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Comrade SK Senthivel

STOP THE UPPER KOTMALE PROJECT

*Article by Comrade E Thambiah &
Statement by the People's Movement*

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From the Heights of Macchu Picchu

Pablo Neruda

Rise up to be born with me, brother.
Give me your hand from the deep
Zone seeded by your sorrow.
You won't return from under the rocks.
You won't return from your subterranean time.
Your hardened voice won't return.
Your gouged-out eyes won't return.

Look at me from the depth of the earth,
labourer, weaver, silent shepherd:
tamer of wild llamas like spirit images:
construction worker on a daring scaffold:
waterer of the tears of the Andes:
jeweller with broken fingers:
farmer trembling as you sow:
potter, poured out into your clay:
bring to the cup of this new life
your old buried sorrows.
Show me your blood and your furrow,
Tell me, "Here I was punished,
Because the jewel didn't shine or the earth
Didn't yield grain or stones on time."
Show me the stone you fell over
And the wood on which they crucified you,
Make a spark from the old flints for me,

(Continued on inside back cover)

From the Editor's Desk

The attitude of the main political parties towards the plight of the victims of the tsunami seems cynical of not altogether callous. The early hesitation of President Kumaratunga in setting up the Joint Mechanism (P-TOMS) to provide relief to the victims of the tsunami strengthened the hands of the opponents of relief to Tamil victims in the Jathika Hela Urumaya, the JVP and the Patriotic National Movement, dominated by the JVP with support from some important members of the SLFP. The President consented to the P-TOMS only after it was clear that aid for tsunami relief from the consortium of donor countries was conditional upon the existence of a mechanism for the distribution of relief for tsunami victims in LTTE controlled areas.

Having earlier denounced the former prime minister for the de facto recognition of LTTE control over a section of the North-East, by signing an MoU with the LTTE, she found herself vulnerable and avoided signing the P-TOMS agreement on behalf of the government. Although the JHU stole the march on the JVP, by having a leading member going on hunger strike in protest of the P-TOMS, the protest was of no avail. The chauvinist JVP, not to be outdone, quit the government, following the signing of the agreement. The Prime Minister's vacillation on the matter exposed the depth to which opportunism ran in the ruling party. The UNP leader proved to be no more a saint, with his ambiguous position, and calculated failure to encourage the President to implement relief work effectively and without delay.

The genuine left as well as the 'old left' have, however, welcomed the consent of the President to the P-TOMS and encouraged her to be bold in implementing it. The JVP and the JHU applied to the Supreme Court against the implementation of the P-TOMS, and succeeded in delaying the implementation of certain key aspects.

Seven months have passed since the tsunami and the plight of the vast majority of the victims is virtually the same as it was immediately after the disaster. The announcement by the US and UK governments that they will not channel any aid through the P-TOMS, which would permit their funding to reach the 'terrorists' speaks volumes about the nature of their aid. Imperialist

aid will be distributed through their agencies and NGOs under the political control of the imperialist states, and in a way that the main benefit will be to the imperialist political and business interests.

While it is remarkable is that the ceasefire still holds, despite the rising the number of killings of LTTE cadres in the North-East with the blessings, if not active involvement, of the armed forces and by implication the government, and reprisals in kind by the LTTE against its political opponents. Formal denial or tacit silence on the part of the government and LTTE means little in the context of an escalating cycle of violence, which has now spread from the East to the North. The situation is fragile and cannot be allowed to go on in this fashion for long.

Unfortunately for the country, the UNP and the SLFP, each subservient to US imperialism and the regional hegemon, are preoccupied with the next presidential election, whose due date is still unknown, and all parliamentary political parties getting ready for a parliamentary election shortly after, the issues that really matter, such as the national question and the rehabilitation of the tsunami and war affected people and regions, take the back seat.

What is now abundantly clear is that the parliamentary politicians are a gathering of opportunists and careerists who do not care for the country or its suffering masses. Thus it is important for the progressive forces to encourage the people to demand action to provide urgent relief to the victims of the tsunami and the war, resolve the national question, and to reverse the policies of three decades ago that have landed the country in a mess.

The forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections should be used to impress upon the people that they can no more rely on the present parliamentary political system with its executive presidency to solve the problems of the country and the pressing need to deal effectively with the national question based on the principle of self determination so that a long term program of mass struggle could be launched for the liberation of the country from imperialism, regional hegemony and their local agents, who have for nearly three decades driven the country towards ruin.

**ADDRESS AT THE
27TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
OF
THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

by

Comrade SK Senthivel
General Secretary of the NDP

Comrades and Friends!

I wish to express on behalf of the Party Central Committee its joy in seeing you in such large numbers at the 27th Anniversary celebration of the Party and its revolutionary greetings to you. Death has taken away from us three comrades who were with us during the last anniversary. We recall with lofty revolutionary sentiments the memories of Comrade S Navaratnam, Member of the Central Committee, Comrade P Chandrakumar, Member of the Hill Country Regional Committee, and Comrade S Sithamparam, senior member of the Party from the Northern Region.

Comrades and Friends!

Twenty-seven years ago, along with a few comrades, we founded the New Democratic Party as a Marxist Leninist party in the name of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left). We started our political journey with the revolutionary determination that, in both ideology and practice, we will function organisationally as a Marxist Leninist party. The founder General Secretary Comrade KA Subramaniam guided us to the decision that we will be guided in our journey by the light shed by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Guidance

by Comrade KA Subramaniam with a wealth of experience and understanding in the communist movement of the country played an important role in propelling the Party forward. Modern revisionism and parliamentary opportunism and, later, extremism had already caused serious decay and degeneration in the left movement. As a result, it was not possible for a revolutionary Marxist Leninist movement to grow strong. These effects still persist in the South.

It is amid such weakness that we came forward with great confidence to propel forward our party as a Marxist Leninist party. That confidence has not weakened to this day. It will not weaken in the future either. Comrades and friends have worked at various levels with dedication, facing all manner of opposition, danger to life, challenges and difficulties, to transform the Party to its present position of strength and to advance it further. They have carried forward the historic task before them with a proletarian outlook. It is through the firm and broad-based collective work of such comrades and friends that we are completing our 27th year and are rising as the single Marxist Leninist Party in the communist-left terrain of the country. We will abide by the policies drawn up by the Fourth Congress of the Party and make the Party stronger and develop it into one that carries forward revolutionary struggles. We note with joy the encouragement and support given by this anniversary celebration to achieve that.

Comrades and Friends!

I seek your permission to place before you some aspects of the current political situation in the country. The whole country is in a serious state of crisis. On one side economic problems are causing hardship to the entire people. As a result there is steady rise in social and cultural decay. As we have been pointing out from the outset, the economic crisis and social decay are a cruel consequence of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. The ruling capitalist class of feudal descent are solely responsible for this situation. During the past quarter of a century, this class has followed programmes along the guidelines of bodies such as the World Bank, the IMF, the Asian Development Bank and the World Trade

Organisation and thereby ruined and shattered the national economy. The two ruling class parties of the country have outdone each other in this respect.

As a result of their erroneous economic policy, prices of essential commodities of the ordinary people, comprising items such as rice, sugar and flour, have increased by the day; and the price of fuel raised every month facilitates the rise in commodity prices. Particularly since the Petroleum Corporation was privatised and handed over to the Indian Oil Company the prices have been steadily on the rise. The real reasons for the rise in fuel prices are kept concealed. While prices soar as a result of liberalisation and privatisation, the increases in wages are inadequate to meet the rise in cost of living. As a result, the vast majority of the workers, peasants, and state and private sector employees are badly affected. The rural peasantry are being pushed below the poverty line.

The government, while refusing to pay heed to these matters, is keen to implement its privatisation programme that continues to ruin the country. It is actively pursuing the Upper Kotmale Project in the hill country, the Nuraicholai Thermal Power Project in Puttalam, and privatisation of the Ceylon Electricity Board and the remaining shares of the Petroleum Corporation. The World Bank has advocated early privatisation of the education and health sectors. The resources of the country and the labour of the people are being robbed by multinational corporations, with the support and cooperation of the governments of the ruling classes.

Although the JVP with its bogus left camouflage had been a part of the government for over a year, it could not block the policy and practice of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Even its exit from the government is not in protest of the failure to solve the problems of the workers and peasants but in opposition to the setting up of the Joint Mechanism to provide relief for the victims of the tsunami in the North-East. Notably, it was during the time when the JVP was in control at the Ministry of Agriculture that three peasants from the Polonnaruwa District committed suicide as a result of their inability to sell their paddy harvest and settle their loans.

The UNP government privatised the plantation sector and transferred it to 22 companies. Trade unions and political parties of the hill country supported the privatisation, claiming that it will lead to a brighter future for the plantation workers. What is the plight of the plantation sector in the hill country? In the same way, the so-called development of the south is also a means of deceiving the Sinhalese. Viewing from a class basis, one will see that the contradiction between the Capitalist and imperialist forces on the one hand and the vast majority comprising the workers, peasants and intellectuals is growing further. At the same time, the solution to the national question, which continues to be the main contradiction, is yet to be realised. The three and a half years of the memorandum of understanding and ceasefire have passed as a period of procrastination and deception. Even the Joint Mechanism for tsunami relief is facing stiff resistance from the JVP and the Jathika Hela Urumaya chauvinists. However, the chauvinistic ruling classes who transformed the national question into a war and the forces of imperialism that gave it their guidance and full support have secured their respective outcomes and benefits. Besides, in order that they may continue to enjoy the benefits, the forces of imperialism are making use of the ruling classes on one side and the LTTE on the other. Currently, a situation has arisen, in which escape from the net cast by them seems impossible.

