

Introduction to the book presentation: “Where Is America Going? Fascism or Socialism” with David North at Humboldt University in Berlin

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We are publishing here the remarks by Johannes Stern introducing the book presentation of Where Is America Going? Fascism or Socialism, with David North at Humboldt University in Berlin. David North’s lecture at Humboldt University, titled “American Imperialism and the oppression of Iran,” is published here. In the coming days, the WSWS will also publish a video of the event.

Dear comrades,
dear students, dear friends,

Many thanks to Tamino and the IYSSE student group here at Humboldt University for the invitation. I would also like to express my pleasure that we were able to welcome David North, the editor of our new book *Where Is America Going? Fascism or Socialism*, for today’s event.

We already presented the book this past weekend at the Leipzig Book Fair. Some of you have probably seen the recording of that presentation on the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The strong response to the book presentation showed that these questions are preoccupying many people. The non-fiction forum where we presented the book was packed, and the discussion was intense—and this is certainly no coincidence. We are living in a situation of mounting political tensions in which more and more people are asking: Where is this development leading? Are we facing a new era of fascism and war—or is there an alternative?

This is precisely the question posed by *Where Is America Going? Fascism or Socialism*.

The book is a collection of central political analyses and statements by the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, its chairman David North, and other SEP and WSWS authors on developments in the United States and their international implications. It demonstrates that the rise of Donald Trump is not the result of individual aberrations or political accidents, but rather the expression of a deep crisis of American society and of the capitalist system as a whole.

It analyzes the historical roots of this development—the extreme social inequality, the erosion of democratic rights, the decay of political institutions—and situates them within the global context of the crisis of capitalism. Above all, it develops a political perspective against war and fascism.

It is not a journalistic commentary and not merely an analysis of individual events. It is the product of a Marxist method that examines

the objective driving forces of social development.

And for that very reason, the answer it gives is also international: the building of an independent socialist movement of the working class.

These questions are not abstract today. They are posed in their most brutal form in the escalating war against Iran.

Significantly, the book concludes with a statement by the Socialist Equality Party in the United States opposing this war. It states clearly what this war is and explains the objective forces driving it.

In the very first section, it states:

The joint US-Israeli assault on Iran, which began in the early morning hours of February 28, is a criminal act of war waged in flagrant violation of the United States Constitution and international law... The attack on Iran is precisely what was described at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders in 1945–46, as a “crime against peace”—the “supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

This characterization is of fundamental importance. It exposes the entire war propaganda of governments and the media, which seek to present this war as “defense,” “deterrence,” or a “security measure.”

In reality—and this is made very clear in the statement—the war is driven by very concrete interests.

I quote from points 15 and 16:

The real reasons for this war lie not in Iran’s nuclear program—for which there is no evidence, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, that it is anything other than peaceful—but in the geopolitics of oil, the struggle for control of strategic resources and the deepening crisis of American global hegemony.

And further:

The war against Iran is, in this sense, a war for global hegemony, directed not only at Tehran but at Beijing, Moscow and the European capitals whose dependence on Middle Eastern energy gives Washington an instrument of coercion.

This is the decisive point: This war is part of a global redivision of the world among the imperialist powers.

It is about energy, geostrategic control, and the preparation of even broader military conflicts—above all against China.

And that is precisely why the situation is so dangerous. We are not dealing with a “regional conflict,” but with an escalation that is leading directly toward a third world war.

The European powers—and Germany in particular—are playing a central role in this.

The German government supports this war politically and strategically. It aligns itself with the United States while at the same time pursuing its own imperialist interests. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, Chancellor Merz traveled to the United States, effectively kissed Trump’s ring in the Oval Office and declared his full support for the war.

When he now claims that this is “not our war,” this does not mean that he opposes it. It means that German imperialism is asserting its own claim.

It does not want to be a bystander—it wants a say in the recolonization of the Middle East.

This can be seen very concretely: Joint statements on securing the Strait of Hormuz, military deployments, and the growing presence of European warships.

Germany and Europe are preparing to play an independent and leading role in this imperialist reordering—just as they are doing in the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

And this course is supported by all parties.

The SPD, through its defense minister Pistorius, is organizing massive rearmament and war preparations. The Greens have been among the most aggressive advocates of military intervention ever since their foreign minister Joschka Fischer organized the first German combat deployment since World War II in Kosovo. And the Left Party—which in Sunday speeches presents itself as an “opposition”—also supports rearmament policy—it approved the government’s war credits in the Bundesrat—and backs the barbaric methods and war aims in Iran.

The chairman of the Left Party, Jan van Aken, declared verbatim that he was “personally also glad [...] that Khamenei is dead” and that “many henchmen of the regime are dead.” He cynically added: “One should never rejoice in the death of a person, and yet I think it is good that they are gone, and may they rot in hell.”

This is not left-wing politics, but war policy.

And all of this shows: There is no opposition to war and militarism within the existing political system.

Why is that?

Because this development is rooted in the crisis of capitalism.

And it is precisely here that the great strength of this book and the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International lies.

We did not recognize this development yesterday, but foresaw it long ago.

Almost 36 years ago, on August 30, 1990—on the eve of the first Gulf War and as the Stalinist bureaucracy was dissolving the Soviet

Union and restoring capitalism—David North declared in a political report to the special congress of the Workers League, the predecessor of the SEP in the United States:

This international gang-up against Iraq is an expression of the historical essence of the Persian Gulf crisis. It marks the beginning of a new imperialist redivision of the world. The end of the postwar era means the end of the postcolonial era... The deepening crisis confronting all the major imperialist powers compels them to secure control over strategic resources and markets.

And further:

Former colonies, which had achieved a degree of political independence, must be resubjugated. In its brutal assault against Iraq, imperialism is giving notice that it intends to restore the type of unrestrained domination of the backward countries that existed prior to World War II.

This was not an abstract prognosis. It is the reality we are living through today. The war against Iran fully confirms this analysis. It is part of a global process directed against China, Russia and ultimately against the entire international working class.

And this raises the decisive question: What is the alternative?

The book gives a clear answer: The struggle against fascism and war requires the building of an international socialist movement of the working class.

Independent of all parties that defend capitalism. Independent of all national programs. Based on a scientific analysis and a revolutionary perspective.

This is not an abstract demand. It is a practical necessity.

Because the danger is real: If this development is not stopped, it will lead to catastrophes surpassing even the horrors of the First and Second World Wars.

Therefore, before I hand over to David, who will speak in more detail on these questions, I want to call on you already now:

Study this book seriously, study its method and its perspective.

And above all: draw the necessary political conclusions.

Now is the time to act.

The struggle against fascism and war requires the building of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class—the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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