

Trotskyists campaign in Kolkata for 80th anniversary of the Fourth International meeting

Students and workers discuss India-Pakistan military tensions and the necessity for socialist internationalism

By our correspondents
8 March 2019

Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) have been campaigning amongst students and workers this week for this Sunday's public meeting in Kolkata, the West Bengal state capital.

The event will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Fourth International, which was established in 1938 by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution, to defend the perspective of international socialism against the betrayals of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Founded in 1953, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) continues that struggle, waging a principled fight against imperialism and all its political agencies.

The campaign for the Kolkata meeting is being conducted as military tensions between India and Pakistan intensify. Critical thinking workers, youth and intellectuals throughout the sub-continent, are deeply concerned about the danger of war between India and Pakistan, both nuclear armed powers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP-led government seized on a Kashmiri separatist suicide attack on February 14, which killed 40 Indian soldiers, to launch a war-mongering campaign against Pakistan, blaming Islamabad for the incident.

On February 26, India bombed targets deep inside Pakistan and the next day warplanes from both countries engaged in a dogfight. This was followed over the next days with cross-border shelling along the Line of Control, which separates parts of Kashmir ruled by two countries.

Modi's military response, and his provocative rhetoric, has been embraced by the opposition Congress party and the main Stalinist formations—the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM and the Communist Party of India or CPI.

Workers and youth speaking with Indian supporters of the ICFI over the past three weeks have voiced concerns about the war danger and growing media hysteria against Pakistan.

ICFI supporters distributed hundreds of WSWs articles about the historical origins of the India-Pakistan conflict and the need for workers and youth to study the history of the Fourth International and its life and death battle against Stalinism.

ICFI campaigners have explained that the source of the conflict lay in the 1947 partition of then British India into a Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu-dominated India. This reactionary communalist arrangement with the departing colonial rulers was imposed with the assistance of both sections of the national bourgeoisie—the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League—and the endorsement of the Soviet and Indian Stalinists.

Sunjay, a railway worker, said: “Modi is vigorously whipping up war tensions but he has proven incapable of doing anything good for working people during his five-year tenure. He wants to get elected prime minister again by using this war-mongering campaign. The government should be making more money available for the people's welfare, including health and education, rather than on military armaments.”

Hussain, another railway worker, said: “I'm opposed

to war and support your comments about it. I agree that war will only be stopped through the intervention of the working class and that a workers' government should be established.

Jana, also a railway worker, like many of his fellow workers, denounced the war hysteria. "Modi made many promises before coming to power but failed to implement any of them. Many youth joined the army because of a huge unemployment problem but they are the ones who are killed in the wars. We have to oppose the war."

Anith, a student from Presidency University, denounced the Modi government's aggressive stand against Pakistan: "I totally oppose this warmongering. The entire drama has been created by Modi government in order to divert everyone's attention from the social issues we face. I fully agree with your socialist anti-war campaign.

"Socialist internationalism is entirely appropriate in the era of global capitalism, he said and declared his solidarity with the ICFI's international campaign for the freedom of Julian Assange.

"No other movement in India that claims to be 'leftist' is taking up the defence of Assange," he said. "The quarter century of war waged by the US that has killed many innocent people may turn ultimately into a world war and a nuclear war."

Anith commented on the Stalinist CPM, which has ruled West Bengal state for over 34 years and referred to the political betrayals of the Maoist Naxalite guerrilla movement, which, he said split into many groups.

"CPM student movements dominated in many universities, presenting themselves as 'people fighters.' But after the genocide of farmers in Nandigram by the CPM-led Left Front government in 2007, they were exposed as anti-people," he said. Peasant farmers were killed and seriously injured when thousands of state police opened fire during protests against the West Bengal state government's appropriation of lands for big business.

Referring to Leon Trotsky, Anith said: "I've read about his struggle against Stalinism. Trotsky has been hidden by these people [the Stalinists] but I'll read more about him on your web site."

Kanaditya, a Jadavpur University student, spoke at length about the hysterical atmosphere being whipped up by the Modi government and the media. He denounced the growing war drive in the region.

"I totally agree with your socialist internationalist program and anti-war campaign," he said, and asked

about the ICFI's warnings that military conflict between India and Pakistan could spiral into a third world war.

ICFI supporters explained that India's transformation into a "frontline state" in the US military-strategic offensive against China and the close military alliance between Islamabad and Beijing meant any military conflict between two South Asian countries could quickly develop into a war involving the US and China.

Kanaditya said no other party in India had explained this danger and he enthusiastically thanked ICFI supporters for their explanation. "I'm really encouraged by your discussion and am so pleased to have finally found an international party that can answer all my questions."

The March 10 Kolkata meeting is a political significant event and will reference Stalinism's betrayal of the anti-colonial movement and its endorsement of the reactionary 1947 partition of India, thereby helping create the conditions for danger of nuclear war between India and Pakistan.

The Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India (BLPI), which was affiliated to the Fourth International, was the only proletarian organisation that opposed the partition and courageously fought for a socialist and internationalist perspective.

These and other key battles waged by the Fourth International are of vital significance for the struggle for socialist internationalism today. We urge workers, students, youth, intellectuals and WSWS readers to attend the meeting and participate in this crucial discussion.

Date and Time: March 10, at 5 p.m.

Venue: Indian Association,
62 B.B. Ganguly Street, Kolkata 700012
(Near Central Metro, Gate No.4)

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