

The pandemic, the global crisis of capitalism, the resurgence of class struggles and the tasks of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)—Part 3

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)

13 June 2022

This is the third and final part of the main resolution adopted by the Third National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka, which was held online from May 14–16, 2022.

The SEP Congress also adopted an emergency resolution “Popular uprising against the Rajapakse government and the tasks of the SEP.”

[Part 1] [Part 2]

The tasks of the Socialist Equality Party

57. The SEP’s program is based on the Theory of the Permanent Revolution, first formulated by Leon Trotsky in 1905. This program, which successfully guided the Russian proletariat to victory in the October 1917 revolution, is founded on the recognition that the national bourgeoisie in countries of belated capitalist development—such as India and Sri Lanka—cannot realise the fundamental democratic tasks and social aspirations of the masses. The bourgeoisie in these countries are tied to imperialism on the one hand, and fear the revolutionary working class on the other. Only the united working class, leading the poor farmers and oppressed masses, can address these historical tasks by establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat as part of the world socialist revolution.

58. Bitter strategic experiences in South Asia underscore the critical importance of the fight for the program of Permanent Revolution. The carving up of South Asia into different nation-states—India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka—by British imperialism and various rival local bourgeois factions has created a communal and religious cauldron.

The Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India (BLPI), then the Indian section of the Fourth International, fought for the perspective of a united struggle of the working class under the banner of socialism, leading the peasantry and other oppressed toilers, throughout the region against capitalist rule, first under the British and then after independence its various local clients. Subsequently however, the BLPI, as part of the liquidationist assault on the program of the Fourth International encouraged and led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, adapted to the state structures formed as part of the post-war settlement. In 1951 it opportunistically merged with the nationally-oriented LSSP, without clarifying any of the differences that had previously led the LSSP to split from the BLPI. The “united” LSSP systematically abandoned international socialist principles. Having opposed the ICFI’s stand against Pabloite liquidationism in 1953, the LSSP adapted to Sinhala populism and finally in 1964 carried out the “Great Betrayal,” entering into Madame Bandaranaike’s SLFP-led

coalition government.

The SEP’s predecessor, the RCL, was established in 1968 on the basis of the ICFI’s struggle against the Pabloites. Throughout its history, the RCL-SEP has opposed Sinhala chauvinism to unite workers across communal divisions to fight against the attacks on social and democratic rights by consecutive bourgeois governments and opposed the war and demanded unconditional withdrawal of Sri Lankan forces from the north and east. The SEP’s program—for a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam as part of the struggle for socialism in South Asia and internationally—essentially flows from this perspective of Permanent Revolution.

59. As the economic and political crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic and as workers have come into struggles across ethnic-communal lines, the ruling party, the opposition and their chauvinist allies have intensified their attempts to incite and provoke anti-Tamil and anti-Muslim divisions. The SEP must vigorously fight against all forms of nationalism, communalism and chauvinism by the government and every faction of the ruling elite, on the basis of the struggle for the international unity of the working class.

60. The party will be able to provide the necessary revolutionary leadership to the working class only by thoroughly arming itself with the strategic experiences of the working class in the last century, concentrated in the struggle of the ICFI. Elaborating this task of the Trotskyist movement, David North explained at the 2019 SEP (US) summer school: “The political development of the party *as a whole*—of both older and younger members—the raising of its theoretical level to meet the intensifying political challenges, requires the interaction of an intense engagement with contemporary developments and the identification and critical analysis of the historical processes that constitute the essential content of the ‘present’.” The Sri Lankan SEP will undertake a systematic and well-elaborated program to raise the theoretical level of its cadres and those who are attracted to the party to help fulfill this task.

61. A significant milestone in the struggle for Trotskyism is the ICFI’s 1985–86 split from the renegade British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), which succumbed to Pabloism, repudiating Trotskyism and embracing national opportunism. The Trotskyists of the ICFI were able to defend orthodox Marxism and prepare the movement for the impending period. The transformation of the ICFI sections from leagues into parties since 1995, including the RCL’s transformation into the SEP, and the launching of the WSWs as the main international organ of the ICFI are pivotal achievements of this struggle.

62. The SEP welcomes the re-launch of the WSWs on October 2, 2020. Since its founding in 1998, the WSWs has played an immense role in

integrating the work of ICFI sections, and educating a generation of workers and youth in Marxism. The re-launched WSWS is a powerful means to bring the essential lessons of the previous strategic experiences of the working class and internal struggles of the Marxist movement into the class struggles unfolding in a pre-revolutionary situation, so as to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The SEP must take the initiative in writing articles and analyses, in timely fashion, and develop the Sinhala and Tamil language sites of the WSWS, apart from writing for the English site.

63. An important aspect of the SEP's struggle is its intervention in the arts and cultural field. Our writing of WSWS articles on issues related to arts and culture, and polemics with the political and ideological representatives of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, must be systematically developed. Expanding the work of the SEP-initiated action committee to defend freedom of expression and art from the attacks of the state and the reactionary chauvinist forces, including the jailing of writers and artists, is also critically important.

64. The recent further exposures of GPU agent Sylvia Ageloff's role in assisting GPU agent Ramon Mercader in the assassination of Leon Trotsky, the great Marxist of the last century, is an important achievement for the ICFI investigation *Security and the Fourth international*. As global capitalism faces an unprecedented crisis, and the working class passes through a pre-revolutionary period, the ruling class, the state and its agents will attempt to infiltrate the movement to sabotage its struggle. The wealth of historical lessons unearthed through this investigation into Trotsky's assassination and the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism and the politics of the Pabloite apologists for the GPU agents will provide immense knowledge for the training of Trotskyist cadre.

65. The SEP takes as a principal task mobilising workers and youth in Sri Lanka and throughout South Asia to build a socialist anti-war movement of the international working class. The US military-strategic offensive against China, enlisting India as its main regional ally in this incendiary operation, and the pressure to bring all South Asian regimes in line with it, highlights the urgent necessity of this fight.

66. At the beginning of 2020, the ICFI and the WSWS characterised the period we are passing through as "The Decade of Socialist Revolution." Within a month, the global pandemic erupted, deepening the world capitalist crisis, beginning a period of mass working-class struggles and opening up new opportunities to fight for the program of socialism internationally. This demands the SEP's active intervention in all struggles of workers, youth and the oppressed. We have to bear in mind, as the WSWS Perspective explained:

"An evaluation of the objective situation and realistic appraisal of political possibilities, which excludes the impact of the intervention of the revolutionary party, is utterly alien to Marxism. The Marxist revolutionary party does not merely comment on events, it participates in the events that it analyzes, and, through its leadership in the struggle for workers' power and socialism, strives to change the world." (quoted from the SEP (US) perspective 2018 "The Resurgence of Class Struggle and the Tasks of the Socialist Equality Party")

67. There is no room for political passivity or complacency in the party, belittling the significance of workers' struggles or the potential for the party to influence them and bring them under its leadership. The party's cadres and every party organ must engage in the political and theoretical struggle to build it as the mass revolutionary party of the working class. At the SEP (US) summer school held in early August 2021, David North explained the decisive role of the party's intervention:

"We can see very clearly that objective conditions are changing that provide for us unparalleled opportunities. Everything depends on how we utilise these opportunities. There have been many cases, even in the past two years, where success depended on a rapid political response. That we recognised these opportunities was of course grounded in a deeper historical understanding. But realising the potential in the objective situation requires that the party act, and that it act decisively."

68. In our interventions in the mounting wave of class struggles, the building of Action Committees in workplaces and working-class neighbourhoods is essential. The old organisations, including the trade unions, have become agents of the state, companies and finance capital, helping them to take back the hard-won rights of workers. The SEP has taken the initiative among plantation and health workers and teachers to form action committees, winning considerable support. The party should vigorously pursue such initiatives in every workplace and among key sections of the working class. Sri Lankan workers' struggles are part of the developing international class struggles and they face common problems. Any successful struggle against the offensive of international finance capital can be waged only by uniting their fight internationally. The SEP, together with its sister parties, must vigorously fight to build the action committees under the banner of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) launched by the ICFI.

69. The SEP's decision to launch four WSWS newsletters, among health, education, migrant and garment workers, is an important initiative. The newsletters will help build action committees, advance workers' understanding about international developments and the struggle for socialism and expand the WSWS's influence among these workers. The increasing interest among the respective sections of workers and their subscribing to the newsletters point to the immense possibilities for the party.

70. Advancing transitional demands within the working class is important to win workers to the revolutionary perspective. Demands such as no work in unsafe workplace conditions; full compensation for job losses; no to scrapping the eight-hour working day; and a sliding scale of wages to compensate for the rising inflation must be advanced.

71. In opposition to the ruling class' dictatorial preparations, various plans to rewrite the constitution and the myth of reviving the decayed parliament, the SEP advances the demand for a constituent assembly elected directly by the people. The sitting of parliamentary members as a "constituent assembly" is a farce and a conspiracy against the people. These demands can be fought for only as part of the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government. No democratic right can be won and assured apart from the struggle for socialism.

72. The struggle to develop the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) must be central to the SEP's initiatives within the working class and the building of the party. Youth have been a main target of the ruling class and the government. The defence ministry secretary has ordered State Intelligence Service (SIS) agents onto the campuses to suppress university students and teachers as well as non-academic staff. The government is pushing compulsory military training for youth in the armed forces to use them as a paramilitary force. School syllabuses are being changed to better-tailor them to providing labour for big business and to propagate reactionary Sinhala-Buddhist ideology. The privatisation of education has been pushed ahead by the government. The FSP-controlled IUSF has intensified protests to deflect opposition among students and turn them away from the working class. Unrest is developing once again among rural youth, who face unemployment and poverty. Young workers are the most brutally exploited section of the working class in the free trade zones and informal sectors. The IYSSE must

vigorously struggle against the attacks on youth and win students and youth to revolutionary Marxist policies. The ideological struggle to expose anti-Marxist theories, such as post-modernism, on campuses will play an important role in winning students to the party.

73. All these tasks are centred on building the SEP as the revolutionary leadership of the working class. This struggle can be carried out only by educating the party cadres as Marxists, imbuing them with the historical and strategic lessons of the Marxist movement embodied in the ICFI. No amount of militancy and courage is in and of itself sufficient. Socialist Revolution is the task. It can and will be successfully carried out only under the leadership of a Marxist party—that is the SEP.

Concluded



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact