

New TamilNet slanders against WSWS: an admission of political bankruptcy

K. Nesan and V. Gnana
3 June 2016

The reply of the Tamil nationalist web site *TamilNet* to the February 17 open letter to *TamilNet* issued by the WSWS—demanding that *TamilNet* retract its slanders claiming that the WSWS is a supporter of genocide and imperialism—is an admission of political bankruptcy.

TamilNet's reply, titled “‘Sri Lanka’ sacred cow to both US imperialism and social imperialism,” does not contest any of the points the WSWS made in its open letter. It cannot and does not attempt to defend its earlier slanders against the WSWS or refute the WSWS’s charge that *TamilNet* is a Tamil nationalist mouthpiece for US imperialism’s “pivot to Asia” and the installation of an unpopular, pro-US regime last year in Sri Lanka.

Instead, *TamilNet* admits that the Tamil nationalist parties have integrated themselves into US foreign policy and the Indian state’s attempt to win influence in Colombo by backing President Maithripala Sirisena. It writes that the “Tamil leadership looks upon appealing to the USA and India for support, despite its previous ‘impotent pleas’ falling on deaf ears. This section of Tamil polity deserves the attack, as it is still impotent for a global struggle-based polity.”

TamilNet's attempt to distance itself from the Tamil National Alliance’s (TNA’s) embrace of the Sirisena regime and of US foreign policy reeks of bad faith. All factions of the Tamil nationalist establishment promoted the Tamil bourgeoisie’s appeals to US imperialism to intervene on its behalf in Sri Lanka and at the United Nations—including *TamilNet*, which wrote many articles pressing for a greater role for Washington.

In one of these articles, “Stephen Rapp dodges question on international investigations,” *TamilNet* begged US Ambassador for Global Criminal Justice Stephen Rapp to mount a stronger intervention in Sri Lankan politics. Criticizing Rapp’s “dodging of a proper response on calling for international investigations,” it approvingly cited Tamil nationalists’ appeals to Washington to draw up a blueprint for a new regime in Sri Lanka. “The civil society representatives urged the visiting US diplomat to propose a framework on a political solution in the resolution,” it wrote.

TamilNet tries to cover up its pro-imperialist record with more baseless slanders, attacking the WSWS as a supporter of the Sri Lankan state. It writes, “However, the ‘world socialists’ conditioned by the so-called ‘Sri Lanka’, created and being propped up by the very imperialists, don’t answer the most crucial question why this ‘Sri Lanka’ should be a single unit in the global struggle of the world working class, commented Tamil activists for

alternative politics.”

The allegation by mysterious unnamed “Tamil activists for alternative politics” that the WSWS is “conditioned” to support the Sri Lankan state is no less false and defamatory than *TamilNet's* previous claims that the WSWS supports imperialism and genocide.

It is *TamilNet*, and not the WSWS, that accepts the reactionary state system that emerged in the Indian subcontinent from the abortion of the revolutionary upsurge of the Indian working class and oppressed masses by the Partition of India, sponsored by the former British colonial rulers, in 1947. *TamilNet* seeks to work within this framework to obtain a separate Tamil statelet in northern Sri Lanka.

The record of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which publishes the *World Socialist Web Site*, and of its Sri Lankan section, the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka), is well known. It never defended the post-1947 set-up or the Sri Lankan unitary state. It fought for the revolutionary overthrow of the formally independent capitalist states that emerged in 1947 from the collaboration between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism, advocating the United Socialist States of Sri Lanka and Eelam, as part of the Socialist United States of South Asia.

Even *TamilNet* felt compelled to acknowledge, in previous articles, that the SEP has unflinchingly opposed the Sri Lankan state as a tool of the Sri Lankan capitalist class and of imperialism, based on the Trotskyist movement’s opposition to the bourgeois state system that emerged from the Partition of India at the end of British colonial rule in 1947-1948. In fact, when *TamilNet* was unsure how to criticize Sri Lankan state policy, it sometimes looked for arguments to the WSWS, which it quoted extensively—and which it now slanders as a supporter of the Sri Lankan state.

Thus in 2012, as demands grew for an inquiry into the Sri Lankan army’s mass slaughter of Tamils at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, *TamilNet* was unpleasantly surprised by Rajapakse’s cynical proposal to form a state-run Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) to investigate. This cut across Tamil nationalists’ demands for an international inquiry, which Sri Lankan officials attacked as a US regime-change operation trying to discredit Rajapakse. To find a political basis for criticizing the Sri Lankan state’s LLRC proposal, *TamilNet* turned for arguments to the WSWS.

It wrote, “*World Socialist Web Site* feature by Sarath rightly exposes the LLRC farce of the Colombo-centric state and its imperialist abettors, in contrast to what [Sri Lankan Ambassador to the UN] Tamara [Kunananayakam] in the garb of socialism and anti-imperialism try to defend the agent state guilty of genocide. ... ‘Only the working class, in a unified struggle for a workers’ and peasants’ government and socialist policies, can defend the most basic democratic rights and address these horrific war crimes,’ concludes Sarath Kumara.”

