

Indian Stalinists ally with regional DMDK party in Tamil Nadu elections

V. Gnana
5 April 2016

It is now confirmed that in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, the People's Welfare Front (PWF), the electoral alliance including the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM), will ally with the Desiya Mutamokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK).

The alliance with the DMDK, a regionalist-based party that campaigns against corruption and has close ties to US imperialism, underscores the role of the Stalinists as bourgeois politicians, suppressing working class opposition and abetting the US "pivot to Asia" to isolate China. The PWF has officially announced that DMDK leader Vijayakanth will be the chief ministerial candidate of its alliance. The PWF-DMDK alliance will present a joint candidate for each of the 234 seats in the Tamil Nadu parliament; 124 will come from the DMDK.

Until last week, the PWF declared that the name of the chief ministerial candidate would be announced only after the elections were over. PWF coordinator Vaiko declared, "we respect democratic traditions, this is a policy-based alliance, and we function on the basis of a 'common minimum program.' In the 1967 election, the DMK did not declare its chief ministerial candidate. We will be compromising policy if we were to focus on individuals as chief ministerial candidates." Their demagoguery went on and on like this.

On March 23, the hitherto talked-about "common minimum programme" vanished into thin air. Addressing a joint press conference, Vaiko heaped praise on DMDK leader and Bollywood actor Vijayakanth and said their alliance would henceforth be named the "Captain Vijayakanth Front." He said the PWF would be the "kingmakers" in the alliance. "You will be the king, the kingmakers will make you the king," he said, addressing Vijayakanth.

Vijayakanth spoke briefly to echo Vaiko's remarks, declaring simply that the PWF "leaders said they will be king makers and I will be king. I have signed this deal."

Every alliance leader is eyeing on ministerial berths. The DMDK has declared the home ministry and finance ministry will be allocated to the CPI and CPM, respectively.

The DMDK-PWF alliance makes no bones about its support for big business. When Vijayakanth raised concerns about possible fund-raising problems, PWF coordinator Vaiko reassured him: "If such a strong alliance emerged, many industrialists will support us financially. You do not have to worry about anything."

The DMDK-PWF alliance also confirms the Indian Stalinists' evolution into open supporters of US imperialism as it carries out its "pivot to Asia" and seeks to embroil India in war preparations against China. While Vaiko wrote a book praising US President Barack Obama, the DMDK also has close ties to the US foreign policy establishment.

The chairman of the US consulate in Chennai, Phillip Min, met with DMK chief Karunanidhi on February 19 and DMDK leader Vijayakanth on February 23. US officials blandly commented that it is usual to meet political leaders in an election period. It is not difficult to guess the type of calculations behind the meetings with US officials, who are pressing for India to accept to station US forces on its territory for possible use in a war with China.

The role of the Stalinists and of the PWF is to conceal this reactionary pro-imperialist agenda behind empty anti-corruption demagoguery, cynically exploiting anger with the ruling AIADMK party in Tamil Nadu. "The fight of DMDK-PWF is against the AIADMK government. We will work together for the victory of

the front, and Vijayakanth will be the king,” said CPM state secretary G Ramakrishnan, soon after signing of the agreement with Vijayakanth.

The Indian Stalinists’ alignment on the interests of Indian capital and US imperialism flows inexorably from their historic alignment on the Indian bourgeoisie. Over the quarter century after the Congress party fully reintegrated India into the world capitalist market in 1991, the CPI and CPM have emerged as bourgeois parties of government, ruling entire Indian states in the interests of international finance capital. They enthusiastically supported the Indian bourgeoisie as it strengthened its armed forces and moved towards joining the US “pivot.”

When India entered into a strategic military alliance with US imperialism in 2005, the Stalinists were propping up and partners in all but name of the Congress-led UPA (United Progressive Alliance) coalition government. They made no objection when the BJP allocated huge amount of finance—some US\$51 billion for 2016-2017, as against \$36 billion the previous year—to prepare for war. Now the PWF functions every more openly as a tool of the Western imperialist powers, especially US imperialism’s war drive against China.

The two major national parties, the BJP and the Congress party, have been discredited among the toiling masses as they pressed forward with pro-war and pro-business policies. The Congress party is yet to come out of its past crisis. The ruling BJP faces continuous electoral defeats, notably in Delhi and Bihar.

The response of the Indian bourgeoisie to the discrediting of the Congress and the BJP is to advance a layer of reactionary regional-nationalist parties in states across India. Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader Tathagata Satpathy told the *Economic Times* that Indian Prime Minister Narendra “Modi’s charisma is declining. Congress’ acceptability is very low, non-existent ... The next government in Delhi in 2019, as I foresee, will not belong to either of the national parties.”

The four-time MP from Dhenkanal in Odisha said the future of regional parties is “bright ... The victory of BJP in 2014 was more because of the defeat of Congress. It was Congress which the people wanted to throw out.”

Asserting “regionalism is well and alive”, he said the assembly elections in five states and Union territories scheduled in the next two months is a “litmus test” for regionalisation of Indian politics.

The number of states where national parties alone are incapable of forming a government is increasing: Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal.

The role of the Indian Stalinist parties is to organise support for various parties and coalitions at the regional level, without interfering with the pro-war, pro-imperialist, pro-business and austerity policies of successive BJP and Congress national governments in New Delhi. In last year’s CPM plenum, Sitaram Yechury reiterated calls for “flexible tactics” to use “conflicts within sections of the ruling class parties while uniting with some of them.”

In West Bengal, the Stalinists are joining hands with the Congress in an attempt to oust the ruling Trinamool Congress of Mamata Banerjee.

In Kerala, while the CPM is nominally opposed to the Congress, the violent clashes between the BJP and the CPM create a favourable situation for the Congress. The BJP has attacked these incidents in its campaign as an example of the “criminal politics” of the CPM. Both the CPM and the BJP blame each other for the violence: the BJP claims the CPM is worried about its growth and is trying to instigate violence, while the CPM claims the BJP is using violence to create communal polarisation.

The policies of the CPI and CPM are always determined in the final analysis by their role as loyal servants of Indian capital. As CPM national secretary Sitaram Yechury declared, commenting on the electoral situation in Tamil Nadu, “I would like to remind you that Leftists, unlike other parties, will take whatever decision only on the basis of national interests.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact