

**A history of imperialist interests
and a people's struggle for
freedom and justice –**

'Our struggle for liberation'

A CASE FOR TAMIL EELAM

THE Tamil people in the island of Sri Lanka are waging a struggle for political independence based on the universal principle of national self-determination. The struggle for independent statehood arose as a consequence of a violent and savage oppression practised by successive Sri Lankan governments against the Tamil people. It is an oppression that aimed at the annihilation of the national entity of the Tamil speaking people.

Decades of peaceful, non-violent political struggle to gain the very basic human rights were met with vicious forms of military suppression. The intensified military occupation of Tamil lands, the intolerable terrorism of the armed forces, the implementation of racist and repressive legislation, the mass arrest and detention of youth and political activists – all these draconian methods were employed to stifle and subjugate the will of our people to live free, and stamp out the legitimate struggle for justice. This ever unfolding thrust of national oppression made unitary existence intolerable and led to the demand for secession by the oppressed Tamil people.

In this memorandum our objective is to place before you the case of Tamil Eelam, its history of immense suffering as well as its heroic struggles. It is the authentic story of the Tamil speaking people, who have no choice but to fight for their dignity, for their right to life, land and labour.

Tamil Eelam: historical background

The Tamils of the island of Sri Lanka constitute themselves as a nation of people with a distinct social formation, culture, language, tradition and economic life. The nation is called Tamil Eelam. The Tamils have been living on the island since prehistoric times. They lived as a stable national entity till the penetration by foreign colonial powers. Waves of colonisation, first the Portuguese, then the Dutch and later the British ruled the island. Though all colonial periods were reigns of exploitation, plunder and armed repression of the indigenous peoples, it was the 150 years of

British rule which had the most profound effects on the life of the people.

Genesis of oppression and exploitation

In 1833 the British arbitrarily unified the island into one state structure laying the foundation for the national conflict. The other significant historical event of British imperial rule was the imposition of the exploitative plantation economy. To work on these plantations the British brought a massive army of cheap conscript labour from South India. They deliberately segregated these poor oppressed workers inside the plantations, permanently condemned them to plantation ghettos (known as 'line rooms'), prevented them from buying their own lands, building their own houses and leading a free social existence. The Tamil plantation workers constituting a crucial part of the Tamil national totality, were reduced to a condition of slavery by neo-colonialism.

Transfer of power From colonial masters to colonised masters. Perpetration of the ideology of Sinhala chauvinism

In 1948 the British handed over power to a small Sinhala ruling class. This class from which all successive Sri Lankan governments arose, held the reins of political and economic power in the island since so-called independence. They continued to maintain power among the Sinhala people, the majority of whom are themselves oppressed, by propagating a fascistic ideology of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and fanaticism. And they unleashed a vicious and violent form of oppression against the Tamil people.

This oppression has a continuous history of 35 years since independence. It has shown itself to have a genocidal intent, involving a calculated plan aiming at the gradual and systematic destruction of the essential foundations of the Tamil national community. Therefore it assumed a multidimensional thrust, attacking simultaneously on different levels of the conditions of existence of the Tamil-speaking nation, penetrating into the very fabric of the

lives of all sections of the Tamil people. It attacked their language, culture, religion, political institutions, traditional lands, economy. And part of the genocidal programme were the state-organised racial pogroms which constantly plagued the island jeopardising the very existence of the Tamils and making unitary life intolerable and impossible.

The Tamil Nation – onslaught on political and cultural identity

In an attempt to destroy the basic foundations of the Tamil Nation, the Sinhala ruling class made its first major onslaught on the Tamil plantation workers – the classic proletariat of the island who were disenfranchised by the Citizenship Acts of 1948 and 1949. One million workers were reduced to the condition of statelessness, condemned to a dehumanised existence, dumped perpetually into their plantation ghettos, to toil in utter misery.

The 1956 'Sinhala Only' Act made Sinhala the only official language of the island. And the 1972 and 1978 constitutions effectively installed a Sinhala Buddhist state on the island, thus creating a condition of political alienation of an entire nation of people.

Tamil peasants – alienation from land

A more subtle form of oppression was the policy of aggressive state-aided Sinhala colonisations or settlements adopted by successive Sinhala governments. Ever since 1949, in the guise of development schemes Sinhala settlers were settled on the traditional Tamil lands driving off masses of Tamil peasants. The worst affected areas were in the eastern province.

