

David North's *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War* introduced at Leipzig Book Fair: "Humanity is confronting the danger of a descent into the abyss"

David North
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On Saturday, at the Leipzig Book Fair in Germany, David North, chairman of the World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US), introduced the newly released German translation of his book Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War. The volume brings together a decade of speeches delivered by North at the International Committee of the Fourth International's annual Online May Day celebrations, from 2014 to 2024, charting the escalating crisis of world capitalism and the drive to global war.

Due to an accident on the train line between Berlin and Leipzig, North and Johannes Stern were unable to attend in person. The remarks below by North, as well as the introduction from Stern, were read aloud.

The German edition, Ein Warnruf: Sozialismus gegen Krieg, can be ordered [here](#). The English edition can be ordered [here](#).

I am very pleased to once again attend the *Leipzig Buch Messe* and present the German-language edition of my most recent book, *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War*. I would like to thank Johannes for his very kind remarks. His praise has been so effusive that Johannes has lifted from my shoulders the burden of praising my own work.

Johannes has placed emphasis on what he has called the prophetic character of the speeches that I delivered at the annual May Day meetings held by the Trotskyist movement, of which I am a member, between 2014 and 2024.

This is high praise, but I am obligated to distance myself from the mystical aura evoked by the reference to

my work's "prophetic character." I am not a prophet and do not possess a crystal ball. I am, rather, a Marxist, who has the advantage of working with a scientific method of historically informed political analysis.

I attempt, when writing, to situate events in a broader historical context, to examine them as moments in a complex process of historical development, to pay less attention, and even no attention at all, to the justifications given by governments and politicians for their policies and actions, to focus instead on the objective economic processes operating on a global scale, to examine the class interests served by governments, and estimate, as carefully and realistically as possible, the implications of the escalating conflicts between national states in a globally-integrated capitalist system, and, finally, to assess the impact of the world crisis on the working class and the potential for the eruption of revolutionary class struggle, leading to the overthrow of capitalism and the reconstruction of the world on a socialist foundation.

This approach to events, as I believe my book demonstrates, has made possible highly accurate political appraisals and even predictions. In any case, the Marxist method that I have sought to utilize has proven to be a far more reliable tool of navigation and prognostication than the combination of short-sighted impressionism, ahistorical pragmatism and self-deluding faith in the eternal character of capitalism that characterizes the work of Establishment journalists and academics.

It is all too obvious that the bourgeois politicians and the soothsayers of the media have foreseen very little. In the period between 1989 and 1991, they proclaimed that the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe marked the beginning of a new

epoch of peace and democracy. Under the hegemony of the humanitarians of American imperialism, capitalism would show the world what it could accomplish.

Nothing turned out as was expected. The last 35 years have been scarred by endless wars which have cost the lives of millions. The capitalist system has staggered from crisis to crisis, surviving only through the implementation of massive multi-trillion-dollar bailouts. Social inequality has reached historically unprecedented levels. The devastating COVID-19 pandemic has claimed millions of lives, and the only lesson drawn by capitalist governments is that it was a mistake, during the first weeks of the pandemic, to take even the most essential measures—such as lockdowns and masking—that detracted from corporate profits. Protecting profit margins is far more important than saving lives.

And what of the fate of democracy? In little more than one month, on May 7, 2025, the eightieth anniversary of the collapse of the Third Reich will be observed. But this anniversary coincides with a global upsurge of fascist movements throughout the world. In Germany, the AfD is emerging as the most influential political party. The process of the descent into fascism is occurring in Italy, France, and, of course, the United States.

The second Trump administration is only the most politically obscene manifestation of the universal breakdown of capitalist democracy. The American constitution is becoming a dead letter. A presidential dictatorship is being erected, in which the democratic principles of Madison, Jefferson and Lincoln are being replaced by the criminal legal theories of Carl Schmitt. The United States is now a country where the Bill of Rights is being subordinated to the Führer principle, which enables the president to declare a “State of Exception”—*Ausnahmezustand*—and deprive whoever he chooses of all legal protections.

The Trump administration has invoked the notorious Alien Enemies Act—previously used only during the War of 1812, World War I and World War II—and is issuing arbitrary “Executive Orders” as fraudulent illegal pretexts to grab students out of their homes or seize them on the streets. Scenes reminiscent of the Chilean, Argentine and Brazilian dictatorships of the recent past, and even of Nazi Germany, are now becoming common in the United States. Mahmoud Khalil, Rumeysa Ozturk, and, most recently, an unidentified student at the University of Minnesota have been seized and flown to an out-of-state detention facility. “Night and Fog”—*Nacht und Nebel*—has come to the United States. Another

courageous student, Momodou Taal, attending Cornell University, is fighting in the courts against being subjected to the same treatment. All these young people have committed no crime. Their sole “offense” has been their exercise of the democratic right of free speech to peacefully protest the mass murder of Palestinians.

And alongside the collapse of democracy we are witnessing the resurgence of militarism, accompanied by the justification and legitimization of genocide. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza are proving to be only the first round of a new global war for the redivision of the world. Now is the time to read and study the seminal texts on imperialism written by Lenin, Trotsky and other great Marxist opponents of imperialism.

As Franz Mehring warned on the eve of World War I, the Gods of War are Athirst. Trump is threatening to seize the Panama Canal and Greenland, and, following the playbook of his Nazi heroes, is openly boasting of his plans for an “Anschluss” of Canada.

As for Germany, it is now engaged in yet another disastrous arms race, recalling those which preceded 1914 and 1939, to achieve, once again, its “place in the sun.” A new “Drive to the East” is being prepared. Unless stopped, it will lead to a catastrophe even greater than those of the previous efforts under Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler.

My book, as is made clear in the title, is an attempt to sound the alarm. Humanity is confronting the danger of a descent into the abyss. The only way out of this crisis is through the ending of the capitalist system. The alternative as posed by Rosa Luxemburg, “Socialism or Barbarism,” confronts us all today. The alarm has been sounded. Now we must respond to it.

Purchase Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War on Mehring Books.



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