

The 2015 May Day Online Rally and the fight against imperialist war

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On May 3, the International Committee of the Fourth International held its second annual International May Day Online Rally. Against the backdrop of the relentless escalation of military violence all over the world, the rally provided a comprehensive global analysis of the causes of war and issued an urgent call for a renewed anti-imperialist and socialist movement of the international working class.

The rally found a significant response, bringing together approximately 1,600 workers and young people from throughout the world, including representatives from every state in the United States, Canada, Europe, India and Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand, and from countries throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Among the more than 400 comments posted online were greetings from Turkey, Thailand, South Africa, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Spain, France, Belgium, Norway and Venezuela.

Amidst endless war propaganda from all the major and lesser capitalist powers, participants in the rally represented the growing anger and opposition around the globe to imperialist violence and the unending assault on the social and democratic rights of the working class.

The speeches—delivered by twelve representatives of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) from the United States, Britain, Germany, New Zealand, Australia and Sri Lanka—covered an enormous range of international political and historical issues. At the very center of the myriad social and political issues confronting the working class, they insisted, was the growing danger of world war.

In his opening report, David North, chairman of the WSWs International Editorial Board, reviewed the explosive escalation of militarist violence spearheaded by the United States and the other major imperialist powers. In the nearly fifteen years since the beginning of the “war on terror,” which had “served as a pretext for the unleashing of US military power all over the world,” the US, he pointed out, had invaded Iraq and Afghanistan and conducted operations against Syria, Yemen, Libya and countless other countries.

Over the past year in particular, the “war on terror” had metastasized into an increasingly direct conflict with Russia and China—the former through the militarization of Eastern Europe following the 2014 coup in Ukraine, and the latter in the form of the US “pivot to Asia” and the network of military alliances it had forged in the Asia-Pacific. North warned that, imperialism, with

extraordinary recklessness, was preparing the ground for a conflict with nuclear-armed powers that would threaten the very future of human civilization.

Nick Beams, a leader of the Australian SEP and member of the WSWs International Editorial Board, connected the global war drive to the deepening world economic crisis. The nearly seven years since the 2008 financial collapse, he said, had seen a staggering rise of economic parasitism and social inequality, while the financial aristocracy sought to resolve the intractable contradictions of world capitalism through the mechanisms of war and police-state forms of rule.

Other speakers reviewed the impact of the global drive to war in particular regions of the world. Wije Dias, general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka, spoke from Colombo at the same time as US Secretary of State John Kerry was visiting the city as part of Washington’s efforts to secure the island nation as a strategic partner in the campaign to isolate and target China.

Uli Rippert, national secretary of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG), reviewed the attempts by the German ruling elite to whitewash the crimes of the Nazis in World War II as it removed all restraints on German imperialism today. Chris Marsden, national secretary of the SEP in Britain, examined the immense social and political crisis in Britain, and Bill Van Auken detailed the impact of the US-China conflict in Latin America.

Tom Peters, a member of the International Committee in New Zealand, reviewed the “seething cauldron of tensions and rivalries” in Asia that had followed the US “pivot.” He pointed out that, like Germany, Japan was also seeking to cast off all constraints on the use of military force.

Assistant National Secretary of the SEP in Britain Julie Hyland and Johannes Stern of the PSG spoke powerfully of the disaster inflicted by the US and European powers on the Middle East and North Africa. They reviewed how the sectarian conflicts stoked by the US throughout the region had produced a catastrophe, while the European ruling classes were encouraging extreme nationalist and fascist tendencies as part of the horrific attack on migrants fleeing imperialist crimes.

The speeches provided not only an objective analysis of the capitalist crisis and the imperialist war drive, but pointed the way forward for the working class. In his report, North insisted that it was not the reactionary nationalism of the Putin regime in Russia, the equally reactionary military expenditures of China, or the policies of any national capitalist government that could counter

imperialism, but only the international working class, organized and mobilized on a socialist and revolutionary program.

Peter Schwarz, in a report that examined the attacks on the social rights of the working class throughout Europe, summarized the experience of Syriza in Greece, the political representative of an international tendency of pseudo-left organizations that had integrated themselves into the framework of bourgeois rule. Just as Syriza was implementing the dictates of the European banks in Greece, he said, the organizations of the upper middle class were backing the imperialist operations in Libya, Syria and Ukraine. Even as the danger of world war had reached levels not seen since 1939 and 1914, it went entirely unopposed by what passed for the so-called left.

The rally was unique: based on a sober and objective appraisal of the gravity of the world situation, it made the case for the necessity of socialist revolution. Indeed, the speakers explained that the same crisis that produced world war was also driving the working class into revolutionary struggle.

SEP (US) National Secretary Joseph Kishore concluded the rally by noting that the center of world imperialism, the United States, was, at the same time, a seething cauldron of social discontent. The American working class, which he described as the “sleeping giant of world politics,” was beginning to awaken, revealed in the eruption of anger over the recent police killing in Baltimore, Maryland. The same class antagonisms existed in every country, Kishore said, creating the objective foundation for the overthrow of world capitalism.

The character of the rally—both the content of the speeches and the global participation—was rooted in the *internationalist* perspective of the International Committee, based on a Marxist perspective and the historical traditions of the Trotskyist movement. In explaining its significance, Leon Trotsky noted, in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution, that May Day sought “to prepare the ground for drawing [workers of all countries] together into a single international proletarian organization of revolutionary action having one world center and one world political orientation.” The ICFI and WSWs May Day Rally in 2015 gave concrete expression to this fundamental aim of the international socialist movement.

Every speaker at the rally emphasized the basic problem confronting the international working class: the problem of revolutionary leadership. To carry out the monumental tasks posed by history and put an end to the disaster created by the capitalist system, the working class must be infused with historical knowledge and armed with a revolutionary program. This requires a revival of the traditions of international socialism, embodied in and represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International. No other movement in the world even raises the danger posed by imperialism, let alone elaborates a political perspective to oppose it.

In closing his introductory comments, David North drew an analogy with the Zimmerwald Conference of September 1915. Thirty-eight people had gathered in the Swiss village a year after the outbreak of World War I to discuss a program to guide opposition to war. Of that group, the delegation led by Lenin consisted of just five. Objective events provided the foundation for

the transformation of what had been a small movement—but one guided by a correct political perspective oriented to the international working class—into the leadership of a mass revolutionary movement.

Explaining the lessons of that historical experience, North concluded:

There are moments in history when the masses move forward and break through the barriers imposed upon them by their oppressors. We are approaching such a historical moment. There are considerably more than 38 people—let alone five—who are participating in this online rally. All of you, dear comrades and friends from all over the world, who are listening today, must see yourselves and must act as delegates representing and fighting for the program of the International Committee of the Fourth International. We urge you to set to work tirelessly to raise the political consciousness of the working class and the youth. There is no place for either passivity or fatalism.

The objective contradictions of capitalism will provide a mighty impulse for the radicalization of the working class. But we must intervene in the developing struggles in order to impart to them a conscious revolutionary socialist orientation. The great task, and, indeed, the inescapable responsibility, confronting all those who understand the historical situation and agree with the perspective and program of international socialism, is to wage “War on War,” to join the Fourth International, and to help build it as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

The speeches delivered to the rally will be posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* over the next week. We urge all our readers to study them, consider the political issues that they raise and make the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party in your country or region and participate in the fight to build the ICFI.



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