

Indian workers and students speak out against imperialist war drive

By our correspondents
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Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), campaigning for their public meeting in Chennai on August 27 spoke to workers in the Sriperambudur Special Economic Zone (SEZ), 40 kilometres from the city, and students from Madras University.

The meeting will discuss US imperialism's war drive against China and the need to build a united anti-war movement of working class around the world based on international socialism as the only way to prevent war.

Under the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has been transformed into a front-line state in the US military-strategic offensive against China. India's increasing involvement in the US-led military build-up against China is carried out behind the backs of the working class and poor.

The so-called "left" in India, including the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM, is covering up the war danger posed by Washington's reckless drive for global hegemony.

The military stand-off between India and China on the Doklam Plateau, a disputed territory between Bhutan and China, enters its 11th week. The confrontation threatens a war involving nuclear-armed rivals with potentially deadly consequences for billions of working people in Asia.

Madan, an apprentice worker from the Hyundai plant in the Sriperambudur SEZ, told the WSW: "I can see a war is coming and that war may become a world war. Yes, as you say, America has been waging a war globally for the past 25 years. This has created a large number of refugees. I was terrified to see in the media that a dead child was found on the sea shore. America has been waging war under Obama and now under Trump for its self-interest and to promote its interests globally.

"The Modi government has cemented a very close military partnership with America. It is clear that it is at the US instigation that the Modi government is trying to wage a war against China. This war is not to defend the people of this country. The government is indifferent to the suffering of the people as it is abolishing subsidies, which are meant for the poor. The government brutally attacks any protests against its policies, including farmers' agitations."

Maheswari and her son Devaraj, a grade 12 student, spoke to campaigners. Devaraj said: "I am opposed to war. I thought by reading several newspapers that America has been waging war against 'terrorists' in the Middle East. But now speaking to you I understood that the wars were waged to plunder the oil resources.

"I have read in my history books that America helped to rebuild Europe and Japan that were devastated by World War II. Now that, as you said, America has lost its dominant economic position and that is the reason why it is waging war world wide to reverse it."

Maheswari intervened to say: "It is good to know that American people are opposed to war. The war will kill a lot of people. A lot of money will be spent on this war. People will face annihilation. There is no benefit for the people with this war. I hate war because it would lead to the deaths of a lot of people."

She has also expressed her opposition to Modi government's attack on Muslims and Dalits—those treated as the "lowest" according to the reactionary Hindu caste system.

Maheswari added that Modi government was trying to abolish the subsidised ration system for the poor. "The government says those who earn 100,000 rupees (\$US1,566) annually will be excluded from ration system. But if you earn around 8,000 rupees per month, you are poor but you are now excluded from the ration

system.”

Logesh, an MBA student at Madras University, said: “I oppose this drive to war. No other parties talk about this issue. It was only because of American support that India has been active in this war drive. It seems China has been soft peddling on this issue. Nevertheless, if war breaks out, China will wage a counter attack.

“I agree with you the Indian and Chinese elites are both reactionary and I welcome the idea that workers in both countries must unite and fight against their respective rulers. The danger of an eruption of a third world war is coming nearer. America’s attack on North Korea may trigger conflicts between the major powers including America, China and Russia.”

Logesh criticised Modi for serving the interests of the big corporations. Modi has been facilitating the growth of Indian billionaire Ambani and his company to extend its influence in virtually every sector of the economy. Modi is pushing for privatisation of public sector companies and encouraging the implementation of the contract work system in these sectors. For instance, in the central government-owned Integral Coach Factory (ICF), low-paid workers are employed on a contractual basis.

Two French students at Madras University, Sharlu Gekketon and Gaëlle Thiriot also expressed their support to the ICFI’s campaign against war.

Gekketon said: “I am fascinated by your policy of internationalism. As you said, the Trump administration is preparing for world war. He tries to erect a wall between US and Mexico, which is foolish and dividing common people in the name of nationalism. We are from France and study here, we interact with Indian students and learn a lot. So dividing people and preparing for war is complete nonsense and not in the interests of common people.”

The two students were interested to know how the ICFI differed from the pseudo-lefts active in France, which led to a lengthy discussion about support of pseudo-lefts for US-led wars and the principled stance of the ICFI’s section in France, Parti de l’egalite socialiste (PES).

Thiriot said: “We have heard about Leon Trotsky and I am surprised that you know more about the French political situation than us. It is really interesting. Now the PS [Socialist Party] and LR [Republicans] have collapsed. Le Pen [of the National Front] is showing a

fascistic tendency and [President] Macron is trying to bring emergency rule in France attacking democratic rights.”

The French students both said they were excited about the existence of an international movement against war and would look at the WSWs.

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