

ISSE in US supports Sri Lankan demonstration

25 March 2008

The following letter was sent by Joe Kay, convenor of the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) in the US, in support of a demonstration and meeting held in Sri Lanka to demand the release of left wing Iranian students. See accompanying article.

Dear comrades,

I am writing on behalf of the International Students for Social Equality in the US to welcome your demonstration protesting the Iranian government's arrest and persecution of left wing members of the Students for Freedom and Equality.

The struggle for the international unity of the working class is central to the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its student organization, the ISSE. The demonstration you are holding today is the concrete manifestation of that perspective, and proudly presents the heritage of the Fourth International to the workers and students of Iran.

Iran is today in the crosshairs of American imperialism. The United States has already waged brutal wars against two of Iran's neighbors—Iraq and Afghanistan. The American ruling class is determined to assert its hegemonic control over the Middle East and Central Asia. No country in the world is excluded as an eventual target of American military force.

It is precisely because the ICFI and ISSE are intransigent opponents of American imperialism that we denounce the persecution of left-wing students in Iran. This position does not contradict our struggle against imperialism, but is rather an essential component of it. In the persecution of these students, an inescapable historical logic is at work. Notwithstanding its tactical differences with American imperialism, the Iranian government is the instrument of the national bourgeoisie. Its hostility of the working class in Iran is more deep-rooted and unyielding than its temporary differences with the United States.

Some eighty years ago, in his classical analysis of the Stalinist betrayal of the Chinese Revolution, Leon Trotsky wrote, "It is a gross mistake to think that imperialism mechanically welds together all the classes of China from without...The revolutionary struggle against imperialism does not weaken, but rather strengthens the political differentiation of the classes."

This perspective is certainly true when applied to Iran today. There are signs of renewed struggles of the working class and political ferment on university campuses. The Students for Freedom and Equality's decision to hold an independent demonstration to protest US war plans, while also opposing all factions of the Iranian political establishment, is itself an expression of political shifts in that country. The Iranian bourgeoisie responds to demands for social equality and democratic rights with arrests, torture, and repression.

The government of Iran has no principled differences with imperialism. It is perfectly willing to cooperate with the United States, as it has in Iraq and Afghanistan. It seeks to maneuver between the US and other powers, including Russia and Europe. The Iranian ruling class will not hesitate to strike a deal with the US or the other imperialist powers as it moves to crush domestic opposition.

The fact that this demonstration is being held in Sri Lanka is particularly significant. The Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka, and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Communist League, has fought continuously for the unification of the Sinhala and Tamil working class as part of a strategy of uniting the working class throughout South Asia. The RCL was formed in 1968 after the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), until then the Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka, agreed to join the bourgeois government of Madam Bandaranaike in 1964. Your entire history has been

bound up with the fight against national opportunism. On this basis, you have rejected any cooperation with the Sinhala bourgeoisie, while also opposing the separatist and nationalist perspective of the LTTE.

The natural ally of Iranian workers and students is not the government and ruling class of Iran, but the international working class. We urge students and workers in Iran to turn to the working classes of Iraq, Sri Lanka, the United States, and every other country of the world. It is only on this basis that the debacle toward which world capitalism is driving humanity—a third imperialist slaughter and economic disaster of a scale comparable to the Great Depression—can be averted.

On behalf of the ISSE, I again welcome your demonstration. We hope that through such actions, students and workers in Iran will see that they are not alone in their fight for socialism. Nor must they start anew without any historical foundation. There is an organization, the ICFI, that throughout its history has fought for the international unity and political independence of the working class.

Fraternally,

Joe Kay for the ISSE (US)



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