

Indian Stalinists line up with national bourgeoisie on Sri Lanka's Tamil issue

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10 May 2012

The stand of India's main Stalinist parliamentary parties on the question of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority is based on defending the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie. On this issue, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM and the Communist Party of India (CPI) have lined up with New Delhi and the communal parties of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

A resolution on the "Sri Lankan Tamil issue" passed by the CPM's 20th national congress, held in Kozhikode in early April, calls for "a political settlement based on the provision of autonomy and devolution of powers for the Tamil-speaking areas," that is, a power-sharing arrangement between the island's Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim elites for the north and east.

The CPM resolution also "urges the Indian government to make all necessary political and diplomatic efforts" for "[t]he full rehabilitation and resettlement of the Tamil people." It calls on Colombo to conduct "an independent and credible enquiry into the human rights violations and to establish accountability."

This time-worn jargon of a "political settlement" has nothing to do with addressing issues of democratic rights of the island's Tamil masses. The Indian ruling elite seeks to use pro-capitalist Tamil parties in Sri Lanka integrated into the Colombo establishment to boost its influence in Sri Lanka. At the same time, it seeks to deflect the anger of the Tamil Nadu population, which is concerned about the plight of ethnically-related Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The CPM has called for the "rehabilitation and resettlement" of displaced people and investigations of "human rights violations." The CPM wants New Delhi to exploit human rights issues as a lever to pressure

President Mahinda Rajapakse to line up with India's interests.

The CPM's and CPI's positions came sharply into focus when the US presented a resolution on Sri Lankan human rights violations to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March. While the CPI supported the resolution directly, the CPM backed it in a roundabout way.

The US resolution urged Colombo to implement the limited proposals of its own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). Rajapakse appointed this commission to whitewash the government's war crimes during the final offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009.

Delhi voted for the resolution to deflect pressure on Tamil Nadu political parties and to send a message to Colombo that India opposes China's growing economic and strategic influence in Sri Lanka. Pursuing its aggressive policy against China, Washington wants the Rajapakse government to distance itself from Beijing.

The CPI congress, which ended on March 30th, hailed the resolution passed at the UNHRC as providing an "opportunity" for India to "persuade" Sri Lanka to take humanitarian actions, investigate war crimes, and propose a political solution. The US resolution has nothing to do with any of these aims, in fact. It was designed to serve the interests of the US and of India.

The CPM congress resolution or the statement issued on Sri Lanka on March 13 prior to UNHRC vote was silent on the US resolution, only so that the party could maintain its bogus anti-US position.

The CPI and CPM lined up with the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK, Tamil

Nadu's ruling party), Dravida Munnethra Kazhagam (DMK) and Marumalarchi Dravida Munnethra Kazhagam (MDMK) in their communal campaign backing the resolution.

On March 13, all these parties, including the CPM and CPI, blocked the proceedings in both houses of the Indian parliament, demanding New Delhi back the US resolution on Sri Lanka. This pressure was one of the reasons that forced Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to declare that his government would support the resolution.

Like the other major powers, India backed the Rajapakse government's military offensive against the LTTE, providing military assistance and logistical support. India turned a blind eye to the killing tens of thousands of Tamils, including civilians, in the military's attacks—while hundreds of thousands of people faced starvation or were denied medical aid.

The CPM and CPI backed this brutal offensive while cynically expressing concern for the “plight of the Tamil civilian population” caught in the fight, while insisting that they do not support the LTTE. Such concerns were expressed even by Tamil Nadu political parties.

Addressing the media in Madurai in Tamil Nadu on February 2, 2009, CPM general secretary Karat said, “The plight of the Tamil civilian population is the primary concern to be dealt with immediately.” He added, “Since we maintain a good neighbourly relationship with Sri Lanka” as a sovereign country, “India should step up its diplomatic and political intervention to save the civilian population, who are caught in the war zone.”

While paying lip service to Sri Lanka's sovereignty, they uphold India's regional supremacy and claim it has the right to intervene in Sri Lanka “diplomatically and politically”.

Both the CPM and CPI opposed the separatist LTTE, from the standpoint of defending the Indian bourgeois national state. They opposed the separatist program of the LTTE, but not from the principled Marxist standpoint, that it represented a nationalist bourgeois project that divides the working class along communal lines. The CPM and CPI shared concerns of India's national bourgeoisie that LTTE separatism would encourage similar separatist tendencies in India, undermining the Indian state.

The CPI-CPM support for the Sri Lankan war and defense of the Indian bourgeoisie's interests has a long history.

Both these parties supported the July 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord signed by then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayawardene. Under this accord, an Indian Peacekeeping Force was invited to the north and east of Sri Lanka to suppress the LTTE and the resistance of Tamils in north and east of the island that killed thousands of people. At the same time, it gave breathing space for Colombo and the Sri Lankan military to suppress rural unrest, killing about 60,000 youth.

The CPI welcomed “the agreement as a positive step towards the solution of the long standing ethnic problem.” The CPM said, if properly accepted by all and implemented, it should settle the Tamil issue. Trying to pose as the defender of Tamils, the CPM said that the Indo-Lanka accord was necessary for defeating the aims of the imperialists and strengthening relations between the two countries.

These Stalinist parties work closely with the Indian bourgeois to defend its interests within the country and internationally. If there are any differences between them and other capitalist parties, it is over what is the best way to serve these interests. The CPM and CPI have a notorious record of backing the governments at the centre as well as in the regional states.

The stand of these parties on Sri Lankan Tamil issue shows they are ready to line up even with the imperialists in defending India's national interests.



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