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Dossier on Sri Lanka

Letters to a Tamil Sama Samajist

- IV Online magazine - 2009 - IV413 - June 2009 -

Publication date: Monday 8 June 2009

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This article set was written by me in hiding when NSSP was banned in 1983. At that time Militant printed and circulated it as an internal discussion document. After the break up of the party it became a public document.

Ironically comrade Anna then living in India under cover, reprimanded me for not being sensitive to the Tamil youth. I accept that my language could be different and if I were to write this article today I would formulate many things differently. But the discussion on method of terror and greater Indian republic is important, in particular as the UNP also abandoning Tamil autonomy. In addition India has become a part of Global capitol creating a massive anti Yankee movement in India.

1. Answering questions from Jaffna

Dear Comrade,

I was preparing a theoretical document on our position concerning the National Question when I came across the questions raised by some of the Jaffna comrades; I think it is urgently necessary to deal with these, at least briefly.

Most certainly we do not call Keppetipola or Puran Appu, or to be very clear Pandara Vanniyam or Sankili, terrorists. Why? Is it because they fought against oppression and subjugation? No, on the contrary we do not call them terrorists because they simply were not terrorists. However we call Sardiel, the 19th century Kandyan highway man a terrorist, in spite of the fact that he, in his own way, fought against colonial and feudal oppression. Why? Because, he was really a terrorist

Marxists always identify people and phenomena by their correct name. That in fact is our duty. We are seeking to educate the working masses by correctly categorizing all symptoms and expressions that arise in politics. We shall not deviate from this duty, come what may.

Who is a terrorist, then? Terrorist is a person whose only or primary form of political action is organized isolated terrorism. Terror is a method in politics. It is utilized by both the oppressor and the oppressed. Neither of them will be a terrorist merely by utilizing terrorism. However even a liberation fighter becomes a terrorist if his primary means in politics is terrorism.

We do not abhor or reject terrorism in any absolute sense. Nor we make any moral judgment on the use of terror, certainly not. All revolutionaries resort to terrorism one time or other, as the need arises. However the difference between a revolutionary, or even a rebel, and a terrorist is that while the former bases himself on the struggle of the masses, the latter confines himself to actions of terror and to the substitution of such organized attacks for the struggle of the masses. Even within a general strike, and a Hartal, of course there could be points of terror. One can think of a group of workers unleashing merciless terror on a fascist gang in the course of retaliation. Still, that will be only marginal or a secondary course of action in relation to the general strike and mass rebellion.

Calling a liberation fighter a terrorist, in itself is not an abuse or a condemnation. Just because the oppressor uses a word, it does not become an abuse or a derogatory word. If it is so, we should not call anybody a Marxist or a

revolutionary because JR and others have always used these terms to condemn others.

In fact he has called Tamil Youth, Marxists and revolutionaries too. Of course he is wrong there in every sense of the word, particularly in using the term Marxists. We do not use those latter terms to identify the militant youth not because he has used these on them, no, of course not. We do not use these on them simply because these are wrong terms to be used on them. These petty bourgeoisie fighters are neither Marxists nor revolutionaries.

One thing should be very clear. That is, we should get rid of this middle class embarrassment of not being able to call a terrorist, a terrorist, when he is a liberation fighter. This kind of shyness arises when one is not sure of one's role in the liberation struggle. If you are not in the fore-front of the liberation struggle using revolutionary methodology, i.e. mass actions, then of course you will have an enormous guilt in calling a young liberation fighter, who at least using terror tactic is in the struggle, a terrorist and an inadequate fighter.

In Jaffna it is our duty to come forward fearlessly criticizing terrorism of young liberation fighters, as a harmful method of struggle. Even Uma maheswaran has been pushed to the position of rejecting Piribaharan's mad terror tactics. As far as I can see Uma is not advocating terrorism, at least not now. He is advocating rural guerillaism. That again is limited compared to a Hartal centered around a general strike. Still he cannot be called a terrorist in the strict sense.

There is no question that Piribaharan is a terrorist. He may be a devoted national liberation fighter. But his method is terrorism and ideology is petty bourgeoisie nationalism. Let me put it clearly that this madman has done untold damage to the liberation struggle by his insane terror. There may be a threat to my life when I say this in public. But that is nothing new. In South we are constantly under the threat of fascist-racialist gangs. In 1971 I described JVPers as Narodniks with a trace of Sinhala racialism and I was threatened with violence for such criticism. If we abandon the truth in fear of threats we might as well fold up the revolutionary party. So, we have to say Piribaharan's method is terrorism. Not only has he used isolated individual terror against the oppressor but also used it indiscriminately against all others fighting the common enemy. He has not hesitated to use it against us too. We did not retaliate not because we are incapable of terror. No one should be encouraged to entertain such an idea. We have not retaliated through terror because it is incorrect to use terror against another group of freedom fighters to settle a dispute. This is insane terror; notwithstanding that of their own methodology. We correctly took the question to the masses and created a mass opinion against them. We shall continue to do so.

Of course we do not join bourgeoisie propaganda and condemn terrorism of freedom fighters; because, their terrorism is only an expression of hatred against the oppression. One can think of a striker who may shoot the supervisor because he is angry with the employer and his henchmen. We do not publicly condemn him. On the contrary we will explain how the cruel employer has pushed the worker into such desperation. In the meantime it is our duty to convince the worker about the futility of his terror tactic and move him towards the proper form of struggle. The parallel should be clear to you.

As I mentioned above, around 1971 I wrote a series of articles comparing the JVP with Russian Narodism with a trace of fascism. I referred to them as rebels and that 71 was a petty bourgeoisie youth rebellion. Many so-called left intellectuals pounced on us and condemned 'Vama Sama Samajaya' for the reference. Their criticism emanated from several reasons. Firstly, they, as were not doing anything for the social revolution, wanted to identify with the youth who were 'doing something'. It is a case of glamour without sacrifice! Secondly, for their middle class sense of value, rebellion was bad where as revolution sounded respectable. Thirdly, the most important of all, according to them JVP was fighting only against police brutality and there was no preplanned insurrection aimed at capturing power. Hence, according to their morals, it was a good thing. We did not give in to this nonsense, and we did not lose in the end.

I think you are facing the parallel of that in Jaffna. These people who criticize us first of all do not do anything for the liberation of the Tamil nation. So they are guilty or afraid to criticize these 'heroic' youth who are in the 'game'.

Secondly, 'Terror', somehow, is bad where as 'revolutionary war' is good. Apparently there is something inherently bad about terror, which does not exist in military violence! Thirdly, this again is most important, these youth are fighting only brutal oppression and not fighting to gain control of Tamil land. At least that is not the immediate purpose. So a boy who play hide and seek with the police is a good fighter while a worker proposing mass defence actions and through these moving towards a massive hartal to overthrow the system is a bad one!

It may sound funny that the government seems to prefer Piribaharan's terrorism to any trend towards general unrest and Hartal. On 9 September 1983, Daily News reported: "The leaflet (of Piribaharan) advised all Tamils in the North not to defy any government directions. All students, teachers, and employees both in the mercantile and public sector should follow government's order it said".

Then on 18 September 1983, Sunday Observer said:

"These gangs (i.e. Hartal callers) are nothing but a handful of school drop-outs who called for Hartals and boycotts. The main intention of these riff raffs is to disturb the education of school children and create tension in the entire Northern Province" he added, "these riff raff gangs have no connection with the Tiger movement or any other terrorist movement and investigations have established this fact."

Obviously the government and pro government elements have seen clearly what is more dangerous to them; Terror or Hartal. Also, here it is interesting to remember what Mr. Leembruggen, the President of the Chamber of commerce of Sri Lanka said very recently. Daily News of 29 October 1983 reported. "Happily" Mr. Leembruggen said, 'a guerilla with a gun in his hand, is not as frightening to the foreign investor as the prospect of a politician with Karl Marx on his mind' ". Is not it very clear in whose interest it is to romanticize terrorism? Piribaharan's type of terrorism is only an extreme kind of Safety Valve and an indirect pressure force for the establishment. LTTE may not accept it. But that is the sad truth.

