SEP public meetings in Sydney and Melbourne

Seventy years since World War II: lessons and warnings

8 October 2009

Seventy years ago, on September 3, 1939, World War II erupted. It was not a war between "democracy" and fascism, but the product of the same fundamental contradictions of capitalism that exploded in World War I. Four years of carnage between 1914 and 1918 resolved none of the underlying national rivalries or economic dilemmas that were to produce the 1929 Wall Street crash, Great Depression and inter-imperialism antagonisms that led to a second global conflict just two decades later.

For six years, humanity witnessed unspeakable barbarism, including the destruction of entire cities and the mass killing of civilian populations, above all, the genocide of six million European Jews by the Nazis and the dropping of atomic bombs by US imperialism on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At least 70 million people lost their lives.

Following World War II, the apologists for the profit system maintained that the conditions that produced the conflict could never re-emerge. Over the past 12 months, however, as the global economy has plunged into the most severe downturn in 75 years, even defenders of capitalism have pointed to the dangers of World War III. American imperialism—the dominant power since 1945—is seeking to offset its economic decline by using military might to boost its geopolitical position. The Middle East, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent are among many potential flashpoints for a broader conflict between the US and its rivals.

The SEP/ISSE meetings in Sydney and Melbourne will discuss the crucial historical lessons of World War II. That terrible conflagration was not inevitable. It was above all the product of the treachery of Social Democracy and Stalinism, which repeatedly betrayed the working class and enabled capitalism to survive the revolutionary convulsions of the 1920s and 1930s.

Nick Beams, SEP National Secretary and a member of the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, will deliver the main report, followed by questions and discussion. We warmly invite WSWS readers and all those opposed to war and militarism to attend.

Sydney
Sunday, November 8, 2.00 p.m.
Australian Museum
The Theatrette
Cnr College and William Streets, Sydney
Nearest railway station: Museum
Nearest parking station: Secure Parking, 70 Riley Street East Sydney
Weekend flat rate $12.00. Alternate metered parking is available in nearby streets.
Click here *for further information, including a map of the parking station location.*

Melbourne
Sunday November 15, 2.00 p.m.
Room 2A & 2B, Level 1
Northcote Town Hall
189 High St, Northcote
All tickets $5.00 ($3 concession)

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