



**This is a special issue of the SUNS,  
in honour of, and tribute to,  
Martin Khor**

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## **Martin Khor: Indefatigable fighter for justice, equity for Global South**

Geneva, April (Chakravarthi Raghavan) -- Martin Khor Kok Peng (1951-2020), an indefatigable fighter for justice and equity for the Global South, close associate and comrade-in-arms for over three decades, passed away peacefully, after a five-year-long fight against cancer, in the early hours of 1 April 2020 in his home in Penang, Malaysia, with wife Meenakshi Raman by his side.

Martin leaves behind a rich legacy of successful battles and several ongoing ones to be continued by colleagues and associates at the Third World Network and global civil society and the trade and justice movement. However, it is a huge void that will be difficult to fill.

It is never easy to write about such a close friend and associate, and it is even more difficult about one in the younger generation. We do so, as other associates and friends, some from early on with Martin in these struggles, in this special issue of SUNS, paying homage to his memory and achievements, determined to carry on with the struggles ahead inspired by his example. (In doing so, while sharing them we will strive to avoid areas of his work and life, dealt with in detail by other associates in this issue of SUNS.)

Born on 9 November 1951, a Malaysian national, Martin qualified himself in Economics at Cambridge, and in Social Services (Economics) at University of Science Malaysia.

He began his career as Administrative Officer, Ministry of Finance, Singapore (1974-1975), but then moved back to Penang, Malaysia to function as Research Director, Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), Malaysia, and Director, Third World Network (1990 to February 2009). He functioned as Editor, South-North Development Monitor - SUNS (2005-2008), Managing Editor, Third World Resurgence (monthly magazine of the Third World Network), Editor, Third World Economics (fortnightly economics magazine of the Third World Network). He was Executive Director of the South Centre (March 2009 to June 2018), and Advisor, Third World Network (July 2018 till his passing on).

He leaves behind, wife Meenakshi Raman (an activist and fighter for justice in her own right), daughter Rebecca (by his previous marriage to Evelyne Hong), 2 grand-children, four brothers and a sister, other relatives and friends. We offer our heartfelt condolences to them all, sharing their grievous loss.

I first came to know of, and then in contact with Martin, in 1987. I was then a Communicator at the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA), at Nyon (Switzerland), but assigned to work in Geneva, covering activities and negotiations at the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and various UN Specialised agencies in Geneva, and write news stories and analysis for the IFDA collaborator, Inter Press Service, and for IFDA's daily newsletter SUNS (then known as Special United Nations Service).

From a phone call from Marc Nerfin, President of IFDA, I learnt that Martin was in Nyon, of the internal police crackdown and arrests of staff of CSOs in Malaysia, and that he had been advised not to return home, lest he too got caught up in the police crackdown. Marc thought Martin could come down to Geneva, meet and talk to me, so that I could write a story in IPS and SUNS. At the time the conversation took place, I was in my office at the Palais des Nations with two Group of 77 regional coordinators, and due to go with them a little later to meet and interview the Malaysian ambassador to UNOG and G77 coordinator, and write a story in IPS and SUNS on important on-going negotiations at UNCTAD. The G77 friends, overhearing the conversation, advised me quickly that there was a better chance to get Malaysia to reverse course, by indirect pressure than by media publicity.

Malaysia, hitherto seen as just a member of ASEAN, the sub-regional trading bloc, led by Singapore, negotiating tariff and trade concessions, was eyeing for itself a more prominent role as Third World leader with strong anti-imperialist credentials at some forthcoming UN special conferences. Rather than wait to meet and learn details from Martin, I got all the facts quickly via telex, and took it up when I met the Malaysian envoy. To cut a long back-and-forth story short, we managed to help ensure there would be no action against Martin, and he could safely return and continue to work at CAP and TWN.

In 1988 and early 1989, Martin and his presence and views were very much in demand by CSOs considering environment, development and other global issues. As he criss-crossed the world, his preferred long-distance carrier (KLM Airlines), involved change of planes etc in Amsterdam, enabling him to easily take side-trips. He would thus come to Geneva to meet contacts in UN organisations. And invariably, he would come home with me, for a home-cooked meal provided by my late wife, Kalyani, whom I would tease for treating Martin like the son she never had! Martin and I would sit and exchange views and thoughts for an hour or two. Soon, as set out below, on Martin and TWN becoming "publishers" of SUNS, our close links and constant exchange of ideas increased greatly.

By early 1989, the Thatcher-Reagan counter-revolution, and its ideology of neo-liberalism, of the "state giving way to the market," had swept across Europe; governments and their cooperation ministries, funding and supporting institutions and CSOs, with alternative ideas, were now actively discouraged, and those receiving funds, pressured to promote only neo-liberalism and not alternate or contrary views. As a result, IFDA, set up (after Stockholm I) with funding and encouragement from like-minded governments in the North, found itself in a dilemma: change its views or no funds. Marc Nerfin and IFDA decided they would rather wind-up than change their views. At that time, knowing its high utility to developing countries, IFDA tried to find alternative means to continue SUNS, but failed in its efforts to persuade the South Commission to take over the responsibility. There was some internal reluctance among its staff; even more Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Secretary-General of the Commission, thought this would be at best a temporary arrangement, since the Commission would be winding up in a year, and there were differences over whether there would be a permanent institution to continue the work of the Commission. Dr. Singh, ultimately felt I should take over SUNS, and continue to publish it as a separate enterprise. This bristled with some legal difficulties, and it was

ultimately decided to continue SUNS as a publication by some enterprise or institution in the South, with financial and other support from the Commission, and others if needed afterwards. In this situation, it was decided to have Martin Khor and the TWN as the publisher, for SUNS to function on a non-commercial basis, with users meeting the costs, according to capacity to pay, and an Advisory Board of Ambassadors of key subscribing developing-country missions in Geneva. Martin was just advised of TWN becoming the publisher, and he readily agreed, without at that time knowing how it would work out. But it did, and the SUNS continues to come out and function.

The South Commission, with former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere as Chairman and India's Manmohan Singh as Secretary-General, had been constituted in 1987, and was considering a gamut of issues behind the development problematique, besides Global, South-North and South-South issues and cooperation. I was in my small way providing them with inputs and information in areas of their remit. I had gone to Kuala Lumpur for the second, and inaugural public session of the Commission in early 1988, and met Martin on the sidelines.

Before returning to Geneva, I went to Penang where I spent a few days with S.M Mohd. Idris (TWN Chairman and CAP President), Martin Khor, Rajamoorthy and other associates, discussing and exchanging views in a tour de horizon, and laying the groundwork for SUNS-TWN cooperation and collaboration in the common fight. Martin and I quickly established mutual rapport and understanding on working together, I on the news front digging out, among others, information on the secretive trade negotiations and publishing them in SUNS; and Martin using all this and other information in alerting and mobilising civil society across the world, as well as persuading developing country governments to concert and act with some unity to defend their interests against the predatory attacks on their autonomous development.

