

# **POLITICAL REPORT OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> HILL COUNTRY REGIONAL CONGRESS OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

*by*

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**Members of the Politburo,  
Delegates to the Congress,  
Comrades,**

The Fourth National Congress of our New Democratic Party was held in Jaffna on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2002, and a deep and meaningful Political Report was adopted at the Congress. It is an important feature of the method of work of our Party that Regional Congresses are convened to carry out programmes that are suitable to the various regions on the basis of the Political Report.

On that basis, the Hill Country Region conducts its Fourth Regional Congress today. The hill country viewed geo-physically as the part of the country above an elevation of 1000 feet (300 metres) above sea level, and includes the Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa Provinces and parts of the Southern and Western Provinces. District-wise it comprises Matale, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle, Ratnapura, Badulla, Monaragala districts and includes parts of Matara, Galle, Kalutara, and Colombo districts. The Hill Country Regional Committee includes people resident in these regions as well as those who consider themselves to be permanent residents of these regions.

Workers in the tea, rubber and coconut plantations, workers in garment factories and other industries, government and private sector workers, and people with working class consciousness in this region form the base for the functioning of our party. Besides, the activities of the Party extend to include those who toil in paddy fields and in vegetable gardens as wage labour or lease holders.

It is inevitable that the Party would unite with people such as small producers, small plantation land owners, middle classes and intellectuals who could and should be mobilised alongside the above working and agricultural classes.

The Sri Lankan state and governments have been clients of imperialism. It is our principal duty to prepare ourselves nationally for freedom from that condition, through a socialist revolution for establishing an egalitarian society. To accomplish that, we need to work on that basis at the regional level as well. As a precondition to carry out the socialist revolution, the New Democratic Revolution needs to be carried out under the leadership of the working class, by uniting with all forces with all forces with which unity is possible. This approach applies to the regions as well. The whole country and its people are being exploited by capitalism, feudalism and imperialist globalisation. The people are divided by nationality, religion, caste, gender and region. They are kept divided so that the imperialist-capitalist-feudal class rule could continue. Through such division the people are oppressed on the basis of nationality, religion, region and gender.

It is important for all the classes exploited by capital (international as well as national) to fight under the leadership of the working class. At the same time, it is necessary to carry out the struggle against national oppression, which comprises the main problem facing the country and an obstacle to carry out the struggle against capital, and achieve at least a minimum solution.

The working class and the peasantry in the region comprising the hill country and their allies are divided on the basis of nationality. The programme of the Party should be extended to the all sections of the people, by overcoming these differences. At the same time, struggles against class and national oppression of the majority of the plantation workers who live in the hill country and the nationality, namely the Hill Country Tamils, to which they belong, are important to extending the programme.

The Hill Country Tamils brought to the island by the British colonialists to set up the plantation industry and to toil there have a 200 year long history. They live in the in the plantations in the Hill Country and their vicinity. The capitalist class and Sinhala Buddhist chauvinists have created bitterness against them among the Sinhalese peasantry by spreading the historically wrong view that the lands of the Sinhalese in the hill country had been taken away by the British to set up plantations and that the Hill Country Tamils enjoyed special privileges.

The truth is that the bulk of the land used for establishing the plantations was wooded and not owned by any and that the workers who created the plantations do not own even a piece of the land on which the estates were established. They do not have houses of their own. They have no permanent place of residence or address. It is true that land that was not used for settling up plantations was taken over by the British. It is the British colonialists who should be answerable for that. When the British colonialists left the country, they left, among many other things, the plantations in the hands of the Lankan ruling classes.

However, the contradiction created between the Sinhalese and the plantation workers by British colonialism is being carried forward by the Lankan capitalist class and the chauvinists in several ways to secure their own survival. The Citizenship Act was introduced in 1948 and the Hill Country Tamils including the plantation workers were made stateless. As a result their right to vote was taken away and from 1952 they were deprived of parliamentary representation.

Although parliamentary representation was secured in stages by subsequent amendments to the Citizenship Act since 1977, such representation is very much at the mercy of the capitalist chauvinistic parties. The Hill Country Tamils continue to be severely exploited as a nationality and as a class. Particularly since the government administered the plantations following their nationalisation and as a result of the creation of settlements on a chauvinistic basis, the Hill Country Tamils have been rendered insecure. Now, under private ownership of the plantations, the plantation workers are exploited most cruelly.

Trade unions that functioned among the plantation workers do political work in a way that ensures that the Hill Country Tamils remain in the grip of narrow nationalism so that the leaders could win seats in parliament to secure cabinet posts and social status for themselves. The Ceylon Workers' Congress and the Malayaha Makkal Munnani (Hill Country People's Front), in particular, divide the people in their efforts to win votes and propagate narrow nationalistic politics to prevent the workers from uniting with the Sinhalese. However, the CWC and the MMM have made it their politics to renew in turn their ties with the UNP and the SLFP so as to secure posts and positions they continue. Their politics is neither proletarian nor one for achieving the aspirations of the oppressed Hill Country Tamil nationality.

Although some trade union demands have been won in bits and pieces during the British period and later between 1972 and 1991, when the estates were managed by state organisations, the hill country plantation trade unions have not achieved anything remarkable. After the handing over of the plantations to private companies (mainly foreign and especially with major share holding by Indian companies), the trade union movement has gradually become defunct for all practical purposes.

Collective agreements are signed according to the wishes of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce acting on behalf of the plantation companies. The trade unions that sign the agreements on behalf the workers, namely the CWC, Ceylon National Estate Workers Union (a UNP trade union), and the Joint Committee of Plantation Trade Unions (a leftist trade union alliance in appearance), seem effete. Besides their inability to win a just wage increase, they go to the extent of justifying the measly wage increases achieved by claiming them to be the maximum attainable.

While they are ineffective as trade unions, they have also proven themselves to be incapable of achieving what is possible within bourgeois democracy through the parliamentary representation that they have.

Under these conditions, the New Democratic Party continues to work with dedication to unite the left and democratic forces and carry forward people's politics in opposition to parties that are functioning as clients to capitalism, chauvinism and imperialism. It is taking the necessary steps for that purpose

in the hill country too. I.e., it is working with dedication to carry forward people's politics in opposition to the UNP and the SLFP. The party is carrying out its activities with its revolutionary politics at the core. Our party has, on its own, through various mass organisations, and by joining with forces with which unity is possible, carried forward mass struggles.

Since 1979, it has participated in many struggles to find solutions for the problems of livelihood the Hill Country Tamils and plantation workers, especially those demanding higher wages for the plantation workers. In 1979 it stood in the forefront of the struggle to make permanent the posts of 402 volunteer teachers. From 1980 to date, we are in the struggle against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Scheme. We have been struggling against the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Scheme through the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) and its youth organisation, the Sri Lanka Patriotic Youth Movement, when the Party functioned as the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) and, following the change of name, through the New Democratic Party and its youth organisation, the Sri Lanka Democratic Youth Front and now by setting up an organisation called the People's Movement Against the Upper Kotmale Scheme through uniting various individuals and organisations.

We struggled against the privatisation of the plantations. We are struggling against chauvinistically motivated settlements in the plantations, and against mining for gems in the plantations. It should be noted that the struggle to repair the road and for the reduction in the bus fare charged in private buses along the Ragala-Highforest route resulted in the repair of the road and a reduction in bus fare. In 1999, we carried out mass demonstrations across the country against ethnic violence in Ratnapura. We carried forward struggles against the killing of political prisoners in Bindunuweva in 2001. In last May, we carried forward struggles against ethnic violence in Kandapola.

We continue to lend support to the struggle of the teacher students in the Sripada College of Education. In last June, besides supporting the demonstration of the teacher students, we took action against attacks on the teacher students. What should be noted here is that, while all trade union leaders and parliamentarians were opposed to the struggle, our Party alone stood firmly and honestly in support of it.

We are, thus, active in mobilising the people through a variety of mass struggles.

We have not failed to use elections as another platform to carry forward our struggle. Our position is that the problems of the people cannot be solved through elections. We also appreciate that it is not possible to reject elections altogether at present and that it cannot be a foregone conclusion that we should always contest elections. In the Provincial Council elections of 1993, we contested as an independent group, under the leadership of Comrade E Thambiah, our National Organiser, with the teacup as symbol.

In 1998, when the Party was a partner in the New Left Front, we contested the Provincial Council elections, again under the leadership of our National Organiser, with the NLF symbol, the table. In the parliamentary elections of 2000, we contested in alliance with the Democratic Left Front, under the leadership of our National Organiser, with the DLF symbol, the clock. In the parliamentary elections of 1993, we contested, under the leadership of Comrade S Panneerselvam, again with the clock as symbol.

In the general election of 2002, we carried forward a protest movement comprising the spoiling of ballot papers. In the Provincial Council elections of 2004 April, we contested the Nuwara Eliya District under the leadership of our National Organiser, with the candle as symbol. Although the party and some comrades faced severe financial hardships by participation in the elections, there were favourable outcomes in activities to mobilise people.

The Party works on the basis that, for the Hill Country Tamils to carry forward their struggle against national oppression, it is important to put forward their identity as a distinct nationality, and that they should be identified as Hill Country Tamils rather than as Tamils of Indian descent. The position of the Party is that the Tamils of Indian descent living outside the hill country, especially in Colombo, the North Western Province, and the North-East Province could be counted within the national identity of Hill Country Tamils, as sections of that nationality. It is our position that the identity of "Hill Country Tamils" that emphasises that we are not foreigners cannot be compromised to serve the

class interests of a few traders living in Colombo and a handful of intellectuals who play along with them.

Besides, the struggle to win and to consolidate the national aspirations of the nationality, the Hill Country Tamils, is not one in opposition to the Sinhalese, and we are firm that, on the contrary, it needs to be carried forward as a struggle to reinforce solidarity with the Sinhalese and Muslims. However, neither that nor the fact that the Hill Country Tamils are surrounded by Sinhalese could be cause for denial of the existence of national oppression against the Hill Country Tamils or to refrain from struggle against it.

An autonomous structure should be established to ensure the right to self determination, equality and autonomy of the Hill Country Tamils. It is only through that they could be freed of national oppression and ethnic violence against them. It is necessary to secure in a similar fashion autonomy and safety for the Muslims living in the hill country.

Thus, the peace process aimed at resolving the national question should address, besides the problems of the Tamils, those of the Hill Country Tamils and the Muslims. The scope of the peace talks should be extended in a way that these problems could be resolved.

The peace negotiations relating to the national question should be immediately resumed. Rehabilitation and reconstruction work should be carried out and an interim administration set up in the North-East so as to enable normal life, peace and democracy there. Following that, negotiations for a final solution to the national question should be conducted to conclusion within a defined time frame. The final solution should be such that it ensures an autonomous region comprising a merged North and East as well as autonomy for the Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese living there. In the hill country, a strong autonomy comprising regions where the Hill Country Tamils live. Outside this region the right to autonomy of these people should be ensured through appropriate autonomous structures.

The Party Regional Committee for the Hill Country has paid attention to oppression of men and women in vegetable gardens, farms, shops, offices and factories, besides the oppression in the plantations, and the struggles against such oppression. It considers that it is its duty to carry forward the struggles for all government servants including teachers and private sector employees for their rights.

The main problems in the plantations are national oppression against Hill Country Tamils and class oppression against plantation workers. The Party, with its actions guided by Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought, has undertaken the responsibility of carrying out multi-faceted struggles on a working class basis to confront such oppression. It is through such multi-faceted struggles that a foundation could be laid for a class struggle led by the workers among the Sinhalese, Hill Country Tamils and Muslims in the hill country.

Besides, the Party is carrying out various activities on the cultural front to reinforce working class characteristics among the people of the region. Organisations such as Thesiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Cem Malarkal Theatre Group and Puthiya Malayakam are carrying forward their work in literature and art with that purpose in mind. The Red Hearts Sports Club conducts sports activities. A musical group called Mountain Mozarts is also active in developing music for the people in support of the Party.

Liberation for the entire people in the hill country, in the long term, is part of socialist revolution and New Democratic revolution in the whole country and, in the immediate context, part of the National Democratic programme. It should be remembered that the revolution of the people of the hill country region is opposed to imperialism, imperialist globalisation and Indian regional hegemony in the same way that socialist revolution on a country-wide scale is opposed to them.

Struggles should be carried forward without entrapping the Hill Country Tamils within the imperialist agenda. Let us link ourselves with the struggles of the people of the world against imperialist globalisation. It is important to avoid falling into the trap laid by the forces of Indian hegemony using the line that the 'Hill Country Tamils are of Indian origin', and persist in struggle. Like imperialism,

Indian hegemony too is hostile to our country and its people. We cannot permit it to carry out its various expansionist activities with the hill country as base.

