

The future lies in socialism

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On Saturday, May 4, the International Committee of the Fourth International held the 2019 International Online May Day Rally, the sixth annual online May Day Rally held by the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. The rally heard speeches on different aspects of the world crisis of capitalism and the struggles of the international working class from 12 leading members of the world party and its sections and sympathizing organizations around the world.

On successive days, the World Socialist Web Site is publishing the texts of the speeches delivered at the rally. Below is the speech delivered by Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (US). Last week, the WWSW published the opening report to the rally, given by David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the WWSW and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US).

This has been a very important and, as with the other May Day Online Rallies held by the International Committee of the Fourth International, a world event. We have had participants today from Australia, France, the United States, Britain, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Peru, the Netherlands, Turkey, Poland, Costa Rica, and many more. There is even one listener who wrote in to say that he was participating from 30,000 feet in the air, above the United States.

The reports that have been delivered today provide a powerful foundation for the construction of a mass socialist movement in the international working class.

The future lies in socialism. The ruling class is itself terrified of the social convulsions to come, of “some sort of revolution,” as hedge fund manager Raymond Dalio put it. The speeches today have reviewed the response of the ruling class in the effort to preserve its social system: the promotion of the far-right, the resurrection of fascism, the turn to authoritarian forms of rule, the attack on democratic rights—including the persecution and victimization of Julian Assange.

The speeches have also explained, however, that there exists a powerful social force that is charting a different way forward—the international working class. They have reviewed some of the most significant struggles, in France, Algeria, China, Germany, Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Israel, Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, India, New Zealand, Sudan, Mexico, and of course the United States.

There is growing interest in socialism. Not since the 1930s has there been such widespread revulsion among masses of people directed against the entire social and economic system.

These two processes are driven by powerful objective forces. At the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, long anticipated by the Trotskyist movement, the ideologists of capitalism proclaimed the end of history. Within the milieu of “left” and pseudo-left academia, which had been oriented to Stalinism, the transformation of the bureaucratic apparatus into a new oligarchy was seized as an occasion to abandon any commitment to the transformation of social relations,

let alone Marxism.

The common conception was that the collapse of the USSR signified the triumph of capitalism. The great problems that plagued mankind in the 20th century were supposedly behind us.

How false these theories have turned out to be!

Instead of a revival of democracy, we have a revival of fascism. Instead of an era of peace, we have had a quarter century of unending war. Instead of social and economic progress, we have had social and economic decay and crisis.

And of course, here in the United States we have Trump.

The Trump administration is not an “aberrant moment in time,” as former Vice President and newly-announced presidential candidate Joe Biden put it. In the Trump administration, to paraphrase Trotsky, “capitalist society is puking up its undigested barbarism.”

All the crimes of the American ruling class have burst into the open. More than one million people killed in the “war on terror;” torture, Guantanamo Bay, extraordinary rendition, assassination. In the economic realm, endless financial speculation, the growth of social inequality to unimaginable levels; a society in which three individuals have more wealth than the bottom half of the population, or 160 million people.

And what of the Democratic Party? They are another manifestation of the same disease. They have chosen to base their opposition to Trump on the most right-wing foundation possible. The reactionary narrative associated with Joseph McCarthy and the period of American anti-communism has been resurrected in the form of the Democratic Party-CIA anti-Russia campaign. “Our election was corrupted, our democracy assaulted, our sovereignty and security violated” by Russia. So declares Hillary Clinton.

The election was not corrupted according to Mrs. Clinton by corporate money. Democracy was not assaulted by the CIA, the FBI, the NSA. Her concern is not that fascists are in the military. No, it is all the dastardly Russians! A very self-serving narrative, to say the least.

The right-wing character of the opposition of this party of Wall Street and the CIA is summed up in its attitude toward Julian Assange.

The Democrats and their allies in the media have not only condoned the persecution of this courageous journalist, they have led the charge against WikiLeaks, which is blamed for leaking Democratic Party emails that exposed Clinton’s corrupt relations with Wall Street banks.

The seizure of Assange from the Ecuadorean embassy has been the occasion, not for condemnation in the media, but for ridicule. Can one really imagine that on the talk shows, the plight of Julian Assange, who has been subject to such outrageous treatment at the hands of the state, is the subject of jokes? It is not necessary to imagine; such is the reality of America today.

Everyone participating in this infamy places upon himself or herself

a black mark that can never be washed clean.

And Chelsea Manning, who languishes in prison for committing the unforgivable sin of refusing to testify against Assange, her plight is simply being ignored.

Underlying all of this is an immense fear, a fear of social opposition, a fear of the working class, a fear that the system upon which their wealth and privileges are founded is on its last legs. This explains the absurd theories of the Democrats and their CIA backers that the divisions within the United States are the product of the Russians, “sowing discord,” the inevitable phrase.

As if it was necessary to sow discord in a society more unequal than any in modern history! The objective conditions for social upheaval have not only been sown by capitalism, they have produced fruit that has ripened and begun to get somewhat rotten.

In a previous May Day, we referred to the American working class as the sleeping giant of world politics. Well, this giant is beginning to awaken, along with workers throughout the world. The number of workers participating in strike action in the US in 2018 was at a 32-year high, propelled largely by strikes by public school teachers that have continued into 2019.

Workers are beginning to break free from the stranglehold of the trade unions, which have worked for decades to suppress the class struggle, to enforce concessions. In the immortal words of a union lawyer before the Supreme Court last year, “union security is the tradeoff for no strikes”—not the security of the workers, but the financial security of the trade union executives that control these organizations and whose incomes place them in the top five, even top one percent of the population.

The corruption scandal that has engulfed the United Auto Workers union has only confirmed to auto workers and all sections of the working class that the union executives are on the payroll of management, tasked with providing the companies with a steady supply of cheap labor, while serving as a management police force.

In the most significant social struggles over the past year—including teachers in the US, the “yellow vest” protests in France, the Matamoros strike in Mexico, the struggles of tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka—a defining characteristic has been their emergence and development in opposition to the pro-capitalist, nationalist so-called “trade unions.” Here in the US, there has been growing support from workers for the fight by the SEP for the formation of a coalition of rank-and-file committees.

The objective impulse of the struggles of workers in the United States and around the world is toward a political general strike, requiring the formation of new organizations, rank-and-file factory and action committees, drawing together all sections of the working class in a fight for power and against the capitalist system.

The development of the class struggle is only in its initial stages. The most critical task, in the United States and internationally, is the construction of a revolutionary leadership. As David North stressed in opening this rally, the contradictions of capitalism are creating the conditions for the renewal of a mass movement of the working class. The political practice of our own movement is increasingly intersecting with the objective movement of the class struggle. The task of the Fourth International is not only to interpret the world, but, on the basis of this understanding, to change it.

This means an unrelenting fight in the working class for genuine socialist politics. Under conditions of growing social unrest, the ruling class brings forward safety valves, political mechanisms to channel opposition, contain it within acceptable parameters. Thus one has

Bernie Sanders, whose role is to cover up a warmongering party with a thin veneer of social reforms that it has no intention of implementing. The Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, in the US, and internationally, the Jeremy Corbyns, the pseudo-left Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Left Party in Germany, all play the same role.

Comrade Chris referred to the cowardly silence of Corbyn in the UK on the plight of Assange. This is repeated here in the US by Sanders, who tweeted the other day, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day—a monumental exercise in hypocrisy—that “journalists should never have to fear for their lives as they do their work.” He said nothing about Assange.

To the extent that they actually talk about socialism, they claim that it can be achieved without any challenge to the existing political institutions of the capitalist state, without any fundamental reorganization of economic life, without any challenge to imperialism.

The Socialist Equality Party insists that genuine socialism is based on the principle of social equality, that the vast sums of wealth monopolized by the rich through the exploitation and immiseration of the working class must be seized and directed toward the satisfaction of social needs.

Socialism is international, based on the principle that workers in every country have the same social interests and the same class enemies. We reject the poisonous nationalism being promoted by the ruling class to divide workers against each other and justify the monstrous persecution of immigrants and refugees.

Socialism is inseparable from the fight against imperialist war, which threatens to engulf the globe in a nuclear catastrophe. The socialist movement will intensify its campaign to defend and free Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and all those who have been victimized for opposing imperialist war and the policies of the capitalist elite.

Genuine socialism is based on the interests of the working class, the vast majority of the world’s population. The growth of the class struggle has exploded all the reactionary theories of the privileged representatives of the upper middle class, the purveyors of identity politics and the theories of post-modernism, that the working class is dead, that it is no longer a revolutionary force, that the central divisions in modern society are not class divisions, but divisions of race or gender.

And genuine socialism is revolutionary. We propose not mild reforms, which the ruling class will not tolerate, but revolution—the overthrow of capitalist property relations through the establishment of democratic control over the giant banks and corporations.

Since its founding more than eighty years ago by Leon Trotsky, the co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution, the Fourth International has fought for revolutionary socialist internationalism against Stalinism, Social Democracy and all perversions of Marxism. Trotskyism is the socialism of today, embodied in the International Committee of the Fourth International, comprised of Socialist Equality Parties throughout the world.

We call on all those participating in this rally today to join and build the ICFI.



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