

# Third National Congress of the SEP (Sri Lanka): Greetings from the French and German sections of the world Trotskyist movement

19 June 2022

*The following greetings from the German and French sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International were read to the Third National Congress of the SEP in Sri Lanka held from May 14 to May 16. Salutations from the SEP in Australia, Canada and the UK will be published on June 21. Greetings from David North on behalf of the ICFI and the US SEP are available here.*

Dear comrades,

I am very pleased to send the revolutionary greetings of the Socialist Equality Party in Germany to this important congress. A development in the working class is concentrated in Sri Lanka right now, which is actually taking place all over the world. This congress gives leadership and perspective to the working class.

When the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie faced mass working class struggles 58 years ago, it brought the LSSP into government to suppress the workers and secure bourgeois rule.

Because of the intervention of the British SLL [Socialist Labour League], it was possible to build the RCL [Revolutionary Communist League] as a section of the ICFI in Sri Lanka on the basis of these political lessons. Relentlessly you have fought ever since against the pseudo-left defenders of bourgeois rule, against communalism and chauvinism, and for the international unity of the working class, based on an independent, socialist program.

These historic principles are now intersecting with the struggles of the working class, as David North explained three years ago about the fifth phase of the development of the Trotskyist movement. Nowhere is this more visible today than in Sri Lanka.

But the mass struggles in Sri Lanka can only be understood as part of the international development of the working class. NATO's proxy war against Russia and the sanctions regime are causing rapidly rising food and energy prices around the world and driving workers into poverty. The coronavirus pandemic is claiming more and more lives as the ruling class prioritizes its profits over human lives.

In Germany, the bourgeoisie is pushing militarism at breathtaking speed. Seventy-seven years after the unconditional surrender, German tanks are rolling again against Russia. The German government is sending more and more heavy weapons to Ukraine to wage a proxy war against Russia on the backs of the Ukrainian population.

The return of German militarism is accompanied by a revival of the vilest anti-Russian chauvinism and racism and the trivialization of Nazi crimes.

For example, Chancellor Olaf Scholz called the Russian invasion of Ukraine a "war of extermination" and a "breach of civilization," terms previously used only for the Nazis' meticulously planned war of extermination in the Soviet Union and the Holocaust.

This unspeakable trivialization of Nazi crimes is taken even further in German newspapers. For example, the newspaper *taz*, which is close to the Green Party, published a long article by Julia Latynina in which she claims that Stalin planned World War II when Hitler was not even in power. The invasion of the Soviet Union would thus have been the preemptive war that Hitler always claimed.

With the proxy war against Russia and the justification and trivialization of Nazi crimes, everything we have shown in recent years is confirmed. German militarism continues its worst traditions and wants once again to become the biggest military power on the continent.

The burden of war and rearmament is to be borne by the working class. Food inflation of 20 to 50 percent lowers the wages of the entire working class and drives masses into poverty. While not a penny was left for pandemic control, education and health, over 100 billion euros are now being poured into rearmament.

As in Sri Lanka, the trade unions play a key role in pushing through these social attacks and militarism. The German Federation of Trade Unions has just concluded its national congress, which saw itself as part of the war machine.

But resistance is growing in the working class. After the horrors of two World Wars and the Holocaust, opposition to militarism and war is deeply rooted in the working class. Strikes and protests against wage theft and inflation are developing everywhere. Many workers are following events in Sri Lanka on the WSWS, while the bourgeois media are reporting next to nothing, knowing that here, too, only a spark is enough to provoke mass struggles.

The central task is to unite the workers' struggles internationally and arm them with revolutionary leadership and a socialist perspective, and that means building the SEP in Sri Lanka and in every country in the world.

Your congress has an important role to play in this tense situation and will be closely followed by workers in Sri Lanka and around the world.

Yours fraternally,

Christoph Vandreier, Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei chairman

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Dear comrades,

We bring the warmest fraternal greetings of the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES) of France to this very important congress of our Sri Lankan comrades.

The mass protests and strikes in Sri Lanka demanding the overthrow of the Rajapakse clique's executive presidency are events of the greatest historical and international importance. The unbearable problems of rising prices, food shortages, and pandemic deaths that are driving this struggle afflict workers in every country. And so the struggles in Sri Lanka are

followed with interest and growing hope by workers and youth in France and beyond.

These struggles directly pose on the order of the day the role of your party and of our international tendency in providing revolutionary leadership to the working class. The vast political heritage of the ICFI's struggle against Stalinism and Pabloism allows us to fight for a decisive settlement of Trotskyism's political struggle against the petty-bourgeois anti-Marxist tendencies. Ever broader layers of workers and youth sense that this is the issue that is posed.

A French youth recently wrote to the WSWs, saying that he had found our site by reading about the Sri Lankan protests. He was moved by the courage and determination of the protesters and struck by the compelling coverage and perspectives advanced by the SEP in Sri Lanka. To this young man being radicalized by the unbearable social crisis and the political rot of the Macron presidency, it is clear that yours is the revolutionary party in Sri Lanka.

He immediately asked, based on this coverage, what we think of the NPA [New Anti-capitalist Party], the French Pabloite affiliate of the Sri Lankan NSSP, and other similar pseudo-left groups, like Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (LFI) party.

