

SEP (Sri Lanka) holds public meeting on 75th anniversary of Leon Trotsky's assassination

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a well-attended meeting at the New Town Hall in Colombo on December 20 to mark the 75th anniversary of the assassination of Leon Trotsky.

In the lead-up to the meeting, the SEP and IYSSE conducted a vigorous campaign in areas of Colombo including the Free Trade Zone in Katunayake, the Ratmalana Railway, the Colombo Harbour Quarters and at the universities. Campaigners sold hundreds of pamphlets in Sinhala and Tamil of the article “75 years since the assassination of Leon Trotsky” by WSWs editorial board chairman David North.

SEP Political Committee member K. Ratnayake, who chaired the meeting, explained the significance of commemorating the 75th anniversary of Leon Trotsky's murder. Trotsky, the co-leader with Lenin of the socialist revolution in Russia in 1917, was the greatest protagonist of the perspective of world socialist revolution. He was murdered in August 1940, a year after the onset of World War II, by Ramón Mercader, a GPU agent sent by Joseph Stalin to Mexico where Trotsky was in exile.

Trotsky advocated a political revolution to overthrow the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy that had usurped political power from the working class in Russia and betrayed socialist revolutions in other countries. He built the Fourth International to provide the necessary revolutionary leadership for the international working class. Well aware that World War II would produce revolutionary upheavals, neither Stalinism nor imperialism could tolerate Trotsky's continued existence.

The speaker explained that the deepening capitalist breakdown that erupted with the 2008 global financial crisis was producing intense geo-political tensions as the US sought to maintain its world dominance. “The US is systematically encircling Russia and China militarily in a bid to establish its hegemony over Eurasia. Similarly other imperialist powers are trying to advance their strategic interests as is the case in Syria. A reckless action by US imperialism would drag the world into a catastrophic Third World War involving nuclear-armed powers,” he said.

Ratnayake explained that the same contradictions that led to the First World War were creating the conditions for revolutionary struggles of the working class. “We are living in a pre-revolutionary period today. Without the political and theoretical lessons of Trotsky's struggles, workers around the world cannot face the challenges before them. Only the International Committee

of the Fourth International (ICFI) embodies this heritage and fights on that basis to build a revolutionary leadership throughout the world.”

Vilani Peiris, also a member of the SEP Political Committee, said that without understanding why and how Trotsky was murdered one cannot understand the significance of Trotskyism. Only the ICFI through its investigation known as *Security and the Fourth International* had revealed how Stalinist agents had infiltrated the Trotskyist movement to prepare and carry out Trotsky's assassination.

Peiris pointed to Trotsky's extraordinary contribution to Marxism in developing the Theory of Permanent Revolution, which provided the theoretical basis for the 1917 Russian Revolution. “It was not an accident that the Stalinist bureaucracy vehemently attacked Trotsky and this theory as it advanced the reactionary nationalist program of socialism in a single country,” she said.

The Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI) was built in India and Sri Lanka by those who were attracted to Trotsky's call to build new revolutionary parties against the betrayals of Stalinism. However, the BLPI itself betrayed its internationalist principles and merged with the nationalist Lanka Sama Samaja Party which further degenerated and joined the capitalist coalition government of Sirima Bandaranaike in 1964.

“Today, workers and youth need a revolutionary party based on Trotskyism. It is the Socialist Equality Party,” Peiris declared.

IYSSE convener and SEP Political Committee member Kapila Fernando, focussed on the dangers facing youth as US imperialism prepares for war against Russia and China. “The SEP is the only political party telling this truth to workers and youth. The capitalist triumphalism after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has disappeared and a period of breakdown of world capitalism has dawned,” he said.

“What happened in 1991 was not the failure of Marxism or socialism, but that of the reactionary nationalist perspective of Stalinism... Trotsky warned that the Stalinist theory of socialism in one country would lead to the degeneration of the Soviet Union and pave the way for capitalist restoration.”

The pseudo-left organisations, such as the Frontline Socialist Party and ex-radicals in the universities in Sri Lanka, opposed Trotskyism and rejected drawing the necessary political lessons from history, Fernando said. Now they are defending capitalism and the pro-US government in Colombo. He concluded by urging

young people to study Trotskyism.

SEP General Secretary Wije Dias opened the main report by referring to the accelerating drive to war, constant political crises and worsening living conditions around the world. “The contemporary social and political convulsions are the result of the unresolved fundamental contradictions of the capitalist order which entered the stage of imperialism at the beginning of the last century. Imperialism has dragged the world into two world wars and spawned Nazism and countless military dictatorships. This decadent system has totally failed to provide any stable solution to its basic contradictions,” he said.

“The essential key to the understanding of today’s world wide social crisis lies in the brilliant theoretical contributions made by Trotsky based on his theory of permanent revolution developed as far back as 1906. Trotsky’s penetrating analysis of the causes of the First World War that broke out in August 1914 is one such theoretical guide.”

“In October 1914, Trotsky wrote: ‘The War proclaims the downfall of the national state. Yet at the same time it proclaims the downfall of the capitalist system of economy. By means of the national state, capitalism has revolutionized the whole economic system of the world. It has divided the whole earth among the oligarchies of the great powers, around which were grouped the satellites, the small nations, who lived off the rivalry between the great ones... World production revolts not only against the confusion produced by national and state divisions but also against the capitalist economic organizations, which has now turned into barbarous disorganization and chaos... The war of 1914 points the way out of the blind alley, forcefully driving the proletariat onto the road of the socialist revolution.’ This socialist perspective guided the working class in Russia to take power in October 1917.”

Dias explained that as early as 1923, as the initial signs of the turn away from the fundamental principles of socialist internationalism were visible within the emerging bureaucracy of the young Soviet Union, Trotsky founded the Left Opposition to fight against that nationalist tendency. After the death of Lenin in 1924, Trotsky and the Left Opposition became the political centre of this struggle.

Trotsky recognised that the role he played as the leader of the world socialist alternative to the Stalin-Bukharin theory of socialism in a single country was of greater importance than his role in the October revolution and as leader of the Red Army that defended the revolution against imperialist military intervention.

Dias said that Trotsky waged an undaunted political struggle for ten years, in the face of terrible repression, to return the Soviet Communist Party and the Third International onto the path of revolutionary socialism. He only decided to found the Fourth International, when no party in the Third International raised any opposition to the treacherous line of the Stalinist leadership that paved the way for Hitler to come to power in Germany in 1933.

“The Transitional Program drafted by Trotsky and adopted at the founding congress of the Fourth International in 1938, has firmly stood the test of time. It embodied all the strategic experiences of the class struggles of the first half of the last century. It is relevant to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership and perspective

today,” Dias insisted.

The speaker explained that the International Committee of the Fourth International had defended the continuity of the revolutionary struggle of Trotsky, while countless political parties had boasted of their resounding successes. They turned their back on the objective laws of the class struggle and have collapsed like sand castles. This has included the ignominious fall of the Stalinist Parties around the world.

“These parties brought devastation upon millions of workers and oppressed masses. The pseudo-left organisations are preparing even greater disasters in the context of a protracted breakdown of world capitalism and the preparations for a nuclear war by US imperialism and its allies,” Dias said.

The speaker referred to the “pivot to Asia” by the Obama administration aimed at diplomatically undermining and militarily encircling China, which is heightening geo-political rivalries throughout the region including Sri Lanka. The pseudo-lefts played a major role in the regime change operation carried out in Colombo in January with the backing of Washington, which opposed the previous government of Mahinda Rajapakse because of his close relations with China.

“The new Sri Lankan government of President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe is now openly working to tie Sri Lanka to the war chariot of US imperialism and has initiated a relentless attack on the social conditions of the working people and youth. The pseudo-lefts have become advocates for the withdrawal of social concessions won by the workers through their past struggles

“History will not treat the contemporary pseudo-lefts less cruelly than the old lefts whose treacherous role has been exposed. The International Committee of the Fourth International is determined to fight energetically in every continent to educate and train a new generation of revolutionary socialists on the lessons of the principled struggle of Trotsky against all opponents of working class internationalism,” Dias said, and concluded by urging participants in the meeting to join the SEP and IYSSE.



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