

Paris meeting addresses war danger in Asia, bankruptcy of Tamil nationalism

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Supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in France held a public meeting in Paris on Sunday on the growing war danger in Sri Lanka and Asia and the bankruptcy of the Tamil bourgeois nationalist parties. The meeting was attended by Tamil, Sinhala and French workers and youth.

Deepal Jayasekera, assistant secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka), the ICFI's Sri Lankan section, gave the opening address. He explained how US imperialism played the key role in installing President Maithripala Sirisena in elections last January, with the aim of aligning Sri Lanka more closely with the US "pivot to Asia" and preparations for war against China.

Jayasekera added that the Tamil bourgeois parties, including the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and pseudo-left parties like the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) and the United Socialist Party (USP), backed the US-sponsored regime-change operation. The TNA and the pseudo-left groups hailed Sirisena as the "democratic" alternative to the previous government of President Mahinda Rajapakse.

In fact, Sirisena has deepened many of the reactionary policies of his predecessor, violating basic democratic rights and launching unprecedented attacks on the working class. Jayasekera pointed out that the Sirisena regime is covering up the war crimes committed by Rajapakse, opposing the release of political prisoners held without trial, and cracking down on opposition to its austerity agenda from workers, students and farmers.

Jayasekera said that the events in Sri Lanka have vindicated the work of the ICFI and the SEP, which alone waged a principled campaign in the elections based on a socialist struggle of the working class against imperialism and war.

V. Gnana, a leading supporter of the ICFI in France,

spoke on the way that the Tamil nationalist parties have functioned as a tool of imperialism. Gnana said that the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009 was the final, bloody outcome of the bankruptcy of the Tamil separatist perspective proclaimed 40 years ago in the 1976 Vaddukoddai resolution of the Tamil United Liberation Front.

Since 2009, the Tamil nationalist parties have openly oriented to US and European imperialism, supporting the war drive against China. They backed Sirisena's election and then his austerity measures, the continued jailing of political prisoners and the growing resort to police violence to terrorise the population.

The final speaker was Alex Lantier. He explained that Sri Lankan immigrant workers in Europe face the same problems as their class brothers and sisters in Europe—the spread of war, austerity, the promotion of nationalism and attacks on democratic rights—and the need to unite with them in struggle. This requires building a section of the ICFI in France, to give leadership and offer a Trotskyist political and historical perspective to workers of all nationalities in France.

Lantier attacked pseudo-left parties, like the New Anti-capitalist Party and the Left Front, who have for decades aligned themselves with the Socialist Party in France as it implemented policies of war and austerity. They are today complicit in the fomenting of nationalist and xenophobic sentiment.

"The role of these organisations is to pave the way for war, austerity and police-state dictatorship in France," Lantier said. "Their hostility to the workers is as fundamental as that of the Tamil nationalist parties. It is rooted in the class struggle, in the hostility of the bourgeoisie and its petty-bourgeois allies to the working class. And the dangers they pose to workers in

France are no less serious than those faced by workers and the oppressed masses in Sri Lanka.”

Afterwards, attendees remained for a long discussion period and asked a range of questions on the US “pivot to Asia,” India’s role in the war drive in Asia, the character of the Sri Lankan civil war and how to develop a socialist movement in the international working class.

A Sinhala worker who has read the WSWs for many years said he thought its analysis was correct and asked why it did not already have broad support in the working class.

The speakers replied that support for the WSWs is growing rapidly, as it speaks for broad opposition to the entire social and political system.

They also explained that the level of its support had to be understood historically. Marxism has been under attack for generations, particularly since the Stalinist bureaucracy waged political genocide against Marxists in the 1930s, culminating in the murder of Leon Trotsky in 1940. This attack has come not only from the bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy but also, most perniciously in recent decades, by pseudo-left forces. Conditions are now ripe for the ICFI to emerge in the leadership of mass revolutionary struggles of the proletariat.

One Tamil worker attending the meeting asked whether the SEP characterises the final months of war in 2009 as a genocide of Tamils.

The speakers explained that the mass murder of LTTE fighters and Tamils in LTTE-held areas at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war was undoubtedly a horrific crime. However, simply applying a label of “genocide” to it—as Tamil nationalist parties seek to do—resolves none of the complex political issues involved in drawing the lessons of this terrible event and fighting against the danger of war in the Indian subcontinent and internationally.

They stressed that the central political issue was the struggle for the unity and political independence of the working class. Successive Sri Lankan regimes waged war not only against Tamils but also against Sinhala workers, while encouraging anti-Tamil sentiment to divide the working class. In the 1970s, the government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, backed by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Stalinist Communist Party, crushed a JVP uprising, killing an estimated 15,000

rural youth.

They added that the Tamil Nationalist forces that criticised the Sri Lankan government’s war crimes are now aligned with the Sirisena government, many of whose top officials were directly implicated in the crimes carried out under Rajapakse.



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