

Self-presentation

## Lalit de Klas (Mauritius)

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**Self-presentation of the political organisation Lalit de Klas (Mauritius) taken from their website, February 23, 2010.**

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### About Lalit

LALIT is a very unusual party. It has stubbornly survived into its fourth decade of existence, always renewing itself successfully. From its foundation in 1976 as a left “free-expression monthly magazine”, it has developed by 2008 into a thriving party, which has recently accelerated its campaign for an “alternative political economy”. This was necessary because Mauritius is falling into a systemic crisis, with the collapse of sugar prices in a society politically organized for 200 years around sugar. And, as other left parties in Mauritius have risen and fallen over the decades, most often disappearing into oblivion one after the other, LALIT has not only persisted but also grown in stature. This longevity is probably due to the objective fact that LALIT was the political leadership of the country’s biggest ever mass movement, the 1979 general strike movement. It is one of those parties that bears the memory of working class struggles and other stories of rebellion within its structures.

Because there is a large working class and no real peasantry in Mauritius, all political parties in Mauritius have adopted the discourse of the left. All parties absolutely have to say they are “in favour of socialism”, they all absolutely have to speak out “for the working class” and “against capitalism” - or else they risk plummeting at the next election. The electorate in Mauritius hurls out parties in power with no seats at all for lesser crimes.

But LALIT is the only party that is, and has been, a kind of beacon, showing the way from where we are today to where, if we work at it and if conditions permit, we might be tomorrow. And the path towards those always-being-discussed goals is “the Program” as it too unfolds and develops, and as it too is understood consciously by those who support it. The program analyzes the realities of present-day history and also presents the demands that flow from that analysis and around which we can today build tomorrow’s future. Seen this way, the struggle is, in some ways, so simple.

These demands are, and have to be, both understandable to any ordinary person today, which means they start at the level of today’s workers’ consciousness, and they must also be capable of bringing the far-reaching gains we want for tomorrow, if they start being attained. So, we work towards socialism, and we do it through a historical process that can, even if only vaguely most of the time, be understood. That is what a program helps us to do. The program is neither minimum demands nor maximum demands, but a way of moving from the minimum to the maximum. And not in a sneaky way either, but openly and consciously.

LALIT has to distinguish itself from all the demagogy in favour of socialism that abounds in

Mauritius. We have to make clear the sober realization that, during the course of the struggle, the existing State will need, at some point, to be confronted and overthrown, not just taken over as is - if we are to achieve a society where equality, freedom, justice, humanism, women's liberation and ecology are all on the immediate agenda. Wage slavery will have to, at some point, become illegal.

So that one day people will no longer have to resort to selling part of their daily lives, in order to stay alive. This aim is the key difference between LALIT and the other parties in Mauritius that pretend to be socialist. The others think wage-slavery is normal. They do not see that it is a left-over from real slavery.

Democracy will have to be extended into all fields, including those of production and exchange. That aim, too, is unusual in a world where the "left" used to be associated with Stalinist movements, who had little esteem for democracy.

LALIT has from its beginnings been enriched by both the previous struggles of working people and the broader masses in Mauritius, and by their present-day struggles - those of workers, women, homeless people, those displaced from Diego Garcia and Chagos, young people, fishermen, ecologists, language rights activist, and small planters. LALIT has inherited traditions from the best of the early Labour Party, the early Mouvement Militant Mauricien, and MMMSP, from the Communist League and the Independent Forward Block. And LALIT has learnt vast amounts from the huge traditions of struggle in India and Africa, and world-wide - workers' struggles, liberation struggles, women's struggles, progressive political struggles of all kinds.

## **Recent Events**

LALIT was one of the organizations that spear-headed the setting up of the NO BASES movement in 2007, which aims at the closure of all military bases, starting with foreign ones. Our history of struggle to get the US-UK base on Diego Garcia (Mauritian land) closed down put us in a position to help launch this important world-wide movement.

The anti-war struggle, we believe, needs this kind of permanent, strategic aim i.e. to close down all the bases that make war possible.

Our militants have on three occasions been to Palestine as volunteers who also bear witness what exactly the illegal occupation by the Israeli State of Palestine means to Palestinians. Understanding the nature of the Zionist State, through hands-on experience as well as theoretical study, has helped us understand more clearly the bourgeois State itself.

On the Mauritian front, LALIT, single-handed succeeded in forcing the Government to re-introduce in 2005 the village elections that had been abolished in 2004. Elections were then held in 150 villages, as they had been before. We also forced the Government to re-introduce old-age pensions on a universal basis, and scrap the means-testing that that had been introduced.

## **Forces for Change**

The strongest and most reliable force for change is the organized working class. But with the bureaucratization of the trade union movement, the neo-liberal all but destruction of the co-operative movement, the NGO-ification of many associations in the country, new forms of independent organization of working people are becoming a crying necessity.

Artists are sometimes staunch allies, at moments when bourgeois ideology is strongest.

Women, when confronted with persistent patriarchy, are also a broad-based force for change.

Young people, disaffected with so many things about society, are often a strong, if sometimes fickle, force for change.

Environmentalists and ecologists can be a force for change at some moments in present-day history, because their most simple demands are not respected by the powers-that-be.

In the past, we have been joined by homeless people, at times, and by families suffering police violence, at other times.

The aim in all these struggles is towards the political vision and struggle that will bring socialism. And in the act of rising up and struggling, we are already assuming our liberty.

Contact us  
lalitmail intnet.mu

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View online : <http://www.lalitmauritius.org/>