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*Poetry: Upton Sinclair, Nizar Qabbani*

# Bread and Roses

*Upton Sinclair*

*As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,  
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill-lofts gray  
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,  
For the people hear us singing, "Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses."*

*As we come marching, marching, we battle, too, for men--  
For they are women's children and we mother them again.  
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes--  
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us Bread, but give us Roses!*

*As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead  
Go crying through our singing their ancient song of Bread;  
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew--  
Yes, bread we fight for--but we fight for Roses, too.*

*As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days--  
The rising of the women means the rising of the race--  
No more the drudge and idler--ten that toil where one reposes--  
But sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses!*

*[The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest,  
ed. Upton Sinclair, John C. Winston Co., 1915]*

# *Editorial*

Voters seldom ask political parties that promise heaven on earth during election campaigns how they would deliver on their pledges. But at a critical moment they will call to memory each false promise. Many entertained hope — especially after nine years of misrule under the Rajapaksas — that the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe regime will undo the harm done through uniting the people and good governance free of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and victimization. But soon their expectations were blown in the wind.

Thus far, there is no sign that the government can or will address the grave economic crises faced by the country. Instead it is taking steps that will plunge the country into deeper debt as well as heap heavier economic burdens on the people by embracing imperialist globalization neoliberal economic policies, and imposed restructuring and austerity even more eagerly than its predecessor. The proposed development plan of the government and the budget merely reflect government subservience to imperialism

By willingly submitting to the commands of US imperialism and its European and Japanese partners, the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe regime has relieved the government of the bogus threat of an international inquiry into war crimes. But imperialists still hold to their trump card of a possible inquiry, in case a less subservient regime replaces the present one. But the government has put on the backburner what matters, namely the national question, for fear of antagonizing vociferous Sinhala Buddhist allies and influential sections of the armed forces on which it relies for its stability. This was amply clear from the reluctance of the Cabinet to release political prisoners who have been unjustly detained for years without due inquiry, charge or trial, and by manipulations to retain a sizeable portion of the land held by the armed forces in the North-East. Nor has the attitude of the government been any better on the plight of the Hill Country Tamils. Let alone addressing their fair demand for recognition as a nationality and the right to housing and land, what are clear are the callous attitude of the state towards those deprived of shelter by landslide and flooding, and passive support for the Plantation Employers Federation against workers in their demand for a fair wage.

Hopes of good governance free of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and victimization started to fade soon after the minority government swore in in January. The scandalous auction of Treasury Bonds of 27<sup>th</sup> February by the Central Bank following the appointment of a foreign national as its Governor exposed favouritism, corruption, failure to properly inquire into corruption and, most importantly, throwing the country into massive debt with a high interest. These were signs of what would follow the formation of the National Government after the general election. The new government is nothing more than a gang of opportunist allies, many of whom have tainted records on many counts.

Pledges to revitalize public health and free education will be illusory with a few sops thrown at critics of the past while the programme to privatize health and education will be pursued in earnest under the guidance of the World Bank and the IMF.

The campaign against corruption of which much fuss was made during the elections and even after has not only proved to be a damp squib but also a means to selectively target individuals to restrain their opposition to government, while major acts of graft are allowed to pass.

Squabbling among members of government and contest for power within the leading parties in power is on the rise. The plight of the pro-government TNA, nominally the main opposition party, is as unenviable.

The recent brutal attack on a peaceful demonstration by students is a sign of what awaits the country and its people as illusions dissolve into thin air and we witness a re-run of how successive UNP regimes met public unrest and political dissent. Repression will be harsher on all fronts as problems are far more critical and intense than before and the foreign masters will act to save this government from mass opposition.

The immediate tragedy is that the visible alternative is an opportunist alliance comprising the SLFP, which has long lost its progressive credentials, a degenerate parliamentary left and obscenely chauvinist forces. The genuine left and progressive democratic forces should come to grips with the reality and reorganize themselves.

# The Current Situation in Sri Lanka

*[Text based on the Political Report of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party on the Domestic Situation presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress, 28, 29, 30 August 2015]*

## **Introduction**

The Fifth National Congress of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party was held in Colombo on 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> June 2010. The domestic situation and international events of the past five years have affirmed that the reports, resolutions and policy stands adopted by the Fifth Congress were correct. The Political Report of the Party on the Domestic Situation was put forward in the Sixth Congress in order that the policy stand of the Party will be carried forward more clearly and firmly by examining and debating the current domestic situation and trends of international events.

The ideological base of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party is Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. Unity of the workers and peasants, revolutionary mobilization of the toiling people and leadership of the Marxist Leninist party will carry forward revolutionary mass struggles for social transformation. These struggles under neo-colonialism will comprise the journey towards the new democratic stage. It is only through that the journey towards socialism is possible.

The Party when formulating its policies should firstly pay attention to the way the socio-economic and cultural set up of the country is structured. It is by understanding that through a Marxist Leninist perspective that the roots of all problems could be identified.

## **Contemporary Sri Lanka**

Viewed in the aforesaid manner, Sri Lanka is an imperialist neo-colony. This neo-colonial structure consolidated itself through novel approaches of the imperialists following the departure of the British colonial regime. This is not unique to Sri Lanka. In the years since the Second World War, neo-colonialism gripped all countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America that were under European colonial domination. In Sri Lanka, the British, in the name of granting independence, transferred state power to the local upper class elite who were their loyalists. Imperialism imposed its neo-colonial schemes on the subsequent capitalist reformist changes in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres and consolidated its grip.

The national bourgeoisie who surged forward in the late 1950's, the 60's and 70's by emphasizing national economy, development of national resources, national aspirations, self reliance, independence, sovereignty and nonalignment lasted only briefly. Imperialist establishments such as the IMF, the World Bank, WTO, UN and others worked tirelessly to wreck those initiatives. Thus the local comprador bourgeois ruling class forces safeguarded a reinforced neo-colonial structure at home.

This neo-colonial structure flourished under the comprador bourgeois UNP government headed by JR Jayewardene. It was further consolidated through the executive presidential system, parliament and the state machinery. The programme of imperialist globalization comprising liberalization, privatization and open economy was by then established globally and was a boon to the neo-colonialism which had already been created and cultured. The failure of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries further facilitated the imposition and establishment of the neo-colonial order in Third World countries, including Sri Lanka.

Foreign investments and multinational companies entered unhindered. Public establishments and state corporations were rapidly privatized or made defunct to pave the way for their entry. For example the plantation sector which was nationalized in the 1980's was handed over to twenty two private companies on a 99-year lease. Free Trade Zones and garment

factories were established where multinational companies were granted the opportunity by legislation to exploit and plunder the labour of the workers at very low wages. The labour laws that had been in practice in Sri Lanka were made defunct in the Free Trade Zones so that they could not protect the rights of workers there. Similarly a system of Collective Agreement was introduced to control the wage rise and other rights and concessions that plantation workers were entitled to. Foreign investment and private sector continued to be encouraged and liberal imports and consumer market were expanded. As a result, national production was killed off in stages, to further ascertain the presence of neo-colonialism. Conflicts caused by the national question and the war served well to establish the system of neo-colonialism, globalization and neoliberal economy. Imperialist and regional hegemonic forces fulfilled their needs behind the scenes of war.

### **The Fundamental Contradiction**

The fundamental contradiction in Sri Lanka under the neo-colonial system is the class contradiction. It is a hostile contradiction between ninety percent of the population and the remaining ten percent, based on an incurable inequality. Some government statistics will illustrate the point. The rich receive 54.1% of the country's national income while the poorest 20% of the population receive 4.5%. The reason for such a wide income gap between the two sections is capitalist neo-colonial production, exploitation and profiteering. As its consequence, 90% of the population is compelled to live in misery, denied of access to the essential needs of life including food, clothing, shelter, education, health, employment opportunity among others.

The vast majority of the population consists of workers, peasants, fishers and lower middle class sections of the state and private sector employees. They cannot support themselves with their wages or earnings. They are unable to fulfil their essential daily needs of life. A vast majority live a life of trouble and turmoil owing to problems of poverty, malnourishment, disease, unavailability of social welfare and

inaccessibility of essential needs of life. 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, earning two US Dollars (around Rs. 260/-) or less per day.

The total indebtedness of Sri Lanka is 7.4 trillion rupees. That means that a citizen is indebted to the extent of Rs. 350,000. Viewed from a class perspective, it means that, irrespective of differences of race, religion, language and region, it is the people of the working classes who are liable for this debt. The number of people who participated in the economic activities of the country in the First Quarter of 2015 was 8.9 million. Of them 63.3% were men and 36.7% were women. According to the Report of the Department of Census and Statics for 2015, a total of 8.5 million are engaged in productive work, with 29.4% in agriculture, 25.9% in industry and 44.7 in the service sector. Their principal enemy is the present social structure and the upper class elite safeguarding it.

The Party has been pointing out that the present social structure of Sri Lanka has contradictions at four levels and contradictions and oppression associated with them. While they are linked to the fundamental contradiction of the country, they have their specific spheres of operation. Contradictions and oppression based on class, nationality, caste and gender continue in many ways. They, together with capitalism and conservative ideology, thought and practice, are characteristic of the feudal era and are compatible with capitalism. The proposals of the Party for earlier general programmes have pointed out the outlook of the Party in these matters as well as solutions for them.

## **Workers**

From a class point of view, all workers of the country are exploited in a variety of fields of activity. Their wages do not match their toil. Besides the denial of rights at work their trade union rights too are denied. Multinational companies as well as foreign and local private ventures are absolutely exploiting the workers. Nearly three hundred thousand male and female plantation workers involved in the production of tea and rubber have to struggle to determine their daily wages. Their wage level is



low as determined by collective agreement between the trade union leaders and employers. Meantime, maximum work is extracted from them through the subtle techniques of capitalism. On the other hand, they are denied their right to housing and land which are their basic rights. In every respect, the life of the workers is at rock bottom. But it is their toil that earns the foreign exchange for the export economy and makes a major contribution to national income.

In the country's export sector, currently the export of made garments follow plantation produce. Made garments are exported on a large scale to the US and Europe. Nearly one hundred and fifty thousand workers are employed in garment manufacture in the Free Trade Zones. Over 90% of them are women, young women in particular. Wages of garment workers are very low. Their working hours, food and accommodation facilities are appalling. Class oppression on the one hand and sexual harassment, discrimination and torture on the other continue in various ways. Despite all of these, the position of the multinational exploitative plunderers is that the labour rights legislation and rights including that to form trade unions are not valid in the Free Trade Zones. As an extension of the UNP government, and in keeping with its election pledge, the government has initiated efforts to bring in foreign capital on the pretext of setting up 45 economic development zones across the country. Foreign investment is to be injected on a large scale into multinational and local companies there to expand exploitation. The present comprador capitalist government has named it social market economy. Whatever fancy names may be given, it should be understood that the policies fall within the imperialist economic structure comprising exploitation of labour and plunder of resources.

Further, the living conditions of casual workers in small enterprises have worsened. Little attention is paid to their rights as workers.

While the wages of service sector workers are seemingly attractive, no attention is paid to their rights and employment security. Their wages, especially in the IT sector, are not as stipulated for such employees. Many thousands are affected by it, but they seem to consider themselves as

white collar workers with a complex of imagined superiority. They are still not consciously aware that they are being subjected to severe exploitation.

### **Peasants**

The nearly two and a half million peasants of the country have been let to face ruin under the present neo-colonial neoliberal economy. Liberal imports seriously affect the peasantry. The peasants are in the desperate plight of being unable to recover their investment for production in the face of rising costs of production and marketing. Changes in weather pattern and natural disasters are severely affecting them. Besides, bank loans and micro-finance schemes have become burdens that drive them to suicide. In addition, multinational companies are raking in huge profits through the sale of fertilizer, pesticides, seed and modern equipment.

Despite Sri Lanka being an agricultural country, its agriculture has been wrecked in many ways so that the peasants live a life of misery. Our own agriculture is ruined in a planned way through neoliberal economics. It should be noted that successive governments lacked an agricultural policy based on a planned national economy. Thus there is a need to devise a national agricultural policy that will rehabilitate the people and peasantry and be implemented without foreign intervention.

### **Fishers**

The life and work of fishers in Sri Lanka, an island surrounded by sea, continues to suffer constraints and exploitation. The coastline of the country is around 1800 km and nearly 4.6 million of the population lives in districts adjoining the sea. Yet there is no improvement in the lives of the fishers and in the prospects for fishery. Besides this national plight, unlawful fishing by Indian trawlers in the seas adjoining the northern and north western coasts continues to severely affect the fishers of the region. Indian trawlers intrude six thousand times a month into the northern and north western waters. The plight of our fishers is clear from the fact that our country, surrounded by water, despite its wealth of fishing resources, is a big importer of fish and dried fish.

While throughout the country fishers face many problems, those in the North-East need to confront intrusions by Indian fisheries businessmen. Ordinary Indian fishermen intrude into Sri Lankan waters to serve the trawler fishing business and are frequently arrested. But the ruling classes of India and Sri Lanka approach the problem in the context of Indian regional hegemony.

### **State and Private Sector Employees**

The state and private sector employees who, based on class, are seen as lower middle classes belong to the category of working people. The salaries that they earn are inadequate to meet the cost of living. As a result there are frequent struggles for wage increase in the state sector. Hence the problems faced by them remain important. The Maithri-Ranil government which came to power on 8<sup>th</sup> January granted some concessions. State employees were awarded a wage increase of Rs 10,000/- as cost of living allowance. But, despite agreement that private sector employees should receive a Rs 2500/- increase in wage, private sector employers and big businesses are obstructing and diverting its implementation.

### **The National Question**

While class contradiction is the fundamental contradiction of the country, the national contradiction remains the main contradiction, manifesting itself in the form of the national question. This is not something that the working people created out of their own needs. The British colonial rulers who were highly skilled in the craft of divide-and-rule and the local upper class chauvinistic elite who took over state power through loyalty to the colonial rulers together transformed the national contradiction into the main contradiction. This contradiction has served not only as a means to secure political power but also to cheat the working people by subjecting them to nationalistic illusions and thereby preventing them from uniting as a class. Meanwhile, reactionary Tamil nationalists use it to serve their conservative politics of domination and elitist class interests.

The comprador capitalist and big capitalist chauvinist forces who are in power seek to over simplify issues by denying the existence of the national question and claiming that it is adequate to relieve some of the grievances of the minorities. Meanwhile, the Tamil nationalist forces, to serve their parliamentary political ambitions and elite class interests, are keen to confine the national question to a Tamil-Sinhala contradiction based on a conservative aristocratic ideological outlook and present it from a racial point of view backed by jingoistic sloganeering.

But the national question of the country concerns the plight of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities and of national minorities including the Malays, Burghers and the Aththo (the aboriginal people) as well as issue of language, religion and region. A political solution is essential for the national question. Its resolution has to be in the form of a long term solution on the one hand and an immediate solution on the other. The national question which is the main contradiction should thereby be diminished in importance, since the ruling class forces, foreign imperialists and regional hegemonic forces who, by locating the national contradiction in peak position have used it to conceal and deflect attention from the class contradiction — which is fundamental contradiction — do not wish to find a minimum solution to the national question.

Hence, it is necessary to explain to the entire people the true and fundamental essence of the national question and emphasize the importance of its resolution. The Party has consistently clarified its stand on the matter extensively, ideologically as well as in practice. The Party, besides explaining consistently and clarifying in detail its position on autonomy based on the principle of the right to self determination as a solution to the national question, also put forward a programme for it.

Tamil nationalism, having explored a variety of forms of struggle to address the national question, finally arrived at armed struggle. Tamil nationalism was defeated following the development of the national question into war. Including the final stage of the war which lasted three decades, more than three hundred thousand people were destroyed in

addition to irrecoverable losses. But the reactionary Tamil nationalist leadership, having learned nothing from the past and not subjecting itself to self criticism, is repeatedly taking the people along the political path of reactionary conservative Tamil nationalism. While the ruling capitalist class and Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism remain the enemies of the Tamil people, reactionary Tamil nationalism too is an enemy. While the form of the chauvinist foe is openly visible, that of reactionary Tamil nationalism is concealed by national feeling.

Hence it is necessary to impress upon the Tamil people the importance of progressive Tamil nationalism. Such progressive nationalism should have as its initial bases giving primacy to all working people, upholding democracy, rejection of caste hierarchy and emphasis of equality, emphasising economic self-reliance and developing productive industry in place of consumerist economics, refusing to bow to the hegemonic forces of India, US and Europe, joining hands and uniting with Sinhalese, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils, opposing oppression of women, and rejecting reactionary cultural features.

Such progressive nationalism is important for the Sinhala, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities as well. In particular, the politics of trade union-party domination in the Hill Country is based on a regionalist reactionary stand. Through it, the forces of union-party domination are thereby conducting politics of enriching themselves by projecting themselves as the representatives of the Hill Country Tamils and in the process acquiring money and property and access to life of luxury. Thus it becomes our unavoidable duty to put forward and explain to the people and especially the young generation progressive nationalism as opposed to opportunist regional politics and all manner of reactionary politics.

### **Caste Contradictions**

While caste contradictions are somewhat relaxed among the Sinhalese, it is still intact among Tamils and Hill Country Tamils. Conservative ideology, thought and practices protect it. Thus, the Party has also put forward a

clear stand on casteism that persists in the social structure. It is an objective reality that caste contradictions and associated oppression do not exist in their earlier forms. But they did not change in the course of time. Since, in the mid-1960s, when caste contradictions and untouchability intensified, Marxist Leninists approached them with a class perspective and waged mass based struggles, the practice of untouchability in public places, a manifestation of casteism, was shattered. Its defeat was a historical turning point for the people oppressed by caste. In the years that followed, continuing the struggle against casteism faced two forms of deviation. One was the Tamil nationalist struggle known as the struggle for Tamil Eelam. The second was the surge in the numbers who went abroad to work as a result of the open economic policy. An illusion was created that casteism has been eradicated as a result of these. But the caste structure remains intact in much of society except in certain sectors. Its continuation is evident among the Tamil diaspora.

The ideology of caste hierarchy exists along the line and dominates ways of thinking. The Party needs to clarify further about the nature of caste contradiction today and how casteism is affecting people oppressed by caste, since there is need to pay attention to attempts by certain elements promote here the ideas of Dalitism which failed in Tamilnadu. Political forces of identity politics are seeking to project the politics of casteism in the North-East and the Hill Country and to assign national status to caste. Thus, based on past experience, in order to address caste contradictions in terms of class struggle, we need to arrive at objective conclusions on approaches and struggles against casteism based on current reality. The tendency for Tamils to identify people by caste and the continuation of caste wise endogamy protect casteism. Settling abroad, increased cash flow and personal wealth have not got rid of caste and caste hierarchy. Hence there is need to address contemporary caste contradictions at the correct level and in the correct direction based on the approach of the experience of the Party, based on class struggle.

## **Oppression of Women**

In the present social system and in daily life women are subjected to exploitation of labour and cultural repression. As a result there is a lack of gender equality and freedom for women. The tendency persists for women to be in a secondary frame of mind and to be seen and treated based on male chauvinist values. Women should develop the courage to challenge the conservative ideology in our society and thoughts and deeds based on it. Meantime, we see that men are subject to conservative ideology and thinking and consciously and unconsciously practise male chauvinism. This cultural hegemony is a source of today's conservatism.

Women are subjected to severe exploitation of labour in factories, on agricultural land, tea and rubber production in plantations, Free Trade Zone garment factories and other factories. The number of women who have gone to the Middle East as housemaids is a million according to statistics. There they live a life of slavery with low wages, subjection to violence and separation from family and children.

While women comprise 52% of the country's population, the worth of their social contribution is much underestimated. Their fundamental rights are denied and they are discriminated against and sidelined in the political, social and cultural spheres. Those who speak of women's rights under feminist banners under NGO funding are merely implementing the programmes of their NGOs. Their main task is to conduct activities that depoliticize women. Hence, attention should be paid to the oppression at the two levels of class oppression and conservative gender oppression.

Hence it is important to mobilize with political clarity working women as well as other women. Only mobilization through women's organizations can be a firm defence for them against the casteism, dowry system, sexual harassment and torture.

Children too are subject to abuse and exploitation at various levels. Their not attending school and dropping out of school owing to poverty, employment in homes, shops and offices, and being subjected to

prostitution and sexual abuse remain social issues. It is important to protect children against these and to initiate movements for the purpose.

### **The Educational Sector**

In the educational sector, we see a rapid growth of the dominance of the private sector. The proliferation of 'international schools' in school education and private universities in higher education, and the replacement of mother tongue by English are taking place. There have been strong efforts guided by foreign consultation under the last government to gradually eliminate education in the mother tongue, free education and national culture. That was why the demand by university students and teachers calling for the allocation of 6% of the GNP was rejected by the Rajapaksa regime. That demand was accommodated in the 100-day programme of the Maithri-Ranil government. One has to wait and see its implementation. However, on the pretext of giving advice, the World Bank and the IMF will, in the form of providing counsel, do their utmost to alter the educational sector to suit their neo-colonial neoliberal scheme of globalization. Hence there is a need to struggle for a national educational policy that would defend free education and higher education and make them suit the country and the people.

### **The Health Sector**

Attempts continue to get rid of the free medical treatment offered to the people by the state health sector and to expand the private health sector. Free medical care and government general hospitals are a great relief to ordinary working people. But the medicinal drugs mafia is bringing into the country through multinational companies more than 15,000 varieties of pharmaceutical drugs. The late Senaka Bibile, Professor of Pharmacology, proposed a national pharmaceuticals policy in the early 1970s, which was adopted by the then government, only to be abandoned subsequently. The implementation of the National Medicine Regulatory Authority Bill was intentionally obstructed for years and although the Parliament adopted it this year, it is argued that it has several loopholes for the medicinal drugs



mafia to penetrate through. It is important to appreciate why 15,000 types of pharmaceutical drugs are imported when a mere 1500 types are adequate for the country's needs. It should be noted that of the drugs imported by the country 90% are made in India. Hence there is a need for mass movements to carry forward free medical care and a national health policy and to control private medicine.

### **The Environment**

The pollution of the environment and climate change have had a major global impact, and its effects are widely felt in our country too. The pollution of fresh water by effluents from factories of multinational companies and by agrochemicals continues. For instance, owing to the irresponsible conduct of private companies and the indifference of the government, fresh water in the regions of Weliveriya and Chunnakam was polluted and people had to struggle for their right to drinking water. The thermal power station in Nuraicholai has led to severe environmental pollution. Well aware of its grave consequences, moves are afoot to install the proposed thermal power station in Sampur and to set up several more. The Upper Kothmale and Uma Oya Schemes in the Hill Country have led to serious disasters. None of these projects have been to serve the needs of the people but the profit of multinational and local companies.

Agricultural production faces a grave crisis owing to erratic weather patterns. Heavy rain and severe drought especially have taken a heavy toll on it. Peasants have been subjected to serious illnesses due to the use of fertilizer and pesticide supplied by multinational companies. In the North Central Province nearly 20,000 peasants have died of kidney disease. There are besides many more kidney patients around. These are consequences of the greed for profit of giant companies.

Capitalism and imperialism have been the prime cause of all environmental pollution and climate change. Thus the environmental problem has become one of the day-to-day issues. Its effects manifest themselves as dreadful diseases and serious natural disasters. It is the

challenge before the entire people of Sri Lanka to join hands in struggle with the people of the world against environmental pollution and climate change that are growing into major disasters, locally and globally.

Several organizations have emerged that fully depoliticize environmental issues and undertake environmental activities based on phrases such as green consumption, green fuel and green commerce and thereby deny the link between pollution and the capitalist economic system. It is necessary to direct environmental struggles against the capitalist globalized system of production and economy which are wrecking the environment.

### **Governmental Power and Political Trends**

Thus far, we considered the present neo-colonial setup and the social contradictions and oppression under it, in particular the fundamental and main contradictions, and other crises and problems. It is important to look at the way governmental power and political trends are developing as a consequence.

Between 2005 and the end of 2014, the period of executive presidential rule by Mahinda Rajapaksa was also the period of most intense war and the conclusion of the war. In this period Mahinda Rajapaksa and his brothers exercised a fascistic dictatorship through their family rule. Using the reputation of his being the person who won the war and destroyed the LTTE, they exercised power through corruption, fraud, violation of the law, abuse of power and autocracy. The Rajapaksa regime acted with a plan to continue in power for a third term and thereafter place the family successor in position. Mahinda Rajapaksa and his brothers believed that Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and the grip on power will make them victorious forever. But Mahinda Rajapaksa was defeated by the opposition alliance on 8<sup>th</sup> January. Maithripala Sirisena, the General Secretary of his party became President and Ranil Wickremesinghe, the leader of the UNP became Prime Minister. The new regime, in the name of the One Hundred Day Programme for Good Governance under the Maithri-Ranil leadership, granted a few concessions and price reductions to lower the cost of living.

It also adopted a more liberal approach in police and military matters than under the Mahinda regime. Besides, it reduced through the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment some of the powers of the President and transferred them to the Parliament and the Prime Minister.

This was not a major change. It was only an attempt for the executive power and parliamentary power to share power between them to implement capitalist dictatorship and not to democratize the country. The purpose was to project themselves before the people as more democratic than the Rajapaksa regime with a dictatorial fascistic tendency. The regime changes through the elections of 8<sup>th</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> August were merely changes of personalities. No fundamental change occurred or will occur. Capitalist dictatorship with a democratic mask will continue with the backing of the US, Europe and India, and it will be against the working people.

A new stage of governmental power combining executive and parliamentary powers has now been inaugurated. A National Government has been formed in association with the main opposition, the UPFA, and smaller parties. This National Government appears to be an alliance of the main parties, the UNP and the UPFA. The people who voted for them expect solutions that give relief to the basic economic crises faced by them. In particular, the vast majority comprising the working people believe that the cost of living will be lowered, the wages will increase and employment opportunities will rise. They believe that the election pledges will be honoured to improve their livelihood and standard of living. There are also those who believe that the programmes proposed in the election manifesto will be put into effect and the country will soon be a paradise. History is that such hopes have proven false on many occasions in the past, since it is the class stand of those who secure governmental power that decides everything.

It is said that with the policies in the election manifesto put forward by Ranil Wickremesinghe and the UNP are put into practice, a new country will emerge in five years. It is as a continuation of the 67 years of

parliamentary rule in which the Senanayakes, Bandaranayakes and Jayewardene's ruled by deceiving the people that it is pledged that economic growth and social advancement will be achieved through five major plans. It should be noted that, in essence, all of these plans are confined to the current neo-colonial, neoliberal economy and do not transcend it. Talk about transforming Sri Lanka into a Singapore has resumed. What was said earlier by JR Jayewardene is being repeated in a renewed form. Setting up 45 Economic Development Zones in the country means that multinational companies will be brought in through foreign investment. This is akin to the plan of the Jayewardene era to set up a thousand garment factories across the country. Likewise, it is said that eleven technology centres will be established in the country. All of them have been proposed relying on foreign capital and investment.

