties, and the handful of seats secured by them was at the mercy of dominant regional political parties. The rejection of the BJP's economic policy was most significant in the humiliation of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, the showpiece of the globalisation-oriented economic measures of the BJP-led alliance.

The rout of the ADMK, which embraced the BJP only a few months before the elections, was a response to the autocratic style of government by Chief Minister Jayalalitha. In the North and the West, the BJP has held strong in all states but Uttar Pradesh, where an alliance of regional and oppressed-caste based parties won an impressive victory and Haryana, where Congress succeeded.

Although the 'foreigner' card was used against Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the Congress, the voters chose to ignore it. However, external pressure and Sonia Gandhi's own political calculations led to her stepping aside and enabling Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's 'economic reforms'. The Congress-led alliance has chosen to ignore the anti-globalisation verdict of the electorate and carry on with its 'reforms with a human face', which in other words is implementing globalisation with a masked face. The budget presented by Chithamparam, another advocate of globalisation, has only confirmed the fears of the genuine left.

The CPI and CPI(M) are in the embarrassing situation that they bargained for, where they feel obliged to keep Congress in power to keep out the JVP, while making only formal protests about the new government continuing with the same anti-people economic policies as its predecessor.

It is also clear that the foreign policy of accommodating US imperialism while working toward regional hegemony will continue, again something that the parliamentary left would not protest strongly against.

The danger to which the parliamentary left is not alive is that the Congress-led alliance is likely to fail to deliver economically and socially on its promises and that the Hindu Fascist BJP and its allies could return to power with a vengeance before long.

The Not-So-Great Wall of Zionism

Israeli atrocities against innocent Palestinians have intensified in the pretext of fighting terrorism, but with the true intention of bringing the Palestinian Authority under total control and continue its occupation and expansion settlements in Palestine.

The ‘Security Fence’ was built by Israel in breach of international law, in the pretext of fighting terrorism, while also encroaching on more Palestinian territory and undermining the already fragile economy of the Palestinians under Israeli domination. The ruling of the International Court of Justice against the building of the wall by Israel in occupied territory is in a moral sense a setback for the Zionist state and its patron, the US.

However, Israel has chosen to disregard the ruling with the blessings of the US. A subsequent UN resolution denouncing Israeli conduct in occupied territories was endorsed with only the US, Israel and four tiny states under US domination opposing it.

What the Arab world has to realise is that it is not possible to isolate Zionism without confronting the US.

Other Wars of the US Imperialists

The US, facing growing hostility to its interventionist policy of imperialist exploitation and domination in South America, is out to punish the culprits. While economic pressure on Brazil and Argentina are expected to politically weaken the governments and make way for more right-wing pro-US governments, the main thrust of US attack is against the legally elected government of Venezuela and the revolutionary forces in Colombia.

Having failed to bring down Hugo Chavez by a coup in 2003, the US has not stopped at using the Venezuelan urban elite classes in staging uprisings against the 'undemocratic' regime. Attempts to topple the government by staging an oil workers' strike failed miserably as well as hurt US interests at a time when oil supplies from the Middle East were insufficient and faced uncertainty.

However, Chavez has, under pressure, agreed to a referendum and the outcome will be decisive not only for his government and the country but for the entire region. The show of popular support for Chavez in the weeks preceding the referendum is, nevertheless, a warning to the US that manipulation of the referendum in its favour is one thing, but to deal with the consequences of toppling a popular government is yet another.

In Colombia, the US is maintaining its dominance by backing unpopular governments, now that of Alvaro Uribe, aided by a corrupt army, deeply involved in the drug trade, and just as corrupt pro-government militias. The government is unable to defeat the leftist revolutionary armies namely, FARC and ELN, because of their popular support. Attempts to undermine the rebels by using NGOs to bring about change by reforms also meets resistance from the army and the pro-government militia, besides the rebels whom they are meant to weaken. Columbia has the biggest direct US military support in the whole of Latin America and this will remain the case as long as the Columbian government remains a bastion of imperialist globalisation in a

region where the masses are in revolt against the US and its globalisation strategy.

The US succeeded in toppling yet another popular government in the Caribbean this year namely the troubled and impoverished Haiti, struggling to recover from decades of the evil rule of the Duvalier father and son. Aristade was tricked by the US and France into giving up power and bullied into leaving the country. American behaviour in Haiti has caused concern among many leaders of the Third World. The grant of asylum to Aristade by South Africa is a commendable expression of defiance.

Attempts to topple Castro's government in Cuba has a long history, with features reminiscent of the valiant efforts of Don Quixote, when they do not remind one of the pathetic cat in the American cartoon serial Tom and Jerry. The Bush government has tightened economic sanctions once more, but only to strengthen the resolve of the Cuban masses and their support for the government.

In East and South East Asia, the US is using Islamic fundamentalism as the pretext for its military expansion. US armed forces are operating in the Philippines, nominally to hunt down the Abu Sayyaf gang, but the fact that the US has continued to brand the Communist Party of the Philippines as a terrorist organisation exposes its true intention.

The US has targeted North Korea for punishment for a long time and has not wasted the opportunity offered by the collapse of the Soviet Union to increase pressure on North Korea. North Korea has stood its ground and refused to compromise on its nuclear power programme and its defence programme unless the US agrees to a non-aggression pact. The US has been for well over fifty years the force behind the division of Korea and the main obstacle to reunification. Its recent move of pulling out 10,000 troops from South Korea but leaving the 14,000 on the demilitarised Zone separating the two halves of Korea is not with the intention of demilitarisation of the region, but

prompted by demands for combat ready troops further to the west.

Another matter of concern is the US proposal to intervene in marine traffic in the Strait of Malacca, separating Malaysia and Indonesia. The declared purpose is control of cargo related to weapons of mass destruction, but what is suspected is the encirclement of China before China poses a challenge to US domination in the region. The US policy is resented by the three countries concerned namely Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, as it poses a threat to their sovereignty. However, one knows that the US has proven ways of persuading the hesitant.

The hard line taken by the US against Syria and Iran has failed to produce results. In Iran, in fact, it has backfired and strengthened the hands of the anti-US clerics. Despite threats of sanctions, Iran has asserted its right to go ahead with its nuclear power programme.

Sudan seems to be the next in line for US intervention under UN cloak. Acts of terror by an Arab racist group against the people of the Dafur region and the failure of the Sudanese government to control it could be used as a pretext for armed intervention. The Sudanese government should learn from the experiences of former Yugoslavia, as well as realise that the US interest in the country comes out of the oil wealth in the Dafur region. It is important the government implements without delay the agreement that it reached with the rebels and ensure the unity and stability of Sudan through restoration of peace to the troubled south of the country, and frustrate the efforts of foreign meddlers.

WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AND CLASS STRUGGLE

by
KJERSTI ERICSSON

(This article is reproduced from the book 'Sisters, Comrades' by Comrade Kjersti Ericsson, Leader of the Workers' Communist Party of Norway, originally published in 1987 in Norwegian and revised in 1993. Some of the chapters have been translated into Tamil in view of their importance to understanding women's struggle in the context of the struggle against imperialism. We proudly reproduce a chapter from the book with the kind permission of the author.)

The relationship between class struggle and women's struggle has become a recurrent theme among socialists and the revolutionaries. That is not surprising. Women in the working class, and the working people, are subject to class oppression, which they share with the men of their class. But they are also subject to gender oppression, which they share with women of other classes. Therefore they encounter pressure from two sides: from the women in the bourgeoisie and the higher strata of the petit bourgeoisie, who want to mobilise them to women's struggle uninfected by all the issues dealing with class contradictions. The women's rights magazine "New Country" expressed it like this in 1903 (referred from Hagemann, 1977, p. 103):

"Nobody can say that our magazine has not, from its outset, had a certain sympathy for labour organisations among working women. But no one can blame "New Country" for referring to see them based on women's rights rather than on 'the foundations of class struggle'.

The same contradiction also appears in views regarding the relationship between women's struggle and imperialism. Many white, western women would not accept that the battle against imperialism has anything to do with 'women's struggle'. This is how the Bolivian miner's wife Domitila describes her discussion with Betty Friedan from the USA at the women's tribunal in Mexico in 1975 (1980, p.193):

"The day women spoke against imperialism, I also held a speech. I made them understand how totally dependent we are on foreigners in every way, how they decide over us both in the economic and the

cultural area. This led to a discussion between myself and Betty Friedan, the great feminist leader from the USA. She and her group had suggested some changes in the 'worldwide plan of action'. But they built on purely feminist questions, and we did not agree with them because they did not pertain to problems which were important to women in Latin America.

"Betty Friedan called on us to follow her line and asked us to give up our 'warlike activities'. She said we were being 'manipulated by the men', and that we 'only thought about politics', and that we did not have a proper grasp of real women's questions".

From another direction, men in the working class and the working people exert pressure, perpetually warning against the 'gender struggle becoming superior to the class struggle'. The main function of women's organisations tied to socialist movements and in socialist countries has often been the mobilisation of women to carry out the movement's or the party's general political policy, not to conduct a separate women's struggle.

At this cross road, the majority of women have to map out their strategy for independence. But it is not a question of 'pure' contradictions between the sexes and 'pure' class contradictions. As I have tried to show in the preceding chapters, women's oppression is woven both into capitalism's economic basis and into the rule of the bourgeoisie. The oppression of women serves the bourgeoisie as a class.

Full equality during capitalism

The goal of the bourgeois women's movement has been, and is, full equality within the framework of the capitalist system. Is this possible? One should not underestimate the changes that can occur. Revolutionaries too can get caught up in what their times conceive as 'natural' and 'obvious', and therefore have difficulties in imagining dramatic changes.

But full equality? In my opinion, history up to now has shown two things: first, it is possible for women to fight for, and obtain, real improvements during capitalism; secondly, the basic structure of women's oppression survives through all changes, often through the oppression taking new, more obscure forms, such as, the unpaid housework surviving despite technological advancement and the production of consumer goods. Pay differences between women and

men survive despite 'equal pay' through a gender divided market mechanism.

Women's subordination under men survives despite the ideology of equality through 'voluntary' subordination due to 'love' and 'personal characteristics'. The 'sexual revolution' and the use of contraceptives have, to use Bell Hooks' words (p. 102) "given men unlimited access to women's bodies". Through role models like Joan Collins and Jane Fonda, the concept that a woman's life is over when she turns thirty, has been replaced by the insane demand that women should be just as sexy and youthful long into the twilight years. This calls for far more effort and intensive concentration on body and appearance than women before us have known.

The discussion about whether full equality is possible during capitalism or not has often taken on a rather frustrating form. Those who think that capitalism must be overthrown, often end up sitting around looking for the decisive logical trick which will make it impossible for capitalism to survive without women's oppression. Those who think that equality can be realised within the framework of the capitalist system say, "yes, but if ...", "yes but if ..." and end up in a hypothetical construction which bears little resemblance to the capitalist societies known throughout history. Moreover, there are at least two possible interpretations for what 'full equality during capitalism' might mean:

–one possible interpretation is that capitalism can abolish the conditions which today oppress women, and still remain in existence as capitalism;

–the other possible interpretation is that men and women 'share the burden': in other words, the oppressive conditions remain, but they don't one-sidedly fall on women.

I have little faith in the decisive trick. But let us look at the two possible interpretations of 'full equality during capitalism' seen from today's reality, and see if they appear to be sensible strategies for women's struggle.

Let us look at interpretation one. This would have to mean, first, that the family was gradually dismantled as an economic unit within the framework of the capitalist system. How could this happen? One possibility is that all the work that today is carried out was transferred to a large, public sector with free or very inexpensive services. This

possibility is not very realistic. One of the large problems in capitalist countries today is that which is often called 'crisis in the public economy'. The public sector takes such a large portion of the surplus value that is produced, that it threatens the tempo of capital accumulation and becomes an independent source of crisis tendencies within the capitalist system (see Minken, 1986). In all countries, no matter the kind of government, authorities attempt to meet this crisis with budget cuts, cutbacks and privatisation. If the public sector were to become so large that it overtook the all the work that is now conducted in the family, this crisis would be dramatically increased.

Another possibility is that all the unpaid work is paid, which would mean transferring it to the market. This has happened with a good deal of housework. Bread can be bought in a store instead of baked at home; we can go to a clothing store instead of sewing clothes at home; etc. This solution would have the advantage, from the capitalist's viewpoint, that it expanded the market.

There are several problems with this alternative. If most people were able to pay for things that are now done without pay (go to restaurants or cafes every day, use a cleaning agency instead of doing their own housecleaning, put their elderly in private nursing homes, etc., etc.) they would quickly encounter the same problem as Domitila's husband: their pay wouldn't be enough! Pay would have to be substantially increased, at the expense of capital's profit. In an economy where modern technology appears to be making mass employment a constant phenomenon, capitalists are in an advantageous position for holding wages down. Everything points towards all the fancy, private services remaining for the few, not for most people. In addition, this 'solution' is contingent upon the family's continued existence as a unit of support, where those with the strongest economy will have the most of the power, and children will be totally economically dependent upon their parents. This can hardly be called 'gradual dismantling of the family as an economic unit'.

In addition, the gender divided labour market and 'women's wages' would have to be abolished. Because this is linked to society's organisation in families, difficulties in dismantling the family as an economic unit would also set limits to how far it is possible to get in 'equalising' the labour market. A capitalist wage system without poorly paid jobs is hard to imagine. There would, for example, always be demands to keep wages down for the large employee

groups in the public sector. Pressures like ‘the crisis in the public sector’ would be particularly strong. And id labour power in labour intensive industries becomes too expensive, Capital would move somewhere else, or would rationalise and automate. Therefore it is extremely difficult to imagine that capitalism can ‘abolish’ ‘women’s jobs’ through the introduction of truly equal pay.

Women are also a flexible reserve army for Capital. This kind of reserve army is created again and again as a link in the very process of capital accumulation. A capitalistic system without a reserve army of labour power is unthinkable.

The oppression of women, and the family as a hierarchy of power, also serves another important function in terms of maintaining bourgeoisie’s rule. The oppression of women contributes to splitting the working people and to ‘corrupting’ the male segment so that they have a certain objective interest in the survival of the system. They are also ‘infected’ by some of the ways in which the bourgeoisie perceive the world. The family also preserves the notion of ‘natural’ hierarchies, and socialises new generations into these ideas. Of course, it isn’t unthinkable that capitalism could develop other oppressive mechanisms, replacing this system in the bourgeoisie’s use of power. But this isn’t very likely.

A capitalist system without the conditions that are now oppressive to women can be anything other than a hypothetical construction. But what of the other possible interpretation, that men and women equally share the burdens?

It is undoubtedly possible to make advances in dividing, for example, housework, compared with where we stand today. Old-fashioned attitudes, however, do not alone produce this unequal distribution – material conditions also contribute. For the most part, men have higher wages than women. This gives them both more power in the family, and, if they are to get everyday life to function, it makes it unprofitable to let the man work part-time instead of the wife. Often a man works as lot of overtime in order for the family to manage economically. Then the possibilities for equally dividing housework are even more difficult. An equal division is therefore contingent upon equality in the labour market: equal work tome and equal pay. It is in families where the wife earns as much as or more than the man that we are likely to find that housework is most evenly divided. At the very least, it is far from becoming the norm. As I pointed out

above, capitalism has built-in barriers against this type of development.

Moreover, the family has an important place in society's hierarchy for the maintenance and recreation of conditions of oppression and subordination. It is very difficult to imagine a fully democratic, bourgeois family. The main point of the family's existence during capitalism is the very fact that there should not be equality there. Demanding that the family within capitalism should stop reproducing social genders with decidedly oppressive and subordinate relations is about the same as demanding that the school should stop reproducing social classes. All studies show that the school, despite its stated goals of 'equalising', is a sorting machine with unflinching class consciousness (see Ericsson and Rudberg, 1981). The family seems to be a sorting machine with unwavering gender consciousness, no matter what the gender conscious parents' stated goals are.

