

# IYSSE concludes US part of international anti-war meeting series

Clara Weiss  
3 May 2023

Last week, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) concluded the US component of its international meeting series, “The War in Ukraine and How to Stop it.” Over the course of almost two months, the IYSSE organized meetings at 12 campuses in 10 different states, including Wayne State University; the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; New York University; the University of Texas, Dallas; the University of Illinois, Chicago; Appalachian State University; and the University of California, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

The series culminated with a meeting at San Diego State University in California on April 25, featuring a lecture by David North, the chairperson of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, on the historical and political origins of the war, which drew an audience of over 120 students.

Internationally, the series is continuing in Germany and the United Kingdom, after previous meetings in seven countries on five continents, including the Americas (from Brazil to the US and Canada), Australia, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and the UK.

The meeting series has been unique both in its international character and its political content. In the US, the IYSSE held meetings at many campuses that are deeply integrated into the US state and war machine, such as NYU, UC Berkeley and the University of Michigan, where generals as well as Biden administration and Ukrainian state officials have been paraded on campus in pro-war meetings throughout the past year.

In the build-up to the meetings, members and supporters of the IYSSE handed out thousands of leaflets, conducted hundreds of discussions and published pieces in student newspapers, including at NYU.

In addition to David North, the lectures were given by four other speakers, including Joseph Kishore, the national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (US); Andre Damon, a lead WSWS writer on the war in Ukraine and SEP (US) Political Committee member; Tom Carter, a WSWS writer and SEP (US) National Committee member; and Bryan Dyne, a WSWS writer with a specialty in science. In each lecture, the IYSSE presented a Marxist analysis of the historical origins of the war and the necessary political basis for workers and young people to oppose it.

The reports given at the meetings refuted the lie of the “unprovoked war.” They stressed five fundamental points necessary to understand the conflict:

- The war can only be understood in relation to the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991 and its consequences.
- The war must be understood as a continuation of three decades of unending and expanding war spearheaded by the United States.
- The Russian invasion was the reactionary response of the Russian oligarchy to decades of imperialist encirclement.
- The war is connected to the escalating geopolitical conflict with China, which is viewed by American imperialism as a dangerous threat to its dominant world position.
- The war cannot be understood apart from the deepening economic,

social and political crisis of the major capitalist powers, above all the United States.

As in Canada, New Zealand and Australia, far-right Ukrainian nationalist forces sought to disrupt multiple IYSSE meetings in the US. At New York University, these forces joined hands with representatives of the faculty of NYU Abu Dhabi and the Sotsial’nyi Rukh (Socialist Movement) in Ukraine, a pro-NATO pseudo-left force that the WSWS has exposed for its close ties to Washington and the CIA. But the campaign of these elements failed.

Representatives of the IYSSE member organization in Russia and Ukraine, the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists (YGBL), provided a powerful refutation of the fraudulent claims by these forces that the IYSSE was an “apologist” for the Putin regime and that the war in Ukraine was about the defense of “democracy.”

Stepan Geller, speaking on behalf of the YGBL in Ukraine, addressed the NYU meeting stating:

Is it true that all the people of Ukraine support this war? My answer is: No! The claim that all Ukrainians support this war is a lie. The main prop for this war is not the proletariat and the Ukrainian population, whose situation is appalling. The main prop of this war are the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists and those they serve.

Geller exposed the role of pseudo-left tendencies like Sotsial’nyi rukh, which had been working for many years “with the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists, with those who call themselves supporters and ideological followers of the fascist gangs of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, who have unleashed terror against the people and national and political genocide on the territory of western Ukraine.”

In his greetings from Russia, Andrei Ritsky carefully explained that the opposition of the YGBL to the Putin regime was rooted in the entire history of the struggle of the Trotskyist movement against the Stalinist, nationalist betrayal of the October revolution of 1917, out of which the Russian as well as the Ukrainian oligarchy ultimately emerged.

In concluding his report at NYU, Joseph Kishore observed:

The absence of any serious discussion on college campuses such as NYU of the real origins and consequences of the war reflects the incorporation of layers of the upper-middle class into the state. Their social and economic position is connected to Wall Street, which means, on the one hand, the continued domination of US imperialism internationally, and, on the other, the brutal exploitation of the working class at home.

But the pro-war fanatics are weak and isolated, and they know it. There is developing throughout the world a movement of the working class, the most powerful social force on the planet. Armed with a socialist program and perspective, it is the working class that can and will put an end to imperialist war, inequality and all the consequences of the capitalist system. The political work of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its student and youth section, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, is focused on the building of a socialist and revolutionary leadership in the working class. It is on this that the future of humanity depends.

The meeting on April 25 at San Diego State University, at which over 120 students came to hear David North, marked the culmination of the series in the US and high point so far of the international meeting series. In his remarks, North explained both the historical origins of the war and the Marxist opposition to the policy of “national defense,” whether from the NATO-backed Zelensky government or the oligarchic Putin regime, both of which emerged out of the Stalinist destruction of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism.

During the discussion period with students, North stressed:

We don’t accept the concept of national defense. Every country is divided into classes. ... Every bourgeoisie is defending its economic interests, which it presents as the defense of the nation, even though the workers themselves have no interest in defending the access of American multinational corporations and transnational corporations to lithium in Russia, or copper, rare earths. What does it benefit from all of this?

The concept of national defense is a reactionary concept, because the basic problem, the most fundamental contradiction in the world today, is the contradiction between the objective development of a globalized economy and the archaic nation-state system. The imperialists try to break out of that contradiction by conquering ever more territories. And yes, and then using propaganda, the ideology of national defense to justify whatever they’re doing.

Drawing a parallel to the situation during the First World War, North stressed that the same contradictions that drive the ruling class toward war also drive the working class toward social revolution. It is this objective process to which young people must orient. He stated:

No matter how isolated the revolutionary forces appeared to be, they were articulating policies and interests which would eventually find mass support. And they were confirmed in February 1917, when out of the crisis generated by the war, the chain of imperialism broke at its weakest link. The masses came into action in Russia and set into motion a process of revolutionary struggle that was to change the world, and even the United States.

Students and workers who attended the meetings expressed appreciation above all for the historical and political explanations given, as well as for the fact that the IYSSE was the only force fighting to build an anti-war movement.

A computer science student who attended the meeting at NYU later told the IYSSE, “I was interested to come to the meeting to learn the reasons why there is a war with Russia. It is new information for people to have,

the reasons of war.”

Ricky, who attended the IYSSE meeting at the University of California, Los Angeles, where Joseph Kishore spoke, said after the meeting, “I had never attended anything of the sort. This meeting at UCLA not only reaffirmed my belief but also showed me that there are people actively working for a better tomorrow.”

Christo, another attendee of the UCLA meeting, said, “It was heartening, the presentation was very clarifying about the class interests giving rise to the war in Ukraine. And it was even more heartening to meet many attendees, to see that more and more students and workers are realizing there is no other solution to war and the devastating crisis of capitalism but for the working class to independently take power.”

Michael, a young worker and student at a community college, traveled almost two hours to attend the IYSSE anti-war meeting at Appalachian State University addressed by Andre Damon. He said, “I liked that there were people here who had opposition [to the views of the IYSSE] and it wasn’t shut down, it was explained. I think that youth and class conscious older people can understand that war is bad no matter what, so it’s nice to actually hear an anti-war movement on campus again.”

The meeting series was held with rigorous anti-COVID measures in place. On posters advertising each meeting, the IYSSE recommended the wearing of N-95 masks, which were then also provided for free at the meeting venues to each attendee. The IYSSE also made use of Far-UVC devices and HEPA filters to ensure the maximum safety of all attendees, and explained the measures to the audience, the majority of whom readily chose to wear masks. The scientifically based anti-COVID measures taken by the IYSSE especially at San Diego State University generated an enthusiastic response among workers, youth and scientists throughout the world.

The positive response to the anti-COVID measures implemented by the IYSSE in this meeting series underscores both the possibility to end the COVID-19 pandemic and the intractable connection between the fight against the pandemic and the fight against war, both of which can only be conducted as a fight against the capitalist system.

Coming on the heels of the IYSSE’s international online rally held on December 10, the international meeting series marks an important political development in the fight by the IYSSE to develop a global anti-war movement that is rooted in the international working class and the historical perspectives of Trotskyism. The perspective outlined at the meetings was further elaborated upon at last Sunday’s International May Day Online Rally, which the IYSSE co-hosted.

In the coming weeks and months, the IYSSE will intensify its efforts to build a global movement against imperialist war and to educate young people in the history and politics of Trotskyism. We urge all those who attended and followed our meetings to fill out the form below to join the IYSSE.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**