

Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party holds Fourth Congress

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
18 September 2026

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Sri Lanka held its Fourth National Congress in Colombo from September 11 to 13 amid a worsening crisis of global capitalism, the escalation of imperialist war and growing resistance by workers and the rural masses to the austerity measures of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)/National People's Power (NPP) government.

The congress adopted the main resolution, "The strategy and program of the SEP in the fight against the JVP government and capitalism." General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera introduced the resolution, while Lasitha Lakmal, Rohantha De Silva and Saman Gunadasa presented supplementary reports on the JVP's evolution, Sri Lanka's racist war and the lessons of the 2022 mass uprising.

Jayasekera stressed that the Congress was taking place under conditions in which the threat of world war had become an immediate reality. "The Third World War is no longer a threat that is expected in the future," he stated. "It is a reality unfolding before our eyes."

He pointed to the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, the US-Israeli genocidal war in Gaza, the US war against Iran and escalating US preparations for military confrontation with China in the Indo-Pacific. These were not separate conflicts but interconnected fronts of imperialist violence rooted in the global crisis of capitalism.

The Congress resolution approached the crisis in Sri Lanka as a concentrated expression of this global crisis. Jayasekera explained that the fundamental contradictions of capitalism—the conflict between globally integrated world economy and outmoded nation-state system, and between socialized production and private ownership of means of production—were driving ruling classes toward war abroad and austerity and authoritarianism at home. At the same time, these same contradictions were producing a revival of the international class struggle.

"The fundamental strategic question," Jayasekera told the Congress, was whether the working class would transform these struggles into a conscious movement for socialism under its own independent revolutionary leadership. He stressed that the central task of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its sections, including the SEP (Sri Lanka), was to provide the revolutionary perspective, program and leadership required for this transformation.

Pointing to developments in Sri Lanka, Jayasekera said: "Policies that the JVP/NPP had some time ago claimed to oppose—IMF austerity, strengthening state repression and alignment with imperialist war preparations—had become central features of its rule.... While relying on the trade-union bureaucracy to contain workers' struggles, the government is preparing to intensify police-state methods."

A central section of the report dealt with the JVP's transformation into a party of bourgeois rule. Jayasekera rejected the claim that it had once been Marxist or socialist and only later degenerated. The JVP had nothing to do with Marxism or socialism. Its evolution was rooted in its petty-bourgeois, Sinhala-chauvinist and anti-working-class foundations and politics.

Jayasekera recalled Keerthi Balasuriya's 1970 warning that rejecting the conclusion that democratic tasks could be achieved only through

proletarian socialist revolution would subordinate the working class to the bourgeoisie and ultimately make the JVP an appendage of the capitalist class. "The JVP's entire evolution," Jayasekera argued, "and particularly its development during the past two years in government" provided a powerful confirmation of Balasuriya's analysis.

Jayasekera stressed the need for the working class in Sri Lanka to draw the central lessons of 2022 mass uprising to prepare itself for future struggles. Two opposing political lines confronted each other in the uprising. The SEP fought for the independent political mobilisation of the working class based on a revolutionary socialist perspective while the opposition parties, including JVP/NPP, with the assistance of trade-union bureaucracies and pseudo-left groups like the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) sought to contain the movement within the capitalist parliamentary framework by promoting an "interim government."

Jayasekera pointed out that betrayal of mass movement by union bureaucracies and pseudo-lefts paved the way for the ruling class to bring a temporary stability to its rule first through pro-US leader of the United National Party (UNP) Ranil Wickremesinghe and subsequently through the JVP/NPP government.

The decisive issue was therefore the "subjective factor:" the development of a revolutionary socialist party capable of transforming spontaneous resistance into a conscious struggle for power. Jayasekera stressed that this failure of the working class to take a revolutionary socialist path could not be attributed to its inherent weakness. Decades of Stalinist, social-democratic and Pabloite betrayals had destroyed socialist consciousness and Marxist political culture in the working class, creating enormous political obstacles. Political education, historical clarification and the development of revolutionary cadres were therefore indispensable tasks.

David North, national chairman of the SEP (US) and chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site*, brought fraternal greetings from the ICFI in a virtual address. He said the Sri Lankan congress was being held amid an extraordinary crisis of capitalism.

Referring to the far-right Alternative for Germany, which apologizes for the Nazi regime, he said it had received nearly 45 percent of the vote in the recent Saxony-Anhalt state election and was now set to form a government there.

"This is an event of immense political significance. Eighty-one years after the collapse of Hitler's regime, the political and ideological descendants of Nazis have emerged as the dominant political force in Germany. And this is not only happening in Germany. The neo-fascist descendants of Mussolini are already in power in Italy. The Le Pen movement, the descendants of the Vichy regime, have emerged as the dominant political force in France. The descendants of Franco in Spain are gaining strength. Even in Britain, the extreme right is gaining mass support.

How it is possible—Who is responsible? What political conclusion is to be drawn from the rise of fascism in Europe and North America?

“It demonstrates the capitalist system’s bankruptcy and reactionary character. 35 years ago, the Soviet Union and East Germany were dissolved by the Stalinist bureaucracy. This was hailed as triumph of democracy. But this paved the way to social reaction. We must emphasize that organizations against Marxism and Trotskyism such as pseudo-lefts, Stalinist remnants, Social Democrats and bourgeois national movements, all of them are politically implicated forces of reaction facilitating and collaborating with the growing social reaction.”

North traced the SEP’s origins to the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), founded in 1968 through the struggle against Pabliste revisionism. This history, he said, had been vindicated by the JVP’s evolution from claims of revolutionary politics into a government implementing capitalist counter-revolution.

