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IDENTITY CARD

MAHMUD DARWISH

[Mahmud Darwish, the best known modern Palestinian poet passed away on 9th August. "Identity Card" is from his first collection "Leaves of Olives".]

Write down!

I am an Arab

And my identity card number is fifty thousand

I have eight children

And the ninth will come after a summer

Will you be angry?

Write down!

I am an Arab

Employed with fellow workers at a quarry

I have eight children

I get them bread

Garments and books from the rocks...

I do not supplicate charity at your doors

Nor do I belittle myself at the footsteps of your chamber

So will you be angry?

Write down!

I am an Arab

I have a name without a title

Patient in a country

Where people are enraged

My roots

Were entrenched before the birth of time

And before the opening of the eras

Before the pines, and the olive trees

And before the grass grew

(Continued on the inside back cover)

From the Editor's Desk

Many a things is swept under the carpet of national security. It happens in the 'biggest democracy' and in the 'most powerful democracy' on earth, and Sri Lanka is no exception. Sri Lanka, besides, has its special features, with sheer wantonness of government after government letting contradictions among the nationalities to develop into national oppression and war. The conflict has come to be termed officially as a war on terrorism so that not only the war but also criminal acts of cruelty associated with it are easily defended and justified in terms of national security.

The failure of the peace negotiations in 2003, the effective failure of the ceasefire in 2006, and the unilateral withdrawal of the government from the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) in early 2008 have taken the country back to the years of intense war preceding the CFA. Not merely the government and the leadership of the armed forces are intent on fighting the war to a finish but a sizeable section of the opposition is even keener on it; and the main opposition party is all too agreeable to the government's plan to militarily defeat the LTTE.

The belligerence of the government follows its military success in the East, aided by the split in the LTTE in 2004, setbacks suffered by it owing to the tsunami later in the year, and logistic support from the US and India. The war has been extended into the LTTE-controlled north and fought intensely, but the end, despite confident claims by the government is not in sight. Its claims of military success have made it electorally stronger than it should be in with its miserable economic performance. Its promise of total military victory against the LTTE has raised expectations among the Sinhala electorate. Although government deadlines to achieve its declared military goals are long past, information trickling in about a military success here and another there helps to keep up spirits amid a rapidly deteriorating economy.

The government has with little resistance heaped economic burdens on a people already choking under a high rate of inflation and an unbearably high and rising cost of living. Yet military spending has increased steeply in the past few years to reach an unprecedented high, and is to be funded by increased taxation. Cess, just another name for tax, has been imposed on imported items including food and other essential goods. Existing cess

rates have been increased to 50% on a variety of imported goods. These are bound to reflect in the prices of many goods and in the cost of living.

The government had delayed lowering the price of fuel until the budget, although crude oil price fell sharply following signs of an economic crunch in the US and fears of global recession. The proposed reduction in fuel prices and bus fares is in no way commensurate with the increases that followed the surge in oil prices.

Yet the government is hopeful that the people will bear the imminent rise in cost of living and other economic burdens that are due to follow alongside the drift towards global recession. The people will perhaps, but that requires a continuous flow of news of unhindered government success on its battlefronts. News of serious military setbacks and losses to the armed forces is not only demoralising but also hurts the government's credibility, whose only basis for support is its claim of success in fighting terrorism. Also reports of corruption and various misdeeds by people in power would hurt enthusiasm for the government.

Recent attempts by the government to rein in radio and TV stations should be seen in the context of its desperate need to have full control over the news media. New Democracy has on several occasions editorially drawn attention to the threats faced by the media and their implications for freedom of expression. The potential threats are getting close to realisation, and violence and threats against media personnel that are now criminal could then become lawful acts.

As warned by the New Democratic Party in its statement of 1st November, proposed regulations to control private television and radio stations will lead to the suppression of democratic views and objections against the government, and make way for the government to continue its pursuit of war and to frustrate the protests of the people who are suffering under the economic crisis.

The reason why the government is keen to tighten its grip on the media is that in the event of the war not going the way it expects or comes to an end, people's attention will turn away from terrorism towards problems closer to home. Silencing the media could be very difficult at that stage.

Whatever the outcome of the moves by the government towards controlling the media, the absence of free media will be a blessing to any fascist state that may emerge from the economic mess, unless revolution saves the country from it

Anti-Imperialism and Support for Cuba are Inseparable

Comrade E Thambiah

***(Address by Comrade Thambiah at the 4th Asia Pacific
Regional Conference for Solidarity with Cuba, Colombo 14th &
15th June 2008)***

Anti-imperialism over the decades

Lenin established that imperialism was the highest form of capitalism, and emphasised that the struggle for socialism is also the struggle by all oppressed classes against imperialism. That situation has not changed yet. But there have been changes to the imperialist agenda. Imperialism has taken the form of globalisation today. Since Cuba with a socialist structure faces severe pressures and threats as a result of the imperialist globalisation programme, it is the bounden duty of all countries and people to support Cuba. Amid economic embargos and political conspiracies, Cuba stands defiant against US imperialism. Supporting Cuba comprises supporting struggles against imperialist globalisation and to defend socialist structures.

The above solidarity is not the monopoly of the communist parties, left parties and liberation movements of the world. Thus, in the context of imperialist globalisation today, it is useful to remind ourselves of anti-imperialist solidarity in historical perspective.

The civil organisation initiated by Comrade Antonio Gramsci of the Italian Communist Party to unite all forces opposed to imperialism based on fascism was not only strong but also an inspiring example. His concept of 'Civil Society' formed the basis for uniting a variety of forces.

Comrade Dimitrov's concept of united front provided the basis for united fronts to combat Nazism. It was through such united fronts that Nazism was defeated in many countries and socialist revolutions took place in several countries.

It was through his united front policy that Comrade Mao Zedong was able to make the struggle against imperialism more broad based.

Following their establishment, the socialist states were able to strengthen ties among themselves as well as with non-socialist countries. Ties were developed between governments and peoples. Friendship societies that were established for the purpose acted to promote stronger ties.

Given the constraints that inter-state relations place on developing relationship between peoples, socialist countries classified relations into three categories; namely those relating to those between governments, between political parties and between people. With the relationship between political parties and that between people abandoned in course of time, what were called socialist countries too treated the relationship between socialist and capitalist states as one between the countries.

As a result, when neo-liberalism and moves for a new world order for imperialist globalisation got active in the 1980's there was no room for broad-based unity among parties, peoples and countries of the world. Yet, although not organisationally centralised, anti-imperialism of the people of the world, communist parties and mass organisations continued to rise.

Cuba in anti-imperialist context

US imperialism intensified its pressures on Cuba. It continued to impose economic embargos on Cuba to compel it to abandon its socialist structures and adopt in their place capitalist politics and neo-liberal economic policies. Inside Cuba, US imperialism persevered in its conspiratorial attempts to assassinate political leaders including the Cuban President Fidel Castro and to create rival political forces

Cuba faced serious crises following the collapse of the Soviet Union after 1989 and Cuba was compelled to carry out many drastic protective measures. Securing international collaboration to defend Cuba against imperialist actions and to struggle against imperialist globalisation became important.

The anti-imperialism of the people of the world and governments adversely affected by imperialist globalisation came together to provide support for Cuba. It is in that context that the Asia Pacific Regional

Organisation for Solidarity with Cuba has been functioning. Communist, leftist and democratic political parties and members of governments in the region jointly participate in it. The fourth regional conference of the organisation is taking place now on the 14th and 15th of June in Colombo.

It is important on this occasion to assess the successes of Cuba and challenges faced by Cuba.

Yesterday's challenges are today's successes or failures. Likewise, today's challenges would be tomorrow's successes or failures. While failures are temporary and short term setbacks, history will always be progressive. Thus successes and failures constitute a chain of historical advance.

Patriotism

To build up the patriotism of the Cuban people against imperialism was yesterday's challenge. The continuing challenge is to protect it and develop it as part of the spirit of internationalism. That means that patriotism is a symbol and concept for national defence and not a symbol and concept for attacking another nation, country or race.

The people of Cuba built anti-imperialist Cuba as something that transcended narrow nationalism, religious identity, ethnicity and racialism. Although it is today's success, it also poses a challenge in the form of the need to defend and develop it into something more extensive, and to match and to be an integral part of the anti-imperialist patriotic stand of the people of the many other nations.

Socialism

Neo-colonialism and imperialist globalisation are serious challenges to the socialist structure. A worldwide programme has to be developed to defend Cuban socialism against these challenges and defeat imperialist globalisation; and the initiative for it needs to be taken on several fronts.

Socialist structures have been wrecked in what were socialist countries. Amid them Cuba stands proud facing challenges and adapting its socialist structures to suit its objective realities. That is to say that Cuban socialism has not bowed down to imperialist globalisation. Despite its success thus far, it needs to advance among continuing challenges.

The Communist Party of Cuba and its leaders have determined that what is called globalisation is imperialist globalisation, and have fulfilled many of the preconditions necessary for the struggle against it. Mainly,

they have organised to that end the internal affairs of Cuba. The success of Cuban socialism lies in the fact that although socialism is being constructed within one country, it is not confined to narrow nationalist confines of a country. The anti-imperialism of the Cuban people is based on socialism.

Anti-imperialism based on socialism has to be distinguished from the anti-imperialism of religious fundamentalism (like that of al Qaeda led by bin Laden) or of dictatorial governments led by individuals or a junta (like that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq until his downfall, those in several Arab countries and Burma among others) or of chauvinism and narrow nationalism. Nationalism based on religion and ethnicity that makes anti-imperialist pronouncements does so subject to the needs of imperialism and in defence of the imperialist system.

Cooperation

Comrade Fidel Castro has stated that the history of Cuba was one that developed on the basis of cooperation. Cooperation means that among people with different points of view and with people outside the country with different points of view.

In the past, several socialist countries that talked about international solidarity and communist and socialist internationalism acted primarily in their own national interest. While it was said that their socialism was part of the international revolution, they did not really act in full appreciation of the meaning of international revolution. That was why proletarian internationalism met with setbacks, and it was possible for socialist structures to be demolished in several countries.

In an anti-imperialist united front there will inevitably be ties between socialist countries and non-socialist countries and between communists and non-communists. Communists alone or socialists alone cannot carry forward the anti-imperialist struggle to success. In the same way, anti-imperialism of non-socialist countries and non-communists alone cannot succeed either.

Local and international cooperation against imperialism involves a united front strategy that unites all anti-imperialist forces. However, anti-imperialism and solidarity with Cuba should take note of two types of forces, namely the primary and secondary ones. The primary forces are communists. No anti-imperialist united front can advance without them, since communists consider opposition to imperialism as a strategy and not as a tactic. Thus, letting forces that treat opposition to imperialism as a tactic, and not communists, play the fundamental leading role cannot be

healthy. Thus, while there is no question about having secondary forces opposed to imperialism in the broad anti-imperialist united front, it is not healthy to have them as the leading force.

Thus the basic feature is that success depends on continuous reinforcement of the relationship that the people and the government of Cuba have with the people, communist parties and anti-imperialist organisations of other countries and its development into cooperation with communists in the lead. On that basis

1. Cuban patriotism should be further developed into an integral part of broad-based anti-imperialism.
2. Cuban anti-imperialism and solidarity with Cuba should be based on socialist principles.
3. Solidarity with Cuba should be based on the socialist structure of Cuba.
4. International solidarity of the people of the world with the Cuban people should be broad-based and transcend state and party boundaries.

It is important that solidarity with Cuba should have at its core communists and other genuine anti-imperialist forces, who are the genuine friends of Cuba. It is our view that links and relationships with opportunist forces will not help to build up genuine solidarity.

Long live Comrade Fidel Castro!
Long live socialist Cuba!
Victory to international solidarity with Cuba!

JVP's Opportunism and Indian Expansionism

Daya

The JVP is once again on its anti-India trail, but on an unprecedented scale this time. Its Chairman Somawansa Amarasinghe and Secretary Tilvin de Silva speak in detail about government plans to hand over several places in the Eastern Province to India, about the intended handing over of oil exploration in Mannar, the cement factory in Kankasanturai and the chemical plant in Paranthan, about of the handing over of oil trade to India, and about the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement and the consequent economic setbacks suffered by Sri Lanka. What they say is not without substance as Sri Lanka has almost become an economic colony of India.

The JVP besides drawing attention to these matters also says that India is exercising hegemony over the Sri Lankan government to create a federal system in the North-East and hand over the region to the Tamils.

Thus the opposition of the JVP to India represents a stand hostile to the right of the Tamils to self-determination. One cannot simply ignore anyone's claim that India is making a constructive effort to ascertain the right of the Tamils to self-determination.

Indian Expansionism and Hegemony

In the 1960s The Ceylon Communist Party, also known as the Pro-Peking Communist Party, led by N Sanmugathasan made public its observation that the Indian ruling classes seek to expand their hegemony outside India and that the struggle against it was part of the struggle of the entire people of Sri Lanka. There are 'India loyalists' who even today try to belittle that position as a 'pro-Chinese position'. They sought to accuse by

extrapolation that the Ceylon Communist Party which accepted Mao Zedong Thought was taking a stand hostile to India in putting forward a policy opposing Indian expansionism in the same way that it sided with China on the question of the Sino-Indian border conflict. It is no secret that while China took steps of a peaceful nature to resolve the border dispute India provoked the armed conflict. Indian expansionism exposed itself when India annexed Sikkim. Much earlier, when asked about his position on Sri Lanka, Jawaharlal Nehru responded by saying that the time will come. Besides, India in its external relations has continued to uphold Indian interests above the principle of equality of nations. The hegemonic approach of India towards Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka is explicit.

As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, India has asserted its hegemony in its talks with Sri Lanka concerning the status of people of Indian origin settled in Sri Lanka, especially the Nehru-Kotalawala accord, the Sirima-Shastri pact and the Sirima-Indira pact; and later in the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement of 1987 and the Free Trade Agreement of the late 1990s.

Among South Asian countries, the economy and systems of health and education of Sri Lanka were well ahead of the rest in the 1970s. There were political leaderships that did not submit to India. The Sri Lankan national question served as a trump card in India's hand to wreck this state of affairs. Several Tamil youth organisations were given military training in India, and most of them were manipulated by India. That found its climax in the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement of 1987.

Although it is possible to continuously observe Indian hegemony in action, there are still some who still argue that the stand against Indian expansionism is a pro-Chinese position. There is an important misunderstanding that contributed to this. During the debate in the Ceylon Communist Party on whether to take the revolutionary path or the parliamentary path, the two sides were mistakenly or deliberately dubbed as pro-China and pro-Soviet.

The communist party that functions under the name of 'Communist Party of Sri Lanka' took the parliamentary road and internationally sided with the Soviet Union. Those who accepted Mao Zedong Thought took the revolutionary path. Since those who took the revolutionary path concurred with the position of the revolutionary camp led by the Communist Party of China internationally, they were dubbed 'pro-China' and portrayed as hostile to India.

The JVP, founded by youth expelled from the Ceylon Communist Party, emphasized the stand of opposing Indian expansionism and hegemony

from the point of view of its extreme nationalist and petit bourgeois stand. The JVP was never a party that accepted Mao Zedong Thought or maintained a close relationship with China in its early years.

Professor Sucaritha Gamlath has stated in his book in Sinhala titled the 'Birth, Existence and Death of the JVP' that opposing Indian expansionism and hegemony was a policy borrowed from the 'pro-China' Communist Party. But he has not gone into the question of whether the JVP had or had not interpreted it correctly (or whether its position was correct or otherwise).

The Position of the JVP

The hostility of the JVP towards India is based on petit bourgeois chauvinism. One of the 'five political classes' conducted by the JVP as a forerunner to its insurrection of 1971 was entitled 'Indian Expansionism'. In it, the JVP identified the plantation workers and small traders of Indian origin as the representatives of Indian expansionism and stated that they should be extradited to India and that the tea and rubber plantations should be closed down. India provided military support to Sri Lanka to suppress the insurrection of the JVP, and Indian naval forces were stationed in the Colombo Harbour during that period.

The second insurrection of the JVP had as its main policy the rejection of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement. The JVP opposed the agreement because it was instrumental in setting up a provincial council for the Tamils of the North-East.

The JVP did not seriously oppose the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement. Nor did it oppose the military support provided by India to the Sri Lankan government. It is out of fear that India may secure a political solution for the Sri Lankan Tamils that the JVP is speaking out against India. The JVP did not oppose India monopolizing oil trade in Sri Lanka.

The JVP now speaks out against India merely in an effort to rectify the recent political setback that it suffered. Its opposition to India is based on its desire that not even the smallest degree of power sharing is assured for the Tamils who are struggling for their right to self-determination. The JVP, which feigned support for India to wreck the peace initiative undertaken with Norwegian facilitation, did not oppose with due force the hegemony exercised by the EU, Japan and the US in Sri Lanka, well outside the context of the peace process. It underestimates its

significance. It plays down the issues. A few months ago, it was subdued in its comments on Indian expansionism.

Thus, the opposition of the JVP to India or its opposition to imperialism and foreign hegemony is really a stand against the Sri Lankan Tamils. It is its Anti-Tamil stand that manifests as opposition to India and to imperialism.

The Marxist Leninist Position

A genuine Marxist Leninist stand opposes the hegemony of any country. Anyone giving primacy to the independence, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka, the unity and the right to self-determination of the nationalities of Sri Lanka, and social transformation in the interest of the workers, peasants and all exploited and oppressed people of Sri Lanka cannot be warm towards Indian expansionism. This does not imply harming the relationship with the people of India and the progressive and democratic forces there. On the contrary, it is a stand that respects the independence, integrity, sovereignty and unity of India.

The Ceylon Communist Party led by Sanmugathasan did not consider the plantation workers as a symbol of Indian expansionism. On the other hand, it said that the plantation workers should be the leading force in the Sri Lankan revolution. That party is now inactive. The New Democratic Party which emerged from it takes a stand against Indian expansionism since Indian expansionist hegemony is hostile to the independence, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka and to the freedom of the nationalities of Sri Lanka.

India, while pretending that it was helping the Tamils in the Sri Lankan national question, brought Sri Lanka under its control through the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement. Thereafter, it helped the Sri Lankan government military at every turn and brought the Sri Lankan economy under its control.

Today the Indian ruling classes have become partners in imperialist globalisation. The bureaucrat capitalist class, besides acting fully in support of imperialist globalisation, is also aggressively seeking to establish its hegemony in the region.

Under these conditions, the Indian ruling classes and the state structures act on the basis that they should bring other countries in the region under their control and face globalised market rivalry on that basis.

Meantime, the Indian ruling classes interpret the independence, integrity and sovereignty of India and the freedom of the nationalities in terms of imperialist globalisation. As a result they act against the people of India as well as the national interests. Consequently, India approaches Sri Lanka and the struggle of the Tamil people for self-determination, on the basis of its approach to the national question in India.

Thus, one cannot correctly understand Indian hegemony, based of pro or anti-China stances. That is not to deny the existence contradictions between China and India. Anyone who sides with India in its differences with China cannot ignore Indian hegemony. Nor are all who side with China are cautious of Indian hegemony. Nevertheless the line of ‘Chinese threat’ is something associated with conservative Tamil nationalist thinking. The effect of Indian hegemony on Sri Lanka and on the struggle of the Tamil people for self-determination cannot be correctly assessed from that position. Nor will it be possible to develop strategies and tactics against Indian hegemony from that position.

The JVP and the Jathika Hela Urumaya oppose India, based on their rejection of the right to self-determination of the Tamils from an extreme Sinhala Chauvinist point of view. India cannot be understood correctly from the standpoints of the JVP or the JHU or for that matter from those of the SLFP or the UNP, which act as the clients of imperialism. Equally, India cannot be understood correctly from the Tamil nationalist standpoint. These standpoints seek to sacrifice Sri Lanka and the struggle of the Tamil people for self-determination at the altar of Indian hegemony.

It is worth noting that several Indian analysts have pointed out that the Indian ruling classes have become part and parcel of imperialism. Thus opposing Indian hegemony is not one of destroying India. It is a strategy of struggle to defend Sri Lanka and the right of the Tamils to self-determination against Indian hegemony and an expression of support to the people of India.

[Approximate translation of an article from *Puthiya Poomi*, September 2008]

Revolutionary Road to Socialism

Deshabakthan

A revolution is an act of overthrowing an existing social order and replacing it with another. Transformation of a hierarchical social order based on the exploitation of one section, usually the vast majority, by another, usually a small minority, is accompanied by a social upheaval with a struggle for power between forces in control of the existing order and forces seeking to replace it with one that suits their interests.

The emergence of private property, accumulation of private wealth and private ownership of the means of production led to the organisation and stratification of society based on classes, with a bearing on their relationship to social production. Classless societies have existed in parts of the world, often alongside, class societies. The development of the state as the mechanism for domination and control of society by the ruling class made it necessary for the state to strengthen itself to serve better the desire of the ruling class for greater wealth and power and to counter threats to the existing order from within and without. Expansion became inevitable as a result and along with it conflict.

In the process, the history of mankind became the history of class struggle. Thus conquest of territory, colonisation, wars and genocide are linked with class interests and class struggle, and represent the spilling over of class conflict outside the territory under the control of a state.

Wherever there is oppression there is struggle. However, oppressive social orders have been able to sustain themselves through violence or the threat of violence; and more effectively through conditioning social thinking in a variety of forms. Thus struggles have mostly been limited in scope and have stopped far short of overthrowing the existing social order.

Struggles for social justice and fair treatment have been put down by the state, ruthlessly when necessary, only to re-emerge at another time in another form and have formed the process of social transformation. Such class struggles constitute a process running up to a major upheaval that leads eventually to the emergence of a new social order.

Revolutionary changes in the social order alter the mode of production and productive relations, and reorganise the class structure alongside the emergence of new classes. It was only after the arrival of capitalism and the emergence of the industrial working class that the notion of an egalitarian society or socialism emerged. Marx correctly identified the role of class and class struggle in social change and the potential of the working class in bringing about social transformation. It was in recognition of the role of the state, its violent nature and the manifestation of this violence in preserving the existing social order that Marx concluded that a just social order cannot be achieved through a state designed to uphold class oppression and exploitation. His call for a revolutionary struggle led by the working class and insistence on the inevitability of armed struggle were based on experience and have been endorsed by every great Marxist thinker.

