

Workers and youth speak on Trotsky's life and death

By our correspondents
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WSWS correspondents interviewed some of those who attended the meetings last week in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne on “How and Why the GPU Murdered Trotsky.” Members of the audience were asked about why they had come to the meetings and what they thought were the most significant aspects of the reports delivered on Trotsky's life, his assassination and the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation, conducted by the International Committee of the Fourth International, into the circumstances surrounding Trotsky's murder.

In Sydney, **Christina**, who is studying social work at the University of Sydney, explained: “I saw someone putting up flyers at the last state election and that was my first awareness of the Socialist Equality Party and that there was an alternative to Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative.

“I started receiving some of your emails, so I was able to compare one email against the other. On the Anzac Day centenary commemoration, your party's take was very radical, but to me rang a bell of truth. None of the other parties were going anywhere near explaining the truth of Gallipoli; that it was a disaster. I felt this was a truthful party. They want to expose the truth for what it is—they aren't scared. These other guys only say half the truth and they are more in allegiance with the whole system as it is today and they concentrate on little issues.”

Christina said she agreed with the SEP banner “No war!” She added: “It's scary to think that the counterforce against the party, as shown in its history, is so strong that it's going to be a real mammoth effort for the party to get up on its feet and grow as a force. I don't know how it's going to come about, but I want to be a part of it!”

Christina said understanding the history of the Trotskyist movement was critical for the working class. “It's a history that not many people know about. People don't know much about Trotsky, even that he was assassinated. There is basic historical information we don't have ... For me to start studying Marxism, Leon Trotsky and everything they stood for gives me hope that there is an alternative to this terrible capitalist system, which is a death knell to everyone.

“Too many people have been turned off Marxism, and told that it's dangerous. The more people know the truth of what communism is, the more the movement will grow. None of it is taught in schools or university degrees—there is no degree that exposes you to Leon Trotsky.

“All I am learning from my social work degree is the disaster that neo-liberalism has brought to people's lives, but it doesn't take it any further and say what are the solutions. They say, ‘let's do counseling or take a pill to deal with depression because you've lost your job.’ They don't talk about how the whole system is defunct.”

Bruce, a Sydney factory worker, said he came to the meeting to find out about the history of Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism. “I want to learn the history so that I can help share what I learn with other people, to hopefully make other people more consciously aware of what is happening and join the fight to make a change.

“From what I can take out from today, the Stalinists organised to kill

someone to stop a political movement that benefits the majority of the worldwide population. I came here today to figure that out.”

Asked what struck him most about the meeting, Bruce said: “I wrote down the things that I really picked up on. First, what really stuck out for me was how it was so long after Trotsky was exiled from Russia that Stalin was still fearful of the influence that Trotsky had over the possible revolutionary potential of the working class people, even though he was so far away.

“Second, were the efforts that were put in to infiltrate and try to influence and tarnish the reputation of the Fourth International. That sort of blew my mind a little bit. To see how far the agents tried to corrupt and destroy it after Trotsky's death. They were trying to put a death nail into his coffin, to try to finish off the Fourth International once and for all.

“Third, how Security and the Fourth International managed to succeed in cleaning the party and returning it back on track to its original reason—which was why Trotsky set it up in 1938. Security and the Fourth International only came 37 years after the setting up of the Fourth International. This party managed to turn it back to its founding purpose.”

Bruce said the lengths to which the Stalinists, assisted by the intelligence agencies of the capitalist powers, went to assassinate Trotsky and attempt to destroy the Fourth International showed how far they recognised the danger of revolutionary leadership.

“It tells us that these people have a lot to lose. In their eyes, by stopping something like this from happening, they manage to keep their benefits and luxuries and lifestyles. If our movement continues to gather momentum, then the only option they have is to try to blindside people with pseudo-left options to try to manipulate the people to believe that they'll get a fairer deal by going down another path.

“It's either kill the Trotskyist movement off or manipulate people so that they don't fall into our perspective of thinking.”

Dara, originally from Iraq, said: “I've always followed politics closely and was involved in workers' parties back home. I thought it would be interesting to see what happened to Trotsky and what people think about his theories at present.

“I hadn't known much about how Trotsky was murdered and the fact that his enemies thought it was important that he was murdered. I hadn't known that the FBI and the GPU considered he was their biggest enemy. I didn't know about how they followed him and the amount of time they spent in order to kill just one person...”

