

SEP/IYSSE (Sri Lanka) to hold public lecture—“Two years since the 2022 mass uprising in Sri Lanka: The political lessons”

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)

17 May 2024

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka are holding a public lecture titled, “Two years since the 2022 mass uprising: The political lessons” at the Colombo Public Library Auditorium on June 4 at 4 p.m.

Two years ago, in the first half of 2022, Sri Lanka was shaken by mass protests and strikes against former President Gotabaya Rajapakse and his government.

The anti-government movement erupted against Rajapakse’s brutal imposition on the working masses of the social burden of the country’s unprecedented economic crisis, produced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. These struggles were part of an emerging wave of actions by the working class internationally.

These protests came to a head during April–July with the Galle Face Green occupation in Colombo, and demonstrations in other Sri Lankan cities, involving workers, young people and the rural masses across the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim ethnic divides. Workers came out in their millions in two one-day general strikes, on April 28 and May 6. This uprising forced President Rajapakse to flee the country and resign, leading to the collapse of his regime.

The trade union bureaucracies, however, with the backing of pseudo-left groups, such as the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), aligned themselves with the capitalist Samagi Jana Balawegaya and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and its National People’s Power, to derail this mass movement and keep it tied to the parliamentary framework.

This political betrayal paved the way for Sri Lanka’s ruling elite, with the blessing of US imperialism and

the Indian government, to elevate the discredited Ranil Wickremesinghe into the executive presidency. Wickremesinghe brutally suppressed the occupations at Galle Face Green and the Presidential Secretariat, and then began implementing harsh International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity measures and various attacks on democratic rights.

Why did this betrayal of the mass movement occur and how was this temporary stabilisation of capitalist rule made possible? The answer lies in the absence of a mass revolutionary party to mobilise the working class in a struggle, supported by the rural poor, to seize power on the basis of an international socialist program.

During the eruption of this struggle, the SEP was the only party that provided a program to defend the social conditions of workers and the poor masses and take the movement forward. It proposed building action committees of workers, as well as the rural poor, to lead a united struggle—independently of the capitalist parties, the trade unions and their fake-left hangers-on—against the government and the profit system.

The SEP called for a Socialist and Democratic Congress of Workers and Rural Masses, comprised of delegates from those action committees, to fight for socialist policies and a workers and peasants’ government.

Two years later, Sri Lankan workers and the rural masses are again coming into struggle against the government’s IMF austerity measures and attacks on democratic rights. The pro-capitalist trade unions with the assistance of the fake-left FSP, however, are deliberately blocking these struggles, fearing they will escalate out of control. Like the ruling and opposition

parties, the trade union leadership is haunted by the April–July 2022 mass uprising that brought capitalist rule to the brink of collapse.

Sri Lankan workers, as part of the international working class, face a rapidly changing political situation. The imperialist powers, with the US at their head and amid a deepening capitalist crisis, are driving the world towards a catastrophic third world war. The only way to prevent this catastrophe is the mobilisation of the international working class to lead a global anti-war movement based on socialist policies.

While the Wickremesinghe government and other reactionary representatives of Sri Lanka’s ruling elite attack the 2022 mass uprising as a “terrorist act” or a “conspiracy,” the FSP is seeking to use the rising anti-government sentiment to promote the building of a so-called people’s council to pressure the capitalist parliament.

In opposition to reactionary forces and the pseudo-left, the SEP/IYSSE fights to draw vital lessons of the 2022 mass anti-government upsurge to politically arm workers and youth. The June 4 public meeting is part of this struggle.

The meeting will discuss the political necessity for the building of the SEP as a mass revolutionary party in the context of current global developments. We urge workers, young people and all those determined to defend social and democratic rights to attend the forthcoming meeting and discuss these crucial issues.

Meeting venue:

Public Library Auditorium, Colombo

Date and time: June 4 at 4 p.m.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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