



Oppose Sri Lanka's Brutal Occupation of Tamil Areas - Take Action against The Western Rulers that Prop Up This Invasion!

May 12 - The Sri Lankan Army is butchering Tamil people in the North of Sri Lanka. The Army has violently taken over historic Tamil homelands previously held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a group fighting for self-determination for the oppressed Tamil minority. But most of those killed by the Army's invasion have been Tamil civilians.

On April 8, artillery shells fired by the Army killed 129 Tamil civilians inside a so-called "no-fire zone." Three of the shells hit a childcare/nutrition centre at Pokka'nai where many were waiting to obtain humanitarian milk rations for children. Then on April 20 – somewhat fittingly also the 120th anniversary of Hitler's birth - the Army unleashed a new genocidal assault. They killed thousands in a 48-hour period. In April, the U.N. stated that 6,500 civilians had been killed in the last three months. This bloodbath keeps getting worse. In a two-day period from May 9, Army shelling of Tamil civilians residing in the LTTE controlled region killed over 1,000 and possibly up to 2,500 people.

Tamil people worldwide have protested against these atrocities. And now a growing number of non-Tamils are getting involved too. It is crucial that the powerful trade union movement joins in these actions. If our unions fail to stand up for a people facing such murderous injustice then their own integrity as a force standing up to injustice – standing up to the exploitation of workers – will be weakened. The workers movement has a real interest in standing with the oppressed Tamil people. After all, the same Western ruling elite that backed Colombo's invasion of Tamil areas are also the very same class that exploits working class people in their own countries.

Pro-Tamil protesters have desperately tried to appeal to the humanity of the rulers in the West who most know have been holding up Colombo's agenda. But these capitalist rulers in the U.S, Britain, Australia etc don't make their decisions based on humanitarian considerations. Rather what matters to them are the profits of the big business owners whom they serve. This is why the organised workers movement is so crucial to saving the Tamil people. Union industrial action to protest against Canberra's support for Lanka's occupation can hurt the profits of Australia's corporate elite and hence force their politicians to back off from supporting the Colombo regime. If this were to happen in all Western countries then it would pull the legs out from under the political/economic platform from which the Lankan Army launches. **Rally against Washington and Canberra's support for the Colombo butchers! Down with the Sri Lankan Army's bloody occupation! Demand that the racist Sri Lankan Army get out of all Tamil majority areas in the North and East of the island!**

The Colonial Times: Divide & Conquer

The carnage in Sri Lanka is the result of decades of discrimination of Tamil people on the island by capitalist Sri Lankan governments. These racist policies are, in turn and in part, a product of 443 years of subjugation of the island by, successively, three different colonial powers.

At the time of invasion by the imperial powers, the Sinhalese and Tamil people lived generally amicably together in separate states on different parts of the one island. There was cultural interaction and trade between the two neighbouring nations. But when the colonial overlords - in particular the last ruler the British - took over, they rammed the separate nations into a single domain, in part for administrative convenience and in part to make it easier to play off the two ethnic communities against each other. Especially as both the Sinhala and Tamil people became more energetic in their calls for an end to colonial rule and all the deprivation, terrible mistreatment and repression that it brought, His Majesty's representatives in Ceylon (the British name given to the island) became more devious in fostering rivalries between the Sinhalese and Tamils. "Divide and conquer" is, after all, what British imperialism is famous for!

In the meantime, both the Sinhala and Tamil upper classes were becoming fearful that the masses who were agitating for independence were simultaneously demanding things like ... heaven forbid! ... an equal vote for all residents regardless of caste and an end to discrimination by castes. What made the upper classes especially nervous was that more and more of the toilers were showing their allegiance to the Marxist parties that were spearheading the independence drive. So the privileged politicians from the two communities sought to keep their respective populations behind them by each whipping up, and appealing to, rival ethnic chauvinist feelings. In the case of the Tamil elite politicians, they could at least point to a legitimate fear that the Tamil minority would be oppressed in a majority-Sinhalese independent Ceylon. Under colonial rule, all the non-European peoples on the island - whether Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamil, Muslim Moor or up-country Tamil (the latter are descendants of those brought by the British as semi-slave labour in the nineteenth century and have a culture and heritage somewhat distinct from Ceylon Tamils) - were arrogantly downtrodden by the British. The Tamil people rightly feared that after independence they would still be downtrodden - this time under Sinhala rulers.

Discrimination & Pogroms

After independence in 1948, the Ceylonese upper class – both Sinhalese and Tamil – continued to fear the wrath of the masses that they exploited. For the organized workers movement that had arisen together with the leftist parties in the 1930s continued to grow in militancy and sophistication. In August 1953, anger at the conservative United National Party government for increasing the price of rice and cutting back social services culminated in a massive general strike (called a hartal). The hartal turned into a semi-uprising involving clashes with the police and army. Flying pickets of workers and poor people stopped scab buses and trains. Rail lines were torn up to stop scab trains from operating and scab buses were pelted with stones and smashed or stopped by street barricades of felled trees. The August 1953 struggle united Tamil and Sinhalese workers, urban poor and peasants all together. The capitalist ruling class was so terrified of revolution that the Cabinet had to hold its emergency meeting aboard a British warship docked in Colombo harbour.

After the 1953 hartal, a large section of the capitalist class was convinced that they would be toppled from power unless they could better divert the hostility against them of the Sinhala masses into hatred for the Tamil minority. So in 1956, the new Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) prime minister, S.W.R.D. Bandranaike introduced a policy called the Sinhala Only Act. That's like having a policy here called the "Whites Only Act" (indeed for much of the last century Australia did operate under a White Australia Policy.) The openly racist name Sinhala Only was chosen because half the point of the Act was not only to discriminate but to be seen to be discriminating – the Sinhala capitalists were determined to make the Sinhala poor think that their upliftment must come at the expense of the Tamils.

The Sinhala Only Act made Sinhalese the sole official language of the country. Until then, Tamils had been heavily employed in the public service, in the postal service and railways and in clerical jobs. The salty, infertile soil in the Tamil Northern part of Sri Lanka meant that it was only through such jobs and education that Tamils could make a living. But after Sinhala Only, the Tamils, lacking proficiency in Sinhalese language, were largely driven out of public service jobs – and that was precisely what the Act was meant to do. Then in 1971, the newly elected "United Front" government introduced a policy to exclude many Tamils from the universities. Later dubbed "Standardisation," the policy made people living in the mostly Tamil populated areas have to score higher entrance marks to get admission to the universities than students living in majority Sinhala areas.

Each discriminatory policy coming from Colombo inflamed racist attitudes at the base of society. This led to several outbreaks of murderous mass rioting against Tamil people. Among the biggest of these were in 1956, 1958 and 1977. These were like the horrific White supremacist riot at Cronulla Beach in 2005 but even more sustained. Hundreds of Tamil people were murdered in these attacks with the acceptance and covert (and sometimes even overt) participation of state forces. Very often the Sinhalese extremist mobs were stirred up by Buddhist monks – who in Sri Lanka form the most racist force in society, somewhat like America's Christian right preachers and India's hard line Hindu nationalists.

The Emergence of the LTTE

As the oppression of the Tamils intensified, attitudes within the Tamil community radicalised. In the 1950s, mainstream Tamil politicians in the Federal Party called only for regional autonomy for the Tamils as part of a federated united Ceylon. But by the mid-1970s, most Tamil people wanted a separate Tamil homeland: Tamil Eelam. The youth were the driving force behind the calls for Tamil Eelam. A shaping experience for these youth was the brutal government repression in 1973 of "Black Flag" protests held in Jaffna against anti-Tamil discrimination and the "Standardisation" policy. The violent repression of this struggle convinced many of the youth of the impotence of the non-violent, parliamentarist strategy adopted by the Tamil political leadership of the time.

There was, however, another big factor shaping the trajectory chosen by the radicalizing Tamil youth. And that was the shocking betrayal of Ceylon's socialist parties. Although short of being genuinely revolutionary like Lenin's Bolsheviks, the Marxist parties in Ceylon did at one time stand against Sinhala chauvinism. When the 1956 Sinhala Only Act was being enacted it was the ostensibly Trotskyist, Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the pro-Moscow Communist Party (CP) that were, together with the Federal Party, the strongest in opposing the policy. The left parties campaigned for "parity of status" between the Sinhalese and Tamil languages. Many Tamil youth at the time who like their Sinhalese brethren were generally attracted to the liberating goals of communism looked to the socialist parties to also defend Tamil rights. Here it is worth noting what happened in the 1956 elections in the Northern electoral seat of Point Pedro. In that electoral district which at the time covered the entire Vadamarachchi area, the very region from where most of the founding Tamil Tiger leaders would later emerge, the people voted in to parliament the Communist Party's candidate. But later the LSSP and CP betrayed both the Tamil people and Sinhalese working class when they went into coalition with the Brandranaike clan's SLFP. In 1964, the two supposedly socialist parties entered the SLFP-led bourgeois government and took up ministerial posts. The LSSP and CP leaders were motivated by a mixture of, on the one hand, naked self-seeking careerism and on the other hand the illusion that that there was a parliamentary road towards socialism. The pseudo-Marxists claimed that by joining with the SLFP they were making an alliance with a so-called "anti-imperialist wing" of the bourgeoisie and in doing so were making capitalism more progressive as the first step towards socialism. The truth, however, is that by joining with a bourgeois party, the ex-left parties necessarily had to suppress their class-struggle program and kowtow to Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism. The LSSP and CP, in fact, later went on to be part of the very same "United Front" government that instituted the notorious "Standardisation" of university entry. It is telling that when Tamil youth staged their March 1973 Black Flag rally, the immediate target of their demonstration was a visit to Jaffna of LSSP minister N.M. Perera and CP minister Pieter Keuneman. In the space of a few years the LSSP and CP had travelled from being bona fide (albeit not Bolshevik) leftists to being the most cynical of fake-leftists, from being champions of Tamil rights to being the enemies of the Tamil people.

With the then Sri Lankan "left" offering no alternative, radical youth who could have been attracted to an internationalist, class-struggle strategy for Tamil liberation instead turned to Tamil nationalism. Meanwhile, the youth's anger at the hopeless conservatism of the parliamentary Tamil parties - the All Ceylon Tamil Congress and the Federal Party - convinced them that they would need to take the road of armed struggle. Eventually V. Prabhakaran's LTTE emerged as the strongest of the Tamil militant groups. Known as the Tamil Tigers for short, the LTTE built up a highly disciplined, well-trained and effective guerilla force. Their ranks especially swelled after a horrific pogrom in July 1983. Then over 3,000 Tamils in Colombo and throughout the country were murdered by rampaging Sinhala racist mobs. Again the state forces colluded with the extremist rioters.

As the LTTE's numerical strength grew, they achieved a number of spectacular military victories. But they are unable to achieve Tamil national liberation because their Tamil nationalist outlook prevents them from uniting with the natural ally of the oppressed Tamil people, the Sinhala working class who too is viciously subjugated by the rich Sinhala ruling class. At times the Tigers have even driven the Sinhala poor back into the hold of their own exploiters – such as in particular cases in the past where the LTTE has responded to gruesome Army atrocities by in turn killing Sinhalese civilians.

Nevertheless, the LTTE's courageous resistance against the murdering Army, the incredible dedication of their cadre and their reputation for incorruptibility has won them the hearts of most Tamil people. Even today after suffering serious military setbacks and with Colombo claiming that the Tigers are on the verge of total defeat, there is some chance that the LTTE will regroup into a force based on its original hit-and-run, classical guerilla warfare strategy. The Sri Lankan military's slaughters of Tamil civilians are a desperate attempt to diminish support for the LTTE. The Lankan rulers hope that their mass killings will demoralise Tamils and drive them into partially blaming the LTTE's militancy for the rivers of Tamil blood that are engulfing the Tamil homeland. But the Army's determination to herd fleeing Tamils into virtual prison camps proves that even they know that liberation fighters will continue to arise from within the embattled Tamil people.

Western Rulers Gave The Colombo Government Thugs The Green Light

So how is Colombo able to prosecute and get away with this genocidal invasion? For one, it has the backing of the Indian government. Although Indian governments are capable of producing crocodile tears to appease sympathy for Eelam Tamils within South India, the Indian Military's training of Lankan Army officers and Indian intelligence about LTTE positions have been vital to the Sri Lankan Army's recent offensive. But what has been most decisive is the support of the Western powers for Sri Lanka's war. Colombo has received much military and economic backing from the U.S. and its allies, including Australia. It is Israel that has supplied the Sri Lankan Air Force with the KFIR jets that have so destructively bombed Tamil towns and villages. The Israeli military and intelligence agencies have also trained Sri Lankan forces. Often Washington outsources such tasks to states like Israel when it wants to be more covert in providing military support to a brutal regime. During the apartheid days, Israel and Taiwan were among the most open supporters of the racist South African government.

Importantly, the Western capitalist governments have also cut off both humanitarian support to Eelam Tamils and financial support for the LTTE from the large Tamil expatriate community. The U.S. and European Union have proscribed the LTTE by branding it a "terrorist" organisation and Tamil activists have faced repression everywhere in the West from Britain to Australia. Outrageously, Australian authorities are trying to imprison three Tamils, Aruran Vinayagamoorthy, Sivarajah Yathavan and Arumugam Rajeevan, on charges of providing financial support to the LTTE. The three Tamil men have been hounded by the Australian authorities since 2007 when they were first jailed. Meanwhile in Britain, a Tamil activist Arunachalam Chrishanthakumar was convicted on terrorism charges of coordinating supplies of material to the LTTE.

Arunachalam Chrishanthakumar's conviction came on April 17, right at the height of the Colombo regime's terrorist onslaught against the Tamil people. Ten days earlier, British police brutally attacked a rally of Tamil protesters and made four arrests, including on the pretext that the demonstrators were flying the LTTE flag. Such repression against expatriate Tamil activists serves to send a signal to the Sri Lankan government that Britain, the U.S, Australia etc is right behind their offensive. And the Colombo butchers sure have got the message!

Why Washington, London, Tokyo & Canberra Are against The Tamil National Liberation Struggle

It is worth noting that most of the organisations involved in armed campaigns for genuine national self-determination claims have been banned or are severely restricted by the West. Check out Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade "list of terrorist organisations" with which financial dealings are banned and you will see that it includes not only the LTTE but Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) as well as the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), a group fighting a just struggle for a Kurdish homeland in Turkish-controlled Kurdistan. In contrast, **bogus** separatist movements not only escape designation as "terrorist" but are covertly financed by the CIA and other Western imperialist agencies. Such movements include the like of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) which carries out violent attacks on the communist-run Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. Like its "spiritual" godfather the Dalai Lama, the TYC fraudulently calls for "Free Tibet" to disguise their real goal which is to overthrow the current Tibetan Autonomous Region government that is dominated by liberated slaves and serfs and their descendants and replace it with an order like the old feudal Tibet where 5% of the population lorded it over the masses of slaves and serfs. Tamil people would be interested to know that the ruling class in the old Dalai Lama-run Tibet was not only an aristocracy but included large numbers of wealthy and ruthless monks – whose terrifyingly brutal contempt for their slaves/serfs mirrored the warmongering contempt for the Tamil people of Lanka's Buddhist monks. The TYC for its part can be compared with Sri Lanka's right-wing Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) party (which is part of Rajapakse's governing coalition), only that unlike the JHU the TYC is thankfully out of power. In March last year, the TYC was central in inciting riots in the Tibetan capital Lhasa where, in a scene that could have resembled past anti-Tamil riots in Colombo, rampaging racist monks murdered 18 civilians and burnt down the Muslim mosque. Yet the TYC are not branded as

“terrorist” by Washington and its allies ... no, such designations are only reserved for those like the LTTE, PFLP and PKK whose agendas don't fit in with U.S. imperialism's schemes.

So why does the struggle for Tamil Eelam clash with the Western powers' agenda? Firstly, one must understand that the rich ruling classes in the West and Japan not only exploit workers in their own countries but make profits at an even more exorbitant rate from superexploiting labour, plundering natural resources and dictating markets in the “Third World.” In Sri Lanka, the U.S., British, Japanese and Australian capitalists are all in there. Australia is actually the second biggest foreign investor (after Japan) in Lanka (*Daily News*, Sri Lanka, 21 March 2007), i.e. the second biggest exploiter of grossly underpaid labour. The biggest foreign industrial plant in Sri Lanka is the Australian-owned Ansell Lanka rubber products factory in the Biyagama Free Trade Zone just to the East of Colombo. The Australian bosses are notorious for their abusive treatment of workers in the Free Trade Zones. In January 1995, the Ansell Lanka workers became so desperate that, as part of a strike demanding recognition of their union, they removed members of the hated management from their offices and led them at gunpoint to a remote storage area. These audacious methods worked - the imprisoned managers had no choice but to sign a piece of paper acceding to the workers demands. The famous strike victory by the Ansell Lanka workers then set off a spate of similar hostage taking of managers at other workplaces within the Free Trade Zones.

How then do the greedy Western and Japanese capitalists operating in Sri Lanka stop such workers revolts from spreading? In the end, they can only fall back on those very same methods that their junior partners in the Lankan ruling class use: set the workers against each other by inciting ethnic tensions and try to divert the rage of the Sinhala workers at their poverty-stricken condition on to the Tamil masses. Now, it is true that the Australian, American, Japanese and British corporate parasites feel that a war environment is bad for business. But they would all rather have that than have united contingents of Sinhala and Tamil workers marching into their offices to take them hostage! This conclusion drawn by the business owners then gets filtered through to their home country governments in Washington, Canberra, London and Tokyo who in turn frame their policy on Sri Lanka accordingly. Let us not forget that under the capitalist political structure that operates in the West, it is the interests of the wealthy business elite that determines government policy and not the interests of the working class masses.

The second factor shaping Western policy on Sri Lanka is their wish to have control of the excellent deepwater natural harbour in Trincomalee and to generally have hegemony over the strategic sea lanes that pass adjacent to the island. Not only does much international cargo pass through these waters but he whose warships have access to Lankan waters and harbours has a big advantage in asserting naval dominance over the strategic Northern part of the Indian Ocean. The U.S. and Britain see holding this advantage as important to putting the squeeze on pro-communist China. To be sure Washington and its allies could potentially deal with any political force on the island willing to be their puppets. But they have calculated that a Tamil Eelam created by a militant liberation struggle is going to be less likely to unquestioningly accede to their diktats and more prone to challenging their “right” to access Trincomalee harbour than the current Colombo regime.

Lastly but not least, the Sri Lanka policy of the Western imperialists is influenced by their desire to maintain the current social “order” in nearby India. Now, to India's impoverished masses this “order” is terribly oppressive. But India's cutthroat capitalist system, sold by Western mouthpieces as “the world's largest democracy,” produces fabulous profits for U.S., and to a lesser extent British and Dutch, corporations exploiting sweatshop labour. Furthermore, the Western capitalists see India as a bulwark against successful, socialistic China and are relying on New Delhi to quell the revolutionary socialist agitation in Nepal. However, Washington, London, The Hague, Canberra etc are worried about the “stability” of the Indian political set-up itself. They know that there are large pockets of working class militancy in India. They also know that poor landless and tenant farmers have been rapidly swelling the ranks of Maoist insurgents in the countryside. Meanwhile in neighbouring Nepal, support for communism has burgeoned over the last few years and the political conditions there seem capable of producing a pro-communist revolution. Therefore, as far as India's thieving Western overlords are concerned, the last thing the country needs is the triumph of Tamil Eelam next door which would inevitably encourage India's own imprisoned nations – like the Kashmiris, the Sikhs of Khalistan and the Nagas in the North East – to step up their own struggles for self-determination. Washington, London, Canberra and, indeed, New Delhi knows that any encouragement for separatist struggles in India could be just the push that could knock down the whole fragile Indian political “order.”

Despite their hostility to the Tamil struggle for self determination, the Western rulers have not been able to totally bury from the public eye the truth about the Sri Lankan government's massacres of Tamil civilians. This is because of energetic protests by the large Tamil expatriate community. From Toronto to London to Paris to Sydney, Tamil people have rallied in thousands-strong demonstrations against Colombo's invasion. Tamil youth have especially been at the forefront of the actions and have sacrificed hours upon hours of their time to staff protest camps and coordinate actions. In terms of logistics and nuts and bolts details, the Tamil protests have been extremely well organized.

The main thrust of the protests in Australia has been to appeal to prime minister Kevin Rudd to demand that the Sri Lankan government agree to a permanent ceasefire with the LTTE. Tamil community rallies have chanted “Australia: Save the Tamils!” But far from showing any signs of supporting the embattled people of Tamil Eelam, the Australian government has continued to make statements that can only encourage the Colombo government. For example, on April 29, Australian Foreign Minister Steven Smith made a point of declaring on ABC Television, when referring to the conflict, that neither Australia nor the international community believe this could be solved by the creation of an independent Tamil state. Then in his May 12 speech to parliament Smith upheld all of the Colombo regime's lying “rationales” for its invasion:

“Madam Deputy Speaker, Australia continues to condemn the terrorist tactics of the LTTE. Australia urges the LTTE to allow civilians caught in the conflict zone to leave, to end its practice of forced recruitment and to renounce terrorism.”

Such ranting can only assist the Sri Lankan government to sell its anti-Tamil onslaught which, after all, it claims is a "war against terrorism."

To be sure, as ordinary people in the West hear more accounts of the killings of Tamils, Western leaders have uttered some words to try and make them look like they actually care for the plight of the Tamil people. They are slightly worried that the naked terror of their thugs in Colombo makes them look bad. Most cynically, that conservative paper of the British ruling class, the Rupert Murdoch owned *The Times* even ran an article that with utter distortions tried to shift the blame for the atrocities in Sri Lanka from the West to ... Communist-run China! More generally, Western governments, while reserving their toughest condemnations for the LTTE, have made a show of asking the Sri Lankan government to stop using heavy weapons and have sometimes called for a temporary pause in fighting to allow civilians to leave the conflict zone. Yet any slap on the wrist that the Western governments deal to President Rajapaksa's regime in Sri Lanka is always made in the context of the Western powers making clear that they side with Colombo against the Tamil resistance. For example, even when speaking of the suffering of Tamil civilians, Stephen Smith blames mostly the LTTE. And when he referred to the bombing and artillery fire against civilians he could not even bring himself to identify the Sri Lankan Army as the culprits, thereby deliberately leaving open the possibility that Colombo's outrageous claim that it is the Tamil Tigers who are shelling Tamil civilians is true:

"Reports of abuses from within the conflict zone include accounts of civilians forced by the LTTE to stay in its territory, of forced recruitment of children and adults by the LTTE, deaths and injuries from bombs and artillery, and families desperately seeking news of their loved ones."

- *May 12 Speech to Parliament by Stephen Smith*

The U.S., Australia and the European powers merely want Colombo to more "smoothly" manage the transition to what the West hopes will be a post-LTTE environment on the island. There is a slight difference in emphasis in the way that Washington, Canberra and London view the situation from the way that the Lankan government does. For Rajapaksa's coalition government the overriding motive, which is to satisfy the greed of the Colombo 7 rich and the Western overlords, is mixed in with their own fanatical Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism. In contrast, the Western ruling classes orient to Sri Lanka from the point of view of pure greed ... full stop! Thus without being swayed by particular racialist notions about the supposed superiority of the Sinhala race over the Tamil race, they are able to examine events in Lanka with more cold calculation than their hot-headed pet lion cubs in Colombo. The Western imperialists fear that Colombo's zeal will make it harder to have "stability" on the island once the LTTE is defeated, which is what they hope will happen. Washington, London, Canberra etc want Rajapaksa to show greater finesse in covering up war crimes (like they often do.) They also want his regime to do more to cultivate a layer of compliant, well-heeled Tamils that they can work through. This is what U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton meant when she called on Colombo to engage Tamils who do not espouse violence or terrorism (read tame sell-out Tamils.) Additionally, the Western rulers like to occasionally throw some firm words at Rajapaksa simply to remind him that he and his ilk are only subordinate local thugs while they are the imperial godfathers.

However, the Western governments' occasional touch on Rajapaksa's wrist should not fool any supporter of Tamil liberation! For these governments continue to do much to support the crushing of Tamil resistance. The U.S. and European Union continue to outlaw the LTTE as a "terrorist" organization and the Australian state is still prosecuting three Tamils on charges of providing financial support to the LTTE. Furthermore, last week, police and the Parramatta Lord Mayor Tony Issa forcibly shut down a vigil by Tamils at Parramatta's Church Street Mall. Police roughed up the peaceful demonstrators and arrested and charged another three Tamil men. Mayor Issa chimed in with the racism typical of the Australian establishment: he told the protesters to "go back to Sri Lanka" if they were not happy!

Even when Western regimes make statements that have a pretence of being firm on Colombo, the main "solution" to the conflict that they offer is to insist that the Tamil Tigers lay down their arms and surrender. Is that not also what the Sri Lankan government wants? So make no mistake about it: the message coming from the U.S., Britain, Australia etc is far from being "even handed"! After all, are they demanding that the Sri Lankan Army lay down its arms and surrenders? Far from it! For example, at an April 13 Foreign Affairs Press Conference held in Perth, Stephen Smith called for "the Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms" but only "called on the Sri Lankan government to resolve these matters not **just** by military means but by political dialogue" (emphasis added.) In other words, it is fine for the Sri Lankan government to wage its military onslaught ... but it should use other means as well. Here Canberra is marching in lock step with its big brothers in Washington. At an April 24 Daily Press Briefing, Acting State Department Spokesman for the new Obama Administration, Robert Wood, demanded that, "the Tamil Tigers must stop holding civilians and stop putting them in harm's way. We call on the Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms and surrender to a third party." And in his May 12 parliamentary speech, Stephen Smith again emphasised that, "Australia continues to urge the LTTE to lay down their arms." All these statements must be music to the ears of the Sri Lankan military. One would not be surprised if Sri Lankan Army Commander, Sarath Fonseka, orders an extra artillery barrage against Tamil-held areas every time he hears a Western leader call for the Tigers to surrender.

The way that the U.S. and its allies are responding to the onslaught in Northern Sri Lanka is no aberration. When Israel murderously attacked the Palestinian people in Gaza late last year – which was more than coincidentally the same time that Colombo began its offensive – Washington and Canberra backed Tel Aviv. In similar fashion to how the Australian rulers today call on the LTTE to lay down its arms, acting Prime Minister at the time, Julia Gillard, stated: "We are calling on Hamas and other militants to cease shelling Southern Israel. Obviously, they have broken the ceasefire and engaged in an act of aggression against Israel." (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 December 2008.) The fact is that the capitalist rulers of the U.S., Britain, Australia, Japan and Germany have much more in common with the butchers in Colombo and Tel Aviv than with oppressed peoples fighting for liberation. In Afghanistan, the occupying U.S./Australian/NATO forces terrorise the local population with all the brutality of Sri Lanka's war on the Tamil people. Last week, as confirmed by the Red Cross, U.S. air strikes on houses in

the western province of Farah killed over a hundred Afghan civilians. On February 12, Australian special forces troops raiding houses in Sarmorghab village in Afghanistan's Oruzgan Province shot dead five innocent children.

In Sri Lanka, the military herds desperate Tamil refugees who are fleeing its onslaught into virtual detention camps. Meanwhile, here, Australian authorities seize seaborne refugees— who are largely fleeing the effects of the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan that Australia has participated in or the wars that it has encouraged as in Sri Lanka – and also imprisons them in detention facilities. Let us not forget too that while, today, the Sinhala-chauvinist ruling class in Lanka seeks to consolidate their dispossession of Tamil people from sovereignty over their own ancestral homelands, in this country the White colonial ruling class dispossessed the indigenous Aboriginal people through a genocide that began 221 years ago. Today this continues in a different form. Over 500 black people have died in state custody in the last 28 years - many simply killed by racist cops and prison guards. Those Aboriginal people that have stood up to these killings, themselves face repression. Several Aboriginal people were jailed for their participation in the defiant mass community outpourings in Redfern in February 2004 and in Palm Island in November 2004 that responded to the racist police murders of, respectively, 17 year old Aboriginal youth TJ Hickey in Redfern and 36 year-old Aboriginal man Mulrunji Doomadgee on Palm Island. Even now Aboriginal hero Lex Wotton languishes in jail on a six-year sentence for his prominent role in the November 2004 Palm Island resistance struggle. Meanwhile, as part of the "Intervention" into Northern Territory black communities, the Australian federal government administers restrictions on access to welfare payments that are so openly discriminatory towards Aboriginal people that it would make that godfather of Sinhala Only, S.W.R.D. Bandranaike proud.

Don't Appeal to The Western Imperialists – They Are The Enemy!

Not only have Western capitalist governments been hitherto opposed to the Tamil liberation struggle - they can **never** be genuine allies of the oppressed Tamil people. For in the West's current political system, the whole state structure – the police, army, overseas embassies, secret police, courts, foreign affairs officialdom etc – are genetically tied to the rich capitalist class. Hence, regardless of which political party is warming the majority of the seats of parliament, all significant decisions are made to accommodate the interests of big business profiteers. And the interests of an oppressing class definitely does not include lifting the oppression of subjugated peoples abroad.

Thus even if the current Western rulers mooted an intervention under the guise of supporting the Tamil people **this should be rejected**. For any imperialist intervention cannot but in the end be disastrous for Eelam Tamils, for the Sinhala poor and for the terribly exploited up-country Tamil masses. Let us not forget what happened in 1987. Then, after a ferocious Sri Lankan Army onslaught on the Jaffna Peninsula, the capitalist Indian government started to pretend that it wanted to protect the Tamil people. In June 1987, the Indian Air Force dropped parcels of basic necessities into embattled Tamil areas as a gesture aimed at winning Tamil support for its impending intervention. The following month, Indian Peace Keeping Forces entered Sri Lanka. Many Tamils expected that while the Indian forces were not going to deliver an independent Tamil Eelam, at least the Indian Army would protect the Tamil people from violence. But just a few months passed before the Indian Army itself turned on the Tamil people and launched a ferocious assault against the LTTE. Tamil people have pointed out that the extreme brutality of the Indian "Peacekeepers" towards civilians in that offensive dwarfed even that of the Lankan Army up to that time. Now, while India is capitalist ruled it is itself trampled upon by the rich imperialist countries. If these Western imperialist powers were to themselves directly intervene in Lanka they would be even more predatory than India was (if that is, indeed, possible.) Furthermore, they also would not have to worry about the potentially restraining effect of a tens-of-millions strong Tamil-speaking population at home – as India did.

Let us here consider two hypothetical scenarios where Western powers could intervene into Lanka under the disingenuous pretext of aiding the Tamil people. In one scenario, imperialist intervention is triggered by the following events. Firstly, the Tamil national liberation forces win a series of major military victories. Secondly, this liberation struggle is accompanied by solidarity agitation by anti-racist Sinhalese in the South. As a result of both of these conditions, the Sinhala-chauvinist regime in Colombo loses the authority of the masses in the South and the whole social order looks shaky. In that situation, the worried Western capitalists choose to intervene to both save the Western-dominated social system in the South and to head off the buoyant Tamil liberation struggle. They do this by appearing to suddenly reverse their previous hostility to Tamil Eelam. They arrange a Western-controlled "independence" process. But they carefully construct this set up to ensure that the new nominally "independent" Tamil Eelam becomes their hopelessly subservient and exploited puppet. Furthermore, by amputating Tamil Eelam territories from Sri Lanka, they relieve the fragile Colombo regime of the running wound that is bleeding it to death.

A script similar to the above was actually played out in East Timor in 1999. At that time the Indonesian capitalist regime that was occupying East Timor was facing growing social unrest at home. The previous year, mass student and worker struggles within Indonesia challenged the then Suharto dictatorship. Furthermore, not only were the East Timorese people continuing to doggedly maintain their resistance to the Indonesian occupation but some Indonesian leftists were starting to openly support the Timorese struggle and this was feeding into broader opposition to militarism within Indonesia. Still, some in the Indonesian ruling class stubbornly believed that they could continue ruling East Timor as before. However, another section of the elite knew that unless they came to an accommodation with the East Timorese independence movement, the East Timor question risked undermining their shaky hold over the rest of Indonesia. The U.S. and Australian overlords concurred with the latter wing of the Indonesian ruling class and encouraged this faction to stand up to the unrepentant pro-occupation faction. While worried about the "stability" of Indonesia, the Australian rulers were excited about what this new policy offered them. For the previous 24 years they had backed Jakarta's occupation of East Timor, calculating that the Indonesian military would be the useful armed intermediary that would facilitate Australian exploitation of East Timor's seabed oil and gas reserves. Now, the Australian capitalists saw a chance to grab East Timor as its very own direct neocolony and to thereby guarantee the plunder of

an even greater share of that country's natural wealth. However, the Australian ruling class knew that there was a serious hurdle to overcome before they could reach their goals. And that was potential obstruction to Australian colonialism from within the Fretilin separatist movement. Would the ranks of the Fretilin separatist movement, after having made so many sacrifices to wage a guerilla struggle for an independent East Timor, now simply consent to the nation being turned into a neocolony of Western powers? Thus these Western powers realised that they had to bring Fretilin under control. To do this they sent a U.N. force to East Timor, including 300 Australian troops and cops, to herd Fretilin fighters into camps to begin disarming them. In return for Fretilin "agreeing" to this arrangement, the U.N. would facilitate the "independence" process through supervising a referendum on independence. Not surprisingly, pro-independence forces won the referendum easily.

But when anti-independence forces, as expected, went on a burning and killing rampage following their electoral defeat, Fretilin, already corralled into camps, was unable to protect the people. Having made the pro-independence masses helpless, the imperialists allowed the right-wing riots to run their course before a massive Australian-led military force cynically invaded East Timor under the pretext of being its "saviours."

Far from "protecting" the local population from violence, the Australian-led U.N. occupation forces subjected the East Timorese people to a new reign of terror. Australian and New Zealand troops and police bashed, imprisoned and in some cases simply opened fire on the numerous dissident elements in and around Fretilin who objected to the now rebranded occupation. Perhaps the most telling example of how subjugated the "new" East Timor is came in May 2002 when the "sovereign" Timorese government signed a "treaty" with Canberra that gave Australia the lion's share of royalties from impoverished East Timor's biggest resource – the Greater Sunrise oil/gas field located in the Timor Sea. This took place on the very day of East Timor's formal "independence"! With Australian-owned multinationals Woodside and BHP and the Australian government stealing its energy resources and with smaller Aussie bosses leaching profits from Timorese labour in other sectors, the local population has been reduced to a level of poverty much worse than even during Indonesia's occupation. A sizeable proportion of people have stunted growth due to malnourishment and many have to forage in the rubbish dumps where the food scraps left over from the high-living Australian and U.N. bureaucrats and entrepreneurs end up. Naturally, this situation fuels unrest. The occupiers have responded by cracking down ever more violently. On 4 December 2002, Australian police and the U.N.-controlled puppet Timorese police opened fire on a rally of high school students protesting against cop violence. Five protesters were shot dead and 13 others received gun shot wounds.

As the Australian ruling classes became confident that they had established a subservient local state apparatus in Timor, they reduced the size of their own military presence. But this reduction did not last long. When the Fretilin government proved to be not obedient enough in agreeing to Australia's theft of Timor's oil, the U.S. and Australia started to covertly undermine the regime. In May 2006, Canberra seized on the instability that it had helped create to again send a big contingent of troops to occupy the country. Using this military presence, Canberra was able to engineer a coup d'etat to replace the Fretilin (which can be thought of as the East Timorese equivalent of the LTTE) government. Then on 23 February 2007, the Australian military rammed two tanks into a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) near the airport in the capital Dili after refugees had resisted attempts to force them to leave the site. Australian troops opened fire shooting dead two IDPs and wounding several others. To this day, Australian troops continue to occupy tiny East Timor. This is hardly the kind of imperialist-controlled and fraudulent "independence" that the Timorese nor indeed the Tamil people need!

Given that the Sri Lankan Army has recently made major military advances, it is out of the question that the Western powers will at this time make an East Timor-style intervention into Lanka. What is slightly more likely is that the Western powers, perhaps under the cover of the U.N., intervenes to try and facilitate the surrender of the LTTE. The Western intervention would be sold as being a move to protect Tamil civilians but the price of this "protection" would be that the LTTE would have to give up its arms. The foreign "peacekeepers" would then be the "third party" whom the LTTE are supposed to surrender to according to the Obama government's program that the Tamil Tigers "lay down their arms and surrender to a third party." Make no mistake about it, if this were to happen it would be catastrophic for the Tamil people. Rabid Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist elements in the South could celebrate the LTTE's demise by going on a bloody rampage. Already, advances by the Army have encouraged hardline Buddhist monks to create a climate of extreme militarism in the South. Not only have temples frequented by Tamils been destroyed but even non-Buddhist Sinhalese have been targeted. For example, monks and other violent racists have attacked and damaged churches. A defeat of the LTTE could see pumped up anti-Tamil racists unleash a pogrom much worse than even in July 1983 if any Tamil dares to raise their voice against discrimination. Furthermore, regardless of what one thinks of the effectiveness of the LTTE's nationalist program, it is certain that if the Tigers are disarmed, the Tamil people in the North and East would be open to a new round of massacres from the vengeful Army that now sees no force that can challenge it. And it would not only be the Lankan Army that commits such atrocities. Pro-government paramilitaries (including traitors in the Tamil community like the TMVP group of LTTE renegades) could also unleash terror.

It is important here to recall the events of 1982 in Lebanon at the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps. The backdrop to these events was Israel's brutal invasion of Lebanon to crush the oppressed Palestinian people. Following the invasion, a "Multinational Force" of U.S. marines and French troops intervened under the guise of being peace makers. The arrangement was that the Multinational Force "Peace Monitors" would shepherd away out of Beirut the Palestinian guerillas protecting the refugees and in return the "Peace Monitors" would themselves "protect" the Palestinians in Beirut. What happened however was that after shepherding out the Palestinian fighters, the Multinational Force withdrew from the refugee camps thus allowing Israel to get its Christian-fascist allies in Lebanon's Phalangist group to storm in and massacre over 3,000 defenceless Palestinian refugees. We must learn the lessons of this bloodbath! **Tamil people should never trust a force containing imperialist militaries to protect them.**

Cut off the Lankan Government's Lifeline – Stop Canberra & Washington's Support for Colombo!

The protests against Colombo's invasion must continue but they must be transformed from rallies appealing for support from Western governments to demonstrations against these governments and their support for the Sri Lankan regime. We should think of it this way: If a person has encouraged his fierce dog to attack you it is useless for you to plead to that dog owner to save you from his dog. But if you take a firm stand against the dog owner, rough him up and make it clear that he is going to be made to pay for encouraging his dog to attack you then he may indeed be forced to put his dog back on a leash. And if you succeeded in making this vicious dog owner scared enough he might even stop feeding his rabid dog until the dog stops his attacks.

