

Indian Trotskyists hold Russian Revolution centenary meeting in Kolkata

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On January 14, the Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) held a public meeting in Kolkata, the state capital of West Bengal, in commemoration of last year's centenary of the Russian Revolution.

The event, which featured a special screening of Herman Axelbank's documentary *Tsar to Lenin*, was the first public meeting held by Trotskyists in Kolkata for more than two decades. Previously known as Calcutta, the city was the main base of the Trotskyist movement during the mid-1940s when the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI), the then Indian sub-continent section of the Fourth International, had a strong presence among workers.

In the weeks before the meeting, ICFI supporters campaigned among workers and students. Thousands of leaflets were distributed at workers' quarters, including those of railway employees, and among students at Jadavpur University, the Presidency College, Science College and City College.

The meeting was conducted in Bengali and English, streamed live on Facebook and chaired by Palash Roy, who introduced the main speaker Arun Kumar and translated his remarks into Bengali.

Kumar outlined the global context of the ICFI centenary meetings, pointing to the resurgence of class struggle internationally: protests and strikes by workers in Germany, Greece, Britain, Romania, Israel and Tunisia in defence of jobs, working conditions and basic living standards. He also explained that the US and other major imperialist powers have responded to the deepening crisis of the world economy by intensifying their military interventions, posing the danger of a third world war.

Kumar reviewed how the US was integrating India ever-more closely into its military-strategic offensive

against China. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's enthusiastic support for Washington was deepening geopolitical tensions throughout the already volatile South Asian region. "The region has become increasingly polarised between the rival India-US and China-Pakistan military-strategic alliances," he said.

The speaker drew out the significance of the Bolsheviks' internationalist perspective and quoted Lenin: "The great honour of beginning the revolution has fallen to the Russian proletariat. But the Russian proletariat must not forget that its movement and revolution are only part of the world revolutionary proletarian movement, which in Germany, for example, is gaining momentum with every passing day. Only from this angle can we define our tasks."

Kumar said the turn away from this perspective by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which usurped power from the Russian working class in the mid-1920s, ultimately led, as Trotsky had warned, to capitalist restoration and the liquidation of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The speaker referred to the so-called October Revolution Centenary Celebrations of India's main Stalinist parliamentary party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM. "The CPM has nothing to do with the revolutionary traditions of the October revolution," he said. "The Stalinists used this occasion to further disorient the working class and the youth by distorting the Bolsheviks' internationalist perspective and trying to portray the Russian Revolution as a national event."

Kumar quoted from a statement by Indian Maoists, entitled "Joint declaration of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties and organizations," which glorified Stalin and claimed that the revolution was about "how comrade Stalin smashed Trotskyism in the midst of a hard two-line struggle."

The speaker told the meeting: “The truth is that in the name of smashing Trotskyism, the nationalist, privileged Stalinist bureaucracy killed virtually the entire Marxist leaders in the Bolshevik central committee ... and carried out a monstrous betrayal of the revolutionary struggles of the international working class.”

Kumar continued: “The world Trotskyist movement, led by the International Committee of the Fourth International, is the only party that embodies and continues the revolutionary tradition of the Russian Revolution. Only the Trotskyists of the BLPI opposed the 1947 reactionary communal partition of India into a Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu-dominated India, which was supported by the Congress party and the Stalinist Communist Party of India.

“The Indian supporters of the ICFI, in collaboration with the Socialist Equality Party, the Sri Lankan section of the ICFI, fights for the perspective of the United Socialist States of South Asia as part of the struggle for world socialism.”

After the meeting some of those in attendance spoke to ICFI supporters.

Indrani, a housewife, said: “After attending the meeting and watching *Tsar to Lenin*, I discovered one thing: That 100 years ago the Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, overthrew the Tsarist regime and the provisional government in Russia and did so under difficult and hostile conditions. The revolution led to the creation of the workers’ state and began the struggle for socialism on the world arena.

“Having considered all this I feel that, instead of moving ahead, we have gone backwards and are divided by regionalism and nationalism... The ICFI comrades and the WSWs have presented the truth and spoke in a simple and clear way. It has also made me realise that during the past 40 years of CPM and Trinamool Congress rule in West Bengal we have been living under the illusion of ‘pro-people’ policies.”

Rudraneel, a Jadavpur University student, said: “The movement against capitalistic regimes is highly necessary in the modern era because of growing disparities between the upper class and working class. I wish your organisation all the support and help you need to overcome this oppressive structure and ensure equality amongst all classes of working individuals. Peace, stability and prosperity must be instituted in our

land for all future generations.”



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