

Turkish IYSSE's intervention at Istanbul student conference wins warm response

Our reporter
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The 18th Independent Congress on Economics of University Students in Turkey was held in Istanbul from March 5-7 with more than 150 students attending from several universities. Several student groups from different universities and cities across the country organize this event on different topics each year. The main theme this year was “Globalization and Searching for Ways Out.” It included subheadings such as “From the economic crisis to the popular uprisings,” “International trade wars,” and “The war economy and the Middle East that cannot be shared.”

This year, supporters of the *Sosyalist E?itlik* (Socialist Equality Group), the sympathizing group of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in Turkey, and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE Turkey) made a Trotskyist political intervention at the conference. A *Sosyalist E?itlik* supporter made a presentation titled “Thirty years of war and the US drive for global hegemony.” Contributions and questions raised by IYSSE supporters drew great interest and generated a lively discussion.

Based on *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990–2016* by David North and perspectives produced by the ICFI, this presentation outlined a historical analysis of the imperialist war drive, advancing a socialist perspective based on the international working class.

The speaker explained that the current fighting between Turkey and Syria is the end product of reckless wars Washington and its European allies have waged in the Middle East since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. It is the latest episode in the imperialist proxy war against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime since 2011, in which the Turkish government has functioned as a tool of the

NATO imperialist powers.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was not the “failure of socialism,” however, but of the national program of Stalinism, and it reflected an existential crisis of the entire post-war nation-state system. The speaker quoted the preface to *A Quarter Century of War*: “The ICFI anticipated that the breakdown of the established postwar equilibrium would lead rapidly to a resurgence of imperialist militarism.” It stated in August 1990 that the Bush administration's war against Iraq “marks the beginning of a new imperialist redivision of the world.”

The imperialist wars, military interventions and proxy wars of the three-decade US drive for global hegemony has only produced disasters. The speaker pointed to war preparations by Washington against Iran, Russia and China, explaining that other imperialist powers are no less ruthless than US in pursuit of their interests. The German ruling class has turned to a militarist foreign policy abroad, promoting far-right forces against deeply rooted anti-war sentiments in the working class, the speaker explained, referring to the analysis presented in Christoph Vandreier's book, *Why Are They Back?*

The speaker explained three stages of the Syrian war and the continuing collaboration between Ankara and Al Qaeda-linked forces, both for regime change and to prevent the formation of a Kurdish state on Ankara's southern border. The latest Turkish invasion targeting the YPG, Washington's main proxy force in Syria, has displaced hundreds of thousands of primarily Kurdish civilians. Their records shows that both the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie are reactionary accomplices of US-led imperialist war in the Middle East; no faction of the capitalist class opposes imperialist war.

At the end of the presentation, the speaker stated that “Under conditions where all the imperialist and

capitalist states are preparing for a world war with nuclear weapons this time, the question of how to stop this enormous danger is of great importance.” As to the roots of the war threat, he quoted from the ICFI’s 2016 statement, *Socialism and the Fight Against War*: “The essential cause of militarism and war lies in the deep-seated contradictions of the world capitalist system: 1) between a globally integrated and interdependent economy and its division into antagonistic national states; and 2) between the socialized character of global production and its subordination, through the private ownership of the means of production, to the accumulation of private profit by the ruling capitalist class.”

Explaining that there is no “national solution” to any great problem—such as war in the Middle East, or the Kurdish question—the speaker argued for an internationalist socialist perspective based on Leon Trotsky’s *Theory of Permanent Revolution*, citing four principles presented in the ICFI’s 2016 statement as the foundation of the building of a new international anti-war movement.

The presentation sparked many questions from the audience, including about Stalinism and the struggle of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International to defend the traditions of the October 1917 revolution against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Communist International.

Another question was on the perspective of the “Socialist Federation of the Middle East” advanced by the speaker as the only progressive response of the working class to imperialist war and reactionary bourgeois factions across the region. The speaker stressed that Turkey’s history powerfully demonstrates that, as Leon Trotsky explained in his *Theory of Permanent Revolution*, there is no national solution to problems facing workers and oppressed people, like independence from imperialism and democratic questions like the Kurdish question.

While the presentation elicited great interest from the audience, it also provoked a frenzied response from students linked to the Albanian-Stalinist Labour Party (EMEP), who had also tried to prevent Mehring Yay?nc?l?k (Mehring Books) from setting up a bookstand outside the event. They repeated discredited Stalinist lies, denying that Leon Trotsky was assassinated by a Stalinist agent and falsely claiming

that Vladimir Lenin supposedly developed the Stalinist theory of “socialism in one country” in 1916.

The speaker refuted these Stalinist lies, stressing the historic struggle of Leon Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement against Stalinism and for the enduring significance of Marxism. As they tried to block the bookstand, it became clear that they wanted to censor Mehring Books because it is a Trotskyist publishing house. It is no coincidence that the EMEP endorsed the bourgeois opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) candidates in Turkey’s largest cities in municipal elections last year.

The *Sosyalist E?itlik* defended its rights to freedom of expression and political activity based on democratic principles and against censorship. This principled stance gained support from other members of the “regulatory board” and from the majority of the audience. When an EMEP supporter walked up in a rage to a *Sosyalist E?itlik* supporter, students defended him and publicly denounced the EMEP supporters. The Mehring Yay?nc?l?k bookstand remained open up to the end of the congress.

The event testified to the enormous power of the Trotskyist perspective developed by the ICFI and the *World Socialist Web Site*. It underscores how the Trotskyist movement can win the support of youth and workers against pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class, based on a principled defense of socialist internationalism and democratic rights.



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