The Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) replies to the United Socialist Party

The Socialist Equality Party
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The pseudo-left United Socialist Party (USP) issued a diatribe last week against the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in response to the exposure posted July 29 on the *World Socialist Web Site* entitled "Sri Lanka: Pseudo-left USP willing to ally with any capitalist party."

The USP's article, entitled "Sectarianism against the methods of Marxism," was published in the name of its organ *Ratutharuwa* as an "editorial statement in response to slanders by WSWS (SEP)." It repeatedly accuses the SEP of "lies and slanders" and declares that the WSWS article "reveals both their sectarianism and their complete failure to understand Marxism and Trotskyism."

The USP strenuously objects to the fact that the SEP reported and explained the political significance of remarks made by USP leader Siritunga Jayasuriya outside the Jaffna district secretariat on July 13, the last day of nominations for the August 17 general election. More than a dozen journalists were present and the WSWS reporter recorded Jayasuriya's remarks, which were made in English. A complete transcription, unedited for grammatical or other errors, is available here.

What is striking from the transcript is the dynamic of the discussion. Speaking in the northern town of Jaffna, which is predominantly Tamil, Jayasuriya is at pains to try to distance himself from the two main bourgeois parties—the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which leads the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA). Both parties are responsible for the protracted communal war for Sinhala supremacy that cost hundreds of thousands of lives and devastated much of the North and East of the island.

When challenged by the WSWS reporter on his previous appearances on platforms with the UNP, Jayasuriya brazenly declared that he had not only joined with UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, but in the past also with former President Mahinda Rajapakse, and would do so again. "We will shake hands with the devil to fight against the oppressor," he said. "That's what we did with Ranil Wickremesinghe and the UNP, but we are not going to have any election with capitalist parties."

While Jayasuriya denied providing democratic window dressing for bourgeois politicians, that is exactly what the USP has been doing. Thus, the conclusion drawn in the SEP article: "The USP is a political outfit for hire, willing to ally with any capitalist party, no matter how reactionary, and dress it up for voters in false democratic colours."

The USP and the "Platform of Freedom"

The *Ratutharuwa* editorial statement specifically defends the USP's participation in the UNP-led "Platform of Freedom" formed in January 2009, following the killing of *Sunday Leader* editor Lasantha Wickrematunge in broad daylight as he drove to work in Colombo. His murder was one of hundreds carried out by pro-government death squads operating in collaboration with the security forces. Under the Rajapakse government, the army launched brutal offensives in the North that were to culminate in the crushing of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009 and the killing of tens of thousands of civilians.

The USP rails against the SEP for failing to understand the USP's involvement in the "Platform of Freedom," which it declares was "a crucial attempt to create an opposition to the war-mongering dictatorship," and not "a political bloc, but a concrete practical campaign in defence of democratic rights." Moreover, "it was correct not to debar any forces, even those who refuse to go outside the framework of capitalism"—that is, discredited bourgeois parties like the UNP.

The "Platform of Freedom," however, took no practical measures to defend anyone against the death squads, did not oppose the war and did nothing to defend democratic rights, in particular, those of Tamils. That would not have been tolerated by the UNP, which is just as mired in Sinhala chauvinism as the SLFP. The UNP was responsible for the 1983 anti-Tamil pogroms that plunged the island into civil war and ruthlessly prosecuted the war while in office.

The political purpose of the "Platform of Freedom" was to revive the UNP's fortunes by providing it with democratic credentials. The "Charter of the Platform of Freedom," agreed by all the participating parties, was the joint program of this political bloc. This short document spoke vaguely about defending the "right to life" and "freedom of expression" in the "four corners and nine provinces of this land and among peoples of all races and creeds," committing no one to anything, certainly not concrete practical measures.

The non-governmental organisation Rights Now—Collective for Democracy, which is currently supporting UNP leader Wickremesinghe, is far more forthright about the aim of the "Platform of Freedom." It declared: "This effort paved the way to legitimise the opposition parties in the eyes of the people, but at the same time it gave an opportunity to the human rights defenders to reclaim the space."

