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Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War, by David North

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Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War *is available from Mehring Books in paperback and EPUB formats.*

Mehring Books is proud to announce the publication of *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War*, by WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North. The book includes the speeches delivered at the International Committee of the Fourth International's Online May Day celebrations from 2014 to 2024. The speeches are an extraordinary and timely year-by-year analysis of the relentless escalation of imperialist militarism and the growing danger of a nuclear third world war.

The volume is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the historical and political background to the escalating US-NATO war against Russia and the ongoing genocide in Gaza, which is now developing into a regional war throughout the Middle East. Other issues examined in the May Day speeches are the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of fascism, and the growth of the international class struggle.

Below is the foreword to *Sounding the Alarm,* written by King's College historian Thomas Mackaman:

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In 2014, one hundred years after the events of 1914 that led to World War I, the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) convened its first International May Day Online Rally. In an essay motivating the rally, David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the WSWS and chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, warned:

> Those who believe that war with China and Russia is an impossibility—that the major imperialist powers would not risk war with nuclear powers—are deluding themselves. The history of the twentieth century, with its two devastating world wars and its innumerable and very bloody localized conflicts, has provided sufficient evidence of the risks the imperialist ruling classes are prepared to take. Indeed, they are prepared to risk the fate of all humanity and the planet itself. One hundred years after the outbreak of World War I and seventy-five years after the start of World War II, the struggle against the danger of a third imperialist cataclysm confronts the international working class. ("No to imperialist war! Reclaim the revolutionary traditions of May Day!" April 12, 2014)

Since 2014 the ICFI has held annual online celebrations. Their purpose has been to connect the historic tradition of international working-class solidarity with the contemporary struggle against capitalist-imperialist militarism and the escalating danger of a thermonuclear third world war.

This volume consists principally of the speeches with which David North has opened the May Day rallies of the past ten years. Also included are essays related to the May Day events written by North. This compilation merits careful study for those who would wish to understand the causes of imperialist war and how to fight it. The central theme of North's speeches is that the struggle against militarism and war is and must be revolutionary, i.e., that only through the overthrow of capitalism by the working class in a world socialist revolution can the drive toward catastrophe be stopped. There is no other way.

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In what goes for “analysis” in the corporate media and the political establishment, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the Israeli genocide in Gaza are legitimate responses to unprovoked aggression. In the officially sanctioned narrative, the war in Ukraine began suddenly on February 24, 2022, when Russian President Vladimir Putin decided, apparently on a whim, to invade Ukraine. The Israeli assault on Gaza began on October 7 with the unprovoked “terrorist” incursion of Hamas fighters into Israel. There is no pre-history.

The speeches in this volume explode these false narratives, as they trace contemporaneously the malignant growth of imperialist militarism. They are testament to the power of the Marxist method, which places the logic of developments in their broader context, identifies the class interests involved, and on that basis elaborates a perspective of struggle.

Another example of Marxist foresight is the response of the ICFI to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. North warned in his May Day speech of 2020 that the disease had provided a “trigger event in world history,” accelerating the overall crisis of capitalism. And North specifically stated that not only US President Donald Trump, but the ruling class as a whole—in the US, Europe, and everywhere—would abandon public health measures to contain the virus because such efforts interfered with the accumulation of surplus value, the sole source of capitalist profit.

North also warned in his May Day speeches that the extreme accumulation of wealth in the US and other countries was incompatible with democratic forms of rule, and that inevitably the ruling classes would turn toward authoritarianism, including fascism.

It was once a common rhetorical device for the liberal and pseudo-left opponents of Trotskyism to accuse the ICFI of “catastrophism.” Talk of fascism and the destruction of democracy was dismissed as overheated rhetoric. From the obvious irrationality of nuclear war, they deduced that the ruling classes would not go to war with Russia or China. And, they reasoned, following Trump, the Biden administration would “follow the science” and adopt common-sense public health measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, if for no other reason than to maintain the stability of “the system.”

The prognoses of the ICFI were right in every case. Fascism is now a force in ruling class politics in a long list of countries since 2014. To name a few: the Philippines, Brazil, Argentina, France, Italy, Germany, Ukraine and, of course, the United States, where, by the time of his May Day lecture in 2021, North was able to refer back to the attempted fascist coup that had taken place only four months earlier. Regarding COVID-19, soon after taking office in 2021, Biden, who had capitalized on popular anger toward Trump’s “let it rip” policy, began to scrap every effort to combat the virus, including even counting the sick and the dead.

As for the threat of world war, only those who are willfully blind can fail to see that it is already underway in the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. The Biden administration’s funding and encouragement of Israel’s genocide in Gaza is inexplicable outside of an understanding that this historic crime is, to the American ruling class, only one theater in a larger war, with Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran the proximate targets once the “Palestinian problem” is resolved. As Washington feeds the fires of war in Ukraine and the Middle East, preparations are far advanced for war with China.

This volume provides a powerful example of Marxism as the science and politics of revolutionary action, which requires careful study by every fighter for socialism. These speeches are a record of the development of the revolutionary and socialist perspective of the working class.

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