If women and men are to 'share the burden equally', this would demand a new 'programming' of social gender within the framework of the present system. One reason for the women taking on the large burdens which unpaid labour entails is their very psychological structure. On the other side, in men's psychological structure identity is closely tied to work, to having a job. This can be seen clearly in situations where they lose support for their identity, through, for example, retirement or unemployment. A large number of men die from retirement. And unemployment often becomes a psychological, not just an economic, catastrophe. The personality is broken down. Ingham (1984, p. 27) quotes an unemployed man who says, "My wife's right, it affects me as a man, it is not much the money so much as the feeling men have". To totally reprogram this within the framework of the existing system is a formidable task.

Substantial changes have occurred, and major changes between the sexes can still occur. Nonetheless, it is still difficult to imagine a capitalism that, in one way or the other, does not have the oppression of women woven into its fabric, in the economic basis and in the power apparatus. It is nearly impossible to conceive this as a practical political movement. When those at the bottom truly rise up, it will be because their entire situation is crushing them. They will not be analysing what is 'pure' women's struggle and what is 'pure' class struggle, but they will rise up from the interwoven reality they live in, a reality which has become intolerable. The movement among the working class and the working people's women today, both in

Norway and in other parts of the world, contains just this quality of totality, it has both a women's aspect and a class aspect. A massive, powerful movement from those at the bottom can hardly avoid threatening those who are at the top. The timid demand for reform toward full equality within the capitalistic system is an impossible, utopian goal.

The women's struggle –a threat to the class struggle?

In periods where the women's struggle has had wind in its sails, warnings that the women's struggle should not be 'superior' to class struggle have not been lacking. This has several aspects: the fear that women and men will use their energy in fighting each other rather than uniting against the bourgeoisie; the fear that socialist and revolutionary women will go over to a 'classless equality policy' in the women's struggle; and probably also the fear that their own male privileges will be under fire.

Agnete Strøm (1986) put it like this: a class standpoint without a women's perspective is a class standpoint based on oppression. This is important for an understanding of the relationship between class struggle and the women's struggle.

In the days of the 2nd international, there were representatives who spoke of a 'socialist colonial policy' (see Myrdal, 1986, p. 67). Workers in the imperialistic countries were to accept imperialism (which might give them short-term benefits) yet develop an alternative colonial policy which was 'socialistic'. Today the expression 'socialist colonial policy' just seems grotesque. If you are a socialist, you must fight against imperialism, you must take sides with the oppressed nations in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. A class standpoint without an anti-imperialist content is a class standpoint based on oppression. With this kind of a class standpoint, you are in reality supporting the system that you want to fight.

A class standpoint without a women's perspective is a kind of 'socialist colonial policy'. The male workers would then accept the oppression of women (from which they have short-term benefits). But just as with the 'socialist colonial policy' is support of imperialism as a system and the bourgeoisie as a class, a class standpoint without a women's perspective supports imperialism as a system and the bourgeoisie as a class. The desire to keep women in unpaid housework, the desire to build an identity as a 'man' on power over women, is at the same time contributing to preserving the

economic conditions and power structures which capitalism depends upon.

At the same time, the oppression of women means a splitting and weakening of the working class. It is not difficult to concretely argue that the struggle strengthens the working class' struggle, not weakens it. Today women make up half of the employed working class of Norway, and they make up an even larger portion of the lowest ranks of the petit bourgeoisie, the working class' closest ally. Pulling these large masses into an active battle against the bourgeoisie would surely be an enormous strength for the entire working class. But in order for this to happen, it must be kept in mind that in many important areas, working class women and men are not in the same objective situation. Women in the working class must fight on their own terms, as women. A worker policy that does consider women's special situation, and which does not bring up demands that are especially important for women, would, then, be a bad worker policy, and would be incapable of mobilising the full strength of the working class. Siri Jensen's pointed remark is therefore entirely correct, "It's not that too much emphasis on women's issues will split the working class. On the contrary, far too little emphasis on women's interests today is hindering the working class' struggle" (Jensen, 1986).

Far too little emphasis on women's interests hinders today's working class' struggle in at least three ways:

- one way is that demands which serve the entire working class, but in which women have the greatest interest, are often treated haphazardly by the labour movement. This is particularly true for leadership in the labour movement, who have, for example, systematically fought against and sabotaged the demand for a six-hour workday since its introduction. But it has also been hard to get support on the grassroots level for issues which concern women;
- the second way is that the opposition of women in the working class movement and in the labour movement has itself had a splitting effect. Pornography at work, sexual harassment, misogyny, male chauvinism in the labour movement, all this contributes to keeping the female worker down and thereby splitting and paralysing the strength of the working class. The fight for gender quotas in the labour movement, the fight against porno on the job, and against sexual harassment are therefore necessary in order to strengthen the unity of the working class, even though they are

directed against the male co-workers. These fights are a necessary part of a reckoning with a 'socialist colonial policy';

- the third way is that the struggle becomes less radical, and more easily deteriorates to class cooperation and reformism if it does not incorporate the struggle against the oppression of women. In the midst of the struggle, there exists a social characteristic that must be preserved, an area of cooperation with the bourgeoisie. The fight against the social democratic leadership in the labour movement and its class collaboration policy becomes crippled and yielding if it does not contain a fight against male chauvinism.

The message to men who want to be consistent in their opposition to the class system should therefore be clear: you have to be on the women's side and actively participate in the battle against women's oppression. A 'unity in the working class' which presupposes the oppression of women is in the long run contrary to its own interests.

One policy for the women of the bourgeoisie and one for the women of the working class?

Historically, this has without doubt, been the situation. There has been a division between the bourgeois/petit bourgeois women's movement and the proletarian women's movement, and these two directions have stood for different things. This is, of course due to the objective fact that the women belonged to different classes. Classes are not a 'categorisation invented by patriarchy in order to divide and conquer', as the modern feminist Robin Morgan (1984, p. 119) claims.

For women of different classes different problems arise as the most pressing. It is no coincidence that Katti Ankler Møller resigned in frustration from the first board in the Norwegian Women's National Committee. Katti Ankler Møller was concerned with abortion, contraceptives and unmarried mother's situation (see Tokheim, 1977). These were the issues that affected the working class women most, and Katti Ankler Møller found little support for the issues she burned for in the National Committee which had a bourgeois dominance.

As a rough sketch one could say that the bourgeois/petit bourgeois women's movement has been a civil liberties movement, a movement for equality within the framework of the system. It has been directed towards the different treatment of women and men, with democratic

demands for equality. At the onset, it was a women's rights movement marked by a liberal view of society, and the desire for free competition between individuals without a handicap for either sex.

The women's movement in the working class has often been tied to the working class' political parties, and has been less preoccupied with equality than with demands that arose from the working class women's material and social situation. Making allowance for the need for unity in the working class (a unity for which men have set the terms), has often made the proletarian women's movement a little tame in its battle against the specific oppression of women. In her article about Labour Party's women's association from 1901 to 1999, Kirsten Flatøy (1977, p. 7) writes:

“In 1904 the women's branch of the Labour Party criticised the women in the bourgeois women's rights movement on the very grounds that the battle they fought was directed towards the man and not towards the existing social system. It was said that their primary goal was to achieve formal rights in society and to advance in competition with men on the labour market. For the working class women, the goal was not to obtain what they saw as more or less artificial equality with men, but to achieve improvements for the working class as a whole”.

This can serve as an illustration which suggests how the divisions went. But both directions had important built-in contradictions.

The bourgeois women's movement had (and has) a contradiction which arises from the bourgeois women's conflicting interests as a gender and as a class. As a gender they are oppressed by a system from which they simultaneously receive benefits as a class. The bourgeois women's movement has attempted to resolve this contradiction by making 'women's rights' into something 'apolitical', something that has no connection to other issues in society. They did not want any changes in class conditions, and they stayed away from questions that they saw as 'political'. “Women's rights were for them apolitical”, wrote Gro Hagemann (1977, p. 108) about the situation in Norway in the first decade of this century. Later the bourgeoisie-influenced sector of the new women's movement also has brought up issues other than those which only deal with formal equality between the sexes. But the idea that there are 'pure' women's issues, which have nothing to do with politics, has survived. The polemics between Domitila and Betty Friedan in

Mexico illustrate this. The working class woman Domitila from a Third World country, Bolivia, has a different view of what 'women's issues' are than the white middle class woman Betty Friedan from the USA.

While the bourgeois women's movement struggles with the built-in problem that their goal, full equality within the framework of the system, is impossible, the proletarian women's movement has its own problems. The most obvious problem is the relationship to men in the working class and the working people.

The labour-related women's movement has perpetually been met with demands that they direct their fight against 'society', not against 'man'. This demand is not merely something that has been forced on them from outside sources. The women in the labour movement have, themselves, seen the need for a unity between the sexes in order to be as strong as possible in the fight against class oppression under which both sexes suffer. Fighting against the oppression of women which is conducted in 'society' or by the 'system' or in the bourgeoisie, while one does not bring up the oppression carried out by 'men', is, however, impossible. The oppression that is carried out by 'men' is a part of the total gender system which contributes to maintaining the bourgeoisie's rule. When the man has the advantage of having a private servant at home, Capital simultaneously has the advantage of reproduction costs being held down through women's unpaid labour. When a man dominates 'his' woman, the bourgeoisie simultaneously profits from half of the working people being held at bay, and from the maintenance of the concept of a 'natural' hierarchy. The depth and breath of 'society's' or the 'bourgeoisie's' oppression of women cannot be understood when the 'men's' oppression of women is not included in the analysis. When it is a taboo to fight against 'men's' oppression, this only leads to important aspects of the gender system being preserved. In reality, this has been the result, both in earlier working women's movements and at times in parts of the 'new' women's movement.

In contrast to the situation for the bourgeois women, no objective built-in contradictions exist for women of the working people.

On the contrary, both the battle they fight as a gender and the battle they fight as a class, pull in the same direction: it threatens the bourgeoisie as a class and capitalism as a system. This is important to understand, both for women and men. It is important for the women

to understand so that they can resist both the bourgeois women's attempts and the workingmen's attempts, from each in their direction, at limiting the battle which must be fought. And it is important to understand the workingman's dual role as victims and profiteers of capitalism's gender system. Without realising this dual role, one risks swaying from 'unity against the bourgeoisie' on male chauvinist terms, to a one-sided animosity with no attempt to convince and form alliances on progressive terms. In order to serve their own class interest, it is important that men understand the function of the women's struggle; only this understanding will make them capable of resisting the role of 'useful idiots'.

What divides us?

'Sisterhood is global' is the title of the book edited by Robin Morgan. And it is true that all women in the world are oppressed as a sex, and therefore have something in common. But in the battle to rid ourselves of this oppression, we can only go so far together.

Women of the working people have good reasons for cooperating with and supporting the bourgeois influenced women's movement as long as it operates as a 'civil rights movement', that is to say, as long as it makes democratic demands for equality between sexes. First, because the demand for equality is fair, and it serves the female sex as a whole. Second, it is true that, the more formal equality that can be reached, the easier it is to see real inequality. Women received the vote, but not political power. Most jobs were opened for women. But women are still concentrated in a small number of jobs with low pay and prestige while men are spread over the entire spectrum. Women received equal pay. But they still do not get a wage on which they can live. The more discriminatory formal rules that are tidied away, the easier it is to see that something other than these formal rules themselves that maintains the oppression of women. This parallels the relationship between the classes. The more formal democratic rights that the working class fights through, the clearer it becomes that capitalism cannot keep the promise of equality for all. The exploitative relationship gets in the way.

Therefore, workingwomen have every reason for supporting 'classless' demands for equality, though they might have little direct significance for their own situation. It is right to support demands that women should be able to be bosses, priests and governing monarchs, though we are neither priests nor bosses nor governing

monarchs. These demands are also a part of the battle for formal and legal equality from which the working class can benefit. One example of an important democratic demand which the bourgeois/petit bourgeois women's movement has raised in our time is the demand for gender quotas. The women discovered that they were placed poorly in the fight for high positions and different kinds of offices, no matter how qualified they were. The demand for gender quotas, in a more or less radical form, is a democratic demand for equal representation for the sexes.

Therefore a proletarian women's movement cannot differ from a bourgeois/petit bourgeois women's movement by going against the 'classless' demands for equality. A proletarian movement must go farther, by also bringing up the real inequalities, and setting them in connection with the capitalistic system's way of functioning. Today there is not much left of the bourgeois women's movement as a civil rights movement. It has for the most part used up its progressive possibilities, though the bourgeois women's rights women still make themselves known in some areas, for example when it comes to the fight for gender quotas in upper level positions. The one, large question where formal inequality is still an eyesore, mandatory military service, is brought up by a few lone souls among the bourgeois women.

The women's movement in the world today is marked by a myriad of directions, ideas and key issues. It is difficult to find the clear dividers of earlier times, between the 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' directions. The class foundation for today's women's organisations is more mixed. But many of the same contradictions are still reflected. In the new women's movement in Norway, for example, there has long been dissention as to whether anti-imperialism has anything to do with women's struggle (Strøm , 1986, p. 51):

“There are several reasons for this split (between the Women's Front and the New Feminists, my note) but the most visible reason was the view on international women's solidarity. Support to freedom movements, the fight for a country's freedom, was not seen as important demands for all. The word imperialism was regarded as a word the Women's Front has inherited from the male dominated organisations”.

Here, we can recognise the concept of the 'apolitical' women's cause. It was no coincidence that it was the Women's Front, the

organisation among the new women's organisations which most clearly placed itself in the 'proletarian' tradition, who were in the forefront raising the issue of international solidarity as an issue for the women's movement. Nor was it a coincidence that it was not the Women's Front who led the way in bringing up issues like wife battering and rape. The inheritance from the proletarian tradition also played a part in this: one should direct the fight against 'society' not against 'man'.

Women split up, and sisterhoods disintegrate, when the women's struggle starts to threaten the bourgeoisie's class interests. In our times this happens fairly quickly. The low paid, double-working woman in a woman's job, who needs a wage on which to get by and not just a 'supplementary wage', who needs a 6-hour normal workday, who needs childcare centres built and care for the elderly, who needs an independent labour movement and free labour rights to be able to fight for these demands, quickly comes into direct opposition to the bourgeois hunt for profit. One of the bourgeoisie's weapons in this battle is the current image of women, with the woman as a self-sacrificing mother and daughter and supported 'subordinate person' in the family. A women's movement for the majority of women must have as its starting point the situation and interests of the women in the working people. This demands that it is versatile, and takes up the fight against 'the gender system' in its full breadth.

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Both Marx and Lenin felt that socialism had to break with the parliamentary system, not by abolishing elections and representative bodies but by making them real tools for the working people's power. Much turned out, as we know, differently. Certain aspects of the political system in the socialist countries came to resemble the bourgeois parliamentary system more than Marx and Lenin had imagined. The elected assemblies were more or less reduced to discussion groups, while the real work off the state took place in the bureaucracy. Many freedoms and rights became more formal than real, also for the working people.

Kjersti Ericsson

Sisters, Comrades (English Translation), 1993, p. 108

Jose Maria Sison, “US Terrorism and the War in the Philippines”, Papieren Tijger, P.O. Box 2599, 4800 CN Breda, The Netherlands, pp. 133

The book comprises a selection of articles written by Professor Jose Maria Sison in 2002 and 2003, selected and edited by Fidel Agcaoili of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. It is presented in three parts: the first with four chapters introducing Sison as a Filipino patriot, intellectual and revolutionary, his ideology and his contribution to the liberation struggle of the people of the Philippines; the second with 29 articles by him concerning the role of US imperialism in the oppression of mankind, with emphasis on international events during 2002-3; and the third comprising documents of the campaign committee to defend Sison and other Filipino individuals currently resident in the Netherlands under political asylum against persecution by the US government and by the Dutch and Filipino authorities under American pressure.