There is, nevertheless, the need to expose these conspiracies to the people and for Tamil people to mobilise the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils in the just struggle for self-determination. It is necessary to create a situation in which the toiling ordinary Sinhalese people accept it.

It is against this background that the UNP campaigns for the Presidential Election to be held this year and claims that all problems will be resolved if Ranil Wickramasinghe becomes President. Have the constitution and the executive presidential system introduced by JR Jayawardane and the UNP in 1978 solved any of the problems of the country during the past 27 years? Did they bring economic, political and socio-cultural development and progress to the people?

So, it is necessary to create a climate in which the entire people struggle to reject this constitution and the executive presidential system and replace it with a new constitution that would bring welfare, equality, democracy, development and wholesome growth to all the people and the different nationalities. The New Democratic Party proposes and emphasises that a broad-based mass revolutionary struggle needs to be launched to achieve it.

The people should not allow the continuation of the game of musical chairs for the executive presidency. The game of switching the group of individuals forming the parliamentary ruling party too cannot lead to any real change. The genuine left and democratic forces should come forward to mobilise the people along the path of mass struggle, bypassing the process of changing people in this pattern. New political forces need to enter the arena and mobilise for it.

The new forces should ignore the old leadership that took the parliamentary path to become opportunists and abandon Marxism Leninism and revolutionary ideals, and progress along the path of struggle by identifying the objective situation in the country. The New Democratic Party places emphasises on this in its anniversary celebration.

Comrades and friends!

It is necessary to make certain observations about the international situation. The American Imperialists and their allies, who arrogantly claim that they have succeeded in their efforts to eradicate socialism and Marxism from the world, have launched their programme of new tactics and schemes. American imperialism seeks to achieve political, military and economic hegemony over the whole world through globalisation. It is prolonging the Palestinian problem without a solution in order to keep the oil wealth of the Middle East under its control. The invasion of Iraq two years ago and earlier attacks have exposed the true forms of America and Britain, its principal ally. They seek to set up a puppet regime in Iraq in the same way that they have in Afghanistan, where their aggression continues. But in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the American and British allied forces are taking a severe beating each day.

America uses the concepts such as “Islamic terrorism” “global terror”, “eradication of the Al Qaida movement” and “destruction of weapons of mass destruction” to justify its aggression, and carries out its wars for global hegemony. It makes a list of countries that stand in its way to global hegemony, and makes false charges and carries out malicious propaganda against them. Iran, North Korea and Cuba are among prime targets of its campaign.

But a new situation is developing fast, in which the people of the world begin to understand the true intentions of America and other capitalist countries and struggle against them. Revolutionary movements are being reorganised on the basis of Marxism Leninism and we see that, from the revolution in Nepal to the mass uprisings in South America, the struggles of the people of the world are growing in confidence.

At the same time, our country faces a situation in which it awaits falling into the clutches of India’s regional hegemony. The strategy of the Indian policy makers is to infiltrate the Sri Lankan economy and intensify its pressure on the country so that it could keep it within its grips. The Indo-Sri Lanka Trade Agreement was created for this purpose, and India is the sole beneficiary of the agreement. Following that, the Indo-Sri Lanka Defence Agreement is to be signed soon.

There has been open Indo-American rivalry in the economic, political and military fields of Sri Lanka. Interference and intervention by America, the European Union, India and Japan have been motivated by the intention to dominate. The Sri Lankan ruling class is now reduced to a position where it is unable to implement any major political decision without taking it to Washington and New Delhi for approval. In the same way, no economic plan can be implemented without the knowledge or in defiance of the World Bank, the IMF and the Asian Development Bank.

Therefore, we need to carry out a people’s struggle against the imperialist globalisation by America and its imperialist allies. Similarly, there could be no tolerance towards India’s regional

hegemony. The Party emphasises that the only way for us is to carry forward a broad-based anti-imperialist struggles against imperialism, on behalf of the country and the people. The position of the Party is that there cannot be an alternative to this approach.

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We Shall Never Forget!

My house can be stormed, night or day!
I can be arrested, and taken away.
In my own homeland, I am not free:
That is why I shall use an olive tree
To engrave on its trunk my tragedy,
To register on it every evil perfidy,
To document every vile Zionist crime,
Committed in our land at any time.
I shall record the names of torturers.
Looters, thieves, rapists and murderers
I shall keep for each a detailed file,
Containing evidence of everything vile,
From Kafr Kassem to Deir Yassin,
And crimes thereafter, or in between!

Tawfiq Zaiyyad
Palestinian Poet

UPPER KOTMALE PROJECT: UPSURGE OF POPULAR RESISTANCE

Comrade E Thambiah
National Organiser of the NDP

Part 1: A Political Nightmare

The Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project (UKHP) has become a nightmare to nearly all Hill Country Tamil politicians, with hardly anyone in the hill country not talking about the subject. Since the convention of activists opposing the UKHP held on 10th April, posters have been put up protesting against the project and leaflets have been widely circulated.

The People's Campaign Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project (hereafter the People's Campaign) appealed to the people of the hill country to observe 15th May as a day of protest against the UKHP and, in a leaflet, asked them to shut down offices, shops and other workplaces, hoist black flags in public places, put up posters and banners against the project and distribute leaflets against the project on that day. It also asked them to shout out "Halt the Upper Kotmale Project immediately", ring the bells in temples, *viharas* and churches, and to toot the horns of vehicles, at noon that day. 15th May is an important day in the history of the hill country. In 1977, the then United Front government took steps to acquire plantation lands by the roadside between Ginigathena and Dayagama to settle members of the majority community there. Anura Bandaranayake initiated this move to transform Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya into his preserve by creating a strong vote-bank there for him. This was yet another oppressive step against the plantation workers who were already

bitter about the government owing to the closure of several plantations during 1970-77 and the food shortages that they had to face. A massive struggle was launched against the acquisition of land.

People of the Devon Estate chased away the surveyors who arrived to measure the land. The surveyors returned with the police, and youth from the Boxfort estate swam across the river and demanded that the surveyors and the police who were carrying out measurements on Devon Estate should leave. The police opened fire on them and killed an eighteen-year old youth, Sivanu Letchumanan. That incident took place on 13th May and since then, 15th May, the day of his funeral, has been marked as a day of remembrance with a variety of programmes to commemorate Sivanu Letchumanan.

Following the police shooting, struggles broke out in schools and plantations in the hill country. Students of the Highlands College in Hatton went on demonstrations, and were attacked by the police and thugs. Following a series of struggles, the government abandoned its plans to acquire the land. The struggles and the ultimate sacrifice by Sivanu Letchumanan helped the Ceylon Workers' Congress candidate S Thondaman and the UNP candidate Gamini Dissanayake in the elections of July 1997.

However, Dissanayake acted with vigour to settle members of the majority community on land belonging to the plantations. He initiated the construction of the Kotmale reservoir under the Accelerated Mahaweli Programme, as a result of which plantation workers were expelled from the regions of Punduloya, Niyanganthara, Paluwatte, Thavalantenne and Pussalawa.

He also attempted from time to time to implement the Upper Kotmale Project as a sequel to it. The project was deferred indefinitely as a result of continued opposition from the people from the plantations in Talawakelle, Lower Scalpa and Holyrood. After 1994, the United People's Alliance attempted to implement the project and deferred it in the face of opposition. Karu Jayasooriya, the Minister for Power in the United National Front government that succeeded the UPA

attempted to implement it. The Malayaha Makkal Munnani (Upcountry People's Front) backed him and, significantly, this was when the leader of the UPF was minister for the Mahaweli Development Programme.

It should also be noted that the UKHP was granted Cabinet approval in 1982 when S Thondaman, then leader of the CWC, was a member of the Cabinet. The project was suspended as a result of struggles of the people of Talawakelle, Lower Scalpa and Holyrood such as the signature campaign by the Ilankai Thesabaktha Vaalipar Munnani (Sri Lanka Patriotic Youth Movement). Again in 1986, attempts were afoot to implement the project. An article published in the *Viirakesasi* exposed in detail how Talawakelle town, the plantations around Talawakelle, the temple, cinema and the Talawakelle Tamil Central School (Madhya Mahavidyalaya) would be submerged as a result of the project.

Acts of protest have intensified since then. When steps were taken in the year 2000 to implement the project, the CWC held a meeting in Talawakelle in protest, and the workers went on a one-day strike. When the CWC joined the United People's Freedom Alliance government in 2004, it was speculated that the government would implement the project since the CWC was lending its support to the project. The CWC denied this initially, but Muththu Sivalingam CWC MP and minister in the UPFA government admitted that the CWC had expressed its consent. As this position of the CWC leadership met with severe opposition from the members of the CWC, the leadership claimed that it had submitted an alternative scheme with less harmful consequences and that the government had approved it.

However, the Japanese organisation that had offered a loan for the project insisted that the project had to be implemented as originally planned and that there was no room for alternatives. This made it clear that the project would be implemented as originally planned and that a major part of Talawakelle would be submerged.

Since the UPF was in support of the project and the CWC was vacillating in its position, several of the organisations opposed to the UKHP got together to found the People's Movement Against the UKHP. The movement has since carried out a series of measures in opposition to the project. The convention of activists opposed to the UKHP was convened for the 10th of last April and it was resolved that mass struggles to stop the project will be carried forward continuously. In accordance with that resolution it was decided to observe May 15th as a day of protest against the UKHP. That day was chosen as the day of protest in order that meaningful actions will be taken on the day of remembrance of the martyr Sivanu Letchumanan to defend once more the land in defence of which he sacrificed his life, so that the day will be one of remembrance of Sivanu Letchumanan who sacrificed his life to protect the land from being taken away from the people in the process of land acquisition as well as one of struggle against the land being taken away for a hydroelectric project.

The convention of the mass movement on 10th April and subsequent activities had their echoes in various May Day meetings. Leaders of the CWC and the UPF spoke about it. The leader of the CWC, instead of stating his position firmly, attempted to imply that he too was opposed to the project. The leader of the UPF claimed that he supported the project since it was a developmental project and that he was emphatic about compensation as well as rehabilitation for those affected by the project. Although he took this stand, leaders of his party at the next tier and the membership of his party remain opposed to the project. The Hill Country Youth Association, which had actively supported his party, is also opposed to the project. Several members of that organisation are involved in the activities of the PMAUKP.

The Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project Commission had set up a committee that included some plantation workers who were potential victims of the project to undertake rehabilitation work. In other words, it set up a housing committee to build new houses for the potential victims and used that committee to make contact with the

potential victims and thereby carry out a campaign in support of the project. The plantation workers who were members of that committee have announced that they are opposed to the project and therefore resigning from the housing committee. They have communicated to the Commission that they oppose this project, which will displace them from their homes, and therefore cannot be members of the housing committee. Similarly, on 29th March, at a propaganda meeting organised by the Commission in support of the project, plantation workers had insisted that the project should be abandoned. Thus the view that this project should be abandoned is gathering strength, and opposition to the project is on the rise at various levels.

As much as a handful of Hill Country Tamil politicians are in support of the project, there are a handful of Hill Country Tamil intellectuals who support the project. A fresh doctorate holder in geography who recommended in public that that the project should be renamed 'Talawakelle Development Project' rather than as the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project faced humiliation. A sharp response to him was that "Even if the project was named after the Hindu god, Siva as the "Lord Siva Development Scheme, the consequence of damming the water will be just as disastrous".

A professor from the hill country has argued that since the Hill Country Tamil MPs are in support of the project, there is no way that any opposition could stop it. Sadly, the professor does not know that reason why the Nuraicholai Thermal Power Project and the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway are not being implemented is not the opposition of the MPs but the opposition of the people. It was people's struggle that prevented the sale of the Epawela phosphate deposits to an American company, and it is people's struggle that is holding back the completion of the Narmadha Dam project in India.

It will be good if all the MPs and trade unions in the hill country oppose the UKHP. But a few leaders have already registered construction companies with their supporters as directors in the hope of securing contracts to their benefit. How could we expect those who are anticipating commissions for contracts and those who have already collected their commissions be expected to oppose the

project? On the other hand, the leaders who support the project are busy in blunting the protest campaigns and creating splits in the protest movement. There is evidence that moves are afoot to subject youth involved in the protest campaign to harassment by police investigation units. Rumours were spread that the Talawakelle region would be declared a High Security Zone in order to prevent the mobilisation of people in the protest campaign.

There is no guarantee that the government will not declare the region a High Security Zone, but it has been stated in parliament on behalf of the government that there is no such declaration. The intention of spreading such rumours is, on the one hand, to intimidate the people who come forward to struggle and, on the other, to suggest to the government that it could declare the region a High Security Zone and carry forward the project. Irrespective of these conspiracies, the campaign against the UKHP will go on.

Part 2: The Need for a Third Political Force

Opposition to the UKHP was marked on April 15th by demonstrations and hartals. It is still being debated and discussed how that day of protest was possible. It is still being debated how and why the day of protest turned out to be successful.

The plantation workers kept off work even without the support or intervention from the leadership of what are said to be the major organisations in the hill country. Although work is currently on offer on Sundays at 50% additional wage as overtime, the workers chose to stay away.

The People's Movement and its member organisations comprising political parties, trade unions and other organisations put up black flags in public places and atop motor vehicles. Besides that, the people, especially the youth, had put up black flags voluntarily. In most towns in the Nuwara Eliya District, the shops were closed. In Talawakelle, a considerable number of shops were closed and there was no business in those which were open. Shops were closed in Highforest, Kotagala, Bogowantalawa, Norwood, Maskeliya, and

towns along the Hatton-Dayagama road. Although the police and the armed forces demanded that the shops be opened in Kotagala and Hatton, the shops were not opened. In towns such as Kotagala, Ragala and Highforest, three-wheelers and hiring vans carried black flags. In Kotagala the police took a three-wheeler driver named Siva to the police station in Patana and insisted that his release was conditional upon the shops being opened and the black flags on motor vehicles being removed. Neither the drivers of vehicles nor the shopkeepers paid heed to the demands of the police.

The Protest Day activities in Nuwara Eliya were carried out most successfully and were capped by a demonstration and satyagraha campaign close to the Devon Waterfall neighbouring Hatton Road in Talawakelle. Although the bus service was sparse, well over a thousand arrived from far away places by private buses and vans to participate in the demonstration. Undergraduates from the hill country attending various universities in the country, teacher trainees at the College of Education and Teacher's Training Colleges, and school children too participated in the demonstration, which attracted the young, the middle aged and the old. It is noteworthy that participation by the Sinhala community in the demonstration was particularly significant.

At the end of the demonstration, the participants went on a procession to the location where Sivanu Letchumanan was buried in the Devon Estate to pay a heroic floral tribute to him and returned to the venue of the demonstration near the Devon Falls to take part in the protest meeting. Leaders and representatives of the member organisations of the People's Movement and of organisations supporting the demonstration addressed the meeting. On 10th April, questions were raised about the ability of the organisers of the People's Movement to conduct a successful convention. Then questions were raised about their ability to carry forward the protest campaign. The convention was a success, and the campaign was carried out extensively, especially in the towns and plantations in the hill country.

On 29th April there was a demonstration in Bogawantalawa, and posters in protest of the Upper Kotmale Project were put up and leaflets were distributed in towns and plantations. The media gave publicity to the protest activities, and some sections of the media that chose to ignore the campaign were compelled to publish news about the protest activities.

The protest campaign was a subject on the May Day platforms, especially of the CWC and the UPF. The May Day meeting of the New Democratic Party in Ragala had opposition to the UKHP as its theme.

The media gave publicity to the Day of Protest on 15th May. The workers kept away from work irrespective of trade union affiliation. Shopkeepers closed down their shops, irrespective of political affiliation. The contribution of the intellectuals was significant too. The support and cooperation from the Sinhala public and the left parties in particular added force to the protest campaign, which became headline news in the local media and gained prominence in the international media as well.

When the correct idea and line reach the people, there is little room for petty differences, and the politics of dominance and trade union influence lose strength. When alternative thought finds leadership, the people are ready to mobilise. May 15th has taught many valuable lessons including that the people will not forever let anti-people activities to be carried out.

This cannot be overstated, and one could boldly say that this was the first time that strikes took place and in the hill country without a call from trade unions and shops were closed without prompting by parliamentary political party or trade union interests. Opposition to the UKHP has to that extent become a public matter. The commitment and leadership of the People's Movement and its member organisations has given the people fresh confidence.

Leaflets were distributed in the name of 'United Traders Association' calling for the shops to be opened that day in Talawakelle, which would be submerged in water if the project were carried out. Some

chauvinists campaigned that the struggle was a Tamil nationalist struggle.

Although the UPF announced in the evening of 17th May that it supported the struggle, shops belonging to persons close to the UPF were kept open, despite the closure of a large number of shops in Talawakelle.

Rumour was spread in a planned way that there would be chaos on 15th May and that a hill country political party was to attack participants in the protest demonstration. Despite the rumours and intimidation, many came from faraway locations to participate in the demonstration. Several attempts were made on 14th May to arrest and detain the principal organisers of the demonstration on 15th May. The police visited homes to arrest some, and wanted some others to report at the police station.

The police also went in search of S Rajendran, Lecturer, Sripada College of Education, who, it should be noted, has, as a geography specialist, carried out several studies of the effects of the Upper Kotmale Project and the Sethu Samudram Project on the people and environment and written several articles on the issues concerned.

Attempts were made through such measures by the police to sabotage the demonstration of May 15th by creating a climate of fear and anguish. The police and the government did not want the practices of mass participation in acts of resistance, expression of dissent and mass demonstrations to be established in the hill country. A section of the so-called leadership in the hill country too has played along with them and, as a result, the police had succeeded in stopping several lawful and democratic demonstrations in the past.

On 28th June 2004, the police attacked trainee teachers of the Sripada College of Education when they went on a demonstration in Hatton. But the issue on which the trainee teachers went on the demonstration still remains unresolved. The demonstration was in demand of action against persons who defrauded funds allocated for the meals of the trainee teachers. No action has been taken against the culprits, although a retired judge was appointed as ombudsman to look into

the charges. Neither the law nor the judiciary seems to know what came out of the inquiry. But the legal and security systems prohibit raising questions about the matter in a democratic fashion. Such is the environment of the hill country.

It is in such a climate that mass struggles such as that of 15th May become highly significant. The existence of the legal and democratic right to carry out such demonstrations can be established only through carrying them out. It was illegal to attempt to arrest the organisers of the May 15th demonstration. It was illegal for the police to take the driver of a three-wheeler to the police station and detain him there because he had a black flag on his vehicle. It was indeed a violation of his fundamental rights.

Plantation workers of the Mount Jean Estate in Hatton who went on strike to protest the assault of a worker by an estate superintendent were arrested in the office of the (JVP) trade union to which they belonged. This was highhanded. Such acts constitute the denial of normal democratic trade union rights of the Hill Country Tamil people. Gathering of information in an intimidating manner about participants in public activities is also an act of denial of rights.

