

SEP public meeting to warn of the dangers of war in Sri Lanka

14 September 2004

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka is holding a public meeting this Friday to warn of the dangers of a return to civil war and advance a socialist perspective to meet the aspirations of working people for peace, democratic rights and decent living standards.

The main speaker will be Wije Dias, the SEP's general secretary and a member of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*. He will explain the underlying reasons why the ruling elites in Colombo have proven incapable of ending a conflict that has claimed the lives of at least 65,000 people and caused mass suffering over the past two decades.

Responding to the demands of corporate leaders, the previous United National Front (UNF) government signed a ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2002. Its purpose was to lay the basis for a communally-based power-sharing arrangement aimed at transforming the island into a cheap labour platform and integrating it into the global processes of production.

From the outset, however, the UNF confronted intransigent opposition from sections of the military hierarchy and various Sinhala chauvinist groups that branded any concession to the LTTE as a betrayal. Representing layers of the state bureaucracy and business that have profitted from the war, these forces enlisted the support of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and launched a process of destabilisation that culminated in the dismissal of the government in February.

But having come to power as the head of an unstable minority government, Kumaratunga confronts the same dilemmas as her predecessor. She has attempted to restart negotiations with the LTTE to ensure an inflow of foreign aid and investment. But her chauvinist

allies—the military and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)—are actively undermining the ceasefire by deliberately stoking up the armed conflict between the LTTE and a breakaway faction led by V. Muralitharan (Karuna) in the East.

The military is being encouraged by the duplicitous role of the United States and its strategic ally India. While publicly backing the resumption of peace talks, Washington and New Delhi have also been strengthening the hand of the Sri Lankan armed forces.

The vast majority of working people in Sri Lanka are opposed to any return to war. Yet the ruling class is so mired in communal politics that it is incapable of halting the slide back towards bloody conflict. To oppose such a disaster requires a complete political break from all the bourgeois parties and their “left” hangers-on and the adoption of an entirely different strategy based on unifying workers—Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim alike—around a socialist perspective to fight for their common class interests.

We urge workers, young people and intellectuals who are looking for a way out of the present impasse to attend the SEP's public meeting and actively participate in the discussion.

Venue: Public Library Auditorium, Colombo 7.

Time: 4pm Friday, September 17



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