

Indian workers and students speak out against US war drive

By our correspondents
28 September 2016

Supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in India campaigned in the southern state of Tamil Nadu last week for the October 2 public meeting in Chennai to discuss the ICFI statement, “Socialism and the Fight Against War” and the Indian government’s participation in the US-led war drive.

In its statement, the ICFI calls on the working class to oppose the imperialist war drive by building a global anti-war movement on the basis of internationalist and socialist principles.

The US is aggressively pushing India to be a “frontline” state against China. Since coming to office in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has further integrated India into Washington’s military build-up in Asia.

The Modi government’s participation in the US war drive against China is occurring behind the backs of the Indian working class and poor. The so-called “left” in India, including the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist), is covering up the immense dangers arising from Washington’s reckless drive for global hegemony.

During last week’s campaign, workers and students discussed Washington’s responsibility for the mounting global tensions and the Modi government’s role in the US war preparations against China. They denounced the government’s fomenting of anti-Pakistan sentiment, which is being fuelled by the backing that Modi is receiving from US imperialism.

The campaigners distributed thousands of leaflets and carried out door-to-door campaigns in Ambattur, Avadi, Korattur and Otteri, the workers’ quarters of the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) and workers’ residences around the Sriperambadur Special Economic Zone. The anti-war campaign also received support among

students at Ambedkar College, Presidency College, Pachaiyappa College, Madras University and the Villivakkam student hostel.

Karunakaran, a retired ICF worker, commented: “America is waging wars in several countries like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, killing millions of innocent people. The UN recently condemned North Korea for testing a nuclear bomb. Tensions between North and South Korea have been increasing. In the war tensions between India and Pakistan, the former is supported by the US and the latter by China. Nobody likes war. It is only the politicians who whip up rivalry and want war, but not the ordinary people.”

Ezhilan, another ICF worker, condemned Modi, his Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other Indian politicians for dividing people along caste and religious lines. He said: “Modi is ready for war with Pakistan and the other political parties are backing him indirectly for political gains. But we workers don’t want war; we want peace. We weren’t born to die in a war. Why should we die?” He added: “Once British imperialism dominated the world; now America wants to dominate the world.”

Ezhilan also opposed the Modi government’s increasing privatisation of public sector industries. He said: “ICF is a public sector industry now on the verge of being privatised. A large number of jobs already have been destroyed.” He said he would participate in the October 2 meeting.

Ramanan, a Britannia company worker, said he was disgusted with the BJP. “It is whipping up religious communalism and trying to divide workers ... There is a cold war between India and Pakistan. Modi is deliberately whipping up anti-Pakistan war hysteria. His policies are also paving the way for the destruction of a large number of jobs.”

Ramanan commented: “America is waging wars all over the world ... the US used to be a very rich country. Now it has become a beggar country. That’s why it is waging wars. Modi’s government is fully supporting the US war plans against China.”

Manuneethi, a railway worker at Carriage works who has just retired, said: “The people and families of armies in both countries, India and Pakistan, would not like war. Large number of soldiers in both countries will die in the war. There is also a danger of this regional war escalating into world war. Nobody will prefer such a war escalation. Modi’s government and the Pakistan government as well want to wage war for their own political gains.

“As happened during previous wars between India and Pakistan, the eruption of war would lead to the imposition of more taxes on people. More youth will be conscripted into the army to carry out the war. If a new war erupts, that will create agony for the people.”

Bhavan, a technician at Hinduja Foundries, had migrated from the northeastern state of Odisha, where his parents are farmers. He recalled a meeting with ICFI supporters a year earlier. “I met you one year back and you were then also explaining about imperialist war dangers. Your analysis has come true now—the war drive has further intensified. There is a danger of the eruption of a third world war. I have been regularly visiting the *World Socialist Web Site* since I met you last year.”

Bhavan added: “Unlike Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, both Russia and China are big nuclear-armed states. Waging wars against them would be catastrophic. These wars must be stopped. Now India is also aligned with the US in the war drive against China. This must be stopped.”

Vijay, a young worker from a courier company, said: “I see the signs of an eruption of a third world war. In this, America is playing a pivotal role. India has also integrated itself in the US war drive against China. America cannot tolerate China’s economic development. I agree that a third world war can be stopped by mobilising the international working class against it.”

Referring to India and Pakistan war tensions, Vijay said: “It’s common for Indian political parties and the media to take the side of India whenever war erupts with Pakistan, but you take a completely different

stand. This is new to me. I have heard this concept only from your movement—that Pakistani and Indian workers could be united in a common program against the ruling elites.”

Balasubramani, 20, had been working in a call centre for three years in Thiruvannamiyur. He said: “Looking at the current state of political affairs, I can see a world war is coming. India did not have many contacts with United States in the past, but now military agreements and joint war exercises between the two countries are on the upswing. There are also increasing tensions between India and Pakistan, as well as between China and India, that may lead to war.”

Prasanth and Surya, Ambedkar Arts college students, spoke to the campaigners. Prasanth, criticised the Modi government’s privatisation program and its slashing of subsidies.

Surya said: “This is the first time I have heard about the war danger ... I have studied the two world wars. Millions of people lost their lives in these wars. A third world war with nuclear weapons would be horrific. So the war must be prevented. I understood from what you said that the only social force capable of preventing this destructive war is the working class.”

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