

Broad audience at Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE meeting against the threat of a nuclear war

Our correspondent
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a powerful online meeting—“Build an international working-class movement to stop nuclear war danger”—on October 16.

About 150 people joined the event via Zoom and the party’s Facebook page from across Sri Lanka, as well as India, the US, Russia, Europe, the Middle East and several other countries. The meeting speeches, which were delivered in Sinhala, were simultaneously translated into Tamil and presented with English subtitles. The meeting video has been viewed so far by over 1,800 people with 570 sharing it.

SEP assistant secretary Saman Gunadasa chaired the meeting. He emphasised that the war provoked by the US and NATO against Russia in Ukraine has brought the world to the brink of a nuclear third world war and that workers and young people “need to understand the seriousness of this matter.”

Referring to US President Joe Biden’s warnings about a “nuclear Armageddon,” Gunadasa said a nuclear war “would not kill not millions of people, but billions, like flies.”

Socialism, he said, “becomes an objective necessity for the working class, for survival. The question today is socialism or annihilation under imperialism?”

SEP general secretary Deepal Jayasekara, who delivered the main report, told the meeting that the direct involvement of the US and its NATO allies in the war in Ukraine is now in the open. Under the Biden administration, he said, “The US has provided over \$US50 billion worth of modern weapons and other military equipment to Ukraine to wage war against Russia. US military officials are active on the ground in Ukraine, providing training, advice and directions to the Ukrainian military.”

The speaker explained that when the SEP says Putin’s invasion was triggered by continuous provocations by the US and its NATO allies, “we are not providing any support to Putin’s invasion, or justifying it.”

Outlining the independent position of the working class, Jayasekera said, “We oppose Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, not in the sense of defending Ukraine’s ‘sovereignty’ or ‘self-determination’ or ‘democracy’ but in the sense of unifying the working class in Russia, Ukraine and internationally against the war.”

The speaker explained the political role of the pseudo-lefts and other pro-capitalist groups which have backed the imperialist war against Russia. The Pabloite United Secretariat, Jayasekara said, “attempts to justify its support for the imperialist war in the name of defending the ‘self-determination’ of Ukraine, or more precisely Ukraine’s right to join alliances, including the US imperialist-dominated NATO.”

The speaker said that the US and other imperialist powers are involved in the Ukraine war for two main reasons. First, to pursue their own geo-political interests and second, to divert from the “immense economic, political and social crisis confronting them as part of the global crisis of capitalism.”

The US, he continued, “is not going to stop at subjugating Russia” but, even as it was waging war against Russia, is preparing for conflict against China, using Taiwan as the pretext, just as it used Ukraine against Russia. “The US is aggressively working to impose its global hegemony, through complete subjugation of Russia and China,” he said.

Jayasekera stated that the ruling elites in the US and other imperialist centres are trying to unload the burden of the worsening economic crisis confronting them onto the backs of the working class in the form of harsh

austerity measures.

“They all confront growing social struggles, including working-class struggles against austerity measures, the criminal decisions to allow COVID-19 to freely spread and the increasing attacks on basic democratic rights,” he said.

Referring to intensifying geopolitical tensions in the region, Jayasekara noted that India is coming under increasing pressure to line up with Washington’s war against Russia in Ukraine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government is desperately trying to maintain a precarious balance between India’s military-strategic partnership with the US and its decades-long defence ties with Russia.

The Sri Lankan government, previously under President Gotabhaya Rajapakse and now under his successor Ranil Wickremesinghe, the speaker continued, is maintaining Colombo’s position of not taking sides in the Ukraine war. In line with this, Sri Lanka abstained in the United Nations General Assembly vote on October 12 to condemn Russia’s attempts to annex four regions of Ukraine, he said.

The Sri Lankan government’s position of “not taking sides” in the Ukraine war is not an indication of opposition to US imperialism and its military-strategic agenda. Colombo confronts its own immense economic crisis and is concerned about its trade ties with both Russia and Ukraine, Jayasekera said.

“The only way to prevent a devastating nuclear war is the independent mobilisation of the global working class on a revolutionary program of international socialism. A key principle of that program is to refuse to defend the nation state, which has become historically outmoded and is in contradiction with the dominance of the world economy and the global interdependence of the productive forces,” Jayasekera said.

The speaker referred to Trotsky’s comment in 1934, during the crisis years between the first and second world wars, that it was necessary to not bind oneself “to the national state in time of war, to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle.” This means, Jayasekara explained, that “opposition to imperialism must be rooted in the fight to unify the international working class in opposition to exploitation, inequality and the capitalist system.”

In conclusion, Jayasekara invited all the participants to join the struggle being waged by the SEP and the

International Committee of the Fourth International to build an international anti-war movement among workers, youth and students.

Above all, he insisted, “I urge all those who have not joined our party, to study our political program and perspectives and regularly read the WSWS, initiate political discussions with us and join the SEP and ICFI to build the necessary revolutionary leadership of the working class.”

During the question-and-answer session, Jayasekara responded to a question about how to stop nuclear devastation, explaining that neither the imperialist powers nor Russia care about the human consequences of this disaster.

“If there is any doubt,” Jayasekara said, “I would like to remind you that these same capitalist ruling classes did not hesitate in sacrificing the lives of millions of people when they allowed COVID-19 to spread freely and in such a deadly manner.

“War can only be stopped by an international socialist revolution of the working class, which will demolish the crisis-ridden capitalist system on a global scale. As history has shown, the Bolshevik Party of Russia, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky in 1917, led the working class to such a victory and established the first working-class state in history.

“This is what stopped the First World War,” Jayasekera said, adding, “building an international anti-war movement led by the working class is the only viable program, and I urge you again to join us in that struggle.”



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