In parallel with SUNS work, I was also contributing some papers for the South Commission on on-going trade negotiations (Improving the Capacity of the South, The Mid-term Review of the Uruguay Round, and The South in the Uruguay Round). I informally shared them with Martin, and at his suggestion turned them into publications, after the Commission made its Report.

Martin was an ecologist and environmentalist, at a time when these terms were not common or fashionable. Thus, he was at the forefront in these global movements and UN-sponsored events to attempt to deal with them. Martin's presence and influence were felt, from the outset at such events. I will just mention one.

When the UN decided in 1988-89 to convene the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the original idea of the powers that be was of just convening a Stockholm II, but that did not fly, giving way to a conference on environment and development), it set up a preparatory committee. Maurice Strong, who organised and ran Stockholm I, was named Secretary-General of the planned UN Conference, tasked with organising and running the event to a successful conclusion (that he did at Rio de Janeiro in 1992). Along with, or as part of it, there were two other treaty negotiations, one on climate and the other on bio-diversity. Strong reached out not only to governments, but also to civil society (going beyond those with formal

consultative status with the UN). This effort, while intended or not, seemed to result in big business (sailing as civil society) registering to participate and contribute, thus seeking an inside track to the ensuing negotiations and possible outcomes!

The Preparatory Committee (Prepcom) held its first organisational meeting at New York, with members of the UN and specialised agencies constituting the Committee, and named Amb. Tommy Koh of Singapore as Chair. The second meeting was held in Geneva. Before the meeting, several CSOs met to exchange ideas on participation and coordination. They suddenly realized the absence among them of an organisation from the South. Someone contacted Martin at Penang, discussed wider Southern participation and need for some fundraising to facilitate this. The TWN was asked to immediately find a way for someone to register on its behalf, be at the Geneva Prepcom to show the flag and make some initial remarks. In those days, with no internet or emails, communication was not only costly but time-consuming. As a result, Martin had a message conveyed to me (that I got during the opening of the 2nd preparatory session) to represent TWN. I did, without any further advice from Penang (beyond a general idea of TWN approach to development issues); and much later in the day managed to make a brief intervention at the Prepcom, promising substantial TWN inputs from the next preparatory meeting.

By the time I intervened, sitting in the Prepcom session, I had been hearing, apart from Strong, a large number of participants, from northern governments and private personalities, speak and commend Mahatma Gandhi and his austere style of living, seemingly commending it to the South. As one who had grown up under Gandhi, during the independence struggle in colonial India, and having spent some days in camp with him, I began to feel irritated to hear the same refrain again and again.

In my intervention, making clear it was some personal views of mine, I noted and thanked earlier speakers for their references to and praise of Gandhi, but wondered how many who had commended Gandhi's style of living, practised it in their own lives. I added: "I have known Gandhi in real life in India. I only wish to commend those who had spoken about Gandhi the fact that, in real life Gandhi practised what he preached, and preached only what he practised!" Third World delegations and the northern CSO coalitions joined in applause to the discomfiture of some in the North!

Later I mailed a copy of my remarks to Martin with my apology, but he came back that this was also the TWN view, and that they will expand on and present it at future meetings.

From the beginning in all his activities, inside Malaysia and globally with civil society, Martin was steadfast in adopting Gandhi's path of non-violent, peaceful resistance against injustice and fight for equity and social justice. Non-violence was an article of faith for Mahatma Gandhi. None of us have the faith and courage to be Gandhis. However for all of us, as Martin saw, as against the vast array of oppressive and coercive instruments that any modern State commands, non-violent and peaceful resistance was the only viable path. In mobilising global civil society, Martin managed to impress this on them, with governments and their institutions

facing this reality, unable to easily suppress and eliminate it, and fumbling to evolve policies to deal with it.

With an ever smiling, cheerful face, always willing to sit across the table and listen patiently and with respect arguments of opponents, weigh these arguments, before countering with humour, and sarcasm sometimes, Martin stood by his basic beliefs and determination, fighting for justice and equity for the marginal and oppressed in every country and society. He stood and steadfastly fought for justice, and equity: for the Global South against the North (including for the "south" in the "north", and against the "north" in the "south"). This is a continuing fight, and all of us, his close associates, colleagues, and friends across the globe, will sorely miss his absence in coming days - a void impossible to fill, but one that collectively all of us have to pursue.

Martin, you are no more, but you are with us always, ever green in our thoughts and inspiring us. Rest in peace.

*(Chakravarthi Raghavan is Editor-Emeritus of the SUNS, and earlier, its Chief Editor from 1980-2005.)*

## **Martin Khor: True revolutionary with vision, purpose & practical know-how**

Penang, Apr (Chee Yoke Ling) -- Seventeen law students and their lecturer took a train ride from Kuala Lumpur to Penang in 1980. Waiting on the platform, as we pulled into the Butterworth train station (on the mainland from where a ferry ride takes passengers to the island of Penang), was a bespectacled young man dressed in casual cotton pants and white short sleeved shirt who, in a very calm way, somehow managed to look eagerly welcoming. That was Martin Khor, then Director of Research of the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP).

That train journey actually began with Martin and his mentor, S.M. Mohamed Idris, successfully persuading the University of Malaya's law faculty Dean to introduce a course on Consumer Law.

Malaysia at that time had only one law school with students sent overseas under government scholarships or family sponsorship. Lawyers for the people and for public interest was almost unheard of. But CAP's ground work and research since its birth in 1970 revealed the stark gaps and even flaws in existing laws and legal system. Access to justice and protection of people and nature were as much a local issue as a global one for Martin and "Mr. Idris" as he was affectionately known.

Of the group of 17 students, there were two of us whose lives were transformed forever - myself and Meena Raman, my best friend, a community and global activist and public interest lawyer who in 2008 became Martin's wife.

We journeyed with CAP and its sister organization Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia), and in 1984 we were part of the historic conference "Third World: Development or Crisis?" that forged the beginning of Third World Network (TWN). One pillar of TWN is the publication of the ideas, perspectives, realities and demands of the peoples of the South. In TWN's stable of publications, SUNS always held a special place in Martin's life.

In the last 2 years of his all too short time with us, he always impressed upon me the importance of SUNS that in spirit and letter is about the South for the South.

Martin's impact in the global arena is incalculable - from the 1992 United Nations Summit on Environment and Development to the GATT Uruguay Round/World Trade Organization and reform of the international financial architecture, from demanding equity and justice for the South in public health, climate change actions and ecological agriculture, from defending the rights of indigenous peoples and communities to confronting myths and false claims of technologies. His intellectual and strategic brilliance was never just academic; he never left anyone in despair or cynicism but would always inspire and show the way to navigate challenges and obstacles by making the actions that we need to take appear so logical, even commonsensical. He was a true revolutionary with vision, purpose and practical know-how.