What has changed since then is not the position of the SEP or of the WSW. Rather, the Tamil nationalists were drawn into a US imperialist operation to effect regime change in Sri Lanka, toppling Rajapakse and installing Sirisena as part of the US “pivot to Asia” to isolate and prepare for war with China.

The TNA, Sri Lanka’s main Tamil nationalist party, unconditionally supported the regime-change operation and now is complicit with the government in implementing austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), attacking the island’s workers and poor. The TNA spread illusions in the war-torn areas that the new government would rebuild the country, provide jobs and “good governance,” and grant the Tamils full democratic rights. However, the social situation facing working people has only worsened.

The new government, praised by the TNA as a “democratic revival,” has refused to release Tamil political prisoners and arrested at least 21 Tamils under the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act since it came to power in January 2015. With TNA officials now in top state posts, including as Opposition leader in parliament, *TamilNet* fears that rising working class opposition to the Sirisena regime will discredit the TNA and Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, India, and the Tamil diaspora. Fear of an increasingly revolutionary mood among workers drives *TamilNet* to denounce the WSW.

TamilNet violently denounces the international revolutionary strategy proposed by the SEP, for the unification of the working class in the Indian subcontinent in struggle against imperialism and war. It writes, “Partial in covering up the aggressive corporate and military operations of especially China, and covering up the competitive role it played in the genocide of Eezham Tamils, the world socialists in the island now come up with a vertical ploy of integrating South Asia and rallying the working class across the Indian subcontinent—all starting from ‘Sri Lanka.’”

This claim that the SEP excuses the crimes of Chinese foreign policy is yet another slander by *TamilNet* refuted by its own articles. The SEP criticized all the major powers, including China, for giving a green light to the Colombo regime in 2009 to end the civil war by carrying out mass murder of the Tamil-separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in northern Sri Lanka.

On July 1, 2013, *TamilNet* quoted from a WSW article by K. Ratnayake, writing, “The author also notes, not without adequate substance, that ‘All the major global and regional powers backed the renewed communal war against the LTTE, supplied military assistance and remained silent about the Sri Lankan military’s atrocities against civilians. The US and its allies only began to raise very limited concerns about the slaughter of civilians in the final months of the war, not out of concern for Tamils, but as a

Kumara for forcing the government to distance itself from China.’”

TamilNet’s criticisms of Chinese state and corporate influence in Sri Lanka are utterly reactionary. They aim only to give a thin “left” veneer to the Tamil nationalists’ pro-imperialist policy, masking their alignment on the most aggressive forces in world politics: US imperialism and its imperialist allies in Europe, Japan, and Australia.

TamilNet’s orientation is pro-imperialist and violently hostile to the struggle to unify the Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim workers and oppressed masses in Sri Lanka. On this basis, they defend the Sri Lankan state and are ready to sanction the bloodiest crimes against the workers, youth, and oppressed masses. Of particular significance is their chilling indifference to the repeated mass slaughters of Sinhalese by the Colombo regime.

In the one passage where *TamilNet* addresses points raised by the WSW’s open letter, it excuses the utterly reactionary policy of the Tamil nationalists, who helped the Sri Lankan state repress mass uprisings and strikes of Sinhalese workers and youth. *TamilNet* writes, “World socialists in the island talk about the massacre of 160,000 JVP Sinhala youth in 1971 and in 1989. The JVP never reached out to Tamils, and unfortunately the Tamils were watching in silence.”

This is a political lie. There was shock and horror among the Tamils at the mass slaughter of Sinhala youth, some of whom had sought refuge in Tamil-held areas. The Tamil workers and oppressed masses did not intervene to avert the slaughter, however, because the Tamil nationalists divided the working class along ethnic lines to avert a common revolutionary struggle of workers across the island. The LTTE, from which *TamilNet* descends, ethnically cleansed areas under their control, expelling Sinhalese and Muslims from northern Sri Lanka.

A reactionary division of labor emerged, in which the Tamil nationalists worked with the Indian and Sri Lankan state to crush the successive mass uprisings in the island.

The LTTE had signed the Indo-Sri Lankan accord in 1987. Its terms specified the dispatch of the Indian army to disarm the LTTE and other armed groups. Initially, the LTTE cooperated with the Indian deployment, but later it sought out the Sri Lankan state as an ally against the Indian forces. In 1989, the LTTE, in a deal with freshly elected President Ranasinghe Premadasa, received arms and supplies to fight the Indians, while Premadasa deployed the Sri Lankan military to crush the insurgency in the South.

Sri Lanka’s ruling parties and associated organizations are primarily responsible for the massacres. Without the silent support of the parliamentary Tamil-nationalist parties and the LTTE in 1989, the massacres would not have been possible. *TamilNet*’s total indifference to these slaughters shows that it is prepared to sanction the bloodiest crimes of imperialism and of the bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka today.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact