

*Theoretical Organ of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party*

*Marxist Leninist*

# *New Democracy*

**46**

*July-September 2012*

***Resolutions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenum of  
the 5<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress of  
the NDMLP***

***Marxist Leninists and Nationalism***

***Being both Victor and Victim***

***Identifying Imperialists***

***Poetry : Thowfiq Zayyad, Sri Sri, Ada Ahroni***

---

Editorial • NDP Diary • Sri Lankan Events • World Events

Website: [www.ndpsl.org](http://www.ndpsl.org)

# The Olive Tree

Tawfiq Zayyad (1929-1994)

Because I do not knit wool\*  
Because I am always hunted  
And my house is always raided.  
Because I cannot own a piece of paper,  
I shall carve my memoirs  
On the home yard olive tree.  
I shall carve bitter reflections,  
Scenes of love and yearnings,  
For my stolen orange grove  
And the lost tombs of my dead.  
I shall carve all my strivings  
For the sake of remembrance  
For the time when I'll drown them  
In the avalanche of triumph  
I shall carve the serial number  
Of every stolen piece of land  
The place of my village on the map  
And the blown up houses,  
And the uprooted trees  
And every bloom that was crushed  
And all the names of the experts in torture  
The names of the prisons.....  
I shall carve dedications  
To memories threading down to eternity  
To the blooded soil of Deir Yasin  
And Kufur Qassem.  
I shall carve the sun's beckoning  
And the moon's whisperings  
And what a skylark recalls  
At a love deserted well.  
For the sake of remembrance,  
I shall continue to carve  
All the chapters of my tragedy  
And all the stages of Al-Nakbah  
On the home yard olive tree!

*[\* Reference to Madame Defarge, who used to knit the names of the traitors and send them to the French revolutionaries during the French Revolution]*

## ***From the Editor's Desk***

Higher education in Sri Lanka has been in crisis for a long time. Under-spending in education, initially blamed on economic problems, later became undeclared state policy, especially after the UNP gained power in 1977. Privatisation of public services and removal of state subsidy for education and health have been part of the agenda of open economy and liberalisation that the IMF and the World Bank have imposed on successive governments.

The first move to privatise higher education by setting up a private medical college in the early 1980s failed in the face of resistance from the academics, students and the general public. Private university education has, however, been smuggled into the country by the government using devious means. Given the public hostility to privatisation of state universities and the abandoning free education (and the electoral repercussions) successive governments have sought to undermine the state university system by underfunding universities and increasing student intake without adequate resources. University education and research have suffered as a result.

Lack of planning and the systematic undermining of universities have deepened the crisis in higher education, and many academics have publicly expressed concern. Political meddling created further problems, and in many universities student protests were often against high-handed action by the authorities. Wages have been an issue with the academic community as their wages — compared with the private sector and in some cases the state sector — have been too low to attract young staff of good academic calibre. Non-academic staff too had their just grievances.

Also, the universities — sometimes even faculties within one university — do not have a common calendar. This situation which arose with the disruption of universities and schools during the JVP insurrection of 1988-89 still persists. No government has so far acted to ensure the streamlining and synchronising of university calendars. The government's undeclared strategy for higher education seems to be to let the state university system destroy its credibility so that there will be a strong demand, especially from the middle and upper-middle classes, for private universities. This is a cunning move since, in the past three decades, those with means have sent abroad their children who failed to secure a place locally for professional degrees, owing to stiff competition for the limited number of places.

It is thus a combination of factors that drove the academic staff to trade union action. The strike this time, however, has several remarkable features.

Most importantly, the demands go beyond wage rise, and include two of great significance to the educational future of the country. One calls for an increase in educational spending to at least match other countries, including those in the region, and the other for an end to political interference.

The strike has been organised democratically, with teachers' unions in individual universities thoroughly discussing issues and demands.

The strike has found common cause with student protests against the erroneous educational policies based on IMF and World Bank advice. Also, the concern expressed for the future of education in the country, especially in the context of the messing up of GCE(A.L) results, has won broader public appeal than any previous protest by university academics,.

The firm and principled stand of the academics has also achieved things of great political importance: After a long time since the escalation of the national conflict, and particularly since the end of the war, a struggle has emerged that brings together different sections of the people, namely the academic and non-academic staff and students of all universities, as well as cuts across ethnic borders to win support among members of all nationalities.

The government could have settled the dispute early through negotiations, but, as usual, it has been disingenuous in its dealings and unwilling to firmly commit on any demand. Since failure to subdue the university academics can also have adverse implications for the government on other fronts, besides implications for its plans to privatise education, the government has been desperate to crush the strike by resorting to bullying at individual as well as collective levels. That has failed. Its hope to tire out the academics has failed too. It has now sought recourse to the legal system to bring the strike to a halt by pushing for arbitration. The Federation of University Teachers' Associations remains defiant, even at the risk of dismissal from university posts.

The outcome of the dispute is still unpredictable with a government that is shamelessly repressive and ruthless. But whatever the outcome, the strike has brought to the public domain matters that have remained behind scenes.

Even if the academics fail to win their demands, the struggle against privatisation of education will continue. What matters is to extend the struggle to fight the undermining of public health and amenities sectors which are important targets of the IMF and World Bank driven policies. Such struggles could also play a valuable role in transcending the forces of chauvinism and narrow nationalism to achieve unity among the toiling masses.

\*\*\*\*\*

# **Resolutions of the Second Plenum of the Fifth Congress of the New- Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party**

*Resolutions adopted at the Plenum of 28<sup>th</sup> July 2012*

- 1. Workers, peasants, fisher folk and all working masses are suffering severe hardship as a result of the government continuously raising the prices of all goods including essential food items. Hence the price increases that push the people towards a state of starvation should be halted. At the same time, a fair wage increase should be granted to all workers and state and private sector employees to meet the rise in cost of living faced by them.**
- 2. The denial, threats, repression, attacks and prohibition practiced by the government against democracy, human rights, trade union rights and freedom of the media should be stopped forthwith.**
- 3. The acts of discrimination, neglect, violence and murder to which long term political detainees are subjected to should be ended forthwith. At the same time all political detainees should be released immediately and details about missing persons should be provided to relatives.**
- 4. Planned land grab and encroachment are being undertaken in the North-East and in the Hill Country. Following the end of the war, the defence forces are at the forefront of this land grab and encroachment. Places of residence, employment and lands of people are affected by these acts, and as a result the resettlement of the people is being obstructed. Hence these acts of land grab and encroachment carried out by the government and the armed forces should be denounced and discontinued immediately.**
- 5. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of the resettled people is in a state of neglect. Meanwhile, the people are refused resettlement in residential areas, work places and public places that are under the**

**control of the defence forces. There should be an end to this state of affairs.**

- 6. Wage increases for Plantation Workers should be awarded based on the increase in cost of living and standard of living instead of on the basis of the Collective Agreement. Also, the people of the Hill Country should be granted the right to land and homes and they should be given ownership of land and housing.**
- 7. Unity, equality and peace among people could be achieved through the resolution of the national question by finding an autonomous solution based on the right to self determination. But chauvinism and comprador capitalism dislike arriving a just political solution. The Party emphasises carrying forward a political solution through power sharing and autonomy on a long term basis in a way that does not yield to these forces.**
- 8. Activities of re-colonisation are being carried out in the name of development. Foreign investors and lenders, their local allies and partners, and those in power are able to accumulate wealth through these projects. There will be no great blessing or benefit to the country and the people from such development activities which are carried out without far sight, to serve self interest. Hence, the destructive acts that degrade nature and the environment should be put to an end.**
- 9. Acts of crime, murder, rape, sexual harassment of women and children, drug abuse and decadence among youth are ascending towards a peak. These are the results of imperialist globalisation and neoliberal economic policies. The only way to arrest these trends is to awaken the people and mobilise them.**
- 10. We emphasise that the entire people should mobilise to oppose and launch struggles of mass uprising against all forms of oppression undertaken by the comprador capitalist chauvinistic fascist government against the entire working people of the country and all nationalities.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

## Nationalism and Nationhood under Neo-colonialism - 6

# Marxist Leninists and the Challenge of Nationalism

*Imayavaramban*

Marxist Leninists have always recognised the dual nature of nationalism. In the context of national oppression, nationalism motivates oppression as well as the struggle against it. Marxist Leninists have always defended the right of an oppressed nation or nationality against imperialist or chauvinist oppression. The issues of nationalism are not straightforward enough to allow the use of simple formulae to deal with them, especially in the neo-colonial era where several nations and nationalities are simultaneously the oppressor and oppressed.

Addressing the national question from a nationalist perspective has invariably made people take positions in breach of democratic and fundamental rights of not only other nationalities but also one's own nationality. This has been true not only of the oppressor nationality but also the oppressed. The tendency for nationalists to reject egalitarian principles and adopt chauvinistic positions arises from the underlying bourgeois nature of nationalism.

Yet nationalism is an objective reality that Marxist Leninists need to deal with. The stand taken by Marxist Leninists on the question of national oppression in the era of colonial occupation and domination was entirely consistent with the Marxist Leninist position of opposing all manifestations of class oppression. There was no difficulty in extrapolating that stand to the era of imperialist wars of aggression and occupation. As far as Marxist Leninists were concerned, their defence of a country and its people against aggression and occupation by a foreign power has always been unconditional, irrespective of the class nature of the resistance to aggression

and occupation. The struggle against colonial and imperialist domination was an important and integral part of the struggle against capitalism.

The national question acquired new dimensions following formal independence of colonies and the ascent to power of a feudal-capitalist class, still bonded to the colonial rulers. Fresh contradictions among nationalities developed out of rivalries cultivated under colonial rule and from the need of the ruling elite to divert the attention of the people from pressing socio-economic issues. Thus it has been necessary for Marxist Leninists to address the complexities of these developments as well as complications caused by imperialist and hegemonic intervention.

There is a dangerous tendency among narrow nationalists to oversimplify the concept of right to self determination as merely the right to secession and thus assert the right to secession, irrespective of its broader implications. Equally dangerous is the tendency on the other hand of chauvinists to reject out of hand the right of any minority nation or nationality to self determination, autonomy or even devolution of power. They falsely claim that any form of devolution of power or autonomy is in effect a move towards secession. There are also those who pretend to be Marxists who to reject the right of minority nations and nationalities to self determination on the pretext that secession could strengthen imperialism. This is plain opportunism.

Nationalism has never been a Marxist Leninist idea and can never be one. But Marxist Leninists have always opposed national oppression. Thus the Marxist Leninist approach to the national question in the post-colonial era needs to be based on endorsing the right of any nation or nationality to protect itself against an oppressor nation state, while at the same time seeking solutions that would avert the need for a call for secession.

The Marxist Leninist approach to the national question in the neo-colonial context could be briefly summed up as follows.

1. It recognises that nationalities, national identity and nationalism exist.
2. It endorses the right of a nation or nation minority to defend itself against national oppression.
3. It accepts unconditionally the right of nations to self determination.
4. It has, where relevant, gone further to extend the principle of the right to self determination to minority nationalities and national minorities in ways that ensure their right to preserve their identity and exercise autonomy in matters relating to their social, political, cultural and economic existence.



5. It is, at the same time, fully conscious of imperialist manipulation of national grievances and other identity based issues to divide people to stir trouble against regimes that refuse to submit to imperialism.
6. It is also aware that imperialism can side with a “friendly state” to carry out oppression based on national, linguistic, caste, religious or cultural identity, especially where the struggles of the oppressed challenge the democratic credentials of its client.
7. It adopts a principled stand which, while defending the right of nations and nationalities to self determination, applies the principle of the right to self determination in the spirit in which Lenin declared it, namely as a means to ensure that nationalities could coexist as equals within one state.

Thus, there is no rigid Marxist Leninists formula to deal with the national question. What is constant in the Marxist Leninist approach to any human conflict is its principled stand against all forms of human oppression. Marxist Leninists should draw a careful distinction between contradictions among the people (or ‘friendly’ contradictions) and contradictions between the people and their oppressors (or hostile contradictions).

Something that may seem to be a hostile contradiction among people could actually be a badly handled friendly contradiction. In such event, the Marxist Leninist response will be to eliminate misunderstandings and propose ways to resolve issues amicably and in ways beneficial to the parties concerned.

There are instances where an oppressed nationality —or even an oppressor— chooses to set aside its contradictions with imperialism and other hegemonic forces and seek their support to overcome ‘rival’ nationalities. Such alliances are either driven by class interests of the nationalist leadership or naïve responses to crises, without a long term perspective. The contradictions remain unfriendly despite the superficial camaraderie which cannot endure the test of time.

There are plenty of instances where oppressed nationalities took imperialism into trust only to be betrayed (for example, the Tamils of Sri Lanka and Eritreans under Ethiopia) or ended up as vassals of imperialism (as in the case of Bosnia and Kosovo), whose freedom from their former oppressors was rendered meaningless and miserable by their new slavery to imperialism.

The Marxist Leninist stand on the national question is diametrically opposed to the imperialist stand. Good examples include the stand of the Marxist Leninists of Turkey on the Kurdish national question, the Communist Party of the Philippines on the Moro people’s national struggle and the position of the Maoists of Nepal on

the complex national question of Nepal. The Sri Lankan Marxist Leninist position on their national question is another instance of a highly principled stand.

Marxist Leninist support for oppressed nationalities in the post colonial era has early beginnings. Mao Zedong's expression of solidarity with the struggle of the Black people in the US in the 1960's is one such instance. On the question of secession, the Marxist Leninist position has been based on a careful study of the issues (like whether there has been aggression or annexation as in the case of Eritrea and East Timor or if problems of an internal nature have been aggravated by the wrong handling of contradictions, and assisted by external intervention as in the case of Sri Lanka).

What matters to Marxist Leninists is to be able to respond in a considered way to any national conflict; reject secession as a universal solution to the national question: and respect the right of nationalities to self determination without making a fetish of it. It is important to remember that the case for self determination arises in the context of national oppression, when an oppressed nationality demands greater autonomy. It is not an end in itself and cannot be thrust on a nationality that does not face national oppression.

Marxist Leninists may differ in their stand on specific issues, owing to differences in their understanding of important aspects of complex national issues. Some Marxist Leninists who were initially supportive of secession in Bosnia and Kosovo because they were misinformed about the situation in Yugoslavia rectified their position once they saw the hands of imperialism in the escalation of the national contradiction.

At one time, several Marxist Leninist organisations in India backed the secessionist cause in Sri Lanka. But when they were informed of the complex nature of the national question in Sri Lanka by Sri Lankan Marxist Leninists, they corrected their understanding and retracted their support for narrow nationalism. Although differences in perspective still exist because of the absence of a common forum for a continuing discussion of the issues, their positions are based on Marxist Leninist principles and their defence of the national rights of the Tamils is essentially consistent.

Despite the progressive role that nationalism once played in anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, it failed to sustain its anti-imperialism in the face of the powerful imperialist assault in the form of neo-colonialism which now bears the face of globalisation. Yet in Latin America, a progressive form of nationalism has emerged with an anti-imperialist content and a positive attitude towards the aspirations of oppressed indigenous and minority nationalities. How well it can

resist imperialism without a fundamental change in the class nature of the state is yet to be seen. Over all, the handling of the national question by the ruling classes in most of the Third World is worrying. The failure of the state to address the genuine grievances of minority nationalities and national minorities has enabled imperialism to make inroads by stirring trouble and covertly siding with one nationality or the other, or even backing opposing sides, as well as seeking to enhance its influence by playing the role of a peace maker.

The feudal-capitalist classes which abandoned their anti-imperialist stand after assuming state power they cynically used nationalism to divide the people. Often the ruling elite has been an oppressor of minority nationalities and sought electoral advantage in divisions based on nationality, ethnicity and religion. There are nevertheless instances where essentially repressive regimes, as for example those in Libya under Ghadafi and in Syria, have handled questions of nationality and religion in a more balanced way than their neighbours.

The national question in Africa is vulnerable to manipulation by imperialism which seeks to split countries apart by transforming tribal and religious differences into conflicts between nationalities. Imperialism has ensured that Africa was denied of leadership of the calibre of Nkrumah of Ghana whose Pan African vision was anti-imperialist and transcending tribal and 'national' differences

We now face a situation in which imperialism, overtly or covertly, encourages identity politics in the Third World to the point of promoting some identities into narrow national identities seeking secession. Marxist Leninists have to take full account of such realities when they defend the rights of nationalities and their right to self determination. They need to tactically and strategically isolate the chauvinistic and narrow nationalist forces of reaction by talking up the just causes of all oppressed sections of the people and linking each just struggle with other just struggles to achieve greater solidarity.

The Marxist Leninist position should fundamentally emphasise unity among nationalities while encouraging devolution of power in ways which will let people have a bigger say in the running of their affairs. Thus, to Marxist Leninists, the national question becomes inseparable from the issues of democracy, social justice and anti-imperialism and, inevitably, the struggle for socialism.

\*\*\*\*\*

# Being both Victor and Victim

## *Post-war Sri Lankan Politics and Society: an Autopsy*

***Asvaththamma***

### **Introduction**

The trajectory of the post-war Sri Lankan state is peculiar. The government is dominated and influenced by Sinhala Buddhist nationalistic and hegemonic ambitions, which in turn culminate new ways and means to justify the Sinhala Buddhist nature of the state and its politics, and reject any form of rights and liberties for the minorities. Overall, it adamantly refuses to accept the multinational and multicultural nature of the country and its interpretation of events need to be understood in the context of post-war Sri Lankan politics.

The war came ended in May 2009, with the government of Sri Lanka as victor after totally annihilating the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Three years have passed and ground realities vastly differ from textbook-style Western-based post war DDR (Disarming, Demobilization & Reintegration), reconciliation and peace-building. The present regime had its own way of viewing and addressing issues, which determines its policies and policy implementation. Against this backdrop, national minorities feel cornered and their lives in the post war setting have been made miserable to the disappointment of many. The actions that led to them seem to be the outcome of a mindset of 'simultaneously being a victor and victim'. This article seeks to examine the prospect of the present scenario being an outcome of thinking and acting like both a victor and victim, understand the phenomenon and explore realistic ways out of this precarious situation.

### **Being both Victor and Victim**

An understanding of the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinistic psyche is necessary to recognise and analyse the ways of the present Sri Lankan state apparatus. After the end of the war — in which the Sri Lankan government was victorious — a new discourse was created where the Tamils are the ones who had to apologize to the Sinhalese for wrong doings and sufferings inflicted by them upon the Sinhalese and their society. In other words, it is argued that the

Sinhalese are the real victims of the civil war and not the Tamils, who were the cause of the civil war. Thus Tamils should apologise to the Sinhalese, as Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country and Tamils cannot dare to challenge the authority of the Sinhala Buddhist state. This victim mentality has been well articulated among the masses by extremist forces and, significantly, had mass appeal in the South. People have been told that Sri Lanka failed to develop in the past thirty years owing to the war waged by the Tamils. Thus the Sinhalese were the ones affected by the actions of the Tamils.

The present Sri Lankan government has bought itself into the argument and appears to believe it. In other words, it comforts itself by calling it a victim while celebrating its victory. The political overtones have duplicated the military victory over the LTTE in several dimensions, the most intriguing one being translating the military victory into a victory of the Sinhalese against Tamils, a minority in the country who challenged the authority of the majority. This dichotomy of the victor cum victim has had a decisive impact on the post-war Sri Lankan state. More importantly, the Sri Lankan society has been reoriented along those lines. The notion has a political baggage attached to it, whereby war crime allegations against the state are interpreted as maligning of Sinhalese by Tamils whereas the Sinhala state and its leadership are seen as modern day knights who are the saviours of the Sinhalese.

The conduct of the post-war Sri Lankan society in general and of the Sri Lankan state machinery in particular could be more clearly understood in terms of the victor cum victim articulation. A recent example of the conduct of the state characteristic of this mentality was the manner in which the state responded to protests by Tamil political prisoners in the Vavuniya prison.

The victim cum victor approach has helped the Sri Lankan government in many ways. It was able to explain the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution against Sri Lanka on that basis, and thereby rebut all allegations of human rights abuses as a conspiracy to victimize people who fought and won on behalf of the Sinhala society, the victim of the war.

The indifferent conduct of post-war reconciliation, the continuing militarization in the North, and the denial of the need for a political solution need to be understood against the backdrop of this mentality, with the Sinhala Buddhist hegemony seeking to dominate and suppress the minorities in order to assert its hegemony. This idea, more than any other, dominates politics and the society at large and hampers any genuine attempt at reconciliation. Consequently, Sri Lanka is not getting far with its so-called development drive with the intended outcomes of peace and stability.

### **Take on Reconciliation**

Building toward social reconciliation is a long and complex process, requiring attention to various aspects and issues. A highly important issue is the

establishment of a shared identity among the alienated parties. It is a complex undertaking in itself, involving an analysis of current identities — both as narrated within a community and as narrated to those outside it — as well as adjudicating the different versions of history maintained by each party. The purpose of a shared identity is, however, not just to create a common past, but also to provide a platform for a different future. When seeking a post-conflict shared identity to achieve reconciliation, it is important to note that there is no universal formula or strategy for reconciliation. There is also the temptation to look at only the contested issues as matters to be addressed, ignorant of the fact that passage of time piles further burdens on the reconciliation process.

The building of a common memory and the quest for truth to heal and restore cannot occur in a vacuum. It is initiated in hospitable social spaces where trust is built and a sense of belonging is restored so that a renewed sense of common purpose and destiny can be nurtured. Memory, as is well known, is an essential part of identity. At the individual level and at a societal level, loss of memory both diminishes an individual and makes relationships difficult with persons who shared those memories. For societies to be cut off from memory makes them myopic. For societies to suppress memory can make them dangerously explosive, especially when those suppressed memories burst forth in a displaced manner, in isolation from their source. Memories are like discrete objects held in the mind, and are continually shaped by the dialectic of remembering and forgetting. Memory turns on relationships— relationship of the present to matters of the past.

When we invoke the adage “time heals,” we in effect acknowledge that our relationship to the past changes over time. That need not entail a rejection of the past, but instead an altered relation to it. The emotional intensity surrounding a memory may weaken, and new perspectives of the memory emerge as it is set in a different web of relationships. Especially in traumatic events such as the death of loved ones or having to flee one’s home, the losses can never be regained. To insist on one specific way to relate to losses can keep us in the orbit of those losses, forever trapped by the toxicity of disappearance. The fact that people do come to terms in some measure with losses and get on with their lives is evidence of how memory changes.

Forgiveness is perhaps the most salient dimension of this change of relationship, especially to a toxic past. In forgiving one does not forget, for one cannot forget something that has so irrevocably changed one’s life, without diminishing oneself and undervaluing the losses suffered? To forgive is not to forget, but to remember in a different way. It is precisely this possibility of remembering in a different way to enter a different relationship with the past that is explored here. For it is this changing relationships that make possible the establishing of a new, common identity between parties that have become estranged or divided in whatever way.