I think you should stand up and fight back. You must say that those who reject mass struggle and resort exclusively to conspiratorial terror actions, are terrorists in- spite of being freedom fighters. No one who is not interested in building a mass movement under the hegemony of the proletariat is going to solve the national question in Sri Lanka or in the Indian Subcontinent. That is quite apart from not establishing a socialist regime. Of course we have no moral objection to the use of terror. In fact if fascist goons attack us, we shall retaliate with severest means possible. Also if such naked terrorism can bring socialism we will be the first to use it. Unfortunately apart from what Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky have taught us, the entire experience of liberation struggles and social revolutions shows that it is not the case. As an instrument of struggle it has only a secondary place. Any Tamil liberation fighter who gives the prime of the place to terrorism will never achieve anything except vicious kind of sectarian reaction that will put what happened in Pakistan to shades.

Only we are capable of avoiding a great disaster in this part of the world and move towards the proper unification of the Indian sub-continent. For us Sama Samajists, both identities: Tamils and Sinhalese are very limited and can play only a very limited role even in the immediate sense. Hence, in the immediate sense too, only identity we could promote is the Indian identity. Unless the liberation struggle is taken to the broad mass movement in this form, here as well as in India, there going to be a long period of human misery. Terrorism of Tamil liberation fighters only aggravates the issue and creates massive obstacles in the path of taking the liberation issue to the non-Tamil Indian masses, even other than Sinhalese. We will not do any good by placating terrorists and yielding to the crocodile tears of petty bourgeoisie intellectuals.

We are the only national party which clearly intervened in the Tamil liberation issue. There is no question about. Therefore we have right to tell the Tamil youth, where they are going wrong and drag them towards sanity and the real struggle for power. We cannot fail in this duty and I am sure we shall not

P.S. About the Elam slogan later

VBK

5 December, 1983.

2. A detailed account of our position

Dear Comrade,

Hope you went through the document on terrorism which I sent to you last week. There I mentioned that I was preparing our position on the concrete slogan of Ham. In this letter I will give you a detailed account of our position. First of all let us make ourselves clear on the principles involved.

1. Right of self determination: The absolute principle in here is that Sama Samajists of an oppressor nation should advocate and fight for freedom to secede for the oppressed nation. In the present context of super imperialism we have to go farther. It is not sufficient to fight for freedom to secede. It is necessary to fight to allow smaller nations to join with a nation other than one's own. For example the freedom of Sri Lankan Tamils to join India or coalesce with Tamil Nadu after breaking from Sri Lanka, as a right, should be defended. Today we see very often apparent sovereignty of small nations who in reality cannot move out of the domain of influence of big nations. So, though there is no actual subjugation, there is indirect threat of intervention if the small nation decides to do something against the wishes of a big neighbor.

On the other hand it is absolutely necessary that Sama Samajists of the small nation or the oppressed nation advocates and fight for integration, of course voluntary integration. That is with power over one's destiny in one's hand, deciding to integrate in the best possible way with the neighboring states. In other words always he must fight against small nation narrow mindedness, seclusion and isolation. (Vide page 347, VI Lenin's "Collected Works Vol: 22)

2. Autonomy: Absolute principle in here is the management of one's everyday life by oneself. Here the most important aspect is the looking after normal social peace and security i.e. police functions. Every distinct set of people should be allowed to elect their own representatives without alien people interfering in their affairs. Best form of autonomy would be small assemblies for all villages, towns, work places with powers over all internal and regional matters and the freedom to coalesce to form bigger units. Autonomy is a must in a democracy even when there are no minorities with national consciousness. In other words autonomy is not an alternative to the right of secession. It is a separate principle to be upheld even if self determination is not an issue. If there is no autonomy there cannot be democracy in a racially and culturally heterogeneous society.

3. Equality of citizens: Absolute principle in here is that all citizens should be equal before the state and should be able to deal with the state as equals. Access to basic ingredients of social living: language, jobs, land, and education (etc) should be equal to all communities. Obviously there cannot be separate registers, different birth certificates, and a community claiming to be the Boomi Puthras. Here again, this principle is independent of the first two. That is, even if the first two principles are not relevant it is imperative that this third principle is respected.

Of course you will see that in a society where the first principle is respected it is very unlikely that the other two are not respected, though the converse is not true. Still there could be cases where the right of secession is granted to

one community while other two principles are violated in respect of others.

Also we should understand that we are discussing the principles involved in solving a bourgeoisie democratic task. Hence the principles are absolute within that context. Naturally for a society which grows over to socialism these principles will eventually become meaningless.

Having got all these clear in our minds, we must come to grapple the concrete question of Lankan Tamils. First problem we encounter is to decide the nature of oppression and the oppressor. Is the Sinhala nation imperialist and Tamils a subject race? Here again Lenin was very clear. World has moved to the stage of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism. Hence our estimate and classification of oppression should be related to the reality of imperialism. An analysis of racial or ethnic violence, unless we relate to the present day working of imperialism, becomes meaningless. Further more it can lead us to a useless moralistic discussion on violence or at worse to an academic debate on historical rights of various racial and communal groups.

Marx at his time did not support Czech and South Slavian national movements against German and Austrian oppressors as they were instruments of reactionary tsarist of Russia. Russian reaction was the greatest oppressor at that time of bourgeoisie democratic revolution of Europe. Hence the struggle against that bulwark of reaction was the real democratic struggle and the genuine fight against oppression. Therefore Czech and South Slavian national liberation movements which were outpost of Russian reaction were opposed. (Vide page 340â€” VI Lenin Collected Worksâ€”Vol: 22) Lenin in his time while advocating Russian and German Social Democrats (Sama Samajists) to demand unconditional freedom for Poland to secede, advised Polish Sama Samajists to work for the unity of the proletarian struggle without putting forward the slogan of Polish independence. This was when Poland was quite developed and very much nationalistic. His argument was that raising such a slogan means helping either imperialism against the other, when both were interested in Poland (i.e. Russian and Germans). (Vide page 351â€”Vol 22.â€” VI Lenin).

I am not drawing any parallels here: Only trying to elucidate the necessity of an overall view. Those examples and lot more, make it clear that while the Sinhala Sama Samajists should unconditionally fight for freedom of secession for Tamils (including their rights to join Tamil Nadu), the Tamil Sama Samajists should decide to lead the struggle for separation only after careful analysis of the entire struggle against the international finance capital in the Indian sub-continent. Tamil Sama Samajists cannot stand for isolation and seclusion. To do that will be to succumb to worse kind of petty bourgeoisie nationalism. Because Elam as it is posed today is not even a bourgeoisie concept. It is utterly petty bourgeoisie. Obviously Tamil Sama Samajists should fight against this trend and stand for integration.

What integration? This is the real question. Tamil Sama Samajists do not stand for secession for the mere sake of separation. Even when he stands for the political independence of Tamils, he should uncompromisingly fight for the unification of the entire Tamil nation within a greater Indian republic. He should stand for the integration of the sub-continent and in particular stand for the unification of Lanka with India. To the Elamist we must pose this question; why this separate entity apart and distinct from Tamil Nadu? Forging of a Tamil Region as a democratic task could only mean the unification of Tamils of Southern India (Lankan and Indian), and nothing else. Such unification within the context of a united greater India will be a progressive step. In fact that is the only realistic way the task of a Tamil nation could be posed. On the other hand to propose an isolation of two million people in an arid piece of land is madness.

We have always maintained that the Tamil National Question can be solved only in the context of the Indian sub-continent; solutions that were proposed so far within a Sri Lankan state are transitional and incomplete. When we said this five years ago people laughed at us saying that we were idealists. However today, it is clear that anybody who thinks of solving the national question without taking into account the Indian sub-continent situation is a fantasy maker. Thus we must boldly and singularly stand for the unification of the Indian sub-continent based on the

principles mentioned above. We cannot afford to deviate an inch from this.