The articles by Sison cover various aspects of US conduct in international matters as well as the more general characteristics of imperialism today with the US-led imperialist globalisation as its principal feature. What is significant about the articles is that they do not stop at exposing and protesting but proceed to encourage the masses by correctly identifying the crisis that is dogging imperialism and compelling it to take an increasingly aggressive stand towards the rest of the world and the rise in mass resistance against imperialist globalisation as well as advocating a united front strategy in confronting imperialism.

The articles also provide much insight into the political developments within the Philippines, which fail to draw the attention of the international news media that sees the main issue in the Philippines as a struggle between the Filipino government and Muslim ‘separatists’ led by ‘Islamic extremists’ such as the Abu Sayyaf group, another creation of the CIA like the Al Qaida, now used as an excuse by US

imperialism to militarily reoccupy the Philippines, in defiance of the current constitution of the Philippines, which put an end to US military presence in the country well after the overthrow of the US-sponsored dictator Marcos.

The US government has branded the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army as terrorist organisations and persuaded to European Council to follow suit. This is a vain effort to intimidate the CPP, the NPA and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, that is not only doomed to fail but also explode in the face of the imperialist power and its puppets in Manila.

The final section of the book is particularly important not only for the purpose of seeking justice for Sison and fellow Filipinos facing harassment in the Netherlands, as a consequence of the labelling of the CPP as a terrorist organisation, but also as documents exposing the double standards of the imperialists.

The campaign against the branding of the CPP and the NPA as terrorist organisations only serves to demonstrate that the US has taken advantage of the 9.11 disaster to persecute mass organisations and liberation movements of the Third World that stand in the way of US domination of the world through its programme of imperialist globalisation.

The articles are most educational to students of Marxism-Leninism and anyone interested in the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the world dominated by the sole hyper-power, namely US imperialism.

-SJS

ON THE ROTTEN CORE AND OVER-EXTENSION OF US IMPERIALISM

by
JOSE MARIA SISON

It would be seen as if the Us won the Cold war due to superior economic political power over the Soviet Union in the period of 1989 to 1991. But in fact the US, like Japan, Germany and the Soviet Union, was in deep economic trouble. In the particular case of the US, it was reeling from the global capitalist crisis of overproduction, aggravated by the accumulated long-term economic and military costs of winning the Cold War and by the recent military overspending by Reagan.

To get the support of its imperialist allies against the Soviet Union from 1948 onwards, the US accommodated them in the American market and neglected its own manufacturing for export. It supported the reconstruction of the imperialist countries defeated in World War II and some industrialisation of certain small areas (Taiwan, South Korea and the like) front lining for the US against its enemies. It also spent heavily to maintain overseas military troops and bases.

Since the 1970s, the US has been in the process of economic decline. When it started to drum up “free market” globalisation in the early 1980s, the Us was attracting foreign funds from abroad with high bank rates and high profit rates in military and military-related production. It borrowed heavily from Japan, Western Europe and the oil producing countries by selling US bonds and stocks to them. It covered its bankruptcy, its budgetary and trade deficits with foreign debt and became the biggest debtor in the world.

In most of the 1980s, Reagan spent heavily on high-tech military production and did not revive manufacturing for export. During his own presidential term, Bush the senior tried to take a trade offensive but failed. He followed the advice of his strategic planners that the US might as well ignite a war in the Gulf, use its military power and start to tighten control over the main oil producers in OPEC.

Behind the scenes the US imperialists encouraged Iraq to invade Kuwait in 1990. Subsequently, the US headed a war coalition under the name of the UN in early 1991. The US made huge gains from its war of aggression in Iraq. Aside from making various allies pay for the military equipment and operations, the US was able to establish military bases and grab the lion's share of the oil income from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the emirates by imposing on them extremely expensive military contracts. Iraq was devastated by US bombings and US supported uprisings.

Palestine lost the support of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the emirates. And Iraq could not provide to Palestine any support in kind to make up for what has been lost. Thus, soon after the end of the first war against Iraq, the US went into a frenzy of efforts to bend the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples to the will of the US imperialists and Israeli Zionists.

The next target of the US was Yugoslavia. In collaboration with its US allies, the US was able to engineer the separation of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia from Yugoslavia by stirring up ethnic and religious differences. Ultimately, it was a full-scale US-NATO war of aggression to break up what remained of Yugoslavia after stirring up contradictions between Kosovo and Serbia. It used high-tech military weaponry against civilian communities, government buildings, hospitals, schools, electric plants, fuel storage tanks, bridges, railways and other public utilities.

In the process of weakening and bringing down the Milosevic government, the US succeeded with its objectives to accelerate

the military expansion of the US and NATO to the southern flanks of Russia, establish military basing and access rights in the whole of Eastern Europe, consolidate bilateral US military relations with the anti-communist Eastern European governments, and ensure the flow of oil from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to the Mediterranean and to prevent any short cut to Germany via Chechenya or the Danube-Rhine connection.

Taking advantage of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US launched in October 2001 the war of aggression against Afghanistan under the pretext of hunting down Osama bin Laden and the Al Queda. Again, high-tech military weaponry made short shrift of the decrepit Taliban government. The US failed to catch Osama bin Laden but made far bigger gains for US monopoly capitalism.

Aggression against Afghanistan gained for the US imperialists military basing and access rights in former Soviet republics (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) in Central Asia, a tighter hold on the sources of oil and gas in the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia, a way for pipelines from those regions to Afghanistan and Pakistan for bringing oil to the Arabian coast and the Indian Ocean, and thereby a stranglehold on the energy requirements of East Asia.

In violation of the UN Charter and the UN Security Council resolution 1441, the US unleashed the second war of aggression against Iraq. It made the false claim that the Iraqi government had nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction that could be used for the purpose of terrorism, particularly for attacking the US. It invoked pre-emptive war for self-defence. Then, it admitted to be an aggressor more blatantly by proclaiming to liberate the sovereign Iraqi people.

The US has succeeded in conquering and occupying Iraq by using its high-tech military weaponry in the most cowardly and brutal manner. Now it has set up a colonial administration under a rabidly pro-Israel general and is choosing puppets to

carry out a divide-and-rule policy. It has gained direct control over the oil resources of Iraq and intends to privatise and put these under the complete or controlling ownership of US oil companies. Other US firms are poised to rake in profits from new military production from new military production contracts, building military bases in Iraq, reconstruction projects and humanitarian aid, all to be paid for by Iraqi oil. By controlling the second largest oil reserve in the world, the US seeks to dominate and make the OPEC impotent, to put the squeeze on Syria and Iran and turn the entire Middle East into a US domain, to keep Germany and Japan dependent on US oil supply and to put China and North Korea under oil blackmail as these are now by significant degree dependent on oil imports from the Middle East.

As the US mass media saturate the global audience with propaganda about a US war of aggression in one country, the US imperialists and their puppets in other countries engage in vile actions to trample upon the national independence of countries and to attach national liberation movements and social revolutions. Time constraints limit me to referring to such vile actions only in the Philippines.

While it waged is war of aggression against Afghanistan in 2001, the US described the Philippines as the “second front” in the “war on terrorism”. It deployed US combat troops in Basilan and elsewhere in the Philippines under the pretext of fighting the Abu Sayyaf, a small bandit gang which the CIA organised in the early 1990s but which the US now claims to be linked to Al Qaeda.

In August 2002, both the US and Macapagal-Arroyo puppet regime claimed to have decimated the Abu Sayyaf. But when it recently launched its second full-scale war of aggression on Iraq, the US again declared the Philippines as the “second front” in the “war on terrorism” under the pretext of gunning after the Abu Sayyaf. It has deployed US combat troops in several regions of the Philippines.

The US is escalating its military intervention in the Philippines in preparation for US military campaigns against such revolutionary forces of the Filipino people as the CPP, NPA and NDFP. US strategists are reported to be eager to test high-tech weaponry once more in a physical and social terrain similar to that of Vietnam. It has gotten the prerogative to command the reactionary armed forces under the guise of “interoperability”. It has military access rights and wants to have outright military basing rights in the Philippines.

At any rate, the US considers the Philippines important as its strategic base for controlling the oil and other natural resources of Southeast Asia, for guarding the trade routes to several regions and encircling China, North Korea and Indochina. The stakes are high enough for the US to employ the most violent and most vicious methods of suppression against the Filipino people and revolutionary forces.

(May 1, 2003)

NDP Diary

NDP Call on May Day 2004

The NDP, on the occasion of its May Day rally held at the Jaffna MPCS Hall, issued a leaflet calling on mass organisations to mobilise on May Day to emphasise the demands of the people. The contents are as follows.

The results of the 13th general elections of April 2nd have demonstrated that it was a meaningless exercise. The United People's Freedom Alliance has formed a minority government. Although it may be argued that presidential and parliamentary power being under the same leadership is a favourable feature, the situation is that decisions taken by the JVP will determine the fate of the government. Thus the country faces the prospect of yet another general election.

The MOU and Ceasefire

The MOU and the ceasefire agreement made between the LTTE and the former government led by Ranil Wickramasinghe was one that gave relief not only to the North-East but to the whole country and the people. The President had thus far lent her co-operation to it. We emphatically ask the President and the Prime Minister not to accommodate the position of the JVP, the partner in government, or to submit to pressure from the Hela Urumaya on the matter and thereby breach or abandon the MOU.

Resume the Negotiations

The negotiations initiated by the former government but prolonged and abandoned halfway should be resumed. The draft proposals put forward by the LTTE for an Interim Self Governing Authority should be taken up for discussion. It is the need of today that the two sides should carry forward the negotiations in a spirit of understanding and compromise to

bring about an interim administration for the North-East. We assert that, through the realisation of this, it will be possible to move towards a solution based on autonomy with the right to self-determination.

Increase in the Prices of Goods

The prices of essential goods are being increased by the day. As a result, the toiling masses including the workers, peasants, and state and private sector employees are suffering under the unbearable load of the cost of living. The increase in prices is as a consequence of liberalisation and privatisation. The value added tax (VAT) imposed by the previous government has been the cause of the prices of goods. Thus we demand that the new government should remove VAT and control the rise in prices and bring down the prices of essential goods.

Increase the Wages

The last government granted a meagre Rs 1250/- increase in salaries. We demand on this May Day that the United People's Freedom Alliance, which in its election campaign claimed that it cared for the people, should grant a salary increase of Rs 5000/- to state and private sector employees so that they could meet the current cost of living.

Liberalisation and Privatisation

The policies of liberalisation and privatisation introduced by the UNP government and JR Jayawardane have subsequently been adopted by the PA government and Chandrika Kumaratunga. They are, in the manner of a fierce demon, possessing the country and the people in their entirety. Liberalisation and privatisation are part of the imperialist scheme of globalisation. Under them local production has been killed and the country has been transformed into a hunting ground for foreign multinational companies. Besides, we could see that, under liberalisation and privatisation, the social, educational, health and cultural sectors have suffered decay and

degeneration. Thus we demand that the new government should take the necessary steps to put an end to liberalisation and privatisation.

Increase in Foreign Intervention

The US, the West and Japan, on the one hand, and India on the other are vying on an unprecedented scale to tighten their grip on this country. Sri Lanka is being used as the arena for them to further their economic and political interests through global and regional domination. The parliamentary political parties and other organisations are helping this by aligning themselves in one-way or other. These political forces which wax eloquent on national interests and people's interests have, behind the scene, sold out to the US and India to serve as their stooges to deliver their plans. As a result, we witness the intensification of foreign intervention and involvement in the national question. Therefore we urge the new government to reject foreign intervention altogether and arrive at a position in which the problems of our country and our people could be resolved through dialogue among ourselves. We emphasise that it should safeguard the country from being dragged into the US-India rivalry for hegemony.

The New Democratic Party on the Occasion of the revolutionary May Day calls upon the people to carry forward mass movements to emphasise the above important demands and other related day-to-day problems faced by the people.

- ❖ Let us dare to confront the political crises!
- ❖ Let people's struggles surge forward!
- ❖ Let us be firm that the final victory is to the people!

Declaration of the 13th International Communist Seminar

The NDP joined the signatories to the Declaration of the 13th International Communist Seminar, "Strategy and Tactics of the

Struggle against the US Global Imperialist War” held in Brussels from 2nd to 4th May 2004, namely the Democratic People's Party of Afghanistan, the Workers' Party of Belgium, the Communist Party of Bulgaria, Partido Comunista de Cuba, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - Liberation, Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the Socialist Party of Latvia, Mouvement Patriotique pour la Solidarité et le Progrès (MPSP-Haske), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Partido Proletario del Peru, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Juventud Comunista de Asturias, the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (PCPE), Partido Comunista de Venezuela, Pôle de Renaissance Communiste en France.

The declaration identified the motives of the US for waging wars of aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq to be related to its strategy for global domination aimed at its imperialist allies as much as against states that it sees as a challenge to imperialism. It hailed the new upsurge in revolutionary struggles taking the forms of movements against globalisation and against wars waged by the US imperialists. At the same time it drew attention to the crisis of capitalism and that of the US in particular and the consequent threat of a new world war initiated by the US, and called for a struggle against such a war for which the US is already making preparations through military expansion on a large scale across the globe under various pretexts, including its “war against terrorism”. Attention has also been drawn to emerging contradictions between the US and its imperialist rivals in Europe as well as Japan, all of which the US is attempting to undermine economically and militarily in various ways.

Particular attention has been drawn to the defiant roles played by the governments of the DPRK, Cuba and Venezuela and the stand taken by the people of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and

Paraguay in effecting the removal of governments that were subservient to US imperialism.

The Declaration concludes with a call to the workers and peoples of the world:

Workers and peoples of the world, let us unite against US hegemonism!

Workers and peoples of the world, let us unite against the preparations for a new world war!

For the withdrawal of the occupation forces from the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.

For the dismantling of all US military bases abroad.

For the dissolution of the aggressive NATO pact.

For the withdrawal of the US bases from Korea, for the denuclearisation of the entire Korean peninsula, for the peaceful reunification of Korea.

Stop the US plots to destabilise Cuba, stop the preparations for a military aggression against Cuba.

For the commitment of the nuclear powers never to use nuclear weapons the first. For total nuclear disarmament under the control of the UN General Assembly, starting with the country that possesses the largest number of nuclear weapons, in order to arrive at the complete and simultaneous nuclear disarmament of all nuclear nations.

Support for the anti-imperialist and revolutionary resistance of the peoples of the world.

Solidarity with all democratic and anti-imperialist forces in the United States.

The NDP in the Provincial Council Elections

The NDP decided to field candidates for the Nuwara Eliya District in the Central Province Provincial Council Elections held in July to use the platform to expose the treachery and the bankruptcy of the trade-union based CWC leadership, its rival the Hill Country Peoples Front and other opportunist allied with one or the other of the capitalist parties. The NDP in its

call to the voters of Nuwara Eliya summed up its position as follows:

People's activists who have been carrying forward mass struggles to secure the fundamental rights of the people and to find solutions to day-to-day issues faced by the people are contesting with the candle as their election symbol.

Those elected to the Provincial Council in the past have been supporters of the ruling party or the main opposition party. They and others like them will, if elected, act in the same way in the future. They have participated in the government at the centre and taken turns in collaborating with the two chauvinistic capitalist parties.

They paid scant attention to securing even the smallest of rights that the people were entitled to under the Provincial Council administration.