Besides these, steps have been taken to defeat the activities of the People's Movement by portraying them as Tamil nationalist. Chauvinists in Talawakelle anticipating that participants in the demonstration near the Devon Falls would go in procession to Talawakelle were ready and waiting to launch a communal attack on the demonstrators. Their plans failed since the procession, as originally intended, took a different route.

On 16th May, some persons organised a demonstration in Talawakelle town demanding the immediate implementation of the UKHP. The Talawakelle Urban Council Chairman, Nimaladasa (UNP), the local JVP Organiser, Buddhadasa and some persons from the SLFP, headed it. They brought employees of the urban council to the Talawakelle bus stand in vehicles belonging to the Ceylon Electricity Board. There were a few Tamil speaking individuals in this demonstration with 60 participants, which was organised by the CEB

with the intention of giving the People's Movement a Tamil nationalist character and thus defeat it.

The 15th May acts of protest, besides serving to halt the UKHP, will provide support to the establishment of the common democratic rights of the people and the evolution of an alternative political leadership based on the interests of the people and with the participation of the people. The protest movement has given rise to faith in an alternative political leadership and initiated related questions and debates.

It has led to the recognition of the need for an alternative political path in place of the attitude that the present need is merely to apply pressure on the current political and trade union leadership which seem to function on the basis of faith in a certain personalities.

In any event, it is noticeable that the immediate need is for a united leadership that could bring together a variety of individuals, under a common programme based democratically on people's interests and with people's participation.

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WHY WE WANT THE UPPER KOTMALE HYDROPOWER PROJECT TO BE STOPPED

Statement issued on behalf of the People's Campaign against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project

According to the feasibility studies done by a consortium of Japanese consultants sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency Bank in 1985, the Upper Kotmale Hydropower proposals consist of two units of 209 MW combined capacity above the (Lower) Kotmale Project. There will be a network of tunnels of total length 27 km to augment the two hydropower units at Caledonia and Talawakelle, which is the critical construction sequence.

- 1 At Talawakelle there will be a concrete gravity dam at a level of 1202 m above MSL, just below the confluence of Nanuoya with Kotmale Oya. The catchment area above this dam is 297 sq. km and the reservoir will be augmented through a trans-basin diversion tunnel 5.25 km long from Puna Oya to Pundal Oya, having a combined area of 50 sq. km.

A low concrete dam of maximum height 15 m and length 110 m is proposed with a reservoir capacity of one million cubic metres active storage. Originally 170 MW was expected from the Talawakelle Power Station alone.

- 2 At Caledonia there will be a concrete gravity dam across Kotmale Oya with elevation 1360 m above MSL just below the confluence of Agra Oya and Dambagastalawwa Oya to impound a reservoir of capacity thirty million cubic metres. An underground power station with an installed capacity of 40 MW will be activated by a 2.83 km long headrace tunnel from the Caledonia reservoir. A saddle dam will be required with height 12 m and length 95 m.

The catchment above this dam is 175 sq. km and it is augmented through a 4 km long tunnel of capacity 6 cubic metres per second from Nanu Oya with a catchment of 60 sq. km.

The Caledonia Powerhouse will have an installed capacity of 40 MW.

This proposal was rejected three times by the relevant authorities. In 2002 it has been approved by the higher authorities.

Although it is said that the above project will be smaller than the original one drawn in 1985 it will be bigger than that as per experience of the past with regard to other hydropower projects. Always the reservoir area and catchment area and tunnel area will be bigger than the estimated size.

The first study was carried out by a Canadian firm in 1962 as a part of the Accelerated Mahaweli Project. Then a detail study was done by the UNDP and the FAO in 1968. The Japan International Cooperation Agency carried out a feasibility study in 1987.

The joint venture agreement was signed between the Sri Lankan government (Ceylon Electricity Board) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency Bank in 2002 and the said bank has agreed to grant a loan of US\$ 384 million for the completion of the project by 2007.

The Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project (UKHP) has been approved by the government in 1982 during the JR Jayawardane regime where the late Saumorthy Thondaman (the leader of the CWC) was in the cabinet, but did not oppose the decision.

The UKHP will be a major project in the island and has been on the list as a potential power source for 30 years.

According to the Government's recent documents its power potential is 150 MW, but according to the Secretary to the Ministry of Power and Energy 445 MW could be generated, in which case, the project

would be the biggest in the country and will be flooding a large area with water.

The project site is located on the western slope of the Nuwara Eliya mountain range, which is the central mountainous zone.

DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

- 1 In the world only 20% of electricity is generated by hydropower. But in Sri Lanka it had reached 76%. Therefore going for further hydropower could be disastrous.
- 2 Massive dams and water reservoirs are opposed worldwide since the world population wants land to live. As Sri Lanka is a small island of 25332 sq. miles extent, it cannot afford to lose any more fertile land by flooding with water for the 150 MW of potential electric power from the UKHP.
- 3 The life span of massive hydropower projects is limited to 30 years and thereafter even the soil of the reservoir cannot be utilised for cultivation.
- 4 The presence of a crystalline limestone band in the project location will lead to soil erosion and landslides (earth-slips).
- 5 The presence of the crystalline band will lead to water leaks as in the case of the Samanalaweva Project.
- 6 The diversion of the stream-flow of Kotmalke Oya and its tributaries as proposed will impair the visual quality of several waterfalls. The major waterfalls affected are as follows:
 - (a) St Clair
 - (b) Devon
 - (c) Ramboda
 - (d) Puna Oya
 - (e) Pundal Oya
 - (f) St Andrew's

Stoppage of the flow of the waterfalls will cause loss of aesthetic value as well as serious damage to the internal functioning of the earth beneath.

- (i) The microclimatic change will adversely affect not only the vegetation of the area but also tea plantations and vegetable cultivation, which would have a major impact on the economy of the country.

The microclimate will certainly cause change in the vegetation cover in the watershed area of Kotmale Oya and other dewatering streams, making such areas more vulnerable to landslides (earth-slips). The entire Kotmale valley is sensitive to landslides. Construction of new roads and widening the existing road as infrastructure of the UKHP will increase vulnerability to landslides

- (iii) It is now estimated that the capacity of the Talawakelle reservoir will be 9 million cubic metres of water. This volume of water will apply pressure on the mountains in that area, which are not matured.

- 7 In the absence of base flow in the downstream, the endemic and threatened species of fauna and flora, particularly the fish, freshwater crabs, amphibian lizards, mammals and orchid species etc. found in the area become more endangered.
- 8 The groundwater content of affected area is heavily dependent on surface runoff water and the moist condition of the area in the absence of a deep soil layer capable enough to hold substantial amounts of water.
- 9 The impact of the construction of a 22 km long tunnel including a 12.8 km long headrace tunnel between the reservoir and the underground power station will seriously affect the surface condition and the microclimate, fauna and flora, tea plantations and vegetable cultivation, biodiversity of the waterfalls owing to the weakening of the spray zone, groundwater, the downstream and health (malaria and other vectors).

- 10 This project will add to global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, and loss of rainforest and endangered species.
- 11 Apart from the above-mentioned generalised damage to the environment and nature, there will be other small but serious specific forms of damage caused to them.
- 12 There are three major dams in the Nuwara Eliya District alone and to have another massive dam will certainly cause serious damage to the mountains.
- 13 All long tunnels constructed in the hill country have encountered severe problems relating to groundwater level.
- 14 Unpredictable adverse conditions could occur during construction, including deep-seated weathering, underground seepage, roof collapse, as have been experienced in a number of similar projects, which have caused problems both technically and financially.
- 16 Sites have not been finalised to dispose the 1356 million cubic metres of material excavated for the construction of the tunnels. If the excavated material is not disposed of properly, it could result in washing-off to the streams and to agricultural lands, causing further environmental problems and loss of livelihood for the local communities.
- 17 Further, it is now evident that the project has to identify proper quarry sites, as the material excavated by both the TBM and conventional methods cannot be used for any construction work, owing to changes in rock properties.

SOCIO-POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL EFFECTS

- 1 The implementation of the UKHP is completely dependent on loan facilities provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency Bank and in return, assurance is given to the Japanese government by the Sri Lankan government that, besides the settlement of the loan with interest, Japan could invest and have

its industries in the area, and electricity for the same will be provided from the said UKHP.

Experts say that the 150 MW of potential electricity will only be enough to fulfil the need of the proposed Japanese factories.

Further, there will be a Training Institute for Hydropower, which will accommodate only Japanese with assurance given for the long stay of the Japanese researchers and technological experts in Sri Lanka.

Through this Japan will be certainly gaining economic and regional hegemony over Sri Lanka.

This so-called development project is too heterogeneous for Sri Lanka and will not fit into the Sri Lankan context.

- 2 As generally all Sri Lankans want land for their life and livelihood, the people in the area, whether they are Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims, need land to live and cannot afford to lose their land or the land in their area to make way for the 150 MW of potential electricity from the UKHP.
- 3 It should be noted that in the past the Hill Country Tamils were driven away from their line rooms and the estates where they worked for the implementation of other hydropower reservoirs. They were abandoned on the streets without relocation or resettlement. Therefore, for the Hill Country Tamils, the hydropower projects are oppressive measures against them and obstacles to the advancement of their nationality.
Also, colonies have been set up on a racial basis around the reservoirs, which adversely affected the proportion of their population. Thus, the hydropower projects are implemented as oppressive measures against the Hill Country Tamils. If the trend continues, there will be unrest in the hill country that could lead to a warlike situation in the hill country as well.
- 4 If the proportion and concentration of population of the Hill Country Tamils is affected, their political representation will be denied by virtue of this project.

- 5 In the guise of security there will be camps for security forces in the reservoir area and that will certainly affect the normal and democratic life of all the people of the area.
Militarisation may lead to communal disharmony among the nationalities living in the area.
- 6 As tea plantations and vegetable cultivation will be affected, the economic basis of the people, especially the Hill Country Tamils, will be ruined.
- 7 There is a demand to devolve the plantations (the regions) that are presently governed by the Central Government to the Provincial Government. The result will be that no development in the plantations would be possible through the Provincial Council.

PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PROJECT

The project has been stopped from time to time in the past as a result of the opposition of the people. Whenever the matter was taken up during the regimes of JR Jayawardane, R Premadasa, DB Wijetunge and, since 1994, Chandrika Kumaratunga, there was mass opposition and therefore the project was stopped (and not through the efforts of the leaders of the Ceylon Workers' Congress or the Upcountry People's Front). Uprooting of the people, flooding the land with water, and environmental concerns have been the general grounds for the opposition of the people.

When the matter was taken up in 2000 by the government with Ranil Wickramasinghe as Prime Minister, the leader of the UPF and MP, P Chandrasekaran gave his full support to it. The CWC leader Arumugan Thondaman opposed it and held a protest meeting at Talawakelle. After the CWC joined the UPFA government in 2004, he too supported the project. These two leaders, despite being well aware of the adverse impact of the UKHP, have supported it for reasons known only to them.

The People's Campaign Against the UKHP was organised in 2001 so as to concentrate and centralise all the hitherto spontaneous protests and struggles of the people against the project. This organisation

consists of political parties, trade unions, mass organisations and individuals including members of the CWC and the UPF.

The organisation carried out several mass agitations against the UKHP, including a signature campaign in 2002, where over a hundred thousand people set their signatures against the UKHP.

Mr Chandrasekaran supported the UKHP, demanding compensation only for the people who will be uprooted. Mr Arumugan Thondaman, supported the UKHP and claimed to the public that the government had agreed to an alternative proposal submitted by his party, in place of the original plan. This falsehood was exposed when the Japan International Cooperation Agency Bank (the lending institution) gave a deadline of 10th December 2005 to the Ministry of Power and Energy to answer to them whether the project will be carried out without any changes and as agreed on 28th March 2002.

Following this, the organisers of the People's Campaign Against the UKHP accelerated their agitations and held a very successful convention on the activities against the UKHP on 10th April 2005 in Hatton. The convention passed several resolutions to carry out a relentless struggle against the UKHP.

THE RESOLUTIONS

- 1 The convention resolves to carry out a house-to-house propaganda campaign to educate the people about the disasters of the project.
- 2 The Convention calls upon all political parties, trade unions and other organisations to take up the protest against the project in their May Day Rallies.
- 3 The Convention resolves to hold protest meetings against the project across the country from 2nd May to 15th May.
- 4 The Convention resolves to observe a Protest Day on 15th May, the day of remembrance of Martyr Sivanu Letchumanan who was shot dead by the police during the Sirimavo Bandaranaike regime in 1977, when he

participated in the struggle against the taking over of estate land of 7000 acres' extent to set up settlements of Sinhalese only.

- 5 The Convention resolves to carry out a variety of agitations in Colombo.
- 6 The Convention resolves to carry out pressure campaigns in Sri Lanka as well as in Japan in order to get cancelled the loan facilities offered by the Japan International Cooperation Agency Bank.
- 7 The Convention resolves to carry out international campaigns of ceaseless agitation through the parent organisation as well as by its international branch that has been set up in London.

Accordingly, the matter of the UKHP was very much spoken about in almost all the May Day rallies in the hill country.

On 27th April 2005, there was a mass agitation in Bogawantalawa town organised by the People's Campaign Against the UKHP. On 8th May 2005, there was a protest meeting and procession organised by the Malayaga Ilaignar Manram in Talawakelle in solidarity with the People's Campaign Against the UKHP.

On 15th May 2005, there was a successful protest day observed in the hill country and a centralised agitation was held by the Devon Waterfalls at Talawakelle. On that day estate workers and workers from other sectors went on strike, and shops and offices were closed.

As the next step of the mass struggle, there was an agitation in front of the Colombo Fort Railway station at 4.00 p.m. on 3rd June 2005, with the aim of carrying out nationwide agitations to pressurise the government to give up the UKHP and to protest against the grant of a loan by Japan for the UKHP, which is disastrous for the environment, the people, and the entire country.

E Thambiah, Attorney-at-Law
Organiser, People's Campaign Against the UKHP

08 June 2005

Sri Lankan Events

Troubled Waters

The fragile alliance between the SLFP and the JVP snapped, not because of the disastrous economic policies followed by successive governments since the country was thrown open to plunder by imperialist vultures in 1978, not because of the submissive foreign policy designed to please imperialism and betray the struggles of the people of the Third World, not because of the failure of the government to safeguard the interests of toiling masses of the country, but because the JVP was opposed to the setting up of the Joint Mechanism (P-TOMS) to provide relief to the victims of the tsunami in the North-East.

While it is true that what persuaded the President to agree to the Joint Mechanism was the prospect of foregoing the pledged multi-billion dollar foreign aid for tsunami relief if there was no mechanism in place for the fair distribution of relief. The courage of the President in consenting to the Joint Mechanism, even belatedly, was commendable in the context of the chauvinistic resistance within the ranks of the government, including members of her own party.

The chauvinism of the JVP was just matched by the JHU, represented in parliament by members of the clergy, with a JHU leader going on hunger strike against the signing the agreement for the Joint Mechanism with the LTTE as co-signatory. Opposition also came from the Muslim leadership when it seemed likely that the President would consent to the P-TOMS. The Muslim leadership, which showed minimal interest in the plight of the tsunami victims in the wake of the disaster, raised objections initially on the grounds that they should be a party to the agreement and later on the grounds of inadequate representation. The lack of consensus among the many

factions and individuals in the Muslim leadership in the East, demonstrated once again that they merely represented conflicting interests of an elite section of the community and not the interests of ordinary Muslims.

The UNP played its characteristic double game of seeming to simultaneously support and oppose the P-TOMS. The UNP, ever since it saw the rift between the SLFP and the JVP grow, focussed on just one issue, namely forcing a presidential election at the end of the year and having its leader Ranil Wickramasinghe elected executive president. The people's march organised by the UNP in mid-July drew massive crowds to Colombo, but the UNP had no plans on offer for dealing with the problems facing the country.

The government, meanwhile, is continuing with economic policies dictated by the imperialist funding agencies and taken the first steps towards privatising the generation and distribution of electricity, by splitting the Ceylon Electricity Board into smaller government businesses. With the JVP having collaborated with the government in creating mechanisms that will lead to the privatisation of water, its credibility as a force that will stand up against the disastrous policies dictated by the World Bank, the IMF and the ADB is in tatters.

The trade unions, despite loyalties divided between the JVP and the capitalist parties, have consistently resisted moves by successive governments to privatise public utilities. But without an uncompromising political line based on anti-imperialism and social justice, they are likely to compromise and eventually surrender.

The JVP leadership, which heaped praise on the US earlier in the year for the US policy towards Sri Lanka, is trying to catch up on its anti-imperialist rhetoric, which sounds hollow after more than a year of JVP silence against US imperialist misdeeds. There are deep divisions within the JVP about its decision to quit the government, although the morale of the party has been boosted by its limited success in persuading the Supreme Court to place a restraining order on certain aspects of the P-TOMS.

Moves to mend fences with the SLFP are going on behind the scenes, and were signalled by the sudden decision of the JVP to switch loyalties from Anura Bandaranaike to Mahinda Rajapaksha in the contest for the SLFP candidature at the next presidential election. The prevailing political uncertainty in the parliamentary political scene has led to speculation about the life of the government and the prospects of either parliamentary elections or the presidential election or both before long. Whenever the elections are and whatever their outcome, there is little good that will be achieved for the people, as long as the country is ruled by one section or another of the feudal-capitalist elite that is subservient to imperialism.

While the national question continues to stay unresolved, the disruptive role of sections of the armed forces and mischief by agents of forces of regional and global hegemony have made security in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts very fragile. The spate of civilian killings that have menaced the east of the island for over a year is now spreading to the north, which is already suffering excesses by the armed forces. The killing of a hairdresser and injuring of a colleague by the reckless conduct of a soldier in early August caused mass anger, and led to the kidnapping and killing of a police officer who went to inquire by a group of individuals.

The worst hit in the present political climate are the victims of tsunami in the North-East, whose situation is worsening by the day while NGOs and other parasites are fattening on the funds sent through private charity organisations from various countries.

A ray of hope emerged, however, amid the gloomy political situation in the country, in the form of the successful campaign against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project. Masses were mobilised on an issue affecting their livelihood, in defiance of the dominant political parties and trade unions. The protest movement succeeded in mobilising the Hill Country Tamils of the affected region and from other regions as well as many Sinhalese, thus frustrating chauvinist attempts to isolate the struggle as part of the Tamil nationalist agenda.

The battle is, however, far from over, and the People's Campaign Against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project is actively taking the campaign to other regions of the country as well as to take up the protest at an international level.

The opposition of the CWC and the UPF leadership to the campaign exposed their political bankruptcy, thus emphasising the need for the Hill Country Tamils to find a political alternative based on mass politics and mass struggle. Attempts by the CWC and UPF leaders to cover their tracks by feigning support for the campaign have not been successful. They are now busy diverting the attention of the people by stirring up regional sentiment by using issues such as the legal dispute with Muslim leaders regarding the appointment of teachers to schools in the plantations.

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International Events

UK: London Bombs and the Left

All genuine Marxists have unconditionally denounced the bombing of underground trains and a bus in London on 7th July 2005. The subsequent unsuccessful attempts of 21st July to bomb public transport only helped to strengthen the faith of the public in the police and national security who have since successfully identified those associated with both attacks and arrested several suspects. Nevertheless, the shoot-to-kill action of the police that led to the death of an innocent Brazilian electrician as he boarded a train on 21st July has served as a warning against allowing the state to assume unlimited powers in the pretext of combating terrorism.

Marxists have also drawn the attention of the public to the fact that it was the anti-democratic and deceptive steps taken by the Tony Blair government to drag Britain into America's dirty war in Iraq that caused the attack, and that a serious review of British foreign policy and its backing of the US in its global expansionist project will, in particular, be more valuable in containing 'Muslim fundamentalist terror' than any anti-terrorist strategy, which will only contribute to transforming Britain into a police state.

Nepal: Alignment of Forces

Although the iron fist of the Nepali dictator that reached out to the media later struck the lawyers who demanded the restoration of civil rights, resistance to the dictatorial rule is on the rise even in the small area under state control. It is in this context that India resumed military supplies to Nepal.

In June, Christina Rocca told the US Congressional Subcommittee that, although since the royal coup of February 1, the US restricted its security assistance to non-lethal material and that lethal security assistance continues to be under review. Britain has yet to formally

resume arm supplies, although support for the dictatorial regime continues. Meanwhile, several western nations including Belgium, and South Africa supply military assistance to Nepal, and France provides crucial components for helicopters assembled and delivered by India. China joined the club on 17th June to deliver military equipment, including five armoured personnel carriers, to Nepal, to fight Maoist rebels.

Several political analysts have observed that the fear of an alliance between Nepal's main political parties and the Maoists is a restraining factor with the hawks in the New Delhi-Washington-London axis. Nevertheless, the alliance of seven leading parliamentary political parties to restore democracy need the support of the Maoists to get anywhere with their declared goal or for that matter to play any role in the politics of Nepal. Interestingly, the leader of the Nepali Congress, Girija Prasad Koirala's vision of democracy in Nepal assigns a purely ceremonial role for the King in Nepal, in contrast that of India's with a role on par with Parliament, so that Koirala's position seems close to the Maoist demand for a republican state.

The Nepali parliamentary left seems slightly out of touch with reality when it demands that the Maoists disarm themselves before they form an alliance. What everybody in Nepal knows by experience is that without the armed struggle there is no way to overthrow the dictatorship, and without arms the Maoists and the masses have nothing.

Iraq: History Repeating Itself?

More than 10,000 American troops are backing what is supposedly an Iraqi-led blockade of Baghdad. But the house-to-house searches, arbitrary arrests and the multitude of checkpoints are only paving the way for an even more dangerous revolt. The campaign to "win the hearts and minds" was over even before it could start, and it is now a matter of sustaining the flagging morale of the armed forces before the inevitable withdrawal in disgrace.

Political commentators have started to draw parallels between the wars in Vietnam, pointing to the French experience in Dien Bien Phu in 1954 as well as the American evacuation from Saigon in 1975. The situation in Iraq is more complex than that in Vietnam under French rule or after American aggression. But the overwhelming reality is that a foreign force of occupation whose presence is resented by the entire population is struggling to control a large territory through sheer military terror.

Operation Lightning launched by the US-led forces to flush the resistance out of its Baghdad strongholds is only helping to harden public opinion against the forces of occupation.

The call for united resistance to foreign occupation by the Shia militant leader Muktada Al-Sadr, in the wake of Operation Lightning, is a good sign for the emergence of a united resistance against the US and its allies. The need of the moment is a patriotic, secular and anti-imperialist campaign for the liberation and rebuilding of Iraq.

US: Galloway Turns the Table on Pro-War Senators

The left wing, anti-war British MP George Galloway was accused by a US Senate Committee, headed by Republican Norm Coleman of receiving vouchers for millions of barrels of oil from Saddam Hussein's regime. In June 2005, Galloway took the challenge and presented himself before the Senate Committee to demonstrate to the Senate Committee that in 14 months of American presence in Iraq *\$8.8 billion of Iraq's wealth went missing and that companies such as Halliburton had stolen to the tune of a billion dollars not only the wealth of the Iraqi people but that of the American taxpayer as well.*

Galloway's exposure of American double standards in Iraq dumbfounded his accusers, reversing the respective roles of the accuser and the accused.

US: Guardian of Terrorism

Members of the Benito Juarez International Court (BJIC), a civil court created to try the hostile behaviour maintained by successive US governments against the Cuban Revolution. They demanded on Tuesday 31st May that the US government extradite Cuban-born terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela to be tried for crimes against humanity. The super-terrorist awaiting trial for illegally entering Mexico, that country's prosecutor Enrique Gonzalez said. He recalled that the Posada Carriles was the mastermind behind the bombing of a Cuban commercial airliner with 73 passengers in October 1976, the organiser of several attacks against Cuba's tourism resorts, and attempted to assassinate President Fidel Castro in November 2000.

Another BJIC organizer, Cuauhtemoc Amezcua, pointed out that the Cuban government had officially requested from Mexico information on what Posada Carriles did, where he went and how he moved to United States. Amezcua also pointed out that the Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez said that Posada Carriles should be extradited to Venezuela, rather than be deported to Mexico.

John Saxe-Fernandez, an expert on US issues, noted that the protection of Carriles by the US is a disaster for the credibility of the so-called US war against international terrorism.

Bolivia

The economic instability borne of free market reforms has spurred frequent demonstrations over water and gas privatisation and social exclusion of the indigenous majority. The unrest of 2003 culminated in the killing of 80 demonstrators and to the untimely departure from office of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, who fled by helicopter to Miami. He was succeeded by President Mesa.

However, the military has acted with some restraint since the shooting to death of Coro Mayta, which forced President Mesa to announce his resignation on 9th June amid calls for oil and gas

nationalization and a Constituent Assembly. The demonstrators also demanded that all those in line to succeed Mesa be excluded from consideration and that early elections be held.

The next in line after Mesa, the conservative and divisive Senate President Hormando Vaca Diez, a wealthy landowner with strong ties to separatist business interests in the eastern Bolivian state of Santa Cruz was persuaded by Evo Morales, a socialist member of the Congress and presidential candidate, to step aside; and so was Mario Cossio, the head of the Congress's lower chamber.

The indigenous majority in South America's poorest country has demanding more political power and gas and oil nationalisation — in direct opposition to a European-descended elite. Supreme Court judge Eduardo Rodriguez, who replaced Mr. Mesa is mandated by the constitution to call elections. His caretaker government has not yet set a date, but he has said elections could be held in December.

The crisis has shown the increasing power of Amerindian groups, which could now win a presidential election to herald another shift to the left in Latin America, where many nations are now rebelling against U.S. influence.

Ecuador

President Lucio Gutierrez was forced out of power on April 20, 2005, before the completion of his four-year term, by mass protests and fled from the roof of his residence in a helicopter to escape the wrath of the protesting masses.

He is the third President to be forced out of power by popular uprising. President Abdala Bucaram was ousted in 1997, just six months into his term, and President Jamil Mahuad within two years. Although the Presidents were legitimately elected in relatively free and fair elections, the people were angered by their policies and abuse of power and show them the door ahead of schedule.

The constitutionally elected new president, Alfredo Palacio was attacked by Condoleezza Rice, then wandering about Eastern Europe

spreading 'democracy'. She demanded from the man who had already been elected constitutionally a constitutional process to get to elections. What seem to have made Palacio 'unconstitutional' to Rice are US concerns about Ecuadorian oil –and the bonds.

Uzbekistan

US imperialism may finally succeed in toppling the government in another member state of the former Soviet Union. The economy of Uzbekistan has been facing mounting difficulties since secession following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The anti-government uprising was not without justification, and the brutality with which the government dealt with it cannot be condoned. It is claimed by the government that Hizb-ut-Tahrir, an Islamist organisation, was behind the violence in the Ferghana valley. This organisation enjoys the blessings of the US through its NGO arms. Meanwhile, the liberal media claim that a secular rebel organisation, "Ozod Dehkonlar" (Free Peasants), founded in December 2003 and with a membership of 100,000 was the principal force. In any event, the hands of US imperialism are visible behind the organisation of the rebellion.

What is interesting is that Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan is portrayed by western liberals and 'left' groups as a pro-US tyrant, rather than a hangover from the Soviet era, whereas the country, including the 'political alternatives', is fully in the grip of US-controlled NGOs, human rights organisations and media personnel, precisely the kind that paved the way for pro-US 'revolutions' in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyztan.

The 'velvet revolutions' in the former Soviet states, the change in foreign policy of Moldova, and the events in Uzbekistan have far reaching consequences. The US global strategy of encirclement of Russia (and then China) demands direct control by the US through US-appointed puppets rather than politicians with a popular base; and Karimov is perhaps now aware of the lesson learned by Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, Eduard Shevardnadze and many others

that one is better off as an enemy of the Americans than as their friend: an enemy, there is a chance that they will try to make a deal; a friend, they will certainly sell down the river.

The latest move by Karimov demanding that the US closes down its military bases in the country is a necessary move for survival, despite the prospect of more virulent American subversion.

EU: Two Blows in a Row

In May, the French people delivered a severe body blow to the new European Union constitution. The Dutch people reinforced the blow in June with a rejection that was even more humiliating to the government that, out of desperation, linked “the fight against terrorism” with the constitution. Subsequent endorsement by Luxembourg was of little consequence. What is significant is that the constitution had been approved by nine European parliaments, including Italy and Germany and Spain, but not by citizens through a referendum.

