

Indian Stalinists ally with US-backed parties in Tamil Nadu

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In allying with US-backed “anti-corruption” parties in the Tamil Nadu state elections, the People’s Welfare Front (PWF) made up of Stalinist and Tamil-nationalist parties is seeking to perpetrate a political fraud.

The PWF’s constituent parties, which have served in many pro-business governments in other states across India, are pledging “transparency” and “clean government.” To be blunt, such pledges are meaningless, and masses of people know it. They aim to corral social anger with the two main bourgeois parties, the ruling AIADMK (All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) and the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), behind a thin gruel of opposition to corruption, while aligning with the strategic interests of US imperialism and its “pivot to Asia.”

The PWF was formed by the Stalinist parliamentary parties, including the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and Communist Party of India (CPI), together with various regionalist and caste-ist parties such as the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) and the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK).

The PWF is now seeking support from the right-wing Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which plans to contest the Tamil Nadu election. AAP is now the ruling party of Delhi, India’s National Capital Territory. It was formed in November 2012 by the leaders of the Kabir organization and anti-corruption movement.

It is well known that the AAP’s leaders have close ties to US imperialism. The current Chief Minister of Delhi, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal, and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia were founding leaders of the Kabir organization, launched in 2005 in Delhi.

Kabir was funded by the CIA-backed Ford Foundation to the tune of hundreds of thousands of

dollars. According to the *Business Standard*, Steven L. Solnick, the New Delhi Representative for the Ford Foundation, said “the Foundation’s last installment to Kabir was in 2010. Our first grant to the NGO was of \$172,000 in 2005; the second was in 2008 of \$197,000.”

These reports underscore the close political ties between “anti-corruption” movements like the AAP and US imperialism. Formed less than three years ago, the AAP came to power amid mass popular disaffection with the Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress Party.

The AAP’s victory also relied on assistance from the Indian Stalinists in Delhi, where the CPM called for an AAP vote. Afterwards, former CPM Secretary General Prakash Karat hailed the AAP’s victory in *People’s Democracy*, the party’s organ. “The virtues that AAP claims for itself—a clean image, incorruptibility, denial of perks and privileges of power, and funding based on people’s contributions—are all part of the style and practice of the communists from the outset.”

Similarly, the PWF carried out a series of initiatives to bring another right-wing regional party into the coalition in Tamil Nadu—the Desiya Mutpoku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK). The DMDK leader Vijayakanth proclaimed to the media, “I want to be a king, not a king maker.” According to the Tamil media *Dinamalar*, the PWF responded with a note to the DMDK, declaring, “It doesn’t matter if you didn’t come to our alliance. If you try to form an alliance yourself under your leadership, we are waiting to join that.”

Last month, Phillip Min, the US Consul General in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, met Vijayakanth in his headquarters. The next day Thanthi TV in Chennai reported that PWF coordinator Vaiko had announced

that if the DMDK joined with the PWF, the PWF would consider supporting Vijayakanth for chief minister.

The PWF functions as a tool of the Western imperialist powers, especially US imperialism, which has announced its “pivot to Asia,” a comprehensive strategy to militarily encircle China. Their goal is to ensure that even if the current, pro-US AIADMK were to lose power due to broad social anger with its policies, another administration aligned with US foreign policy would replace it.

During the election campaign, the PWF has maintained a deafening silence on imperialist wars in the Middle East, East Africa and Afghanistan, and the intensification of US military activity in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as Washington moves to integrate India into an international alliance aimed against China.

According to the *New York Times*, US ambassador to India Richard R. Verma had indicated that “joint patrols by navy vessels from India and the US will become a common and welcome sight throughout Indo Pacific waters.”

The political agenda of the CPM and CPI is to align themselves with US imperialism, suppress working class struggles such as the recent mass strike of public sector workers, and emerge as trusted tools of imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie.

Over the past quarter-century the Stalinist parties have repeatedly propped up Indian governments that pursued free market policies and closer military-strategic ties with Washington. This includes the Congress-led UPA government, which the Stalinists supported in office for three years after Manmohan Singh and George W. Bush formed the Indo-US strategic partnership in July 2005.

The Stalinists’ electoral partners in Tamil Nadu are allies of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in Sri Lanka. The TNA supported the “regime change” operation that saw the US and India orchestrate a “joint opposition” candidate to oust President Mahinda Rajapakse in the 2015 election, because he was deemed too pro-Chinese. The TNA has supported Sri Lanka’s new government as it has integrated more fully into Washington’s “pivot,” including through the recent Sri Lanka-US “partnership dialogue.”

The Stalinists seek to cover up their reactionary policies by claiming they are fighting corruption. CPM

General Secretary Sitaram Yechury told a Madurai conference of the PWF, “We are joining together for a ‘clean government’ in Tamil Nadu, based on economic policies, alternative pro-peoples policies and non-corruption. For the first time in Tamil Nadu for many decades, a clean government will be formed. We can build a better Tamil Nadu and India.”

At the same conference, CPI National Secretary D. Raja said, “We have formed this alliance because we thought differently and wanted a different path to solve the problems of the people in the state.”

These promises are empty and false. All of the PWF’s constituent parties have collaborated for decades with India’s discredited mainstream parties, the Congress and the BJP at the national level, and the AIADMK and DMK in Tamil Nadu.

The PWF’s strategy is particularly driven by fear of the widespread alienation among young voters from the major bourgeois parties.

According to the *Hindu*, the unemployment rate is unprecedented. “As the education level increases in Tamil Nadu, the unemployment rate also rises in the age group 15-29 years, and is significantly high at 13.5 percent in the case of post-graduates. Ten million Indians with graduate, post-graduate and technical degrees were looking for work, meaning that 15 percent of all Indians with the highest levels of education were seeking jobs as of 2011. Kerala had India’s highest graduate unemployment rate at over 30 percent.”

It should be noted that the southern India state of Kerala was ruled for many years by the CPM and CPI.

The Stalinists’ election campaign in Tamil Nadu takes place in the context of a series of state elections they are contesting with different bourgeois parties. In West Bengal, they have entered into an alliance with Congress, the traditional ruling party of the Indian bourgeoisie, that is responsible for initiating India’s pro-market policies and the strategic partnership with US imperialism.



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