Above all, the Sri Lankan government has its own understanding and interpretation of reconciliation deriving from the victor's mentality as well as the domination it has over the Tamils who once challenged the state — Sinhala Buddhists — through an armed struggle. In a general sense, reconciliation is often discussed in terms of restoring a virtuous society. On this account, wrongdoing alienates the perpetrator from both his victims (by failing to treat them as his moral equals) and moral community he has disturbed (by violating its publicly shared norms). Reconciliation initiated by the perpetrator's acknowledgement his wrongdoings are followed by remorse and reparation which open the way for forgiveness and, eventually, the restoration of the community. In divided societies, neither community nor communal norms can be presupposed because the politics of reconciliation rests on the question of belonging and the terms of political association.

### **Some Thoughts on Democracy**

Re-reading democracy in the context of post-war Sri Lanka raises several new questions relevant to understanding the complexity that Sri Lankan society is placed in. We are increasingly aware that democracy and democratic values — freedom, equality and justice — continue to be challenged. Worse, not only do old threats to democracy remain unresolved, but new ones emerge as we enter a more interdependent and globalized reality.

From the time that the concept of democracy emerged in ancient Greece, its core idea has been self-rule, which challenged the claims of those seeking to rule over others. Whenever reasoning based on ideology failed to justify domination over those deemed subordinate, violence and coercion have been used, first to impose minority or individual authority and then to secure the established order. While those with access to power have been resourceful enough to defer popular rule and the core values associated with it, common folk proved to be even more spirited in their pursuit of freedom, equality and self-rule. Although mass movements have from time to time wrought power from those that concentrate it in their hands, the victories seldom endured, as the opponents of self-rule soon regrouped to find ways to subvert the claims and practices of the many. Democracy has thus remained an unfulfilled promise and, whenever accessed, is readily contested by those with much to lose from it.

All analyses of democracy confront us with recurring riddles, one being the problem of inevitability: is democracy an expression of an unfolding historically-determined trend, a "*Zeitgeist*," as suggested by Fukuyama's take on Hegel? Or is it something that will inevitably decay because of its own contradictions, as Michels and Huntington suggest? Can it be "exported" and transplanted? There is abundant evidence of imperial powers attempting to reproduce or impose their version of a "benchmark" political system on others.

But, has it worked? Some of the transplants have survived, even successfully. Mostly impositions and imitations have been dismal failures.

Democracy is not an item of hardware to be plugged in to produce instant results. Even if seen as a soft technology, it is not in the same class as managerial structures, accounting systems or business plans. Learning, context, culture and ethics are often ignored important considerations. The Sri Lankan experience of democracy shows it as a fragile and illusive practice, easily distorted by power, threatened by inequality, and readily held hostage by what may be known as “the establishment”, the “military-industrial complex,” the “state apparatus” or simply “the system.” But threats to democracy are only from above while all of our political institutions remain democratic façades for domination by the powerful few. Elections are not a tool for conflict resolution or democracy but a process which risks more conflict since it creates winners and losers, and advantages some groups over others. When power imbalance is severe, elections, used as a yardstick to measure democracy, become a farce, as they have often been in Sri Lanka.

Democratic practice needs to start at the individual and family levels for a democratic common sense to emerge and be able to slowly and gradually consolidate and become institutionalized. Ultimately, a democratic regime, which includes a democratic state and its diverse legal components, must grow out of a democratic society, where the process of gradual democratization is as important, maybe even more important, than the end result; meaningful democracy cannot be achieved by antidemocratic means. Hence the democratic quality of processes is of utmost importance for the establishment of democratic political regimes and anyone interested in democracy needs to include an analysis of the processes and paths.

### **Conclusion**

The way the democratic political system evolved in Sri Lanka since the late colonial years provided a ‘modern’ context for ethnic-majoritarian construction of state power. From the outset, representative democracy took root in Sri Lanka, through limited as well as universal franchise, alongside ethnic identity politics. Without a party political system which cut across intra-group loyalties — with the exception of the badly divided left — at independence, identity politics became the dominant mode for democratic competition; and ethnic majoritarian democracy that took form following independence in 1948, was largely a product of democracy through identity politics.

The practice of minority exclusion from the domain of state power was further strengthened by the way in which ‘state’ building and ‘nation’ building processes developed since independence. These processes were in turn shaped according to the political vision of Sinhala nationalism which saw the post-colonial state in unitarist and centralist terms. Building a strong and unitary state thus became central to ‘nation’ building, rejecting pluralist, multi-



cultural categories. The Sinhala political class that governed the state saw no virtue or relevance of pluralism in post-colonial nation building.

Sri Lanka's recent history shows clearly that a lasting and just peace requires profound constitutional reforms and devolution of power as well as a shift away from the elite-dominated patron-client political culture. Without such measures Sri Lanka will gradually drift towards asymmetric dissolution. Any feasible solution will encompass a shared political future for all citizens as members of identity groups and as individual citizens. Envisioning a shared political future demands the relocation of the post-colonial state within a democratic, pluralistic framework. But the reality of a victor cum victim mentality will remain an obstacle to such a shared political future.

As for post-war peace, a maximalist trajectory of conflict resolution seems to be both unrealistic and impossible. Existing political conditions in Sri Lanka do not allow room for a maximalist program of conflict resolution. The Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities and the main political actors representing them have contradictory expectations from peace, with each conceptualising peace differently and anticipating different outcomes from peace.

There is the deep-seated suspicion of a settlement to the national question itself. Sinhala nationalists fear that a settlement with regional autonomy would be a stepping stone for secession. Tamil nationalists fear that the Sinhalese political class will not be agreeable to an honourable solution. Meanwhile, Muslim nationalists fear that a solution based on consensus between the government and the Tamils would reduce Muslims to a permanently disempowered minority. Finally, the Sinhalese political class, which controls the Sri Lankan state, does not seem ready for a political settlement acceptable to the Tamils, and that is where all seems to end.

Sri Lankan mainstream politics is seen as bankrupt by the social constituencies that underlie the rise of subaltern nationalism. The political elite have offered too little, too late leaving the path to peace markedly more hazardous. As the Sri Lankan conflict has been produced and sustained within the political field, lasting peace is contingent on political transformation. This translates to a dual challenge of transforming political institutions and practices in the direction of substantive devolution of power (not just administrative decentralisation) and substantive democracy (not mere electoral democracy). These challenges are inseparable: electoral democracy without devolution (rebuilding the unitary state) or devolution without democracy (constructing an authoritarian local state) cannot yield a just and lasting peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

# A Question of Identifying Imperialists

*Mohan*

## **Introductory comments**

The term imperialism has been used recklessly by political commentators; and hegemonic powers and chauvinists have been referred to as imperialists by their victims. Although the term derives from empire, in the modern context it has a specific political meaning, and imperialism plays a key role in sustaining the capitalist system nationally and globally.

Thus understanding what imperialism is and how it works is important to the struggle for the emancipation of humanity. Lenin opens the chapter titled “The place of Imperialism in History” in his well known work “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism” with the statement: “We have seen that in its economic essence imperialism is monopoly capitalism”. That is imperialism in a nutshell.

Marxists have a fair understanding of what imperialism stands for and what it has done to humanity since the recognition of its emergence by Marx in the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Yet, differences persist about characterising a developed capitalist country (in today’s context, India and China, especially, as they are capitalist countries with fast growing export economies) as imperialist or not. Correct recognition of the dominant imperialist system, headed and dominated by the US, and the role and the relationship of other capitalist countries to it are important in the analysis of international political events and determining one’s response to them. Relying dogmatically on definitions to determine whether a country is imperialist can be dangerous.

Definitions, when used intelligently and applied flexibly without compromising on essentials, help to understand things and to put the understanding into practice. Rigid and subjective interpretations of definitions have the opposite effect. For example, fascism can be defined in terms of features that characterise it; but the possession of one or several of those features need not necessarily make one a fascist. Also a fascist need not qualify on each count to be a fascist. Thus rigid and subjective approaches

can lead one to brand almost anyone a fascist or, at the other extreme, to fail to recognise fascism even when it stares in one's face.

### **What is imperialism?**

Imperialism came about when capitalism reached a certain stage of development and had to become monopolistic for further expansion and survival. Transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism marked a change in the style of operation of imperialism. Monopoly capitalism itself underwent changes as finance capital became increasingly dominant; and capital openly dictates terms to the state. The growth of the service industry, the commercialisation of public services and utilities, and the role of the armaments industry and war itself as driving forces of the economy are now important features of capitalism.

Thus confining our understanding of imperialism to its formative stages or even to its development into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be inadequate to understand the way imperialism works. Although the essence of imperialism remains unchanged its manifestations have changed. Lenin in 1916 identified imperialism as a special stage of capitalism in his important thesis on imperialism, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. He identified the following as its salient features:

- (1) monopolies arising from the concentration of production;
- (2) merging of bank capital with industrial capital;
- (3) rise of finance capital and a financial oligarchy;
- (4) importance of the export of capital;
- (5) formation of international monopoly capitalist associations to share the world among themselves;
- (6) territorial division of the world among the biggest capitalist powers.

While each of these features continues to exist, imperialism has been forced by events to change its strategy. Importantly, the loss of former colonies and, therefore, direct control over their economic and political affairs led to the superseding of colonialism by neo-colonialism. The predominance of the US in the capitalist world since the end of the Second World War also had implications for former European colonies.

The War also gave rise to a "Socialist Camp" — comprising governments led by communist parties — which challenged imperialist global dominance; and imperialism seemed to recoil in the face of the post-war tide of anti-imperialism sweeping the Third World comprising former colonies and semi-colonies. Although direct military intervention and political subversion persisted, imperialism, as demonstrated by the landmark defeat of US

imperialism in Vietnam in 1975, failed miserably to overcome resistance to occupation and aggression.

### **Imperialism today**

Imperialism redesigned its strategy, and was aided in it by the changes that occurred in the Soviet Union in the 1960s when the Soviet Union sought “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism at the expense of international anti-imperialist struggles. Besides, the split in the international communist movement following the change in course of the Soviet Union had adverse implications for the Third World as a whole. The ideological dispute with China also led to hostility to the extent that Soviet Union threatened China militarily. As an international anti-imperialist group, the Non-Aligned Movement was weakened while the contest between the Soviet Union and the US ceased to be about the socialist cause or anti-imperialist struggles but concerned global dominance, as evident from the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968<sup>1</sup> and subsequent involvements in Ethiopia, Angola and, most tragically, in Afghanistan.

Other factors, especially the inability of the national bourgeois leadership to stand up to imperialism in the context of challenges posed by the working class and other toiling masses in their countries and its failure to develop robust national economic policies to ensure economic development free of imperialist neo-colonial domination, too helped imperialism to reassert itself globally.

Imperialism adapted to these changes with new strategies globally as well as within individual capitalist countries comprising the imperialist camp. Capitalist monopolies needed globalisation for increasing profit as well as to control working class demands for better wages and working conditions, and imperialism took well calculated steps to globalise capital.

### **The impact of globalisation**

Globalisation progressed alongside the growth of service industries at the expense of manufacturing, outsourcing of industrial production (and later even part of the service sector) to countries with cheaper labour, and the rapid transfer of capital across national boundaries. Also, a huge mass of highly vulnerable skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers (including “intellectual” workers) was created by civil war, political persecution, natural disasters and economic crisis — if not collapse — in their home countries.

