LTTE signals support for NATO bombing

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The leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has made no public comment on NATO's air war against Yugoslavia. But through an aligned organisation, it has signalled its support for imperialist military intervention in the Kosovo crisis.

Earlier this month, the Federation of Tamil Associations of United Kingdom sent a letter of invitation to journalists for an April 25 rally in London. Issued by the federation's press officer, whose address is the same as that of the LTTE's London bureau, the invitation favourably contrasts the "West's" reaction to the Kosovo crisis with its attitude toward the war that erupted in 1983 in response to the Sri Lankan state's oppression of the Tamil minority.

Quoting an April 6 speech by Roger Wareham, of the International Association Against Torture, the invitation says, "Developed countries and their media's response to certain situations, like Kosovo, is markedly different than it is for Third World situations like Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Rwanda and El Salvador, where many more thousands of civilians were killed.

"Rhetorical flourishes, notwithstanding, the Sri Lankan government is not taking the steps necessary to justly resolve the Tamil struggle for self-determination. Its war against Tamil people, its press censorship, its detention of political prisoners, its failure to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act--all violate the human rights of the Tamil people."

Exposure of the hypocritical nature of NATO's invocation of human rights is a necessary part of the struggle against the current war in the Balkans and against future attempts by the US and its allies to give an altruistic guise to aggressions aimed at securing their predatory economic and geopolitical interests.

On March 26, the *World Socialist Web Site* published an editorial "Whom will the United States bomb next?" that warned the NATO intervention in Kosovo establishes a precedent for the US and other imperialist powers to militarily attack any country should they disagree with its internal policies. The editorial then added that were the US sincere in its opposition to the violation of the rights of national and ethnic minorities, Washington would be "obliged to radically alter its attitude to a long list of countries".

"It must, for example, embrace the cause of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka and end its support for the regime in Colombo that continues to prosecute a bloody war against the Tamils in the northeast of that island nation.

"It must prepare for military action against its present NATO ally Turkey, which conducts a policy of police-military repression against its substantial Kurdish minority even more savage than that pursued by Milosevic against the Kosovars."

But the Federation of Tamil Associations was not trying to expose the hypocrisy of the US and the other NATO powers. It reproduced Wareham's remarks without comment and an appeal to journalists who work for news organisations that have worked alongside the British government in rallying public support for the NATO intervention. The only inference possible is that the Federation of Tamil Associations and the LTTE hope to induce, if not NATO, at least one or more of its major powers to impose a settlement to the 15-year-long war on the island.

Support for an imperialist expeditionary force in Sri Lanka would be in line with the evolution of LTTE strategy. In recent years, the LTTE has frequently called for UN intervention to end the war or for mediation by a "third party". Last December, LTTE leader V. Prabakaran, broke with long-standing LTTE policy when he said his movement would be willing to accept mediation by countries that have provided financial and military assistance to the Sri Lankan state in its war against the Tamils--an obvious reference to the US and Britain.

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Clearly the LTTE has learnt nothing from the debacle it, and more importantly, the Tamil masses suffered in the 1980s, because of the LTTE's opportunist and reactionary alliance with the Indian bourgeoisie. Under Indira Gandhi and then her son Rajiv, India patronised the LTTE, so as to prevent the Tamil struggle from becoming a challenge to the nation-state system in South Asia and to pressure the Sri Lankan government to recognise India as the regional superpower. Through its intelligence agency, RAW (Research and Intelligence Wing), India supplied the LTTE with arms and training, only to intervene, with the LTTE's blessing, to police a "peace settlement" (the 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan Accord) that ran roughshod over the Tamils' democratic aspirations and preserved the Sri Lankan state and its racist constitution.

Within a few months of the accord's signing, the LTTE was complaining to the UN that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) had become an army of occupation that was subjecting the majority Tamil population of the North and East to military rule. "Cordon-off operations, house to house searches, search and destroy missions, mass identification parades, arrest, detention and torture of Tamil youth continues unabated by the IPKF.... There is no freedom of public mobility. The Tamil areas are placed under rigid military administration" (*Unjust war against Tamils*, LTTE memorandum to UN Conference on Human Rights, February 1988).

Subsequently, in a published reappraisal of its alliance with the Indian government, the LTTE leadership claimed that New Delhi had actually colluded with Sri Lankan security forces for years "Mr. Unnikrishnan who was in charge of RAW in Tamil Nadu was responsible for the co-ordination of the activities of various Tamil groups. But Mr. Unnikrishnan was passing on vital information to Sri Lanka such as the type of training and arms given to the Tamil militants. Relative strengths of each group, strategic plans etc. were progressively passed on to the Sri Lankan Government" (*India and the Eelam Tamil Crisis*, Political Committee, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam).

This bitter and bloody experience notwithstanding, the LTTE leadership has continued to appeal to the Indian government for support. Hostile to any perspective for linking the struggle against the national oppression of the Tamils with the socialist and democratic strivings of the oppressed masses in Sri Lanka's South and the international working class, the LTTE pursues and has always pursued a strategy of manoeuvring amongst the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie, the great powers and international capital for support.

Like other ostensible national liberation movements, from the PLO to the IRA, it has responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increasing economic domination of the transnationals by trying to woo international capital and insinuate itself into the new imperialist world order.

The Tamil masses must be warned. Through its support for the NATO aggression in Kosova the LTTE is signalling its readiness to support the introduction of an imperialist expeditionary force on the island, which in the name of bringing an end to ethnic warfare would strengthen the capitalist state against the masses, Sinhalese and Tamil, and greatly increase imperialist economic and political domination over the island as a whole.

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