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Alexandra Kollontai

**Who are Imperialist?
Anti-Imperialist Unity
Confused Priorities**

Zhou Enlai on Social Imperialism

**National Democratic Front of the
Philippines: 50th Anniversary**

*Poetry: Paul Robeson, Ahmad Shamlou,
Langston Hughes*

Anthem of the USSR

(Lyrics)

Paul Robeson

United forever in friendship and labor
our mighty Republics will ever endure
the Great Soviet Union
will live through the ages
the dream of a people
their fortress secure.

[Chorus]

Long live our Soviet Motherland
built by the people's mighty hand.
Long live her people united and free
strong in a friendship tried by fire
long may her crimson flag inspire
shining in glory for all men to see.

Through days dark and stormy
when great Lenin led us
our eyes saw the bright sun of Freedom above
and Stalin our leader
with faith in the people
inspired us to build the land that we love.

[Chorus]

We fought for the future
destroyed the invader
and brought to our homeland
the laurels of fame.
A glory will live in the memory of nations
and all generations will honor her name.

Editorial

It took seven decades for Sri Lankan parliamentary democracy to thoroughly expose its bankruptcy. The point here is not to dismiss electoral politics as a means to pursue the interests of the oppressed masses. But to point out that ruling class interests prevail.

The working class fought for its rights during colonial and semi-colonial times. Significant victories were won by the left leadership during national bourgeois SLFP rule. Rights to unionise and to strike served to secure fairer wages and working conditions. The victories, however, were not all embracing, with dark areas in the plantations where workers were handicapped by denial of citizenship.

The comprador elite who saw workers' rights as a challenge to them and their imperial masters resented every nationalisation of foreign businesses and military bases since 1956. They responded with an unsuccessful coup in early 1962 after petroleum products business was nationalised in 1961. Nationalisation of tea plantations in 1972 added to their anger. They waited their turn for revenge, which came in 1977, thanks to blundering by the old left which had lost its standing among workers and to disunity among anti-imperialists.

The UNP government abused its electoral mandate to reverse every working class and national bourgeois gain, short of selling off the country to neo-colonialism now led by US imperialism. The UNP, by transforming the national question into war, diverted attention from the unpopular economic policies of privatisation, liberalisation and opening up to predatory foreign capital. The economic damage due to the avoidable three decades long civil war made the country's debt mount atop what was building up under the open economy.

Ending the civil war militarily in 2009 did not yield social harmony or economic recovery. The Rajapaksa family tightened its grip on power and enriched itself using 'war victory' and letting corruption

reach unprecedented levels. The Rajapaksas who cynically undid even the limited success in restoring a semblance of democracy after the defeat of the UNP government in 1994 were rejected by the people in 2015, but only to return to power in 2019 thanks to the chaotic governance by the UNP-led alliance.

A combination of circumstances and bad financial handling by them led to financial and economic chaos causing shortages of essentials including fuel. Suicidal tactical mistakes and mischief by miscreants caused the 'apolitical' Aragalaya uprising against the President and his government to fail. Manipulation by the Rajapaksas enabled the presidency of the devious Ranil Wickremesinghe which continues the task initiated by Ranil's uncle JR Jayawardene, namely surrendering the country's sovereignty to the US and its financial agencies while erasing any vestige of democracy in the name of economic recovery.

Claims of stabilization of the economy and promised recovery aided by the IMF are not visible in the daily lives of the people who face continued shortages, rising prices of essentials and a falling standard of living. Corruption and abuse of power are as rampant as before, while parliamentary opposition parties without a credible political or economic programme are obsessed with seizing parliamentary power and replacing the President. Their lack of vision is evident in their assent to the IMF's relief package, neglect of revival of the national economy, and disregard for the national question while pandering to the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism whipped up by the government.

It is time to alert the public that bourgeois democracy is bogus democracy and not a path to national salvation and that it assists imperialism and the regional hegemon in oppressing and exploiting the country and the people. The genuine left has on its shoulders the task of building an alternative democratic system to address the interests of the toiling masses by relieving them of the double burden of imperialism and regional hegemony.

Who are Imperialist?

Debate is still on about whether China and Russia are imperialist powers. There is often agreement on the information on which the debates are based. But interpretations are heavily disputed.

The Five 'Criteria'

Reference is commonly made to what are called Lenin's five criteria that define an imperialist country, namely:

1. Monopolies are dominant in the economy and society
2. Bank capital has merged with industrial capital to form the finance oligarchy
3. The export of surplus capital has acquired pronounced importance over the export of commodities
4. The world economy is divided among the blocs of capitalist trusts, cartels and syndicates
5. The division of the globe among the biggest monopoly capitalist powers has been completed.

Lenin only identified five key characteristics of the transition of a capitalist country into an imperialist power. Some adherents of the 'five criteria' model ignore the differences between the manner in which capitalism grew in early capitalist countries of Europe and North America and that where capitalism was a transplant. Having outlined how capitalism became imperialism, Lenin did not call the characteristics criteria to identify an imperialist power.

The essay "China: Imperialism or Semi-Periphery?" by Minqi Li [<https://monthlyreview.org/2021/07/01/china-imperialism-or-semi-periphery>] clarifies it thus: "After elaborating the five basic features of

imperialism, Lenin immediately said that *“we shall see later that imperialism can and must be defined differently if consideration is to be given, not only to the basic, purely economic concepts...but also the historical phase of this stage of capitalism in relation to capitalism in general.”*

Li clarifies that “While some of the “basic features” of imperialism proposed by Lenin remain relevant, the “territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers” can no longer be understood in its original sense due to the victory of national liberation movements and decolonization of Asia and Africa in the mid–twentieth century. Marxist theories of imperialism...that evolved after the mid–twentieth century typically defined imperialism as a relationship of economic exploitation leading to unequal distribution of wealth and power on a global scale.”

We may also note that the role of unequal exchange as a means of imperialist appropriation was enhanced when neo-colonialism took over from colonial rule to ensure imperialist economic domination.

Bearing that in mind, let us review arguments based on the ‘five criteria’ by some to declare that China and Russia are ‘imperialisms’ and some others that India, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia too are. Consequently, many who oppose the claims too rely on the same criteria to argue their case. Evidence is thus offered either to assert or to negate that a given country satisfies the five criteria.

It seems that dogmatism joins hands with subjectivism on occasion to identify some countries as imperialist on par with the US and its allies. Some counter arguments too are subjective. Selective data fitting is used to prove the case either way. But willingly or not they only weaken the global anti-imperialist cause by diverting attention from the main enemy of the oppressed nations and people.

Arguments by Peter Chan of Socialist Action, Hong Kong from China Worker (<https://chinaworker.info/en/2022/01/14/33092/>) given below in italics are typical of those declaring China as imperialist.

1. The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life.

There is no doubt about the extent of the concentration of production and capital in China today: for the second year in a row, China is the country with the most companies on the Fortune 500 list of the world's largest companies with 135 companies in 2020, an increase of 11 from 2019. This compares to 122 in the US. (Peter Chan)

There is no evidence that any form of concentration of production and capital to any degree has led to monopolies in China. JM Sison, while holding that China is imperialist, correctly notes that "China has used its large population, the industrial foundation of the former socialist economy, the combination of state and private monopoly capitalism, state planning and the use of state resources and the rapid transfer and development of high technology to accelerate the growth of the economy and military forces." [<https://www.bannedthought.net/Philippines/PPP/Sison/2021/Sison-OnTheCommunistPartyOfChina-2021-04-25.pdf>]

Sison, however, argues that, there are state monopoly corporations in all major parts of China's economy, with collaboration between them and private monopoly corporations, and points out that the state corporations even sell shares to big capitalists.

There is a question of scale besides whether the said activities would individually or as a whole make China an active partner playing a decisive role in the imperialist economic system. Such eventuality is not ruled out. But the current status of China is that it is an unwelcome outsider to the US-led imperialist alliance.

2. The merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a financial oligarchy.

China’s four largest banks (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, China Construction Bank, Agricultural Bank of China and Bank of China) are also the four largest banks in the world. Although these are state-owned enterprises on the surface, they are listed companies that are run on profits.

....

China also has the largest stock markets in the world. The Shanghai Stock Exchange is the third largest in the world in terms of market capitalisation, Hong Kong the fourth largest and Shenzhen the seventh.

(Peter Chan)

[Chan offers an extensive list of financial service businesses with which the ‘oligopolies’ are involved, and points to the growing trend of expansion of stock market activity.]

Question arises about differences in the mode of operation of the said “financial capital”. Are these enterprises comparable in any way with their Western counterparts? Also, has bank capital in China merged with industrial capital to create financial capital?

Sison is correct to draw attention to state monopoly corporations in all major parts of China’s economy and to collaboration between them and private monopoly corporations and state corporations selling shares to big capitalists. The dominant economic forces in the said monopolies, however, are unlike those in advanced capitalist countries during their transformation into imperialism.

Yang Heping (writing as Hua Shi) claims in “Imperialism, Ultra-Imperialism, and the Rise of China” that the China’s state-owned capital group has become the world’s largest single combination of industrial and finance capital and a powerful monopoly capitalist group [<http://mike-servethepeople.blogspot.com/2018/11/translators-note-i->

came-across-this.html] that. According to Yang, China's demand for resources has led to intense imperial rivalry with the US in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Minqi Li explains, however, that for Lenin, capitalist imperialism is not about the formation of large capitals and export of capital. It inevitably leads to and is characterized by "high monopoly profits" or "superprofits" through the plunder of the whole world. Notably, Lenin called imperialism a "world-historical phenomenon" that will be based on the exploitation of the great majority of the world by a "handful of exceptionally rich and powerful states". Li points out that imperialism will be a system where a small minority of the world population exploits the great majority and not one where a majority exploits the minority.

The stock market is a necessary feature of a capitalist economy. Will its existence or expansion make the country monopoly capitalist (in other words imperialism)? Has China's bank capital merged with industrial capital to create "finance capital" or a financial oligarchy?

Do the big banks of China, acting individually or as cartels, extract 'superprofits' by financial control of exploitative capitalist ventures in any Third World or non-imperialist country?

3. The export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance.

Commodity exports have certainly been the backbone of China's economy and have supported the country's economic boom. In recent years, capital exports have also become increasingly important. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) can be considered an important part of China's capital export strategy and was even written into the CCP's constitution in 2017. This is the only case of a foreign policy being enshrined in the CCP's constitution. During the Covid-19 pandemic, China has become the world's largest exporter of foreign direct

investment (FDI). As the CCP's Global Times (September 29, 2021) proudly reported, "China's FDI is also growing in influence, accounting for 20.2 percent of the total global investment volume, maintaining a level above 10 percent for five consecutive years."

(Peter Chan)

There seem purposive omissions here. The way export of capital occurs in China differs fundamentally from that in the capitalist West. Can one honestly say that 'export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities' acquired exceptional importance in the Chinese economy? While Western capital in the past five decades willingly moved production facilities to the Third World (and to poorer European countries) to the detriment of its own manufacturing industry, China, in past two decades, has become the manufacturing hub of the world, with manufacture for export drifting towards goods demanding sophisticated processes.

Imperialist export of capital was designed to make an imperialist country thrive by the exploitation of labour in the colonies (now neocolonies) and other dependencies. Part of the superprofits extracted went to placate the upper layers of the working class to void the class consciousness of the working class and benumb its sensitivity to imperialist injustice.

Capitalist imperialism cannot merely comprise the formation of large volumes of capital and export of capital. That would place among imperialist powers a number of countries with massive wealth amassed by the sale of natural resources and clever trade practices. To Lenin it also required making "superprofits" through the plunder of the whole world through monopolistic practices. Historically imperialism has concerned a few very rich and powerful states that exploit the vast majority of the world's population. Could one seriously accuse China of plundering the whole world — to borrow a phrase from Lenin — simply by "clipping coupons"?

Minqi Li explains that, despite China's large foreign liabilities, its accumulated foreign assets worth trillions of dollars make China a large net creditor. While this supports the argument that China, by exporting massive amounts of capital, qualifies to be an imperialist country, Li draws attention to the contrast between the structures of China's overseas assets and foreign assets in China. In 2018, China's overseas assets comprised reserve assets (43%), direct investment (26%), portfolio investment (7%), and currency and deposits, loans, trade credits, etc. constituting 24 %, while foreign investments in China comprised 53% foreign direct investment, 21% portfolio investment and 26% other.

Dominance of direct foreign investment in China indicates foreign capitalist exploitation of China's cheap labour and natural resources. Reserve assets, the largest component of China's overseas assets, largely consist of accumulated trade surpluses and are invested mostly on low-return "liquid" instruments such as US government bonds.

4. The formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves.

This refers to what today are called multinational corporations (MNCs). According to Global Data, 10 percent of the world's top 2,190 MNCs in terms of revenue in 2020 were from China, the third largest country behind the US (33 percent) and Japan (12 percent). This shows the important position of Chinese-owned multinationals in global capitalism. (Peter Chan)

Here we have trouble in locating China among Western capitalist systems of cartels. Can one say that any of the said Chinese MNCs joined other MNCs become a big capitalist cartel? China thus far has no monopolistic system of cartels, certainly not any that controls trade, manufacture and finance. This may not be owing to any moral

persuasion but more because US-led imperialism does its best to keep China out of its scheme of monopolies. China has, however, joined several US dominated global trade and financial bodies including the WTO and IMF.

5. The territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.

What is referred to here includes both the traditional military colonial policy and the more modern form of neo-colonialism through political and economic dominance. China has both. Internally, especially with the process of capitalist restoration, Beijing pursued brutal Han colonial and racist policies in ethnic minority regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet. Externally, it has exported capital to seize markets through the BRI, putting countries in debt traps in order to exercise economic domination. In recent years, China has expressed territorial expansion ambitions and more frequent military threats in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. (Peter Chan)

Chan simply recites Western narratives of China's "military threats in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea", export of capital to seize markets through BRI, as well as the now discredited charge of Chinese loan traps. Examples for Chinese territorial expansion, interestingly, concern territory claimed by the People's Republic of China from the time of its founding as based on long-standing historical records. What matters is the context that makes it necessary for China to assert its territorial claims while expressing willing to negotiate with countries contesting them.

No major state, including the US, has formally challenged China's sovereignty in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong. But the new critics of China echo vicious anti-China slander in Western media claiming brutal Han colonial racism in minority regions, forgetting that they once firmly defended Chinese sovereignty in these territories,

Chinese Capitalism

Defence against the charge that China is imperialist rests at times on faith that China is socialist. Can we deny that Deng Xiaoping's 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' was another name for Chinese capitalism? Deng affirmed it by acts to dismantle People's Communes, encourage private plots in the countryside, undermine full term employment and wage security, and prioritize profit in state enterprises. Free health service and free education were soon undermined. China has come too far along the road chartered by Deng. Attempts in the past two decades to rectify some of the harm caused by Deng's 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' are inadequate to put China back on the socialist track.

Many analysts who reject that China is imperialist agree that China has embraced capitalism. While noting that state ventures coexist with private capital, they insist that the state sector prevails.

Capitalism today arrived in China and the Soviet Union by the subversion of a growing socialist economy. The new elite class which usurped power included many members of the ruling Communist Party and the working class itself, as warned by Mao. This breed of capitalists comprised political leaders, managers and entrepreneurs and not a dormant bourgeois class lying in wait to seize power. In fact, what engendered capitalism was lingering bourgeois ideology, seized upon by ideologically degenerate elite within the Communist Party who won over waverers within the party.

The phenomenon of dominant ideology, as explained by Gramsci and inherent in Mao's answer to the question on ideas that influence minds to emerge as a new capitalist ideology, manifested as two vastly different capitalist states in Russia and China. The ruling class in Russia relies on Russian nationalism, is overtly anti-communist, and even rejects the October Revolution. The ruling Chinese elites

claim succession to the Chinese revolution but only pay lip service to socialist construction. China wavered between near total rejection of Mao Zedong's policies by Deng Xiaoping and the use of Mao Zedong Thought to justify its capitalist practices.

While it is futile to use "Lenin's five criteria" to determine if China is imperialist or not, it will make sense to compare the conduct of China in international affairs with that of US imperialism. It could yield a meaningful idea of the impact of China's actions on oppressed people and nations.

China is a state capitalist country with a strong private sector. That need not make China imperialist, but implies potential to grow into an imperialist power. Capitalism in both Russia and China, despite differences in the routes to capitalism and the kinds of capitalism, differ from capitalism in the West. It will be incorrect to use Lenin's model of imperialist transformation to decide if either is imperialist.

Important differences between these two capitalist countries and the US-led imperialist group of nations come into play, besides other considerations. Taking them into account will help people in non-imperialist countries to decide their stand in conflicts between US-led imperialism and an allegedly imperialist (or potentially imperialist) country and to develop strategies to deal with an emergent imperialism that may pose an existential threat.

China is at the centre of debates on 'new imperialisms' and it will help to study the class nature of its state, dominant capitalist sectors, economic dealings with weaker countries, proneness to war, conquest and control of territory, military presence outside national boundaries and exercise of hegemony, before drawing conclusions. Also important are unequal exchange and engineering of prices in global trade to acquire Third World resources and labour.

Imperialist Expansion

Colonial expansion nearly ended by early 20th Century. Until late mid-20th Century, colonialists tried to keep their colonies and semi-colonies in the face of robust revolutionary and liberation struggles. Rivalry over colonies ceased after the Second World War (WWII). The US, by then the strongest imperialist power, became the dominant neo-colonial power. Its economic power overcame the reluctance of former colonial powers to yield control. The US became the sole superpower after the Soviet Union fell, Globalization, designed to consolidate US hegemony, fell through soon. But the US tightened its grip on Africa, with help from former colonial powers.

The ways of US imperialism

The ways of US imperialism could be said to be the touchstone for imperialist conduct in the neocolonial era. Since WWII, the US has acted to consolidate its place as the predominant imperialist power. The essay "Understanding US Intervention" in the 71st issue of Marxist Leninist New Democracy gave a fair summary of studies by anti-imperialist political analysts. Let us consider the imperialist processes for global control since WWII.

Meddling in Internal Affairs of Countries

There is a wealth of literature on US meddling. India, Türkiye and Israel too exercise hegemony in their respective regions as did the USSR in the Brezhnev era. But none is a match to the US which has forced countries to change domestic and external policies to serve US interests. The US also brings into play its imperialist partners to add their economic and military muscle to bully weaker countries.

Its meddling in the electoral process by covert funding of political clients and influential sections of the media is known since WWII. CIA operations in Europe to keep communists out of power have

evolved into a more sophisticated process where CIA proxies like the NED and other NGOs actively execute regime change plans.

Territorial and Military Expansion

Territorial expansion of the US had saturated by the end of the 19th Century. But the US went on an extensive drive to acquire naval and military bases to expand its global neo-colonial dominance.

Global military presence: The US has about 750 overseas military bases in more than 80 countries. Of them, around 60% house at least 200 US military personnel each on 4 hectares or more of land. The rest include cooperative security locations and forward operating sites. Actual numbers may be more. Conflict Management and Peace Science Journal revealed that, as of 2020, the US had around 173 000 troops in 159 countries. The US now pursues military expansion in Africa to curtail China's economic footprint there.

Control of the oceans: The US almost totally dominates the world's blue waters. While China, Russia and India are naval powers in their own right, their global naval presence hardly matches the US. The US, in total domination of the Pacific since WWII, now faces a defiant China that rejects US hegemony in its territorial waters.

Military encirclement: The purpose of global US military presence is encirclement of any country posing a potential threat. Russia and China are prime targets with US military bases and US Navy fleets located close by.

Military treaties and alliances: The US-led SEATO and CENTO fell apart in the 1970s. The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, which was invoked in 1962 to serve US interests in the Cuban Missile Crisis, was ignored the war over Malvinas (Falkland Islands) but invoked to impose sanctions on Venezuela. This

dishonesty led Mexico to withdraw in 2002. Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Ecuador followed in 2012, and Uruguay briefly in 2019. NATO, the most powerful US-led alliance, has 31-members (so far) and nine global partners outside North America and Europe. It has got very aggressive since the fall of the Soviet Union, and waged war first in countries of former Yugoslavia, then Afghanistan in South Asia and Libya in North Africa, and now threatening Russia and China. It is the main instigator of the conflict in Ukraine.

AUSCANNZUKUS superseded ANZUS, and Five Eyes coordinates intelligence services of the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Two military alliances, QUAD (2007-8; re-founded in 2017) comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US, and AUKUS (2021) have emerged mainly to contain China in Asia-Pacific.

Also, the US has cobbled up war coalitions such as the vicious 35-nation Gulf War Coalition of 1990-9 for aggressive purposes.

Wars and Armed Aggression

US foreign policy is about making the world safe for US corporations by forestalling the emergence of humane alternatives to capitalism. The Cold War minimised the risk of war between the two main military power alliances, but did not reject armed conflict involving the US. War was waged wherever US dominance was challenged, successfully in the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Grenada and Panama, and not so successfully in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba and Lebanon.

An imagined Soviet-led International Communist Conspiracy justified US aggression during Cold War. When that threat ceased with the fall of the Soviet Union, the US, to pursue a moral crusade, found a new enemy in Islamic fundamentalism, whose rise was facilitated by the US itself to spite the Soviet Union.

Although the formal ending of the Cold War in 1991 removed the perceived Soviet threat, the US, rather than disband NATO, went on to enlarge it, violating its pledge to President Gorbachev that the NATO will not expand into countries of the former Soviet Union. [<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>]

The CIA still plays a key role in US interventions. The US War on Terrorism targeting the Islamic State in 2014 was complex and provided means for waging war in Africa through proxies. The US deals with the Islamic State through the CIA and other middlemen to facilitate covert action. The War on Drugs meanwhile became a pretext to sustain US military presence in Latin American countries with little justification.

The US waged wars in Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Niger, besides armed intervention in former states of Yugoslavia and in Haiti.

Wars by other means: While no country has attacked the US since WWII, the US has attacked countries, based on imagined threats and self-interest disguised as collective interest. It uses proxies to fight its battles, incites civil unrest and regional conflicts, stages coups (often military) and political assassinations to achieve regime change in a country or destabilize it, if regime change efforts fail.

Constitutional coups are common since the dawn of this century. Since the end of the Cold War, defending human rights, democracy and the right to self determination are increasingly excuses for US intervention via the agency of the UNSC, NATO or other alliances.

Political assassinations, was a frequent regime change tool during Cold War that generally cost less than war and targets have included critics and opponents of US policy.

Military coups were commonplace in Latin America and Africa in the 1960s and delivered regimes subservient to the US. In recent decades the US has avoided public association with any coup, but its ready recognition of the coup government (Bolivia, 2019) and censure of a government that foiled an attempted coup (Nicaragua, 2018, and Venezuela, 2022) are obvious giveaways.

Parliamentary coups are common since the fall of the Soviet Union. Important parliamentary coups include the ousting of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya in 2009, Uruguayan President Fernando Lugo in 2012, and Brazilian President Dilma Rouseff in 2016, Recent removals of Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan by a vote of no confidence by an opportunist political alliance in April 2022 and impeachment of Peruvian President Pedro in December 2022 by a parliament that was constantly obstructive since he took office.

Destabilisation: Political assassination, destabilization and regime change remain important strategies. The National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Center for International Private Enterprise, International Center for Journalists, Freedom House, USAID and Millennium Challenge Corporation and many regional NGOS conduct political subversion. While China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela and Nicaragua are current prime targets, lesser 'threats' are not exempt. Friendship with the enemy is adequate to earn the wrath of the US

Global Economic Control and Economic Warfare

Since WWII, the US had set up global financial mechanisms under its control, with an international monetary system centred round the US dollar. With the US dollar as the main international reserve currency, the US collects "seigniorage" from around the world. It exercises hegemony in international economy and finance by manipulating the

weighted voting systems, rules and operation of international organizations.

The US uses its control over international economic and financial organizations including the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization to coerce countries into submission to adopt policies such as financial liberalization and opening up of financial markets in order to facilitate US capital inflow and speculation.

The US has other means economic coercion as well. In the 1980s, its hegemonic financial muscle forced Japan to sign the Plaza Accord that pushed up the Yen and forced Japan to open up its financial market. The resultant slowing of Japan's economic growth lasted three decades, later called the "three lost decades."

The hegemony of the US dollar is a source of global economic instability and uncertainty, as seen during the COVID 'pandemic' when the US abused its financial hegemony to pump trillions of dollars into the global market. More recently the US resorted to a string of interest rate hikes to shore up the dollar, plunging the international financial market into turmoil, causing high inflation, currency depreciation and capital outflow in developing countries.

The economic and financial hegemony of the US lets it act at will to foist unilateral sanctions on any country, organization or individual and enact domestic laws with global reach. US sanctions against foreign entities rose tenfold in the past two decades covering half the world population in 40 countries including Cuba, Venezuela, China, Russia, the DPRK and Iran. Economic sanctions are part of America's war against an adversary, meant to force regime change (Venezuela and Iran), win trade concessions (China) or ruin the economy (Russia). The US coerces states and businesses to eschew dealings with its targets, even where sanctions lack UN Security Council

approval. Such practices deviate from the declared liberal market economy and point to the failure of Globalisation.

Technological Hegemony

Decades ago imperialists wanted to keep former colonies and semi colonies industrially backward. Finance capital's greed for profit changed that attitude as outsourcing of industrial production from advanced capitalist countries to poorer European countries and Third World countries with cheap skilled labour was profitable. But advanced technology was held back by intellectual property laws and division of production among different countries. The Third World is now a source of raw materials, primary goods, and cheap industrial labour, Africa being the worst victim of the deal.

The US exercises its monopoly power, suppressive measures and restriction of advanced technology to deter scientific, technological and economic advancement in the Third World. It uses IP rights to control intellectual property, and uses this advantage and its monopoly to reap huge profits in developing countries. Meantime, it skims the cream of Third World skilled personnel to generate its IP wealth, by tempting them with wages unimaginable at home.

A ploy used by the US is to accuse competitors of unfair trade practices and slap retaliatory tariffs to cut them out of the US market. It politicizes technological issues by over extending the concept of national security in order to suppress successful foreign businesses like China's Huawei by blocking entry to the US market and coaxing allies to act similarly. Pressure is exerted on the main producers of high-end chips to prevent sale of high-end chips to China to cripple manufacture of high technology products. Such obstruction extends to other high-end technologies through stricter control in the fields of biotechnology and artificial intelligence, tough export controls, and

investment screening. National security was invoked to expel social media apps like TikTok and WeChat

The US politicises technological issues by sticking "democracy" and "human rights" labels on them to create pretexts for technological blockade against rivals so as to preserve the technological hegemony of imperialist technological alliances.

It is known that the US abuses its technological hegemony to conduct cyber attacks and eavesdropping nationally and globally. US surveillance knows no exception and leaders of allied countries too have been targets, while US citizens remain the most vulnerable.

Economic Subversion: Sanctions, Tariffs and Trade Wars

US Sanctions. Since the end of the Cold War the UN Security Council has imposed sanctions on several countries as well as ISIS, al Qaida and Taliban, once proxies of the US. US clients like Israel and Saudi Arabia, both major violators of human rights, have been exempt. These are besides the many unilateral political and trade sanctions imposed by the US to extract economic advantage and punish enemies. Violation of human rights, democratic rule or fair trade forms the basis for the sanctions, which are in fact politically motivated or driven by monopolistic economic interests.

US sanctions serve to force governments to yield to US demands or face regime change, and to wilfully inflict pain and risk thousands of lives in their course. Unilateral sanctions by the US lack global consensus and breach the rules of the WTO. The cruelty of the sanctions seldom arouses indignation among the American public who are systematically misled by the US media. The US extracts compliance of friendly countries and businesses with interests in the US by selective punishment of non-compliance.

US bullying can be counterproductive. Punitive sanctions have at times helped governments to turn the tables on the US by blaming

sanctions for its own failings. Even when sanctions worked, as in Zimbabwe, they need not yield an amenable regime. The most ill-fated sanctions regime seems the one where the US persuaded EU to follow US sanctions against Russia over Ukraine to bring Russia to its knees, but it was the EU that suffered as a result.

Trade Wars entailing tariffs, import quotas, domestic subsidies, currency devaluation, and embargos between imperialist countries include the Chicken Tariff War of the US against France and West Germany 1963, the trade war between the US and Japan (1970s to 80s) over Japanese threat to US industrial dominance, the Banana Wars (1993-2012) with the US fighting EU trade restrictions against flooding of its markets by bananas from US-based monopolies, and the Steel Tariff War in 2002 waged by the US against Europe to protect its steel industry. The US under President Trump waged a futile tariff war against China in 2018. Despite its failure and negative consequences for the US, President Biden continues with the tariffs and waged a trade war with fresh sanctions on Chinese businesses on various pretexts. Currently the aim is to cripple China's industry by blocking access to advanced semiconductors.

Redefined Aims

The Congressional Research Service Report "U.S. Role in the World: Background and Issues for Congress" (updated 19.12.2019) summed up the post-WWII role of the US under the following four aims:

- global leadership;
- defence and promotion of the liberal international order;
- defence and promotion of freedom, democracy, and human rights; and
- prevention of the emergence of regional hegemony in Eurasia.

The aims mirror the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 asserting American Exceptionalism and America's Manifest Destiny.

China and Imperialist Practices

An item wise comparison of the conduct of US imperialism with that of Chinese capitalism will inform us where China stands as an 'imperialist' power in relation to the US or even its major allies. We may compare conduct in the following five areas:

- a. Sector wise monopoly of trade
- b. Manipulation of markets
- c. Conditional foreign aid and loan traps
- d. Exploitation of labour and extraction of natural resources
- e. Armed aggression and war

China is thus far not guilty in categories a, b and e. In category c, charges have been made against China, citing for example the case of Sri Lanka, comprise malicious vilification by the Western media.

While there is case to argue under category d, it will make sense to locate China in the production chain and check whether China is a net beneficiary of the process. Figure 1 shows that China, unlike the US, is on the whole a net loser in the global capitalist division of labour with surplus value transferred to core imperialist countries far exceeding gain from the peripheral non-imperialist countries.

Minqi Li, however, points out that China's per capita GDP is well above peripheral income levels and that, in terms of international labour transfer flows, its relationship with nearly half of the world population is exploitative, making it fit to be considered a semi-peripheral country in the capitalist world system.

Li also concedes that, given China's current economic growth rate, a scenario is conceivable where China advances into the core of the capitalist world system to become an imperialist country exploiting the overwhelming majority of the world. Li, nevertheless, points out that the structural constraints of the capitalist world system as well as global ecological limits militate against it.



Figure 1: Net Labour Transfer (Million Worker-Years, 1990-2017)

[As accessed on May 31, 2021 from “World Development Indicators,” World Bank. Net labour transfer is defined as the difference between the total labour embodied in a country’s imported goods and services and the total labour embodied in the country’s exported goods and services. If the difference is positive, it constitutes a net labour gain; if negative, it constitutes a net labour loss.]

Threat to Global Peace and Stability

The Third World faces grave externally induced political instability. Close examination of civil unrest, regime change, economic crises and border conflicts will show that US imperialism and its allies are the main creators of problems.

Following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran by Shiite Muslim militants, Sunni-Shia differences were fostered to sow fresh discord

among Muslims in West Asia. Saudi Arabia (backed by the US) and Iran waged proxy wars in Syria and Yemen. They are party to many conflicts in the Middle East. Restoration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran this year, thanks to Chinese diplomacy, has boosted peace prospects in Yemen. Chinese motives need not be wholly unselfish, but to attribute imperialist motives would be malicious.

The US has stirred trouble for China in Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan for long. It has failed in all but Taiwan, where in its pursuit of raising tensions in the Taiwan Strait and dragging China into war, it escalates provocation through an undeclared 'Two Chinas' policy which encourages secessionists in Taiwan.

The US instigates countries that have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea to be difficult and be drawn into conflict so as to enable US meddling and military intervention.

The US, while pursuing military expansion globally, accuses China of aggressive intentions in its trade and economic cooperation in Africa and Latin America. Whoever imputes imperialist motives to BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the Belt and Road Initiative only echoes the narrative of US imperialism.

An increase in membership of BRICS, SCO and BRI will reduce the risk of monopoly of any of them by any country. Currently, they are only looking at international alternatives to US dominated bodies controlling global trade and economic growth.

Subversion of the purpose is possible if one or several partners become imperialist powers. But to reject the initiatives now will only imply a wish to preserve the existing US dominated imperialist global order.

Prospect of China becoming Imperialist

Capitalist China is not yet imperialist. Becoming an imperialist state is a process over which a capitalist state has little control. We need to be alert to the risk of China becoming imperialist, and be ready for that eventuality. The circumstances that obstruct China's passage to imperialism can change, and China could become an imperialist power. The alternative is a return to socialism, the responsibility for which is with the working class and the revolutionary left of China.

The growing tendency towards individualism and consumerism is a major challenge to socialist change. Since the current equilibrium between state capitalism and the private sector is not a stable condition, an affluent state capitalist society risks soon becoming a selfish society dominated by big capital, whose transformation into imperialism is inevitable if the working class does not fight back.

The emergence of a technological elite accompanying the shift of production towards digitization and artificial intelligence has implications for Chinese class structure.

The growth of the defence sector of China is partly inevitable in the context of US imperialist encirclement and provocation. While such military strength is more than necessary for pure defence that has been a deterrent against imperialist mischief in Iran, North Korea and Russia, whereas Libya paid a big price for its lack of vigilance. Yet, without socialist politics in command, the risk of an alliance of the military and big capitalists cannot be ignored.

Thus there is need to appreciate trends within the state capitalist or state guided capitalist system in China. There is need to think of ways to resist Chinese economic dominance in the event of China becoming a fully-fledged imperialism within the present imperialist framework or as another form of imperialism in place of the existing US-led imperialism if it crashes under a heap of self-induced crises.

A Concluding Remark

The purpose of the study was to recognize the biggest threat to humanity and the immediate challenge to the cause of social justice.

While the position taken by the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party that China and Russia among other major capitalist states are potentially imperialist but not yet imperialist seems valid, the issues facing the Left and anti-imperialist movements transcend the debate whether these capitalist states are imperialist or not.

There is need to recognize the main threat to humanity, which in our view is, the imperialist alliance led by the US. That is not to exempt other forces of capitalist hegemony and oppression, but to be alert to the danger of placing on par the US-led imperialist alliance and any other capitalist power or alliance, and be dismissive of conflicts between the US-led imperialism and any other power that one chooses to define as imperialist based on whatever criteria used as a conflict between imperialisms.

Thus we urge the Left to bear in mind that the US-led imperialism is the only relevant imperialist force today and view each conflict with US-led imperialism on the merits of the facts and implications for the socialist and anti-imperialist causes.

A United Front to Face Imperialism

*Author looks back at his essay 8 years ago
in MLND 54, January 2015*

The essay

Confronting Imperialism: Plea for a United Front Strategy

Deshabakthan

The Marxist Leninist United Front Strategy

The United Front Strategy advocated by Marxist Leninists is about bringing people together on issues rather than ideology. The strategy although limited in purpose takes a long term view of issues. Thus it cannot be the desertion or dilution of ideology or the betrayal of the working class and all what Marxism stands for. Marxist Leninists enter into united fronts with well defined goals that address specific issues characteristic of specific situations.

Marxist Leninist parties have entered into alliances from positions of relative strength and from positions of relative weakness, not as an act of desperation but as a bold move whose motivation transcends the purpose of strengthening the party. Genuine Marxist Leninists know that with goals clear, principles uncompromised and

cooperation based on agreed principles, they will end up stronger and as the leading force in the course of struggle for a common cause.

A united front is contextual, conditional and changing, and there can be no general prescription about the goals or choice of allies. There are, nevertheless, fundamental principles and guidelines, which have emerged from positive as well as negative historical experiences, both direct and indirect, from the time the concept of United Front was initiated by Lenin a century ago to bring together the working class that was divided between revolutionary and social democratic parties in order to achieve specific goals. The idea of uniting the many to isolate the few has since been developed in various forms including the position that communists should support anti-imperialist struggles even where the struggle is led by members of a reactionary class, provided that the struggle is objectively revolutionary in the sense that it delivers a blow to imperialism.

Lenin, addressing the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations 22nd November 1919, prophetically declared that “The socialist revolution will not be solely, or chiefly, a struggle of the revolutionary proletarians in each country against their bourgeoisie— no, it will be a struggle of all imperialist-oppressed colonies and countries, of all dependent countries, against international imperialism”. [Collected Works, 4th English Edition, Moscow 1965, 30, pp. 151-162]

Lenin’s observation is especially pertinent after neo-colonialism shifted the burden of capitalist exploitation to the Third World with the once anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie as junior partner and proxy in exploiting the toiling masses and in suppressing any attempt to resist or revolt in their respective countries. The burden of the anti-imperialist struggle is mainly on the shoulders of the toiling masses of the Third World. That is not to dismiss the revolutionary potential of the working classes in advanced capitalist countries, but

to argue the role of revolutionary struggles in the neo-colonies in deepening the crisis of capital.

Accordingly, the revolutionary strategy of the United Front, initially formulated to unite parties leading the working class, has been adapted to situations where broader alliances were formed as necessary to resist the common enemy of all toiling masses, even in contexts where the industrial working class was numerically weak. The strategy proved effective in situations ranging from the anti-fascist struggle in Europe to liberation struggles in China, Vietnam and other Third World countries.

The United Front Strategy has also helped the revolutionary left to break the isolation imposed on it by the reactionaries who to varying degrees had succeeded in dividing the oppressed masses based on narrow distinctions, including ethnicity and other identity-based issues. Most importantly, the revolutionary left forged alliances to successfully isolate imperialism, the main oppressor, and its reactionary allies.

In any event, the case for anti-imperialist united fronts is strong in all contexts because the revolutionary forces do not currently constitute a majority in any developed capitalist country. Also, the emergence of the service industry as a dominant part of the capitalist economy has further weakened class consciousness. The need for united fronts has been recognized in advanced capitalist countries as evident from the mass support for initiatives such as the various “Social Forum” and “Occupy” movements. There is also much to learn from the failure of mass uprisings such as the ‘Arab Spring’. It will help to ask ourselves why all such mass mobilisation failed to produce the desired results.

The point is that the initiatives which triggered the imagination of the masses in favour of a political change were not organized as a political force with clear goals and direction, in other words, without correct leadership. I am convinced that it is the revolutionary leftists,

the Marxist Leninists in particular, who have a sound theoretical understanding of imperialism today and the need for anti-imperialist mass struggle at various levels. It is thus necessary for Marxist Leninist parties and organization to play a leading, not necessarily dominant, role in planning the goals and strategies for such struggles. Without it, mass enthusiasm for struggle could be squandered by NGOs and bogus populist bodies, willingly acting in the interest of imperialism, to deflect the campaign from what should be its main thrust.

The United Front Strategy is not hazard-free and Marxist Leninists should be alert to potential dangers. The importance of maintaining the initiative and preserving the independence of the Communist Party within the United Front cannot, therefore, be over emphasised.

Mao Zedong, summing up the experience of the Second Revolutionary Civil War, urged the Communist Party to be firmly in the lead: "Only the proletariat and the Communist Party can lead the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie; can overcome the narrow-mindedness of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, the destructiveness of the unemployed masses and also (provided the Communist Party does not err in its policy) the vacillation and lack of thoroughness of the bourgeoisie— and can lead the revolution and the war on to the road to victory." [Problems of Strategy Issues in China's Revolutionary War, December 1936, Selected Works, Volume One]

With reference to the United Front against Japanese invasion, Mao Zedong defended the independence of all member parties: "To sustain a long war by long-term co-operation or, in other words, to subordinate the class struggle to the present national struggle against Japan— such is the fundamental principle of the united front. Subject to this principle, the independent character of the parties and classes and their independence and initiative within the united front should be preserved, and their essential rights should not be sacrificed to co-

operation and unity, but on the contrary must be firmly upheld within certain limits. Only thus can co-operation be promoted, indeed only thus can there be any co-operation at all. Otherwise co-operation will turn into amalgamation and the united front will inevitably be sacrificed.” [The Question of Independence and Initiative within the United Front, 5th November 1938]

Serious errors occur when — as in the case of the parliamentary left in Sri Lanka — the leadership loses faith in the revolution, subordinates itself to the dominant partner of the alliance, and eventually uses the united front to shield its own weakness. The Sri Lankan parliamentary left is now an appendage of the once national bourgeois SLFP, whose leadership is drained of anti-imperialist content.

What is thus important is not whether the party is participating in a united front from a position of relative strength or weakness, but whether it is principled in its approach and firm in principles while being flexible in its dealings with partners based on mutual respect and adherence to the aims of the United Front.

The Imperialist Strategy

We know that US imperialism has developed a variety of mechanisms to prolong imperialist control of the global economy. Imperialism plays different tricks at different levels to sustain its political and military domination and exploitation of countries and people of the Third World. Emphasis of national interest in imperialist countries is now more implicit than in the colonial era. But nationalism with a tinge of racism is explicitly summoned in the name of defending “the American way of life” etc. to address threats to the established social order.

Globally, imperialism implements its neo-colonial agenda by assigning to itself the role of defining and defending the international order. It has at its command mighty military machines in the form of

national armed forces and the NATO, a powerful network of intelligence and subversion agencies, devices for economic pressure and control, and *de facto* control over the UN. As military intervention is a key aspect of imperialist control, pretexts are either imagined or manufactured as necessary to justify and sustain intervention by whipping up xenophobia and racism within the imperialist country through allusion to threats to national security and economic interests.

Besides attacking 'hostile countries' and 'terrorists' and subverting 'less friendly' countries in the name of defending democracy and human rights, imperialism also stifles internal opposition and resistance to aggression and meddling in foreign countries using a variety of tactics ranging from appealing to patriotic sentiments to brutal repression where necessary. The subservient media establishment collaborates with the imperialist state, at least for the duration of any act of aggression.

At regional level the US mostly uses proxies to wage war or to destabilise unfriendly countries. Israel has been particularly notorious in this respect. Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Australia are among important client states that regularly serve US imperialist interests in their regions and even beyond. The US also exploits disputes among countries, based on historical issues including border disputes, to provoke conflict and thereby weaken and destabilise 'less friendly' countries. The most recent example is regime change in Ukraine designed to punish Russia for its 'hostile' role in frustrating US-led attempts to subvert Syria. It will also be well to remember that most of the Islamic fundamentalist organizations (including ones which have spun out of control to confront US interests) are creations of the US aided by clients in the Middle East.

Imperialism uses issues of identity to divide anti-imperialist forces in any country that it wishes to subvert. Oppression of minority

nationalities which came to the fore in the post-colonial era is exploited in more than one way. While oppressed nationalities are egged on to adopt narrow nationalistic — and even confrontational — stands, their chauvinist oppressors, repressive governments mainly, are encouraged to deny the national and fundamental rights of minorities. Imperialism has also shown ability to support both sides of a conflict at different times (as in Ethiopia in the 1970's) or simultaneously (as in Sri Lanka during the civil war which ended in 2009).

Religious chauvinism is another weapon that has recently been added to the armoury of imperialism. Promotion of internal conflicts and their escalation into war also offers imperialism benefits by way of sale of arms as well as peace brokering through which it buys influence on both sides to the conflict.

Towards an Anti-Imperialist Strategy

Imperialist subversion at the national level deserves the most urgent attention of a Marxist Leninist party, since identity-based conflicts hinder the unity of the people who desperately need to overcome imperialism, fulfil urgent democratic tasks and achieve social justice. A powerful united front of the oppressed masses is thus a prerequisite for a Marxist Leninist party to establish itself as a (if not the) leading revolutionary force and thereby defeat of imperialism and its allies.

It is the equally the duty of Marxist Leninists to oppose imperialist aggression and subversion anywhere in the world and support every form of opposition to imperialism. Such opposition is most effective when expressed through international organizations. Thus there is a strong case for international anti-imperialist solidarity organizations. But Marxist Leninists should be wary that their participation in such organizations does not become a substitute for mass political work at home and the building of a strong Marxist Leninist party.

International Marxist Leninist solidarity organizations should be free of sectarianism and encourage tactical issue-based as well as strategic anti-imperialist united fronts in every country with the view to link them with each other at national, regional and international levels.

Superficially, sectarianism seems arrogant and over confident, but what underlies it is lack of self confidence. Marxist Leninists should be humble, willing to learn from others — especially the masses — and ready to admit error and correct it when recognized. Every political party arrives at its stand based on certain class or group interests and has the right to its views. There are differences in views of Marxist Leninists on various issues even when they agree on fundamentals. To be rigid and insist dogmatically that one's position is absolutely correct and all else is wrong is not a Marxist Leninist approach. Differences in views can be based on differences in experience, differences in emphasis or even differences in perception. Individual opinion should be seen in context, and it takes discussion and debate on an equal basis to resolve differences and reach common ground for united struggle.

We come across Marxist Leninists who are willing to discuss common strategy with reformists and bourgeois liberals but are reluctant to even discuss issues with Marxist Leninists from a different political party. Blind adherence to terminology and definitions can drive apart parties that are effectively prescribing the same line. Thus there is a need to be sufficiently flexible to hear other points of view, understand their bases, and discuss matters with an open mind rather than reject outright the position taken by another party. Emphasis should be on achieving common ground.

Dimitrov, in the context of building an anti-fascist front, answered the question "Is it possible to realize this unity of action of the proletariat in the individual countries and throughout the whole world?" as follows: "Yes, it is. And it is possible at this very moment. The Communist International puts no conditions for unity of action

except one, and that an elementary condition acceptable for all workers, viz., that the unity of action be directed against fascism, against the offensive of capital, against the threat of war, against the class enemy. This is our condition". [The United Front: The Struggle against Fascism and War, Georgi Dimitrov, Proletarian Publishers San Francisco, 1975, p.33. Article accessed as https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm; and as <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/TUF35.html>]

Dimitrov adds in support of a contextual approach to the United Front: "It goes without saying that the practical realization of a united front will take various forms in various countries, depending upon the condition and character of the workers' organizations and their political level, upon the situation in the particular country, upon the changes in progress in the international labour movement, etc." [Ibid p.38]

The Challenges of the United Front

A united front is not an end in itself. It is designed to address immediate issues that need to be resolved in order to mobilize the people to achieve long term goals, on which partners of the alliance can vastly differ. A Marxist Leninist should have sufficient confidence in the Marxist Leninist goal and be clear about how the short term objectives addressed by the common programme will eventually tally with long term objectives.

Each partner enters the anti-imperialist united front in recognition of the threat posed by imperialism in both the short and the long term. Building a united front is about addressing shared concerns and making compromises on issues where there are significant differences, but without compromise on principled positions. There have been situations where some aspect of the political programme of a partner may be suspended temporarily but with the option to reactivate it when conditions change. What matters is that everything

about the United Front should be above board and conducted as agreed without any partner subverting the common programme or using the programme to implement a private agenda in an underhand manner. Where there is mutual trust the United Front could survive beyond the delivery of the declared goals to adopt a more advanced common programme. It can on the other hand be wrecked by the insincerity of one or several partners.

A positive example in Sri Lankan politics is the united front founded in 1966 to combat caste discrimination. The campaign won new allies for the Marxist Leninist Communist Party — predecessor of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party and the Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist) — which played a leading role, and enabled cooperation on a number of projects on the socio cultural front. That experience enabled the Party to survive the decades of repression in the North of Sri Lanka by the armed forces of the state as well as Tamil militants.

A negative example concerns the founding of the New Left Front (NLF) by three left parties and three left groups in 1999. The leader of the Navasamasamaja Party (NSSP) who entertained parliamentary ambitions sought to use the NLF to advance his career. Having secured a seat in the Western Provincial Council in the elections of 1999, based on strong backing from a key partners, mainly the NDMLP (then NDP), he yielded to temptation by the JVP which promised to make him Speaker of the Council with support from the UNP. Having lured him into their trap, the JVP dumped him soon after his breach of trust forced a split in the NLF.

What is important to note is that a broad-based alliance with all partners sincerely adhering to the agreed terms succeeded while a potentially closer left alliance failed because an important partner nursed a private agenda.

It is thus clear that the United Front Strategy to succeed demands basic integrity besides a well considered programme focusing on key issues and ensuring maximum consensus through compromise and

concessions, without forcing any participant to abandon a principled stand,.

Negative experiences in a united front could make participants reluctant to join such alliances on later occasions. But that is to fail to learn from the past. A written comprehensive agreement and mass publicity for it will be a deterrent to opportunists as they would then be challenged by the public.

There are those who are reluctant to enter into alliances because they fear that they are a small force and therefore could be dominated by numerically stronger partners. What needs to be remembered is that the strength of a Marxist Leninist Party rests primarily on sound theory and practice. If it is capable of standing by its principles, not afraid of criticism and ready to rectify mistakes through criticism and self-criticism, it can actually win over a majority and even persuade larger partners to accept its line.

There are inhibitions that Marxist Leninist parties suffer about the prospect of working together in a united front, although each party is, at least in theory, amenable to broad-based alliances. That brings one to the crucial question about friends and enemies. Before a party rejects another, accusing the latter of right opportunism, left adventurism or any such deviation, it should attempt to discuss political differences and resolve them if possible and, most importantly, explore common grounds for them to work together. No difference in ideology, revolutionary strategy or tactics can justify branding another Marxist Leninist party as an enemy. Resolution of such political differences by violent means is an anti-Marxist flaw that should be remedied. A party which is too stubborn to accommodate another with similar ideology is unlikely to be effective in a United Front which will have even greater diversity of views.

If a Marxist Leninist party fears that working with a particular rival in a common programme involves a risk, that risk is worth taking even if such ventures fail more than once. Lack of dialogue hinders

Marxist Leninist unity as well as the prospect of building a strong anti-imperialist mass movement. A Marxist Leninist only grows stronger by taking calculated risks, making mistakes and demonstrating the humility to correct mistakes rather than by being “always right”.

There are differences among Marxist Leninist parties on questions relating to the feudal and colonial labels. One party may call a country feudal or semi-feudal while another may reject that view. Some parties like to use the term semi-colonial while others prefer neo-colonial to refer to certain Third World countries. While terminology needs precision and related disputes need to be resolved at some stage, what matters immediately is whether terminology should be an obstacle to unity for a common cause. If parties recognize aspects of feudalism that need to be eliminated there is a case for unity in struggle. Irrespectively of whether the mode of operation of imperialism is semi-colonial or neo-colonial, imperialism remains the main enemy and should be opposed. There can be no excuse to shy away from that. Working together to achieve short term targets and discussing matters in a fraternal spirit will help to resolve theoretical and ideological issues while advancing the revolutionary cause.

Some parties are particular about the use of the qualifier Maoist in their name. Some resent it and there are others who have an open mind on the matter. If it is possible for a Marxist Leninist or a Maoist or a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist to work with non-Marxists on issues of democratic and human rights, why should the label hinder their joining in a united front? It is a bitter truth that matters of ego and careerism have played a big role in factionalism and dogmatic politics. A good communist should be free of such emotional shackles.

Summing Up

The case pleaded above may be summed up as follows:

- The United Front Strategy is about a programme to unite the majority against a small oppressive minority.
- While working in the United Front towards its short term goal, Marxist Leninists should also take a long term view of the struggle.
- The agenda of the United Front should be clearly defined to discourage any member organization implementing a secret agenda.
- Emphasis within the United Front should be on achieving maximum common ground within the broadest feasible alliance.
- Common goals inevitably demand compromise, but not at the expense of the principled stand of a party.
- Members of the United Front should be sincere in purpose, so that opportunism is avoided.
- A Marxist Leninist party should preserve its independence and maintain the initiative within the United Front.
- Equally a Marxist Leninist party should defend the independence of the partners of the alliance
- A Marxist Leninist party should always uphold class and class struggle.
- A Marxist Leninist party should always remember that its strength does not lie in numbers but in its principled stand and commitment to the revolutionary cause.
- Unity among Marxist Leninist parties and a strong anti-imperialist alliance at the national level is essential to effective anti-imperialist cooperation internationally.
- The principles on which solidarity is successfully built at national level could be used at international level regionally and globally.

A short review of developments since

Revolutionary united fronts are fewer since formal colonial rule ended and imperialism reinvented colonialism as neo-colonialism. Overcoming imperialism both nationally and internationally is the challenge facing the global left. That includes fighting fascism, Zionism and racism, and it is central to overcome imperialism to ensure success of struggles for social justice.

The genuine left, except the sectarian extreme left, accepts the need for anti-imperialist unity. But how good is the performance? Unity has achieved much for anti-imperialist left and progressive forces of Latin America in resisting US imperialism and its lackeys. But there a long way to go as the imperialist threat remains. Imperialism will miss no opportunity to subvert anti-imperialist regimes.

From a socialist perspective, anti-imperialist alliances, as a whole, have serious shortcomings. Goals are still mostly reformist, and socialist vision is inhibited by an inbuilt fear of the wrath of US imperialism so that national leaders hesitate to shake off the grip of imperialism on the economy of their countries. Persistent defiance has, however, paid dividends wherever people dared, as in Venezuela and Nicaragua amid a raft of sanctions against them by the US and allies and US-backed local subversion. Their defiance inspired people of the region so that governments have been elected in the past decade that are more defiant than before of US imperialism in international matters, as in Mexico, Honduras, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Colombia. Whether all of them will live up to the expectations of their voters is also subject to external factors. The President of Ecuador who won in 2017 as a left candidate sold out to the US and acted to reverse the anti-imperialist policies of his predecessor. There was a counter revolutionary coup in Bolivia, but reversed soon, while it took a decade to reverse in Honduras. Utter

failure in Venezuela and Nicaragua will not deter the US from trying new ways to destabilize the governments. US imperialism succeeded in Peru recently by using the parliament to disable a centre-left president and finally oust him by an act of impeachment. The conduct of the US has, however, earned public resentment across Latin America. The change in government in Colombia, a bastion of US power in South America not long ago, is a sign of the times. But, given the political system and residual exploiting classes backed by powerful media and well funded NGOs, left of centre governments will continue to face an existential challenge.

As harmful as the hostility of the US and allies was the idealisation of the Bolivarian model of Hugo Chavez as 'Socialism of the 21st Century'. The false hopes raised by Chavismo enthusiasts fell flat sooner than expected following the downward manipulation of global oil prices and denial of the oil revenue on which Venezuela relied. Nevertheless the anti-imperialist political awareness generated stood Venezuela in good stead against US economic and political assault on many fronts. Venezuela deserves unqualified support to sustain its commendable task of defying imperialism. The lesson to learn is that the ballot box is not the means to achieve or defend socialism as long as imperialism exists and the local bourgeoisie are a force to contend.

Overconfidence and sectarianism have hurt Indian Marxist Leninist movements. Parties and factions that emerged from the defeat of the Naxalbari Movement still face trouble in finding common ground. Following the fall of the parliamentary left in what was seemingly its bastion in West Bengal and the rise of the right led by the Hindu fascist BJP, there is need not only for all secular parliamentary parties, especially the parliamentary left, to rethink strategy. Given the complexity of India and its uneven social and economic composition, strategies for the emancipation of its oppressed demand

flexibility to address the diversity of contexts in which a neo-colonial entity faces imperialism. To imagine a uniform code of revolutionary struggle and impose it on the entire country will be disastrous. Revolutionaries as well reformists may be tempted to interpret the whole based on the part that is their experience. But willingness to learn from each other is essential to develop a strategy to overcome imperialism and its allies in a complex reality. Closer cooperation is needed among Marxist revolutionaries in order for them to play a key role in building a broad front of anti-imperialist forces. A party unwilling to work for the former task will not be suited for the latter.

There is promise of such willingness among some left forces, notably the fragmented revolutionary Maoists of Nepal in views expressed by Comrade Mohan Baidya (Kiran) in an interview last year [<https://peoples-voice.org/2022/07/27/interview-with-comrade-kiran-of-the-cpn-revolutionary-maoist/>]. Such unity could lead to a broad-based anti-imperialist alliance in Nepal. Unity, however, is no end in itself. Unity without sound principles and clear purpose is fragile. Comrade Kiran has warned elsewhere that “[U]nity cannot happen merely on the basis of agreement on the political line alone. There are additional practical barriers to unity such as egocentricity of the leadership, political careerism, and unnecessary adventurism all of which have to be handled effectively before we can achieve unity.” [<https://jacobin.com/2018/09/nepal-peoples-war-revolution-maoism-kiran>]

Spontaneous mass protests in which an assortment of forces come together rarely leads to a united front with a clear purpose and programme. Some projected the much welcome “Social Forum” and “Occupy” movements as models of broad united fronts against capitalist plunder. But events proved them wrong. Even greater hope was placed on mass uprisings called the ‘Arab Spring’. But the uprisings failed to deliver in a variety of circumstances. Thus there is

strong need for a common purpose and a programme of action so that mass enthusiasm is not deflected or dissipated.

Most revolutionary leftists, Marxist Leninists in particular, have a sound theoretical understanding of imperialism today and the need for anti-imperialist mass struggle at various levels. Thus Marxist Leninist parties and organizations can play a leading, but not necessarily dominant, role in planning the goals and strategies for such struggles, provided that they are flexible to accommodate differences that do not violate the purpose of the united struggle.

It is a bitter truth, however, that ego and careerism encourage factionalism and dogmatism. A good communist should be free of such emotional shackles, as a united front is about working with people who share a cause despite differences however serious.

While there is much to learn from failures, success stories have aspects that deserve emulation. A most enduring united front in recent decades is the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

(See separate item in this issue.)

Confused Priorities

S. Sivasegaram

If in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position. Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved.

Mao Zedong

"On Contradiction" (August 1937), Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 332.

Importance of the Principal Contradiction

The concept of the principal contradiction is central to resolving complex issues. It was applied in liberation struggles for evolving strategies to isolate the main enemy to win liberation.

A positive example is the line of the Communist Party of Indochina amid the struggle against French colonial rule. Japan had invaded the French colony of Vietnam in September 1940 and taken control of it. But the armed forces of the Vichi France (the Nazi collaborator regime) were allowed to remain. In May 1941 the Communist Party formed the League for Independence of Vietnam (the Viet Minh), a broad national alliance which cooperated with the Allied Forces (Britain, US, USSR, China and 'Free France') while asserting its recognition as the representative of Vietnam's national aspirations. That let the Communist Party have the upper hand in the struggle. Viet Minh's recognition of Japan as the main enemy over the French

colonialists was a good strategic decision, despite awareness of the prospect of the French reasserting their dominance in Indochina once Japan is defeated. The wise choice between an imperialist invader and a colonial occupier proved right, so that the ideas of a united front and isolation of the main enemy endured even in the decades of struggle to liberate South Vietnam.

Freedom fighters of Burma (Myanmar) and Indonesia, however, sided with Japan for differing periods to resist the British and the Dutch, their respective colonial masters. Burmese faith in Japan soon faded but Indonesian ties lasted until the war ended. Although caught between warring imperialists, neutrality was not an option.

The Luxury of Neutrality

There were times when a communist party stood aloof, and when it could not. After the USSR frustrated the wish of the Allies that Nazi Germany would fight the USSR to mutual destruction, Germany turned on the Allies. Communist parties stood aside while the imperialist alliances fought. When socialist USSR was drawn into the war they could not stand aside. But Trotskyists, unable to tell the difference between Stalinists and Nazis, pleaded neutrality.

Neutrality is wise in conflicts due to bad handling of contradictions that could have been resolved amicably, but not when imperialist aggression is the issue. Opposing imperialism is instinctive to a communist. But there are 'Marxists' who on occasion see a liberator in imperialism. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela are to them 'undemocratic dictators' who deserved to be overthrown. Thus they applaud the criminal overthrow of Saddam Husain in Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, hail the US and Saudi backed 'uprising' in Syria, and defend US backed coups masked as popular revolts in Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Marxists, while being clear about who is friend and who is foe, should be aware that all contradictions cannot be resolved similarly and often one takes precedence over others, even to the point of choosing between oppressors. Neutrality has at times meant siding with the worse foe. Sri Lankan Marxist Leninists had erred during the elections of 1970 and 1977 by not recognizing the main enemy.

The Ceylon Communist Party argued that there was little to choose between the pro-imperialist UNP and the nationalistic SLFP, both chauvinist bourgeois parties, and called for the boycott of the polls. Given the addiction of the public to elections, the call failed in 1970. But the party lost the goodwill of supporters of the SLFP and its left allies. The stand was the same but less vehement in 1977. But the old left, out of spite towards their former coalition ally, refused to see the UNP as the principal enemy and rejected the idea of an electoral pact. The SLFP was humiliated at the polls, but the parliamentary left was bankrupted of its parliamentary seats. The UNP won an unprecedented 5/6th majority in parliament and the country still struggles with the consequences.

