

Indian Trotskyists campaign for Kolkata meeting to mark the 80th anniversary of the Fourth International

By Arun Kumar and Ritwik Mitter
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International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) supporters in India have been campaigning among university students in Kolkata, capital of West Bengal, for the forthcoming March 10 public meeting to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International.

The Indian Trotskyists hosted a similar public meeting on November 18 in Chennai, which was addressed by Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) assistant national secretary Deepal Jayasekera. The Kolkata meeting will also be addressed by a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party, which is the Sri Lankan section of the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement.

“I support all the things that this party is doing,” Suman, a Jadavpur University student, told ICFI supporters. “The struggle for socialism should be conducted on an international scale or else it will collapse like the Soviet Union.”

Suman, like several other students at Jadavpur University, agreed that there was an urgent need for the development of an international revolutionary party of the working class to fight the US-led preparations for war against China and the Modi government’s austerity attacks on Indian workers and the rural poor.

Suman was contemptuous of all other Indian political parties, including the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM, which he said were completely indifferent to the plight of working people. He spoke strongly in favour of a revolutionary transformation of the capitalist system and said he was interested in joining the Trotskyist movement.

ICFI campaigners explained to students the significance of resurgence of the international working

class and the growing rebellion against the trade unions. They also distributed copies of the WSWs article on India’s recent two-day general strike which pointed out the duplicitous role played by the CPM and the other Stalinist parliamentary party, the Communist Party of India and their respective unions. Like their counterparts internationally, these unions function as an industrial police force for the corporations and capitalist governments.

There was broad agreement among students that the CPM was part of the Indian capitalist establishment. The CPM-led Left Front government, which ruled West Bengal for more than 30 years until 2011, had ruthlessly imposed the “free-market reforms” demanded by Indian big business and global investors.

The students also voiced their concerns about the increasing attacks on democratic rights by the current Trinamool Congress (TMC)-led government in West Bengal. Student protests have been ongoing on university campuses against the imposition of a council system, which would completely abolish the democratically-elected student unions.

The ICFI supporters explained that political responsibility for the growth of the right-wing TMC and the coming to power of Prime Minister Modi’s Hindu communalist BJP rested with the CPM-led Left Front and its affiliated trade unions.

The Stalinist CPM had isolated striking workers and politically subordinated the working class to Indian big business parties, such as Congress, and various caste-based regional parties. The suppression of any independent movement of the working class was exploited by the extreme right and communalist forces to divide the working class and intensify the

government attacks.

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Gaurab, another student from Jadavpur University, was enthusiastic about the socialist program of the Trotskyist movement. “I totally support the thought that a workers’ government should have the ultimate power so that the common people get the benefits,” he said.

Durpayan told ICFI campaigners that he was “in support of the Socialist Equality Party’s ideology and definitely with working-class struggles,” while another student, Soumayjit, added: “We need to raise the peoples’ consciousness.”

A student from Darjeeling said he agreed with workers taking democratic control of the major industries as part of the fight for socialism. “Even the tea plantation workers are being laid off. I support them taking over all the big tea estates, such as Duncans [one of India’s largest tea producers].”

An ex-member of the Student Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPM, said: “I’ve been with the SFI before and have seen how they collaborate with big shots and powerful people. The SFI follows the line dictated by the CPM and that is why I have left the SFI.”

Another student, Tanmoy, spoke about the rising danger of war. “The threat of world war by the ruling classes is dangerous for all of us. This can only be prevented by uniting the working class. Workers in India lack a collective leadership to voice their opinions.” ICFI campaigners explained how the ICFI and the WSWS were committed to providing that kind of leadership.

Ritojit responded to an ICFI campaigners’ explanation of Stalin’s repudiation of world socialist revolution and his embrace of “socialism in one country,” an anti-Marxist and nationalist program.

“The Stalinist deviation of the world Marxist movement was responsible for one disaster after another,” Ritojit said. “Workers movements must be unified in order to deal with the deviation caused by Stalinist parties which continue to betray workers’ interests.”

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