

Where is America Going? Fascism or Socialism—Foreword to the German edition

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We are publishing below the foreword to the German edition of the new book Where is America Going? Fascism or Socialism (edited by David North), which will soon be published by Mehring Verlag and presented at the Leipzig Book Fair on March 21 (more information here). It can be pre-ordered here from Mehring Verlag.

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Recent developments in the United States—Donald Trump’s open acts of war and the deadly deployment of paramilitary ICE thugs in Minneapolis and other cities—have triggered horror worldwide. They make clear that the danger of a new world war is real and that a military and police state is emerging in the US.

At the same time, large sections of official politics and the media display a peculiar blindness. Although the fascistic character of the administration is sometimes acknowledged, most analyses remain fixated on the person of Donald Trump and his individual traits and character. Thus, the decisive question is missed. Trump has not invaded the paradise garden of an otherwise healthy American democracy like the proverbial evil one. Rather, he is the political embodiment of a degenerated, bestial ruling class that expresses the historical crisis of the capitalist system.

The present volume contains statements, articles and lectures by the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) and editor of this book, David North, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), as well as other WSWS authors from the years 2015 to 2026. They analyse Trump’s entire political trajectory: from his rise through his first term in office, the conspiracy to annul the 2020 election, the attempted coup of January 6, 2021 to his return to power in 2025 and the open formation of a government of the oligarchy.

The **first part** covers the period between 2015 and 2020, which includes Trump’s campaign for the presidency and his first term. It analyses the social and

political conditions that enabled his coming to power: the decades of social devastation, the extreme enrichment of a financial oligarchy, the fatal pro-war policies of both parties and the decline of America’s industrial centres, which formed the breeding ground for his rise. At the same time, it examines the first term, which was characterized by the systematic promotion of right-wing militias, anti-migrant agitation, the construction of authoritarian forms of rule and the intensification of US war policy.

The events of January 2026 in Minneapolis have shocked the whole world and made clear that the transformation of American democracy into a military and police state is no longer just a theoretical possibility. It is taking place before our eyes.

The **second part** is devoted to the 2020 elections, as well as the January 6, 2021 coup and its consequences. The texts prove that this was not a “slip-up” or a mere eccentricity of Trump but a conscious attempt to overturn the election defeat through a coup d’état—with far-reaching support within the state apparatus and the Republican Party and without any resistance from the Democrats.

The **third part** deals with Trump’s second term since 2025 and develops a socialist strategy against the fascist conspiracy. It analyses the concentration of political power in the hands of an oligarchy whose interests are inseparably linked to militarism, social oppression and imperialist expansion, and explains why the fight against fascism and war requires a break with the capitalist system and all its institutions and parties, as well as the independent political mobilization of the working class on an international basis.

The particular strength of this book lies in its method. The texts gathered here stand in the tradition of classical Marxism, as defended by Leon Trotsky against its nationalist perversion by Stalinism. They comprehend

political developments not as the product of individual character traits or mere wrong decisions but as the expression of objective class interests and historical contradictions.

From this perspective, the WSWS and the SEP have correctly understood the Trump phenomenon from the very beginning. While liberal commentators viewed him as a temporary anomaly, and sections of the pseudo-left even downplayed him, the WSWS and the SEP have analysed his movement as a specific form of fascist reaction to the crisis of American and international capitalism. They warned early on of the consequences of a policy that combines social inequality, permanent wars and the systematic hollowing out of democratic rights.

In doing so, the texts do not restrict themselves to mere analysis but intervene in the class struggle. They are addressed to workers, youth and intellectuals who are looking for a political perspective that points beyond the dead ends of liberalism, nationalism and reformism. They inseparably connect the defence of democratic rights with the fight against social inequality and imperialist war.

The significance of this collection is not exhausted in a better understanding of the events in the United States. These are inextricably linked to the global crisis of capitalism. The aggressive reorientation of American imperialism intensifies the tensions between the great powers and drives the European governments—especially in Germany—to massive rearmament and the revival of an independent militarist great power policy.

And here, too, the social crisis is being unloaded onto the working class through comprehensive attacks on wages, jobs and social rights. At the same time, we are witnessing the systematic normalization of right-wing extremist and fascist ideologies, the relativization of the historical crimes of German imperialism and the expansion of the state apparatus of repression. The parallels are no coincidence. They spring from the same economic and political contradictions and stand in a stark continuity.

The rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the neo-Nazi riots in Chemnitz and their defence by Secret Service chief Hans-Georg Maaßen outrage millions of people. But why are the fascists back seven decades after the fall of the Third Reich? Without examining the sharp changes in politics, the state apparatus and intellectual life, one cannot understand this.

As in the 1930s, when the ruling class brought Hitler to power in order to make Germany “fit for war” again after the catastrophic defeat in the First World War, it is

responding today to the historical crisis of capitalism with an aggressive turn to militarism, fascism and war.

Precisely for this reason, this book is of crucial importance for workers and youth in Germany. It not only provides a well-founded analysis of American developments, it conveys a method and a perspective that are required to counter the return of the ruling classes to imperialist barbarism here as well. The fight against fascism and war cannot be waged within a national framework. It requires the international unification of the working class based on a socialist program.

The texts published here show that the fight against Trump—and against the social forces that produced him—cannot consist of supporting the Democratic Party, its pseudo-left appendages and the trade unions, which are themselves deeply implicated in the system of imperialist wars and social inequality. The alternative is not Trump or “liberal democracy” but fascism or socialism.

The opposition to war, social devastation and authoritarian rule is increasingly taking explosive forms in the United States. Strikes, protests against police violence, resistance against the murderous ICE deportations and mass surveillance—all this points to an enormous revolutionary potential. But without a clear political orientation, such movements threaten to be led into dead ends or co-opted by bourgeois forces. The SEP and the WSWS are fighting to fuse these struggles with a conscious socialist strategy.

This book does not merely document a dramatic phase of American history and intervene in it but provides a contribution to the political arming of an international movement of the working class. It makes clear that the defence of democratic rights, the fight against war and the overcoming of social inequality are only possible on the basis of a revolutionary transformation of society.

The question posed by the title—*Where is America Going? Fascism or Socialism*—is not a rhetorical one. It is posed worldwide with enormous urgency. Its answer depends on the conscious intervention of the working class into history and the building of a new revolutionary leadership. This book is intended to and will contribute towards drawing the necessary political conclusions and taking up the fight for a socialist future.



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