The socialist movement has from the time of Marx and Engels witnessed bitter debates and undergone splits, nationally and internationally, over questions concerning the nature of the state, the need for revolution to achieve socialism, and revolutionary armed struggle. Marxist Leninists rejected the parliamentary road to socialism not for lack of faith in democracy but because they know how the dice are loaded against the working class. They ruled out the prospect of peaceful transition from a capitalist society to socialism, not because they believe in violence as the only means of social change but because they know the violent nature of the bourgeois state and how violence will be imposed on the forces of social change when the class interests of the bourgeoisie come under threat.

By revolutionary struggle Marxist Leninists do not mean plunging a country into civil war. To them, revolutionary struggle comprises a wide variety of activities by which the oppressed classes stake a claim on state power to overthrow the existing state machinery controlled by the ruling classes and replace it with a different kind of state dominated by the erstwhile oppressed classes who are the producers of wealth. In advanced industrial countries the working class can take power by itself and in less industrialised situations the working class forms alliances that are appropriate to the nature of the revolution and revolutionary struggle.

Recent political changes in South America and Nepal are interpreted by reformists and revisionists to mean that a revolutionary struggle is not necessary to achieve socialism and an armed struggle even less. They are distorting facts when they claim that these developments have made socialism possible without revolutionary armed struggle.

It was a unique set of circumstances that brought Hugo Chavez to power in Venezuela. His endorsement of socialism was also a result of the developments that took place in Venezuela, but the politically conscious class forces that can take Venezuela towards socialism remain to be developed. A violent attempt to overthrow Chavez had been defeated, and it will be well to be aware that such attempts can recur, and that the US has not given up on its plans to eliminate Chavez and his political successors.

Rafael Ramirez, Venezuela's Minister of Energy and Petroleum has warned: "In Venezuela we are in a basic and crucial battle: rescue our sovereignty and return to the nation the use of its resources. This battle passes through the defence of the right of the Venezuelan people to decide their destiny with the aim of moving towards socialism.... To struggle for socialism, in capitalism, is very difficult, because capitalist values and relations are still present, they influence and pressure us. If we make a mistake, they reproduce themselves. That is why the discussion over socialism in Venezuela has to consider that this is a process that is just beginning, and which has to be accompanied by an intense practice". (See *New Democracy* **30**, p. 48).

The reality is that the political right is waiting for a chance to strike back, and when it does it will be with the help of imperialism and is likely to be far more violent than its earlier failed coup attempt. It is necessary therefore to mobilise the working class and other toiling and oppressed sections of the masses as well as to prepare them against counter revolutionary violence.

It is important to commend the positive contributions of the Venezuelan state, especially its firm anti-imperialist stand and support to countries in the region to free their economies of imperialist domination and control. At the same time it is necessary to caution against over-optimism and over-enthusiasm.

There is a tendency to make Venezuela the model for socialism in the 21st Century. The advocates of this line cannot find a single Latin American country to which the Venezuelan model will fit. Reinforcing national solidarity against the imperialist threat remains the main task in Venezuela and that cannot be entrusted to any section of the bourgeoisie.

To achieve that, the country needs to be more than a welfare state with control over the major sectors of an economy which needs diversification. Venezuela has no precedents to follow in this respect. What is important is that the masses are armed ideologically and physically against the prospect of an armed counter-revolution.

The election of Evo Morales in 2006 was not without bloodshed and much more blood was shed recently to defend the achievements of the past two years. It was the reactionaries who instigated and enacted violence; and it was mass mobilisation that enabled Morales to come to power and saved the country from a right-wing coup. The reactionary forces comprising the affluent classes are still intact; and to pretend that they will not raise their head again to strike even more viciously will be folly. Mass mobilisation without disarming the reactionaries will deprive Bolivia of effective resistance against a counter-revolutionary coup.

The Maoist Communist Party of Nepal has committed itself to multi-party democracy and expressed confidence in advancing towards socialism by peaceful means. They are able to say this from a position of strength made possible by over ten years of sustained People's War. Progress in that direction is bound to be hampered by the reactionaries, who are already agitating to reverse the changes brought about in the countryside in the course of the People's War.

The move to merge the Nepal Army and the People's Liberation Army is intended to disarm the reactionaries at least partially by loosening their grip on the armed forces while affirming the intention of the Maoists to give up the armed struggle. However, there is the strong possibility that the reactionaries and opportunists will obstruct progress and try to prevent the Democratic Republic from meeting the expectations of the masses. There is also the risk of revisionist ideology creeping in as it did in former socialist countries. These need to be resisted through mass struggle, not to plunge the country into a state of civil war but to prevent one from occurring.

The two Indian revisionist parties gleefully argue that since the Maoists of Nepal have given up armed struggle the Maoists in India should follow suit. They forget a few important parts of the story: firstly, the Maoists did not regret any part of their armed struggle; secondly, they gave up armed struggle after achieving an important goal, namely bring the dictatorial monarchy to an end, and from a position of strength both military and political. On what basis do they demand that Indian revolutionaries should disarm while the state is siding with the oppressor on every basis: class, caste, nationality, ethnicity, religion and gender?

Marxist Leninists know that revolution is not armed struggle pure and simple. It includes a number of forms of struggle and the inevitability of violence does not come out of any craving that they have for violence, but out of the need to confront an enemy at home who is armed to the teeth and backed by an even more heavily armed enemy of the humanity.

Both friendly and hostile contradictions involve struggle for their resolution. Marxist Leninists reject the use of violence to resolve contradictions among the people or for that matter with potential allies against the principal enemy, even if the alliance is in the short term.

To Marxist Leninists, revolution is an act of love for mankind and indiscriminate violence is therefore not acceptable; and the revolutionary forces resort to armed struggle after a careful consideration of not just the military aspects but also the political aspects as well as the implications for the masses. Their position is best summed up in the words of Mao Zedong:

Every communist must grasp the truth, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

The revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them.

Our principle is that the party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the party.

Their endorsement of armed struggle is a reflection of the objective reality, failing to recognize which will be to invite defeat. Nevertheless, by putting politics in command and adopting the mass political line Marxist Leninists place the people in command of the gun through the agency of the revolutionary forces.

When people who want social change and are ready to struggle for it are uncertain about the need for armed struggle, the decision is made for them by the oppressor, who never takes chances. Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador simply cannot afford to learn the expensive lessons that many a Third World country has learnt when it sought to move to socialism by peaceful means, without offending imperialism and local reaction.

Global Economy in Turmoil: Whose Crisis it?

Mohan

Introduction

The most serious financial crisis since the Great Depression (1929-1935) is far from over. Since April this year three of the largest independent investment banks in the US have ceased to be; and the US government will be a major stake holder in the American International Group (AIG), the world's largest insurer, to prevent its collapse. Following steps taken in the UK, the US Treasury is considering control of major US banks.

US-led finance, which dominated and shaped the global capitalist system, has suffered a big blow with major implications for the stability of the system and the power rivalries within it. Already the crisis has had a knock-on effect on West Europe and governments are busy bailing out large banks facing failure. Its impact went further and stock markets crashed in many countries with large Foreign Direct Investments (FDI).

Many blame fraud, greed and bad financial regulation for the crisis, not without justification. But the essential truth is that the crisis is not a result of any form of malfunctioning of the system but the outcome of the way it has functioned. The crisis has deep structural causes in the very nature of the system, in its insatiable thirst for profit and its callous disregard for the human condition. It is a manifestation of the anarchy of capitalist production, and concerns the essential relationship between the bloating of the financial sector in the US, the mechanics of financialisation, and the rapid globalisation of capitalist production, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This growth and expansion have led to severe imbalances between the financial system with its eyes on future profits, and the accumulation of

capital needed by the production systems for reinvestment of profit, based on the exploitation of wage-labour.

Run-up to the Present Crisis

The current crisis did not come out of the blues. It developed over several decades. The 'oil crisis' of 1974 and the rise in oil prices from their ridiculously low values to more realistic ones had an impact on economies based on cheap fuel. The US, following its humiliating and costly defeat in its Vietnam War in 1975, suffered hyper-inflation in the 1970's. Raising US federal interest rates to 20% between 1979 and 1982 to control inflation induced deep recession between 1980 and 1982. Meantime, the huge deficits for the military build-up starting under Reagan in 1980 were met by loans from Japan. "Junk bonds" and "leveraged buyouts" of companies moved to the fore during this period.

The first major Third World debt crisis occurred in 1982 with many Third World countries, especially in Latin America, on the verge of defaulting. Losses of the US creditor banks were effectively nationalized. In 1984 the US became the world's biggest debtor nation.

Deregulation of the London Stock Exchange in 1986 led to expanded activity in world markets; but was followed by the world stock market crash in 1987. The savings and loan meltdown in 1989-1991 in the US added a further \$150 billion to the national debt; recession was officially acknowledged in 1990, and house prices plummeted by 20%.

The financial markets worldwide continued to suffer crises. In 1990 the Japanese stock market index collapsed by more than two-thirds, and Japan with its bad bank loans and real estate suffered more than a decade of deflation. In 1994 Mexico had a crisis, and the US government bailed out American holders of Mexican bonds to the tune of \$50 billion. The Asian financial market crisis 1997-98 led to economic meltdown in South Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Thailand, whose 'economic miracles' were based on massive foreign credit and speculative investment. As Russia defaulted payments in 1998 and the hedge fund Long Term Capital Management was wiped out, the US government cobbled up a \$13 billion dollar rescue involving various banks.

The US economy went into recession in 2000-01. The collapse of the 'Dot.com' boom in 2000 (causing a 60% fall in NASDAQ) and the stock market plunge in 2001 following '9/11', constituted an important part of the bear market from 2000 to 2003. The Enron bankruptcy signalled a deepening crisis of "off-balance sheet" scams, followed in 2003 by

World.com. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell to 7,300 in 2002 (to recover slowly to 14,000 by 2007).

Arrival of the Crisis

Federal interest rates were reduced to 1% to stimulate lending and growth. This gave the banks ready access to plentiful cheap credit. In 2003 asset inflation (stocks, real estate), driven by massive easing of credit, accelerated the rise in house prices in the US and Europe. The banks pushed mortgages on people by fair and foul means and sold the mortgages to investment banks; the investment banks in turn combined these and other loans to create complex financial products for sale to large investors in the U.S. and elsewhere. These mortgage-backed securities circulating in financial markets became the basis for other loans. The ultimate collateral for this chain of borrowing and lending was, however, the original mortgage loans. When house prices fell and more and more mortgage holders were unable to pay back their housing loans, the original collateral lost much of its value.

Despite intervention in the face of mounting financial crisis by the US government, the representative and guardian of the interests of capital, US capitalism still faces danger in the form of mounting losses and collapses in the financial sector, and the drying up of lending channels which could drive the economy into a rapid recession.

Explaining the Crisis

Explaining the crisis as a flaw in the banking system leading to difficulty for financial institutions to raise capital conceals the truth that the crisis is intertwined with the path of world capitalist growth, and the imperialist programme of globalisation.

Globalisation has involved direct productive and financial investments abroad, including extensive outsourcing and subcontracting. It enabled the assimilation of the export economies of the Third World to the world capitalist market to create a globally-integrated manufacturing economy based on cheap-labour. Consequently, US trans-national corporations, excluding their sub-contracting component of imports, account for 40% of US imports now; and 30% of US corporate profit is generated abroad in super-profit sweatshops.

Globalisation, to be profitable for the corporations, required less restriction on the rapid transfer of capital. 'Free-trade agreements' with Third World countries became part of the process. With financialisation

dominating the path of world capitalist growth in the past 15 years, the financial services sector in advanced capitalist countries thrived. Financial institutions including investment banks provided financial services to gamble on interest rate variations, currency fluctuations and other risks. Financial speculation itself became an attractive means of short-term and lucrative profits.

Global financial assets rose sixteen-fold from \$12 trillion to nearly \$200 trillion between 1980 and 2007, far outstripping the growth of world output or the expansion of trade. During this period, finance and credit increasingly dominated growth in advanced capitalist countries. For example, in the US, the share of manufacturing fell to 12% of the GDP (production of goods and services) in 2005, compared with 20% for the financial services, whose share of total corporate profits rose from 5 to 40%.

Meantime, the artificially stimulated consumption and borrowing thrust China into rapid manufacturing growth and in turn worsened US trade deficits. The massive uninterrupted inflow of capital from abroad necessary to shore up the piling debt and US trade deficits has left Japan and now China with huge amounts of US Treasury debt.

Contradictions of Globalised Capital

Aggressive globalisation of production and markets and closer ties between economies brought the global economy to a situation in which the crisis in one economy could very quickly trigger a string of crisis across the world.

Attempts by financial institutions not only to reduce risk but also to profit from it by improvising a variety of diverse financial instruments spread over a wide field of international investments, in the end, made all concerned more vulnerable than before. Thus the expansion of credit which spurred economic growth also heightened global financial fragility. The global economy is now loaded with billions if not trillions of dollars of imaginary wealth that is inconvertible into tangible, productive assets.

In the end, the combined forces of globalisation and financialisation which spurred economic growth ended up obstructing profitable accumulation of capital and led to imbalances and instabilities. Thus what seemed a mighty force of capitalism has transformed itself into its opposite.

The US dollar is of crucial importance to US global supremacy and the whole of the current global economic order. It is not only the leading currency for international financial transactions and for holding foreign

exchange reserves but also an investable commodity used in the buying, selling and trading of international currency markets. A significant move away from the US dollar by foreign central banks and investors could set off a global monetary crisis and to the emergence of a rival currency, implying rival economic power. The signs are already there for this happening. Several South American countries have already signalled less dependence on the US dollar in bilateral trade. Movement of large economies away from the US dollar is no more a remote possibility.

The power of the imperialist system rests on the domination of vast territories by military might and where necessary brutal force. What US militarism costs to the US economy is seldom discussed by economists and politicians alike. Growing resentment of economic exploitation, political interference and aggression by US imperialism has led to resistance. The response of the US is to aggressively pursue the same wrong policies and get itself bogged down in un-winnable wars.

The Real Crisis

The impact of the financial meltdown is far reaching. People started losing their homes at the start of the crisis. The worth of their savings and investment in pension funds has come down by at least a fifth owing to the fall in share prices. The economic slowdown has started to lead to job losses especially among the low-paid, and will lead to curtailment of vitally needed social programs and services including health and education.

Globalisation has already made the Third World increasingly vulnerable to crises of global capitalism. The soaring of food prices over the last year and of petroleum this year, and its fall following the anticipated economic slowdown are partly related to financial speculation, and economic policies imposed on the Third World by imperialism. The plight of the people of the Third World, especially the poor will be unenviable in the months and probably years to come.

While the lives and livelihood of millions is at stake at home and abroad, the state is seeking to protect a financial system responsible for the disaster and rescue its owners and investor beneficiaries.

Political Implications

Despite the acuteness of the crisis and the chaos that it has already created and will continue to create in the months to come, neither the US imperialist system nor global capitalism will collapse. Unless it is

overthrown by revolution, it will find ways of survival and will re-emerge in a modified form but with the same essence of capitalist greed and at tremendous human cost.

It is true that the crisis has once again made socialism, communism and revolution, which were dismissed as outmoded in the last decade of the 20th Century now seem relevant, even more relevant than they were at the time of socialist revolutions in the wake of World War II. Some even think that the crisis of capitalism will inevitably lead to the strengthening of socialism. If that were possible, the US and much of Europe should have become socialist countries in the course of the great depression. But what the world witnessed was the rise of fascism in Europe.

Fascism is not a natural choice of the people. It is thrust upon them by the ruling classes by devious means. All forms of narrow nationalism, religious fundamentalism and sectarian ideologies are breeding grounds of fascism at times of serious economic and political turmoil.

When the capitalist class fails to resolve the economic crisis through the bourgeois democratic system, it sees fascism as its only option. Fascists use populist methods and pander to base emotions arising from racial and religious prejudices and hatred. Without a strong, well organised revolutionary left movement that is able and willing to lead a revolution to take state power and transform the existing social order, the threat of fascism is real.

The way things are the prospects for revolution are not bright in the advanced capitalist countries. But things can change. Revolutionary changes in the neo-colonies can affect the global economic order with implications for the advanced capitalist countries, the working class and the revolutionary movements there.

Whatever the outcome, the crisis has revalidated some old lessons for the oppressed and exploited people of the world: Capitalism in any guise cannot solve the problems of human need; every new form it adopts can only make life more miserable for mankind as a whole. It is only revolution and socialism that can offer hope for humanity.

NDP Diary

Stop Victimising the People of Vanni

NDP Statement to the Media

30th September 2008

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party concerning the plight of the people caught up in the war in the Vanni.

Nearly 250,000 people have been displaced and are undergoing suffering as refugees owing to the land and air attacks on the Vanni region. They urgently need food and medication. Infants suffer for shortage of milk powder. Patients suffer for lack of proper medical treatment. People live their daily life under tree shelter, in open fields and jungles. The government should promptly stop the use of food and medicine as weapons to win the war. The New Democratic Party emphatically demands that the government should stop victimising the people of the Vanni by starving them and urgently send to them essential food, milk powder medication and other essential needs.

The war is focussed on capturing Kilinochchi and freeing Vanni. The president and his ministers are vehemently justifying it. But so far, as a consequence of the ferocity of the war, nearly 250,000 people have been displaced and are in a desperate situation without food, clothing and shelter, unable to provide milk to infants and the necessary medication for patients. The president and ministers who talk about the Buddhist doctrine pay little heed to this human tragedy. Are not the people suffering in the Vanni citizens of this country? Is seeking to victimise them by starving them to be considered democracy or Buddhist doctrine? Mahinda Chinthana is today seen to be Military Chinthana. Thus we emphasise that, instead of making token gestures like sending a few trucks for the relief of the people suffering in the Vanni, urgent steps should be taken by the government to provide adequate amounts of essential food and medicinal goods.

At the same time we wish to point out that the national question, which is the cause of the war, cannot be resolved through the war to capture Kilinochchi and free Vanni. The way to end the war is only through a just political solution arrived at through extensive negotiations in which all the parties concerned could participate. Such a political solution is what is

needed by not merely the Tamils but also the entire people of the country. The Party firmly believes that a new climate in which the various ethnic groups could live in harmony could be created in that way.

SK Senthivel

General Secretary, New Democratic Party

Control of Television and Radio

NDP Statement to the Media

1st November 2008

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party denouncing the recent Gazette notification designed to control the freedom of the Media.

New regulations to control private television and radio stations as announced by recent gazette notification constitute a move to suppress media freedom. This action will lead to the suppression of all democratic views and objections against the government. These regulations make way for the Mahinda Chinthana government to continue its pursuit of war and to frustrate the protests of the people who are suffering under the economic crisis. The objection and legal action instituted by five media organisations in this context are welcome. The New Democratic Party strongly denounces the above gazette notification.

It is a matter of concern that the Mahinda Chinthana government, while boasting that it has not laid hands on media freedom and will not in the future, has published a gazette notification whereby a single minister will control private radio and television stations. There is the danger that this situation will be extended to its next stage. If this gazette notification comes into practice, the situation will arise in which the government will lay hands on the print media. Through it will emerge the dangerous situation where the freedom of the media and the freedom of expression of the people are controlled and suppressed.

Therefore, the New Democratic Party supports the just demands put forward by the five media organisations and strongly denounces the action of the government.

SK Senthivel

General Secretary, New Democratic Party

Concern for the Plight of Tamils

NDP Statement to the Media

8th November 2008

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party on the expression of support and sympathy towards the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils by the people of Tamilnadu.

The emotional wave of popular support and sympathy in Tamilnadu with a population of 65 million Tamils regarding the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils cannot in any way be ignored. Not merely the state and Central governments in India but also the government of Sri Lanka carrying out chauvinistic oppression should pay due attention to this state of surge in response to the sufferings of the Sri Lankan Tamils. This juncture requires the creation of a new climate for a just political solution of the national question. Under the prevailing conditions, it is necessary to make moves towards ceasefire, negotiations, a just political solution and peace in ways that are, unlike in the past, truly beneficial to the people. It is only initiatives in this direction that can put an end to the terrible desperation and suffering of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The New Democratic Party emphasises this need.

The hunger strike movement organised by the Communist Party of India on 2nd October was the event that provided the platform for the expression of the abundant feeling of support among the people of Tamilnadu for the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The hunger strike campaign, in which several parties including the Communist Party of India (Marxist) participated, surged as a tremendous wave across Tamilnadu. It was with the intention of preventing this surge from rising further and deflecting it that the Chief Minister M Karunanithi sought to organise an all party meeting, a threat to resign seats in the parliament, and a human chain campaign, and thereby stabilise the support for him and the DMK. Play acting by Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh and Pranab Mukherjee helped that activity. The wave of feelings of the Tamils was substituted for with 800 tonnes of food and medicine and collection of relief funds. Through this the state and central governments and the government of Sri Lanka thereby achieved consensus and solidarity among themselves. Meantime not only the Sri Lankan Tamils but also the people of Tamilnadu who expressed support for them got cheated. While various political parties there are only making use of the surge in support among the people of Tamilnadu for the Tamils of Sri Lanka for their purposes, they are unable

to come to a common policy or common consensus. The reason for this should be carefully examined.

The Marxist Leninist parties of India have already put forward as a policy the resolution of the Sri Lankan national on the basis of the principle of self-determination. Now the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) are emphasising that the Tamils of Sri Lanka should be granted autonomy within a united Sri Lanka. At the same time, the lack of a unified policy among the Tamil nationalist parties of Tamilnadu tends to weaken the popular upsurge. A similar situation prevails among various Sri Lankan Tamil factions.

Therefore, the New Democratic Party emphasises that a people's movement with ceasefire, negotiations, a just political solution and peace as common policy should be carried forward in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka.

SK Senthivel

General Secretary, New Democratic Party

An Anti-People Anti-National Budget

NDP Statement to the Media

11th November 2008

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Party issued the following statement on the Budget on behalf of the Politburo of the Party.

The President has presented a budget that has rejected their demand for a pay increase of Rs 5000 and not granted a pay rise for the 7.5 million state and private sector employees. But nearly 180 billion rupees has been allocated to carry forward the war. President Rajapaksha who has unashamedly imposed taxes on essential goods has offered eyewash in the name of a reduction in fuel prices. That will not reduce the prices of goods or control the rising cost of living. What is on offer is a budget that suits the war effort and the well-to-do upper classes while at the same time hostile to the entire working population. As a result the entire working population including the hill country plantation workers undoubtedly risk facing difficulties at various levels in the coming year.

The fourth budget of the Mahinda Chinthana government offers no relief or concession as consolation for the terrible difficulties faced by the working people. While the government servants have been cheated with the offer of Rs 1000 increase in the cost of living allowance, the private

sector employees have been totally abandoned with nothing on offer. Meanwhile the price of wheat flour and essential food items will be increased through taxation. The small decrease in fuel price will in no way compensate the rise in cost of living faced by the people. Claims that the budget is aimed at encouraging local production and one that will eliminate the negative aspects of globalisation are fanciful empty words. Who under the advice and guidance of the World Bank, the IMF and their likes privatised about a hundred state corporations and handed them over to foreigners and ruined agriculture by liberal importation. It was the UNP and the SLFP. It is not possible to rescue the country from this condition by empty words and budget speeches. How can national production be developed without proper development plans and financial allocations for industrial and agricultural production? The capitalists and the government are perpetrating a great injustice upon plantation workers who are involved in the export economy by slave driving them and keeping them in a state of poverty and starvation. It is to cover this up that the government has offered ministerial posts to bogus hill country trade union leaders for 'removal of injustice', 'youth empowerment' and 'plantation infrastructure' and thereby fooling the plantation workers. Similarly it is waving its flags of 'Eastern Dawn' and 'Northern Spring'. It is utter fraud to talk about development and national economy while transforming the North East into a cemetery, making Tamil people suffer in the wilderness of war, and duping the Sinhalese people by depicting these as 'heroism' and 'victory'.

Hence the Politburo of the New Democratic Party points out that the budget for 2009 proposed by the President and currently debated in parliament is an anti-people, anti-national war-oriented budget adding further unbearable burdens on the people.

SK Senthivel

General Secretary, New Democratic Party

Remembering Comrade Maniam

Founder General Secretary of the New Democratic Party, Comrade KA Subramaniam, fondly known as Comrade Maniam to comrades and friends passed away on 27th November 1999. Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party in a tribute to mark his nineteenth death anniversary said that Comrade Maniam was an exemplary and upright communist in word and deed. Excerpts from the tribute are given below.

Comrade Maniam joined the communist camp in his young days as a full time cadre. His full time political service and leadership qualities led

to more and more political responsibilities for him. The role that he played in the Northern Region Communist Party was solemn and of historical importance. His skills were useful right up to the level of the Central Committee. He put politics first and made Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought an aspect of his family life. He worked with dedication to his very end to ensure that his political work was beneficial to the people and rewarding to the Party.

Comrade Maniam served as the General Secretary of the Party and guided it during the last ten years of his life. His final years were marked by the intensification of severe political crises. The Sri Lankan and Indian armed forces and armed Tamil movements conducted themselves in ways hostile to the people. He as well as Party comrades faced life threats time and again. Eventually he was compelled to work from underground, and diabetes took a toll on his health. Amid all these, Comrade Maniam acted facing challenges and tests, and carrying forward the Party, displaying steel-like courage and ability characteristic of a communist.

The life that he led, characterised to its very end by his trust and confidence in the ideology of Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought that he embraced, is a wealthy legacy full of exemplary conduct. Comrade Maniam emphasized the importance of building up a Marxist Leninist party in Sri Lanka and acted on that basis. With far sight, he made his contribution to the theory and practice of the New Democratic Party to ensure that it followed that path. He breathed his last after making his revolutionary appeal that after his death the Party should carry forward its revolutionary duty and handing over the responsibility to his comrades. The greatest tribute that we could pay to his memory is to carry forward his final revolutionary wish amid difficulties faced on several fronts.

People's Campaign against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project: Third Anniversary of Mass Protest

2nd October 2008 marks the third anniversary of the People's Campaign against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project. Massive popular campaigns were carried out against the Upper Kotmale scheme. On 29th April 2005 there was a demonstration in Bogawantalawa town and on 8th May there was a protest meeting and demonstration in Talawakelle. Protest campaigns were launched throughout the hill country on 15th May

and day-to-day activities came to a standstill. This was followed by a demonstration opposite the Colombo Fort Railway Station on 3rd June.

The whole of September was declared a month of protest and protest activities were carried out. Protest was made to the Japanese government providing financial support for the project and a petition was handed in at the Japanese Embassy in Colombo. Many activists involved in the September protests faced opposition and threats. Action was filed against those involved in the poster campaign. On 25th September, a protest conference was convened at the Talawakelle Kathiresan Temple.

A mass protest demonstration was held in Talawakelle town on 2nd October 2005 as a strong expression of public resentment against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project and to mark the conclusion of the September campaign. Participants in the demonstration were attacked by thugs. The attack was an activity planned by the government and chauvinists. Reactionary hill country trade union leaders sought to deflect the attention of the people who participated in the protest movements and went on to support the government to implement the disastrous Upper Kotmale scheme.

The scheme is now being implemented, and the people are facing its environmental consequences. People affected by the scheme and compelled to relocate were promised comfortable housing, land and compensation in cash. The pledges have not been fulfilled. Those who acted against the protest campaign now regret the effects of the scheme. Yet, rather than join the protest movement or come forward to strengthen it they go pleading for compensation behind the very Hill Country leadership that betrayed the protest campaign. Some of the trade union leaders who were associated with the protest movement have since joined the government and are enjoying various favours.

No left organisation that was involved in the protest movement has betrayed the protest movement. Five comrades from the New Democratic Party, some comrades from the Railway Workers' Union, some travelling artists, and journalists associated with the paper *Akuna* were arrested twenty months ago under Emergency Regulations and are under detention without legal inquiry.

The people and those who fought for them are suffering oppression. But the Hill Country Tamil leaders who betrayed the people are enjoying favours. Such is the character of the Hill Country Tamil leadership.

NDP signature campaign for the trial or unconditional release of political detainees

The campaign launched earlier this year by the New Democratic Party to obtain 100,000 signatures on a petition demanding either the trial without delay or unconditional release of all Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil political prisoners who are being detained without trial is in progress. The Party expressed appreciation for the support received thus far and called for the continued cooperation and support of all those who uphold justice, freedom and democratic values to formally endorse and canvass support for the campaign.

Appeal for Support

The NDP publications, *Puthiya Poomi* and New Democracy uphold democratic values and defend the interests of the oppressed, independently of ethnic, religious or any such identity. They are unique among Sri Lankan journals for high journalistic standards, useful content and coverage of issues unaddressed by mainstream media and publications of political parties representing the interests of the exploiting classes. The rising costs of printing and postage have added to the financial burdens of the Party, which relies on financial support from supporters and well wishers, who also burdened by the rising cost of living. The Party has neither NGO funding nor rich patrons. Hence the Party appeals to readers and well wishers to contribute to its Publications Fund by adding to the subscription, making a donation, or sponsoring the publication of part or whole of an issue of either journal. Payments may be made to:

S Thevarajah, account number 452868

Bank of Ceylon, Supermarket Branch

Colombo 11, Sri Lanka

Please mention 'Publications Fund' in the covering note addressed to: **47, 3rd Floor, CCSM Complex, Colombo 11, Sri Lanka.**

Sri Lankan Events

Aliens in their Own Land

The Police required Tamils originating from the north and resident in Colombo since any time during the last five years to register with the police. Registration took place on 20th and 21st September at designated police stations and selected public premises. The exercise was repeated for Tamils from the East two weeks later. The move came days after Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksha expressed concern over the sharp increase in exodus from northern region to Colombo and surrounding areas in the last few weeks.

He argued that thousands arrive in Colombo each month from other parts of the war-torn nation, many of them ethnic Tamils fleeing fighting in the north and claimed that most of them were staying in Colombo without any valid reason and that they should go back to their areas. If that were the reason, asking Tamils who came to Colombo in the past five years to register suggests other intentions. It should be remembered that an attempt to expel Tamils from Colombo in June 2007 was thwarted by the intervention of the Supreme Court.

What is sad is that a blatant act of discrimination against a nationality by the government was allowed to go unchallenged. Tamil leaders protested but did not call for resistance. Had they initiated a campaign of defiance and canvassed support among parties representing other nationalities, especially the Sinhalese, it would have helped to improve understanding between the people of different nationalities and also to rebuild a campaign for peace.

Wound up by Dead Ropes

When the involvement of Indian technicians working with the Sri Lankan armed forces came to light following the LTTE attack on the Vavuniya air base on 9th September, the Communist Party of India organised a successful protest campaign against Indian military support for Sri Lanka.

Fearing that rival Tamil nationalists will make political capital of the issue, Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, limited damage by deflecting the wave of popular feeling by listing several demands to the Indian government including the cessation of supply of arms to Sri Lanka and persuading the Sri Lankan government to agree to a ceasefire. Possible Indian armed intervention too was hinted at. A two-week deadline was given and post-dated resignation letters were collected from all DMK MPs, to be handed in if the Indian government failed to meet the demands. Anyone who knows the politics of Tamilnadu would have seen through Karunanidhi's game and that nothing would happen.

The Sri Lankan media got agitated in expected fashion, with some applauding and others denouncing the events. Karunanidhi, cunning as ever, became an instant hero to Tamil newspapers, excluding the pro-government ones, and to Tamil nationalists. Words of wisdom from the Marxist Leninists fell on deaf ears. When the deadline was over Karunanidhi expressed satisfaction with unknown assurances by the prime minister, and the protest was over. The Marxist Leninists were prophetic once again.

Karunanidhi, to cover up, initiated fund-raising to supply essential food and medicine to those affected by the conflict. But the game is not over. Accusations and counter accusations fly across the political sky of Tamilnadu and the entertainment industry with a vested interest in business among the Tamil Diaspora has jumped in with its protest.

The Sri Lankan Tamil media rather than treat such gimmicks with the contempt that they deserve, still gives them publicity and thereby misleads the Tamils into counting on Indian intervention some day.

US Ambassador and Military Solution

US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake declared on 24th October in Chennai witnessing a wave of public protest against India's conduct the conflict in Sri Lanka that "America's experience in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere has taught us that terrorism cannot be defeated by law enforcement and military measures alone.... One way forward is for Sri Lanka to complete the work of the All Parties Representative Committee which has reached agreement on 90% of a blueprint for constitutional reform that most Sri Lankans believe offers great promise". He reiterated his position again in Colombo in November, where he also confirmed that the American policy on the Sri Lankan conflict will not change even if Obama is elected.

Quite a few have overreacted to Ambassador Blake's statement by subjectively reading into it their hopes or fears of US pressure on Sri Lanka for a ceasefire and negotiations. A careful reading will show that he only said that "terrorism cannot be defeated by law enforcement and military measures alone", thus not rejecting the continued use of force, as the US does in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. He calls for a political solution of some kind, but without the slightest hint of urging talks with the LTTE.

The US has been the biggest direct and indirect patron and promoter of the cruel war by the Sri Lankan state. Neither US imperialism nor the US ambassador has learnt anything worthwhile about fighting terrorism. The US creates and promotes conflict in the Third World and then brands as terrorists parties to the conflict that do not serve its interests. Thus it is well to note that Ambassador Blake has said nothing really new.

Conquer and Divide

The split induced more than four years ago in the LTTE facilitated the government to dislodge it from control in the East. The LTTE militarily overcame the faction calling itself the TMVP, which returned with a vengeance with support from the armed forces. Splits took place in the TMVP and the Pillayan faction seemed to have the upper hand and was helped by Karuna's exile and arrest in the UK. Things have changed since the electoral success in the Provincial Council election that made Pillayan the Chief Minister.

Karuna's return to Sri Lanka has altered the picture. With support from the armed forces, which once sided with Pillayan, and nomination as MP on the national list, replacing a JVP MP who was forced to resign by the JVP for unethical conduct, Karuna is now Prince Charming to the envy of not just Pillayan but also other Tamil leaders who are loyal to the ruling party. Karuna is being used by the government even to deny to the Eastern Provincial Council its own police force which Pillayan hoped would absorb former TMVP cadres. Karuna's utterances have provoked anger within the TMVP which asked him for explanation and then announced his removal as leader.

Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain: Mahinda Chinthanaya has scored yet another political victory for its chauvinist agenda.

Changing the Way of Reading Our History

Periodization in Sri Lankan History – Some Reflections with Special Emphasis on the Development of the State, RALH Gunawardana, Social Scientists Association, Colombo 5, 2008 pp. 81 +iii, Rs 350.00

It is common practice to divide the history as well as prehistory into periods. The way in which the history is divided in time is based on the socio-political approach of the historian, and conditions the way in which history is written, read and understood.

Professor Gunawardana draws attention to inadequacies in the way periodisation has been carried out in relation to Sri Lanka. He draws particular attention to the continuing practice of separation in terms of the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods and points out that this line of division is not helpful in understanding the history of Buddhism and other fields of activity such as irrigation and agriculture. As pointed out by the author the project undertaken is not aimed at a general periodisation applicable to all fields of activity but one with emphasis on politics and state.

Following a brief discussion of earlier approaches to periodisation and outlining how the author arrived at his method, he proceeds to demarcate periods as those of Chieftans, the Early State, Power-Sharing State (associated with the development of the hydraulic civilisation), the Early Medieval State (associated with the dissolution of the hydraulic civilisation), Multiple Kingdoms, Besieged Kingdoms (resisting European power), the Colonial State, and the Post-Colonial State.

The benefit of such an approach to understanding political and social changes in Sri Lanka are obvious, and reviewing the written histories of the country in this fashion would also help to dispel the myths on which narrow nationalism is built.

This short book is based on ideas that the author had developed since the 1960s as a young researcher and expressed at different times in his writings and is essential reading for young historians and all students of history.

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Interpreting the Social Role of Buddhism

Buddhism in India – Challenging Brahminism and Caste, Gail Omvedt, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 314+xi. (price not specified)

The book provides a fairly extensive coverage of the development and decay of Buddhism in India, and in its course explodes many of the myths relating to caste and Hinduism to which many historians and social scientists have knowingly or unknowingly subscribed.

Despite the sound historical account of the context and the nature of the development of Buddhism and its role in confronting Brahminism and caste, the book tends to idealise Buddhism as a thought system with answers to all human ills. As a result, the author takes exception even to the mildest criticism that draws attention to what may be an obvious inadequacy.

For example, Marxist commentators like Kosambi and Chattopaddyaya earn her wrath for claiming that Buddhism developed in the context of a slave society. To counter that position the author goes on to claim that the society at the time was “a dynamic and in many ways even capitalistic society” (p. 144), based on the existence of wage labour and monetary relationships and to call it an emerging commercial society.

The author, like many reputed writers of the history of India, pays poor attention to historical developments in the Dravidian south. The existence of a strong Buddhist movement from the pre-Christian era until around the 9th Century in the Tamil kingdoms and the existence of important Buddhist epics are well known but fail to draw due attention from the author. But the author cites in endorsing fashion the claims that the sangam poetess *Avvayaar* was the oldest known Buddhist woman *sant* and that Thiruvalluvar of the post *Sangam* period was her brother, neither of which has a serious basis.

References like “the *kural* written under Buddhist influence” (p. 57) are also misleading, since *kural* (commonly referred to as *tirukkural*) is known to show a stronger influence of Jainism.

The author accepts without further probing the claim by Ambedkar that the Dalits were in fact originally Buddhists who had been rendered untouchables (p. 17). Discussion of the *Bhakti* movements is patchy and hasty; and, in the process of attaching a Brahminic label, the author misses important progressive trends within them.

Perhaps because the work is confined to the political entity called India, comments by the author on Buddhism in ancient and medieval Sri

Lanka are, if at all, in passing. There no evidence of interest in the historical development of Buddhism in Sri Lanka where it survived as the dominant religion without break for longer than two millennia, despite proximity to India and continuous interaction with the South Indian kingdoms which were ruled mostly by 'Hindu' rulers, except for brief spells in which some rulers came under Jain or Buddhist influence. There is, however, more detailed reference to Anagarika Dharmapala becoming one of the most important leaders of a revivalistic and nationalistic Buddhism in Sri Lanka (p. 234).

The main weakness of the book is a lack of objectivity in many places. That could probably be the result of the author's uncritical endorsement of Ambedkar and his interpretation of Buddhism to advance the Dalit Cause, and a tendency to defend Buddhism against any school of thought that questions its relevance or adequacy in any context. Ambedkar's hostility towards Marxism has been inherited by his adherents who identify themselves with Dalitism, especially in Tamilnadu. The author too shows such inclinations.

Ambedkar's leading the conversion to Buddhism of a large number of Dalits in Maharashtra was an effective protest against the caste system and exposed the hypocrisy of MK Gandhi. His impact on Dalit awareness was undoubtedly great; but Buddhism *per se* failed to take forward the cause of the Dalits. EV Ramasamy (commonly known as Periyar) correctly pointed out that leaving Hinduism for any other faith would be of no benefit; he prescribed the rejection of religion as a whole and confrontation of Brahminism as the way forward for the entire community.

Omvedt would have helped to understand the fall of Buddhism if she had probed how Buddhism has been abused by the state and how it has become a powerful tool in the hands of imperialism and reaction, as exemplified by the conduct of the Dalai Lama, and the Buddhist establishment in neighbouring Sri Lanka.

The book is nevertheless essential reading for those who want to understand the respective roles played by caste, Brahminism and Buddhism in India, and especially those with illusions about the liberal nature of 'Hinduism'.

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International Events

US: Changing of the Guard

The US presidential election was an important event since US is the most powerful but parasitical nation on earth, and the biggest importer of a wide range of minerals, raw materials and finished products as well as skilled persons from the rest of the world. It is also the biggest exporter of war and military equipment.

The election also had other important aspects. Obama's convincing victory was made possible by Black liberation struggle through the erosion of white supremacy; and marks an important psychological break for what has been a fundamentally racist society. Obama is arguably the best political speaker of the United States in recent decades, and cleverer and more educated than the reactionary John McCain. Yet he had a hard time overcoming racial prejudice and had to make some unprincipled compromises to win nomination by his party and eventually the election.

The election was held amid the worst financial crisis faced by the US and the world since the 1930s. His electoral success was considerably helped by the crisis, owing to the association of his opponent with the policies of the present government which was in no small measure responsible for the mess that the US is in today.

Obama has pledged to completely exempt the poorest from taxes, reduce taxes for the middle classes, and increase taxes for the wealthiest. He has claimed that the revenues will not be used to bail out banks.

In the light of the current financial crisis and its impact, the American people are more worried about the economy than the war in Iraq that they did not want in the first place, or for that matter the war in Afghanistan. Obama has repeatedly denounced the ruinous spending on Bush's Iraq war paid for by US citizens, and promised to end it and bring home the troops, but not all of them though.

The pressing problems of the world are not really a major concern to Obama. He supports the American system and will be supported by it. Thus, his commitment to 'fight terrorism' will stand and some of the troops will go to Afghanistan to join the other unjust war. He has also

conceded during his contest for nomination on defending 'Israel's right to exist' and Israeli refusal to talk to Hamas.

There is no doubt that Obama is the better choice from the point of view of domestic politics. The less affluent cannot suffer another term under a president representing the most corrupt and reactionary sections of the exploiting classes. But Obama's election will not transform the American society to bring justice to the Blacks and Latin Americans who continue to be discriminated against. Nor can it bring to an end the consumerism which is a major ill of American society and an important contributor to the present crisis.

The gun lobby and the tobacco lobby will not go away and the parasitic insurance and health businesses will do their best to subvert public health and welfare for the poor. These forces have succeeded against past presidents who declared their good intentions about gun control, public health and social welfare.

Had the bellicose McCain won the Presidency, the danger of a war would have increased, but let there be no illusions about the ability of Obama to transform the Pentagon, the CIA and other arms of the state that represent vested interests with a major stake in maintaining the US at war with humanity.

Thus there is some reason to celebrate, but with a lot of caution and little to hope for in the Third World.

US: the Master Arms Peddler

The Bush administration is pushing through a number of weapons deals abroad to rearm Iraq and Afghanistan, contain North Korea and Iran, and strengthen ties with former Russian allies. The US Department of Defence (DoD) has, so far in this fiscal year, approved the sale or transfer of over \$32 billion in military equipment, compared with \$12 billion in 2005. Deliveries on orders placed now will continue for years as legacy of Bush.

In the Persian Gulf region, the rearmament is driven mainly by fears of Iran. The Emirates are planning to spend \$16 billion on missile defence systems from the US according to DoD notifications to Congress. The Emirates also intend to order offensive weapons. Saudi Arabia, this fiscal year alone, has signed at least \$6 billion worth of agreements to buy weapons from the US — the highest figure for Saudi Arabia since 1993. Israel, a major buyer of US military equipment, is also increasing its orders, including four US-made coastal warships worth \$1.9 billion. South Korea has signed sales agreements worth \$1.1 billion this year.

The US, for long the world's top arms peddler, increased its share of the global arms trade from 40% in 2000 to nearly 52% in 2006, with Russia at 21%. The list of nations with US as a primary source of major weapons systems has grown in recent years.

The value of foreign arms deliveries completed by the US showed only a modest increase from an average of \$12 billion between 2004 and 2006 to \$13 billion in 2008. Complex weapons systems take time to produce so that the increase in sales agreements will be reflected in the arms deliveries of the next several years.

The surge in weapon deals since 2006 is provoking concerns not only among advocates of arms control but also friends of Israel who fear that the flow of sophisticated military equipment into the Middle East may one day compromise the military edge of Israel.

India: Who is to Blame for the Floods?

The State of Bihar experienced perhaps its worst flood disaster in history following a breach in the embankment of the river Koshi, a river important to northern Bihar, with its source at an elevation of around 7000 m in the Himalayas and its upper catchment in Nepal and Tibet. Parts of Nepal too suffered from the flooding. The river is known to meander because of its heavy sediment load and its course has shifted by about 160 km between 1723 and 1948.

On 18th August 2008, at a time of relatively moderate flow of the Koshi, when the embankment was breached in Western Kusaha Panchayat in Nepal, the Government of Bihar failed to respond, and the damage became irreversible. The Koshi spilled out of the plateau of silt that it had been allowed to build over decades to inundate four Panchayats of Sunsari district in Nepal, with a population of some 35,000 and then spread to the east through Bihar, towards its old channels leading to the Ganges. Blocked on the west by towering embankments, and to the south by raised roadways, the river created a massive lake, which broke through to the Ganges in September.

