

**Let us Defend and Carry Forward the Climate of Peace!
Let us Demand a Just Political Solution!**

(Address by Comrade S.K. Senthivel at the May Day Rally in Jaffna)

Comrades and Friends,

I express my revolutionary salutation and greetings to you on this glorious day of revolutionary struggle of the working class. We are celebrating this May Day in the wake of two important events that have taken place on the national and the international scene. The first concerns the climate of peace in which there is respite from the nineteen years' long war of national conflict in the country, with the North-East at its core. The second concerns the new international situation consequent to the attacks in American cities on the 11th of September last year. It is important to take our stand on both these matters on a Marxist-Leninist basis and with a proletarian class outlook. Let us at the same time firmly resolve to be determined in our decisions, our political stance and their implementation.

Comrades,

The nineteen years' long war has taken a break because of the Memorandum of Understanding made between the government and the LTTE. As a result, guns and cannons have taken a rest. People in the North-East and in the rest of the country have gladly welcomed the fresh breeze of peace. The ceasefire and consequent lifting of embargoes, after a long spell, have created an opportunity for the people to heave a great sigh of relief. This new environment is most welcome. Thus, our party emphasises that the above environment of peace should be protected without ulterior motive by both parties, with the support of other popular political forces.

The environment of peace that has come about on a national scale is one that the country deserves and one that seems to be the last opportunity for peace. A similar good opportunity was there in 1994, but Mrs Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaratunge seriously blundered then in protecting it and carrying it forward with calm. As a result, she destroyed the environment of peace and transformed herself from one portraying herself as the angel of peace to one performing a war dance. An opportunity for peace then lost has come before us once more. All of us should be aware that, if we fail to carry it forward in a proper fashion, the result would be great damage and disaster.

Nobody need consider the Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the LTTE to be 100% perfect. There are positive and negative features in it. But we should view it from the point of view of the people and grasp the favourable features that are present in good measure. For our people who have suffered damage, destruction, despair and displacement because of the nineteen years long war, the ceasefire and the lifting of embargoes are most favourable things. We should welcome the above features that are carried forward with third party mediation by Norway. But one cannot be blindly faithful and careless. Every step should be taken with careful observation.

The move towards negotiations is correct. It cannot be one for merely finding short-term solutions. The negotiations should progress towards building up a lasting peace and restoration of normal life for the people. Only negotiations that could make way for full autonomy in the Tamil homeland comprising the merged North-East province could be meaningful.

This is exactly what our party has emphasised as one of its prime demands in very May Day declaration over the past eighteen years. We did not stop with making declarations, but also

carried forward struggles in support of the demand in the North-East, among the Sinhalese in the South and in the Hill Country.

The beginning of the materialisation of the demands that we pressed for, namely a ceasefire, lifting of embargoes, negotiation with the LTTE, third party facilitation and a move towards a just solution, is a great victory for the people.

At this juncture, our party remembers the mass movements and struggles that were carried forward unremittingly to make possible the beginning of peace. We have always strongly opposed the acts of racist violence initiated by the UNP in 1977 and the acts of barbarism in 1979, 1981 and 1983.

We have always opposed the Prevention of Terrorism Act that was designed to defend chauvinistic oppression and suppress the struggles of the Tamil people. Besides that, we also warned of the danger that this very act could be turned against the Sinhalese. As predicted, it happened in the cruellest possible way amid the Sinhalese. Even today, around 3000 Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people are detained in various prisons across the country under this Prevention of Terrorism Act. We demand their release on this May Day.

We also campaigned against the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution of the Country that made it legally necessary to take an oath rejecting secession. In the mid-1980s, we founded the Mass Movement for Human Rights and carried out several campaigns and struggles against the above pieces of legislation and demanding the removal of embargo on fuel and other essential goods. Recollection of these activities today would further affirm the consistently pro-people stand of our party.

We have since the beginning put forward a policy that would enable the exercising of the right to self-determination in our country in a realistic and practical way. We have suggested ways in which it could be constitutionally guaranteed that the Tamil nationality and other nationalities could exercise their right to self-determination through the setting up of autonomous regions and internal autonomous structures so that the need for secession is averted, and have consistently argued for it. It is most welcome that the LTTE and the government show signs that they are beginning to think on those lines. But we know that the outcome will not be complete or up to our expectations. We should remember that the UNP would never arrive at a position where it has fully abandoned its chauvinist stand.

