

The ICFI's program intersects with a new wave of working-class struggle

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On Saturday, May 4, the International Committee of the Fourth International held the 2019 International Online May Day Rally, the sixth annual online May Day Rally held by the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. The rally heard speeches on different aspects of the world crisis of capitalism and the struggles of the international working class from 12 leading members of the world party and its sections and sympathizing organizations around the world.

On successive days, the World Socialist Web Site is publishing the texts of the speeches delivered at the rally. Below is the speech delivered by Wije Dias, general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka). On Monday, the WSWS published the opening report to the rally, given by David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the WSWS and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US).

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A notable change one can encounter, in the new wave of working-class struggles around the world, is the growing tendency for workers to break out of the trade union straitjacket and take independent initiatives to control the fate of their struggles.

As Marxist revolutionaries, we are well aware that this move alone is totally inadequate to guarantee the victory of these struggles. But it is the clearest indication of the acuteness of the crisis of leadership the workers confront, and also an important first step towards propelling the working class to look for alternative programs and leaderships for their struggles.

Trotsky wrote in the founding document of the Fourth International, *The Transitional Program and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, that the crisis of humanity is characterised by the crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the working class.

It is not every day that the workers become aware of

this crisis. It happens at times of acute crisis in the political system as a whole. Workers are starting to recognise this crisis and are turning towards finding alternative solutions.

We now live in such a period of history, and we are the only movement that has fought against all those who wrote off the historical revolutionary role of the working class in leading humanity out of the capitalist morass. In this struggle, we have prepared ourselves to undertake the task of providing the program and leadership for which workers everywhere are searching in the present period.

This is the secret behind the new experiences that all the sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International are now undertaking on every continent. Our recent experiences have been a powerful vindication of the intersection of the objective developments of the class struggle and the perspective of the world Trotskyist movement.

The Mexican Matamoros workers launched their struggle in defiance of the dictates of the union leaders and have attracted wide support from the youth, students, professional sections and middle-class layers. They were also unhesitant in sending greetings to the Detroit conference of rank-and-file workers, called by the Socialist Equality Party in the US. The turn to forge the internationalist unity of the workers in struggle was explicit in this action, and only the Trotskyist movement is prepared to provide it with a socialist orientation.

In the same way, the workers of the action committee founded by the Sri Lankan SEP at the Abbotsleigh estate, during the 100,000-strong plantation workers' strike, joined a picket to demand the release of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, imprisoned for exposing the military crimes of the imperialist powers.

They also passed a resolution to that effect and came forward to take their place in the international campaign being waged by the ICFI and the WSWs.

These developments cannot be treated as some isolated phenomena peculiar to these countries. They are symbolic of the revolutionary potential contained in the general development of the unfolding struggles of the objectively international class, the working class. Whether it be the teachers in every state in the US, or the “yellow vest” movement in France, or the workers in neighbouring India, where, not many months ago, we witnessed a general strike of several million public sector workers, the social conditions and political issues facing all these workers are very similar.

The generalisation of the social conditions of the workers in the developed countries as well as the historically backward countries, is the product of the protracted global breakdown of the capitalist economy, which initially surfaced in 2008 in the form of a collapse of huge US financial conglomerates. This has created unbearable social polarisation in every country, even in China, where boasts of the unhindered rise of capitalist development, under the descendants of the Stalinist bureaucracy, are fast fading.

It is this global crisis of capitalism that impels the right-wing turn of the ruling elites. Washington takes the lead among the imperialist powers in preparing for a war, at whatever cost to humanity, to reassert its lost world hegemony. The continuation of the pivot to Asia that began under Barack Obama is now being accelerated under Donald Trump, integrating India and Sri Lanka more closely into the aggressive US military strategy against China.

Under these conditions, the historic significance of the perspective of the ICFI and the SEP for a Union of Socialist Republics of South Asia has assumed unprecedented relevance. This was clearly exposed in the tragic events that took place two weeks ago in Sri Lanka, where more than 250 men, women and children perished, while no less than 500 were seriously injured.

The foremost reason for the carrying out of the reactionary terrorist attack in Sri Lanka, which was organised by ISIS in collaboration with a small group of Muslim youth, is the close collaboration of the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government with the US led war strategy, which has already caused a vast destruction of life and social conditions in the Middle

East. All the evidence that has surfaced so far indicates that the government knew about the attack well in advance, but did not do anything to prevent it, because it calculated that such a provocation could be used to create further divisions among the workers and the oppressed, who are threatening to fight back.

Sri Lankan Defence Secretary, Hemasiri Fernando, let the cat out of the bag when he told a BBC correspondent, that they “did not expect the attacks to be of this magnitude.” While unintentional, the statement revealed that the government desired a provocation, but on a smaller scale. The involvement of ISIS, which faced defeat in its futile adventure against the major powers and was driven out of Syria, caused the terrorist attacks to go beyond the despicable expectations of the ruling elite.

Now, both the Sri Lankan ruling elite and the US and its allies have turned to exploit the post-terrorist attack situation, to rush in even more draconian, anti-democratic police state measures against the whole population, and to make the island a more open hub for the aggressive imperialist war machine. Hordes of FBI and Pentagon officials have already descended onto the island to “assist investigations.”

Only the working class, on a world scale, and based on the program of international socialism, for which the ICFI fights, can end imperialist war and the fascistic and police state preparations of the ruling classes. A politically independent working class has the historic ability to attract and lead the poor farmers, oppressed communities, unemployed youth and students, middle classes and professionals away from the reactionary adventurist terrorist outfits that, in the final analysis, play into the designs of the ruling elites.

The vital task of mobilising the working class on the basis of this program, contained in the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution, depends on building the mass revolutionary parties of the ICFI in every country around the globe.



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