

Third International May Day Online Rally evokes powerful response

Shannon Jones
2 May 2016

The WSWS will be publishing all the speeches to the International May Day Online Rally, beginning today with David North's introductory report.

The 2016 International May Day Online Rally held on Sunday attracted thousands of workers and young people, participating from more than 90 different countries. The rally was centered on the fight to build a global movement of workers, students and youth against imperialist war.

The rally was joined by many people listening at physical gatherings in a number of different cities, including Detroit, Michigan; Berlin, Germany and Colombo, Sri Lanka, where a May Day meeting held earlier in the day brought together 200 workers and youth.

This was the third international May Day rally organized by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International. It featured presentations from four continents by leading figures in the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. The speeches were simultaneously translated from English into German, Sinhala and Tamil.

There were more than 700 comments posted on the WSWS message board, including greetings sent from scores of countries, from South Korea and the Philippines, to the United Arab Emirates, Croatia, Turkey and Mexico. There were many participants from the United States, Germany, the UK and Sri Lanka.

David North, the chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board and the national chairman of the US Socialist Equality Party, opened the rally, welcoming all those attending. He began by noting that exactly 25 years ago, after the conclusion of the first Gulf War, the ICFI issued a May Day statement in which it warned: "The increasing recklessness and bellicosity of American imperialism represents, in the final analysis, an attempt to offset and reverse its economic decay through the use of military power—the one area in which the United States still exercises unquestioned domination."

Since that time, North said, the analysis of the ICFI had been vindicated. Powerful objective forces were driving the United States to ever more reckless adventures. Not only was it seeking to dominate Asia, but the entire Eurasian region landmass. It would be the gravest error, warned North, to think that the political leaders of the major imperialist powers would not risk the devastating consequences of a nuclear war to achieve their aims.

North said that the antiwar strategy of the working class could

not be based on the conventional calculations of bourgeois politics. "We proceed, instead, from an assessment of the balance of power between social classes. The fight against imperialist war depends upon the political mobilization of the working class. It is the responsibility of the socialist movement to educate and raise the political consciousness of the working class so that it can wage war on war. The program on which that fight is based must be anti-capitalist and socialist. War cannot be stopped without ending the economic system—capitalism—that generates military conflict."

Nationalism, in its most virulent and reactionary form, was reemerging all over the world, North warned. In response to this danger, he reiterated the need for the working class to base its strategy on Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution. "The purpose of today's rally is to issue a clear call for the development of a mass international movement of workers and youth against war," said North. "This urgent task is inseparably linked to the building of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution."

The next speaker was Wije Dias, the general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka). He reviewed recent developments in South Asia, noting that the region was a vital component in the global war plans of US imperialism. He pointed in particular to the role of India, where the ruling classes were offering their services to the US war drive.

James Cogan, the national secretary of the Australian SEP, spoke about the US "pivot" to Asia, which is inflaming tensions throughout the region. There was nothing, however, progressive about the response of the Chinese regime to US provocations, Cogan said. Its promotion of Chinese nationalism divided the working class, playing into the hands of the war instigators.

Cheryl Crisp, the assistant national secretary of the SEP (Australia), pointed to the whipping up of chauvinism and the militarist preparations of the Australian and Japanese ruling classes. "Racism and xenophobia can only be opposed through the fight for the international unity of the working class," said Crisp. "We must unite in a common struggle to overthrow capitalism—the source of war."

WSWS writer and SEP (US) National Committee member Bill Van Auken spoke about the growing revolutionary crisis in Central and South America. The United States, which has long regarded Latin America as its "backyard," is developing a new, more virulent form of the Monroe Doctrine to counter the influence of China, Van Auken said. In particular, he noted, it planned to

capitalize on the growing economic crisis in the region, which has undermined various “left” governments that had employed minimal social spending to contain the class struggle.

