

An assessment of the International May Day Online Rally

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The International May Day Online Rally, held on Sunday, May 4 and organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International, was a major international political event and a milestone that foreshadows the resurgence of socialism as a powerful force within the world working class.

By any objective appraisal, the rally was an impressive and substantial organizational, technological and, above all, political achievement. Even before the rally began, nearly 2,000 people had registered for the event. The audience that followed the rally online came from over 90 countries. There was significant participation in the rally from Canada, the United States (where listeners came from 48 out of 50 states), Latin America (especially Brazil), Britain and Western Europe, South Africa, India and Sri Lanka, and Australia and New Zealand.

The ICFI was gratified that there were listeners from both Russia and Ukraine. There were listeners who logged in from China, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines. A significant number of listeners signed in from the Middle East and Central Asia. The fact that many in the audience live in countries where the International Committee has had, up to this point, no politically active organization testifies to the global reach of the *World Socialist Web Site*, which was the principal medium through which the rally was advertised.

Ten speakers—representatives of the ICFI from the United States, Britain, Germany, Sri Lanka and Australia—addressed the rally. Their speeches covered a vast range of international political issues, including the crisis in Ukraine, the mounting danger of a third world war, the global economic crisis, the growth of extreme levels of social inequality and the assault on democratic rights.

All the speakers based their remarks on a Marxist analysis of the capitalist system and the vast political experience of the international Trotskyist movement. They spoke, unequivocally and without obfuscation, as partisans of the Fourth International. (The text and an audio recording of each of the speeches is being posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* this week.)

The speeches clearly resonated with the world-wide audience. Throughout the rally, which ran just under two-and-a-half hours, comments poured in from listeners—more than 700 in all. In the course of the day, the *World Socialist Web Site* was accessed by more than 50,000 individual readers, which is substantially higher than the WSWWS's readership on an average Sunday.

The International Committee of the Fourth International and its members and supporters all over the world recognize the success of this event. However, we are not wasting time patting ourselves on the back. As Marxists, we approach political developments—including those in which we play a direct role—*objectively*. That is, we seek to understand the essential reasons, beyond the immediate efforts of the movement's cadre, for the exceptional response to this rally. Even as the event was in progress, both the scale and response of the audience made it clear that the rally represented a qualitatively significant event in the leftward political reorientation of advanced sections of workers and youth.

The most decisive factor underlying this shift is the objective crisis of capitalism. The deterioration of social conditions for the working class has been a protracted process that spans several decades. The disaster of 2008 has intensified the disillusionment with capitalism, and the outrageous level of social inequality has provoked worldwide indignation. The endless

series of wars and the relentless growth of authoritarian tendencies have severely undermined the credibility of capitalist “democracy.” Moreover, the growing danger of an international nuclear conflagration, exemplified by the Ukraine crisis, has evoked deep anxiety among masses of people.

More than 20 years have passed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe. Since then, the catastrophic consequences of capitalist restoration for the masses throughout the former USSR and in Eastern Europe have shattered illusions in the “miracle of the market.” And in China, despite significant economic growth in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989, the working class is profoundly dissatisfied with the social consequences of that growth.

The *international* political disorientation produced by the betrayals and ignominious collapse of not only the Stalinist regimes, but of all the old opportunist labor and trade union organizations, is giving way to a new political mood within the working class and, especially, the youth. The development of a mood of social opposition to capitalism found expression in the response to the rally.

That being said, we are not seeking to exaggerate the scale of participation. There were not tens of thousands of listeners, let alone millions. But the participation was significant, and represents and anticipates, without question, a substantial shift in the political orientation and alignment of the working class.

Here we come to another critical and, from a political standpoint, decisive factor in the success of the rally. Objective processes play a mighty role in history. But this rally did not happen by itself. It was planned and organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International. A large portion of the audience consisted of people, from all over the world, whose political consciousness has been profoundly influenced by the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has in the course of 16 years worked relentlessly for the reforging of a genuine Marxian revolutionary political culture within the working class.

The WSWS itself emerged on the basis of the entire antecedent history of the struggle waged by the Fourth International, led by the International Committee, to defend the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution against the nationalist opportunism of Stalinism, social

democracy and the innumerable varieties of petty-bourgeois radicalism.

The long struggle to uphold these principles, spanning decades, is now intersecting with the process of mass political radicalization. The development of socialist revolution emerges out of the interaction of the objective movement of the working class, driven by the insoluble crisis of capitalism, and the politically conscious subjective intervention of the International Committee in the unfolding historical maelstrom.

At the conclusion of the rally, Comrade Joseph Kishore, the national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, said that Trotsky would have been proud of the rally. Yes, he certainly would have been. And he would also have proceeded to analyze and explain the new challenges that arise from this success.

The International Rally of May 4, 2014 is now part of history. The International Committee of the Fourth International will proceed to build politically upon this achievement by expanding the fight for socialism into new sections of the working class and youth throughout the world.



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