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The Fifth All Sri Lanka Congress of the NDMLP

Tamil Nationalism: One to Smash & One to Build

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The True Prison

Kenule Saro-Wiva

**It is not the leaking roof
Nor the singing mosquitoes
In the damp, wretched cell
It is not the clank of the key
As the warder locks you in
It is not the measly rations
Unfit for man or beast
Nor yet the emptiness of day
Dipping into the blankness of night
It is not
It is not
It is not
It is the lies that you have been drummed
Into your ears for one generation
It is the security agent running amok
Executing callous calamitous orders
In exchange for a wretched meal a day
The magistrate writing into her book
Punishment she knows is undeserved
The oral decrepitude
Mental ineptitude
The meal of dictators
Cowardice masking as obedience
Lurking in our denigrating souls
It is fear damping trousers
We dare not wash of our urine
It is this
It is this
It is this
Dear friend, turns our free world
Into a dreary prison.**

[Ken Saro-Wiva writer, journalist, TV author and poet fought on behalf of the Ogoni people of the Niger Delta against exploitation by Shell and other oil companies. He was hanged by the Nigerian dictatorship in 1995 after a farcical trial.]

From the Editor's Desk

On 17th May, President Rajapaksa named an eight-member 'Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission' to report on the lessons to learn from the events between 21st February 2002—when a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE—to 19th May 2009—when the war came to an end with the annihilation of the LTTE as a fighting force. The Commission which has started its hearings is also to make recommendations to ensure that such a conflict does not recur.

The government has two purposes in mind: one to divert attention from the Expert Committee appointed by the UN Secretary General to report on human rights violations that may have occurred in Sri Lanka during the final stages of the war; and the other to gather data to justify the resumption of the war in 2006 through asserting that the MoU of 2002 and the Ceasefire Agreement constituted a serious threat to national security. In short, the purpose of the Commission is to rationalise a course of action about which the government had already made up its mind.

The government has no intention of resolving the national question or finding ways of healing the wounds of national oppression and war. Every step taken by the government and the armed forces runs counter to bringing about national resolution. Thus the course of action of the government will inevitably leave it with no option but severe repression to ensure that there will be no serious challenge to its continuing in power.

The government which at the end of the general election was only 6 parliamentary seats short of a two-thirds majority is now only 4 short of that target, and has little difficulty in attaining it. The question is what it intends to achieve with that majority. The intention to amend the constitution was clear even before the general election, and that the purpose was not to terminate the executive presidency, which has been a curse on democracy in the country, but to remove the existing limit on the number of terms that one may serve as President. An alternative and even more dangerous proposal to allow executive powers to the Prime Minister rather than to the President was, however, abandoned. The UNP too seems to prefer the continuation of the executive presidency.

Amendments also await the system of election by proportional representation to parliament, regional and local bodies. The intention is to reintroduce individual electorate based election or reduce the number of representatives elected under proportional representation. This will hurt minority representation everywhere, and Hill Country Tamils will suffer most. Such changes will be acceptable to the UNP as well, as they will diminish the need for it to be at the mercy of feuding parties and factions of the minority nationalities. How the minority nationality MPs who are partners in the UPFA government will respond to a change in the system of election remains to be seen. But the likelihood is that they will fall in line after, at best, feeble utterances of formal protest.

Thus the short term prospect is that the family in power will consolidate its hold on the affairs of the country. Meantime, there is the increasing risk of existing repressive legislation being used to suppress all voices of dissent as well as just demands of the public and mass protests against repression.

It will be wrong to expect representatives of the chauvinistic ruling classes in government or in opposition to be serious about finding a solution to the national question, which is the key to the resolution of the economic and social problems that ail the country. It is most likely that the national question will be kept unresolved or even further aggravated so that the attention of the public is diverted from pressing economic and political issues. Democratic forces of all nationalities need to pay particular attention to this danger, because it can be used as an excuse to introduce more repressive laws, control free expression, and beef up the armed forces even after the end of a costly war.

The struggle for democracy, human rights and economic recovery are becoming increasingly inseparable from a just and lasting solution to the national question and the struggle to defend the independence, sovereignty and integrity of the country against imperialist and hegemonic domination over the country. Narrow nationalists as well as the opportunist left and the chauvinistic pseudo left have thus far not only failed the people but also contributed to the worsening of the problems.

It is time for a fresh approach transcending every form of narrow nationalism and opportunism.

New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

Statement to the Media on the

Fifth All Sri Lanka Congress

Issued by

SK Senthivel

General Secretary

New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

The Fifth All Sri Lanka Congress of the New Democratic Party took place in Colombo on the 25th and 26th of June 2010, under the presidium comprising SK Senthivel, E Thambiah, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah and V Mahendran.

The Congress resolved after thorough discussion that the New-Democratic Party be renamed as the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party in consideration of the need for the name to reflect its Marxist Leninist ideological stand and the fact that capitalist parties exist in other countries with the name New Democratic Party – matters to which fraternal foreign Marxist Leninist parties have drawn attention, and in consideration of the fact that the Elections Commissioner has already recognised a party with a similar sounding name

The Fifth All Sri Lanka Congress of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party (hitherto New-Democratic Party) declared self determination for the nationalities within a united Sri Lanka, new democratic revolution led by the working class and a socialist future as its political aims.

The Congress elected a fifteen-member Central Committee, with SK Senthivel as General Secretary, V Mahendran as National Organiser, E Thambiah as International Organiser, and S Thevarajah as Treasurer.

National and International Reports, Organisational and Financial Reports and amendments to the Constitution of the Party were submitted to the Congress and adopted unanimously after thorough discussion and debate. The following comprises summaries of the important resolutions adopted by the Congress:

1. The Sinhala Buddhist feudal conservative and big/comprador bourgeois forces comprise the ruling classes that protect and defend the present neo-colonial structure and dominate over workers, peasants, small traders, the middle classes, women, youth, the minority nationalities and the overwhelming majority of the toiling masses and deny the national democracy due unto them. Thus the need to win national democracy is an urgent task that requires the building of a broad united front comprising left, progressive and democratic parties, parties of the minority nationalities, anti-imperialist organisations, trade unions, peasant organisations, cultural organisations, and intellectuals. A broad programme of political work transcending parliamentary politics should be firmly implemented aiming at giving the initiative to the people in deciding on political and economic issues so that power is transferred to the people. Democracy and human rights, and the equality, autonomy and the right to self determination of nationalities should be assured in order to ensure the independence, sovereignty and unity of Sri Lanka. The national economy and a multi-ethnic national culture should be developed to achieve national democracy.

2. As the next stage, since Sri Lanka is not a developed capitalist country, a New Democratic Revolution is a pre-requisite for socialist revolution. All exploited classes, patriotic anti-imperialist forces, national and petit bourgeois forces should be mobilised to defeat imperialism and big/comprador bourgeoisie and establish self determination according to the wishes of the respective nationalities, eliminate the residues of feudalism, and implement socialist structures.

3. Having accepted the UN, an imperialist agency, and its neo-colonial agenda and having signed a variety of agreements, Sri Lanka obtained the military support of India, China, Pakistan and the US to conduct its war. During and after the war, Sri

Lanka acted in ways that allowed foreign countries to meddle in its affairs and paid scant regard to matters of national integrity, independence and sovereignty. But its expression of concern and anger about the UN Secretary General's nomination of a committee to investigate alleged war crimes and human rights violations sounds hollow and seeks to deceive the people. There can be no doubt that the imperialist agenda of bodies such as the UN, will carry out activities to suit their ulterior motives. The advisory committee of the UN Secretary General will not help the Tamil people in any way to secure justice or find a political solution; and the Tamil people have little to hope for from the UN. At the same time, Sri Lanka's rejection of the investigation of alleged war crimes and human rights violations is unacceptable. It is by finding a just political solution to the national question, and inquiring into war crimes and human rights violations and punishing offenders and compensating victims that Sri Lanka could prevent foreign intervention.

4. From moderate Tamil nationalists to militants, none took a progressive nationalist stand. They aligned with imperialism and India to uphold reactionary conservative nationalism. They thrust a secessionist agenda on the Tamils. Now the elite among the Tamil diaspora have set up a "Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam" and are thrusting it upon the Tamil people, claiming that the US and the West are supporting it. It was India that first banned the LTTE in 1998. That ban still continues. North America and Europe followed suit. The elite can do little but grumble occasionally. It is known that the US which apparently assured that it will send rescue aircraft to save the LTTE leaders betrayed the trust. The Tamils will not win any rights by a few, who once demanded a separate state, embracing a chauvinist government that will not even grant the powers that Provincial Governments are entitled to. It is only when national democracy is established in Sri Lanka that a just political solution to the national question will be found. It is under circumstances when New Democratic Revolution is victorious that the Tamil people will have self determination based on their own wishes. Thus the best option for the Tamil diaspora is to participate in the struggle for national democracy. A stand supportive of national liberation cannot be in the interest of imperialism, big/comprador capitalism, and feudalism. Thus without endorsing the right of Tamils to self determination the struggles of the toiling Sinhalese masses against imperialism, globalisation, and big/comprador capitalist and dominant feudal

classes cannot secure the support of the Tamil people. Likewise, the struggle of the Tamils for the right to self determination – the struggle to resolve the main contradiction – cannot get the Sinhalese to join it or support it without Tamils supporting or joining the above struggles of the Sinhalese masses.

5. The Hill Country Tamils too are a distinct nationality and are subject to national oppression. They comprise one aspect of the Sri Lankan national question. At the same time, they are workers who are subjected to class exploitation. Thus the Hill Country Tamils who are oppressed on a national and class basis should be mobilize on the basis of class struggle for their liberation from oppression.

6. While the Muslims are also a nationality, they should not be confined to religion, and they should be subject to mobilization based on class.

7. Ethno-nationalism is a major obstacle to the unity of people. Lessons should be drawn from the experiences of the trade union and left movements of Sri Lanka to build a revolutionary movement that will unite workers of all nationalities based on class. Steps should be taken to unite workers divided socially, occupationally and by ethno-nationalism by undertaking activities of class cooperation. Activities should be carried out based on programmes to politically awaken workers through struggles to win their immediate demands, mobilize them organisationally, and develop them as the leading force of working class revolution. All the toiling masses should be brought under the common identity of workers and cooperation ensured in all their struggles to mobilize them along the path of mass struggle.

8. The peasantry is an important force of revolutionary social change. Hence broad unity between the workers and peasants should be built. They should be freed of neo-colonial clutches in the names of “sustainable development”, “development”, “alternative production” and “depoliticisation”, delivered by NGOs acting as the agents of imperialism in the agricultural sector. The problems of the fisher folk should be separately studied and the fisher folk should be freed from the control of big capitalists and multi-national companies.