“Trotsky's murder is still relevant now in 2015 because I believe that capitalism is a failed system. The problems we had 70, 80 years ago are now coming back. We are now facing terrible wars and killings, even worse than then, so I think Trotsky's ideas are answers for today's questions.”

Jennifer, a retired dental nurse from the New South Wales Central Coast, north of Sydney, explained that she had seen two men campaigning at a shopping centre. “I've always had socialist leanings but I don't know enough about any of it, so I decided to talk to them. They interested me in

what they had to say and asked me to come to a meeting. I decided to come and I'm glad I came.

"I knew Trotsky had been assassinated in Mexico and I knew a lot about the Russian Revolution—well not much really because I didn't know much about the Trotsky and Stalin situation... I learned today that Trotsky was the main instigator with Lenin in setting up the revolution. I'm still not sure how Stalin got involved and took over. I want to come to another meeting and do some reading to understand that... I did associate Stalin with socialism, but I don't now. The talk in the shopping centre gave me food for thought. That's why I am here."

Jennifer said Trotsky's life and his assassination showed how far people and parties with opposed agendas would go to stop revolutionary socialist ideas gaining a following. "Of course the relevance of history is important. If we didn't have history we'd have nothing to go back to say 'this worked' or 'this didn't work'."

Aaron, a young factory worker from Penrith in western Sydney, said: "The web site [WSWS] is catching my curiosity. The world needs a bit of order; it is chaotic at the moment. This movement has potential. After listening to the speakers I understand more about this movement. I see that Trotsky's was a pivotal role. He was one of the leaders of the movement."

"I think he was killed out of fear of what he was potentially capable of, more than anything else. Trotsky fought for the working class to be better off, instead of being oppressed."

"If I hadn't met this movement I wouldn't have known about any of this history. It is important to know the truth. Young people need to know about this to aim for a better future."

"There is a relevance to today and the way things are working out. Such as the way terrorism is handled, like with the Paris terrorist attacks. The French government's response was just to increase the air strikes and this is going to create more attacks. They used the terrorist attacks to initiate plans that they already had to attack Syria."

In Brisbane, **Eric**, a pipeline company worker, said the meeting was "well structured" and "passed on information, which is really important." He added: "I was impressed by the intensity of the meeting. Everyone was enthralled by it. It wasn't just lagging off. It was very eye-opening."

Eric said he came to the meeting "because of what's happening in the world now... We need someone to stop today's leaders, like Obama, going to war again. We shouldn't be in this situation."

What impressed him the most about the material presented at the meeting was the "deceit" involved by both Stalin's regime and the American government in the assassination of Trotsky and the subsequent cover-up of the operation. "Stalin was afraid that the truth would come out," Eric said. "Trotsky was exiled but he began to get more support than Stalin, who then did a deal with Hitler. As the French ambassador, Coulondre, told Hitler, they all knew that Trotsky would win greater support out of the world war."

Commenting on why both the Stalinists and the US government went to such lengths to kill Trotsky and try to destroy the Fourth International, Eric said: "The working class needs a direction. That's why the FBI had 1,600 agents inside the Trotskyist movement in America. They wanted to know what was happening at every level. J. Edgar Hoover was personally following this infiltration, and I've heard bad things about Hoover."

Gabriel, an unemployed worker from a Romanian family, said he came to the meeting because, "I wanted to learn an alternative side to the official story. Because of my European background, I wanted to dig deeper into the history... We need to discover the truth. The assassination of Trotsky is one of those things."

"I couldn't put the puzzle together until tonight. You have presented the documents and the links with some of the agents, which was very, very good. I really enjoyed listening to that."

Gabriel said Stalin's regime and the US government had a common

interest in silencing Trotsky. "They were worried about a better world. Their plan was to live under a system of full control and domination over people, where people didn't have a choice or a say."

"Stalin used to just shoot people who didn't agree with him. And the United States is always manufacturing terrorism of some kind, and sending in its agents. The CIA is a very powerful organisation."

Gabriel had a message for WSWS readers. "This was a very good meeting for striving for knowledge. If you want to find the truth, come along and have a listen, and give these guys a chance."

In Melbourne, high school student **Angelina** said: "I came to the meeting because I was interested in the historical facts on Leon Trotsky, and I wanted to learn more about him. I thought I would learn more from the meeting because there would be experts giving reports."

"Before the meeting I knew Trotsky was killed in Mexico, and that it was by the GPU, but I didn't know that this was the second attempt on his life. I didn't know anything about the spies on the inside, the ones within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and that Stalin had gone as far as putting GPU spies within the party, and that some had intimate relationships with people in the party to gain their trust."

"Also, 'Etienne' (Mark Zbrowski) knew Leon Sedov well, but still betrayed him. He murdered a lot of his friends and colleagues. Then he was well-off afterward... There should be more investigations into this."

"It was interesting that 10 percent of the SWP members were government agents. They went to such an extent to protect the capitalists in America. They knew that revolution could have happened if they hadn't infiltrated the SWP... They knew what a powerful figure Trotsky was and what an impact he had on the world. The FBI worked with the GPU..."

"I thought the stuff on the court case—the Gelfand Case—and how this related to Trotsky's assassination was very interesting... [SWP national secretary] Jack Barnes denied the agents in the court case. It's incredible how involved the government, the GPU and Stalin were in Trotsky's death."

Angelina added: "The stuff on the pseudo-left, that was the part I was most interested in. About Syriza and how it's pseudo-left. How they exploit Trotsky and his good name to push the working class to vote for them, even though they're the same as the right-wing people. They're not as open as right-wing politicians, like they may support gay rights for instance, but they also support wars."

"I'm interested in pseudo-leftism, and how they exploit Marxism, even though they're not Marxists at all. All of my friends believe in the pseudo-left. They think the Greens are left... Without education on what socialism is, it's hard for working class people and even middle class people to get the proper education on what socialism is and what it stands for."

"With the growing wars, I think socialism is more possible, but there are also many right-wing and neo-Nazi elements coming out in this generation, like Donald Trump, along with pseudo-lefts. I think it's harder for socialists today. It's possible for revolution to happen, but education is crucial in keeping Trotsky's ideas alive. Without education, the working class will fall victim to the right-wing propaganda of capitalism."

"War can be prevented by the working class rising against the pushers of war, but only through revolution. You can't appeal to the government. I think there is already massive opposition to war. There will have to be revolutionary acts taken."

Trajan, a retired factory worker, said: "I came because I saw a poster in the Preston market, and I was very interested because I was reading books about Leon Trotsky and Stalinism. I had read he was expelled from the Soviet Union and chased by the GPU, and murdered in Mexico. This was the biggest tragedy for the Fourth International. I have never had the opportunity to know your party or join your party, but now I know it after

this meeting.

“I was born in Yugoslavia and there was plenty of state propaganda against Trotsky, and some of the Trotskyists were put in the jail. Anyone who was not a Stalinist was jailed. I know Stalin was the biggest criminal of all. He killed many people...

“I am always reading books about socialist revolution, I am always interested in revolution. This process toward revolution is unstoppable because America is trying to suppress everyone. The more they suppress the people in other countries, the more the people will rise up. What America is doing in Syria and the Middle East is a very big problem.

“I have worked as a fork lift driver at Visy [paper and cardboard manufacturer] and many, many places. I always stood up for the working class. My wife says ‘be quiet,’ but I say we have rights and we must speak out. I have always seen myself as a Marxist.”

Luna, a University of Melbourne student, said: “I only knew a little bit about Trotsky before I came to the meeting. I had read a couple of articles, and my sister had studied history of revolutions at school.

“The standout thing from the meeting was that before the meeting I didn’t understand the differences between Marxism, Stalinism and Trotskyism. I was very aware about the criticism of communism—that communism is really bad and had inherently failed. But now I know that Stalinism is really nationalism, and that communism, Trotskyism, is internationalism.

“I had heard about Trotsky’s assassination and there always seem to be an air of mystery about his assassination. I had always wondered—if, as they said, he had no power then why did they put so much effort into killing him? For me that was never a resolved question. The meeting clarified that for me, because Trotsky clearly had such potential to influence the situation, even in Russia, though he wasn’t there, and really the world situation.

“When your party began investigating the assassination of Trotsky I can’t understand why the other parties opposed this investigation. I don’t understand why anyone would want to stop the investigation, other than they had some motivation to hide something...

“For me it was very clear that your party is very serious about history, that history is very important and that you can learn a lot from it. I thought the meeting was very objective and interesting. Now I want to go back and read more.”

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