The UNP, while holding on to its chauvinist position, remains a party that stands for the strengthening of the policies of the big bourgeoisie. The circumstances under which it has been forced to call for peace need to be viewed from our perspective. But, at the same time, its moves towards peace should not be hampered. We have to act with a clear distinction drawn between the two aspects.

The UNP is projecting its loyalty to imperialism by continuing with its policies of the past towards the open economic policy and privatisation and accelerating their implementation. As a result, increased prices of goods and charges for services are being imposed on the people. The peasants and the workers have been deceived by the UNP government. Therefore, a ruthless struggle has to be launched against all anti-people practices of the UNP.

Comrades,

While we are clear that the present environment of peace should be defended and carried forward, we also need to carry out a vigorous campaign among the people against the JVP, the Sihala Urumaya and sections of the People's Alliance who are obsessed by chauvinism and are out to wreck the peace process. We need to carry forward a campaign among the Sinhala

proletariat and working masses to impress upon them the need for a just solution in order to make the climate of peace last.

At the same time, we should not underestimate the significance of the relentless struggle of the LTTE. Nearly 16,000 of their cadre have laid down their lives. The sacrifice and dedication of those fighters is the basis for the present climate of peace. Thousands of cadres from other movements too have struggled with a thirst for liberation and sacrificed their lives. Nearly 25,000 fighters have sacrificed their lives from all the movements concerned. Besides this, over 70,000 members of the public have been killed. We should always bear in mind that, in the past quarter of a century, nearly a hundred thousand people have laid down their lives in the struggle against chauvinistic oppression.

The LTTE is the foremost representative of the Tamil liberation struggle. They have learnt valuable lessons through experience in the past 20 years. Therefore, our party asks the LTTE to distinguish right from wrong on the basis of their past experience, correctly understand the current international situation, and carry forward their political line with clarity.

In particular, the US wants to exploit the current climate of peace to establish itself among us to serve its interests of global hegemony. The Palaly air base and the Trincomalee naval base are among its important targets. The Tamil people as well as the people of the entire country should be particularly vigilant about this.

Equally, the forces of Indian hegemony are in the process of advancing their regional interests trying to wreck the present climate of peace. The resolution proposed by Ms Jayalalitha in the Tamilnadu State Assembly calling for the deportation of the leader of the LTTE is just one manifestation of this. One has to be extremely cautious in this matter and not submit to the Indian ruling classes.

We should also remember that the forces of conservatism and social reaction, traders and merchants, and other exploiting classes are seeking to exploit the present climate of peace to their own profit. Forces that accumulated tremendous wealth through war will not keep idle during peace. Again, we need to be alive to the fact that forces of caste arrogance still exist, and continue to struggle against them.

It was the workers, peasants, fisher folk and other working people that stood firm on their land and persevered in struggle in the middle of the war during the past 19 years. Any struggle that fails to remember that they are the fundamental force is doomed to fail. Therefore, let us firmly resolve on this May Day that all of us will unite and advance far with calm, clarity and determination to establish peace and to ensure the success of a political solution.

Comrades,

It is necessary to say a few words about the international situation at this juncture. Following the attacks in American cities on the 11th of September last year, America has sought to expand and establish its dominance. It is waging attack in the name of 'combating terrorism'. Its every move is an effort for economic and military domination of the world. America that fantasises that it has put an end to Marxism and socialism is now swearing that it will put an end to Islamic extremism. All of this is an attack on the people of the world.

Thus, the blow delivered to America on September 11 has to be seen as a blow taken at its imperialist world domination. The anger welling up in the West, including America, against globalisation, the World Bank and the IMF and manifesting itself as a surge of mass struggles is a welcome feature. On the American soil where a mass struggle was born to press for the working class demand for an eight-hour working day, today surges a mighty storm in opposition to imperialist globalisation.

Therefore, let us link ourselves with the uprising against imperialism led by America. Let us revive and nurture the revolutionary sentiments of our tradition of communist struggle and forge a link between that tradition and the new generation. The final victory is to the working class and the masses and not to the reactionaries. Let us firmly resolve on this May Day to hold aloft the glorious banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and advance without fear of sacrifice along the path of revolutionary struggle.

I conclude by expressing once again to all of you revolutionary salutation and greetings on behalf of the Central Committee of the New Democratic Party and my behalf.

Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought!

Glory to the New Democratic Party!