Among the demands of the pro-Tamil protests here should be:

- That the Rudd government stop making statements that **encourage** the Colombo regime's occupation. Australian government ministers should SHUT UP their calls on the LTTE to disarm. And they should SHUT UP their statements blaming the LTTE for the bloodbath of Tamil civilians.
- That Canberra and Washington stop their military aid for the Lankan government.
- That all "anti-terror" restrictions on the LTTE be lifted.
- That all government restrictions on Tamils and others in Australia sending financial and other material support to pro-LTTE organizations and the LTTE itself (whether for food aid **or for purchasing arms**) be immediately lifted. We need to help the Tamil people in Sri Lanka to be able to get the arms that they need to defend their lives!
- That the charges be immediately dropped against the three Australian Tamils facing imprisonment on accusations of providing material aid to the LTTE.
- That the charges be dropped against the three Tamil protesters arrested in Parramatta last week. For a halt to all police harassment and intimidation of Tamil protests!
- That all Tamil refugees (along with other refugees) arriving in Australia be immediately granted residency with full citizenship rights.

In fighting for these demands Tamil people can find many supporters. For starters, from Australia's Aboriginal people who understand too well what genocide is all about and have much experience in fighting against it. Many Aboriginal activists are extremely well read and knowledgeable about other peoples' liberation struggles including that of the Tamil people. Then there are the Palestinian people and their numerous supporters - they too understand how the Western rulers sponsor regimes that crush downtrodden peoples. And then there are the sympathizers of the many other genuine liberation struggles of subjugated nations - including those of the Kurds, the Basques, the Chechens, the BangsaMoro Muslim people of the Philippines and the Kashmiris, Sikhs, Nagas and other imprisoned peoples in India.

Most centrally, there is the working class in Australia. It is the glue that can unite the various oppressed peoples together because the working class is the class that has no material interest in supporting the capitalist order - that social order that is ultimately responsible for perpetuating the subjugation of all the different oppressed nationalities. In a positive sign, some Australian union leaders have begun to speak out about the killing of Tamil civilians and the May 7 Unions NSW meeting passed a motion calling on the Sri Lankan government to ensure the safety and wellbeing of civilians caught up in the war. This must be built into a much stronger stand where the union movement unequivocally opposes the Lankan government's occupation of Tamil areas and Canberra's support for it.

It is the organized workers movement that has the power, through being able to turn production *off and on*, to make the Western ruling classes really back down. Trade union contingents need to be mobilized here to participate in the pro-Tamil protests as a step towards building the union industrial action urgently needed to oppose the Colombo government's invasion. In motivating this program, we can point to past struggles by the workers movement of Australia when it has mobilised against national oppression. One such struggle was waged in the years immediately following WWII. In the war years, the Dutch colonialists from Indonesia moved to Australia after their Japanese rivals overran them. After Japan was defeated at the end of WWII and moved out of the territories it occupied, the Dutch imperialists based in Australia moved to reconquer their Indonesian colony. But in solidarity with Indonesian independence fighters, Australian seamen and waterfront workers prevented the ships carrying Dutch personnel and material from being loaded or sailed. These union bans gave crucial assistance to the Indonesian independence movement.

The workers movement today must recall the spirit of these powerful acts of solidarity with the Indonesian independence movement to come to the aid of the embattled Tamil people. Although Sri Lanka as a poor neocolony possesses few major economic interests in Australia that could be hit by industrial action as the post WWII Dutch had, union strikes and bans can **put the squeeze on the Australian ruling class for its backing of Sri Lanka's occupation of Tamil areas**. In particular, **workers industrial action should target the Australian operations of Australian businesses that are making big money in Sri Lanka - like Ansell Ltd, Bluescope Steel and textile manufacturer Pope Packaging**. It is ultimately the owners of these corporations (and the bosses of similar U.S., Japanese and British companies operating in Sri Lanka) alongside the Colombo 7 ultra-rich that the whole Sri Lankan government policy is designed to serve. It is only when these Western corporate exploiters

find that their Colombo attack dogs' invasion is causing their own operations to be hurt by protest actions will they "realise" that they will need to **reign in their dogs**.

Pro-Tamil Protesters Must Clearly Stand against The Western Capitalists

In seeking to win support from the workers movement as well as other subjugated peoples, ordinary Australian Tamils must genuinely support the struggles of these other oppressed sectors. Thus Tamils must, for example, support the Aboriginal peoples struggles for justice and land rights. They must support the Palestinian fight for self-determination and must oppose the horrific imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Tamil people also need to explain to the workers movement how their cause coincides with the worldwide workers struggle against the exploiters of labour. They must explain how the discrimination and violence suffered by Lankan Tamils is a result of the drive by the Lankan capitalists to divert the anger of the poverty-stricken Sinhala toilers away from the capitalists that exploit them. And Australian Tamils should outline how, today, as the global capitalist economic crisis deepens the hardships of the masses, the Lankan exploiting class is ever more frenziedly deepening this diversion. In truthfully describing their struggle in this way, Australia's Tamil masses will show their concern for the workers' cause.

Only if the different streams of the movement are united into one giant torrent can there ever be sufficient force to push the common oppressor back. The common focus that can unite the different streams is **opposition** to the capitalist powers of the world. It is they who are the direct oppressor of Aboriginal people, who incite those who violently crush the Tamil, Palestinian and Kurdish people and who at home leach fabulous profits from workers' toil only to sack these same workers when ever those profits fall a little.

Pro-Tamil protests should, therefore, move away from appealing to the Australian and other Western ruling elites to be their saviour. For not only is this futile, not only does this confuse pro-Tamil activists as to who their friends are and who their enemy is but it has the effect of dividing Tamil people from other exploited and oppressed people. What are Aboriginal people suffering grinding oppression under the Australian rulers to think when they hear Tamil people touting these very same people as "saviours"? What are militant trade unionists to think when they know that the current Australian government continues to maintain the previous Howard regime's fascistic laws against construction unions? When one downtrodden group pleads for support to the imperialist enemy this inevitably means knifing in the back other oppressed groups because one can only appeal to the capitalist powers if one agrees to ignore or even uphold its subjugation of other groups.

A real sign of advancement of the Tamil solidarity movement will be seen when Australian flags are removed from the protests. Currently, Tamil people are carrying the flag as a show of loyalty to the Australian establishment. But not only is this establishment supporting the regime that is butchering the Tamil people, this establishment, the Australian state, serves only the interests of a wealthy few and not the vast majority of working class Australians. So while it was overall terrific that there were hundreds of Tamils swelling the ranks of the Sydney May Day march, the fact that Tamil demonstrators carried the Australian flag would have repelled many other participants. For proud trade unionists and leftists understand that this is the flag of the exploiters of the working class. To Aboriginal people the Australian flag is deeply offensive – it is the flag under which they were massacred and dispossessed. In fighting against genocide, the Tamil people should not raise the flag that symbolises the genocide of another people. Today, the Australian flag is especially raised by racist youth to show their support for the disgusting 2005 White supremacist riot at Cronulla Beach. These racists target anyone who is not white – not only "people of Middle Eastern appearance" but also East Asians, Aboriginal people, Indians, Tamils etc. Finally, the current Australian flag contains that hated symbol of British imperialism and subordination to the monarchy: the Union Jack. Let us not forget that it was British colonial rule of Ceylon that has paved the way to the hell that Tamil people in Sri Lanka are in today. The only way that the flag of Australian capitalism should go up in a Tamil demonstration ... is in smoke!

Some politically astute Tamils now sense that the movement needs to take an anti-imperialist direction. But many of these people are currently reluctant to make this turn because they know that this will put off upper class Tamils – Tamils that are thoroughly loyal to the current social system in Australia because it suits *them* just fine. Although astute Tamil activists don't themselves agree with the outlook of the bourgeois Tamils, they have misgivings about breaking with these bourgeois Tamils because they feel that to a certain degree, at particular times, the upper class Tamils have given some financial and other support to the cause. But at this desperate time, now is especially not the time for sentimentality. Furthermore, history has proven that at critical moments, the upper class Tamils care far more about preserving their privileged position than they do about supporting Tamil liberation. This has always been the case going right back to 1949. Then G.G. Ponnambalam's All Ceylon Tamil Congress supported the disenfranchisement of citizenship rights of Up-Country Tamils because they feared the Up-Country Tamils' strong support for the Marxist parties and militant trade unions. It was this blatantly discriminatory act against Up-Country Tamils that built the platform for the Sinhala Only guillotine that would fall upon the Ceylon Tamils eight years later. It is far, far more important for the Tamil masses to build unity with the oppressed peoples and working classes of the world than to cling on to the slender and erratic "support" of capitalist and wanna-be capitalist Tamils.

Splitting The Sinhala Poor Masses Away from The Warmongering Sinhala Exploiting Class

There is another crucial reason why the movement in defence of the Tamil people must take a definite line against Western imperialism. This has to do with the way that Rajapaksa's SLFP and their JVP coalition partners are selling their bloody invasion to the Sinhala, Muslim and Up-Country Tamil masses. Their military onslaught is in part being sold through a subtle implied message in their propaganda that it is necessary in order to stop an imperialist plot to further subjugate Sri Lanka by dividing it into two. Such dishonest propaganda works because there is legitimate hatred of the colonial powers in Lanka. The country was raped by three different European colonial powers and today much of the wealth sweated out by its toilers is still

directly or indirectly grabbed by Western "multinational" corporations. Meanwhile, people of all ethnicities from the island are still treated with racist arrogance by imperialist societies. Witness the nasty treatment often meted out to Sri Lankan cricket teams touring Australia – the brunt of which has most recently been borne by Up-Country Tamil, spin-legend Muttiah Muralitharan.

That is why it is important for the Tamil solidarity movement to call Rajapaksa's bluff by exposing how it is he and not the Tamil separatists who are carrying out the agenda of the Western imperialists. Far from trying to engineer the break up of Sri Lanka, the Western powers have always been opposed to Tamil Eelam. If worldwide protests against the Colombo regime's occupation take a strong line against the Western powers that are backing it then they will help prove to the masses in the South that it is in fact Rajapaksa's SLFP, the JVP and the monks who are dancing Baila with the Western imperialists.

Already the working people of Sri Lanka are highly suspicious of the "anti-imperialist" credentials of their rulers. The Lankan state that is committing genocidal killings of Tamils also unleashes anti-worker violence in the service of Western "multinational" corporations. A typical incident occurred on 5 September 1994 (see *Multinational Monitor*, 1 January 1995.) It was then that workers at the Australian-owned Ansell Lanka rubber gloves factory (mentioned earlier) and two other smaller foreign-owned factories had assembled to march from the Biyagama Free Trade Zone to Colombo to present a petition. The Ansell workers were demanding a pay increase, increased sick days and permanency. But the police blocked the road with a huge truck to stop the 7,000 marchers from setting off. When the workers peacefully proceeded to march anyway, the Sri Lankan police first fired tear gas and then started shooting. By the end of the incident, eight workers had received gun shot wounds from the police attack and many more were also injured.

There is truly a chasm that separates, on the one hand, the Colombo 7 rich and their Western capitalist senior partners and, on the other hand, the toiling masses in the South. A big gap also separates the ruling class politicians - giving orders from the plush environment of Kotte - from the naive Sinhala rural poor youth who just to gain an income enlists in the Army which then sends him as cannon fodder to kill Tamils and be killed by the Tigers. Presently, this chasm is sealed over with the glue of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism – the one thing that currently keeps the Sinhala masses tied to their exploiters. A wedge must be driven in to break this glue and open up the chasm.

It is primarily the responsibility of the political left in the South to drive this split. But to date what passes for the "Marxist" left in Sri Lanka has woefully failed to take up this task. There are some exceptions. The stance taken, for example, by socialist politician Wickramabahu Karunaratne against Colombo's anti-Tamil terror points to the possibility that leftists in the South will mobilise against the Army's bloody takeover of Tamil areas. Such leftists must, however, stand firm for the long haul and must break decisively from all the worst practices and treachery of the Lankan "Marxist" left. They must not go down the road of the LSSP and CP or more recent traitors like Vasudeva Nanayakarra who once spoke of defending Tamil rights but then ditched those positions to become part of capitalist governments. The tragedy of Lanka is that the socialist movement once promised so much. It led the independence struggle from the British and organized militant strike struggles including among the especially exploited Up Country Tamil estate workers. The upper classes were so scared of the Marxist-trained Lankan workers movement that they granted some concessions to pacify the masses – concessions that enabled the Lankan masses to enjoy standards of basic health care and education slightly better than other "Third World" capitalist countries. But today after all the left's sellouts and capitulations to Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism, life for the masses of Lanka is like living in a hellhole.

There are five major lessons that Lankan leftists must draw if they are to rebuild a movement worthy of the name "Marxist" - a movement with enough integrity to challenge the Sinhala chauvinist terror and the social order that spawns it. Firstly, socialist parties must reject coalition with any capitalist parties. The LSSP and CP excused such coalitions by claiming that the SLFP reflects an "anti-imperialist," more "democratic" wing of the capitalist class. This is rubbish! In a country like Sri Lanka that is still in practice downtrodden by imperialist countries, all wings of the capitalist class are tied to the capitalists of the richer countries. And no wing of the exploiting class is consistently "democratic" either. This is because in semicolonial countries so much of the wealth is plundered by rich-country corporations that the masses are reduced to abject poverty. Thus the capitalist ruling class can only keep its desperate toilers from revolting by repressive means or by diverting them with the most extreme nationalism. The "progressive" SLFP whom the "left" most often joined with has often been a more fanatical proponent of Sinhala chauvinism than even the conservative UNP.

Secondly, Lanka's history has proved that there is no parliamentary road to socialism. Even if a leftist party were to be elected to govern without bourgeois coalition partners, it would not be able to institute decisive progressive measures. For if it tried to, it would face sabotage by the state organs – the police, army, courts and bureaucracy - that have been built up and hardened to serve the interests of the exploiting class. For example, could you imagine Lt. General Fonseka obeying a hypothetical socialist party's orders to protect Tamil rights activists and crush violent Sinhala racists? Or obeying an order to seize the corporate assets of Colombo 7 high fliers to make them the common property of all people? And would he and his ilk simply accept being sacked by the government to allow leftists to institute an anti-chauvinist, anti-capitalist program? No way is the answer to all of these three questions! That is why any ostensibly socialist party that has illusions in the parliamentary road to socialism must eventually sell out – like the LSSP, CP and Vasudeva Nanayakarra have - because they must inevitably make their program acceptable to the Lt. General Fonsekas that dominate the state apparatus. For real communists, parliament is only an arena to gain a wider hearing for the party's views. The means to achieve real progressive change is the class struggle, a struggle that must eventually culminate in the seizure of state power by the toiling masses.

Thirdly, the party that the masses in the island need is not one of showy leaders who think that they are on a higher intellectual plane than their own ranks. That is how many of the LSSP and CP leaders sometimes acted. These parties at times seemed to be led by a collection of stars and big egos. Instead, the communist party that is needed must have a leadership that is close to

the people. Not a leadership that seeks to "combine" the struggle for liberation with personal ambition but a leadership that in its political work is devoted solely and 100% to the struggle of the masses.

Fourthly, without women playing a leading role in the struggle there can be no liberation. In Lanka's ex-Marxist parties, male intellectuals have dominated the leadership. But although women of all ethnicities are terribly oppressed in Lanka, women toilers are strategically placed to spearhead the revolutionary struggle. Largely, women tea pickers form the backbone of the economy and women form a high proportion of the process workers in the Free Trade Zone, textile, clothing and footwear industry factories. In the North and East, women have played a big role in the armed Tamil national liberation struggle and this has to a degree challenged the subservient role foisted upon them in traditional Tamil society.

Fifthly, any party calling itself communist and worth its salt must defend the right of nations to self-determination. This is what Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks taught us:

The right to self determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation....

Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.

- *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self Determination*, V.I. Lenin, 1916.

In Sri Lanka, this means insisting on the right of the Tamils in the North and East to establish Tamil Eelam. After years of pogroms and mass killings of Tamils, the only way that the island can be freed from the pernicious grip of Sinhala chauvinism is if Tamil Eelam is separated out of Lanka and thereby the national question is taken out of the picture. And only when this Tamil Eelam is granted can the Tamil masses begin to rebuild trust in their Sinhala counterparts so that in warm, neighbourly friendship the Sinhala and Tamil working classes can cooperate in removing the exploiting classes, both Sinhalese and Tamil, from power.

The Tamil People Are Not Alone

Right now it is an extremely grim, tormenting time for Tamil people the world over. While their people are being crushed in the North and East of Lanka it seems that all the powerful forces in the world are against them. But the Tamil people are, in fact, not alone.

Firstly, there are all the other peoples suffering national subjugation who can understand from their own experience what Tamil people are facing and can be united with Tamil people to jointly struggle against their oppressors. The dispossessed Aboriginal people of Australia, other indigenous peoples in the U.S., Canada and Chile, the Palestinians, the Kurds, Philippine Moros, Kashmiris and Nagas as well as the occupied peoples of Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor. Then there are the other peoples who face racial oppression – including Asian, African and Middle Eastern minorities in Australia and South Asians and Jamaicans in Britain. U.S. blacks are still terribly downtrodden no matter that there is a person with a black face heading the administration of the system that oppresses them.

Secondly, although capitalist powers dominate the world, not every country in the world is capitalist-ruled. There is Cuba, the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Vietnam and North Korea. One of these countries, the PRC has the world's fastest growing economy and is a rising world power. To be sure, the transition to socialism in China and the other workers states is far from perfect and far from secure. But the fact that the core of the PRC economy is still based on collectively-owned production rather than the capitalist profit system means that if the PRC were to decide to intervene into another country's affairs there is a **possibility** that this intervention could be genuinely liberating. The PRC is in fact the only world power that **could** intervene into a "Third World" country like Sri Lanka without a predatory motive. Unfortunately, rather than pursuing the internationalist goals of Lenin's revolutionary communists in Russia, the PRC leaders subscribe to a conservative, distorted form of Marxism that turns its back on the international struggle for liberation. PRC leaders only concentrate on trying to build socialism in their own country while striving to maintain "peaceful coexistence with capitalism" internationally. They plead with the capitalist world to not interfere in their own affairs by in turn promising not to challenge the terrible oppression of capitalist rule internationally. This policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries" is utterly national-centred. However, it should not be confused with the foreign policy of the capitalist powers which is always geared to deepening the exploitation of "Third World" countries. So, for example, the PRC has built truly mutually beneficial economic relationships with African and Latin American countries which is a far cry from the way that Western powers have arrogantly demanded that these countries slash social services, privatise and hand over control of key economic sectors. However, the reality of the PRC's "peaceful coexistence with capitalism" also means that it seeks cordial relations with every capitalist government no matter how oppressive. And that means that the PRC (like their socialistic counterparts in Cuba) has cordial relations with the bloodthirsty regime in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, no matter how much Western powers attack socialistic rule in the PRC, the PRC government still tries to build good relationships with these capitalist powers - build good relationships, that is, with the globe's most reactionary forces, the forces that are ultimately responsible for the carnage of Tamils. Nevertheless, as long as the PRC remains under a form of workers rule, there is a possibility that its inward looking foreign policy will be overturned. This possibility exists because the "peaceful coexistence with capitalism" policy is not only damaging to the world's oppressed but puts in danger the socialist gains in the PRC itself. For no matter how much the PRC grovels to capitalist governments, capitalist rulers cannot but seek to sabotage its socialist construction. There are elements within the left wing of the ruling Communist Party of China who to a degree understand this and they are also the ones resisting greater capitalist incursions into China itself. On the other hand there are right-leaning forces who want even more accommodation with capitalist governments internationally as well as greater "freedom" to operate for pro-capitalist forces within China. This contest

between the PRC left and the PRC right will shape not only China but indeed the whole world. The world's oppressed, not least the Tamil people, need the genuinely communist forces to triumph within the PRC. Part of the march towards that triumph will come through popularising the need for a foreign policy that is based on an alliance with the exploited and oppressed of the world. We therefore make the following appeal. Sister and brother Chinese masses: You have made much headway towards your liberation since you grabbed state power through your great Revolution 60 years ago. But here in the capitalist world – from Mexico to Sri Lanka to India to Australia – we are still suffering. We need your help – help us to achieve our liberation too! Drop your foreign policy of “non-interference”! We respectfully warn you too that unless you help us to rid ourselves of our oppressors, these same oppressors will gang up and eventually succeed in rolling back your revolution. And then you too will end up in the miserable position that we are in today.

Thirdly, there is that sleeping tiger – the Sinhala working class who too is subjugated by the same rulers that murder Tamil people. Although Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism has currently infected many Sinhala workers, eventually more thoughtful Sinhala worker activists are going to realise that this chauvinism is a threat to them as well. If the Colombo regime succeeds in its

anti-Tamil agenda, the chauvinist hysteria in the South will be so bad that any workers' strike, any social struggle will be crushed on the grounds that it is a threat to Sinhala-Buddhist supremacy. That is why a component of the Sinhala toilers must break completely from chauvinism and become champions of the fight for Tamil Eelam. But, on the contrary, if some section of the Sinhala toilers does not rise in time to fight against the oppression of Tamil people, then the Tamil people will face a horrible future.

Fourthly, there is the working class in the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Unlike their double crossing rulers, the Indian toiling masses are genuinely sympathetic to the oppressed Eelam Tamils. Although workers in the subcontinent are terribly exploited they have plenty of fight in them. Just last August, millions of workers in India's airport, rail and banking sectors simultaneously struck against price rises and anti-worker government policies. Especially if boosted by a surge in the Nepalese revolutionary movement, there could be a strengthening of the class struggle in the subcontinent. If that happens, the masses may acquire the muscle needed to strangle the New Delhi arm that helps to hold up Colombo's anti-Tamil invasion.

Last but not least there are the working masses and anti-racists in the rest of the world –including the West and Japan. The fact is that the reactionary policies of the imperialist rulers – from their bloody occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq, and East Timor to their support for Tel Aviv's and Colombo's terror – does no good for working class people in their own countries. Far from it! In fact, the more the Western ruling classes are able to get away with predatory interventions abroad, the more confident they are to exploit toilers in their own countries and make workers pay for their system's economic crisis. More politically astute workers and leftist activists see this. Today, even despite all the anti-Tamil propaganda coming from Murdoch's newspapers and from the big business or government-owned TV stations, there are a growing number of non-Tamils – from anti-war activists, to Palestine supporters to some trade unionists – who see the necessity to oppose the slaughter of Tamil people. The key question now for the Tamil solidarity movement is to ensure that the struggle here turns **from one that appeals to the Australian ruling class to one that opposes it. Build towards workers political strikes to protest against the Australian rulers' support for the Sri Lankan Army's occupation of Tamil areas! Hit with trade union industrial action Australian business owners – like those of Ansell Ltd, Bluescope Steel and Pope Packaging – that profit from and shape Lanka's blood-soaked political order! We must by such worldwide methods push these Western corporate bigwigs and their politicians against the wall. Push against the wall until Rajapaksa and the other thugs realise that they will need to back off from the Tamil people if they want to save their godfathers in the West from our wrath.** Stop the brutal killings of Tamil people – Demand that the Sri Lankan Army immediately withdraw from all Tamil majority areas! Support the creation of Tamil Eelam so that Sinhala and Tamil workers, who then will be friendly neighbours living mostly in the separate states of Lanka and Eelam, will again trust each other enough to build strong class struggle solidarity!



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