

Berlin meeting marks 70th anniversary of Trotsky's assassination

Our correspondents
21 October 2010

An audience of around 200 attended a meeting in Berlin on Sunday to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the murder of Leon Trotsky. The main speaker at the meeting was David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US)

The event was a successful culmination to four days of meetings organized by the German Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG), Mehring Publications and the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE).

On Thursday, US historian Alexander Rabinowitch addressed an audience of around 350 and led a discussion on his book, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Bolshevik Rule in Petrograd*. (See "Great interest in lecture by Professor Rabinowitch in Berlin"). On Friday, Professor Rabinowitch presented the newly published German edition of his book to a packed audience at the Unibuch bookshop in central Berlin, and on Saturday Rabinowitch led a seminar at the city's Technical University.

All of the four meetings were very well attended and in some cases were standing room only. This response expresses a growing interest in the October Revolution and the work of Leon Trotsky against the background of the biggest crisis of the capitalist system in the past 80 years.

Peter Schwarz, who chaired the meeting on Sunday on behalf of the PSG, stressed that despite the fact that 70 years had passed since his murder, Trotsky remained one of the most significant political thinkers today. What made him of especial contemporary relevance was his understanding of the international character of capitalism.

"For Trotsky, internationalism was not just a hollow phrase," Schwarz said. "His conception was much

more than a platonic call for international solidarity and harmony between nations. The international character of modern economy and society represented the starting point for his social analysis and his political program. World economy, he wrote, is not merely the sum of its national parts. It is a vast independent reality established on the basis of the international division of labour, which predominates over all national markets in the modern epoch. From this starting point he concluded that the national orientation of the proletariat could only be derived from this international standpoint and not the other way round.

"Today communication, transport, trade, financial transactions and production have assumed a far more international form than was the case in Trotsky's day. The international finance and economic crisis has made clear to millions the extent to which their lives are dependent on the world economy and the anarchy of international finance markets," Schwarz stressed.

"Modern production links together people all over the world in a social whole. This process, however, is incompatible with the private ownership of the means of production and rival nation states. Trotsky's warning in the Transitional Program of 1938 is as relevant today as it was then: 'Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind.'"

Schwarz then presented the main speaker at the meeting, David North. North's latest book, *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*, has just been published in a German edition.

For the full text of North's remarks, see "Seventy years since the assassination of Leon Trotsky".

Following his remarks, North answered a series of questions from the audience, including questions

related to the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky, the political perspective of the SEP in the US, and the meaning of social equality.



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