The bankruptcy of these regimes, said Van Auken, was a devastating exposure of all those pseudo-left tendencies that promoted bourgeois nationalism as an alternative to building a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

Ulrich Rippert, the national secretary of the German Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party), noted that May Day 2016 marked 100 years since German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht made his heroic antiwar speech at Berlin’s Potsdamer Platz in the midst of the carnage of World War I. Today, warned Rippert, all the contradictions that gave rise to that terrible slaughter are returning. In particular, he pointed to the dangerous reemergence of German militarism.

The next speaker, Peter Schwarz, the Secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International, spoke about the crisis in the European Union. While the EU and its predecessors had once been vehicles for providing a certain degree of political stability, the EU was now the driving force for national conflicts and mounting attacks on the working class. The only progressive basis for the solution to the crisis was the unification of the working class based on the program of the United Socialist States of Europe, Schwarz insisted.

The remarks of Julie Hyland, the assistant national secretary of the SEP (Britain), centered on the European refugee crisis and the terrible toll it is exacting. She noted that there were more refugees today than at any time in human history due to the criminal wars instigated by US imperialism and the European powers.

Chris Marsden, SEP (Britain) national secretary, spoke about the upcoming referendum on British participation in the EU. He explained the SEP’s call for an active boycott of the vote. “The greatest danger would be to allow the attempt by the pseudo-left groups to channel hostility to the EU in a nationalist direction to go unopposed. The Brexit campaign has underscored the criminal political role of all these groups and their hostility to the working class.” The campaign of the SEP, he said, was to provide working people with a socialist policy to oppose nationalism and chauvinism.

The presidential candidate of the SEP (US), Jerry White, spoke next. The SEP was contesting the election, he said, to provide a socialist program to oppose war and oppression. After a nomination process in which any significant discussion or debate on the issue of war was largely avoided, the Democrats and Republicans were on the brink of nominating two warmongers as their presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump

The growing radicalization of the American working class, reflected in an initial form in support for the “socialist” Bernie Sanders, will lead to an explosive growth of the class struggle, said White. “In the spirit of May Day, the Socialist Equality Party will use this election campaign to politically educate the working class, oppose all forms of national chauvinism and bigotry, and to build a powerful, international movement against war, social inequality and exploitation.”

In concluding the online rally, SEP (US) National Secretary Joe Kishore thanked all the speakers and those who participated

online. “The speeches delivered today provide a powerful picture of an extremely explosive world situation. Their combined impact makes clear the immense tasks we confront. We live in an era of perpetual war.”

He continued, “There are immense risks, but there are also enormous possibilities. The old order is breaking apart. The old political institutions are increasingly incapable of containing explosive social tensions. The same contradictions that produce imperialist war are also exacerbating class conflict and creating the objective conditions for social revolution.”

He appealed to all listeners to become actively involved in the fight for a socialist future for mankind. “Build a faction of the SEP in your factory or workplace. Study the program of the SEP and the International Committee of the Fourth International and make the decision to join and build the World Party of Socialist Revolution!”

The enthusiastic response to the rally was reflected in the comments of those participating. One listener wrote, “Thank you for this May Day forum. As a veteran of the US’s imperialistic first Persian Gulf War (Bush senior’s debacle) I am disgusted by war for oil. Many of the speakers today have mentioned that the same capitalistic powers that started the last two world wars will be the powers that start the Third World War. I would argue that they already have!”

Another wrote, “Incredible to listen how the ruling classes worldwide are spending billions and billions preparing more catastrophic wars and at the same time have nothing more to offer to their population than pure austerity and repression. It is pure lies that there is no more money for social programs, or refugees.”

Remarking on the experience, Sarah, a young disabled worker from Jackson, Michigan attending the May Day gathering at Wayne State University in Detroit said, “The War on Terror has been going on as long as I can remember. My children have had this going on their entire lives. Our funds are being used in the wrong way, how can you justify these things? Who is paying for this? The poor get poorer and the rich get richer. I think we all need to unite together, and this is a beginning.”



To contact the WWSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact