

Sri Lankan SEP holds public meeting on world war threat

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a successful meeting at Colombo's Public Library Auditorium last Monday on the US "pivot" to Asia and the threat of world war. About 80 workers, youths and housewives attended the meeting.

In the lead up to the meeting, SEP and IYSSE members and supporters campaigned extensively in and around Colombo. Thousands of copies of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) statement, "Oppose Israeli invasion of Gaza" and the ICFI resolution, "Socialism and the fight against imperialist war," were distributed in Sinhala and Tamil.

Chairing the meeting, SEP assistant secretary Deepal Jayasekera said: "During the last century, the imperialist powers twice dragged mankind into catastrophic world wars. Today, 100 years since the outbreak of World War I and 75 years since the beginning of World War II, the US and other imperialists pushing the world's population towards another genocidal world war, this time fighting with nuclear weapons."

Jayasekera said the US "pivot," which involved militarily encircling and diplomatically isolating China, was dragging all the countries of the region, including India and Sri Lanka, into the maelstrom of geo-political tensions. The US had intensified its efforts to woo India as a counterweight to China, while applying pressure on Sri Lanka's government of President Mahinda Rajapakse to break its close ties with China.

Addressing the meeting, IYSSE convener Kapila Fernando exposed the role of the Inter University Students Federation, controlled by the pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP). It tried to promote

dangerous illusions among students, claiming that the government's privatisation of education could be reversed if "enough pressure" were applied via protests.

Fernando also pointed to the pro-imperialist orientation of the pseudo-left tendencies. The FSP covered up for Israel's genocidal war in Gaza, with its newspaper, *Janarala*, declaring that "both Israel and Hamas want this war."

SEP general secretary Wije Dias delivered the main report. He said the meeting was a part of an international campaign, launched by the ICFI to build an antiwar movement of the working class worldwide. He quoted the ICFI resolution, "Socialism and the fight against imperialist war," which explained the fundamental contradiction between global capitalism and the nation state system, which inevitably drives the imperialist powers to war.

"We are holding this meeting on the 107th anniversary of the conference held at Stuttgart, Germany in 1907 to discuss the developing threat of imperialist war and the preparations of the Second International to oppose it," Dias emphasised. "Although that congress passed a vigorous resolution opposing imperialist war, the sections of the Second International joined the chauvinist wave unleashed by the imperialist powers in declaring war in 1914.

"The ICFI, drawing the lesson of that tragic experience, insists in its resolution: 'The ICFI resolves to place the struggle against war at the centre of its political work. It must become the international centre of revolutionary opposition to the resurgence of imperialist violence and militarism.'"

Dias explained that the Fourth International was established in 1938, just a year before the outbreak of World War II. In its founding document, the

“Transitional Program,” Leon Trotsky warned the international working class about the impending war and called for the political preparation for the overthrow of the imperialist system through a struggle for a world federation of socialist states.

The speaker outlined how a group of Trotskyists, working inside the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in the 1930s, responded to Trotsky’s call. They took the important initial step of expelling the party’s Stalinist faction, which was following orders from Moscow to collaborate with British imperialism’s war efforts, and founded the all-India section of the Fourth International.

“The work of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, under conditions of severe repression by the British colonial authorities and the bourgeois National Congress and witchhunts by the Stalinists, drew a powerful response from the working class in many parts of the sub-continent. It was an important chapter in the history of the socialist movement in the region, as well as internationally.

“The present generation of the working people and youth are being deprived of these important historical lessons by the betrayals of the LSSP. Only through the ICFI and the SEP can the working class and youth learn these vital lessons and become fighters for international socialism against the barbarism of imperialist war.”

Commenting on the international situation, Dias said Israel’s US-aided attacks on the Gaza Strip had killed more than 2,000 Palestinians, injured 40,000 and displaced 500,000. This ruthless enterprise showed the utter bankruptcy of the post-World War II “settlements” reached between the imperialist powers and the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy.

These post-war settlements around the world, including in the Middle East and Asia, were aimed against the aspirations of working people and the oppressed masses, which were oriented in a revolutionary socialist direction. In Palestine and the Indian sub-continent, including Sri Lanka, the last 66 years had brought social catastrophes to the working class, rural poor and youth.

Dias pinpointed the role of the pseudo-lefts of the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) and United Socialist Party (USP) in helping to cover up the imperialist drive to war. These groups tried to paint the imperialist powers as guardians of democratic and human rights.

On the pretext of backing the war crimes accusations against the Rajapakse government, they supported the US-sponsored UNHRC resolution, which sought to break the relations between Colombo and Beijing. In doing so, they signalled their readiness to collaborate with a US-backed government during wartime.

“This is an international phenomena,” the speaker explained. “Their counterparts around the world are following a similar line, whether it is the Socialist Alternative in Australia, or the New Anti-capitalist Party in France. Their role is to politically disarm the working people and youth in the face of unprecedented attacks on democratic and social rights and, above all, the threat of a nuclear war.

“In opposition to all these fake lefts, the ICFI undertakes the task of the revolutionary mobilisation of the international working class, in order to rally the oppressed people and youth, and bring the fight against imperialist war to the centre stage of the class struggle. Our movement consciously fights to unite workers and youth around the program of international socialism as the alternative to imperialist barbarism.”

Answering a question about the SEP’s attitude toward fascistic elements like the Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Dias explained that organisations like BBS are promoted by the ruling class, to be used against the working class and the poor as they are driven into revolutionary struggles by the deepening crisis of capitalism. Such groups are comprised of petty-bourgeois layers, driven to desperation under capitalism itself.

“The anti-Muslim campaign of BBS got its inspiration from the anti-Tamil hysteria cultivated during the 30-year-long war by the capitalist governments against the Tamil minority,” Dias said. “The only viable program to counter such fascistic threats is the program of socialism, which is the basis for Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim working people to be mobilised to overthrow capitalism.”



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