

LTTE bomb in Colombo kills 38

Atrocity in Sri Lanka serves reactionary ends

**Statement of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka
13 March 1998**

The Socialist Equality Party, Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, strongly condemns the bus bomb detonated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at the city centre of Colombo on Thursday, March 5.

This explosion outside the city's main train station instantly killed 38 and seriously injured more than 250 innocent civilians, including a large number of women and many children returning from school. A primary school van carrying over a dozen children was blown to bits by the impact of the bomb, leaving no survivors. The bomb went off at one of the busiest times of the day, and at one of the most crowded locations in Colombo. Primary school children were certain to be among those hit by the explosion, since those schools close at mid-day.

More than 300 vehicles that had stopped for traffic lights were damaged, and several stores nearby collapsed on top of shoppers who were doing their marketing.

At least two powerful, shrapnel-packed bombs were affixed to the side boards of a 25-seat Nissan mini-bus whose sole occupant was the suicide bomber. That individual detonated the explosive when traffic police tried to reprimand him for an accident involving his vehicle.

This is the eighth in a series of major bomb attacks carried out by the LTTE in the city of Colombo since April of 1995, when the Peoples Alliance (PA) regime intensified its war against the Tamil population in the northeast part of Sri Lanka. The first of these bombs, which exploded in October of 1995, was aimed at the army headquarters. However, it went off in a street nearby the target, killing 20 civilians on the spot and doing no damage to the Army.

That same month the oil installations in Colombo

were attacked, killing more than 20. Two months later an LTTE bomb exploded at the Central Bank. Eighty six bank employees and other workers died and more than 1,000 were wounded. That July Dehiwala train bombs killed 57 home-bound office workers and injured over 300.

After a lapse of 15 months, another major bomb was activated in October of last year by the LTTE near the World Trade Centre and the Galadari Hotel. Again there were several scores of victims, all civilians.

The following month an attack was carried out damaging two oil storage tanks at Colombo's main power station. The next bombing occurred on January 6 of this year, when another suicide bomber blew herself up after being stopped by security personnel. Nine people died, including the passengers of a van which had also been stopped by the security police.

In addition to the devastation inflicted on life and property in the war zone itself, these bombings in Colombo highlight the carnage resulting from the racist war of the capitalist regime against the Tamils. At the same time, they expose the reactionary and desperate politics of the LTTE, which uses such terrorist methods in its attempt to set up a separate capitalist state in the North and East of the country.

LTTE bomb attacks on civilians in Colombo, as well as the recent bombing of a Buddhist shrine in Kandy, are clearly intended to whip up a Sinhala racist backlash against the Tamils in the South. The LTTE leaders calculate that such a development would prove helpful in promoting their separatist agenda. Such are the degenerate tactics they carry out in the name of achieving democracy!

The PA regime has dubbed its military assault on the Tamil masses a "war for peace," while the LTTE calls its military attacks a "war of national liberation." The

claims of both the Sinhala and Tamil pro-imperialist bourgeoisie are fraudulent. They aim at neither peace nor genuine liberation. Both the PA regime and the LTTE leadership bring only more misery and death to the Sinhala and Tamil masses.

When the United National Party (UNP), which ruled for 17 years beginning in 1977, grew less and less stable due to mounting opposition from workers, the rural poor and youth, the imperialist powers showed sympathy for the LTTE's struggle for a separate Tamil state. Their aim was to establish a new bourgeois state in the North and East in the event that the Colombo regime proved unable to guarantee profits for transnational corporations.

Now, however, imperialist support has shifted to the PA regime, which is carrying out the war against the Tamils more aggressively than the previous regime, and clamping down on the struggles of workers and the rural poor more vigorously. It does so with the support of the ex-Trotskyist Sama Samaja Party, the Stalinist Communist Party, the Nava Sama Samaja Party, the Ceylon Workers Congress of Thondaman and other trade union bureaucracies.

All of the imperialist powers-American, British, German, Australian etc.-have come forward to condemn the latest bombing attack of the LTTE and declare their support for the "peace moves" of the PA regime.

This experience shows the blind ally into which the oppressed nationalities and communities are driven under the bourgeois banner of "self-determination." The only way forward for the oppressed masses who aspire to secure democratic rights and social equality is to rally to the proletarian internationalist banner of socialism. This is the perspective and program on which the SEP fights to unify and mobilise the Sinhala and Tamil working class and the oppressed masses of Sri Lanka and Eelam. The establishment of a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam, as part of a Soviet Republic of the Indian sub-continent, is the only way to stop the racist war and fratricidal carnage.



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