### **The National Economy and Foreign Investment**

Foreign companies continue with their projects initiated under or agreed upon under the Rajapaksa regime. The lands that have been given away in the name of 99 years' lease will not be recovered. Plans have been drafted to enable foreign companies to exploit and plunder the labour and natural resources in many parts of the country. For instance, in Kuliapitiya in the Kurunagala District, agreement has been made with the German industrial giant Volkswagen to set up a motor vehicle manufacturing company. In Pettah, at the heart of Colombo four acres of land has been allocated to the Krrish Group of India. Land close to it is to be allotted to the Australian Casino mogul James Packer to set up a casino complex. A part of the sea has been reserved for the Harbour City project of a Chinese company. Already two large entertainment centres are being built along Galle Face, Colombo. Land has been allocated to Indian Companies in the Slave Island (Kompani Veediya) area of Colombo and construction work is in progress. Likewise hundreds of acres have been handed over to foreign companies.

The main question is how such projects will help the development of the country. We need to examine whether the economy of the country prospered from the Free Trade Zones established earlier. While foreign

investors and their local partners benefitted, neither the workers nor the country's economy saw any good or gain. Thus the present National Government is the same as the leadership of the same old UNP. The SLFP that has joined it is the same old SLFP which has ceased to be a party of the national bourgeoisie to become the party of the big bourgeoisie. It is for that reason that it has been able to join hands with the comprador bourgeoisie. Now the comprador and big bourgeois parties have taken charge of the state through the National Government. They will strive to reinforce the neo-colonial economic structure of the country.

Today consumerism is spreading rapidly through the open market of the country. The IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UN are providing advice and guidance for the neo-colonial economy and the programme of globalization. The US and European imperialist powers will be supportive of the present regime. India is striving to retain its economic and political hold on the country. Its next target is to impose on Sri Lanka the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) designed to assert Indian interests.

Although, deep within, China is concerned that the position which it held may be lost, the situation is that Sri Lanka cannot easily do away with its ties with China. There are differences between the aid and loans granted by China when it was a socialist country and those after it turned capitalist. Although there are still differences between Chinese loans and the loans from the IMF, the World Bank and the ADB, their capitalist bases cannot be denied.

### **Intentions of the Government and Intentions of the US**

The National Government for "good governance" in which the UNP and the SLFP have joined hands aims to implement the current imperialist neo-colonial economic programme of globalization. The US and the West are trying their fullest to protect and stabilize the new regime. They encouraged the development of national question into war in order that they could establish their economic and political interests in Sri Lanka. At

the peak of war, they fully cooperated with the Rajapaksa regime to defeat the LTTE. Then, to be rid of the same Rajapaksa regime, the US introduced in the UN Human Rights Council a proposal to inquire into war crimes in Sri Lanka. The Tamil parties and organizations of the Tamil diaspora considered it to be a move for their salvation and expressed their faith in the US and the West and persuaded the Tamil people to believe it. But today the US has fulfilled its ulterior motive by the removal of Rajapaksa from power. Thus, the UNHCR motion by the US had to be redrafted to suit the Maithri-Ranil regime. However much it may be extrapolated, the UNHCR report and resolution, while being mere eyewash, will only pave the way for reinforcing US interests in Sri Lanka.

The US-West alliance played a key role in the background of the collaboration by the Ranil-Maithri-Chandrika alliance to form a national government. As a result, there is covert strengthening of the Indo-US rivalry. Already the US resents Indian efforts to improve relations with China and India's membership in BRICS. Still, the US claims that India is its strategic partner. Meanwhile China's economic growth has been strong and China has become a major contender in the expansion of global trade. Thus there is change in the prime position held by China under the Rajapaksa regime. But the Ranil-Maithri regime knows that to weaken or restrain relations with China and commercial investment by China could spell danger to their plans. Hence it has been announced that Chinese plans will resume after review.

Therefore, it is important to examine closely who declares that they will make the country prosperous. It should be asked with whose collaboration they will develop the country. It should also be asked what growth would be like. The truth is that the National Government under the Ranil-Maithri leadership will essentially act with the main aim of defending the imperialist neo-colonial setup and imposing and establishing globalization and the neoliberal economic system. Its true form will soon be exposed. The budget of the National Government for 2016 which is due soon will expose the true form of the government to the people.

## **The Path of the Party**

Thus far, we looked at the economical, political and social spheres of the country and the neo-colonial social structure on which they are established. It was thus possible to identify the fundamental, main and secondary contradictions. Thus the Party reasserts through this Congress that their solution and the liberation of the people are its policy and path to take.

The programme of globalization is implemented under the current imperialist neo-colonial neoliberal economic system, and the comprador and big bourgeoisie in power support it fully. Feudal ideology and practices are in conformity with it. As a result, social differentiation, exploitation and oppression are on the rise.

Under the conditions, the Party needs to intensify its pace along the path towards the New Democratic Revolutionary stage which it charted and traversed. Without achieving the New Democratic Revolution, we cannot arrive at or achieve socialism. Hence, New Democratic Revolution aimed at social change and socialism through New Democratic Revolution is our fundamental strategic stand. To achieve that goal, tactics and practices should be evolved and put into effect that could overcome all major obstacles that stand in the way. The policy compatible with it can only be Progressive National Democracy. We need to identify such forces, and be at the fore to encourage, guide and work with them.

While putting into practice its programme based on its class stand, it is important that the Party makes clear its stand and role in uniting and guiding progressive national democratic forces and working in unity with them.

## **The Strategy of the Party**

When we say that our strategy is New Democratic Revolution, we see it as a strategy for South Asian Countries as a whole. The means of securing it cannot be a peaceful approach or the path of parliamentary opportunism. Mass mobilization and revolutionary struggles comprise our basic

approach. Our method is to organize elementary struggles and advance them to struggles at a higher level. Such struggles will be varied in form and with potential to become struggles at a high level. Circumstantial factors determine their form. Workers, peasants and other working people will be at the core of the struggles and be their propelling force.

Elections and parliament can be helpful in mobilizing people along our path of mass struggle and strengthening the struggle, but we should not submerge ourselves in them. In other words, participation in elections should be decided by the wishes of the people based on our mass political work and not as an end in itself. Hence while we set out on our journey towards the New Democratic Revolutionary stage, it is important that we affirm that our aim is socialism and that in our practice we have the clarity and far sight for that purpose.

### **The Tactics of the Party**

Thus, while we adopt the New Democratic Revolution as our strategy, it is necessary to devise the tactics to achieve it. The fundamental, main and secondary contradictions, while explicitly expressing themselves, also remain tense. Thus we need to develop appropriate tactics to approach them and to educate and mobilize the people subject to oppression based on them. In the context of the reality facing us, it is important to uphold progressive national democracy. It is necessary to define the necessary fundamental features for it. Such progressive national democracy is a policy stand that is immediately presentable to the workers, peasants, fishers, state and private sector employees and oppressed nationalities.

In the current context where globalization and neoliberal economic exploitation and plunder are strong, workers need to struggle for the democratic and trade union rights that are denied to them. Government employees have to mobilize and struggle for their wage increase and other fundamental rights.

Likewise, in the national question too which persists as the main contradiction, there is need to approach matters from a progressive



national democratic basis and advance along accordingly designed policies

### **The National Question**

Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism, which is most intense on the national question, also acts as the tool of the comprador capitalist forces of the ruling class. At the same time, Tamil nationalism which projects itself as being at the opposite pole, is reactionary and narrow nationalistic. Hence, progressive national democracy is an urgent need of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities.

At the same time, such progressive national democracy seems an acceptable current reality for progressive and democratic forces among the Sinhalese as well. The basically reactionary Tamil nationalism which is propagated in the North and East and in other parts of the country is not only a continuation of conservative feudal ideology and thought but also followed in practice. Tamil communalism and racism are thrust forward in the name of Tamil nationalism.

As a result, ordinary Tamil people, failing to see the class oppression that they are subjected to, drown themselves in a form of conservative arrogance based on the belief that Tamil nationalism is in their interest. The situation persists where, as a result of that approach, people refuse to see the real oppression based on race and class. Tamil nationalists have from then to now use it for their parliamentary electoral purposes.

Upper class, upper caste elitist ideology and way of thinking constitute the life blood of Tamil nationalism. The main component of its representatives has been the elevated Vellala upper class forces of dominance. They have come in the tradition of looking down on the Vanni and the East on a regional basis. Besides, the Tamil nationalist leadership does not view the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as equals. Nor is it willing to accept them. While looking down on the ordinary Sinhalese, they closely associate with the Sinhala upper class, upper caste leaders. The Tamil elite have, since the colonial era, been steeped in loyalty to the

white masters. In that tradition, they conduct themselves with slavish loyalty towards to the neo-colonial masters and their neoliberal policies and practices.

### **Progressive National Democratic Programme**

Tamil nationalism has no progressive policy on casteism and oppression of women and that is why the Party has unhesitatingly declared that such reactionary Tamil nationalism should be smashed. At the same time, smashing it should be with a view to put forward a progressive national democratic stand. Since the Party is fundamentally class based, we need to promote the progressive national democratic programme from our tactical position, identify the forces suited for it and encourage its implementation accordingly. That is the immediate task facing us.

Such a progressive national democratic stand is fully compatible with the economical, political, social and cultural environment of the Hill Country Tamils. The severely exploited three hundred thousand strong working class of the Hill Country has had to struggle every two years to determine its daily wage. But those struggles have eventually been betrayed by the dominant hereditary trade union leadership.

Besides, the Hill Country Tamils, in their 200 years long history, have been abandoned as a people without a village structure that includes the right to their own housing, land and address. This rates among the worst of cruelties of class and national oppression on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Hence the call for 20 perches of land, individual houses and a village structure, and protection of the uniqueness as a nationality should be emphasized and campaigned for as the demand of the Hill Country Tamil people. This should be guided along the path of mass struggle transcending ballot box politics.

Besides, we see casteism and oppression of women being effected in the Hill Country through conservative ideology and thinking. It should be noted that the Hill Country Tamils live among Sinhalese, in large concentrations in some areas and smaller concentrations in others. Sinhala

chauvinists take advantage of this to deny recognition of the Hill Country Tamils as a socially distinct group and a nationality. Hence the Party draws attention at this juncture to the need to extend the progressive national democratic programme among the Hill Country Tamils.

The tendency among Muslims to emphasize Muslim nationalism associated with Islamic culture manifests itself as identity politics. But it is projected with a reactionary perspective. Those who champion it are not the ordinary Muslim working people but wealthy Muslims, traders and religious reactionaries. It is the latter who spread malicious ideas against ordinary Sinhalese and Tamil working people. At one time, political stands opposed to imperialism and supportive of democracy and progressive politics were strong among Muslims. However, since the fall of socialist countries, imperialist intrigue and aggression and the emergence of Islamic extremism have led to conflicts among Muslim countries and among Muslims and to civil wars. In this context imperialists led by the US are persecuting Muslims and Muslim countries.

In recent years chauvinist organizations and Buddhist fundamentalist forces have unleashed hatred and violence against Muslims. In this environment, the path for salvation of the Muslims comprises transcending the politics of concessions undertaken by the Muslim leadership and upholding progressive national democracy with an anti-imperialist content. .

### **The Status of the Left Movement**

Undeniably, the Sri Lankan left movement is fragmented and weak. The parliamentary left parties, namely the LSSP and the Communist Party, have irredeemably fallen into opportunist degeneration. The JVP which took advantage of it to come to the fore, disguised as a left party, eventually reduced themselves to parliamentarians and social democrats. Now the JVP leaders are unable to oppose imperialism or reject neoliberal economics or consumerist culture and are bourgeois parliamentarians who expose corruption and abuse of power and do not have any characteristics

of leftists. What remain are the red flag and the hammer and sickle logo. The JVP which once represented the petit bourgeoisie is now taking a middle class stand. While professing to be not communal it is confused about a political solution to the national question.

The Frontline Socialist Party (FLSP) which split from the JVP, meanwhile, adopts a Trotskyite stand on important issues and retains some residues of the political line of the JVP, with which it parted company. The FLSP puts forward anti-capitalism and talks of achieving socialism. But its denial of the democratic stage necessary to advance to socialism is essentially a Trotskyite line. On the national question, it still lacks a clear stand. By denying the existence of nationalities, and hence the right to self determination, the FLSP takes a position where it addresses the national question merely as a question of human equality. However, it is significant that inner party struggles are on within the FLSP to determine its political future.

There is, nevertheless, a need to determine through a process of criticism and self-criticism the reasons why the Sri Lankan left movement fragmented and weakened. Not only the Trotskyite movements but also the Marxist Leninists should be subjected to it.

### **Socio-Cultural Aspects**

It is important to examine the status of socio cultural aspects amid the economic and political conditions of the country. When neo-colonialism and neoliberal economics go hand in hand with feudal ideology and thinking, there will be harmony between them in the socio cultural spheres as well. On the one hand, the toxic culture of globalization has freely infiltrated and its influence on society, especially the youth, is spreading. Negative aspects of modern information technology are tugging at the social foundations of day-to-day life. Consequently, socio cultural decay is spreading fast by the day, and a young generation with little concern for the country or the people or socio-political-cultural life is growing up as a mechanistic individuals. Imperialism profits by it in many

ways. Imperialism also uses it to divert the attention of the people from the cruelty of the existing social set-up comprising exploitation and oppression as well as to conceal it from them.

In this situation, conservatives are at the fore to promote all reactionary features in the name of culture. Religions too play a role in this respect. Of things spoken highly of as our culture, all have religious roots. Rejection of science is common to all religions. Yet, it is not our practice to interfere with anyone's religious faith to the extent that it is personal belief. But in a context where religions transcend personal belief to propagate superstition and mutual distrust among people, we need to inform the people about the economical and political situation, their objective reality and causes.

Today, we face the danger of the spread of foreign toxic culture linked with globalization in various ways and at various levels. Reactionary conservative culture is promoted on the other hand in the name of our cultural values. We can see both these trends go hand in hand. It is important that we pay more attention to these matters and reject reactionary conservative culture and struggle against the toxic culture of globalization. It is unacceptable to compromise or collude. It behoves us to educate the people in these matters and carry forward pro-people culture.

Foreign forces are infiltrating the current socio-cultural spheres. These foreign forces by using religion and the spheres of art, literature and culture through various organizations make them their defences. Besides, these spheres also serve as defences protecting the political and economic interests of reactionaries and conservatives. In this respect, religious and social non-governmental volunteer organizations (NGOs) of the West and Indian proxy organizations have very carefully and subtly infiltrated among the people. Likewise, local organizations are cultivating reactionary attitudes not only in the name of race, religion, language and culture but also in the name of caste. NGOs and religious organizations have entered the arena with massive financial resources. They use money as a major device to divert the attention of the people.

## **Literature and Art**

Further, the situation concerning literature and art also seems unhealthy. In general they serve the ruling classes and forces of domination. The pro-people art and literature that surged against these trends seem to have weakened now. The concept of People's Literature needs to battle the aforesaid conservatism and the art and literature of globalization. Hence, it is important for us to act in realization of the fact that the responsibility is with us to break through the dominant ideology of the society and create a new culture for the people.

## **Closure**

Our Party is a proletarian party based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Hence our way of thinking and approach and formulation and implementation of policy differ from those of other political parties. It is thus important for us to study any problem in depth and relate our findings to objective reality and to apply the dialectical approach to everything. The historical task of implementing our policies and practices with firmness, dedication and commitment, taking into account the current political, economic, social and cultural situations in the country, is before us. The current international situation is not yet favourable to us. Nevertheless we need to struggle firmly to change the situation. Let us firmly resolve to advance in unity with the genuine left, democratic and progressive forces of the country nationally and with Marxist Leninist forces internationally.

- **We shall achieve the New Democratic Revolution!**
- **We will hold high the Red Flag for Socialism!**
- **Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought!**
- **Victory to the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party!**

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# The Party's Perception of the Current International Situation

*[Text based on the Political Report of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party on the International Situation presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress, 28, 29, 30 August 2015]*

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party's perception of the current international situation based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought is presented below.

The people and countries of the world are still in the imperialist era. Thus is essential for us to understand imperialism well. It is useful at this juncture to remember the four fundamental contradictions of the world as set out by Lenin:

1. The contradiction between socialism and capitalism
2. The contradiction between capital and labour
3. The contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations and people
4. The contradiction among imperialist countries

## **The Imperialist Thrust**

The ruling class of imperialist US, its policy makers and their European and Japanese allies are unrelentingly carrying forward their imperialist aims. The scheme of imperialist globalization is at the core of the current imperialist programme. The neo-colonial economic system has overrun the whole world through it. Capitalist expansion and exploitation and the plundering of the resources of countries are conducted through imperialist

globalization and neo-colonial economics. To achieve it, imperialism uses all means at its disposal including war. The US imperialism continues to be the main enemy of the people of the world.

### **The Middle East and Africa**

While no fundamental change occurred in the global situation during the past decade, the trends of the previous decade have intensified. Although US imperialist objectives have not been achieved in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US, on its own and in alliance with European countries, has continued to wage wars of aggression. The severity of US intervention was most felt in the Middle East and North Africa. As anticipated by Marxist Leninists the victories of the mass uprisings during the so called "Arab Spring" were rapidly reversed.

Egyptian army chief General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who toppled the Islamic Brotherhood regime led by Mohamed Morsi within an year of its election to power following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, got elected as President. The el-Sisi regime proved to be harsher than that of Mubarak and even more cooperative with the US and Israel. The el-Sisi regime which has exempted Mubarak's crimes from punishment has imposed severe punishments on the members of the Islamic Brotherhood and sentenced former president Morsi to death.

Since there has been a strong left tendency in Tunisia, the US could not impose on it a dictatorial regime of its liking. The West has, however, been able to ensure a 'moderate' Islamist regime there.

In Bahrain a popular uprising was suppressed with the support of Saudi Arabian armed forces.

The people's struggle of Yemen was frustrated after an year by replacing the old dictator by a new dictator acceptable to Saudi Arabia and the US. With another mass uprising overthrowing the regime that succeeded, Saudi Arabia is destroying the country by a series of bombing raids. But the US-Saudi intentions have so far not been fulfilled.



Although the West overthrew the Gaddafi regime in Libya, the country has not had a stable government since the overthrow. The weapons which the West distributed to Gaddafi are now in the hands of Islamist extremists in countries neighbouring Libya.

### **The Rest of Africa**

The terrorist group Boko Haram indulging in anti people violence in the name of Islam in Nigeria which is the largest economy in West Africa poses a challenge to the government, thus enabling US intervention on the names of Africa's defence and elimination of Islamist terror. Its links with North African al Qaeda have since strengthened.

In Africa's north east, Ethiopia intervened on behalf of the US in Somalia following the failure of US intervention. Since then the country is in a state of civil war. Under pressure from the US, the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), backed by the UN, are stationed in Somalia. The al Shaba rebels who are opposing the Somali government, which depends on military support from AMISOM and the UN as well as US backing, have expanded their campaign into Kenya and resorted to terrorist activity. This threatens the stability of East Africa.

Since the partition of Sudan with encouragement from the US, conflicts based on tribal contradictions and the ongoing civil war stand in the way of US efforts to bring South Sudan under its total dominance.

Two decades since the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the aspirations of the oppressed Black majority remain unfulfilled. The African National Congress (ANC) and the National Union of Mineworkers which were the liberation forces of South Africa are today acting against the people. The ANC government has cruelly suppressed strikes and shot dead workers. The deals that Mandela and the ANC struck with imperialism and multinational corporations have transformed South Africa into a total neo-colony.

The West which tried hard for three decades to topple the government of Zimbabwe which firmly upheld anti-imperialism in Africa has failed in its mission. But attempts at regime change persist in various ways.

Against this background, a Pan African Federalist campaign emphasising anti imperialism and social justice is taking shape along the lines of African Unity pursued by Kwame Nkrumah and others in the 1960's. How far it will succeed remains uncertain, but it signals the resurgence of new left tendencies in the countries of Black Africa.

### **ISIS Terror**

What the US has achieved thus far is to topple governments that it disliked and, where there were governments supportive of the US, ensure that such governments maintained power. The US attempt at regime change in Syria in the wake of the regime change in Libya failed. Instead, the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an organization created with Saudi sponsorship, eliminated its rivals in Syria and seized control of a part of Syria. Subsequently the ISIS took control of a substantial part of Iraq. Besides its terrorism and brutal killings driven by religious fanaticism, its bid for leadership of the entire Islamic world has added a further complication.

Although the US talks about wiping out the ISIS forces, its main interest is in getting a foothold in Syria. There is strong suspicion that the Turkish state has helped the ISIS penetration and massacre in the Kurdish region of Rojava in northern Syria liberated from the ISIS by progressive secular forces and the ISIS massacre on Turkish soil of the leftist group which set out from Suruc in Turkey to the Syrian border town of Kobane. The US is seeking to use ISIS expansion into Iraq as pretext for continued stationing of its troops in Iraq. Although the ISIS which grew under the direct and indirect patronage of the US appears to be making trouble for the US now, it is not the intention of the US to destroy ISIS, for the ISIS seems the most viable tool for regime change in Syria.

### **A few Imperialist Retreats**

After several unsuccessful bids to establish a regime in Iran that would be favourable to the US, the US resorted to economic sanctions against Iran. Then it used the lie that Iran's efforts to develop nuclear power were aimed at developing nuclear weapons to bring about international trade sanctions against Iran. It is significant that the US used false evidence fabricated by Israel to achieve its goal. US insistence that Iran should subject all its endeavours for nuclear power development to scrutiny by the International Atomic Energy Authority failed to persuade Iran. So the US negotiators had to climb down several steps to arrive at a nuclear accord with Iran. But Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Zionist organizations in the US are trying their best to nullify the accord through the Congress and the Senate of the US. Nevertheless, it is the general view of anti-imperialists that Iran should be cautious about US intentions, because what the US desires is a regime to its liking in Iran.

Following isolation both internationally and in Latin America, the US has been forced to withdraw the cruel trade sanctions that it imposed, in violation of international law, against Cuba over the past 55 years. Diplomatic relations have now been restored between the two countries. But the Cuban government and people need to be on the alert since US wish for a regime change in Cuba remains unchanged.

### **Latin America**

Old hegemonic intentions as well as the imperialist need to be rid of left governments still guide US policy in Latin America. The US is unable to come to grips with the reality that the world is changing in defiance of its wishes. Although the control that the US had over Latin America has slackened because of such changes, US attempts at regime change in Latin America and the Caribbean have not ceased. Although the US has succeeded in Haiti, Honduras and Uruguay, it has been unable to establish governments with popular support in these countries. The government in power in El Salvador since 2009 is also to the resentment of imperialism.

The main attention of the US in South America has been on Venezuela, which has the strongest left tendencies after Cuba in Latin America. Besides the US stirring local unrest to destabilize the government of Nicolas Maduro, NGOs sponsored by the US offer guidance to the opposition to undermine law and order as well as to acts of hoarding and smuggling that create artificial shortages of essential goods. Hence it has become important to politicize and mobilize the people of Venezuela. After Venezuela, the governments of Ecuador and Bolivia are the US targets for regime change. Sabotage attempts by the US in South and Central America and the Caribbean will persist for the time being.

### **US Concerns and Threats**

The main global concern of the US is about Russia's re-emergence as a military power and the rise of China as an economic power since they pose a threat to US global domination. The US, a great debtor nation, is fast losing its position as the world's biggest economy. Unable to hold on to its global domination by its economic power and political influence it is relying heavily on its military might. It is for that reason that the US is all out to set up and strengthen its defence programme in the Pacific.

The moves of the US in Europe and Asia need to be seen as part of the US plan to isolate and weaken China and Russia before they get stronger. Meanwhile, the West, which forfeited its industrial base owing to US and European capital, driven by profit motive, relocating their industrial production in countries with cheaper labour, depends heavily on products from the Third World. China's industrial growth today developed based on such export economy. As a result, China, which depends on the countries of Africa and Latin America for its resources, shows much interest in direct and indirect investment in Africa and Latin America. A good reason for Chinese success in these countries is that China does not meddle in the internal affairs of countries.

In particular, the growing influence of China in sub-Saharan African countries stands in the way of the hegemonic aims of the US. Hence the

US is targeting countries which maintain good relations with China. The US is actively involved in establishing AFRICOM, the US military outfit for Africa, on African soil. During the past few years France intervened militarily in the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Mali and Chad. Since they were former French colonies, it was expedient to send French troops there. But this trend is part of the US imperialist plan for Africa. The US which tried hard to incite civilian unrest within China is now using issues of maritime borders between China and its neighbours to drag China into a war.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the US, in breach of its undertaking to Russia, has drawn not only its former Warsaw Pact allies but also former Soviet Republics into NATO, the Western military alliance headed by the US. Russia clashed with Georgia a few years ago when attempt was made to draw Georgia into NATO. Last year, there was a US inspired coup in Ukraine. The consequent internal conflict in Ukraine and secessionist activities in South and East Ukraine are propelling Europe into a war situation. While much of the recent evidence on the downing of the Malaysian civilian aircraft in July 2014 suggests that the Ukrainian government is the culprit, the cover up by the US and EU and their imposition of sanctions against Russia should be seen as efforts to draw Russia into confrontation.

### **The European Crisis**

There is another important reason why US imperialism is hastily targeting China and Russia. The West has still not properly recovered from the economic crisis that began in 2008. The people of Europe are dissatisfied with the passing of the burdens of a capitalist crisis on to them. In Greece and Spain in particular, revolutionary trends that reject the old revisionist left are gathering momentum.

The financial crisis of Europe and US is not accidental. It is an inevitable crisis of monopoly capital. It is not temporary either. Attempts thus far to deal with it have failed. National debt, economic stagnation and

unemployment have affected all countries of the West. Asian countries which advanced rapidly amid the crisis too are now affected. Many of the time limits set by governments and financial institutions for global economic reconvert have lapsed. The economic crisis has severely affected the more vulnerable sections of the population of the West. Consequently, racism and fascist forces are raising their head among them. The people of the Third World who migrated to Europe are now on the one hand facing economic woes and on the other neo-fascist and racist harassment, which are the side effects of the crisis.

Popular rejection of the harsh conditions laid down by Europe on Greece to resolve its debt crisis, which placed heavy burdens on the people of Greece, brought to power Syriza, a new left alliance. Syriza has so far not been able to rescue the country from its crisis. Popular resistance persists amid EU pressure. In Spain a militant left force has emerged from the protest movement against austerity measures. Although in both Greece and Spain the old left and reformist parties have lost, social transformation demands harder effort.

Otherwise, popular disaffection has only led to a succession of changes of government and not to the emergence of a strong revolutionary force of resistance. In short, it is broadly recognized that capitalism has worsened the economic issues of Europe and that reformist parties are incapable of addressing the economic crisis. But there is inadequate realization of the need for meaningful change among the public. Marxist Leninist parties of Europe are working at rectifying these failings.

### **Leftist Regimes**

The Cuban and North Korean regimes which could be called socialist have several shortcomings. Yet, there is need for caution about criticizing them strongly. We cannot forget that they have been subject to many forms of international pressure from the US and its allies, and attempts at regime change still persist. Besides, there is need for caution against distortion of news about these countries by the world's powerful news media.

In particular, while the governments and media of the West incessantly talk about North Korea developing nuclear weapons to attack Japan and South Korea and thereby wrecking world peace, the US provokes North Korea by conducting jointly with South Korea military exercises in the neighbourhood of North Korea. Attention is drawn only to North Korean responses in the propaganda about the aggressive intentions of North Korea. The US which through the UN imposes trade embargos against North Korea also campaigns without end that there is famine in North Korea. Thus, for international proletarian solidarity, it is important to explain to the people the ceaseless attacks against these countries by the West and relentlessly oppose such attacks.

Socialism cannot be attained through parliament or along the electoral political route. Yet we see US imperialism seeking to topple left-oriented governments in the name of protecting democracy. Although many Latin American countries have rid themselves of direct US hegemony, they are not in a position to avert US interference. Except in Colombia, there is no prospect of a militant revolutionary movement functioning outside parliamentary politics. Thus, it is important that our assessment of governments with a left identity that have come to power through elections should be based on how firmly they uphold anti-imperialist politics, how honestly they strive to free themselves of the effects of globalization, how dedicatedly they work for the well being of oppressed and toiling masses and how hard they attempt to protect national resources from foreign and local big capitalists.

While we accept the need of a country to have foreign investment and export of resources to free itself of a backward economy, we cannot accept continued reliance of a country on foreign investment and export of resources. Hence, the economic policy of a country may be assessed based on how it uses the export of its resources. In this respect, while we can mostly support the practice of Venezuela, we can critically endorse the policies of Ecuador and Bolivia. Criticism should emphasize freedom from imperialist grip. It is correct to criticize regimes like that in Brazil which

push the country further into the trap of globalization, and encourage progressive forces to act against their economic policies.

### **Imperialist Divide and Rule**

The global region whose resources are most severely plundered is sub-Saharan Africa. The secessionist war in southern Sudan and the intense civil war that follows the secession of South Sudan and the two decades long civil war across the Congo which has not really concluded were wars that were induced by the West. Although Islamic extremism is pointed at as the cause of the internal crises in North and West Africa, Islamic extremism and extremist organizations were, in general, created with the backing of the US, Saudi Arabia and Qatar but subsequently turned hostile to the US. Although the US claims to be fighting Islamic fundamentalism, there are still many places where Islamic extremism is acting in secret alliance with the US and as its agent.

We have seen contradictions among nationalities and ethnic groups develop into civil wars during the past few decades. We have seen in several countries that this is planned and implemented by imperialism and that the local chauvinistic capitalist class seeks profit in it. Since recently, differences among religions and religious sects have led to severe clashes and cruel oppression. Subjecting of the Muslim minority to Buddhist extremist violence in Myanmar, which is moving “towards democracy” with the blessings of the US, is further evidence of how imperialism and local reactionaries are benefitting from identity politics.

### **The Lessons of Nepal**

The most important of the victories of armed people’s liberation struggle in this century is the victory of the Peoples War waged by the Maoists. Yet, the Maoist Communists suffered several setbacks owing to opportunistic tendencies within the Maoist Party. Indian expansionist intervention played an important role in causing divisions. The experiences of Nepal are important reminders that the people cannot be liberated by the parliamentary path. Neither the parliamentary left nor the



Nepal Congress can resolve the problems of Nepal. The countless NGOs created with the backing of the West are working hard to depoliticize the people. Hence, the Maoists can liberate Nepal only by rectifying their mistakes and starting from where they left. It is welcome that a section of the Maoists are actively working at self-criticism.

### **Confronting Neo-colonialism**

In summary, it could be said that imperialist globalization has wrecked the economies of countries. As a result, internal contradictions have intensified within countries. If these contradictions are not addressed from a proletarian class outlook, there is the danger that they could developed into conflicts among nations, religions and other social sectors. Identity politics is being actively pursued by NGOs. We have witnessed its dangers in Sri Lanka. It is being implemented in a planned way as part of an imperialist programme to prevent the people uniting on the basis of class.

In the current neo-colonial context, we, as Marxist Leninists, should approach imperialism and its characteristics in an objective and analytical manner. We should approach and analyse the conditions in the global trends based on objective reality.

Imperialist exploitation today had developed into a brutal attack on nature that threatens the very existence of humanity. It is thus significant therefore that Marxist Leninists worldwide are debating the contradiction between imperialism and nature. What is important to note is that environmentalist organizations and reformists avoid saying that the capitalist mode of production is the fundamental reason for environmental decay. Hence it is important to emphasize the role of class and class struggle everywhere and in everything. All solutions put forward to their exclusion are attempts to protect capitalism and imperialism.

We should be clear about the way imperialism functions in the neo-colonial sage. Here, irrespective of the correctness or otherwise of identifying certain countries as imperialist, it is important that we think in depth about the conclusions that we arrive at through such identification.

## **Russia and China**

The US, the countries of Europe and Japan function as an imperialist group. They are trying to divide the world among themselves. Their move to include Russia as a junior partner has failed. China is a capitalist country today. But it differs in many ways from Western capitalist countries. Chinese capitalism does not comprise monopolistic institutions which is a salient feature of imperialism. Besides, the methods that China adopts to expand its trade and the nature of its investments lack the historical features of imperialism. Also, the rate of penetration of foreign capital into China exceeds China's foreign investments. In other words, the extent to which foreign capital exploits Chinese labour is many times larger than the extent to which Chinese capital exploits foreign labour outside its national boundaries. Hence, if one could use formulae such as export of capital as evidence that China is an imperialist country, Saudi Arabia and Singapore too would be imperialist.

Being a fast growing capitalist country, China relies on other countries for its raw materials to meet its industrial needs. China cannot always remain the same. If it does not return to socialism it is very likely that it will become imperialist. Hence China, Russia and India and some other capitalist countries can be considered as countries with potential to develop into imperialist countries. But to say that they are imperialist countries is not an acceptable assessment.

Against a background of pressure from the West and financial crises, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa formed the organization BRICS in 2008 for their economic cooperation. BRICS recently established an international financial organization. For now BRICS can only be viewed as a shield to protect from global economic crises and US domination and not called an imperialist alliance, since three of its member states are close to the US.

The Shanghai-5 organization founded in 1996 by China, Russia and three former Soviet Republics expanded to become the Shanghai Cooperation Organization which includes most of Asia as members,

observers or dialogue partners. Among its aims Asian defence is of prime importance. Although the SCO undertakes military, economic and cultural cooperation activities, there is little prospect of its becoming a military alliance since it comprises countries with conflicting interests. Those who seek to point at BRICS and SCO as imperialist hegemonic establishments fail to consider the imperialist actions that made them necessary. We need to be alert in such matters.

Even if one were to call China, Russia or India imperialist based on some definition, contradictions between them and imperialism led by the US need to be taken into account. It cannot be a Marxist Leninist stand to ignore everything and declare that all imperialisms are alike and that there is no need to concern ourselves with differences.

### **Imperialist Interventions and Us**

We should be cautious about those, including some leftists, who tend to assess political and military intervention by the US and the West purely in terms of the kind of regime in the country subject to intervention.

Such persons readily endorsed moves to remove from power Gaddafi in Libya, Saddam Husain in Iraq and Basher al Assad in Syria among others. Even on the question of US actions against Iran, they maintained 'neutrality' on the same basis. Some resented the failure to oust Robert Mugabe from power in Zimbabwe.

What then should be our stand? If what overthrows by struggle a reactionary regime is a progressive force that will pave the way for people's power, we may support it. If we understand for whose benefit a regime change occurs, it is not hard to guess the consequences. Thus, it is fundamentally correct for us to oppose any foreign intervention, especially imperialist intervention.

Mechanistic approaches yield defective views. Some rationalize China in the blind faith that it is still a socialist country. Some would hold that, since China and Russia are imperialist powers, there is no need to take any interest in them. Yet others would argue that since they are imperialist

countries, the conflict in Ukraine is one between two imperialisms for hegemony and go further to denounce Russia for its “aggression”. These are consequences of locating history as a mere string of events on imperfect political planes.

It should be noted that the crisis in Ukraine is a result of the US strategy of encircling Russia. That the regime change in Ukraine was a coup in which Ukrainian fascists played a major role deserves to be noted. The purpose of the US is to shift the military threat to Russia from the US and the West close to the Russian border through bringing Ukraine under its control. To expect Russia not to react to it is not only lacking in political wisdom but also to side with US imperialism.

Anyone can have reasons to identify China and Russia as imperialist countries. Some could be angered by the betrayal of socialism in those countries. Some could be confused. Some could have mischievous intentions. But, based on the criteria developed by Lenin to define imperialism, thus far there is no good reason to call China and Russia imperialist countries. By such reference to China and Russia, contradictions between the US and Russia and between US and China are trivialized as contradictions between imperialists.

Even in contradictions between imperialists, there have often been many instances in which oppressed people and nations had to treat one or the other as the principal enemy. To forget them and equate Russia and China with the US are views that run counter to reality.

It is true that Russia and China are capitalist countries. But it is only after examining their economic bases and the degree to which the nature of their foreign investments resemble the finance capital of the US and its allies that we can decide if Russia and China are imperialist. We should understand the differences between historical territorial claims and aggression and expansion in colonialist fashion.

It is dishonest for those who once accepted the territorial borders of China and the Soviet Union when they were socialist countries to attribute

imperialist motives for claims for the same borders. We should criticize errors of China and Russia in handling their respective national questions. But we cannot allow the West to meddle in those matters to transform them into hostile contradictions and induce civil unrest. Thus it is important to assess every issue honestly in its particular context and against its historical background.

Today US aggression is not against any socialist country. We cannot therefore be indifferent towards US aggression. We cannot step aside claiming the US intervention in the Ukraine is hegemonic rivalry between two imperialist countries. To do so is to strengthen US imperialism. Also, we cannot ignore a future cold war that could be waged against China.

Thus in today's context, our stand on international issues should be decided on the basis that US imperialism is the main enemy of the people of the world. In the Middle East, we should understand what is happening in Palestine's Gaza. We should understand the meaning of the series of regime changes by the US. In the least, we should appreciate how the US and its allies fundamentally differ from any other capitalist country.

The US invaded Iraq to wreck the country and retain it as a killing field for hundreds of thousands. The situation in Afghanistan is similar. Unable to invade Syria directly, the US is using internal contradictions there to achieve regime change through its mercenary gangs.

### **Sri Lanka in the International Arena**

It is important that the people of Sri Lanka oppose US imperialism the main enemy of the people of the world and all powers supporting the US it. At the same time, the agenda of India, the region's hegemonic power, seeking to keep under its total control the countries of South Asia, including Sri Lanka, is in not in any way acceptable.

At one time India joined hands with Soviet Union, then a global hegemonic power, to achieve its regional hegemonic goals. When it recognized the decline of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, it slowly courted the friendship of the US. The pro-US attitude has since developed to the

point where it has reached a fresh peak under Narendra Modi. As the task of making India a tool of the US gathered speed, India's non-alignment and its stand in support of the Palestinian people went adrift. The expansionist policy which led to the annexation of Sikkim in 1974 manifested itself in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan as direct interference in the internal political affairs, including elections. Now China and Pakistan are pointed at to carry out expansionist projects using agents in the countries concerned. Hence there is need for caution about Indian interference in internal affairs.

China has thus far not installed its armed forces in any other country. Nor has it intervened in the internal affairs of countries. Nor has it sought to set up military bases in any other country. This can change tomorrow. But, until that happens, it is incorrect to compare China with hegemonic powers. Nevertheless, it is unacceptable that China sought to permanently acquire a piece of land in the proposed Port City off Colombo. We object to it as it harms Sri Lanka's interests. We should also be clear that the imperialist purpose of possessing agricultural land in Sri Lanka is based on a desire for economic control over countries.

In the neo-colonial era, imperialism is the main enemy of toiling people and oppressed nations. Hence it is important to carry forward the anti-imperialist struggle at all levels. In this matter, we as Marxist Leninists, work together with other left, democratic and progressive forces. Our anti-imperialist duty is tied to internationalism. Hence the Party has acquired membership of International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties of Organization (ICOR). We need to separately and jointly expand and carry forward our anti-imperialist programme. That is our international duty as well. We will join hands with struggles of the working class of the world and anti-imperialist struggles.

- **Workers of the World Unite!**
- **Workers of the World and Oppressed people of the World Unite!**
- **We declare the solidarity of the Party with anti-imperialist struggles of the world and all revolutionary struggles!**

# Resolutions Adopted at the 6<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress

*[The following resolutions were adopted by the 6th All Sri Lanka Congress of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party held on 28, 29, 30 August 2015.]*

- 1. This Congress call upon all workers who are subject to exploitation and oppression under the neoliberal economy of globalization of the country to unite beyond differences of race, religion, language and region and struggle to secure their hard won trade union rights that were taken away after 1977, a fair wage, employment security and satisfactory working conditions.*
- 2. This Congress call upon all peasants to unite and launch peasants' movements directed at the rulers to prevent the harm inflicted by the neoliberal economic policies that are expedited through imperialist globalization and to rescue the peasantry and the agricultural sector from cruel exploitation by big capitalists, banks, business establishments and brokers*
- 3. As imperialism remains the principal enemy of all working people and oppressed nationalities, this Congress call upon all the working people of the country to reject all imperialist pressure and foreign intervention that harm the unity of the people and the sovereignty, security and economic development of the country and the government of the comprador and big capitalist classes which is an accomplice and its anti-national policies, and mobilize on a class basis.*
- 4. A resilient political solution has to be found for the national question through the rejection of the ruling class chauvinists and narrow nationalists with their politics of dominance. This Congress points out that the solution should be one with autonomy for traditional homelands for the Tamils and Muslims and based on the right to self*

*determination within a united Sri Lanka, and that it should besides recognize the Hill Country Tamils as a nationality and assure them of autonomy and autonomous inner structures as well as have provisions to create regional social administrative units in a way that assets the fundamental rights of other minority communities.*

5. *This Congress urges that inquiries into war crimes should be conducted in a way that upholds justice and is free of foreign intervention and the offenders, whoever they may be, should be duly punished and that restoration, rehabilitation, compensation and relief should be provided to women who lost their husbands and others affected by war. Six years after the end of the war, people are unable to return to their own lands, homes and marine regions and are living in misery in camps for the displaced and elsewhere; military camps should be removed from their areas of abode and livelihood where they are under severe military control, and the lands, homes, work places and marine regions should be returned soon to the people.*
6. *This Congress urges that all anti-people legislation in the country including laws for the prevention of terrorism should be nullified, that all political prisoners and those detained under such laws should be released without delay and that information about missing persons should be provided immediately.*
7. *This Congress urges that the ongoing life of misery in line rooms of the Hill Country Tamils with a 200 year history in the country should be brought to an end and that their right to land, housing, a village style social structure and fundamental rights of education and health should be secured and that plantation workers should be entitled to a daily minimum wage of Rs. 1000.*
8. *The Congress urges putting in place an extensive fisheries policy that would protect the fisheries resources of the country and contribute to the national economy as well as ensure employment security and safety at sea. It also urges an end to the miserable pillage of fish and use of threat by operators of large foreign trawlers that unlawfully*



*enter Sri Lankan waters, especially in the north and north-west, where Indian fishing boat owners are intent on plundering our marine resources and in the process wrecking our marine resources.*

- 9. In the north and east of the country as well as in other regions, people depressed by caste remain discriminated in many ways against by caste-based perverted thinking and practice. The Congress urges that while we, based on experiences of earlier struggles, advance in our resistance to casteism by joining hands with the entire working people to win the rights of the people depressed by caste in a context where they remain economically, educationally, health wise and culturally backward, we should also vehemently oppose the toxic Dalitist ideas that are being promoted among them by local and foreign elements.*
- 10. The Congress calls upon women who comprise more than 50% of the population practices to mobilize to put an end to their treatment as second class social creatures owing to exploitation of labour and oppressive conservative cultural practices, to shatter the shackles of gender enslavement, and to combat sexual violence, torture and abuse against women as well as abuse of children.*
- 11. The policies of neoliberalism, globalization, and privatization adopted in the country are destroying the education sector and free education in particular. A ruinous system of education is being promoted in a planned way with foreign and local advice and guidance. The Congress draws attention to the need for students and youth to join hands with the masses to struggle against such moves and to secure an educational system that will develop education and culture to further national interests and social advancement; and calls upon students, teachers and intellectuals to mobilize for the purpose.*
- 12. This Congress strongly condemns the multi-prong moves to further wreck the health sector of the country, promote private sector medicine and thereby kill off free medical care which is still the health support for the people and the role of globalization in promoting consumer culture which enables the sacrificing of the people to serve*

*the greed of the pharmaceuticals mafia peddling drugs on the pretext of curing illnesses, and demands the setting in place of a national health policy appropriate to the country and the people.*

13. *The smuggling, distribution and consumption of narcotic drugs and profiting from drugs occur in the country on an unprecedented scale. There is planned encouragement of such activities which affect the people across the country and the youth in particular who get addicted to drugs. The Congress urges undertaking mass movements against such abuses and to exert pressure on the government to act.*
14. *Nature and environment are polluted as a result of multinational and local companies and trade and commerce establishments functioning with greed for profit on land, water, air, sky, sea and forest. As a result, the country and the people face dangers and the health of the people is affected in many ways. In consideration of the fact that imperialism is solely responsible for this state of affairs and that its client, the comprador and big bourgeoisie of the country, is defending it, the Congress supports the adoption of a variety of steps to protect nature and prevent the pollution of the environment.*
15. *This Congress views with concern the submerging of all humanitarian cultural values as a result of the open market policy under globalization and adverse manifestations of modern information technology through movies, television, computers and mobile telephones, and urges undertaking pro-people art and literature and cultural activities to counter decadent art, literature and culture.*
16. *The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party through its 6<sup>th</sup> Congress expresses its support for and international solidarity with the struggles of the working class and the toiling masses against exploitation and oppression, struggles for liberation and independence, revolutionary struggles against imperialism by oppressed countries, people and nationalities, and the relentless struggles against imperialist aggression and military intervention across the world.*

# Tamil Nationalism in Crisis

*Asvaththaamaa*

## **Introduction**

Nationalism is the driving force of Sri Lankan parliamentary politics. The emergence of the Sri Lankan national question, which transformed into a civil war in the early 1980s, had the perfect ingredients for two counter-nationalisms to grow and feed off each other. Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms grew in parallel during the past thirty years along with the intensification of the conflict, killing thousands on both sides through fully fledged civil war.

The end of the civil war in May 2009 created a new battleground for the contending nationalisms to thrive, one as the victor and the other the victim. Sinhala nationalism celebrated the conquering of its Tamil counterpart and thereby the Tamil population as a whole. This victorious euphoria paved the way for the re-emergence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism with new faces and new rhetoric.

Tamil nationalism was hurt, wounded and bleeding. This gave energy and courage to fight back, not by the use of arms but through other means. Electoral politics was chosen, and the march was headed by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the so called representatives of the Tamil people.

The recently concluded parliamentary elections and its outcome have paved the way for a new setting for nationalism in general in Sri Lanka. The new government is created on a platform of 'good governance' and is heavily aided by neoliberalism. The combination of good governance and neoliberalism is countering nationalism in general. Sinhala nationalism is countered through economic development and good governance. Tamil

nationalism is countered with the pretext of good governance and equality in the form of opposition leader and the idea of reconciliation.

This paper tries to understand the dilemma nationalism faces today in Sri Lanka and argues that the contents of the nationalism is not enough to counter the challenge thrown at it by the good governance regime.

### **Nationalism: Some thoughts**

Originally, nation states were created for the purpose of capitalism. Capitalism which was formulating boundaries and creating new trade routines and modern ways of exploitation needed a framework to control and regulate the nations which was the major source for capitalistic accumulation. Along with the nation and the creation of nation states, the concept of nationalism came along as a by-product of capitalism and worked its way to develop and sustain capitalism in the nation states.

Nationalism is an ideology which supports, builds and is created by capitalism in the nation state. The common assumption is that states seeking or benefiting from popular unity, whether for warfare, revenue, or development, come to encourage or enjoy the common allegiance of their population, excluding only foreigners.

Benedict Anderson says that this "imagined community" emerges out of language, suggesting that no one is purposefully or even accidentally excluded from the emerging cohesion. As he says, "language is not an instrument of exclusion, it is fundamentally inclusive."

For Ernest Gellner, such homogeneity is "imposed by objective imperative" of the economy, with "industrial society allergic to counter-entropic institutions" or traits. For state theorists, pervasive loyalty or devotion to the polity is deliberately encouraged via allocation of services and privileges, with the state arbitrating disputes to bolster unity.

Eric Hobsbawm, based on his extensive research on the origins and growth of nationalism, is very critical of nationalism and has explained how in history nationalism has helped capitalism and its growth.

By late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, capitalism had transcended territorial boundaries and neoliberalism had been in the forefront. It had made a disjuncture between nationalism and capitalism, where capitalism no longer needed nationalism in a context where multinational corporations were becoming bigger than the nation states and international trade was regulating the state of affairs irrespective of national borders.

The story of the Third World countries is a little different. Most Third World countries were colonies and nationalism was a force that united the masses against colonial rule. The development of nationalism under colonialism had less to do with the growth of capitalism in the colony than with colonial exploitation of countries and communities.

Even under neo-colonialism, nationalism in all its forms evolved in response to oppression by a local elite class — often acting in the name of an ethnic group or a nationality — or by the combined actions of capitalism and a local elite class. Thus even feudal and semi-feudal societies have produced “nationalism” of one kind or another. This feature is important to understand the Sri Lankan context.

### **The Sri Lankan Context**

The Sinhala feudal-capitalist elite forces took over state power from the British colonial masters after independence. Nationalism was used as the main tool for parliamentary politics and polarised the society on ethnic lines, culminating in a nationalistic rhetoric.

The Sinhala upper class elite rulers followed in the footsteps of the British masters in using the divide-and-rule conspiracy to keep apart the nationalities and persist in their chauvinist stand. In the period following independence, nationalism has developed at every stage, under circumstances where chauvinistic oppression thrived. Chauvinism has been advanced with arrogance and power by the forces of the Sinhala ruling classes.

The Tamil leadership failed to put forward any common programme comprising a progressive political outlook and farsighted anti-capitalist

activities that could be carried out in unity with all the oppressed people of the country to oppose chauvinism. Since the Tamil leadership comprised elitist, upper caste, upper class leaders, it upheld a narrow nationalist outlook. It is noteworthy that while upholding a narrow nationalist outlook ethnically, its stand as a class has been supportive of capitalism.

Narrow nationalism and class compromise which comprised the response of the Tamil elite political leadership, have failed miserably throughout. Running out of options, the Tamil leadership adopted Tamil nationalism as its tool for parliamentary politics and secured its parliamentary seats. The emergence of young Tamil militants as a political force was a new turn in the Tamil nationalist politics. The Tamil militant organisations were petit bourgeois in outlook and driven by Tamil nationalism.

The military defeat of the LTTE was a major setback for Tamil nationalism. But the repressive, un-accommodative and chauvinistic years that followed made space for the second coming of Tamil nationalism. In other words, it created a space where electoral politics became the way to achieve the goals of Tamils. The electoral success in the Northern Provincial council elections gave greater legitimacy and weight to political parties with faith in electoral democracy.

### **The Current Situation**

The TNA spoke of international investigation of alleged war crimes by the Sri Lankan state and a just solution for the Tamils regarding the national question. During the parliamentary election, the election manifesto of the TNA reflected Tamil nationalistic sentiments.

On the other hand, the TNA's main opponent, the Tamil National Progressive Front (TNPF) adopted a more hard-line stance, which too was about ultra-Tamil nationalism. Both TNA and TNPF were banking heavily on the international community and imperialism for any kind of justice that they hoped for the Tamils.

The new 'good governance' regime is based on neoliberal values and neoliberal economic policies. Both TNA and TNPF are in line with the general Tamil nationalist expectations of the international community and its preference for imperialists. This is where nationalism got into a crisis. The values and virtues of Tamil nationalism reflect those of the new Sri Lankan government, but the latter denies the rights of the Tamil people and continues with oppression in forms different from the former regime and less aggressively. To make things more difficult for the Tamil nationalists, the US and other Western powers asked the TNA to work with the government. Tamil nationalism which was fashioned and voted in by the Tamil people to secure a solution by confrontation is now forced to work with the government as well as accept minimalistic terms.

The TNA and Tamil nationalists were hopeful that the international community lead by the US will impose an international investigation of war crimes allegedly committed during the final stages of the civil war. But now it is almost certain that the US supports an internal mechanism in Sri Lanka. The theatre in Geneva was created by the US and the West to tame and control the Rajapaksa regime through resolutions against Sri Lanka in the UNHCR, because the relationship between the West and the Rajapaksa regime had soured, over the years.

It should be noted that the US-sponsored resolutions in the UNHCR had nothing to do with the Sri Lankan national question. As elsewhere, the US raised human rights issues to persuade the Sri Lankan government to adopt policies that serve US interests. But the Tamil nationalists were naively happy and promoted the false impression that the US will ensure that Tamils get justice and a just solution.

During the last parliamentary elections Tamil nationalists contesting for parliamentary seats tried hard to convince the Tamil people that the "International Community" is their saviour, and made public calls for an international inquiry and intervention by the "International Community", knowing well by then that the US and its allies used the pretext of war crimes and human rights violations against Tamils during the closing

stages of the war to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan government to serve their own agenda and not out of love for the Tamils or a wish to solve the national question.

Tamil nationalism until recently had an enemy in the name of the Sri Lankan government and a friend in the name of imperialism. Imperialism opposed the Sri Lankan government not because it supported Tamils, but because Sri Lankan government was not adequately cooperative with it. Tamil nationalism, out of political bankruptcy, hoped and propagated the myth that imperialism is with the Tamils and is against the Sri Lankan State.

Now the situation has changed with the regime change and a UNP-led government in power, which is to the liking of imperialism. For the US and its allies the Sri Lankan government is now more cooperative and it is time to call off the uneasy noises made against the government. So they demand that the TNA and Tamil nationalists should cooperate.

## **Conclusion**

The crisis of Tamil nationalism is two-fold. First its base, which is the Saliva Vellala caste elite, is coming under attack from democratic political rivals. Secondly its saviours are asking them to be good and subservient, by working with the Sri Lankan government and cooperating, which is, however, against the people's mandate and therefore will hurt their parliamentary ambitions in future.

On the other hand, the Tamil people should realise that parliamentary politics and the representatives whom they have elected will not be able to bring any just solution for the Tamils. They have been voting to elect their representatives since 1931. Thus far nothing has been achieved through parliamentary democracy. Thus it is time to seek a better alternative.

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## **Sampur Thermal Power Station**

### **A mass struggle in the making**

Sampur which only a few years ago was a self sufficient village in the vicinity of Trincomalee on the East coast of Sri Lanka is today wooded. Tomorrow its plight will be worse. Six years since the end of war, people of Sampur are unable to settle in their own lands.

Even after the President assured by gazette notification that 350 hectares (818 acres) of land will be allocated for resettlement of the people of Sampur, there has been dillydallying in allocating land and on 18<sup>th</sup> May the people initiated a hunger strike which was called off after the lifting of an interim suspension order by the Court. These are matters that all may know or have been spoken about by all Tamil nationalist politicians.

But there is a much bigger issue that they have not spoken about. It concerns the thermal power plant to be set up in Sampur. The proposed thermal power plant is to use coal, which is referred to as a “dirty energy source”, and has major adverse implications for the environment. It will not only have serious environmental impact, but also have grave economic and social consequences. In particular, it could make the next generation unhealthy.

Despite this reality, no politician who declares that he is a defender of the Tamil people has opened his mouth about the potential effects. The reason is that the project has been undertaken by India. The champions of the Tamil national cause have not uttered anything besides empty phrases

like “To speak against India on the Sampur question is like opposing India” and “Opposing the Indian position will cause us a diplomatic setback”. In a matter concerning the people they adopt a stand that is totally opposed to the people.

But it is not possible to conceal forever the problems of the people. Those who understood the gravity of the problem have made it a subject of discussion. The organization “Green Trincomalee” founded by a few social activists has taken this issue to hand. Following continuous discussions in small groups, they have brought the matter to the attention of the public. Besides their variety of field activities, their most important achievement is to have made the people talk about the problem. A situation has developed in which even to a small extent the people of Trincomalee view this as everyone’s problem.

This awareness has advanced to the point of launching small campaigns. A peaceful protest demonstration has taken place protesting the Sampur thermal power plant. In a situation in which the people have taken to the streets on this issue, the campaign is developing into a mass struggle. Several progressive and democratic organizations including the Mass Organization for Social Justice have joined hands with Green Trincomalee to bring the struggle into the public sphere.

However, there are some vicious elements active in causing confusion among the people on the issue. They have initiated campaigns to the effect that all problems have been resolved with the gazette notification by the President and there is no more need to struggle or talk about anything. In fact these campaigns expose them thoroughly.

Under the circumstances, the need to clarify matters to the people, conduct more mass struggles, and seek nationwide cooperation for the struggles has become greater than before.

*Trincomalee Correspondents*

## **Comments in the Wake of the Haldummulla Meeriyabedde Landslide**

The District of Badulla has fifteen District Secretarial Divisions. Of the fifteen, the Haldummulla Secretariat which comes second in the list of most backward secretarial divisions has thirty nine Grama Niladhari Divisions, and is one in which Tamils constitute a 51% majority.

The Meerirabedde Estate lies along the foot of a mountain range and, even during summer, water flows ceaselessly along a stream originating at the mountain top. Hence the people of the village took to agriculture as their means of livelihood. It is significant that, meanwhile, in view of the favourable conditions offered by the water stream, dairy farmers had transformed the estate into a dairy village. Nevertheless, tea cultivation has remained the main form of employment of the people.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the day of the landslide, since outstation workers had locked up their homes and left early in the morning, school students too had started to leave their houses. Usually, the mothers hastily finish their morning chores and leave with their children under five only after they hear the factory siren at 7.30 a.m. and there was no reason for that day to be an exception. Besides them, other residents of the village, school drop-outs, and students awaiting results of the GCE O/L and A/L examinations were as usual at home.

Eye witnesses claimed that the landslide, moving at around 200 km/h from above, finished its 2 km long journey in 30-35 seconds. Sixty five families including six line settlements and individual houses lost their home completely in this incident. Besides, the number confirmed dead in the incident is 38, of whom 36 are from Meeriyabedde and one each from Koslande Division of the Meeriyabedde Estate and Arnold Division of the Mahakanda Estate. It is feared that a few more may have got entrapped in the landslide. The historical temple located in the village along with the hospital and playground has got completely buried under.

It was the unanimous view of the affected people that, although the villagers acted to inform relatives, the media and the armed forces by mobile telephone about the disaster which took place at 7.35 a.m., neither the armed forces nor any rescue team appeared at the site until 11.15 a.m. The fact the armed forces took four hours to arrive, although the Diyatalawa Army Camp, reputedly the second biggest military training camp in the country, was only 25 km from the site, suggests that the gravity of the tragedy was wilfully neglected.

Was it because the residents of this estate were 100% Tamils? The question arises in the minds of many as to what happened on that day to the defence forces who reach the venue well ahead of students' struggles and protest demonstrations by the public.

The landslide not only occurred in a way that split the village into two halves but also totally wrecked the only road that they used for transport. As a result, the victims were divided into two sections, with one on the Koslanda side and the other on the Poonagala side. It is another ironical truth that those who visited the site, including politicians and senior officials, went to see those on the Koslanda side but not those who had lost their homes and all belongings. The reason was that transport to the Koslanda region was in good condition and the Mahakanda Poonagala route required walking 6 km through wooded area.

Besides, on the day of the incident, although ruling party personalities and state officials failed to call on the victims, it was remarkable that the Mayor of Bandarawela was humane enough to visit them irrespective of political identity, distribute lunch and dry rations, and offer his tipper truck to transport them to the Poonagala School.

Amid these conditions, the soldiers who arrived belatedly to the venue did not help or make arrangements to transport the goods in the remaining houses to secure locations. It was significant that the owner of a nearby private estate who observed what went on and for his part went to the victims and distributed 100-150 parcels of food and offered his lorry to

transport them to the Poonagala Tamil Vidyalaya. It irritated many to see the soldiers standing among the crowds, viewing the landslide.

The arrival of Hon. Senthil Thondaman, Member of Uva Provincial Council and Minister of Plantation Infrastructure in the evening after all victims had been moved to safe locations attracted the attention of a few. As the thousands who went to view the landslide would testify, the weather was fine on the day of the incident and the next three days, and it remains a puzzle to this day whom the media intended to fool with reports that rescue operations were delayed by bad weather.

It is known that Ranjit Samarasinghe, minister in the present government and then Disaster Management Minister declared at a press conference that as early as 2005 warning was issued to the people about the impending danger and that the estate management was given advice about it. It is also known that Ranjit Samarasinghe was a minister in the UPFA government under President Rajapaksa. Besides, the CWC, which boasts that it is the oldest trade union in the Hill Country and the sole representative of the people of Indian descent, was also a partner in the UPFA government. It is known that from that day to now billions of rupees had been spent by the Mahinda Chinthanaya government on plans such as Gamaneguma, Maganeguma, Divineguma, Northern Spring and Dawn of the East and to build an international cricket stadium, an international airport, an international harbour, an international conference hall, super highways and Mahindodaya technological colleges and for hosting the Commonwealth Conference in which world leaders took part and along with it a world youth congress. But why could it not see that a community was drowned in darkness for nearly 150 years.

When it comes to crises and disasters affecting the majority community, its politicians and people's representatives investigate the relevant issues. It is practice that when they are unable to visit the venue of a disaster, they would at least send a coordinating secretary to the location to collect data. Representatives of the Hill Country Tamils are in parliament as ministers and MPs, in provincial councils as ministers and members, and besides

these as Coordinating Secretaries to the President and as Presidential Advisors. It is clear they use all their power for their personal benefit and none of them has the intention to communicate the problems of the people to those at higher levels.

The wage issue of the Hill Country Tamils has been there for a long time and their residences are century old and insecure. The health schemes available to villages are not available to the plantations. While insecticides are sprayed village after village to destroy dengue mosquitoes, not even notification of it reaches the people in the plantations. Tea estate workers, who play a key role in generating the national income, do not possess a land on which they could build a house. They do not own the houses that they occupy. Tea factories in many parts of the country face shut down and many tea estates too face closure. The situation in which they worked seven days a week has changed and the number of work days have declined to three or four. Besides, the daily wage of the worker is further reduced when attendance is less than 80% of the work days. Amid this mountain of problems, the announcement at a press conference by the leaders of the CWC, which boasts that it is the sole representative of the plantation workers, that it will give unconditional support for the government is a declaration of their selfish political intentions as well as the level of their political awareness. Meantime, other trade unions affiliated to the government too act with similar attitude.

Although several organizations speak up for the people and work sincerely for their salvation, since they function in isolation, the aforesaid political forces and the media behind them are able to successfully sideline their efforts. Hence organizations acting with the lofty goal of serving the people should come forward to work together at every level that offers an opportunity, while preserving the individuality of each.

*Marx Prabakar*  
*Meeriyabedde Estate, Koslanda*  
*November 2015*

### **Release Political Prisoners Immediately**

#### *NDMLP Statement to the Media*

*13<sup>th</sup> October 2015*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of Party on the demand for immediate release of long term political prisoners.

The hunger strike by long term political detainees in prison demanding unconditional release is fully justified. The hunger strike was the result of the Maithri-Ranil regime — claiming to administer good governance with reconciliation — being as indifferent as its predecessor towards the release political detainees in prison. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party fully supports their demands, and urges the government to intervene and take speedy action for their release within a set time frame.

Political prisoners in prisons, detention camps and rehabilitation centres for extremist activities have been released through inquiry and general amnesty. Some of them are MPs, ministers and in other high positions. But to detain for a long time those arrested based on the national question comprises racial discrimination and injustice. We have a tragic situation in which the long term political prisoners, their families and relatives suffer physical and emotional trauma. It has been pointed out that their fundamental and human rights are violated. Hence in view of all these matters, the Party urges the government to expedite the unconditional release of political prisoners.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

### **On Responses to the Geneva Resolution**

#### *NDMLP Statement to the Media*

*6<sup>th</sup> October 2015*

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

statement on the resolution which the US got passed in the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva.

The resolution on Sri Lanka by the US was designed to serve the needs and interests of the US and the West and to protect the Maithri-Ranil regime. The above resolution which has led to legal and practical problems will only help to drag matters on and not yield justice or benefits to the many thousands of Tamil people affected by war. At the same time, the chauvinists in the South and Tamil nationalists in the North have taken the resolution to hand to achieve their respective political ends. That is an attempt to encourage political turmoil among the nationalities and induce racial conflict. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly condemns the endeavours of both parties. At the same time it urges a just inquiry free of foreign meddling and capable of yielding justice and fairness and compensation to all affected people.

A climate has been created in which the Sri Lankan government has to be absolutely loyal to imperialism in order to slightly ease the vice-like grip of the threatened international inquiry. It is the responsibility of the entire people to oppose any threat and injustice of any form against the sovereignty, independence and integrity of the country. Meantime, allowing the ascent of forces that take advantage of the anti-imperialist feelings among the Sinhalese to project themselves as anti-imperialists and arouse the Sinhala public by giving a chauvinist twist to the Geneva resolution will lead to dangerous consequences.

Tamil nationalists who accept the European and US imperialists as their masters counted on the illusory international inquiry resolution by the US and persuaded the Tamil people to follow suit are now disappointed.

Had an internal inquiry which would enjoy the confidence of the entire people been urged on behalf of the Tamils, it could have won considerable support among the Sinhalese. But the Tamil nationalists, out of their faith in foreigners, espoused the international inquiry only to be let down by the US. In order that their political mess does not catch the eyes of the people, each leadership is acting out its own drama.



Hence the Party, while urging a just inquiry into war crimes and human rights violations, also emphasizes the need to find a firm and durable political solution to the national question.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **Keep the Election Pledge on Plantation Wages**

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

*23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015*

Comrade V Mahendran, National Organizer of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party on the collective agreement on wages that is dragging on.

The wages issue was a powerful weapon in the hands of the trade union and political readers of the Hill Country. Having become MPs, ministers, deputy ministers and ministers of state, with the votes gathered using the demand for a Rs 1000 wage increase, they are now silent about the question of wages. Rather than using the lives of the plantation workers for their selfish political theatre, they should act to ensure that the government and the parties concerned grant the workers a Rs 1000 wage increase. The government too should play a role as a party to the Collective Agreement on wages to be made between the major trade unions and the Plantation Employers Federation and keep its election pledge to the workers.

Six months have lapsed since the Collective Agreement which decides the livelihood of plantation workers expired in March. The main trade union to sign the Agreement declared that it will not rest without securing a daily wage of Rs 1000 before the period of the agreement was over. This was widely welcomed by all workers. But, since the Employers Federation narrated the same old story of making losses, the talks dragged on. This served well the Hill Country leaders, the UNP, UPFA and JVP to rake in votes at the general election. It was as a result that the UNP won with large majorities in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Kandy. In the Hill Country, eight Hill Country Tamil candidates got elected from the Tamil Progressive Alliance, the UNP and the CWC.

The Party strongly criticizes their indifference on the question of wages a month after the election. The Party appeals to the trade unions that sign the Agreement and the government that they should honour the moral responsibility that they have towards plantation workers and commence negotiations with the Employers Federation and secure a daily wage of Rs 1000 for the plantation workers.

V Mahendran  
National Organizer

## **On Addressing the National Question**

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

*7<sup>th</sup> September 2015*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party urged at the 6<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress of the Party that the national question still remains the main problem of the county, and added that there is no guarantee about the extent to which the problem will be resolved by the present government, referred to as the National Government for Good Governance. Also, it is unlikely that because R Sampanthan, the leader of the TNA, is the Leader of Opposition and S Adaikalanathan is Deputy Chairman of Committees in Parliament there will be a solution to the national question. Hence, the correct political path would be to put forward a solution in the form of autonomy based on the right to self determination and launch a progressive national democratic movement.

The economic problem of the country is fundamental. Undoubtedly, in a few months its impact will take the form of crises and issues. At the same time, the national question, the main problem of the county, is still in the balance. At this juncture, the Party reiterates the solution which it has put forward in the past for resolving the national question. The political solution should comprise autonomy with the right to self determination within a united Sri Lanka. Such a solution should be not specific to the Tamil nationality but applicable to the Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities as well as to other minority communities. While upholding such a solution based on autonomy as a long term solution, it is necessary to implement devolution of power at all levels and advance through unity, equality and

democracy among nationalities. This could be the first step towards a solution based on autonomy, and it could thereby be possible to de-escalate the degree of conflict between nationalities.

Hence, it is the need of the moment for the Tamil people to use the experiences of their political past to adopt a progressive national democratic stand to resist chauvinist oppression in the national question. The Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils, in order to address the national question as faced by them, need to engage in politics that lets them decide their own destiny. To achieve this, they need to transcend the politics of the ballot box and mobilize along the path of mass political struggle. The national question cannot be resolved through parliamentary positions or by placing their faith in those who have thus far cheated the Tamil people and others to serve their self interest by talking about the international community. Thus what is needed today is for the people to awaken politically, reject all leaderships without policies for the people and take a political line appropriate to their needs.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **Statement on the Sixth Congress of the Party**

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

*31<sup>st</sup> August 2015*

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement to the media on the conclusion of its Sixth All Sri Lanka Congress which took place in Jaffna on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of August.

Establishment of the neoliberal economic structure is going ahead in full force in Sri Lanka under neo-colonialism. Class contradiction and oppression related to it remain the fundamental contradiction in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile the national contradiction and chauvinistic oppression resulting from it are in prime position. The ruling parties of the local comprador and big capitalist classes and the foreign imperialist forces that support and welcome them are together the common enemy of the people of Sri Lanka. Under the conditions, only revolutionary mass politics and struggles for people's power can be a

solution to the problems and crises of all the people of the country. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party has that as its aim and purpose.

The country and the people are facing severe crises in the economic sphere. According to government statistics, the economic growth rate is at 4.5%, which means that the living standard of the working people is still poor. The recent change of government cannot provide a remedy for these economic crises since the change concerned personalities, and the state machinery and state power remain unchanged. As a result, the workers, peasants and other working people are to be subjected to bigger burdens and crises than at present. The Maithri-Ranil regime has embraced the existing neo-colonial, neoliberal economic programme of globalization more eagerly than its predecessor. It is highly approved of by US imperialism and the European and Japanese imperialists led by it; and they have come forward to collaborate with the new regime. Meanwhile the Indian regional hegemonic forces and the Chinese capitalist regime are doing their best to retain their positions of influence in Sri Lanka.

While the fundamental contradiction has in its clutches the country and its entire people, the thus far unresolved national contradiction and oppression continue to be the main issues. Hence, the resolution of the national question is essential to the oppressed nationalities as well as the entire population of the country.

The essence of the national question is that, while the ruling big capitalist classes and chauvinism are on one side of the contradiction, the Tamil, Muslim, Hill Country Tamil nationalities and minority communities such as the Burghers, Malays and the aboriginal people remain on the other. It should be recognized that the national question is not merely a Sinhala-Tamil contradiction. The solutions for the national question put forward by the elitist Tamil leadership which upholds its politics of domination as narrow nationalism are parochial and racist, and are likely to provide nourishment and joy to chauvinists and meddling foreign forces.

Thus, the Tamil nationalism which has been adopted to this day remains bound by feudal ideology and thinking. The Party identifies it as reactionary nationalism. Such reactionary nationalism is evident among the Muslim and

Hill Country Tamil nationalities. That is why the Party through its Sixth Congress posed the challenge to all democratic and progressive forces among all nationalities that they should propagate progressive national democracy. The fundamental stand of the Party is to establish socialism by achieving the New Democratic Revolution through united revolutionary struggles of the workers, peasants and other working people. That is our long term goal. The Congress affirmed that, at the same time, the Party will join hands with the forces of progressive national democracy and provide support and guidance to them in launching mass struggles when they mobilize to resolve the national question and other issues.

On the national question, the Party has already transcended the politics of the ballot box to stand by the oppressed nationalities in mass struggles against oppression. That has to be further widened to launch struggles in collaboration with progressive forces. It is the extension and growth of such struggles that can secure autonomy, autonomous internal structures and self-administrative units based on the right to self determination within a united Sri Lanka and thus lead to a lasting solution to the national question. The Congress which proposed this as the long term solution, expressed its belief that that progress towards a solution based on autonomy is possible through devolving power to provincial councils and local government bodies, and appealed to genuinely pro-people forces at home and abroad who understand and accept the basics of progressive national democracy to come forward to work towards this end.

The Congress, having discussed the current international situation, pointed out that the imperialist alliance led by the US which is reaching out across the globe for global hegemony is the main enemy of the people of Sri Lanka and the world. It also noted that the reality that the leadership of the Indian ruling class, which is the regional hegemon, remains a threat and that Sri Lanka too faces the threat of Indian intervention.

Having discussed the current national and international situations, the Congress adopted its programme and 16 resolutions. It also elected a new Central Committee with 16 members, including Comrade SK Senthivel as General Secretary, Comrade V Mahendran as National Organizer, and Comrade K. Ganapathirajan as Treasurer.

The Congress concluded with Red Salute to departed comrades and commendation and honours for comrades who had served the Party for long.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

## **Fair Wages for Plantation Workers**

### *NDMLP Statement to the Media*

10<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary and Comrade V Mahendran, National Organizer of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of Party on the wage demands of the plantation workers.

It is just and essential that plantation workers to whom the cost of living and problems of livelihood are severe crises are awarded a daily wage of Rs 1000.00. The Plantation Employers Federation is dragging out the discussions on collective agreement to dodge the issue and award a pittance as wage increase. Hence the President and the Prime Minister should intervene in the matter to take steps to ensure that a daily wage of Rs 1000.00 is awarded. Meantime, it is necessary for the plantation workers to unite in struggle beyond differences in trade union affiliation in order that due pressure is exerted for their wage increase.

The plantation workers have never received a wage to match the cost of living and problems of livelihood. The major trade unions do not show the same interest as in collecting subscriptions in matters of wage increase. This situation has persisted even after the government which took over the estates handed them to private companies. Since 1999, the wage increase is agreed between the major trade unions and the Plantation Employers Federation every two years. The wage increase has been a minimal rise in daily wages. Although the CWC, the biggest trade union, despite having ministerial positions in successive governments has agreed to very low wages in negotiations with the Plantation Employers Federation. The National Plantation Workers Union, the trade union of the UNP, as well as the Federation of Trade Unions have similarly been in agreement with the plantation companies. Governments of the past have refrained from intervening in the decisions to award low wage increases, thereby siding with

the employers. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party urges that the President and the government of today who came to power with the votes of the plantation workers and the Hill Country Tamil MPs who have been granted ministerial posts in the government should act honestly to persuade the Plantation Employers Federation to grant a daily wage of Rs 1000.00 for the plantation workers. However, the Party also urges the plantation workers to persevere in their struggle for a wage increase based on the strength of their unity and beyond the politics of the ballot box.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary

V Mahendran  
National Organizer

## **Regional Parties and Mass Organizations**

### **Political Detainees**

**Jaffna:** Comrade Selvam Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the Party released on 14<sup>th</sup> November a pamphlet affirming unqualified support of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party to the 217 Tamil political prisoners who were on hunger strike in 14 prisons from 8<sup>th</sup> November in view of the breach of the pledge by the President that all political detainees will be released by 7<sup>th</sup> November.

The pamphlet pointed that such detention and other acts of oppression by the state even after the end of the war were made possible by the Prevention of Terrorism Act introduced by JR Jayewardene. It added that the people who elected this government in the hope that it will restore democracy and find a just solution to the national question had been let down and urged that mass struggles involving all nationalities as the only feasible means of securing justice. It also pointed out that while forces within and outside the government sought to block the release of the prisoners, democratic and progressive forces and working people among the Sinhalese as well as people of the North-East and the Hill Country were ceaselessly campaigning for the release of the detainees, and urged therefore that such an approach should be adopted on a broader scale to embrace other issues as well.

**Matale:** The Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice (HMOS) conducted a mass demonstration near the Clock Tower in Matale on Sunday

15.11.2015 supporting the hunger strike of the political prisoners demanding their release. Besides members of the families of the detainees, the New Democratic Youth front, the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, the Frontline Socialist Party and the National Organization for the Release of Political Prisoners participated in the demonstration.

## **Police Violence against Students**

**New Democratic Youth Front:** On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015, David Suren and T Sriprakash, Joint Secretaries of the NDYF issued a statement denouncing the brutal police attack on National Diploma in Accountancy students in Colombo on 29<sup>th</sup> October. The statement added that the students protested the lowering in 2014 of the status of their diploma — earlier on par with a degree in commerce — compelling them to study for a further one and a half year period for a fee, after completing the 4-year programme. It also noted that the students also protested against setting up private universities and demanded the safeguarding of free education.

## **Landslides and Safe Housing in the Plantations**

**HMOS Campaign:** The Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice (HMOS) is continuing with its struggle to put a end to the 200 years long life in line rooms by Hill Country Tamil plantation workers, to get rid of insecure settlements and to secure housing schemes and 20 perches of land per family. It conducted a picketing campaign at the end of October at the site of the landslide in Meeriyabedde to mark the anniversary of the event and denounce the failure of the government and opportunist leaders to deliver on the promise to re-house the victims of the disaster.

The HMOS visited the scene of the landslide in the Wedamulla Kayirukatti Estate in Kothmale which killed seven and displaced more than 200 people on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015, and shared in the grief of the affected people. In its statement the HMOS pointed out that the tragedy occurred because concerns about safety that have been raised from time to time were ignored by the unions and the government. It also drew attention to the still incomplete housing project for the victims of Meeriyabedde landslide 2014 and the



abandoned re-housing of victims of flooding and landslide in Rattota Nikaloya in 2013.

## **Wages of Plantation Workers**

**Matale:** Comrade Surendra, Matale Regional Secretary of the Party issued a statement in October 2015 denouncing the opportunism of parliamentary political parties and leading trade unions in the Hill Country for making false promises of securing a daily wage of Rs 1000 to get the votes of the plantation workers and criticized the executive presidency for avoiding a decision and passing the buck to the trade unions and the Employers Federation.

Comrade Mohan Raj, Matale Organizer of the Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice (HMOS) issued a newspaper statement on 1<sup>st</sup> November in which he pointed out that the reactionary diplomacy of the leaders of the Hill Country Tamils has let down the plantation workers and that sustained struggle is the only way open to secure a fair wage.

## **Fishers' Rights**

K Anandakumarasamy, President and S Thanujan and A Seevaratnam, Joint Secretaries of the Mass Organization for Social Justice issued a statement in September challenging the Northern Provincial Council to pass a resolution in the interest of protecting the livelihood of local fishers by calling for the prevention of the large scale entry of Indian trawler fishing vessels into Sri Lankan territorial waters. The statement drawing attention to the indifference of the governments of both countries about resolving the problem expressed solidarity with the campaign in Jaffna on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 by fishers of the North — the most affected section of the population since the commencement of the war — protesting against intrusion by Indian trawlers which besides depriving the fishers of their catch also damage their equipment, and appealed to the campaigners to not let the campaign to be diverted so that it may advance towards success.

## **Protesting Child Molestation**

Following the abduction, rape and murder of the 5-year old girl child Seya Sadewmi in mid-September, a successful mass awareness campaign with

participation by all communities took place on 30th September in the vicinity of the Vavuniya Bus Station. The campaign was organized by the Mass Organization for Human Rights, Ceylon Teachers Union and the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party.

The New Democratic Youth Front organized a mass awareness campaign in Jaffna on 3<sup>rd</sup> October against sexual and other forms of abuse of children and women that are on the rise in the country. The campaign led by the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, Mass Organization for Human Rights and the Organization for Women's Liberation Thought was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October opposite the Jaffna Bus Station with participation by members of the public and representatives of public organizations.

## **On Parliamentary Elections**

The Northern Regional Committee of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party organized a series of seminars in the Districts of Jaffna and Vavuniya to clarify its position on the parliamentary elections scheduled for August 2015. A well attended seminar titled "What will the general election achieve?" chaired by Comrade Selvam Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the Party was held in the cafeteria of the Jaffna Library on 7<sup>th</sup> July. Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party delivered the main address.

### ***Obituary***

*Renowned Dutch journalist and author Peter Custers died in Leiden, Netherlands on 3<sup>rd</sup> September aged 66. Peter, a tireless campaigner of the Dutch peace movement against the threat of nuclear war, has, over the past twenty years, also helped or initiated a variety of international campaigns on Third World causes and challenged trade liberalisation. Peter, well known for his writings on anti-imperialist themes, was a friend of the NDMLP and has contributed to this Journal. Marxist Leninist New Democracy records his loss with deep regrets.*

# Message to the Arab World

Nizar Qabbani

*If I knew I'd come to no harm,  
And could see the Sultan,  
This is what I would say:  
'Sultan,  
Your wild dogs have torn my clothes  
Your spies hound me  
Their eyes hound me  
Their noses hound me  
Their feet hound me  
They hound me like Fate  
Interrogate my wife  
And take down the name of my friends.  
Sultan,  
When I came close to your walls  
and talked about my pains,  
Your soldiers beat me with their boots,  
Forced me to eat my shoes.  
Sultan,  
You lost two wars,  
Sultan,  
Half of our people are without tongues,  
What's the use of a people without tongues?  
Half of our people  
Are trapped like ants and rats  
Between walls.'  
If I knew I'd come to no harm  
I'd tell him:  
'You lost two wars  
You lost touch with children.'*

[Verse 17 of poem titled "A Message to the Arab World"]

*“All day long this man would toil thus, his whole being centered upon the purpose of making twenty-three instead of twenty-two and a half cents an hour; and then his product would be reckoned up by the census taker, and jubilant captains of industry would boast of it in their banquet halls, telling how our workers are nearly twice as efficient as those of any other country. If we are the greatest nation the sun ever shone upon, it would seem to be mainly because we have been able to goad our wage-earners to this pitch of frenzy.”*

— Upton Sinclair, in the novel *“The Jungle”*

*[Upton Beall Sinclair, Jr. (1878 – 1968) was a highly reputed American novelist, writer, journalist, and socialist politician and activist]*

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