By 31st August, more than three and a half million people from over 1700 villages in 16 districts were affected, with thousands dead, well over 100,000 hectares (1000 square kilometres) flooded, and over 280,000 houses damaged. The government response to the disaster was criminally inadequate; and the officialdom sought to exonerate itself by calling it a 'natural calamity' and treating the 18th August breach in the eastern embankment of Koshi at Kusaha, on the Indo-Nepal border, as a unique, one-off event.

The genuine left and concerned social activists promptly pointed out that neither the flood nor the response to it was a natural calamity and that the negligent and callous conduct of central and state governments over the past fifty years was to blame. The Bihar Government yielded to a demand for a judicial enquiry which is expected to come up with a report by March 2009.

Critics of the state and central governments have also pointed out that, since early 1960s, whichever party was in power, the people of Bihar suffered as consequences of official apathy towards the embankments on the Koshi; and that this time it was a clear case of dereliction of duty by the state government in repairing upstream barrages ahead of the monsoon of 2008 that has resulted in devastation.

The technocrats and their political bosses in Bihar first accused Nepal of renegeing on commitments to maintain and dredge the barrage and the embankments on its side, owing to preoccupation with political events there. The truth was that the maintenance of the barrage and the embankments was the responsibility of the Bihar Water Resources Department. The explanation then became that the flooding was due to the river tending to change course to move east. That has led to bigger questions about the role of the embankments constructed along the river and whether they were not meant to prevent the river from meandering

Amid this tragedy, Prime Minister Prachanda of Nepal following a visit to Sunsari, as one of his first tasks as PM, said that the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1954 was "a historical blunder." Indian promises of benefits to Nepal in the 1954 Koshi agreement (and subsequent amendments) have turned out to be lies. The irrigated land is within India; "concessional" electric power is charged for at high rates; compensation for submerged or leached Nepali lands remains unpaid after many decades; promised roads were not built by India; and the embankments were not maintained and they collapsed.

An Article in *Analytical Monthly Review*, September 2008 said: "It is not only the embankments that have been breached, the 1954 Koshi agreement -- an unequal treaty if ever there were one -- has been breached as well. Under international law it is now no more than a scrap of paper. There is no hope for a rational solution to the dramatic challenges of the ecological water crisis from the criminal gang of bourgeois Bihari politicians, from deranged giant dam proponents, from Chidambaram & Co, from the "cross-fire" murdering generals of Bangladesh, or from the gentle hands of the Sangh Parivar. But Nepal is a necessary participant in any water plan; that is where the rivers commence. When Prachanda sits down to renegotiate the water treaties he will be representing not only Nepal, but the hopes of all in the region

for a better future. Yet ultimately if we are successfully to manage the looming environmental water disaster it shall require a radical change in the balance of class forces in society in both India and Bangladesh; we can hope that Nepal will light the path”.

Also relevant is the comment by Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and Robert Wasson in *Water First: Issues and Challenges for Nations and Communities in South Asia* (Sage, New Delhi, August 2008): “What lessons does the Koshi flood teach us? The recent flood shows that anthropogenic causes have heightened and aggravated the flood impacts, and that ‘flood control’ as seen by the state may not necessarily be the only viable response to floods. The technology of such control relies overtly on insulating floodplains from rivers by embankments and dams. The current disaster devastating the lives of so many poor people emphasises the urgent need to rethink water management strategies and policies. The future well being of millions of rural Indians is at stake because it is well-known that the official philosophy of water management in India has been keenly in favour of the construction of capital-intensive large structures such as dams and embankments on rivers. The government is currently toying with the ‘Riverlink Project’, based on the idea of linking all rivers through a series of canals to create a gigantic water-grid for the transfer of water from one part of the country to another. The long-term environmental impacts of such a gigantic project can only be assumed”.

Nepal: One Country, Two Armies?

Despite the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) agreeing to a multi-party democracy and to struggle peacefully towards its goal, external pressures still exist and find expression through various forces within Nepal and without. There are several outstanding issues on which the government will be tested, and the opportunists in the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist) will continue to barter their support and participation in government for the posts and privileges that they have always been craving after. The next big issue concerns the merging of the Nepal Army (formerly the Royal Nepal Army) and the People's Liberation Army. Their fusion is not simple, and raises fresh issues.

Comments below by Chetan Kunwar on the subject in an article in the CPN(M) journal *Red Star* of 11.9.2008 are particularly significant.

There is a serious debate about fusing the two armies. Nepal is now a Federal Democratic Republic (FDR), and we have to concretize the peace process to carry it to the logical end. The fusion of the two

armies is compulsory. However, no other parties know anything about the outline and plan of fusing the armies except the CPN-Maoist. Rather, the parliamentary political parties are misusing the issue of fusing the armies only as a bargaining card for power sharing. These political parties should try and be sincere if they are mature and honest in politics. The popular phrase 'according to the virtue and vice' should be the basis of fusing the armies. This will be the one of the principal basis of the fusion.

Logic without essence is only logic to pass time over trifling issues that can only create problems. The Nepal Army (NA) has a history of protecting the nation by fighting against British colonialist intervention and against Tibetan invasion in the earlier periods of the unification of Nepal. The NA has a history of dedication, sacrifice and devotion for the protection of the nation and the nationality, including its tasks in peace keeping under United Nations in many different countries of the world. However, there is also the negative aspect that it has always been used to crush the people's movements and the people's war. The NA should review its misdeeds of the past.

On the other hand, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has a new unprecedented record in the history of Nepal. The sacrifice, dedication and devotion of the PLA have liberated the nation and the Nepalese people from the chains of injustice, exploitation, repression and discrimination and the external interference. It has fought for the establishment of a new glorious history of Nepal.

In other words, the NA has played an important role for territorial integrity and the PLA has played an important role to aid the liberation of the Nepalese people and making them sovereign. Now, Nepal has its own new identity in the world. A small country, with its unknown identity in the world before revolution, has now been introduced in the world through the identity of a decade long People's War (PW) and the PLA. These historical achievements should be synthesized in building the new Nepal.

The fusion of both the armies, the NA affiliated since the beginning of the unification of Nepal and the PLA fighting for the liberty and sovereignty of the people, will be the new model of the national army in Nepal. So far as the issue of the influence of any ideas and ideology over the army is concerned, we should be clear that any army itself is a means. It is necessary that the means is guided or used by any idea means leadership. Therefore, it is not necessary to blame each other over the question of purity. If we talk about purity, the NA will remain loyal to the former monarchy and the PLA will be loyal to CPN-Maoist. This is a hangover from the past that may lead the two

armies into conflict. Everyone must be serious over the question of fusing the two armies.

No army is without ideas or ideology. An army is not a machine without mind and life. Therefore, we should be aware of the debates on fusing the armies, and this debate should not be expressed in a random way. The debate should be held in a plan, set and sequence to carry it up to a logical end. Understanding and transformation is necessary here. The NA should change their old ideas and thinking because of the changing situation. Certainly, there are challenges. Likewise, PLA should professionalize and bring changes according to its changed role and responsibility. The democratization of the NA and professionalisation of the PLA is the meeting point of the fusion of both the armies. Any bias is another obstacle that rejects fraternity and the fusion. After merging and building a national army, it will be guided by the ideas of the federal democratic republic.

However, because of the external influence on the politics of Nepal, an environment of confidence that problems will not occur in this sensitive process of fusion does not exist. However, we have our own stand and expect that the national interest should be in the fusion of the two armies, whatever the interests of foreign powers may be; only the national interest can fulfil the dream of all the Nepalese people.

Pakistan: Growing Anger

Owing to frustration that the US-led coalition troops are not winning the war in Afghanistan there is an increasing tendency to blame Pakistan for the failure. While calling for maximum cooperation from the Pakistani government and military, the US policy makers are trying to bully Pakistan into co-operation with the forces of occupation in Afghanistan on terms dictated by the US.

Since early September, US forces based in Afghanistan repeatedly carried out armed intrusions and air attacks in Pakistan's tribal areas in Baluchistan and the NWFP. These attacks by the US forces have led to anger among the people and to calls by mass organizations to the government to retaliate against attacks by US-led forces.

In September, tribal elders in the border regions affected by US intrusions and attacks warned of attacks on US military bases in neighbouring war-stricken Afghanistan in retaliation for recent US air and ground strikes.

Pakistan Trade Union Federation General Secretary Gulzar Ahmed called upon the representatives of trade unions to hold strikes and demonstrations across the country, slamming the political parties for keeping mum over the situation.

Nisar Ali Khan, leader of the main opposition PML-N, said that his party was very concerned about the country's security and demanded that the PPP-led government convened a joint session of parliament as soon as possible.

Resentment is also strong within the armed forces and found expression in Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani's words warning that the country's borders will be defended at all costs and that the military would decide to respond to coalition troops. In fact Pakistani troops fired at US military aircraft on 15th September when they entered Pakistani air space in South Waziristan and forced the aircraft to retreat.

The Communist Worker Peasants Party (CMKP) in a recent analysis of the political situation noted that "US imperialism is knocking on our door and invading our territory. In this regard, the fight against US imperialism assumes even greater importance than before. CMKP calls upon the democratic government and the Pakistan army to defend the territorial integrity and the people of Pakistan. When military incursions become the norm, then protests and seminars are not enough. The circumstances call for militant action against imperialism. US imperialism is the enemy of all the people of the world. Its militarist and aggressive policies have resulted in the worst massacres in recent history. We must unite all the democratic forces of Pakistan to fight against US imperialism."

The CMKP also cautioned the people that none of the bourgeois-democratic parties had the stomach to wage a relentless struggle for bourgeois-democracy in Pakistan, and called upon the Communists to organize the working masses to take the democratic struggle towards a people's democratic revolution. It also emphasised the need to persevere in the struggle against military rule as the present democratic government is subservient to the civil military bureaucracy; against US imperialism which is invading Pakistani territory; and against and Islamic fundamentalism because of its reactionary nature.

Ecuador: A New Constitution

Ecuador, with a population of 13.9 million, overwhelmingly approved a new 444-article constitution by a referendum on 29th September with a 64 to 28 percent majority.

The new constitution, inspired by the repudiation of neo-liberal policies by Venezuela and Bolivia, is designed to strengthen the government's hold on the economy now based chiefly on oil, banana and coffee exports, and remittances by its emigrants; and recovers the role of the state in participatory development planning in areas such as health care, education, housing, and water supply, among other things. It guarantees universal health care, free education, and a dignified and adequate home, independent of one's social and economic situation, and proposes the development of policies to eradicate inequality and discrimination towards women, including the valuation of non-paid work in the home. The constitution also addresses the concerns of indigenous people on the exploitation of protected areas.

While the constitution stops short of nationalising the country's natural resources, it declares energy, telecommunications, transport, non-renewable natural resources, refining of hydrocarbons, bio-diversity, genetic heritage, and water as strategic sectors where the state reserves the right to administer, regulate, control, and manage.

The constitution also has articles important to sovereignty that prohibit foreign military bases, which is particularly important since the violation of Ecuadorian territory by Colombian forces with strategic support from the US. The US military bases stationed in Ecuador for controlling drug trafficking have already been persuaded to leave.

The constitution gives the president more control over the *coup d'etat* prone armed forces and the right to stand for two consecutive 4-year terms; and the Constitutional Assembly (CA), which drafted the new constitution, will organize general elections for February 2009, in which President Rafael Correa is likely to seek re-election. Consensus has been reached on the composition of the Legislation and Supervision Committee comprising 76 members of the CA and to various sub-committees, to facilitate the transition.

How successfully the government can deliver on the pledges in the new constitution will depend on how effectively it frees the economy from imperialist control. Defending the sovereignty of the country will require greater vigilance and mobilisation of the toiling masses against intervention and subversion by the US supported by local reactionaries.

Bolivia: The People Win Again

After months of street battles and political meetings, a new draft of the Bolivian constitution was ratified by Congress on October 21, and will be put to a national referendum on 25th January 2009. If it is accepted, a general election will be held in December 2009. Given the support that Morales has, the referendum is likely to adopt the constitution.

The draft constitution includes changes to allow the redistribution of land and gas wealth for the benefit of the majority of the country and to give increased rights to indigenous people. Questions still remain regarding amendments that were made to the original draft as concession to secure the support of the opposition legislators.

The road to the new constitution was long, complicated, and often violent. It started with the election of members to the Constituent Assembly (CA) on 2nd July 2006 and the right-wing opposition used all its might to block the advance of the CA and set off a wave of violence against assembly delegates so that the CA was forced to convene in a military compound, without most of the opposition delegates, to draft and adopt the new constitution in December of 2007.

The Congress approved the constitution only after a 160 km long march by more than 100,000 comprising union members, activists, students, farmers, and miners from Caracollo in the Oruro Department (major administrative region) to the capital La Paz, demanding a referendum on the constitution. President Evo Morales participated in sections of the march stretching 15 km, the longest ever in La Paz.

The indigenous nationalist project of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) government led by Morales is seen as a serious threat to the economic interests of the agribusiness elites and gas trans-nationals. They had through their control of the prefectures and civic committees of the departments of the east, worked hard to stop the advance of the indigenous nationalist project. The winning of a vote of confidence by Morales with 67% of the national vote on a recall referendum on 10th August 2008, with not less than 40% in any department, made the right-wing so desperate that it heightened its clamour for full autonomy for the five right-wing controlled Departments in eastern Bolivia which are rich in natural resources. Encouraged by the US, it launched an unsuccessful 'civil war' and resorted to murderous violence against the supporters of Morales. In Pando and Tarifa the oil and gas pipelines were blown up, causing extensive damage and costing millions of dollars in lost state revenues. Besides, the US encouraged and guided the opposition in its efforts to subvert Bolivia since Morales took over as President.

The trouble created by the Bolivian reactionaries made things worse for them, and led to greater solidarity among the oppressed people of Bolivia. Agreement was signed on 17th September by the indigenous, peasant, urban and social movements constituting the National Coalition for Change and the Bolivian Workers Centre (COB) on a seven-point proposal to defend the unity of Bolivia and democracy against foreign and local subversion, consolidate support for the Morales government and its social programme, expel the US ambassador for his role in facilitating subversion, and bring to justice Leopoldo Fernández, the Governor of Pando Prefecture for violating the constitution and ordering the killing of thirty poor farmers who were in a large group marching to Cobija (the capital of Pando) on 11th September.

Morales promptly expelled the US ambassador for his role in the coup conspiracy and acted fast to arrest Fernández, who is now facing trial on charges of genocide.

Another good outcome of the attempted reactionary coup was that three days after the massacre, an emergency summit of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) unanimously declared its "fullest and decided support for the constitutional government of President Evo Morales" and warned that "its respective governments energetically reject and do not recognise any situation that implies an intent of civil coup d'etat, the rupture of institutional order, or that compromises the territorial integrity of the Republic of Bolivia".

The events in Bolivia have politically awoken the indigenous people of South America whose organisations lost no time to express support for the Morales government and to denounce US meddling.

Argentina and Brazil: Ditching the Dollar

Brazil and Argentina launched in October the Payment System on Local Currency (SML) for bilateral trade standing at about 25 billion US dollars per year. This arrangement will do away with the US dollar as a medium of exchange and help small and medium industries in both countries by saving them bank charges for converting local currencies to US dollars.

While the SML is due to gradually eliminate the dollar from bilateral trade, the US dollar will play a role in transactions, as the respective central banks will set the exchange rate for the local currencies with respect to the dollar.

It is expected that countries like Paraguay and Uruguay may soon follow suit, although this move is far from the necessary move for South America to free the economy from control by the US dollar.

Venezuela: Falling Oil Prices Don't Hurt

President Chávez rejected as part of the great campaign to foment fear and uncertainty among Venezuelans claims in the international media that Venezuela's "Bolivarian Revolution" will be devastated by falling oil prices from over \$145 in July to around \$65 in October . He argued that, even if the price fell back to 2006 levels of around \$55 per barrel, Venezuela would continue to grow socially and economically; and pointed out that its economy grew by 15% in 2004, when the average price was \$32.8 per barrel, and grew for five years, four with average oil price lower than it is today. Finance Minister Alí Rodríguez, presenting the 2009 budget proposal for approval by the National Assembly, predicted an average oil price of \$60 per barrel next year, and economic growth by 6%.

Venezuela enacted a tax on windfall oil profits last year, and now has nearly \$40 billion in foreign currency reserves. In 2005 it transferred 60% of its reserves out of US banks into a Swiss bank, and diversified the remaining deposits, which Rodríguez said protected the reserves from the recent collapse of US banks.

"For 10 years they have been saying that the Venezuelan economy is sinking, and now they are the ones who sank," Chávez commented.

(Source: venezuelanalysis.com)

Lebanon: US Re-supplies the Army

The US has resumed military supplies to the Lebanese army. New York Times reported that "the weapons are the leading edge of a new American commitment to re-supply the military of this small but pivotal Middle Eastern country, which emerged three years ago from decades of Syrian domination". So far, the deliveries of heavy weapons have been too small to require formal notification to Congress and the arms deals are in their early stages according to US.

The revival of American military assistance, ceased since the 1980s when the US assisted the Lebanese Army only to end up with US troops trapped in a civil war, is meant to build an armed force that could counter Hezbollah which controls southern Lebanon in defiance of attempts by

Lebanese reactionaries to disarm it. Hezbollah remains the only Lebanese force that has successfully defended the country against Israel.

Officials in the US military and administrative establishment are reported to have expressed concern about extensive military aid to a Lebanon as Hezbollah has close Syrian and Iranian ties and continues to gain political power. Also Israel is known to have been lobbying for a lower level of support in view of the risk of US tanks and helicopters being used against Israel one day.

US imperialism and Zionists seem to want to have it both ways everywhere in the Middle East but that is not always possible.

Colombia: Workers Rise in Protest

The repressive US-backed Colombian regime, locked in conflict for over half a century with leftist guerrilla movements in control of a sizeable part of Colombia is now facing increasing resistance in the government controlled parts of the country.

The one-day strike on 23rd October called by the Trade Union Confederation (CUT) proved to be particularly strong among state employees and teachers, but also affected all sections of the economy. The strike was organized by the CUT and social and political organizations, to protest the imposition by the government of a state of Domestic Concussion, decreed on October 18. The strikers also expressed their support to indigenous communities, which since October 11 have carried out several actions to demand the restitution of ancient lands and the end of outrages and killings of many of them.

Schools, hospitals and courts around the country were closed; and over 700,000 Colombians took part nationwide in marches held in 40 cities around the country protesting against the pro-US government of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez.

Colombia: Army Commander Resigns

American-trained Gen. Mario Montoya, the commander of Colombia's army resigned on 4th November after an investigation linked dozens of military personnel under his command to the killing of civilians by the armed forces to inflate the number of insurgents or criminal gang members killed in combat. The scandal has already led to a shake-up in the Colombian military even as it gloats over its 'victories' against leftist guerrillas in recent months.

General Montoya was the most prominent among senior officers who chafed at greater judicial scrutiny of their methods in their victories against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Colombia's largest rebel group, including the staged 'rescue' of 15 hostages in July. Political analysts in Colombia said that the isolation of Montoya from an investigation in recent weeks into the latest claims involving civilian killings was a move by Uribe's government to protect him. Prosecutors are also investigating accusations that 1,015 civilians had been killed outside combat since 2002 when Uribe intensified the war against the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

The scandal demands scrutiny on Uribe's government and its top ally, the US, which provides Colombia with about \$500 million a year in military assistance and is responsible for vetting Colombian military units for human rights abuses before they can receive American aid.

(Source: New York Times)

Bulgaria: Crime Rules

The New York Times reported in September that lives of politicians in Bulgaria can be as cheap as spent bullets, with murky business groups waging a murderous struggle for their cut of everything from real estate deals to millions in European aid. More than 125 contract killings occurred since 1993, according to a list compiled by the US Embassy in Sofia, excluding at least four killed this year; and most of the killings remain unsolved.

The NYT, which labelled Bulgaria as the most corrupt country in the 27-member EU, pointed out that EU membership has arguably only made criminal networks richer, raising worries that if the EU cannot tamp down criminal activity in a member state it may have little sway over other fragile nations wanting to join. The paper warned Western nations of the heavy costs of drawing fragile post-communist states into their orbit, away from Russia's influence.

The US, which helped Bulgaria into NATO, is pumping in money to boost its armed forces. The EU, has pledged 11 billion Euros in aid despite concern that the money rather than halt crime will feed it.

The situation in Bulgaria is a continuation of the kind of situation that Russia and several former members of the Soviet Union faced after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the core of the problem is capitalist greed; and differences lie in the style of operation of the capitalist classes.

Renewed Spirit

Ithayaraja

***In this nation abundant in democracy
Where even a meal time snack
Cannot be decided upon freely.
While pestles pound away uninhibitedly
Security fences of the police
Keep track of places where needles pierce.
While big rats grow fatter
The intelligence services
Meticulously monitor on their computers
The movement of little mice.***

***We have been forced to be joyful
On cemetery grounds
Over which vultures encircle.
Like little creatures
That perish
In the contest of skill
Of the jungle dwellers
Human beings, renew their spirit
To carry on their daily tasks.***

(Translated from Meeralkal, anthology of Ithayaraasan, 2008)

(Continued from the inside front cover)

**My father ... descends from the family of the plough
Not from a privileged class
And my grandfather ... was a farmer
Neither well-bred, nor well-born!
Teaches me the pride of the sun
Before teaching me how to read
And my house is like a watchman's hut
Made of branches and cane
Are you satisfied with my status?
I have a name without a title!**

**Write down!
I am an Arab
You have stolen the orchards of my ancestors
And the land which I cultivated
Along with my children
And you left nothing for us
Except for these rocks ...
So will the State take them
As it has been said?!**

**Therefore!
Write down on the top of the first page:
I do not hate people
Nor do I encroach
But if I become hungry
The usurper's flesh will be my food
Beware ...
Beware ...
Of my hunger
And my anger!**

A State of Siege

Mahmud Darwish

**The siege is lying in wait.
It is lying in wait on a tilted stairway
in the midst of a storm.**

**We are alone. We are alone to the point
of drunkenness with our own aloneness,
with the occasional rainbow visiting.**

**We have brothers and sisters overseas...
kind sisters, who love us...
who look our way and weep.
And secretly they say
"I wish that siege was here, so that I could"
But they cannot finish the sentence.
Do not leave us alone. No.
Do not leave us alone.**

**Our losses are between two and eight a day.
And ten are wounded.
Twenty homes are gone.
Forty olive groves destroyed,
in addition to the structural damage
afflicting the veins of the poem, the play,
and the unfinished painting.**

(2002, translated by Ramsis Amun)

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