

# Indian Trotskyists celebrate 80 years of the Fourth International

By our correspondents  
23 November 2018

Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) held a public meeting in Chennai last Sunday to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Fourth International and 50 years since the founding of its Sri Lankan section, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP).

The meeting, held at the Madras Reporters Guild in Chepauk, was attended by about 30 workers, young people, housewives and intellectuals. Some participants travelled several hundred kilometres from the cities of Hyderabad, Bangalore and Coimbatore.

During the campaign for the meeting, ICFI supporters spoke with autoworkers in the industrial areas of Sriperumbudur and Oragadam near Chennai, transport workers in the city and students at several universities.

Chairing the event, Moses Rajkumar warmly welcomed the main speaker, Deepal Jayasekera, the assistant secretary of the Sri Lankan SEP.

Rajkumar stated: “In marking these anniversaries, we are paying tribute to the ICFI’s uncompromising struggle for more than sixty years to defend the principles and program of the Fourth International against all forms political opportunism.”

Arun Kumar, of the Indian ICFI supporters group, said that the ICFI was the only party fighting to unite the working class of the world on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program directed against the growing danger of imperialist world war and the drive by ruling classes everywhere towards authoritarian and fascistic forms of rule.

Kumar noted that the meeting was being held in the context of mounting geo-political tensions globally and in the South Asian region, stemming from the breakdown of world capitalism and the attempts of American imperialism to offset its economic decline through the use of military force.

Kumar explained: “In this situation, Indian foreign policy has been increasingly tilted towards the US. Successive Indian governments, whether led by Congress or the BJP, have deepened the country’s military and strategic partnership with the US. The current BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has placed India on the front lines of the US plans for war against China.”

Kumar said that the deepening world crisis was also propelling the working class into social and political struggles. He reviewed strikes by around 3,000 auto workers from the Yamaha India, Royal Enfield and Myoung Shin India Automotive plants, located in the Oragadam industrial hub 55 kilometres from Chennai.

The Stalinists and trade unions, he warned, were doing everything they could to suppress the emerging movement and prevent it from developing into a political confrontation with the bourgeois parties.

To that end, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), led by the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist), held an “all party meeting” on October 30, with the opposition bourgeois parties, including Congress, under the fraudulent pretext of gaining their support for the strike.

“This was part of the attempts of the Stalinists to derail the autoworkers’ strikes by subordinating them to the pro-business parties of the Indian ruling elite,” Kumar said.

Jayasekera spoke at length on the historical lessons of the struggle waged by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International against Stalinism, Social Democracy, bourgeois nationalism and all other forms of national-opportunism.

The speaker stressed the contemporary relevance of studying the historical experiences of the 20th century.

“The greatest event of the 20th century was the 1917

October Russian Revolution, which brought the working class to power for the first time in the history,” Jayasekera said.

“The October Revolution emerged out of the breakdown of world capitalism, expressed in the catastrophe of World War One. The revolution was not a national development, but a world event. It emerged, not because conditions in Russia were ripe for socialist revolution, but because conditions internationally necessitated the overthrow of world capitalism.”

Jayasekera explained that only by studying the history of the Fourth International could workers and young people, who are increasingly attracted to socialism, be politically oriented and equipped to fight for the abolition of capitalism today.

He outlined the history of the Trotskyist movement in South Asia in the initial years of the Fourth International, including the struggles waged by the pioneer Sri Lankan Trotskyists who founded the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1935. Above all, he stressed the enduring significance of the establishment of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI) in 1942, as the all-India section of the FI, aimed at unifying the working class throughout South Asia against the British colonialists and the local ruling elites throughout the region.

Jayasekera explained that the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), the forerunner of the SEP, was founded in 1968 in a struggle against the LSSP, which had betrayed the program of socialist internationalism and entered into a coalition government with the bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1964.

The speaker said: “At the centre of the RCL/SEP’s struggle over the past 50 years has been the fight for Trotsky’s theory of Permanent Revolution. This insists that only the working class is capable of leading the struggle for social and democratic rights in countries of a belated capitalist development like India and Sri Lanka. The working class will fulfill these democratic tasks, only by establishing workers’ and peasants’ governments as part of the world socialist revolution.”

Following the reports, several questions were raised on the history of the Fourth International and the current political situation.

A young worker requested clarification on the Trotskyists’ opposition to the 1947 partition of India,

which led to a Muslim-majority Pakistan and a Hindu-dominated India.

In reply, Jayasekera quoted from a resolution passed at the 1944 BLPI conference. It characterised the call for a Pakistani nation as “politically reactionary and theoretically false,” and warned: “It constitutes an effort through an appeal to communal sentiments to divert the rising discontent of the Muslim masses away from its true enemy, namely, British imperialism and its native allies, against the Hindus.”

Jayasekera added: “Partition was carried out to divide the working class, which was entering into struggles throughout India that cut across ethnic and religious lines. The BLPI fought against partition as part of its struggle for the unity of the working class. It warned that partition would lead to future military conflicts. That warning has been tragically vindicated by three wars, which have already erupted between India and Pakistan, and ongoing tensions threatening an even more catastrophic conflict.”

Many participants expressed interest in further discussion on the internationalist perspective of the ICFI. Attendees donated 550 rupees and purchased 800 rupees worth of literature.

To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>