

**Marxist Leninist**

# **New Democracy**

**February 2019**

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**புதிய - ஜனநாயக மார்க்சிச - லெனினிசக் கட்சி**

**NEW - DEMOCRATIC MARXIST - LENINIST PARTY**



# City Johannesburg

Mongane Wally Serote (1944–)

This way I salute you:

My hand pulses to my back trousers pocket

Or into my inner jacket pocket

For my pass, my life,

Jo'burg City.

My hand like a starved snake rears my pockets

For my thin, ever lean wallet,

While my stomach groans a friendly smile to hunger,

Jo'burg City.

My stomach also devours coppers and papers

Don't you know?

Jo'burg City, I salute you;

When I run out, or roar in a bus to you,

I leave behind me, my love,

My comic houses and people, my dongas and my ever whirling dust,

My death

That's so related to me as a wink to the eye.

Jo'burg City

I travel on your black and white and roboted roads

Through your thick iron breath that you inhale

At six in the morning and exhale from five noon.

Jo'burg City

*(continued on inside back cover)*

## *Editorial*

What was a constitutional coup lasted fifty one days from 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 when President Sirisena replaced Wickremasinghe with Rajapaksa as Prime Minister to 15<sup>th</sup> December when Rajapaksa resigned after the Supreme Court ruled that the dismissal of Wickremasinghe was illegal.

The President's irresponsibility hurt the political stability of the country. The haste with which he appointed Rajapaksa has raised questions about his motives as well as of others behind it. His declaration of a non-existent majority for Rajapaksa and unethical acts on behalf of the latter to create a majority by resorting to massive bribery to persuade MPs to change sides has ruined the credibility of parliamentary democracy.

Although the TNA seemingly stood by parliamentary democratic norms, there is doubt if such principled behaviour would recur under another set of conditions, since in its role as the main opposition party, it acted more as an undeclared partner of the UNF-led government than as opposition, and its loyalty to the UNF (really the UNP) was all too transparent.

Neither the UNF nor the UPFA alliance before it had a parliamentary majority, nor will the alliance led by the SLPP controlled by the Rajapaksa clan. MPs are bought with ministerial posts and other rewards, without which the mercenaries would seek other avenues. That leads to matching demands by partners and party members, and to ridiculously large cabinets of ministers which has been the norm since President Rajapaksa bought off opposition MPs to secure a stable majority in 2006.

Letting Rajapaksa become Prime Minister by foul means was as undesirable as it was to let him continue as President with plans to propagate the corrupt dictatorial rule of his family.

Removal of the Rajapaksa regime has, however, not changed anything for the country or the people, but for one set of corrupt politicians in power being substituted with another. But for a slight reduction in presidential power and a little more freedom for the media, nothing has been

achieved in restoring law and order or eliminating financial corruption and abuse of power. The economy is a shambles and the country is being burdened with debt to enable massive projects that bring little benefit to the ordinary people. Even after the failed coup, the UNF seems to have learned nothing and continues the way it did before the coup.

The UNF–UPFA coalition was a marriage of convenience between the UNP and a minority of the SLFP, that came about after Sirisena was elected President in 2015. Despite minimal difference in political content between the parties, a system of personal loyalty and patronage stands in the way of trust and cooperation between the two parties dominated by persons greedy for money and ambitious for personal power. Thus the partnership was doomed at birth, more so because there was no serious political programme for the declared regime of “Good Governance”.

As for policy, party and personal preferences of foreign powers do not manifest in a distinct foreign policy stand, especially since economic liberalization, and then the war, surrendered the country’s sovereignty to rival powers. Some foreign powers are more explicit in their demands on the country and preference of government than others and that invites foreign meddling in the affairs of the country

The country is unable to come out of the economic mess that it fell into owing to the disastrous economic policy it adopted since 1978. It is unable to resolve the national question, even after experiencing a painful war. Corruption and crime dominate. No major political party or alliance, including the JVP and parties representing minority nationalities has an answer, and the way the parliamentary political system is structured obstructs the emergence of a political party that can rise above parochial considerations and capitalist class interests.

While it is important to defend parliamentary democracy against fascist and military threat, we cannot entrust that system to resolve problems faced by the people. The key lesson of the failed coup is that democracy is too delicate to be left to the mercy of parliamentary politics, and needs to be built through mass politics led by left and progressive forces.

# The October Revolution Lives

## Conclusions for the Revolutionary Class Struggle Today

*Comrade Jose Maria Sison*

*Chairman, Communist Party of the Philippines &  
Chairperson, International League of Peoples' Struggle*

*Comrade Jose Maria Sison delivered the Introductory Speech for the International Seminar marking 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the October Revolution, organized by the International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations (ICOR) and the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO) on October 29, 2017. The text of the speech is reproduced below with the kind permission of Comrade Sison, for which Marxist Leninist New Democracy is grateful to him.*

Dear Comrades,

First of all, I wish to thank Comrade Stefan Engel, the International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations (ICOR) and the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO) for inviting me to speak on Item 6, "The October Revolution

Lives: Conclusions for the revolutionary class struggle today”, in this international theoretical seminar to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

It is a pleasure and honour to have this opportunity to exchange ideas and views with the comrades in ICOR and the 12th ICMLPO. I convey to you warmest greetings of solidarity from the International League of Peoples’ Struggle, which has been undertaking study conferences and other activities to celebrate the centenary of the October Revolution.

I propose to draw conclusions from the development of subjective forces of the revolution before, during and after the October Revolution. I wish to focus on how Lenin and his loyal successors built the Bolshevik Party ideologically, politically and organizationally. The aim of making the conclusions is to define the lessons to learn from the example of the Bolsheviks and the tasks to carry out in the revolutionary class struggle today.

## **Part I: Conclusions from the Development of Subjective Forces in the October Revolution**

### **1. Ideological Building**

Before he turned twenty years old, Lenin had already read and studied thoroughly *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Capital*, which educated him on the application of materialist dialectics in the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and in the critique of the capitalist political economy, respectively. When he read the works of the Marxist forerunner Georgi Plekhanov, he agreed with him that Russia was moving from feudalism to capitalism and that the proletariat would carry the development further to proletarian revolution and socialism. This view repudiated that of the agrarian-socialist Narodnik movement,

which had presumed that the peasantry could establish socialism by building peasant communes. However, Lenin recognized the importance of the revolutionary role of the peasantry in alliance with proletariat.

By the time that Lenin published his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in 1909, it was clear that he had surpassed Plekhanov in comprehending Marxist materialist philosophy. The latter could not recognize the prime importance of social practice over personal experience. Lenin contended with the "third party" philosophy of bourgeois subjectivists, especially of the type of Hume and Bishop Berkeley, who regarded reality as mere constructs of sense-data.

Outstandingly, he identified the unity of opposites as the most fundamental law of material dialectics. This is rigorously demonstrated in the analytical writings of Marx and Lenin himself.

The first major work of Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), showed his comprehensive and profound knowledge of Russian economy and society and laid the ground for understanding the role of Russia in the international context of modern imperialism.

Russian imperialism was of the military feudal kind but already had industrial enclaves which were comparable to those of the cities of Western Europe and whose capital accumulation was fed by the oppressed nationalities in an ocean of feudalism and feudalism.

Lenin had a clear view of Russia as the weakest link in the chain of imperialist countries and as a huge country subject to the law of uneven development, oppressing and exploiting the toiling masses of workers and peasants and yet imposed upon by stronger imperialist powers. He could lead the October Revolution to victory because he understood the nature and laws of motion of imperialism as he explicated in his 1916 book, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, more comprehensively

and more profoundly than the earlier critics of this phenomenon like John A. Hobson (*Imperialism*, 1902) and Rudolf Hilferding (*Finance Capital*, 1910). Most important of all he opposed Kautsky's notion of ultra-imperialism in 1912. Such notion presupposed that the imperialist powers invest abroad, develop the less developed countries and bring about the growth of industry and the proletariat on a unilinear line. It paved the way for social chauvinism and supporting the imperialist war budgets in the run up to World War I. Lenin countered Kautsky and the Second International by stressing the law of uneven development, the imperialist struggle for a redivision of the world and the spasmodic flow of investment that results in crises and wars. He was firm on describing imperialism as crisis-stricken, decadent, moribund and aggressive. Having led the victory of the October Revolution, Lenin further repudiated Kautsky in 1918 with the book, *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*.

Lenin correctly defined modern imperialism or monopoly capitalism as the highest and final stage of capitalism and described the era as that of modern imperialism and proletarian internationalism. He identified the five features, such as the following: a) the dominance of monopoly capital in capitalist economies, b) the merger of industrial and bank capital to form a finance oligarchy, c) the growing importance of the export of surplus capital over the export of surplus goods, d) the formation of cartels, syndicates and other international combines of monopolies, and e) the complete division of the world among the capitalist countries as economic territory (sources of cheap labour and raw materials, markets, fields of investments and spheres of influence; be these colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries). The fifth feature leads to a struggle for redivision of the world among the imperialist powers upon the unceasing change in the balance of forces.



The economic crisis of the world capitalist system and the contradictions among the capitalist powers had already broken out into World War I when in 1916 Lenin wrote *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. The inter-imperialist war and the victory of the October Revolution vindicated and proved correct a series of his propositions: the uneven development of the imperialist countries, Russia as one of the weakest links in the chain of imperialist countries, imperialism as the eve of socialism, turning the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war and the possibility of the revolutionary victory of the Bolsheviks first against Tsarism and then against the bourgeoisie.

He predicted the victory of the October Revolution as well as the emergence of a worse general crisis of the world capitalist system after World War I. Indeed, a more severe socio-economic and political crisis afflicted a number of imperialist countries, especially the losers in World War I. The struggle between revolution and counterrevolution continued in Germany in the 1920s. Fascism took power in Italy in 1922. The ever worsening crisis of the Weimar Republic and the bourgeois incompetence and bungling of the social democrats led to the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany in 1933. The Great Depression engulfed the entire capitalist world in the 1930s and led to World War II.)

## **2. Political Building**

In his major work *Two Tactics of Social Democracy* (1905), Lenin put forward the general line of the revolution by which the Bolsheviks could arouse, organize and mobilize the broad masses of the people against Tsarism and the bourgeoisie. He elaborated on the teaching of Marx that the battle for democracy must be won before the battle for socialism. He called for the basic democratic alliance of the workers and peasants in sharp contrast to the narrow losing line of the 1905 revolution, which prematurely called for all power to the workers' soviets.

Under the leadership of Lenin, the Bolsheviks maintained their solidity as a proletarian revolutionary party but also saw the importance and necessity of alliance with other political forces in order to overthrow Tsarism in the February Revolution. In preparation for the October Revolution, Lenin paid attention to developing comprehensive leadership over the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers. He made sure that upon the overthrow of the provisional government under Kerensky, power would pass on to the soviets. As early as 1914, he wrote the *Right of Nations to Self-determination* in order to undermine the military-feudal foundation of Russian imperialism.

From the study of the Paris Commune of 1871 by Karl Marx, Lenin learned the most essential lesson that for the proletarian dictatorship and the proletarian revolution to prevail, the bureaucratic and military machinery of the bourgeois state must be smashed. He wrote and published *State and Revolution* in 1917 while he was preoccupied with the practical problems of the proletarian revolution. The strategy and tactics for defeating the enemy and winning the revolution must be consonant with and appropriate to the history and conditions of the imperialist country where the proletariat leads and carries out the armed revolution. The imperialist war, the terrible consequences on Russian troops and the revolutionary work done by the Bolsheviks among them created the conditions for the overthrow of Tsarist rule in February 1917 and then of the Kerensky-led bourgeois government in October 1917 through urban uprisings.