Anti-imperialist Struggle: Weakening and Revival

Left parties seem poor at forming alliances other than opportunistic electoral pacts. That is worrying. Sectarian leftists who are stern in their dealings with left rivals are amiable in dealings with bourgeois electoral partners. More worrying is hesitance to recognize the main enemy, nationally and internationally. Even those who concede that US imperialism is the main foe fail at times to recognize its hands in internal conflicts and regime changes or to realize that proxy war is the imperialist norm since US humiliation in the Vietnam War.

From the 1960s the USSR had an eye on global political influence if not hegemony while backing anti-colonialism and anti-imperialist struggles. That hindered the rise of a robust anti-imperialist alliance

in the wake of anti-colonial success globally. Cuba, despite reliance on USSR to resist US bullying, inspired anti-imperialism, notably in Latin America and the Caribbean, where anti-imperialist struggles were necessary home grown responses to heavy handed US actions.

China kept aloof of major US–USSR conflicts, and its neutrality was not commendable in the Angolan war, which had transcended US–USSR rivalry when racist South Africa entered the fray and two of the three liberation movements sided with the US and South Africa. Chinese neutrality was, however, wise in Ethiopia’s war with the Eritrean liberation movement, despite criticism of Soviet intentions.

China’s foreign policy had kept China out of war, but for wars with India in 1962 and Vietnam in 1979. Notably, Chinese support for revolutionary movements and liberation struggles faded as China’s revolutionary commitment slackened after Mao.

The US was emboldened by Russian and Chinese hesitance since the fall of the USSR to oppose US moves to split countries, subvert governments and induct subservient regimes on various pretexts. It was further encouraged by worldwide sympathy following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 to arrogate to itself the right to intervene at will in the Third World. Internal divisions and economic crises in member states weakened the European Union as an international force and reduced it to a client of the US, with Europe having minimal say in NATO decisions to extend US aggression beyond Europe as well.

Since the fall of the USSR and the formal end of the Cold War, the US became the world’s sole super power. That did not last long. Amid economic and financial crises in the US and Europe, several Third World countries, notably China, and a rejuvenated Russia got more assertive, and less vulnerable to bullying by the US. Yet, the US could manipulate the spontaneous Arab Spring to preserve status quo in the Middle East and North Africa. However, US aggressiveness led to

the undoing of its authority. Invasion of Afghanistan ended in shameful failure, while ousting Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya failed to go according to plan.

Russia and Iran got wise to US intrigue to impose regime change in Syria and since 2015 supported Syria to defeat US, Saudi and Qatar backed Islamic fundamentalist terror. But there is some way to go to rid north east Syria of US and Türkiye military presence. That will only be feasible by addressing Kurdish aspirations for autonomy.

Economic and political sanctions by the US to subdue or overthrow disobedient governments have begun to fail or even misfire like the sanctions against Russia for its military action in the Ukraine. Reversal of leftist gains in Latin America in the first decade of the century has been rebuffed in the past decade. Hopes for economic and political cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean are bright. US efforts to undermine the BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the Belt & Road Initiative are falling by the roadside as countries show interest, amid US moves to reactivate QUAD and start the AUKUS to encircle China.

Prospects are gloomy for US imperialism. Marxist Leninists should take the initiative to consolidate anti-imperialist unity and thereby build their credibility as revolutionary forces.

Elusive Notions of Imperialist Support for Victims

Knowing the main enemy is essential to harness the anti-imperialist surge. But there is confusion on that front, akin to that of Trotskyists when German fascism drew the USSR into WWII. Some of them declared that there was little choice between Stalinism and Nazism.

Using rigid criteria to test if a country is imperialist could lead to confusion. Despite a capitalist country's imperialist potential and

prospects of partnership in imperialist alliances, we should identify the countries besides the US and its allies which are imperialist.

Some list only China and Russia. Some add India, Turkey or both to the list. Yet others treat regional hegemony, territorial conquest, military might, membership in a multi-national military alliance and large overseas investments as markers of imperialism. They are not likely to define a modern day imperialist power. By overstating the threat posed by an alleged imperialist power one could even locate one's self on the side of the most oppressive imperialist power.

While consensus on whether a country is imperialist or not is elusive, it is not hard to recognize the motives of parties to a conflict or to assess the implications of the outcome of the conflict to the socialist cause and struggles for freedom across the globe.

Some "revolutionary leftists" baulk at the thought of a firm anti-imperialist stand even when an imperialist power or alliance targets a weak country. Some justify their apathy by faulting the victim as oppressor, dictator or denier of political and democratic rights. Even now, some refuse to condemn sanctions by the West against Iran, Nicaragua, Syria, Venezuela and Zimbabwe, arguing that they are reactionary, dictatorial or corrupt. That these countries had for long been victims of imperialist aggression, bullying and sabotage seems inconsequential to some. Yet others desire externally forced regime change. However, these countries have bravely resisted the US bully with wide public support, even at the cost of curtailing or suspending ambitious economic and welfare schemes.

Dilemma of Competing Imperialisms

In critical issues of the century like conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine, we have seen reluctance to identify the real culprits and tendency to pose the problem as a clash of rival imperialisms. Defining an issue as a battle between imperialisms persuades some to

dismiss the background to the problem and place parties to the conflict in opposing imperialist camps.

Afghanistan. US-led aggressors overthrew the Taliban government backed by Islamist forces besides covert support from a few Third World countries. When the Taliban routed the US-led alliance to seize power, an embittered US craved revenge. It seized 7 billion US dollars of Afghanistan's reserves from the Da Afghanistan Bank and directed European allies to seize a further \$2 billion there to cripple the Afghan economy. The US is irate that China and Russia among others came to the rescue, while some leftists envisage emerging imperialist rivalry in Afghanistan.

Syria. In 2015, Russia, Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah joined Syria to fight Islamic fundamentalist militants and the Islamic State (IS). This turned the tide in favour of Syria. But 'Marxists' obsessed with US–Russia rivalry were oblivious to the source of the 'spontaneous' uprising seeking to overthrow a government that was most defiant of US imperialism and the risk of Syria being overrun by the IS.

A positive outcome of the conflict was that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with People's Protection Units (YPG) as the dominant player rapidly gained control over much of north and east Syria in 2012, as the Syrian Army retreated to fight elsewhere. The Kurdish National Council (KNC) and Democratic Union Party (PYD) ran the captured cities and announced the self-governed region of Rojava in January 2014. The YPG also strongly resisted the Islamic State (IS).

Later in 2014, when the IS laid siege to the YPG controlled city of Kobani, the US seized the opportunity and stationed its troops in Syria on pretext of jointly fighting the IS. Many Marxists questioned the wisdom of YPG's move. But those fixated with inter-imperialist rivalry endorsed it. The credibility of the US as a partner came apart under Trump's presidency (2017-2020).

The net outcome, however, is that US troops are well rooted in north eastern Syria, amid US unease about likely reconciliation between Syria and Türkiye (very hostile to the Bashar al-Assad government until recently) as well as a YPG–Syria accord.

The YPG, were unlike Iraqi Kurdish leaders with a history of flirting with the US in the vain hope of fulfilling Kurdish aspirations, despite US support for Türkiye’s oppression of the Kurdish people. Iraqi Kurdish leaders acted like several other leaders of oppressed nationalities who saw a liberator in the US, which we know feigns support for a just cause only to make an oppressor serve its political and economic agenda. Among factors that misled the YPG to trust the US are losing sight of the main enemy and the theory of inter-imperialist rivalry in Syria. Developments in the Arab World including the rehabilitation of Bashar al-Assad’s government offer hope that the YPG could extricate itself from the grip of the US.

Ukraine. Those who think that Vladimir Putin is out to restore a lost Russian empire are blind to the unjustified expansion of NATO in order to encircle and subdue Russia so that US domination over Europe will continue uncontested. The US and Russia do compete for influence in countries of former USSR, but purposes differ.

While Russia has returned to be a geopolitical force, it is nowhere near re-gathering countries of the former USSR under its wing. Since the USSR fell, Russia faced attempts to destroy its integrity by stirring trouble in Chechnya well into this millennium, and there is evidence of US support for the rebels. The admission of three countries of the former USSR to NATO in 2004 was in bad faith and breached an understanding with the then President Gorbachev in 1990 [<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>]. The US and NATO backtracked on it and in 2008 the NATO denied any such pledge. That lie is repeated in the Western media.

Russia's economic recovery since early this century made the US fear for its security. When Russia's southern neighbour Georgia was encouraged to join NATO in 2008, Russia intervened on pretext of defending the independence South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia, which they declared in 1992. Ukrainian events were more sinister. The US forced a regime change in Ukraine in 2014 by a coup camouflaged as mass protest, in which Ukrainian fascists had an active role. Russia, in response, encouraged a referendum in the peninsula of Crimea which voted overwhelmingly to join Russia.

The claim that Russia's attack in Ukraine was unprovoked is for the naïve. Ukraine's insistence on joining NATO led to Russia's military action. Sixteen months of destructive fighting thus far could have been averted if Ukraine and NATO assured Russia that Ukraine will not join NATO. The short-sighted assumption of the US and its European allies that the Russian economy could be crippled by a slate of sanctions blocking Russian exports including oil and natural gas proved awfully wrong, and the Russian economy endured the sanctions. Meantime, European economies suffered as a result of restrictions on import of Russian fuel. The West is far more willing to arm Ukraine to fight even to destruction than pursue peace. Even now, they hope that the war will weaken Russia economically and militarily. But the US while failing to isolate Russia has also lost out diplomatically.

The purpose here is not to choose or cheer winners in the conflict but to point out that Russia's purpose in the run up to the conflict was not territorial expansion but arresting the expansion of NATO to its borders. The US seeks to enlarge its global military presence by expanding NATO, which could be used to bully not just Russia but also China as well as US targets such as North Korea and Iran.

The source of US desperation is its waning economic and political clout in the face of China's rise as an economic power. The problem

before us is not whether Russia or China is imperialist but knowing the global power that poses an immediate threat to world peace and harms economic growth of the Global South.

Notably, the late Comrade Maria Sison, an outstanding Marxist Leninist of our times, despite identifying and criticising both Russia and China as imperialist, has avoided placing either on par with US imperialism and named the US as the instigator and the Ukrainian regime as its proxy in the Ukrainian conflict:

Thus far, the US and its imperialist allies have succeeded in channelling their economic and political rivalries, including territorial re-divisions, through negotiated deals within international and regional bodies, while constricting Russia and China. But they have gone into proxy wars to dominate the underdeveloped countries or gain positions of strength. Thus, the imperialist powers have decreased the chances of direct inter-imperialist wars. But for the first time, the US and NATO have openly emboldened Ukraine to provoke a war with Russia, a country with nuclear power, which has put on maximum alert its nuclear forces.

[<https://neodemocracy.blogspot.com/2022/10/on-world-situation-jose-maria-sison.html>]

The trouble with naming a few too many imperialisms is that one could easily lose track of the main contradiction and err in judgment by the loss of objectivity. The global scene is dynamic, and we should have the humility to accept the possibility of our being wrong and to correct our views based on objective reality. To be stubbornly subjective is to be not a good Marxist.

A Note on Social Imperialism

Zhou Enlai explained as follows the Chinese stand that the Soviet Union practiced 'socialism in words but imperialism in deeds':

Internally, it has restored capitalism, enforced a fascist dictatorship and enslaved the people of all nationalities, thus deepening the political and economic contradictions as well as contradictions among nationalities. Externally, it has invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia, massed its troops along the Chinese border, sent troops into the People's Republic of Mongolia, supported the traitorous Lon Nol clique, suppressed the Polish workers' rebellion, intervened in Egypt, causing the expulsion of the Soviet experts, dismembered Pakistan and carried out subversive activities in many Asian and African countries. This series of facts has profoundly exposed its ugly features as the new Czar and its reactionary nature, namely, "socialism in words, imperialism in deeds."

[https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/10th_congress_report.htm]

It is notable that Zhou Enlai does not claim that the Soviet Union was imperialist based on the 'five criteria' of Lenin or any other economic criterion. He used factual arguments founded on China's real concerns about Soviet conduct, especially under Brezhnev, in the context of military threats against China and Soviet military intervention elsewhere. The term 'social imperialism' in the essay refers essentially to betrayal of socialism and revolution followed by an aggressive posture evident in the Soviet challenge to the global dominance of US imperialism. The 'arms race' was part of it, and where it led the Soviet economy is another matter.

National Democratic Front of the Philippines: 50th Anniversary

Message from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines to all allies and friends on the NDFP's 50th anniversary

April 24, 2023

On behalf of the entire membership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), as well as all Red fighters and commanders of the New People's Army (NPA), the Central Committee of the CPP extends militant revolutionary greetings to all its allies and friends in the National Democratic Front of the Philippines on the historic and most joyous occasion of the NDFP's 50th anniversary.

We propose to the National Council that the NDFP and its allied organizations carry the following theme during this entire year of celebration:

Strengthen the NDFP! Unite the Filipino people to fight for Philippine sovereignty amid heightening foreign intervention and rising threats of imperialist war! Carry out militant struggles to fight for the people's national and democratic interests against the US-Marcos fascist regime! Carry forward the national democratic revolution to victory!

On this occasion, let us remember and pay tribute to all the heroes and martyrs of the Philippine revolution. Let us give special honors to Comrades Jose Ma. Sison, Benito Tiamzon, Wilma Austria, Fidel V. Agcaoili, Antonio Zumel, Julius Giron, as well as other key leaders of

the Party and the NDFP, as well as peace consultants who passed away or were killed by the reactionary state terrorists. Let us express our gratitude to the countless allies of the NDFP who continue to serve the national democratic revolution.

There is urgent need to strengthen and further invigorate the NDFP as the Filipino people face a worsening crisis of the ruling system and growing threats of getting caught in the vortex of imperialist wars, with the Marcos regime and the AFP being used by the US in its war provocations, while remaining spineless against Chinese aggression.

In the coming period, the NDFP must carry out widespread efforts to promote the people's patriotic spirit, and unite, galvanize and mobilize the broadest section of the people to defend the country against rising imperialist rivalries and threats of wars. Amid intensifying US imperialist military intervention and worsening forms of oppression and exploitation under the neoliberal policy regime, the NDFP must exert all efforts to more vigorously advance the national democratic revolution and the cause of national freedom and democracy.

The CPP and the NDFP

On the initiative of the Party, the NDFP was formed on April 24, 1973, less than a year after the declaration of martial law by the US-Marcos fascist dictatorship. On that day, the NDFP Preparatory Commission issued the Manifesto "Unite to Overthrow the US-Marcos Dictatorship" which included its 10-point program. Since then, the Filipino people have possessed three powerful weapons: the Party, the NPA and the NDFP.

During the entire course of the anti-dictatorship struggle, the NDFP and its program served as one of the most powerful beacons that guided the broad masses of the people in their march against the

fascist regime and in their overall revolutionary resistance. Through the NDFP, a wide underground network of national democratic forces was built which served as solid core of the broad mass struggles against the dictatorship.

The manifesto and 10-point program of the NDFP quickly gained traction among the broad sections of the Filipino people and galvanized them to get organized and take action against the fascist regime. The NDFP initially brought together a number of organizations of youth and students, women, peasants and other classes and sectors which were forced to go underground with the imposition of open fascist rule. Since 1973, the NDFP steadily expanded and is now composed of 18 underground organizations, namely: Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, Revolutionary Council of Trade Unions, Katipunan ng mga Samahang Manggagawa, Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid, Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan, Kabataang Makabayan, Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan, Makabayang Samahang Pangkalusugan, Liga ng Agham para sa Bayan, Lupon ng Mananaggol para sa Bayan, Artista at Manunulat para sa Sambayanan, Makabayang Kawaning Pilipino, Compatriots – Revolutionary Organization of Overseas Filipinos and their Families, Christians for National Liberation, Cordillera People's Democratic Front, Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization, and Revolutionary Organization of Lumads.

The NDFP is the most consolidated united front organization of the Filipino people. It binds together all the progressive classes and sectors in support of the people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war. It is the political center of gravity of the various levels and forms of united front organization against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

In the course of waging protracted people's war, organs of political power at village or inter-village levels, as well as at municipal and inter-municipal and even district levels, have been built based on the organized strength of revolutionary mass organizations, the local Party organizations and armed strength of the New People's Army. These perform state functions including implementing land reform policies and programs, dispensing justice and resolving contradictions among the people, conducting education and health services. These organize and mobilize the people to wage widespread armed resistance against the reactionary state.

Taken together, all these comprise the embryo of the future People's Democratic Government of the Philippines, a united front of all progressive and patriotic classes based on the basic alliance of workers and peasants, and under the leadership of the proletariat. Until it is established on a nationwide scale, the PDG is represented by the NDFP.

Representing the PDG, the NDFP has established political, economic, military and proto-diplomatic relations with other entities. It has actively promoted international solidarity among anti-imperialist forces. Directly or indirectly, the NDFP has received quasi-state recognition by other governments or international entities.

Presently, two governments exist in the Philippine countryside: the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the PDG represented by the NDFP. The PDG is Red and revolutionary; while the GRP is White and reactionary. Both sides are belligerents in the civil war of the past 54 years.

The NDFP has been conducting peace negotiations with the GRP since 1987. It has firmly and excellently represented the national and democratic interests of the Filipino people, and frustrated the GRP's scheme to use peace negotiations as an instrument of deception and

pacification. The negotiations have produced important agreements, foremost of which is the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The NDFP has clearly demonstrated its dedication to addressing the socioeconomic and political roots of the civil war, and in doing so, has drawn the support of broad segments of society to the cause of just and lasting peace.

Relevance and urgency of the NDFP's 12-point program

The 12-point program of the NDFP is a systematic expression of the Filipino people's collective aspiration for national freedom and democracy. It is the most superior of all programs of political parties and organizations in the Philippines.

The NDFP program is the anti-thesis of the neoliberal, anti-Filipino and anti-democratic policies and programs of the ruling Marcos fascist and puppet regime, as well as all previous regimes whether pseudo-democratic or tyrannical. It represents the interests of workers, peasants and all other exploited and oppressed classes of Philippine society as well as all progressive and patriotic forces, which are diametrically opposed to the interests of US imperialism, and the local ruling classes of big bourgeois compradors and big landlords.

The sharpening crisis of the ruling semi-colonial and semi-feudal system underscores the relevance and urgency of implementing the NDFP's 12-point program. Fifty years or so since the NDFP's program was drawn up, the semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions in the Philippines remain qualitatively unchanged. It has only worsened quantitatively, with the Filipino people suffering from conditions of oppression and exploitation far worse than ever before.

In the countryside, the problem of landlessness has become even more acute in the face of various forms of land grabbing and land dispossession by new and old type landlords, big bourgeois compradors and multinational corporations in mining, plantations, infrastructure, real estate, and so on. All over the country, the broad masses experience increasingly intolerable socioeconomic conditions amid low wages, loss of income, skyrocketing prices of fuel, food and basic commodities, joblessness, and dispossession. The ruling reactionary state has resorted to more brutal fascist measures to suppress the people's resistance and preserve the ruling system.

Amid their gross economic conditions and political repression, the Filipino people are continually being drawn to the 12-Point Program of the NDFP as the most viable and direct solution to their pressing problems. The demand for genuine land reform and national industrialization is even more urgent in the face of the widespread destruction of productive forces in both cities and rural areas. The demand for a comprehensive and progressive social program is even more relevant amid the aggravation of the crisis of public health and public education. Every other item in the NDFP program is in sharp contrast to the dark facets of the ruling system.

The prospect of establishing a new country where people enjoy genuine freedom and true democracy, and where they themselves benefit from the fruits of their labor, infuses them with revolutionary fervor and optimism and invigorates them to wage revolution.

The NDFP's program is a general reflection of the program for a people's democratic revolution of the Communist Party of the Philippine. In pursuing the Filipino people's struggle for genuine national freedom, the NDFP's 12-point program is historically linked to the old democratic revolutionary program of the Katipunan. It serves to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution, and thus,

create the conditions to carry forward socialist revolution and construction.

Current burning issues of the day under the Marcos fascist and puppet regime

The de facto Marcos fascist and puppet regime is currently the most concentrated expression of the rotten semi-colonial and semi-feudal ruling system. It embodies the interests of US imperialism and that of the ruling exploiting classes; more specifically, that of the Marcos-Duterte ruling clique. Amid the crisis of the ruling system, the ruling Marcos-Duterte clique has become obsessed with monopolizing economic and political power, causing its isolation from the people, and generating rifts and rivalries within.

The current US-Marcos regime is causing the further aggravation of the economic and political crisis of the ruling system. Its anti-national and anti-democratic policies are most clearly demonstrated in the following four key issues:

(a) Heightening US military intervention in the Philippines. This is marked by US plans to build at least four more military bases and facilities under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). This is in addition to the already existing five military bases and facilities where the US prepositions weapons and stations American troops in the Philippines. The new military bases will be part of US plans to build a \$27.1 billion network of missile stations in the so-called "First Island Chain" of countries nearest China. This also forms part of continuing war provocations against China, centered on undermining the One China Policy and stoking calls for Taiwan Independence.

At the same time, the US is intensifying its counterrevolutionary war in the Philippines for suppressing the national democratic revolution by supplying weapons, funding and supporting the AFP's

counterinsurgency operations. The vain hope of the US imperialists is to crush the revolutionary armed struggle so that it can fully utilize or maximize its puppet armed forces in a possible armed confrontation with its imperialist rival China.

(b) Intensifying fascist suppression and state terrorism under the US-directed counterinsurgency operations. There is rampant violation of human rights and international humanitarian law by the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP), including hamletting of communities, food blockades, indiscriminate firing of weapons, aerial and artillery bombing, extrajudicial killings, abductions, unlawful and unjust arrests, torture and other brutalities against civilians or non-combatants.

(c) Increasingly aggressive push for neoliberal policies and measures which worsen mass poverty and aggravate the socio-economic conditions of the people. These policies subject people to more severe forms of oppression and exploitation. The heightened drive to expand the operations of multinational corporations are causing widespread dispossession of peasants and fisherfolk, economic dislocation and destruction of productive forces. These further deepen the backward, agrarian and pre-industrial state of the Philippine economy, resulting in acute unemployment, low wages amid high prices, dependence on imports and foreign borrowing; and so on

(d) Deepening crisis of the ruling political system. In the rush to maximize bureaucratic privilege, the ruling Marcos-Duterte clique is aggressively pushing efforts to monopolize political and economic power. The plan to amend the 1987 constitution clearly falls into the schemes to do away with provisions restricting powers to impose martial law and perpetuate the ruling clique in power. These machinations deepen rifts and rivalries among various cliques of the ruling classes. At the same time, conflicts between the Marcos and

Duterte camps are also deepening as they rival over control of bureaucrat capitalist loot including control of the military, police and other key government agencies, pocketing bribes from government contracts, collection of protection money from smuggling and drug trafficking, and so on.

These issues underscore the moribund state of the ruling semi-colonial and semi-feudal system. Any of these or a combination of two or more factors can form the fulcrum of a sharp turn in the economic and political crisis, which in turn can stir the broad masses of the people and heighten their democratic and militant mass movement.

The explosive and destructive potency of these issues are also heightened by the context of the continuing crisis of the international capitalist system, and growing prospects of another round of financial crisis, recessions and economic depression. Across the world, a surge in mass demonstrations is steadily developing in both the capitalist centers and in less developed semi-colonial countries as oppressed and exploited classes resist worsening policies and imperialist wars.

The role of the NDFP in the developing revolutionary surge

The Communist Party of the Philippines continues to lead the Filipino people in waging national democratic revolution through protracted people's war. It is gratified to have as its allies the organizations and members affiliated with the NDFP.

Amid the sharp deterioration of the ruling system, rising inter-imperialist rivalries and increasing possibility of inter-imperialist war, the Party sees a forthcoming period of surge in the revolutionary armed struggle, mass movement in both the cities and countryside, and building the NDFP and other united front

organizations. There are bright prospects for the revolutionary forces to achieve unprecedented strength in the coming period of growth.