How absolutely privileged and blessed some of us are to have been mentored by him for so many years, and to be his friend and colleague.



Martin started to teasingly call me "Miss Chee" when I decided to return to teach Consumer Law and other public interest courses at the law faculty in 1984. This was because it was my turn to bring students on that train journey to Penang each year, where another generation was inspired by Martin, Mr. Idris and all the amazing people in CAP and Sahabat Alam Malaysia.

Today, 30 years after I left academia to work in Sahabat Alam Malaysia and then TWN, at unexpected moments on the street or in a restaurant I would hear a voice calling out "Ms Chee!" and there before me would be a former student. And inevitably I would hear how their trip to Penang touched and even shaped many of them.

I will always miss hearing Martin's voice saying "Ms Chee" which he continued to do till he left us ... The only way I can honour him is to follow in his footsteps - to mentor, to nurture and to care. Thank you, Martin.

(Chee Yoke Ling is Director of Third World Network.)

## **Martin Khor: Reflections and reminiscences**

Penang, Apr (TWN-SUNS) -- It is with the deepest sorrow that we share the news that Martin Khor (1951-2020), TWN's Chairman and former Director, passed away peacefully in the early hours of 1 April 2020 in his home here.

Living with cancer since 2015, he had worked even harder as the inspiring mentor, strategic and action-oriented thinker, indefatigable advocate and wonderful husband, father and grandfather.

We cannot even begin to reach out to all of Martin's friends and supporters who over decades, young and old, have marched with him to reject injustice and inequity among peoples especially of the South, and to defend nature again and again.

Herein below, are some memories, reflections and reminiscences from associates, colleagues and friends that provide a vignette of his life and endeavours, to guide us as we continue on the path he helped to chart.

## **Martin Khor: Leading voice of South for equity & justice**

New Delhi, Apr (Vandana Shiva) -- I first met Martin in the early 1980's, when I was in Penang, at the invitation of S M Mohamed Idris head of the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), for a meeting on tropical forests. Mr Idris invited me because of the study (Ecological Audit of Eucalyptus Cultivation, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore) we had done in 1981 on the World Bank Funded Social Forestry project in Karnataka, promoting Eucalyptus monocultures on farms.

Mr Idris had founded many institutions - CAP, Sahabat Alam Malaysia, and later Third World Network - and inspired brilliant young scholars like Martin to return to Malaysia.

By the end of the Tropical Forest meeting, we had launched the World Rainforest Movement to stop the World Bank's US\$8 billion global tropical forestry project which we realised was a deforestation project. That movement continues to work in defence of the world's forests.

Martin was quick to pick up important emerging issues and throw his weight behind them. He was a brilliant organiser. No issue was too big for him to take on for people's rights and Third World Rights. Martin thought big and his canvas was big. And we built many movements together on emerging issues of our times.

In 1984, after the violence in the Punjab (India), I had done a study on the Green Revolution in Punjab for the United Nations University for the Conflicts over Resources project of the programme on Peace and Global Transformation, and wrote a book titled "The Violence of the Green Revolution" on the basis of the Punjab study. Martin immediately published it as a Third World Network publication along with Zed Books. This study opened me to the issues of Biotechnology.

In 1987, at a press conference at the UN in Geneva, Chakravarthi Raghavan, Editor of SUNS, woke me to GATT and Intellectual Property Negotiations in the Uruguay Round of GATT trade negotiations. After Raghavan's book, "Recolonisation: GATT, the Uruguay Round and the Third World," was published by TWN and Zed Books in 1990, we started to connect issues of sustainability, trade and the environment. The TWN emerged as the leading voice of the Third World on issues of trade. And Martin was clearly the leader on trade issues on the global stage.

In 1991, when the Dunkel Draft Text was leaked (we jokingly called it DDT in India), we started to organise to defend the rights of the Third World. My focus was on Seeds and Intellectual Property. Others focussed on patents on medicine including the Working Group on Patent Laws in India. And we made a difference to national laws and the paradigm of intellectual property.

During a Penang Conference on Alternative Approaches to Science and Technology we drafted a declaration on the new Biotechnologies. We went to the UN Conference on Environment and Development as the only group that connected global environmental issues of climate change and Biodiversity erosion with trade issues, GATT & Intellectual Property. We were therefore

able to preempt the corporate re-colonisation agenda that Raghavan had warned us about, and succeeded in introducing articles in the Climate Convention and the Biodiversity Convention that protected the integrity of the planet, diverse species, diverse cultures and the Third World.

Biodiversity, Biosafety and Biotechnology emerged as the big issue that we raised in the process leading to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. At many Prep Coms for the Rio Summit, we worked to ensure Article 19.3 on Biosafety was introduced in the Convention on Biological Diversity. I was later appointed as an expert in the group framing the Biosafety protocol which later became the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the international law that shaped national laws to protect Biodiversity and Public Health in the age on Genetic Engineering.

When GMOs started to be commercially released, at my suggestion, Martin worked to bring the world's activists and scientists together to evolve a long term strategy to protect biodiversity, people's health, and farmers livelihoods and rights.

I realised that activism without science can be attacked, and science disconnected from activism lies hidden in publications.

Martin came to Schumacher College in Totnes (UK) where I was teaching a course , and we got together with Brian Goodwin, a leading biologist, and Tewolde Egziabher, the lead negotiator for Africa at the CBD negotiations, and planned the major conference, held in Penang (1994) on "Beyond Reductionist Biology", on Biotechnology and Biosafety, which changed the nature of the debate and gave new strength to the movements and scientists.

Since then the independent science of living systems has been pitted against corporate Public Relations presented as science. We did change the course of history from the linear corporate path of continued colonisation, to the now colonisation of life itself.

Martin and I were both founding Board members of the "International Forum on Globalisation, "a global network of intellectuals and activists," in 1999 at the time of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle. Martin delivered the keynote speech at the IFG meet and its mega teach-in. (See (<https://ratical.org/co-globalize/ifg112699MK.html>)). The WTO Seattle Conference collapsed.

But it was not just global issues that preoccupied Martin. When there was a plan to destroy Penang Hill, the watershed of Penang, at the instance of Martin and Mr Idris, I did an ecological impact study, that resulted in stopping the Penang Hill project.

Mr Idris is no more with us. Nor is Martin. But they will stay with us as inspirations.

And when the history of our times is written, Martin's contributions to struggles for justice and sustainability, from the local to the global levels, will stand out.

*(Vandana Shiva is an Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and anti-globalization author.)*

## **Martin Khor: A luta continua!**

Montevideo, Apr (Roberto Bissio) -- I first met Martin in November 1984 in Penang, during the conference in which some two hundred intellectuals and activists from around the world met and concluded that a Third World Network needed to be created to face the global neoliberal offensive led by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher and mandated the host organization, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) to set it up.

Martin was then a young economist, a Cambridge graduate who had decided to abandon a promising career at Singapore and to ignore the temptation of serving the multinationals corporations that were starting a second wave of export-oriented growth in South-East Asia, to devote himself instead to help organize civil society.

As the first association of its kind in the developing world, CAP was receiving complaints about defective video- recorders, but also paying attention to the voices of fishing communities displaced by ill-conceived development projects, campaigning against a shopping center that was destroying several blocks of the historic center of Georgetown, Penang island's capital, and organizing crusades against tobacco and against sugar ... decades before they became fashionable.

From accumulating evidence from each case, won or lost, Martin was detecting trends, the "root causes" as he would say, of social injustice or environmental destruction. Not having been able to stop the first skyscraper in Penang or the bridge linking the island with the mainland, did not dissuade him from targeting much bigger global enemies as head of TWN. Unfairness could not be tolerated.

Thus, in a moment when it was common sense for Western environmentalists to blame population growth in the South as the threat, Martin was a key contributor to re-framing the discussion of the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro as a crusade against unsustainable production and consumption patterns in the North.

Years later, in 1996, when the ink was still drying on the Marrakesh Agreements that created the World Trade Organization, the North was already pushing to make the WTO even more unfair for the South by adding new issues to its disciplines, such as investment agreements (to allow investors to sue host governments, but not the other way around) or competition rules biased against state-owned enterprises or procurement proceedings favouring multinational corporations. Martin picked up that fight and developed a strategy that combined popular mobilization of the affected sectors with the consolidation of a group of like-minded developing country diplomats that actually blocked those issues at the Singapore Ministerial meeting of the WTO.

A few weeks later in Geneva, as TWN representative in Latin America, I attended a small meeting when a leading Southern Ambassador thanked Martin for the efforts deployed in Singapore, but in a depressed mood announced that "everything we fought for since

independence will be lost" because the OECD has now taken the issue of investor protection as its own, and once a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) was agreed to in that rich countries club, without any opposition of the South, it would become the unavoidable global standard.

"We shall stop it then!" said Martin, making me look down to not show surprise or disbelief. But true to his commitment, Martin devoted most of his 16 to 18 hours work journeys in the next months to fight the MAI Goliath by attacking it from its rearguard. There, where Southern diplomacy had no access, TWN mobilized its network, friends and the wider public to address the key sectors that would be affected in the North itself by this new push of unrestricted globalization: environmentalists, women, health campaigners, educators, unions.

As the implications began to be understood, explained and translated into campaigns, parliamentarians in capitals started to ask uncomfortable questions: in Ottawa, Rome or Seoul; the Internet circulated leaked drafts, petitions and discussions and the resulting global mobilization led to the OECD dropping the issue in 1998.

Martin never claimed any personal credit for this or for his many other achievements in the global campaigns on trade, on climate change or on antibiotic resistance. Instead, he always paid tribute to his predecessors, team work, detailed research and documentation to support any claim and commitment to essential values and a simple life.

When I last met him, not so many weeks ago in Penang, fully aware of how cancer was limiting his energies, he was actively organizing the continuation of the work on many fronts and advising the generation that he trained and inspired to search for and motivate the youth. That is how "a luta continua"! ("the struggle continues").

*(Roberto Bissio is a Uruguayan journalist and Coordinator of the civil society organization Social Watch.)*

## **Martin Khor: Third Worldist extraordinaire**

Kuala Lumpur, Apr (Jomo Kwame Sundaram) -- Martin Khor Kok Peng, who passed away just after the end of the first quarter of 2020, leaves behind an unusually rich legacy. Atypically for people mainly working in the world of ideas, he was also a very practical and pragmatic advocate and activist who successfully built and sustained several important initiatives.

Martin was widely known and well respected, both in Malaysia and internationally, and will be remembered for his commitment to a variety of causes perhaps best summed up by the concept of sustainable development, adopted by world leaders at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and reaffirmed in Johannesburg in 2002, Rio again in 2012 and, most recently, through the Sustainable Development Goals declared in 2015. Martin's passing, less than a year after the demise of his mentor and close collaborator, the nonagenarian S M Mohamed Idris, suggests the end of an era, not only in Malaysia, but also beyond.

Already there are many pronouncements about the end of the Third World, of the solidarity of the global South, and most recently, about the related demise of multilateralism, especially as it was transformed in the 1970s when the United Nations committed to establishing a New International Economic Order, following the efforts of the G77 caucus of developing countries at the UN.

Reflecting on Martin's career path, one cannot but be struck by the choices he made, including paths not taken. Leaving his hometown of Penang, Martin was a pre-university classmate of current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in Singapore, before going to Cambridge together. He then spent a few months in Singapore's civil service during 1974-1975, which almost surely would have led eventually to a cabinet position in Lee's cabinet.

Instead, Martin "broke his bond" to return to Malaysia to start teaching for a pittance at the Science University of Malaysia (USM). There, he completed a pioneering study of dimensions of Malaysian economic dependence, from British colonial times until the 1970s. Reprinted last year, the book remains an inspiring example of what a brilliant mind can do with official statistics from the colonial period to the present, establishing beyond doubt colonial Malaya's role as the real "jewel in the crown" of the British empire.

Back in Penang, Martin began his lifelong engagement with the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) and Friends of the Earth, Malaysia (SAM), collaborating closely with Idris, to wage efforts to protect Penang, and later the country against ecological and other disasters in the name of development.

Following an international civil society solidarity conference in 1984, Third World Network (TWN) was born and later developed by Martin to promote collective solidarity to protect developing countries' national interests as the global South came under siege with the neoliberal ascendance of the 1980s. Working increasingly in Geneva, where the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) seemed stuck, Martin worked closely



with senior Indian journalist, C. Raghavan who had developed a vital news service to support developing country negotiating teams.

A South meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1986 resulted (1987) in establishing the South Commission, chaired by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and with India's Manmohan Singh (later to become Prime Minister) as Secretary-General, which reported in 1999, and led to the establishment of the South Centre as an intergovernmental policy research and analysis institution for developing countries to be headquartered in Geneva and chaired by Nyerere. Years later, skilled and experienced in working with government officials, Martin took over the South Centre in 2009, strengthening its finances, capacities and impact, by creatively mobilizing resources, another Martin forte.

Following the Asian financial crises of 1997-1998, Martin turned his attention to financial liberalization and its global consequences. Former UN financial economist Yilmaz Akyuz joined him as chief economist of the team which Martin soon put together at the South Centre to address a range of new challenges for the South.

Martin's widow, Meenakshi Raman, was a victim of Malaysian political repression in 1987. But without personal rancour, Martin worked closely with the Mahathir and subsequent Malaysian administrations, especially on international causes, including trade, intellectual property, bio-piracy and climate change.

Martin touched many, inspiring all by his tireless commitment. He was often more than happy for others to get credit for his discreet efforts behind the scenes with relevant research and skilled drafting. His persistence was legendary, but everyone knew his efforts were never for personal gain. Martin was well known for his indefatigable energy and meticulousness in preparing policy and advocacy briefs on many key matters of concern to developing countries, often working late into the night as necessary. This reputation gained him access to many government and other leaders.

Martin's loss is irreplaceable, but unlike most others, he painstakingly built the organizations and networks to carry on his pioneering work and build on his rich legacy.

*(Jomo Kwame Sundaram is a prominent Malaysian economist, member of the Malaysian Council of Eminent Persons, and a former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and FAO's Assistant Director-General for Economic and Social Development.)*

## **Martin Khor: Undaunted fighter for the poor and under-privileged**

Geneva, Apr (Yilmaz Akyuz and Richard Kozul-Wright) -- We are greatly saddened by the passing of Martin Khor, a long-time friend and colleague, an undaunted fighter for the poor and underprivileged, a passionate believer in a more balanced and inclusive multilateralism, a rare intellectual and eloquent orator, an icon of the Global South worthy of veneration, greatly respected for his struggle for justice and fairness against the dominance and double-standards of big economic powers.

A staunch multilateralist but against neo-liberal globalisation, after he became Executive Director of the South Centre in Geneva, Martin made the Centre an important voice in discussions on international trade and investment, intellectual property, health, global macroeconomics, finance, sustainable development, and climate change. During his tenure, the Centre extended significantly the scope and quality of its policy research and advice, building an enhanced reputation and level of trust among developing countries in the struggles to protect and promote their interests.

*(Yilmaz Akyuz is a Former Director, Globalization and Development Strategies Division, UNCTAD, and Former Chief Economist, South Centre, Geneva. Richard Kozul-Wright is Director, Globalization and Development Strategies Division, UNCTAD, Geneva).*

## **Martin Khor: Life extraordinaire, tireless supporter of alternative ideas**

Geneva, Apr (Andrew Cornford) -- Martin's death is a sad event. But one also looks back on a life extraordinarily well spent as an effective initiator and director of organisations and projects, and perhaps most importantly as a tireless supporter of alternative ideas concerning economic and social development.

*(Andrew Cornford, a former senior economist at UNCTAD and now a Research Fellow at the Financial Markets Center, contributes to SUNS on financial market issues.)*

## **Martin Khor: An intellectual giant and a legend**

Penang, (Gurdial Singh Nijar) -- Martin Khor passed away in the early hours of April 1, after a 5-year formidable struggle with cancer.

Martin, you will be remembered for your commitment to things that matter most in life. From the preservation of the local environment to the global attenuation of the hazards of climate change. Hence your crucial leadership of the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) - which waged struggles to preserve the treasures and bounty of Penang - fighting against plans to "develop" Penang Hill, against hill slope construction, the reclamation of lands from the sea and mega projects.

From ensuring not only the national sovereign interest but more significantly the collective integrity of developing countries; marked by the greatest admirable feat: inspiring the creation of developing country blocs to face developed countries in international negotiations, starting from the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit until the more recent 2010 Climate Change Agreement; with loads of other treaty negotiations in-between; primarily through the internationally renowned Third World Network (TWN) which he founded in 1984 together with his mentor the late S. M Mohamed Idris and other international luminaries; Martin cut a familiar figure with diplomats at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). I remember in the early 1990s he would drag me to the WTO building, overlooking the picturesque Lake Geneva, where we would sit patiently outside the negotiation room and rush to diplomats as they emerged, To hand them sheaves of Martin's well-prepared policy arguments on each issue of fundamental concern to developing countries - such as the need to limit the deleterious effects of IP for medicines and the like; thus did his reputation grow as an indefatigable aide to developing countries, earning him welcome access to the inner caucuses of third world governments, culminating in his appointment in 2009 as the chief of the South Centre, his term ended in 2015.

He was a constant at our ministries and agencies, reaching to the very top to push for national policy positions. I recall being invited together with Martin by the previous Pakatan Harapan government (May 2018 - March 2020) to address members of the Cabinet and the Attorney-General on issues relating to the ratification of the CPTPP, a trans Pacific trade agreement, where he lucidly recounted the downside of the dispute settlement mechanism which could impoverish developing countries in suits brought against the government if they carried out reforms in the national interest, which corporations claimed affected their economic interests.

Self-effacing, he pushed others to the forefront while providing the intellectual research and boost. Industrious, working overnight wherever he was to ensure key materials were in the hands of decision-makers in time; an Intellectual giant: with so many books, articles and a Star column to his name; caring and always lending a helping hand or ear to those around him.

Martin is truly, a legend in his lifetime and well after. Martin, rest in peace.

*(Gurdial Singh Nijar, a prominent public interest lawyer, is an early associate of Martin in Malaysia.)*

## **Martin Khor: Inspiration to all in global development fight**

New Delhi, Apr (Jayati Ghosh\*) -- Martin was an inspiration to all of us, because of his steadfast commitment, indefatigable energy, infectious enthusiasm and truly impressive capacity for hard work. His dedication to countries of the Global South was strong and his tenacity ensured that he would carry on and keep pushing a progressive agenda despite all obstacles. In addition to his sharp mind and analytical abilities, he also brought humanity and humour to his work. It is difficult to imagine the world of global development fighters without him. We will miss him greatly, even as we continue to benefit from his work.

*(Jayati Ghosh is Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Executive Secretary, International Development Economics Associates - [www.networkideas.org](http://www.networkideas.org))*

## **Martin Khor: Had profound understanding of North-South issues**

Jaipur, India, Apr (B. K Zutshi) -- Indeed, very sad to learn about Martin having passed on. I didn't know him personally that well, having met him only once in Jaipur some years back, when he was visiting here. However, I knew about his work for the developing countries, and found him quite charming with a profound understanding of North-South issues in trade and finance. May his soul rest in peace.

*(B. K. Zutshi was Indian Representative to GATT (1989-1994), and negotiated for India in the Uruguay Round, and also coordinated positions of developing countries in the negotiations, particularly in the area of services, culminating with the Marrakesh Treaty.)*

## **Martin Khor: Deep commitment to his convictions**

Pune, India, Apr (S. P. Shukla) -- I saw the sad news about Martin, and it was a shock to me as he was much younger to me in age.

I had first met him in 1992 soon after my quitting the post of Finance Secretary to the Government of India and we became good friends at that very first meeting. I had been to Penang at his invitation for a seminar, but unfortunately got into an allergic bout of unceasing hiccups, and had to return mid-way during the seminar. At that time, Martin looked after me personally like an affectionate younger brother.

In the years that followed, he would always make it a point to meet up whenever he visited Delhi. Vandana and Meera Shiva too used to bring him along. He had the unique combination of straightforwardness and politeness, of deep commitment to his convictions and genuine respect for others.

I did not know about his illness, so the shock of the news is even more stunning. My profound condolences to the TWN and South community.

*(S. P. Shukla was India's Representative to GATT (1983-1989), and later Secretary to Government of India in Commerce and then Finance, before quitting government.)*



## **Martin Khor: A tower of the Global South**

Hyderabad, Apr (Rammanohar Reddy) -- For those of us who started thinking about GATT issues in the late 1980s and then about global environmental changes and sustainable development, Martin Khor was a figure who loomed large. By then he was writing and speaking about these issues and clearing the fog surrounding the major proposals that were on the table both as part of the Uruguay Round and ahead of the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro.

That was also when the "Third World" was still a political bloc fighting multilateral institutions and multinational corporations. And the Third World Network which Martin Khor established along with Mohamed Idris of the Consumer Association of Penang was an important guiding light for researchers, activists and journalists interested in Third World.

I was lucky to be one of those who learnt from him and, more than that, personally benefited from his hand of friendship.

I came to meet Martin and Meena only in the late 1990s at Geneva when I would be covering WTO issues for The Hindu. That was the beginning of a close-to-25-years of guidance and, I would like to think, friendship, too. Martin's clear thinking, his hard work and his energy to understand the minutiae were amazing, all the while without losing the broad picture.

I was not the only journalist to learn much from him. I would think there were innumerable government officials, NGO activists and even ministers who benefited from his understanding of global economic issues.

As Martin shifted his interest to the environment and climate change, I had the privilege of publishing in the Economic and Political Weekly close to half a dozen of his detailed analytical pieces on climate change issues at UN conferences at Copenhagen, Cancun, Doha, Lima, and elsewhere. Those articles continue to be standout articles even a decade later for the insights they provided.

The word "irreplaceable" is a frequently used cliché. But not vis-a-vis Martin Khor, who is irreplaceable in the Global South.

*(Rammanohar Reddy is Editor of India Forum, and formerly Editor of "Economic and Political Weekly" and earlier Deputy Editor, The Hindu ).*

## **Martin Khor: Formidable campaigner and fighter**

New Delhi, Apr (Bhagirath Lal Das) -- Using sharp intellect, objective facts and persuasive capacity, Martin Khor was a formidable campaigner and fighter for the causes he had determined through reasoned thinking. His patience and humility facilitated his work and enhanced the effects of his efforts. I had the privilege of seeing all such qualities in him in full play for nearly twenty-five years, from 1995 onward.

Once, while sitting in a small office at UNCTAD in Geneva in 1996, I was writing papers explaining the provisions of various WTO agreements that had recently emerged. Suddenly I found Martin entering the room and taking a seat. He noticed a small slip of paper by my side where I had scribbled some short notes. On his enquiry, I explained to him that I was recording the deficiencies and imbalances I had noticed in the agreements. He had a quick glance at it and his eyes brightened. Barely concealing the agitation in his mind, he said these provisions were extremely unfair and harmful for the developing countries and must be brought to their notice. I said it would not be any use as the developing countries must be fully aware of it already. He disagreed and persuaded me to turn these scribbled notes into a short paper. Martin sent this paper to all the Missions of the developing countries in Geneva and invited them to a conference.

It was an eye-opener for me. The Ambassadors and other senior diplomats of developing countries took the matter seriously and many of them became convinced that it was necessary to make concerted efforts to bring about changes in the agreements. This was the beginning of the massive campaign to improve the agreements in order to eliminate/reduce inequities, deficiencies and imbalances.

Martin thought it was necessary to mobilise the civil society groups of the developing countries for this cause. He organised a week-long workshop in Penang, Malaysia, where members from about 50 civil society organisations of Asia, Africa and Latin America participated. They got deeply absorbed in this mission and decided to pursue this subject vigorously in their own countries and regions. This campaign got strengthened year after year, from one WTO Ministerial Meeting to the next, starting from the first in Singapore in December 1996. This initiative in the area of international trade is just an example of Martin's way of working towards his objectives.

He covered a wide range of areas for his action. While the main subjects mentioned above covered the areas of international trade in goods and services and also intellectual property rights (patents, copyright, etc), Martin's interest and sphere of activities spread to several other areas of deep concern to the developing countries: international financial institutions and their working, environment including climate change, condition of indigenous people, etc.

I was always fascinated to observe him working in these diverse fields with common approach and strategy. His first step would be to identify the inequities and imbalances through arduous

studies and discussions keeping the focus on the interests of the developing countries. And there were many.

For example, in the area of agriculture, the developed countries had been permitted by the WTO Agriculture Agreement to continue with massive subsidies whereas the developing countries were prohibited from subsidising their farmers beyond a very small level. The option of the developing countries to impose quantitative restrictions on imports, while facing balance of payment problems was almost ended. In the area of intellectual property rights (IPR), the position of the patent holders had been strengthened, enabling them to charge exorbitant monopoly prices and royalties, resulting in high payments by the developing countries to the multinational firms of the developed countries. In the area of finance, the international institutions (IMF, World Bank) had made it a practice to put tough conditions on the developing countries while granting them loans, resulting in damaging effects on their economies. In the area of environment and climate change, while the developed countries had been primarily responsible for the deterioration of world climate over centuries since the first industrial revolution, they were now insisting on high responsibility of action by the developing countries which would severely restrain their options for industrial development.

These are only some illustrative examples of inequity and unfairness which agitated Martin's mind and made him identify the subjects for his attention. Having selected the subjects, he would identify experts and knowledgeable people and seek their support in preparing positions and arguments for correcting the situation. His next step would be to approach important policy persons in key developing countries: high officials, ministers and sometime even heads of governments. In these discussions he would be forthright and practical and not ideological or theoretical. For example, he would specially dilate upon how these issues were affecting that particular country and why it was necessary for them to get involved in efforts to bring about changes and amendments.

His next exercise would be with the international trade diplomats of the developing countries in Geneva on matters of trade, with the finance negotiators of these countries in international financial institutions and with the environment negotiators handling environment and climate change, and so on.

In all this process, his transparent sincerity and complete selflessness helped in generating confidence in the minds of the people he was interacting with.

He encouraged the developing country-negotiators to establish core groups among themselves for intensive negotiations and to form coalitions. He would back them up with the support of research papers, arguments and counter-arguments. He made strenuous efforts to organise repeated interface of the negotiators and policy officials with experts in these respective fields. With such back up support they felt encouraged and strengthened.

In all the stages of such intense exercise he would enlist the support of the civil society groups of the developing countries and often even of the developed countries. He would organise

workshops, seminars and even informal discussions involving the civil society organisations and the developing country-negotiators and policy officials.

And while Martin was engaged in all this intense work he had absolutely no concern for his personal comfort or even his health. He never cared for recognition or reward; he was always ready to give credit to others. Positive results in favour of the developing countries, whenever they emerged, were his rewards. It is difficult for anybody to replace Martin and there will be a big void. Perhaps a group of persons with deep common commitment and complementary attributes could come together and take Martin's mission forward. That will be a befitting tribute to Martin and his legacy.

*(Bhagirath Lal Das is former Representative of India to the GATT, Secretary to the Government of India, and then headed UNCTAD's Division on Trade.)*

## **Martin Khor: Champion of South-South Cooperation**

New Delhi, Apr (Hardeep Singh Puri\*) -- Deeply saddened to know that Martin Khor has passed away,

Both Lakshmi and I knew him in his various Avatars in Geneva and New York. He will be particularly remembered as a renowned Development Economist and champion of South-South cooperation.

Martin threw his heart and soul into supporting the cause of the developing countries of the South in international trade and finance negotiations. . We offer our condolences to his family. He will be missed. RIP

(\*Hardeep Singh Puri, former Indian diplomat, is India's Minister of State (independent charge) for Civil Aviation, Housing and Urban Development, and Minister of State for Commerce and Industry. Lakshmi Puri, his wife, was Assistant Secretary-General at UN Women and prior to that, Director at Unctad's Division on Trade.) +

## **Martin Khor: An irreplaceable leader, trusted by all CSOs**

Auckland, New Zealand, Apr (Prof. Jane Kelsey) -- When someone who has left an indelible footprint on the world has left us, it is like a giant totara tree falling in the forest.

Martin has been a leader as long as I have known him. He provided wisdom, strategic insights, intellectual rigour, and political instincts that we all trusted. I first met him at Brussels in 1990 at an activist meeting in the middle of the Uruguay round, when he initiated us into the arcane world of what was being planned in the name of "trade", especially this bizarre notion of "trade in services". Along with stalwarts like Raghavan and a handful of others, Martin helped to build the foundations for campaigns against the WTO, MAI, GATS 2000, and so many others that have followed.

He has done his work. It is time for him to rest. We will miss him terribly. He is irreplaceable. But we need celebrate his life and honour it by building on the platform he created in the decades ahead.

*(Jane Kelsey is professor of law at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.)*

## **Martin Khor: His legacy, example will help to shape a better world for all**

Geneva, Apr (Vicente Paolo Yu) -- Martin Khor, by his writings, work and activities at TWN, encompassing a vast array of issues and subjects, proved to be seminal and inspirational for a whole generation of activists in the Global North and the Global South engaged in a common fight against corporate- and finance-driven global economic integration that adversely affected the economic, social and environmental rights of the poor in developing countries.

A big part of Martin's work involved encouraging and supporting developing countries to work together in protecting and promoting their common development interests in the global arena.

This work received a big boost when in March 2009, Martin took office as the third Executive Director of the South Centre, and worked in that capacity from March 2009 to June 2018. Even earlier, he was a member of the first Board of the South Centre under its first Chairman, former Tanzania President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere.

As Executive Director, Martin put the Centre on a stable footing both financially and institutionally. This enabled the Centre to respond more effectively to the needs of developing countries for policy research and direct technical assistance on a wide range of multilateral negotiations as well as national policymaking.

Martin saw and acted on the potential of the South Centre to serve as the South's vehicle to promote Southern solidarity, to pursue systemic and structural changes in the global system to address historical and current inequalities within the framework of social and economic justice and environmental sustainability. He implemented all this by combining and articulating the policy research and analysis of the Centre and other Southern institutions on multilateral development issues, with effective policy and technical support by directly working with developing country governments, civil society, and other actors in international negotiations and national policymaking. He encouraged developing country governments to work together to address the power and institutional imbalances existing in international institutions and global governance dynamics in favour of the Global North.

Under his leadership, the South Centre supported developing countries in strategically highlighting development policy and structural approaches to address systemic inequalities in the global arena. He expanded the Centre's institutional coverage from mostly trade-related issues (including WTO, EPAs, IPRs) in the pre-2009 period to include, post-2009 to 2018, global macroeconomic and finance, debt, tax, investment, sustainable development, climate change, disaster risk reduction, agroecology, biodiversity protection, antimicrobial resistance, and global health issues.

Under him, the Centre worked with developing countries in the conceptualization of the SDGs, on international tax cooperation, more directly on the right to development, human rights obligations of transnational corporations, and unilateral coercive measures, for developing countries to see health as part of their development policy arsenal.

On climate change, Martin championed the articulation of a development and environmental equity-oriented approach to the climate change problematique and the fostering and development of developing country perspectives in the climate change negotiations that were reflected in the outcomes of climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC such as the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Martin was a strong believer in the value of South-South cooperation and solidarity around the South's common development interests as a means for bringing about change and making developing countries stronger. In all these areas of work, he sought to foster a better dialogue between developing country governments and civil society, thereby also impacting the global narrative on these issues.

His engagement with developing country governments on multilateral and national policy issues sought to link issues of national development interest and impact to the underlying global systemic and structural conditions that gave rise to challenges or difficulties being faced by developing countries in achieving their national development objectives.

He did so in a way where complex international policy considerations were linked to concrete national development challenges; this made it easier for national policy makers to grasp the importance of fully engaging in multilateral negotiations and also made it easier for the diplomats and negotiators to explain the direct relevance of their multilateral negotiations work to their capitals.

Martin set the example that inspired us, his colleagues at the Centre, and to which we aspired in terms of work ethic, clarity of vision and mission, strong advocacy for the poor and the marginalized, especially of the Global South, and humaneness in leadership.

He showed us that development and equity-oriented policy research and analysis need to be paired with effective policy advocacy and partnerships among governments, civil society, trade unions, and social movements, in order to be able to effect policy change, create a better and more just world, and, more importantly, that it was not impossible to do so.

Martin's leadership of the South Centre was marked by effective and humane institutional management and governance, a focus on ensuring smooth human relations, a clear emphasis on effective and relevant policy analysis and policy advocacy in working with developing country governments, and a deep commitment to the Global South and to development equity and justice. He was inspiring to work with, given his work ethic, intellectual brilliance, commitment and passion.

His passing is a deep loss for all of us in the world of ideas and advocacy and in the world of activism for social, economic, and environmental justice and equity. His legacy and example will continue to live on as we all seek to shape a better world for all for today and tomorrow.



*(Vicente Paolo Yu III held various offices at South Centre from 2002, including as Head of Administration (2010-2016) and as Deputy Executive Director (2016-2018)).*

## **Martin Khor: A tireless defender of the Third World**

Geneva, Apr (Kanaga Raja) -- I had known and worked with Martin Khor for more than 20 years and was deeply saddened when I heard of his passing away.

