

Colombo meeting launches Sinhala translation of *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century*

By 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 well-attended public meeting on March 15 to launch the Sinhala edition of David North's *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century*.

The event was held at the Colombo Public Library Auditorium and attended by SEP members, workers, students and youth from various parts of the island. It opened with greetings delivered live from Germany by David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the SEP in the US.

The audience listened intently as North praised the "intellectual effort, technical work and financial costs" involved in the Sinhalese translation of his book and paid tribute to the Sri Lankan SEP and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, for the decades of courageous struggle for revolutionary Marxism. North's remarks were welcomed with enthusiastic applause.

SEP political committee and WSWs International Editorial Board member K. Ratnayake chaired the meeting with SEP general secretary Wije Dias delivering the main report.

Ratnayake explained North's leading role in the theoretical and political struggle of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and pointed out that *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century* was the latest of the author's invaluable contributions to Marxism and Trotskyism.

The articles and lectures in the book, Ratnayake said, defended Marxist and Trotskyist principles against the historical falsifications of the Stalinists, Pabloites, post-modernists and pseudo-lefts.

The new publication presents "an objective picture of

the 20th century," Ratnayake said. "For revolutionary Marxists, studying history is not an academic exercise but an inseparable part of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. This will immensely contribute to developing perspectives for the international working class against imperialist war and social counter-revolution."

Delivering the main report, SEP general secretary Dias paid tribute to Mehring Books for the original compilation and publication of North's work. The speaker quoted a section from the original foreword, which insisted that the exposure of the key historical falsifications in the 20th century was "a weapon in the revolutionary struggles of the future."

Dias told the meeting that the "penetrating theoretical and political expositions" in North's book were derived from the systematic study of the strategic experiences of the interventions made by the Marxist movement, including the ICFI, in the international class struggle over one and three quarter centuries.

"Social revolutionary theory is developed by critically analysing the social practice of mankind, which, in turn guides the social practice to a higher level at the next stage. It is in this sense that this book serves as a 'weapon in the revolutionary struggles of the future.'

"Opportunists reject this dialectical relationship between social practice and theory," Dias said. "Like all other opportunist tendencies throughout the world, the Frontline Socialist Party in Sri Lanka claims in one of its publications *Akshaya* (The Axis), that 'the challenge faced by the lefts today, is to make the tasks of activists and theoreticians coincide.'

"Society is split into two distinct categories, with activity and theory like two rails running parallel and separate from each other but brought to coincide by the pseudo-lefts. This theory, which is divorced from the

material basis of the class struggle, is a recipe to opportunistically bring together different class forces and politically derail the mass movement,” Dias said.

The speaker drew attention to the current world situation, the dangers of a Third World War and the historic significance of the ICFI’s campaign to build a global socialist anti-war movement. North’s book, he said, contained invaluable historical and theoretical material to clarify workers, rural poor and youth about the struggle to construct a mass movement to prevent war through the socialist overturn of the imperialist world order.

Dias said that *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century* explained the fundamental theoretical premises on which Bolshevism was founded by Lenin to build an independent political party of the working class in Russia, without which the overthrow of the bourgeois rule was impossible.

“The debates waged by Trotsky against all those attempts to belittle the leading role of the working class in the Russian Revolution and the resolution of democratic tasks, prepared the ground for the uncompromising struggle against those like the Socialist Revolutionaries in Russia who cultivated illusions about nationalist petty-bourgeois social forces.”

North’s book, the speaker continued, “is permeated with proletarian internationalism. The Russian Revolution, its victory, as well as its degeneration and tragic demise under the Stalinist bureaucracy, has shown that internationalism is pivotal for the working class for all time. This is particularly so under conditions of heightening war tensions where national chauvinist hysteria is whipped up by the ruling classes and their ‘left’ agencies.”

Dias told the meeting the ICFI’s struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution had been “enormously strengthened by *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century*.”

Referring to Trotsky’s comment that “one of the psychological causes of opportunism is the fear of great tasks which means the mistrust of revolutionary possibilities,” Dias concluded his speech by declaring: “We see and trust the revolutionary possibilities that are developing around the world and therefore we unhesitatingly undertake the task of establishing world socialism.”

Those in attendance contributed generously to the SEP’s Special Fund and bought more than two dozen copies of *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished*

Twentieth Sinhala edition. ~~Important~~ discussions were held with some of those who came to the event.

Supun, a Moratuwa University engineering student, said *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century* was very timely. “When the pseudo-left parties and the post-modernists are consciously trying to blur the borders of the working class and imply that there is no working class, this book stands in a direct challenge to them, strongly declaring: ‘No, the working class is there and the revolution is on the way.’”

“Comrade Wije Dias pointed out that while the Frontline Socialist Party calls for a front of all ‘left’ parties, the SEP rigidly rejects getting together with these pseudo-left parties. The actual need is to build a party for the working class based on socialism, not to create different movements in different places, each standing for isolated problems and expect these temporary plasters [Band-Aids] to cover-up wounds.”

Indunil, a Colombo University law student, was met during the campaign for the meeting. He said that the SEP had made clear that “imperialist interventions and geo-political tensions throughout the world, mean that the danger of a third world war is imminent.” He initially told WSWS reporters, however, that countries should “co-operate with each other” and attempt to “solve their problems within their own boundaries.”

In the discussion, it was pointed out that cooperation between countries was impossible under capitalism, and especially under conditions of an escalating globalised economic breakdown. Indunil concluded: “I understand that socialism is the answer to world war. To prevent war then we need to mobilise working people all around the world and a party like yours to lead these masses.”

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