These changes affected the role of finance capital. While industrial capital in the advanced capitalist countries through accumulation of super profits freed itself of control by finance capital, the burden of finance capital was

shifted to weaker sectors at home and through various mechanisms to the economies of the Third World. The state in the advanced capitalist countries now plays the role of the guarantor and protector of monopolist profit, by fiscal means at home — as in the recent global financial crisis — and by other means such as political subversion and blatant military action elsewhere. Another important feature of globalised capitalism is the enhanced role of speculation in accumulating capital as well as in manipulating markets, facilitated by modern information technology.

The feudal and comprador bourgeois elements in the former colonies and semi-colonies continued to enrich themselves in the post-colonial set-up, and a power class of industrial and merchant capitalists also emerged in countries like India, China (following its abandoning of socialism) and later Brazil, with the backing of the state and the availability in abundance of natural and human resources. Besides, the weakening of the imperialist economy by wars of aggression and outsourcing of manufacture to countries with lower wage levels in order to maximise profits, among other factors, further helped the rapid growth of such economies, but with serious internal weaknesses and vulnerability to imperialist assault.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the weakening of its constituents and its main successor Russia in particular. Although Russia, no longer a super power, survived as a military power to reckon, its economy remains relatively weak.

### **Adapting to globalisation**

The development of industrial and merchant capital as well as the accumulation of wealth through the export of natural resources (especially oil) in certain Third World countries enabled governments and businesses in some countries to find foreign markets for their products, invest their wealth in other Third World countries and seek influence there in order to ensure a reliable supply of raw materials for their fast growing industries. They also invested in countries, in selected sectors and development projects, especially where imperialist countries considered them to be financially and politically risky. While, by virtue of their economic power, they claim a role for themselves in imperialist structures like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation, they also founded loosely knit economic and broad based political alliances such as the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in order to resist imperialist pressure and domination. Notably, alliances such as the Mercosur and more recently CELAC have emerged in South America to diminish US hegemony in the region.

Undoubtedly many of the new developments in India and China are results of the growth of capitalism in the two countries. It is in this context that some tend to designate India and China as imperialist powers. However, before

rushing to put them on par with countries in the imperialist system, one should examine the developments in China and India in the context of the features of imperialism its current phase of globalisation as well as the nature of their relationship to the US-led imperialist camp. It is thus important to identify the location of China and India in the scheme of imperialist globalisation, their status *vis a vis* the existing imperialist network and their interest in sustaining it in its present form, and their style of economic expansion.

### **Are India and China imperialist powers?**

The case for the claim that India and China are imperialist powers rests on the argument that they are fully fledged capitalist states backed by military might that export capital and seek regional hegemony. The issues raised here are of serious concern to all oppressed nations and people, and point to the possibility of the two countries developing into imperialist powers. But do they constitute an adequate basis to brand them as imperialist powers?

Where the two countries fail most to qualify as imperialist powers in the current global context is in their capitalist classes not belonging to international monopoly capitalist associations and not being in a position to demand for a share of the world for them to dominate. They are also not powers that are in a position to press any global territorial ambition, except by way of historical claims to neighbouring waters as in the case of China and seeking regional hegemony as in the case of India.

If export of capital alone is a criterion, all but a handful of Third World countries will qualify as imperialists. Thus the relative scales of capital inflow and outflow, the nature of the country's foreign investments and the methods used for expanding trade and investment should, among others, be taken into account. An important feature of Indian and Chinese capitalism is that the two countries are still targets of international capital, which through foreign direct investments and other means exploits cheap labour and mineral resources in the two countries. The volume of capital export by either country remains much less than capital inflow into the country.

There is no doubt that the two countries aim to be capitalist powers and want a greater share of the global market and unrestricted access to natural resources. They are yet to exploit cheap labour abroad on any significant scale and their financial markets are far from being key players in the global scenario. But nothing prevents either from becoming a global capitalist or imperialist power especially since the US cannot for long dominate the world in the way it did over the past three quarter of a century and the European Union and Japan are unlikely to take its place.

There are important differences between the paths that India and China have taken to become major economic, political and military powers, both

driven by the US but in contrasting ways. The former expects to achieve regional hegemony under the tutelage of the US in the hope that it will one day be an equal partner. China's relationship with the US was never comfortable, even when they briefly shared a common enemy in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 80s. China's emergence as a strong export economy while the US economy in on the decline has got the US worried about the economic clout China, more than about Japan's in the 1970s and 1980s. Although China as a military power is no match to the US, it is strengthening itself militarily to deter the US from even threatening to wage war.

It is the steps that China has taken to circumvent a — not very unlikely — blockade by the US by land or sea that are being interpreted as China's attempts to encircle India and thereby feed Indian hegemonic ambitions on the pretext of containing the Chinese threat. These steps are used by some to portray China but not India as the aggressive imperialist power.

### **A concluding remark**

The reality is that the US is the main imperialist power and the imperialist system comprises the US and its allies. The anti-imperialist struggle should not therefore be distracted or lose direction by pointing at potential but not actual threats. It is important to beware of expansionism by any power, but putting a potential threat on par with the existing threat can be suicidal.

\*\*\*\*\*

---

<sup>1</sup> It was in this context that the Communist Party of China denounced the Soviet Union as "Soviet social imperialism". The term "social imperialism" follows from Lenin's reference to European social democrats of his time who were socialist in words but whose actions were supportive of their imperialist rulers.

The Soviet Union at the time was dominating over the socialist countries of East Europe and to some extent Cuba and manipulated their economies to suit its interests, and took economic advantage of countries in the name of aid and economic cooperation. Also, the number of capitalist ventures was on the increase within the Soviet Union and the larger state owned industries had become profit-driven and serving the interests of a powerful elite class.

However, major economic features characteristic of imperialism as identified by Lenin like, for example, export of capital were absent in the Soviet Union. Thus the use of the term social imperialism has to be seen in terms of the wanton abandoning of the socialist relations of production by the Soviet Union in favour of profit and the rivalry with the US for hegemony, and not equated to imperialism in the normal sense.

---

## **Racist Attacks on Sinhalese Denounced**

### ***NDMLP Statement to the Media***

7<sup>th</sup> September 2012

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

The communally motivated protests and attacks on Sinhalese pilgrims, who are ordinary people, comprise a despicable act of racism. Such petty minded activities will in no way help the Sri Lankan Tamils. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party very strongly condemns such perverse racist protests and attacks conducted in the name of acts of national sentiment. The Party urges that such activities which could justify chauvinist violence and provoke communal violence in Sri Lanka should be stopped.

It is well known that chauvinist oppression continues in Sri Lanka and that President Mahinda Rajapakse leads it. It is the moral duty of the people of Tamilnadu to not only support and console the Tamil people who are subject to racial oppression but also to urge a just political solution. Such support of the people of Tamilnadu for the Sri Lankan Tamils is being abused by some so-called "Tamil sentimentalists" and parties of the "Dravidian movement" in their self interest and to serve their narrow purposes. It is on their basis that protests were made against Sinhalese student sportsmen and attacks were launched against passengers who went on a pilgrimage. These are parochial acts of racism by Tamil racist activists who cannot tell the difference between chauvinist oppressors and ordinary Sinhalese people. Hence the Party reiterates that such activities should be stopped forthwith.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **The Second Prison Killing**

### ***NDMLP Statement to the Media***

10<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary, New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued on behalf of the Politburo of the Party the following statement on the death of the Tamil political detainee Dilrukshan on 7<sup>th</sup> August.



Dilrukshan, a Tamil political detainee who was brutally attacked in the Vavuniya Prison and then in the Mahara Prison and subsequently warded in a state of coma at the Ragama Hospital, died on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2012, making his death the second murder in prison. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly denounces this murder. The only way left for the people is to mobilise themselves and demand for justice and fairness.

Officials and Special Task Force personnel had carried out planned brutal attacks on Tamil political detainees in the Vavuniya Prison and then in the Mahara Prison, to which they were transferred. Of the detainees, a youth named Nimalaroopan has already died. It was only two weeks after his death that his remains were handed to his parents, through a court of law. Dilrukshan, another Tamil political detainee who was gravely wounded in the attacks and detained in hospital in a state of coma, has now died, making his death the second murder in prison. Prison house murders seem to be occurring in keeping with the saying "When the Devil reigns, the scriptures devour corpses".

It is under conditions in which the fundamental rights of prisoners are being trampled underfoot, that attacks and murders of political detainees are continuing to persist. Political detainees continue to face a risk of similar prison murders. The Party thus reemphasises that it is only through extending further the people's movement for the release of political prisoners that attacks and, murders in inside prisons can be stopped.

The Party expresses its full endorsement of the awareness campaign to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012 in Jaffna demanding the release of all political prisoners, based on the call by the Tamil national People's Front, and announces participation by the Party in the campaign. The Party also calls upon all people who seek justice and fairness to participate in the campaign.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **Brutal Attack on Prisoners by Armed Forces**

### ***NDMLP Statement to the Media***

*7<sup>th</sup> July 2012*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary, New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party denouncing the cruel attack by the armed forces on Tamil political prisoners in the Vavuniya Prison.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of the last month the armed forces carried out a savage attack on Tamil political prisoners in the Vavuniya Prison. The attacks on the severely injured prisoners continued even after they had been transferred to the Mahara Prison. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of this month, Ganesan Nimalaruban, a young prisoner, succumbed to the severe injuries that he sustained in the attacks. The above savage attack on Tamil political prisoners and the cruel killing are brutal fascist attacks. Besides, the Mahinda Chinthana government is committing the grave injustice refusing to hand over the remains of the deceased to his parents. The Party points out that the above condemnable and sorrowful incident was an outcome of the prolonged detention of political prisoners without inquiry.

There are Tamil political prisoners who are under detention without inquiry for more than five, ten or even fifteen years. Pressure campaigns have been conducted within and outside the prisons demanding their release. But the rulers who boast of Buddhist virtues have refused to listen to the pleas. Instead the Tamil political prisoners are subjected to arrogant chauvinistic oppression and attacks.

The recent attack evokes memories of earlier prison attacks and killings. The Vavuniya Prison attacks and killing have to be seen as a continuation of the Welikada Prison killings of 1983, the Bindunuweva Rehabilitation Camp killings of year 2000, the Kalutara Prison attacks, and Boosa Detention Centre tortures. The occurrence of such a savage attack and brutal killing under a government that sermonises daily on the teachings of the Buddha and Buddhist virtues has made the leaders of the government bow their heads in shame.

The Party emphatically asks the government that, at least after this cruel event, it should come forward to release all political prisoners under a general amnesty.

S.K. Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **NDMLP News Release**

*24<sup>th</sup> June 2012*

## **NDMLP Support for and Participation in the Thirumurukandi Awareness Campaign**

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party expressed full support for the awareness campaign scheduled to take place in Thirumurukandi on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012 calling for an end to the land seizure and encroachment taking place in the North-East, the release of political prisoners detained in prisons, and demanding the publication of details of persons who have gone missing, and announced that it will participate in the campaign.

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party who made the announcement added that the demands of the awareness campaign called by the Tamil National Alliance are fully justified since those who have resettled and those who have been prevented from returning to their habitats are passing each day amid many problems, among which land seizure and encroachment by the government and the armed forces are important issues. It has also become necessary to call out aloud for the release of political prisoners who have been detained for long periods without inquiry.

United mass struggles and participation by the people are important for finding a solution to these problems. On that basis the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party decided to support the awareness campaign in Thirumurukandi and to participate in it.

S.K. Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **NDMLP Northern Regional Committee News Release**

*16<sup>th</sup> August 2012*

### **The Power of the People Should Mobilise in Preparation for Mass Struggle**

A demonstration was organised by the Tamil National People's Front in Jaffna on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012, protesting the killing of Dilrukshan, the second Tamil political detainee to be killed as a result of attacks on prisoners in Vavuniya and later in Mahara. Several political parties participated in the demonstration attended by a large number of people who raised slogans denouncing national oppression by the Mahinda Rajapakse government. Leaders of participating political parties addressed the public at the end of the demonstration.

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party in his address said that, the present government is conducting a regime of fascist genocide. Nimalarooapan and Dilrukshan died as a result of the brutal attack on Tamil political detainees in the Vavuniya Prison and later in the Mahara Prison. These prison killings constitute the third incident of killing of Tamil political prisoners. Fifty two were killed in the Welikada Prison in 1983 and thirty one were killed in the Bindunuweva Prison in 2000, and now in the Vavuniya attacks two have been bloodily wounded and killed. These are none other than genocide under racist chauvinist regimes. Only the people have the ability to stop them. Therefore the people should mobilise to demand justice. That will be the only way to oppose oppression.

So far, nearly two hundred thousand Tamils have been victims of the cruel blood thirst of national oppression during the past sixty years of its

development. This situation needs to be ended. Struggles should not be deflected in the direction of parliament and vote banks. The need of the day is mass uprisings and struggles that can mobilise the power of the people. A new path and a new journey are necessary to carry forward such struggles. All forces that are capable of struggling honestly against national oppression need to unite based on a common program based on past experiences. Such a program should be capable of advancing by taking along with it other nationalities, namely the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils. At the same time, its struggle should be one capable of winning the support and cooperation of the people of the South. Only such a struggle based on a broad and extensive platform can have the correct approach and far sight to resist national oppression.

It is significant that supporters of the New Democratic Party were present in large numbers in the protest demonstration organised by the Tamil National People's Front with participation by several political parties and leaders.

K Kathirgamanathan

(on behalf of the Northern Regional Committee of the NDMLP)

## **NDMLP Vavuniya District Branch Message to the Public**

*16<sup>th</sup> August 2012*

### **Water Shortage: Who are the Culprits?**

A leaflet campaign was launched in Vavuniya by the NDMLP cadres in Vavuniya explaining the causes of the current drought conditions in the district. A fundamental reason was the systematic neglect of the numerous reservoirs of different capacities that were built in ancient times for irrigation and to preserve ground water. The reservoirs that suffered most were those in and adjoining Vavuniya town, whose water holding capacity has been severely diminished by encroachments, not by the poor, but by the wealthy and government officials who have built palatial buildings and temples adjoining the bank.

The leaflet drew pointed out that a research and awareness campaign was conducted on the destruction of reservoirs by university students, who also held discussions with the GA, government officials and MPs, but to no avail. It drew particular attention to the negative role of a leading Tamil National Alliance personality in this connection, and to the tendency of the TNA to brand anyone who opposes the destruction of reservoirs as anti-Tamil nationalists.

It urged the Agricultural Services Department and the Irrigation Department to take the necessary steps by replacing negligent with proactive officers. It urged the people to be alert and act to conserve ground water by restoring and protecting the reservoirs that are central to the sustenance of life in the region.

## **34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meetings of the NDMLP**

### **Colombo**

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party marked its 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a public meeting under the theme “Current Political Trends and their Future Developments” held at the Kailasapathy Auditorium of the Dhesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Colombo 6 on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The meeting was addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah, S Panneerselvam, K Selvam Kathirgamanathan, T Prakash and R Nelson Mohanraj. The talks covered a wide range of matters relating to the theme and explained the stand of the Party from an historical perspective.

The talks were followed by a revolutionary cultural programme.

### **Jaffna**

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party marked its 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Kalaimathi People’s Hall, Puththur (Jaffna District) on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2012. The public meeting organised by the Northern Regional Party Branch was chaired by Comrade K Selvam Kathirgamanathan. The meeting was addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah, V Mahendran, S Panneerselvam, S Thevarajah, T Prakash, K Vijayakumar, KS Seelan and K Panchalingam.

The talks covered a wide range of matters relating to current issues and explained the stand of the Party from an historical perspective. The talks were followed by revolutionary songs, revolutionary theatre and other revolutionary cultural events.

\*\*\*\*\*

# ***Sri Lankan Events***

## **Playing with higher education**

Government handling of the strike by the non-academic staff in June was cynical. It subdued the strike by starving employees into submission. That strategy failed to work with the academic staff on strike since early July. Yet there is no interest in settling the dispute that has kept universities shut for over two months. The cynicism of the government is even more transparent in the matter of university admissions for 2012. Even after the mishandling of the GCE(AL) examination and the questionable standardisation procedure (Z-score) used for old and new syllabi of subjects caused much agony to parents and students, and a Supreme Court ruling on the matter, the government is in no hurry to finalise university admissions. As a result, several students re-sat the examination in the event of their being denied a university place. But neither the government nor its officials seem troubled by it.

## **Denial of the right to congregate**

Restrictions on public gatherings in the North have worsened since the end of the war. Co-operative societies, public bodies and private individuals are under increasing pressure to refuse their premises for meetings with any sign of political content not acceptable to those in power. More worryingly, the police need to be informed of even weddings, funerals and birthday parties. The presence of security officials at such gatherings is intimidating to the public. Historical experience is that such repression cannot go on forever and will sooner or later explode in the faces of the tyrants who impose it.

## **Criminals on the loose**

Law enforcement has been inefficient in catch up with political assassins. The prime suspect in the murder last year of Bharatha Lakshman Premachandra (leader of The SMP, a partner in the ruling alliance) is still at large. Police reluctance to arrest extends even to known criminals and murder suspects as in the case of Geethanagamge Amarasena (a.k.a. Julampitiya Amare) named by witnesses as the killer of two JVP members during a meeting with the public in Hambantota in June 2012, and despite several earlier warrants for his arrest. Although the suspect later surrendered to court, what would follow remains uncertain. What is more disturbing than police failure to catch up with killers of political leaders and members of the clergy is the widely published report that Julampitiya Amare has been given personal protection by STF soldiers.

## **Seasonal nationalism**

Three Hill Country Tamil parties which have for long been at loggerheads with each other united on a common slate of candidates in order to secure "Hill Country Tamil representation" at the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council elections held in August. Given the cynical opportunism of the parties, which for personal gain readily switch alliances with Sinhala chauvinist parties, the resilience of such alliances is doubtful. What is sad, however, is that political parties with no declared principle or policy can still survive among an increasingly oppressed nationality.

## **Media worries about China**

Wijaya Newspapers and the Tamil media seemed agitated by the visit of China's Defence Minister Liang Guanglie on 29<sup>th</sup> August for a 5-day official visit. The visit is the first of the kind since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the countries in 1957 and cannot be dismissed lightly in the context of US desire for domination in South Asia and growing US-India rivalry for regional dominance. When Liang Guanglie followed up this visit with a visit to India of similar duration, perhaps to assure India of China's intentions, the papers had little to comment on it.

Although China and Sri Lanka are a very long way from a military treaty, we should firmly oppose any defence treaty with any foreign power. But what is surprising is the code of morality of the media who remain silent when military officials from the US or India pay similar visits and when all manner of military agreements are signed with them.

## **JVP Mark 2?**

There was hope in various quarters that the Frontline Socialist Party would not be a clone of the JVP, from which it split earlier this year. Initial FSP claims to be the true successors of Rohana Wijeweera were dismissed as a tactic to retain members who had a soft corner for the late leader who all but took the JVP to its grave twice. But subsequent utterances by its spokespersons suggest that the FSP has no fundamental differences with the JVP except for anger that the latter got taken for a ride by Mahinda Rajapakse who broke it up before dumping it. On the national question, FSP leaders oppose not just self determination but any form of devolution. The minority nationalities are kindly asked to grin and bear until socialism arrives for their deliverance.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **World Events**

### **Rio+20: Disappointing Outcome**

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development, widely known as Rio+20, — meant to be a follow up of the 1992 Earth Summit which put in place landmark conventions on climate change and biodiversity, and commitments on poverty eradication and social justice — did not live up to expectations. Angry about the outcome, civil society groups and scientists accused the leaders of the most powerful countries of supporting business, as usual, and putting private profit before people and the planet.

The heads of state of the US, UK, Germany and most other EU countries did not attend. The BRICS nations dominated the proceedings, and Brazil acted to avoid the conflict and chaos of the Copenhagen climate conference of 2009 by pushing through a compromise document, but without a tangible outcome.

Nicaraguan representative Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann said: "Our final document is an opportunity that has been missed. It contributes almost nothing to our struggle to survive as a species .... We now face a future of increasing natural disasters". Many others too expressed disappointment

Bolivian President Evo Morales attacked the "green economy" proclaimed by developed nations as a means of subjecting the peoples and anti-capitalist governments, and criticized environmentalism as an imperialist strategy to translate every river, lake, plant and natural product into business profit, temporally safeguarded for future private appropriation.

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa charged that the rich countries were most answerable for environmental degradation. He said in a subsequent interview that while the existing relations of power remain there will be no agreement to reduce net emissions. He also noted that while anyone can sign a document of principles there are no concrete and binding commitments on emission limits or compensation for contamination.

Even the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon admitted: "Let me be frank: our efforts have not lived up to the measure of the challenge.... Nature does not negotiate with human beings".

[Sources: <http://www.granma.cu/ingles/ouramerica-i/28jun-rio-20.html>;  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/jun/23/rio-20-earth-summit-document>]



# ASIA

## Myanmar

### Baiting for influence

On 13<sup>th</sup> June, Myanmar's opposition leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi set off on her two-week tour of five European countries, including her visit to Norway to collect her Nobel Prize awarded in 1991. What remains to be seen is the role to be ascribed to Myanmar, a neighbour of China, in the new layout of global politics and the imperialist agenda for the region.

Until the recent loosening of the military's grip on life in Myanmar, China was the sole foreign power with any influence on Myanmar, which is strategically important to China in containing a likely US blockade of sea trade routes to China under any pretext. China has, since its retreat from supporting revolutionary struggles in the late 1970s and particularly since taking the capitalist road to development, moved close to the military regime in Myanmar (then Burma).

India's efforts to rival China for influence were frustrated not by its concerns for democracy and human rights in Myanmar but by longstanding suspicions of India among the ruling elite. More than India, the US has resented China's strategic presence in the region. Along with its shift of strategic focus to Asia Pacific in late 2011, the US has set fresh guidelines for its diplomacy as well as that of its allies in the region. The US lost no time to take advantage of the surfacing of "democratization" in Myanmar in 2011, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar December 2011, to be followed by British Prime Minister David Cameron in April 2012 and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in May 2012.

Whether the reforms announced by the government led by former general Thein Sein will lead to any meaningful form of democracy in Myanmar and how the regime will deal with the ethnic and communal conflicts that have escalated in recent months remain to be seen.

Twenty Burmese student leaders were detained by the authorities on 6<sup>th</sup> July ahead of the anniversary of the suppression of a student movement 50 years ago. They were released later. About 300 people met in Yangon (Rangoon) to mark the event despite the detentions and activists said that the detentions prove that the Burmese military still has repressive tendencies; and Aung San Suu Kyi observed that the students' detention is another reminder that continued reform in Burma should not be taken for granted. However,

such matters are trivial in the race for the trophy called Myanmar, rich in natural and mineral resources, and of great strategic value in the planned isolation and encirclement of China; and the hype surrounding Aung San Suu Kyi's tour of Europe is a useful pretext and a "cover-up" used by the US to advance this strategy.

While the US is rushing to strengthen ties with Myanmar, two thorny issues could trouble diplomatic ties: one concerns the name Myanmar — changed from Burma in late 1980s — but not recognized by several countries as well as the opposition who make it a point to stick to Burma to the annoyance of the Myanmar regime. The other more serious one concerns human rights, where the government's record is still unconvincing, as it continues to detain hundreds of political prisoners. With the US oil business eager to grab the opportunity to plunder the country's oil and gas resources, it is likely that US policy makers will turn a blind eye to human rights violations and corruption in the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise.,

[Sources: *english.ruvr.ru; bbc.co.uk*]

## The plight of the Rohingyas

Thirty thousand Rohingya victims of the latest eruption of ethnic violence in Rakhaine state capital Sittwe were forced by Bangladesh to return to Myanmar. With no media access to the troubled zone, there's no information on the security of the returned.

The fundamental issue of statelessness of this Muslim minority in the Rakhaine state of Myanmar — in breach of Article 15(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'Everyone has the right to a nationality'— persists, with persecution and ethnic cleansing of varying intensity accompanying it.

Imam Hussein, Associate Editor, Daily Star, Bangladesh, drawing attention to the plight of the Rohingyas [<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=240145>], accused the Bangladeshi government of failing in its responsibility in not taking up the matter as a bilateral issue with Myanmar. He also criticised the indifferent attitude of to the international community — supersensitive to the cause of consolidating the pro-democracy and open economy gains and advancing the freedom and leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi to complete the process of Myanmar's opening to the world — to the plight of the Rohingyas. He also pointed out that while the Myanmar government seems to make every attempt to assimilate the "insurrectionist" Karen and Kachin espousing the aspirations of small nations into the Myanmar society is adopting a harsher attitude towards the Rohingyas.

In late August, Human Rights Watch accused China of returning hundreds of Kachins who had fled fighting in northern Burma to the conflict area [[www.hrw.org/news/2012/.../china-refugees-forcibly-returned-burma](http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/.../china-refugees-forcibly-returned-burma)]. But the Chinese authorities have denied it. What is clear is that the plight of the oppressed minorities is likely to worsen with the global and regional powers scrambling for influence in Myanmar.

## India

### Maruti-Suzuki workers' struggle

The harsh anti-worker anti-trade union approach of the management of Maruti Suzuki India Ltd precipitated industrial violence following an incident of casteist abuse at the Maruti-Suzuki's Manesar plant, leading to the unfortunate death of a senior manager on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2012. The management, instead of resolving the problem, launched a vicious witch hunt with the support of the Haryana state government. The prolonging of the crisis by Maruti Suzuki has only helped to highlight the unlawful anti-worker practices of the company. (See <http://www.countercurrents.org/cgp120812.htm> for a comment by the Communist Ghadar Party).

The response of workers in other plants has been one of total solidarity with the dismissed workers. The actions of the management has also alerted progressive sections of the society, and protests are building across the country, including the joint protest demonstration demanding immediate reinstatement of the 546 expelled workers, an end to the witch hunt, demilitarisation of the workplace, end to custodial violence against workers, security of employment of contract workers and implementation of labour laws. Hundreds participated in that protest organised by more than thirty workers' and students' organisations at the Maruti Suzuki headquarters during the visit by Osamu Suzuki, Chairman and CEO of Maruti-Suzuki Corporation. (See <http://sanhati.com/articles/5472/> for the text of the press release). An earlier Workers and Students demonstration was held on 9<sup>th</sup> August in Delhi.

The response of the capitalist media, while reflecting anticipated attitudes, is informative about the surge in workers' protests across India. The Financial Express on 30<sup>th</sup> July noted that "Industrial disputes leading to strikes and lockouts are on the rise, after registering a decline in 2011.... and officials expect the labour unrest trend to worsen in the coming months...."

"The latest data points out why the private sector is more worried about labour troubles. Though there have been more strikes in public sector firms in

the first five months of this year, all lockouts have exclusively happened in private companies. Labour ministry officials expect the year as a whole could see a rise in such disputes compared to 2011”.

The Wall Street Journal on 27<sup>th</sup> July noted that “Since 2009, industrial action has stalled output at Honda Motor, Hyundai Motor and several auto parts makers.... There has been significant, lengthy and costly industrial action in the past two years” and warned that although India's long-term growth story, especially rising incomes, is a big draw for foreign investors there are plenty of reasons to be concerned about investing in India such as the woeful performance of the rupee, a slew of recent corporate scandals, and the stalling of policy reforms to encourage more investment in retail and insurance”.

## Assam: Minority against minority

The violence of July 2012 in Assam's Kokrajhar district is being used cynically by religious factionalists. The failure of the state and central governments to act promptly led to the spread of violence, with the army intervening belatedly. Fear and insecurity gripped Kokrajhar and adjoining districts forcing nearly half a million to seek refuge in relief camps. Violence continued into August, although at a low key, with the death toll passing 80.

The incidents had repercussions far beyond Assam. The Hindu fascist RSS and the BJP, its political extension, used the opportunity to launch a virulent campaign against ‘infiltration by Bangladeshi Muslims’. Meantime, a protest organised by some Muslim organizations in Mumbai led to clashes with the police, the killing of two and injuries to many.

The rumour campaign that followed the outburst of violence cynically used social networking internet sites and cell phone messages, to stoke fear and prejudices by predicting post-Eid attacks on students and workers from the North-East. Panic-stricken workers and students, mainly from Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune rushed back home. This added to communal distrust and led to further incidents of violence in Assam.

The regrettable events bring to the fore, urgently among other matters, the need to explode the myth that the native population of Assam is being systematically swamped by Bangladeshi Muslim ‘infiltrators’; and the need to address the serious grievances of the common people of the North-East, caused by the neglect of the region's development and repressive measures that throttle democracy, especially the wanton conduct of the armed forces under the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

The issues need to be seen in the context of the growing economic imbalance in India with an artificial and unsustainable growth spurred by the growing corporate centres, and the cynical exploitation of migrant labour accompanied by ethnic and caste-based victimisation and persecution. The guarantee of the security and rights of migrant workers and students against cynical manipulation of communal and reactionary forces, include the arms of the state, has become central to democracy and rule of law in India.

The incidents also urgently call for a review of the promotion of narrow ethnic identity politics at the expense of progressive and anti-imperialist content, especially in the context of implications for other oppressed nationalities and social groups.

Regional forces have failed to address these issues, and the BJP, kept out of Assam thus far by regional sentiment, can grow into a dangerous divisive force capitalising on freshly whipped up anti-Muslim sentiments.

[Source: [mlint.wordpress.com](http://mlint.wordpress.com)]

## Struggle for Justice in the Bathani Tola massacre

Twenty one Dalits (11 women, 6 children. 3 infants and an adult male) were butchered in Bathani Tola, Bhojpur, Bihar on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1996 by 60 members of the Ranvir Sena (a notorious armed gang in the pay of upper caste landowners) who descended on the village and set twelve houses on fire.

The attack, though said to be in retaliation for the earlier killing of nine Bhumihars in Nandhi village by the CPI(M-L) Liberation, was really in response to agricultural labourers, encouraged by CPI(M-L) cadres, demanding the statutory daily minimum wage of Rs. 30.75 and refusing to work for the Rs. 20.00 which the landowners were willing to pay. The attack was designed to weaken the will of the cadres and prevent a labour boycott on hundreds of acres of land. No Ranvir Sena leader was arrested for the massacre, despite its being followed by further attacks by the Ranvir Sena on Dalits and agricultural labourers in Laxmanpur Bathe (December 1997) and Sankarbigha (January 1998), in which 81 Dalits were killed.

An FIR was filed on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1996 against 33 persons the day after the Bathani Thola massacre, and charges were framed, nearly 4 years after, on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000 against 64 persons. On 5<sup>th</sup> May the civil court at Ara sentenced three persons to death, twenty to life imprisonment, and acquitted the rest for want of evidence. On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012, the Patna High Court acquitted all twenty three convicted of the murders. On 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012, the

Bihar State, under pressure from the masses, announced its decision to move to Supreme Court to challenge the Patna HC Order.

A Convention was held in Delhi on 'Bathani Tola Acquittal: Political Complicity and Issues of Justice in Feudal and Communal Massacres', on 23<sup>rd</sup> April protesting the Bihar HC verdict acquitting all the accused. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July a citizen's committee (Citizens for Justice for Bathani Tola) — formed in solidarity with the massacre survivors' quest for justice and to protest the wholesale acquittal of the massacre-accused by the Bihar High Court — announced plans to observe the anniversary of the Bathani Tola massacre on 15<sup>th</sup> July. On 16<sup>th</sup> July, the Supreme Court admitted appeals filed by the Bihar Government and some of the family members of the victims against the acquittal of 23 persons, allegedly responsible for the massacre. The struggle for justice is far from over, and must be carried through until justice is secured.

## Chhattisgarh Massacre of Adivasis

On 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012, members of the local police and Central Reserve Police Force shot dead or hacked to death 20 Adivasi (indigenous) villagers, including a woman and five children, in Kotaguda village in Bijapur District, Chhattisgarh and went on to claim that they only killed Maoists who opened fire. Shamefully, but predictably, Union Home Minister Chidambaram, without even checking the facts, declared the massacre a genuine encounter. The Chhattisgarh Government, which initially denied the deaths of children and civilians, soon changed its story and explained that the deaths occurred because the Maoists used villagers and children as a 'human shield'. The villagers affirmed that the forces wantonly attacked a village meeting for several hours and that no Maoists were present on that day, and accused the security forces of sexually molesting four young girls. Such crimes and tragedies are the outcome of the state's war, especially 'Operation Green Hunt', in the forest and tribal areas in the name of combating Maoism.

Genuine left and human rights organisations and other social activists strongly condemned the massacre and demanded a credible and impartial judicial panel enquiry into this heinous crime to establish the truth and ensure that those responsible do not enjoy impunity. Successful Joint Protest Demonstrations have been held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012 in front of Chattisgarh Bhavan, Chanakyapuri and on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012 at Parliament Street in which various people's organisations, civil rights groups, intellectuals and prominent citizens from various states participated.

[Sources: [cpiml.org](http://cpiml.org); [sanhati.com](http://sanhati.com); also see <http://kasamaproject.org/2012/07/24/fact-finding-team-indian-government-massacre-in-chhattisgarh/>]

## Price of politics of desperation

The decision of the CPI(M) to support the Congress-backed presidential candidate Pranab Mukherjee led to acrimony among electoral partners on the left. While the CPI(M) and the All India Forward Bloc decided to support Mukherjee, the CPI and the RSP decided to abstain. The CPI(M) claim that its move was designed to drive a wedge between the Congress and the Trinamul Congress fell flat on its face when TC leader Mamta Bannerjee changed her mind and supported Mukherjee. The decision by the CPI and the RSP to abstain proved to be more moral as well as pragmatic by being sensitive to the feelings of the left's support base which is bitter about the anti-people policies of the Congress-led government. Although the CPI(M) leadership claimed that the different positions adopted by the left parties will not affect left unity, its opportunism has hurt unity within the party. The JNU Unit of the Students' Federation of India, the students' wing of the CPI(M), passed a resolution supported by 36 out of the 46 members criticising the decision to support Mukherjee.

## Nepal

### Maoists: Struggle to overcome reversals

The national convention of the revolutionary faction of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) held from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012 finalised the political report of its Central Committee and the interim constitution. The political report said that the principal contradiction in Nepal was between comprador, bureaucratic bourgeoisie and feudal class and Indian expansionism at one pole and the broad Nepalese people at the other. It stressed the need to assert the defence of national independence.

Internationally, it recognised that the principal contradiction as between imperialism and the oppressed nations and, given the weakness of subjective forces compared to the objective situation comprising the economic crisis of the US and other imperialist countries, it urged the need to strengthen the genuine revolutionary communist parties of the world.

Summing up the developments in Nepal and within the Party since the initiation of People's War, the report recognised the failings of the past and identified the tasks facing the party and the revolution, and claimed that the revolutionary faction consistently worked hard to rectify the failings.

It also pointed out that the policies adopted as revolutionary tactics in relation to the interim government, the new constitution and the democratic republic got distorted as strategies by opportunists in the Party to detriment of the Party and that hasty compromises in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and other agreements, without guaranteeing the securing of the achievements of the People's War and the mass movement, led to the betrayal of the interests of the proletariat, the masses of the people and the revolution.

The report urged building on the achievements of the revolution, namely the creation of People's Liberation Army, establishment of base areas and people's government, the role played by workers, peasants, women, indigenous nationalities and Dalits; and the awareness developed the process.

One of the main decisions of the National Convention was to draw attention to the right neo-revisionist deviation — which affected every realm of theory, politics, philosophy, strategy, tactics and conduct — in both Dahal and Bhattarai, while endorsing the positive role that they once played in the course of revolution and the People's War. In view of the reality that several revolutionary comrades were still with the neo-revisionist groups, the Convention decided to appeal to them to be a part of the revolutionary current by rejecting opportunism.

It was also decided to defend achievements like republic, federalism and secularism, emphasise the need for a new democratic revolution in Nepal, and adopt as the main political tactics the establishment of People's Federal Republic and defending national independence.

The key features of the interim constitution adopted by the Convention are that the guiding principle of party will be Marxism-Leninism-Maoism; that the party organised by breaking ties with opportunists will be named as the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist; and that tasks related to party organization, mass organisations, and departments will be systematised, to make the party well-disciplined and militant based on collective decision and committee system, with financial transparency.

The Party Congress is scheduled to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013, with the door for unity kept open until the Congress for the neo-revisionist group to transform itself by correcting its mistakes.

*[Source: [www.asiaone.com](http://www.asiaone.com), [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)]*



## Another national sell out

Global times [<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/715378.shtml>] reported on 17<sup>th</sup> Jun 2012, citing local media, that the Nepali government is preparing to enact a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) bill through an ordinance. The bill, endorsed by the government in 2009, did not get parliamentary approval as trade unions criticized it for a lack of provisions to ensure workers' rights.

Among others, the bill upholds three broad principles: incentives to industries, one-spot service, and labour flexibility in the zone, aimed to provide impetus to the country's export. In a bid to lure investors in SEZ, the bill also promises a range of special treatments such as duty-free import of raw materials, exemption from value added tax and waiver of excise duty and other local taxes.

According to the bill, the SEZ will be an area where domestic laws related to labour and industries in Nepal would not apply. While the bill allows workers to practice collective bargaining, it prohibits them from activities that affect production and normal operations of the industries. As a sop to workers' concerns, the bill includes provision for better facilities for workers in the SEZ than outside of the zone. According to the bill, an autonomous SEZ Authority will be formed to oversee the Zone's operations, and SEZ regulations will determine wages, medical and insurance facilities, among others.

## Iran

### NAM Summit: A snub to the US

Amid US efforts to economically strangle and politically isolate Iran, 118 countries accepted the invitation from Iran to send high-level delegations to Iran for the 16<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. The non-aligned conference that started in Teheran on 26<sup>th</sup> August was further evidence of declining US influence in the Third World, and the Middle East in particular. The three-year tenure that Iran has secured as head of NAM offers Iran an opportunity to elevate its international standing and frustrate US attempts to isolate it, not because the NAM can stand up to imperialism as a Third World alliance, but because of the symbolic prestige of heading the largest association of states outside the UN.

. Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's hostile remarks about Syria which caused some embarrassment to the hosts did not mar the significance of his visit to Iran, the first by an Egyptian president since the two countries broke

relations in 1979 following Anwar Sadat's signing of the Camp David Accord and normalization of Egypt's relations with Israel. Morsi's attitude towards the Iranian leaders was certainly warm. Besides, his adverse comments on Syria were largely ignored by NAM which unanimously approved a resolution opposing western intervention.

Although UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's speech confirmed his servility to US imperialism, his very participation was evidence that he was not risking antagonising countries of the NAM by turning down the invitation to the Summit.

The release of a carefully timed dubious IAEA report reiterating earlier falsehoods accusing Iran of not being 'cooperative' and hinting that Iran was advancing in the direction of nuclear weapon production failed to impress the NAM delegates who went on to endorse the right of Iran to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

## US bullying fails to work

The deadline for the global cut off in all oil sales and banking transactions with Iran passed on 1<sup>st</sup> July amid mounting pressure from the US and EU, including threats of punitive measures, against countries continuing to import Iranian oil. These moves were designed to unravel Iran's economy.

Although the world's largest corporations and banks can seize assets and block economic transactions of any developing country, with the global capitalist system in crisis and the global economy in total disarray, governments of many countries know that cutting off commerce with one of the largest and stable economies in Asia could hurt their economies badly. Not just China, Russia, and ALBA countries of Latin America, even India, Pakistan and South Korea refused to stop buying Iranian petroleum products. The US could not even stop Iraq and Afghanistan, where it invested heavily in war, from trading with Iran. Iraq, besides helping Iran breach US sanctions by buying Iranian oil and goods, is also helping Iran to arm the Syrian government to fight the US-sponsored armed rebellion.

The sanctions, undoubtedly, are hurting the Iranian economy, but are nowhere near destabilising the country economically or politically. Like all US meddling in the past, they will only strengthen Iranian nationalism and anti-West sentiments among the public.

In the face of imperialist subversion, sabotage and threats against Iran, all progressive and anti-imperialist forces, without illusions about the reactionary

and repressive nature and the class identity of the Iranian state, are duty bound to defend Iran's right to develop its resources and to resist imperialism.

## **Syria: Untold truths**

While the anti-war movement in the US is growing steadily, the US is openly threatening Russia against backing the Syrian government that the US is seeking to topple using proxy forces called the Syrian National Council who are funded by the reactionary Arab regimes of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Such threats by the US are a sign of desperation, and will not work against Russia and China, which have learned a few lessons after letting the US have its way in Libya. Thus US finds Syria to be a harder nut to crack than Libya, but is persevering despite severe reversals suffered by its clients in Syria. It is in this context that the propaganda war against the Assad regime has escalated, and it seems fit to point to sources of less known truths.

Two recent articles thoroughly expose the evil motives of the US, NATO and reactionary Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia. The first is by Joyce Chediak (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-u-s-and-syria-facts-you-should-know/>).

The second is an interview of Sister Agnes Miriam, Mother Superior of the West-Aramean Syrian Melkite Catholic Church in Qara, diocese of Homs. [[http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Arameans\\_Syria\\_Good\\_Bad\\_Ones\\_23\\_7\\_2012.htm](http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Arameans_Syria_Good_Bad_Ones_23_7_2012.htm)].

The first article, based on news reports in reputed establishment media of the US, provides data on how the US and NATO conspired to use grassroots protests in the Arab World as a cover to build support for right-wing insurgencies to bring Syria into the pro-imperialist camp. It asks why the Syrian protest was initiated in a small town near the Jordanian border whereas protests elsewhere had started in large urban centres. It goes on to provide evidence of the US and NATO providing not only arms, training and funds to the 'rebels', but also supplying them with foreign mercenaries, and how Turkey is being used as the base not only for accommodating Syrian refugees and the rebels, but also to train and arm fighters.

The cynical targeting of sensitive regions and vulnerable populations like the Christian community is also exposed. That the intentional killing of civilians was carried out by the rebels is well brought out in the article which also questions the dubious role of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan who was sent at the behest of the UN and Arab League to put together a peace proposal. The US used the failure of Annan's mission, caused by the

opposition's refusal to cooperate, as pretext to arm and equip the rebels with even more sophisticated weapons.

Most importantly the article exposes the lies of the imperialist dominated US and global media, designed to demonise Assad, by blaming the government for mass killings, including that of 108 people in Houla on 25<sup>th</sup> May just before Annan's visit. Investigations showed that the culprit in Houla was the so-called Free Syrian Army and the victims were supporters of Assad.

She cites the New York Times of 26<sup>th</sup> June to expose the US-NATO conspiracy: "The onetime ragtag militias of the Syrian opposition are developing into a more effective fighting force with the help of an increasingly sophisticated network of activists here in southern Turkey that is smuggling crucial supplies across the border including weapons, communication gear, field hospitals and even salaries for soldiers who defect. The network reflects an effort to forge an opposition movement ... that together can not only defeat ... Assad but also replace his government."

The interview of Sister Agnes Miriam is enlightening. She explained to a hostile interviewer from Sky News — who threateningly suggested that she was a liar — that the Homs massacre and the forcing of 80,000 West-Aramean Christians to flee from Homs was a cynical act by the "Free Syrian Army" to make victims of Christians and point to the government forces as culprits. She ended the interview with the crisp remark: "*It is enough of this media war where you just talk about one side and you figure that the conflict in Syria is between black and white*".

Palestinian refugees are also victims of the cynicism of the US-backed rebels. The China-based Global Times on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 citing Xinhua news agency [<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/716933.shtml>] reported that the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine strongly condemned the killing of Palestinians at the al-Nayrab camp in Aleppo allegedly by armed terrorist groups. The statement said at least 50 Palestinians have been killed in different Palestinian camps recently, revealing the criminal plan aimed to displace the Palestinians from their camps. Although a few of the 500,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria have joined the anti-government rebels, the stand of all Palestinians is mainly supportive of the Assad regime, and that is resented by the opposition.

# **AFRICA**

## **Egypt: Morsi's fight back**

The US has now settled for a power balance in Egypt that would ensure that the Army would maintain effective control and Egypt would adhere to its old foreign policy. But the overreach of the Egyptian Army — which used bullying tactics with the help of the Judiciary to strip the presidency of significant powers just before President Mohammed Morsi took office on 30<sup>th</sup> June — backfired: Morsi took advantage of the attack on 6<sup>th</sup> August by militants in the Sinai (bordering Israel) killing 16 border guards to assert himself.

Following Egyptian airstrikes against the militants, Morsi on 8<sup>th</sup> August dismissed his intelligence chief for failing to act on an Israeli warning of an imminent attack, and thereby deflected popular anger over the attack. He also got Defence Minister Tantawi to replace the commander of the military police, which acted brutally during street protests since Mubarak's fall last year.

Although the firing of senior officials is an important assertion of authority by Morsi since he assumed power, let there be no illusion of a serious shift in power balance or political direction that would displease the US. The Sinai campaign was lauded by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney for showing a "willingness to take action when necessary". The dismissals followed a meeting of the newly created National Defence Council, including Morsi, senior army commanders and intelligence officials. That indicates cooperation between the President and army leaders in the face of crisis.

The conflict between President Morsi and the army, right now, is a pillow fight, without even a bruise, about power sharing and not about delivering the democratic will of the people. Yet it is important that progressive forces side with Morsi wherever the conflict concerns the authority of a democratically elected government over the military. The support needs to be conditional and require Morsi to take a stand consistent with the wishes of the martyrs who shed blood to rid Egypt of Mubarak.

## **South Africa: The Marikana Massacre**

On 16<sup>th</sup> August heavily armed police opened fire on striking platinum miners, killing thirty four and injuring seventy eight strikers at Marikana in the North West Province of South Africa. Although police murders, police brutality, cover-ups and corruption have risen in the past 18 years under the African National Congress regime in post-apartheid South Africa, this event was a

huge shock to the country. Public anger is continuing to build against the government and the trade union establishment which choose to accept the police version of events and blame the victims for the tragedy.

South Africa, built on and sustained by mining using cheap African labour, still depends on that labour even after the end of apartheid. The ruling ANC is now a party of big capital (with its big names like Cyril Ramaphosa, Khulubuse Zuma and Zondwa Mandela directly connected with the mining industry). It produces most of the world's platinum and London-based Lonmin's Marikana mine is one of the largest platinum mines in South Africa.

The National Union of Mineworkers, a very important, militant union in the 1980s was once a threat to mine owners and multinationals. But today, it is bureaucratic, tied to the management, getting alienated from the workers, and losing members like the rock drillers to the smaller Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union.

Rock drill operators who do backbreaking work for low wages (equivalent to around US \$500 a month) demanded a three-fold wage increase. The strike started as a wild cat strike out of frustration against Lonmin as well as the NUM, and won the support of the rival AMCU.

The miners who were at the receiving end of the conflict are being blamed for starting the gun battle, although the authorities know that the miners were running away from rubber bullet and tear gas attack by the police. Sickeningly, two hundred and seventy miners were arrested and charged by the national prosecuting authority with the murder of the 34 miners. (On 2<sup>nd</sup> September, the South African authorities in the face of public anger announced that they were provisionally dropping murder charges against the miners).

The massacre has brought into national consciousness the reality of the abject living conditions of communities linked to mining, despite desperate moves by the media to create a negative image about the workers by projecting images of Africans with machetes and sticks and thereby rationalise the police barrage. Such demonizing of the strikers has not dented their militancy and amid all manner of threats the Marikana strike continues with growing public support.

The cynicism of the ANC and its degeneration — taking cover behind the carefully constructed neo-Gandhian image of Mandela — have been strongly denounced even by leaders from the militant era of the ANC. In fact, by the early 1990s, the ANC had compromised with imperialism and agreed to support, defend and patronize multinational mining and thereby protect the

interests of multinationals in exchange for taking over state power from the apartheid regime.

South Africa has since faced a number of spontaneous mass revolts as well as organized protests by the suffering masses who have not gained anything from the transfer of power to the ANC. In fact, imaging of the role of the ANC as the main force of liberation, which is certainly untrue of its later years, has helped to subdue the masses against continuing repression. The conduct of the ANC is a classic example of cynical national bourgeois conduct in the era of neo-colonialism — mouthing anti-imperialist slogans for public consumption while secretly colluding with imperialism.

The outrage and the public support for the miners is encouraging and in sharp contrast with the negative attitude of the ANC government and the trade union establishment. Opportunist calls for nationalization of the mines will only change the facade while the real control will be in the hands of global capital. South Africans are now more politicized and militancy is growing among the workers and the youth. What matters is to translate it into social change.

[For a useful and detailed comment see <http://truth-out.org/news/item/11237-the-marikana-massacre-a-turning-point-for-south-africa>]

## **LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN**

### **Paraguay: Another US-sponsored coup**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June the Congress of Paraguay ousted President Fernando Lugo by an impeachment proceeding for which he was given less than 24 hours to prepare and two hours to present a defence, in a process in clear breach of Paraguay's constitution, which provides for the right to adequate defence.

The pretext for the impeachment was an armed clash between peasants fighting for land rights and the police, which left at least 17 dead, including seven police officers. The land in dispute was claimed by the landless workers and said to have been illegally obtained by a Colorado party politician. The conflict was only a pretext for impeachment, as President Lugo was not responsible for what happened and his opponents offered no evidence for their charges during the "trial". President Lugo proposed an investigation into the incident, which the opposition was not interested in.

The real cause for the coup is that the election of Fernando Lugo, a former Catholic bishop from the tradition of liberation theology, as President in 2008

was unacceptable to the elite who controlled Paraguay through the rightwing Colorado party which until 2008 ruled uninterrupted for 61 years — of which 42 years (1947-1989) were under a dictatorship. Lugo had no majority backing in the Congress, and put together a coalition government. The right — including the media — was waiting for an opportunity to oust him. Also, the US needed to arrest the trend of left of centre-left governments getting elected across South America since the tail end of the last century. Secret cables dating back to 2009 released by WikiLeaks carry titles such as “Paraguayan pols plot parliamentary putsch” and “Lugo impeachment rumors are back” indicate that the US embassy was involved in the conspiracies hatched by the Paraguayan right.

The US responded lukewarmly to the crisis, with a statement in support of due process, but was in reality supportive of the coup, South American countries, on the other hand, responded strongly. UNASUR which sought to prevent the coup by demanding that Fernando Lugo should be given a fair hearing refused to recognize the next government, in keeping with a democracy clause in UNASUR's charter; suspended Paraguay from membership on 29<sup>th</sup> June; and followed it with expulsion on 14<sup>th</sup> August. The South American trade bloc Mercosur suspended Paraguay from membership, but stopped short of applying trade sanctions.

The pattern since the coup in Honduras suggests that the US is returning to its old ways of toppling ‘unfriendly regimes’ and there is reason for the left leaning regimes of the region to be on the alert. It also means that the US is getting increasingly isolated from Latin America's democratic mainstream.

[Sources: [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk); [globalresearch.ca](http://globalresearch.ca) ;  
[http://elpais.com/elpais/2012/08/16/inenglish/1345119725\\_323360.html](http://elpais.com/elpais/2012/08/16/inenglish/1345119725_323360.html)]

## **Honduras: Resistance to Fight for Socialism**

On 24<sup>th</sup> August, Los Angeles Times reported: “Honduras is under siege. Its judicial system is almost completely dysfunctional, and more than 10,000 complaints of human rights abuses by state security forces have been filed in the last three years, according to the Committee of Families of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras. At least 23 journalists have been killed since 2009. The United Nations, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have all raised grave concerns about the country's dire situation.

“But despite all of this overwhelming evidence, the US State Department this month reported that the Honduran government is taking adequate



measures to address congressional concerns about human rights. This clears the way for US funds to flow to the repressive government of President Porfirio Lobo, who came to power in 2009 in a military coup that deposed democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya”.

The coup of 2009, symptomatic of the desperate attempt of US imperialism to reverse the anti-imperialist trend in Latin America, ushered in a reign of terror. But, despite the terror imposed by the US and Honduran coup regime, the masses are organizing, mobilizing and fighting back. Militants and activists together with a wide cross section of oppressed people formed mass organizations and united fronts, including the 3-year-old National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP).

The FNRP which decided — through assemblies, meetings and rich debates — that the Resistance would be entering the 2013 presidential elections announced on 1<sup>st</sup> July a new phase in the struggle: “Let’s go from Resistance to Socialism!” [<http://www.workers.org/2012/08/18/honduran-resistance-declares-fight-for-socialism/>]

The new party, Partido Libertad y Refundación (Libre Party), formed to organize the necessary steps contest the election, formally announced on 1<sup>st</sup> July the candidacy of Xiomara Castro de Zelaya — wife of former President Zelaya — for President. On the day of her nomination, Xiomara announced: “Come people of Honduras, let us build a socialist and democratic society. Let us bring down the bourgeois state and build a socialist one.”

Whether the election can transform Honduras is one matter, but the clear leftward shift of the Honduran resistance deserves to be welcomed.

## **Ecuador: A Bold and Commendable Move**

When Ecuador’s President Rafael Correa offered the besieged Assange political asylum, the British government threatened to violate Ecuador’s sovereignty and storm its embassy in London. But Latin America stood up for Ecuador, almost unanimously, and Britain had to back off.

The chief culprit, however, is US imperialism which is all out to persecute anyone exposing its crimes. WikiLeaks, by leaking countless messages from US embassies worldwide, exposed US war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as many US conspiracies and even published video footage of US military attacks in Iraq. In August 2010, Sweden, under US pressure, demanded the extradition of Assange to face investigation of charges of sexual assault. The motives were clear and cut no ice with women’s rights organizations.

Assange, an Australian national, justifiably fears that if he goes to Sweden to defend himself, he will be promptly extradited to the US, to face charges of treason for exposing US secrets and be sentenced long imprisonment or even a death penalty. Unable to leave Britain, he sought asylum in Ecuador on 19<sup>th</sup> June, and President Correa, courageously defying the obvious wishes of the US, offered Assange asylum, based on the risk of capital punishment should he be tried in the US.

In response, the British government declared that it will stop Assange from leaving its shores and threatened to storm the Ecuadoran Embassy to enable his extradition. This outrageous challenge to Ecuador's sovereignty, made the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance and UNISUR to rally behind Ecuador against Britain. This well deserved snub is a lesson to Britain and its master that imperialist bullying tactics do not work the way they once did.

## **NORTH AMERICA**

### **US Arms Sales Dominate Global Market**

An article by Thom Shanker in the New York Times of 26<sup>th</sup> August claimed that, according to a new study for the US Congress, arms sales by the United States tripled in 2011 from \$21.4 billion for 2010, driven by major arms sales to Persian Gulf allies, mainly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, concerned about Iran's regional ambitions. The agreements with Saudi Arabia were to the tune of \$33.4 billion, with the UAE and Oman trailing behind at \$3.49 billion and Oman buying 18 F-16 fighters for \$1.4 billion. Other significant weapons deals by the US included a \$4.1 billion agreement with India and \$2 billion with Taiwan.

US overseas weapons sales in 2011, totalled \$66.3 billion (nearly 78% of the \$85.3 billion global arms market), and the largest single-year sales total in the history of US arms exports. Russia was a poor second, with \$4.8 billion in arms deals. Most of the purchases were by developing nations at around \$71.5 billion, with the share of the US at \$56.3 billion.

**\*\*\*\*\***

# Jayabheri (Victory Drum)

*Sri Sri (1910-1983)*

I too offered a fuel of firewood  
to the world's fire:  
I too poured a tear  
for the world's rain:  
I too yelled with a mad throat  
for the earth's roar:  
When summer scorched  
did I not swelter like a bat?  
When rainy season gathered all around  
did I not melt at the fathom's height?  
When winter's cold cut, frozen, numb  
I even let cries of hunger:  
If I alone am left standing  
fiery winds, rainclouds, snow drizzles  
will break the earth:  
Multi coloured stars peering down from the sky  
will fall, explode, vomiting blood:  
Days breaking nights withering  
the great deluge will engulf this world over:  
Those moments will arrive when I alone  
fill the whole earth  
the sighs of my moaning cries  
soaking the world in a rainstorm:  
I too will sprout  
as the white petal of the lotus of the universe:  
I too will swoon  
as the string of the lute of the universe:  
I too will rise up as the flag  
on the palace of the earth

## **Amputated Hand**

**Ada Aharoni**

**A young boy runs to me  
and asks for a sweet,  
he spreads his amputated arm  
without a hand -  
"Who did that to you?"  
I ask aghast,  
"Entum!" - "You!"  
he answers timidly -  
his apologetic bashfulness strangles  
my shocked shame.**

*(from poems of the Israeli poet inspired from Letters  
of Israeli Soldiers while in Lebanon, 2001)*

Published by V Mahendran of 15/4 Mahindarama Road, Mt Lavinia  
Phone, Fax: 011 2473757; E-mail: [newdemocraticmlparty@gmail.com](mailto:newdemocraticmlparty@gmail.com)  
Website: <http://ndpsl.org>

Printed at Comprint System, HL ½ Dias Place Colombo 12  
Phone: 011 7201738