

India: We Tamils Party promotes communalism in Tamil Nadu

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The Tamil extremist Naam Thamilar Katchi (NTK or We Tamils Party) was in the forefront of a reactionary communal campaign waged by Tamil parties last month in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu over the crimes of the Sri Lankan government against that country's Tamil minority.

NTK leader Sebastian Seeman went to Geneva as part of his party's efforts to pressure the Indian government to vote for a US-sponsored resolution at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on the Sri Lankan government's human rights violations.

The US resolution had nothing to do with defending the democratic rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Washington backed the Sri Lankan government's communal war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and turned a blind eye to its war crimes. The US only began to raise the issue of human rights after the LTTE's defeat in 2009, as a means of pressuring Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse to distance himself from China. By backing the US resolution, the NTK and other Tamil groups are serving US strategic interests.

The NTK and other Tamil parties cover up the real reason for the LTTE's defeat, which was a product of its communal politics. Cornered by the Sri Lankan military, the bourgeois LTTE was organically incapable of making any appeal to the working class in Sri Lanka, India or internationally. Instead, it issued utterly futile appeals to India, the US and other powers that had been backing the Colombo government's war.

The NTK was founded on May 18, 2010, the first anniversary of the LTTE's military defeat. Seeman, a film director and actor, used the name NTK to emphasise his party's communal credentials as against other parties, such as the Dravida Munnethra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida

Munnethra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the ruling party in Tamil Nadu. Previously, Seeman was a supporter of the LTTE.

In Geneva, Seeman met with representatives of LTTE exile groups such as the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) and the Global Tamil Forum (GTF). These organisations are oriented to seeking the support of the US and the European imperialist powers to establish a separate state in Sri Lanka or strike a power-sharing agreement with Colombo government.

Addressing a public meeting in Geneva on March 22, Seeman told the audience that his party was founded in opposition to the killing of Tamils in Sri Lanka. He accused other Tamil Nadu parties of not representing the "original Tamils" but Dravidians—a term commonly used to identify people in southern Indian states, including Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh as well as Tamil Nadu.

Seeman sought to portray himself as a "True Tamil" and the saviour of Tamils. "Neither [the DMK or AIADMK] is trustworthy nor a leader of my race," he said. "Political freedom is the last opportunity for the Tamil nation, which is being a slave in all conditions, as a linguistic slave, Indian slave, Dravidian slave, caste slave, and religious slave."

Seeman has no fundamental differences with the ruthless policies of the DMK and AIADMK toward the working class. He is putting the NTK forward as a more aggressive representative of the Tamil ruling elites in Tamil Nadu.

Seeman bases himself on the reactionary project of S. P. Adithanar, who founded the We Tamils Party in 1958 and initiated a campaign for a separate Tamil Nadu state. Adithanar exploited the opposition to the forcible imposition of Hindi as India's official language. The then Congress government repressed the

“We Tamils” movement. Adithanar abandoned his campaign in the early 1960s and liquidated his party into the DMK in 1967.

The NTK is seeking to exploit, for electoral purposes, the widespread anger in Tamil Nadu over the Sri Lankan government’s oppressive methods against Tamils. The party intends to contest the Tamil Nadu assembly elections in 2016. Seeman said “political freedom for Tamils” could be achieved if a “true Tamil” came to power and made “the central government bow to our demands.” Hinting at separatism, he said New Delhi had to decide “whether there will be a Tamil Eelam or Tamil Nadu.”

The NTK’s opportunist and right-wing character was evident during the 2011 state elections in Tamil Nadu. It accused the Indian government and its DMK partner of being responsible for the deaths of LTTE leaders and tens of thousands of Tamils during the Sri Lankan war. At the same time, the NTK backed the AIADMK, whose leader J. Jayalalitha publicly backed the Rajapakse government’s reactionary war, and only belatedly criticised its war crimes.

Like the DMK and AIADMK, the NTK’s communal campaign is an attempt to divide workers in Tamil Nadu from their class brothers in Sri Lanka and India. It is true that the Rajapakse government is responsible for war crimes. However, Seeman falsely blames Sinhala people as a whole for the government’s crimes. On March 26, at a public meeting in France, Seeman declared: “The dead were all Tamils. Sinhalese massacred them.”

In Tamil Nadu, the NTK has aligned with the DMK and AIADMK to pit people in the state against those in Karnataka over a water dispute. Successive Tamil Nadu governments have accused Karnataka for limiting the flow of water in the Cauveri River.

The state government in Kerala is also planning to build a new dam that would limit water sharing by Tamil Nadu farmers. On this dispute, Seeman made a provocative warning last year. He said that if the Kerala project continued “it would lead to the killing of Malayali people [those of Kerala origin] living in Tamil Nadu.”

While relatively small at present, the NTK is seeking to exploit the widespread alienation with the DMK and AIADMK, which have successively ruled the state for decades. Seeman is seeking to breathe new life into

Tamil communal politics to divide the working class and rural masses.

The class struggle is sharpening in India, including in Tamil Nadu. Strikes have erupted in the central government-owned Neyveli Lignite mines, located in Tamil Nadu, and among workers in transnational companies, such as Foxconn, Hyundai and BYD, in the special economic zones. Student unrest in colleges is developing against their deteriorating facilities. Discontent among the rural poor is also widespread, as living conditions deteriorate.

Workers and youth must reject the NTK’s divisive communal politics. What is necessary is the united struggle of the working class in Sri Lanka, India and internationally to put an end to capitalism, which is the root cause of ethnic, linguistic and religious discrimination.

This means a fight for workers’ and peasants’ governments in Sri Lanka and India to implement socialist policies—that is, a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam as part of a United Socialist States of South Asia. Only the Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka advances this program and fights to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International throughout South Asia.



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