

# Sri Lankan SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera discusses international socialist program in TV interview

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On December 18, Deepal Jayasekera, the general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka, took part in an interview titled “Turning Point” on Siyatha TV, a prominent private TV channel in the country. [A video of the interview in Sinhala is posted here]

The program’s host, Udayashan Idamegedara, began by briefly acknowledging the grim reality that the Sri Lankan people are expected to confront in the upcoming year, as President Ranil Wickremesinghe’s government has implemented increased VAT and other taxes that will further increase inequality and poverty.

Idamegedara said that in previous years, his TV channel had featured officials from mainstream political parties (referring to parties within the bourgeois political establishment) on the program. However, this time, he explained that they wanted to introduce a “change” by providing an opportunity for the SEP to present its “analysis of the current political situation in the country.”

In his introduction to the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), Idamegedara highlighted the party’s extensive history of over fifty-five years, tracing its roots back to the establishment of its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), in June 1968. He then invited Jayasekera to delve into the overall history of the party.

Expressing gratitude to Siyatha TV for the opportunity, Jayasekera began by recounting the party’s origins. He explained that a group of politically radicalized youth were disillusioned by the betrayal of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1964, when it joined a bourgeois coalition government under Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike. They took the initiative

to form the RCL in June 1968, under the political and theoretical guidance of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

Describing the LSSP’s entry into the Bandaranaike’s government as a “great betrayal,” Jayasekera explained that the LSSP, claiming to be a Trotskyist party, had “betrayed the Trotskyist principles of international socialism and the political independence of the working class as the very existence of the capitalist rule was being threatened by a wave of workers struggles.”

Jayasekera reviewed how the ICFI intervened by explaining that the roots of LSSP’s betrayal were in Pabloite revisionism, which emerged in the Fourth International in the early 1950s. The ICFI had been formed in 1953 in a struggle against Pabloism.

Jayasekera emphasized that the SEP approaches problems not on a nationalist basis but on the foundation of the working class, which is inherently international. “The working class is an international class,” he said. “Workers may live in various countries, speak various languages and believe various religions. However, they are all exploited as a class universally. Only the working class can mobilise together across national borders, languages and religious divisions. So the ICFI is a party that represents and is based on the international working class.”

“The LSSP leaders joined the Bandaranaike government to protect capitalist rule, betraying the powerful 21 demands movement of the working class,” Jayasekera explained. He underscored the tragic consequences of this betrayal, pointing to the three-decade-long anti-Tamil racist war.

Addressing the contemporary relevance of Trotskyism, Jayasekera pointed to the basic

contradictions of the world capitalist system, between the globalized economy and the nation-state system, as well as between socialized production and private ownership of means of production. These contradictions, he said, are pushing the world towards an imperialist world war, evident in events like the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and Israel's ongoing genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza.

The US is seeking to expand the Gaza war into broader war in the Middle East, focused on Iran. Jayasekera explained the necessity of building a global anti-war movement of the international working class, based on socialist policies.

The interviewer intervened to raise the "practicality" of the Trotskyist program. Noting that the SEP did not have any elected members in parliament or local or provincial councils, he asked: "Is it because your party did not adapt to the new situation?" Jayasekera explained that though it runs in elections, the SEP has no illusions about resolving the burning issues confronting working people through parliament or local and provincial councils.

Jayasekera explained the SEP's call for workers and rural poor to form independent action committees in every factory, workplace, neighbourhood and rural area to take the struggle for their basic social and democratic rights into their own hands. He reviewed the initiative taken by the SEP in July last year to launch a campaign to build a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses to develop an independent political movement of the working class.

"Through this program we insist that the working class should take power into its own hands instead of handing it over to somebody else," he said.

Jayasekera also explained how the SEP functions as a section of an international movement, the ICFI: "Our movement is international and has sections in several countries, including Sri Lanka, the US, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Australia, and Turkey. We conduct daily discussions to produce articles on the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS), our online publication ... Thus this is the only international movement that regularly develops its program and perspectives through an international discussion."

In the end, the interviewer asked Jayasekera what is the solution for the capitalist crisis. Jayasekera once again elaborated the socialist program and the need to

form independent action committees and build the Democratic and Socialist Congress to spearhead the struggle for a government of workers and peasants committed to socialist policies, as part of a broader struggle for socialism internationally.

In response to a question on what benefit the SEP offers to the people, Jayasekera again explained that the working class needs to establish its own power by overthrowing capitalist rule to implement its own socialist solution. The SEP is fighting to provide the necessary leadership, program and perspective for the working class in that struggle. He invited workers, youth and intellectuals to join the SEP.

Visibly moved by the explanation, the interviewer concluded by saying: "Very important thoughts... We should take things into our own hands to resolve them. They [the SEP] are ready to provide leadership and guideline. It is important because we must take the battle into our hands. What we have done for 75 years was waiting for somebody to do it for us. That is why we have this problem now. The Socialist Equality Party is ready to provide that leadership and show the clear road for that. Their demands from us: Come to this path; we will guide you."



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