

In Sydney, Australia, David North and Evan Blake launch two critical books on Trotsky and the pandemic

Our reporters
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At an event in Sydney, Australia on Thursday evening, *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board Chairman David North launched his new book *Leon Trotsky and the Struggle for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century*. He was joined by Evan Blake, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, who presented another new title from Mehring Books, *COVID, Capitalism, and Class War: A Social and Political Chronology of the Pandemic*.

Chairing the event, Socialist Equality Party (Australia) National Secretary Cheryl Crisp noted the unique character of the meeting. Amid an unprecedented crisis of the global capitalist system, it was addressing decisive issues of revolutionary perspective and strategy.

All of the in-person attendees were wearing N95 masks, while the SEP used every available COVID-19 precaution, including Far-UVC lamps and HEPA filters. The enthusiastic take-up of masking demonstrated that ordinary people could and would fight for an end to the pandemic when armed with the means to do so.

A capacity audience attended in-person at the Sydney location. More than 70 others took part via a livestream from all the largest cities in Australia, as well as New Zealand. In addition to members and supporters of the SEP, several prominent Australian Zero-COVID advocates attended.

North began by noting that the documents in his book had been written over the course of 40 years. The first piece in the volume, a series of essays on *Leon Trotsky and the development of Marxism*, was written in 1982. The last, a letter to young Trotskyists in Russia and the

former Soviet Union, was published just months ago.

Despite the span of time, North stated: “What is striking looking back on the works in this volume is the interconnectedness. While the analysis has developed, the underlying theme of all the essays, lectures and even a letter that appear in this volume is that in the perspective of history, Leon Trotsky emerges as the decisive figure in the socialism of the 20th century and in the socialist movement of the 21st century.”

North emphasised the importance of Trotsky’s work to the present day. The speaker said: “What one is struck by, more than anything else, is the staggeringly contemporary character of his work. The political problems which we deal with are so profoundly connected to Trotsky’s analysis. ... If Trotsky were to walk into this room, he could rapidly orient himself.”

North noted that terms associated with Trotsky’s work, such as “the death agony of capitalism, world socialist revolution, the globalisation of the class struggle, the bankruptcy of the bourgeois nation-state, are eminently applicable to our own time.” Trotsky’s analysis was intensely relevant to the growing danger of a world war, expressed most sharply in the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and American imperialism’s aggressive confrontation with China in the Indo-Pacific.

North said that genuine Marxism was “concerned with coming to grips with the fact that unless there is a socialist revolution, the world is doomed. And the only force which could carry through this revolution is the working class. That is the central truth which must be assimilated by everyone who considers himself or herself a Marxist. ... It is in the work of Trotsky that the powerful methodology of Marxism is applied to

provide an answer to the great political problems of our time. This is what this book is concerned with.”

Blake, presenting *COVID, Capitalism, and Class War*, explained that the analysis it contained was a practical application of the methodology that North had elaborated. The documents in the book were a chronicle of the response of the International Committee of the Fourth International to the pandemic, the “greatest public health crisis in history.”

Blake refuted the assertions that the COVID crisis was over. Every day, millions continue to be infected, thousands die and thousands more become afflicted with Long-COVID.

The compilation in the book, Blake emphasised, exposed the claims of capitalist governments that this mass death and illness was inevitable. The statements from the WSWS and the ICFI contained in the volume, beginning in January, 2020, had elaborated a scientifically-grounded program of public health that could have rapidly ended the pandemic. These policies were rejected by governments because of their impact on corporate profits.

Blake explained that the Trotskyist movement was alone in exposing the criminality of the official response, including through the Global Workers’ Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic that he chairs. It was also the only political tendency continuing to fight for the elimination of the virus in the interests of the working class and humanity as a whole.

A question and answer session followed the presentations, moderated by Crisp and Tom Peters, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand. Attendees asked North and Blake to elaborate on the genesis of his latest work, the relationship between the pandemic and corporate financial interests, and the purpose and role of the Global Inquest.



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