David North addresses book launches in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia

Our reporters
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David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the United States, spoke at book launches in Sydney and Melbourne over the past week. The events were part of a visit by North, who has played a leading role in the world Trotskyist movement for more than 50 years, to the SEP in Australia.

The meetings, last Saturday in Sydney and the previous Wednesday in Melbourne, were well attended, testifying to a growing interest in a socialist and revolutionary perspective.

The two books that were launched, *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gaza Genocide* and *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War*, provide an outline of the global crisis of capitalism, its origins and a genuine socialist alternative.

In his opening remarks at the Sydney book launch, North placed the analysis in the books and today's situation in a broader historical context.

It was impossible, he stated, to understand the horrors of the Israeli genocide in Gaza without an examination of the tragedies of the 20th century, including the Nazi Holocaust of European Jewry, facilitated by the betrayals of Stalinism, which had helped the reactionary Zionist movement acquire a mass base of support. Similarly, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine was rooted in developments stemming from Stalinism's final betrayal, its 1991 liquidation of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism.

North called attention to recent attacks on Trotskyism, citing a work by British academic John Kelly, who denounces its insistence that the alternatives confronting humanity are "socialism or barbarism." Instead, Kelly asserts the ongoing viability of social reforms within the framework of capitalism.

North outlined the bankruptcy of these claims, advanced by political opponents of a socialist and revolutionary perspective. The agenda of the ruling elite, represented in the US by the fascist Donald Trump, was "the elimination of all that remains of social reform, the repudiation of the Constitution, mass deportations in the United States, unlimited powers to a president… So who can seriously claim that the Trotskyist depiction of this epoch as the death agony of capitalism is inaccurate?"

North emphasised that this program, which was not unique to the ruling elite in the US, but was being implemented by capitalist governments everywhere, would produce growing opposition.

"We are living today in very serious times," he said, noting the immense dangers posed. However, the globalisation of production, the growth of the working class and technological advances had created unprecedented conditions for the unification of working-class struggle on a global scale. The critical issue, he stressed, was the crisis of revolutionary leadership, which had to be overcome by the building of the ICFI and its sections, including the SEP in Australia.

Following North's opening remarks, a panel discussion began with him answering questions about his books from SEP (Australia) Secretary Cheryl Crisp and Assistant National Secretary Max Boddy.

Boddy asked why the ICFI had initiated its annual online international May Day rallies in 2014, the opening reports of which are contained in *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War*.

In reply, North pointed not only to the technical possibilities of the internet, but the ICFI's identification of a growth of imperialist militarism following the 2008 global financial crisis. The Trotskyist movement had identified parallels between

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that period and the one preceding the outbreak of World War One.

Boddy asked North to respond to the claims, advanced particularly in academia and at the universities, that Marx's analysis was no longer relevant in an era of "diverse identities."

North stressed Marx's enduring relevance, including his identification of the "objective basis of socialist revolution," which continued to be vindicated in developments today. North reviewed the manner in which Marxism had formed the basis of the greatest revolution in history to date, the October 1917 socialist revolution in Russia.

Crisp noted that one of the speeches in *The Logic of Zionism* addressed the self-immolation of Aaron Bushnell, who had taken his life in public protest against the genocide. Crisp asked North to comment on his polemic against those who had glorified Bushnell's tragic suicide as a viable form of political action.

North drew a parallel with the 1938 murder of a Nazi official in Paris by Herschel Grynszpan, a Jewish teenager. Trotsky had been alone in defending Grynszpan. But he had explained, as the IC had decades later in the case of Bushnell, that such individual actions did nothing to raise the political consciousness and understanding of the working class, the only means of effecting a revolutionary transformation of society.

In Melbourne, North fielded a range of questions from the audience, including how and why Trump had won the presidential election, how the fight for social equality could be advanced, and about the situation within Israel itself.

In his concluding remarks at both events, North urged those in attendance, hostile to the deepening capitalist barbarism, to become active participants in the fight for socialism, by joining the SEP.

Seventy-five copies of the two books that North launched were sold, and attendees were able to speak to the author, who signed his works at both events. Overall, more than $2,300 in literature was purchased.

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