But the fighting extended from the cities to the countryside until 1920 because of the sizeable remnants of the reactionary army and the forces of Western imperialist intervention. The Bolsheviks became well prepared for the fighting in the countryside because they had gained all-round leadership in the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers, had built up a formidable Red Army and had control over the centres and lines of

logistics and communications. The successful strategy and tactics employed by the Bolsheviks in the urban uprisings and in the battles of fluid movement in the countryside became a rich source of lessons and inspiration for the proletarian revolutionaries all over the world under the auspices of the Third International.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks concentrated on leading the October Revolution to victory in 1917, and the subsequent tasks of building Soviet power such as reconstituting the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party as the All-Russian Communist Party in 1918, defeating the White Armies in the Civil War and foreign interventionist powers until 1920, founding the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922 and reviving the economy and consolidating Soviet power through the New Economic Policy. But even amidst the Civil War in 1919, Lenin promptly paid attention to the founding of the Third International in Moscow in order to advance the world proletarian revolution and to further demonstrate the difference between the Communists and the opportunists and revisionists in the Second International which had dissolved in 1916.

At first, Lenin expected that the first inter-imperialist war and continuing crisis of the world capitalist system would generate revolutionary conditions in the imperialist countries in Europe, especially in Germany where the working class movement became strong under communist leadership. But unlike Trotsky, he did not depend exclusively on victory of the proletarian revolution in Germany or Western Europe for the consolidation of Soviet power and the continued advance of the world proletarian revolution. Indeed, if the world proletarian revolution could not advance through Berlin it could do so through Beijing. Lenin extended the call of the *Communist Manifesto* for the workers of the world to unite against capitalism to the call for the workers and all oppressed peoples and nations to unite against imperialism.

Early on after the victory of the October Revolution in 1917, Lenin paid great attention to the role and work of the Third International in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles of the oppressed peoples and nations in the East and made sure that communist parties were formed among them. He laid the ground for the theory and practice of two-stage revolution (new democratic revolution and then socialist revolution) in the underdeveloped countries. After the death of Lenin, Stalin continued the proletarian revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks in socialist construction and revolution. He built the strong foundation of the Soviet economy through socialist industrialization and through the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture.

In the further experience and clarification of the new democratic and socialist stages of the revolution after the October Revolution, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party have outstandingly demonstrated the correctness and effectiveness of the strategic line of protracted people's war by encircling the cities from the countryside and accumulating strength until conditions are ripe for seizing power in the cities in predominantly agrarian and underdeveloped countries. At any rate, the various forms of legal and armed struggles that enabled the rise of people's democracies and several socialist countries after World War II are worthy of study for appropriate application in various types of countries under various conditions. In the course of World War II partisan warfare could be waged in both urban and rural areas in Europe.

### **3. Organizational Building**

In *What Is to be Done* (1902) Lenin gave much importance to the Party newspaper *Iskra* as a propagandist and organizer of the Party. Indeed, to recruit new members and firm up the old stock of members, the Party must always invigorate them with the correct revolutionary position on vital issues and must account how many members are buying and

reading the newspaper, and how many members and unorganized people are responding to calls for mass mobilization.

In his debate with Martov on organizational matters, Lenin opposed the view that the Party must be constituted by the trade unions. He pointed out that if the Party would exclusively arise out of the narrow confines of trade unionism, then it would be like the bourgeois labourite party. He called for professional proletarian revolutionaries and advocated individual Party membership subject to the principles of proletarian revolutionary remoulding, active party life, militant activism among the masses and democratic centralism conducive to freedom and discipline. The Party cadres and members must be able to look over the entire society from the vantage of the working class, become a partisan to this class and further remould themselves as proletarian revolutionaries. Because revolution is a mass undertaking, the Party must be at the helm and at the core of the trade unions, peasant associations and other mass organizations. These must be under the direction of the competent Party offices and cadres. And within mass organizations, there must be fractions, groups or cells of the Party at the core. The masses organized by the Party are the reservoir of new Party members and can serve as the hard core of the spontaneous masses who rise up during revolutionary situations and crises.

Giving due importance to its central revolutionary task, which is to seize political power, the Party must consider how to smash the military and bureaucratic machinery of the reactionary state. The Bolsheviks sent cadres into the Tsarist army to organize revolutionary cells within and also participated in parliament. Thus, by the time the revolutions of 1917 occurred, the soviets of soldiers were already a major revolutionary force. From the masses of workers and peasants who were organized as Red Guard, the Red Army grew bigger as the soviets contributed troops and

supplies for winning the civil war and the resistance against foreign interventionist forces.

According to circumstances, the revolutionary parties of the proletariat must build the mass organizations of various classes and sectors, self-defence organizations, the Red Army or the people's army, the organs of political power, the intra-class and inter-class alliances, the international unity of communist and workers' parties and the international solidarity of peoples. By learning from the October Revolution and the subsequent revolutionary struggles, we come to know what subjective forces of the revolution must be organized in order to advance and win victory. As we wage revolutionary class struggle, we can expand and consolidate these forces, strengthen them in stages and look forward to a fundamentally better and brighter future in socialism.

## **Part II: Further Conclusions from the Building of Socialism in the Soviet Union and Later Developments to the Present**

### **1. Building Socialism in One Country and Inspiring the World Proletarian Revolution**

Lenin upheld the building of socialism in one country as a necessity in connection with building the international communist movement. He considered the Soviet Union as the bulwark of the international communist movement and the Third International. He set the line that building socialism in one country was possible because of the moribund and decadent character of imperialism and its recurrent and ever worsening crisis and proneness to war. Lenin led the Bolsheviks in building and consolidating Soviet power in the Soviet Union even as he wished that more socialist countries would help to consolidate socialism

and even as he thought that it would take a whole historical epoch for socialism to defeat imperialism and bring about the withering of the proletarian state and the rise of communism as a classless society.

Stalin followed the line of Lenin in building socialism in one country against the defeatist line of Trotsky that it was impossible and that the path forward was through a Europe-wide revolutionary conflagration; and as well as against the Rightist line of Bukharin to extend the New Economic Policy indefinitely. Stalin actually succeeded in carrying forward the socialist revolution and construction. He was able to build socialist industry and accomplish the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture. He was also able to direct the Third International to promote the building of communist parties and revolutionary mass movements in dozens of countries. But the victories in socialist construction led to the premature declaration in the Soviet Constitution of 1936 that classes and class struggle had come to an end, except the one between the Soviet people and imperialism.

During World War II, the Soviet Union resoundingly defeated the invasionary forces of Nazi Germany and rolled them back, enabling several countries in Europe to establish people's democracies and socialism. The victory of the October Revolution extended to the rise of several socialist countries and national liberation movements during and after World War II. China emerged in 1949 as one more big and powerful socialist country to challenge imperialism. That same year, the Soviet Union broke the US monopoly of nuclear power. The Korean people fought US imperialism to a standstill from 1951 to 1953. The Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea frustrated US aggression and subsequent blockades and sanctions after the 1953 armistice. The Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian peoples inflicted defeats on US imperialists and their allies until their stunning succession of nationwide victories in 1975.

## **2. Revisionist Betrayal and Capitalist Restoration**

Until 1956 it could be said that one-third of humankind had come under the governance of socialism under the leadership of revolutionary parties of the proletariat. But 1956 was also the year when the Krushchov revisionist clique came to power in the Soviet Union and totally negated the achievements of Stalin under the pretext of condemning the personality cult. Krushchov made a coup and brought about a comprehensive set of anti-socialist reforms in the CPSU, the State, and in industry and agriculture. He propagated such bourgeois populist notions as “party of the whole people” and “state of the whole people” and such bourgeois pacifist notions as “peaceful transition to socialism” “peaceful economic competition” and “peaceful co-existence” as the general line of the international communist movement.

Brezhnev also made his own coup and replaced Krushchov in 1964. He paid some lip service to Stalin but in fact he hewed closely to the revisionist line of Krushchov. He recentralized some ministries and enterprises only to ensure funds for the federal centre and for the arms race. The antisocialist reforms continued. Worse, Mafia-type criminal syndicates arose to thieve on the state enterprises and delivered goods for their private profit to the expanded “free market”. Brezhnev practised social imperialism and pushed such notions as the “international dictatorship of the proletariat” and “limited national sovereignty” of other countries.

By the time that Gorbachev became the top leader of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union was already mired in grave and deep going economic crisis due to rampant bureaucratic corruption and the extremely burdensome costs of the arms race and military operations. Gorbachev used all these to accelerate the restoration of capitalism under the rubric of “new thinking” (glasnost) and “restructuring” (perestroika). He fully realized capitalist restoration upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union in



1991 after emboldening the revisionist ruling cliques in Eastern Europe to adopt outrightly capitalist and anti-socialist policies and measures.

Mao Zedong is responsible for the most significant and the greatest effort to confront the phenomenon of modern revisionism. He launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) in 1966 and put forward the theory and practice of continuing revolution under proletarian dictatorship in order to combat revisionism, prevent the restoration of capitalism and consolidate socialism. In most of the ten-year course of the GPCR, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party provided effective leadership in revolutionizing the mode of production and the social superstructure. But soon after Chairman Mao's death, the Deng revisionist clique successfully staged a coup, purged at least 30 per cent of the membership of the CCP and imprisoned thousands of cadres. Thereafter, it carried out anti-socialist reforms at an accelerated rate from 1978 onwards.

### **3. Intensifying Inter-Imperialist Contradictions and New Upsurge of the World Proletarian Revolution**

We are still in the era of modern imperialism and proletarian revolution because of the success of the revisionist ruling cliques in subverting the previous socialist countries for several decades and converting nearly all of them into undisguised capitalist countries from 1989 to 1991. For a while after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, US imperialism boasted of itself as the winner in the Cold War and the sole superpower. It launched ideological, economic, political and military offensives in order to proclaim the "death" of socialism and the perpetuity of capitalism, and to take practical advantage of the dire conditions of those countries that have restored capitalism as their social system.

Within its national borders and abroad, the US has pushed hard the neoliberal economic policy, imagining that this could solve the problem

of stagflation beginning in the 1970s. But this policy of unbridled greed has served to bring about the ever faster and deeper going recurrence and worsening of the economic and financial crises. The attempts to counter the crisis of overproduction with ever larger doses of public, corporate and household debt have brought about bigger busts.

Until now, the imperialist countries have failed to solve the financial crisis that broke out in the US and spread globally since 2008. China, which used to enjoy US accommodation for its cheap labour and cheap manufactures, is now in the throes of severe economic and financial crisis due to domestic glut of goods and bad debts. It is now desperately looking for more ways to export its surplus capital earned from previous trade surpluses.

The US has also pushed hard its neoconservative policy of full-spectrum dominance, with Pax Americana in the 21st century boosted by high-tech military power. It uses war production for buoying up its economy and launches wars of aggression and sponsors regional proxy wars in order to sell weapons and expand economic territory. There has been no end to the wars instigated by the US and its NATO allies since the 1990s. But for the US, the costs have far outweighed the benefits and are compounded by steady losses in its economic competition with other capitalist powers under conditions of global depression since 2008. The US has accelerated its strategic decline from an unchallenged hyper-power to being one among the imperialist powers in a multipolar world. The G-7 and its multilateral agencies and military treaty alliances are now being challenged by the Sino- Russian partnership, the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

All major contradictions in the world today are intensifying. There is not a single capitalist power today that is not beset by intensifying struggle between capital and labour amidst serious economic and financial crisis.

The contradictions between the imperialist powers and the oppressed peoples and nations rage most violently where the US and its NATO allies are carrying out wars of aggression as in Iraq, Afghanistan, former Yugoslavia, Libya, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and elsewhere. The imperialist powers are being confronted by countries with increasing sense of independence as they resist imperialist impositions and see opportunities for manoeuvre in the multipolar world. Contradictions are intensifying among the imperialist powers because of the integration of China and Russia as major powers in the capitalist world.

As the socio-economic and political crises worsen at an accelerated rate, the proletariat and people suffer intolerable exploitation, deprivation and poverty. They will never accept oppression and exploitation without resistance. The objective conditions are becoming ever more favourable for building the subjective forces of the revolution and waging various forms of revolutionary struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism. Towards fulfilling the central task of seizing political power, the revolutionary parties of the proletariat must build themselves as Bolshevik-type parties ideologically, politically and organizationally in the direction of socialism and communism.

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# Facing the National Question in Neocolonial Context

## **Introduction**

The Study Group published a series of articles in Marxist Leninist New Democracy (MLND issues 64 to 67) that summarised European colonial conquest in Asia, Africa, the Americas and Australia and the impact of colonialism on people subject to colonial rule. The task was a beneficial experience for the NDMLP and the Study Group, whose earlier work on the national question in the colonial and post-colonial contexts offered some useful insights into the national question in the neo-colonial context.

The NDMLP examined the Sri Lankan national question in depth and has since the early 1990s urged a review of the concepts of nationhood and self determination, as the national question has since the end of colonial rule been aggravated to become the main (but not fundamental) contradiction in Sri Lanka by the 1970s. Further aggravation led to a three decades long (1977–2009) tragic armed conflict.

The analysis of the national question by the NDMLP, although objective, was influenced by its immediate context as well as the confinement of its awareness mostly to Asia and to some extent Europe, thanks to access to the wealth of literature on the national question in Europe. The analysis

gained, however, from the experiences of socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union and China, and from the way socialist-led Nicaragua addressed its complex national question.

Marxist Leninist response to the national question in the face of neo-colonialism should be based on a clear understanding of the sources of national identity and the different ways in which it emerged under colonial impact. Marxist Leninists have been objective in seeing the national question as an aspect of class struggle and accepting the need to address the national question as a key aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle. Analysis of specific issues by some has, however, been vulnerable to subjective errors, some arising from extrapolation of experiences in their immediate context to less familiar contexts and some others from adopting tactics with a short term view of the problem without adequate consideration for long term implications and impact on the global anti-imperialist struggle.

The Study Group undertook a study of colonialism in order to obtain a broader view of the national question in the interest of expanding the scope of the concept of self determination to address the post-colonial national question. The aim was gather information for understanding the increasing assertion of national and ethnic identities so that the national question is addressed in context, based on the principle of defending the right of a group of people to decide their own destiny, while bearing in mind the socialist goal for which the anti-imperialist struggle is an essential precondition.

The study deepened our understanding the national question and its relationship to identity issues under colonialism and neocolonialism. The observations of these studies and earlier studies of European and Asian contexts are summed up in the text that follows.

## **The Post-colonial Nation**

Stalin defined a nation in the context of the Soviet Union, founded as a union of republics with the right to secession. His definition has served well to decide the feasibility of a community becoming a nation state.

The notion of nation state is a product of capitalism, and colonial powers did not consider colonies as nations. The right of a colony to nationhood and to become an independent state was supported by Lenin, Stalin and other Marxist Leninists. That position was consistent with the principle of the right of nations to self determination.

As the national question under colonial rule was essentially centred on freedom from colonial rule, the colonial masters went to great lengths to divide the people in the colonies. The British who made grand plans for a vast British Raj in South Asia eventually ended up inducing secessionist tendencies in India so as to weaken the struggle for freedom.

The independent states that came out of colonial rule in Asia were often not based on considerations of whether the state would qualify to be a nation. Kurdistan, with potential to be a nation state that could co-exist in harmony with its Arab, Persian and Turkish neighbours as a post-colony, was carved out between countries whose rivalry served the interests of the colonial rulers.

Besides the haphazard creation of several post-colonial states, chauvinism of the majority and narrow nationalism of the minorities soon emerged in newly independent colonies, especially in Asia. Seeds of dissent had been sown under colonial rule, often intentionally by the colonial rulers. The national question was, however, to stay, grow and haunt the stability of the former colonies.

Imperialism, besides dividing countries by military intervention, as in Vietnam and Korea, induced and inspired secession in the post-colonial

era on various pretexts to serve the economic interests of former colonial rulers, as in the case of the secession of Katanga from the Congo and Biafra from Nigeria in the 1960s. Imperialist meddling led to the break up the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which had addressed the national question far better than capitalist Europe, between 1991 and 1992. This was followed by further division of Serbia by promoting civil war leading to the creation of the Republic of Kosovo in 2008. Imperialism also played a key role on the secession of South Sudan from the Sudan 2011, making separatism part of the imperialist agenda of recolonizing Africa.

The fall of the Soviet Union led to a rise in secessionist tendencies, some induced by imperialism and others by internal power rivalries, in several countries that were once part of the 'Socialist Bloc'. The call for secession from China by the Uighurs in Xinjiang was started in the early 1990s, and is kept alive by the US. Notably, the call for Tibetan independence too was reactivated at that time. The campaign for Taiwanese independence earned the blessings of the US much after most countries of the world recognized the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China, rejecting the US-backed government based in Taiwan that represented China in the UN until November 1971.

Imperialism, not long ago, cynically encouraged moves for secession in Bolivia and Venezuela by economically well off provinces. These are instances where national identity played no role in the call for secession. Thus the concept of nation and its relevance to secession based on the right of a people to self determination need to be revaluated in the post-colonial context, with particular attention to the role of imperialism. Thus the concept of national identity and its relation to ethnicity as identity were revaluated in the post-colonial context, conforming to the spirit in which Lenin declared the right of nations to self determination.

## Nationality

We prefer the term 'nationality' to the term 'nation' to refer to any group of people that aspires to be a nation in its own right or would, in a limited sense, qualify to be a nation in the post-colonial context. The choice is of particular relevance where oppression by majoritarian chauvinism compels an oppressed community to call itself a nation so that it may claim the right to secession if not secession itself.

The term 'nationality' is applied to any people who fulfil most of the important requirements of nationhood, irrespective of their wish to become a nation state. Thus the term covers a wide range of ethnic and other identities that have emerged in the course of history.

The concept of nationality was used by the NDMLP to address the post-colonial national question in relation to secessionist demands in South Asia. It was later found applicable to indigenous communities whose development as nations was cruelly disrupted by colonial intervention, like settler colonialism in North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Most indigenous communities of Canada since the 1980s call themselves First Nations to assert their right to traditional land and for the pursuit of their culture and way of life, free of interference by dominant settler communities. Their struggle is more about autonomy than secession. Indigenous people elsewhere in the Americas do not call themselves nations, and reference as indigenous people is common while others use the name of the ethnic group to refer to themselves.

The term nationality could, thus, fairly refer to any indigenous people of the Americas, Australia, New Zealand as well as India, Indonesia and other countries where tribal people co-exist with larger communities that have *de facto* recognition as nationalities with regional government, recognized territory, language and culture. Tribal people in India enjoy much less socio-political rights than people recognized as nationalities or



national minorities, and their traditional right to territory faces constant threat from the state, big capital and imperialism, as well as the chauvinism of neighbouring nationalities. Their national question is thus unlike that of larger nationalities, but no less important.

During the Civil Rights Movement in the US, influential militant sections of the Black People of the US used the term Black Nation, despite differences in the way they defined the Black Nation. The Communist Party of China placed the struggle of the Black Americans on par with the anti-colonial national liberation struggles of the time. Most Marxist Leninists endorsed that position and were supportive of Black Liberation.

Thus it seems that the term nationality could be applied to a people who satisfy the essential requirements for a nation as stated by Stalin, but cannot necessarily develop into a nation state. This enables a consistent approach in addressing national oppression by a majority nationality (or nation), often backed by imperialism. The approach could also lead to ways of preventing identity-based contradictions from becoming hostile contradictions that imperialists and regional hegemons could exploit by inciting calls for secession or to provoking civil unrest.

## **National Minority**

The use of the term 'national minority' to refer to a minority community has been a sensitive issue in contexts where an oppressed people prefer to be called a nation, as the term 'national minority' can be used to deny their distinct identity and legitimate aspirations.

Although there is no generally accepted definition of a national minority, a community that asserts itself as a unique entity based on features such as ethnic group, language, culture and religion, and the will to preserve its identity within the framework of a sovereign state, distinct from other communities that come under that state, could be considered a national

minority if it falls short of being a nationality. State recognition as a national minority can affect the rights of a community to its territory and to preserve its identity and way of life. Marxist Leninists should take a principled stand on the rights of any national minority, regardless of the stand of the state, like for example regarding the Rohingya community in Myanmar, who are denied any form of recognition by the state, despite long presence in large numbers in the Rakhine Province of Myanmar.

Minority communities as well as nationalities are considered as national minorities in several countries, and a given ethnic group may be called by the same name or different names in the countries where they live. National minority status best suits a people with common cultural and linguistic identities, but without a territory to claim as theirs so that they live amid communities that qualify as nationalities.

Countries like China, Nicaragua and Venezuela offer even tiny minorities recognition comparable with that nationalities are entitled to, but without calling them nationalities. This contrasts with the US where language rights of the Latino people were curbed not very long ago by legislation making English the official language in states like California with a sizeable proportion of speakers of Spanish.

The October Revolution had a lasting impact on ethnic minority rights in Europe. Thus the EU has a policy that supports minority languages, but not observed by some member states, including France. Turkey, a non-member, has for long denied the Kurdish people (a nation torn between Turkey and its neighbours) recognition as a nationality, and refers to them as a minority and denies language rights of Kurds and other minorities. Since 2012 some minority languages are taught as additional languages, but has no provision to teach in any language but Turkish.

In much of Asia there is tendency for an official language or the language of a numerically strong ethnic group recognized as a nationality or

national minority to dominate over languages of indigenous people and small ethnic groups. Thus, recognition as a national minority, unless effectively on par with a nationality, risks erosion of the right to identity and preservation of the way of life.

In China, the term 'minority nationality' is applied to people who would in another context qualify as nationalities. The choice of term was in the context of the experience of semi-colonial China's with predators like Imperial Japan and British India seeking to carve out Chinese territory in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as well as earlier seizure of territory from China by the Tsarist Russian Empire. Despite designation as 'national minority', the extent of autonomy enjoyed by the 'national minorities', especially the larger ones, is far more than what recognized minority nationalities enjoy elsewhere.

The national question should not be shackled by definitions but resolved based on the form of national oppression. Right to self determination should thus be upheld in its spirit as in the Soviet Union where many national minorities had autonomy comparable with nationalities.

Secession and autonomy are not ends in themselves. Secession is often the result of severe national oppression or impracticality of co-existence. Autonomy for a nationality or a national minority is not to isolate it from other nationalities or national minorities. It mainly assures freedom from the threat of assimilation under cultural, economic or military pressure.

State sovereignty is hollow today not only in most countries of the Third World but also in economically weak capitalist countries integrated with the global imperialist system. Neocolonialism continues to undermine the sovereignty of nations with greater ease than direct colonial rule, and cynically uses the national question in the Third World to undermine regimes that act against imperialist interests.

The concern of International Community of imperialists towards national minorities in the Third World is imperialist interest masquerading as humanitarian concern. Thus Marxist Leninists, while upholding working class ideology and class struggle, should reject all forms of identity based oppression, and treat differences among countries, nationalities and national minorities as friendly contradictions and defend the right of communities to preserve their identity and pursue ways of life of their choice, without infringing on the rights of any other community.