“No movement is capable of expressing the growing radicalization of working-class mass movement, other than our revolutionary movement. This is why our campaign to release comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk, who was jailed due to his affiliation to the WSW and support to World Socialist Revolution, has become unique,” he reiterated.

He concluded his greetings saying, “the discussion taking place in this congress is important not only to the movement in this country, but also it is a contribution to build the world movement for socialism.”

SEP (US) National Secretary Joe Kishore also addressed the congress, and the ICFI sections in Australia, Canada, Britain, Germany and Turkey sent written greetings bringing the experiences and struggles of workers from every continent into the deliberations.

The supplementary report by Lasitha Lakmal on the history of the JVP traced the organisation’s evolution from its emergence in the late 1960s to its present role as an instrument of bourgeois rule.

Lakmal began from the political consequences of the 1964 betrayal of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), which entered the bourgeois government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike. This betrayal created a political vacuum among workers and youth and opened the way for petty-bourgeois nationalist tendencies such as the JVP.

Lakmal said the JVP’s history confirmed Keerthi Balasuriya’s insistence that only the working class, armed with a Marxist party, could overthrow capitalism. The 1971 rural insurrection, the JVP’s opposition to the 1980 general strike, its Sinhala-chauvinist campaign during the communal war and its attacks on the working class and the RCL demonstrated its hostility to independent working-class politics.

The report recalled Balasuriya’s warning that the JVP’s racism against Tamil plantation workers could become a weapon of monopoly capitalism and lead toward fascism.

The RCL’s response to the LSSP betrayal was fundamentally different. It fought to unite Sinhala and Tamil workers, defended the democratic rights of the Tamil people and opposed both the state’s communal war and the JVP’s chauvinist politics.

Lakmal traced the JVP’s subsequent integration into the capitalist establishment, including its participation in coalition governments, support for the communal war, alliances with bourgeois parties and increasing orientation toward imperialist powers.

The creation of the National People’s Power in 2019 marked a further stage in this evolution. The JVP sought to rebrand itself as a respectable political force by drawing in academics, professionals, NGOs and sections of the upper middle class while assuring business and international investors that it would defend capitalist economic relations.

The report linked this transformation directly to the JVP’s role in the 2022 uprising and its subsequent accession to government.

Producing the supplementary report on the history of the racist war, Rohantha De Silva explained that even after the military conflict ended in 2009, none of the problems faced by the Tamil masses has been solved. Over a hundred thousand were killed in the north and south of the country, and many more were displaced. This demonstrates the bankruptcy of the

capitalist system.

“The war was not an organic development, but the product of the policies pursued by the Sri Lankan ruling elite. Faced with a militant and socialist working class, the weak bourgeoisie promoted Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism to divide the working class, leading to the communal war. But this was not predetermined. The decisive factor was the betrayal of the working-class leadership, chiefly the LSSP, which culminated in it entering the popular front government in 1964,” he said.

“This betrayal led to the formation of petty-bourgeois movements—the LTTE in the north and the JVP in the south,” he went on. The bankruptcy of these petty-bourgeois movements is now revealed. The RCL foresaw the debacle of the LTTE.

Citing a 1987 article in *Kamkaru Mawatha* (the RCL publication at the time), De Silva explained that a nationally exclusive movement could not achieve liberation and would become politically isolated and impotent within the capitalist nation-state system.

In conclusion, Rohantha emphasized that the only way forward resolve the national question is for the working class to take power on the perspective of the world socialist revolution.

Saman Gunadasa’s supplementary report drew out the political lessons of the 2022 mass uprising for the SEP and its preparation for future struggles.

Gunadasa stressed that 2022 was not simply a completed historical episode. Government preparations to suppress future struggles make its lessons an immediate relevance. The central issue is how the SEP prepares the working class and the masses for an uprising that goes beyond the political limitations of the 2022 struggle.

Drawing on Trotsky’s analysis of 1905 as the prelude to the 1917 Russian Revolution, Gunadasa said the decisive task was to draw political conclusions from an uprising and prepare the working class for future struggles through an international socialist perspective.

Gunadasa argued that the same approach is indispensable for the SEP. The 2022 uprising arose from an international crisis intensified by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The SEP intervened from the beginning through the WSW, party publications, meetings and discussions with workers and rural masses.

The two general strikes demonstrated the immense power of the working class and revolutionary possibilities emerged. But the SEP was not sufficiently rooted among militant workers to win them to the program of independent political struggle for power. This enabled pseudo-left and middle-class forces to divert the movement back toward bourgeois parliamentary rule.

The defeat demonstrated not the failure of the revolutionary program, but the consequences of the absence of revolutionary leadership. The SEP’s program of workers’ action committees, mobilisation of rural masses and a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses provides the alternative.

Workers need to realize that “the revolutionary struggle is international, not an extension of the existing nationalist bourgeois framework,” Gunadasa stressed. “Socialist consciousness does not arise spontaneously. It requires conscious revolutionary leadership. That is the challenge before this congress,” he concluded.

The Congress unanimously adopted a resolution on the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk.

The congress elected a new Central Committee (CC). The members of incoming CC reelected Deepal Jayasekara as general secretary and reelected Saman Gunadasa as assistant national secretary; Lasitha Lakmal as national editor and Pani Wijesiriwardane as assistant national editor.

The congress established that the SEP’s work in Sri Lanka—amid escalating war, social inequality and attacks on democratic rights—was an integral part of the international struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution.

Its reports, resolutions and contributions will be published on the *World Socialist Web Site* to politically arm workers and young people for the struggles ahead.



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