

Surabaya, the capital of East Java, to the island of Madura, a 5.43-kilometer span, to begin construction in February. Also, on Sept. 26, China signed six agreements for major energy projects in Indonesia, including oil, mining, and power development; while on Sept. 27 the two nations signed a huge, \$8.4 billion contract for the supply of liquified natural gas from a new facility in the Indonesian Province of Papua, to supply the Chinese Province of Fujian.

Making the point even clearer, Indonesian Army Chief Gen. Endriartono Sutarto announced Sept. 19 that Indonesia was seeking alternatives to the United States as the nation's arms supplier. Following a meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Chi Haotian in Jakarta, General Endriartono said that Indonesia could not continue to be dependent on one source, since that source has been disrupted by embargos based on political considerations. He named China as one likely new source.

The National Strategy Report released by the U.S. White House on Sept. 20 includes the following passage on China: "Yet, a quarter century after beginning the process of shedding the worst features of the Communist legacy, China's leaders have not yet made the next series of fundamental choices about the character of their state. In pursuing advanced military capabilities that can threaten its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region, China is following an outdated path that, in the end, will hamper its own pursuit of national greatness. In time, China will find that social and political freedom is the only source of that greatness."

This is the same document in which President Bush put his signature to the following utopian doctrine, endorsing preemptive military action against perceived threats: "As a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed. We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. So we must be prepared to defeat our enemies' plans, using the best intelligence and proceeding with deliberation. History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action."

The future of Indonesia, of China, of Asia, depends absolutely on the global effort to end both this utopian war policy, and the unfolding financial collapse, while building the necessary alliance of sovereign nations to create a new world economic structure.

To reach us on the Web:

www.larouchepub.com

Sri Lanka Talks To End 19 Years of Civil War

by Ramtanu Maitra

While U.S. President George W. Bush was busily precipitating a war against Iraq, a remarkable event took place on Sept. 16-19, in southern Thailand, where the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), hitherto murderous adversaries, began an arduous journey to end the 19-year-old civil war. Tucked away in private villas under the tight security at the Sattahip naval base, 160 miles southeast of Bangkok and close to the resort city of Pattaya, the two parties ended their first round of talks and set the dates for the next three rounds: Oct. 31-Nov. 3, Dec. 2-5, and Jan. 6-9, 2003.

The outcome of the first round of talks was most encouraging. Beside expressing their "resolve to address the full range of issues pertaining to a lasting political settlement of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka" and pledging their "determination to continue upholding the Cease-Fire Agreement and expanding the range of confidence-building measures over the period ahead," the two sides discussed in depth "the urgent need to address the difficult humanitarian situation in the north and east of Sri Lanka." They agreed to set up a joint task force for humanitarian and reconstruction activities, the press release said.

Behind the Peace Effort

In the process of bringing about the first round of talks, a number of nations had played key roles, especially Norway, India, and the United States. But, according to observers, two unrelated events perhaps contributed the most in making the parties agree to break the cycle of violence that has taken almost 65,000 lives and created serious security concerns for not only the Sri Lankan citizens, but also for the nations in the region.

The first was the violent events in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, which caused revulsion in Sri Lanka at the loss of thousands of innocent lives. The second turning point was the election of a new government under the United National Party (UNP) leader, Ranil Wickremasinghe. Prime Minister Wickremasinghe had made a "peace plan" the center of his election campaign. Though his appeal was strongly opposed by a significant segment of the ethnic-Sinhala majority, who consider elimination of the Tamil minority as the only possible solution to the ethnic strife, at the end, a war-weary country responded by endorsing Wickremasinghe's

approach of a negotiated settlement of the civil war, and handed him a narrow victory.

At the talks, the Colombo government was represented by a Cabinet Minister and a close confidant of Wickremasinghe, Prof. G.I. Peiris, while the Tamil Tigers' negotiator was their spokesman, Anton Balasingham. Equally significant was the presence of Sri Lankan Muslim representative Rauff Hakeem, as an equal partner to the talks. Hakeem's 12 Members of Parliament belonging to the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC) provide support to Wickremasinghe's government and their pullout could collapse the government, and the peace talks, instantly. On the other hand, the Muslims are a distinct ethnic minority, forming almost 7% of the island's 19 million people, and are concentrated in the northeastern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. In these provinces, the Tamils are the single largest ethnic group. Earlier the Tamils had tried to expel the Muslims from these provinces to boost their own numbers. It is evident that by bringing the Muslims in as an equal partner to the talks, the Tamils have exhibited flexibility and goodwill.

