

Political crisis in Sri Lanka deepens

Why the Socialist Equality Party turned down Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga's invitation to all-party talks

15 May 2000

In the midst of a deepening political crisis in Sri Lanka produced by a string of military defeats in the war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), President Chandrika Kumaratunga has called an all-party meeting today in a bid to shore up her administration.

Along with other political parties, the Socialist Equality Party, the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, has been invited to send two representatives to take part in the discussions. The SEP will not attend and in the following letter to the president, SEP National Secretary Wije Dias sets out the party's reasons and restates the SEP's longstanding opposition to the war.

To President Chandrika Kumaratunga,

Madam President,

In reply to your invitation to the Socialist Equality Party to attend the all-party meeting being held today to discuss your government's prosecution of the ongoing war on the Tamil people and the army's military defeats on the Jaffna peninsula, I have to inform you that the SEP will not attend.

Under conditions where the government has promulgated sweeping emergency regulations to stifle any display of opposition to its policies, the meeting will be a complete sham. The all-embracing character of the restrictions now in force mean that any criticisms of the government will be suppressed.

Moreover, the sweeping anti-democratic measures initiated by your government reveal its real purpose: to rubberstamp government decisions already made, lend credibility to its policies and garner support for the continuation of a war that has had such disastrous

consequences for working people, both Sinhalese and Tamil, throughout the island. The Socialist Equality Party has no intention of participating in this charade.

However, as you have asked our opinion on the war we will give it to you. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost and millions of rupees squandered in the prosecution of a reactionary war aimed at suppressing the basic democratic rights of the Tamil people. You came to power in 1994 promising peace and instead intensified the war and its burden on ordinary people. More soldiers and civilians have died in the last six years than in the previous decade under successive UNP governments.

Sinhalese workers and villagers are not responsible for this conflict and yet they have borne its terrible costs: the staggering loss of life, the mounting toll of injured and maimed, and the savage cutbacks in government spending and basic services in order to pay for the military machine. Their interests lie in an end to the fighting and a fraternal settlement with their Tamil brothers and sisters.

The Socialist Equality Party unequivocally calls for the complete and immediate withdrawal of all Sri Lankan military forces from the north and east of the island. Not one more soldier should die and not one more rupee should be spent on a war being waged solely in the interests of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie.

Yours sincerely,

Wije Dias,

National Secretary,
Socialist Equality Party



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