

Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE holds well attended online meeting against US-NATO war drive and the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Our correspondents

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a lively online meeting Sunday, March 20, titled “Oppose US–NATO war drive and the Russian invasion of Ukraine!”

Prior to the meeting, the SEP and the IYSSE launched a strong campaign against the imperialist war drive, which attracted wide support among workers, students and youth.

About 150 out of more than 250 registrants joined the meeting, which was held through Zoom, and dozens more watched the event on the party’s Facebook page. Participants attended from across Sri Lanka as well as from India, France, the Middle East and several other countries and regions throughout the world. The video has so far been viewed by more than 1,200 people, with 300 others sharing it.

SEP political committee member Saman Gunadasa chaired the meeting. He pointed out that a full-scale war against Russia is being prepared through a media propaganda campaign. “As a part of the anti-Russia campaign,” he said, “the pro-imperialist media is covering up the fact that the US military has killed millions of people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and many other countries in the Middle East and other regions.”

Gunadasa emphasized that it was crucial for workers in Sri Lanka, South Asia and throughout the world to understand that there is no future for the working class or the planet itself without building an anti-war movement of the international working class, based on the perspective on international socialism.

David North, the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the WWSW and the national chairman of the SEP in the US, made opening remarks to the meeting. He

started by emphasizing that the International Committee of the Fourth International’s approach to the war is based on revolutionary, socialist and internationalist principles.

While stating that the ICFI has unequivocally opposed the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, North emphasized that it was necessary to expose the deceit and the falsifications of the imperialist powers in their hypocritical anti-Russian campaign.

North explained that thirty years ago, at the time of the dissolution of Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy, the ideologists of the ruling class proclaimed the “end of history.” The dissolution of the USSR supposedly represented the triumph of capitalism that would bring with it a blossoming of democracy, equality and prosperity.

“The breakup of the Soviet Union did not produce prosperity for the masses,” North said. “It produced poverty. Different fragments of the former Soviet Union are ruled by oligarchic, corrupt governments, and the republics that were established on that basis have been plagued by war.”

The entire capitalist world, North said, is confronted with a crisis of monumental proportions. “One cannot understand the crisis that has erupted in Ukraine without reference to the global crisis out of which it has emerged. This finds its most extreme expression in a global pandemic that has cost the lives over six million people during the last two years. The US, the most advanced capitalist country in the world, is at the verge of reaching one million deaths.”

North said that those deaths could have been avoided, but the necessary measures to stop the pandemic were rejected for two reasons. “First the necessary measures conflicted with corporate financial interests, and second the elimination of the virus is not possible on a national

basis.”

North insisted that the pandemic has revealed an extraordinary indifference to human life on the part of the ruling class. This must be taken as a warning under conditions of the looming threat of a nuclear war. “One cannot avoid drawing the conclusion that there is a definite relation between the reactionary policies in response to the pandemic and the reckless policies pursued in response to the war in Ukraine.”

Concluding his speech, North said the fundamental and decisive question is: “How will this mad drive towards war be stopped?” The only way, he said, is through the development of the international class struggle the building of a world party of socialist revolution. He concluded by saying that he hoped “the meeting will contribute significantly towards building a powerful international movement of the working class against war and for socialism.”

Sakuntha Hirimuthugoda, representing the IYSSE in Sri Lanka, addressed the meeting next. He started his speech by referring to the *World Socialist Web Site*’s analysis of the efforts of the White House to escalate the conflict in Ukraine into a proxy war between the NATO powers and Russia. As a result, the danger of a third world war is mounting. “The imperialist powers around the world are sitting on the rim of the volcano of World War III, and they are throwing explosives into it.”

Quoting from ICFI statement, “Socialism and the Fight Against War,” he said that “the ruling classes everywhere are impelled to defend their positions by extracting unending ‘sacrifice’ from workers in their ‘home’ national state, in the form of mass unemployment, austerity and the destruction of living standards.”

Hirimuthugoda added that the ruling elites throughout the world “are only capable of leading mankind toward destruction, in the form of war, austerity, dictatorship, fascism, the pandemic and mass unemployment. This can only be stopped by mobilizing the youth and the rest of the oppressed behind an independent working class movement fighting for socialism.”

Concluding remarks were delivered to the meeting by SEP political committee member Pani Wijesiriwardena. He said: “The deep-rooted and fundamental causes for a war are not revealed in how it begins. They emerge in the course of the war’s development. When World War I broke out in 1914, only the most far-sighted Marxists—Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg, in particular—saw the explosion of the long-escalating inter-imperialist conflict as its root cause.”

Referring to the WSWS perspective titled, “Ukraine: The questions that must be asked,” the speaker continued: “The ruling elites in the US and Europe are facing a major economic, political and social crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the ruling class is not capable of providing any solution to the growing social anger, war is being used to divert internal social tensions to an outside enemy.”

Wijesiriwardena explained the reactionary role of pseudo-left organizations around the world within this context. He mentioned a statement issued by a Pabloite organization, which claims to be the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International, that supports the vicious anti-Russia campaign. Its Sri Lankan affiliate, the Socialist People’s Forum, had said that Russia had violated the self-determination of Ukraine while covering up for the role of NATO and American imperialism in instigating the war.

The speaker noted that the US war drive has intensified the geopolitical tensions in the Indian Ocean region and in Asia. He described the disastrous implications of the US conflict with China, which is taking the form of demands that China distance itself from Russia. “Although New Delhi has tried to maintain a balance between its military-strategic partnership with the US and its long-standing relationship with Moscow, it is getting difficult to continue that due to the mounting pressure from the Biden administration. The Colombo government has claimed to be neutral in this crisis, but it is under intense US pressure to align with its interests and distance itself from China.”

In the conclusion Wijesiriwardena said: “Although the capitalist governments have no program to end this devastation, the working class around the world is opposed to the war. What needs to be done is to develop their opposition as a conscious political movement for socialism.”



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