So the concrete question of secession of Lankan Tamils is really the question of breaking away from the present state and linking up with the Indian republic. In other words the Tamil Sama Samajist fights either to remain within Lanka based on above mentioned principles with the intention of dragging the entire island into the Indian republic in the coming period or if and when that position is rejected, to break away from Sri Lanka and join India as a part and parcel of Tamil Nadu. There is no other concrete democratic reality and Tamil Sama Samajist, least of all, should not stand for anything else. Hence the question to be answered by us is whether we are today dismissing Sinhala nation as a reactionary outpost and raising the slogan of Lankan Tamils separately and independently joining the Indian republic breaking the Sri Lankan state. This is the only concrete formulation of the question before us. In general standing for unification with India is a basic revolutionary democratic position. That is Sinhalese; Tamils; Bengalis; Sindhis etc joining the greater Indian republic is a necessary general slogan irrespective of the concrete situation. (Of course we know that we can achieve such a republic only under the hegemony of the proletariat). But to support today, the secession of Sri Lankan Tamils and to propose them to join the present Indian republic, certain preconditions should be satisfied.

Such a proposal means a conflict between the Indian state and the Sri Lankan state. If we are proposing that as the liberation task to the Tamils in Sri Lanka then we cannot hesitate but co-operate with Indian forces on a tactical plane to achieve such. In any case there is no other way secession of Sri Lankan Tamils could be achieved whatever the utopian radical youth might think. Then the question is, can we say, that the Indian republic stands for democracy against Sinhala state, a bulwark of imperialist reaction? To answer in the affirmative it is not necessary for the Indian republic to be a socialist paradise or Tamil Nadu to be an epitome of democracy. Anyone demanding such as a precondition is an opportunist of the worst kind. On the other hand for a Tamil Sama Samajist to take that position it should be clear to him beyond doubt that the Sinhala nation has totally succumbed to imperialist reaction, thus making the separation with the view to join India, the immediate democratic task. Can we say this today? Can we say "Indian democracy, help us to smash Sinhala fascist state"? Can we write off Sinhala nation as such?

Some ultra-leftists have come to that conclusion. For them left movement has lost its forces and completely decimated. In addition Sinhala racialism is part and parcel of pro-imperialist state, backed by CIA and the Pentagon. Democracy is finished for the coming period. Hence there is nothing much to expect within the Sinhala nation in this period. All attempts should be directed to wipe out this out-post of reaction. They of course give unconditional support for all Tamil national movements. Terrorism is elevated to a form of mass struggle, a revolutionary war, and venerated.

Clearly, even on the basis of the conclusion that the Sinhala state of JR is an out-post of imperialist reaction and the Sinhala nation has no progressive content in the present moment, their positions are wrong. On one hand they do not see the importance of the Indian republic. With such a position first thing should have been to decide tactically on the side of Indian nationalism. They have not done that. Obviously they do not see that only meaningful separatist movement is that, which is inspired by Indian industrial capitalism. Forward strides taken by Indian industries with even limited democracy and unification, has attracted the attention of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Strong nationalist sentiments of the educated Tamil youth are partly fired by the changes they see in the Tamil Nadu. Ultra-leftists are oblivious to these facts. On the other hand, at no point one should give unconditional support to National movements, completely handing over the liberation to 'national democracy' or even 'revolutionary democracy'. One should never dip one's separate red flag even if one joins unconditionally to strike a blow at the reaction. This is what Lenin has taught us. (Vide Lenin's "Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions" 1920)

However these are minor matters when compared to the gross mistake of writing off Sinhala nation at this moment. It is true that both the JVP and our party are banned. But is this act, a frightened mad blow of an unstable regime or a definite fascist take over? Are all progressive forces in Sinhala areas dissipated? I think it will be an incredible folly for us to answer in the affirmative and to conclude that the centre for proletarian work in Sri Lanka has moved entirely

and completely into the Tamil nationality and émigré groups. Of course if we were to select between Indira and JR naturally we will be with Indira who still represents the national industrial bourgeoisie in the sub-continent whereas JR is simply a comprador Don Juan (Not the lecher, the prince.) He does not represent the Sinhala nationalists though the right wing chauvinist elements are with his adjutant Cyril Mathew. Sinhala nationalism is not with imperialism nor is it an imperialist force on its own strength. Sinhala merchant and commercial capital, on the contrary, is a minor bourgeoisie element which is in sharp conflict with imperialism. When India declared war against Pakistan over the issue of Bangladesh we came on the side of India heavily. There was no question then about the nature of the war. Pakistan was a (and still is though there is a significant progressive mass movement) reactionary theocratic state run by imperialist puppets. India was and still is a secular democratic state (within limits) which is in conflict with imperialism. Sama Samajists of the East Pakistan (if such were present) should have participated on the Indian side but not on the slogan of Bangladesh. On the contrary we must fight for the unification of the Bangala nation within an Indian integration. Even though relatively speaking Bangladesh is a big country it is wrong for anyone, not to advocate and fight for integration, above all the unification of Bengalis and thus not to educate Bangala workers in the spirit of internationalism.