9. Although untouchability is now on the wane, castism cannot be dismissed merely as a problem of identity, and struggles

against caste domination and narrow caste consciousness need to be carried forward since castism is a feudal ideology that wrecks the unity of the people. It should be noted that the struggle that was carried forward by revolutionary Marxist Leninist communists in 1968 – unlike struggles in India aimed at special allocations and other concessions for oppressed castes, which have served to sustain caste identity – was with the aim of eliminating castism and untouchability through struggle. While rejecting the stand of narrow caste consciousness – as upheld by ‘dalitism’ – that struggles against castism will eliminate caste, the close link and collaboration between class struggle and opposition to caste should be upheld.

10. The struggle against private property is struggle for women’s liberation. It was Marxism that explained the historical truth of how initially women came to be treated as private property. Thus the struggle for women’s liberation should be treated not merely as question of identity and be seen as part of class struggle and both struggles should be carried out in parallel.

11. If the people do not unite against US imperialism and Indian hegemonic forces that seek to exercise hegemony over Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka faces the risk of forfeiting its independence, integrity, sovereignty and unity. While the US and Western imperialists and Japanese imperialism carry forward globalisation in Sri Lanka, India remains a partner with imperialism. China is within the programme of globalisation for its own economic benefit. Thus the Congress calls for the building of a strong and united broad people’s movement against imperialism, globalisation and hegemony.

Finally the Congress wishes to express its heartiest thanks to all supporters and friends of the Party for their encouragement and support for the Congress which concluded successfully and in particular to fraternal parties and organisations who sent congratulatory messages and statements of support.

Tamil Nationalism: One to Smash and One to Build

[An English version of the elaboration in Tamil of a comment by Comrade SK Senthivel at a public meeting in Jaffna calling for the smashing of reactionary Tamil nationalism and its replacement by Tamil nationalism with a progressive approach, originally published in *Puthiya Poomi* April-May 2010.]

Reactionary Tamil Nationalism to be Smashed

- The one based on elitist hegemonic ideology of feudal origin and with hardened reactionary features at every level
- The one wallowing in conservatism, mouthing empty boasts about race and language to plunge the Tamil working people into an illusion of racial feeling
- The one that uses Tamil nationalism to defend the practice of class based exploitation of the Tamil working people in many ways
- The one that has always excluded the basic rights and just demands of workers, peasants, fisher-folk, people depressed by caste, and women from its agenda to conceal them and to deflect attention from them by using the cloak of racial, linguistic, religious and cultural sentiments
- The one which in the political sphere upholds the thoughts and practices of the upper caste, upper class elite that once ruled
- The one that fostered and defended in the form of elitist Vellala domination a system of caste hierarchy handed down by Brahminist ideology
- The one that conducted behind the reactionary features of Saivism and Christianity politics to defend the well being of the wealthy
- The one that fosters the propagation of conservative culture through traditions, customs and rituals and unscientific ideologies

- The one that provokes ethnic, religious, linguistic and regional hostilities for its political survival and furtherance, and remains rooted in racialism
- The one that makes the Sinhala, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people to be seen as inferior and subordinate as well as takes care to prevent their uniting with the Tamil people
- The one which at the same time unites with the Sinhala elite upper classes, based on class and caste
- The one which accepts the ideology which, in the name of religion, culture and tradition treats women like slaves and inferiors
- The one which gets along with poisonous, foreign forms of art and literature and decadent cultural features without contradiction or resistance
- The one that is eternally slavish in its dealings with the Indian ruling classes in the name of historical ties and umbilical link
- The one which has been slavishly loyal to colonialism and now imperialism and serves as an accomplice in protecting their economic interests

The above said reactionary aspects remain embedded in Tamil nationalism and are being portrayed as sacred and superior features that should be preserved forever. Without smashing such Tamil nationalism, it will not be possible for the Tamil nationality to travel along the path of genuine liberation.

Progressive Tamil Nationalism to be Built

- One that will question the conservative ideology of dominance possessed by Tamil nationalism, and rejects whatever stands in the way of social development
- One that will not waste its time on outmoded empty boasts about ethnic and linguistic greatness and moves away from illusory ethnic sentiment but instead approaches reality scientifically
- One that will embrace the vast majority of the Tamil people comprising toiling masses and give due recognition to work and toil

- One that will make the rights and demands of all sections of the people among the Tamils in all its programmes
- One that will expose the deception by those with wealth and comfort who continue to dominate politics in the name of Tamil nationalism
- One that will seek to negate the caste system as a social hierarchical structure and comes forward to strengthen social justice and unity among Tamils
- One that while accepting religious faith as a matter of personal preference rejects the propagation of reactionary thought by force and through superstitious beliefs
- One that rejects the stirring up of communalism and communal hatred for political and economic gain
- One that refuses to see the Sinhalese, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as aliens and seeks to develop an approach of unity that sees them as fellow human beings and brethren
- One that appreciates the distinction between the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist ruling elite forces and ordinary toiling Sinhalese masses and acts to strengthen unity between the toiling Sinhalese masses and the Tamil people
- One that recognises and rejects aspects of conservative cultural enslavement of women and seeks to establish gender equality
- One that boldly rejects poisonous, foreign forms of art and literature and decadent cultural features
- One that recognises the regional hegemonic ambitions of the Indian ruling classes and refuses to allow the Tamil people to be used as its tool
- One that does not possess blind faith in Western imperialist forces and rejects loyalty to foreign interests

Marxist Leninists welcome the development of Tamil nationalism on the above basis, and have no reservations about working in alliance with such progressive Tamil nationalism. They recognise such progressive Tamil nationalism as a need of the hour and a way for the young generation of Tamils to be prevented from being deceived by the reactionary ploys of Tamil nationalism as it is constituted now.

The Concept of Tamil Eelam in the Hands of Political Hijackers

For Whom is the TGTE?

Narasimha

An interim Trans-national Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) has been created. What will that Government do? Who is in it? Whose interests does it represent? Answers to these questions can be found only when one understands when and by whom the idea of Trans-national Government of Tamil Eelam was mooted.

It was when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam faced absolute defeat that their elitist advisors among the Tamil diaspora planned the TGTE. Their purpose was clear. This piece of theatre is very much akin to the one staged by the Federal Party (FP, officially Ilankaith Thamizh Arasuk Katchi) which, when its credibility was in question, sought to avert the frustration of the Tamil people turning against it by adopting a new name 'Tamil United Liberation Front' (TULF) and called for the establishment of a separate state of Tamil Eelam.

It was not a difficult task to build support for the idea of independence for Tamil Eelam among the Tamil diaspora, which went into exile in the face of chauvinist oppression. A majority of the Tamil diaspora turned a blind eye to the lack of democracy, the purely militaristic approach and oppression on the part of the LTTE. Since, to them, there seemed to be no choice but the armed struggle of the LTTE in the face of the chauvinistic, genocidal war launched by the government. Thus there continued to be support for the LTTE among the Tamil diaspora until its final defeat.

The TGTE concept is a preventive tactic of self defence by an elitist group among the Tamil diaspora which built up hope that Western

governments will intervene to arrest the decimation of the LTTE, and halt genocidal attacks against innocent Tamils as well as cruelty by the armed forces. The move was designed to deflect the fury of the Tamil diaspora away from it, when the hopes and expectations that it nurtured would come to naught. The blitzkrieg campaign for TGTE was carried out to deny an opportunity for the Tamil diaspora to determine the basis on which their future course of action will proceed.

When the FP started to drift towards the call for a separate state of Tamil Eelam, there were political debates among the public. The leadership of the FP feared that such debates would lead to alternative ideas taking root, and thereby hurt the prospect of the anticipated electoral success base on the call for Tamil Eelam. It therefore chose to forbid public debates on the subject and made the now infamous 'Vaddukkodai Resolution' final.

What is going on among the Tamil diaspora now is a worse scandal than that. The TGTE idea has been thrust on the diaspora by an elite, without allowing the diaspora an opportunity to understand what Trans-national Government of Tamil Eelam means or a chance to study the defeat suffered by the Tamil Eelam liberation campaign. 'Referenda' and, even more dubious elections to posts in the 'provisional transnational government' were 'democratically' staged to enable a pro-imperialist elitist clique to announce itself as the prime representative of the Tamil diaspora.

A substantial part of the funds raised in the name of the LTTE and on the pretext of the welfare of the Tamils in Sri Lanka is in the control of this gang of charlatans. Another, substantial part of the funds is entrapped in the hands of another gang of charlatans who are at loggerheads with the former. Besides these gangs, a variety of individuals who had been at the forefront of fundraising for the LTTE have made use of the situation to make theirs the funds extracted from the Tamil diaspora. Part of the funds is in the possession of the Sri Lankan government and former leading members of the LTTE.

The conduct of the individuals in charge of the 'provisional government' reminds us of the Tamil nationalist tradition of not having to explain anything to the people and not accounting for anything to the people.

In the very same way that the leadership of the FP, the TULF and now the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) remained in the hands of a well to do upper caste elite group, the leadership of the Tamil diaspora too has gone to the hands of a gang that claims that it has connections

in high places. In the same way FP, the TULF and the TNA deceptively included members of backward communities as token representatives of the communities while carrying on with their elitist politics, the diaspora elite too has included among its ranks in the 'transnational government' one or two 'outsiders' while retaining elitist control.

None of the legal experts or intellectuals or fund holders behind the TGTE project has so far said anything clearly about what the TGTE would achieve, for they know well that any political move that they may make, if it runs counter to the interests of the country in which they reside, will constitute a threat to their very existence. Anyone examining the reason why the countries in the West that turned a blind eye to acts of intimidation by alleged supporters of the LTTE and let the LTTE to grow into a powerful force among the Tamil diaspora took a hard line against the LTTE since early this decade will realise that the activities of the TGTE will be tolerated only as far they serve the interests of the countries concerned.

In their international dealings too the elite among the Tamil diaspora follow in the footsteps of their forefathers in Sri Lanka. Thus, the TGTE personalities will do nothing more than continuing to cheat the Tamil diaspora in the international arena.

Nevertheless, the declaration of the TGTE and the empty boasts of its spokespersons suit the Sri Lankan government. Already, the argument that the "transnational government of the LTTE" is a security threat to Sri Lanka has been used in parliament to justify the proposal to prolong the State of Emergency.

In the 1960's the founding of the abortive "We Tamils Movement" by the Tamilnadu (then the State of Madras) media magnate SP Adiththan was taken advantage of by the Government of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to justify its measures against the FP. Following the failed 'Satyagraha' of the FP in 1961, various defunct Dravida Munnetrak Kazhagams in the country were proscribed. The proscription served to scare the Sinhalese about a potential threat from South India and thereby reinforce chauvinism and oppression by the state. The futile TGTE is likely to serve the present government in a similar fashion.

The simmering of the national question suits the Sri Lankan government as well as the ruling classes. Only by keeping alive fears among the Sinhalese about the threat of secession and terrorism will it be possible for it to continue to strengthen the armed forces even after the end of the war and to prolong the State of Emergency and other repressive laws without significant protest from the public. Even

recently, a Tamil political party and the Army staged incidents of abduction in the North to enable the reintroduction of military checkpoints. Such incidents serve to create the illusion among the Tamil diaspora that the LTTE is still active in Sri Lanka. Such theatre will only serve groups of individuals who cheat the people to heighten their popularity.

