

Messages from Russia, US, Australia demand release of Tamil socialists

The WSWS Editorial Board
15 August 1998

Faxes, letters and e-mails continue to be sent to the London offices of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), as the *World Socialist Web Site* steps up the international campaign to demand the release of three Tamil socialists arrested by the LTTE.

Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleshwaran and Rajendran Sudarshan, all members of the Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party, were arrested in Kilinochchi, a district in the north of the country which is under the control of the LTTE, the separatist guerrilla group waging war in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Sambandan and Naguleshwaran were taken into custody on July 26 as they were posting SEP placards in the area. Sudarshan was arrested August 2 in his home.

The LTTE is notorious for using violence, including murder, against its political opponents. On July 28, when relatives of Sambandan and Naguleshwaran spoke with the LTTE official in charge of the area, Theepan, he said he had ordered the arrests because the SEP's politics had become an obstacle to the LTTE's activities. Theepan added he had handed the two SEP members over to Pottu Amman, the head of the LTTE police in the area. Amman is well-known for his brutal treatment of LTTE opponents.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has spearheaded an international campaign to demand the release of the Sri Lankan SEP members. Hundreds of press releases have been sent to newspapers, press agencies, television and radio stations and web sites throughout the world. The Sri Lankan SEP and its sister parties throughout the world have contacted scores of human and civil rights groups, labor organizations and individuals concerned with the defense of democratic rights, appealing for letters of protest to be sent. In Britain alone, scores of organizations and news agencies, including Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan newspapers, journals and web sites, as well as South East Asian Studies academics were contacted

Friday.

Also on Friday, the WSWS received a copy of a fax sent to the LTTE offices from the editorial board members of the Russian magazine "Social Equality," protesting the arrest and detention of the Tamil SEP members. The magazine is published by supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International from Chelyabinsk, Russia. Their letter denounced the arrests as a "clear case of a politically-motivated attack on basic democratic rights."

A letter was also sent by a dozen workers at the General Motors brake plant in Dayton, Ohio, members of United Auto Workers Local 696. It read in part, "The SEP has always fought to bring about the international unity of all workers, while opposing any person or group who would try to separate us. The unity of Sinhala and Tamil workers and farmers is the only way the racist war being waged by the government in Colombo can be defeated. As part of our duty to stand with the international working class, we condemn the arrest of the SEP members and demand that they be released and returned unharmed."

An aircraft maintenance worker and metal workers' union delegate in Sydney, Australia also sent a protest. Describing himself as "longtime supporter of the Tamil struggle," he stated that "the actions of the LTTE are clearly an attack on socialist and internationalist politics and on the democratic rights of all workers and their organizations. As a delegate of one of this country's largest unions (the AMWU), I can promise you that I will be campaigning within that organisation for the release of the SEP members."

Another letter, sent from a public servant in Melbourne, said many Australians "tend to regard nationalism throughout the region as the direct and evil outcome of Euro-American commerce and imperialism." If the LTTE imprisons people for "internationalist views," he said, they would be seen "in the same bad light as Hindu

Nationalists in India.”

When the SEP in Sri Lanka first learned of the arrests, on August 4, it immediately sent a letter of protest to the LTTE’s head offices, located in London, England. Similar messages have been sent by the SEP’s fraternal parties in India, Europe, North America, Russia and Australia. Scores of protests have been sent by individuals in the US, Canada, Britain, Germany, Japan and Australia. An organization of Indian textile workers, Australian fertilizer workers, London bus drivers and US telephone workers also sent protests.

Despite this outpouring of letters and faxes protesting the arrests, the LTTE has to date failed to issue any statement on the whereabouts or condition of the detainees. On August 12 a representative from the LTTE in London informed the *World Socialist Web Site* that the messages and letters were relayed to the LTTE in Sri Lanka and he was awaiting a response.

The WSWs urgently calls on all of its readers, all labor and human rights organizations, and all who defend basic democratic rights to send faxes and letters to the LTTE condemning the arrest of the SEP members in Kilinochchi and demanding their immediate and unconditional release.

Letters should be faxed to the LTTE c/o Eelam House (London) at:

44-171-403-1653

Telephone: 44-171-403-4554.

Statements can also be mailed to:

The LTTE
c/o Eelam House
202 Long Lane
London SE1 4QB
United Kingdom

Please send copies of all statements of protest to the WSWs at:

Email: editor@wsws.org

Fax: (US) 248-967-3023



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact