

Greetings to Chennai meeting from SEP (Sri Lanka) general secretary

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The following greetings were sent by Wije Dias, general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) to a meeting held in Chennai, India on October 2 on the drive to imperialist war and the fight for socialism.

Dear comrades,

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka, extends the warmest revolutionary greetings to the public meeting held by WSW/ICFI supporters in India, to discuss the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) statement *Socialism and the Fight Against War* and to oppose the Indian government's participation in the imperialist war drive.

Your meeting, aimed at mobilising the Indian working class and youth in a common struggle with the world's working class, based on the program of international socialism and against the deepening imperialist war drive, is of enormous importance.

The ICFI and its sections, including the Sri Lankan SEP, have placed the struggle against imperialist war at the centre of all our political work. As elaborated in the ICFI statement of February 18, our endeavour is to build a global socialist anti-war movement to defeat the threat of war by overthrowing the world capitalist order in which the threat of world war is rooted.

The historical validity of the world socialist perspective, developed on the basis of the Theory of Permanent Revolution as the only alternative to imperialism, and defended by the Trotskyist movement against all varieties of revisionists after the Second World War, is fully vindicated today, with the deepening crisis of global capitalism that erupted in 2008.

This has also proved the correctness of the ICFI's analysis that the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 25 years ago, was not, as falsely proclaimed by the servants of the bourgeoisie, the collapse of socialism, but an expression of the reactionary nature of the nationalist program of Stalinism. Today, the fundamental contradictions of the post-war settlements that were established through the collaboration between the imperialist powers, the Stalinist bureaucracy and the national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries, as in the Indian sub-continent, are exploding in every corner of the world.

As the ICFI statement warns, these developments have brought the world once again to the brink of a catastrophic global conflict. The intensity of the military mobilisation in Syria threatens a full-scale conflagration between the US and European imperialist powers on one side and Russia on the other. As part of its "pivot to Asia," US imperialism is instigating countries in East and South

East Asia to create provocations against China, which the US considers a threat to its world hegemony.

As your meeting is taking place in Chennai, the initial sparks of a military confrontation are already flying in the north of the Indian sub-continent between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan.

The only way one can assess the full scope of this conflict is by analysing it within the context of global developments. Leon Trotsky pointed out in criticising the Stalinist program of the Third International in 1928: "In the present epoch, to a much larger extent than in the past, the national orientation of the proletariat must and can flow only from a world orientation and not vice versa. Herein lies the basic and primary difference between communist internationalism and all varieties of national socialism."

As with all other regions around the world, South Asia is increasingly being dragged into the maelstrom of growing global geo-political tensions. Following the armed attack on an Indian military base at Uri in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian government, with the backing of the Obama administration, used the incident to launch a military intrusion into Pakistan, heightening tensions in the region to a level not seen in many decades.

The escalation of the conflict poses the danger of a war between India and Pakistan, which would be the first-ever military conflict between two nuclear powers, with deadly consequences for millions living in the sub-continent. Moreover, under conditions in which the US is harnessing India as a front-line state in its war drive against China, such a war could rapidly develop into a world war, involving the US on India's side and China backing Pakistan.

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in May 2014, Washington has intensified its moves to integrate India more firmly into its war drive against China, by showering India with a series of military-strategic favours, such as a civil nuclear agreement and treaties for the co-development and co-production of advanced defence equipment. The Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) that the Modi government signed with the Obama administration in late August, giving US access to Indian military bases, is a major strengthening of strategic relations between the two countries. This has been a huge factor in encouraging India to openly bully and threaten Pakistan, in order to assert New Delhi's dominance in the region.

These developments have brought to the surface all the unresolved historical questions of the region, exposing the

reactionary myth maintained by the Stalinist communist parties (the CPI and CPI-M) and their pseudo-left hangers-on that the national bourgeoisie is capable of assuring a progressive and democratic end to colonialism. What have the Congress in India and the Muslim League in Pakistan, along with the two main capitalist parties in Sri Lanka, with their conspiratorial deals with their imperialist masters, delivered for the masses of the region over the past 70 years? Only the threat of becoming the victims of another imperialist war, as well as utter social degradation.

The historical issues confronted by the working class, oppressed poor and youth today are explained in the “Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka),” adopted at the SEP’s founding congress in 2011. In discussing the formal independence of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 1947-48, the document referred to the correct principled position taken by the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI)—the section of the Fourth International for the Indian sub-continent—at the time.

The following far-sighted words were said by Colvin R. de Silva, a leader of the BLPI, in a speech in Calcutta in January 1948: “The gruesome cutting up of the living body of India on the one hand and of two living nationalities (the Punjabi and Bengali nationalities) on the other was put forward as a solution of the communal problem on the one side and a means of opening up the road to freedom on the other. Both pleas have proved false. Partition has proved in the one respect only a means for re-forging chains for the imperialist enslavement of the masses ... In the other respect, it has proved but a means of beguiling two states to thoughts of mutual war as the only means of canalising internal communal feelings away from civil convulsions.”

The SEP document stated: “De Silva’s warnings proved prophetic. Partition has given rise to a reactionary geo-political struggle between India and Pakistan that has resulted in three declared wars and countless war crises, squandered vital economic resources, and today threatens the people of South Asia with a nuclear conflagration.”

Blaming Pakistan for the attack on the Uri base, various aggressive options against Pakistan are being discussed now within the Indian elite, including “surgical attacks,” cruise missile attacks, raids into Pakistan territory to destroy separatist camps and the suspension of the decades-long Indus Water Treaty, on the pretext of “punishing” those responsible. All sections of India’s political establishment, including Congress, the Stalinist parties, various think tanks and the national and regional media, are fully involved in these hysterical war preparations.

In response, Pakistan’s government and military officers are also involved in reactionary jingoist campaigns against India. While Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was shedding crocodile tears for Kashmiri Muslims suffering brutal military repression at the hands of the Indian government, Pakistani military officials in Rawalpindi are making bellicose remarks against India.

In Sri Lanka, the government of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has also rallied to the war cries of the Indian government, under the pretext of condemning terrorism instigated by Pakistan. The present Sri Lankan government was brought to power through a regime-

change operation backed by the US, because the previous president Mahinda Rajapakse was building close relations with China.

A new racist campaign is now being waged by both Sinhala and Tamil bourgeois political parties. Although seven years have passed since the defeat of the bourgeois separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, no significant relaxation of the military presence or the oppression of the Tamil community has taken place. Thousands of Tamil families are still prevented from returning to their former homes and land by the occupying military. Scores of political prisoners are yet to be released and no accounting is taking place for the many “disappeared” persons.

A new organisation initiated by the Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Vigneswaran, the Tamil Peoples Council (TPC), has recently launched a protest campaign based on Tamil communalism to exploit the grievances of Tamil working people. Meanwhile, the main bourgeois party, the Tamil National Alliance, supports the Colombo government and occupies the position of official opposition in the parliament. The common reactionary plank shared by both factions of the Tamil elite is their grovelling before the imperialist powers, particularly the US, to intervene “to redress” Tamil problems.

The Sinhala communalists, including the government parties, in their turn, utilise the TPC’s communal campaign to whip up Sinhala chauvinism in the south of the island, and divide the developing mass protests by working people and youth of all communities against the government’s austerity measures and anti-democratic policies.

All these developments indisputably raise the central necessity of an alternative political perspective for the working class in South Asia to unite across communal lines and establish workers’ and peasants’ governments. Under capitalism what working people and youth starkly face is the danger of imperialist war, proxy wars in the region and social counter-revolution. The only answer is to build an international anti-war movement of the working class, based on the perspective of establishing a world federation of socialist states in which a United Socialist States of South Asia will be an indivisible part.

This is the perspective on which the ICFI fights to mobilise working people, oppressed communities and youth all over the world. Our analysis is presented through our international organ, the *World Socialist Web Site*. We urge all those who oppose war and the social catastrophe being created by capitalism to join the fight to build a Trotskyist revolutionary party in India as a section of the ICFI.

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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