### **Colonial Conquest and National Identity**

The net impact of colonial intervention varied in form and extent with the colonial power, its stage of socio-economic development, and the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the occupied lands including the kind of political organization. Even where colonial conquest did not involve mass settlement, it had an impact on ethnic identity by way of religion, language and culture.

National identity emerged alongside the concept of nation state, a product of capitalism, and the issue of nationhood is generally raised in terms of the right to be a nation state. Britain and France suppressed rival national identities at home in the course of becoming nation states. Colonial rule was thus no respecter of ethnic identity in conquered lands. While it defended colonial conquest using seemingly ethical reasons that concealed the colonial purpose, it had a modernizing impact in the course of wrecking traditional ways of life and means of production. It also conditioned identity, through religious conversion and the creation of a loyal elite class. Religion, while often a divisive force, seldom defined nationality, at least until the British used it to divide an ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse India (which at one time they not only controlled but sought to expand by adding Burma and attempting to annex Tibet) in their effort to arrest the threat to colonial rule.

Colonial rulers imposed their language on administration and education in the colonies, with manifold impact on culture. The elite that stood by the rulers assimilated themselves to the culture of the colonialists, while colonial rule left intact socially divisive and archaic feudal aspects such as the caste hierarchy and social conservatism. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the language of the colonial power continues as the language of government, although native languages hold sway in social life. The colonial legacy and the need of the new middle class to know an international language, often English or French, for employment and higher education, has confined education in the mother tongue to primary schools, with a two-fold impact: learning in a language other than the mother tongue hampered learning, and reliance on an alien language had negative implications for cultural identity. Indigenous nationalities of South and Central America face similar problems, despite greater recognition of their language rights in recent decades. Strong linguistic nationalism in the former colonies of Asia has not arrested the growing dominance of English in higher education and the professions, and as the 'link language' between regional languages with mutual affinity. In general the middle classes are vulnerable to Europeanization of their culture.

Impact of racial mixing and religious conversion on ethnic identity was modest in Asia under colonial rule, so that ethno-linguistic identities remained rather intact. However, with the surge in demand for cheap labour in plantations and mines, colonialism resorted to indentured labour. The population thus displaced settled in their destinations, with long term implications for ethnic identity there.

Colonial carving up of Africa hindered the emergence of nations and nationalities based on ethno-linguistic or tribal identity. Imperialism, however, uses tribal and religious differences in the post-colonial era to divide people and destabilize sub-Saharan Africa. Imperialism was behind the failed moves in the 1960s to separate Katanga from the Congo

and Biafra from Nigeria. France is behind moves to separate Cabinda from Angola. While religion is increasingly used to divide the people and undermine governments in Africa, separatism based on language has emerged among Anglophone Cameroonians in Cameroon comprising the former colonies of British Cameroon and French Cameroon.

Colonial conquest decimated whole communities in the Caribbean, and distorted identity based on indigenous tribes and social groupings in what is Latin America. Settler colonialism in North America, Australia and New Zealand severely marginalized the indigenous people, with systematic genocide continuing into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in North America and Australia. Cultural, linguistic and territorial rights of indigenous people came to the fore since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and to motivate indigenous people to fight to defend their identity and decide their way of life and means of livelihood without external interference.

## **Indigenous Nationalities**

Indigenous tribes are structured as clans comprising closely knit communities of varying sizes. Each tribe has a common heritage and at some stage shared a common language and a system of beliefs. Several tribes could, however, share a language and even beliefs and customs.

Many indigenous tribes in North America call themselves nations as they meet the main requirements of a nation. Most tribes in Canada call themselves First Nations; and tribal governments like the Navajos in the US have voted to refer to themselves as nations.

Assertion of indigenous identity and demand for indigenous rights in Latin America since late 20<sup>th</sup> Century enabled several long oppressed indigenous communities to win their right to land, language and culture. Resistance to US imperialist dominance in South and Central America also helped the struggle for indigenous rights.

The indigenous people of India (now referred to as Adivasis) are mostly identified in terms of their clans, tribes and/or a union of tribes. The common identity of the latter, however, does not necessarily imply a common language or culture, and the sense of oneness comes from a shared history or common political aspirations that transcend linguistic and cultural identity. Such collective identity is particularly necessary in a context where imperialism and its comprador capitalist partners have joined hands to displace the Adivasi people in the name of development, to facilitate access to forest, mineral and other natural resources.

### **Colonial Settlement and Ethnic Identity**

Colonial settlement comprised arrivals from Europe following colonial conquest and subsequent arrivals as slaves and indentured labour. Racial mixing of the settlers and indigenous people led to new ethnic identities — some comprising a large population — initially without clear identity, but in course of time evolving hybrid cultural and linguistic identities. Some settlers preserved their identity for lack of opportunity for racial mixing. Racism was strong among White settlers in North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and attitudes were hostile towards people of colour. Colour based racism persists in South and Central America among descendants of post-colonial European arrivals.

Racial ideology, a source of social discrimination and segregation, can be a toxic divisive force in countries with large populations of descendants of indentured labour and slaves, as seen in Fiji in recent decades and Guyana in the 1960s. Desire exists among the Black people of North America to revive ties with their African 'home' as a response to White racism, and there is lingering religious and cultural nostalgia among Asian communities for the long lost 'motherland'. Even when desirous of being part of the host country, settler communities remain potential victims of chauvinist and fascist tendencies.

The complexity of ethnic identity has been compounded by the growth in refugee population escaping communal strife, war, economic failure and natural disaster. Besides displaced people and immigrant labour filling the demand for labour in the industrial and domestic sectors, there is also a growth in middle class emigration tempted by attractive wages.

Refugees and immigrant workers face discrimination and violence based on race and religion in the host countries. While these problems do not come within the scope of the national question, there are underlying issues that relate to contradictions based on national identity.

### **Mixed Races and Displaced Communities**

Migration from Africa and Asia in the colonial era, unlike migration from Europe, was predominantly involuntary, and conditions of settlement varied. Indigenous people in the Caribbean islands had been wiped out before slaves and later indentured labour were settled. In what is Latin America, besides genocide of a large section of the indigenous population by the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors, there was substantial inter-racial mixing as colonial settlement was not designed to seize land from the indigenous people unlike that to the north of Mexico. Most post-colonial European settlers in South America and Mexico did not mix racially. The decline in indigenous population under colonial occupation led, however, to the dominant population being of mixed origin, except in a few countries where either the indigenous people or European settlers comprised the majority. Identity based on colour is strong in the US and Canada where the settlers resorted to genocide and dispossession, and the colour hierarchy placed the Black population at the bottom.

A mixed race group constituting the majority in a country may be identified as the main nationality. Smaller groups are generally known by



names based on ethnic origins. The term Coloureds refers to Afro-European descendants in South Africa, and Creole refers to a variety of people of European and Black descent mainly in the West Indies, with each Creole population having its own culture and language or dialect. In Latin America, post-colonial European settlers who call themselves Peninsulars use the term Creole to derisively refer to earlier settlers.

The settlement of South Asians and Chinese as indentured labour in the Caribbean and in British colonies elsewhere in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries made complex the ethnic composition in the colonies, partly because settlement in large groups led to a strong tendency to preserve ethno-cultural and religious identity, and at times linguistic identity.

Ongoing economic deterioration in former colonies induced migration to West Europe and later North America. East Europeans were encouraged since WW1, for political reasons. Northward migration in Europe occurred as a result of poverty in southern Europe and the post WW2 demand for man power in the north. Since 1961, West Germany accepted Turkish citizens (including Kurds) in large numbers as Guest Workers, and many chose to stay behind. France attracted immigrants from Europe and its former colonies into the 1970s. Since the 1950s, Britain encouraged West Indians and later South Asians to immigrate. They were followed by Ugandan Indians in the 1960s and later refugees fleeing political crises, starting with Bangladeshis in the early 1970s followed by others from South Asia and southern Africa and later Eastern Europe. The colonial legacy of racism and jingoism was strong in Europe so that immigrants from Asia, Africa and the West Indies suffered discrimination, although the form and degree of harassment varied with country and economic climate.

The influx of political and economic refugees of civil war, mishandled natural disasters and economic crises, for much of which imperialism was

responsible, surged since the 1970s. Colonial bonds, proximity and ease of access were decisive in attraction to any European country. Refugees, being a vulnerable source of cheap manual and intellectual labour were welcomed by the capitalists in European countries. Notably, the US, Canada and Australia relaxed their racist immigration policies in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Imperialist meddling in Africa and the Middle East is the key source of political and humanitarian crises in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The resultant refugee problem led to political crises in countries of the EU, where the global crisis of capitalism has revived jingoism as well as activated demand for secession by resentful nationalities like the Scots in Britain and the Catalans and Basques in Spain.

Immigrants can find it hard to integrate with the natives. Where they settled in sufficiently large numbers, they tend to live as a group with strong cultural, and even linguistic, affinity to the land that they left. Racial prejudices and resentment of aliens among the native population were aggravated by the view that the natives are losing jobs to the immigrants and the imagined threat of being swamped by alien culture.

## **Unsustainable Claims to Nationhood**

Besides oppression and discrimination based on national and ethnic identity, there are other bases on which people suffer discrimination and mistreatment. Oppression based on caste is on par with that based on colour in South Africa and the US during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Caste.** As the caste system is exclusive to South Asia, its manifestations are not easily understood elsewhere. Struggle against discrimination by caste and untouchability gathered force during the anti-colonial struggle and, despite gains by way of positive discrimination in education and employment, the system is too deeply entrenched, especially in rural

India, and the struggle to free society of casteism will be prolonged. There is, however, a puerile tendency within the Dalit movement backed by desperate NGOs and postmodernists not just to emphasise caste identity but to equate it to national identity. There is segregation by caste in much of rural India and even parts of urban India, but no caste or group of castes has the potential to lead an independent existence in isolation from the rest of society.

**Religion.** Religion by itself is not a defining feature of a nationality. But there are religious communities that have over time developed cultural identities that distinguish them from communities with which they share the same language and even territory. Several such communities have been recognized as national minorities (like the Sikhs of India and the predominantly Muslim Hui minority in China who are culturally close to the majority Han) Muslims of Yugoslavia were recognized as a distinct nationality and, until secession induced by external forces, coexisted healthily with the mainly Orthodox Christian Serbs and Roman Catholic Croats, who themselves had much in common but for religion and scripts used for what are really two dialects of a language. What is significant is that, while religion can divide a nationality, no religion has united people with different languages, culture and history into a nationality. Even in the Arab World and Latin America, religion has failed to overcome the impact of separate political development as individual states.

**Regionalism.** Regionalism can become a divisive force as a result of uneven economic development (including the impact of the urban-rural divide) and class-based oppression of historically backward or occupied regions. Ethnicity, language preferences and dialect contribute to it. The demand for carving out the State of Telengana from the State of Andhra in India is one such instance. In Sri Lanka regional sentiments persist amid minority nationalities. Regionalism has also been encouraged by

US imperialism to demand the secession of the wealthier provinces of Bolivia and Venezuela to weaken “hostile” regimes.

## **Addressing the Post-colonial National Question**

The right to self determination and the right of colonies to independence adequately addressed the national question under direct colonial rule. Subsequent national question in former colonies concerns oppression by a dominant majority which in turn is a victim of neo-colonialism. The once oppressed nation (or nationality) turns on other nationalities as well as national minorities.

Several former colonies and semi-colonies have groups of people who could have become independent states if they so willed, unless forcibly stopped. There are others who fit the definition of a nation fully or mostly, but cannot even consider secession for geopolitical and other considerations. The sovereignty of landlocked countries (like Lesotho fully and Swaziland mostly by South Africa, and Bhutan and Sikkim mostly by India, which annexed the latter in 1974) is curbed politically and economically by the larger neighbour. Geographic proximity and imperialist backing enabled Indonesia to annex East Timor in 1975 as soon as Portugal deserted its colony.

Economic plight and adverse geographic location have made a mockery of the sovereignty of many Third World countries. Border disputes directly or indirectly harm the sovereignty of militarily weak states. The national question and the exercise of the right to secession, thus, need to take into account the reality of neo-colonialism.

International power rivalry played a major role in nearly all instances of post-colonial secession, as in Bangladesh (1971), Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (1983), Republic of South Ossetia (1991), Eritria (1993), Republic of Abkhazia (1999), Republic of Kosovo (2008) and South Sudan

(2011). It will be worth noting that secession has not resolved the core political issues that were used to encourage and enable the secession of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and South Sudan.

There is a rise in calls for secession within Europe. But imperialism, while enabling secession in the Third World, rejects secession in countries of the EU, even when a vast majority of a nationality want secession, as in the Catalanian referendum of 2017. Thus the balance of regional and global forces seems to determine the practicality of secession, regardless of the validity of the case for it.

Many of the current struggles for secession are colonial residues that concern potentially independent states that were merged into a larger state by colonial rulers or their successors. Colonial division of Kurdish territory between client states and the expulsion of Palestinians from their land from before the creation of Israel led to arguably the worst instances of post-colonial national oppression. Calls for secession also developed in the late or post-colonial period owing to perceived national oppression that could have been averted by addressing the main grievances.

Africa and Latin America have fewer secessionist movements than Asia. Religious identity offers stronger prospects than tribal identity as a divisive force in Africa. The likelihood of imperialism using inter-state, inter-tribe and inter-religious differences to divide the African people is strong and needs to be guarded against, especially in the face of moves afoot to recolonize Africa by the US and former colonial powers by various means including military intervention.

Indigenous people of the Americas and Australia were subjected to systematic genocide, and are arguably the worst victims of settler colonialism. The genocidal policies of the colonists and later military rulers seem likely to be revived with a vengeance under the new fascist regime in Brazil. An alliance of multinationals and comprador capitalists

increasingly targets lands of the already marginalized tribal people of India; and the pattern is likely to spread across South Asia and beyond. In this context, Marxist Leninists should unconditionally support the right of all indigenous people to their land, culture, language and way of life in the same way that they supported freedom from colonial rule. Thus the concept of self determination should place the sovereignty of indigenous people on par with the sovereignty of nations.

Nationalism is not sacred and secession is not an end in itself to Marxist Leninists, but they respect national identity and stand by struggles to resist oppression. They defend nationalism to the extent that it represents the interests of a people facing oppression based on national identity. Thus, the right to self determination is not a nod for secession but a means to encourage voluntary co-existence of nationalities, based on mutual trust and respect for national identity. Marxist Leninists set apart historically progressive nationalism from reactionary and oppressive nationalism, and urge national liberation movements to be socially progressive, free of chauvinism, and anti-imperialist in spirit.

Rigid adherence to the definition of a nation and confining the right to secession to nations alone violates the spirit in which Lenin urged that right. Moves by the United Nations to water down self determination using the notions of 'internal' and 'external' self determination were to appease influential member states that resent the prospect of allowing any part of the country the right to secession. However it lets powerful states to apply that right selectively and use devices like R2P to achieve secession. Thus, such division of self determination will help to deny the right to secession of nationalities that are not favoured by imperialism.

The purpose of the right to self determination is to ensure maximum relief to an oppressed nationality, and the principle should be applied with consistency, while taking post-colonial reality into account. Thus the

idea of self determination needs to be enlarged from endorsing the 'right of a nation to secede' to endorsing the right of a nationality (meaning a people who fully satisfy all or most of the criteria for nationhood, but not necessarily able become a separate state) to maximum feasible autonomy, including the right to secede, federate or adopt any suitable form of voluntary coexistence with other nationalities. This approach will apply universally to address the grievances oppressed nationalities including indigenous people.

The approach will further benefit from a creative approach to the concept of nationality. The prospect of several ethnic groups sharing a territory being treated as a multi-ethnic nationality that may be multi-lingual and multi-cultural, with languages and cultures sharing common features and even moving closer in the course of collective development is worth exploring. How a nationality exercises its right to decide the course of its social, cultural and economic existence would depend on its specific circumstances. Common socio-economic factors are likely play a stronger role than ethnic identity in many contexts, especially where defending the interests of communities against predatory forces takes precedence, as in mass struggles against colonial rule.

Recognition of a people as a nationality and declaration of support for its right to self determination are contextual, and become necessary only in situations where there is national oppression and the oppressed people seek relief from oppression. The purpose of autonomy is to liberate a people from oppression and not to make way for meddling by external vested interests. Thus, care is necessary in contexts where imperialism and other reactionary forces take advantage of contradictions among people to induce secession or demand forms of autonomy that facilitate imperialist interference and exploitation.

The basic principle of the right to self determination is the recognition of the right of a group of people to its identity and free choice of its mode of existence. Although such choice is restricted by external factors, the case for free choice is there. The number of groups that comprise national minorities (or simply minorities) is increasing as a result of migration of large groups forced by civil war, natural disaster and adverse economic circumstances. Culture and language are not static, and migration has led to inter-racial mixing and changing identities, and issues faced by mixed communities, especially involving new immigrants, can be complex. It should also be noted that there are several immigrant groups that are willing to integrate with the local population but are prevented from doing so by xenophobia and racism in the host country.

Recognizing as national minorities native and immigrant ethnic groups who do not qualify as minority nationalities can protect cultural, linguistic and religious rights as well as defend them against identity based oppression. But it is also important to ensure that national minorities as well as minority nationalities are not allowed to be manipulated by mischievous elements, especially imperialism and its allies, to provoke conflict and destabilize society.

Marxist Leninists should locate socialist vision and anti-imperialism at the core of the national question and recognize the relationship of the national contradiction to class and class struggle. Such approach will help to unite nationalities and national minorities by placing all socio ethnic groups on an equal footing.

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# Rehabilitating Democracy

*(Notes on the stand of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party regarding democracy, presented in early 2018 for discussion by left and other progressive organizations with the aim to initiate a democratic mass movement)*

## Defining Democracy

In class society, class decides everything. Thus the dominant ideology of our society determines our understanding of democracy; as a result, we tend to perceive democracy as something derived from bourgeois democracy, subject to socio-cultural and historical deformation.

The compulsion for periodic redrafting and ceaselessly amending the constitution tells us that even that democracy is in crisis.

The task before us is to understand the purpose of bourgeois democracy, the decay and crises that it has been subjected to as a result of the political issues of the country, and the solutions that the ruling classes have to offer to resolve these problems.

The decay and denial of bourgeois democratic rights has made the need to rehabilitate democratic rights a problem to be addressed besides serious contradictions relating to imperialist neo-colonialism, economic crisis, class oppression, the national question and oppression based on gender and identity.

Thus, the rehabilitation of democracy cannot be one where we return to the very social order whose decay led to the current crisis of democracy.

Democracy has a specific meaning to those struggling for social justice and a society with justice and equality. It is appropriate to call such democracy socialist democracy or people's democracy.

## **Stages of Socialist Struggle**

Our purpose is to achieve socialism. To attain it, there is need to overcome a variety of immediate issues that are the outcome of the crisis of bourgeois democracy in the Third World. Third World bourgeois democracy is flawed both in the way it was established as well as the way it has been implemented. This flaw has adverse implications for the oppressed toiling masses. Hence, prior to moving towards an alternative form of democracy, it is necessary to address these issues.

This transition comprises a stage where the forces for social justice bring together and consolidate their success in resolving the problems confronted in the course of their struggle and winning the confidence of the masses. This interim phase could be called by different names. But, as far as the people are concerned, although this is far better than bourgeois democracy, it falls behind People's Democracy, which refers to a socialist system. Thus we choose to refer to it as "New Democracy". The duration of New Democracy will vary according to the nature of the challenges that need to be met. But it cannot be too long, and cannot be of a form that can be considered a goal in itself.

Some view New Democracy as a replica of the interim solution prescribed for semi-colonial semi-feudal China by the Communist Party of China. New Democracy has never had a universal model. It, besides needing to adapt to the objective situation in each country and depending on prevailing contradictions, could vary in form and content in different regions of one country.

Since we consider Sri Lanka to be a country that is subject to neo-colonial domination and bound by feudal ideology and customs, we identify New

Democracy as a stage designed to free the country from those bonds to enable progress towards People's Democracy.

Even those who reject the concept of New Democracy would concede that the problems that we face cannot be resolved in one go and that there is hence need to classify our targets as immediate, short term and long term and thereby plan the strategy to achieve the final goal. This indicates that the New Democratic struggle comprises several steps. If need arises, these steps could overlap.

## **Democratic Rights**

The targets of the struggle for democratic rights can be broadly grouped into two kinds: one concerns those which are attainable under bourgeois democracy, and the other is about advancing towards socialism.

Rights attainable under bourgeois democracy include rights that existed already or were won through struggle but taken away subsequently, as well as rights that need to be won. Whether a right was once enjoyed and lost subsequently or was undermined or is yet to be won is not decisive in prioritizing a target. Priority is determined based on social impact and need.

The struggle for some rights that belong to socialist transformation could be initiated alongside the campaign for short and long term bourgeois democratic goals.

## **Bourgeois Democratic Rights**

The rights to be won through struggle within the bourgeois democratic framework could be broadly grouped as follows, and specifically identified through discussion. (Many of them have been specified individually or broadly identified under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations.) Priority will be determined by context.

- The right to equal treatment for all, irrespective of caste, race and religion
- Social and cultural rights for nationalities and ethnic groups
- The right of an individual to observe his/her religious faith
- Women's rights based on gender equality
- Rights of children
- Trade union rights
- Right to livelihood and safety at work
- Right to health and education
- Right to respectful retirement
- Right of expression and assembly
- Right to participate in politics
- Right to undertake political work without harassment
- Equality before the Law based on Rule of Law
- Rights of prisoners

## **Socialist Democratic Rights**

These are rights that cannot be ordinarily expected under capitalism, but could be won through struggle under specific social, economic and political conditions.

- Gender equality
- Rights of children as future citizens
- The right of workers to enjoy the fruits of their labour
- The right of workers to have democratic control over production
- The right of workers to determine a fair wage and welfare schemes
- The right of workers to be represented in all public organizations

- Making education, health and employment opportunity the birth right of all citizens
- The right of citizens to ensure justice with fairness
- The right of citizens to participate in the formulation of policy at all levels
- The right to equal treatment in all walks of life irrespective of identity

## **Principles for Programme of Struggle**

The Democratic Movement should unite the largest possible section of people based on respect for the rights of others.

Oppressive ideologies shall not be allowed to direct the movement. At the same time an approach should be adopted that will enable those with a prejudiced approach towards society to rectify their ways.

All discussions and conclusions shall be guide by democratic principles and collective responsibility. Thus there shall be no room for secret agendas.

While the aims of the struggle also concern rights pertinent to parliamentary democracy, the movement should not come under the influence of electoral political interests.

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# **Address by Comrade Seva Rajendran, Delegate of the NDMLP at the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist), 28 November – 1 December 2018**

Dear Comrades,

Fraternal salutations to all participants in the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist)!

I bring warm revolutionary greetings from the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party of Sri Lanka and its members to the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist), members of the Party, and fellow delegates to the Congress.

Our two parties forged fraternal relationship several years ago, and the relationship has grown closer with time, especially since the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party joined the ICOR four years ago. The NDMLP is highly appreciative of the valuable role of the CPI (ML) in encouraging and supporting the NDMLP to join ICOR and thereby strengthen links with fraternal parties from different parts of the world.

While the political situations in our two countries differ in many ways, there is much in common between the two parties. The historical circumstances that led to the emergence of revolutionary Marxism Leninism as a revolutionary force in our countries can be traced to the great split in the international communist movement in the early 1960s and struggles against modern revisionism.

The Marxist Leninist tradition in Sri Lanka has a proud history of defending revolutionary Marxism against opportunist and adventurist tendencies. It was at the forefront of combating Trotskyism which had firmer roots in Sri Lanka than elsewhere in Asia. It also contributed significantly both in theory and practice in the international struggle

against modern revisionism. The split with the revisionists in 1964 was a key turning point in the development of the Party as the main Marxist Leninist revolutionary party in the country.

Its defence of Marxism Leninism as upheld by the Chinese Communist Party led by Chairman Mao Zedong during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and understanding and defence of the Cultural Revolution were of historical significance at the time.

While learning from the great revolutionary experiences of Russia (later the USSR) and China as well as the revolutionary experiences of other countries, the NDMLP has avoided imitating the revolutionary path pursued in other countries, while respecting the policies and practices of fraternal parties as based on the objective situations obtaining in each country, and as matters that are subject to development and change.

The Party has struggled against dogmatic tendencies, which led to splits that weakened the party and the left as a whole in Sri Lanka, in a context where imperialism resurged in the 1970s as neo-colonialism and promoted national oppression, narrow nationalism and identity politics to divide the oppressed masses. The Party withstood pressures to yield to narrow nationalism and to compromise with chauvinism, unlike other sections of the Sri Lankan left which compromised with nationalism to their own grief. The Party has consistently adopted a principled position on the national question in the post-colonial context by treating it as a friendly contradiction that could be resolved by granting nationalities the right of to self-determination secession and creatively applying it to accommodate national minorities while actively encouraging measures that will avert secession.

The Party was among the first of Third World Marxist Leninist parties to declare that the term neo-colonial will be most appropriate to most former colonies and urging that since feudal production relations have mostly ceased, it will be appropriate to avoid calling most Third World

countries semi-feudal. It however notes that feudal ideology and social relations remain strong even in the urban context in matters relating to gender and caste discrimination if not oppression and archaic feudal beliefs sustained in the name of religion and culture so that it will be correct to refer to several Third World countries as countries with strong feudal remnants. But the Party does not indulge in debates on terminology with fraternal parties, as long as there is agreement on essential facts, their understanding and approach to addressing issues.

The Party has consistently urges the need for a united front strategy to resolve the pressing problems of the Country as well as to work towards its New Democratic goal (defined in the Sri Lankan context).

On the same basis, it has urged fraternal Marxist Leninist parties to be mutually supportive, emphasise aspects that are common and resolve differences through serious and extended discussion in a fraternal spirit, and avoid acrimony as much as possible since it only helps the enemy to deepen divisions among revolutionary forces.

The party has been sensitive to matters of identity based oppression and adopted stands that placed identity-based contradictions in the context of class struggle. It has lent unqualified support for the rights of those oppressed based on ethnicity, caste, faith and gender, and achieved historic success in its mass struggle (1966 to 1972) against untouchability in the North of Sri Lanka.

The Party has withstood oppression by the state and by the LTTE by being firm in its principles. It paid a price by way of harassment, injuries and loss of life of members, arrest and prolonged detention, and inability to function normally for prolonged periods. But the Party never yielded and emerged morally stronger so that it remains the most credible Marxist political party in the country.

The party upholds Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought as its ideology and guiding light. It recognizes US-led imperialism as the main



enemy of the people of the world. It recognizes class struggle as fundamental while recognizing the national question in Sri Lanka as the current main contradiction. It is on the fore in campaigning for environmental protection, gender and caste issues and in resisting suppression of democratic rights by a succession of regimes and warning the public of the rising threat of fascism.

The Party has made mistakes and corrected them through the process of criticism and self-criticism and inner party democracy. It has always been willing to deal with dissent democratically and address criticism with an open mind.

I am here on behalf of the Party to learn from fellow participants and enrich the revolutionary thinking of the Party with the views and experiences that we share on this great occasion.

Let me wish once again all delegates to the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) a most successful Congress on behalf of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party of Sri Lanka.

*Long live the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist)!*

*Long live the fraternal revolutionary relationship between the CPI (ML) and NDMLP!*

*Long live the spirit of proletarian revolution!*

*Workers of the world unite!*

*Victory to the working class!*

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## **Addressing Imperialism Today**

### **Presented by Comrade Seva Rajendran**

#### **On Imperialism**

- Transformation of capitalism into imperialism was inevitable.
- The development of imperialism was uneven and irregular
- Imperialist strategy has changed with time and place.
- When the colonial system collapsed by mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, imperialism found its alternative in neo-colonialism.
- Neo-colonialism in crisis led to imperialist globalization and neo-liberalism.
- Some features of imperialism differ significantly in detail from those of imperialism of the colonial era.
- A rigid definition of imperialism is thus not possible or desirable
- It is desirable to clearly understand imperialism in terms of its salient features and develop definitions that accommodate potential developments.
- However, the five features of imperialism as set out by Lenin offer essentially valid guidelines:
  - (1) *Concentration of production and capital leading to monopolies that dominate economic life;*
  - (2) *Merging of bank and industrial capital leading to finance capital under a financial oligarchy;*
  - (3) *Export of capital gaining primacy over the export of commodities;*

*(4) Arrival of monopolist capitalist cartels seeking to share the world among themselves;*

*(5) Territorial division of the world among the biggest capitalist powers.*

- Imperialism is still the stage where a few monopolies and finance capital establishments dominate the economy.
- Export of capital takes precedence over export of goods.
- International cartels effectively carve up the world among themselves through agency of capitalist powers.

### **Some Key Features of Imperialism Today**

- Continuing growth of finance capital
- Emergence of giant monopolies free of control by banks
- Finance drawing heavily (directly and indirectly) on private savings and public funds
- Speculation as a major driving force of finance capital.

### **Some Major Driving Forces of Imperialism**

- Advances in information and communication technology enabling speedy and seamless transfer of capital
- Shift of industrial production to lands with cheap labour and focus on finance and services in imperialist countries
- Large scale transnational migration of labour, driven by economic need, political instability, wars and civil wars
- Opening up of more natural resources and labour of the Third World to neo-colonial plunder leading to imperialist re-colonization through control over natural resources including water and agricultural land
- Rise in imperialist military presence, especially in Africa and the expansion of NATO

## **Important Outcomes of Post-Colonial Imperialist Development**

- Market fundamentalism as driving ideology of the economic and political systems of nearly all capitalist countries at the expense of social welfare and democratic institutions
- Threat to human survival by rising consumerism and environmental degradation
- Deepening crisis of capital leading to rise in populism, racism and fascism in the West
- Undermining of bourgeois democratic institutions across the world
- Rendering of much of the Third World bourgeoisie as a spent force, with the ruling classes acting as proxies of imperialism to control restive sections of the population
- Imperialist war against states (not necessarily socialist or progressive) defying imperialism
- Failure of imperialist globalization leading to imperialist crisis and the threat of WW3.

## **Setbacks to the Anti-imperialist Cause**

- Re-emergence of imperialism as neo-colonialism driven by neoliberalism
- A weak Third World bourgeoisie.
- Threat of fascism in parts of the Third World, especially South and South East Asia
- The rise of modern revisionism followed later by Trotskyist tendencies in Europe.
- The collapse of the USSR and the negation of socialism in China.
- Weakening of the Left movement by sectarianism and dogmatism

- Failure to build a united front strategy among left and progressive forces

## **Placing Anti-imperialism at the Core of the Struggle for Socialism**

- Without a strong anti-imperialist international alliance to resist imperialism, struggles against imperialist subversion and aggression become much the harder.
- The left, Marxist Leninists especially, should tell friend from foe and mobilize the masses nationally on international issues concerning imperialist intrigue and aggression especially in Latin America and Africa.
- Active interest should be rekindled in key anti-imperialist struggles, especially Palestine.
- The role of imperialist client states such as Colombia, Israel and Saudi Arabia need to be thoroughly exposed.
- There is need to learn from the attitude of Lenin and Stalin towards struggles in the colonies.

## **Who are Today's Imperialist Powers?**

- There is consensus among Marxist Leninists that US imperialism, its European allies and Japan comprise the main imperialist alliance which despite rivalries and contradictions acts together in many ways.
- There is also consensus among Marxist Leninists (with few exceptions about China) that China and Russia are capitalist countries.
- There is, however, dispute about whether China and Russia are imperialist.

- Some say that China and Russia are already imperialist and some add India, South Africa and Brazil among others to the list.
- Some see China and Russia as potential imperialist powers, but still lacking in several departments, and place India and others far behind in the line-up to become imperialist powers.

### **The Stand of the NDMLP, Sri Lanka**

- China and Russia are yet to become imperialist powers comparable with Western imperialist countries for a variety of reasons.
- The prospect of China and Russia and even India becoming imperialist powers is strong.
- The immediate threat is US-led imperialism and it can be dangerous to place China and Russia or any reactionary regime on par with US-led imperialist countries.
- The distinction is essential in contexts like Syria and Ukraine where the core issue is US imperialist expansion.
- A principled approach of supporting struggles against all forms of oppression understood in the context of imperialist domination will be beneficial to the anti-imperialist struggle.
- There is no case to endorse actions by China or Russia or any other because of conflict of interest with the US, although the stand on international issues should be based primarily on an anti-US imperialist perspective.
- Hegemonic bullying and meddling by powerful countries should be resisted at all cost.

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## *Notes from Correspondents*

[The following text is a preliminary draft document produced in late 2018 for further discussion by a group of left parties and organizations including the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party as part of a long-term programme to develop a mass organization to address pressing issues concerning the country and the people.]

### **Proposals for a Mass Centre to be developed under Left Leadership in the context of the Current Political Crisis**

#### **1. Theme**

Let us build through People's Power True Democracy and Economic Justice!

#### **2. Name of Organization**

Centre for People's Struggle

(Regional organizations will function under the name "People's Power Council")

#### **3. Spheres of Concern**

As the organization is not a political party, there is no need to need to develop policies that embrace all spheres. Thus, a comprehensive draft should be produced to cover policies relating to the spheres of *Democracy, Economy, National Question, Foreign Policy and Socio Cultural Matters*.

#### **4. Scope of Policy Framework**

It will be appropriate to produce an initial stage policy framework appropriate for working in unity with other democratic, progressive, mass organizations within the scope of the spheres of concern in place of theoretical explanations relating to the spheres concerned.

A few basic initial stage proposals have been drafted to address that purpose.

## a) Democracy

- ❖ **Fundamental Rights:** Allocation of constitutional priority to second generation rights such as economic and social rights rather than restrict it to first generation rights such as constitutional and political rights.
  - i. Recognition of the right to education, health, housing, employment and livelihood and individual rights (including rejection of biometrics regulations)
  - ii. Recognition of the human environment as common social resource and making development strategies compatible with environmental balance a public responsibility
  - iii. Delivering to the people the gains of development.
- ❖ **State structure:** Proposals for direct involvement of the people in matters of government decisions, and discussion of a thorough reform of the existing Executive Power, Constitutional Assembly and judicial system.
  - i. Establishing a system whereby the people would actually implement the government decisions taken, rather than the present representative democracy in which sovereignty evades the people; and setting up appropriate structures to implement the system. Thus, a new structure that will defend democracy and fundamental rights will replace of the anti-democratic system of popular representation including the current Executive Presidential system.
  - ii. Granting the people the power to recall representatives elected by popular vote as well as other representatives.



- iii. Granting the people the power to submit new Bills and the power to challenge Bills that have already been passed.
- iv. Elimination of the existing gender inequality in existing law, and incorporating in the Constitution, a basis for absolute equality.
- v. Drafting the necessary provisions that transcend the limits of responsibility and implementation of current law to affirm in practice the responsibility of law until justice is delivered.

❖ **Constitution**

- i. A constitution should be drafted that truly puts into effect the sovereignty of the people. The draft should incorporate the aforesaid aspects as basic components.
- ii. Drafting should be undertaken by a Constitution Compilation Council with participation by workers, peasants, students, youth and women, and the draft should be subjected to extensive discussion among the people and adopted by a popular referendum.
- iii. Secularity of the state should be affirmed by the Constitution and by the conduct of the state.

- ❖ **Elections:** Introduction of reforms to prevent the abuse of financial power, media power and state power within the electoral system. Ensuring that the wage of a representative does not exceed that of a skilled worker. Denial of special privileges for representatives. Granting the people the right to recall people's representatives. Developing a system by which the people can intervene to review the appointment of state employees at high levels or recall employees, when such

officials who have a direct and emotional impact on public life fail to abide by rules that they have sworn to obey.

- i. Introducing a system of election whereby the sovereignty of the people can be implemented; and conducting of elections by an interim government in order to prevent the abuse of state power in any way in the conduct of elections.
- ii. Requiring political parties and organizations to limit their financial transactions to a specified limit, and subjecting such transactions to monitoring and audit.
- iii. The Constitution should incorporate the conduct of elections at a specified interval and on a specified date.
- iv. Requiring all representatives of the people and state officials who occupy positions of responsibility in sensitive domains to annually submit accounts of their wealth, and affirming the right of each citizen to obtain particulars relating to it when necessary.

❖ **Priority for Democratic Rights of the people**

- i. Incorporation of the right of workers to strike and to unionize in the Constitution
- ii. Limiting the working day to six (6) hours.
- iii. Employment protection for workers in the state, private and plantation sectors and avoiding wage differentials between the state, private and plantation sectors.

**b) Economy**

- ❖ Building up of a people-participation economy with a view to eliminate economic inequality. Making arrangements for the fair sharing of the fruits of production and adopting an

economic policy that prioritized production to replace the existing economic system that is facing a crisis owing to the uneven growth of the finance sector.

- ❖ Acting according to a pro-people policy in matters of international trade and trade agreements in place of international trade and trade agreements that are designed to serve global imperialist needs.
- ❖ Developing an economic programme based on pro-people economic policies in place of the neoliberal economic policy implemented through imperialist financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank.
- ❖ Freeing social welfare services including education, health services and public transport from capitalist profit, and affirming housing and employment as fundamental rights.
- ❖ Rejection of privatization of state enterprises.
- ❖ Assuring earnings and pensions adequate to meet living expenses, and social security and social welfare services
- ❖ Adopting essential measures to free the economy of peasants and fishers from the influence of multinational companies, and capital in general, and to protect small entrepreneurs from challenges confronted by them; and taking steps to negate anti-people agreements such as the Free Trade Agreement with Singapore and other such schemes that fulfil the avaricious needs of global capital
- ❖ Revoking the current taxation policies that place the tax burden on the toiling masses and developing a proper tax system that will allow just sharing of social wealth.
- ❖ Rejection of making land a saleable commodity in the interest of profit for foreign capital and contrary to the cultivation

needs of the peasantry and national agricultural needs; and affirming a pro-people land policy.

- ❖ Affirmation of the right of the plantation workers to land and housing, and establishing a monthly wage adequate to meet living expenses.

### **c) National Question**

- ❖ Overcoming racial and religious parochialism that has been cultivated in the course of the history of Sri Lanka and separatist tendencies that came about as a result of national oppression, and uniting people of all nationalities and religions in order to fulfil the above proposed programmes.
- ❖ While recognizing the national and cultural characteristics of each group of people, steps should be taken to act against racial and religious parochialism and national oppression; and intervention is necessary for the purpose through ceaseless education, propaganda and agitation among the people.
- ❖ Taking active steps to put a total end to state intervention and fundamentalist intervention that give priority to a given nationality or religion or cultural group and demeans other groups of people and their religion and culture.
- ❖ Taking active steps to fully prevent taking advantage of distinctive national, ethnic, religious and cultural features to fulfil political purposes.
- ❖ Taking urgent active steps to resolve the issues of freeing of political prisoners, delivery of justice in the question of the disappeared, return of forcefully seized land to the people, stopping settlements that provoke communalism, and sensitive aspects of the national question including the affirmation of the civic rights of the people in the plantations.

# **An Alternative Political Path is Needed to Solve Problems Faced by the People**

*There is little use in changing individuals  
Join forces to carry forward a Common Programme*

- ❖ The economic problems and crises on the country are on the rise by each day. Their each effect leads to a severe burden of life for the working people who comprise the majority in the country. The working people comprise workers, peasants, agricultural labour, fishers, daily wage earners, the self-employed, small traders, middle level government servants and private sector workers. They constitute 90% of the population. Increases in prices and tariffs and indirect taxes are directed at them.

## **Increase in Price of Essential Goods**

- ❖ The prices of food items such as rice, sugar, wheat flour, coriander, chilli, coconut, milk powder and vegetables are rising rapidly. Besides, the prices of petrol, diesel, kerosene and gas fuel are also on the rise. The cost of construction materials, medicinal drugs and other consumer goods are rising too. Medical and educational expenses are also on the rise. As a result, the cost of living rises and the standard of living declines.
- ❖ Department of Census and Statistics data place monthly expenditure for an average family at Rs 57 377 in rural areas and Rs 77 337 in urban areas. Meantime, the US Dollar exchange rate of the Sri Lankan Rupee is declining by the day. This too adds to the rise in prices of

goods. The fundamental reason for this is the economic policy followed by the UNP and the SLFP based on a comprador and big capitalist position.

- ❖ We are experiencing the adverse effects of the economic structure based on the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization that had been followed over the past 40 years. The manufacturing economy based on agriculture, fisheries and small industries has been allowed to decay and perish. The country was opened up to import and consumption. Exports declined while imports soared. The country has been submerged in debt secured from the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Japan China, European Union and India. These hegemonic forces are competing to keep Sri Lanka under their control.

### **Denial of Wage Increase to Working People**

- ❖ All working people are denied wage increase. Their hard won democratic and trade union rights are denied. A situation of youth unemployment continues, and many youth who have completed university degrees and other higher education programmes remain unemployed. People all round are seen struggling with burdens of life and struggling against pressure from creditors including microfinance organizations.
- ❖ Natural resources fall prey to greed for profit. Forests are destroyed at random. The environment is getting polluted. Disease spreads as a result of toxification of land and water. The number of patients is on the rise.
- ❖ Thus, it is important that the people ask what the UNP and the SLFP that ruled the country in turns and other parties that enjoyed power as their partners have achieved during the past 40 years (1978–2018).
- ❖ The Tamil National Alliance as well as the Muslim and Hill Country Tamil leaders who secured ministerial posts has silently endorsed this

disastrous economic system. That is an indication of their class loyalties.

### **Profits for the Companies, Crises for the People.**

- ❖ All those who ruled the country either sold out or mortgaged the country and its resources to capitalists and investment from the US, Europe, India, China and Japan. Members of the ruling class parties who took turns to be presidents, prime ministers, and finance ministers were party to protecting this corrupt economic system, and aided exploitation and greed for profit while filling their pockets with millions as commissions and through bribery and corruption which have become widespread. The toiling masses have been let down and multinational companies and big businesses are plundering dry the country and the people.
- ❖ Change of government brought in new thieves in place of the old and not relief to the people. Now there is rivalry between the two big gangs of thieves about who is to come to power next.
- ❖ The parliament has been shielding the chauvinist comprador bourgeois parties and the daylight robbery by their members. Terms like 'democracy' 'new constitution' 'national production' and 'reconciliation' comprise political chicanery to deceive and divert the attention of the toiling masses. Hence, we need to be clear about the anti-people orientation of the existing political, economic and social structures and the people should dare to ask why, how and for what purpose and to oppose political, economic and social deception.

### **Leaders and the Lack of a Solution or the National Question**

- ❖ People suffering any form of oppression should know its basic reasons. That is, while struggling against the effects they should also identify the basic causes and fight to change them.
- ❖ The birth and growth of the national question has a century long history. Colonialists, neocolonialists, the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist

ruling classes, foreign forces, the dominant elite leadership among Tamils, and the upper class leaders of the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils have contributed to its development, complication and dragging on without a solution. They are the prime cause of the three decades long war.

- ❖ The national question has served as a suitable platform and arena for their elitist ruling class needs, politics of domination, parliamentary posts and predatory life of luxury. The national question has also helped foreign forces to have a dominant grip on Sri Lanka.
- ❖ All these forces have cultivated the national contradiction to make it a cruel war and caused the devastation of the Tamil people. Ten years since the end of the war, no just solution has been put forward for the national question. The factions of the ruling classes hold on to their faith that they could sustain their grip on their respective bases of power by nurturing Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. It is they who act directly and indirectly as the drivers of institutionalizing and politicizing Buddhism. The members of “Good Governance” and the “Joint Opposition” can be seen to be equals in this matter.

## **Tamil Leadership**

- ❖ The Tamil leadership has since the emergence of the national question and the development of oppression based on it to this day have put forward policies consistent with their elitist upper class attitude of social domination.
- ❖ Under colonial rule the leaders submitted to the colonialists, and were pleased with the posts and positions and wealth and comforts that they received. Subsequently to sustain the comforts of parliamentary posts they took advantage of national oppression to indulge in politics of vote gathering by stirring nationalist sentiments. None of them attempted to approach the national question and put



forward policies to resolve it based on the economic, political, geographic, social and cultural realities of Sri Lanka.

- ❖ It was because of it that the Tamil leaders who initially resorted to politics of accommodation with the Sinhala elitist upper class forces failed. Their subsequent securing a substantial number of seats in parliament and conducting non-violent campaigns failed to prevent national oppression or to secure political and economic rights. On the contrary, all of them only delivered disaster and unredeemable losses to the Tamil people.

### **Incompetence of the Tamil Leadership**

- ❖ Nine and a half years since the war ended, even after adopting the politics of accommodation with the 'good Governance' regime inside and outside parliament, the Tamil National Alliance has been unable to take a single step towards a political solution. In matters such as the rehabilitation of people affected by war, freeing of long-term political prisoners, the question of the 'disappeared' and land still to be recovered from occupying armed forces, one sees only indifference and lethargy. We need to think deeply about the reason for it.
- ❖ The TNA in the process of conducting politics of accommodation with the government is carrying out politics of elitist upper class solidarity. As a result the elite among the Tamils enjoy various concessions. But the ordinary people are neglected.

### **Changing Personalities is like Changing Masks**

- ❖ On the other hand, those who oppose the TNA to demand an alternative leadership lack a political programme for the toiling masses and are thrusting forward merely the politics of protest and politics in pursuit of positions by calling for a change of personalities. Based on past experience, the people should realize that there is nothing to gain by changing personalities in parliamentary and provincial council posts.

- ❖ Voices that give the impression that they are opposed to Sinhala Buddhist rule will achieve nothing. What are needed are policy based change and a leadership that suits it. To seek personalities among the elite to fit the bill will be to seek to change the mask. All who have been soaked in puddles with Tamil nationalist identity have been subservient loyalists of the US, India and European powers. To forget that these were the very foreign forces that provided support and cooperation to the cruel war during the final battle of Mullivaikkal would comprise political stupidity and a slavish mentality of kissing the feet that kick one.

### **Refusal to see Internal Contradictions and Issues**

- ❖ The Tamil nationalist reactionary leadership that leads the Tamil people takes no notice of internal contradictions and issues among the Tamil people. This reactionary Tamil nationalism does not have an appropriate policy that would secure a solution for the problems faced by caste and social inequality over several centuries. One can on various occasions notice direct and indirect expression of casteist thinking and attitudes based on untouchability that practices caste based discrimination.
- ❖ Likewise, they have no solution for problems faced by women owing to conservative cultural factors.
- ❖ While efforts take place to make token allocations for people of depressed communities and women in their lists of candidates in order to secure their votes, nothing interest is taken by them to resolve basic problems faced by the people that concern land, housing, education and health.

### **A Common Programme for Mass Mobilization**

- ❖ Therefore, all toiling people should take into account the truths and the objective circumstances concerning the political, economic and social problems that face them; identify, debate and discuss their

causes and effects; and arrive at solutions with a long-term perspective. It is important that people do not subject themselves to sentiment or allow themselves to get agitated and immerse themselves in political delusion.

- ❖ Every experience of the past should be used as prior knowledge. The toiling masses, other working people and women should together mobilize based on a common mass political programme. The Marxist Leninist New Democratic Party is firm in its position that the only path of political struggle left before us is mass political mobilization. Elections can only be a part of part of it; and the problems of the toiling masses and oppressed people cannot be resolved through electoral politics alone.
- ❖ The problems and crises faced by the people cannot be solved by replacing old shepherds with new shepherds.
- ❖ Let us understand and mobilize with a sense of historical understanding that it is the people, and only the people who are the driving force of history!
- ❖ Let us raise together the hands and voices of the people!
- ❖ Thus it is the call of the moment that all genuine, pro-people, democratic and left forces that represent the toiling masses and progressive Tamil nationalist forces join hands and work together in a common programme.
- ❖ The Marxist Leninist New Democratic Party declares its readiness to offer fullest cooperation and contribution to such united political action.

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### *Press Release*

*14<sup>th</sup> January 2019*

### **Nothing less than Rs 1000 per day will be acceptable**

Comrade V Mahendran, National Organizer of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party, issued on behalf of the Party the following statement on the dispute about the daily wage of plantation workers.

Any solution that does not incorporate a minimum daily wage of Rs 1000 in the Collective Agreement will be a betrayal of the plantation workers.

The Collective Agreement that determines the wage increase and basic rights of plantation workers has been dragging on for the past three months. The demand for a daily wage of Rs 1000 that was put forward in 2015 after negotiations dragged out for eighteen months the settlement turned out to be a deceptive basic wage of Rs 500. The trade union and political leaders of the Hill Country Tamils and the main political parties of the country, thereby, blatantly deceived the plantation workers.

Consequently, this time, the demand for Rs 1000 per day was put forward by the trade unions well ahead of the time for negotiations to start on the Collective Agreement. Political parties, especially those representing the Hill Country Tamils, gave the impression that they supported the demand. During the past three months, plantation workers and leaders of several trade unions and political parties in the Hill Country in support of the wage demand of the workers, as did the ruling party of the country and others have launched struggles at various levels. At the same time, there seems to be a groundswell of support at the

national level and internationally too. The matter was blatantly used for political gain even during the chaotic days of the parliamentary power crisis.

But right now, conspiracies are afoot to sign the Agreement offering a modest basic wage.

In the current economic climate of the country, any solution that falls outside the reasonable demand for a basic wage of Rs 1000 per day will be a historical betrayal of the plantation workers.

It is to be denounced that the trade union and political leaders who have been marketing their politics using the wage issue and put forward the demand for a basic wage of Rs 1000 per day since 2015 express views that are self-contradictory, sign the Agreement on the sly and adopt a wishy washy attitude. These leaders who are only interested in retaining their vote bank for them to warm up to the chauvinist ruling faction have not done anything constructive in the interest of the people in their whole history.

The government is out to play its usual tricks on the plantation workers in the matter of the Collective Agreement as well. Hence the trade union and political leaders of the Hill Country Tamils should cast aside their self-seeking political interests and bitter political rivalries aside and stand together to win the just demand of the plantation workers. The left, progressive and democratic forces of the country should lend their staunch support for such a stand.

V Mahendran  
National Organizer, NDMLP

*Address by Comrade SK Senthivel at the 29th Commemoration of the  
Late Comrade KA Subramaniam on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018*

## **Whoever Leads, Nothing Will Happen in the Interest of the People**

Comrade SK Senthivel addressing the 29th Commemoration of the late comrade KA Subramaniam said that the parliamentary political crisis that Sri Lanka faces as a result of the executive power of the President is more of a storm in a teacup, with rival ruling class factions vying for power.

He further added that the crises facing the country are the manifestations of economic, political, social and cultural problems that could not be resolved by seventy years of parliamentary government including forty years under the constitution that enabled executive presidential rule.

Neither the Soulbury constitution of 1947 nor Sirimavo Bandaranayake's constitution of 1972 nor JR Jayewardene's constitution of 1978 bring any benefit or blessing to the country or its people. If at all, especially under the forty years of parliamentary government under executive presidential rule, there remain unresolved economic crises and a war and destruction that resulted from the failure to solve the national question.

At the same time, behind the scenes of war, liberalization, privatization, foreign multinational companies and domination by private capital investment have established themselves in the country. This was carried forward by the two main political parties of the South that took turns to remain in power at the centre. They were advised and guided by foreign powers, which also arranged to provide the government with massive loans at high interest rates.

As a result, the country has to pay back billions of dollars to service the loans. Exports have fallen and imports have risen, and production

economy has declined while consumption has increased. As a net result, the exchange rate for the rupee is passing 180 rupees to the US dollar. The toiling masses who comprise the majority of the country have to bear the burden of all these and face the crises created.

None of the sides that are competing for power is prepared to provide an answer or to alter the economic structure. At the same time the constitution, executive power and parliament have failed and stand exposed. Thus, whoever may lead the above failed systems, nothing will happen in the interest of the people. The people should come forward to think about these from a political and economic perspective and to carry forward an alternative political programme with a long-term perspective. The people should get ready to carry forward pro-people political and economic programmes on a broad basis.

The word democracy is spelt out aloud by some. But the democracy that they talk about has failed to secure anything for the toiling masses or the oppressed nationalities. The reason is that the democracy that they shout aloud is a democracy entirely in the interest of the capitalist elite upper classes. It is under this democracy that the toiling masses experience crises of life including exploitation, inequality, unemployment, poverty and ethnic conflict. Territorial oppression against minority nationalities is on the increase. Hence there is a need to secure a democracy in which people participate. Today's political crises demonstrate that an alternative pro-people political programme has to be carried forward, transcending the political parties of the ruling chauvinist capitalist classes that are stirring storms in teacups in the interest of their pursuit of power. The need has arisen to take the path of mass struggle.

There will be no relief for the toiling people of the South under the parliamentary representative system that has been repeatedly ruined and rendered useless. The chauvinist upper class big capitalist ruling factions

are clashing among themselves for power. In this matter, the dominant forces of the North and East, and the Hill Country are taking stands in line with their respective class interests. They do not have any interest in the fundamental rights of the people they represent or about immediate problems that demand to be resolved or need that have to be fulfilled.

Thus all of them are clearly demonstrating their respective class positions. The toiling masses and people oppressed based on race, language, region, caste, community and religion should therefore realize this well and identify an alternative political path that suits them, and follow the theory and practice that will enable them to take that path.

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**Comrade Senthivel addressing the environment protection demonstration in Puttalam on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018**



## Worldwide Environment Event, Puttalam

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018 the NDMLP marked the Worldwide Environment Day by joining hands with the people of the Puttalam District on a continuous Satyagraha campaign at the Colombo Face Green in Puttalam, protesting the dumping of waste in the District.

NDMLP activists and people from various parts of the country joined the protesters in solidarity with the Environment Day of Struggle marked on 16<sup>th</sup> November by ICOR (International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations) to protect the global environment from greed for profit. The following NDMLP slogans were among those on display.

Let us protect the natural environment from greed for profit!

Do not destroy the natural environment by dumping local and foreign garbage in Puttalam

Let us all join in! Let us strengthen the struggle.

Let us protect the environment for future generations.



# Hasta siempre Comandante

(Until Always)

**Carlos Puebla**

We learned to love you  
from the heights of history  
with the sun of your bravery  
you laid siege to death

*Chorus*

The deep (or beloved) transparency of your presence  
became clear here

Commandante Che Guevara

Your glorious and strong hand  
fires at history  
when all of Santa Clara  
awakens to see you

*Chorus*

You come burning the winds  
with spring suns  
to plant the flag  
with the light of your smile

*Chorus*

Your revolutionary love  
leads you to a new undertaking  
where they are awaiting the firmness  
of your liberating arm

*Chorus*

We will carry on  
as we did along with you  
and with Fidel we say to you:  
Until Always, Commandante!

*Chorus*

*(Song by Cuban composer Carlos Puebla in 1965 in response to Che Guevara's farewell letter)*

*(continued from inside front cover)*

That is the time when I come to you,  
When your neon flowers flaunt from your electrical wind,  
That is the time when I leave you,  
When your neon flowers flaunt their way through the falling darkness  
On your cement trees.  
And as I go back, to my love,  
My dongas, my dust, my people, my death,  
Where death lurks in the dark like a blade in the flesh,  
I can feel your roots, anchoring your might, my feebleness  
In my flesh, in my mind, in my blood,  
And everything about you says it.  
That, that is all you need of me.  
Jo'burg City, Johannesburg,  
Listen when I tell you,  
There is no fun, nothing, in it,  
When you leave the women and men with such frozen expressions,  
Expressions that have tears like furrows of soil erosion,  
Jo'burg City, you are dry like death,  
Jo'burg City, Johannesburg, Jo'burg City.

*The poetry of South African poet and writer Mongane Wally Serote expressed themes of political activism, development of black identity and popular resistance. The apartheid government arrested him in 1969 under the Terrorism Act and held him in solitary confinement without charge for nine months. He published his first volume of verse, *Yakhal'inkomo* in 1972 and won the Ingrid Jonker Prize for Poetry in 1973. He obtained a master's degree in Fine Arts in the Columbia University (US) in 1979. Exiled from South Africa, he resisted apartheid from Botswana mainly through the Medu Arts Ensemble formed in 1977 by South African exiles. He moved to London and worked for the African National Congress, and on return to South Africa in 1990 headed the Department of Art and Culture for the ANC. In 1993, he won the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa, and in 2004 the Pablo Neruda award from the Chilean government and more recently Order of Ikhamanga by the South African government for his contribution to literature.*

## *Bella Ciao*

*One morning I woke up*

*O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao*

*One morning I woke up*

*And I found the invader*

*Oh partisan, carry me away,*

*O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao*

*Oh partisan, carry me away,*

*For I feel I'm dying*

*And if I die as a partisan*

*O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao*

*And if I die as a partisan*

*You have to bury me*

*But bury me up in the mountain*

*O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao,*

*But bury me up in the mountain*

*Under the shadow of a beautiful flower*

*And the people who will pass by*

*O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao,*

*And the people who will pass by*

*Will say to me: "what a beautiful flower"*

*This is the flower of the partisan*

*O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao*

*This is the flower of the partisan*

*Who died for freedom*

*(Italian folk song adopted as an anthem of the anti-fascist resistance)*

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Website: <http://www.ndmlp.org/>

Printed at World Vision Graphics  
18 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Rohini Lane Colombo 11