

Asian tsunami disaster: the historical and political issues

SEP/WSWS public meeting in Galle, capital of southern Sri Lanka

17 May 2005

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka is holding a public meeting in Galle, capital of the southern province and a city hit hard by the December 26 tsunami, to discuss the historical and political issues raised by the disaster.

Nearly five months have passed since the tsunami brought massive destruction to lives, properties and infrastructure throughout southern Asia. But tens of thousands of survivors are still living in miserable conditions without any certainty about their future. Those living in Sri Lanka in makeshift tents now face even more severe privations with the onset of the rainy season. The various promises made by the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government have proved to be empty words.

As a result, there is growing anger among tsunami-affected people towards the government and other political parties. Rather than providing essential relief and reconstruction facilities, the Sri Lankan ruling elite is fanning communal tensions. Moreover, international donors, including the major world powers, have “pledged” \$US1.8 billion in aid, yet committed only \$750 million, which has still not been provided.

In order to secure their own financial and strategic interests, the US and other powers are pressuring President Chandrika Kumaratunga to sign an agreement for a joint aid mechanism with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This is aimed at creating conditions for the resumption of talks to end two decades of civil war. However, Kumaratunga’s main coalition partner, the Sinhala extremist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), is vehemently opposing any such agreement, claiming that it would provide international “recognition” to the LTTE. Having demanded that Kumaratunga reach an arrangement with

the LTTE, the main opposition United National Party has now backed away, adapting itself to the Sinhala chauvinism of the JVP.

The tsunami disaster and its aftermath have demonstrated, yet again, the complete inability of the Sri Lankan political establishment to address or resolve any of the immense social and economic problems confronting ordinary working people. The SEP/*World Socialist Web Site* meeting in Galle will review the political and historical background to the present crisis, and advance a socialist alternative to poverty, social inequality and war.

K. Ratnayake, a member of the SEP central committee and the WSWS International Editorial Board will deliver the main report.

Date and time: May 22, 4 p.m.

Venue: Co-operative Centre, Pettigalawaththa, Galle.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact