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To Write

Don't take my table

I want to write

My school is bombed

I want to write

My teachers are killed

I want to write

My home is grey rubble

I want to write

My friend lost her leg

I want to write

My dad is looking for food

I want to write

My land is under bombs

I want to write

I feel scared

I want to write

The pen doesn't stay still

I want to write

This is how to fight

I want to write

The turn of events in 2024 in Sri Lanka was not unexpected by objective observers of political developments since the end of the war in 2009. Transformation of the national question into a war from 1983 aggravated the economic problems that worsened the indebtedness initiated by the open economic policy of 1978.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, re-elected president in 2010 with an overwhelming majority, and his government grossly abused power to the detriment of the country. Besides corruption and theft, they reversed constitutional amendments that curtailed some of the executive powers of the President and sought to eliminate the two-term limit of the presidency, which every presidential candidate pledged to eliminate, but never did.

Public anger brought down Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2015, but the common candidate Maithripala Sirisena who succeeded and the UNP-led alliance that won parliamentary power failed not only to fulfil pledges to curtail presidential power and introduce electoral reforms but also to act on anti-Muslim violence and prevent the Easter Sunday bombings of 2019.

The Rajapaksa clan which reorganized itself as the SLPP (a breakaway from the SLFP) took advantage of the chaos to sweep back to power in 2019, but with Gotabaya Rajapaksa (US citizen until the eve of nominations to the Presidential Election) as President.

Corruption and bad governance continued amid rising debt, and an impending financial crisis was advanced by the global economic crisis precipitated by the global economic clamp down imposed in the name of controlling the 'COVID-19 epidemic'. Bad policy decisions including tax concession to the rich, liberal import of luxury goods including motor vehicles, the ban on chemical fertilizer with no alternative on offer and poor planning of the import of essentials combined with the cash crisis to cause unprecedented shortages of food, fuel and medicine. Public anger manifested itself as the 'Aragalaya' mass protest in Colombo.

NGOs and their foreign masters did all they could to depoliticize the Aragalaya. But, as the protests gathered momentum to become a secular progressive force, local and foreign reactionaries joined hands to forcibly suppress the Aragalaya and make Ranil Wickremesinghe the President, who was protective of the Rajapaksa clan, obedient to imperialism and accommodative of Indian expansionism.

The country has been run by the Mahinda–Ranil alliance since mid-2022 until the Presidential Election in September 2024. During this period the country was manipulated to consent to a rescue package offered by the IMF and, to his last day in power, Ranil Wickremesinghe did everything in his power to commit the country to obligations imposed by the IMF.

The NPP alliance led by the JVP, in its keenness to capture presidential and parliamentary power, on the one hand pledged reduced prices of essential goods and relief of the tax burden besides firm action against corruption and bringing to justice persons guilty of corruption and theft. It also offered addressing the just grievances of the minority nationalities. Given the experience with post 1977 governments, the NPP pledges had great mass appeal. The election of Anura Kumara Dissanayake was also helped by strong divisions among rival political parties, and his electoral success enabled the sweeping success of the NPP at the parliamentary elections with a two-thirds majority, saving it from reliance on corrupt politicians to form government.

The government's firmness on corruption and minor reductions in prices of essential goods and services, although inadequate, have been well received by the public so that people seem far more tolerant towards the shortages and price hikes of rice and coconuts, for which the government cannot be blamed. But for the goodwill to last, the government has to balance the addressing of short term economic problems by measures that are not in the long-term economic interest against long term plans aimed at rebuilding the national economy.

Announcements of grand plans to revitalize tourism to boost income from tourism and to invest on education and training that will make Sri Lankan workers more attractive to the international labour market are not steps that will help to relieve the country from the grip of global market forces. In fact, they will keep the country a captive of neo-colonialism as heavy reliance on such sources of income will make the country vulnerable to blackmail against steps to free the country from neo-colonialism.

The anti-imperialist credibility of the NPP government and its will to rescue the country from the neo-colonial grip remain uncertain in the context of its desire to be in the good books of imperialist powers and Indian expansionism.

Even among supporters of the NPP, not many demand a defiant stand against the IMF in matters of passing the debt burden on the toiling masses. The claim of the NPP during its election campaign that it will renegotiate several of the terms of the IMF loan has not been realized. Knowing how badly the NPP government needs financial relief and cannot in the immediate run afford to antagonize its creditors, the IMF will not yield on its terms and conditions.

The NPP is vulnerable to pressure from the political right to adhere to the ways of the neo-colonial global order. Defiance will invariably imply external economic pressure and even the threat of bringing down the government. Without mass mobilization and public protest against compromise with imperialism, a government that is half-hearted in its anti-imperialism is bound to yield to neo-colonialism.

That is where a genuine opposition is needed to demand government by mobilising the masses if necessary, to stand up to reactionary forces and external pressures to defend the interests of the people against all external pressures.

**Documents of the First and Second Plenums of
the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party
27th & 28th July 2024**

**Address by Comrade SK Senthivel,
General Secretary of the Party**

1. The National Situation

Dear Comrades of Politburo

Dear Comrades of the Plenum

Revolutionary Greetings!

Comrades

The Seventh All Sri Lanka Congress took place on the 15th and 16th of April 2022 in Matale. The First Plenum that should have been held in 2023 according to the Constitution of the Party was not held then under the prevailing conditions. However, the Central Committee of the Seventh Congress has so far met seven times to conduct extensive discussions and adopt resolutions to carry forward the activities of the Party. It is in this context that the First and Second Plenums of the Party are being held here.

It is essential under the present circumstances that we debate on activities that the Party is to undertake in the spheres of politics, economy, society and culture. The Seventh Congress drew attention to the social structure of Sri Lanka being in the stranglehold of neo-colonialism. Since the so-called independence of 1948, the country has been ruled for 76 years, initially by parliamentary government by and since 1978 by an executive presidential government. It is a fundamental question that everyone who loves the country and its people should ask

why Sri Lanka failed to develop into a prosperous self-sufficient country during this period of governance.

The Country

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean with a wealth of land, water and human resources. European colonists used them to plunder the wealth of the country. The British colonial rulers, when they left in 1948, handed over state power in the name of independence to an upper class elite of feudal descent which would be eternally loyal to them. In the past 76 years, the country has been ruled under three different constitutions, for 31 years under a parliamentary form of government and for 46 years under executive presidential rule.

After all these years, the country seems backward with terrible political, economic, social and cultural decay. The victims of such backwardness are the toiling masses who comprise the majority. In fact, the workers, peasants, fishers, agricultural labourers, daily wage earners, state and private sector employees, women and the middle classes comprise the overwhelming affected majority. Besides the class divide, people are divided as nationalities and national minorities and religious groups.

It is a positive feature that Sinhala, Tamil and English are languages in currency in Sri Lanka. However, a situation persists where the forces of the ruling classes have divided the people on racial, religious and linguistic bases rather than on a class basis in order that their elitist class interests are preserved and they retain a firm hold on state power. It is in consideration of this that the Party has identified class contradiction as the fundamental contradiction and the national contradiction as the main contradiction. That is the objective reality of the country.

The above said class basis has always been decisive in the course of the country's political and economic development. Given the neo-colonial structure of the country, imperialism and other powers occupy the

dominant place deciding the country's economy, resources and human existence. The way of the foreign forces is to operate in a planned manner by making the upper class elite forces their trustworthy partners. That is the basis of imperialist interference.

The historical experience that all national economic programmes and attempts at industrial development during every period following the said independence in 1948 had been subverted directly or indirectly by imperialism is something that should be understood. We can clearly see that these imperialist forces are keeping the country under their control and the ruling class forces are supportive of the process.

It was a comprador capitalist class that create the current constitution of the country and thereby became the accomplice of imperialism to surrender the politics and economy of the country to neoliberal economics, liberalisation and privatisation. The sorrowful plight of the country and the people is its grave consequence.

The economy of the country has been wrecked in many ways. The manufacturing economy was destroyed in a planned manner. Meanwhile an import driven economy was promoted at every level. The export sector was wrecked and crippled with some sectors totally abandoned. All essential goods including rice, sugar and pharmaceuticals have been imported. Criminal groups constituting a market Mafiosi have amassed massive profits with support from the government.

At the same time, corruption, fraud and scams have penetrated all state sectors. Corruption proliferates at the top levels of government. Money and gold that were looted to the value of billions have been smuggled out and placed in banks. Money was borrowed from abroad to meet government expenses, and all loans were said to have been to build up the country. Now the total foreign debt has passed 100 billion US dollars.

Besides, the government which promoted the propaganda that the country's economy had declined as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic

indulged in scams behind that smoke screen. Cash changing hands as commission has become common practice in most ministries. With privatisation riding high, criminal mafia groups have gained influence among the rulers and ministries.

With corruption, fraud and scams existing in the Central Bank that administers the state's finance, one can understand how bad conditions are in the country. The adverse effects of the open economy subject every working person to severe pressures of livelihood. Poverty and unemployment spread like cancer. Unable to obtain food and fuel, people spent days and nights waiting in queues for them.

It was in these circumstances that the Aragalaya campaign started at the Galle Face green in April 2022. That struggle echoed problems faced by the public. Forces representing a variety of political and social forces came forward in the struggle. The slogan "Gota go home!" began to rise loud and clear in the Galle Face green during that campaign. Besides various political forces, NGOs and religious organizations too got involved in the popular uprising. For that reason alone, one cannot hold in contempt the feeling of popular emotion identified by the Aragalaya.

The force of feeling of a mass uprising was visible on the Galle Face green. Popular anger echoed there. The campaign that sought to remove the leadership of government succeeded in expelling President Gotabaya Rajapaksa from the Presidential Palace. Following that, it also removed Mahinda Rajapaksa from his position as Prime Minister and other Rajapaksas from key positions.

The US and Western imperialist forces and India expansionists who saw the might of the uprising did not remain idle. They penetrated the campaign to ensure that their interests were unharmed. They also feared that the Aragalaya of Galle Face green could overthrow ruling class forces from the stage of political power. So, these imperialist and regional hegemonic forces took the initiative to create a leadership that would

continue to serve them loyally. They sought to bring to the lead the US loyalist Ranil Wickremesinghe who among the ruling elite was the most subservient to foreign forces. Meanwhile, the left and progressive sections of the Aragalaya put forward an alternative minimum programme. Alarmed by it, the US and Indian ruling forces worked untiringly to ensure a leadership that was loyal to them. Under these conditions, they succeeded in making Ranil Wickremesinghe who entered parliament as a nominated member to be the sole UNP MP Prime Minister initially and then President.

It is here that we need to be observant of how attentive and observant the foreign powers have been about Sri Lankan matters. There are two more matters with a class basis that we need to look at in depth

1. The US, India and European global powers will not idly watch during armed uprisings or amid popular uprisings that may occur and will act in every way possible to protect their interests.
2. The working people of the country have seen again in practice even recently that the ruling class forces that fight each other in the parliamentary arena will unite to defend their class interests and their wealth and comfort.

The latter was the reason why the Rajapaksa clan consented to make Ranil Wickremesinghe the President and the Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna (SLPP) with its parliamentary majority too obliged. This clearly demonstrated that the ruling classes of Sri Lanka will not give up on the present system of government or allow it be altered in any way. The working classes of Sri Lanka should take note of this reality.

Hence, we need to take into account Aragalaya's contribution to mass uprising. Even when we take into consideration the treachery and the let down by the NGOs and infiltration by foreign forces, we cannot deny or underestimate the mass uprising component of that struggle. Nor can it be dismissed as an NGO campaign. As Marxist Leninists, we need to

approach and appreciate any struggle based on class analysis. Likewise, we need to assess from a class based American, Indian and European meddling and the stand of the Sri Lankan ruling classes.

The country is witnessing the running of the government with Ranil Wickremesinghe as President and the SLPP holding parliamentary majority while being within the grip of imperialist and regional hegemonic forces.

For example, the conduct of the US ambassador to Sri Lanka during the Aragalaya and her subsequent political tours of the North and other parts of the country make it clear that Sri Lanka is a neo-colony of the US. We cannot forget her visit to the Election Commission and conducting discussions with the Chairman of the Commission in the manner of conducting an inquest. Likewise, the Indian expansionist domineering grip on the country is expanding through the North, East and the Hill Country.

The Ranil-Mahinda government that is ruling the country since Ranil Wickremesinghe became President has, in return for the 2.9 billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund, accepted all the conditions and guidelines laid down by the IMF and raised direct and indirect taxes including the VAT to unbearably high levels.

Besides, five major agreements signed with India last year during Ranil Wickremesinghe's visit to India expose the exploitation of Lankan resources by the Adani-Ambani corporate bodies of India. Likewise, the Hambantota Harbour agreement, commercial capital investments in the adjoining region and the Colombo Harbour City agreement point to Chinese interests. European investments and Japanese capital are silently entering the country.