In January 2010, in the midst of a presidential election campaign, USP leader Jayasuriya joined Wickremesinghe on a joint platform to celebrate the success of the fraudulent "Platform of Freedom." At the time, the UNP was backing former army commander Sarath Fonseka, the man directly responsible for atrocities in the final months of the war, as the opposition "common candidate."

As the WSWS reported at the time, Wickremesinghe hailed Jayasuriya, declaring: "He took the initiative in forming this force. We followed him. Today we have advanced far. I salute Siritunga. Threatened with assassination, we were afraid to come out. Then Siritunga came forward. It paved the way for us to be able to challenge the incumbent president."

While drinking in the praise, Jayasuriya remained utterly silent about the challenger, General Fonseka, and his war crimes.

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The United Front

The WSWS comment by the SEP's presidential candidate, Wije Dias, provoked a similar USP tirade to the current one. Dias replied in detail, exposing in particular the USP's claim that its opportunist manoeuvring with the UNP was a model of the United Front tactic as practiced by Lenin and Trotsky.

The USP never replied to Dias. It simply claims once again that "Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks engaged on many occasions in similar actions with petit-bourgeois and bourgeois forces in the struggle against Tsarism." No attempt is made to concretely examine any of the "many occasions," because Lenin and Trotsky never advocated the type of opportunist relations with capitalist parties in which the USP is engaged. The United Front tactic applied to working-class parties and organisations, not bourgeois parties.

We cite Dias's reply at some length as a succinct summary of the political issues at stake:

> The USP invokes the names of Lenin and Trotsky as the advocates of this political sham. The writer even caustically declares that he can provide "the learned professors of the WSWS" with the necessary quotes. No need. The SEP is well aware of the differences between the United Front tactic, which has a long history in the Marxist movement, and the type of opportunist alliance with which the USP has been associated throughout its entire political existence and which has always proven a disaster for the working class.
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> The essence of the United Front is to unite and mobilise the working class to defend its rights against the class enemy, using the methods of class struggle. In the process, Marxists take every opportunity to expose the vacillations and duplicity of the opportunist leaders of the working class. The indispensable condition for the formation of a United Front is the political independence of the revolutionary party—no joint political program, no common slogans and no mixing of banners.
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> Leon Trotsky explained so well as he campaigned for a United Front of the German Communist Party with the Social Democrats in the 1930s against the Nazis: "No common platform with Social Democracy, or with the leaders of the German trade unions, no common publications, banners, placards! Agree only how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike! Such an agreement can be concluded even with the devil himself, with his grandmother and even with Noske and Grzensinki. On one condition, not to tie one's own hands."
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> This was exactly what the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), the SEP's forerunner, fought for in the late 1980s, when the UNP was in government. The UNP, which had launched the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 1983, had signed the Indo-Lanka Accord to allow so-called Indian peacekeepers into the North, freeing the security forces to crush growing unrest in the South. It imposed martial law on the pretext of suppressing the Janatha Vimukthi Peramu?a (People's Liberation Front—JVP), which opposed the Accord from a reactionary Sinhala chauvinist standpoint. Hundreds of workers, trade unionists and political activists were being murdered both by the security forces and the fascistic JVP gangs.
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> The RCL wrote to the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Workers Congress and the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), of which Jayasuriya was a leader at the time, proposing a United Front to take practical measures—the formation of workers' defence squads, joint picket lines, joint demonstrations and the organisation of a general strike against the UNP government.
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> The NSSP flatly rejected the proposal, accusing the RCL of "sectarianism" for excluding the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP), which it described as "the new proletarian reformist mass tendency." The SLMP, as the RCL explained at the time, was a bourgeois party, which was to merge with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Its leader, Chandrika Kumaratunga, became the country's president. The SLFP's current leader is none other than the current president, Rajapakse, whose anti-democratic methods are notorious.
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> The differences could not have been clearer. Against the RCL's call for a United Front, the NSSP adamantly defended the type of political bloc that Lenin and Trotsky had always insisted was impermissible for a revolutionary Marxist party. As the RCL pointed out, the NSSP had formed an electoral bloc with the bourgeois SLMP on the basis of a common program for government—"Perspectives and the Way Forward." This type of Popular Front alliance, promoted by the Stalinists, led to political catastrophes for the working class in France and Spain in the 1930s. The result was no different in Sri Lanka in the 1980s. It paralysed the working class precisely at the point where its independent political mobilisation was so desperately needed.
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> After toying with the idea of bringing the JVP into the government, UNP President Ranasinghe Premadasa unleashed the security forces against the JVP and Sinhala rural youth throughout the South from 1989 on. An estimated 60,000 young people were slaughtered by the military, its death squads and its network of secret torture chambers and prisons. It should be noted that the present UNP leader, Ranil Wickremesinghe, with whom Jayasuriya shares platforms and who he presents as a fighter for democracy, was a minister in that UNP government and bears direct political responsibility for its crimes.

