

Wije Dias: The international struggles of the working class and the perspective of Permanent Revolution

Wije Dias
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Below is the text of the speech given by Wije Dias, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka, to the International Online May Day Rally hosted by the International Committee of the Fourth International and the World Socialist Web Site on Sunday, May 4.

It is with great enthusiasm that the members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka participate in this online International May Day rally called by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In calling the rally, the ICFI is giving expression to the great historical traditions of May Day as the day, celebrated by Marxists since its inception, of working class solidarity that cuts across all national, communal and ethnic divisions. By taking the initiative to revive these traditions, the ICFI has once again proved itself to be the sole genuine international socialist party of the world working class.

As previous speakers have already outlined, one hundred years after the onset of World War I, the imperialist powers, led by the US, are bringing the world to the brink of another barbaric war. This underscores the fact that, after two world wars, fascism and military dictatorships in many parts of the world, none of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism have been resolved.

The working class must draw the indisputable conclusion that it must overthrow the moribund capitalist world order and replace it with world socialism.

The Russian Revolution led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky in October 1917 was the first step towards achieving this international socialist alternative to capitalism. The perspective that guided it was based on the Theory of Permanent Revolution, articulated by Trotsky in 1906 by subjecting the experience of the defeat of the 1905 Russian Revolution to a thorough Marxist analysis.

The theory of Permanent Revolution insisted on the independent and leading political role of the working class in achieving the belated democratic tasks, such as national unification and liberation from colonial, landlordist and

caste oppression, and the historical inseparability of those tasks from the struggle for international socialism. The extension of the revolution beyond Russia and onto the world arena was prevented not by any inherent strength of imperialism, but by the betrayals carried out by the opportunist leaders of Social Democracy, later joined by the Stalinist bureaucracies, that rejected internationalism in favor of the nationalist program of “socialism in one country.”

Our movement, the ICFI, was founded in 1953 to defeat the Pablo-Mandel revisionist tendency that arose within the Fourth International. The Pabloites capitulated before the post-war capitalist stabilization and rejected the revolutionary role of the working class. The ICFI continues the struggle waged by Trotsky to rearm the world working class with scientific socialist consciousness in order to undertake its historic task of world socialist revolution. That is the powerful revolutionary tradition that is being evoked in this rally.

The rapidly deepening world economic and political crisis confirms the correctness of our theoretical and political struggle over the past six decades. Not only has the post-war stabilization, which was glorified by all the opportunists, collapsed in a shambles, but the “end of history” announced in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has proved to be a total fallacy.

Once again, history is marching with giant strides. Social and political conflicts are erupting in every part of the globe while the dark clouds of nuclear war are gathering. The alternatives are forcefully posed before humanity: either socialism, based on the interests of the international working class, or capitalist barbarism.

Socialism is an international project. It has been the ICFI’s intransigent struggle against all forms of national opportunism that has equipped it to emerge as the only political movement fighting to arm the working class and oppressed masses with the historical and international

perspective they require for the revolutionary upheavals ahead.

An understanding of Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution is critical, as the struggles of the recent period have already demonstrated. The Egyptian revolution that erupted in 2011 demonstrated the utter worthlessness of the promises made by every section of the bourgeoisie—the military, the Muslim Brotherhood and liberal figures such as El Baradei. All of them are tied by a thousand threads to imperialism and are deeply hostile to any independent movement of the working class. All of them danced to Washington's tune.

Millions of workers entered into struggle against the Mubarak dictatorship and its program of austerity, which the entire political establishment supports. But their courageous struggles were diverted back under the wing of one or other section of the bourgeoisie. What was lacking was a revolutionary program and party to mobilise the working class, and behind it the urban and rural masses, against the capitalist class as a whole.

Lessons must also be drawn from the 2012 massacre of striking platinum miners in South Africa. For two decades, the ruling classes around the world have hailed the African National Congress that replaced Apartheid as a great step forward for the South African people. Nelson Mandela was feted wherever he went as a great champion of the poor and oppressed. But the gunning down of 34 miners at Marikana by the ANC government's police demonstrates that the working class cannot put its faith in any section of the bourgeoisie—no matter what the colour of its skin.

Under the ANC, South Africa has become one of the most unequal countries in the world. It has promoted a thin layer of black capitalists and relegated the majority of working people to abject poverty.

The same is true elsewhere in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The promises of democracy and better living standards that were made at the time of formal independence have proven completely hollow. In 1948, it was only the Sri Lankan Trotskyists who denounced the British handover to their local lackeys as a fake independence and fought to unify and mobilise the working class to take power.

In every country, bourgeois rule has proved a disaster for the working class and rural masses. To maintain power, governments have not hesitated to resort to police state methods, deliberately inflaming ethnic, religious, tribal and linguistic differences to disorient and divide the working class. India, which is routinely hailed as the world's biggest democracy, was founded on a wretched deal with British imperialism to partition the subcontinent in 1947. More than one million lives were lost in the communal carnage that followed, and South Asia continues to bleed right down to

this day as a consequence.

The anti-Tamil communalism promoted by the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie ever since 1948 resulted in a 30-year civil war that ended only in 2009. And, like so many bourgeois armed liberation struggles, the war waged by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam proved to be a disaster for the Tamil people. The LTTE was not defeated by the military might of the Sri Lankan military, but as a result of its own reactionary perspective. Its national separatist and pro-imperialist program meant that the LTTE was organically incapable of making any appeal to Sinhala workers or to the working class in India or anywhere else in the world. Such experiences have been replicated throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Now, as US imperialism intervenes in every part of the globe to assert its unchallenged domination over the world, the ruling classes throughout Asia are shedding what little remains of their anti-imperialist pretensions and preparing to drag the working class into the barbarism of world war.

The International Committee of the Fourth International alone has fought to defend Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution against Stalinism and its apologists. It is this perspective that must animate the new generation of revolutionaries that is coming forward to fight against war and the deepening attacks on living standards and democratic rights.

The powerful response to the ICFI's international May Day rally by workers and youth on every continent is an indisputable sign of a resurgent revolutionary wave. The Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka, which is grounded on decades of experience in the struggle for Permanent Revolution, pledges to give every assistance to those who come forward throughout Asia to found new sections of the Trotskyist movement as the new revolutionary leaderships of the working class.



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