Trawler fishing in breach of the country's territorial waters in the north as well as the campaign to annex Kachchatheevu expose Indian hegemonic attitudes. Also, agreements have been made confirming

Indian capital investment in thousands of acres of land adjoining the Trincomalee harbour.

A programme is on the offing to initiate housing schemes in regions where Hill Country Tamils live in order to appropriate fertile lands in those regions for Indian investment. As an implicit endorsement of that motive, some personalities among Hill Country Tamils have started to refer to them as Tamils of Indian descent in order to negate the identity of Hill Country Tamils which emerged as a nationality out of 200 years of life and toil in the Hill Country. There is much intrigue based on ulterior motives of the Indian ruling classes. Likewise, penetration with ulterior motives of the Indian ruling classes is on the rise in the North, East and the Hill Country. It is defended as umbilical connection.

The Current Sorry State of the Country

In a sorry context where the country is encircled by the neo-liberal, neo-colonial economy on all fronts over 90% of the population comprising working people. The total population of the country is twenty-two million. Women comprise 52% of this population. Workers, peasants, fishers, agricultural labourers, daily wage earners, state and private sector employees belonging to the middle classes and the bottom layers of the society form the working people who constitute 90% of the population. It is they who experience today's severe crises of life, scarcities, sorrowful life and poverty. According to recent statistics, eight million people have been thrust into a state of poverty which transcends race, religion, language and region and has reached its peak in the past two years. It is to conceal this that ruses like Samurdhi and Asuvesuma that toss a penny in the begging bowl and cons like distribution of rice are conducted. They are being expedited in anticipation of the elections to come.

Strikes and work to rule take place in the state sector based on just demands concerning wage increase, wage anomalies, irregularities in

appointments and denial of employment opportunity. The government is intent on using police repression to overcome them. Holding elections will not bring about solutions for such problems since the constitution of the country is decadent and enables personal dictatorship, and the parliament plays along with it. Here the people see bourgeois democracy in its nakedness.

Besides, selling of the resources of the country and privatisation under the guidance of the IMF are undertaken in haste. Laws are being enacted in succession in parliament to enable these measures. With the government party having 120 MPs in parliament, it has been practice to use that parliamentary majority to enact unpatriotic anti-people legislations. When examining the conscience with which MPs raise their hands in support of such laws, one can see the state of decay of bourgeois democracy. Persons filled with fraud and kickbacks pass off as people's representatives, and they are not ashamed of their actions.

Working people struggle against price increases to obtain their daily foods. The rise in electric tariff has led to the termination of power supply to a million poor consumers who find it difficult to find kerosene for the lamps. The government, after raising the price of fuel by several hundred rupees and now lowering the price by a few rupees, tries to cheat the public by claiming that it has lowered prices, using its so-called pricing formula.

Economic crisis apart, governments reject a resolution of the national question and the needs and demands of nationalities. The ruling sections deliberately refuse to acknowledge the national question and problems faced by nationalities concerning ethnicity, language, religion and region. Chauvinist land seizure and breach of religious worship rights occur with the blessings of the state.

Also demanding attention is the non-resolution of problems of livelihood of the Hill Country Tamil people starting with the long-standing

question of wage increase as well as right to land and house ownership. Meanwhile peddlers of ethnic hatred are stirring up problems that threaten the existence of Muslims.

In a situation in which the above problems are clearly visible, a historical need has arisen for working people to rid of narrow differences among them, recognise who is friend and who is enemy and mobilise along the path of revolutionary struggle. Hence our Marxist Leninist outlook recognises the emergence of a stage to carry forward the tasks of the national democratic revolution. That calls for a broad-based programme and a unified action strategy. This plenum should debate the matter and arrive at conclusions regarding the appropriate united front.

The Party and the United Front Strategy

The Party has always urged the need for a united front of Left forces and has taken the necessary initiatives. There have been times when such efforts collapsed after participation in elections. Efforts made before and after the Aragalya uprising were based on these historical experiences.

Already, parties with leftist names degenerated themselves through taking the parliamentary path and participating in allegedly progressive governments. The JVP, which resorted to armed struggle twice, too got drawn to the parliamentary path.

The Front-Line Socialist Party (FLSP) emerged under these circumstances and asserted its left identity. It has displayed interest and enthusiasm in preserving its red identity, especially in its activities in the South of the country, through undertaking mass struggles with a left outlook in the interest of the country and the toiling masses. Consequently, its contact and dialogue with the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party became extensive. Several rounds of talks and discussions took place between the two parties to initiate a Left programme.

The FLSP is not a party based on Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong thought. But the Party recognised that it possessed many features of Marxism Leninism. Talks between the two parties were based on the stand that there was need for a minimum agreement and a common programme. The Party made its fullest contribution to the process.

The two parties which undertook studies and analyses to define the economic and political stands to be adopted by a united front and to develop mechanisms to resolve the national question agreed upon a common programme proposal. It was agreed that, besides the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities, The Attho, Burghers and Malays are minority nationalities. It was insisted that the ethnic, linguistic, religious and territorial uniqueness shall for no reason be damaged or rejected.

Besides, the common programme noted that Sri Lanka will be identified as a multi-ethnic country in the new constitution to be set up. It also noted that everyone will have the right to observe his/her religious faith and there shall be no state religion, and that a climate will be created where a multitude of ethnic and religious cultures could coexist amicably. It is also emphasised that there will be no room for discrimination in the name of ethnicity, religion, caste, gender or race.

A statement of a common programme that incorporates these ideas is to be developed and published following dialogue and debate. Such United Front and programme are very necessary in the current national and international context. Hence it is important that this plenum should debate more extensively how the Party is to undertake its journey with this united front and come to conclusions. At the same time, the plenum should also debate and come to conclusions about how the Party's programme should be carried forward organizationally and at mass level. Proposals and plans for the purpose should put forward and discussed.

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**Address by Comrade SK Senthivel,
General Secretary of the Party**

2. The Current International Situation

Dear Comrades

We can see that the imperialist globalised economy that we confront has created several crises driven by privatisation and liberalisation. The people of the world suffer its consequences in economic disparity, poverty, hunger and starvation, unemployment and serious diseases. The countries of the Third World located in Asia, Africa and Latin America face their severest consequences.

COVID-19

We saw that imperialist powers are capable of doing anything for profit during the said COVID-19 epidemic. By exaggerating the epidemic, they caused economic difficulties in the countries of the world and made a profitable business of vaccines produced by imperialist countries.

Many countries of the Third World were subjected to pressure to buy the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine which was produced in excess in the US. When there was a global dearth of vaccines in 2021–22, Sri Lanka mostly obtained Chinese made vaccines. When a third dose of vaccine was imposed on the public, surplus Pfizer vaccines from the US were imposed on Sri Lanka. This is the political aspect of vaccine business.

The left-oriented Canadian socio-political research website has since 2020 pointed out that another purpose of the COVID-19 pandemic project was to induce a global economic shutdown. Many did not take much notice of imperialism seeking to recolonize countries, especially Third World countries, by stalling their economies and imposing neo-colonial debts on them, seizure of their resources and intrusion foreign multinational companies. However, the global economic crisis of 2020–22 played an important part in the financial crisis of 2023. The COVID phobia crippled the tourism sector, and even now we see it struggling.

There were two important reasons why “COVID mortality” was highest in the West. Proportionately, the aged population there was higher there than elsewhere. Also, in the past several decades, public health services were weakened there by cost-cutting measures. Hence medical neglect could be considered an important factor.

The adverse effects of COVID vaccines that had been hushed up thus far are now beginning to be spoken about in the open. The link between Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and heart disease is now clear. Still, governments will not further probe the matter or take action since the pharmaceutical mafia has emerged as a powerful force. The health sector and politicians bow before it.

A country that did most harm to itself because of COVID phobia was China. In the face of US campaign that the COVID-19 virus originated in China, the Chinese government took measures that obstructed many of its economic activities. As a result, China’s economic growth slowed down very much during 2020–23.

Under conditions under which the entire global economy stagnated, US imperialism focussed its global hegemonic ambition on China, which was its chief economic foe. Moves to encircle Russia began with the coup of 2014 in the Ukraine.

To understand the current global situation, one should understand the events in Ukraine and Palestine's Gaza. They tell us how the world is split in two today.

Everything that happened against their backgrounds will explain how badly the US has isolated itself in the past two to three years.

Besides, the events of this century have also affirmed how dogmatism can propel those who swear by revolutionary politics into positions that are supportive of imperialism.

Ukraine and the World

There are many who view the conflict in Ukraine based on the surprise attack on Ukraine by Russia in 2022 February. But the origins go back to the breaking up of the Soviet Union. Amid the breaking up of the Soviet Union certain assurances were given to Mikhail Gorbachev the Russian President on behalf of the US government with the view to bring the Cold War to an end. Most important of them was the US will not incorporate in the NATO countries that split from the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev lasted only a short time as President after the end of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin who followed him as the President of the Russian Federation soon became a vassal of the US. The Russian economy ran to ruin under him. Islamist extremists started a war of secession in Chechnya with the view to create chaos in Russia.

Putin who came to power against this background restored the security and economy of Russia. The global situation was favourable to him. Initially he was trustful of the West. Russia was able to join the G7 group of seven powerful comprising Western economic powers and Japan as an eighth to make it G8. He wished to secure NATO membership for Russia.

But the US entertained fears of Russian revival, and it drew former Soviet states of Europe one by one into NATO. Russia which did not bother when the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joined

NATO got alerted when attempt was made to draw Georgia into NATO. It responded by recognizing in 2008 the provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that had announced secession from Georgia in 1994 and 1992, respectively. Russia also militarily intervened to defend the two states against attack by Georgia. That ended Georgia's bid to join NATO.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the US subverted every government that stood in the way of US hegemony. In Egypt and Tunisia, eventually it succeeded in replacing rulers overthrown by the Arab Spring mass uprisings with rulers who were friendly to it. Circumstances had changed in 2015 and Russia, which preserved calm when the US intervened in Iraq and Libya, decided to intervene in Syria to defend the government.

In Ukraine, an anti-Russia group in alliance with neo Nazis Ukrainian Nazis changed the regime by a coup d'état. Russia responded by retaking Crimea (a peninsula transferred from Russian Republic to Ukraine under Khrushchev) through a freely held referendum. It was unsurprising that, against a background of the anti-ethnic Russian policies of the new Ukrainian government, Crimea with 90% of its population Russian speakers resolved to join Russia.

The Ukrainian government responded by augmenting its acts of animosity against Russian majority regions of Eastern Ukraine. It also intensified its efforts to join the EU and more importantly NATO. Although Russia had sternly warned against plans to join NATO, Ukraine proceeded to violate the understanding reached with Russia about conflicts in Eastern Ukraine and, encouraged by NATO leadership, persisted in efforts to join NATO. It was in this context that Russia started military action in the Eastern border region of Ukraine in February 2021, and followed it with referendums in predominantly Russian speaking regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia in Eastern Ukraine, after which they were declared as Russia's districts.

The duration of the conflict in Ukraine is now four months short of three years, and is going on because Ukraine will not pledge not to join NATO, the main Russian precondition to bring the conflict to an end, and the West has acted to wreck efforts for a negotiated settlement. Ukraine has lost most of eastern Ukraine to Russian forces and its armed forces have lost a sizeable part of its arms and men. Meanwhile, steps taken by the West to punish Russia like imposing trade sanctions eventually hurt the economies of European countries. The European economy which depends heavily on Russia's oil and gas is choking as a result of trade sanctions on Russian fuel exports. Meanwhile Third World markets for Russian fuel have strengthened. This along with the rise in fuel prices has made the Russian economy stronger than could have been anticipated, so that attempts to isolate Russia globally have failed. Today except for a few nations, the entire Third World seeks Russia's friendship.

The Middle East

The US-Israel alliance has been dominating the Middle East for long. But Chinese diplomacy has succeeded in releasing Saudi Arabia from the clutches of the US. China, by facilitating an Iran-Saudi Arabia dialogue, helped to normalise relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as to alleviate conflicts between the Sunni and Shia Muslim communities.

This has very much diminished the prospect of an Israel-US-Saudi alliance waging war on Iran. Besides, the normalisation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Syria has also thwarted the scheme of the US to isolate Syria.

South Asia

It was at a time when the US was fast losing friends in the Middle East and the Muslim world that the armed forces of Pakistan failed to prevent an alliance of independent candidates led by Imran Khan who was defiant of the US from securing sufficient votes to become Pakistan's

largest group of lawmakers. But the older establishment parties who were at each other's throats until then, were made to come together to prevent Imran Khan from becoming prime minister. Amid Pakistan's struggling economy the stability of the government is in doubt, while Imran Khan's popularity remains high.

Prospects were strong for Modi to be re-elected in India, as Hindu fanaticism is on the rise in North India. The BJP has been weak in the South and the East. As a result the BJP secured a victory without an absolute Majority. This was a shock to Modi. Although, owing to enmity towards China, India seeks to act in ways agreeable to the US, economic reality stands in the way of moves to reduce trade with China. Besides, India has rejected the US sanctions against Russia since hostility towards Russia as well could lead to India's isolation in the whole of Asia.

Nevertheless, India's adoption of a stand that is accommodative of Israel on the Palestinian question and its attempts to build warm relations with certain Arab countries have come to a standstill in the wake of Israel's attack on Gaza.

South East Asia

The conflict between the repressive military regime of Myanmar and opposition rebels receiving the backing of the West is at a stalemate. Asian countries are reluctant to intervene.

The change of government in Thailand failed to yield the anti-China orientation anticipated by the US.

China

The US is unable to turn the countries of the world against China because of the growth of China's economy and international trade. BRICS, which the US resents heavily has grown to have 11 members at the end of last year, and many more countries have expressed wish to join it. All

attempts by the US and its Western allies and their slanderous campaign to hamper the development of the Belt & Road trade route initiated by China have failed.

China has completed in full its poverty alleviation programme. But, despite many social reforms undertaken under the present government, China is still continuing on the capitalist road. But those who call China an imperialist power should at least take note of the fact that under current global conditions only China and Russia remain effective barriers against domination of the world by the US, EU and Japan comprising the world's sole imperialist alliance.

There is the risk that China's growth could propel China into an imperialist power. But Chinese capitalism has yet to arrive at the stage of becoming finance capital. Its production-based economy still relies on foreign investments. Nor has China reached the stage where it stations troops in foreign countries or seizing foreign territory. Nevertheless, socialists cannot consider China to be an exemplary socialist country.

Africa

Changes that occurred during the past decade in countries of West Africa that were subject to French influence are commendable. Although governments changed as a result of military coup d'états, their ordering French troops to leave their soil is a forceful slap in the face of France. Besides, the instruction by Niger to the US to remove its forces from the strong military base that it established in Niger is an important change.

The Current Global Situation

Today, the world is clearly divided as two camps. The US, its European allies, Canada, Australia, Japan and Israel comprise one. The people of the rest of the world are in the other. As a result, even rulers who had been pro-US have distanced themselves from the West on the questions of Ukraine and Gaza.

Although there are wavering governments, even they could openly align with the US. Today even the US democracy is tottering. US democracy is nothing more than monopoly capitalistic bourgeois democracy of the ruling class.

The genocidal mass murder committed by the US jointly with Israeli Zionist terrorism has earned the wrath of the people of the world. The genocidal war that commenced last October continues amid grave calamity. 39 000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza by Israeli forces with US backing. The Israeli forces have killed 9 000 children. The mass killings in Gaza are far worse than the murder of Jews under Hitler.

In the present global order, imperialism and its awful forms of capitalist exploitation appear weak. The imperialist capitalist practise has only led to poverty, unemployment, cruel diseases, social inequality, degradation of the environment and anti-human activities. Imperialism is really advancing towards its destruction. The US is falling from its position as the world's top economy.

Meantime, anti-imperialist struggles are waged in various forms across the world. We witness people mobilising on American soil in support of Palestine and against genocide in Gaza. These are signs of the powerful waves of opposition that imperialism and its allies are facing.

There is no doubt that the people of the world will triumph. Imperialism cannot last for long. The Party, like all other Marxist Leninist parties of the world, is firm in its belief that the people of the world will defeat and destroy it. At this point we see the realisation of the prophetic words of Comrade Mao in 1956 that "US imperialism is a paper tiger".

Down with Imperialism!

Victory to the struggles of the people of the world!

Urgent Reform Proposals on the Resolution of the National Question

Sri Lanka is a country of multi-ethnic nationalities. A nationality groups there are the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils; and there are besides ethnic groups with identity such as Burgher and Malay nationalities.

Capitalism in Sri Lanka was established through British colonial politics and capitalist intervention.

Capitalism in Sri Lanka was from the outset backward in nature.

Industrialisation was as a very low level and through the intervention of British capital production relations in Sri Lanka were elevated to the capitalist economic level.

The backward state of the economy is also reflected in other fields. Hence in some capitalist countries the national question has been resolved to a significant degree while issues concerning the oppression of women seem to remain unresolved tasks of capitalism. British rule employed a strategy of divide and rule people as Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims on a national basis, with the Sinhalese divided further as up-country and low-country Sinhalese, taking them to the extent of seeking secession. The local capitalist class that came to power following an independence that was only nominal became puppets of the strategic intervention adopted by the British and used nationalist pressure for their own schemes for holding on to political power.

All political parties and alliances that came to power on the basis that the Sinhalese were the majority among the people of the nation continued to use communalism as a hegemonic ideology to hold on to their party's political power in the capitalist state. As a result, a nationalist pressure that is absent among the Sinhalese but persists only among the minority ethnic groups did not diminish but continued to grow after the so-called independence.

The bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalist political parties that emerged in response to this trend submitted themselves to narrow ethnic

sectarianism in order to consolidate their political strength in the national context.

Not only did the left movement in Sri Lanka fail to put forward a political programme to counter the situation, it took the electoral political path to submerge itself in parliamentarism. As a result, these left political movements too fell victim to nationalist politics. Following the rejection of the federal proposals that were initially put forward on bourgeois democratic grounds by Tamil nationalist political parties and leaders by various governments of Sri Lanka, the situation led to armed political mobilization for a separate state called Tamil Eelam.

An indisputable truth that we need to accept is that political democracy for the numerical minority national groups cannot be assured by the Sri Lankan capitalist system or the political structures established through it. Hence, political parties that come to power and political parties that seek state power in order to protect and consolidate their voter base have in their political programmes, both before and after coming to power, included and enlarged slogans based on Sinhala nationalism and racism in a planned way.

It eventually expanded to become Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic ideology. We can observe that, based on electoral politics, not only through capitalist political parties but also through parties of the old left and left parties that are taking a destructive path, it draws a majority of the Sinhalese voters into sectarian politics through such activities. The armed activities of the Tamil Eelam nationalist political movements besides finding expression in the killing of Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese, created situations of unprecedented hostility among the nationalities of Sri Lanka. The worth of the wealth that was destroyed was very high and, to this day, we see the agendas of various international forces operating in the internal political events of this country.

As the political agenda of the Sri Lankan capitalist parties evolved into a phalanx based on Sinhala Buddhist ideology in conjunction with various international political trends in the wake of the fall of the armed political movements for Tamil Eelam, hostility towards Muslims that was held low or limited to the upper layers of society was applied with much intensity to serve its political purpose.

President Gotabaya who fled in July 2022, following his electoral success in 2019 declared that he was the President of the Sinhalese, marking an attitude of expelling all other nationalities from politics.

Another matter demanding attention is the need to pay attention to the oppressed Hill Country Tamil nationality who toiled for 200 years in Sri Lanka under conditions of semi-slavery only to strengthen the capitalist framework of the country. This section of the population that has little to do with the political demands of the Tamil nationalist movement has fallen prey to the power political tug-of-war between the capitalist states of India and Sri Lanka. These people who have been subjected to economic pressures and social inequality lack the right to housing, land, civic rights or even the right to a residential address, even today, dumped into a condition that characterised pre-capitalist society.

While their national identity provides a basis to subject them to excessive exploitation, the truth must be emphasised that they are a working class who were the initial working class of the Sri Lankan capitalist structure and even today a section of the working class that earns abundant profits for the wealthy members of the plantation economy. Now they have migrated to different parts of the island. Whichever part of the island they live, their identity is emphasised a Hill Country Tamils. Hence the political programme of the left movements of the country should in the matter of resolving the national question emphasise the struggle to overcome the national and cultural oppression faced by them.

As an essential precondition to it the Hill Country Tamils should be recognised as an individual nationality like the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims.

Bearing in mind the above discussed context, the resolution of the national question of Sri Lanka is to us an essential preconditional task, and the following urgent political reforms should be implemented forthwith. The present proposals that are listed below are based on the purpose of creating a new pro-people constitution and also take into account the clear experiences that befell the people in the course of the last struggle concerning a political programme for people's power.

1. Accepting that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country representing Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people and recognizing that the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities, each of which constitutes a modest proportion of the total population, have for historical socio-economic and political reasons been subjected to special forms of national pressures, a special political-economic, socio-cultural and psychological programme will be implemented to eliminate racism and national oppression.
2. A two-chamber legislature will be set up in the state system in order to prevent injustice to national and cultural minorities through policy-based decisions and consequent acts of legislation passed by the executive and parliament based on such policy. The two-chamber legislature shall have a separate council besides the democratically elected house of parliament founded on the basis of the new pro-people constitution. Election of members to this council will be conducted through a plebiscite that will secure equal representation of all nationalities.

It will be mandatory for any bill or law with features affecting national unity or national cultural equality to be passed by both chambers.

3. A structure comprising new autonomous regions and autonomous units is proposed in a way that power is devolved for the nationalities to gain autonomy. While power is devolved to autonomous regions and autonomous units, political and economic power will be shared on the basis of a democratic centralised state and the protection of the pattern of the ethnic mix. The public will be consulted in the matters of devolution of power and delimitation of borders, and the final proposal shall be with the consent of the people; and a new border delimitation commission will be appointed to determine the autonomous regions and autonomous units. The final proposal prepared by the border delimitation commission after gathering the views of the people will be put forward for public approval.

4. A people's council structure to affirm people's power will be established, which will be legally and politically recognised to be on par with all administrative structures in the country including autonomous regions and autonomous units.
5. The secular nature of the state shall be affirmed. Besides not allocating special state patronage for any religion, religion will be considered a matter of personal faith and shall be made independent of state matters.
6. Law shall forbid privileged as well as unfavourable treatment of people of any nationality or any culture or religion.
7. Sinhala, Tamil and English shall be accepted as national languages.
8. A national programme shall be organised for the learning of the three national languages, namely Sinhala, Tamil and English, and a National Language Studies Institution shall be established by bringing together schools, universities, colleges of education and teachers training colleges.
9. It shall be made mandatory to conduct all official activities including legal matters and government orders.
10. The right of all citizens shall be affirmed for one to be educated in any national language of one's choice and conduct business with the state in a national language preferred by one.
11. Equality of status shall be affirmed for all nationalities in the spheres of politics, society and culture, and on that basis all kinds of special privileges and all manner of oppression shall be legally prohibited.
12. A fully empowered commission shall be appointed to resolve issues relating to disappeared persons, political detainees, and land seized from people and political killings, and a report shall be prepared with the collaboration of affected individuals and steps shall be taken for justice to be done to them within one year's time.

Consumerism: Imperialist Staple Ignored by Environmentalists

The purpose of the essay is not to explain in detail the phenomenon of global consumerism but draw attention to its absence in environmentalist discourses. The essay draws attention to the role of consumerism beyond its importance as a means of enhancing capitalist profit and harming the environment and to the failure of environmental campaigners to accept the part played by consumerism in environmental damage. Many even confuse much of consumerism as genuine social need. It is not surprising that consumerism is not a core issue of environmentalism or green politics which seek to address the environmental crisis within the global capitalist framework.

The emphasis of the essay is on Sri Lankan experience while it also draws on experiences elsewhere. Attention is drawn to how consumerism acts in various domains through misidentification of human material needs and wants. While food, water, clothing, shelter have always been material needs, combined with emotional needs, they also place health and safety, sanitation, transport, communication, comfort and entertainment closer to needs rather than wants.

Capitalism thrives by creating essentials out of non-essentials. It also expands consumption by imposing its own values of quality on human needs. Quality of life and standard of living are subjective criteria for comparing performance of societies. It is true that social development has transformed many goods that were not human needs into needs. But there are things that have been and still are cunningly imposed on an unsuspecting public to enhance the profits of a powerful exploiting class.

Fear and anxiety have for long assisted consumerism to transform nonessentials into essentials. A sense of insecurity has invaded sectors including health, childcare, insurance, water, food catering and fitness. Confusion between luxury and essential comfort has for long influenced the clothing and housing sectors and the motor industry. Alimentation of literature, art and music from real life has helped the growth of a thriving market for creations for passive amusement at the expense of those with a socially constructive role. Advanced features of devices designed for military purposes have entered products for everyday use to make profit in the name of performance.

Consumerism has penetrated Lankan society to the extent that practices and products that served communities well for centuries if not millennia have been edged out in the interest of practices and products of dubious benefit. Comment will be limited in this essay to aspects of market driven consumerism and its impact on the environment.

Expansion of Consumerism

Consumerism has expanded in many directions.

- ***Purchase of non-essential goods.*** Need for such goods is, besides by promotion through advertisement, generated by systematic induction of social obsessions based on distorted notions of smart appearance, including hair and skin colour, physique and attire.
- ***Wasteful practices*** mostly concern accumulation of more goods than needed, acquisition of luxury goods, over consumption, and hesitance to repair and reuse even slightly damaged goods.
- ***Extravagant attitudes*** have led to an exponential rise in the volume of clothing and footwear purchased. Excessive consumption is strikingly evident in the growing rise in purchase of apparel in the name of fashion. Purpose of clothing has since long drifted from its functional role as a means to protect the body from the elements.

- ***Loss of durability of goods.*** Manufactured goods are intentionally not meant to last long and even items made of durable material are discarded as they go out of fashion with the arrival of new models.
- ***Reluctance to repair*** household and industrial goods is supplemented by a lack of spare parts for older models. Serviceability of appliances and even motor vehicles is thus limited to a few years. The 'use once and discard' culture dominates consumer goods.
- ***Waste in the health sector.*** The health sector is getting increasingly wasteful. Fear drives false notions of personal health and safety to drive over prescription of medicinal drugs, clinical laboratory tests and medical procedures. Hostility among medical professionals to traditional practices is initiated in education programmes for western medicine which wilfully ostracise traditional medicine. Treatment of illnesses takes priority over prevention. Patent medicine and surgery thrive at the expense of healthy life practices, preventive medicine, home medicine and community medicine.
- ***Excessive packaging*** adds considerably to the cost of all products and to the volume of waste. Many medicinal tablets and capsules sold loose not long ago are now sold as blister wrapped packs.
- ***Brand name obsession*** has edged out traditional inexpensive items of food and medicine in favour of processed food and pharmaceutical products. Private hospitals and medical practitioners promote brand name cults despite an order of magnitude difference between prices of medication sold by the generic name and with a reputed brand name.
- ***Fashion as driver of waste.*** Advances in materials and manufacturing processes have made textiles and garments cheaper and more durable. But that has not helped to reduce personal consumption. Fashion and brand name obsession drive wasteful consumption. Fashion and fads compel the discarding of garments in good condition as outmoded, just to promote production and waste. Although fashion has caused

limited reversals in mass production to attract custom made garments to the affluent, that offers little support to traditional industry or low paid weavers and tailors.

- *Disposable goods* have penetrated every walk of life. Goods ranging from reusable babies' nappies to reparable machine parts have lost out to disposables. While cost and convenience are the stated reasons, the net benefit is doubtful.
- *Tourism* is mostly accompanied by wasteful consumption of food and non-reusable consumer goods, waste of fuel and electricity and generation of garbage.
- *Non-utilitarian goods*, mostly handicraft (not all truly handmade), are mass produced for elitist compulsion including tourism rather than social purpose.
- *Hoarding* besides wasteful consumption of goods bought in excess of need is driven by fear of shortage. Hoarding of essential consumables invariably lead to wastage.

Bottled drinks. Consumption of bottled water and mineral waters has soared with products like Coke penetrating rural areas. More and more spring water is sold in plastic bottles for fear of germs in well water or tap water, although bottled water is known to have more organisms than urban tap water.

Attitudinal problems

Laziness has become a virtue so that prepared processed food is fast replacing home-cooked meals, with negative consequences for personal health and the environment. Wrapping material for fast food and plastic containers for bottled water and beverages are a major source of plastic pollution aggravated by reckless discarding of containers and packaging.

Fear and anxiety drive consumerism in matters of domestic hygiene and medical treatment. Consumption of germicides and insecticides has been on the rise in urban households and catching up in rural areas. Chemical substances claiming to eliminate 99.9% of all germs are purchased by unsuspecting consumers who hardly realise that germs exceeding that percentage are harmless if not beneficial to the human being. The case is weak for prolonged use of such toxic chemicals especially in the absence of a major epidemic, which itself is a result of an unhealthy environment. The pharmaceutical business misses no opportunity to promote such waste, as for instance in the case of COVID-19, which boosted the use of hand sanitizers and facial masks with a long-lasting impact.

Craving light complexion, born of wrong social values, was reinforced by centuries of European colonial rule. Possessed by desire to look young and light-skinned, people young and old resort to potentially hazardous cosmetics and chemical substances to alter skin and hair colour. Beauty parlours have proliferated in the past few decades to reach even semi-urban locations. Less hazardous natural substances used in tradition to maintain healthy skin and hair and good food habits and exercise that kept people fit have yielded to products with hazardous content including nano-substances that also harm the environment. Concern with signs of ageing has led to increased cosmetic use of botulinum toxin in South Asia in recent decades. Medical professionals know the risk of its serious side effects and long-term implications for skin and muscles, but the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries downplay the dangers with the connivance of the medical profession.

False Solutions

Myths are afloat about how recycling, renewable energy and sustainable growth can resolve environmental problems, while the existing pattern of consumerism thrives. Such approach cynically protects capitalist profit

by not calling out capitalism as the source and driver of environmental degradation.

Recycling concerns recovering costly material more than protecting the environment. The rise in the use of composite materials in products and packaging has made the salvaging of selected materials complex and costly. Also, the energy cost rises with the complexity of the processed waste, while the waste generated by the process can hardly be recycled.

Thanks to technological advances the case for renewable energy is now stronger. Solar and wind energy are produced far more efficiently than thirty years ago. But there is still an energy cost component to invest in advance to produce the energy devices. While the energy pay-back time has reduced to around 1 or 2 years, there are factors to consider like waste disposal at the end of the life of a solar panel. Importantly, renewable energy production is still modest and offers no promise of a decline in fossil fuel consumption in the foreseeable future. Given the limited supply of sources of raw materials for which demand will rise with expansion of renewable energy, with accompanying increase in energy intensive recycling.

The case argued here is not the rejection of recycling or renewable energy, but to dismiss the illusion that recycling and renewable energy will increasingly hold the answer to the growing demand for energy and environmental problems resulting from rising consumption.

The Curse of Consumerism

The curse of consumerism is most evident in the transport and building services sectors in Sri Lanka, both of which pollute the environment. The number of motor vehicles on road is on the rise while quality of public transport is at rock bottom. Affordable personal transport is mostly by tuk-tuks which are also serious air pollutes. Possession of luxury motor vehicles, mostly single passenger owner driven or chauffer driven cars, is

a sign of social status, and governments have consistently pandered to such crass social values. The need to rationalise transport was never a concern in government road transport policy although people are forced to travel long distances to work and to obtain their needs. Expansion in telecommunications has failed to eliminate the need for travel to get things done.

Air conditioning is another well to do middle class addiction, and the boom in high rise buildings in the city has added to the load on the electric power system as well as to heating and humidifying an already humid and warm urban surrounding.

Addiction to luxury goods, electric gadgets, toys and mobile phones has led to the import of a huge number of such goods with a short life and the proliferation of plastic and urban waste.

Consumerism has grown into a social habit or even part of the culture of populations once reputed for frugal living and industry. Liberalisation of imports since 1978 has much to answer for in these social ills.

Reliance of the economy on overseas employment and export processing zones which together deny skilled and semi-skilled labour for industrial development of the country has added to surging consumerism. Earnings from these sources have fed consumerism in a big way. Workers return from the Middle East and elsewhere where they toil with luxury goods and gadgets of little purpose to their communities. Even the hard-earned money remitted by members of the Tamil and Sinhalese diaspora to their families is rarely invested in productive ventures but wasted on luxury goods and gadgets ranging from expensive mobile phones to motorbikes. Their unhealthy impact on other members of the community persuades them to indulge in consumption beyond means. The banking sector too has encouraged customers to buy domestic electric equipment on credit only to struggle to keep them going and often to service the loan.

The Failure of Environmentalists

Environmentalists including Green politicians, be they of the political left or centre, have refused to see capitalism as the main enemy of the global environment. Even left-of-centre Green politics would not confront capitalism and imperialism for fear that they will be labelled Marxist or even socialist. The difficulty that environmentalists have in asserting a case against consumerism, which will not be popular with their sponsors, be they partners of imperialism or populist liberals who want to have it both ways with addressing consumerism as a cause of environmental degradation.

The case is strong for reassessment of common notions of human need and 'sustainable' development. If one locates capitalist profit at the centre of the environmental crisis, the way to address the crisis is not seeking soft solutions like recycling and renewable energy which are of little purpose without confronting consumerism, the driver of the growth of waste and pollution of land water and air.

Battling consumerism demands both political and social awareness. Thus, serious anti-imperialism cannot be content with paying lip service to saving the environment be instead campaign hard against non-essential consumption while ensuring that people's genuine needs for physical health and persona autonomy are fulfilled within limits of sustainable natural resources.

Counter-Democratic US interventions in Latin America

Two centuries of US intervention in Latin America served to defend its geopolitical and economic hold, and to deter radical or revolutionary forces from winning political power in any country and thus trigger a trend that will challenge US dominance. Post Cold War developments like the rise of Chinese influence and a surge in centre-left nationalism in Latin America, however, pose fresh challenges to US dominance.

US intervention has devastated the lives of people in targeted countries. Military intervention killed tens of thousands of civilians, and decades of US-backed military dictatorships inflicted trauma on whole populations.

The US has, besides militarily intervening to punish defiant states, also meddled in elections through subversion, sponsored coups d'état, stirred civil commotion, and waged proxy wars. Interventions since the 1970s, unlike earlier, have been selectively targeted to serve as a severe warning to other states that may be tempted to defy the US. Attention is drawn below to some of the most impactful instances of US meddling.

The purpose is to illustrate how US imperialism has interfered in countries of Latin America in its pursuit of global power and the impact of its interference on individual countries and the region. The US has adapted its methods to the changing global conditions, but its aggressive posture towards weaker countries remains unchanged.

Given below are summaries of US intervention in countries of Latin America with most impact on political developments in the region.

1. Cuba: The Eternal Target

The US bid to increase trade and control in Cuba began in 1818 when Spain opened Cuban ports for international trade. It failed in its bid in 1854 to buy Cuba from Spain, but seized its opportunity in Cuba's rebellion against Spain in 1868-78. Amid the turmoil, US investors bought large tracts of land cheaply, forcing thousands of Cubans to emigrate to the US. Cuba, ceded to the US at end of the Spanish-American War (1898-1902), was militarily controlled by the US from 1901 to 1902, and troops withdrew on condition of a standing right to militarily intervene to defend US interests. The US also leased land in 1903 on the shore of Guantanamo Bay to build the now notorious naval base, over which it still has control.

While Cuba was a republic since 1902, the US military put down all mass uprisings. A US-backed military coup in 1933 let Sgt Fulgencio Batista control Cuba until 1958. Batista seized absolute power by a military coup in 1952, suspended the 1940 constitution and revoked most political liberties, including the right to strike. By then most of the sugar industry and 70% of the arable land were US owned.

The stagnant economy widened the gap between rich and poor. Batista sided with owners of big sugar plantations. He and his cronies profited by exploiting Cuba's commercial interests and close links with the US Mafia that ran the drug, gambling, and prostitution trades in Havana, and from US based multinationals which received lucrative contracts.

Discontent grew and socialist ideas became influential. Batista resorted to wide-scale violence, torture and public executions. Six years of guerrilla warfare against the dictatorship ended with Batista fleeing Havana on New Year's Eve 1958. The US recognized the new government with Fidel Castro as prime minister.

Cuba nationalised US businesses without compensation in 1960. The US reacted with a partial trade embargo and severance of diplomatic ties. Its

response to the Soviet Union becoming Cuba's main trading partner was a failed invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs in April 1961 by about 1 500 CIA-trained Cuban exiles. In May 1961 Castro declared Cuba a socialist state.

The US encouraged Cubans to leave for the US and in December 1961 Cuba legislated to nationalise private properties of Cubans fleeing the country. Urged by the US, the Organization of American States (OAS) suspended Cuba's membership in 1962. The US expanded its embargo to all trade with Cuba. In October Cuba let the Soviet Union deploy nuclear missiles on its soil, precipitating the Cuban Missile Crisis which ended when the Soviet Union removed its missiles in return for the withdrawal of US nuclear missiles in Turkey. China condemned the Soviet Union for wilfully causing a crisis to Cuba's disadvantage.

Harassment included encouraging Cubans to emigrate to the US and using it to justify embargos. Most cynically the US also made countless attempts to assassinate Castro.

In 1968 Cuba nationalised small private businesses. Although the new constitution of 1976 declared the government's socialist character the US, the Jimmy Carter's presidency (1977 Jan to 1981 Jan) was more conciliatory towards Cuba, although most sanctions held. The US and Cuba also had limited diplomatic relations. Carter reaffirmed his friendliness by visiting Cuba in 2002, to be the first former US president to visit since 1959. Attitudes hardened under Ronald Reagan, and in 1982 the Department of State added Cuba to its list of state sponsors of terrorism for its support of liberation movements.

The US sought to subvert Cuba following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to hardship for the Cuban economy which strongly relied on trade with the Soviet Union. But US efforts at political isolation failed, and the UN General Assembly has since 1992 passed a non-binding resolution annually (but for 2020 owing to the "COVID-19 pandemic") condemning the US embargo which it held to be a violation

of the UN Charter and international law. The voting strengthened from 59 for, 3 against and 79 abstentions in 1992 to near unanimity by the end of the century, with only the US and Israel always voting against. Besides, Pope John Paul II who visited Cuba in 1998 called for an end to the embargo.

Moves to soften the US stand once again began in 2014 during Barak Obama's second term. The State Department took Cuba off its list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2015 May. The US and Cuba restored diplomatic relations in July and opened embassies in their capitals. Donald Trump who became President in 2017 reversed the policy, and barred business transactions with Cuban state enterprises run by the military and restricted travel to Cuba. In 2021, his outgoing administration restored Cuba to the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Things changed somewhat under Joe Biden with some relaxation of travel and remittance restrictions among others. But the policies of regime change in Cuba and trade sanctions persist. Despite that, Cuba has increased its import of food and agricultural products from the US. The outlook is, however, bleak under Trump's forthcoming term in 2025.

2. Chile: A Most Murderous Coup

In 1975 the Senator Frank Church Committee revealed that the US had covertly intervened in Chile from as early as 1962 and that covert involvement was extensive and continuous from 1963 to 1973. In 1970, on request by President Richard Nixon, the CIA planned a 'constitutional coup' to prevent the election of Marxist leader Salvador Allende. The CIA and top levels of the Nixon administration had a hand in the murder of Chilean general René Schneider in October 1970 to provide a pretext for a military coup to halt the democratic election of Allende. The CIA assisted democratic protesters and other dissidents merely to destabilise Chile to help create conditions for the 1973 coup d'état that overthrew

President Allende and yielded the cruellest right-wing dictatorship in post WWII history, presided over by General Augusto Pinochet.

The declared excuse for the coup was that Allende, elected President in 1970, had ties with the Cuban government, the then principal target of the US in Latin America and the Caribbean. But big business interests played a bigger role. US corporations dominated Chile's industries from 1960. Anaconda and Kennecott Copper, owning 80% of the production of copper, Chile's main export, made huge profits. The Chilean Left had organized mass protests against them. The prospect of Allende fulfilling his pledge to nationalise Chile's major industries worried US corporations operating in Chile. They wanted the US government to defend their interest. The ITT, which owned Chile's telephone company and had influence in the CIA and the ruling Republican Party, pledged US\$ 1 million to help the CIA stop Allende. The CIA assistance to opposition parties and candidates in 1970 could not prevent Allende's election. Efforts to persuade the Chilean Congress not to confirm Allende failed too. After Allende's confirmation, the US imposed an unofficial embargo on the Chilean economy, but its impact was poor. The CIA then sought unsuccessfully to instigate a coup. When Allende became president in September 1970, the CIA and transnational corporations collaborated to induce the media, opposition parties and private companies to conduct extensive negative propaganda. In 1973 a second coup, that the CIA knew of in advance, led to Allende's killing and Pinochet's capture of power.

The US supported the military dictatorship for decades even as it banned political parties, dissolved Congress and scrapped the constitution. Pinochet who censored the press and banned unions allowed torture and repression. Nearly 28,000 people were killed during his rule. It took 17 years to be rid of his rule in 1990 by a referendum, but he remained army chief until 1998, and then an unelected "senator for life". Although arrested in London in 1998 for crimes against humanity, he was allowed

to return to Chile, where he died in 2006 with around 300 criminal charges pending against him. He never spent a day in prison.

The Chilean right still has political clout and Centre-Left presidents who have come to power generally compromised with the Right and yielded to US pressure in foreign policy.

3. Nicaragua: Terror as Tool of Regime Change

The US took Nicaragua in 1912, and in 1914 awarded itself by treaty the right to build a canal across Nicaragua and a naval base on the Gulf of Fonseca besides a long lease on the Corn Islands in the Caribbean. The Central American Court of Justice upheld the protest of Nicaragua's neighbours. But US refused to honour the ruling. The Treaty was repealed only in 1970.

The US backed the dictatorship of the Somoza family which ruled Nicaragua for 43 years (from 1936 to 1979). The socialist rebel group FSLN (the Sandinistas) founded in 1962 mobilized the masses against the dictatorship, and attacked the repressive National Guard. The last Somoza dictator Anastasio Somoza responded with bloody reprisals. The FSLN regrouped with other political groups, and the Sandinista revolution overthrew Somoza in July 1979.

The FSLN government seized land held by the Somoza family and turned it into cooperatives. The US saw the Sandinistas as a threat to its interests and national security, and imposed sanctions against Nicaragua. The US and its Central American allies backed the Contras who started terrorist violence in 1982 which escalated after Daniel Ortega was elected President in 1984. By 1987 the FSLN was forced to talk with the Contras to make a peace agreement in 1988. Against the background of a wrecked economy, the centre-right National Opposition Union backed by the US defeated the FSLN in the 1990 elections. The FSLN recovered to win Managua municipal elections in 2000 but it took six more years of chaos

and corrupt governance for ex-president Ortega to be re-elected in November 2006. The US has since backed anti-government protests demanding “democratic freedoms”. Coup attempts in 2018 and 2021 outstand among the many US-inspired protests that failed. Steps by the government to counter terrorist violence by the US-backed opposition are presented by the US dominated global media as evidence of undemocratic government. By refusal to recognize Nicaragua’s 2021 election results, the US and allies are amid a new prolonged bid to overthrow the government.

But Nicaragua, among the poorest in Latin America, is on to steady economic growth at 3.5–4.5% with unemployment at 3.5% for 2024.

4. Venezuela: War on the Chavez Legacy

Venezuela, once part of Gran Colombia became independent in 1830, had military or military backed governments until 1945. Transition to democratic government in 1948 was interrupted by military rule until democracy was restored in 1959.

Venezuela as a leading oil exporter gained from the rise in oil prices after the Arab oil embargo of 1973. When prices fell in 1983, the government cut public spending and in 1989 sought IMF loans to steady the economy. Amid public anger, Hugo Chavez, a military officer, jailed in 1992 for leading a failed coup attempt and freed in 1994, formed a political party that pledged to reduce poverty and fight corruption. Chavez was elected president in 1998. The 1999 constitution made Venezuela the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" and extended the presidential term from five to six years. Chavez was re-elected with a wide majority in 2000.

In 2001 the government made the state petroleum company PDVSA holder of majority stake in all upstream oil projects. The opposition took advantage of the chaos following a strike at PDVSA in 2002 to launch a coup that ousted Chavez for 3 days. Backed by the public and loyal

members of the security forces, Chavez turned tables on his detractors to restore democratic government. The US, knew of the coup in advance and backed it. But its exact role is unknown. The government decided to use PCVSA's resources to finance social programmes. In 2004, Chavez overcame an opposition move to recall him electorally, and was convincingly re-elected in 2006.

In 2007 the government took charge of four heavy oil products in the Orinoco belt worth billions of dollars. US oil firms Exxon Mobil and Conoco Phillips left Venezuela and sued for reparations. In the same year Chavez lost a referendum to amend the constitution, to abolish of term limits among other proposals. Term limits were later eliminated by a constitutional referendum in 2009. Although the opposition made electoral gains in 2010, the ruling United Socialist Party (PSUV) held its majority in the National Assembly (NA).

In 2011 Chavez had surgery in Cuba for cancer, ostensibly activated by poisoning by US agents. Despite his illness he was convincingly re-elected in October 2012. But he died in March 2013, three months into his fourth term. His chosen successor Nicolas Maduro narrowly won the Presidential election in April. But the ruling PSUV, which recovered to win the municipal elections in December, suffered a setback in elections to the NA in December 2015, losing control of the NA to the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD).

In 2016, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) found the NA in contempt of court for swearing in legislators whose elections it had deemed invalid, and stripped the NA of its powers in March 2017, a decision reversed after public protest and censure by international bodies. The protests that began in March got combative by April, but failed to stop elections to the Constituent Assembly (CA) which overwhelmingly returned candidates of the PSUV and allies.

The CA that was to rewrite the constitution also had legal power over other state institutions, and in August it summoned members of the NA to attend a ceremony acknowledging its legal superiority. The opposition members of the NA boycotted the event and the CA stripped the NA of its legislative powers.

In January 2019 Juan Guaidó, leader of the NA (2019–21) declared himself Interim President of Venezuela. He was endorsed by the US and allied governments that rejected Maduro's re-election. Even after the NA removed Guaidó as 'Acting President' in December 2022, the US and allies continued his recognition and held on to Venezuela's vast foreign assets which they seized in 2019.

Maduro kept control of nearly all Venezuelan institutions, including security forces, despite Guaidó's "interim government" controlling some foreign assets and embassies under US patronage. Although Guaidó soon lost international support, the US and allies still seek to punish the Maduro government and deny Venezuela access to its foreign assets and inflict sanctions designed to cripple the economy.

The PSUV won 20 of 23 states and the capital Caracas in the national elections in November 2021. Predictably, the US rejected the vote monitored and endorsed by the EU and a delegation of US National Lawyers Guild that were present in Venezuela.

In July 2024 Maduro was re-elected for the 2025–31 term with 51.9% against 44% for his main opponent. The opposition, the US and allies rejected it. The opposition's claim of access to 83.5% of the reported tallies showing that its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia won with 67.1% of the votes remains unsupported. The Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) affirmed the official results and the public expressed overwhelming support for Maduro in the streets by countering violent protests and criminal acts organised by the opposition. Yet, the US in November, once again, chose to recognise the loser of the contest as President.

It is true that under Maduro, there was rising unemployment, shortages of goods, severe inflation, closure of several corporations and decline of productivity. But they were due to US economic sanctions and blockades combined with criminal sabotage and anti-social violence by the opposition. However, Maduro and the PUSV government have frustrated US and allied efforts to destroy them by pushing the Venezuelan economic into a deep crisis.

The US has two aims, one to control Venezuela's vast oil resources and other to deny success to a strongly left-of-centre state that could inspire Latin America to reject US authority in the region. The fact that some supposedly 'centre-left' governments hesitated to endorse the election of Maduro, demanding 'proof' of clean election, much like the US and allies, is evidence that many centre-left leaders are far behind the people of their lands in matters of anti-imperialism.

5. Bolivia: Coup d'état as Mass Protest

Following independence from Spain in 1825 Bolivia was federated with Peru from 1836 to 1839. Loss of coastal territory to Chile by war (1879-84) made it landlocked. It also lost its rubber-rich Acre province to Brazil in 1903 and some territory to Paraguay by war (1932-35). Despite a large indigenous population, state power was in the hands of elite settlers and descendants, mostly military rulers.

Peasants and miners overthrew military rule in 1952, and Paz Estenssoro of the Revolutionary National Movement (MNR) was elected president. Tin mines (Bolivia's main mineral source) were nationalised, land reform was effected and universal suffrage enfranchised the indigenous people. Estenssoro changed hue and turned on his left and trade union allies in the early 1960s, and the US rewarded him with aid and loans. US Peace Corps too entered Bolivia. He revived the army as his power base. With General René Barrientos of the Air Force as his running mate in the 1964 May, the army got active in politics. Internal unrest grew. Following

clashes between the army and miners in October, Barrientos seized power in a coup in November 1964, leading to a string of military regimes. Conflict with miners was aggravated when wages in state owned mines were halved. Protests followed and a united leftist opposition People's Democratic Council was formed in November 1965.

From 1963 to 1965, the US covertly funded the centre and right of the ruling MNR, and the CIA aided Barrientos' election campaign in 1966, which he won. A notorious CIA operation in Bolivia in was its collaboration with the army in October 1967 to destroy the guerrilla group led by Che Guevara and capturing and killing Guevara.

The military which obstructed the Democratic and Popular Union (DPU) (an alliance of the Revolutionary Left Movement, the Communist Party and others) which won the general elections of 1978, 1979 and 1980 from assuming power, faced a dead-end by 1982 when the economy bordered on collapse. In September 1982 the military reconvened the Congress elected in 1980, which elected Siles Zuazo (former President, 1956–60).

Siles restored ties with Cuba in 1983 after twenty years, and Cuban doctors arrived to reorganise Bolivia's health system. Having survived a military coup attempt in June 1984, he soon stepped down amid hyperinflation and weak political support. Estenssoro, who was elected president for a fourth time in 1985, formed the first successful neo-liberal government in Latin America. He reversed his earlier policies to privatise mines, cut government deficits, change the tax system and float the currency. While inflation rate fell, tin prices fell too. When miners marched on La Paz in 1986, he ordered the army to intervene. In 1986, 21 000 miners lost their jobs following the collapse of the global tin market.

Neo-liberal economics persisted under Leftist Jaime Paz Zamora, elected president in 1989, who made a power sharing deal with former dictator Hugo Banzer. Until 2005, a succession of centre-right MNR governments

undertook social reforms and privatised public enterprises as told by the World Bank and the IMF.

Amid the political crisis, an alliance of the Movement towards Socialism (MAS, born of the demand to defend the interests of coca growers) with indigenous social movements and other parties grew in strength. Its leader Evo Morales became the first indigenous Bolivian president in December 2005, and MAS rose to dominate Bolivian municipal politics.

The new constitution of 2009 was adopted by referendum with 64.4% approval. Morales won a third term in 2014 to be Bolivia's longest-serving president. A constitutional amendment to let him contest for a fourth term lost narrowly in a referendum in 2016. But the Constitutional Court held that term limits contravene the American Convention on Human Rights and let him run for a fourth term in 2019. Morales claimed victory in the first round of the vote, but was forced to step down and flee the country by US-backed protests mobilised by the opposition. Opposition Senator Jeanine Áñez succeeded him. Her far-right government which repressed protests and resorted to racist state violence, met with public resentment. MAS, returned to power in the 2020 presidential vote with Luis Arce as president. Áñez and her allies were prosecuted and serve prison sentences for their role in the coup.

Bolivia is, however, is amid a political crisis since 2023 owing to dispute between Morales and Acre on the right of Morales to contest the presidency, which was unlawfully denied to him. Failure to resolve differences risks dividing the MAS and enabling the return of the far right with help from the US.

6. Guatemala: Coup with a Lasting Impact

The United Fruit Company (UFCO), a most successful US company that made huge profits from the export of bananas grown in Latin America, UFCO controlled 42% of Guatemala's land and the entire production and

exports of banana during the rightist dictatorship of Jorge Ubico. It reinforced its brutal control over the cultivators y its ownership of the country's telecommunication system and most of its railroad.

The revolution that removed Ubico in 1944 led to the country's first democratic election. Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, elected president in 1951, extended political freedom, and let communists enter politics. The US was further angered by President Arbenz's proposed 'Decree 900' allowing the redistribution of undeveloped lands held by large property owners, comprising 2% of the population owning 70% of the land, to landless farmers making 90% of the population.

Angered by the reforms, UFCO used its influence with the US government to launch an anti-communist propaganda blitz against Guatemala, and the CIA built, armed and trained an opposition force that launched a coup to overthrow Arbenz in 1954. Since then, Guatemala had 40 years of military dictatorship amid public protest and a civil war (1960–96), in which 250 000 Guatemalans, mostly indigenous civilians, were killed or 'disappeared'. The Historical Clarification Commission (the "Truth Commission") attributed 93% of human rights abuses to the military and government-backed forces, and held the government responsible for acts of genocide.

Post civil war governments including centre-left government of President Bernardo Arévalo of the Semilla Party that assumed power in January 2024 have yielded no meaningful political change. Guatemala remains a client state of the US which dominates the economy, and the US dictates its foreign policy. Thus, it rejects the One China policy on China to recognise the Taiwan regime and is hostile to the Venezuelan government.

The people of Guatemala who elected a centre-left government in the hope of freeing themselves of US domination have been failed by the centre-left owing to the economic and political grip of the US.

7. Honduras: On Crosshairs for Regime Change

Spain conquered Honduras, home to many indigenous cultures, in the 16th Century and ruled until 1821. It imposed its language and customs on the people. Early in the 20th Century, US fruit companies, mainly the United Fruit Company, Cuyamel Fruit Company and Standard Fruit Company, made Honduras a huge banana plantation on land granted by conservative politicians. They dominated the economy while conservatives ruled until 1988. The US backed many military coups to ensure rule by a loyal elite. Thus, Honduras was also a base to attack Nicaragua's FSLN government in the 1980s.

US dominance relied on controversial development projects sponsored by USAID, a large contingent of US Peace Corps and hordes of NGOs and international agencies. Even under the new constitution of 1982, government policy needed military approval and no government dared to defy the US. Things changed in 2005 November with the election of Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya Rosales as president. But his Liberal Party lacked an absolute majority in parliament. In June 2009, a military coup overthrew him and forced him into exile. The pretext for the coup was a legitimate proposal to hold a referendum to amend the constitution.

President Obama's effort to erase the "gringo bully" image by rejecting the coup, failed in the face of Congressional Republican defence of the coup government as a bulwark against Venezuela. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton too undercut Obama with covert support for a coup rejected by the UN, the Organization of American States and the EU.

The repressive coup government lasted until the election of Zelaya's wife Xiomara Castro de Zelaya was elected as Honduras' first female President in 2021 from the Liberty and Refoundation Party founded by a leftist coalition opposed to the 2009 coup.

The Xiomora government, despite no majority in the Congress, placed indigenous wellbeing over rule of law to stop the eviction of indigenous people by land owners. It also banned open-pit mining to protect the

environment and pledged to conserve areas of "high environmental value". It also moved Supreme Court to abolish Honduras' special economic zones, implemented by the previous National Government.

In May 2023, the government legislated tax reforms to close tax loopholes and selective privileges. It also reversed the foreign policy of the coup government to recognise Maduro as President of Venezuela, establish ties with China and denounce Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Honduras is thus a target for regime change at the general elections due in 2025, and the US is building up its campaign of lies. Honduras is also harassed by an avalanche of corporate claims by foreign and domestic investors since 2023, mostly by companies which invested irregularly under the narco-dictatorship that followed the 2009 coup. The way forward for Honduras is to legislate against such mischief and inform the people of its actions.

8. Grenada: Regime Change by Invasion

Grenada, a Caribbean island 150 km north of Venezuela, was the smallest country invaded by the US since WWII. Operation Urgent Fury of October 1983 was its largest US military action since the Vietnam War.

In February 1974, Grenada became independent of the UK with Eric Gairy as prime minister. Gairy's corrupt autocratic rule used gang violence against political rivals. Elections in 1976 helped the New Jewel Movement (NJM) and friendly parties to weaken Gairy in parliament. In March 1979, the NJM staged a bloodless coup and declared a People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) with Maurice Bishop as prime minister. The PRG amid Western hostility acted to rebuild the economy which was a total shambles. Social and economic reforms were carried out with help from the Soviet-bloc. When it expedited the construction of a large airstrip for the development of tourism with Cuban assistance, US President Reagan claimed that it was meant for Soviet aircraft.

The US launched its Caribbean Basin Initiative in 1983 to keep out Soviet influence. Bishop visited the US in June 1983 to meet with US officials. It was resented within the NJM and he was forced out in October. Gen. Hudson Austin, commander of armed forces, took charge. Amid ensuing political unrest, Reagan sent in 10 000 US soldiers backed by some 300 soldiers from countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Resistance was soon crushed and the invaders killed over 100 civilians. The UN General Assembly condemned the invasion.

US forces quickly occupied the island's airfields, power station and broadcast facilities. US combat forces withdrew by mid-December, leaving some 300 noncombat troops as advisers for the OECS contingent.

Subsequently, the US allowed popular elections and a series of centrist and centre-right governments were elected. Corruption became a serious issue, with contracts awarded to foreign investors of ill repute. Poverty is widespread amid a nominally expanding economy with no choice but obey the decree of US controlled international financial institutions. Nostalgia for the island's socialist experiment lingers on.

Cuba and Grenada resumed diplomatic ties in 1994. In 2005, Prime Minister Keith Mitchell restored ties with the People's Republic of China, severed in 1989 when Grenada established diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Most significantly, Grenada joined Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) as full member in December 2014 during its summit Havana, and Prime Minister Mitchell said that the membership was a natural extension of the country's long-time cooperation with both Cuba and Venezuela. These are signs that the US has failed to arrest the anti-imperialist trend in Grenada.

9. Brazil: Regime Change by Lawfare

In 1964, President Kennedy backed the military coup that overthrew President Joao Goulart, "to prevent Brazil from becoming another Cuba".

Return to democracy was by overcoming a string of hard-line right-wing governments. Brazil was not new to military coups or dictatorships, but the bloodless coup that ousted the left-wing President Goulart in 1961 led to a most repressive military rule lasting 21 years from 1964 to 1985. The coup, planned and executed by senior commanders of the Army, had support from high-ranking members of the military, conservative forces like the Catholic Church and anti-communist civilian movements. The military regime, with nationalism, economic development, and anti-communism as guidelines, enacted a new Constitution in 1967 that stifled freedom of speech and political opposition. The regime also resorted to torture, extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances.

Freedom from military dictatorship took a tortuous course including an armed mass struggle (1967-73) that was crushed and mass street protests in the early 1980s amid a failing economy. Governments have been elected since 1985 and, despite the rise of a 'left' alliance in this century, the Brazilian right still has a strong hold on the system.

The US which in the 20th Century used invasion, insurgencies and economic blockades to further its interests in Latin America, now has 'anti-corruption' in its regime change armoury in place of armed intervention and CIA-armed client insurgents. The left held presidential power since 2002. And in 2016, a legal coup served to remove the left president Dilma Rousseff from power. The neo-fascist president Jair Bolsonaro was elected in 2018. Strangely, evidence of 'lawfare' tactics used by the US against Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva has mostly been ignored by mainstream media and scholars.

Economic reality forced Brazil to expand trade with China, now ahead of the US as trading partner, and a founding lead role in the BRICS. Under the right-wing rule between 2016 and 2024, however, Brazil was reluctant to join China's B&R initiative. Brazil is now close to joining it, much after seven South American countries.

The might of the far right in Brazil with links to the US goes back to the two decades of Military government following the 1964 coup, and cannot be underrated. Any government with centre-left ideology, regardless of its willingness to yield to the US on key issues, is vulnerable to subversion by the US and its local partners.

10. Argentina: Fascist Residues of Military Rule

The military dominated Argentinian politics for long, and ruled the country during 1930–32 and 1943–46. Centre-Left populism under President Juan Peron (1946–55) fell victim to a military coup in 1955. Peronists were banned from the elections in 1958, and the military seized power in a coup in 1966 to rule until 1973 when the ban was lifted on Peronism. US officials were in touch with the plotters, and US administration was aware of intended human rights violations.

US intervention in Latin America meant more than supporting military regimes. Argentina was the operations centre of Operation Condor, a system to coordinate repression in South America, initiated in Chile in November 1975 by a US-led group of dictators of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The US offered the military regimes counterinsurgency training, financial support and intelligence briefings in the name of fighting communism. Operation Condor kidnapped, tortured and killed political, social, trade-union and student activists from these countries, and lasted until around 1983, when the Argentinian military regime fell following defeat by UK in the war over Malvinas (Falklands) in 1982.

When Argentina's democratically elected centre-left President Isabel Peron was overthrown in 1976 in a military coup (the most murderous in Argentine history), the US had foreknowledge of the coup that led to the deaths of nearly 30 000. It was supported and endorsed by the US government and, notably, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger visited the newly-installed dictatorship several times. The dictatorship

committed grievous crimes in violation of human rights, including mass execution, extrajudicial arrest, torture and rape, as well as the relocation of children born of pregnant detainees. The cruelty was so notorious that it caused enough discomfort to the US government to nominally withdrew support to Argentina under Operation Condor. But US backing for the dictatorship continued.

Mass resistance to the military dictatorship was strong to the very end so that, unlike in Chile, many offenders were punished. Memories of military rule in 1976-83 are so bitter that they will obstruct military rule, but no guarantee against the election of far-right governments.

Centre-right Peronists were elected until 2003, when a centre left Peronist alliance returned to power to last until 2015. Power has changed hands between centre-right and centre-left until the neo-liberal Javier Milei was elected in 2023.

A Closing Footnote

The US has meddled in the democratic process in very nearly every country in Latin America and most of the Caribbean. Most of the countries listed above are subject ceaseless attack in the form of economic sanctions and tampering with the electoral process. Six of them, namely Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Honduras are continuing US targets for regime change. The others included in this part of the study have notable bearing the above regime changing objectives.

Other Latin American and Caribbean countries where US meddling had led to regime change include Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico and British Guyana. The second and concluding part of the study will deal with regime change methods in these countries as well as manipulations in Peru and Colombia to defend US hegemony in the region.

Food for Thought for Serious Anti-imperialists

Imayavaramban

Criteria for deciding if a state is imperialist have been much debated in the past several decades, so that the only the US is the unanimously accepted imperialist state. Lenin's five characteristics of imperialism have been reformulated by some as rigid criteria and, aided by subjective reasoning, been used to label China, Russia and India among others as 'imperialisms' even on par with US imperialism.

These countries with fast growing capitalist economies and considerable military strength have the potential to become imperialist powers. There can be reasoned debate on whether they are already imperialist powers. Even if they are, whether they are imperialist powers on par with the US is debatable. Even conceding that they are imperialist powers vying with the US, economically, politically and militarily, to dominate the world, there is need to study the conduct of each in specific contexts.

Countries like Türkiye, India and even Morocco which resorted to force to annex territory to fulfil expansionist ambitions. But such expansion has not posed a challenge to US hegemony and has on occasion been conducted with the blessings of US imperialism.

The risk of misidentification of countries as imperialist, even when there is cause to call any imperialist based on some criterion, lies in the tendency to attribute imperialist motives to them in every issue in which they show an interest or take sides.

Russia along with Iran was accused of imperialist design for supporting Bashar Assad (allegedly the oppressive dictator of Syria) in a war waged against Syria by a combination of Islamic fundamentalists backed by the US and its Arab allies. Support by Russia and Iran helped Syria to defend

itself and overcome foreign aggression in most of the country. But backing by the US and Türkiye kept alive the rebels to overthrow the Assad regime in an economically wrecked country. Apart from counting winners and losers, could one claim that the overthrow of Assad by NPR, a fundamentalist force with roots in the IS and Al Qaeda augers well for Syrian democracy or the security of the minorities of Syria? What have the leftist Kurdish rebels won by seeking US imperialist support to fight the IS? Will any narrative of Russian imperialist ambition tell us who did the most to destroy the integrity of Syria which is now torn apart by the US, Israel and Türkiye and their fundamentalist proxies?

What theory of imperialist rivalry will explain the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza and Zionist aggression in the region? If war breaks out in the Middle East and Iran is drawn into war and another “imperialism” like Russia or Türkiye also gets involved against Israel aggression, can the war readily dismissed as a manifestation of imperialist rivalry the way Trotskyists saw WWII even after the Soviet Union was drawn in?

To name a country as imperialist and thus attribute imperialist motives to it in any conflict in which it is involved is not only unscientific but also a most dishonest way to interpret global events. Such approach has led some to see in Russia an imperialist aggressor of an innocent Ukraine defended by the US and its imperialist EU and NATO partners, totally ignoring the circumstances that led to a most regrettable conflict in which Ukraine is a proxy serving US imperialist interests.

Anyone who wants to be taken seriously as a Marxist Leninists should think and act like a Marxist Leninist and avoid getting carried away by prejudice and subjective thinking in analysing global events in a world upon which US imperialism seeks to impose endless military conflicts.

Lankan Left: Fresh Hope

Imayavaramban

The history of Left alliances in Sri Lanka records a string of ailments ranging from dogmatism to opportunism. The particular misfortune of the Sri Lankan Left was that it was the only left movement in Asia to be dominated by Trotskyists with an elitist background.

The LSSP, founded by an alliance of left oriented group, soon came to be dominated by Trotskyists, whose understanding of the global political situation was conditioned by a loyalty to Trotsky in the dispute between Stalin and Trotsky at the time. They erred in causing a split in the LSSP by expelling 'Stalinists' who defended the Soviet Union and urged support for the Soviet Union in WWII because it implied tactical support to the British in a war which had changed character from a conflict among capitalist states of Europe to one an alliance of western capitalist states and the Soviet Union against a fascist alliance of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan. They severely under estimated the fascist threat and called WWII a conflict between two capitalist camps.

The LSSP had then turned dogmatic and hostile to form alliances with 'Stalinists' and the national bourgeoisie, whom they called the local petit bourgeoisie. The LSSP was also susceptible to factionalism and splits based on personal loyalties. Dogmatism yielded to pragmatism after the 1947 parliamentary elections preceding national independence, a trick on the people by which power was transferred to a comprador bourgeois class loyal to the British rulers.

The results of the elections were inconclusive. But the Left, divided between two Trotskyist parties and the Communist Party formed by those expelled from the LSSP, performed well.

A coalition government comprising MPs of the left parties and national bourgeois MPs was mooted. Dogmatic arrogance of some leaders of the LSSP sank that prospect, and with it the hope of keeping the comprador bourgeois UNP out of power.

By then, the Left, especially the Trotskyist parties, had begun to dream of capturing power through the ballot. Meanwhile, revisionism began to penetrate the Communist Party, thanks to the influence of the British Communist Party. But hopes of the Left to be elected to power were shattered in 1952 by the consolidation of the electoral base by the UNP following the Citizenship Act of 1948 which disenfranchised the Hill Country Tamils. The Hartal of 1953 offered the left an opportunity to unite as a mass political force. But that was not to be, and the SLFP, formed in 1951 under the leadership of SWRD Bandaranaike who left the UNP, capitalized on popular resentment of the UNP. The SLFP joined the Trotskyist VLSSP (led by Philip Gunawardena) and other minor parties, some rather sectarian, to form the MEP (People's United Front) which won sufficient seats to form the government.

VLSSP's partnership with the SLFP came with the price of submitting to Sinhala chauvinism, from which retreat was difficult. The right wing of the SLFP and other reactionary partners resented the VLSSP so that the MEP alliance failed, and the VLSSP assumed the name MEP for itself in time for the elections in 1960 March following the assassination of Bandaranaike in September 1959. The LSSP and CP made no-contest pacts with the SLFP in the both the inconclusive general election of March 1960 and the election in July 1960 which the SLFP led by Sirimavo Bandaranayake won convincingly. Left support for the SLFP government although conditional helped to influence the government in taking progressive measures, including acts defiant of US imperialism.

Keeping a distance from the SLFP preserved the credibility of the LSSP and CP among the working class and in the trade union movement. When the government was confronted by working class disaffection in

the face of economic problems, Sirimavo sought to mollify the workers by accommodating the left parties, especially since the formation of the United Left Front comprising the LSSP, CP and MEP, and a powerful alliance of trade unions that planned to press for 21 demands of which some were progressive political.

Sirimavo successfully tempted the LSSP to join her government, thereby inducing the collapse of the ULF and the 21 Demands Campaign as well as a split in the LSSP.

Since then, all left alliances with the SLFP were as junior partners. The Unite Front of the SLFP, LSSP and CP was electorally successful in 1970, but the LSSP leaders over asserted themselves within the UF government to the peril of the alliance which fell apart in 1976. The split between the SLFP and the two left parties led to the heavy defeat of the SLFP and a total electoral disaster for the parliamentary left in the elections in 1977.

The massive victory of the UNP in 1977 had harsh implications for the country, the left forces and the anti-imperialist movement as a whole. But the parliamentary left learned no lessons. Thanks to initial support by the UNP, the JVP emerged as the strongest party of the 'left' and served the UNP to disrupt the revival of the SLFP and the old left.

Left alliance with the SLFP was since revived with no ideological basis and purely for electoral gain, and implied subservience to the SLFP, and later the SLPP. Alliances involving factions that split from the LSSP or derived from them at various times were exceptions to this pattern, but electoral ambitions always played a role.

An alliance with declared aims outside electoral politics was the New Left Front formed in 1998, comprising five organizations including the NSSP and NDMLP (then NDP). It performed fairly well in the Provincial Council elections in 1999 to secure nearly 1% of the national vote and secured a seat in the Western Province. That worried the JVP as it had potential to be a genuine left challenge to its blend of chauvinism and left

posturing. The JVP tempted the leader of the NSSP with an offer to elect him as Speaker of the Western Provincial Council by pooling the votes of the UNP and the JVP against the ruling PA. NSSP's negotiation with the JVP without reference to its NLF partners led to the wrecking of the NLF. Having achieved its goal, the JVP left the NSSP standing, and out of desperation the NSSP claimed the name NLF for itself and soon dropped it to call itself the Left Front.

This experience was a serious setback for efforts to build a secular left alliance with purpose beyond winning elections. As the parliamentary left continued to decay the NSSP and other organizations with roots in the LSSP were also weakened by opportunism and sectarianism. The NSSP even reduced itself to become an informal partner of the UNP.

The JVP's opportunism was clear with its parliamentary ambitions at the fore. In 2004, allied with the SLFP to form the United People's Freedom Alliance which the 'left' partners of the ruling PA, namely the LSSP, CP, MEP, DUNF and SLMP soon joined. But the JVP was soon at loggerheads with the SLFP, and was sidelined from the government. But it returned to support Mahinda Rajapakse's candidacy as President on a chauvinist platform. The partnership collapsed with the JVP suffering an eventual three-way split and a weakening of public support.

The Frontline Socialist Party (FLSP) emerged in 2012 after the rejection of the JVP's chauvinist opportunist politics. The FLSP, although not entirely free of the ideological flaws of the JVP, was willing for a dialogue with the revolutionary left to form a broad mass alliance. The FLSP went through a long process of internal political debate and discussion to mature into a genuine left force distinct from the JVP. Its maturity was evident in its role in the Aragalaya of 2022 which initiated process that saw the end of the Rajapaksa family rule.

Important among its realizations was the urgency of the resolution of the national question of Sri Lanka as an essential preconditional task, and the

realization is clear in the draft document “Urgent Reform Proposals on the Resolution of the National Question” produced jointly by the FLSP and the NDMLP.

The NDMLP has been aware that the Front-Line Socialist Party (FLSP) was not a party based on Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong thought. But it took serious note of the FLSP’s possession of many features of Marxism Leninism and its interest and enthusiasm in preserving its red identity as evident from its activities in the South in the interest of the country and the toiling masses. The dialogue between the NDMLP and FLSP was extensive and based on the recognition of the need for a minimum agreement and a common programme. The two parties decided to initiate a Left programme after several rounds of talks and discussions.

The two parties, having undertaken studies and analyses to arrive at the economic and political stands to be adopted by a united front and mechanisms to resolve the national question, agreed upon a proposal for a common programme. They agreed to identify Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic country and to recognize the Attho, Burghers and Malays as minority nationalities, and declare that the ethnic, linguistic, religious and territorial identity of all nationalities shall be respected.

The above approach sharply contrasts with all former election-oriented alliances and significantly improves on the earlier NLF alliance through attention to detail in the national question.

Challenges Facing Sri Lanka's President

Ahilan Kadirgamar

Sri Lanka's new president faces a problem shared by too many developing countries: austerity imposed by the west.

Anura Kumara Disanayake wants a better deal from the IMF to reduce suffering during the country's punishing debt crisis.

Sri Lanka is at a historic juncture. Faced with its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and having defaulted on its external debt for the first time, the country recently saw unprecedented protests demanding systemic change. The former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa was literally chased away in 2022, as protesters stormed his residence and swam in his pool. The political parties and their offshoots that have ruled the country since independence are unravelling. Take Anura Kumara Disanayake. He polled just 3.8% of the vote during the previous presidential election in 2019. This week, he was sworn in as president.

The new president belongs to the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party and leads the new centre-left National People's Power (NPP) coalition. The JVP engaged in two major insurrections in the early 1970s and late 1980s, which resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives – mass violence was committed by both the JVP and the state. But the party has come a long way from its mix of revolutionary Marxist-Leninism and Sinhala ethno-nationalism, having moved into the centrist mainstream. From its roots in the rural south of the country, the party remoulded its base in the suburbs and small towns and even wooed the middle classes by taking up the issue of corruption. Its electoral capture of state power was contingent on the unprecedented economic crisis, as it waited patiently for the political winds to turn.

Yet its victory comes during unenviable times, as the bankrupt country is subject to severe austerity measures in line with the conditions of an

agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Washington-based financial institution that has long promoted social welfare cuts on developing countries in the name of the free market.

The previous government did not even consider negotiating terms with the IMF. It was all too willing to grovel before the global powers and ran the economy adhering to the benchmarks and recommendations of western institutions. These economic policies benefited the elite in the country, while the burden from the rise in VAT, the market pricing of energy, the halving of real wages for many and the cost of living doubling have all hit working people. Domestic debt restructuring, pushed by the international bondholders – consisting of large hedge funds and other financiers – was also needed to satisfy the IMF's debt sustainability analysis (DSA). This now means the retirement funds of working people, such as garment workers and tea pluckers, over the next 16 years are going to lose half their value. Meanwhile, wealthy investors in the financial sector have got away scot-free, with their investments untouched.

The central challenge before Dissanayake is getting a better IMF agreement. And it is this tension between a new president who seeks social change and the old IMF, which remains committed to the interests of global finance and markets, that is likely to play out in the weeks and months ahead.

Sri Lanka is heading for parliamentary elections in seven weeks, and it is Dissanayake's strength in parliament, and the national consensus he can forge, that will determine his bargaining power with the IMF and the extent to which he can keep the elite in the country at bay.

At the heart of any renegotiation are the IMF's targets. According to these, Sri Lanka must get its public debt down to 95% of GDP and must spend 4.5% of GDP annually in external debt servicing once the IMF programme is finished. This amounts to 30% of all government revenue going on servicing debt – a great scenario for Sri Lanka's creditors, particularly international bondholders to whom \$12.55bn is owed. But

with little debt relief, the reality is that Sri Lanka could end up defaulting again.

In this context, there is mounting pressure on Dissanayake to stay the course with the IMF. From the elite in the capital, Colombo, to the western media, there is much talk that a former Marxist cannot work with the IMF and manage the economy. This amounts to a kind of sabotage. It is important to point out here that while the so-called “IMF bailout” amounts to just about \$60m a month for the duration of the programme, Sri Lanka’s foreign earnings (exports, service earnings and worker remittances) every month now are about 30 times that amount, at \$1,800m. In other words, the president will not be sticking to the IMF programme for its funds, but due to international political pressure and the fear of isolation.