Comrades,

Of all political tasks that we considered so far, the most important are the political tasks of our revolutionary party.

The trade unions in our region cannot even stir. The parliamentary politicians cannot raise the standard of living of the people by ensuring at least the necessities of the people such as food, shelter, education and health services. The UNP and the SLFP that have been ruling the country and the political parties subservient to them cannot bring salvation to the people of this country. The so-called left parties clinging on to the SLFP cannot carry forward people's politics properly. The JVP, which upholds Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism while waving the red flag, is attempting to initiate trade union work in the hill country. Since its basis is hostile to the working class in the plantations and the Hill Country Tamils, the people cannot accept it. The need of the present is the path of political struggle as opposed to the path of making people surrender in return for concessions for the trade unionists and parliamentary politicians.

Some educated people who have come from among the backward Hill Country Tamil community collaborate with trade unionists and parliamentary politicians for their self-advancement and go to the extent of justifying them. They refuse to accept the politics of struggle as an alternative to trade unionists and parliamentary politicians. These educated persons interpret the politics of opposition to existing trade unionists and parliamentary politicians as one of replacing one group of individuals with another. Some of them have become officials and members of an elite class. There is an anti-people stand of the educated class. Among the educated in the hill country, caste ideology and gender oppression are emerging in new forms. It is essential to struggle against these trends. Some of the educated individuals are defenders of the trade unionists and parliamentary politicians. It is necessary to oppose their anti-social stand.

Hordes of NGOs have emerged, claiming to work against trade unionism and parliamentarism, while securing funding from imperialist countries and their agencies in the pretext of social development, women's empowerment and social research. They downgrade people's activists to the level of social workers. NGOs reject explicitly or implicitly that only a socialist revolution could transform the unequal class society. They project to the people voluntarism, comprising cost-free activities such as carrying out social services with foreign funding to paying honoraria to participants in meetings and seminars, as the alternative to the degenerated politics of today. That cannot transform society.

NGOs carry out certain tasks (for example, construction of public toilets) which should be the responsibility of the state towards the people. They create the notion that the people should not depend on the state for their needs but fulfil them on their own. To the NGOs, mass struggle is to bring the people to the streets and make exhibits of them. They spread among the people and especially the educated classes the belief that problems could be solved by submitting research reports on social development and exerting pressure on the government. Also, the NGOs themselves offer employment opportunities. Those who work there do not only find fault with the people but also consider themselves more advanced than the people. Those who administer the NGOs are moneyed and well to do. They call themselves 'civil society' and live like the nobility.

Such voluntarism is fundamentally opposed to social change and to the activities of revolutionary mass organisations and revolutionary parties. Imperialist programmes are implemented through them. Trade unionism, parliamentarism and voluntarism are serving to blunt the class consciousness of the workers.

Our principal task is to carry out revolutionary work and mobilise the people against these forces. That could be done by the Party on its own and jointly with forces that could be united with. It could also be done through mass organisations.

A larger number of educated people have joined the ranks of our Party than any other organisation. They are acting with proletarian consciousness and scientific clarity against the anti-social educated

class and the NGOs. We need to develop that work further and defend and develop the class consciousness of the workers.

On this basis the 4<sup>th</sup> Hill Country Regional Congress of the Party puts forward the following immediate tasks:

- 1 We will strengthen the New Democratic Party as a revolutionary party and mobilize the people behind it.
- 2 In order to win the rights of the oppressed Hill Country Tamils, we will develop a broad mass movement transcending the limitations of the political parties and trade unions.
- 3 We will develop a revolutionary trade union movement in the plantation sector.
- 4 We will advance through strengthening the unity of the left and democratic forces against the UPFA and the UNP.

In addition, we will mobilize the people to achieve the following:

- a. We will struggle to defeat chauvinism and narrow nationalism and to ensure the rights of all nationalities in the hill country and to establish equality and unity among them.
- b. We will win a just wage scheme for the plantation workers.
- c. We will free the plantations from the private sector and bring them under co-operative management.
- d. We will put an end to the disastrous Upper Kotmale Scheme.
- e. We will win basic educational and health care facilities.
- f. We will eliminate caste and gender oppression.
- g. We will win the rights of the peasantry.
- h. We will construct a new culture.

**We will win New Democracy and unite for a socialist future.**

**Long live Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought**

**Victory to the Proletarian Revolution**

**Long Live the New Democratic Party**