

David North lectures in US Midwest on lessons of 20th Century imperialism

Our reporters
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David North, Chairman of the SEP and the International Editorial Board of the WSWs, delivered three lectures in the Midwest on the history of imperialism in the 20th century and its lessons for the current political period.

The lectures were part of a series being held in the US and Canada, sponsored by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, titled "Imperialism and the World Wars of the Twentieth Century: Historical Lessons and Present Dangers." North's most recent book *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished 20th Century*, published this year by Mehring Books, examines the critical historical and theoretical issues that confronted the working class in the last century.

Lectures at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago and the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis were well attended by students and young workers. The lecture at Wayne State University in Detroit was widely attended by students, city workers, autoworkers, and retirees.

Prior to the lecture in Chicago, North was interviewed on WZRD the student radio station at NEIU. He discussed the importance, especially for students and workers, to undertake a serious study of history and take up the fight for socialism.

In the lectures, North addressed the origins and consequences of World War I and reviewed the contemporary war drive in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe in this historical context. He told the audiences that in order to understand present developments, the significance of the great events of the past century must be studied and understood.

He explained that one of the key lessons of the experiences of the 20th century was that the current drive to a third world war can only be stopped by a united struggle of the international working class

fighting to overthrow the capitalist system. He stressed that "in the fight against war and imperialism, the greatest challenge is education; an absence of historical knowledge leads to a lack of political knowledge."

A wide range of issues were discussed in the question-and-answer period including: how to fight the militarization of police in the United States; the development of socialist consciousness; the role of the pseudo-left in limiting the class struggle; the wars in the Middle East and America's military spending; why Russia and China are not imperialist; and the ongoing Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

John, who attended the lecture in Chicago, asked what socialism would look like and how workers would decide to govern society.

North pointed out the immense importance of developing the political consciousness of the international working class and explained how workers will democratically decide how workplaces, schools, and society at large will be run.

After the lecture ended, John told the WSWs: "I thought it was a very good lecture. It was good to see the connection between what happened 100 years ago with the outbreak of World War I and what is going on today. It gives a clear picture of the possibility of an impending global war."

Arthur, an autoworker who attended the Detroit lecture asked if America's wars were tied to its relative economic decline.

North explained that American capitalism has held a privileged position since World War II because the dollar has been used as the world currency and, despite its still dominant position, the dollar has been in decline over the last several decades and America has experienced industrial stagnation.

He noted that underlying the immense escalation of

militarism is the conception that American military power can offset its relative economic weakness and will compel potential competitors to respect the sovereignty of the dollar.

David North will be speaking in New Orleans on Monday, October 20 at 5pm at the Zeitgeist Theater, and in Tampa, Florida on Tuesday, October 21 at 7:30pm at the University of South Florida. Go to FightAgainstWar.org for information on lecture dates and locations in November.



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