Thus it is essential that the interests of the people are given pride of place and people's power is established from the lowest to the highest level. Those who are working to develop the alternative politics and alternative leadership for the purpose are contesting as an independent group, with the candle as their symbol and seek your support.

The independent group under the leadership of E Thambiah, Attorney at Law, who is the National Organiser of the New Democratic Party also includes, on a broad basis, people's activists outside the party.

The Upper Kotmale Scheme which is likely to be an environmental hazard has serious political implications for the Hill Country Tamil people. Although the Ceylon Workers Congress opposes the scheme, the people are always suspicious that it is capable of Any kind of compromise at any time. The Hill Country People's Front is willing to lend support to the implementation of the scheme.

Thanks to chauvinist conspiracies, the Pattana Sri Pada College of Education, the only College of Education for the Hill

Country Tamils, has not been allowed any peace. This has affected education in the Hill Country. The schools are not allowed to function independently as a result of the excesses of the Provincial Council politicians and officials. Teachers, principals and students are subject to a variety of harassment.

The Tamil people are unable to conduct their day-to-day affairs in Tamil at the Provincial Council.

Since the land on which the plantations are under the authority of the central government, the people in the plantations are unable to benefit from provincial development work.

It is necessary to annul the collective agreement between the estate managements that have denied the workers their rights and certain trade unions.

It is necessary to act in a planned way to defend the identity and the unique characteristics of the Hill Country Tamils and enable them to live as equals with people of other nationalities.

The traditional trade unions and parliamentary political leadership are unable to resolve these problems. And these problems will not be solved by continuing along the same path.

The alternative path is to take the new path of mass struggle. To elect those contesting under the symbol of the candle is an alternative political act.

Vote for the New Democratic Party (Independent Group 2) to

- ❖ stop the disastrous Upper Kotmale Scheme.
- ❖ to safeguard the Sri Pada College of Education
- ❖ to set up an educational system where the schools,
- ❖ principals, teachers and students are free from the trespasses of Provincial Council politicians and officials
- ❖ to implement administration in Tamil in provincial administration
- ❖ to bring estate land under the administration of the Provincial Council

**Message for the Media by Comrade E Thambiah, Organising Secretary, NDP:
The People Should Elect an Honest Political Leadership**

Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser and leading candidate of the Independent Group 2 in the Nuwara Eliya District, during his campaign address at Dickoya Batalgala, stated that “The people should reject those who hand out items such as cricket bats and balls, musical instruments and trophies to a few people, and proceed to gather the votes of the entire Hill Country Tamil population to make themselves members of the Provincial Council to live a life of luxury. The people should, instead elect only those who would act in a planned way for the people to get the benefits of development activities and social facilities”.

He further added, “There are no dispensaries in the plantation areas. The hospitals in the townships of the Hill Country lack basic facilities. There are no transport facilities to take patients to urban hospitals. Patients die as a result. However, family planning is being implemented in a planned way through deception of the people.

“Distributing items such as cricket bats and balls, trophies and musical instruments and using that to ask for votes has become a convenient technique of vote gathering by members of the Provincial Council”.

Condemnation of Police Brutality

Police brutality against a peaceful procession of teachers of the Patana Sripada College of Education on 28th May was condemned by a number of social and political organisations and concerned individuals. The NDP, which fully endorsed the struggle of the teachers for a just and early resolution of the crisis at the College and for the early reopening of the College, was an important signatory to the following resolution:

We the undersigned vehemently condemn the use of teargas by the police on the peaceful procession intended to make the

public, the officials and the institution concerned aware of the prevailing problems at the Patana Sripada College of Education, and the brutal attack by the police by participants in the procession at the Princess Junction on 28th May 2004.

As the problems in the College were not solved for long and no action was taken against the officers who were alleged to have committed fraud or misappropriated the funds of the College, several teacher trainees protested against the officers concerned. False charges were made against these teacher trainees, with some of them arrested on false charges and cases filed against them, and the College was closed indefinitely. As a result the victimised teacher trainees were compelled to go on a procession to state the problems within the College and expose the culprits.

Under the circumstances, there was no intention on the part of the participants in the procession to create unrest or to breach the peace.

On 28th May 2004, at the Princess Junction, Hatton, the police used teargas on the procession organised by the teacher trainees and brutally attacked the participants. Consequently, many of the participants were injured and ten of them were admitted to the General Hospital, Nuwara Eliya.

The brutal action of the police is a blatant violation of fundamental rights enshrined the constitution; this, especially, is also an act against the freedom of expression of the participants in the procession.

Therefore, we pass the following resolution condemning the police and calling upon Her Excellency the President of Sri Lanka

- 1 to take action against the abuse of power and atrocities of the police who used tear gas on the procession and brutally attacked the participants;

- 2 to inquire into the allegations made against the officials of the College regarding charges of misappropriation of the funds of the College;
- 3 to reopen the College immediately, solve the problems of the teacher trainees, and create a healthy atmosphere for them to continue with their education;
- 4 to compensate persons injured and affected by the use of tear gas and brutal police attack.

Hatton

2nd June 2004

The National Problem of the Hill Country Tamils Demands Solutions Particular to it

Comrade E Thambiah, Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser and leading candidate of the Independent Group 2 in the Nuwara Eliya District, during a meeting at Ragala to explain the party policy, stated that, when a solution is found to assure the national aspirations of the Tamils, a solution also needs to be found to assure the national aspirations of another nationality, namely the Hill Country Tamils. He added that the solutions that would ensure the national aspirations of the Hill Country Tamils cannot be accommodated within those that are designed to ensure the national aspirations of the Tamils of the North-East, and that solutions to the problems of the Hill Country Tamils need to be specific to those issues. He added that a common programme is necessary to secure these solutions, and that the Hill Country Tamils while they united in struggle under that programme needed to secure the co-operation of other nationalities, and also that, since it has been proven that the 'so called leaders of the Hill Country Tamils are not suited for that task, it is necessary to develop an alternative leadership.

The essence of the rest of his statement is as follows: The Hill Country Tamils are densely populated in certain areas and are

more spread out in several others. Thus the autonomy for them cannot be like the one for the Tamils of the North-East. It is necessary to have autonomous structures that are free from domination by other nationalities while making provision for them to enjoy political equality with other nationalities as well as their fundamental rights.

Although individuals seem to have importance in the political arena, that importance is subject to limitations. In politics, only mass organisations could be of great importance. A programme of action, the appropriate practice and political direction are essential for winning the rights of the Hill Country Tamils.

There is no political rule that prescribes that only organisations that are specific to the Hill Country Tamils can secure their rights or that organisations that function on a countrywide basis cannot. It is possible for a single organisation or a united front to carry forward the struggle of several nationalities. Under such conditions, programmes for winning the rights of each nationality and the relevant practice should be put forward in the spirit of full independence, autonomy and equality.

All Hill Country Tamils and their organisations that could be united under common programme to win the rights of the Hill Country Tamils should be united, and the co-operation of other nationalities and their organisations should be secured. It is not possible to ensure the autonomy of the Hill Country Tamils, subject to domination of or precedence by another nationality.

The political path to win the rights of the Hill Country Tamils cannot be one for making deals and compromises with chauvinism. Politics for winning rights should fundamentally comprise thoughts that are not anti-people, accommodation of differences, and excellent broad-based democratic principles. It should be one that nurtures and defends the progressive cultural features of the Hill Country Tamil people and develops a new culture of equality and common welfare.

Demand for Action Against Racist Violence

A series of incidents resulting from the obstruction of a Tamil three-wheeler driver by the driver and the conductor of a private bus led to violence between an armed gang of Sinhalese led by the bus driver and Hill Country Tamils of the area in Kandapola on 28th April 2004. Inaction by the police when the incident could have been defused without further violence led to the escalation of violence. Police and army shooting killed a Hill Country Tamil and injured another. The police and the army later entered an adjoining estate and their firing killed one more. A curfew was declared for area, and properties of Sinhalese businessmen came under attack during curfew. Police entered tea estates on the following day and fired injuring several. It was reported that besides the two killed, fifteen Hill Country Tamils suffered injury.

