Large global turnout for online lecture, “Why Study the Russian Revolution?”

13 March 2017

A large audience of listeners from more than 60 countries participated in an online lecture delivered by WSWS International Editorial Board Chairperson David North, “Why Study the Russian Revolution?” on March 11. The lecture was the first in a series organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International to mark the centenary of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

The recording of his lecture is now available here, and the text is posted here.

Well over 1,000 people listened to the lecture while it was being broadcast live. An additional 1,700 viewed it in the 24 hours after it was posted on YouTube. In several areas, groups gathered to listen in and hold discussions on the event. During the lecture, participants contributed more than 200 comments and questions.

There was a substantial audience from the United States, Canada and Latin America; the UK, Germany and throughout Europe; India and Sri Lanka; and Australia and New Zealand. There were participants from Russia, Indonesia, Turkey, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Egypt and dozens of other countries.

Many listeners participated even though the lecture was being delivered late at night or in the early hours of the morning where they live.

“What a great presentation by Dave North,” commented a participant from Berlin, Germany. “I greet all of you fraternally and encourage each of you who are new here to join the ICFI. Let us prevent a third World War for the sake of all humanity!”

“As always, Comrade North, a wonderful presentation doing justice to Marxism and the sacrifices and struggles of the working class across the generations,” wrote a listener from San Francisco, California.

“Thank you for helping to crystallise the key issues in studying the 1917 revolution,” added a participant from Manchester, UK.

The next lecture in the series, “The Legacy of 1905 and the Strategy of the Russian Revolution,” will be delivered on March 25 at 5:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time by Fred Williams, an expert in Russian history and writer for the WSWS.

“The Russian Revolution was the most important, consequential and progressive political event of the twentieth century,” North said at the beginning of the lecture. “Despite the ultimately tragic fate of the Soviet Union—which was destroyed by the betrayals and crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy—no other event in the past century had such a far-reaching impact on the lives of hundreds of millions of people on every part of the planet.”

“The Russian Revolution, culminating in the conquest of political power by the Bolshevik Party in October 1917, marked a new stage in world history. The overthrow of the bourgeois Provisional Government proved that an alternative to capitalism was not a utopian dream, but rather, a real possibility that could be achieved through the conscious political struggle of the working class.”

North’s lecture answered the question contained in the headline and reviewed the course of the monumental events of 1917. The problems with which the Russian revolutionaries grappled, he said “not only persist, they are more acute than ever. One hundred years after the Russian Revolution of 1917, capitalism is spiraling toward disaster.”

Following the lecture, North addressed questions on the relationship between war and revolution in 1917 and today; the nature and role of the Soviets in Russia; the origins of Stalinism; the significance of the rise of Donald Trump and far-right movements throughout the

© World Socialist Web Site

world; and the crisis of global capitalism today.

"For all that has changed," North concluded the meeting, "the vast developments in technology, the vast changes in many forms of social life, the political language of our time is still the political language of 1917… For an understanding of the present world, and to develop a strategy for socialist revolution, there is no better foundation than the works of Marx and Engels, and of Lenin and Trotsky."

"The enormous response to the lecture is an expression of the immense interest in the Russian Revolution, its enduring significance and the political radicalization of workers and youth throughout the world," said SEP (US) National Secretary Joseph Kishore, who chaired the meeting. "We urge all readers of the WSWS to listen to and study the lecture and make plans to participate in the lectures to come."

Full information on the lectures and the series as is available at wsws.org/1917.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site