

David North lecture tour

## Nearly 100 attend meeting in New York City on the 80th anniversary of the Fourth International

Our reporters  
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David North continued his international speaking tour on the history of the Fourth International with a meeting on November 8 in New York City attended by nearly 100 people. The audience included students and faculty from New York University, where the meeting was held, along with students from high schools and other colleges in New York and New Jersey and workers from various industries, including construction.

North is the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States.

The meeting follows highly successful meetings in Michigan, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology near Boston, and in Sri Lanka. North spoke this Monday in Chicago and will speak today in Portland, Oregon; Wednesday in Berkeley, California; and Thursday in San Diego. Next month, North will speak in Australia and New Zealand.

The meeting in New York, “Eighty Years of the Fourth International (1938-2018): The class struggle, revolution, and socialism in the 21st century,” emphasized the necessity for a scientific understanding of history, particularly in light of recent political developments, including the anti-Semitic massacre that took place only weeks prior to the meeting.

North began by noting, in addition to the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International, the significance of two centenaries this week: the German Revolution and the end of World War I. These events, of world-historic significance, could only be

understood in their historical context. Yet what dominates in the academy, he explained, including at NYU, is an intellectual climate hostile to an objective, scientific approach to history.

North stressed the SEP’s historical approach: “Our party ... places great weight on historical anniversaries. We do so not because we are by nature nostalgic, but rather because it is through history that we can orient and understand the place of our movement in the contemporary political situation.”

He continued: “The task of the Marxist movement is to fight to bring the consciousness of the working class into alignment with its objective being. A complex and difficult struggle, to be sure, but one which is objectively possible, because it is based on real, objective relations that exist.”

North noted that Leon Trotsky, when he founded the Fourth International amid major defeats of the working class, always stressed its objectively revolutionary role, including in the United States, where the working class engaged in massive strikes throughout the 1930s, an upsurge of the class struggle which he followed closely. This revolutionary perspective animates the struggle of the Fourth International today.

The report was followed by a lively question-and-answer session, and many attendees stayed afterwards for discussion with members of the SEP and its youth group, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality. Attendees also donated generously to the party’s work and purchased Marxist literature from the book table.

Attendees spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* after

the meeting. Victoria, a student at Bloomfield College in Bloomfield, New Jersey, spoke to the WSWs about the lecture, which she said “definitely broadened my mind on the foundation and history of the Socialist Equality Party.”

When asked what attracts her to the history of the Trotskyist movement, she said: “I’d say the revolutionary side of it. The strikes such as the one in 1934, the Minneapolis General Strike, which helped revitalize industrial unionism. I feel it’s important for one’s voice to be heard, but unfortunately it’s not something we see in most unions today.”

Renwaldo, a college student in Queens, said, “One thing I found very interesting about the lecture was the comment about ‘anti-essentialist’ ideology, and the danger of basing our understanding of history on a subjective viewpoint.

“We are taught when we are young to associate socialism immediately with fascism. It is scary to think that this kind of teaching isn’t an accident.”

Gandhi, a freshman at NYU, told the WSWs: “I definitely think we need history, because if you don’t know why things are the way they are, you won’t know how to combat it. ... Those who fail to know history are doomed to repeat it, you know that quote.

“With the pseudo-left, a lot of people don’t know what actual socialism is, they think Russia was socialist, and if they don’t know that history then they won’t know what the USSR actually was and then they will look toward capitalism.”

Asked why he thinks it is important to study the history of Trotskyism, Gandhi said: “The understanding that I need to know that history because I can’t call myself a socialist, I can’t understand the problems from this perspective without knowing that history. That’s why I want to learn more, because if I don’t then I can’t properly analyze the problems that are present now, that affect me. Otherwise, I’ll just be seeing it from the perspective that is handed down as we grow up in a capitalistic society—reformism. It’s popular among Democrats—not getting rid of capitalism, just reforming it, which isn’t the solution.”



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