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Sri Lanka: New Tamil alliance declares pro-US agenda

The Tamil People's National Alliance (TPNA), recently formed on the initiative of former Northern Provincial Council Chief Minister C.V. Wigneswaran, is another mechanism to trap the anger of war-affected Tamil people and curry favour with US imperialism and India by serving their strategic interests.

Wigneswaran is the leader of Tamil People's Alliance (TPA) formed last year. Other groups in the front launched on February 9 include the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) led by Suresh Premachandran, the Tamil National Party (TNP) and the Autonomous League of Eelam Tamil (ALET).

Though this alliance proclaims itself as an "alternative" to the discredited TNA, all these groups have associated with the TNA in the past.

The TNA promoted Wigneswaran as northern chief minister in 2013. The TNP has been formed by former leaders of Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and was a partner of TNA along with EPRLF. ALET was formed by former provincial council member Ananthi Sasitharan who won his position as a candidate of the TNA.

The policy statement of TPNA appeals for a political solution "on self-determination." It calls for "maximum autonomy and sovereignty based on federalism merging north and east, according to the changes in global politics."

In accordance with changing "global politics" means nothing but backing the US war preparations against China and in return obtaining Washington's support to secure the interest of the Tamil bourgeoisie.

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In an article in *Veerakesari*, C.A. Jothilingam, one of the mentors to form the TPNA, noted: “Sri Lanka is unprecedentedly tightly attached to the international agenda... Tamil politics too is compelled to go behind it and should handle the international politics.”

The “international agenda” cited by Jothilingam is the policy of the US and its regional ally, India, against China to secure their geopolitical interests.

The TNA, which follows the same reactionary line, backed the US orchestrated regime change operation to oust Mahinda Rajapakse and install Maithripala Sirisena as president in 2015. Washington did not oppose Rajapakse’s communal war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or his anti-democratic rule but was hostile to his close relations with Beijing.

US imperialism is seeking to bring Sri Lanka—strategically located in the Indian Ocean—within its orbit.

The TNA party fraudulently campaigned among Tamil masses in 2015 to promote Sirisena as a man who would address human rights violations and democratic rights. After he was installed, the TNA has supported every move of the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government: integration of the country’s military with the US Pacific Command, the suppression of any probe into war crimes and the International Monetary Fund’s austerity program.

All the parties and individuals now regrouped in the TPNA backed these policies. Its appeal for a so-called political solution is a plea for greater power sharing for the Tamil elite in the joint exploitation of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim workers by local and international capital.

After directly backing it for years, Wigneswaran in his speech at the inaugural meeting cynically accused the TNA of making concessions to the previous Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government. “The TNA has created a situation for Sinhala leaders to declare bravely that Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country and the minority people should not request a solution disliked by Sinhalese,” he declared.

President Gotabhaya Rajapakse, who was elected in November, and his allies have intensified their Sinhala-Buddhist supremacist campaign. Pointing a finger at Rajapakse, Wigneswaran and his supporters, organised as the Tamil People’s Council (TPC), have initiated their own reactionary communal campaign including “Eluka Tamil” or “Rise up Tamils.”

The former chief minister last week “welcomed” the travel ban imposed on Sri Lanka’s Army Commander Shavendra Silva, by the US. Wigneswaran commented: “The action shows the essential obligation of the international countries to prosecute cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide by Sri Lankan security forces.”

The travel ban on the general has nothing to do with prosecuting the gross human rights violations of the Sri Lankan military. The US is the biggest human rights violator on the planet and helped the previous Colombo government to suppress any action on war crimes. It is again exploiting “human rights” to pressure President Rajapakse to adhere to Washington’s war drive against China.

The travel ban will do nothing to address the demands of Tamils for justice for the crimes of political leaders in Colombo and the military during the 30-year civil war, including the final phase of the war during which tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were killed, executed after surrendering or simply “disappeared.”

Wigneswaran last year told the TPC central committee: “India began to understand that the maritime security of South India is depending on the strengthening the safety of Sri Lankan Tamils. It is necessary to maintain a smooth relationship with India...”

After last year’s Easter Sunday bombings by a Muslim terrorist group in Sri Lanka, he openly supported the anti-Muslim chauvinism of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying: “There are more than 200 million Muslims in India, Kashmir is still in a troubling situation. India is now confronted with the problem of foreign and domestic Islamism.”

The EPRLF and TELO are also loyal allies of New Delhi. Both parties took part in atrocities of the so-called Indian Peace Keeping Force, sent to north and east of Sri Lanka in 1987 as part of the Indo-Lanka Accord. The Indian troops were not there to promote peace or defend democratic rights but to disarm the LTTE and suppress opposition to Colombo government.

The new alliance has been formed amid growing opposition of Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim workers to the austerity agenda of the previous government, now continued by President Rajapakse. Like their counterparts in Colombo, the Tamil elites are terrified and hostile to any movement of the working class.

As the TNA has been discredited for its betrayals, offshoots of this organisation are forming one alliance after another to block the development of a unified movement of

working people. None of these parties have uttered a word against or about Rajapakse's moves to establish authoritarian rule to suppress the working class.

Tamil workers and youth must draw the necessary lessons from the military defeat of the LTTE and the treachery of other Tamil parties. The LTTE's defeat was not just a military question, but was a product of the bankrupt perspective of appealing to the "international community," above all US imperialism for the creation of a separate Tamil state. At the same time, the LTTE which reflected the interests of the Tamil bourgeoisie, was organically opposed to any appeal to the working class in Sri Lanka and internationally.

The defence of the democratic rights of the Tamil people can only be achieved through the united struggle of workers across ethnic lines and internationally on a socialist program to overthrow capitalism. On this basis, the Socialist Equality Party fights for a socialist republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam as part of the fight for socialism in Asia and internationally. We urge working people and youth to reject the reactionary politics of the Tamil parties and to fight for this program.

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