When I joined Third World Network (TWN) back in 1994, I had some basic understanding of the issues that TWN was working on, such as trade and development, environment, money and finance etc.

However, I developed a much deeper understanding of these issues from the articles and papers that Martin used to write for TWN as well as hearing him talk passionately about these issues.

It was Martin who asked me in 1996-97 to take on the task of editing TWN's fortnightly, the Third World Economics (TWE), when its previous editor left TWN.

It was through editing TWE, that I had the opportunity of reading the articles written by Mr Chakravarthi Raghavan, then Editor-in-Chief of the South-North Development Monitor (SUNS), and these gave me even greater insights into the workings of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as well as other issues.

It was also Martin who arranged for me to go to Geneva, first in 1995 and numerous times later on, to help out Mr Raghavan with the production of the SUNS.

Later, in 2001, I came to Geneva and began working full-time with Mr Raghavan, eventually taking on the editorship of the SUNS in 2008 from Martin, to whom Mr Raghavan had handed over responsibility in 2005 when he retired.

Some of my best recollections of working with Martin was when the both of us were covering various WTO meetings from 2005 until 2008. We would frequently hold discussions on what meetings to cover and who would write the article on any particular meeting, and I greatly valued his insights and suggestions.

Martin was a tireless defender of the Third World and he will be sorely missed.

*(Kanaga Raja is Editor of the SUNS.)*

## **Martin Khor: Great helmsman in fight for trade-environment justice**

Geneva, Apr (D. Ravi Kanth) -- Almost 23 years ago, I received a telephone call from Martin Khor at Geneva. I had heard about him from then Indian ambassador to WTO, S Narayanan, and Mr Bhagirath Lal Das, former India's trade envoy to the GATT.

In one of my articles in 1996 on Trade and Investment in Asia Times, Bangkok, I had quoted Martin to argue that investment should never enter the newly established WTO because it is not a trade issue.

Martin, during that telephone call, said he wanted to employ me for six months to work at the Geneva-based South-North Development Monitor - SUNS. I accepted the offer thinking it would open my eyes to the workings of the WTO. And that is how I landed in Geneva. The six-month stint at SUNS during December 1997-May 1998, was very useful.

Martin and his wife Meena, would spend time with me whenever they visited Geneva, and would inquire about everything - from my stay in Geneva to the Kafkaesque world of trade negotiations at the WTO. Martin would often provide guidance and share views through his Socratic-like questioning on the dynamics of the multilateral trade negotiations.

Subsequently, after my stint at the SUNS, I had started writing for several media outlets - in India, USA, the Economic & Political Weekly (India), IPS, and Mint among others. Through it all, I kept up my wonderful relationship with Martin and we would spend time at the Press bar of the Palais des Nations. Invariably, he would start discussions, raising questions about the developments unfolding at the WTO.

The renowned Cambridge academic and teacher, Joan Robinson, once said that every fool can answer about everything, but it is only the wise person who would ask the right questions. Martin's questions vindicated that famous comment. He would raise pertinent questions that would force me to think about how decisions are reached at the WTO and why developing countries must always unite to stop the ugly outcomes at the global trade body, inimical to their needs and interests.

Unsurprisingly, for the WTO officials and trade envoys from the major developed countries, Martin posed a huge problem. Whenever I would check with the trade envoys from major industrialized countries for a clarification on stories I was writing, they would ask me whether Martin Khor has influenced me.

It was in 2001, at the fourth WTO ministerial meeting in Doha (Qatar), that I saw for the first time, Martin's enormous capacity for mobilizing to support the developing and poorest countries. Rammanohar Reddy, the former deputy-editor of the Hindu, and I would meet Martin to know what was transpiring in the closed-door negotiations at the ministerial meetings.

He provided guidance to developing countries on how they should approach issues foisted by the major developed countries, particularly USTR Robert Zoellick and EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy. These two had joined hands at Doha, to push controversial issues, the Singapore issues (first raised at MC1 in Singapore) such as Trade and Investment, Government Procurement, Competition Policy, and Trade Facilitation, that would enforce onerous disciplines on developing countries and arrest their development.

As all developed countries united under the leadership of Zoellick and Lamy at the Doha meeting, it was Martin who marshalled his intellectual resources to expose the fallacies of the arguments advanced by these big boys.

The four Singapore issues, however, collapsed due to the lack of "explicit consensus" at the WTO's ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico, in 2003. For those of us covering that meeting, it was evident that Martin's concerted mobilization efforts had brought about the requisite unity among the developing countries.

Subsequently, during meetings of the group of five countries - the US, the EU, India, Brazil, and Australia - in July 2006, Martin's facts and evidence-based proposals helped the former Indian trade minister Kamal Nath to pursue the developmental agenda in agriculture.

In 2008, when Martin was covering the mini-ministerial meeting among the US, the EU, Brazil, India, Australia, Japan and China, at the WTO, he and I often exchanged notes on the developments at the closed-door negotiations. It was an opaque meeting in which trade ministers of many countries were excluded while these seven countries discussed the major issues in agriculture for finalizing the modalities.

Between 2009 and 2015, while Martin focused his time on the global environment negotiations, I would reach him to understand the developments in the trade front. He would often advise me to leave the trade issue and start focusing on climate change negotiations. He would say the climate change negotiations are at the centre stage while trade negotiations are pushed to the back burner.

He would often tell me that the climate change negotiations are a major battle between the developed countries, who had created the global climate crisis, and the developing countries who are being asked to pay a price by undertaking onerous commitments even though they were not responsible for the crisis.

In 2015, at the insistence of Chakravarthi Raghavan, Martin asked me to write for SUNS again; and I met Chee Yoke Ling, the director of the TWN and began writing again for the SUNS. Even as he was battling against cancer, Martin would send his responses to my articles in both SUNS and in the Indian newspapers. Recently, he liked one of my articles in an Indian media, and wrote: "A very good article, Ravi. However, it is hard to read due to the many adverts popping up. Keep up your good work." Indeed, it is a badge of honour to receive from the man who brought me to Geneva and guided me from time to time.

On Tuesday, when I heard that Martin had passed away, I felt devastated and felt it is huge loss for the developing world and me. He was a great helmsman enabling people and governments of developing countries to stand up and fight against the trade-related and environment-related injustices inflicted on the daridra narayans (a term coined by Mahatma Gandhi to describe the wretched social and economic conditions of the poor in India).

Martin, it is difficult to fill the huge void you left behind for your colleagues and the developing world. Comrade Martin, you may have left us. But for us, who interacted with you, your decades of guidance and waging struggles against injustices at the local and international level are etched in our minds. And they will continue to help us in navigating through these uneven and imbalanced trade and environment negotiations.

May you rest in peace.

*(D. Ravi Kanth contributes articles to the SUNS on trade issues and other activities at UN agencies.)*