Protest of the Opposition

At the end of 2012, the USP, along with the pseudo-left Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), which had also been part of the "Platform of Freedom," joined a UNP-led alliance called Vipakshaye Virodhaya (Protest of the Opposition), or VV for short.

At the formal signing of the VV memorandum of understanding in February 2013, Wickremesinghe declared that "this is the beginning of a revolution." The UNP leader did not, of course, mean a revolution in the sense of a movement of the masses. In fact, the opposite was the case. VV was conceived as a political bloc precisely to divert the mounting discontent of workers and the poor into safe parliamentary channels. "We have commenced a journey towards good governance," he declared.

Apart from the UNP, the USP's partners in VV included the NSSP, two Tamil capitalist parties—the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Democratic People's Front—and two Sinhala extremist groups—Nava Sihala Urumaya and the Motherland Protection Front.

VV's political orientation soon became apparent when it sent a letter to Rajapakse in March 2013 seeking a memorandum of understanding to prevent the country from becoming a "pariah state" and calling for an all-party conference to deal with a UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) resolution on human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

The US, which had backed Rajapakse's brutal war until 2009, cynically supported the resolution as a means of pressuring the Sri Lankan president

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to distance himself from China. It came as the Obama administration was ramping up its "pivot to Asia," aimed at undermining Chinese influence throughout the region and militarily encircling China. Due to Sri Lanka's strategic position at the cross-roads of shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, Pentagon planners have always regarded the island as vital for their war strategies, including blocking Chinese imports of energy and minerals from Africa and the Middle East.

The support of the USP and NSSP for VV is part of a broader shift among pseudo-left organisations internationally, which was demonstrated by their support for the US-led military intervention in Libya in 2011 and the ongoing regime-change operation in Syria under the bogus pretext of "human rights." In the case of Sri Lanka, Washington used the methods of diplomatic intrigue rather than military intervention to remove Rajapakse from power.

Regime-change in Colombo

The "Platform of Freedom" and VV were very much the embryo of the regime-change operation that swung into action as soon as Rajapakse announced an early presidential election for January 8, 2015. The following day, one of Rajapakse's key henchmen, Health Minister Maithripala Sirisena, quit the cabinet and held a press conference announcing his intention of challenging for the presidency.

The presence of former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, daughter of the SLFP's founder, at the press conference pointed to the wider political machinations involved. After serving two terms as Sri Lankan president, Kumaratunga had forged close relations with Washington via the Clinton Foundation. As Obama's former secretary of state, Hillary Clinton had been one of the chief architects of the "pivot to Asia" and was involved in all of its intrigues, including in Sri Lanka.

The SEP documented, in so far as details emerged publicly, the collusion between Kumaratunga, senior UNP figures, including Wickremesinghe, and US officials going back at least to April 2014 to move against Rajapakse. Wickremesinghe stood aside in the presidential election and the UNP backed Sirisena as the common opposition candidate. In return, Sirisena, having defeated Rajapakse, installed Wickremesinghe as prime minister and head of a minority UNP-led government.

The pseudo-left organisations, along with a large array of upper-middle class academic and professional groupings, NGOs and trade unions, played a vital role in promoting Sirisena, who was deeply implicated in all of the government's crimes and atrocities, as the democratic alternative to the "dictatorial" and "fascist" Rajapakse.

The NSSP and USP had a de facto division of labour. While NSSP leader Wickramabahu Karunaratne appeared repeatedly on Sirisena's platforms, denouncing Rajapakse's "fascist regime," the USP kept its distance, but nevertheless supported the anti-Rajapakse campaign indirectly. Posturing as independent from both the UNP and SLFP, the USP's presidential candidate Jayasuriya made limited criticisms of Sirisena's "commitment to neo-liberal economic policies," but remained silent on his responsibility, including on occasions as acting defence minister, for the government's war crimes. His real fire was directed against Rajapakse and his "dictatorial regime." By suggesting that Sirisena represented the "lesser evil," the USP played a crucial role in corralling more skeptical sections of voters behind the former health minister.

The historical roots of the USP

In its diatribes against the SEP, the USP derides the SEP's insistence that in preparing for the revolutionary battles ahead, workers must be armed with the political lessons derived from the key strategic experiences of the twentieth century in Sri Lanka and internationally. In his 2010 reply to the USP, SEP General Secretary Wije Dias outlined the issues and sketched the historic roots of the USP. Again, the USP has not replied.

> [A] frivolous attitude toward historic questions is a hallmark of petty-bourgeois organisations. Jayasuriya would prefer not to recall any history, particularly that of his own organisation, whose record is a litany of opportunist manoeuvres and political shipwrecks that have cost the working class dearly. The working class, however, can only go forward to the extent that it learns the essential lessons from its own strategic experiences in Sri Lanka and internationally. The history makes clear that the USP has nothing to do with Marxism or principled revolutionary politics.
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> The betrayal of the LSSP, which joined the bourgeois government of Madame Sirama Bandarainaike in 1964 amid widespread working class agitation, had a profound impact on the working class in Sri Lanka and internationally. It was the first time that an ostensibly Trotskyist party had openly abandoned the principles of socialist internationalism. As a result, in the absence of a struggle for class unity, communal politics, including the petty-bourgeois guerrillaism of the JVP and LTTE, flourished. While the LSSP's betrayal did not determine all subsequent history, it is impossible to understand subsequent developments, including the eruption of civil war, without understanding its consequences.
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> In 1964, Gerry Healy, the leader of the Socialist Labour League (SLL), the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), went to Colombo and campaigned outside the LSSP congress that sanctioned its entry into the Bandaranaike government. Healy identified the roots of the betrayal in the opportunist tendency that emerged inside the Fourth International in the early 1950s led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. The Pabloites accommodated to the post-war restabilisation of capitalism and to the dominant Stalinist, Social Democratic and bourgeois nationalist leaderships.
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> The ICFI, of which the SEP is the Sri Lankan section, was formed in 1953 to combat Pabloite opportunism and defend the principles of Trotskyism. The Committee for a Workers International—the opportunist "international" with which the USP is currently aligned—traces its roots back to the late Ted Grant, who had similar views to Pablo and Mandel and for a period held the franchise for the British section of the Pabloite international.
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> In his pamphlet *Ceylon: The Great Betrayal*, Healy explained: "The degeneration [of the LSSP] is inextricably bound up with the struggle inside the international Trotskyist movement. It constitutes the most complete example of betrayal by Pablo and his European allies, Germain [Mandel] and Pierre Frank." He emphasised: "The answer lies not in Ceylon, but in an international study of the struggle against Pabloite revisionism. The real architects of the coalition reside in Paris." The Pabloites, who had sanctioned and condoned the LSSP's backsliding for years, had paved the way for the coalition government in Colombo.
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> The RCL, which was formed in 1968, was forged on these lessons and proudly defends this heritage of Healy. It was only on this basis that the RCL together with the ICFI was able wage a

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political fight against Healy's subsequent political degeneration, which culminated in the 1985–86 split with the British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP)—the SLL's successor. While the ICFI examined in detail and drew the necessary lessons from the WRP's betrayals, it nevertheless recognised the enormous political role that Healy had played, particularly in the 1960s, in defending the principles of Trotskyism.

It is not surprising that the USP would prefer that the LSSP's betrayal was forgotten. Jayasuriya, together with NSSP leader Wickremabahu Karunaratna, remained inside the LSSP for more than a decade afterward. The Bandaranaike government collapsed in 1965, but a second coalition government came to power in 1970 with the LSSP in key ministerial posts. Jayasuriya and Karunaratna remained inside the LSSP as the coalition government suppressed the 1971 JVP uprising, killing an estimated 15,000 youth, imposed a communal constitution that made Buddhism the state religion, imposed discriminatory measures against Tamils in education, and accelerated the forced repatriation of Tamil plantation workers to India. Like true opportunists, they only quit the party after the LSSP became so reviled among workers that it was annihilated in the 1977 general election. Jayasuriya and Karunaratna formed the NSSP in 1978, and subsequently parted ways to head their own outfits, but they never broke from the politics of coalitionism—that is, of class collaboration.

The record of the SEP

There is an unbridgeable class gulf between the SEP and the ICFI on the one hand, and all the pseudo-left organisations on the other. In the nearly half century since the RCL was established, the party has established deep roots in the working class as a result of its consistent struggle for principle, its fight for proletarian internationalism against all forms of nationalism and communalism, and its courageous struggle against the war waged by successive Colombo governments to suppress the democratic rights of the Tamil minority.

The *Ratutharuwa* editorial statement denounces the SEP as "sectarian" for refusing to participate in its opportunist activities, mocks the SEP's fight for theoretical clarity, and resorts to its own lies to try to deny the SEP's long record of struggle in the working class. "The crudeness and sectarianism also flow from the fact that there is little evidence that the SEP have any influence or base in the working class. It makes no effort whatsoever to take part in the day-to-day struggles of workers. Instead, without dirtying their hands in the often complex living struggles, the SEP members preach the 'purity of socialism' from the comfort of their home."

What the USP means by the working class and its day-to-day struggles has nothing to do with workers as such. The USP, like all the pseudo-left organisations, identifies the "working class" with the corrupt middle class apparatuses of the trade unions as well as the host of NGOs that have come to play a vital role for the ruling classes in countries like Sri Lanka in suppressing the resistance of workers and the poor. The USP is closely associated with the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Union (FTZGSEU), the Ceylon Teachers Union (CTU) and the Government Nursing Officers' Association (GNOA), all of which have a track record of betrayals. The CTU and GNOA are now actively supporting the UNP election campaign.

To provide a full answer to the USP's gratuitous insults would more than double the length of this already long reply. But some slanders cannot be allowed to pass. Members of the RCL/SEP have on more than one occasion paid dearly for their determined fight for principle in the working class and among the rural masses.

* In 1971, the LSSP, of which Jayasuriya was a member, was part of the Bandaranaike government that unleashed its military to suppress the JVP uprising. Even though it was forced underground and its publications banned, the RCL, while politically opposed to the JVP's politics, took a principled stand against the state repression of JVP members and rural youth. Two RCL members—Central Committee member Lakshman Weerakoon and L.G. Gunadasa—were arrested and killed in police custody.

* Following the defeat of the Bandaranaike government in 1977, the incoming UNP government rapidly ramped up communal tensions and boosted troops in the north of the country. From the outset, the RCL demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the military from the North and East and, in a climate of communal reaction, fought for the unity of the working class. In 1979, leading RCL member R.P. Piyadasa was brutally murdered for opposing the government's policies by UNP-organised thugs working with the police.

* In 1988 and 1998, the RCL was the only party to take a stand against the Indo-Lanka Accord and also the JVP's chauvinist campaign to "defend the motherland." As a result of its stand, the party faced police raids and arrests as well as JVP attacks. JVP gunmen murdered three RCL members—R.A. Pitawela, P.H. Gunapala and Gretian Geekiyanage.

* In the North, SEP members waged a difficult political struggle to oppose the war and demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of troops, and at the same time counter the Tamil separatism of the LTTE. In 1998, the LTTE arrested five SEP members—Rasendran Sudharshan, Thirugnana Sambanthar, Kasinathan Naguleswaran, A. Rasaratnam and E. Nyalvale—in a bid to intimidate and silence the party and block its struggle to unify workers. They were released unharmed only because of the international campaign by the SEP and its sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International. In 2007, as pro-government death squads operated with impunity, SEP member Nadarajah Wimaleswaran vanished while travelling to the navy-controlled island of Kayts and is likely to have been murdered.

The 2005 presidential election

The only concrete example of the SEP's supposed absence from political struggle cited by *Ratutharuwa* is the following: "The SEP was seen nowhere in the election in 2004 when the USP launched a vehement campaign against the mistake of boycotting the election propagated by the LTTE… When the presidential candidate and USP General Secretary Siritunga Jayasuriya came third in that election, he used the platform to clearly warn against the unleashing of chauvinist forces by the victorious Mahinda Rajapakse. The SEP did nothing of that sort. When their candidate Wije Dias spoke on the same platform, he gave a little history lesson (as usual) and announced that none of the election promises would be kept and finished with the audacious claim that he alone can save the working class."

A remarkable historical tour de force by the USP, which, like all opportunists, are mesmerised by numbers and like to boast about coming third in the presidential election. They should at least remember that the election took place in 2005, not 2004.

More significantly, while the USP was so concerned about the LTTE's "boycott mistake," primarily because it would cost the UNP the election, Dias and the SEP were the only party to warn the working class that Rajapakse would plunge the country back to war. Its election manifesto clearly stated: "He has allied himself with the Sinhala extremists of the

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JVP and JHU, who are demanding the strengthening of the military, a revision of the current ceasefire and the abandonment of the P-TOMS agreement with the LTTE for the joint administration of tsunami aid. The logic of these policies is to set the course for war."

The "platform" that Jayasuriya refers to was the official declaration of the polls at which each of the candidates was allowed to make a brief speech. As the WSWS reported at the time, far from thundering against Rajapakse, Jayasuriya, on his way to the microphone, grabbed the president-elect's hand with both of his and warmly congratulated the winner. It set the tone for his speech, which offered conciliatory advice to Rajapakse, suggesting he had "a big challenge and a special responsibility" to control "the Sinhalese nationality" and give Tamils their due rights. "On a day like today, I don't want to put forward more negative ideas than that," he added.

When it came to his turn, Dias, in the few minutes available, struck an entirely different note.

> As the presidential candidate of the SEP, I stated at the beginning of our campaign that we were contesting the election not just to gather some votes in this country. Our aim was to use this opportunity to start a discussion on our policies and perspective, that is, an internationalist socialist perspective, in Sri Lanka, in the Indian subcontinent, in South Asia and internationally. I want to thank the SEP members for their efforts in carrying out this work and to those who supported it.
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> Now the election results are out and a new president has been elected. But the SEP believes not a single problem of the workers, oppressed, peasants, youth, Tamil masses and other layers will be solved. What are behind the election results is dishonesty and promises that will never be implemented. My statement is not speculation. It is the historical lesson of the last 58 years of this so-called independent state. The country was ruled by the UNP for around 30 years and then the SLFP ruled with various coalitions and alliances, but not a single problem of the masses has been solved.
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> That is why we, the SEP, say emphatically to the masses that they have to fight for a program that will bring a solution to the war, a solution that will establish democratic rights for all and a socialist solution to the increases in the cost of living. The program and perspective essential for the masses is the program of international socialism. I conclude my speech by saying in the coming period the SEP will provide this program to the masses and promises to fight for it.

This is the real history.

What is the USP doing in Jaffna?

In the present election, the USP has made a deliberate orientation to Jaffna by placing Jayasuriya at the head of its slate in this electoral district. The USP is posturing there as a defender of Tamil rights in staunch opposition to both the UNP and SLFP. That is why it reacted so hysterically to the WSWS exposure of Jayasuriya's remarks that his party was willing to work with either party given the appropriate circumstances.

The political situation in Jaffna is one of growing unrest, particularly among Tamil youth. Since the LTTE's defeat in 2009, the entire population has remained under military occupation, subject to routine harassment and abuse of democratic rights. Unemployment is high. Many people still lack adequate accommodation. And there is ongoing discontent with the bourgeois TNA, which won control of the northern provincial council and has done nothing to alleviate the terrible conditions facing the majority of people.

The SEP is intervening in Jaffna to clarify critical political issues facing Tamil workers and youth and to fight for the revolutionary unity of the working class in the struggle for a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam. The USP's campaign is designed to do exactly the opposite: to prevent the working class from drawing the necessary political lessons from the LTTE's defeat and the bankruptcy of Tamil nationalism.

That is the purpose of the USP's slogan of the "Tamil people's right to self-determination." It means nothing other than defending the right of the Tamil bourgeoisie to rule the North and East and exploit the Tamil working class—either via an independent capitalist state or, as the TNA proposes, an autonomous province in a federal Sri Lanka. The USP, which was an ally of the TNA in VV, is promoting this increasingly discredited bourgeois party in the current election.

This perspective of Tamil separatism, however, is precisely what has produced such a catastrophe for the Tamil working class, in particular. As the SEP explained in highlighting Jayasuriya's remarks in Jaffna:

> The LTTE's collapse was not primarily military, but the result of its political program. The LTTE represented the class interests of the Tamil bourgeoisie and thus resorted to ruthless measures to suppress any opposition by Tamil workers or peasants. Based on Tamil separatism and chauvinism, the LTTE was utterly incapable of making any appeal to working people in the south of Sri Lanka or more broadly in South Asia and internationally. Instead, it appealed to US imperialism and the Indian government, even as they were supporting the Colombo government and its war both diplomatically and militarily.

The conclusion that workers and youth in Jaffna have to draw is that their allies are not the corrupt venal Tamil elites, but the working class throughout the island, South Asia and internationally in a unified struggle to put an end to their common oppressor—the capitalist system.

What is the USP doing in Colombo?

While Jayasuriya is claiming to defend Tamils in Jaffna, the USP is singing a different political tune in Colombo, where it tried but failed to forge an "alternative left force" for the election with the NSSP and the Front Line Socialist Party (FSP) through the establishment of common lists of candidates or a seat arrangement with the two parties.

The USP's discussions with the FSP are significant, as this organisation is a breakaway from the JVP that has always been deeply hostile to any concessions to the Tamil minority. Far from repudiating the JVP's communal politics, FSP leaders boast of their role during the JVP's chauvinist campaign against the Indo-Lanka Accord in the late 1980s and its murderous activities. While the talks broke down over the USP's support for "the right to self-determination," the fact that they even began testifies to the USP's adaptation to Sinhala communalism when in Colombo.

Workers and youth should draw serious political lessons from events in Greece where "an alternative left force" in the form of Syriza has just carried out a historic betrayal of the Greek and European working class.

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Elected in January on promises to oppose austerity, the Syriza government rapidly abandoned its pledges, repudiated the overwhelming “no” vote in last month’s referendum, and is imposing the draconian diktats of European and international finance capital on the working class. This betrayal is a warning to workers everywhere of what the pseudo-lefts in power will do.

The USP hailed Syriza’s election win, and its sister party Xeknima, the Greek section of the Committee for a Workers International, rallied behind the Syriza government. Domestic policy invariably follows foreign policy. The USP’s enthusiastic support for Syriza is a warning to workers that it will now play no less treacherous a role in Sri Lanka.

The pseudo-lefts in Sri Lanka, like their counterparts around the world, are not based on the working class and the oppressed, but represent the interests of privileged layers of the upper-middle class. Through more than three decades of wretched manoeuvres with rival factions of the bourgeoisie, the USP and NSSP have integrated themselves into the Colombo political establishment, which is determined to impose the burden of the country’s economic crisis onto working people.

The events in Greece signal the rapid worsening of the global economic breakdown that is fuelling geo-political tensions, heightening the danger of war, and driving the deepening assault on the living conditions and democratic rights of the working class and urban and rural poor in every country. The SEP is standing in the Sri Lankan election to educate and mobilise the working class independently of all factions of the ruling class and their pseudo-left apologists in the fight for a workers’ and peasants’ government and socialist policies.

We urge workers and youth to carefully study our election manifesto, actively support our campaign and vote for our candidates to demonstrate your support for our socialist internationalist perspective. Above all, we call on you to apply to join the ranks of the SEP and build it as the necessary revolutionary leadership for the struggles that will inevitably erupt.

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