

# Socialism continues to express the hopes and aspirations of the working class

A reply to Shyamon Jayaasinghe from Frontline Socialist Party

Your newspaper carried an article 'Is Socialism Dying' which gave an adverse account of a public meeting recently held by us the Front Line Socialist Party. In the interest of fairness we request that you carry our reply as well.

The FLSP does have a program which will certainly improve upon the capitalist system. This programme is no secret. In 1848 Marx wrote "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims." The FLSP Programme may not bring perfection to the world, but it will bring justice to the 90 per cent of the population whose labour is exploited by the 10 per cent who rule society. The contents of our programme follow from the writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Vladimir Lenin.

Such a communist programme is necessary because all the evils we see in our society are a product of capitalism, its crises and contradictions. Despite all its costly political apparatuses, capitalism is quite incapable of reforming itself, since it is concerned solely with profit maximisation. Ordinary human needs do not count by comparison. That is why it is necessary to take the means of production, distribution and exchange out of private control and into social ownership. Only then can real needs-based social planning commence.

Your correspondent regards all the Twentieth Century socialist revolutions as an "acute disappointment" and a "bad example". Let us briefly mention some stubborn historical facts. Soviet Russia went in thirty years from the most backward country in Europe to a nuclear superpower. Education and medical care were made free. Unemployment was permanently abolished in 1933. Women were given in every respect equal status with men before this had been attempted in any other country. Industrialisation was achieved in two Five Year Plans, and exploitation and inequality was abolished from the countryside of the world's largest country. These economic and social achievements made it possible for the Red Army to repulse the Nazi millions and save the world from the horrors of fascism. These are only some of the achievements of socialism that we need to keep in mind before so easily writing it off as a failure.

It is true that the collapse of the USSR affected Cuba adversely, because Cuba had traded on equal terms with the entire socialist bloc. But to live on \$20 per week in Cuba does not mean the kind of poverty it means in Sri Lanka. The Cuban government

provides massive subsidies on essentials, free health care (the best in Latin America), and free education for all. By the way, Raul Castro did not say "Either we change course or we sink." What he actually said was "We can either rectify (rectificamos) the situation, or we will run out of time walking on the edge of the abyss, and we will sink." President Castro announced reforms in 2010 which allow Cubans to open small businesses, and buy and sell cars. But he rejected permitting additional parties because that would open the door to US interference: It "would be the equivalent of legalising a party of imperialism on our soil" he said.

There is no such thing as an unchanging human nature. The nature of a person depends on where and how he was brought up, and what society he is a product of. For example, the human nature of an aboriginal resident of a remote central Australian station who has never seen the city is different from the human nature of a Sydney stockbroker. Similarly the nature of someone brought up under socialism differs greatly from someone brought up under capitalism. Capitalism produces people inclined to individualism and selfishness, whereas socialist society fosters a collectivist outlook. Under capitalism, labour is often an onerous and degrading chore, which nobody would perform if they could avoid it, or unless they are given a material incentive.

Under socialism, labour is an entirely different thing. Gone will be those who thrived on exploitation and the acquisition of the labour of others. It will still be necessary under socialism to provide material incentives for better work with higher pay. The socialist system proved its technological superiority by putting both the first man and the first woman into space. By the time the communist stage is reached, it will have become a habit to work for the common good without the need for any material incentives. Labour will have become easier and give pleasure. Every able-bodied person will work willingly for the public benefit according to their own inclinations.

The growth of social welfare in the capitalist countries is not due "solely" to their "superior income generative power". If that were true the U.S., the world's richest country, would have the biggest social welfare system. In fact U.S. social welfare spending is only 16.2 per cent of the total economy, which leaves them lagging behind every European country except Slovakia. Australia is even lower at 16.0 per cent. (Source: Huffington Post August 19th 2012). Clearly the level of welfare spending in a



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particular country is at least partly the result of a political battle between the haves and the have-nots.

Socialist ideology with its central planning apparatus is no enemy of democracy but on the contrary requires it for the efficient operation of needs-based planning. The real question is: who controls the machinery of the State? Under capitalism it is the bourgeoisie that controls the State machine. Only the socialist revolution can change that and ensure that the State is brought under the control of the class that works, the proletariat. Lenin warned of the danger to the revolution posed by bureaucrats who do not share the collectivist outlook of the revolution, and who are merely conscious of their own material gain. Such people will have to be sacked and brought under democratic control.

Socialism is not dying but continues to express the hopes and aspirations of the Sri Lankan and international labouring class. No credible alternative to capitalism other than socialism has ever been put forward. The FLSP stands for Marxism-Leninism, which is based not on utopian dreams but on a scientific analysis of contemporary capitalist society and on the thousands of years of history that preceded it. Capitalism is inefficient in that it wastes the productive forces contained in the unemployed and short-time workers, it is exploitative in that it robs workers of their surplus value, and is anarchic in that it cannot plan production in the interests of mankind. Only socialism and communism can save the human race from barbarism.

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