There are lessons to be learned from elsewhere here – notably Kenya. Its president, William Ruto, was elected in 2022, a year after an IMF agreement, and the red carpets were eventually rolled out for him in Washington for sticking to the neoliberal programme. Yet within two years, massive protests against austerity and state repression have marred the country. In Sri Lanka, as in about 70 developing countries around the world in debt distress, the same questions arise. Do they continue to mortgage their national policies to the bondholders and the IMF, or do they seek alternative avenues of development finance and negotiate their way out of the crippling IMF programmes?

Dissanayake is going to have to walk a tightrope. For a country and people that are going through the worst phase of dispossession since independence, international solidarity should mean providing space for rebuilding the country. For if Dissanayake fails to carry the citizenry, the xenophobic and polarising forces that ravaged Sri Lanka for decades will be waiting in the wings.

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Crooked Bond Deals and the IMF Trap

Ahilan Kadirgamar

The IMF's trap backed by the great powers could not have been laid with better timing

The Sri Lankan people have voted again for great change. They have elected a president from outside the political mainstream and rejected the political elite who have ruled the country since independence. Yet any president that comes to power now is in an unenviable position, as they inherit an economy that is at its most fragile moment since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is the contradiction between the fresh breath of political change and the stale forces dictating the economy that confronts our country during this historic moment.

The troubles for President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had begun even days before his election. And within two weeks after his election, the international establishment led by the IMF has twisted the arms of the new Government into accepting a crooked bond deal. This agreement at the centre of the debt restructuring process will cost the country many billion dollars in future.

It is these neo-colonial machinations of the West led by the IMF, and flanked now by the powers in Asia, which smaller countries like ours have to reckon with. Indeed, wealth and power have no colour, and when a buck is to be made in the extractive global financial order of the twenty-first century, the logic of the creditor and the debtor over-determine whether it is the White West or Coloured Asia.

Red baiting

The Western establishment including the business press started hunting for those who could be hiding in the woods to take over the country

Just when the wave of support for Dissanayake became apparent, the IMF started signalling its agenda. The week before elections, on September 12th, the IMF spokesperson had the following to say: “Achieving the programme’s objectives is a key priority to give Sri Lanka a chance to emerge from one of its worst crises in history. As I’ve already noted, a lot of progress has been made, but the country is not out of the woods yet, and it is important to safeguard those hard-won gains.”

The Western establishment including the business press started hunting for those who could be hiding in the woods to take over the country. The red scare was ignited. They asked, can a Marxist, and one without experience, manage the economy and work with the IMF?

The West’s darling, President Wickremesinghe, was in full swing trying to milk the IMF statement. He descended further, and had negotiations with the international bondholders just three days before the elections to sell the country’s future, as he had done over the last two years. And two days before the election, after the campaigning blackout had started, he came out and announced that a deal had been made with the bondholders. For the robber barons that hold Sri Lanka’s sovereign debt it could not have worked any better; a president desperate on the verge of defeat trying to showcase a so-called successful deal, and bondholders keen to seal an agreement with an illegitimate leader in his last days. Such deals are not new, for this script has played out in so many postcolonial countries for decades.

The shrill discourse in the international press against President Dissanayake and his party, gained momentum with diplomatic double speak including messages from the capitals around the world. That the

President and his party the JVP, which had led two insurrections decades ago, but have moved to the centre since the 1990s was not a consideration. The proof is in the eating of the pudding as the saying goes; so, if you are not a radical then you must stomach the IMF program and even accept a bad bond deal that will push Sri Lanka into a second default in a few years.

The IMF lost no time. The week after the inauguration of the president they were in Colombo. They informed the government that a bond deal that may in the end only provide a ten percent reduction in the debt stock was in line with their Debt Sustainability Analysis, and the bilateral creditors representing the great Asian powers, particularly China, Japan and India, have found the reduction in the value of debt by the bondholders to be comparable with their own restructuring of Sri Lanka's loans. The Finance Ministry announced its intention to proceed with the debt restructuring based on this bond deal last Friday.

Out of Bondage

The IMF's trap backed by the great powers could not have been laid with better timing. The new president is facing the challenges of a bureaucracy aligned with the old guard, the elite in Colombo are waiting to sabotage the government, and parliamentary elections are just over a month away where the president needs a majority of 113 seats compared to the mere 3 seats now held by his coalition. We know from our history that the threats of the West are backed by geopolitical and financial power. Isolation and a capital strike were what the left-leaning United Front Government of the 1970s faced when they moved away from the United States and into the orbit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the weeks ahead, the circus of parliamentary elections will be on show. Even as the parties fight it out, we as a country have to take stock of the depth of people's suffering, and what the future holds out for our economy. If we are to remain with the IMF program it will be more pain

for our people, all so that the powerful creditors are repaid. There will be little by way of relief, hardly any new jobs and only stagnant livelihoods.

The end goal of the IMF programme when it concludes in 2027, is for the Government to repay 4.5% of GDP in external debt servicing each year, which requires 30% of government revenue generated through taxation and repaid in foreign exchange worth 30% of export earnings. Furthermore, the financial stability of Sri Lanka according to the IMF model will be based on Sri Lanka borrowing 1.8% of GDP in sovereign bonds each year beginning in 2027, which in effect will be used to rollover part of the 4.5% of GDP in external debt servicing.

In other words, starting in 2027, Sri Lanka will again start borrowing high interest sovereign bonds of USD 1.5 billion or higher each year from the bondholders paving the way for the next debt crisis. To put the expected new bonds in context, Sri Lanka's total current debt owed to the bondholders is USD 12.6 billion, and the debt stock reduction from the crooked deal accepted last Friday, with its various contingent provisions called macro-linked bonds, will be less than USD 1.5 billion.

For now, the IMF trap of returning Sri Lanka to the bondage of global financiers has worked. Do we as a country and a people want to remain in that trap?

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The North too Needs Political Change like the Change in Political Thinking in the South

Statement to the Media

5.11.2024

The election campaign headquarters of the People's Struggle Alliance announced that Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party and lead candidate of the PSA for the Jaffna District made the following declaration on behalf of the Party at a people's forum in Point Pedro in the Jaffna District soliciting support for the PSA in the forthcoming General Election.

In the presidential election in September, the people have taught a lesson to the parties of the conservative elite upper class that dominated politics in the South for the past 77 years. Likewise, they should defeat the forces in the North-East and the Hill Country which have long been using narrow racialism and selfish politics for their political survival.

These forces have neither been faithful to the working people nor used their parliamentary seats to serve them. They only made financial gain and accumulated wealth but not acted on behalf of the people. It is for that reason that we appeal to the people to elect the Peoples Struggle Alliance for the forthcoming parliament.

The Peoples Struggle Alliance affirms that if elected it will reject parliamentary privileges and concessions to serve as an opposition party in parliament as a party that is sincere to the people.

He further added that, during the past 77 years of parliamentary politics, racism and religious hegemony had risen to become ethnic oppression and become chauvinist military oppression that manifested itself as a 30-

year war. The war has besides killing 500 000 Tamil people destroyed the country's economy.

It should be reminded that, besides the Sinhala Buddhist ruling classes which was at the forefront of that war, the Indian and American powers too were active in the pursuit of the war. It is these imperialists and regional hegemons that parties that proffer Tamil nationalism, as usual, celebrate as their saviours when campaigning for votes for their politics of ethnic dominance.

Thus, to salvage the economy brinking on bankruptcy and to resolve the national question that remains the main contradiction, the PSA is contesting parliamentary elections in all districts of the country including the North, East and the Hill Country, with a clear set of policies. We appeal to the people to vote based on political thought with promise of a bright future for the country, and therefore vote for the Umbrella symbol of the PSA.

The NDMLP in Parliamentary Elections 2004

Statement to the Media

5.10.2004

The Central Committee of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party has resolved that the Party will contest the forthcoming Parliamentary elections in November under the umbrella symbol of the People's Struggle Alliance which is firm in its policy and practice based on a pro-people outlook. The PSA was already founded by two left political parties and other revolutionary progressive democratic forces that were at the forefront of the Aragalaya people's struggle on the Galle Face Green following extensive discussions.

The PSA will contest in all districts of the country, and the Party has accepted responsibility to field candidates including as leading candidate

in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Vanni, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Batticaloa and Trincomalee.

We have struggled against the parties of the ruling classes that have wrecked the country and the people by carrying forward the neo-liberal economic policies that are currently in practice. We have at the same time consistently urged the implementation of an industrial production economy that puts to use the land, water and human labour and other resources of the country.

The country has been dragged into darkness by the open economy, privatisation and liberalisation. The people, unable to withstand the economic burdens, were pushed into poverty. The country faced bankruptcy. Meantime, the national question that remained unresolved for 75 years transformed into a cruel 30 years long war. Fifteen years since the end of the war, the national question remains unresolved.

It is in this context that the parliamentary general elections are being held under the newly elected President from the United People's Power. Hence there is the need to put forward and secure the just and reasonable demands of the toiling masses and oppressed nationalities. It is necessary to struggle within and outside parliament for them.

That is the reason why the Party is participating in the parliamentary elections to put forward its policies to the country, its people and nationalities and explain the problems before us and secure votes to be elected to parliament to act honestly and be the vice of the people.

Comment on the Presidential Election

Statement to the Media

25.9.2024

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the party on the Presidential Election.

In the elections held last week for the 9th Executive President of Sri Lanka, the National People's Power had put forward pro-people policies emphasizing the interests of the people and succeeded in having its leader Anura Kumara Disanayake elected and sworn in as President.

The basis of this victory can be seen as the culmination of the wave of the Aragalaya popular struggle that was transformed into votes of the toiling masses. This voting has eliminated has side-lined the traditional ruling class forces from the stage of executive power. Hence the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party considers the people who voted in anticipation of structural changes, Anura Kumara Disanayake who was elected President thereby, and the National People's Power are deserving of praise and welcome.

Besides, although the country has nominally freed itself from colonial rule, it is still a country in neo-colonial stranglehold. As a result of it, the country and the people had been pushed into a grave political, economic and social crisis. The resources of the country and the toil of the people have been wrung by foreign powers with the consent and support of local capitalist forces with feudal roots that held state power. Although there were struggles against it, they were frustrated by the ruling classes. Those who came to power in the name of Sinhala Buddhist national sentiment bowed to the upper-class elite and foreign imperialist powers and wrecked the interests of the country and the livelihood of the people. To conceal it and divert the attention of the people from it, the local ruling classes and foreign imperialist and regional hegemonic forces developed the national question into enmity and hostile contradictions among nationalities, and thereby served their class interests. As a culmination of the process, the country was subject to a grave political and economic crisis and propelled into bankruptcy. The livelihood of the people hit rock bottom.

Aragalaya was the surge of popular struggle that was born amid this climate of crisis and drove out the then rulers from the arena of political

power. But that uprising was deflected by foreign imperialist and regional hegemonic forces to place Ranil Wickremesinghe once more in power through the back door and hold on to power for two years.

It is as delivering a counter blow to that the people have brought the National People's Power to power by electing Anura Kumara Disسانayake President. Hence the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party emphasises the importance of the need to find a just solution to the national question while acting to find proper solutions to the severe economic crises faced by the people.

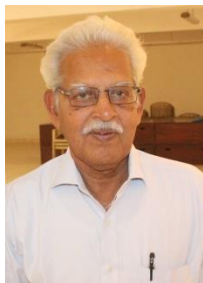
At the same time New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party assures that it will be firmly on the side of the people, the interests of the country and its nationalities in opposing the ruling local reactionary forces and the foreign imperialist and regional hegemonic forces that inspire them to oppose whatever steps that may be taken to uphold national interests and take pro-people measures.

The Party also affirms that it will join hands with the people to support whatever just actions taken by the new government and oppose whatever is anti-people.

Comrade Maniam Commemorated

The 35th commemoration of Comrade KA Subramaniam was held on 1st December 2024 at 3.30 p.m. in the Poet Murugaiyan Auditorium of the Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai in Kokkuvil, Jaffna.

The meeting was chaired by Comrade David Suren, Regional Secretary of the NDMLP for the Hill Country. The keynote address titled "The Change of Government and the Outlook for Left Politics in Sri Lanka" was delivered by Dr Mahendran Thiruvarangan, senior Lecturer of the University of Jaffna. The address was followed by a commentary by Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the NDMLP.



Two short poems by Varavara Rao

Dream Pigeons

Pigeons released by the heart
alight on the eyelids
You know that I am scared to open
my eyes and break the wings,
and so, I pretend, eyes closed.
I know very well that my
dreams are not my creations alone
and that imagination is not
anyone's solitude.

1990, translated by Rohith

A Petition to the Court of the People

Dispatch those laws with stones
and greet the diffident
in a confetti of flowers.
Build a tomb to the dictatorship
of death and liberate
the caged love.

1990, translated by Rohith

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Front Cover :

**Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party with
Comrade Valliammai Subramaniam (2013 December)**

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