

Leipzig Book Fair: David North to present his book *Leon Trotsky and the Struggle for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century*

Mehring Verlag
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Mehring Verlag, the publishing house of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) in Germany, will be presenting its new titles at the upcoming Leipzig Book Fair. The highlight will be the book launch of *Leon Trotsky and the Struggle for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century* by David North.

North has been active as a revolutionary journalist, historian and political leader in the international Trotskyist movement for more than half a century. He is chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the US.

North is the author of many important Marxist writings and books, including *The Heritage We Defend: A Contribution to the History of the Fourth International*; *The Crisis of American Democracy*; *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*; *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century*; *The Frankfurt School, Postmodernism and the Politics of the Pseudo-Left* and *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990–2016*.

In May, Mehring Verlag will publish North's latest book *The Logic of Zionism: From nationalist myth to the Gaza genocide*. The work is highly topical and can be pre-ordered at the Mehring Verlag stall at the Leipzig book fair. It contains several lectures dealing with the historical background and causes of the Gaza genocide by the Israeli regime and military.

The ideological and political foundations of Zionism, which emerged at the end of the 19th century in opposition to the socialist labour movement, are examined. The virulent nationalism of Zionist ideology was the basis on which the expulsion of the Palestinians began in 1948 and the state of Israel was created.

The book *Leon Trotsky and the Struggle for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century*, which North is presenting on Saturday, comprises texts that he has written over the last 40 years. The foreword states:

Despite the many years that separate the first and last document, they are connected by a central argument: that Leon Trotsky was the most significant figure in the history of socialism during the first four decades of the twentieth century, and that his legacy remains the critical and indispensable theoretical and political foundation of the ongoing contemporary struggle for the victory of world socialism.

Trotsky is a historical figure whose active influence upon

contemporary events has extended far beyond his lifetime, argues North. "His writings are studied not only for the insight they provide into the events of the first four decades of the last century, but also as analyses essential for understanding and intervening in present-day events." And further: "The present world situation bears more than just a disturbing resemblance to that described so acutely by Trotsky eighty-five years ago."

As in 1914 and 1939, the imperialist countries are once again launching a world war, which began in Ukraine with NATO's war against Russia, is continuing in the Middle East with the genocide against the Palestinians and provocations against Iran and is leading to a war against China. German Defence Minister Pistorius demands that Germany must once again become "fit for war," meaning the subordination of all human and material reserves to the pro-war course. It means social cutbacks, an increase in the levels of exploitation, compulsory labour service for the unemployed and the obliteration of young people as cannon fodder.

Trotsky fought against imperialist violence and mass slaughter during the First World War. Only the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, which he led alongside Vladimir Lenin, put an end to the carnage.

In his writings of the 1920s and 1930s, Trotsky warned that humanity was heading for a new world war if capitalism were not overthrown. After the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933, thanks to the policies of Stalin and the German Communist Party (KPD), he intensified these warnings.

The lessons of that time, which Trotsky drew out like no other, are of paramount significance in the current situation. Anyone horrified by the escalation of the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza must ask him or herself how these bloody wars can be stopped.

Trotsky insisted this was only possible through the mobilisation of the working class against capitalism. A correct policy against war consisted of two elements, he wrote in 1938, in the founding programme of the Fourth International: "Irreconcilability towards imperialism and its wars, and the ability to draw on the experience of the masses themselves." Appeals to governments, futile hopes for a "multipolar" world and the like will not bring about any change today either.

Last year, the Fourth International, which Trotsky founded following the betrayal of Stalinism, celebrated its centenary. In 1923, the Left Opposition emerged under Trotsky's leadership to oppose the degeneration of the first workers' state in Russia.

To mark the occasion, Mehring Verlag published three works by

Leon Trotsky in German, which are among his most important works: *Whither France?*, *Portrait of National Socialism (Porträt des Nationalsozialismus)* and *History of the Russian Revolution* (in two volumes).

Whither France?, published for the first time by Mehring Verlag, contains Trotsky's articles from 1934 to 1938 on convulsive political developments in France. "These were decisive years for the fate of France and Europe," explains Peter Schwarz in the foreword. "Under the pressure of the Great Depression, which led to mass unemployment, widespread poverty and fierce class struggles worldwide, bourgeois democracy collapsed." The preface continues:

Leon Trotsky's writings reproduced here are the key to understanding the events of that time and the lessons learnt from them, which are of burning relevance today—in the face of escalating wars, fierce class struggles and the resurgence of fascist parties. Trotsky did not write as a passive observer, but as a revolutionary Marxist. He fought against the Stalinists' popular front policy, which paralysed and politically disarmed the working class, and provided perspectives with which the working class could break through this paralysis and conquer political power.

Together with his French comrades, Trotsky developed political initiatives and an "Action Programme for France" to break the stranglehold of the bureaucratic apparatus. The latter is published as an appendix, as is Trotsky's "Letter to the French Workers" of June 10, 1935, at which time he was expelled from the country by the French government and forced to find asylum in Norway.

The texts have been thoroughly revised and checked against the French and Russian editions. The volume is supplemented by a chronology, a list of organisations and publications, a list of persons and an index.

Trotsky's work *Portrait of National Socialism*, published in a second edition, now contains additional articles on the national and world economy, centrism and the participation of the German Communist Party in the Nazi referendum to overthrow the Social Democratic government of Prussia in 1931.

In the foreword to this new edition, chairman of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei Christoph Vandreier writes:

The Nazi seizure of power on 30 January 1933 marked a terrible turning point in the history of the 20th century and led to the worst crimes in human history: the Nazi terror, the extermination of six million Jews, organised down to the last detail, and the barbaric war of extermination against Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

Leon Trotsky's writings on Germany offer an unrivalled understanding of the events and dynamics that led to this catastrophe. The famous anti-war activist and writer Kurt Tucholsky expressed his admiration that Trotsky, in his exile on Prinkipo, 2,000 kilometres from Berlin, had a clearer view of events in Germany than any of his contemporaries.

Renowned German journalist and satirist Kurt Tucholsky described

Portrait of National Socialism as "splendid" and a "masterpiece" that contained "everything, absolutely everything."

The third work by Trotsky from the current Mehring publishing programme is the *History of the Russian Revolution*. First published in 1930, it is one of the most important and brilliant historical works of the 20th century.

Mehring is publishing the work in Alexandra Ramm's very good translation, which was approved by Trotsky. Obvious errors have been corrected, pictures and maps have been added and a detailed list of individuals has been compiled.

David North, in his book mentioned above, *The Logic of Zionism: From nationalist myth to the Gaza genocide*, poses the question: "What will it take to put an end to all this?" And he answers:

Not individual acts of revenge, not personal acts of self-sacrifice, but a turn to the working class, the only social force that has the capacity to bring capitalism to its knees and thus destroy the foundations of militarism, because of its objective role in the capitalist production process, its position in relation to the productive forces, its potential economic power and its global character.

North continues:

So turn your anger and indignation into effective political action, into a determination to master Marxist theory, to appropriate the lessons of history and to familiarise yourselves with the great revolutionary struggles of the last century.

This begins with studying the books published by Mehring Verlag. You can visit the Mehring Verlag stand (Hall 5, Stand F111) at the Leipzig Book Fair, March 21-24.

David North will present his new book *Leon Trotsky and the Struggle for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century* on Saturday, March 23 from 12:00 to 12:30 pm in the Non-Fiction Forum in Hall 5 (A100).



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