Indeed, the struggle of the SEP in Sri Lanka against the pseudo-left is exposing the pseudo-left around the world.

The SEP in Sri Lanka has advanced the demand to bring down the executive presidency and mobilize the working class independently in action committees. You are firstly illuminating the revolutionary path that broad masses of workers and youth in Sri Lanka are seeking out, in deeds, by taking up the struggle against Rajapakse. You are, moreover, tracing out a path that workers around the world will seek in the coming months and years, as the international working class takes the path of a struggle for state power and for socialism.

France has just had its presidential election, which ended in a two-way contest between the banker Emmanuel Macron and the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen. The PES fought in the working class for voters to reject both candidates, boycott the vote, and prepare for the struggles of the working class that are to come in the next presidency. This placed us in irreconcilable opposition to Mélenchon, the NPA and the entire pseudo-left.

Mélenchon was shocked by the 22 percent vote that he received on the first round, as millions of French voters tried to impose a left-wing alternative on Macron and Le Pen. He did not welcome the evidence of a powerful movement to the left in the workers and youth of France's largest cities. Instead, he panicked and even initially vowed to retire.

When he regained his wits, he proposed to serve as prime minister to carry out a people's revolution, either under Macron or under a neo-fascist presidency of Marine Le Pen, if she won. He stressed that he aimed to lead not a socialist revolution by the working class, but a people's revolution. This is a very particular type of "revolution"! It is a "revolution" led by an official of the capitalist state serving under a president pursuing extreme-right policies of imperialist war, mass COVID-19 infection, and police-state repression. It is, to speak plainly, a counter-revolution.

On this basis, Mélenchon has formed an alliance with the Socialist Party, a discredited, big-business party founded in 1971 that has for decades imposed austerity and war on the workers.

The PES rejects with contempt the political line of Mélenchon, who is now in discussions with a broad range of pseudo-left parties in France including the NPA. We brand the claim that a revolution can be carried out by the capitalist state as a political lie. The PES proudly defends the revolutionary heritage of the Trotskyist movement and the struggles of the international working class for socialism.

In that heritage, an important part is played by your party. The predecessor of the SEP (Sri Lanka), the Revolutionary Communist

League, was formed in irreconcilable struggle against the Pabloite Great Betrayal of the LSSP [Lanka Sama Samaja Party] in 1964. Capitulating to the pressure of the Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist movements, it entered into bourgeois government, paving the way for the division of the working class along ethnic lines and, ultimately, a 26-year communal war in Sri Lanka.

This searing experience in the treachery of Pabloism underlies the irreconcilable opposition of the PES to all those petty-bourgeois figures, like Mélenchon and the NPA, who turn their backs on the international working class and socialism to orient to nationalism and the capitalist state.

The RCL rejected the United Left Front formed between the LSSP and the Sinhalese chauvinists during the Great Betrayal. In France, Mélenchon and the NPA are trying to rebuild the Union of the Left formed a few years later between the Stalinist French Communist Party and the Socialist Party. As the RCL/SEP fights all the reactionary descendants of the United Left Front, so the PES today fights all those like Mélenchon who try to breathe new life into the political corpses of the Union of the Left, so as to drive the workers into a blind alley.

Our collaboration with our Sri Lankan comrades is of enormous significance to the PES. Many PES comrades were won to Trotskyism and the Permanent Revolution in exile in Europe, after having fled Sri Lanka during the communal war. As we formed our section, we consciously sought to base ourselves on your party's long and proud history. Your assistant national secretary, comrade Jayasekera, traveled to Paris to give us lectures on the founding of the RCL, in the months before the founding of the PES in 2016.

Today, we look forward to deepening our collaboration with the SEP (Sri Lanka) as you face the enormous responsibility of intervening in an emerging international revolutionary movement in the working class.

Today in Sri Lanka, as in France during the "yellow vest" protests, one hears often the slogan that the movement is apolitical. In France, such remarks came from workers disgusted with the political experiences they had with the old Union of the Left parties, as well as from pseudo-left operatives who wanted above all to avoid discussing critical political issues. Indeed, they wanted to protect themselves from mounting anger in the working class.

But what the great mass of working and toiling people need is the truth, not cover-ups and lies. How else are to Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim workers to be unified in Sri Lanka—and unified with their class brothers and sisters in India and beyond—except on the perspectives of our party? Avoiding or evading the critical issues we raise only means aligning oneself, consciously or not, with the ruling elite's moves to divide the workers along national lines and defeat them piecemeal.

Many comrades have already doubtless made the comparison between the revolutionary events in Sri Lanka in 2022 with those in Egypt in 2011. After years of uprisings and repression, and thanks to the confusion caused by the NATO war in Syria, the Egyptian army reimposed its dictatorship on the insurgent workers. But the ICFI had no presence in Egypt. Armed with the vast lessons of our history, we can fight to ensure that the struggles of the workers in Sri Lanka and internationally do not come to such an end, but are crowned by the world socialist revolution.

Your fraternally,

Alex Lantier, Parti de l'égalité socialiste national secretary

V. Gnana, Parti de l'égalité socialiste assistant national secretary



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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