The Tamil diaspora should ask a few important questions from the coterie that has in their name set up an interim transnational government. They should demand that accounts be shown for the sums of money collected in the name of Tamil liberation, and the welfare and rehabilitation of the Sri Lankan Tamils, and about the sum that is in the possession of the transnational government. If this 'government' has other sources of funding, full details of the source and purpose of funding should be obtained. It should be asked for the programme of the TGTE and be required to subject any decision by the TGTE to public debate within the Tamil diaspora before its implementation. The implementation of any decision without general acceptance should be stopped.

There are many things for us to understand. A group which secured only 9% of the votes of the Tamils by pleading for strong Tamil representation is now functioning as the puppet of the India's rulers. The gang led by Rudrakumaran, which belongs to the tradition of the FP, is acting as the stooge of US imperialism. Besides these, there is a wide range of racketeering gangs that follow the same old wrong line.

It is the responsibility of the Tamil diaspora to question each of them in order to prevent betrayals and the obstruction of the emergence of a genuine upsurge for the liberation of the Tamils.

The Tamils in Sri Lanka, although they live amid despair, will not let the old gang of tricksters to cheat them. Thus it is necessary for the good forces among the Tamil diaspora to show greater interest in understanding the position of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and explain it to the rest of the Tamil diaspora.

[Translation of Article in Puthiyapoomi June-July 2010]

Liberation Struggle and International Support

Mohan

Tamil nationalists have for long been expectant of foreign support for their struggle for a separate state. Every foreign intervention that led to the emergence of a separate state inspired them and gave hope that the foreign country that facilitated secession elsewhere could be manipulated into helping their secessionist cause. When Bangladesh seceded from Pakistan, with India using that opportunity to weaken Pakistan and to secure a client state to its east, hopes were built about India intervening on behalf of the Tamils. Attempts by the Federal Party to woo India then did not bear fruit, despite its blind support for India against China and Pakistan.

India took an interest in the Sri Lankan national question only when it could use the grievances of the Tamils to subdue a Sri Lankan government whose foreign policy had shifted in favour of the US, hindering India's expansionist ambitions. That India used Sri Lankan Tamil militants as its proxies in its battle against the Sri Lankan regime became clear only after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord in 1987. By then India had cultivated a large number of clients among rival Tamil factions, almost all of whom remain agents of Indian interests. With the LTTE out of the way as a credible fighting force, even the constituent parties of the Tamil National Alliance have been persuaded to toe the line.

The older generation of Tamil nationalists trusted the 'even handedness' of British colonial masters, at least until the 1960s. After that there was hope that the US would side with the Tamil nationalists against the left-supported SLFP governments. That too proved illusive since the UNP came to power in 1977. Yet, illusions based on the

Zionist project and Western support for Israel survived, and are kept alive by a section of the elite among the Tamil diaspora in the West. Faith in the West was rekindled by US and European intervention in Yugoslavia not only to break up the Federation but also to punish Serbia by enabling the secession of Kosovo.

Historically, Tamil nationalism has been anti-left and, as a rule, hostile to socialist countries even when no socialist country had acted in ways that hurt the interests of Tamils or any other minority in Sri Lanka. The Soviet Union, despite its global ambitions and domineering attitude towards the Socialist Bloc, avoided meddling in the internal affairs of Third World countries, with the exception of Angola, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Yet, the Tamil nationalists went out of their way to side with the US in its acts of aggression against Cuba, its war against Vietnam, and its backing for Israel against the Palestinians.

Tamil nationalism has yet to free itself from the mind-set of siding with the West and/or India and needlessly antagonising their rivals. Besides the reactionary class nature of the Tamil nationalists, various international events have prevented the Tamil nationalists from coming to terms with the reality of international power politics.

The lack of a spirit of solidarity with the oppressed classes and nations of the world pervaded all leading Tamil nationalist movements, despite the alleged 'left tendencies' of some. Even the few which claimed to be Marxist proved inadequate.

In the course of the liberation struggle, the LTTE monopolised the armed struggle to the exclusion of its rivals; and the main rival movements and their factions responded by siding with the Sri Lankan government or becoming pawns in the hands of India. The elite among the Tamil diaspora in the West adopted a strongly pro-West line. The LTTE took a favourable stand towards imperialism and endorsed globalisation. It refused to denounce US wars of aggression against Iraq and Afghanistan and never expressed support for any liberation struggle, despite lasting sympathy and support of several Marxist Leninist parties of Asia for the struggle of the Tamils— some even supportive of the LTTE, with some reservations.

Many Tamil nationalists still delude themselves with the hope that they could manipulate India and/or the countries of the West collectively or individually to achieve their goals. Even today, with little room for illusion about Indian intentions in Sri Lanka, Tamils nationalists based in India and Sri Lanka use feeble excuses like India is a major force in South Asia and nothing should be done that would

antagonise India. The implication is that even to suggest that India should not intervene in the internal affairs of the country will offend India and make it hostile to the 'Tamil cause'.

Those who pin their hopes on the capitalist West, the US mainly, count on utterances about human rights violations and war crimes by the foreign affairs spokespersons for the US, EU and UK and by the UN Secretary General. They hardly realise that their newly found concern for human rights in Sri Lanka has more to do with re-establishing Western dominance in Sri Lanka.

Support from foreign governments for liberation struggles within a country is generally seen as a hostile act by countries and is rare except under special historical conditions. Principled support from governments for anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles and struggles against foreign occupation and aggression existed during the era of anti-colonial struggles and even after, but has faded away with the collapse of the Soviet Union and China embracing capitalism. Thus, given the fact that only a global or regional power intervenes militarily in the affairs of other countries and that such intervention is invariably in the interest of the power concerned, genuine foreign government support for a liberation struggle can only be political.

Countries take stands in defence of the rights of oppressed people and nations. Vietnam, Kashmir, Palestine and East Timor are among instances of effective international challenge to aggression and occupation. Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists wonder why their struggle did not attract international support. When a Sri Lankan resolution commending itself for 'defeating terrorism' was passed in the UN Human Rights Council —pre-empting a motion planned by the West condemning Sri Lanka's human rights record— Tamil nationalists were disappointed with India and not surprised by China and Russia siding with Sri Lanka. But a wide spectrum of Tamil opinion, including views of some 'leftists', denounced Cuba for supporting the resolution.

This irrational anger resulted from the failure to understand the politics of human rights and the naïve belief that the rest of the world is morally obliged to stand up for the Tamils, especially with the Tamil nationalists not saying a word against any injustice committed by imperialism, even after it was clear that the US is not in favour of the right to self determination of the Tamils.

The US has used the human rights trap against governments that dare to defy it. The aborted US-backed resolution on Sri Lanka, judging by the past attitude of the West towards the national question

and armed conflict, was not about bringing to justice the violators of human rights, but to regain lost control over Sri Lanka. It would also have served as a precedent for future meddling the internal affairs of other Third World countries. It would have been reckless of Cuba or any Third World country that is not in the good books of US imperialism to walk into that trap.

Governments have spoken up without ulterior motive in defence of oppressed people. But that depended on the government, the global political situation and how issues are placed before the government concerned. Cuba would have needed very persuasive arguments to side with the US on behalf of Sri Lankan Tamils on matters relating to human rights. With the US seeming to side with the Tamils against a friendly government, the US move would have been seen with suspicion, especially with the Tamil nationalist leadership seen to side with imperialism and showing no interest in ties with governments or liberation movements opposed to imperialism.

Another important but commonly ignored factor is the way international relations function. Unless the interests of a state are directly or indirectly affected, a government does not respond to international events, and even less to internal issues of other countries. Big powers like the US and the West get involved in interstate and internal conflicts, not out of altruism but imperialist self interest. Thus the response of any state to intervention by the US and the West will be based on implications for itself.

Sadly, some of the 'left inclined' supporters of the Tamil nationalist cause who readily fault Cuba for its stand on the UNHRC resolution have chosen to ignore the politics of human rights as upheld by the West. Those who argued that Cuba could have at least abstained looked at only Tamil interests to the exclusion of all other considerations, and continue to express their frustration. There was no effort on the part of the Tamil nationalists to persuade Cuba to abstain or to explain to Cuba their position and stand vis-à-vis imperialism. To this day, all Tamil nationalist lobbying of governments has been confined to India and the West, with the possible exception of lobbying on their behalf by their supporters in the ANC in South Africa. But South Africa too sided with Sri Lanka on the UNHRC resolution.

Even where a government is seen to be siding with the oppressor, it is not lobbying with politicians and other elitist agents of influence that changes the course of the government. Mass protests have achieved far more than manipulations behind closed doors. What any

liberation struggle should realise is that, internationally, their most reliable allies are among liberation movements and the genuine left and progressive forces of the world.

Progressive organisations do not voluntarily support each struggle in other parts of the world. There is need for exchange of information, establishment of the credentials of the struggle as genuine and its opposition to all forms of oppression, and the building up of friendship and mutual understanding with at least some liberation and anti-imperialist movements. Visibility is important and, without participation in campaigns in support of other struggles for justice in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, forces of Tamil liberation cannot reasonably expect others to take up their cause.

Tamils who seriously seek international support should realise that the kind of international support that was sought by their leaders has failed the Tamil People. Not only have India and the West failed to help the Tamils during their moments of need but in fact sided with the oppressor. There is the need to build a new kind of international support base. That will require redefinition of the Tamil liberation struggle as something that is not parochial and seeks solidarity on an equal footing with all oppressed nations and people across the world.

That means that the Tamil national struggle should become a genuine liberation struggle of the Tamil people that distinguishes between the Sinhalese masses and the ruling elite classes who are also oppressors of the Sinhalese. The right of the Tamils to self determination should automatically include the same right for Muslims and Hill Country Tamils. It should not hesitate to express support for the Kashmiri, Manipuri and Naga national struggles and the struggles of tribal people for their rights of land and livelihood, even if it means falling foul of the Indian ruling classes. It needs to identify itself with the long oppressed Palestinians and other victims of imperialism, even if that would displease the US and its allies. What is needed is the support of the people of India, the US and Europe and not the ruling classes.

If the oppressed people of the world and their liberation organisations fail to stand by the Tamils, after the Tamil liberation struggle redefines itself as a genuine mass liberation struggle, then there is genuine cause to complain.

NDP Diary

Fifth Party Congress

The Fifth All Sri Lanka Congress of the New Democratic Party took place in Colombo on the 25th and 26th of June 2010. The statement to the media is presented in this issue as a separate item.

NDP Statement to the Media

The Plight of the Resettled People

24th July 2010

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party who, along with party comrades, visited the 'resettled regions' of the Vanni on the 22nd and 23rd of July, met the people, listened to their grievances, and consoled them issued the following statement to the media.

The daily life of the people resettled in the Vanni can be seen to be one of sorrow and filled with pain. The resettled people are in a desperate situation where they have lost their homes. The people with a mere five thousand rupees and a tarpaulin sheet per family handed by the government for resettlement have been compelled to live a meaningless life of desperation in open space on barren land. The government which has to rehabilitate them and restore their lives is shirking its responsibility. Likewise, the Tamil leadership at home and abroad which had contributed to the misery is unwilling to accept responsibility or contribute its share for the rehabilitation of these people. These attitudes deserve to be denounced as inhuman and hard hearted.

I and my party comrades went to several resettled areas and met the people. Their stories were filled with indescribable sorrow and pain. Everywhere, people were settled in their old habitats under UNHCR labelled tarpaulin sheets. Their burned down, demolished and destroyed houses were also in the same vicinity. The roofing sheets, doors and door frames in solidly built houses had been torn out. Houses damaged by

shell attack were also noticeable. Houses by the roadside had been removed without a trace.

Each family had suffered one or more losses of life. We were tearfully told the sad story of the death of the husbands of the three daughters of an elderly mother and of a grandchild in Tharumapuram East. When the 24-year old youngest daughter described the painful death of her eight-year old son struck by a shell and her desperation about the future of her two daughters, we had no words to console her. She said that relief from the government was mainly wheat flour and that there had been no grants of any kind since the initial grant of five thousand rupees. In Visuvamadu, there had been resettlement in one area only.

When we went to another house the wails of sorrow were heartrending. When the mother of three sons narrated amid sobs how one of the sons was killed in the shelling in the final days of the war, another was forcefully recruited by the LTTE and got killed, and one son ended up in a detention camp, we could only sigh in response.

Thus, from every family that we met, we heard only the pain of a death, the scars of deep wounds and the tales of woe of the final days of the war.

The agony suffered by the resettled people and their life of sorrow and their sighs of longing seemed to express a sense of frustration about their being born as Tamils. An elderly man said in despair: "Rather than torture us by resettling us in this fashion, they could have detained us in the camps".

Members of the armed forces are there in every nook and corner of the resettled regions. Relief activities of the government are nominally there. There are still areas that have not been resettled. The suffering of the people in transit camps cannot be expressed in words.

Meantime, the President and the Cabinet have met in Kilinochchi and dispersed. The President stepped aside, having placed the responsibility on government officials in his address. Nothing has happened besides ministers pledging to do various things. They have no interest in the resettled people other than to claim that Kilinochchi and Vanni are in their control.

At the same time, those boast about Tamil nationalism, Tamil sentiment and Tamil nationality do not even set their sights on the resettled people. The wealthy members of the Tamil diaspora are not helping to make a collective effort to help with the resettlement of the people of the Vanni. Yet, many millions are being spent to erect towers for temples in the Jaffna Peninsula and on festivals and other pompous activities. Tamils in Colombo treat themselves to pompous festivities. Weddings and celebrations of 'attaining puberty' take place in five-star

hotels at the cost of hundreds of thousand rupees. Meantime, nothing happens besides formal visits by a few parliamentarians who make empty promises to the resettled people. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party puts forward as a proposal that, leaving alone the government, the rehabilitation and revitalisation of the totally wrecked and ruined lives of the people of Vanni can be achieved only through a well planned common programme that brings together all political parties, public organisations and wealthy members of the Tamil diaspora.

Without doing that, it is meaningless to approach the resettled people and make promise upon promise to them. The Tamil society should overcome its selfish attitude of seeing the people of the Vanni as a different entity. They are not pitiable people but people oppressed and betrayed by chauvinist military oppression and the Tamil leadership. What can be seen is that the people are helplessly cursing their fate on the one hand with military oppression and on the other with a sense of betrayal that they had been given hopes only to be abandoned in a killing field. Thus, the reality that we witness is that it is only through providing urgent, well planned essential support to the resettled people comprising peasants, workers and other toiling masses that they can be rescued from their present life of misery.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary,
New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

Public Meeting Emphasising People's Demands

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party held a public meeting chaired by its General Secretary SK Senthivel on 31st July in the Jaffna MPCs building to emphasise the following ten demands that concern the immediate problems faced by the people, under the heading "The People Should Mobilise to Secure Normal Life, Democracy and a Political Solution".

- Bring down the prices of essential goods!
- Control the cost of living!
- Grant wage increases immediately!
- Give the resettled people the relief due to them!
- Put an end to life as refugees!
- Release all political prisoners!

- Release details of missing persons!
- Let those driven away from homes in High Security Zones return!
- Enable the Muslims driven away in 1990 to return to their homes!
- Rehabilitate the ruined systems of education and health!

The meeting was also addressed by E Thambiah, V Mahendran, S Thevarajah, K Thanikasalam, S Panneerselvam and K Kathirgamanathan, members of the Politburo of the Party and by M Thiyagarajah and TV Krishnasamy on behalf of the Mass Movement for Social Justice.

Excerpts from May Day Addresses

Jaffna May Day Rally

Comrade SK Senthivel

It has become certain that the United People's Freedom Alliance government headed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa will establish two-thirds majority strength in parliament. But using that majority what kind of solutions are to be offered to the important problems faced by the country and the people? The situation does not allow room to believe that the two-thirds majority will enable solutions to problems which have remained unresolved in the past. Hence situations will develop in which there will be demands and struggles by the people, workers and peasants. Under such conditions the rulers can only choose between democracy and dictatorship. The truth is that we need not wait for long to find out what the choice will be.

There is jubilation that the 30-years long war has been won but there is little concern for the continuing sufferings of the people affected by war and matters concerning them move at snail's pace. Besides, nothing has been said clearly and openly about finding a solution to the national question, which was the cause of the war.

Besides, there are in the country 1.2 million state employees and six million private sector employees, of whom 500,000 are plantation workers. Can the government, with its two-thirds majority, grant the wage increases that they have been demanding? Can it restore to practice the 'Workers' Charter' that was introduced and smothered when the President was cabinet minister. If that cannot be achieved with a two-thirds majority, the people are bound to ask for what purpose the two-thirds majority would be put to use.

A variety of parties and political forces have blended into the Mahinda Chinthanaya government. The parliamentary left parties, in particular, have lost their individuality and been absorbed into it. Likewise, the JVP which masqueraded as a left party has weakened and its hues faded. Tamil and Muslim parties have joined the government. None of these will be of any benefit to the working class or to the minority nationalities. That is why the Party says that politics for the people is not politics of concessions. It challenges them to take the political path of struggle for rights with self respect. It calls upon them on this revolutionary May Day to reject all forms of deceptive politics and take the road of alternative politics for the working people.

Hatton May Day Rally

Comrade S Panneerselvam

Under conditions of rising cost of living, it is the plantation workers who are suffering most for lack of a fair wage rise. Only a slight wage increase has been achieved through the Collective Agreement which is renewed every two years. Neither the Hill Country trade unions nor the members of Parliament have been able to alter this pathetic situation. Thus united trade union struggles are necessary to ensure a fair wage structure for the workers.

Comrade E Thambiah

The UPFA government which has formed the government by securing 30% of the votes does not qualify to represent the entire people. Thus, plans to introduce changes to the constitution that include the elimination of the system of proportional representation are not acceptable. Eliminating defects in the system of proportional representation and the elimination of the system itself are different matters. Moves to eliminate the system have an ulterior motive. The government intends to totally deny the opportunity that small political parties and parties of the minority nationalities have to secure even a handful of seats by eliminating the system of proportional representation. That is totally unacceptable.

Amendments to the constitution should include provisions that will ensure autonomy for the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities, empowerment of the people and democracy, and affirm the rights of workers, peasants and women. Amendments to the constitution are designed to get rid of the system of proportional representation and

to enable one to be president for more than two terms. Moves by the government to make such amendments should be stopped.

Leaders of the parties of minority nationalities who joined the government party to contest the elections have not been given the cabinet posts that they expected. Besides that, the government is planning to amend the system of election in a way that will prevent them from winning elections. This is the kind of protection that minorities have under this government.

Neo-colonial domination has been set in place soon after the military action was brought to an end. Sri Lanka has been transformed into an economic colony of India. Domination by the US and Europe too has expanded and spread. Therefore, the independence, sovereignty and integrity that the ruling classes are boasting about have been affected.

To salvage the independence, sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka, it is necessary to fight neo-colonialism and imperialism. The best way to find a just political solution to the national question, to win recognition for the Hill Country Tamils as a distinct nationality and to affirm their national aspirations, to secure a wage scheme that will ensure fair wage increases for the plantation workers, to establish a university exclusively for the Hill Country Tamil people, and to ensure reservation for women in political representation and employment is the path of a united and determined mass struggle.

Vavuniya May Day Seminar

Comrade RK Soodamani

The people of Sri Lanka are daily facing various problems and crises. The Mahinda Rajapaksa government that has come to power cannot in any way resolve them. We need to mobilise the people for future struggles. Let us swear an oath to our firm commitment to that cause on this May Day, the day of struggle.

Comrade Balasankaran

The people of Sri Lanka, the workers, peasants and the Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils, comprising the oppressed nationalities, are being subject to much suffering and sorrow. Low wages and rising cost of living have made life impossible for the workers. Almost a century and a quarter ago, the working class struggled and won its right to an eight-hour working day. But today, the plight of the working class is that workers, unable to support the family, seek second jobs and toil for 12 to 16 hours like modern day slaves. At the same time, finding a solution to

the national question, the main problem facing the country, is being deferred while the chauvinist agenda is being accelerated. Its after effects are bound to be grave and will lead to bitterness among the nationalities. The working class should mobilise against it along the path of struggle.

Ratnapura-Kahawatte May Day Rally

Comrade Ganapathy (ULWU)

Comrade Ganapathy emphasised the memories of the workers' struggle in Chicago and the May Day and the need for solidarity among workers.

Comrade Nelson Mohanraj

Comrade Mohanraj illustrated with examples how the Hill Country plantation workers once fought for their rights by joining hands with the left trade unions. He pointed out that the present acts of trade union and political compromise have blunted working class militancy and as a result the rights of workers have been affected.

Comrade Pushparaj

Comrade Pushparaj in his address drew attention to the need for workers' unity and the need for a correct political path.

Comrade Vijayakumar

Comrade Vijayakumar in his address pointed out that the continuation of the system akin to slavery introduced by the British underlies the day to day problems of the Hill Country and emphasised the need for mass based politics to resolve the social, economic and cultural problems in the Hill Country.

(Courtesy: Puthiya Poomi April-May 2019)

Sri Lankan Events

Punishing a general

Not surprisingly the First Court Martial against the retired General Sarath Fonseka ruled on 13th August that he was guilty on counts of being involved in politics while serving in the Army, and recommended that he should be discharged dishonourably, stripped of rank and honours and hence relieved of retirement benefits. Even less surprisingly, President Rajapaksa did not lose much time or sleep to endorse the ruling. Questions about the legality of the trial and other forms of protest are unlikely to produce results.

Although forces of Sinhala chauvinism have become even more deeply divided over the treatment accorded to Fonseka, the differences will continue to concern political power and not the needs of the people of the country.

Punishing a favourite son

Following the public outcry in response to Deputy Minister Mervin Silva tying up a Samurdhi officer to a tree on 3rd August as punishment for neglect of duty, President Rajapaksa on 11th August ordered his removal from his post in the government and his suspension from the SLFP. This is rather surprising since Mervin Silva has got away with far worse offences in the past, especially against the media, and has even appeared to have been rewarded for his mischief. Dismissal from post and party may not really be punishment at all and greater things may await the apparent favourite of the President.

Till death do they fast

National Freedom Front leader Minister Wimal Weerawansa went on a 'fast unto death' on 8th July in front of the UN Complex in Colombo demanding that the UN calls off its Expert Panel to investigate war crimes in Sri Lanka. Predictably the fast concluded two days later with President Rajapaksa saving his life with a glass of water. Little came out of the protest led by Weerawansa except for the rowdy scenes preceding the

hunger strike and the pro-government media fuss about the fasting minister.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon insisted that the Sri Lankan government should live up to its responsibility as host country and threatened to close down the UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo. Although that threat proved empty, the UN Expert Panel inquiry will go on without Sri Lankan cooperation. What emerges from it will tell us which the bigger farce is, the inquiry or the protest.

Silencing protesters

The protest demonstrations by the JVP-led National Democratic Front in Galle on 12th August encountered the strong arm of the law. The police used the customary tear gas and baton charge as well as arrested leading political figures from the JVP. The conduct of the police has been denounced by many who believe in the rule of the law and the democratic right to protest. It should not be forgotten that the JVP leadership, which has been singled out for punishment by the police, has in the past been a defender of police and military repression of Tamils as well as political opponents. Yet it is correct and necessary to denounce police brutality against peaceful protests since such conduct will not be restricted to the JVP in the future.

The death of a nurse

On 10th July the body of 28 year old Sarvanai Dharshika, a woman nurse at the Velanai Hospital in the Jaffna District was found with a rope tied around her neck. Priyantha Seneviratne, a doctor at the same hospital was suspected of rape and murder. The immediate response of the armed forces was to move him out of the area. Dignified protest by the nursing staff in the Jaffna Hospital led to the Kayts Magistrate ordering the remanding of the suspect till 24th July and to the exhumation of Dharshika's body for autopsy. But on 16th July, the Jaffna High Court allowed bail for the suspect, leading to public anger and frustration.

It is also disappointing that the Tamil nationalist leaders have not questioned the basis of the release on bail and the forces behind it. Even more depressing is the failure of women's rights organizations of the country to intervene. Such pattern of behaviour confirms that class considerations often override concerns of gender and nationality.

World Events

ASIA

India:

Foul Murder and Media Intimidation

CPI(Maoist) spokesperson Azad (Cherukuri Rajkumar) and journalist-activist Hemchandra Pandey from Uttarakhand were killed, reportedly in an 'encounter' in the jungles of Adilabad District near Andhra-Maharashtra border. The prolonged gun-fight between the Maoists and the Andhra police as claimed by the latter holds no water since the Andhra government has repeatedly claimed that the Maoists have no strike-power left in Andhra. More credible is the CPI(Maoist) claim that Azad was carrying a confidential communication from Swami Agnivesh in connection with a possible dialogue between the state and the Maoists. This version has been confirmed by Swami Agnivesh. (See newkerala.com/news/fullnews-142382.html). Addressing the media in Calcutta on 7th July, Agnivesh confirmed writing a letter to Azad, appreciating his steps for peace talks, which may have put Azad off guard assuming that the government was softening its stand.

Several left political parties and public personalities have demanded a judicial inquiry to establish whether the encounter was genuine. The killing of Azad along with journalist-activist Pandey has added to suspicions about the circumstances. On 8th July the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) and the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) demanded an independent authority to look into the killing of Pandey.

The killing of Azad has made the prospect of peace more remote, which may precisely be what the Indian state and its hawkish Home Minister Chidamparam wish.

The killing of journalist Pandey also needs to be seen in the context of a rise in attempts to intimidate journalists critical of the oppressive Indian state. Arundhati Roy relating her recent experience observed "Now that Operation Green Hunt has begun to knock on the doors of

people like myself, imagine what's happening to activists and political workers who are not well known. To the hundreds that are being jailed, tortured and eliminated". (See full text of the comment and other links in zcommunications.org/operation-green-hunts-urban-avatar-by-arundhati-roy)

[Other sources: sanhati.com/excerpted/2554/]

The Losing Battle in Chhattisgarh

Vijay Raman, Special Director-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CPRF) in his interview of 18th July 2010 with "the Week" described some of the difficulties faced by his counter-insurgency forces in their efforts to suppress the popular struggles and Maoist forces. Vijay Raman is in charge of the biggest anti-Maoist offensive and commands over 60,000 personnel. He was once known for his aggressive tactics in Kashmir where he managed to develop and protect a group of informers, but unable to repeat it in Chhattisgarh.

He admitted failure to reach out to the tribal people since the poor tribal people's impression of the government is the one propagated by the Maoists, and added that battle cannot be won just by force.

He also said that 'Operation Green Hunt' had sent wrong signals to the common people and that the spate of illegal killings that went on did not help. He also rejected the idea of having the Army in the forefront of the battle.

For more details:

revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2010/07/18/crpf-special-director-general-vijay-ramans-difficult-fight-against-naxalites/

[Source: week.manoramaonline.com]

A People's Victory in Northern Andhra

The National Environment Appellate Authority (NEAA) in Delhi announced the cancellation of the environmental clearance to the setting up of a 2 640 MW thermal power plant by the Nagarjuna Construction Company (NCC) in Sompeta, close on the heels of a two-day bandh by the people of Sompeta, Kanchili and Kaviti blocks in the Srikakulam District (well remembered for its mass uprising in 1967) to protest the police opening fire on a 10,000 strong crowd on 14th July. Two persons were killed and several dozen including media personnel and police were injured when police opened fire and resorted to lathi charge to quell protests.

For more details:

thehindu.com/2010/07/15/stories/2010071556330100.htm

Kashmir Aflame

Kashmir is going through another cycle of killings-protests-more killings-curfew. In June 2010 at least 11 civilians had been killed by paramilitary forces. Protest marches across Kashmir in response to the killings were met with indiscriminate firing by security forces deployed in the region. While curfew ruled for days on end in many parts of the state, the guns of the CPRF, reportedly, did not spare even ambulances. By the second week of August the death toll resulting from atrocities by the Indian security forces against protesters passed 50.

The state government's formal apologies for some of the killings and promised probes carry little credibility in Kashmir which has seen them all before. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's attempts to attribute everything to instigation by his political rival, the PDP led by Ms Mehbooba Mufti, failed amid growing intensity of protests; and mass anger began to resemble the upsurge in Kashmir twenty years ago and the Palestinian intifada. In July, Omar retreated and appealed to the Central Government to come up with a political solution. But the Central Government has, as usual, relied on armed forces to keep peace in the region. Curfew continued into late July and the shut-downs called by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, under arrest) received popular support, and protests against the repressive Indian rulers appear to transcend political affiliation. Support and sympathy for the protesters is growing in the rest of India with calls for the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Provisions Act and for the withdrawal of the armed forces from populated areas.

[Sources: globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=20204;
nytimes.com/2010/08/13/world/asia/13kashmir.html?_r=1&th&emc=th]

Insulting Bhopal Victims

In December 1984, 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate leaked out of Union Carbide Corporation's pesticide plant in Bhopal, exposing over 500 000 people to toxic fumes, killing 25 000, injuring the health of hundreds of thousands, and poisoning the soil and water, an effect that still affects many and will harm generations. In 1989, Union Carbide settled for a mere \$470 million with the Indian government. But since the number of victims was high, each received just about \$1,000.

More than 25 years after what was one of the world's worst industrial disasters, a trial court in Bhopal delivered on 7th June 2010 a verdict that insulted the victims by letting off the mighty CEOs who were the main offenders with a ridiculously light sentence if not scot-free. It has thus assured the MNCs they could act with total impunity in India even if their

negligence and wilful violation of regulations will kill thousands of Indians and injure many times more.

The verdict let the Union Carbide CEO Warren Anderson off the hook by declaring him an absconder. (Anderson's escape from India was reportedly facilitated by the then Congress government and Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi, and successive Indian governments did not demand his extradition to face trial). Eight representatives of the Indian operatives Union Carbide India Ltd received a mere two year sentence and fined of \$2 100 each, but allowed bail on the same day.

Bhopal survivors filed a class action lawsuit against Union Carbide in the US in 1999. Internal Union Carbide documents disclosed during court hearings in New York in 2002 showed that the company was using "unproven technology" at its Bhopal plant.

Twenty-five years since the disaster many are still grappling with its effects and about 30,000 people are still drinking water that has been contaminated by toxins leaking into the local water supply and soil since 1977, by actions in breach of the advice of Union Carbide's own experts. But Dow Chemicals, which acquired Union Carbide for \$12 billion in 2001, refuses to accept responsibility for cleaning up the Union Carbide factory wastes. In separate US litigation in 2002, Dow Chemicals set aside \$2.2 billion to compensate American workers exposed to asbestos at Union Carbide operations. Leading rights activists accused Dow of attaching greater value to the lives of Americans than those of Indians. Yet, the Indian ruling classes roll out the red carpet for Dow.

After a series of delays and procedural issues, US litigation around the Bhopal disaster continues in a New York court; and despite the 7th June guilty verdict, litigation surrounding the disaster will continue in other Indian courts. But it will be business as usual between the Indian government and foreign multinationals.

For a fuller account:

english.aljazeera.net/focus/2010/2010/06/201067172210334761.html

An NGO for every 400 people

Indian Express reported on 7th July 2010 that India has possibly the largest number of active NGOs in the world according to a recent study commissioned by the government, which put their number, accounted for until 2009, at 3.3 million, many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres and meaning one NGO for fewer than 400 Indians.

The actual number of active NGOs may be more since the study took into consideration only those registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 or the Mumbai Public Trust Act and its variants, while such organisations can be registered under a wide variety of Acts.

The number of NGOs which was only 144 000 in 1970 rose to 179 000 in 1980, 552 000 in 1990, 1 122 000 in 2000 to reach 3 300 000 in 2009. Independent sources have estimated that NGOs raise anywhere between 4 billion and 8 billion Indian rupees in funding annually.

Nepal: The Struggle for Stability

India manipulated the resignation of the Maoist-led government last year. That made way for Madhav Kumar Nepal, rejected by the electorate twice over, to be installed as Prime Minister of Nepal. His government failed miserably to deliver the new constitution before the deadline of 28th May 2010, amid massive public protests organized by the Maoists demanding the resignation of his government and calling for a government led by the Maoists, the biggest party in the Constituent assembly. Madhav Kumar's popularity faded and his government became untenable. Negotiations with the Maoists helped to avert crisis and consensus was reached that the Maoists will lend support to extend the life of the Constitutional Assembly by another year, based on the pledge that Madhav Kumar will resign as Prime Minister. Once the life of the CA was prolonged, he went back on his word.

It has come to light that pressure from India made Madhav Kumar cling on to his post as an ineffective prime minister. Indian meddling was clear all along. On 1st June, Rakesh Sood, Indian Ambassador to Nepal, met with Prime at Singh Durbar, in breach of diplomatic protocol by not informing the Foreign Ministry of his intention to meet the Prime Minister. The outcome of the meeting remains a secret, but it is common knowledge in Nepal that Madhav Kumar was asked to hold on to further tame and harass the Maoists by creating excuses. But that was not to last. He finally had to step down, but not until India made sure that the Maoists will not have their way in the CA. (For more details see telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7755).

Several attempts to elect a prime minister by consensus failed because a two-thirds majority approval was not possible for any. Run-off polls on 23rd July and 6th August failed, and even if the CA succeeds in electing a new prime minister in the next round on 23rd August, the kind of deals necessary to achieve it will make the CA incapable of fulfilling the purpose for which it was elected.

What is certain is that India will do its best to ensure that Nepal has a government subservient to Delhi; and if Nepal cannot be governed by Delhi, Nepal shall be made ungovernable. Thus the task before the Maoists is to consolidate their urban mass support and expand their rural power base using the correct policies that guided the mass political struggle that led to the overthrow of the monarch in 2006.

[Additional source: www.ekantipur.com]

Bangladesh: Workers' Protest

Textile workers demanding back pay and an immediate monthly wage rise were attacked with bamboo staves, tear-gas and water-cannon by the police on the streets of Dhaka on 30th June 2010. Workers in defence erected barricades, pelted the police with stones and attacked cars. Local reporters and union officials said a row between workers and a manager at one factory led to a fight which then sparked general disorder. When order was restored by late evening, at least 30 people, mainly workers producing garments for global brands, were injured. Although law prohibits employment of children below 14 years, many can still be found in the sprawling factories, and hundreds of teenagers took part in running battles with the police.

A global report released around mid-June by the International Trade Union Confederation identified Bangladeshi garment workers as the "world's most poorly paid" and subject to wage cuts, unpaid overtime work and even payment rates below the set minimum wage levels.

An estimated three million workers, 2.5 million of them women, work in 4800 garment factories across Bangladesh. The lower paid workers earn a minimum monthly salary of 1,660 taka (around US\$25 and far less than that for the low-paid Sri Lankan plantation workers) and demand 5,000 taka. Owners refuse to pay more than 3,000 taka.

The garment industry accounts for 80% of Bangladesh's annual export earnings of US\$16 billion, and the minimum wage, set by the government in 1994 remained unchanged until 2006 despite soaring food prices. Until the problem is resolved fairly, the violence is bound to continue. The militancy of the young employees, no more from the villages but born and bred in the slums of Dhaka, too is likely to find political form.

For more information:

guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/30/bangladesh-strikes-children-beaten-police
demotix.com/news/378377/national-garments-workers-press-conference-bangladesh

China: Earnings, Wages and Rights

The growing income gap between the rich and the poor has prompted calls for measures to ensure an even distribution of wealth. The Economic Information Daily, published by the Xinhua News Agency, on 11th May 2010 (english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6981414.html) quoted a report by academics and researchers as saying that corruption plays an important role in the widening poverty gap. Xinhua also pointed out that the Gini Coefficient, a measure of uneven distribution of wealth, had exceeded 0.4 (a level commonly recognized as the warning line) in China ten years ago.

Li Shi, a professor of Beijing Normal University, pointed out that income disparity between the top 10 percent high earners and the bottom 10 percent of the lowest earners has increased from a factor of 7.3 in 1988 to 23 in 2007. In some regions, coal mine owners earned millions of Yuan, while farmers only earn an average of 4,359 Yuan (\$638) a year.

The study also showed that “hidden incomes” of some of the rich people has reached 4,800 billion Yuan (\$703 billion) and linked corruption to hidden incomes.

The two-week long strike since 25th May in a company in Foshan in Guangdong Province supplying spares to Honda is relevant in this context. It is a sign of rights consciousness among young migrant workers and an important turning point in class struggle in capitalist China. The struggle against a breach of constitutional rights of the workers has been waged under difficult conditions, with no support from local party and government organizations and hostility from the local union. On 3rd June the editorial collective of Chinese Workers Research Network (CWRN) and eleven scholars (including one from Japan) issued a call in support of the Honda strike, and were joined by several scholars, students and workers from the China and abroad. Joan Hinton, the ninety-year-old internationalist and a reputed friend of China, also signed on the letter expressing her support.

The strike in Foshan was a limited success and spread to other plants and 36 strikes had taken place between 25th May and 12th July, leading to significant pay rises. The implications of successful struggles for fair wages and acceptable working conditions go beyond matters concerning foreign investment in China. They could be part of a revival of working class resistance to capital in China.

[Source: chinastudygroup.net]

Iran: The Next Middle East Target?

Direct and indirect US threats against Iran have escalated since the re-election of Mehmoed Ahmedinejad last year. Attempts to topple the government by encouraging the US backed candidate and supporters to question the validity of the election failed, partly because of harsh reaction by the state and more importantly because of lack of popular support for the cause. Under pressure from the US the UN Security Council resolved on 9th June to impose a fourth round of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, despite assurances from Iran that its nuclear program is peaceful and under the full supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Keener than the US on a military attack on Iran is Israel. On 12th July Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro warned that a US-Israeli attack on Iran is "imminent" and that it could trigger a global nuclear war. He described US and Israeli sabre-rattling over Iran's civil nuclear energy programme as "the most serious crisis" on the international scene because "the Iranian government will not retreat."

The Oxford Research Group pointed out on 15th July in its study titled "Military Action Against Iran: Impact and Effects" Authored by Professor Paul Rogers follows Israeli reports that Syria is manufacturing Iranian M-600 missiles for Hezbollah, the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu calling Iran "the ultimate terrorist threat" and saying it was a mistake to think Iran's nuclear ambitions could be contained, and a call from the United Arab Emirates Ambassador in Washington for a military strike on Iran. It argues that Israel is now fully capable of attacking Iran as it has deployed many new systems including US-built long-range strike aircraft and armed drones. It also warns of the grave consequences of such a war. For the full report:

oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/news/2010/07/new_report_israeli_military_strike_iran_will_lead_a_long_war

On 16th July, Presna Latina said that Leonid Ivashov, President of the Academy of Geopolitical Affairs of Russia associated US war plans against Iran with the interests of military, industrial and financial sectors. He assured that there is a high probability of a military attack against Iran and that all the signs of a major conflict in the Persian Gulf and in the vicinity of Iran are visible.

On 23rd July, Iranian President Ahmadinejad said that Iran's enemies have decided to attack two regional Arab states, which are Iran's allies, with the help of the Zionist regime to deter decision-making in Iran. Although Ahmadinejad did not name the two states, political analysts believe that the reference was to Syria and Lebanon.

[Other sources: plenglish.com, presstv.ir]

North Korea: Facing the US Bully

On 22nd July, a North Korean spokesperson denounced a new set of sanctions imposed by the United States aimed at the sale or procurement of arms and related goods as well as the procurement of luxury items in its attempt to stem Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, and said that it represented a "clear expression of intensified hostility". He also denounced the planned US-South Korea naval drills involving about 20 ships and 200 fixed-wing aircraft, intended as a warning to North Korea, as posing a major threat to regional security and global peace.

The US had already sent the 97,000 tonne nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington to take part in the drill set to begin on 25th July Sunday in the Sea of Japan. The drills are the first overt military response to the sinking of the naval vessel Cheonan, on 26th March 26 by an explosion. Of 104 crew members, 58 were rescued and the rest were reported dead or missing.

The South Korean authorities presented the results of an investigation on May 20, attributing the incident to an alleged torpedo attack by North Korea which North Korea has denied responsibility for and insists on sending experts to verify the facts, a request Seoul has denied several times. Also now there is growing doubt in South Korea as to whether North Korea sank the Cheonan.

South Korea now has a government that seeks to undermine peace with North Korea and past achievements in efforts to reunite Korea. North Korea is used to conspiracies and bullying by the US to isolate it until the US achieves a 'regime change' there too. North Korea's defiance has paid dividends in the past and is likely to succeed once again.

[Sources: *english.aljazeera*, *wire.antiwar.com*, *globalresearch.ca*]

Palestine: Zionist Piracy Decried

Israel's characteristic ham-fisted response to opposition showed up once more on 30th May at night when it blocked a flotilla of six ships with humanitarian aid to Gaza. Its forces boarded the Turkish vessel *Mavi Marmara* and killed 19 civilians (18 Turkish nationals and one US citizen of Turkish origin). Israeli brutality met with strong condemnation across the globe. Calls for independent inquiries fell on deaf ears while Israel's own inquiry exonerated the soldiers responsible for the killing. The international working class seems to have thought differently. The following are among its strong messages to Israel.

On 7th June, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (IFU), and 11 other Palestinian union and labour movement organizations sent a united appeal to dock workers unions worldwide. The appeal pleaded that “Gaza today has become the test of our universal morality and our common humanity. During the South African anti-apartheid struggle, the world was inspired by the brave and principled actions of dockworkers unions who refused to handle South African cargo, contributing significantly to the ultimate fall of apartheid. Today, we call on you, dockworkers unions of the world, to do the same against Israel’s occupation and apartheid. This is the most effective form of solidarity to end injustice and uphold universal human rights.”

On 20th June morning, 800 trade unionists and Palestine solidarity activists from the San Francisco Bay Area successfully picketed the Stevedoring Services of America terminal at Berths 57-58 in the Port of Oakland in an unprecedented show of strength by the local and regional AFL-CIO, affiliated unions and their members standing side by side with Palestinian and Arab-American activists.

Even before the Palestinian appeal, the Swedish Dockworkers Union, a key member of the International Dockworkers Council (IDC), announced plans for a week-long blockade of all trade with Israel, and Swedish dock workers began their blockade on 23rd June.

The Turkish dockworkers union Liman-Is soon joined the fast growing movement for boycott sweeping through all levels of society after the killing of Turkish aid volunteers.

Boycotting Israeli shipment in India began on 17th June on receipt of information that cargo unloaded at Colombo from Israeli ship m/v *Zim Livorno* was bound to arrive at Cochin in a feeder vessel.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) had already responded straight after the attack on Gaza in December 2008 - Jan 2009, when in three weeks, Israeli forces killed 1400 Palestinians including over 300 children. Even before the UN launched its investigation of possible war crimes (the "Goldstone Report"), South African workers knew enough to act. Members of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union SATAWU, affiliated to COSATU, refused to work the Zim Lines “Johanna Russ” – which sailed from Haifa at the height of the invasion – when it arrived in Durban in early February 2009.

[Source: [http:// www.counterpunch.org/dropkin07132010.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/dropkin07132010.html)]

An interview of economist Shir Hever by Paul Jay, Senior Editor of *Real News* on 15th July pointed out that the boycott movement came from people who support it mostly because they see a connection between what happens in Palestine, the Middle East, and their own lives and because Israel is a kind of factory for repression and mechanisms of repression that are being sold to other countries in the world, after they have already been tested on Palestinians, as kind of guinea pigs.

He saw it also as a protest against their governments for enabling and allowing Israel to continue to violate international law, to develop and create weapons of mass destruction illegally, to deny Palestinians citizenship and democracy and to incarcerate a million and a half people in the Gaza Strip in conditions of utter poverty where their only means of sustenance is aid from the international community.

Hever said that evidence of the impact of the boycott is hidden by various Israeli bureaus of statistics and the manufacturers' association. A survey report showed that 21% of Israeli exporters reported on average a 10% loss of income because of boycott related specifically to the attack on Gaza in 2008-2009. The survey report was suppressed since the manufacturers' association knew that, if that information reached people who support the boycott movement, it will give them more confidence to continue their efforts.

[Source: <http://alethonews.wordpress.com/2010/07/17/the-boycott-israel-movement/>]

Lebanon: Israel and Hariri Murder

A crackdown on Israeli spy rings in Lebanon led to more than 70 arrests over the past 18 months. Among them are four high-ranking Lebanese Army and General Security officers, and Charbel Qazzi, head of transmission and broadcasting at Alfa, one of Lebanon's two state-owned mobile service providers. Qazzi has confessed to installing computer programs and planting electronic chips in Alfa transmitters for use by Israeli intelligence to monitor communications, locate and target individuals for assassination, and potentially deploy viruses capable of erasing recorded information in the contact lines.

The revelations have thrown into doubt the legitimacy of the UN-sanctioned Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) for prosecuting those responsible for the assassination of the then prime minister Rafiq Hariri on 14th February 2005 by detonating 1000 kg of explosives near his passing motorcade. The STL is expected to issue indictments as early as

September—relying heavily on phone recordings and mobile transmissions to do so.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech on 16th July that the STL would use information gleaned from Israeli-compromised communications to falsely implicate Hezbollah. He called the STL's role an "Israeli project" meant to "create an uproar in Lebanon". Opposition MP and Free Patriotic Movement head Michel Aoun has warned Nasrallah that the STL is likely to indict "uncontrolled" Hezbollah members to be followed by "Lebanese-Lebanese and Lebanese-Palestinian tension, and by an Israeli war on Lebanon". Giving credence to these assertions, Commander in Chief of the Israel Defence Forces Gabi Ashkenazi, predicted "with lots of wishes" that the situation in Lebanon would deteriorate in September after the STL indicts Hezbollah for Hariri's assassination.

Israel's agents and operatives in Lebanon and its infiltration of a telecom network have been exposed. At the very least, the STL must recognize that evidence of alleged Hezbollah involvement in Hariri's death (a group that historically enjoyed good ties with Hariri) is wholly tainted and probably doctored. The arrest of Qazzi and the breakup of Israeli spy rings should prompt the STL to shift its focus to the only regional player that has benefited from Hariri's murder; one that will continue to do so if and when their designs to implicate Hezbollah are realized.

[Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/201007235669/the-hariri-assassination-israels-fingerprints-surface.html>]

The Philippines: After the Elections

The 10th May national elections led to the election of Noynoy Aquino as President. To secure votes, Aquino promised that he would prosecute Gloria Arroyo for corruption and grave human rights violations. Progressive mass organizations have issued the challenge to Aquino to make true that promise.

Meanwhile, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), on behalf of the revolutionary forces including the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA), expressed willingness to resume formal peace negotiations with the government, based on previously signed agreements between the two sides, in order to address the roots of the ongoing armed conflict and attain a just and lasting peace. The revolutionary forces also indicated that they are ready to pursue the revolutionary struggle to fulfil the Filipino people's

aspirations for national freedom, social emancipation, progress and peace.

The NDFP also warned that it is unlikely that the Filipino people can expect a real change from the elections which returned the same old bourgeois parties representing the interests of the local exploiting classes who act as junior partners of US imperialism. The warning has already come true, with the Aquino government announcing a rise in mining activities in the Eastern Visayas region. Fr. Santiago Salas, NDFP-EV spokesperson denounced the government's rush to exploit Eastern Visayas as anti-people, anti-development, anti-environment and pro-foreign.

The NDFP-EV called on the people to unite and resist the escalation of foreign mining in the region and urged the people to defend their communities, livelihoods, the environment, and the national patrimony against large-scale foreign mining.

[Source: ndfp.net/liberation_intl/zzLI_103006/LI_july2010b_online.pdf]

AFRICA

African Peace & Security Concerns

Although the past six months were marked by redoubled efforts by the AU to promote peace and security, the situation is still tenuous and fragile with conflicts persisting in Guinea Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic. The coup d'etat in Niger in February has led to political turmoil as well as growing food scarcity. Political instability in the Indian Ocean island state of Madagascar is another challenge to African security.

In war torn Somalia, the situation is fragile owing to open US meddling, despite African efforts to bring reconciliation between the Transitional Federal Government and rivals wielding power in parts of the country. The civil conflict has also spilt into neighbouring Uganda which along with Burundi currently contributes to the 6000 strong African peacekeeping force in Somalia.

Although the April 2010 general elections ensured stability in Sudan, the country awaits a critical turn in its history with the impending self-determination referendum in southern Sudan later in the year. Foreign meddling in the region is bound to worsen following the likely secession of southern Sudan and the growing US military presence in Africa.

Normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea and the restoration of Eritrean representation in the AU are positive developments. But without normalisation of relations between Eritrea and US-backed Ethiopia, the region is likely to remain disturbed for a long time to come.

[Source: *prensa-latina.cu*]

Rwanda: Democracy in Doubt

Rwanda goes to the polls on 9th August to elect a President, with the incumbent, Paul Kagame, head of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front, in total control over the election process.

The “international community” which has been supportive of Rwanda’s “democratic transition” is blind to the widespread arrests of journalists and opposition politicians, silencing of the print media, assassination and assassination attempts against critics, and the recent alleged killing of Jwani Mwaikusa, defence lawyer at the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda, outside his home in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 14th July.

While a few countries like Sweden and the Netherlands have cut their aid, the US and the UK still cynically support Kagame. Diplomats quietly acknowledge the repression of elites but fail to address the impact of the elections on ordinary Rwandans such as rural farmers, teachers, nurses, low level civil servants and traders who make up the remaining 90 percent of the population with virtually no say in politics. The average Rwandan sees the upcoming elections as a form of social control to ensure they vote for Kagame’s RPF.

The strategy of repression means that none of the three main opposition parties —Democratic Green Party of Rwanda, FDU-Inkingi and PS-Imberakuri— can take part in the elections.

[Sources: *globalresearch.ca, humanrightsinitiative.org*]

Somalia: Growing Concerns

Concerns are growing that US military aid and support to the transitional government of Somalia are in breach of a number of international laws, especially when the US was supposed to have left the country years ago. The civil war in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia has driven hundreds of thousands of Somalis into exile, death by starvation, or being killed in conflict.

The US-backed transitional government has been on the edge of collapse for years under continued attacks by the Al Shabab militia and fellow Islamist militant group Hizbul Islam, which control much of central and southern Somalia, leaving only a few small parts of the capital under government rule, protected by the Somali military, its Ahlu Sunna Waljama militia and African Union peacekeepers. Battles rage even in government-controlled areas. Troops loyal to the government bicker for scraps of power among themselves while corruption and organized crime erode the fragile state security.

Adding the controversy surrounding US military aid to the regime in Mogadishu is the allegation that the regime is using child soldiers. A UN Security Council report into Somalia's 'persistent violations' in the use of child soldiers has turned the spotlight on the involvement of the US in the fight for control.

Somalia is also expected to benefit from the Obama administration's 2011 budget request for security assistance programmes in Africa which includes US\$38 million for arms sales to African states, US\$21 million for training African officers and US\$24 million for anti-terrorism programmes.

More details in: dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5722273,00.html

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Honduras: Fighting Back

One year ago, on 28th June 2009, a coup was carried out by US-trained military officers, including graduates of the infamous US Army School of the Americas (WHINSEC) in Georgia, and President Zelaya was illegally taken to Costa Rica.

Democracy in Honduras ended, as a de facto government of the rich and powerful seized control. A sham election backed by the US confirmed the leadership of the coup powers. The US and powerful lobbyists continue to roam the hemisphere to convince other Latin American countries to normalize relations with the coup regime.

The global media has ignored the revival of US hard power in the Americas and the widespread resistance that challenges it. Yet a pro-democracy movement, the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular

formed in the coup's aftermath has organized the anger and passion of mass-based popular movements of landless workers, farmers, women, gays and lesbians, unions, youth and others to arouse hope throughout the country, despite horrendous repression including the assassination of activists and driving into exile of leaders. Four judges, including the president of Honduran Judges for Democracy, were dismissed in May 2010 for criticizing the illegality of the coup. In 2010 alone, seven journalists have been murdered and many others threatened so that Reporters Without Borders has called Honduras the most dangerous country in the world for journalists.

[Source: *resistenciahonduras.net*]

Venezuela: US Meddling

Venezuela is pondering its next move in the light of potential US-backed armed aggression from Colombia. Since the escalation of the bilateral crisis spurred by the Colombian government, Venezuelan has been on the alert to safeguard the country's sovereignty and implement a precise strategy against each contingency. The measures include maximum surveillance on the Colombian border.

The concerns of Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez seem fully justified in the context of the US-Colombia military agreement of October 2009 allowing the US seven military bases and the use all Colombian territory as needed to complete missions. Also in February 2010, the US National Directorate of Intelligence, in its annual threat assessment, classified Venezuela as "Anti-US Leader" in the region.

On 24th July, based on a secret memo received from an unnamed source inside the US, Chávez denounced US plans to attack his country and overthrow his government. The memo drew attention to various factors including a naval build up in Costa Rica where the government had authorized on 1st July the entry of 46 US war ships and 7,000 marines into its maritime and land territory on the pretext of "drug control".

Chávez denounced contacts between opposition governors and extreme right-wing military officers and paramilitary groups from Colombia, and warned that whoever backs an invasion of the homeland is a traitor and will be treated as such. He also announced the decision to cut off oil supplies to the United States in the event of a US-supported war against Venezuela.

Four days after the breaking-off of relations between Colombia and Venezuela on 22nd July following Colombia's accusation that Venezuela

allowed Colombian guerrilla fighters on its territory, Chávez called for unity among all sectors of the country to counter the plots hatched in US territory. He also called for unity between the Venezuelan and the Colombian peoples, who have been brothers and sisters for centuries of common history.

After reviewing intelligence information and analyzing the escalation of accusations against Venezuela, President Chávez decided to cancel his trip to Cuba scheduled for 26th July. Chávez claimed that an attack from Colombia was likely and said that in the event of attack by the Colombian regime with blessings from the US, Venezuela would act to counter the foreign attack as well as to neutralize the internal opposition that supports such warmongering plans. Chávez also warned the US that in the event of a military attack against Venezuela from Colombia or elsewhere, all oil supply to the US will be suspended.

