

Indian Trotskyists hold Kolkata public meeting to celebrate 80th anniversary of the Fourth International

Our correspondents
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Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) held a public meeting on March 10 in Kolkata, the West Bengal capital, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Fourth International. The audience included students from Jadavpur University. The meeting was livestreamed on Facebook and followed last November's 80th anniversary meeting in Chennai, the Tamil Nadu capital.

During the campaign for Sunday's meeting, the Indian Trotskyists spoke with and won support from important layers of workers, including railway employees, and students from several universities in Kolkata.

Palash Roy, a long-standing member of the ICFI supporters group, chaired the event and warmly welcomed Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party (SEP) assistant secretary Deepal Jayasekera, the main speaker. Roy told the meeting that "the ICFI is the only party that continues the fight for the unity of the international working class based on the program of world socialist revolution."

Arun Kumar, from the ICFI supporters' group, noted that the Kolkata meeting was being held under conditions of intense political and military tensions between nuclear armed India and Pakistan, with deadly consequences for millions of people in the region.

"Although the Indian and Pakistani ruling elites have currently backed away from an all-out war, the danger remains," he said. "The bellicose remarks made by India's Modi government, and Pakistani Prime Minister Khan's reply in kind, indicate that these tensions could rapidly spiral into a catastrophic nuclear conflict."

Kumar told the audience that the decades-long rivalry between the two countries was rooted in the partition of then colonial India into a Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu-dominated India by the departing British imperialists.

The communalist division, he explained, was imposed with the assistance of both parties of the national bourgeoisie—Congress and the Muslim League—and the Stalinist Communist Party of India (CPI). He pointed out that the geo-political tensions in South Asia produced by that partition have escalated to dangerous levels by the US military-strategic offensive against China and Washington's efforts to closely integrate India into this agenda.

Kumar said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's war-mongering campaign against Pakistan was backed by all the parties of the Indian political establishment, including the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM and the CPI, as well as Maoist parties like the CPI (Marxist-Leninist)-Liberation. He concluded by explaining that the only way to prevent the outbreak of a war was through a unified struggle of the working class in South Asia to overthrow the reactionary state system created in the 1947-48 partition, and its replacement with a Union of Socialist Republics in the region, as a part of the struggle for world socialist revolution.

SEP (Sri Lanka) assistant national secretary Deepal Jayasekera carefully reviewed the history of the Trotskyist movement, tracing the principled struggle waged by Trotsky against the Stalinist bureaucracy—from the formation of the Left Opposition in 1923, in the fight against the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Communist Party under Stalin, to the founding of the Fourth International in

1938. He explained how the ICFI was established in 1953 to defend Trotskyist principles against the liquidationist Pabloite revisionism that had emerged within the Fourth International.

Jayasekera stressed the important struggle waged by the Trotskyist movement in South Asia and added: “The political and theoretical battles conducted by the pioneer Trotskyists, who founded the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1935 and later the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI) in 1942, against British imperialism and its national agents, i.e., the Ceylonese and Indian bourgeoisies, inspired fighters for socialism throughout the world. These struggles contain vital lessons for those who want to fight for socialism today.”

The speaker detailed the BLPI’s courageous and principled opposition to the 1947 partition of India and its fight for the socialist unity of the working class across Hindu and Muslim communal lines. He explained the LSSP’s subsequent nationalist degeneration, a process that began in the early 1950s and was encouraged by the Pabloites, culminated in its entry into a coalition government with the bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1964.

Jayasekera pointed out that the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), the forerunner of the Sri Lankan SEP, was founded in 1968 as a section of the ICFI in the struggle against the LSSP’s betrayal.

Referring to the ICFI’s decades-long fight for Marxism and the perspective of world socialism, Jayasekera said: “Under conditions of the very advanced levels of the globalisation of the capitalist economy, all nationally-based organisations like the LSSP in Sri Lanka and the Stalinists in India have collapsed, in the sense of defending even the most basic needs of the working class. What has been powerfully vindicated is the program and perspective of international socialism, defended and developed by the ICFI and its sections.

“The fight conducted by the Fourth International and the SEP to build the revolutionary leadership of the working class on the perspective of socialist internationalism is intersecting with the mass struggles now emerging internationally. This objective situation has opened up very powerful opportunities to build Socialist Equality Parties, as sections of the ICFI, in India, throughout South Asia and internationally.”

Jayasekera concluded by urging the audience to undertake a serious study of the history and perspectives of the Fourth International and to “join with us in building the Indian section of the ICFI.”



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