Inquiries by the NDP led to the conclusion that inaction by the police led to the eruption of serious violence, and that, following the escalation of violence, the police and the army resorted to shooting without exploring other measures. It was also observed that they were partial to the bus driver and his gang who were attacking the Tamils, and targeted Tamils for their attack.

The NDP has demanded an impartial inquiry into the incident and action against those responsible for inciting the violence and against the members of the police and the army responsible for firing at will. It has also demanded that the question of ethnic bias on the part of the police and the army and charges of the involvement of a government minister should be look into, and that the victims of violence and police and army shooting be duly compensated

The NDP also noted that chauvinistic propaganda by the media and by political parties was a major factor in heightening ethnic tension in a region where the Hill Country Tamils, for long victims of bias and hegemony on top of abuse by those in authority, bear animosity towards the Sinhalese, who too have

their suspicions about the Hill Country Tamils. The NDP urged that the violence should be a lesson for the future and that a conciliatory approach be adopted in dealing with the contradictions of such nature between the communities.

Note: The NDP suspended its May Day rally in Ragala in deference to the two victims of police and army brutality, whose funerals were held on 1st May 2004.]

May Day Press Release

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the NDP, to mark the Revolutionary May Day rallies in Jaffna and Ragala, issued the following press release:

The New Democratic Party is to hold May Day rallies in Jaffna and Ragala to emphasise that the ceasefire should be sustained, the memorandum of understanding made between Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and the LTTE should be upheld, and talks should be continued, starting with the proposal for setting up an interim self-governing authority for returning life in the North-East to normality; that the national question should be found a political solution through negotiations so as to achieve lasting peace; that the prices of essential items should be brought down, and the government should award wage increases state, private and plantation sector workers so that they can meet the rise in cost of living; that all economic activities for imperialist globalisation, including privatisation, should be halted; that the Upper Kotmale scheme should be scrapped; that interference by the US and European imperialism and Indian hegemony should be stopped; and that racialism and religious fundamentalism should be defeated.

In Jaffna

The May Day rally, chaired by Comrade SK Senthivel will be held in the Jaffna MPCs auditorium at 10.00 a.m. on 1st May 2004 and addressed by Comrades K Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary, S Thevarajah, K Thanikasalam

and S Navaratnam, and by other leaders of the party, and representatives of trade unions and mass organisations.

In Ragala

The May Day rally, chaired by Comrade E Thambiah will be held in Ragala town at 10.00 a.m. on 1st May 2004 and addressed by Comrades S Panneerselvam, Hill Country Regional Secretary, V Mahendran, S Rajendran, S Chandrakumar and several others.

The procession will start at 9.00 a.m. at Ragala Nadukkanakku Bazaar and proceed to Ragala town.

The rally emphasising that the Upper Kotmale scheme should be scrapped, that the system of collective agreement with plantation companies should be annulled, that the plantation workers be granted their wage rise, and that the plantation economy be salvaged from the plantation companies, will also be addressed by leaders of several trade unions and mass organisations.

In a situation in which both presidential rule and parliamentary rule are at a dead end, the path united mass struggle uniting the nationalities and comprising workers, peasants and intellectuals is the best political path. We call upon all of them to join in the May Day rallies of the NDP emphasising the unity of all forces that could be united on the basis of power to the people, autonomy for the nationalities, an independent Sri Lanka and a socialist future.

Protest against the Proposed US Information Section in the Public Library, Jaffna

Comrade SK Senthivel, General secretary of the NDP, wrote the following letter to the Special Commissioner, Jaffna Municipal Council protesting at the reported invitation to the US Embassy in Sri Lanka to set up an information section of the US Embassy in the Public Library, Jaffna.

Dear Sir

US Information Section in the Public Library, Jaffna

We understand from news in the local newspapers that the Advisory Council of the Public Library, Jaffna has sent a request and invitation to the US Embassy in Sri Lanka to establish an information section of the US Embassy in the Public Library, Jaffna. This move could have serious consequences for the northern region and to our people. This move had caused consternation and a sense of shock to all those who care.

The US has become the sole super power in the world and seeks to dominate the entire world. In particular, it is interfering in the Third World. For example, from Afghanistan to Iraq, it is carrying out a direct war of aggression. Even in Sri Lanka, it had been behind 20 years of chauvinistic war. It refuses to acknowledge the right of the Tamil people to self-determination but instead lends support and advise to the chauvinistic ruling classes. The Tamil people know very well that it has openly expressed this position.

To ask for an information section of the embassy of the US with such a record could only be seen as a move hostile to the Tamil people. We like to remind that, as early as 1968, when the American Information Center was established in the Public Library, Jaffna, our party and people expressed their strong opposition.

Further, since the restoration of the Public Library, there was no formal opening of the library. Nor does the library provide a full service. We like to ask why it is that, while things remain to be done and to be organised, there is a hasty offer of provision for the Information Center of the US Embassy to function in the Public Library and a request and invitation to do so. The function of the information section does not merely stops with books and magazines. They also bear the risk of going beyond that to involve political, social and cultural infiltration and activities of military intelligence.

Also, one should keep in mind the plight of the library if, on the basis of accommodation of the Information Center of US Embassy, other big powers ask for room for their information units to function in the Public Library. The Public Library, Jaffna is the common property of the people. We like to state that the people will for no reason tolerate its use as a base for espionage by the hegemonic power that the US is, posing a threat to the people of the world, of Sri Lanka and the Tamil people in particular.

Thus our party strongly condemns the one-sided decision taken by the Advisory Council of the Public Library, Jaffna, chaired by you to set up an information section of the US Embassy in the Library, and requests you to abandon this effort.

Thanking you
Yours truly
SK Senthivel
General Secretary

[Note: Since this letter, the Special Commissioner had denied any plans to set up such an information section. The newspapers have, however, stood by their reports.]

DO NOT OFFER US A TRIFLE

Kjersti Ericsson

The shame
insinuates itself on the victims
the one who is beaten
has committed a crime
the blood that drips from the wounds
is unclean
the abused body guilty.
The shame
insinuates itself on the victims
centuries upon decades
millennia upon centuries
will this never end?
Sisters, comrades, women
our anger rises now
it rises and rises like the tide
up from the innermost darkness in us
carrying with it the glowing ash
from all the fires
carrying with it the blows, the screams
the boot-tramplings of the heart
and those countless used-up unlived
lives
for which there can be no consolation.
The anger rises and rises
it is our mighty gift to the world
together with the love
never required
that found it too cramped

to be confined to a man's breast
we give it to each other now
and to this earth
with the people who live on it
black, white, yellow, brown
to the younger reindeer
unprotected against fallout-bearing rain
to the sea that breathes so heavily
and to the nameless, unseen flowers
deep in the Amazonian jungle.
Do not offer us a trifle
something halfway.
Do not ask us to be grateful!
We have come here
with the blaze from all the fires in us
the pain from all of the blows
and the boot-tramplings of the heart
with the hunger of unlived lives
and that terrible heat
from our unrequited love.
Do not stand in our way
when we come to change the world
with vehement strokes
when we come to cultivate it
in our own way.
Do not stand in our way
for we are the owners of tomorrow.

(Translated by Franscesca M Nichols)

KIDNAPPERS

Iris Clayton

*There were nine little blackfellas
having fun and running free
along came the welfare
said this just cannot be
he grabbed the little blackfellas
sent them all to their homes
to train them as servants
to slave in gubbars' homes
and when the little blackfellas
grew up to be eighteen
some of them were shy and timid
and some of them plain mean
now some of them plain mean
now some of them have children
of their very own
and they don't want
to see them sent
to the bloody training homes
They all hate the whiteman
with his racist laws
and they all keep the whiteman out
when he knocks up on their doors*

*[Courtesy: Black Australia: An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry,
Ed. Kein Gilbert. Penguin Books. 1988]*

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