

IYSSE holds meeting against Ukraine war at Brazil's University of São Paulo

Our reporters

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Last Monday, March 20, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a powerful antiwar meeting at the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, as part of its international campaign The war in Ukraine and how to stop it.

The meeting was hosted by leading members of the Socialist Equality Group (GSI-BR), which is fighting to build a Brazilian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It also featured a statement by the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), supporters of the ICFI in the countries of the former Soviet Union, to Brazilian youth and workers.

The speeches addressed the historical origins of the war, its relation to the world capitalist crisis and the developing global class struggle, and the political perspective required to develop an antiwar movement in the 21st century.

The event's host, Guilherme Ferreira, began by summarizing the current situation of the US-NATO confrontation with Russia in Ukraine. He declared:

One year after its beginning, this war is far from over. In fact, it is developing dangerously, threatening to spiral out of control. In recent weeks, successive red lines have been crossed, bringing the world even closer to an open war between nuclear powers.

Ferreira highlighted the significant coincidence of the date of the event and the 20-year anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq. As then, he claimed, the real interests of American imperialism are being hidden behind lies and a campaign to demonize its current adversaries.

To discuss the historical and political background of the war, Ferreira called upon the next speaker, Tomas Castanheira.

Castanheira began his speech by confronting the hegemonic narrative, which describes the current conflict in Ukraine as an “unprovoked war” launched by Vladimir Putin. He declared: “This war can only be understood in the context of the contradictions opened up by the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991.”

Referring to the wars and interventions promoted by

Washington over the past three decades in its declared quest for global hegemony, Castanheira explained that the “current confrontation with Russia, and even the use of Ukraine as a platform for this purpose” were long prepared.

He also pointed to the explosive global economic, political and social crisis as a critical factor driving the military escalation of the capitalist regimes. Emphasizing the relationship between war and the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, he stated:

The contradiction between the inability of the world capitalist class to organize a solution to preserve human lives [from the coronavirus], and its mobilization of massive resources and coordination among global powers to wage a war that threatens the end of humanity sums up the crisis of the present society.

Castanheira pointed out that this historic crisis of capitalism was anticipated by the ICFI, which predicted that the period opened with the dissolution of the USSR would be marked by “the deepening of the same contradictions that led to the outbreak of World War I, on the one hand, and to the October Revolution of 1917, on the other.”

The political foresight and revolutionary stance of the ICFI, he explained, was the product of the Trotskyist movement's long struggle against Stalinism and every form of nationalism.

“Without Stalinism's betrayals of the revolutionary struggles of the international working class, Hitler would never have risen to power in Germany, and the continuation of the socialist revolution would have prevented a second and even more brutal world war,” Castanheira said. “And without its betrayals of the revolutions that rose up with the end of the war (...), capitalism would not have been able to establish a new world equilibrium,” he added.

From 1953 on, Castanheira stated, the Trotskyists' struggle entered a new chapter with the foundation of the ICFI and its struggle against Pabloite revisionism. “The Pabloites broke with the Fourth International to defend nationalist perspectives, in the first place the Stalinist bureaucracy, as forces of

opposition to imperialism ... and alternatives to developing the world party of socialist revolution.”

The defense of Trotskyist principles, Castanheira claimed, led “the ICFI, unlike the Pabloites, to repudiate the movement of the bureaucracy to dissolve the Soviet Union.”

Presenting the revolutionary perspectives elaborated by the ICFI at that critical historical moment—particularly at its Conference Against War and Colonialism, in 1991—Castanheira argued that they remain the essential basis for the antiwar movement today. He concluded:

The only program capable of defeating this war at its root is the unification of the international working class for the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of a global economy upon socialist guidelines.

Giving expression to the solid internationalist orientation of the IYSSE’s campaign, Ferreira then read to the Brazilian audience the statement sent by the leadership of the Young Guard of Bolsheviks-Leninists.

The YGBL called on Brazilian youth and workers to repudiate the “imperialist policies of the NATO countries, especially the United States... which has taken hundreds of thousands of lives of Russians, Ukrainians and other nationalities.”

At the same time, the YGBL called upon them to reject bourgeois nationalism as a viable basis for opposing the war. “In the final analysis,” they claimed, “both the Putin government and the Zelensky government are based on maintaining a capitalist system whose essence is the exploitation of Russian and Ukrainian workers.”

Making the necessary link between their revolutionary opposition to Putin and Zelensky and the political challenges faced by the Brazilian youth, they stated:

The workers and youth of Brazil must once and for all put an end to the illusions in the present Lula government, which is based on the suppression of the struggles of the working class and the realization of the interests of the Brazilian oligarchy.

Instead, the YGBL called for the construction of a revolutionary party in Brazil “that will defend the independent position of the working class, and act in solidarity with the working class around the world through the International Committee of the Fourth International.”

Elaborating upon this perspective, the event’s last speaker, Eduardo Parati, presented the growing struggles of the

international working class as the necessary basis for the movement against war and for socialist revolution.

Parati explained that the war is intensifying the immense social crisis “both in the centers of imperialism and in the oppressed countries.” “In order to finance imperialism’s weapons and pay for the financial crisis,” the ruling classes are promoting “the suppression of all social opposition,” he said.

“In Latin America,” Parati said, “this program is being promoted by all the Pink Tide governments, including the PT [Workers Party] in Brazil.” While presenting themselves as “left-wing,” these bourgeois nationalist regimes are “assisting the imperialist powers in the confrontation that threatens to turn into a nuclear war,” he stated.

Parati also denounced the complicity of the pseudo-left organizations in this bourgeois reaction. He pointed to the Morenoite Unified Socialist Workers Party’s (PSTU) call “to support the imperialist powers in arming the Ukrainian army” and the “systematic strengthening of the Brazilian capitalist state and military.”

On the other hand, Parati said, all over the world, “massive strikes and protests are developing against the huge crises of the capitalist system.” He added, “In every case the working class is entering into a direct confrontation with not only the companies, but also the capitalist state and the unions.”

“Rank-and-file committees will be the organizational expression of the working class in this new historical moment,” Parati stated. “[But] above all, we need to provide a political perspective for these struggles.”

In a compelling conclusion to the event at the University of São Paulo, Parati declared:

Our call to everyone here is that you assimilate these lessons, undertake a serious study of the history of the Trotskyist movement represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International, and make the decision to join the IYSSE and GSI-BR.



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