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Good Morning Revolution

by

Langston Hughes (1902-67)

Good morning Revolution:

You are the best friend

I ever had.

We gonna pal around together from now on.

Say, listen, Revolution:

You know the boss where I used to work,

The guy that gimme the air to cut expenses,

He wrote a long letter to the papers about you:

Said you was a trouble maker, a alien-enemy,

In other words a son-of-a-bitch.

He called up the police

And told'em to watch out for a guy

Named Revolution

You see,

The boss knows you are my friend.

He sees us hanging out together

He knows we're hungry and ragged,

And ain't got a damn thing in this world –

And are gonna to do something about it.

The boss got all his needs, certainly,

Eats swell,

Owens a lotta houses,

Goes vacationin',

Breaks strikes,

Runs politics, bribes police

Pays off congress

And struts all over earth –

But me, I ain't never had enough to eat.

Me, I ain't never been warm in winter.

Me, I ain't never known security –

(continued on inside back cover)

From the Editor's Desk

The trend set in early 2006 continues. The armed forces have intensified military action, and captured much of the areas held by the LTTE in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts of the East, but at a heavy price for civilians. The number of refugees in these districts has surpassed 200 000, and the plight of the displaced is pathetic owing to the infrastructure to deal with the refugees being under severe strain and in considerable disarray following the opening of hostilities last year, albeit with the Ceasefire Agreement still alive,.

Wishful thinking by the Tamil parliamentary leadership that the 'international community' will intervene in a humanitarian way has failed to materialise. But illusions persist about the goodwill of the 'international community'.

The temptation to play the China card to curry favour with the US and India had always been great with Tamil nationalists, who rarely missed an opportunity from the time that China was a bastion of support for revolutionary struggles globally. There was no affinity between Pakistan and the Tamil leadership which continued to look up to India to come to their rescue, even after it became patently clear that India was only using the Sri Lankan national question to serve its hegemonic ambitions. Also, it is not for ignorance of the fact that the US and Israel have been the biggest suppliers of arms and armaments for the genocidal war conducted by the reactionary governments that the Tamil leadership is pinning its hopes on intervention by the US, and if possible the UN.

Two Tamil nationalist MPs who recently visited India stated that Pakistan and China are the main suppliers of arms to Sri Lanka and hence India should frustrate the Chinese and Pakistani plans to dominate Sri Lanka by intervening on behalf of the Tamil people. Similar statements continue to be made by various Tamil leaders. What is being ignored is that India, to serve its hegemonic ends, is playing ball with the US and, if the purpose is to counter Chinese or Pakistani

influence, both the US and India would only work harder to make Sri Lanka solely their client.

On the part of Sinhala nationalism, since the shattering electoral defeat of the SLFP in 1977, and particularly since the consolidation of the 'open economic policy' in the years that followed, the SLFP, as the main national bourgeois party, lost the initiative in opposing imperialism, and when the SLFP returned to power in 1994, it pursued the same policies as the UNP on nearly every major issue, despite the occasional ritual anti-imperialist utterance designed to reassure a section of their traditional support.

President Mahinda Rajapaksha, in a recent speech made in honour of JR Jayawardane, has praised the economic policy initiated by the latter and pledged to continue with it. Meanwhile the recently signed ACSA and earlier deals with the US Government are transforming this country into a vassal of the US or of an Indo-US alliance, given the proximity of India and its hegemonic ambitions.

The JVP and the JHU while objecting to foreign intervention to facilitate the peace process are favourable to US intervention to eliminate the LTTE threat. The net effect of the negative approach to the peace process on various sides will be to make foreign intervention a reality.

Let us be clear that to denounce US and Indian domination is not to welcome any other. But it is important to recognise real threats and avoid deflecting attention from them by pointing at imaginary threats.

What the people of the country should always be conscious of is that the forces of imperialism and hegemony are their enemies of the people of Sri Lanka, irrespective of nationality. No struggle, be it in the name of liberation or in the name of safeguarding the integrity of the country, is credible unless it is thoroughly anti-imperialistic

The Way Forward

Liberation of the Entire People of Sri Lanka is Possible only by Mass Uprisings

[What follows is a summary paper of a recent discussion among Sinhala and Tamil Marxist Leninist activists. The discussion was aimed at carrying forward the struggle against social oppression, for the liberation of the country from imperialism and hegemony, and the resolution of the national question through solidarity among the nationalities, based on the principle of the right to self-determination. Readers are invited to make their critical observations on this paper so that the ideas contained therein could be dealt with more thoroughly and expanded upon.]

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) made in 2002 between the then Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and the LTTE have been in effect until 2006. Armed conflicts, Claymore anti-personnel mine attacks, explosions, murders, kidnappings, disappearances, and arrests that occurred over the past year have rendered them ineffective

The national question and alien forces

In the pretext of supporting the war against terrorism and helping with the peace efforts, forces of imperialism and hegemony are determining the day-to-day conduct of the affairs of this country. Through that the US, the countries of the European Union, Japan and India are exercising hegemony. The economy of this country has been enslaved by India through the one-sided Free Trade Agreement between India and Sri Lanka which only benefits India and through Indian investments in Sri Lanka. Besides, Sri Lanka receives military support from the US, Pakistan and Israel. The CIA, FBI, RAW, Mossad and other such foreign intelligence services are carrying out their espionage activities unhindered.

It is as a result of the stand taken by Sinhala chauvinism and the errors of the Tamil nationalists that there is increased domination by foreign forces; and today the national question has become the main problem and has been left in the hands of foreign forces. As a result of Sinhala domination and its oppressive approach, the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities and national minorities like the Burghers, Malays and the Attho (earlier known as the Veddha) have been subject to untold suffering, cruelty and oppression. The struggles of the oppressed Tamil people have become centred around the LTTE, whose armed activities have been on the rise.

Meanwhile, under the imperialist globalisation programme, neo-liberal economic schemes are being implemented in the agricultural sector as well. While the people are continuing to oppose them in view of their effects, the ruling classes are continuing with them. The programme of globalisation has killed the life cells of a national economy based on self sufficiency. The oppressed peasants, workers and the middle classes are badly affected. It is doubtful under the worsening climate of liberalisation and privatisation whether any of the resources of the country will be left behind for the generations to come.

Dissatisfaction and resistance among the people

Under these circumstances, any reasonable person will protest about the way the ruling classes are governing this country. The people as a whole have reached a state where they are willing to accept that the present anti-people form of government should be replaced by a form of government that gives prominence to the interests of the people.

The constitution, the presidential system of government, and the parliamentary system have failed to protect, among other things, the welfare of the people of Sri Lanka, their honour and self respect, their wealth, and their democratic and human rights. The police, the armed forces and the judiciary seem to be concerned with serving the ruling classes and protecting their interests, and defending the Sinhala hegemony of the upper classes. Meanwhile the workers, peasants, and the employed middle classes are getting ready to take a stand against the exploiting classes and face the challenges.

The current Sri Lankan situation demands the transfer of powers in the hands of the ruling classes to the true representatives of the people. Major changes are required in state power. The people are becoming

like dried leaves and a single spark to set the woods alight. They have lost faith in the ruling classes. The old system of government and administration of the ruling classes have reached their limit of incompetence. The ruling classes have forfeited their eligibility to continue to rule the people. Under these conditions, the people of Sri Lanka are affected in many ways, directly and indirectly. Even the comfortably off middle classes and people with considerable wealth are beginning to feel insecure.

A new approach to struggle

Thus, not only the ordinary masses, but also those living in some comfort are compelled to seek changes through alternative political activity. Such alternative politics has to be revolutionary politics.

The characteristic of the ruling classes of Sri Lanka is that of a client of imperialism. On the political and social planes, the policies of the state uphold violence and war as their main approach. There are differences between the methods of struggle against such ruling classes and those against earlier political establishments. There are differences between the strategy and tactics of governance by the old exploiting reactionary classes and those of the present ruling classes based on banditry and terror. One who takes note of these differences cannot be satisfied about the adequacy of the current approaches to struggle.

Hence it is necessary to transform completely the old approaches of the people, to undertake new initiatives and to carry forward new forms of struggle in new directions. Trade union activities of workers and peasants, strikes, electoral political meetings, processions and demonstrations have only provoked harsh responses accompanied by violence, and yielded counterproductive results.

Thus several struggles that are distinct from those of the past need to be carried out, outside the scope of the parliamentary electoral arena and the confines of trade unions, unlike the struggles carried out within and outside the electoral arena, and in ways different from that of traditional propaganda. It is also a historical necessity to function in ways unlike that of NGOs that are confined to a specified framework.

Through elections and the importance given to them, the ruling classes have become more and more privileged. Meantime, even the most ordinary rights of the ruled classes are denied to them.

The armed struggle of the JVP in 1971 and 1988 and the armed struggle for the right to self determination of the Tamil people have led to a feeling of disgust among the people so that they do not want such struggles to emerge. The imperialists and the reactionary ruling class forces have succeeded in this. However, the oppressed people have no choice or alternative but to impair the existing system of government and the ruling classes through the correct form of struggle and establish a meaningful democratic government. To achieve that, new forms of mass struggle with fresh meaning should be launched. It is in that way that great mass struggles and uprisings take place across the globe.

Lessons from earlier struggles

Owing to the errors of the leadership, the hatred of 12th August 1953, despite popular participation on a massive scale, could not be developed into a mass uprising. Various strikes, including the July 1980 strike, resistance campaigns by the people, and mass demonstrations have, owing to the activities of bogus left forces and mischievous NGOs, and contrary to expectations, helped the ruling classes. The exploited and ruled classes have continued to be affected. We need to advance by learning from these experiences.

It cannot be denied that people have won some rights and that some significant political changes have been achieved through mass movements and resistance campaigns. But the leadership was captive to the predominance of anti-people forces. These struggles were, in general, used to achieve the political goals of the UNP and the SLFP, and used until the leadership was granted its opportunity.

A new mass uprising becomes necessary

Today, a political climate prevails in which the people stand face to face against the ruling classes, their political enemy. That confrontation requires no less than a fundamental social change and to that end urgently demands a new popular uprising under the appropriate radical change in political leadership. The maturing of this condition and the achievement of a victorious situation depends on the entire Sri Lankan people.

At the mention of mass uprising and mass struggle, some jump to protest that they will be ruthlessly suppressed by the terrorist ruling classes, chauvinists and fascists, and will only pave the way to further reinforcement of state power to unprecedented levels. They would also

claim that the people will be subject to suffering. People who argue in this fashion do not see popular uprising as a correct path of struggle to protect the people.

Those who accept popular uprising as the path for struggle need to pay attention to the new meaning, the new form and the new workings of the popular uprising for social change. It is necessary to prepare an alternative economic defence, action and reaction, and a culture that emphasises the case for the struggle so that the popular uprising is invincible. A mass struggle carried forward with maximum popular participation could contain one or several aspects concerning the welfare of the people. Lazybones and ones who refuse to endorse popular uprisings think that such an uprising will lead to the killing of unarmed people and that it is difficult for a popular uprising to take place. Such people have no faith in the power of the people.

If it is possible for the ruling classes to militarily suppress and decimate a mass uprising, it means that the uprising is not a correct mass uprising. A mass uprising comprises a continuous sequence of mass struggles. In such a correct mass uprising, there are preparatory measures for the steps leading to social change. They have features such as strategy and tactics. Mass struggles are, simultaneously, acts of training the people and struggles generating confidence among them.

Uprisings should be carried forward with care

Any mass uprising carried forward in a state of unpreparedness is suicidal. Mass uprisings cannot be created compulsively. Mass struggles cannot be transformed into a mass uprising merely through an announcement, or appeals through leaflets and posters. Mass uprisings cannot be specified a time, place and event. When the necessary objective conditions are there and contradictions sharpen, the emergence of a mass uprising is inevitable. As much as one cannot compulsively create a mass uprising, a mass uprising once started cannot be stopped either. It will run its course until it reaches its target. After which, the uprising should be sustained to retain its victory.

Thus, we need to be alert to the prospects of such a mass uprising. We should also develop the political and organisational preparedness that could withstand that environment, and the emotional and intellectual standards that correspond to it. Such preparedness will be

able to mobilise accordingly the spontaneous feelings of the people and guide them.

When such preparedness does not exist, the enemies of the people can make use of mass struggles to their advantage and render the struggles ineffective and obstruct social transformation, which is the goal of the struggles. In the history of Sri Lanka, most mass struggles have been used merely to bring the UNP and the SLFP to power in turn. NGOs have incorporated mass struggles into their programmes. That too is to help the ruling classes.

The political goal of mass uprisings

It is important to ensure that mass struggles and their purposes concern the interests of the people and are in the hands of the people rather than belong to the leaders. A struggle is meaningless in the absence of the goal of social transformation,

The people of this country have been affected by the rule of both major parties, which can neither fulfil the aspirations of the people nor be reformed into parties for the people. To create other parties in their place is not an alternative either. People should be made to realise that mass activities that are confined to elections and economic demands are of no benefit. Although it may seem that they can be confined to resolving certain problems that are in the open and to winning certain demands, reality is otherwise. There should be agreement and interest in resolving the fundamental issues.

The national oppression against the Tamil people and imperialist oppression both direct and indirect are not the same. Thus they may be viewed on different planes. But the programme of imperialist hegemony against the two nationalities is fundamentally the same. While there is a situation in which imperialist hegemony is opposed separately from the respective planes, what is opposed and what is to be won are common to both. The struggles of the two nationalities need to be confederated. They should be coordinated and carried out against the common enemy, the terrorist ruling classes locally and imperialism internationally. In the same way, the mass activities to press for economic demands of the workers in the plantation and state sector should be confederated with the struggles of the fisher folk and the peasants.

Also mass activities against the Upper Kotmale hydro power scheme, the Noraicholai and Sampur thermal power schemes, and the proposals for the Weerawila Airport and the super highway could be combined against the main enemy, namely the ruling classes and imperialism.

The confederation of struggles

It will be useless to confine mass struggles to specific demands on specific planes, without basing them on social transformation. They need to be combined. Confederation does not mean reducing the importance of any struggle or altering its aim. While each struggle is carried forward on its plane with vigour and intensity, there is need for coordination between the mass struggles and between the leaderships. The basis of confederation could be independence-consensus-dedication. If there is no coordination between struggles, it will be easy for the ruling class to set one struggle against another. It is well known that the chauvinistic ruling classes of Sri Lanka have succeeded in presenting the Tamil people's struggle for self-determination as one against the Sinhalese and Muslim people. To defeat them, it is necessary to develop cooperation among the struggles, a common line against the common enemy and a common programme. Also, like uniting all forces that could be united in a given mass struggle, there is need for need to confederate different struggles and their leaderships.

To say that there is need for unity in mass struggles does not mean unity with those involved in the activities of the parties of the ruling classes, bogus leftists, opportunists and NGOs. It means that there cannot be unity with forces that are explicitly or implicitly anti-people. It should be understood that when, in the context of the national question, we say that broad-based unity is needed in the struggle against chauvinism, we do not mean unity with those working hand-in-hand with the chauvinistic oppressors. To ensure success of a struggle, one should ensure participation by the vast majority of the masses, maximum possible friendly forces and the smallest possible number of enemies.

Unity, confederation and struggle

Likewise, winning the support of those outside a given struggle by joining in the activities of their struggle will be most effective. Matters should be handled in a way that the support of those outside is not just

moral support but one with commitment. For example, when the support of the Sinhalese to the struggle of the Tamil people takes the form of mutual linking of common struggles, it becomes strong and enduring.

The strongest power against the ruling classes is the power of the people. That power can be built only through mass struggles. Besides, it is the right thing to do to affirm the support of those not associated with the struggle by linking up with their struggles.

There is need for unity within specific struggles and between struggles. That unity should be based on confederation and be democratic. Confederation cannot only be a concept; it should also concern practice and organisational structure.

Marxist Leninists and the Sri Lankan National Question

by

Imayavaramban

1. Marxists and Social Oppression

Marxists hold that the principal contradiction in class society is that between the two main antagonistic classes. Thus, class struggle goes on irrespectively of the existence of other social contradictions. However, other contradictions, including some which are not normally antagonistic, can under some conditions be transformed into antagonistic ones. Those concerning religion, language, race, ethnicity, nations and nationalities, regions, caste and class, especially those between oppressed castes and classes are among such contradictions. To use the terminology of Mao Zedong, they are essentially friendly contradictions. What one should not forget is that a secondary contradiction, including what should have been a friendly contradiction, could develop into the main contradiction that demands to be addressed more urgently than the fundamental contradiction.

It is true that historical enmity has existed between social groups, often based on rivalries of dominant classes. But there is nothing 'natural' or permanent about such hostility, and what is important is that hostility between social groups could be introduced and cultivated in order that dominant elite classes may continue in power, untroubled by the oppressed classes, by diverting their attention away from the class oppression suffered by them. While it is true that not all such contradictions are the creations of the exploiting classes, the ruling elite, whether they be colonial or neo-colonial masters or a local class of masters, do not fail to exploit such contradictions to their advantage. It is only when such contradictions spin out of control and lead to social

instability and disorder that threaten their interests that the masters call for reconciliation and act decisively to prevent further escalation of the conflict. Whether they act fairly or impartially in these matters is another matter, but all action is guided by class interest.

A Marxist's understanding of social contradictions depends very much on their context and their relationship to the principal contradiction. A 'dogmatic Marxist' may take a rigid view of matters and underestimate or even reject the importance of any contradiction other than class contradictions. Marxism cannot be dogmatic; thus a 'dogmatic Marxist' is not a Marxist. While a Marxist takes a principled position in dealing with a social contradiction, that position should be based on objective study and in full awareness of its practical implications. Thus, while there can be clear guidelines, there cannot be predetermined positions for a Marxist to take on the various social contradictions.

The positions that Marx and Lenin took on specific national questions of their times were not rigid. They changed on the basis of their understanding of the issues. Although the principle of national self-determination in itself was not inherent to Marxism, it was Lenin who first proposed it as the right of a nation and thereby unconditionally defended the right of oppressed nations to secede. This principle was readily applicable to countries under colonial or semi-colonial rule and other enslaved nations. Even the nationalism of the elite classes in oppressed nations was seen as deserving the support of Marxists insofar as their struggle was against imperialism.

With most of the colonial countries freeing themselves from colonial rule or other forms of direct domination by imperialism, the old anti-colonial or anti-imperialist nationalism of the bourgeois elite who took control of the state in the liberated country failed to achieve economic independence by developing a national economy compatible with the aspirations of the people. Not only the pro-imperialist puppet regimes that took over the reins of state power from the former masters but even the more patriotic national bourgeois proved incapable of standing up to neo-colonialism and, in course of time, compromised with imperialism. The nationalist slogans that once served to mobilise the masses against imperialism and colonialism either fell by the wayside or got transformed into narrow nationalistic or chauvinistic slogans

targeting fellow ethnic, religious or other social groups rather than persevering in the struggle against imperialism.

The form taken by such narrow nationalism or chauvinism varied from country to country and, in several instances, the seeds for such developments were sown even before political independence from colonial or imperialist domination. What are often readily ignored in nearly all such instances are the class interests that are served by the promotion of agendas of national, ethnic, religious, racial and caste oppression. It is in this context that Marxism-Leninism, or revolutionary Marxism, as opposed to pacifist and opportunist trends within Marxism, had to review and redefine its theoretical position and develop an appropriate practical approach.

Even a cursory view of the positions taken by Marxist Leninist and Maoist communist parties on issues of national, caste, gender and other forms of oppression will show that they stood on the side of the oppressed, defended their right to struggle, and more often than not took up the cause of the oppressed as part of their struggle for social transformation. This stands in stark contrast with the positions taken by the whole range of opportunists, including advocates of peaceful coexistence with imperialism and those who have lost their way along the 'parliamentary path to socialism'.

There persists, however, a tendency, especially among anti-left nationalists and other opponents of Marxism, including NGO 'radicals', to argue that Marxism, because of its emphasis on class struggle is either insensitive to other contradictions or incapable of appreciating their significance. Postmodernism come to their rescue with arguments to dismiss Marxism as a 'grand narrative' and thus promote all manner of 'meta narratives' that serve to divide the forces that for their liberation need to unite against imperialism and its allies. Betrayal of the oppressed nationalities and other oppressed communities by the opportunists who call themselves communists or socialists are regularly cited by the opponents of Marxism to attack genuine Marxists who have consistently defended the oppressed and unconditionally denounced such betrayals. An examination of the conduct of the enemies of Marxism will show that they act not out of ignorance but out of mischief, knowing very well the difference between genuine Marxist Leninists and the opportunists.

It is against this background that the Marxist position on national oppression is reviewed here, in general; and in the context of the Sri Lankan national question, the contribution of Marxist Leninists to advancing the principle of self-determination, their position on other forms of social oppression, including their leading role in the mass struggle against caste oppression.

2. Marxists, National Struggles and Self-Determination

The nation state is a product of capitalism and there is nothing natural or fundamental about national identity. Nevertheless, national identity exists and so does nationalism. When bourgeois oppression takes the form of national oppression, nationalism is reinforced on either side of the conflict. Thus nationalism is a force to reckon, and cannot be wished away. However, Marxists distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressor and the nationalism of the oppressed. Recognition of right of a nation to self-determination helped Marxists to take an uncompromising position in all struggles for national liberation in the colonial era.

The emergence of chauvinism and narrow nationalism in the post-colonial period led to national oppression and struggle involving nationalities which were themselves subject to neo-colonialism. The issues were further complicated by the involvement of imperialism and other emerging forces of hegemony. Marxists saw the contradiction as a friendly contradiction but recognised the risk of the contradiction developing into an antagonistic one. Even the parliamentary left in most situations took a principled stand in support of the rights of minority ethnic groups and nationalities. With the national question assuming greater significance in electoral politics, opportunism got the better of principled politics, and the parliamentary left acted in very much the same way that social democrats and liberals would have, and electoral considerations increasingly dictated the stand taken on issues of nation and other forms of oppression, at times including class oppression.

It was difficult for the opportunist left to openly abandon principles of equality and social justice. Thus, while pretending to uphold principles of equality between different nationalities and ethnic groups, in practice they distanced themselves from just struggles, when association with

them was likely to be an electoral disadvantage. At times, they went to the extent of opposing such struggles in the pretext of denouncing violence and terrorism or opposing sectarianism, narrow nationalism and separatism. While they denounced chauvinism, their tone was increasingly conciliatory towards the chauvinists, for fear of being seen to be 'unpatriotic'. Their condemnation of sectarian violence against oppressed minorities was conditioned by the public mood and was vociferous only when their political survival was itself under threat. Such behaviour of the parliamentary left was the consequence or the lack of will to take the initiative in launching and leading mass struggles.

Electoral opportunism also meant that the parliamentary left increasingly sought to appear patriotic, at times even more patriotic than the nationalists, so that it was anathema for them to endorse the right of minority nationalities to national self-determination, including the right to secession as stated unequivocally by Lenin.

The right to self-determination is not something that could be applied blindly, and cannot be imposed on a nationality or an ethnic group. A nationality struggles for its right to self-determination or to secede only when it feels that its identity or its very existence is under threat. Intervention by a Marxist party should be aimed at removing the threat, and that is best achieved by supporting the right to self-determination. The opportunist left sees the demand for secession as the issue rather than the threat faced by the nationality. The respective stands taken on the one hand by the various Marxist-Leninist and Maoist communist organisations in India and that by the two parliamentary communist parties on the other on liberation struggles in Kashmir and in the northeast of India will amply illustrate the difference between the revolutionary left and parliamentary opportunism.

Imperialism and reactionary forces too have taken up the cause of the right to self-determination and encouraged secession in several countries. Carving out a white state from South Africa was a serious consideration on the eve of the success of the struggle against the white racist state. Secession of Katanga from the Congo in the early 1960s was an imperialist backed project which was abandoned when the goal of ridding the Congo of an anti-imperialist regime was achieved. Examples of cynical manipulation of nationalist sentiments to achieve imperialist goals are many and include that of the Albanian nationality in the Kosovo Province of Serbia, the Kurds of Iraq (but not

the far more harshly oppressed Kurds of southern Turkey) and, not long ago, Eritrea under Ethiopian domination.

To a Marxist Leninist the national cause is not an end in itself and, therefore, however progressive and anti-imperialist a national liberation struggle may be, one's approach to the national question will not be the same as that of a nationalist. The starting points differ and convergence of interests is confined to the just cause of defending the right of a people to determine their mode of existence free from external oppression and domination. Under no circumstance can a Marxist Leninist turn a blind eye to social oppression internal to a nationality. Thus, unconditional support for the liberation struggle of an oppressed nationality does not stop a Marxist Leninist from fighting for social justice within that nationality.

The claim by some postmodernists and nationalists that Marxism, because of its emphasis on class struggle, often to the exclusion of all other forms of social oppression, is not capable of coming to terms with the national struggle is not just incorrect, but also mischievous. Such claims, aimed at distorting the Marxist Leninist position on the national struggle, are based on a selective patchwork of information relating to conduct of the parliamentary left and the occasional error committed by genuine Marxist Leninists.

The struggle of each oppressed nationality has been complex and continuously evolving, with no two struggles alike, and differences further accentuated by foreign intervention driven by hegemonic intentions in several instances. Thus there cannot be a universal Marxist Leninist position on the national question in the post colonial context.

Imperialism meddles in the national question in the pretext of defending the human and fundamental rights of oppressed nationalities when it wants to stage a 'regime change'. It meddles in the pretext of 'combating terrorism' when it chooses to support an oppressive chauvinistic regime. In either event, it is through defending the rights of the oppressed nationalities and by working towards solutions based on the right to self-determination that Marxist Leninists can defeat imperialist intentions and achieve unity among the nationalities.

Marxist Leninist endorsement of the right to self-determination is not based on seeing secession as the key to solving any national question.

On the contrary, Marxist Leninists see the right to self-determination as the most effective means of ensuring unity among nationalities of a country subject to imperialist oppression. The support and sympathy of Turkish Marxist Leninists to the liberation struggle of the Kurdish people and of the Marxist Leninists of the Philippines to the Moro national struggle are illustrative of the principled position taken by Marxist Leninists.

The basic desire of Marxist Leninists to avert secession in countries in the Third World arises from a view of the contradictions between the nationalities as friendly, and on their desire for solidarity among the oppressed people in their struggle against their principal enemy. The Marxist Leninist approach to the national question thus emphasises the peaceful resolution of the differences, based on the principle of the right to self-determination. That does not prevent a Marxist Leninists from taking a principled stand on national oppression and the struggle for liberation. Marxist Leninists are obliged to support liberation struggles, even with a declared secessionist goal, not in the interest of secession *per se*, but to defend the rights of the oppressed.

It is important to recognise that the Marxist Leninist position on a national question is neither determined *a priori* nor developed in the abstract, but emerges in the course of social practice and in the context of objective conditions obtaining locally as well as internationally. Marxist Leninist support for liberation struggles is, contrary to what opponents of Marxism say, not despite the emphasis on class struggle but based on an understanding of the relationship between national and class oppression.

Let us examine against this background the position taken by the left in Sri Lanka on various issued relating to the national question, in the context of the emergence of nationalism based on ethnic identity as a major political force.

3. Marxists and the National Question in Sri Lanka

Unlike several Asian countries under colonial rule, Sri Lanka did not have a national liberation struggle. The elite classes were more interested in sharing the spoils of colonial exploitation with the British colonial masters than in the overthrow of colonial rule. But ethnic

consciousness was strong among the different social groups as were regional interests.

Sinhala Buddhist ideology was designed to serve the interests of the emergent Sinhala capitalist classes and the land-owning classes, both with feudal origins and a record of collaboration with the colonialists. The hostility of the Sinhala Buddhist elite towards the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th century carefully avoided confrontation with the colonial rulers and the clash with the Muslims in 1915 had little anti-colonial content. Hostility towards the two major Tamil ethnic groups, namely the Hill Country Tamils and those of the North and East was slower to arrive. The emergent Sinhala national identity itself was rife with contradictions so that at the time of the anti-Muslim violence, the leadership of the Salagama caste group (now with a strong Sinhala Buddhist identity and very much under Sinhala chauvinistic influence) emphatically distanced itself from the Sinhala nationality, and today's Sinhala Catholic population along the coastline north of Colombo was then Tamil speaking. Differences ran deep between the elitist leadership of the Hill Country Sinhalese and that of the Low Country Sinhalese, and caste was a major political factor overriding ethnic considerations.

Tamil national identity was also slow to emerge and developed very much in response to an aggressive form of Sinhala nationalism. The emergent Tamil nationalism was represented by an elite group belonging to the high castes of Jaffna, and failed to address the concerns of the Tamils of other regions as well as the oppressed castes and classes. Thus the emergence Tamil as well as Sinhala national identities as political forces was initially based on the interests of the respective elite groups within the communities and their 'democratisation' was consequent upon the development of electoral politics.

Class interests continued to override nationalism, even after the emergence of Sinhala and Tamil identities as political forces. The left, which was at least nominally committed to a revolutionary transformation of society, took a principled stand on major political issues. When DS Senanayake proposed colonisation schemes for the mass settlement of landless Sinhalese peasants in the predominantly Tamil and Muslim Eastern Province, the strongest protest was voiced by the then Trotskyite leader Philip Gunawardana who charged that the

move was aimed at protecting the interests of the landed gentry in the south from demands for land reform.

In 1948, the entire parliamentary left voted against the Citizenship Act that disenfranchised the Hill Country Tamils, whereas a sizeable section of the Tamil and Muslim MPs voted for the Act. But there was a significant shift in the position of the left when the Trotskyite Philip Gunawardana formed an electoral alliance with the Sinhala nationalist SLFP led by SWRD Bandaranayake. The Official Language Act of 1956 which made Sinhala the sole official language of the country was, nevertheless, resolutely opposed by the Trotskyite LSSP and the Communist Party (CP).

The degeneration of the leadership of the LSSP and the CP was a direct result of the decision to take the parliamentary road to socialism. What happened to the LSSP and the CP was not significantly different from what had happened to the parliamentary left elsewhere; and opportunist politics designed to win the largest possible number of parliamentary seats meant not only the abandoning of the defence of the ethnic minorities against chauvinism, but also letting down the working class and abandoning class struggle.

Thus, if the conduct of the parliamentary left is evidence that emphasis on class conflict makes Marxism incapable of coming to grips with the national question, then that evidence could equally be used to claim that for some other conceivable reason Marxism is incapable of coming to grips class struggle. Such is the absurdity of conclusions about Marxism based on the conduct of an opportunist left.

It was after the split in the international communist movement in the early 1960s that the opportunists in the CP, guided by the revisionist Communist Party of the Soviet Union, openly took the parliamentary path and within a few years formed an alliance with the SLFP, the party of the Sinhala national bourgeois class at the time. The genuine left parted company with the opportunists in 1964 to function as a Marxist Leninist communist party, and it would be appropriate to examine the conduct of the Marxist Leninist tradition to draw conclusions about Marxist attitude not only towards nationalism but also towards other forms of social oppression. It should be said in fairness to certain sections of the LSSP which broke off with the LSSP in 1964 to form the LSSP-R in 1964 and the Nava Sama Samaja Party in the early 1970s, that they retained their principled stand on the rights of the Tamil

speaking people, and the NSSP, in contrast to the traditional Trotskyite position on the national question recognised the Tamils as a nation and defended the right of the Tamils to self-determination

Marxist Leninists have been consistent in their opposition all acts of discrimination against ethnic minorities including the Sirima-Shastri pact of 1965 on the 'repatriation' of the already disenfranchised Hill Country Tamils without consideration for the wishes of the Hill Country Tamils; the notorious practice of 'standardisation' that discriminated against Tamils in university admissions; and the republican constitution of 1972 which discriminated against ethnic minorities and granted a special status to Buddhism. Despite the principled position of the Marxist Leninists, they, together with the opportunist left, were branded as enemies by Tamil nationalist parliamentary leaders as well as their militant successors and denounced as traitors to the Tamil cause.

The proposal of a federal structure for Sri Lanka was first made in 1938 in anticipation of threats that may be faced by ethnic minorities, by Leonard Woolfe, the well known author of 'Village in the Jungle' and former senior civil servant in the island who was subsequently an active member of the Fabian Society. The Communist Party was early to recognise the Tamils as a nationality and prescribe regional autonomy for them. Although some critics claim that the CP did this without much understanding of the national question, and was merely taking the line adopted by the Soviet Union, the fact remains that the CP and the LSSP recognised the need for equal treatment of all ethnic groups. Significantly, the CP recognised Tamils as a distinct nationality while the LSSP preferred to refer to Tamils as a minority.

The Federal Party (FP) was founded in 1949 by dissenters in the Tamil Congress which they accused of betraying the Hill Country Tamils in supporting legislation that disenfranchised them in 1948 which claimed to speak for the entire Tamil speaking population of the island, actually had representation only among the Tamils of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Although the FP had as one of its main goals the achievement of a federal state for the Tamils of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, it never launched struggles for that purpose. Its main focus was the language issue and, despite its protests about planned Sinhala settlements in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, no campaign was launched against moves by the state to alter the ethnic balance in these provinces in favour of the Sinhala

nationality. The FP, like its predecessor the Tamil Congress, relied on using its parliamentary strength to make deals with one or the other of the two main Sinhala nationalist parties that came to power. Its reluctance to collaborate with the left parties was largely because of the Tamil elite class interests that it chose to serve.

It was only in 1976, after the bankruptcy of the parliamentary politics of the FP was exposed that the FP allied with its weaker Tamil nationalist rivals to found the Tamil United Left Front (TULF), whose objective was the establishment of a separate state of Tamil Eelam. The Marxist Leninists were of the view that the call for secession was merely a ploy to win seats at the parliamentary elections and not a serious move towards a separate state, which proved to be the case soon after the elections. The TULF had made a deal with the UNP whereby it would persuade Tamils in the South to support the UNP and in return the UNP when in government will address the main grievances of the Tamils. The TULF was badly let down by the UNP government; and the District Councils set up in 1980 by the UNP government proved to have less authority than a municipal council. The period since 1977 was one of national oppression against the Tamils culminating in the pogrom of July 1983 and the TULF losing all credibility with the Tamils.

The Tamil militant youth movements were essentially an offshoot of the TULF, and with the impotence of the TULF becoming increasingly clear the youth movements became more assertive and even gained mass support at the expense of the TULF. Although Tamil militancy was inspired by the mass struggle against untouchability led by the Marxist Leninists in the 1960s, what the Tamil militants failed to learn from that mass struggle was the principle of relying on the masses. Some of the avoidable tragedies of the liberation struggle of the Tamils could be traced to its reliance on foreign support and military prowess than on the masses and a broad-based mass struggle.

It is true that the Marxist Leninists and other genuine left forces failed to win over a sizeable section of the Tamil population and in fact lost ground to the Tamil militants in some of their earlier strongholds. Several critics have attributed this to the failure of the left to identify itself with the Tamil national struggle. Others claim that this was because of the impression that the left as a whole had compromised itself with the Sinhala nationalists. While there is some substance to both explanations, the truth is somewhat more complex.

Unlike in the South, where the left parties with Trotskyite beginnings dominated left politics, in the North, it was the Communist Party that dominated the left movement. It was active in the trade union movement and took up the cause of those oppressed by caste. This was to its disadvantage in electoral politics. However, following the split in the CP in 1964, the Marxist Leninists developed into the strongest left group in the North owing to their mass political work, which attracted the progressive elements across caste barriers, and enabled the Marxist Leninists to launch and lead an effective campaign against untouchability in 1966.

Tamil nationalist leadership was traditionally in the hands of the upper caste elite of the North, and the militant youth movements that succeeded the parliamentary leadership was at best petit bourgeois in its outlook. The Marxist Leninists emerging from unfortunate splits in their party in the 1970s were placed at a disadvantage with anti-Tamil discrimination and state sponsored violence against the Tamils pushing the youth towards strongly nationalistic positions. The New Democratic Party (NDP), which by the early 1980s was the main Marxist Leninist party in the North and East and in the Hill Country was not antagonistic towards the youth movements, but was constructively critical of the errors in the line taken by the movements. The movements were specifically warned against excessive reliance on arms, against their harsh treatment of rivals including internecine killings, against dependence on foreign powers, and about the dangers of the command style of politics that denied the Tamil masses an active role in their struggle against chauvinistic oppression.

The Marxist Leninists also pointed out the fallacy of the Tamil nationalist claim of representing the entire Tamil speaking people, including Muslims and the Hill Country Tamils. The New Democratic Party, which by the early 1980s was the main Marxist Leninist party in the North and East and in the Hill Country, besides endorsing Muslim and Hill Country Tamil identity as distinct from that of the Tamils of the North East, recognised their political emergence as nationalities in their own right and was the first to advocate the right of these nationalities and other national minorities to self-determination, by presenting the principle of self-determination in its true spirit by not restricting the right to it to nationalities in a position to exercise the right to secession.

None of these could have endeared the Marxist Leninists to the Tamil nationalists, and the policy of isolating the left, and in particular the Marxist Leninists, initiated by the Tamil Congress and the Federal Party continued under the militant nationalists. Democratic expression of views has by and large been denied to the people of the North East, especially the Tamils and the Muslims, by the state and its armed forces as well as by the Tamil militants, without exception. The NDP survived this climate of denial of free political activity by the state and rival Tamil militant organisations, not by compromising its stand on the national and other forms of oppression but by holding on to its principles.

The Marxist Leninists may have erred tactically, but they did not err ideologically or in their strategy based on a prolonged mass struggle against local reaction and foreign domination. Those who believe that the Marxist Leninists would have been more successful by adopting a Tamil nationalist identity or endorsing the secessionist agenda were proven wrong by the fate that befell the National Liberation Front of Tamileelam (NLFT) and its breakaway People's Liberation Front of Tamileelam (PLFT). Both organisations had in significant number young men who were once members or sympathisers of Marxist Leninist parties or groups. But they failed to be credible as advocates of the Tamil nationalist cause, and got thrown into political wilderness. Some Tamil nationalist militant organisations appeared to be left or Marxist oriented, but when it came to the crunch their rivalry with the LTTE got the better of their leftist politics and they ended up as pawns in the hands of a foreign country.

Another useful case worth a mention here is the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, whose concessions to Sinhala nationalism washed away whatever Marxist pretences that remained in it and made it a most vicious force of Sinhala nationalism.

Those who complain that Marxist Leninists overly emphasise class struggle and fail to respond adequately to other contradictions, point to their failure to adopt the Tamil secessionist cause, but do not give due credit for the Marxist Leninist initiative in the struggle against caste oppression. What the critics fail to, or refuse to, appreciate is the fact that the Marxist Leninists are consistent in standing up for the rights of any oppressed community irrespective of who the oppressor is.

Tamil nationalists are still reluctant to recognise Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as distinct nationalities, although a few have turned a full 180 degrees to talk about a Muslim nation in the East as opposed to a Muslim nationality spread across the whole island, and side with Muslim opportunists who seek to drive a wedge between the Muslims of the East and the vast majority of the Muslims living amid the Sinhalese. The need to address aspects of the national question concerning the Muslims and the Hill Country Tamils based on the principle of self-determination, was urged by the NDP more than a decade ago and its criticism of the opportunist politics of the leadership of the two nationalities has been vindicated by the conduct of the leaders in recent times and the increasing disillusionment of the masses with them.

What are also forgotten are the warnings issued by the NDP about serious shortcomings of the Tamil militant movements, which turned out to be prophetic, especially the one concerning foreign meddling in the national question. Another matter to which the NDP has consistently drawn attention is the trust placed on the neutrality of the so called 'international community'. The Tamil national movement has historically refrained from taking an anti-imperialist position and has failed to take the side of victims of imperialist aggression. It seems that the struggle against national oppression has to learn several more first hand lessons before they heed the warnings against imperialist intentions.

4. Concluding Remarks

It should be clear from the foregoing that what has been shown as a shortcoming of Marxism and Marxists in dealing with the national question and the rights of oppressed ethnic minorities is actually that of the parliamentary path and opportunist politics.

Marxist Leninists in Sri Lanka have not pandered to narrow nationalism for short term political gain. While upholding class contradiction as fundamental, they have both nationally and internationally been sensitive to issues of social oppression; and able to recognise the development of a secondary contradiction into the main contradiction in a given situation and to respond to it appropriately.

This is not to claim that Marxist Leninists have always assessed the situation correctly and acted wisely. What is significant is that they have always been honest, based their position on the objective reality as perceived by them, been willing to rectify errors, and resisted opportunism. Even where they have in the short term lost mass support owing to their principled position during critical periods of national oppression and struggle, they have made a valuable contribution by endorsing the positive aspects of struggle while constructively criticising aspects that harm the interests of the masses.

The challenge facing the NDP and other Marxist Leninists in Sri Lanka is big. They have an important role to play in opposing the war, defending the struggle against national oppression, and securing the rights of all nationalities and national minorities through the exercise of the right to self-determination, while ensuring that imperialism and forces of regional hegemony do not take advantage of the crisis to secure control over the whole country. They also have the duty of warning all nationalities of the impending fascist threat and brutal suppression of democratic and fundamental rights of the people in the pretext of combating terrorism.

Only through the unity of the genuine left with the broadest possible alliance of progressive and genuinely patriotic forces will it be possible to force the government and its allies on the one hand and the LTTE on the other to end the war and enter into meaningful negotiations to find a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the national question. It is only such an alliance that will be able to restore democracy and fundamental rights to the whole country and reverse the trend of imperialist and hegemonic encroachment into the sovereignty of the country.

Blue Gold

The Global Water Crisis and
the Commodification of the World's Water Supply

Maude Barlow

(National chairperson, council of Canadians;
Chair, IFG Committee on the globalisation of Water)

We'd like to believe there's an infinite supply of water on the planet. But the assumption is tragically false. Available fresh water amounts to less than one half of one percent of all the water on earth. The rest is sea water or is frozen in the polar ice. Fresh water is renewable only by rainfall, at the rate of 40 000 to 50 000 cubic kilometres per year. Due to intensive urbanisation, deforestation, water diversion and industrial farming, however, with the drying of the earth's surface, even this small finite source of fresh water is disappearing; if present trends persist, the water in all river basins on every continent could steadily be depleted.

Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, more than twice the rate of human population growth. According to the United Nations, more than one billion people on earth already lack access to fresh drinking water. If current trends persist, by 2025, the demand for water is expected to rise to 56% above the amount that is currently available.

As the water crisis intensifies, governments under pressure from transnational corporations are advocating a radical solution: privatisation, commodification and mass diversion of water. Proponents say that such a system is the only way to distribute water to the world's thirsty. However, experience shows that selling water in the open market does not address the needs of the poor, thirsty people. On the contrary, privatised water is delivered to those who can pay for it, such as wealthy cities and individuals and water-intensive industries, like

agriculture and high-tech. As one resident of the high desert in New Mexico observed after his community's water had been diverted for use by the high-tech industry: "Water flows uphill to money".

The push to commodify water comes at a time when the social, political and economic impacts of water scarcity are rapidly becoming a destabilising force, with water-related conflicts springing up around the globe. For example, Malaya, which supplies about half of Singapore's water, threatened to cut off that supply in 1997 after Singapore criticised its government policies. In Africa, relations between Botswana and Namibia have been severely strained by Namibian plans to construct a pipeline to divert water from the shared Okavango River to eastern Namibia.

The former Mayor of Mexico City predicts a war in the Mexican Valley in the foreseeable future if a solution to his city's water crisis is not found soon. Much has been written about the potential for water wars in the Middle East, where water resources are severely limited. The late King Hussain of Jordan once said that the only thing that he would go to war with Israel over was water, because Israel controls Jordan's water supply.

Meanwhile, the future of one of earth's most vital resources is being determined by those who profit from its overuse and abuse. A handful of transnational corporations, backed by the World Bank, are aggressively taking over the management of public water services in developing countries, dramatically raising the price of water to the local residents and profiting from the Third World's desperate search for solutions to the water crisis. The corporate agenda is clear: water should be treated like any other tradable good, with its use determined by the market principle.

At the same time, governments are signing away their control over domestic water supplies by participating in trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): its proposed successor, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These global trade institutions effectively give transnational corporations unprecedented access to the water of signatory countries.

Already corporations have started to sue governments in order to gain access to domestic water sources. For example, Sun Belt, a

California company, is suing the Government of Canada under NAFTA because British Columbia (B.C.) banned water exports several years ago. The company claims that B.C.'s law violates several NAFTA-based investor rights and therefore is claiming \$10 billion in compensation for lost profits.

With the protection of these international trade agreements, companies are setting their sights on the mass transport of bulk water by diversion and super-tanker. Several companies are developing technology whereby large quantities of water would be loaded into huge sealed bags and towed across the ocean for sale. Selling water to the highest bidder will only exacerbate the worst impacts of the world water crisis.

A number of key research and environmental organisations such as the Worldwatch Institute, World Resources Institute and the United Nations Environment Programme have been sounding the alarm for well over a decade. If water usage continues to increase at the current rates, the results will be devastating for the earth and its inhabitants. Groups such as the International Rivers Network, Greenpeace, Clean Waters Network, Sierra Club and Friends of the World International, along with thousands of community groups around the world are fighting the construction of new dams, reclaiming damaged rivers and wetlands, confronting industry over contamination of water systems, and protecting whales and other aquatic species from hunting and over-fishing. In a number of countries, experts have come up with some exciting and creative solutions to these problems. This work is crucial, yet efforts need to be coordinated and understood in the broader context of economic globalisation and its role in promoting privatisation and commodification.

Who owns water? Should anyone? Should it be privatised? What rights do transnational corporations have to buy water systems? Should it be traded as a commodity in the open market? What laws do we need to protect water? What is the role of government? How do those in the water-rich countries share with those in the water-poor countries? Who is the custodian for nature's livelihood? How do ordinary citizens become involved in the process?

The analysis and recommendations in this report are based on the principle that water is part of earth's heritage, and must be preserved in the public domain for all time and protected by strong local, national

and international law. At stake is the whole notion of the “commons”, the idea that through our public institutions we recognise a shared human and natural heritage to be preserved for future generations. Local communities must be watchdogs of our waterways and must establish principles that oversee the use of this precious resource.

Instead of allowing this vital resource to become a commodity sold to the highest bidder, we believe that access to clean water for basic needs is a fundamental human right. Each generation must ensure that the abundance and quality of water is not diminished as a result of its activities. Great efforts must be made to restore the health of aquatic ecosystems that have already been degraded as well as to protect others from harm.

Above all we need to radically restructure our societies and lifestyles in order to reverse the depletion of our fresh water and to learn to live within the watershed ecosystems that were created to sustain life. We must abandon the specious notion that we can abuse the world's resources because, somehow, technology will come to our rescue. There is no technological “fix” for a planet depleted of water.

[Reproduced with kind permission from *Thirst for Profit*, compiled by *Puthiya Kalaccharam, Chennai 600083*]

NDP Diary

Appeal by the Central Committee of the NDP

25th March 2007

On the 14th and 15th of February 2007, police officers from the Terrorist Investigation Department (TID) arrested five important members of the New Democratic Party in the Hill Country Region of the Party, namely V Mahendran (32 years, Teacher, N/Halgranoya), R Jeyaseelan (30 years, Teacher, N/Halgranoya), S Sugeshanan (30 years, Teacher, N/Halgranoya), S Mohanraj (26 years, Student, N/Halgranoya), N Krishnapriyan (23 years, Rozella, Student, Open University)

The above five comrades have been arrested under Emergency Regulations No. 7 (Prevention and Prohibition of Terrorism and Specified Terrorism Activities) of 6th December 2006. They have not been produced in Courts before a Magistrate and continue to be detained in the Boosa Detention Camp on the pretext of continuing with the inquiries.

They are young comrades who have been important members of the New Democratic Party and at the lead in building the Party, its Youth Organisation, Trade Union and Teacher's Organisation in the Hill Country. These comrades were at the forefront of mass struggles carried forward by the New Democratic Party in the Hill Country.

They played a leading role in the People's Campaign against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project, in building the New Democratic Proletarian Union as the alternative trade union movement among the plantation workers, in the struggle of the plantation workers for higher wages, and in the campaign against the Sedhu Samudram Canal Project. They have also actively campaigned against the war and for a political solution and for unity among the Tamil and Sinhalese people.

To associate such comrades with "terrorism" and keep them under detention is political victimisation. There is suspicion that it is the reactionary forces that are unable to bear the growth of the Party as an

alternative political force in the Hill Country amid severe pressures who are behind these arrests and detention.

Of our five comrades from ordinary working class families who have served the Party, three are teachers and two are students. The Party is taking steps to secure their release through public pressure and through legal action. The Party also appeals to the left and democratic forces to join in the campaign based on the demand that they should be produced in court for judicial inquiry or be released.

The Party calls upon entire left and democratic forces to come forward to launch a people's campaign demanding the withdrawal of the Emergency Regulations relating to the Prevention and Prohibition of Terrorism and Specified Terrorism Activities that are an obstacle and a threat to carrying out freely democratic, human rights, trade union and political activities, under the critical conditions that prevail; and calls upon Marxist Leninist parties, and left and democratic forces abroad to bring the necessary pressure to that effect upon the Sri Lankan Government in order to secure the release of the five Party comrades as well as other political, trade union and media activists.

The Party also appeals to comrades and friends, the socially concerned individuals and organisations, and well wishers to provide financial support to the best of their ability in order to take the necessary legal action for the release of our party comrades and to provide essential financial help to the families of the detained comrades.

Thanking you,

SK Senthivel, General Secretary

E Thambiah, Attorney-at-Law, National Organiser

Bank Details for Financial Contributions:

**S Thevarajah
a/c Number 452868
Bank of Ceylon
Super Market Branch
Colombo 11**

Statement addressing Leaders of Political Parties, Trade Unions and Mass Organisations, and the Media

NDP Calls for the Release of Arrested and Detained Members

19th February 2007

Call for the Release of Our Party Members Arrested and Detained

V Mahendran (Teacher, Ragala)
R Jeyaseelan (Teacher, Ragala)
S Sugeshanan (Teacher, Ragala)
S Mohanraj (Student, Ragala)
N Krishnapriyan (Student, Rozella)

We would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the above said members of our party were arrested at their residences on the 14th and 15th of February by police officers and detained at the TID Headquarters. At the same time our party members, our trade union (Proletarian New Democratic Union) members, and supporters are harassed and threatened by persons claiming themselves to be CID officers. Their houses are being searched and checked.

We understand that the above arrests and other acts of harassment are done on alleged connections between our above said members and Mr Nihal Serasinghe, one of the three media persons who were arrested recently in Colombo.

In fact, Mr Serasinghe is married to a Tamil lady in Ragala, has attended our public meetings and is a graphic designer by profession. He is known to be a left activist and participates in mass agitations against war, for democracy and human rights. We know him on these bases, and our said members would have had connections with him on the above premises. We are confident that there cannot be any alleged secret or nefarious connection between our said members and Nihal Serasinghe.

Our party is a Marxist Leninist party which is working for the past twenty-eight years and never accepted terrorism as a political programme. While opposing military activities and war, we have right through been emphasising and reiterating a political solution for the national question through peaceful negotiation. We advocate autonomy for the Tamil and oppressed nationalities within the framework of a

united Sri Lanka and at the same time agitate and raise our voice for the rights of the working class and peasants. Despite differences and assertion of its separate identity, our party has always worked closely with the left and democratic forces for the common cause of winning and safeguarding the rights of the people.

Under these circumstances, we wish to state that our said members have been arrested and detained unlawfully, unjustly and unreasonably on the basis of fabricated and wrong information, and that we suspect that certain anti-social and reactionary forces which cannot stomach our progress in political and trade union activities in the Hill Country are behind these actions against us.

In this regard, we have already written to the President on 15th February 2007 and to the Secretary of Defence on 19th February 2007, and have urged them to expedite the questioning of our said members and release them as soon as possible.

Letter of Protest

NDP Protests the Abuse of the Name of the Party

12th March 2007

Hon. Karu Jayasuriya MP

Dear Sir,

Protesting your use of the name New Democratic Party, the name of our party

This is to inform you that our part doth hereby mark its protest of your use of the name New Democratic Party.

We understand that the rebel or breakaway group of the United National Party under your leadership is using our party's name, New Democratic Party to identify itself.

You may be aware that our party is a Marxist-Leninist party which has a history of 28 years, and recalls to your memory that, on your invitation to our party, we had discussions with you when you were in the United National Party.

Our party contested General, Provincial Council and Local Government Elections under independent lists and under the lists of the Democratic Left Front under the leadership of Comrade Vasudeva Nanayakkara, and the New Left Front.

Our party contested Provincial Council Elections in 1993 under an independent list in Nuwara Eliya.

You may be aware that we were a founder, constituent member of the New Left Front, and contested under the symbol of the Table in Colombo as well as in Nuwara Eliya in 1999 for the Provincial Councils. In 2000 and 2001, we contested the Parliamentary Elections in Jaffna, Colombo and Nuwara Eliya under the symbol of the Clock, of the Democratic Left Front led by Comrade Vasudeva Nanayakkara.

We contested the Provincial Council Elections in 2004 under an independent list. In 2005, we contested in Nuwara Eliya and Walapane Pradeshiya Sabha as independent groups, and secured a seat in the Walapane Pradeshiya Sabha. Accordingly, Mr Shanmugam Panneerselvam is representing us in the said Pradeshiya Sabha.

Our Party is working among plantation workers through a trade union named the Proletarian New Democratic Union.

We are publishing *Puthiya Poomi*, a Tamil monthly, and *New Democracy*, an English quarterly magazine.

We are a party that is seriously and continuously involved in political activities. Please note that we named the party the New Democratic Party since we believe in the New Democratic Revolution.

Therefore please desist from using the said name New Democratic Party.

Thanking you,

yours faithfully,

SK Senthivel, General Secretary

E Thambiah, Attorney-at-Law, National Organiser

[Note: Hon. Karu Jayasuriya has since assured the NDP that the name of the Party will not be abused.]

Sri Lankan Events

Left Parties and Groups Protest against the Deteriorating National Situation

[The following is the text of a letter sent by concerned organisations and individuals to the His Excellency the President on 13th March 2007.]

13th March 2007

No. 17 Barrack Lane
Colombo 2
13.03.2007

His Excellency, the President
Janadhipathi Mandiraya
Colombo

Your Excellency,

We wish to bring to your notice the grave threat to the lives of numerous members of political parties and organisations, human rights groups, trade unions, media institutions, media professionals and artistes that has arisen from the harsh political and militaristic conditions now prevailing in the country. We the undersigned, urge you to give your most serious attention to this emerging situation.

1. You have attained office by means of an alliance with militaristic and ultra-nationalistic forces that advocate the abrogation of the 2002 Cease-Fire Agreement and a militarist solution to the ethnic conflict. The dependence on such an alliance whose major partners comprise the JVP and the Jathika Hela Urumaya is propelling the government towards a full-scale military course of action, as a result of which the entire Sri Lankan society is being converted to a militaristic and racist mindset. In consequence, those sectors of society that exercise their democratic right and employ civic actions and means to advocate a peaceful political settlement of the ethnic problem, including political

parties, mass organisations, women's organisations, trade unions and media institutions are now being subjected to extreme pressure in complete violation of their fundamental and democratic rights as citizens. It is imperative that, as head of state, Your Excellency should intervene to urgently bring this worsening situation under control.

2. The severely repressive laws currently being enforced by your government in pursuit of the above-mentioned strategy are only serving to worsen the current situation. These forces within your government are undemocratically attempting to strengthen their position in order to achieve their fascist objectives.

3. We wish to point out that the National Movement Against Terrorism, an organisation like the Jathika Hela Urumaya, which is now represented in Your Excellency's Cabinet of Ministers, is carrying out a massive hate campaign, targeting all those sections of Sri Lankan society that are opposed to war and stand for a peaceful political settlement. An example of this dangerous hate campaign is the poster put up throughout Colombo carrying the slogan: "Peace Tigers - Media Tigers - Leftist Tigers - identify them – eliminate them – save the country". Attempts by some sections to vilify as "Tigers" those sectors and groups that have a view point that is different to theirs can only be described as a terrorist tactic to whip up public animosity against those sectors and groups and activists. The irrational statement made in the *Ravaya* newspaper of Friday 18th by a member of Your Excellency's Cabinet of Minister, namely JHU parliamentarian Patali Champika Ranavaka, has shocked all law-abiding and democracy-upholding citizens in the country. We draw Your Excellency's attention to the relevant extract from this interview.

"... Yes! People are dying. What can be done about that? Are you asking us to spare them? They are traitors to the race"

What is the attitude of your Government and Cabinet to this destructive and hateful statement by a Minister who yet remains a Cabinet member? Do we interpret the failure of your Cabinet spokespersons to comment on this statement as an indication that Your Excellency's Cabinet and Government as a whole collectively endorse this statement and share the views of this Minister? This is evidence that Your Excellency's Government is becoming a regime of fascist and racist nature.

This vilification as “Tigers” or as “Tiger supporters” is becoming a simplistic way of silencing your political opponents. This style of repression is reminiscent of the infamous repressive campaign in the USA in the 1950s by United States Senator Joseph McCarthy who targeted people by labelling as ‘communist’ and ‘communist sympathisers’. A large number of Americans including senators, artistes, lawyers, senior military officers became victims of this McCarthyist terrorism. The McCarthyist rampage ended only when the US President was also branded a ‘communist’.

The prevailing situation in Sri Lanka is similar to the McCarthy regime. Those artistes, trade unionists, media professionals, political parties and non-governmental organisations opposed to the war policy are being branded today as “Tigers” by the Jathika Hela Urumaya, the JVP and Government Ministers and other Government politicians.

Sripathi Sooriyarachchi and Mangala Samaraweera who left Your Excellency’s Government are also being labelled as “Tiger sympathisers”. Likewise, according to the counter charges made by Mr Sooriyarachchi, Your Excellency, the President of the country, are being branded as a “Tiger sympathiser”. The unofficial media organ of the JVP, the ‘Lanka’ newspaper, has, in recent headline critical of the admission into the Government of a group of UNP defectors, referred to “Velupillai Ranil” and “Velupillai Mahinda”.

The use of this tactic of branding as a “Tiger” to vilify individuals, to terrorise them and thereby suppress their political activism, subject them to public humiliation as well as make them the target of collective war hysteria is a most dangerous and socially harmful tendency.

4. Prevention of Terrorism Act and other repressive laws

It is our contention that the political and fundamental rights of the entirety of Sri Lankan society are very gravely threatened by the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act that has been put into effect under the Emergency Regulations enacted by Your Excellency’s Government. We point out that some of these regulations are even more draconian than the impunity regulations enacted by the then UNP government that even you had opposed while sitting in Opposition. Is it not an example of this repressive ethos that the actions of those government officers and even the ordinary individuals appointed and

empowered under these anti-terrorism laws are exempt from legal remedy?

Does it not take away the sole remedy for recourse to the legal system that oppressed and suffering citizens could resort to? Your Excellency's Government has clearly moved to grant excessive and even unlimited powers to the very security forces and auxiliary forces that are considered principally responsible for the ongoing wave of abductions and disappearances of people.

The recent arrests of Sinhala youth accused of being "Tigers" as well as the case of journalist Guruparan both go to demonstrate the culpability of Your Excellency's Government in the growing incidence of abductions and disappearances. While at first, in both instances, the Government denied any involvement, subsequently, under international pressure and in the face of public campaigns by trade unions and the mass media, the Government was compelled to admit that these persons were indeed in its custody.

If these persons had broken the law, then they should be punished under the relevant legal provisions. Resort to abduction and forced extraction of confessions that were then issued to the mass media without any observance of legalities have only served to seriously undermine the legitimacy of the country's judicial system and law. This action has wholly undermined the basic legal principle of recognition of innocence until proven guilty. Your Excellency's Ministers have the facility of the use of the state mass media to vigorously counter the recent accusation made against you regarding a pact with the Tigers. However, the ordinary citizens lacking power or financial resources do not have the same capacity to counter similar "Tiger" allegations made against them. Who will be held responsible when such citizens are so accused and are publicly condemned by the mass media minus any legal defences, and are then subject to public harassment including assault and the destruction of their homes and property by mobs? Just as much as those Americans suffered under McCarthyism, so are these Sri Lankans today subjected to such branding as "Tigers" face a future devoid of normalcy.

5. Suppression of trade union activism

While the Essential Services laws enacted under the Emergency Regulations on August 3^d 2006 rendered any trade union action as

illegal, the recently enacted anti-terrorism regulations define trade union action as 'terrorism'. Despite agreeing to withdraw these regulations in the face of mass protests, the Government has yet to do so. Even as some trade unions have moved to call on the ILO to act in this regard, the leaders of these unions have come under death threats. Posters containing photographs of these union leaders and labelling them as "Tigers" have been put up inside public sector buildings and offices. Given the hate-filled warmongering social atmosphere prevailing today, such branding amounts to a virtual death sentence against these individuals who could face possible mob hysteria and violence.

6. Suppression of the mass media

In the course of the recent enactment of severe anti-terror regulations under the Emergency Law, Your Excellency as well as senior Government leaders gave the assurance that these regulations would not be used to suppress the media and the trade unions. However, what is occurring now is a far more dangerous situation. Today, when there is a need to suppress the political activism of an individual, initially, powerful government personalities as well as the state media, along with various racist and militarist factions act to brand such individuals as "Tigers". Having been publicly condemned as "Tigers" and "terrorists", these individuals are then dealt with under the Anti Terrorism Regulations.

When Your Excellency, in a recent address to the SLFP Executive Committee described the *Mavubima* newspaper as being a Tiger supporter, this created a space for the use of the anti-terrorism regulations against that respected and popular newspaper. *Mavubima* reporter Ms Parameshwari has now already completed 100 days in detention under the Regulations. The subsequent detention of publisher Dushyantha Basnayake can only be construed as an intimidation of this publishing house and its owners. This is a prime example of the draconian repression that is being meted out by Your Excellency's Government. The even worse repression that is being meted out to the Tamil language media and its personnel is well known.

The sheer numbers of the media professionals who have been killed, abducted and detained in this country in recent months are an alarming indicator of the state of freedom of the mass media.

7. Censorship of the arts

A massive attack, using propaganda as well as legal harassment has been unleashed on the freedom of expression of artistes and intellectuals opposed to war. We remind Your Excellency of the banning of 'Aksharaya' and other films.

We must express our profound regret and protest at this unrestrained assault on the human right to hold views and to express views.

8. The failure to adopt a consensual political approach toward resolving the national crisis has seen a slide into an unending civil war that is devastating the country. We call for urgent steps to end the continuing violence in the North-East that is resulting in killings, disappearances, large-scale population displacements, and the destruction of property. We urge an end to offensive military actions and call for systematic steps to resolve the complex problems of the Tamil and Muslim people.

It is the Government of Sri Lanka that must bear the principal responsibility for the worsening national policy and military crisis that we have described at length above. A legitimately elected government must fulfil the task of providing its citizens with all the necessary conditions to live freely enjoying basic civil and political rights and freedom of expression. We must express yet again to Your Excellency, as Head of State, our profound regret and protests at the failure of Your Excellency's Government to fulfil this task. Accordingly, we, the undersigned, call for

- The withdrawal of all repressive Emergency Regulations
- A halt to all abductions and killings
- The disclosure of the location of all those abducted and in detention
- A halt to illegal arrests
- The proper arraignment of those in custody before the courts of law or their immediate release
- The protection of families and property of those being held in custody
- A halt to the branding as "Tigers" and repression against trade unionists, artistes and media professionals
- An end to the war strategy that is the root cause of all these evils.

Thank you.

Signed by

1. Left Front
2. United Socialist Party
3. New Democratic Party
4. Socialist Party
5. Western Peoples Front
6. Tamil National Alliance
7. Free Media Movement
8. Sri Lanka Tamil Media alliance
9. Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions
10. Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association
11. Hiru Group
12. Diyesa Group
13. X Group
14. Mavubime Api
15. East Wind
16. November Movement
17. Ceylon Teachers Union
18. United Federation of Labour
19. Government United Federation of Labour
20. Janaraja United Health Services Union
21. Government Printers Union
22. Socialist State Workers Union
23. Professor Sucharitha Gamlath
24. Professor H Sriyananda
25. Dr Sunil Wijesiriwardana
26. Fr Sarath Iddamalgoda – Manawa Himikam Piyasa
27. Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights
(Wasantha Dissanayake)
28. Centre for Protection of Right to Life and Democracy
(Chandrapala Kumarage, Attorney at Law)
29. Jayasiri Jayasekera – Journalist
30. Parakrama Niriella – Dramatist
31. Gamini Viyangoda – Writer
32. Shiral Lakthilale – Attorney at Law

Expanding Cabinet and End of Party Politics?

President Mahinda Rajapaksha's answer to the lack of a parliamentary majority was to induce people to cross over to the government benches. There were rewards as well as veiled threats for such crossovers. The rise in the popularity of the Present as a result of the military gains in the east of the country led to further frustrations within the ranks of the UNP and to challenges to the leadership of Ranil Wickramasinghe. The UNP leader deflected the challenge by entering into an MoU with the government whereby the UNP will give unqualified support for the government's efforts to deal with the national crisis and in exchange it was agreed that crossovers will not be encouraged.

The JVP was, as expected, unhappy with the purchase of new loyalties by the government since that undermined their influence. UNP dissenters faced political oblivion as a result of Wickramasinghe regaining the upper hand within the UNP, and President Rajapaksha encouraged further crossovers from the UNP and rewarded all with ministerial posts, thereby creating the biggest cabinet ever or perhaps even imaginable. The JVP turned even more hostile, but to no avail. Meanwhile the JVP itself faced an internal crisis and a split.

Ministerial posts as rewards to outsiders also caused friction within the ranks of the SLFP who resented the downgrading of ministerial posts by the dilution of authority. The UNP declared that the MoU has not been honoured by the President and decided to withdraw support to the government. This led to further criticism, especially about the interference in the affairs of government by the kith and kin of the President. The President responded fast by dismissing three ministers of whom one was invited back shortly afterwards.

Leaving aside the acrimony caused by the dismissals, what has now become clear is that parliamentary party politics is being reduced to an absurdity, with people joining and leaving parties at will and with no one to question.

International Events

Nepal: Cause for Caution if not Concern

The signing of the agreement between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Seven Party Alliance was warmly welcomed by the People of Nepal, not just because that meant an end to the armed conflict but because it could mark the end for ever of the repressive and dictatorial monarchy and give Nepal the first opportunity for meaningful democracy.

The optimism of the CPN(M) about the possibility of achieving its short and medium term goals of social justice through parliamentary democracy was not shared by the Indian Maoists who have warned the CPN(M) of the risk taken by the revolutionary forces in disarming itself.

Given the geopolitical reality of Nepal where its western neighbour and the sole global superpower would use the pretext of a civil war to intervene militarily in Nepal and the existence within Nepal of a section of the armed forces and parties loyal to forces of foreign intervention, the agreement entered into with the SPA for a ceasefire and democratic transition could be tactically a correct move. But to throw caution to the wind and to expect the reactionaries in SPA, especially the Nepali Congress factions, to cooperate in social and economic programmes that will undermine their position and class interests could be dangerous.

Already the Prime Minister had acted in bad faith in the appointment of ambassadors by not consulting the CPN(M) in advance and it was a show of strength by the CPN(M) that made the Prime Minister see sense. No opportunity will be spared by the reactionaries to short change the Maoists and the oppressed masses for whom the CPM(N) stood and jointly with whom they defied the armed forces of the state.

The climate of peace is also being exploited to create conflict among the oppressed masses. The recent clamour of the Mahdesi nationality

for a fair representation in the elected bodies has been exploited by Hindutwa infiltrators from India to cause clashes among the Mahdesi people. The initial mishandling of the Mahdesi demand by the government which used force to control protests was denounced by the Maoists who expressed support for the Mahdesi demand. However, the prospect of the contradictions among the people being manipulated by forces of mischief to divide the oppressed masses in the name of ethnic identity and other differences could undo at least part of what has been achieved through a decade of struggle.

It is urgently necessary to consolidate the victories scored by the masses in their struggle for social justice and for people's power to be conserved if not built upon, and to be alert against the class enemy, who is far more dangerous in times of peace than in times of armed conflict.

The Philippines: Marcos Mark II

The National Democratic Front of Philippines (Southern Mindanao) accused the Gloria Arroyo regime of keeping alive the embers of militarism, fascism and corruption—hallmarks of the hated Marcos dictatorship. The regime, besieged by plummeting popular support and increasing political isolation, has during the past five years resorted to unlawful killing of hundreds of political dissidents and unleashed military terror on the politically organised masses. Human rights organisations have indicted the Armed Forces, the National Police, paramilitary forces and intelligence networks for the crimes. The recent report of UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston on the spate of killings in the country has made Arroyo's position vulnerable and therefore more desperate. Egged on by the US imperialists she is hurriedly acting to transform the country into a military-backed dictatorship. The newly proclaimed Anti-Terror Act, euphemistically called the Human Security Act of 2007 may appear to target the small and supposedly Al Qaida-linked groups like Abu Sayyaf and Jema'ah Islamiyah, which could be adequately dealt with under existing legal and security systems.

Professor Jose Ma. Sison, Chief Political Consultant for the NDFP, explained in his comment on the Act that the intent of the Act is to unleash state terror with impunity and create a climate of fear without need to declare martial law, and thereby intimidate and suppress not

only revolutionary organizations and popular movements but all opposition, dissent and independent media within the system.

He observed that the Act provides for the easy proscription of organizations and individuals, indefinite detention on the non-bailable charge of terrorism, freezing and confiscation of financial assets, easy incrimination of so-called accomplices and accessories, unlimited intrusions of surveillance into privacy and family life, oppressive restraints even on those released on bail, and so on. As a matter of course, the military, police and paramilitary forces can arrest and detain anyone whom they regard or suspect as a "terrorist". The time limit for detention without charges is 72 hours, which is more than enough to extract a confession out of a detainee who could then be detained indefinitely on the non-bailable charge of terrorism. There is also enough time to remove all traces of the arrest and make the detainee disappear permanently. This is not a farfetched possibility under the prevailing conditions of continuing human rights violations with impunity and the stigmatization and suppression of patriotic and progressive organizations and individuals as 'terrorists'.

The next likely step is to ban the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New Peoples' Army and if possible the National Democratic Front of Philippines, and, of course, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. But, in fact, any party or organization or individual can be proscribed as 'terrorist' upon the decision of a politically-controlled Anti-Terrorism-Council, based on intelligence reports and recommendations by the military and police. The ultimate target will be the democratic forces that would resist the march of the Philippines towards a dictatorship of the kind known under Marcos over a quarter of a century ago.

Professor Sison expressed confidence that "As well-proven by the ultimate failure of the 14-year Marcos fascist dictatorship, the Arroyo regime will ultimately fall in disgrace by using the Anti-Terror Act to terrorize the people. For a while, the draconian regime can do a lot of repression and harm to the people. But unwittingly it incites and drives the broad masses of the people and the revolutionary forces to wage the armed revolution for national liberation, democracy and justice more fiercely than ever before. Many political activists and people who would otherwise stay in the legal political struggle are pushed by the regime to join the armed revolution and seek justice for wrongs done to them".

In conclusion he said that “The CPP, NPA and NDFP are confronted with the vow of the Arroyo regime to destroy the people’s revolutionary movement for national liberation and democracy or to render it strategically inconsequential before 2010. It is therefore understandable why the Filipino people and revolutionary forces are raising the level of their own strength and capabilities for greater struggles for the purpose eradicating not only the Arroyo regime but the entire ruling system of big compradors and landlords who are beholden to US imperialism”.

Korea: Who Blinked?

The Western media establishment was unanimous in its verdict that the deal that was struck in Beijing on 13 February 2007 commencing the process of denuclearization of Korea, comprehensive regional reconciliation, ending the Korean War, and normalizing relations between North Korea and its two historic enemies, Japan and the United States that North Korea had yielded partly under pressure from China and partly as a result of the UN Security Council Resolution 1718 condemning North Korea for its nuclear test as well as imposing limited sanctions. That was essential fodder to keep the spirits high among the faithful.

But it was Washington, which refused to talk face-to-face with North Korea, that yielded and not North Korea which was always willing to talk. Although the Washington’s honouring the agreement is quite another matter, its readiness to start normalisation of relations with North Korea, to remove the terrorist label from it, and to ease restrictions on doing business with it, even before the completion of nuclear disarmament, were major concessions. Ending a half-century long embargo and enabling diplomatic and economic normalization will meet North Korea’s consistent demands and render nuclear defence unnecessary. The US also appears to have decided not to pursue some major disputes that had been the subject of bitter contention.

Why the US decided to take a conciliatory attitude towards a prime member of the alleged ‘Axis of Evil’ remains a puzzle to those who do not accept the thesis that North Korea had yielded. The hardening of the US attitude towards Iran may hold the answer to that question.

US-India: Stephen Rademaker Spills the Beans

India voted against Iran at the Governors' Board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2005 and 2006, the first time on a resolution condemning Iran for not meeting its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the second time to report Iran to the UN Security Council. Stephen Rademaker, the former US Assistant Secretary for International Security and Non-Proliferation, confessed at a meeting that he addressed in the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) on Thursday 15th February 2007 that the US coerced India to vote against Iran on both occasions.

Rademaker's talk was reported in detail by Siddharth Varadarajan, a much respected journalist and Associate Editor of *the Hindu*, who attended the talk. And Rademaker's confession was published in the *Times of India* and *the Hindu* but not given much publicity in the West.

What is interesting is that nobody in the ruling establishments of the US and India seems embarrassed. On the other hand, why should anyone be, since the question of who is master has long since been settled?

Russia-India-China: Coalition in the Making?

The meeting between the foreign ministers of Russia, China and India at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on February 14, 2007 and their announcement that 'cooperation, rather than confrontation, should govern the approaches to regional and global affairs' is seen as a signal to the US that it can no longer wage war on weaker countries at will. It is also suspected that the discussion covered West Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Despite the assertion in the joint statement that the "trilateral cooperation was not directed against the interests of any other country and was, on the contrary, intended to promote international harmony and understanding", the US will not take kindly to an alliance between the three, even if it is only for promoting cultural tourism.

Russia, against a background of weakening US authority, in the battlefronts of Asia, in the political front in Latin America and rising

Chinese influence in Africa, is taking the initiative in the evolution of an alliance with that will stand up to US attempts to dominate Asia. The convergence of interests of Russia and China has already resulted in the Central Asia-centric Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, where Russia and China are members, and a year ago India joined as an observer.

Significantly, Putin has been particularly assertive in the recent months and, in his speech on 11th February at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy, openly criticised US foreign policy. Russia has also started to exercise its right to the traditional role played by the Soviet Union in dealing with the Middle East and Palestine in particular.

To the section of the Indian elite that is nostalgic about the days of defence treaties with the Soviet Union, this seems a better path for India to take to become a global power than by being a client of the US. However, the close ties that have developed between the Indian ruling classes, irrespective of their political party labels, are difficult to shake off. Thus, as long as the US remains the main global military and economic power, it is likely that India will use its developing ties with Russia, and rather grudgingly with China, to strike better bargains with its patron.

While the emergence of an alliance to counter US military domination and interference in the affairs of smaller countries has its benefits to the Third World, the class nature of the ruling classes will dictate that such alliances only work to carve up the world among themselves. Revolution is the only salvation for the oppressed nations and people of the Third World.

Book Review

An LSSP Rebel Remembered

T Perera. Revolutionary Trails, Edmund Samarakkody: A Political Profile. Social Scientists Association, Colombo 5, 2006, pp.223 +vi

Edmund Samarakkody, who split from the LSSP in 1964, will probably be remembered for his uncompromising stand in support of the rights of the minorities of Sri Lanka. His split from the LSSP had its roots in the opportunist proposal by NM Perera that the LSSP should go in for a coalition with the SLFP, which found overwhelming support in the Party as early as May 1960. The lack of a majority in the Central Committee of the Party meant that the decision was deferred until 1964 when some of the former opponents of the proposal Colvin R de Silva, Leslie Gunawardane and Bernard Soysa changed their mind when opportunity knocked on the door a second time at the cost of the betrayal of a united workers struggle based on 21 demands.

The book provides a factual record of the highlights of the political career of Edmund Samarakkody and places it against the background of the history of the LSSP.

It was perhaps too late when Samarakkody and his colleagues decided to openly challenge the opportunist line in 1964, by which time NM Perera had consolidated his position as the leader of the LSSP. Thus, unlike in the case of the CP, where a similar split in the same year led to a strong opposition to opportunism, Edmund Samarakkody and his colleagues, despite the Ceylon Mercantile Union, a petit bourgeois trade union of formidable strength, taking the side of the rebels, soon found themselves politically isolated.

While Samarakkody's judgment in crucial issues, especially the decision of the two LSSP rebels to vote for a rightist amendment to the Throne Speech in December 1964 and thereby cause the defeat of the SLFP-LSSP coalition government, could be criticised or even be

condemned, people respected his political and personal integrity. He had the honesty to openly express regret of his action—not that of bringing down a government which he did not approve of, but voting for an amendment sponsored by reactionaries. That error cost him and the LSSP-R that split from the LSSP dearly so that even the section of the LSSP that had its doubts about of the coalition turned hostile to them. It also led to desertions from the LSSP-R.

Despite his humiliating defeat in the parliamentary election of 1965, Samarakkody remained firm and uncompromising in matters of principle. Significantly, he stood by the JVP in its time of defeat in the insurrection in 1971 and provided legal and other forms of support to them, only to be let down by the JVP who found a more useful patron in JR Jayawardane. He failed, however, to see through the chauvinist agenda that was being developed by the JVP leadership in the guise of opposing Indian invasion, and it took him until the JVP killed leftist supporters of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord to realise what the JVP stood for. Despite his reservations on the right of the Tamils to self-determination he defended the rights of the Tamil people to the end. Importantly, he opposed Indian armed intervention in 1987, and denounced Indian expansionist intentions.

What is lacking in the book is a valid explanation as to why the LSSP, the dominant left party in the country and much stronger than the CP in the South, failed and, what was worse, degenerated into an appendage of the SLFP. Ritual denunciation of the 'Stalinists' and protesting about the opportunism of individuals by the author and the subject of his study fall far short of a good explanation for the tragedy that the LSSP finally turned out to be. N Sanmugathan has, in this context, drawn attention to the class origins of the 'old left', and the LSSP in particular. Thus there is a need for serious soul searching on the part of nostalgic historiographers of the left.

Nevertheless, the book is essential documentation, and a deserving tribute to one of the most principled politicians that the country has produced.

-SJS-

Globalised Militarism: Fresh Questions

Peter Custers. Questioning Globalised Militarism: Nuclear and Military Production and Critical Economic Theory, Tulika Books, New Delhi 110 049 (paperback), 2006.

The book is the outcome of well researched analysis of the production and consumption of arms as an integral aspect of the present world capitalist order. Custers brings out fresh insights to the study of militarism by going deeply into the economic aspects of militarism, touching on subject areas and topics that have escaped the attention of many an economist.

The opening chapter presents the globalisation of militarism in the context of the tendency for increased military expenditure in the US since the late 1990s and planned full-scale wars, the new turn taken by the nuclear threat which not long ago was something confined essentially to the two super powers, and the growth in the export of arms and armament systems. He takes off from the Marxian method for the analysis of the business cycle and Marx's notion of capitalism's tendency towards disproportionality, to locate the role of the military sector in the social circuit of capital and through Marxist theories of international trade and the issue of unequal exchange to arrive at a novel concept of disparate exchange (meaning the qualitatively different nature of the commodities exchanged), with particular attention to the exchange of primary commodities for arms in many Third World economies and its negative impact on development since what is exchanged for primary commodities represent social waste. He argues the case for an innovative approach to theorise the arms trade through incorporating the existence of non-commodity waste.

The rest of the book is in three parts, the first with eight chapters under the theme 'Social waste and non-commodity waste and the individual circuit of capital', the second with nine chapters under the theme 'The military sector and social accumulation of capital', and the last with six chapters under the theme 'arms exports and the structure of world trade: international circuits of capital'.

The book presents economic theory and analysis in a readable style which does not compromise rigour despite care to make the text accessible to the lay reader.

It would be appropriate to conclude this review by citing Samir Amin from his Foreword:

“This audacious pioneering work deserves to be read with the greatest attention, even if it is not always easy to read. Whether or not one is convinced by one or the other of his arguments is not the point; we cannot advance in these matters without reflecting on this work”.

“To understand the world, Custers offers on all these fundamental subjects propositions which, in my opinion, unquestionably constitute advances. For the conjunction “‘economy/historical materialism’ brings into play fundamental concepts with regard to use-value, the role of politics and the sense of social, and with regard to the relations between societies that together compose the world system”.

SJS-

The People’s Leader

Kahawaththa P Mahendran

I grew up on the milk of wisdom that gran’dad fed me
My journey is along the path he tread—
not the tiniest deviation from his footsteps.
Slashing through and pruning the thinking of the people
is the glory of his wisdom.

This theatre by me
is to take that through to my successors waiting to be born.
If an educated one awakens who will fall prey to my hunger?

In case you moan and groan and struggle to rise, I have
in my pockets bones that I have saved to break your back.
Some I will throw at the polls.
Some others I will smear with promises,
knock on the doors of the young and throw at them
to silence the young.
Listen to all my words, applaud, give me joy.
I will say aloud again and again
of my ability to bargain
so that your votes do not go waste
and blissfully will I feed and fatten myself.

You who daily
climb the hills with chapped feet,
donate blood to quench the thirst of leeches
in the scorching sun, in the rain
and choke with all your sores
I will trample you some more.
I will charm to conceal my monstrosities
I will be a minister.

In five star locations I stage my orgies
my pot belly swelling up.
Opposition benches are not for me—
I raise my hand with the ruling side
so that the wickedness that pervades my mind
remains covered and concealed.

You toilers! You naïve ones!
Vote for me tomorrow too
for my bravery in slashing you to pieces
and send me to Parliament—
for I am the servant of the people

(translated from Tamil from Puthiya Poomi, January 2007)

Colours

T Pradeesh

Look for it
Not for the colour of your skin
But the colour of your mind
Good isn't it

The colour of the sea is blue
The sky is also blue
Trees, bushes and grass
Covering the earth are green
All are good for the eyes
The Rainbow with its seven colours
Gives us light and joy
Blood is red
Hair is black, sometimes brown
In elders grey
Skins of men differ in colour
White, black, brown, fair, yellow and red
That is nature
Nature is beautiful
Colours are beautiful
They are for us
Some foolish men
Have divided themselves
By colour
Have fought many meaningless wars
And still hate each other
For they are power crazy

Colours are creation of climate
Followed by gene
With none to blame
Right and wrong
Good and bad
Beautiful and ugly
Not by colour
But from greedy men's minds

No good or bad by colour
No high or low by colour

(Pradeesh is 9 years old)

Appeal by the Central Committee of the New Democratic Party

On the 14th and 15th of February 2007, police officers from the Terrorist Investigation Department (TID) arrested under Emergency Regulations five important members of the New Democratic Party from the Hill Country. They have not been produced in Courts before a Magistrate and continue to be detained in the Boosa Detention Camp on the pretext of continuing with the inquiries.

[For more details see NDP Diary pp.30-31]

The Party is taking steps to secure their release through public pressure and through legal action. The Party appeals to comrades and friends, the socially concerned individuals and organisations, and well wishers to provide financial support for the necessary legal action to secure the release of the five detained comrades and to provide essential financial support to their families.

Bank Details for Financial Contributions:

**S Thevarajah
a/c Number 452868
Bank of Ceylon
Super Market Branch
Colombo 11**

Announcement

New Democracy publishes articles of social, cultural and political importance to the people of Sri Lanka and their struggle for emancipation from imperialist domination and freedom from oppression of all kinds by the reactionary ruling classes.

Articles on local and international matters, with a Marxist outlook or with a progressive content are invited for publication. Articles should preferably be in English. Articles in Sinhala or Tamil will be considered for publication in translation.

Readers are encouraged to write their comments on the journal and its contents. Where the comments are of general interest, the letter or relevant sections will be reproduced in the journal.

Readers are also encouraged to draw our attention to articles of value to our readers so that they may be reproduced in New Democracy in full or in abridged form with the consent of the author/publisher.

Only a limited number of copies of the journal are published and back numbers may be obtained from the publisher at

47, 3rd Floor
CCSM Complex
Colombo 11, Sri Lanka

New Democracy could also be accessed by internet at
www.ndpsl.org

(continued from inside front cover)

All my life, been livin' hand to mouth
Hand to mouth.

Listen, Revolution,
We're buddies, see –
Together,
We can take everything:
Factories, arsenals, houses, ships,
Railroads, forests, fields, orchards,
Bus lines, telegraphs, radios,
(Jesus! Raise hell with radios!)
Steel mills, coal mines, oil wells, gas,
All the tools \of production.
(Great day in the morning!)
Everything –
And turn'em over to the people who work.
Rule and run'em for us people who work.

Boy! Them radios!
Broadcasting that very first morning to USSR:
Another member of the International Soviet's done come
Greetings to the Socialist Soviet Republics
Hey you rising workers everywhere greetings –
And we'll sign it: Germany
Sign it: China
Sign it: Africa
Sign it: Italy
Sign it: America
Sign it with my one name: Worker
On that day when no one will be hungry, cold oppressed,
Anywhere in the world again.

That's our job!

I been starvin' too long
Ain't you?

Let's go, Revolution!

(written circa 1931-40)

The Ballads of Lenin

by
Langston Hughes (1902-67)

Comrade Lenin of Russia
High in a marble tomb,
Move over, comrade Lenin,
And give me room.

I am Ivan, the peasant,
Boots all muddy with soil,
I fought with you, Comrade Lenin.
Now I have finished my toil.

Comrade Lenin of Russia
Alive in a marble tomb,
Move over, comrade Lenin,
And give me room.

I am Chico, the Negro,
Cutting cane in the sun.
I lived for you, Comrade Lenin.
Now my work is done

Comrade Lenin of Russia
Honored in a marble tomb,
Move over, comrade Lenin,
And leave me room.

I am Chang from the foundries
On strike on the streets of Shanghai.
For the sake of the Revolution
I fight, I starve, I die.

Comrade Lenin of Russia
Speaks from the marble tomb,
ON GUARD WITH THE WORKERS FOREVER
THE WORLD IS OUR ROOM!

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