In France, workers, farmers, small traders, youth and immigrants joined forces to reject the constitution in a campaign led by the left, a rejection in which the far right too joined for chauvinistic reasons.

The process of European unification, as envisaged by the imperialists of Europe is now facing a dead end. But that does not mean that the existing mechanism of co-operation between the European countries is at stake. What is to be celebrated is that an imperialist agenda for a United States of Europe that will be an oppressor of the people of Europe as well as a major force in the oppression of the Third World has failed.

Japan: Glossing over a Shameful Past

Imperialism, despite various theories that globalisation will wipe off national differences, thrives on chauvinistic sentiments. Japanese imperialists have resisted acknowledging their crimes against the

people of Asia, China and Korea in particular. Defeat in World War II compelled them to admit their fault to the US and its western allies, even though the US had acted in ways that provoked Japan.

Japanese aggression in Asia was expansionism driven by chauvinistic contempt for the people of China, Korea and other nations in Asia. The acts of cruelty in China and Korea surpassed that of the Japanese forces elsewhere. Half-hearted regrets have been expressed by Japanese leaders from time to time so as to help Japanese businesses in China and the Chinese leaders taking the capitalist road were willing to accept that as sufficient for the time.

The recent downturn in the Japanese economy, the sense of insecurity of the workers in the Japanese industry, and the failing popularity of the government seem to have persuaded the Japanese government to revive nationalism as a way of stabilising itself politically. The Japanese government turned a blind eye to the deliberate omission of Japanese crimes against the people of East Asia in school textbooks. To make matters worse the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi and ministers paid their respects at the Japanese memorial for war heroes, long associated with Japanese imperialism.

This infuriated the people of China and South Korea, who staged massive anti-Japanese protests with calls to boycott Japanese goods. The Japanese leaders have since made efforts to patch up relations between the governments Japan and China. Whether the Japanese government will succeed in pacifying the Chinese and the Korean people will depend on the sincerity with which it will re-examine its imperial past.

NDP Diary

Press Communiqué of the NDP

6th April 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party released on 6th April 2005 a press communiqué objecting to the proposed Upper Kotmale Hydro Power Project. The communiqué stated that fertile plantation land, human settlements and a large portion of Talawakelle town face inundation following the proposed construction of dams in Talawakelle and Caledonia in the Hill Country, in connection with the Upper Kotmale Hydro Power Project. The project will have adverse environmental consequences, and will badly affect the people of the Hill Country. Therefore the New Democratic Party vehemently condemns the measures taken by the government in its eager pursuit of implementing the Upper Kotmale Project, which would be a bad precedent not merely for the Hill Country but for Sri Lanka as a whole. The Party also gives its fullest support and co-operation to the people's campaign of opposition demanding the abandoning of the Upper Kotmale Project.

The communiqué further added that it has become customary for the two ruling class parties that have come to power in this country to act against the Hill Country Tamils while ruling the country with the support of the trade unions and parties of the Hill Country Tamils. Some of these political parties have completely sold themselves out. The Upper Kotmale Scheme was earlier carried forward under the UNP government and now under the UPFA government. The project is to be implemented using a massive loan from Japan. The truth that, while a large sum will be payable to Japan as interest, the 150 MW of electricity generated by the scheme will be used for the purposes of two Japanese companies to be set up in the Hill Country has been hidden from the people.

Meanwhile an area including several hundred acres of fertile plantation land, human settlements and a large portion of Talawakelle

town face inundation. Promises of compensation, alternative housing, development and alternative employment will, as in the past, be mere deception and eyewash. Besides, planned chauvinistic colonisation and establishment of military bases will also be a consequence of the project. Above all, the Upper Kotmale Scheme is one of several ventures to sell the natural resources of the country to foreigners and lead the country to disaster. Moreover, it should be noted that geoscientists have warned that the dammed reservoirs that already exist in the Hill Country and the proposed Upper Kotmale Scheme would make the region more vulnerable to earth tremors and environmental changes.

Therefore, considering the interests of the country and its people, the New Democratic Party will give its fullest support and co-operation to the people's campaign of opposition demanding the abandoning of the Upper Kotmale Project.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

25th April 2005

Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the NDP released a press communiqué on 25th May 2005 in which he called upon the entire people of the hill country to mobilise in the Revolutionary May Day Rally of the NDP to be held in Ragala, in order to build up people's power to put an end to the Upper Kotmale Project, to win a fair increase in wage for the plantation workers, to achieve a political solution to the national question, and to overcome imperialism, which is the basis of the problems, and to strengthen the alternative democratic joint political leadership of the Hill Country Tamils with participation by the people.

The communiqué added that the NDP is holding demonstrations and rallies in Jaffna and Ragala and that the demonstration emphasising a political solution that will ensure equality of the nationalities and autonomy on the basis of the right to self determination will commence at 10.00 a.m. from the Thirunelveli Junction, Jaffna and

proceed to the Jaffna Co-operative Society Auditorium, the venue of the meeting. Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party, will chair the meeting.

The revolutionary procession in Ragala will commence at 10.00 a.m. at the Ragala Nadukkanakku Bazaar Street and proceed to the venue of the meeting in Ragala. Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the Party, will chair the meeting.

The security of the plantation workers and of the entire Hill Country Tamil people now faces an unprecedented threat. Their future is uncertain. The disastrous Upper Kotmale Project has become a major threat. It has been demonstrated that the leadership of the trade unions and the parliamentary political parties of the hill country are incapable of defending the people against these threats.

Hence, a democratic joint political leadership with participation by the people is the most suitable for the people of the hill country. The Party calls upon all to unite for the common purpose of reinforcing such a political leadership based on the working class as nurtured and developed by the NDP and to mobilise in the Revolutionary May Day Rally in Ragala.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

27th April 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party released on 27th April 2005 the following May Day Statement on behalf of the Central Committee of the Party.

It befits neither the UPFA government led by Chandrika Kumaratunga, which is dragging its feet without setting up the Joint Mechanism for the North-East while allowing the prices of essential goods soar sky high and speedily implementing privatisation, nor the JVP, which is stirring up chauvinistic fanaticism while cloaking itself in red, to celebrate May Day. Thus, the working people and the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamils who are subject to oppression should mobilise on this May Day to make a militant call

against the anti-people anti-national policies of the UPFA government.

It is a year since the UPFA government came to power. It is four months since the tsunami disaster. President Chandrika Kumaratunga proudly boasts she has occupied the seat of the executive presidency for ten years. But the issues of negotiation and political solution for the national question, which was transformed into a cruel war, remain unresolved in any respect. All efforts for a solution and the expectations of the people have been cast aside. In the end, it was expected that a joint mechanism would be set up to deal with the tsunami disaster and the losses suffered by the people of the North-East will be rectified through restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. That too is being cynically procrastinated. The JVP, which is mouthing chauvinistic venom, has been instrumental in causing the delays. The JVP, which has thus demonstrated that it is not a left party, is in fact a chauvinistic party cloaked in red. Meantime, the prospect of the notion of a political solution to the national question based on the principle of self-determination becoming a sacrificial lamb at the altar of Indo-US rivalry is clearly visible. The US and India, which acted indirectly to complicate the national question, are today acting openly to serve their political and military interests.

It is in this context that privatisation is being quickened and the resources of the country are being robbed. The UPFA government is taking steps to privatise the remaining state enterprises such as electricity, petroleum, water, education, rail transport and banking. It is to implement the environmentally disastrous Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project in the hill country and the Nuraicholai Thermal Power Plant in Puttalam. Meanwhile, the country is left wide open to imports to the ruin of our agricultural production and the pauperisation of the peasants who are driven to suicide. The Chandrika government is following the path chartered by the World Bank, the IMF and the Asian Development Bank. The steps taken by the government are plunging the country into imperialist globalisation. Thus, the working people and the Tamil, Muslim and

Hill Country Tamils who are subject to oppression should mobilise on this May Day to make a militant call against the Anti-people anti-national policies of the UPFA government.

The May Day processions and rallies of the NDP will be held in Jaffna and the hill country.

Press Communiqué of the NDP

10th June 2005

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party released on 10th June 2005 a press communiqué on behalf of the Politburo of the Party in connection with the crisis concerning the Joint Mechanism (P-TOMS).

The communiqué stated that a monthly increase in fuel price has now become standard and, as a result, prices and fares are increasing without restraint and the people are struggling to survive in the face of the rising cost of living. The JVP, while maintaining silence about this abject economic condition of the people, is mouthing slogans about patriotism and national welfare and whipping up frantic chauvinistic fervour against the Joint Mechanism. Meanwhile the Buddhist clergy who preach non-violence have gone on hunger strike against the setting up of the Joint Mechanism, that is intended to provide relief for reconstruction and rehabilitation to the people of the North-East who suffer great burdens of loss caused by the tsunami. Besides the consequent emergence of a political crisis, the country is also being pushed into a situation of communal disharmony and turbulence. Under these conditions, it is essential that the president does not retreat in the face of opposition and, as promised by her earlier, proceed to set up the Joint Mechanism in collaboration with the LTTE. The NDP emphasises that the setting up of the Joint Mechanism will, besides enabling the provision of relief to the victims of tsunami in the North-East, be a forerunner to the resumption of the long stalled negotiations for the resolution of the national question.

The communiqué added that the outbursts and hunger strikes by the JVP and the Jathika Hela Urumaya regarding the Joint Mechanism proposed by the President with the consent of the LTTE are neither to save the country nor for the salvation of the people. It is for the resumption of war to plunge the country in a bloodbath. It is in the vain hope that they could capture state power by such means. The JVP leadership, which has been a partner in power for an year, enjoying ministerial positions and accompanying perks, have not uttered a word about the crises of life faced by the people on a daily basis or about the ruination of the country by liberalisation, privatisation and foreign infiltration. But they swear that they are willing to sacrifice their lives in the cause of preventing the setting up of the Joint Mechanism to provide relief to the tsunami victims in the North-East. The president, for the sake of saving the lives of one or two Buddhist priests on hunger strike, should not abandon the Joint Mechanism to serve the people of the North-East who are in a desperate situation, after having lost tens of thousands of lives.

Meantime, the UNP should abandon its opportunist line of ‘stirring the pond to catch the fish’, with the presidential election, the parliamentary election and the next government in mind. It should abandon saying one thing at a time about the Joint Mechanism, contradicting itself each time. At the same time, if the UNP is sincere towards the Tamil people, it should support the Joint Mechanism about which there is consensus between the President and the LTTE. The question is whether it will do so.

The NDP wishes to point out that if the President will, in setting up the Joint Mechanism, act with firmness and courage to overcome the emerging opposition, she will be writing a fresh chapter in the annals of the history of this country that has been tarnished by chauvinism and secure a unique position for herself; otherwise she will be the victim of the old route and drag the country once more into the mire of war.

The NDP emphasises that it is the bounden duty of all left and democratic forces and all who are desirous of peace to give their fullest support to the setting up of the Joint Mechanism.

Revolutionary May Day of the NDP in the North and the Hill Country

On 1st May 2005, the NDP conducted its May Day processions and rallies in the north and in the hill country.

In the north, the Party had its May Day in Jaffna town. The May Day procession originally scheduled to proceed from Thirunelveli Junction was curtailed under LTTE pressure and started from Sathiram Junction and arrived at the venue for the rally. Slogans raised during the demonstration included “Workers of the world unite; let us struggle against globalisation!” “Let us oppose oppression!” and “Grant the Joint Mechanism!”

Comrade K Kathirgamanathan chaired the May Day rally, which was addressed by the Party General Secretary, Comrade SK Senthivel and Central Committee members, Comrades K Thanikasalam and S Thevarajah, Comrade P Murugesu on behalf of the Youth League, trade union representative K Panchalingam, M Thiagarajah, former Northern Region Chairman of the Ceylon Teachers’ Union and others.

In the Hill Country, the May Day procession and rally of the Party were held in Ragala. The procession started at the St Leonard’s Bazaar and proceeded to the venue of the rally at Ragala Bazaar. Slogans raised during the demonstration included “Stop forthwith the Upper Kotmale Project!” “Are the bogus development schemes to eliminate the Hill Country Tamils?” and “Grant the plantation workers their pay rise!”

National Organiser of the Party, Comrade E Thambiah chaired the May Day rally, which was addressed by Comrade S Panneerselvam, Hill Country Regional Secretary of the Party, Comrades V Mahendran, N Varathgarajah, educationist S Rajendran and several others.

27th Anniversary Celebration of the NDP

The New Democratic Party celebrated its 27th Anniversary in Hatton on 3rd July 2005. A very well attended public meeting and a cultural programme were conducted in the Sakthi Hall, Hatton. Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the NDP chaired the meeting and Comrade SK Senthivel delivered the Anniversary Address. Comrades Sarath Fernando (Railway Workers Union), S Jeyaseelan, K Kathirgamanathan, K Mahendran, S Panneerselvam, S Rajendran (Educationist), S Sathiyamoorthy, J Satkurunathan, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah, and other leading comrades also addressed the meeting. Comrade N Varatharajah introduced the speakers.

The cultural programme included street theatre, revolutionary songs and folk dance and music, and the movie, Motorcycle Diary, depicting a part of the life of Ché Guevara.

[A translation in summary of the address by Comrade Senthivel is included in this issue of ND.]

Call by the Hill Country Committee of the NDP

(The following is a translation of a Tamil leaflet distributed by the Hill Country Committee to mark the occasion of the 27th Anniversary Celebration of the NDP held in Hatton on 3rd July 2005.)

People of the Hill Country, what is the alternative?

Any decision that is not taken on the basis of the long-term needs and the interests of the people will in the end harm the people. Because of the failure to prevent the transfer of plantations from the state to the private sector workers have lost the rights and privileges that they once enjoyed. The plantation economy has been wrecked by schemes such as those for potato cultivation and horticulture. As a direct result, the plantation workers and people who relied on the plantation economy for their livelihood have been badly affected. Today the trade unions are in a situation in which they are unable to speak up against oppression by the plantation companies. The members of

parliament also remain silent. Some limit their bravado to press releases.

Although it is said that legislation is in place for solving the citizenship issue in full, the Hill Country Tamils have been denied their rights in several matters including the registration of names in the voter's register.

The Hill Country Tamil nationality has not received the full benefits from institutions such as the Pattana Sripada College of Education, the Teachers' Training College and the Thondaman Technical Training Institute.

Even the *grama sevaka* officials appointed to serve in the Tamil medium are unable to function in Tamil.

Besides these, acts of national oppression, such as planned chauvinistic settlements and hydropower schemes and racist attacks have rendered the Hill Country Tamils unprotected. Although historical experience has taught many lessons, the so-called leadership of the Hill Country Tamils comprising the CWC and the Hill Country People's Front have failed to take a firm and defiant stand.

The leaders of the hill country are only interested in obtaining the votes of the Hill Country Tamils and thereby secure posts and portfolios and concessions for themselves from the parties that form the government. They have made it their politics to live at the mercy of chauvinistic capitalist parties. Their holding ministerial posts in oppressive governments has not led to any serious change in the living conditions of the people.

Contesting elections, entering into alliances with chauvinistic governments and running the trade unions in ways that suit the big plantation companies is neither the politics of the Hill Country Tamils nor the politics for the plantation workers.

The politics of the nationality and the plantation workers is the politics of mass struggle. It is the only way in which the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers could secure their existence. Such

politics will not be carried forward by organisations such as the CWC and the Hill Country People's Front.

The New Democratic Party has made calm and steady progress along the path of mass political struggle the past 26 years. It has carried forward on several fronts ideological struggles as well as mass struggles based on the demands of the Hill Country Tamils for their rights. It conducts election campaigns too as struggles for winning these rights. Even when it wins the elections it will still be carrying forward struggles to secure the rights of the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers. There will be no compromise or surrender in dealings with the chauvinists and the capitalists.

The New Democratic Party has carried forward mass struggles against the chauvinistic attacks in Wevalwatte and Kandapola, the Bindunuweva massacre and mining for gems in the plantations, and in support of an increased wages for the plantation workers. Currently, it is carrying forward major struggles against the Upper Kotmale Project.

It has supported many struggles in the hill country and lent its fullest support for the struggle of the trainee teachers at the Pattana Sripada College of Education.

Thus the New Democratic Party has determined that the alternative political path for the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers is the path of mass political struggle and continues its journey along that path. It is ready to struggle on its own as well as in unity under a common programme with other parties, trade unions and mass organisations.

The New Democratic Party on the occasion of its 27th anniversary calls upon all political parties, trade unions, mass organisations and individuals to come forward to unite under a common programme to win the rights of the Hill Country Tamils and the plantation workers.

Hill Country Committee of the NDP
10th June 2005
Ragala

We are not dead leaf

by

Maruthur Gani

Even if we
inhale the poisonous air
bellowed by the urban factory,
even if we
wander about
with muddy feet
and ploughshare in hand
in the countryside,
we are not dead leaf
to be swept away
by the dry south-westerly wind.
In our journey towards
an era of common ownership,
we will endure
the fiercest attack of
thunder and lightening
and wind and rain.
We will put an end to
the era of private ownership.
It is simply enough
if we could only catch a glimpse
of the rising red glow of light
over the eastern horizon.

(continued from inside front)

**For the old lamps to show the whips still stuck
After centuries in the old wounds
And the axes shining with blood.
I come to speak for your dead mouth.
Across the earth come together all
The silent worn-out lips
And from the depth speak to me all this long night
Like I was pinned down there with you.
Tell me all, chain by chain,
Link by link and step by step,
Sharpen the knives which you hid,
Put them in my breast and in my hand,
Like a river of yellow lighting
Like a river of buried jaguars
And let me weep, hours, days, years,
For blind ages, cycles of stars.**

Give me silence, water, hope.

Give me struggle, iron, volcanoes.

Stick bodies to me like magnets.

Draw near to my veins and my mouth.

Speak through my words and my blood.

Victim Number 18

Mahmoud Darwish

Once olive grove was green.
It was, and the sky
A grove of blue. It was my love.
What changed that evening?

At the bend in the track they stopped the lorry of workers.
So calm they were.
They turned us round towards the east. So calm they were.

Once my heart was a blue bird, O nest of my beloved.
The handkerchiefs I had of yours were all white. They were, my love.
What stained them that evening?
I do not understand at all, my love.

At the bend in the track they stopped the lorry of workers.
So calm they were.
They turned us round towards the east. So calm they were.

From me you'll have evening,
Yours the shade and yours the light,
A wedding-ring and all you want,
And an orchard of trees, of olive and fig.
And as on every night I'll come to you.
In the dream I'll enter by the window and throw you jasmine.
Blame me not if I'm a little late:
They stopped me.
The olive grove was always green.
It was, my love.

Fifty victims
Turned it at sunset into
A crimson pond, Fifty victims.
Beloved, do not blame me.
They killed me. They killed me.
They killed me

(from *The Music of Human Flesh*, Translated by: Denys Johnson-Davies)