Autonomy, Not Separatism

Perhaps the most encouraging feature of the first round was the environment that prevailed throughout the three days of talks. Both sides were eager to move forward and accomplish something positive. At the end, the Tigers, who rejected government's proposal to disarm until a permanent solution meeting the aspirations of the Tamil people is reached, said categorically that they do not seek a separate nation. What the Tamils want, Balasingham explained, is autonomy. "The LTTE does not operate with the concept of a separate state. We operate with the concept of a homeland and self-determination. Homeland does not mean a separate state," Balasingham said.

Balasingham's statement was warmly welcomed by the government in Colombo, and Professor Peiris told the press that the Tigers' aspirations "can be fulfilled within one country, if we set about it in the proper way." The Norwegians, who had sponsored the talks, also announced that both sides have agreed to set up a panel to resettle some 1.6 million people who were displaced by the two decades of civil war.

Seeking International Support

As soon the talks began, Wickremasinghe flew over to New York, where the United Nations General Assembly was in session, and where he met with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and then, went to Washington to meet with U.S. authorities. Although the Sri Lankan Prime Minister's visit to the United States was labeled as "a mission to attract financial support to rebuild the war-battered nation," it was obviously more than that. It is likely that the Prime Minister was on a mission to seek support from powerful nations in order to continue with the peace process.

The one-day visit to Sri Lanka by U.S. Deputy Secretary

of State Richard Armitage late in August, has drawn international attention. Armitage visited the northern city of Jaffna, traditionally the Tigers' stronghold, and saw some of the worst scenes of destruction caused by the war. He visited the second largest town in the north, Chavakatchery, and met with a delegation led by the veteran Tamil politician, Sampanthan. Upon his return to the capital, Colombo, Armitage met with Wickremasinghe and former Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, a Muslim, who deliberated with the American diplomat in his capacity as President Chandrika Kumaratunga's international affairs adviser.

There are a number of reasons why Wickremasinghe is keen in garnering outside support. For one thing, he faces strong opposition to the peace process within the country. To begin with, the Tamil Tigers are a dangerous opponent, and the Sri Lankan government would not like to drop its guard to accommodate the peace process. Moreover, the Tamil Tigers seek to make Trincomalee, the deep-water port on Sri Lanka's east coast, its capital. Trincomalee, considered by experts as the best deep-water port in Asia, was used by the British and other Allies during World War II, and was eyed as a prized port by the United States, Israel, and Britain during the Cold War days. It is likely that Wickremasinghe would like to know the level of Washington's present interest in Trincomalee.

Internal Opposition

Prime Minister Wickremasinghe's peace efforts are openly resisted by Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga, who years ago had tried to negotiate with the Tigers and failed. Subsequently, Mrs. Kumaratunga became the target of the Tiger assassins and she has already survived one assassination attempt. The past has made President Kumaratunga bitter, and some observers contend that she would do her very best to scuttle the peace efforts launched by her political adversary, Wickremasinghe.

In addition, Wickremasinghe will have to convince yet another powerful adversary, the Buddhist temple-based organization, the Sangha. Those Sinhala chauvinists who oppose the peace process, have sought support recently of the Buddhist monks. On Sept. 2, under the aegis of the newly formed "National Conference on Buddhist Monks," hundreds of monks demonstrated in Colombo, denouncing the Norwegian peace brokers. The monks demanded that the government abandon its plan to lift the ban on the Tamil Tigers ahead of the talks. It is clear that President Kumaratunga has allied with the powerful Buddhist Sangha to foil the peace efforts.

Wickremasinghe is fully aware of the powerful influence that the Sangha exercises on Sri Lankan politics and its role in nearly two decades of civil war. His Defense Minister has called on the powerful Buddhist monk Malwatte Mahanayake Thera, to obtain his blessings for the peace process, and has assured the revered monk that the government's decision to lift the ban on the Tamil Tigers would not compromise nation's security.