Though it is not a fascist state, it is true Sri Lanka to-day is a Sinhala Buddhist state led by comprador classes, with a Bonapartist constitution with serious curtailments on democracy. Where as secular Indian Republic is led by a significant national industrial bourgeoisie. Hence it is attractive to the Tamil workers and peasants and also to the advanced Sinhala workers. Also, Sinhala national movement is not represented by JR and his clique. As I said above Cyril Mathew represents the extreme, fanatical element of the Sinhala Bourgeoisie. Sinhala national capitalist class is really a very minor capitalist class consisting of commercial and state bureaucratic classes with a minor manufacturing component. These people were the leaders of the populist movement represented by the SLFP. Today the most radical expression of them is the TB-Vijaya faction, earlier led by Hector. There is a progressive aspect to this movement and in the immediate sense it is in conflict with imperialism. They have common interest with Indian manufacturing classes. In- fact Tamil petty bourgeoisie stood close to them during the Presidential election, compelled by common economic interest. Also it is amply clear that Indian national bourgeois opinion depends very much on the plight of this force. If this force is also crushed under foot by the reaction, that will be a great impetus for Indira to intervene directly in here. Present 'good office' role is with the approval of Mrs. B; that we cannot forget. As long as these forces are intact, unless indications are given by them, Indira will hesitate to intervene in spite of all the wailing and whimpering of Tamil Nationalists.

Apart from this radical Sinhala national democratic forces there is the left movement with the JVP bringing in, the radicalized Sinhala petty bourgeoisie. It is true that there is a ban and these forces are in a certain degree of confusion after the defeats in July 1980 strike and in 1982 Presidential elections. But it is complete nonsense to think that left and democratic forces, i.e. proletarian and radical petty bourgeoisie forces, are all wiped out or neutralized. It is madder to think that July violence is a conscious attack by JR and his adjutants, backed by imperialism, to wipe out both Tamil nationalism and left politics in Sri Lanka. Of course JR's Machiavellian maneuvers opened the way. But several frustrations and dissatisfactions gushed into this blind alley shocking JR out of balance.

So it is completely wrong to conclude that Sinhala pro gressive forces are no more and fascist are in full control.

Any strategy based on that kind of thinking will be completely irresponsible. If Tamil Sama Samajists today take up secession and pro Indian Republican slogan dismissing Sinhala nation it will bring total confusion into the Sinhala progressive movement severely impeding real revolutionary prospects. Still, in the Indian sub continent one of the most promising backgrounds is provided by the radicalized Sinhala workers and peasants. However tragic it may be, momentary and temporary confusions and the rise of dark forces should not close our eyes to the fact that all important left parties and workers organizations, at least nominally, stand for the right of self determination and they have not said the last word yet. If we do that not only will we be dismissing Sinhala left and democratic organizations but also spitting on the face of the Sinhala workers and peasants such as Eheliyagoda voters; who voted for VN disregarding the vicious communal campaign of JR that made them fully aware that the NSSP stands for the

liberation of Tamils, the repeal of anti-terrorist act and the release of Tamil political prisoners. We cannot hand over on a plate a nation which is not yet a reactionary out post, to western imperialism. Nor we could abandon all the grounds we have won among Sinhala masses and let Sinhala nation the stepping stone for the intervention of western imperialism. You cannot fail to realize that convincing the majority community to accept the right of secession is not the same as proposing immediate division of the country with possible foreign assistance. Latter proposal will give advantage to the dark forces within the majority nation. Obviously if the dark forces are already in full control then it is our duty to eliminate them even using division of the country as a means. But in the present situation Tamil Sama Samajists should intervene and direct the Tamil liberation struggle, so as to ignite the revolutionary forces among the Sinhalese and hence in entire Sri Lanka. He should always remember that a proletarian victory in Sri Lanka will act as the beacon of the Indian revolution.

How powerful are the dark forces today? Are we fighting a black dictatorship (racist, fascist) backed by imperialism which has drained in blood all progressive forces? We must not paint the devil blacker than it really is. What we have got is an unstable constitutional Bonapartism resting on several forces pulling in different directions. Thonda & Deva are still powerful forces. Thonda's attitude and his popularity still, show that there is no significant tendency for Kandyan Tamil workers to abandon Kandyan areas and move to the North. In fact Thonda has regained respect within his community. Also most of the Colombo Tamils have re-established themselves in their old places. These two groups alone constitute 30% and 8% of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Armed forces and the police though predominantly Sinhala, do not constitute a politicalized racist attack force. It still acts as state machinery within a bourgeoisie democracy. Hence it will be incorrect for us to classify every police officer or even every soldier as a fascist thug or a racist brute and to develop our strategies on such false assumption. Our strategy should be disruption and dismantling of the state by propaganda, agitation and mass actions and not military attacks aimed at wiping out soldiers and policemen. It is stupid and disastrous to use methods of struggle that are used against fascist or imperialist dictatorship, against a parliamentary democracy though with a strong Bonapartist tendency.

So you see, moving from the general position of right of secessions and other principles, to a position of separation and division is not as simple as some comrades think. It is certainly not enough to say that 'Tamils have already decided', Of course, Tamils have decided and the progressive elements among them is looking at India or a collaboration with workers state while the right wing is hopeful of ASEAN and thinks of installing a Singapore type state with American support. We must realize that while the revolutionary proletarian movement is represented by us and the tendencies close to us, the revolutionary democratic movement among the Tamils is the tendency that looks towards India with the hope of unification of all Tamils within a greater republic.

So the national unification task today is to take the idea of integration of the Indian sub continent to both the Sinhala and the Tamil masses and to other peoples in the sub continent. Already advanced workers among Sinhalese were able to break conclusively from chauvinism and approve of Indira shaking JR by the collar. Some go to the extent of thinking that it is a good thing of the Indian Army comes and "knock the fool off". Such feelings have tremendous positive aspect. But this will not grow in the right direction if we pose the intervention of the Indian Army where the outcome is a mere dissection of the country leaving Sinhalese in the hands of a worse chauvinist far to the right of JR. For those Sinhala workers, who vaguely wish that racist semi fascist forces be eliminated by the Indian republican forces, one cannot offer the prospects of a worse form of a fascist state.

What will be the role of Indian bourgeoisie including that of Tamil Nadu? Let us understand very clearly, even under a worst condition that is, even after take over by bloody racists backed by American imperialism, it is very unlikely that Indian bourgeoisie will fully back a popular war against the dictatorship. Obviously, on the other hand, Jang Sang elements may support the regime. Only reluctantly Indira may help a liberation war. She knows very well such a war releases revolutionary forces which will threaten her own artificial unitary regime. In fact JR, after returning from India said what she really worried about is the harassment of Tamils in Sinhala areas and not the fate of the liberation struggle in the North. Ten years of liberation struggle did not disturb her. Not only Indira even Amir is frightened of the Marxist tendencies within Tamil liberation. He was reported to have said: "If there is a settlement that we can

recommend to the people we can carry them (i.e. the militants) except for a few groups which were Marxist orientated.” (Vide, Islandâ€™23 November 1983, page 1). It is not entirely clear how he is going to deal with these Marxists including of course Tamil Sama Samajists. Perhaps JR Indira-Amir 'thrimurthi' will look after them!

This discussion leads us to the slogans raised during the independence struggle of Sri Lanka and India in 1930s and '40s. Sri Lanka bourgeoisie at first did not ask for complete independence and it came to them as an after thought. When Sama Samajists launched the “free Lanka” slogan they (i.e. LSSP) were identifying themselves with the Indian national movement. In fact at early stages even Nehru was introduced here as an Indian Sama Samajists by the paper “Sama Samaja”. That was of course going bit too far. But the fact remains that it was considered to be a single liberation struggle. However later Phillip succumbed to Sinhala chauvinism and separated the Sri Lankan independence from the Indian independence movement where as BLPI continued the idea of Indian unification as a part and parcel of the independence struggle. It was the only correct way to pose the question of independence from British imperialism. Proletariat poses liberation issue not as a process of disintegration and amputation but as a means of healthy integration.

We cannot put all teachings of Marx and Lenin over the board just because feelings ran high after July holocaust. The very people who tore their hair apart shouting “nothing but separation” are now thinking of the best possible way to satisfy JR. Before long we may have to fight alone to show that the agreed settlement is a sellout. I am sure that real interest of, the Tamil workers and peasants will be thrown overboard for some concessions to the Tamil upper and middle classes. In particular the interest of Kandyan Tamils will be swept under the carpet; land allocations in the North and the East included.

Our duty is to stand by our socialist internationalist duty and to take the best form of slogans to emancipate the masses. If we do not emancipate and educate them on the national question we cannot ever take them along the road to socialism. Now that even Indian intervention is a possibility if a serious breakdown occurs again, Tamil Sama Samajists have a greater responsibility fighting against Tamil narrow nationalism of isolation. You must pose the question realistically and make the best layers aware of their responsibility. We must show that we are fighting for liberation with the intention of integration with other Indian nations including Sinhalese on the basis of genuine equality.

You should propose:

1. Right of secession be included in the constitution, a referendum be held among the Tamil masses to decide their destiny under the supervision of an international commission acceptable to the Tamil leaders (if a referendum is held obviously you will campaign for a democratic unity in Sri Lanka with the Indian unification as the perspective.)
2. Autonomy of Tamil speaking areas with powers over regional security or police functions. Home guards or defence militias for minorities in other areas.
3. Equality, and end of discrimination in citizenship, jobs, education, land allocation, and particularly, in the national armed forces. Granting of citizenship to all Kandyan Tamils .
4. Right to use Tamil in dealing with the central government.
5. Fair share of the national income to develop the Tamil areas.

On the basis of this programme you should mobilize Tamil people and bring them to participate in the common struggle

to throw out this government In the course of such a struggle they will be able to take power in their own areas. Once they are in power Tamils could decide for the best possible integration. To talk of separation before taking power is to put cart before the horse. Separation or integration entirely depends on what changes take place within the Sinhala nation. Putting the slogan of separation now, means not to expect a common struggle with Sinhala workers and peasants and evolve a strategy for power by passing, or more correctly against, the entire Sinhala nation. Such a strategy for power presumes that the liberation struggle is against a reactionary Sinhala state backed by imperialism, and the struggle is with the help of all progressive forces in the subcontinent and in particular the Indian national democratic forces. As I said before that is not the way things stand today. Class forces are more powerful than that within Sri Lanka and also within India. Sri Lankan state is still a weak constitutional Bonapartism. Indian national bourgeoisie is not interested in toppling JR and would be happy if he stabilizes himself and put all militants, both Sinhala and Tamil, on the run. American imperialism has more important problems near at home than getting involved with Sinhala racialists.

Such is the actual situation. There can be no doubt our programme aimed at mobilizing both Tamil and Sinhala forces against the decadent regime of JR is the only correct strategy. Tamil Samajists should boldly tell the Tamil masses that while trying to mobilize support for their cause in India and elsewhere they should remember that their greatest support is close at home: Among the Sinhala workers and peasants. Hence it is their responsibility to use slogans and tactics which are more effective in mobilizing these Sinhala forces too. Idea should be to overthrow the present oppressive regime and establish a revolutionary power based on workers, peasants and soldiers councils. Naturally in such a takeover, the control of Tamil areas will be in the hand of the Tamil masses. They will be then free to decide on what their destiny ought to be.

Singing Elam slogan in London and Madras and playing hide and seek with armed forces is no alternative to that.

3. Reading material

1. The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self Determination: Thesis (page 143, Vol.22 Collected Works of VI Lenin.
2. The Discussion on Self Determination summed up (page 320, Vol.22 Collected Works of VI Lenin)
- 3 Preliminary Draft Thesis on the National and the Colonial Questions (VI Lenin, June 5 1920)
4. The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions (VI Lenin, July 26 1920)