The New People's Army is more than ever determined to carry out protracted people's war in the countryside. It has preserved and persevered along the path of revolutionary armed struggle, and continues to wage extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare on an ever widening and deepening mass base.

The revolutionary mass movement is bound to surge forward in the coming months and years. After a period of militarist lockdown during the pandemic, there is now a conspicuous rise in the level of economic and political struggles of various sectors. There is the increasing tempo of workers' strikes and mass actions to demand higher wages, oppose gross working conditions and fight contractualization and other oppressive flexible labor schemes. The clamor to end agricultural liberalization and other oppressive neoliberal policies that cause land dispossession, rural bankruptcy and economic dislocation continue to unite and rouse peasant mass struggles alongside their demand for genuine land reform. The struggle against dams and other infrastructure projects, expansion of mining and plantation operations across the different regions continue to intensify. The broad masses of fisherfolk are coming together to resist destructive reclamation plans, and underwater mining by big foreign companies that cause their economic dislocation. The recent strike of jeepney and public utility drivers highlight how the semi-proletarian masses are resisting oppressive socioeconomic policies and programs that take away their livelihood. The militant and patriotic students and youth movement is bound to rise amid rising costs of education and state abandonment, as well as against heightened imperialist intervention.

Political repression and violations of civil and political rights continue to incite the people's outrage, condemnation and resistance.

The responsibility of the US imperialists behind the war of suppression is being thoroughly exposed. The Filipino people's anger continue to rise against foreign plunder and destruction of the environment and people's livelihood by multinationals and its local agents, and against widespread corruption by big bureaucrat capitalists led by the Marcos-Duterte clique.

The NDFP and all its allied organizations must serve as the core of all-out efforts to unite, organize and rally all revolutionary, progressive and positive forces to build the broadest united front against US-Marcos regime as the most concentrated expression of all the social evils being suffered by the Filipino people, and to advance the people's war for national and social liberation.

We urge the NDFP and its allied organizations and other affiliates to carry out the following tasks, campaigns, struggles and activities in the coming year, with the aim of broadening and strengthening the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal united front:

a) Build the broadest alliance against the US-Marcos fascist regime. Expose and oppose Marcos' subservience to foreign economic interests. Expose, oppose and isolate the ruling Marcos-Duterte clique in its schemes to monopolize economic and political power. Expose the corruption of the ruling clique, including the machinations to recover the Marcos dynasty's ill-gotten wealth, diverting public funds to big bourgeois operations, smuggling behind the facade of import liberalization, and other schemes.

b) Wage a campaign to expose and demand the dismantling of US military bases in the Philippines, the withdrawal of US troops, an end to US military intervention and war exercises, war provocations against China and funding of brutal counterinsurgency operations that violate the principle of non-interference. Call for the abrogation of the EDCA, the Visiting Forces Agreement, the Mutual Defense

Treaty and all other unequal military treaties with the US. Demand the dismantling of Chinese military facilities and withdrawal of military forces, and a stop to the plunder of Philippine marine resources.

c) Generate widespread support for the economic struggles against neoliberal policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization, especially for the workers' demand for wage increases. Draw broad support for the struggles for genuine land reform in the countryside, and against the entry of mining companies, expansion of plantations, ecotourism, dams and energy projects, and other programs that destroy the environment and people's livelihood. Oppose the imposition of onerous taxes and burdensome foreign debt payments.

d) Build a broad anti-fascist united front. Expose widespread state terrorism, violations of human rights and attacks against civilians and civilian communities in violation of international humanitarian law, especially violation of women and child rights. Demand a stop to indiscriminate and disproportionate use of aerial bombing and artillery shelling which endangers the lives of civilians. Expose the link between rising fascist repression and the aggressive neoliberal push to pave the way for foreign companies to plunder the country's resources, further pull down wages, grab land and dispossess the people.

e) Vigorously promote and carry out the NDFP's 12-Point Program through all possible forms and venues—from the academe to the slums, the factories and workplaces to the countryside. Actively develop a mass education, propaganda and cultural movement to reach out to the broad masses in their millions. Raise the people's knowledge and consciousness about the victories they have won in the past 54 years of revolutionary struggle, and the need to bring forward the national democratic revolution to fruition to end their sufferings.

f) Develop a vigorous organizing movement to achieve unprecedented expansion and growth of all NDFP allied organizations, and build new ones to represent other oppressed classes and sectors. Hold study meetings and special conferences and build their organizational structure. Produce new mass leaders capable of rousing the people in their numbers. Strengthen the revolutionary underground and ensure the formation of self-defense committees to secure all revolutionary forces.

g) Strengthen the NDFP as an alliance. Raise the consciousness of the membership of allied organizations by carrying out internal education about the NDFP, its history and its work. Develop coordination and cooperation among the NDFP's allied organizations. Strengthen their links with the NDFP's overseas office and support the work of the NDFP's international representatives.

h) Generate widespread political and material support for the New People's Army. Actively recruit Red fighters from among workers, students, women and other sectors. Mobilize self-defense units to extend material, political, and intelligence assistance to local people's militia units and guerrilla units of the NPA.

i) Continue to promote and represent the People's Democratic Government. Carry out an international campaign to promote the NDFP as representative of the Filipino people. Continue to gather international support for the Filipino people's struggle for national and social liberation. Continue to build proto-diplomatic relations with countries and other international entities. Continue to promote the NDFP's commitment to a just and lasting peace.

j) Help efforts in building and expanding anti-imperialist solidarity networks and alliances. Help build broad international alliances against imperialist wars. Extend solidarity support to the democratic

mass struggles of workers, peasants and other toiling people, as well as revolutionary armed resistance in other countries.

The Central Committee of the CPP sees the NDFP playing a crucial role in the coming period of revolutionary resurgence. We are confident that all the NDFP's forces will continue to exert all efforts to rouse the people and shoulder the difficult tasks in waging all forms of patriotic and democratic resistance, generating widespread support for the people's war and carrying forward the national democratic revolution.

Long live the National Democratic Front of the Philippines!

Long live the New People's Army!

Long live the Communist Party of the Philippines!

Long live the Filipino people!

[Reproduced in view of relevance to theory and practice of the United Front and prioritizing opposition to US imperialism in the anti-imperialist struggle.]

NDMLP Diary

Summary of recent statements issued by the NDMLP

Revolutionary May Day of the Party

The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party announced on 27th April that it will hold its May Day rallies this year under the theme “Revolutionary May Day to oppose acts of state oppression” in the regions of Jaffna, the Hill Country and Vavuniya.

The May Day procession for the Jaffna May Day rally started near Kalviyankaadu junction on Point Pedro Street around 4.00 p.m. The rally chaired by Comrade K Selvam Kathirgamanathan began at 5.00 p.m. in Sangiliyan Park, Nallur.

The procession for the Hill Country May Day rally began at 11.00 a.m. from Bazaar Street, Ragala Middle Division and Comrade Siva Rajendran chaired the rally.

The procession for the Vavuniya May Day rally at the auditorium of the Town Hall began at 10.00 a.m. from near the Vavuniya Madhya Mahavidyalayam. Comrade M Paheerathan chaired the rally.

The rallies were addressed by leading party comrades SK Senthivel, V Mahendran, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah, S Don Bosco, N Pradeepan, David Suren, T Sri Prakas, Semmalar Mohan, K Jintheesan, S Panneerselvam and representatives of trade unions and mass organizations.

Erroneous reference to Hill Country Tamils

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party issued a statement on behalf of the Party on

18th March 2023 strongly objecting to fresh moves by 'Yazh Nanbargal' (Jaffna Friends) in collaboration with the Indian High Commission office of Jaffna to refer to the Hill Country Tamils as Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka. Reference to Hill Country Tamils as Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka by a group calling itself 'Yazh Nanbargal' (Friends of Jaffna) as well as Indian High Commission is a historical fraud which belittles and maligns the identity of Hill Country Tamils and is designed to extend the hegemony of India.

The statement further pointed out that reference to Hill Country Tamils as Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka has ulterior motives. Calling them 'Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka' is to refuse to recognise their ethnic rights and the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party strongly denounces the move.

This year marks 200 years since the Hill Country Tamils were first brought to colonial Ceylon by the British as indentured labour from South India. This happened in several phases from 1823. Labour Unions, Progressive Organisations, Left forces and the intelligentsia are continuously voicing for the unresolved issues of the Hill Country Tamils and are emphasizing on their uniqueness. Identifying them as Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka at this juncture has many motives.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party has been waging a struggle for long for the recognition of the Hill Country Tamils as a separate nationality. It has made a series of demands to the government to recognise the Hill Country Tamils as one of the four nationalities, and has been struggling for the demand since the 1990s. The Party had re-emphasised this in its Proposals for Constitutional Reform submitted to the government during rule by the United National Front for Good Governance.

It is condemnable to call the Hill Country Tamils, an oppressed nationality who have been denied citizenship and the rights of civil societies, including land, housing, education, etc., as Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka.

Progressive organizations and the public in Jaffna should register their protest over this new oppressive move against the Hill Country Tamils. The Party urges all those who care about the Hill Country Tamils to raise their voice against this, and calls upon the people of Sri Lanka to fight for the rights of the Hill Country Tamils.

Chauvinist Vandalism at a Temple

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party issued on 28th March 2023 a statement on behalf of the Party denouncing the act of vandalism by chauvinist oppressors.

The religious fanatical act of breaking up and casting away of Saivaite icons located on the Vedukkunaarimalai hill in Vavuniya North is an extension of the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist oppression that has been practised continuously in Sri Lanka. There is no doubt that the hands of chauvinists of the ruling group are there in the background to this mean act that was carried out in a planned manner.

The vast majority of the country's toiling masses are heavily loaded with severe economic burdens to face crises in their daily life. Meanwhile the resources of the country are to be given away by acts of privatisation as collateral for money borrowed from the IMF.

The country and the people will suffer harsh political and economic consequences as a result. The trump card that the Ranil-Rajapaksa regime has is its ability to divert public attention away from the resultant public fury by stirring ethnic and religious differences and

grudges and escalate them into conflicts and shield themselves and their class interests behind that. It is being executed impeccably by Ranil Wickremasinghe following in the footsteps of JR Jayawardene and the Rajapaksas, the kings of corruption who are manipulating from behind.

Foreign forces and their local agents are also active in provoking and arousing such ethno religious splits.

Thus it should be realized that sectarian stands or colluding with foreign forces cannot be made the way to overcome the hands of chauvinistic oppression.

The position of the Party is that integrating the programmes to resist chauvinistic oppression with the broader struggle addressing the economic, political and social problems faced by the working people will yield the correct mass line.

“Always remember that the people are not fighting for ideas, nor for what is in men’s minds. The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better and in peace, to benefit from progress, and for the better future of their children. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, the construction of peace, progress and independence are hollow words devoid of any significance unless they can be translated into a real improvement of living conditions.”

Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973)

Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral

Children of the Depths

Ahmad Shamlou

They thrive,
In the town of no street,
In the stale web of dead-end lanes,
In the bosom of smoke, drug and pain,
Talismans in their pocket and stones in hands.
The children of the depths!
The children of the depths!
They thrive.

The cruel swamp of fate in front,
The lash of thrown fathers on their back,
Ears filled with their shattered mothers' curse,
In a void of hope,
Their future crushed in their clinched fists,
The children of the depths,
The children of the depths,
They thrive.

They flourish,
In the forest of no spring,
On the trees of no yield,
In the fields of no harvest,
The children of the depths!
The children of the depths!

They chant with a bleeding throat,
They carry an unbending flag in their hands,
They bear the banner of pain on their shoulders,
The children of the depths!
The Kaveh* of the depths,
They thrive.

** Kaveh the Blacksmith is a figure in Iranian mythology who led a popular uprising against a ruthless foreign ruler.*

Translation: Mahvash Shahegh & Dan Newsome

Lenin

Langston Hughes

A large, faded, purple-tinted image of Vladimir Lenin in a dark suit, walking and looking to the left. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid on it.

*Lenin walks around the world.
Frontiers cannot bar him.
Neither barracks nor barricades impede.
Nor does barbed wire scar him.
Lenin walks around the world.
Black, brown, and white receive him.
Language is no barrier.
The strangest tongues believe him.
Lenin walks around the world.
The sun sets like a scar.
Between the darkness and the dawn
There rises a red star.*

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