Trotskyism is the Marxism of the 21st Century

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The International Committee of the Fourth International held its fifth annual May Day Online Rally on May 5. Coinciding with the 200th anniversary of the birth of the founder of the modern socialist movement, the rally emphasized the continuity between the life and ideas of Karl Marx and the building of the Fourth International, led by the International Committee, as the World Party of Socialist Revolution today.

The rally embodied the call sounded by Marx and Engels more than 150 years ago: ”Workers of the world, Unite!” It attracted a global audience from more than 50 countries. Fourteen speakers from six different countries and four different continents presented a revolutionary Marxist perspective on all the critical political issues facing the international working class.

In opening the rally, *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board Chairman David North delivered a report that reviewed the essential elements of the life and political thought of Karl Marx. He stressed three points:

1) That the philosophy of Marxism is materialism, which Marx applied to the study of man’s socioeconomic and political evolution. “Marx identified—amidst the seemingly uncoordinated actions of countless millions of human beings, each pursuing what they believed to be their own best interests, driven by their individual passions, ambitions and contradictory aspirations—those objective forces, operating apart from and even independently of individual subjective consciousness, that underlie and determine the economic structure of society.”

2) That the achievements of Marx in the realm of social and economic theory are inseparable from the fight by Marx and the Marxist movement to politically organize the working class in opposition to capitalism. “Much of the discussion of the ‘relevance’ of Marx,” North stated, “is dominated and distorted by this strict separation of the consideration of Marx’s economic critique of capitalism, from the recognition of the enduring significance of Marxism as the historical and contemporary international political movement of the most advanced sections of the working class for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system.”

3) That the Marxism of the 21st century is Trotskyism, embodied in the political program and practice of the Fourth International, founded in 1938, and continued in the struggle of the International Committee against Stalinism, Social Democracy and all forms of opportunism, centrism and pseudo-left politics. As North stated, “Marxism does not exist in the abstract, or as a set of conclusions formulated more than a century ago. Rather, it exists as the real movement that represents the continuity of the conscious struggle within the international working class to develop the program, perspective and practice of world socialist revolution.”

As a political event, the rally was the only celebration of May Day and Marx’s bicentenary that provided a comprehensive examination of the world political situation from the standpoint of the fight to organize the international working class in struggle against capitalist exploitation, imperialist militarism and war, authoritarianism, and for the establishment of a global socialist society.

The speakers reviewed the escalation of geopolitical conflicts that pose the danger of world war, including the offensive of American imperialism in the Middle East, Asia and against Russia. They spoke about the breakdown of democratic forms of rule throughout the world, including the rise of far-right nationalist movements and the authoritarian policies of the

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traditional capitalist parties.

The rally examined the state of the world capitalist system ten years after the financial collapse of 2008, which was followed by a historic transfer of wealth from the working class to the corporate and financial elite. The speakers exposed the class war being waged by the ruling parties against the working class, expressed in the escalating assault on wages, jobs and social programs throughout the world, and the brutal persecution of immigrants and refugees.

Above all, the speeches stressed the significance of the resurgence of class struggle throughout the world, from the expanding wave of teachers strikes in the US—which have developed in opposition to the corporatist and anti-working class trade unions—to a series of protests and strikes this year in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The growth of the class struggle has refuted the reactionary and anti-Marxist claims that the class struggle has been superseded by conflicts over race, gender and sexual orientation.

The ruling class is terrified of the growth of opposition in the working class, and the danger that this opposition will develop into a conscious political and revolutionary movement against capitalism. It is for this reason that capitalist states, in close coordination with giant Internet and social media companies like Google and Facebook, have taken far-reaching measures to censor the Internet and suppress free speech online.

All the speeches at the rally connected the fight to mobilize the working class against capitalism with the historical experiences of the Marxist movement spanning nearly 200 years. In the final speech, Bill Van Auken, the Latin America editor for the WSWS, reviewed the struggle of the Trotskyist movement against petty-bourgeois nationalism and revisionism, which was responsible for a series of terrible defeats in Latin America during the 20th century. These bitter experiences, Van Auken declared, "underscore the necessity of forging a new revolutionary Marxist movement based on the independent political mobilization of the working class…

"Such a movement," he concluded, "can be built only through the assimilation of the long history of the struggle of Trotskyism against revisionism and, on this principled foundation, establishing sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in every country."

In the founding document of the Fourth International, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, Leon Trotsky wrote, "Outside of these cadres there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name."

Trotsky's statement is even truer today than it was 80 years ago. There is no political tendency outside of the Fourth International, led by the International Committee, that represents the continuity of Marxism.

Against the backdrop of an escalation of the class struggle and the initial signs of a political radicalization of the international working class, the May Day rally was the conscious expression of a developing objective movement. The political perspective outlined at the rally must be brought into the practice of the working class. The essential task is the building of a revolutionary leadership, the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.

In the coming days, the WSWS will be posting the text and audio of all the speeches to the May Day rally. We urge our readers to study them and take an active part in the fight for socialism by joining and building the International Committee of the Fourth International, organized in sections of the Socialist Equality Party throughout the world, and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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