Although there have since been signs of easing of the strained relations between the two countries, the prospect of the US using Colombia to destabilise Venezuela by other means remains.

[Source: *plenglish.com, chavezcode.com*]

Colombia: Hit Man Elected

Juan Manuel Santos, the notorious Defence Minister under outgoing President Alvaro Uribe, won the Presidential elections in June 2010. Major electronic and print media hailed his election as a great victory for democracy, ignoring shocking facts about the elections and the profoundly authoritarian conduct of Santos over the past decade.

The Uribe-Santos regime used the military and its 30 000 strong paramilitary death squads to terrorize entire populations centres deemed “sympathetic” to the insurgency. Over 20 000 people, many falsely labelled “guerrillas”, have been killed by the regime. The military has randomly rounded up scores of poor urban youth, shot them and claimed a resounding victory over the FARC guerrillas; and Santos as Defence Minister was directly implicated by the Courts in what was called “false positives”. Death-squad hit-men serving the regime have killed over two thousand trade unionists, human rights activists, journalists and congress members critical of the regime, making Colombia the most dangerous country for workers’ representatives.

Although the regime mobilized over 350,000 military and police officials, many involved in the decade long repression, to “oversee” the elections, the outcome was far from the “mandate” declared by the mass media: 56% of the electorate, did not vote, pointing to disaffection with

the regime's violent repression, massive dispossession of millions and failure to deal with the under- and unemployment hurting 40% of the economically active population.

The 'overwhelming' mandate for Santos was a mere 30% of the electorate. The pattern of abstention was significant. Among the shanty towns and rural areas facing repression and neglect, abstention was over 80%. In the middle and upper class sectors of the major cities, over 60% voted for Santos.

See full article by James Petras in: eurasiareview.com/201006294094/leader-of-death-squads-wins-colombian-election.html

Footnote: The Santos government, following a Constitutional Court ruling that suspended an agreement which provided greater access for US troops to Colombia bases, decided to suspend Colombia's defence pact with the US, although there was no difficulty in passing it through the country's legislature, adding to the troubles of the US in Latin America. Whether this means that Santos will be a less willing partner of the US than Uribe was is to be seen in the months to come.

EUROPE

Turkey: Mounting Anger

Turkey's repositioning of itself within the greater west Asian area is a prominent feature of the emerging regional order. The reorientation of Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab and Muslim worlds has much to do with domestic changes, mainly the emergence of a new middle class that is sensitive to issues concerning the *umma* (Islamic nation). It was this constituency that in 2002 brought to power Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice & Development Party or AKP).

But other regional trends too have drawn the Turkish state away from its post World War II orientation towards US strategic interests. Among those are concerns about the transnational threats of Kurdish separatist movements, which have provoked the Turkish armed forces to repeated incursions into northern Iraq by in pursuit of PKK militants. The backing provided by the US to Kurdish nationalists in Iraq in order to secure its oil interests in northern Iraq is not seen very kindly by Turkish nationalists.

The suffering of the Palestinian population in Gaza has, over the years, become a rallying-point of the Islamist media in Turkey, and support for the Palestinians has grown very strong since the brutal Israeli raid against Gaza in 2008. Israel made matters worse for itself by authorising a commando raid on the aid-flotilla bound for Gaza on 31st May, in which Turkish activists were killed, which became the most significant incident that reinforced Turkey's support for the Palestinian cause. Remarkably, Prime Minister Erdogan has repeatedly designated Hamas both the democratically elected government of Palestine and a "resistance movement".

The failure of the US and the West to resolve the crisis over Iran's plans for nuclear fuel enrichment has hindered efforts by Turkey to forge closer business links with Iran, especially concerning oil and gas. Turkey has pursued a closer and more sympathetic dialogue with Iran than ever before and joined Brazil to evolve a proposal that would pre-empt a further round of United Nations sanctions. The "Tehran declaration", of May 2010 by the heads of the governments of Brazil, Iran and Turkey was a calculated rebuff to the US.

US efforts to subdue the Iranian regime through sanctions have mostly backfired and in the Middle East it has transformed Turkey into a stronger opponent than Iran of Israeli policy on Palestine.

[Sources: *presstv.ir*; *guardian.co.uk*]

Protests against Spending Cuts

As European Governments move collectively to slash public expenditure, including jobs, pay and pensions, while the European economy is fragile and vulnerable to renewed recession, the ETUC is to mobilise a collective trade union response. This will be centred on a big demonstration in Brussels but the ETUC is calling on affiliates to take the maximum possible degree of action in all the countries of the European Union. The ETUC is also supporting the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) Worldwide Day of Decent Work on 7th October. (See: *etuc.org/a/7323*). The build-up towards that day of protest had started unprompted in several European countries.

In Greece, Athens has been the scene of a series of protests with protesters numbering tens of thousands most of the time, with riot police using tear gas and baton charge against demonstrators. Several 24-hour mass strikes by public and private sector unions have taken place, bringing the whole country to a standstill.

In Spain public workers struck on 8th June against a wage cut in what was the first of trade union-led protests against government austerity measures. The day was also marked by massive demonstrations across Spain [See: nytimes.com/2010/06/09/world/europe/09iht-spain.html. On 29th June, Spanish workers expressed their displeasure at a 5 percent public sector pay cut by shutting down Madrid's metro system. [See: wsws.org/articles/2010/jun2010/spai-j30.shtml]

In Italy, the 6 million strong CGIL, Italy's biggest union, held rallies in Rome, Milan and other cities on 25th June demanding a redraft of the a 25-billion-euro austerity package, which Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi says is an essential part of European efforts to save the euro. Earlier, on 12th June thousands marched in Rome to protest against austerity measures including cuts in funding to local authorities and freezing the salaries of public sector workers. Italy's medical workers including doctors, nurses and veterinarians went on strike on 19th July in protest at government plans to cut health budgets. Fire-fighters went on a national four-hour stoppage on 20th July protesting austerity measures. Berlusconi pushed his austerity budget through Parliament by threatening to step down in the event of failure to pass the budget. [Sources: presstv.ir, uk.reuters.com, epsu.org/r/180]

French unions held nationwide strikes on 24th June and hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets to protest against plans to raise the retirement age from 60 to 62 by 2018. The CGT, France's largest union, estimated that at least 2 million protesters participated in about 200 rallies throughout France. The Sarkozy government has, however, vowed not to budge on its reform proposal.

In Germany, tens of thousands protested on 12th June against Germany's biggest austerity drive since World War II, following the announcement of plans for 80 billion Euros (\$96.30 billion) in budget cuts and taxes over four years by Chancellor Angela Merkel's cabinet on 7th June.

In Portugal, tens of thousands marched in Lisbon on 29th May against the government's austerity measures, in the first display of popular discontent since the government announced on 13th May a package of tax rises and cuts in pay and spending. The leader of the biggest trade union vowed to intensify resistance, but stopped short of calling a strike.

[Sources: presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=135522§ionid=351020606, etuc.org/a/7323]

Comrade Mother

S Sukesanan

Later in life,
I sorrowed for you
when I learnt that
you had high fever
when they cut the umbilical cord
to part me from you and
that you were heart-broken
that you could not feed me.
In my tender age
you taught me in advance of the class and
when I came top of the class
I was proud of your deed.

As time passed
when dad
broken-hearted by loss of wealth and home
fell ill and saw his end
and others rejected us
you fed our shrunken bowels
with the handful of grains you had.
On days when that too was absent
You filled our bellies with water,
and your love.
Owing to that training, even today
I can function without food.
You were truly a great teacher.

During my adolescence
when I sought friends to mix with
you gave abundant advise—
to befriend the good and
to avoid wrongful life.
Its success defies words.

As time passed
friends led to comrades
who gave me Marxism.
With the rules of dialectics in my mind
I understood what was proper in life and
acted with that understanding.
Although you knew that my side was correct
you initially feared for your son being on that side— but
when you saw my comrades and their deeds
you conquered your fear to support me.
You worked for our programmes—
I was delighted by your deeds.
Suddenly one day—
the guardsmen of capitalism
took me away to inquire,
then to detain, and
now to be remanded.
Will steel tempered by Marxism yield?
Yet, when a year passed,
another May Day arrived.
My comrades and I were not there
to participate in May Day tasks—
my heart felt heavy.
When May Day passed
words of participating comrades fell on my ears
“Comrade, your mother too participated”.
My feelings strengthened.
My sorrows died.
You who bore sorrow for long
became the one that wiped off mine.

Mother,
I have not words to address you.
One thing is clear— Mother
You are not only the one that gave birth to me
You are among my comrades!

History Knows

V Thinakaran

You are not entirely hated
by our people
as they have got accustomed to
a life of bitterness.
That is why
we fall at your feet
when you are accorded a welcome
with decorated water-filled pots.
People know that you are
bitter honey.
They also know that
your words are
sweet venom.
They are troubled
by illusive scenery.

History knows
the differences between
a lifetime of illusions
and clearly made choices.
History is a modest
great teacher

World to Win Revolution is the Solution

T Pradeesh

World to win
There is a world to win
Workers, peasants, oppressed classes
Oppressed people
We have a world to win

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro and Ché
Did their service
For Revolution
Revolution is the solution for
Social Ailments

We will bind ourselves
On class basis
Class basis, working class basis
We are the winners with the world of today

We'll hold high Marxism
We'll hold high the flag of red
We'll hold high the workers' flag
We'll hold high the flag of the oppressed
We'll march forward
To win over the world is for you
Remember, the world is for you

Tribute to Comrade Narayanan

T Pradeesh

Where's your smile?
Has it disappeared, with your breath?
Is life— only breathing?
Oh no!
If not, what is life?
Life is different.
You also left us with memories which tell
at least the minimum meaning of life.

You contributed to yourself as well as to others.
“One for all and all for one”
This is a saying of Marxism about life.
Weren't you such one?

Some contribute only to themselves
and also get others to contribute to them.
What were you?
Less for yourself and more for others.
You proved that your birth was
to live for others and others for you.

Then, was your life only to breath?
I don't see you breathing now.
Therefore, have you died?
Oh no! No!
You were born to contribute— not just to breathe
And you have contributed.

The contribution of any creature can only be limited
Your contribution has come to an end.
So, you didn't die, but, ended your contribution.
Mankind will never forget your contribution.

You didn't die, but retired.
Farewell to you.
Good Bye, Comrade Uncle Narayanan.

*[Comrade Narayanan, a long-standing member and activist of the
NDMLP passed away on 14th August 2010]*

Abandoning ***Samih al Qasim***

I saw her
I saw her in the square
I saw her bleeding in the square
I saw her staggering in the square
I saw her being killed in the square
I saw her...I saw her...
And when he shouted
“Who is her guardian?”
I denied knowing her
I left her in the square
I left her bleeding in the square
I left her staggering in the square
I left her dying in the square
I left her...

[*Courtesy: Victims of a Map, Al Sazi Books, London, 1984*]

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