

Public meeting in Paris marks the 15th Anniversary of the WSWs

Our reporter
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Supporters of the WSWs and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) held a well-attended public meeting on September 29 in Paris, marking the 15th anniversary of the WSWs. The main speaker was the secretary of the ICFI, Peter Schwarz. A broad cross-section of French and immigrant workers and students attended the meeting.

The attendance and the lively response to the meeting reflected rising popular opposition to the reactionary Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande and its pseudo-left supporters, such as the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), and the interest of growing layers of the working class in a socialist alternative to France's bankrupt official "left."

Schwarz said, "The WSWs is a historical conquest of which we are proud. Fifteen years ago when we launched it we had only a few hundred readers. Now we have 40,000 to 50,000 readers every day throughout the world."

Schwarz explained that the production of the WSWs was founded on the conceptions of historical materialism. The WSWs considers its central task to be "making every day an objective, Marxist analysis of the development of the crisis of capitalist society ... Our method is founded on the principle that it is only possible to understand the present based on history, that the present must be viewed through the whole history of the experiences that the working class has gone through as a revolutionary class."

Schwarz noted that this method places the WSWs and the ICFI in political and theoretical opposition to the prevailing ideological climate, in which "bourgeois and petty-bourgeois philosophers—especially those influenced by post-modernism—totally reject history."

Thus, ex-Maoist philosopher and media guru Alain Badiou dismisses the entire history of the workers',

movement: "Marxism, the workers movement, mass democracy, Leninism, the party of the proletariat, the socialist state, all those remarkable inventions of the 20th century, are quite obviously no longer of any use to us."

Schwarz noted that this conception was the basis of the dissolution of the *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire* in 2009 and the founding of the NPA. While the LCR falsely claimed to be Trotskyist, he said, "The NPA refuses, however, to explicitly claim to be Trotskyist and considers that anarchist, Stalinist and reformist tendencies are just as legitimate."

Schwarz pointed out that with the development of globalisation, "what Trotsky had always placed at the centre of his struggle against Stalinism—the impossibility of building socialism in one country—is now confirmed. Globalisation has not resolved the crisis of capitalism," he continued, "but has considerably worsened it." The 2008 financial crisis plunged the world economy into the deepest recession since the 1930s, demonstrating the incompatibility of internationally organized productive forces with private property and the nation-state system.

He observed, however, that "the decades of repression of the working class by the Stalinist bureaucracy and the murder of a whole generation of revolutionary Marxists by the Stalinist terror in the 1930s had undermined the socialist consciousness which was widespread at the time of the October Revolution." In the Western countries, moreover, "the domination of the labour movement for decades by reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies had stifled socialist consciousness."

The ICFI concluded that socialist consciousness in the working class could not be limited to interventions in workers' struggles with a few tactical demands.

Herein lay the task of the WSW: “To revive in the working class the great political culture of Marxism. This is the only foundation on which a truly revolutionary workers movement can be built.”

Schwarz pointed out that globalisation had not only undermined the Stalinist programme of “socialism in one country”, but also all national programmes including those of the trade unions and social democracy. Like the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR “they had become open agents of capital and ceased to be, even in the vaguest sense, workers' organisations.”

As it attempted to counterbalance Germany's growing economic dominance in Europe with military means, Schwarz noted, the French ruling class had turned to an ever more violent policy of imperialist intervention in the Middle East and Africa. “Hollande,” Schwarz added, “has followed this policy a hundred percent and has been supported in this by all the parties, including the ‘far left.’”

The political line of the NPA in the Libyan war and in Syria has in no way differed from that of the PS. In both cases it has demanded the arming of the pro-imperialist opposition in order to obtain regime change. He concluded with a call to build the ICFI in France.

A lively discussion followed. A former member of the pseudo-left Lutte Ouvrière (LO) organization claimed that the imperialist-backed opposition in Syria represented the Arab Spring, attacking the WSW for not placing its central emphasis on the Assad regime's brutality and corruption.

A woman in the audience reacted forcefully against his position, saying that the media harped on these points to cover for the reactionary designs of imperialism that were “using the fundamentalists as the military forces of capitalism.” She referred to Trotsky's positions in the 1930s, when he said he would oppose an armed intervention by “democratic” British imperialism against the Brazilian dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas.

Schwarz pointed out that in Libya and Syria, far from a mass movement of the working class as in Tunisia and Egypt, the imperialists had developed their own opposition movements and that the support for its own bourgeoisie by the NPA had been decisive. “We don't support the Assad regime,” Schwarz said. “The task of overthrowing the Assad regime belongs to the working class of the region.”

The meeting concluded with informal discussion and a successful collection of funds to help build the ICFI in France.



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