

Sri Lanka: Campaign for International May Day wins warm response

Our correspondents

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The fight for the 2015 Online International May Day Rally has received support from students and workers at Colombo's University of Sri Jayawardenepura, which has about 12,000 students.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka are campaigning for the May 3 rally, sponsored by the *World Socialist Web Site*, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the IYSSE. As part of the campaign, the SEP and IYSSE will also hold a public meeting in Colombo on May 1.

Supporters distributed hundreds of Sinhala language copies of the May Day Rally announcement at the university, along with other Marxist literature. Several students and workers spoke to the SEP team, and expressed their support by holding placards against imperialist war.

I. H. Macar, a translator, said: "As I am very much concerned about the developing threat of another worldwide catastrophe, your campaign struck me immediately. Apart from your party, no any other political organisation or media speaks about the threat of imperialist war.

"I have known your party since my childhood. My father was a sympathiser of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL, predecessor of Sri Lankan SEP). I know the RCL fought for internationalism from its inception. I am convinced that [war] cannot be resolved on a national basis. War is an imperialist intervention."

Macar spoke about the January 8 election of Maithripala Sirisena as the country's president, ousting Mahinda Rajapakse, who had incurred Washington's wrath by developing close relations with China.

"I agree with you that the change of government in Sri Lanka was orchestrated by American imperialism.

Also, India, a country that once posed as anti-imperialist, now abets imperialism. People are fed up with mainstream political parties. An alternative is a burning need."

The translator referred to the backing of this regime-change operation by pseudo-left groups that then joined Sirisena's National Executive Council. "Even self-declared 'left' parties like the Nava Sama Samaja Party have fully lined up behind imperialism," he said. "The presence of N SSP leader Wickremabahu Karunaratne in the National Executive Council is an example."

Sanka, a student, commented: "Previously I thought the IUSF [a student organisation affiliated to pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party] genuinely represented students. Now I have understood that their sole intention is to put pressure on the rulers. They never even think of replacing the existing system. The media and these parties never talk about the threat of world war. This is the first time I have heard of such a danger.

"An online May Day rally is a new experience for me. I was not interested in May Day celebrations because every party does it, including the [capitalist] parties like the ruling United National Party and Sri Lanka Freedom Party. These May Day rallies do not represent the interests of workers and poor. But this is truly a new experience."

Subash, a management student, said: "All the political parties in this country are bankrupt. A few years ago, the university student leaders broke from the JVP [Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna] and said they would start a new party that would be really revolutionary. It did not take much time for their new Frontline Socialist Party to be exposed. They supported the installation of the Sirisena government. This government has now attacked demonstrating students, while not

implementing the promises it said it would fulfil in 100 days.

“The JVP and the Frontline Socialist Party lionised the Castro regime in Cuba. As you have pointed out, now the Cuban regime has embraced Obama. Where has their anti-imperialist talk gone?”

Subash added: “I am attracted by your campaign. You are the only political party that has raised the question of the imperialist drive to world war. As you point out, this is a worldwide question that has only a world answer. I appreciate your emphasis on the working class as the international force that can stop war.”

Subash bought a copy of the *Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)* and said he would register for the May Day Rally and attend the meeting on May 1.

H.U. Bandara, a mason, explained: “My home is in Bandarawela (in Sri Lanka’s central hills). All the ordinary people are being forced to think along new lines by the crisis of the political system. There is no doubt that members of the Rajapakse regime siphoned off huge amounts of money from the public works into their coffers. But I agree that Sirisena was placed in office through a US conspiracy to firmly line up our island in its imperialist camp.

“Your discussion about the threat of world war, and explanation that it can be stopped only by an international working class movement, triggered much thought in me. I am 50 years old. I will attend your May Day meeting and look forward to the Online May Day rally.”



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