A political appraisal of the ICFI's 2017 International May Day Online Rally

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2 May 2017

The 2017 May Day Online Rally, held on Sunday, April 30, marks a significant development in the building of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

The rally, the fourth held by the International Committee since May Day 2014, attracted an audience from more than 50 countries. Of course, as an event broadcast across all the time zones, many listeners heard the speeches following the rally, after they were posted online. The audience that accessed the May Day rally on either Facebook or YouTube within the initial 24 hours numbered approximately 7,500.

More significant than the attendance was the political content of the rally, which featured 13 speakers from seven countries, speaking in four languages. Collectively, they presented a revolutionary Marxist perspective on the critical historical and contemporary political issues facing the international working class. The overriding issue was the struggle against imperialist war. Within that framework, the speakers analyzed the global economic crisis, the social and political situation in South Asia, Brexit and the fracturing of the European Union, the international refugee crisis, the political and social crisis of US capitalism, and the explosive conditions in Latin America.

For the first time since 1970, a public meeting of the International Committee was addressed by a section in France, the newly-formed *Partie de l'égalité socialist*. PES leader Alex Lantier explained the party's call for an active boycott of the presidential election between the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen of the National Front and the ex-banker and right-wing former member of the Socialist Party, Emmanuel Macron.

The rally also heard a speech from Sven Wurm, the spokesperson for the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at Humboldt University in Berlin. The IYSSE and the *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei* have fought against efforts, led by Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski, to rewrite German history to rehabilitate fascism. The German Trotskyists have been alone in explaining the significance of this historical revisionism. Their campaign has developed into a central political issue in Germany, with all the major bourgeois newspapers compelled to comment in anger over the influence of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the IYSSE.

A critical element of Lenin's political genius in the years preceding the Russian Revolution of 1917 found expression in his careful study of the development of political parties and tendencies, which he understood as a reflection of movements and shifts in broader class forces. Applying this approach to an examination of the political significance of the May Day rally, we must strive to understand the "success" of this event—the high theoretical and political level and the size of the audience—as an expression of an objective social process.

The past year has seen signs—though politically limited—of a radicalization among workers and youth. This includes support for Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and the protests against the Trump administration in the US; protests in France against reactionary labor "reforms" and the widespread rejection of the "choice" between Macron and Le Pen; the largest one-day strike in history against the right-wing agenda of Narendra Modi in India; and a significant growth of class conflict in China.

The most important factor in this radicalization is the objective crisis of world capitalism, which, nearly a decade after the financial collapse of 2008, is entering a new and more dangerous stage. A quarter-century of

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unending war, spearheaded by American imperialism, is developing into an ever more direct conflict involving large, nuclear-armed powers. Social inequality globally is at heights not seen since the beginning of the 20th century. Democratic forms of rule are being abolished, and the ruling class is calling forward extreme nationalist and fascistic movements to scapegoat immigrants and create the framework for the forcible repression of all opposition to the demands of the corporate and financial elite. In the United States, the Trump administration represents the rule of the oligarchy in an unvarnished form.

There remains, however, an enormous gap between the advanced state of the crisis of capitalism and the present level of consciousness in the working class. WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North addressed this problem in his speech:

> As capitalism hurtles toward the abyss, it is creating the conditions for the political radicalization of the working class—billions of human beings—in all parts of the world. It is true that social consciousness lags behind social being, but that does not mean that the working class is blind to the bankruptcy of the existing social system, which has nothing to offer the masses—least of all hope for a better future…
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> Yes, there is a crisis of political leadership in the working class. But it is a crisis that can be solved, because the working class is a revolutionary force that embodies the objectively existing potential for the socialist reconstruction of society.

Today, North explained, outside of the ICFI there is no political tendency that is seeking to build a socialist leadership in the working class. “There is not another organization in the world that can claim, with any degree of seriousness, that it either represents the interests of the working class or advances a revolutionary program,” he said.

It is a political fact that the ICFI rally was the only May Day meeting anywhere in the world that made a serious evaluation of the world capitalist crisis and advanced a perspective and strategy for world socialist revolution. The organizations of the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left—whether Pabloite, state capitalist, anarchist or one of the countless varieties of nationalist, ethnic, racial and gender politics—have absolutely nothing to offer the working class in terms of program and perspective. In a document published last week in *International Viewpoint*, the Pabloites—who fraudulently claim association with the Fourth International—acknowledged with remarkable frankness their own political bankruptcy, stating: “The key idea is that we cannot generalize a model for what the FI [Fourth International] has to do…”

The ICFI is the sole representative of revolutionary Marxism and Trotskyism. In the coming days, the WSWS will be publishing all the speeches given at the May Day rally. We urge our readers to make a careful study of the speeches, each of which represents the application of Marxist theory to the development of the political program of international socialist revolution.

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