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Contradictions among Fraternal Parties

The Presidential Election

SK Senthivel

The Notion of 'Just Peace'

Asvaththammaa

Poetry: *Jim Connel, Bertolt Brecht,
Ahmad Shamlu, T Pradeesh*

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Red flag

Jim Connel

The people's flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our martyred dead,
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold,
Their hearts blood dyed its every fold.

Then raise the scarlet standard high. (chorus)
Within its shade we'll live and die,
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying here.

Look round, the Frenchman loves its blaze,
The sturdy German chants its praise,
In Moscow's vaults its hymns are sung
Chicago swells the surging throng.

It waved above our infant might,
When all ahead seemed dark as night;
It witnessed many a deed and vow,
We must not change its colour now.

It well recalls the triumphs past,
It gives the hope of peace at last;
The banner bright, the symbol plain,
Of human right and human gain.

It suits today the weak and base,
Whose minds are fixed on pelf and place
To cringe before the rich man's frown,
And haul the sacred emblem down.

With heads uncovered swear we all
To bear it onward till we fall;
Come dungeons dark or gallows grim,
This song shall be our parting hymn.

[This song by Jim Connel is among the most famous songs of the working class.]

From the Editor's Desk

The presidential election offered no meaningful choice to the people. In a situation where political desperation decided electoral alliances, the JVP and UNP joined hands to field General Sarath Fonseka as their common candidate against the incumbent Mahinda Rajapakse. The two main candidates competed on the basis of credit for winning a long drawn out war, which was avoidable in the first place and could have been brought to a negotiated end had the parties to the conflict used the peace negotiations to address the underlying issues rather than to reinforce their positions and gain political mileage. None of the major political parties showed an interest in resolving the national question or in addressing the economic problems arising from the submission of the economy to imperialist and hegemonic predators and aggravated by the war.

The country is as divided as it was during the war, and the re-election of Rajapakse has changed nothing. Foreign hegemonic interests played a role in the presidential election, with India getting the better of the US. And foreign meddling is likely in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Erosion of the democratic and human rights continues in every sphere of public activity. During the presidential elections, the opposition was vociferous about the breach of democratic freedoms, abuse of state resources and the media, and abuse of state power, corruption and nepotism. But there was neither a serious analysis of the causes nor self criticism of the contribution of each party to the current political and economic crisis.

The main opposition candidate Sarath Fonseka failed to win the anticipated overwhelming support of the minority nationalities who showed a poor interest in the election, especially in the North with polling at around 20%. Meantime Mahinda Rajapakse's campaigners took advantage of the support of the Tamil National Alliance to claim the existence of a secret deal between the TNA and Fonseka to arouse, with some success, Sinhala nationalist sentiments.

A UNP-JVP alliance in the forthcoming parliamentary election was feasible in the event of a strong performance by their common candidate. That prospect was revived by the arrest of Fonseka 2 weeks after presidential election, and the JVP sought to capitalise on the 'martyrdom' of Fonseka. The UNP, unwilling to risk further erosion of its popular base, rejected any alliance except under its own symbol.

Thus, the forthcoming election will be one concerning the bid of the government to win a powerful majority, even a two-thirds majority by some means, so that it could amend the constitution in ways that will consolidate the control of the ruling elite over the state apparatus. The UNP and the JVP, hoping to capitalise on the sympathy for Fonseka, are seeking to recover their lost political ground as well as to prevent the government from securing a majority. Electoral alliances with parties of the national minorities are, as in the past, matters of political exigency. With the TNA fractured by internal squabbling, the likelihood is that the political parties of the minority nationalities will be bargaining for posts and privileges in the new parliament. None of this will help to resolve the problems facing the country, especially the national question and the worsening economic crisis.

The position of the New-Democratic Party in the presidential election was that the occasion should be used to field a common candidate of the left and the minority nationalities with a view to build a serious political alternative to the existing morass and, in the event of that failing, to reject the election by spoiling the ballot papers. Participation by minority nationalities in the presidential election was generally poor, and the Tamils of the North overwhelmingly rejected the main candidates as well as prescriptions by the political parties which sided with the candidates, vindicating the validity of the stand of the NDP.

Thus the minority nationalities should unequivocally reject their narrow nationalist leaders in the forthcoming parliamentary election since none of the narrow nationalist politicians has a progressive outlook and, if elected, is likely to behave in an even more unprincipled way in the new parliament.

It is therefore the responsibility of the genuine left, progressive and democratic forces to develop a strategy in the forthcoming general election that would provide the people with a way to express their rejection of narrow nationalism, sectarianism and opportunist politics. Most importantly, the occasion of the general election should be used for mass political education and to convince the people that a political alternative based on a mass movement is not only possible but urgently needed for the salvation of the working people of the country as well as the minority nationalities.

Handling Contradictions among Fraternal Parties

**(A Document Drafted by the International Relations
Study Group of the New Democratic Party)**

Prelude

The manner in which debates are conducted among some Marxist Leninist organisations and individuals with Marxist Leninist views on issues of varying importance, makes one wonder whether they as Marxist Leninists have learnt much from Mao Zedong on the question of handling contradictions, especially those not concerning the enemy.

Disagreement and dissent are not new or unusual to communists. Yet, seemingly deep divisions of opinion have, more often than not, been healed inside communist parties by thorough discussion and debate, to lead ultimately to greater unity. Splits occur more for lack of dialogue than for sharp ideological differences. Individuals seeking to prevail over others through suppression of discussion and debate have done much harm. Nevertheless, the predominant desire has, as a rule, been to resolve internal contradictions through dialogue or debate as necessary. Criticism and self-criticism constitute an important part of the process.

The method of democratically resolving contradictions within an organisation has also been successful inside broad front organisations as well as short-term alliances led by good communists, because communists do not lose sight of the common cause and persevere to ensure that the common interest prevails over differences, except

when the differences stand in the way of attaining the agreed goals or in the face of duplicity.

A reason why splits in left parties take long to come into the open is the practice of democratic centralism. Effort is always made to resolve contradictions through discussion and debate. Not only the great debates within the Soviet and the Chinese Communist Parties but also the debates between them on the questions of Stalin, People's Communes, and the 'peaceful path to socialism' took place in a disciplined manner over a long time. It was after Khrushchev launched a vicious public attack on Comrade Stalin as a pretext for replacing Marxism with revisionism that the existence of serious differences became public knowledge. Even then, efforts continued to resolve the contradictions through discussion based on democratic principles; and it was Khrushchev's hostile and provocative attitude towards fraternal parties and socialist countries opposed to revisionism which led to acrimony. What is important to note here is that, despite deep divisions and the prospect of reconciliation getting bleaker by the day, Marxist Leninists persevered in internal debate and refused to be provoked until the revisionist camp went on the offensive.

The tendency to split has been strong when the general political climate was not favourable to the left. Ironically so, since that is exactly the kind of situation demanding greater unity and serious effort to resolve the differences, and rebuild the proletarian revolutionary party and the left movement. Marxist Leninists cannot compromise with opportunism or adventurism, and need to be firm against such tendencies. But the way to correct erroneous tendencies is patient discussion and debate rather than hasty confrontation. There is a need for a culture of respect for opposing views – not one of accommodating wrong tendencies and views – in dealing with contradictions so that those who hold the wrong views are corrected while incorrect views are eliminated in a friendly and democratic way.

Intra-Party and Inter-Party Contradictions

Marxist Leninist parties have generally been good at handling internal contradictions. The Marxist Leninist movement in India was splintered in the wake of state repression in the 1970s and in Sri Lanka following the political chaos caused by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) insurrection. Similar problems have been faced by

Marxist Leninists elsewhere in the 1970s and 1980s. But, as a whole, the Marxist Leninist movement has demonstrated remarkable resilience to survive the crises and re-establish itself, and in some cases launch successful revolutionary mass struggles.

Marxist Leninist organisations in India are showing a steady growth but have difficulty in uniting as a powerful revolutionary force. In Sri Lanka, active Marxist Leninists among the Tamils and Hill Country Tamils are, in effect, represented by a single organisation, while growth of narrow nationalist politics during the past three decades has not helped the growth of the left – not just the genuine left – among the Muslims and Sinhalese. Emergent narrow nationalism has been a major factor among Muslims in the wake of hostility from Sinhala chauvinism and Tamil narrow nationalism. The strong Trotskyite tradition among the Sinhalese continues to be a divisive force even after the left lost ground to the populist pseudo-left JVP which assimilated the Sinhalese youth to its chauvinist agenda. There are, however, Marxist Leninist groups and individuals who are unable to organise themselves as a political party. Thus Marxist Leninists need to think in terms of a broad front to the exclusion of opportunist politics and opportunist alliances.

Attempts to develop international alliances of Marxist Leninist parties and organisations has had limited success. While the need for developing fraternal relationship between Marxist Leninist parties is urgent, its fulfilment is hampered by difficulties in resolving what would, if handled correctly, be only friendly contradictions.

Stable and healthy relationship needs to be built between fraternal parties, including Marxist Leninist parties with seemingly strong ideological differences, at a party-to-party level. While the relationship between Marxist Leninist parties within a country is mainly about unity and struggle in carrying forward the revolutionary mass movement, that between parties in different countries or even regions of a country, where geography and ethno-linguistic differences stand in the way of close interaction and collaboration, is mostly about mutual support and exchange of thought and experience. Based on past experience, both positive and negative, in the international communist movement, it is important that interaction between parties is fraternal and on an equal footing.

Given the absence of a broad umbrella organisation or a network, fraternal ties between organisations demand mutual understanding and support and the will to treat differences as friendly

contradictions. This demands the recognition that conditions differ from country to country and from region to region, and that revolutionary strategy will invariably be unique to each situation, be it a country, a region or different communities within a region, in short the specific context.

One cannot deny a fraternal party the right to comment on the political situation in the country or region of another party; or make general or universal observations; or draw attention to potential dangers and errors. Fraternal relationship is meaningless without such right. But the way in which views are exchanged is important. A Marxist Leninist party, however strong or successful, should show humility and avoid dictating to a fraternal party on matters of policy, tactics and strategy. Equally, a Marxist Leninist party should be receptive to views expressed by a fraternal party as well as other friendly forces, and all parties should be willing to learn from each other.

Insisting on universal solutions to seemingly similar but fundamentally different situations leads to harmful misunderstandings. It will be dogmatic to refuse to recognise differences in approach in their context and to reject the need for different strategies in different situations. Marxist Leninist parties need to be cautious about utterances with unfavourable implications for fraternal parties. Equally, in the event of error, the response, while being uncompromising on principles, should not be hostile. Public debate is best avoided until every possibility of rectifying errors and resolving differences through fraternal dialogue has been exhausted.

Recent International Experience

One unfortunate recent instance concerns the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) – now the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) – which had carried out a successful 10-year long armed struggle. The UCPN(M), besides declaring that they will pursue their goal of establishing a People’s Republic of Nepal peacefully, prescribed it as the way forward for socialism in the 21st Century. The views expressed had adverse implications for the Communist Party of India (Maoist) which has been persevering in armed struggle in several parts of India. Not surprisingly, the revisionist Communist Party of India (Marxist) mischievously demanded that the Indian Maoists should take the cue from their Nepali counterparts. The strong public

response of the Indian Maoists to the Nepali Maoists only helped to strain the relationship between the two parties than to rectify mistakes.

It has already been seen through the recent experience of the UCPN(M) that any decision on a peaceful path for the Nepali revolution is not in its hands but in the hands of the Nepali reactionaries, Indian expansionists and US imperialists who are keen to restore the old order. Thus the declared position of the UCPN(M) has to be understood in the context of India and the US branding it as terrorist and using it as pretext to militarily intervene to restore the old order. Yet there was neither need nor adequate basis to generalise that experience or prescribe it to other countries. That error could have been rectified through dialogue which did not spill over into the media, at least until after its resolution, and allowing the UCPN(M) time to review their new found position.

Nevertheless, there are things for left parties across the world to learn from the Maoists of Nepal. Their ability to resolve internal contradictions through patient and thorough discussion is one of them. While the enemies of the Nepali revolution gleefully speculated that differences on the line of the struggle would lead to a split in the party, the Maoists surprised them by not only resolving their differences but also consolidating party unity. The Maoists achieved it through a long and thorough process of uninhibited discussion, debate, criticism and self criticism.

Thus there is no reason why Marxist Leninist parties within a country cannot find common ground and make it the basis for cooperation in mass struggles against the state. Such cooperation will inspire Marxist Leninist parties in other countries to cooperate with each other nationally and internationally.

There is also the question of how to deal with anti-imperialist and left movements whose political line disagrees with the Marxist Leninist position on the road to socialism. Venezuela is perhaps the most important case today, as it is also used by several reformists as well as frustrated Trotskyites to reject Marxism Leninism. Marxist Leninists know what is keeping the populist left government of Chavez in Venezuela in power amid sustained efforts by the US and the forces of Venezuelan reaction to topple it. Flatterers are seeking to lull the Latin American left into a state of complaisance, and Marxist Leninists have warned against it, especially since the enemies within and without are strong. Marxist Leninists call for the politicisation of

the Latin American masses on the basis of class and class struggle and have reservations about the way in which the left is being organised in Venezuela.

More serious concerns exist about the extrapolation of the Venezuelan experience to the whole of Latin America, let alone the world, by some who project it as Socialism for the 21st Century. Yet it is essential to recognise the need for unconditional support for the left and anti-imperialist governments in Latin America in defending themselves against US-led conspiracies. It is equally important for Marxist Leninists and the broad left to be aware of the risks faced by the Latin American left governments and to warn against the risks, especially the dangers of over enthusiasm. But it will be a grave error to denounce the governments in ways that will weaken internal and international anti-imperialist solidarity.

Lessons in Handling Contradictions

Thus the central issue boils down to the correct handling of debates and discussion among fraternal parties and friendly forces. Many of the rules that apply to the correct handling of contradictions within a party apply to the handling of contradictions between fraternal parties. The Communist Party of China, at least until China took the capitalist road, was exemplary in its dealings with fraternal parties. It treated all parties as equal and with respect. The CPC did not dictate to fraternal parties, nor did it seek to advise fraternal parties how they should conduct their affairs. The most one could expect from the CPC was a statement of its experience and general comments indicative of its assessment of a situation, but never prescriptions.

The New-Democratic Party has learnt from friendly Marxist Leninist parties and through its own experience, including serious mistakes. Thus it has been able to avoid friendly contradictions from developing into hostile contradictions. For example, differences have existed between the NDP and most of the Indian Marxist Leninist parties in India on the Sri Lankan national question. The position of the NDP was that the national question should be resolved without recourse to secession, by establishing autonomies for the various nationalities based on the principle of self determination. While denouncing Sinhala chauvinism, it criticised Tamil narrow nationalism, the anti-democratic ways of the Liberation Tigers (LTTE), and its excessive reliance on arms at the expense of mass

politics. This approach was at variance with the views held by several Indian Marxist Leninist parties, which were conditioned by the general impression created by the Indian media and other biased sources of information.

The NDP did not fault the Indian Marxist Leninists for what it saw as erroneous positions. Instead it patiently explained its position to each party with which it was in touch. Some took the trouble to understand the position of the NDP by accessing its publications, while there are others who still differ. The NDP, despite its position that the national question is still the main contradiction in Sri Lanka, seeks to prevent differences over that matter from developing into a major contradiction.

Likewise, the NDP has its assessment of conditions in India. It supports all mass struggles against the repressive state and seeks friendly relations with all Marxist Leninist parties and groups in India. It has its overall assessment of the political situation in India, and the political lines and methods of struggle of fraternal parties. It shares its views with the party or group concerned wherever opportunity arises; and it makes its understanding clearer and corrects wrong impressions through exchange of views. It has, on principle, refused to take a public stand on disputes among Marxist Leninist parties and groups. At the same time, when its views are sought, it has expressed them frankly and in a friendly manner.

It is unfortunate that when an NDP delegate attends a function organised by one Marxist Leninist organisation, some other organisations frown upon it, as if it is an unfriendly act. The truth is that the NDP places its relationship with all fraternal parties, nationally and internationally, on an equal footing so that cooperation and support are on a mutual basis and without discrimination between friendly parties, and not siding with one against another. Here, again, the approach is like that of Marxist Leninist parties in the 1960s and 70s towards rival Marxist Leninist organisations from another country, namely one of encouraging the rival parties to resolve their differences amicably and forging closer ties without taking sides.

The Need for a Sound Marxist Leninist Approach

In the final analysis, all Marxist Leninists have to get close to each other, nationally and internationally. One has to be conscious of the

fact that the Marxist Leninist line of struggle is based on mass struggle and broad front organisations. That means achieving the broadest possible unity based on a common programme without compromising on basic principles. It is important to strike the correct balance between broad-based unity and being firm on principles. Firmness in principles can go hand in hand with cooperation with others holding different views, provided that the aims are clearly defined and there is no hidden agenda. That was how Marxist Leninists across the world successfully led struggles against colonial rule, fascism, imperialist aggression and various forms of internal oppression.

It merely requires an extension of the above approach to the relationship between fraternal parties to enhance mutual support and cooperation with a view to build strong Marxist Leninist revolutionary movements nationally and internationally.

Contradictions are bound to arise between fraternal parties when policies and practices of one appear to be in conflict with those of the other. Such differences are not difficult, certainly not impossible, to resolve. It is important to study the conditions under which the seemingly unacceptable decisions are taken and appreciate the reasons for differences in approach. To understand a decision is not to endorse it but to recognise the conditions that lead to that decision. This step should be thoroughly implemented before making critical comments or suggesting more appropriate options.

It is important to remember that contexts differ and that the revolution needs to address specific situations and issues which vary not only from country to country but also from region to region and community to community within a country. That is not to deny universal principles and the primacy of class and class struggle. It is only a call to apply the scientific method of Marxism Leninism to solve a problem rather than redefine the problem to fit a model solution.

What Marxist Leninists should always remember is that all fraternal parties are equal and that party to party relations should emphasise matters that unite fraternal parties and not what seem to divide them. There is a need for unanimity on a wide range of issues concerning mass liberation struggles against imperialism and its lackeys. Such unanimity demands a flexible rather than a rigid approach, comprising firmness in principles and flexibility in handling differences.

Modern communication technology has certainly helped revolutionary struggles in many ways, including exchange of information with speed and establishment of contact with relative ease. But it has also encouraged hasty and ill-considered exchanges of views between individuals and organisations as well as to the spilling over of debates into the public domain before the issues concerned are even understood. The so-called “blogsites” and other such websites of Marxist Leninist organisations and individuals associated with them need to exercise caution and discipline in the handling of political information in the public domain.

We now witness the liberal use of the term ‘self criticism’ by parties to polemical debates demanding that the opponent should self-criticise before he/she or the organisation could comment on a subject. Such conduct is childish and violates the spirit of self-criticism as understood by Marxist Leninists. Indulgence in personal or personalised debates in the public domain can lead to childish petit bourgeois conduct which is certainly not characteristic of a good Marxist Leninist. It is well to remember that it is the enemy and mischief makers who gain when Marxist Leninists indulge in bitter personal attacks in the public domain.

The Marxist Leninist method of rectifying errors has criticism and self-criticism as a central feature by which the organisation seeks to correct erroneous views and actions and not humiliate the holder of a wrong view or doer of a wrong deed. What is needed is support and solidarity among individuals as well as organisations.

Marxist Leninists in Sri Lanka like those in other small South Asian countries look up to mass revolutionary struggles in India as an inspiration. A revolution in India will make the revolutionary task all the more easier for the smaller neighbours; and, in the event of an advancing revolution as in the case of Nepal, Indian revolutionary forces can effectively stop Indian meddling aimed at undermining the revolution and destabilising the country. It is our appeal to Indian Marxist Leninists that they should, irrespective of differences, seek to build and to strengthen ties with Marxist Leninist and anti-imperialist liberation movements in the region and encourage mutual support on matters relating to the common cause of anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic mass struggles.

The Presidential Election and the Future of the Tamil People

Comrade SK Senthivel

[A public seminar was held on 26th December 2009 at the MPCAS Auditorium, Jaffna under the theme "The Presidential election and the future of the Tamil people". The seminar was chaired by Comrade K Kathirgamanathan, secretary of the Northern Region Branch of the New Democratic Party. A large number political enthusiasts and supporters of the Party attended the seminar and the welcome address was delivered by Comrade K Thanikasalam, Member of the Politburo of the Party. The text of the address in Tamil by Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party is given below.]

Over the past thirty years, the working people of this country, especially the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamils, have had no benefits or salvation from the executive presidential system or any president who occupied the seat of presidential power. Instead, the entire people experienced economic crises, national oppression and the cruelty of war. Under the conditions, the economic crises and the burdens of life faced by the working people will not be resolved and there will be no just political solution for the Tamil people, regardless of which of the two main candidates wins the forthcoming presidential election. For the people to opt for one of the two main candidates without realising this truth will be to elect one who will deliver even heavier blows to them. The forthcoming presidential election seems to be one in which the people are compelled to choose between being lashed by a whip and being kicked by an iron boot. In such an election, one must think in depth as to whether they should vote for anyone. That is why the New Democratic Party appeals to the people to express their disgust and protest by spoiling the ballot papers rather than vote for any candidate.

Both main candidates competing to win the forthcoming presidential election carried forward the war from the same chariot of

war. Their election campaign centres mainly around who made victory possible. Many thousand Tamil people had been killed in that horrible war and three hundred thousand people were detained behind barbed wire fences. Even today, there are mothers, wives, brothers and sisters and relatives who are in a state of dismay not knowing the plight of their dear ones. How can the two candidates who are responsible for the situation face the Tamil people and demand their votes. How would you classify anyone who appeals to you to vote for either candidate? The Party raises the question as to how a self respecting and conscientious Tamil could vote for either candidate.

The Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil leaders are taking stands supportive of one or the other main candidate in anticipation of their respective parliamentary seats, ministerial posts and other favours and concessions and not to fulfil the interests and wishes of the vast majority of the people whom they represent. It is in this situation that the Tamil National Alliance is in a predicament, unable to take a stand supportive of the people. They are in a sad plight where they cannot go among the Tamil people in the North and East to learn their views. That is because the five parties that are in the TNA are answerable for the destructive war that had concluded and the misery that continues. The Tamil people are experiencing the harsh consequences of the erroneous and impractical demand for a Tamil Eelam based on the 'Vaddukkoddai Resolution' put forward by them thirty-five years ago.

It is that feeling of guilt that is stopping the TNA from facing the people. Incapable of self-critically admitting to the past mistake or reviewing it, the TNA has dared to commit another serious mistake and betrayal once again. In the course of that, they are negotiating with the two main candidates. It can be expected that they will take a wrong decision and try to impose it on the Tamil people. That is why they, rather than come amid the Tamil people, find their views and then take a decision, persist with their politics of domination by issuing commands to the Tamil people while seated in Colombo. Under these conditions, we appeal to the Tamil people to act thoughtfully. The rights of the Tamil people were not won in the past under conditions where they spoke of politics of compromise, politics of confrontation and politics of struggle. Now some are seeking to carry forward politics of concessions. This can only be politics of slavery that fails to call for a proper solution to the national question and not the price for the losses suffered by the Tamil people.

If on the one hand Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism oppressed the Tamil nationality, conservative Tamil narrow nationalism, on the other hand, was responsible for the destruction and losses suffered by the Tamil people. Thus, for the Tamil nationalists to seek to lead the Tamil people along the same lines and for the people to accept it unquestioningly to go round in circles will only lead to politics of slavery.

That is why the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people need an alternative political path today. That path can only be a path of united mass struggle of the entire working people. The Tamil nationality cannot in any way abandon or compromise its demand for its right to self determination, democracy and equality. That is why the New Democratic Party insists that to solve the national question it is necessary to grant a system of autonomy that recognises multi-ethnic nationality within a united Sri Lanka based on the principle of the right to self determination. To achieve it, the Tamil people should abandon the approach of relying on foreign imperialist or hegemonic powers and take the new political path of joining hands with the Sinhalese working people to combat the chauvinist capitalist ruling class forces. It is this that the Party is emphasising at this juncture. The younger generation among the Tamil people should from its experience of the lessons of recent history come forward at least to carry forward a progressive form of Tamil nationalism. We call upon them to reject the conservative Tamil narrow nationalism and adopt a progressive form of nationalism that can unite all sections of the Tamil people. The old approach of simply whipping up nationalist, linguistic sentiments from a conservative point of view to serve self interest through parliamentary politics of domination should be rejected.

Therefore the Tamil nationality, after so much of destruction, losses and misery, should choose with calm and far sight a firm and correct political path. Its beginning should be announced at the forthcoming presidential election as a voice of protest and symbol of aversion. The only way to do it is to reject this election and spoil the ballot papers. That could be the starting signal for the next stage of emphasising the need to solve the national question.

The Notion of 'Just Peace' in Post-War Sri Lanka

Asvaththammaa

Post-war Sri Lanka has several new dimensions to it. The new setting poses enormous challenges. The thirty year civil war has ended, but the root causes of the conflict which led to full-fledged war have not been addressed. Besides, the destruction caused by the civil war in the economic, social and cultural spheres have torn Sri Lankan society into pieces. Against this backdrop, talk about 'just peace' has gained prominence in several spheres of activity, but nearly all of it reduced to the idea of reconciliation and not political solution. The theme during and after the presidential elections has been national reconciliation. This is the sad reality of post war Sri Lanka, in which hardly anyone is willing to talk about a political solution or about the grievances and rights-based issues of the minorities.

Giraudoux, highly reputed French playwright and war hero of WWI, called peace 'the interval between wars'. The way the post war politics is conducted in Sri Lanka would persuade one to endorse Giraudoux. Does anyone really want to bring about 'peace' in real terms? Political jargon and newfangled catchphrases that have entered the public sphere dominate discussion and the ideas implicit in them are readily taken for granted. The 'Civil Society', which in Sri Lankan context has come to mean NGO society, is also driving this agenda at the expense of the minority rights. Many articles, columns and other forms of comment in the print media and internet keep chanting about reconciliation, and bringing 'just peace' to Sri Lanka.

Reconciliation is an over-arching process embracing the search for truth, justice, forgiveness, healing and so on. Seeking accurate understanding of the past is vital to the reconciliation process. But 'truth' in itself cannot bring about reconciliation, for while seeking the truth is a key ingredient of reconciliation it is not the only one. Likewise, justice, which is vital for healing wounds, making offenders accountable and re-establishing relations of equity and respect, cannot by itself bring about reconciliation. Truth and justice are

integral parts of reconciliation. Was this the reconciliation that was bandied about in the election campaign? Certainly not. The two main candidates were equally responsible for the war offences, and should be held responsible for the events of the final weeks of the war where an estimated 30,000 innocent civilians were killed. Is the reconciliation that is being talked about—said to be based on ‘just peace’—of the kind mentioned above?

If there can be reference to a ‘just war’ cannot there be one to ‘just peace’? The question is not as trivial as it sounds. For a war to be just, it has to justify the heavy cost it involves—the untimely loss of lives, and the economic and other damages incurred—and it will invariably be unusual. ‘Just war’ seems a contradiction in terms, but history has witnessed such wars, especially to fend off an aggressor for survival, making it a valid concept. The term just peace would sound redundant, but its problem lies not in its redundancy, but in the implicit notion of an ‘unjust peace’. The notion of ‘unjust peace’ creates room for resistance to peace, where it may be said to be unjust, by causing injustice to a party affected by the war. Separating peace and ‘just peace’ diminishes the value of peace, with consequences that are not just theoretical or conceptual but also political, and creating a category that cannot be objectively confirmed.

The history of the world has been much a history of war and intermediate periods. Many conflicts have been resolved based on the “winner takes all” principle. Annihilating all men, capturing women and children, and looting the enemy’s possessions had been accepted and even ‘fair’ endings to conflicts. Territories that belonged to the vanquished have been ceded to the victor. Once norms of war were thus set, regardless of the winner, the principle went unchallenged. Thus, for instance, in economic wars resolved by designated representatives, as in the battle of David and Goliath, the victory of an individual determined the fate of the loser’s camp. It is difficult to locate justice in such a case, but the victory was legitimate, one perceived by the loser not as criminal injustice, but as an inalienable part of a lifestyle he was born into, agreed with, or had come to terms with. Why then has peace been often unjust and why has justice been more often belligerent than peaceful?

Against this backdrop, talk of ‘just peace’ the post-war Sri Lanka takes centre stage. The fundamental causes for the conflict remain and the chauvinism, running high as triumphalism in wake of the defeat of LTTE brings back haunting memories of the past to the minorities.

With no will for a political solution, what are sought are stopgap solutions. There has been no accountability for the war crimes committed and the country is kept in the dark about the last days of war and casualty rates for combatants and civilians. Ironically, when the results of the Presidential Election were announced, the opposition and several individuals and organisations protested that democracy is dead. Did any of them truly believe that there had been democracy in the country? When innocent civilians were killed, the main political parties, the mainstream media and civil society organizations were silent in the pretext of 'War on Terrorism'. Thus far, none of them has dared to probe the events of the final stage of the bloody civil war, but each most forthcoming in discussing the merits of the two war heroes contesting the presidential polls and siding with one or the other of the candidates. Civil society organizations which call themselves defenders of human rights and justice were in fact supporting one war criminal over the other. In the process, even earlier alleged war crimes and gross violations of human rights by their preferred candidate were forgiven and sanctified. What was the kind of justice that they were talking about, or more fundamentally justice for whom? For the parties to the conflict or for the victims of the compromises constructed by the states concerned?

The world that we live in and relations among states and non-state organisations are governed by partiality which works in two ways: each party tends to see things only from its own point of view, and there is no impartial judge empowered to judge what is just and even less impose its judgment on the parties. In the Hobbesian universe, the Leviathan alone defines what is just and it is therefore an arbitrary decision. In the Sri Lankan context each side asserts its notion of justice (which fuels wars if the said actors are armed) and, of course, its own interests. Grave injustices are often condoned to maintain the established order. It bears remembering the saying attributed to Goethe: "better injustice than disorder". It seems the near universal mantra shared by all right-wing statesmen, and now openly in practice in Sri Lanka.

It is rare for regional or world order to be established without both injustice and violence. If victory over other is not followed by effort to resolve the root causes of the conflicts and reach an agreement acceptable (if not satisfactory) to the warring factions, then peace will remain fragile, and feelings of injustice strong enough for violence to resume. Can one promote the notion of 'just peace' when no acceptable means to a solution is in sight?

As Edward Said has paraphrased “there is no doubt, for instance, that a people whose basic rights to self-determination have not been realized because they are under military or imperial occupation and who have struggled to achieve self-determination for many years, have a right in principle to the peace that comes as a result of liberation. It is hard to fault that as a statement of what a just peace might entail. But what is also entailed is perhaps greater suffering, more destruction, more distortion and a whole lot of problems associated with an aggrieved nationalism ready to exact a very high price from its enemy and its internal opponents in order to achieve justice and peace”.

Thus the right to self-determination of the nationalities which provided the basis for resolving peacefully national contradictions seems the only viable route for a political solution in the Sri Lanka.

Post-war Sri Lanka seems to be a place with no war but retains all aspects, tendencies and mindsets of the war-torn past. There seems no will to break with the past, and what we see is the continuation of the past. Post-war Sri Lanka seems more conducive to fully-fledged globalization and for imposing neo-colonization in full force in the guise of nationalism. When the market assumes utmost priority, advances in technology and modernity will move in to haunt the rural backwaters of Sri Lanka, to be called development so that there will be no case to argue for justice or peace.

It may be best to throw out the notion of ‘just peace’. As long as talk of peace is necessary, who else but NGOs are best equipped to conduct high profile seminars, conferences and workshops in five star hotels? Donors will ensure that the reports are printed in glossy papers for ‘peace’ to return to Sri Lanka on glossy paper, no matter what happens in reality.

Eventually, all the talk about peace is based on vested interests and no more. I will conclude by citing Edward Said again. “For those who challenge all this and call it utopian or unrealistic, my answer is a simple one: show me what else is available today as a way of thinking about and moving towards a Just Peace. Show me a scheme for peace that is not based on abridged memory, continued injustice, unmitigated conflict, apartheid”.

NDP Diary

NDP Statement to the Media

Elections and the Left and Progressive

15th February 2010

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party issued a statement to the media on the decision of the Politburo of the Party on the question of participation in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

The left, democratic and progressive forces cannot produce any results by contesting the forthcoming parliamentary elections separately out of a narrow desire for posts and positions to merely secure parliamentary seats. That, besides denying people clarity about political alternatives, will make it impossible to expose to the people and defeat the conservative, reactionary elite political forces with an upper class ideology that have thus far put forward futile policies to deceive the working people and the nationalities to enjoy the privileges of parliamentary political dominance. Hence to unite all forces that can be united and contest the elections together, based on a new alternative political programme, could provide the people with a constructive political path. The New-Democratic Party emphasises this approach in its invitation to the left, democratic and progressive forces in the current post-war situation.

One **should** seriously examine what the working people and the nationalities underwent during the past 63 years of parliamentary government. The Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil leadership in the North, East and the Hill Country have not acted to secure any beneficial changes in the living conditions of the people to the extent that they have acted to secure parliamentary seats and accompanying comforts and benefits. That was the result of the activities of the parties and leaders with conservative, reactionary policies. Especially in the North-East, the wrong political path that has been adopted has been the cause of the current misery and the desperation of the people. The people should at this moment take a close look at the wrong leadership and guidance of the conservative, reactionary Tamil nationalist leaders. That is why neither the parliamentary path nor the path of armed struggle could show the way for the salvation of the people. The same reactionary Tamil nationalist forces are seeking to carry forward their politics of dominance through the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The only way to defeat them at the forthcoming elections and put forward new alternative policies and a political programme will be for the pro-people left,

democratic and progressive forces to unite and face the forthcoming elections together. Through that, it will be possible to expose and oppose the conservative, reactionary forces and their narrow approach of political dominance. It will, besides, be a good opportunity to take the new alternative politics among the people and to mobilise the people along a political path of mass struggle. The Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people should reject devious approaches and stirring up of nationalist sentiments and narrow caste sentiments designed for the selfish purpose of winning parliamentary seats. By doing so they should come forward to carry forward new alternative politics. That is only means to mobilise the Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people as a single force.

That is why the left, democratic and progressive forces should unite as one front to face the forthcoming elections. The New Democratic Party emphasises that it is only by that means that the working people and the oppressed nationalities can take the alternative political path for their liberation by rejecting and isolating the chauvinistic capitalist ruling class forces, their national, class, caste and gender oppression, and the deceitful leaders who serve as their accomplices.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDP Statement to the Media

Let us Build a New Political Base

1st February 2010

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party released on 1st February a statement to the media from the Politburo of the Party on the outcome of the presidential elections.

The statement pointed out that the Tamil people, especially those in the North, have duly rebuffed the candidates of the two chauvinistic capitalist candidates and the Tamil nationalist leaders who supported one or the other candidate in the recently concluded presidential election. A poor 18-20% of the votes only have been cast. The Tamil people have thus firmly rejected the election and given expression to their feeling of opposition. This is a severe blow to the to the stand of the Tamil nationalist leadership, especially the Tamil National Alliance, to uphold upper class, elitist political domination and its tendency to accommodate chauvinism and foreign hegemonic forces. The pain of this blow cannot be concealed by any form of rationalisation. Hence the Tamil people should not stop at boycotting but go beyond it to prepare themselves to build a new political base in place of Tamil narrow nationalism. It is

through that they will be able to determine their own fate. Similarly, the Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people should come forward to reject the selfish leadership whose sections have aligned themselves with the chauvinistic ruling class forces that are oppressing the people based on race, class and religion, and join hands with the ordinary toiling Sinhalese people to carry forward movements to fight for their rights.

The statement added that the elections have led to the re-election of Mahinda Rajapakse as President. He placed before the Sinhalese people the military victory, destruction of the LTTE and the elimination of terrorism to become the President with executive power for his next term. Even if Sarath Fonseka had won, the chances are that the very same dictatorial presidential rule would have persisted. Hence the prospects are that the whole country, the working people, and nationalities denied of their rights will, under the system of rule based on the existing constitution, face serious challenges and severe problems. The political reality seems that the people who cast their votes will be compelled to pay a heavy price for it in various ways.

Neither the victory secured at the presidential election nor the outcome of the forthcoming parliamentary election will not bring any fundamental change or relief to the working people and the oppressed nationalities of the country. In particular, the entire Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people, who have been subject to ethnic contradictions and oppression as a result of the national question, should avoid embracing the chauvinistic ruling class forces of the South and come forward to join hands with the ordinary Sinhalese working people to build firm people's movements and carry forward broad-based mass struggles. The New-Democratic Party declares that as the only alternative political path before the Tamil people who have rejected the last two elections to express their objections and disgust.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDP Statement to the Media

Resolution of the Central Committee on the Presidential Election

18th December 2009

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party issued the following detailed statement on the resolution adopted unanimously by the Central Committee after debating the stand of the Party on the Presidential Election.

The Central Committee of the New-Democratic Party unanimously resolved that the people should not vote for any candidate contesting the forthcoming Presidential Election but spoil their ballot papers, and thereby carry forward a mass movement of protest to reject and eliminate the dictatorial presidential system with executive powers; and by doing so the entire people, especially the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people, should express their disgust and opposition to the system of personal dictatorial presidential rule that has been in place for thirty-one years.

During the past 31 years the country and the people have at various levels have with pain and sorrow experienced economic crises, political repression, injustice and devastation. The presidential system with executive powers has been principal among factors that caused the three decades long chauvinist capitalist war and the struggles carried out among the Tamil people. The one who initiated the war was JR Jayawardane, the first executive president. Thirty years on, the one who celebrated victory after ending the war in a flood of Tamil blood is President Mahinda Rajapakse. At the same time, the one who carried forward the cruel war in the battlefield is Army General Sarath Fonseka.

President Rajapakse and General Fonseka jointly carried forward the final war. Although the two are opposing each other in the Presidential Election, both are incapable of fulfilling the basic aspirations of the working people of the country and of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people. Both uphold chauvinistic positions that are unwilling to find a sincere solution to the national question. For the people to choose one as the better candidate and vote for him will not only be a politically unwise act but also one amounting to their blighting themselves.

The New-Democratic Party poses the question to the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people as to how they could vote for either of these two main candidates contesting on behalf of two chauvinistic parties. To vote for the other parties will not only be meaningless but also deflect the opposition of the people to the executive presidential system and indirectly support the main candidates.

The statement further added that, if a joint candidate had been put up collectively by the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil parties and the parties of the left against the candidates of the two chauvinistic capitalist parties and a situation created in which neither candidate secured 50% of the votes, it would have led to a constitutional crisis relating to the presidential system and forced a need to amend the constitution. Besides, it would have led to the building up of political awakening among the people and mass political power.

The minority nationality parties that are seeking to elect one of the main candidates with no consideration for the above prospect are committing an act of betrayal for the sake of securing their posts and positions and their pursuit of selfish parliamentary politics. This is a continuation of the past politics of ruling class dominance. In the 30-year war, around two hundred and fifty thousand Tamil people have been killed. Property worth tens of billions has been destroyed. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced, and in the end three hundred thousand people have ended up as refugees behind barbed wire fences. The sorrow of the destruction and despair of the final stages of the war have not gone away.

Under these conditions, how can people vote for the executive presidential system that is responsible for the cruel war and the problems of daily livelihood and the two candidates who caused the destruction? Likewise, the system of government that took the lives of nearly a hundred and fifty thousand Sinhalese people plunged in a pool of blood was exactly the same dictatorial presidential system. Hence, it is fantasy to expect that anyone coming to power will for the sake of election pledges willingly abandon this presidential system and its brutal powers to being democracy for the people.

Thus, there is an opportunity before the people to express their disgust and opposition to the presidential system and the main candidates; and the proper way to do it is to reject the electoral process by spoiling the ballot papers. The call of the New Democratic Party to the people is that they could through such rejection carry forward alternative politics by demonstrating their political strength and taking the path of mass struggle.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

[The New Democratic Party followed up its call for the rejection of the presidential election by spoiling of the ballot paper with a campaign of political education, consultation and discussion. A series of public meetings were held across the Jaffna Peninsula and several thousand pamphlets explaining the rejection of the election were distributed in public places.

The pamphlets pointed out that the system of government was one of oppressing the working people and identified the local and foreign forces behind the thirty year long destructive war. It also explained the political manoeuvres behind the presidential election and identified the foreign forces at play. Attention was also drawn to the betrayal by the Tamil National alliance.

The main message of the campaign was that the people should think in terms of a political alternative that will let the people decide their political destiny and that the people should mobilise along the path of mass political struggle.]

NDP Statement to the Media
Call for a Common Candidate
8th December 2009

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party issued the following statement pointing out the need to field a common candidate at the forthcoming parliamentary election.

In the present context, the correct choice for the parties of the minority nationalities and the parties of the left will be to put forward a common candidate of unity based on a common programme addressing in the form of clear demands the issues confronting the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities. The New Democratic Party emphasises that the time has not passed for efforts to that end and for decisions to be arrived at.

Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil political parties met in Zurich recently for a two-day conference. Why couldn't they to put forward a common candidate based on that unity? Putting forward such a candidate could prevent the leading candidate from securing 50% of the votes cast, thereby create a constitutional crisis, and force the existing executive presidential system face a dilemma. Besides, that could provide the opportunity to emphasise the problems faced by the minority nationalities and to put forward demands.

Hence, talks should be initiated to put forward a common candidate representing the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil political parties and the left parties. The time has not passed for that to be achieved. Parties deciding on which of the two main candidates is to be supported or individuals declaring themselves as candidates amounts to political deficiency and politics of selfishness. Hence the New-Democratic Party pleads with the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil political parties and the left parties to arrive at a consensus on a common candidate.

S K Senthivel
General Secretary, New-Democratic Party

NDP Media Announcement

Comrade Thambiah at Dacca Conference

30th December 2009

Comrade E Thambiah, Attorney-at-Law and National Organiser of the New Democratic Party, has travelled to Dacca on the invitation of the Bangladesh Socialist Party to take part in the Congress of the party on 30th & 31st December in Dacca. He will be addressing a public meeting to be held on 30th December in Dacca and hold discussions with fraternal international communist parties about the regional and international situations and the building up of the international communist movement. He will also hold discussions with the Bangladesh Democratic Left Front on 1st January 2010.

S K Senthivel

General Secretary, New-Democratic Party

[Summaries of talks by Comrade Thambiah at meetings in Bangladesh will be published in the next issue of New Democracy.]

Comrade Sanmugathanan Remembered

7th February 2010

The 17th death anniversary of Comrade N Sanmugathanan (Comrade Shan) was marked on 7th February 2010 at the Kailasapathy Auditorium of the Dhesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Colombo 6, organised by the Sanmugathanan Centre for Marxist Studies.

Comrade E Thambiah delivered the welcome address of the meeting chaired by Dr S Sivasegaram and the commemoration address titled "The results of the presidential election and the challenges faced by the country" was delivered by Comrade SK Senthivel. Comrade S Thevarajah delivered the vote of thanks.

Cuba National Day Marked

1st January 2010

The 51st National Day of Cuba and Ant-Imperialist Day were marked on 1st January 2010 by the International Solidarity People's Forum (ISPF) in Colombo as a Liberation Cultural Evening at the Auditorium of the Head Office of the Dhesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai in Wellawatte, Colombo 6.

The gathering, chaired by S Thevarajah, Attorney-at-Law, was addressed by Siva Rajendran, Senior Lecturer, Sri Pada College of Education, V

Mahendran, Editor, Puthiya Malayakam, and Lionel Fernando. The meeting was followed by Tea, a cultural programme and a musical concert presented by Sinhala and Tamil artists.

Comrade KA Subramaniam Remembered

28th November 2009

The 20th death anniversary of Comrade KA Subramaniam (Comrade Maniam) was marked on 28th November 2009 at the Kailasapathy Auditorium of the Dhesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Colombo 6, organised by the KA Subramaniam Commemoration Committee.

Comrade S Thevarajah delivered the welcome address of the meeting chaired by Comrade SK Senthivel and the commemoration address titled “The right of nationalities to self-determination and hegemonic interests of America and India” was delivered by Comrade E Thambiah. Comrade AK Thiruchelvam delivered the vote of thanks.

Address by Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser, New-Democratic Party at the Opening Session of the 2nd Congress of SUCI on 17th November 2009 at Ramleela Maidan, Delhi

Dear comrades, friends, members of presidium and delegates from abroad,

May I have the privilege to convey the revolutionary greetings from the Central Committee of the New-Democratic Party, Sri Lanka, the working class, the oppressed nationalities and other toiling masses of Sri Lanka.

Long Live SUCI (Communists)!

Long Live the fraternal relationship between SUCI (Communists) and New-Democratic Party, Sri Lanka!

Sri Lanka is your neighbouring country; our party is your revolutionary communist neighbour maintaining fraternal relationship with your party for over a decade. Of course, there can be differences and reservations on a variety of issues but, by upholding Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought, our party has developed strong ties with SUCI (Communists), a genuine communist party in India to fulfil our duties of Proletarian Internationalism.

The 2nd Congress of your party has concluded successfully. Now you have your new thesis and style of work in your hands and minds and the

leadership of your new Central Committee to go ahead with your revolutionary tasks.

At this stage let me congratulate your new Central Committee.

I also express my concern and regards to your General Secretary Comrade Nihar Mukherjee. I wish him a quick recovery from his illness. Since he is in Calcutta, I am not in a position to convey my feelings directly, but hope to send him same through the new central committee.

Long Live Comrade Nihar Mukherjee

I thank the Central Committee of SUCI (Communists) for the fraternal invitation extended to our party to participate in your important 2nd Congress.

Now we are about to conclude the celebrations of your 2nd Congress. At this point of your time I would like to state that I am here, full of revolutionary spirit and with solidarity from our party and from your bereaving neighbour Sri Lanka experiencing deaths, killings, abductions, disappearances, sexual abuse, mass exodus and other sufferings of war and post war developments. These are direct results of the so-called “humanitarian operations” (war) of the incumbent government of Sri Lanka; particularly the results of the intensive military operation of the Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinist State of Sri Lanka in Tamil area on Tamil Nationality.

More than two lakhs of ordinary people are estimated to have died owing to the three decades long armed conflict. Three lakhs of people are displaced and kept in open prisons in the name of welfare centres. Thousands of people are detained in prisons. Even after the military defeat of LTTE the killings, abductions, disappearances, arrests and detentions of Tamils, democratic and leftist activities are continuing.

Now we are in a transitional period following the suppression of the LTTE insurrection. Whether we are towards a good or a bad future is to be seen. The sufferings and the setbacks are by and large an inheritance of the policies and practices of Tamil nationalists including LTTE. Our party never had any political agreement or understanding with the LTTE as they were separatists, anti-democratic and violators of human rights, and not anti-imperialists or anti-hegemonist.

The LTTE through foul play emerged as the major force of the Tamils. Our party always urged all the governments of Sri Lanka to solve the problem politically through peaceful means by negotiation with LTTE.

The incumbent government had not adopted the line of political solution through negotiation.

We as Marxist-Leninists always stand for a united Sri Lanka and for solving the national question politically based on the right to self-determination, equality and autonomy. Likewise we always stand for the unity of India. By unity we mean not the unity in terms of capitalist reactionary assimilation but association of nationalities on an equal footing.

Comrades and friends, you may recollect that in the course of my speech delivered at Calcutta in 1997 at the rally of the Anti- Imperialist forum of India, I had appealed to the Indian people and progressive forces to help us to overcome the tragedy of war. When I came down from the stage after my appeal, some of your comrades and foreign delegates asked me why I made such an appeal. Whatever explanations that I gave at that time would have not probably have been accepted by the comrades who posed the question.

Now I believe that better explanations have been given in the fashion of "Res ipsa loquitur" (the thing speaks for itself) by the Indian ruling class which played a major role in the recent military operations of Sri Lankan security forces in the Tamil area, distributing all the possibilities of peaceful means of settlement. Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has openly said that he has actually fought India's war against that LTTE, making evident the partnership with the Indian ruling class in waging war in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. Again and again I emphasize the fact that the Indian ruling class is largely responsible for the plight of present Sri Lanka and the dilemma of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. It was they who sowed the seeds of separatist Tamil militancy in the soil of Sri Lanka and nourished it. They fished in the troubled waters and have now brought Sri Lanka to its knees.

Based on that premise I think that my appeal is still valid and I make the same appeal again to the Indian people and the progressive democratic forces of India to help us to overcome the tragedy of war. What is the help that we expect from the Indian people and progressive forces?

The Indian ruling class is your class enemy and it is our enemy too, as they are dominating us with their strategies of hegemony and expansionism and they are very much disturbing our day to day affairs. Imperialism is the common enemy for both of us. You have to fight against your ruling class and imperialism. We have to fight against our ruling class enemies and imperialism. In this context, you can help us by building a strong genuine communist movement on your soil and struggle

against your class enemies and imperialism in ways that may ease our tasks.

Another way to help is to maintain solidarity with the communist movement in Sri Lanka and its struggle, as well as the legitimate struggles of the oppressed nationalities of Sri Lanka against the oppressing state, as we consider the contradiction between the oppressed nationalities and the oppressing Sinhala Buddhist chauvinistic state to remain as the major contradiction even after the military defeat of LTTE. This is the specific condition of Sri Lanka, where Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism has institutionalized its hegemony over other nationalities by various oppressive programmes. Now it has established itself as a state oppressing other nationalities while submitting the country to neo-colonialism.

We urge solidarity not only in word but in deed as well.

SUCI (Communist) and NDP Sri Lanka are working hand in hand in International Anti-Imperialist Movement and to strengthen the Proletarian International Solidarity. Hence our Party feels that our participation in the 2nd Congress of SUCI is our revolutionary duty. I propose that we should work together to fulfil our national and as well as the international task of communists.

Before I conclude I must thank the central committee of SUCI (Communists), the delegates of SUCI, volunteers and all the comrades of SUCI for invitation extended to us and the revolutionary hospitality observed to us.

Long Live Revolution.

Long Live Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

Long Live International Solidarity of Communists.

Long Live SUCI (Communists).

Long Live solidarity between SUCI (Communists) and NDP Sri Lanka.

Long Live relationship between people of India and Sri Lanka.

Revolution will Win
Granthi Zindabad (Hindi)
Bijoy Biplov (Bengali)
Puratchi Vellum (Tamil)
Viplavaya Dineva (Sinhala)

Sri Lankan Events

Continuing Attacks on the Media

As far as the establishment is concerned, the safety of Sri Lankan journalists has been a low priority. Political analyst Prageeth Eknaligoda went missing since 24th January from his home in Homagama and has still not returned. His wife who went to lodge a complaint with the Police on 25th January was taken into custody and then released.

Chandana Sirimalwatte, Chief Editor of the weekly, *Lanka*, was arrested by the police on 29th January, and the police sealed the office of the newspaper on the 30th. The ban on the newspaper was lifted the Gangodawila Magistrate on 1st February, and on 16th February the Nugegoda Magistrate's Court ordered the release of Sirimalwatte.

The Free Media Movement reported that on 11th February in Dehiatthakandiya police grabbed the TV cameras of journalist Sugath Wijerathna of Sirasa TV and KHM Samathapala of Swarnavahini TV and erased the footage covering the police attack on peaceful protesters; and on 14th February in Tangalla thugs protected by the police grabbed the cassettes of Ajith Pushpakumara of Siyatha group and Rahula Hemantha of Sirasa TV. Both incidents concerned the coverage of meetings to protest the arrest of Sarath Fonseka.

Challenging the Election

The immediate response of the Sarath Fonseka camp to the outcome of the presidential election was to reject it and accuse the government of electoral fraud on a massive scale. Some evidence of stolen ballot papers has since been presented by the Fonseka camp. Some of the charges like electronic fraud seemed rather far fetched and difficult to establish in a court of law. There was of course abuse of state resources on a massive scale since before nominations were filed. There was criminal violence and threat of violence. But much of that had become common electoral practice in the country since the UNP swept to power in 1977. The presidential election of 1994 was perhaps the exception, when the incumbent had little at stake at the election. Neither the UNP nor the JVP is qualified to talk about electoral malpractices until they apologise to the people for their electoral misdeeds of the past. But that is no excuse for what went on during the election campaign.

An election petition has now been filed in the Supreme Court by Sarath Fonseka based on charges of abuse of power and state resources and stealing of ballot papers among other issues.

Arrest of Fonseka

The timing and the manner of the arrest of the main opposition presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka suggests that the arrest is politically motivated and has serious political implications for the future. The UNP, JVP and other supporters of Fonseka organised demonstrations against the arrest and called for his immediate release. The heads of the main Buddhist chapters too called for his immediate release, pointing out that a war hero is incarcerated while former LTTE terrorists are enjoying cabinet posts.

The government took the wind out of the opposition sail by prohibiting processions and demonstrations from the day nominations were called for the general election up to the end of the general election. It also defused what could have been a massive protest by the Buddhist clergy by forcing the heads of the chapters to defer a proposed conference of the clergy about the current situation in the country.

Responses to Mass Rejection

Not just the Tamil nationalist politicians and public figures but also the NGO establishment, leading political parties in the South and the media as a whole have still not come to terms with the reality that the people of the North have rebuffed not just the main presidential candidates but also the electoral process. The fact that around 80% of the electorate had kept off has been systematically underplayed or, when brought to notice, explained casually in terms of people having gone abroad or being held up outside the region.

The truth is that the people of Jaffna acted in the same manner during the elections to the Jaffna Municipality some months ago and efforts by Tamil politicians, the media and public figures to avoid a repetition of that episode has badly failed.

Boycotting elections is not an end in itself. It is only a political statement of rejection of an existing order. It is a signal to the forces of revolution to come up with a political alternative. The left, progressive and democratic forces should seize the moment to build a political alternative that will embrace the whole island.

World Events

Haiti

New Democracy is deeply saddened by the loss of over 200,000 lives in Haiti caused by the earthquake that struck the country on 12th January 2010. It extends its heartfelt sympathies to surviving victims and family and friends of all victims. It proudly expresses its admiration of the Haitian people for the spirit of hope and self-confidence with which they are facing the crisis and appreciation for the true friends of Haiti for their selfless and timely support to the people of Haiti. It expresses solidarity with the people of Haiti in their struggle to rebuild their lives and defend their country against predators.

International responses to the tragedy

The response of Latin America and the Caribbean was overwhelming in its humanitarian spirit. Every form of humanitarian aid including urgent medical aid and food were rushed to Haiti. Meantime, the US rushed its troops to Haiti, in the pretext of preserving order. The presence of US troops in the capital Port-au-Prince has been a disruptive influence affecting the supply of essential goods and movement of personnel to provide essential medical and social care.

Cuban medical workers, besides providing urgent medical attention, played a leading role in dealing with the prevention of outbreak of disease by vaccinating people against tetanus followed by a vaccination campaign against diphtheria, whooping cough, and measles with the support of the pan-American Health Organization. UNASUR, representing the twelve South American governments, translated its words of solidarity with Haiti

into deed by undertaking responsibilities in the reconstruction of the country and writing off debts.

Mark Weisbrot in his article in the Guardian (UK) pointed out that 33 cents of each US government dollar goes to the military and drew to attention to the presence of 6000 US troops in Haiti besides the 12500 UN troops already there. The US is planning a bigger military presence there with 20,000 troops. Several countries in the region have already demanded the withdrawal of US troops who are not engaged in any support or rescue work.

The Haitian economy was wrecked by the concerted action of US, Canada and France between 2000 and 2004 through cutting off economic aid in order to topple the elected government. US led forces minimised the role of government in Haiti and, as pointed out by Associate Press, Haitian government revenues, not including grants, are just 10 percent of GDP, below half the level for even poorer countries such as Rwanda, Mozambique, Niger and Burundi. But USAID is currently funnelling millions of US taxpayer dollars into questionable organizations such as Chemonics, Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), and its own Office of Transition Initiatives, which has been involved in shady political activities in various countries where the US was undermining democratically elected governments.

Sources: *guardian.co.uk, prensa-latina.cu*

Afghanistan: Adding to Desperation MPs snub Karzai's cabinet

The Afghan parliament dealt blow to President Hamid Karzai on 2nd January by rejecting 17 out of his 24 nominees for a new cabinet in a secret ballot of MPs, amid Karzai's desperate bid for legitimacy in Afghanistan and abroad.

The nominations were designed to retain 12 ministers in their posts in order to satisfy US and western wishes that trusted hands be retained. A second attempt to fill the vacancies met with a similar fate on 16th January when the MPs rejected 10 of the 17 nominees, leaving 10 cabinet posts unfilled. How and when the posts are to be filled remains uncertain with the chief of Afghanistan's elections commission saying that parliamentary elections will be held on 22 May, just 10 months after Karzai's victory in a presidential election marred by fraud and violence.

Sources: *guardian.co.uk, reuters.com*

Plans to escalate war

Meanwhile the US-led forces of occupation are set to launch an offensive in the Taliban stronghold in Helmund Province in Southern Afghanistan in February. Although it is likely that the occupying forces will be able to capture the territory, resistance to occupation has already prepared to resort to guerrilla warfare in a terrain hostile and unfamiliar to the US-led troops.

Sources: *guardian.co.uk, reuters.com*

From conquest to bloodbath

On 29th December the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released figures demonstrating that Afghan civilian deaths had risen by 10 percent in the first ten months of 2009, from 1,838 during the same period a year earlier to 2,038. The majority of the killings were attributed to insurgent attacks, including those directed against U.S., NATO and government targets, but almost 500 civilians were killed by American and NATO forces.

For more details of atrocities against civilians see
www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=16839

Nepal: Fresh Strategies

Mobilising the masses

In November 2009, the Maoists (United Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist) sent a clear message to the government of Nepal, an opportunist alliance cobbled up by India, that the Maoists are still the most popular political force in Nepal.

The Maoists who successfully concluded the third phase of their struggle on 19th December declared the fourth phase in January. The Maoists have adapted their strategy to new situation to define the contradiction between the people and imperialism, Indian expansionism in particular operating through their puppets and the remnants of feudalism.

The tactical line emphasising national independence, civilian supremacy, peace, drafting of a new constitution and a united national government seeks to rally the people round the main slogans:

All Patriotic and Republican Forces Unite!

Let us Protect the National Independence!

Other campaign slogans reflected the concerns and feelings of the Nepali masses:

Cancel the unconstitutional step of the President!

Maintain civil supremacy!

Stop the counterrevolutionary conspiracy!

Ensure Peace and New constitution!

Let us unite all leftist, patriotic and republican forces!

Let us defeat the counterrevolutionary plot!

Let us build a united front of all leftist, patriotic and republican forces!

Protect national independence!

Maintain the civilian supremacy!

Ensure peace and a forward-looking new constitution!

Long live the People's Federal republic!

Cancel all the unequal treaties and the agreements!

Indian Army: Evacuate the Nepalese territory!

Counterrevolution in the making

Sukhdev Shah, Nepal's Ambassador to the US between February and May 2009, and a US citizen, has declared in an article published in the website 'My Republica' that Nepal has become a fertile ground for a military takeover of the government, independently or under the shadow of a constitutional authority.

While conceding that successive regimes have failed politically and that the present government is at a loss on how to face up to the new Maoist challenge, he suggests that the government may be attracted to use the full force of the army to suppress the Maoists. His fear is that the Maoists, once in power, by making civilian supremacy a battle-cry would seek a quick dissolution of the army, a hurdle on their road to complete victory. He has little faith in the political system's ability to overcome the 'Maoist threat'. He argues that, since the Maoists have been in a sort of undeclared war with the army for some time and the monarchy had prevented the army from taking on the Maoists, it is likely that the army could be persuaded to crush the Maoist militarily. He goes beyond the military defeat of the Maoists to propose a frightening future for Nepal.

"Presidential rule or army takeover can eliminate some Maoists and subdue their backers but it will be incapable of winning the ideological war. There is little or nothing to take a bet on how the events are going to unfold over the

coming months and years, but the present cat-and-mouse manoeuvrings by political parties and Maoists are likely to move the conflict to centre-stage for a showdown. If this comes to pass, army will have a greater chance of claiming victory, provided that the conflict involves mostly the leadership on the top. Another big uncertainty is if Nepal has the good fortune of some strongmen rising to the occasion—the likes of Korea's Park Chung-He, Chile's Pinochet, Indonesia's Suharto—to take up the challenge of suppressing dissent and mobilizing the machinery of the State to focus on only one mission: Building a strong and prosperous nation.

With so many options tried over so many years to eradicate poverty and catch-up on the bandwagon of growth, opportunities and prosperity, this last option may just have a chance to succeed”.

Shah's assessment of the situation in Nepal is based on a reactionary pro-imperialist outlook. But his observations are realistic. Thus the prospect of a neo-fascist takeover, probably underwritten by the US, cannot be excluded unless the revolutionary forces are constantly on the alert and keep the reactionaries and foreign meddlers at bay.

Sources: *southasiarev.wordpress.com, news.outlookindia.com*

India: State Terror Unleashed

Citizens protest against war orchestration

Around 2000 citizens of West Bengal again came out on the streets of Kolkata on February 9, 2010, braving state repression, to declare that they will not allow Home Minister Chidambaram and the chief ministers to plot their genocidal plans in the heart of the city. Participants represented various human rights and anti-imperialist organisations, students' organizations and individuals. The slogans ranged from “Chidambaram go back” to “We demand food, not bullets, for the people of Lalgarh”.

The march ended with the burning of effigies of Chidambaram and Buddhadeb Battacharya, Chief Minister of West Bengal. Then the participants proceeded to join a demonstration organized by a forum of Marxist Leninist parties where the speakers denounced Operation Green Hunt and the state repression on activists, rights workers and trade unionists in the name of combating Maoists.

Source: *Sanhati.com*

State murder of journalist

Kolkata Police Special Branch picked up Sapan Dasgupta from his home on 6th October 2009, on charges of being associated with the People's March — a Maoist quarterly the ban on which by the Kerala government was lifted by the Press & Registration Appellate Board on 7th August two months before Dasgupta's arrest. After his arrest under Sections 18 (conspiracy), 20 (punishment for organising terrorist camps), 39 (support given to terrorist organisation) of Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967 and 121/121A/124A of Indian Penal Code that deal with sedition against the state, Dasgupta was remanded to police custody for 28 days and interrogated by the CID and the Special Branch. He was charged under the UAPA for publishing a banned periodical.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a senior CID official said: "We interrogated him for several days. But we did not find anything substantial to book him under the UAPA. In the case diary, it was mentioned that he used to publish a banned magazine and also published an exclusive interview of elusive Maoist leader Kishenji and PCAPA chief Chhatradhar Mahato. But it was not something unique to his publication, as several newspapers also published such interviews and articles. No charges were proved against him and we did not get any evidence against him to submit the charge sheet."

The Association for Protection of Democratic Rights pointed out that the Bengali edition of People's March has a valid press registration. Sujato Bhadra, General Secretary of APDR, charged that Dasgupta was murdered by the state since the jail authorities had denied him essential medical attention. He died on 2nd February 2010.

Sources: *southasianmedia.net, indianexpress.com*

Chidambaram's little offer

Union Home Minister P Chidambaram, urging Maoists to stop violence, give up arms and start negotiations with the Centre, offered to suspend contracts with mining companies in order to get the Maoists to agree to a dialogue. He also told the Financial Times that the mining contracts could be renewed to provide royalty payments for local communities.

Chidambaram said that the Maoists criticise the sale of iron ore and other minerals to outsiders and accuse large companies of cheating the impoverished population and that they had told the tribal people that this is all a capitalist conspiracy to seize their land and give it to big business to exploit the minerals and that had resonance among the tribal people because the fragile existence they lead is threatened.

There was no response on the offer from Vedanta Resources, with its headquarters in London or ArcelorMittal owned by Indian billionaire Lakshmi Mittal.

Source: *asianage.com*

Maoists kill 24 troops in West Bengal

At least 24 troops were killed when Maoists attacked a camp of the paramilitary forces in India's West Bengal state, officials said. The camp was overrun by the Maoists after the troops put up brief initial resistance. The Maoists then burnt down the camp and planted landmines on the entire length of the road leading to the camp.

In a call to the television station NDTV, Maoist leader Koteswar Rao, also known as Kishenji, said that the attack was in retaliation for the government's military offensive Operation Green Hunt against the Maoists, which has also affected the tribal people.

Ajay Sahni, director of New Delhi's Institute of Conflict Management, said India faced the prospect of a protracted struggle, with little possibility of success, against the guerrillas, given what he said was the government's inadequate strength to combat the rebels.

Source: *ft.com*

Manipur: Call for Coordinated struggle

The proscribed United National Liberation Front (UNLF) underscored the crucial importance of close coordination among insurgent groups of Manipur and waging the liberation movement collectively. On the 23rd raising day of the Manipur People's Army (MPA), the UNLF noted a major factor in the failure to carry forward the liberation movement at the desired pace has been the inability of revolutionary groups to work together. Sana Yaima Chairman of the UNLF, Military Affairs Committee said that it would be hard for any single group to bring the liberation movement to a higher plane even if it receives support and assistance from the people and foreign countries. He also pointed out that a joint struggle by revolutionary groups would certainly help them stand in a vantage position, more importantly it would go a long way towards winning unflinching faith of the people, and that, once the people's faith is won, nothing could stand in the way of the revolutionary movement.

Source: *southasiarev.wordpress.com*

Pakistan: US Expands its War

Jeremy Scahill in his comment of 4th February 2010 in "the Nation" (www.thenation.com/doc/20100222/scahill2) noted that the killing of three US special forces soldiers in northwest Pakistan on 3rd February confirmed that the US military was more deeply engaged in war in Pakistan than previously acknowledged by the White House and Pentagon. A Pakistani journalist who witnessed the attack said that some of the US soldiers were dressed in civilian clothes and had been identified by their Pakistani handlers as journalists.

The article draws attention to direct US involvement in military operations against Pakistan Taliban in dubious ways and points out that the attack on US soldiers has demonstrated that the US military is getting increasingly entrenched in the country.

The United States does not publicly acknowledge US military operations in Pakistan. On CENTCOM's website, they are described in vague terms. "We will of course continue to target, disrupt, and pursue the leadership, bases, and support networks of Al Qaeda and other transnational extremist groups operating in the region," declares CENTCOM's Pakistan page. "We will do this aggressively and relentlessly."

Since President Obama's inauguration, the administration has downplayed the role of US military forces in Pakistan. In July, Ambassador Richard Holbrook said bluntly, "People think that the US has troops in Pakistan, well, we don't." On Wednesday, after the US soldiers' deaths, his tune changed dramatically: "There's nothing secret about their presence," he said. One thing is certain: as the situation in Pakistan becomes more volatile and the US military presence in the country expands, it will become increasingly difficult for the Obama administration to downplay or deny the reality that a US war in Pakistan is already underway.

The Philippines: Facing State Terror

The abysmal human rights record of the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regime has surpassed that of the notorious Marcos regime.

On 28th November 2010 58 people were brutally killed in Ampatuan, Maguindanao. These victims of attacks by high-powered firearms at close range, were unarmed and included political supporters who were present to file a nomination for the upcoming elections and 32 journalists who

went to cover the event. There was an unsuccessful attempt by the administration reputed for brushing aside the extrajudicial killings of activists while publicly praising and promoting military officials known for their records of human rights abuses to systematically cover up the crime.

Public opinion holds the Macapagal-Arroyo regime accountable for the Ampatuan massacre, since Andal Ampatuan Sr. who has been identified as the person who ordered the massacre has been a crony of Macapagal-Arroyo who backed her strongly in the presidential elections of 2004 and 2007. Macapagal-Arroyo had been the beneficiary of the reign of terror in Maguindanao led by Ampatuan Sr., which indulged in massive vote buying and election cheating in the elections of 2004 and 2007, and had encouraged and nurtured the violence that led to the massacre by circumventing the constitutional ban on private armies by issuing an Executive Order 546 that allowed local officials to become warlords. The carnage has been denounced as an assault on the freedom of the media as well as on the people's democratic, civil and political rights.

The negative publicity of the massacre has not stopped the Armed Forces of the Philippines from carrying out arbitrary arrests, abductions, detention and torture of civilians, and even the murder of civilians distantly associated with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. As recently as February 2010, 43 health professionals and workers in Morong, Rizal were arbitrarily arrested and tortured by high officers and units of the Second Infantry Division of the Philippine Army.

In sharp contrast to the brutal conduct of the armed forces of the Philippines is the attitude of the New People's Army towards the government soldiers slain by it. When 29 soldiers were killed and 35 wounded in six clashes between 27th January and 4th February in the Cordillera Administrative Region, its political organisation, the Cordillera People's Democratic Front, condoled with the families of the dead soldiers and mourned for them the way it would mourn the death of its own fighters as they came from the same poor peasant and working class background as NPA fighters. It appealed to rank and file soldiers to defy orders from their immediate superiors who command them to conduct military operations against the NPA, to cooperate with the NPA and even join the revolutionary movement. It also advised junior officers not to lead their men in areas where they will surely be ambushed.

Sources: zumel.com, southasiarev.wordpress.com

Yemen: Blaming it on al Qaeda

[This comment has drawn heavily on the analysis of Mohamed Hassan, an Ethiopian born specialist in geopolitics and the Arab world: http://www.michelcollon.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2521:yemen-usa-are-fighting-against-democracy-not-against-al-qaeda&catid=1:articles&itemid=2]

Hassan explains that the incredible story of the failed attack on an Amsterdam-Detroit flight by a Nigerian boy, trained in Yemen, a close ally of the US, betrayed by his father, was typical of US-made *al Qaeda* fiction to provide a pretext to interfere in Arab countries. He proceeds to explain that the corrupt 20 years old pro-US regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh faces surging armed resistance by the Houthi movement which leads the Zyidis (a Shia Muslim sect) in the north. The fighting has made refugees of 150,000 people. President Saleh, himself a Zyidi, has falsely accused Iran of supporting the Houthi rebels in the hope of mobilizing the Sunni Muslims to back his war against the Houthis, thereby risking loss of support from own community.

South Yemen was administered separately by the British colonial rulers who used its capital Aden to control sea trade in the region and as a colonial outpost. Hassan draws attention to the holding of Indian political prisoners in Aden, the capital of South Yemen, as a factor that inspired the independence movement of South Yemen which forced the British colonialists out in 1967. It was for several years the most progressive state in the Arab World. Today's Yemen was formed in 1990 by the reunification of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south with the Saudi controlled Yemeni Arab Republic in the north, after the South Yemen was weakened by conflict caused by pro-western meddling.

Initially Saudi Arabia sought to prevent Yemen from becoming a strong neighbour and encouraged secessionism in the South. Conflict broke out in 1994, but the rebellion was put down. Fifteen years later dissatisfaction about dominance by the North and corruption led to the expression of discontent as a call for secession from a regime that has virtually restored the old feudal order in Yemen. Yemeni people are angered by the deteriorating social and economic conditions as well as by the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, which they see as wars against Muslims. Saleh's pro-US stand and his submission to Saudi Arabia have caused much popular anger against him.

The success of a revolution in Yemen, a very poor Arab country, could encourage resistance fighters in other pro-imperialist states in the region, especially Saudi Arabia, and has serious economic consequences for the

US. The US is taking few chances and has already sent missiles and special troops. A good proportion of US supplied weapons have fallen into the hands of the resistance because of Zyidi links with the Yemeni army.

Saleh launched a major offensive against the Houthis in August 2009 and called for reinforcements from the Saudi Arabian and US armies, but failed to defeat the Houthis. He and Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of Houthi resistance declared on 11th February 2010 the end of fighting in the five-year conflict. The truce follows a unilateral ceasefire by the resistance on January 30, a few days after it announced a truce with Saudi Arabia.

The US is using the pretext of *al Qaeda* involvement to strengthen its military presence in Yemen, which in reality is severely strained by its internal conflicts, aggravated by Saudi and US geo-political concerns about the alleged rise of Iran's influence in the region. Yemen could be the next battlefield in the US-led war against an imagined Islamic threat to the West. But, given the militant past of the Yemeni people, it will be yet another failure of the US foreign policy of blatant aggression.

Other sources: globalresearch.ca, bernama.com, news.dailytrust.com

Palestine: Breaking the Blockade

On 6th January 2010, the Palestinian people and their friends across the world sent a message of defiance to Zionist Israel, its master the imperialist US and their reactionary allies. A convoy organized by the British-based group Viva Palestina, accompanied by more than 500 international activists entered Gaza on that day after it received the approval of Egyptian authorities to bring into the besieged, region several tons of humanitarian supplies. The activists entered Gaza through Rafah border crossing. Fifty-nine of the vehicles were not allowed into the strip but the supplies were unloaded and taken through by the activists.

Egyptian approval came after activists and security forces clashed earlier in the day when the government refused to let the aid convoy to pass through its land to the Hamas-ruled territory. More than 55 activists and several members of the security forces were injured; and around 60 convoy-members were arrested.

Gaza has been under a tight Israeli blockade since June 2007 when the democratically elected Hamas took control of the area, and Egypt has been under fire from Arab and Muslim groups for its cooperating with Israel.

British MP George Galloway, accompanying the convoy, said that the activists had been forced to renegotiate with the Egyptian authorities who had also refused the convoy entry into Egypt from the Red Sea, forcing it to change course to a Mediterranean port.

It should be noted here that on 27th December 2010, Palestinians commemorated the start of the 22 day attacks by Israel on Gaza an operation which targeted unarmed civilians, schools, hospitals, journalists and emergency staff. It was followed by the Gaza Freedom March 31st December in which 1400 people from 42 countries had registered to participate, and claimed by the organisers to be the first mass mobilization of this size since 1967.

Sources: presstv.ir, alethonews.wordpress.com

Africa

Somalia: The Forgotten Crisis

On 19th January 2010 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees reported that continuing fighting and general insecurity in southern Somalia has displaced an estimated 63,000 people since the beginning of this year. Conflict in the capital Mogadishu with street battles between government forces and *al-Shabaab* and *Hisb-ul-Islam* militiamen had caused the displacement of thousands every week. Fighting also continues between government-aligned militia and Islamic militants elsewhere in the country. Somalia with one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, had in mid-January some 1.5 million people internally displaced and more than 560,000 people living as refugees in neighbouring countries, mainly in Kenya (309,000), Yemen (163,000) and Ethiopia (59,000).

Although the African Union operated African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) is functioning in Somalia only Uganda and Burundi have troops (over 5000 soldiers) stationed in Somalia, which sections of the Somali resistance forces see as forces of occupation, and operations by AMISOM have been targets of attack.

Kenya has also been dragged into the conflict because of its alleged training and equipping of Kenyan and Kenya-based Somalis to take part in the offensive against *al-Shabaab* rebels. Meanwhile the EU plans to train 2000 Somali troops in western Uganda in May 2010.

The future for peace in Somalia seems bleak in the context of continuing US-led imperialist meddling, despite the failure of the US-

backed Ethiopian invasion in 2006 that overthrew the regime that restored political stability but failed to control Somalia.

Sources: *unhcr.org*, *news.xinhuanet.com*, *globalresearch.ca*

Guinea: Doubtful Democracy

Guinea's military ruler Captain Moussa Dadis Camara was shot in the head on 3rd December 2009 by the former chief of the presidential guard, who claimed that Camara was trying to blame him for the killing of opposition demonstrators on 28th September. A UN inquiry into the killings reported that there are sufficient grounds for presuming that Camara has direct criminal responsibility for the killings.

The decision on 15th January by Guinea's military rulers to keep Camara in temporary exile in Burkina Faso eased concerns about of violence in the country. On the 18th, Camara in his first public comment since he was shot at called for calm and national unity in the pursuit of a transitional government and democratic elections within six months. On the 19th the interim president General Sekouba Konate appointed Jean-Marie Dore, an opposition veteran as prime minister, among others, to prepare Guinea for transition democratic elections. The steps, welcomed by the main opposition parties, are seen with suspicion by the trade unions which resent the unilateral action by the military.

Even after elections, parliamentary democracy is bound to be under threat from the powerful presence of the military in the affairs of the country and in particular military officers once favoured by Camara as well as those with tribal loyalties towards him.

Sources : *news.bbc.co.uk*, *english.aljazeera.net*, *globalgeopolitics.net*

North America

US: Foreign Policy under Obama

The Barak Obama regime, while struggling to extricate the US from its economic mess which has developed into a crisis of global capitalism continues with its disastrous foreign policy. Nobel peace laureate Obama's foreign policy goes beyond continuing the failed policies of the George Bush to aggravate the conflicts and push the US into deeper crises in its military and 'regime change' adventures and thereby diminish US influence in international affairs.

Haiti: The US response to the tragic earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 was to transform it into an opportunity to reshape Haiti's political and economic conditions in ways that will keep Haiti permanently under US domination. Nicaragua, Bolivia and Venezuela have openly accused the US of exploiting the tragedy to impose a military occupation of the country. The US has responded by accusing the three countries of 'politicising' the crisis. Yet besides Haitians the people in the Caribbean region and Latin America compare the response of the US, which rushed thousands of troops into Haiti, with that of Latin American countries, which rushed medical workers to Haiti. Although Haitian public resentment is surging against the US, amid the callous attitude of the US and the UN officials towards rescue and relief operations the US is seeking to consolidate its military presence which it plans to boost to 20,000 and permanently occupy Haiti.

Honduras: The coup in Honduras last year was an early first for the Obama regime, which has encouraged the conspirators to hold on to power by refusing to derecognise the regime amid almost universal rejection of the coup. The US has sought to legitimise the coup by persuading its allies to recognise the new unlawful government elected by a process marked by massive state sponsored abuse of human rights and state power, and rejected by a majority of the voters (50% not participating and over 6.5% of those who voted spoiling their ballot paper). The vast majority of Latin American countries have refused to recognise the election or the new government. (Also see separate section on Honduras below).

Colombia: Following the closure of US bases in Ecuador in late 2009, the US has increased its military presence in Colombia on the pretext of controlling cocaine production and trafficking but in fact aimed at destabilising leftist governments in the region. US military expansion in Colombia has been denounced by South American countries.

Yemen: The US, under Obama, has opened a new front in its war in West Asia to support the reactionary regime through Saudi Arabia. A US\$70 million package of military and security assistance has been put into place to suppress rebellion against one of the most corrupt and hated regimes in the region. (Also see earlier section on Yemen).

AfPak war: A major contribution of the Obama administration to US foreign policy was the escalation the war in Afghanistan while claiming to withdraw Iraq, which the US is likely to leave in a bigger mess than when it took over after the military defeat of Saddam Hussein. The staggering US\$30 billion cost of sending 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan offers no promise of victory but will certainly deepen the crisis of the debt ridden US economy.

The expansion of the war into Pakistan has adverse implications not only for the tottering elected government and the struggle for democracy in Pakistan but also for India, the regional hegemon and ally of the US as witnessed in the rising incidence of terrorist activity in India. What the Obama regime has achieved is to add to instability in the region.

Iran: US attempts to bully Iran over the issue of uranium enrichment yielded nothing more than greater defiance by the Iranian regime which announced on 11th February, a day after the US imposed fresh sanctions, that Iran has produced its first batch of uranium enriched to a higher level, and will not be bullied by the West into curtailing its nuclear program. The Obama regime's covert backing for the defeated candidate at the presidential election in his efforts to invalidate the outcome of the election has backfired. It has only made the government stronger amid rising economic problems and continuing state repression. The biggest losers in the process have been the genuine democratic and progressive forces who seek to build a secular and strong independent Iran free of foreign domination and control.

Nowhere else has US foreign policy been so thoroughly discredited as in Palestine. The Obama regime is vigorously continuing with the same hypocritical approach of its predecessors. Its Palestinian policy is resented by the Arab world as a whole although dictatorial Arab regimes, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in particular, play along with the US to undermine the just struggle of the Palestinians. Resentment has only grown about US hostility towards several Muslim countries, as well as naked aggression and war. Obama's sweet words during his visit to the Middle East following his election have proven to be insincere and resentment is growing not just in the Arab world but also the Islamic world.

Obama's measured confrontational approach towards China and Russia designed to please the conservative right in the US cannot take US interests very far, since US militarism has only contributed to the rise of China as a global economic power (although at a price for the national economy and the well being of its people) and the decline of the US as an economic power.

US imperialism will continue to meddle in the internal affairs of countries and seek regime changes even more desperately as it becomes increasingly isolated. Obama has already demonstrated who is in control in the US and that he is only there to carry out orders.

Sources: *guardian.co.uk, globalresearch.ca, prensa-latina.cu*

Latin America

Honduras: Discredited Elections

Washington's role in the coup in Honduras against President Zelaya has been evident from day one. The Obama administration's initial public insistence on Zelaya's legitimacy as president of Honduras quickly faded after the first weeks of the coup.

Costa Rican president Oscar Arias – staunch ally of the US – “mediated” the negotiations between coup leaders and President Zelaya while the US was buying time, until an “elected government” could replace Zelaya. The Honduran resistance movement called for the boycott of the elections of 29th November 2009 which were denounced by the Washington-based Center for Justice and International Law for their “climate of harassment, violence, and violation of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly” and by Amnesty International noting that the authorities had detained various individuals under a decree prohibiting gatherings of more than four people, some of whom have been charged with terrorism, and calling for revealing the identities and whereabouts of those detained. The level of voter turnout was clearly lower than in past elections, and the official figure stood at 50%, with around 30% voting in the poorer regions. Of those who voted over 6.5% spoiled their ballot papers.

Sources: *global research.org*, *commondreams.org*

Venezuela: Chavez's Fifth International

During an international meeting of left parties held in Caracas from 19th to 21st November, 2009, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez launched a call for a Fifth Socialist International which, according to him, should bring together left parties and social movements; and must be “an instrument for the unification and the articulation of the struggle of the peoples to save this planet”.

While the aims and scope of the proposed International may have wide appeal the likely composition of the International itself is already in dispute. Those who hail the Venezuelan model as the model for “Socialism of the 21st Century” are enthusiastic about the project, and reject all doubts and words of caution about the populist approach of Chavez and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) that he leads. A variety of Trotskyites hail the move for reasons that have more to do with nostalgia and clannish anti-‘Stalinist’ sentiment than with sound

Marxist analysis. However, Trotskyites with 'brand name' concerns resent the idea of yet another International with state resources to back it.

There are genuine fears about Chavez's commitment to the idea of a capitalist-socialist mixed economic model and his respect for private property in a country where the bourgeoisie mainly import goods and generate little productive employment. Despite remarkable progress in education, public health and the living standards of the vast majority, the economy depends heavily on its oil wealth. Venezuela imports most of its food and has a long way to go towards implementation of essential land reform in the agrarian sector, and is struggling to industrialise itself. Given the vulnerability of the economy, the ability of Venezuela to provide leadership for a Socialist International is questionable.

Yet, one cannot deny the valuable role played by Venezuela during the past decade in enabling political changes in Latin America, its valuable support for countries and people targeted by imperialism. Venezuela has important projects close to home that concern the consolidation of victories scored against US imperialism, and deserves the support of left, progressive and democratic forces across the world. While it is correct to warn against the risks of populist politics, the dangers of over enthusiasm and other errors of theoretical and practical significance, little will be achieved by taking a hostile stand against the Venezuelan leadership at a time when the country and the region face serious internal and external threats.

Source: *venezuelanaysis.com*

Uruguay: The Left Scores

José Mujica, 74, once a member of the Marxist Tupamaros revolutionary movement that battled right-wing governments in the 1960s and 1970s and jailed for 14 years for his role in armed struggle, won 48% of the vote in the first round of elections in October 2009, just short of an outright majority. In the run-off against the former President, Luis Lacalle at the end of November he was elected President with 52% of the vote.

Mujica has pledged to keep the ruling centre-left broad front coalition in power. Many Uruguayans credit the coalition with returning the country to economic growth and Mujica, a farmer and former Agriculture Minister, has pledged to continue investor-friendly policies that have helped the economy to expand for six consecutive years.

Source: *ipsnews.net*

Chile: The Right Wins

The Chilean presidential election of 2009 held on 13th December 2009 led to a run-off which the billionaire centre-right candidate Sebastián Piñera won with about 51.6% of the vote against the centre-left Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle with 48.4%. Although the centre-right emerged strongest in elections to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies it failed to secure a majority in either house. Although the results point to the failure of the broad left in addressing the concerns of the electorate, the election was notable for the election of three members of the Communist Party to the 120 member Chamber of Deputies. Notably, this is the first time since 1958 that the centre-right has won power democratically.

Source: *guardian.co.uk*, *en.wikipedia.org*

Europe

Copenhagen Summit: A Disaster

Ministers of Environment from the EU on 23rd December 2009 qualified as a disaster the Conference of Copenhagen and talked about the impossibility of achieving an internationally binding agreement about climate change before the end of the coming year. A comment by Fidel Castro on the same day titled the “The truth of what happened at Copenhagen summit” exposed that was more revealing. The following text is based on Castro’s comment.

The Danish government on 18th December, the final day of deliberations, offered the conference’s plenary hall to President Obama for a meeting where only he and a selected group of guests, 16 in all, would have the exclusive right to speak. Obama’s deceitful, demagogic and ambiguous remarks failed to involve a binding commitment and ignored the Kyoto Framework Convention. At the end of the speeches of the 16 chosen, Evo Morales requested the floor and the Danish president consented only on the insistence of the other delegations. Morales was followed by Hugo Chavez.

From the evening of the 17th and the early morning hours of the 18th the Prime Minister of Denmark and senior representatives of the US had been meeting with the Chairman of the European Commission and the leaders of 27 nations to introduce to them – on behalf of Obama – a draft agreement in whose elaboration none of the other leaders of the rest of the world had taken part.

After all the heads of state had left, the Prime Minister of Denmark convened a meeting at three in the morning of the 19th to conclude the Summit. By then, the countries were represented by ministers, officials, ambassadors and technical staff. The attempt by Obama and allies to smuggle in a document imposed by the US as one agreed by consensus at the Summit was thwarted by a group of representatives of Third World countries. Attempts to reduce climate control targets well below universally recognized scientific views were exposed as was the attempt to undermine the principle of sovereign equality consecrated in the United Nations Charter by using the concept of ‘a group of representative leaders’.

Despite heavy pressure from delegations of developed countries a small number of countries insisted on the rectification of the grave omissions and ambiguities of the document promoted by the US, particularly the absence of a commitment by the developed countries on the reduction of carbon emissions and on the financing that would allow the South countries to adopt alleviating and adjustment measures. In the end, the position of the ALBA countries and Sudan, as President of the G-77, prevailed that the document was unacceptable to the conference thus it could not be adopted, and the Conference could only “take note” of the existence of the document representing the position of a group of about 25 countries.

On 18th February 2010, the top UN climate-change official Yvo de Boer announced his resignation takes effect on 1st July. De Boer said that his decision was unrelated to the summit's outcome and that he believes that talks on a new treaty are on track, despite the frustration of failing to reach a deal at the Copenhagen climate summit in December.

Source: *tehrantimes.com, earthtimes.org*

Greece: Troubled Economy

In late January 2010, Greek bonds plunged as the markets took a look at government plans to cut a budget deficit running at 12.7% of the GDP. There was speculation that a bailout was being organised by the European Central Bank, or the EU, but not without implications for the currency markets. Greece's troubles seeped into the currency markets, dragging down the euro. Other Euro area bond markets, in Spain and Portugal in particular, took a tumble. Interestingly, Greece was aided by Goldman Sachs to mask the true extent of its deficit with the help of a derivatives deal that legally circumvented the EU Maastricht deficit rules.

Following discussions between the Greek prime minister, the Presidents of France, Germany and the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council, the leaders issued a statement on 12th February aimed at restoring calm and voicing political support for Papandreou's programme of swingeing budget cuts and structural reforms.

The purpose of the statement was to tell speculators that the major EU economies will act firmly to restore confidence in the Euro. There was no promise of funds for Greece, whose budget cuts and structural reforms will heap heavier burdens on the people, risking the kind of unrest of a little over a year ago.

Source: *macedoniaonline.eu, guardian.co.uk*

Ukraine: the Faded Orange Revolution

To the dismay of governments and the media in the West, the opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich made a comeback from his loss in the 'Orange Revolution' of 2004 by defeating Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko by 3.5% of the votes cast. Tymoshenko whose initial response to her defeat was to challenge the result in court retreated, claiming that she will not have a 'fair hearing'.

Source: *nytimes.com*

The Netherlands: Cabinet Falls

The Netherlands' coalition government fell victim to the US-led war in Afghanistan. The government fell in the morning of 20th February 2010 after the two largest parties failed to agree on whether to withdraw Dutch troops from Afghanistan later this year, as had been planned.

Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende's centre-right Christian Democrat CDA, the bigger partner in the coalition, had suggested keeping a reduced force in Afghanistan for a year past the August 2010 deadline. That was met with opposition from the Labour Party of Wouter Bos, the Deputy Prime Minister who explained: "A plan was agreed to when our soldiers went to Afghanistan. Our partners in the government didn't want to stick to that plan, and on the basis of their refusal we have decided to resign from this government".

Source: *english.aljazeera.net*

Two Poems by T Pradeesh

If I were a Millionaire

If I were a millionaire how will it be?
If I were a millionaire it will be the happiest moment in my life,
Millions and millions in my house,
Meats and meats for my pets,
Expensive helicopters and expensive cars.

What a nice house,
What a nice car,
What a nice pet,
All for the sake of my lots of money.

Giving money to other people
And earning money for my people
And all for the sake of my lots of money.
Will I be happy with my money?

A New World

Change the government,
Change the rules,
Change the people
And change the environment.

Bring up the education,
Bring up the youngsters,
Bring up peace
And bring up equality.

Stop the war,
Stop the imperialists,
Stop the enemies
And a new world is built.

Questions from a Worker who Reads

Bertolt Brecht

Who built Thebes of the seven gates?
In the books you will find the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And Babylon, many times demolished
Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
Where, the evening that the Wall of China was finished
Did the masons go? Great Rome
Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Had Byzantium, much praised in song
Only palaces for its inhabitants? Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still bawled for their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India.
Was he alone?
Caesar beat the Gauls.
Did he not have even a cook with him?

Philip of Spain wept when his armada
Went down. Was he the only one to weep?
Frederick the Second won the Seven Year's War. Who
Else won it?

Every page a victory.
Who cooked the feast for the victors?
Every ten years a great man?
Who paid the bill?

So many reports.
So many questions.

In this dead-end

Ahmad Shamlu (1925-1999)

*They smell your mouth
To see if you have been saying: I love you.
They smell your heart
This is the strangest of times, my dear!*

*Whoever knocks at the door in the middle of the night
Has come to kill the light
We have to hide it in a closet.*

*Now the butchers are
Stationed on each cross-road
With a tree trunk and a cleaver
To engrave a smile on our lips
And a song on our mouths
We have to hide our pleasures in a closet.*

*Canaries are being roasted on fire
Made of lilies and lilacs
This is the strangest of times, my dear!*

*The victorious drunkard Devil
Is celebrating our mourning
We have to hide God in a closet.*

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Website: <http://ndpsl.org>

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