

International Online May Day Rally draws worldwide audience

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The 2015 International May Day Online Rally, sponsored by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) Sunday, was a highly successful and unique global event, bringing together workers and young people from more than 60 countries on six continents. Speakers outlined a socialist program to mobilize the international working class against the growing danger of world war.

The rally, organized through the *World Socialist Web Site*, the daily organ of the ICFI, was the second annual online rally, following the highly successful event held in 2014. More than 1,500 worldwide participated online at this year's rally, with many more listening in at physical gatherings in several countries. The turnout reflected the widespread opposition to the war drive of the major imperialist powers that has been coupled with a relentless assault on democratic rights and social counterrevolution at home.

The list of speakers included leaders of the ICFI from the United States, Britain, Germany, Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand. The speeches were simultaneously translated from English into German, Sinhala and Tamil.

During the meeting, participants posted hundreds of comments from all across the world. Online greetings were sent to the rally from points across the US, Canada, South America, Europe, the Asia-Pacific and Africa. These included greetings from supporters in Turkey, New Zealand, India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Australia, South Africa, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Norway and Venezuela.

Co-chairs of the online rally were Helen Halyard and Kristina Betinis, members of the national committee of the Socialist Equality Party (US).

David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and national chairman of the SEP (US) was the opening speaker.

North said that the purpose of the rally was to give voice to the opposition of the international working class to imperialist war, provide an analysis of the main causes of the militarist policies pursued by the imperialist powers and capitalist governments all over the world, and outline the program upon which a new revolutionary movement of the working class against war must be based.

“The past year,” North said, “has witnessed the relentless escalation of military violence, instigated by the United States and its major imperialist allies.” Regional interventions “are part of an emerging global battle plan” that threatens to unleash a conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

North linked the expanding military violence employed by US imperialism overseas to the internal crisis at home, which has seen the plundering of society by a wealthy financial elite that controls all the levers of political power.

“There are moments in history when the masses move forward and break through the barriers imposed upon them by their oppressors,” North said. “We are approaching such a historical moment.”

North stressed that only an international movement of the working class could put an end to the danger of war. He emphasized that only the ICFI based its struggle on the power of the international working class guided by a revolutionary socialist program.

Nick Beams, national committee member of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) and a member of the international editorial board of the WSWs, reviewed the disastrous state of the world economy. He warned that the policies pursued by the ruling elites in the wake of the 2008 financial crash were setting the stage for an even greater crisis. At the same time, the economic contradictions wracking the world financial system were driving imperialism toward the launching of a new world war.

“A new war for the division and redivision of the world is in the making, threatening the survival of civilization,” Beams declared. (The speech by Beams, and those of all the other speakers, will be posted on the WSWs in the coming days).

Wije Dias, general secretary of the SEP of Sri Lanka, explained that US imperialism was seeking to place that island nation firmly in its political orbit as part of its drive to encircle China. The US, he said, was working to destabilize the whole of South Asia without any regard for the consequences.

He stressed that the central issue facing the working class internationally was that of revolutionary program and perspective. The ICFI, he said, based its struggle on the Theory of Permanent Revolution as advanced by Leon Trotsky.

Peter Schwarz, the secretary of the ICFI, spoke about the

revival of militarism in Germany and across Europe. All the contradictions that led to two previous world wars that devastated the continent were reemerging, he warned. Far from leading to peace and prosperity on the continent, the European Union is the source of austerity and militarism, Schwarz said.

Schwarz reviewed the experience of the election of Syriza in Greece, which decisively exposed the pseudo-left organizations as an auxiliary of imperialism and the assault on the working class.

Ulrich Rippert, national secretary of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party), was the next speaker. He reported on developments in Germany, where a massive military buildup was being accompanied by revisions of history, with the crimes of the Nazis being relativized and glossed over.

Millions, he said, were watching the revival of militarism with shock and outrage. Historical truth, Rippert stressed, was a powerful force. Basing itself on the lessons of history, the ICFI is seeking to arm the opposition to militarism with a conscious program, he declared.

Chris Marsden, national secretary of the SEP (Britain) pointed to the massive growth of social inequality in that country, noting that the richest 117 people now control more wealth than the bottom 40 percent of the population. None of the problems facing working people, Marsden stressed, could be resolved without breaking the grip of the financial aristocracy dominating society.

Bill Van Auken, a member of the SEP (US) national committee and the WWSW International Editorial Board, spoke on the situation in Latin America. Noting the witch-hunt being conducted by the Obama administration against immigrants, he stressed that the SEP upholds the right of workers to live in the country they choose.

He pointed to the recent rapprochement between the Castroite regime in Cuba and the United States as a further confirmation of the bankruptcy of the perspective of those pseudo-left forces that claimed that Castroism provided a viable perspective for the Latin American working class.

Tom Peters, a leading member of the Social Equality Group in New Zealand, spoke on the “pivot to Asia” being carried out by the Obama administration in the US, which, he said, has transformed the region “into a cauldron of tensions and rivalries.” He noted the growth of militarism throughout the region, in particular Japan’s move to rearm and the effort of the Australian government to glorify the killing fields of World War I.

James Cogan, national secretary of the SEP (Australia) spoke on developments in the Asia Pacific. In particular, he pointed to the US war plans aimed at China, which, he warned, posed the possibility of a nuclear catastrophe. The Chinese working class, said Cogan, could not leave its fate in the hands of the Chinese Stalinist regime. Chinese workers had to establish their political independence from every section of the Chinese bourgeoisie,

forging an alliance with the working class throughout Asia and internationally.

Johannes Stern, a national committee member of the PSG in Germany, discussed the situation in the Middle East. The region, Stern said, more and more resembled the powder keg in the Balkans prior to WWI. “Entire countries lie in ruin, millions have been killed or turned into refugees.”

All the imperialist powers, he said, were involved in the struggle to plunder and dominate the region, which is rich in natural resources. Pseudo-left groups, he noted, had played a particularly despicable role, portraying imperialist military aggression as a struggle for human rights. The tragic developments in Egypt, Stern said, raised the critical question of revolutionary leadership to guide the struggles of the masses.

Julie Hyland, assistant national secretary of the SEP (Britain) addressed the horrific conditions facing immigrants to Europe. She said that the deaths of thousands of migrants on the Mediterranean were the direct responsibility of the European powers, which had adopted a policy of “let them drown.”

“Today,” Hyland said, “in the age of exploratory missions to Mars and of the Internet, where trillions of dollars are transferred around the globe at the stroke of a key, capitalism is again attempting to squeeze from its pores the victims of the social nightmare it has created.”

The final speaker, Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the SEP (US), said that the danger of world war must not be underestimated. America, he said, was engaged in a campaign of world conquest. “Every country it touches, with its bombs and drones, descends into chaos.”

However, Kishore noted, “As it wreaks havoc in country after country, the ruling class confronts its most potent and powerful foe within its own borders: the American working class.” As the recent developments in Baltimore show, Kishore said, class tensions are so great that it takes little to set off a social explosion.

The struggle against war, Kishore emphasized, requires the building of a conscious international movement. “This rally represents a powerful force for carrying out this task... A single worldwide movement based on a common political program: the program of revolutionary socialist internationalism.”

In conclusion, he called participants to take up the fight for socialism, study the program of the SEP and ICFI and make the decision to join and build the World Party of Socialist Revolution.



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