The motive of this strategy is very apparent in the present context with the arrival of the Israelis on the shores of the island. This enhances the strategy of capture by settlement, to destroy the territorial homogeneity of the Tamil nation, to reduce the Tamil people to a minority in their own historic lands and alienate the people from their land, with the motive of crushing the will of an oppressed nation.

Closing the door on education and employment – Tamil youth deprived of a future

The Sinhala Only Act and a notorious discriminatory selective device called 'standardisation' deprived a vast population of Tamil youth of access to higher education and employment. Angered and frustrated by the imposition of an alien language and racist educational policies the Tamil youth grew militant with an iron determination to fight back against national oppression.

Racial pogroms – brutal arm of state terrorism

Violent anti-Tamil riots erupted on the island in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983. In these racial holocausts thousands of Tamils including women and children were mercilessly massacred in the most gruesome manner, and hundreds of thousands made refugees. The state and the armed forces colluded with hooligans and vandals in this sadistic orgy of arson, rape and mass murder.

The cumulative effect of this multidimensional oppression threatened the very survival of the Tamils. The chauvinism of the Sinhala national bourgeoisie triggered off the causal mechanism precipitating the dynamics of a revolutionary rupture between the two nations.

The Tamil national struggle from federation to secession

Faced with the oppressive measures of successive Sri Lankan governments, the Tamils, under bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leadership, organised mass non-violent agitational campaigns demanding a federal form of autonomy within the unitary state structure and restoration of basic human rights. Yet these demands were met with a savage form of military repression, the promises given to them were never fulfilled, and agreements and pacts became a dead letter.

Practically all Sinhala political movements including the Marxist parties (the 'Trotskyite' LSSP and

the Communist Party succumbed to political opportunism in the early 1960s) turned a deaf ear to the Tamil national question. This unholy alliance of all major Sinhala political parties and their arrogant determination to stifle the most crucial and urgent issues facing the Tamils, made the Tamils realise the utter futility of pursuing any form of rational dialogue.

This objective factor forced the Tamil nationalist parties to converge (TULF was formed) and fight for political independence on the basis of the nation's right to self-determination. At the General Elections in 1977 this united front was given a clear mandate from the Tamil people to launch a national struggle to establish sovereignty in the Tamil homeland. Thus a new historical era in Tamil politics began, ushering in a struggle for national independence.

Learning the lessons of history Militant youth and armed resistance

Caught up in a revolutionary situation generated by the contradiction of national oppression, and constantly victimised by police brutality, Tamil youth were disillusioned with the political strategy of non-violence, which the bourgeois nationalist leadership advocated. They rightly perceived that the only alternative left to the Tamils under conditions of mounting national oppression was none other than revolutionary armed struggle for the total independence of their nation.

Birth of the Tiger movement – the struggle for liberation

The revolutionary ardour of the Tamil youth which manifested itself in the form of indiscriminate outbursts of political violence in the early 1970s began to seek concrete political expression in an organisational structure built on a revolutionary political theory and practice. Neither the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), nor the left movement, offered any concrete political avenue to the revolutionary potential of the rebellious youth. On this

concrete condition of intolerable national oppression the Tiger movement was born in 1972.

The movement was founded by its present leader and military commander, Velubillai Prabakaran. At the time of inauguration the movement called itself the 'Tamil New Tigers', but later on, on May 5 1976, the organisation re-named itself the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. From its inception the Tiger movement took into its ranks the most resolute, most dedicated and the most zealous young revolutionaries. Structured as a guerrilla force disciplined with an iron will to fight for the cause, the Tigers emerged as the armed resistance movement of the oppressed Tamil masses. The Tigers' commitment to armed struggle was undertaken after careful and cautious appraisal of the national struggle and with the fullest comprehension of the concrete situation in which masses of people were presented with no alternative other than to resort to revolutionary resistance to advance the national cause.

Ideologically bound to the revolutionary theory and practice of Marxism and Leninism, the Liberation Tigers firmly believe that revolutionary armed resistance should be sustained and supported by the mobilised masses. They evolved a strategy of protracted guerrilla warfare extending to a people's struggle for national liberation and chartered its political programme, integrating the national struggle with class struggle, defining their ultimate objective as national liberation and socialist revolution.

The Tigers' politico-military organisation became the revolutionary alternative to the bourgeois leadership of TULF. The TULF leadership earned the distrust and anger of the people by not advancing the struggle for which they were given a mandate, but treading the path of electoral politics, bargains and negotiations with a brutal enemy. Today the TULF stands fully exposed, discredited and demoralised in contrast to the committed leadership of the Liberation Tigers.

The present Sri Lankan regime, unable to contend with the determination of the struggling masses and their armed vanguard, LTTF,

shed their political facade of non-alignment and invite to the shores of Sri Lanka their natural allies, the US and British imperialists and their agents, Zionist Israel.

A history of imperialist interests and the challenge of the Tamil Eelam liberation struggle

British imperial rule was the genesis of national conflict and oppression, and it was aggravated by the heritage of the parliamentary system. With the backing of Western imperialism, since independence the Sinhala ruling elite have been in charge of an increasingly totalitarian political system, propagating the ideology of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and fanaticism.

In the present context, the military occupation of the Tamil homelands and the open economic policy, have all worsened the economic crisis produced by a dependent neo-colonial economy. This has led to an increased control and penetration of the imperialists. To the shores of Sri Lanka have come the western multinationals, to exploit the availability of cheap labour and land. But most crucially imperialist interests are centred around the Port of Trincomalee in Tamil Eelam. It is the site of a planned US base. A base here would enable the US to dominate the whole of the Indian Ocean, and consolidate its control over the whole region with South Africa on one side and Singapore and the Philippines on the other.

It is in their global interests that the US and its allies have rallied around the Sri Lankan government to crush all resistance and ensure 'stability'. For which the strongest and most advanced challenge comes from the Tamil people and their armed vanguard movement LTTE, politically and militarily. The Sri Lankan armed forces are trained in counter-insurgency methods by the MOSSAD and 'ex'-SAS men. South Africa has joined forces with them recently.

The imperialist penetration has created a revolutionary situation in

the Tamil nation. The historic role of spearheading a national liberation has shifted from the collaborationist national bourgeois to the revolutionary proletariat. The Tigers, the sons and daughters of the oppressed Tamil masses are the vanguard of the national liberation struggle, spearheading effectively the national revolution.

Creating the conditions for a people's struggle – building a national movement

The Liberation Tigers, in their twelve-years-long protracted guerrilla warfare, have not only given confidence to the Tamil people, gradually raised their consciousness, exposed and demoralised the enemy and internationalised the Tamil national question.

This mode of struggle has created the conditions and awakened the consciousness of the once passive and powerless Tamil masses to struggle determinedly for their political independence. It has made the vast sections of the oppressed Tamil people see the national liberation struggle as an arena to struggle for their own emancipation, and made them realise that they are the leaders and heroes of the struggle.

No longer can the enemy and his struggling symbol of power – the armed forces walk with impunity in the occupied Tamil lands. On the pretext of eradicating 'terrorism' the state is going on a disastrous course to crush the Liberation Tigers and the collective will of the Tamil people. They use brutal tactics borrowed from the Israeli allies – the mass random arrest and torture, the tactic of collective punishment – where villages are shelled, burned down, innocents murdered, and most significantly the attempt to push Sinhala settlements under armed protection in and around Tamil villages have been the methods used by a fascist state to destroy the guerrillas and alienate them from their base – the masses. But this has only hardened the resolve of Tigers

and the Tamil people, mobilising into the ranks of the Liberation Tigers, all sections of the oppressed Tamil nation; building a truly national movement.

Breaking the ideological hegemony

The small Sinhala ruling class, to perpetuate its power base, has always been reinforcing a chauvinistic ideological hegemony and has been practicing a vicious and brutal form of national oppression against the Tamil nation. Thus the Sinhala ruling class consolidated an unpopular dictatorship against the possible uprising of the oppressed Sinhala masses. The Tamil National Liberation struggle has created the conditions for the revolutionaries in the south to break this chauvinistic ideological hegemony of the ruling class and to advance an ideological battle supporting most resolutely the right of the oppressed Tamil nation to secession, i.e. the right to establish an independent socialist Tamil Eelam. Such a political strategy can only serve to emancipate the oppressed Tamil nation as well as the oppressed Sinhala masses.

Links of solidarity

The Tamil national liberation struggle as an oppressed nation fighting against the oppressor, constitutes an integral part of the international struggle, the struggle of revolutionary forces of reaction, the forces of imperialism neo-colonialism, Zionism and racism.

We therefore appeal to all progressive people to sympathise and support the freedom struggle of the Eelam Tamils. In the name of humanity liberty and justice. We call upon you to condemn the genocidal oppressive policies of the Sri Lankan government and to recognise our people's right to national self-determination.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam express their support and solidarity to all revolutionary liberation struggles of the oppressed masses of the world.

For further information regarding the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam please contact:

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