

“Of course, Trotsky was an alternative to Stalin”

## An interview with Professor Mario Kessler on the Trotsky biography by Robert Service

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Since its publication in English by Harvard University Press three years ago, the Trotsky biography by British professor Robert Service has been subjected to a devastating critique by historians. David North in 2010 published the book *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* (Mehring Books), in which he pointed out numerous factual errors, omissions, distortions and falsifications of sources.

Fourteen historians, sociologists and political scientists from Germany, Austria and Switzerland shared this criticism and, in what was initially a private letter [1], wrote to the director of the German publishing house Suhrkamp Verlag raising grave reservations about its plan to bring out a German edition of Service’s book.

Despite these concerns and criticisms, Suhrkamp is intent on going ahead and has announced on its web site that publication is planned for July 2, 2012. On behalf of the *World Socialist Web Site*, Wolfgang Weber spoke with Professor Mario Kessler about this decision.

Professor Kessler is a co-signatory of the letter to the Suhrkamp publishing house. Since the beginning of his career as a historian, his specialised area of research has been anti-Semitism and the labour movement. He studied in Jena and Leipzig, received his doctorate in 1982, and earned his post-doctoral qualification (Habilitation) in 1990 at the Academy of Sciences of what was then still East Germany (the German Democratic Republic—GDR).

Since 1996 he has worked at the Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) in Potsdam, where he also teaches at the university. He has been a guest professor at Yeshiva University in New York, the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), Columbus State University (Georgia) and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He has also been a research scholar at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore), King’s College (London) and, most recently, Harvard University.

Mario Kessler has published over two dozen books in German and English on the history of anti-Semitism, the European labour movement, historiography, and exile communities. He is currently completing work on a biography of the German Communist leader and subsequent anti-communist Ruth Fischer. He is also co-editing a book dealing with the transformation and “liquidation” (Abwicklung) of historical scholarship in the GDR after German reunification in 1990. This book will be published in English.

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**WSWS:** It is now more than nine months since you and a group of other historians sent what was initially a private letter to the head of the Suhrkamp publishing house, Ms. Ulla Unseld-Berkéwicz, in which you raised grave concerns about the planned German edition of the Trotsky biography written by Robert Service. So far, there has been no response to this letter by the publisher. Instead, Ulrich M. Schmid intervened in the international debate and in a feature article on February 21, 2012 in the

*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported, based on information from Suhrkamp, that the publisher was intent on publication of a corrected version “without any far-reaching changes in the text,” despite the concerns raised by leading historians.

Schmid, a professor of Russian history and culture at the University of St. Gallen, welcomed this decision and dismissed the numerous factual errors and distortions in Service’s book as “small change” that would concern only nit-pickers and could easily be corrected in the course of translation. In his article, he does not even bother to address the charge of outright falsification of facts and sources.

**Mario Kessler:** I know and respect the director of Suhrkamp, Ulla Unseld-Berkéwicz, and was therefore amazed when I learned that the publishing house intended to go ahead with the production of a book which, after I had read it in 2010, I did not regard as a model of historical work. Up until then I had expected better from Robert Service. The fact that Ulrich Schmid, known to stand for certain standards of quality, is so strongly committed to the book is astonishing.

Enough has been said already about the many factual errors and examples of carelessness in the book; I naturally also took note of them. But whoever publishes books in the US (in England it is similar) knows that even large publishing houses such as Harvard University Press can no longer afford a proper editorial department. This, in the first place, has less to do with Trotsky than with the logic of the capitalist book market.

**WSWS:** The publication of the Service biography of Trotsky has, of course, served to discredit Harvard University Press. However, such an incredibly high number of errors is not to be found in other books put out by Harvard University Press and rather strongly points to a lack of competence on the part of the author himself.

**MK:** I would say this much: Robert Service cites numerous titles in the bibliography without making clear to the reader that he has not used them for his book. Had he actually made use of them, he would have been able to avoid a lot of mistakes and omissions, one would assume.

**WSWS:** According to press reports, at the launch of his book in London in 2009, Service publicly declared, “There’s life in the old guy Trotsky. If the ice pick didn’t finish him off, I hope my book does.” That is, achieve what the murderer of Trotsky failed to do in 1940—namely, destroy Trotsky as a figure in world history and a personage of immense political and moral authority.

It is this political aim of the book, rather than any new research findings or other scientific considerations, that prompts the reviewer Professor Ulrich Schmid to strongly support a German edition by Suhrkamp. In the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of March 6, 2012, Dr. Lorenz Jäger takes a similar position and even defends the thesis of the Oxford professor, according to which Stalin was a “more level-headed statesman” than Trotsky. “If ever Trotsky had been the paramount leader instead of

Stalin,” Robert Service writes, “the risk of a bloodbath in Europe would have been drastically increased.”

**MK:** Putting Trotsky alongside Stalin to encourage the belief that Trotsky was just a frustrated mass murderer is not so new. This interpretation can also be found in the émigré literature of Mensheviks during the interwar period. Its authors were unable to reconcile themselves to the fact that they had been defeated by Trotsky in the Civil War and now, in exile, were forced to stomach his interpretation of revolutionary history. Previous generations of historians might have exercised a generous indulgence towards those authors. This cannot be accepted, however, with regard to contemporary historians. Here another standard must be applied to critics. According to Service, Trotsky was quite simply no alternative to Stalin. But this contradicts the historical facts and the findings amassed in the course of three-quarters of a century of research.

Of course, Trotsky *was* an alternative to Stalin, although he was not, if you permit me the irony, a “flawless democrat,” as Vladimir Putin was once described by the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Naturally, Trotsky resorted to force when it came to the very existence of the young Soviet Republic—a fact Service and Schmid deplore. But how could the Bolsheviks do otherwise? The alternative, we should never forget, was not a bourgeois democratic state, but rather the white counterrevolution, i.e., the Black Hundreds in a much more extreme form—intent on wiping out not only Marxism, but especially the Jews. They proved this during the civil war, when they carried out the bloodiest pogroms prior to Auschwitz.

Without putting Trotsky on a pedestal, in my opinion there was a significant difference between him and Stalin and his ilk. For the Stalinists, the construct of an overarching conspiracy was the constitutive feature of their politics, while none of their Communist opponents regarded the main enemy as coming from their own ranks. This does not reveal anything about the relationship between the Communists and democracy, although Trotsky went through his own learning process in this respect—an analysis of which is also missing in Service’s account.

Who else, also amongst the bourgeois opponents of Hitler, was able to follow the rise of the dictator with such profound analyses and warnings? Who else among the Communists (apart from the Communist Party Opposition and the Leninbund, which should also be mentioned) vigorously defended the democratic rights and institutions of the Weimar Republic despite all criticism of its class character? Who else but Trotsky foresaw in 1938 that Hitler’s program would lead to the Holocaust? In a letter to American comrades dated November 22, 1938, he wrote: “It is possible to imagine without difficulty what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of the future world war. But even without war the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty the *physical extermination of the Jews.*” [2] Is it possible to read this without emotion? Does this quote not deserve a place in Service’s book?

Beyond that, in a very short chapter on “Trotsky and the Jews,” Service manages to suppress or distort an incredible number of things that are essential to a truthful presentation of the topic, i.e., Trotsky’s analysis of Russian and Romanian anti-Semitism based on the examples of the Beilis trial and the persecution of the Jews in the context of the Balkan Wars. Trotsky’s masterful portrayal of the Black Hundreds in the Russian Revolution of 1905 (“The Tsar’s Men at Work,” Chapter 12 in his book *1905*) [3] is missing, as is a detailed presentation of his observations on the anti-Semitism of the Nazi Party in the last years of the Weimar Republic. And much more could be mentioned. Instead, Robert Service falsely writes that Karl Kautsky was a Jew.

Sure enough, the young Trotsky made a mistake in his estimation of Zionism and the Jewish Workers’ Bund, which Service notes, but without sufficiently explaining the historical context. What was it about? On January 1, 1904, Trotsky wrote in *Iskra* that Theodor Herzl had recommended Uganda as a temporary home for the Jews. But while he

could promise the Jews Uganda, he could not give it to them. This dispute, over whether Palestine or Uganda should become a Jewish homeland, in Trotsky’s opinion would lead to the division and ruination of the Zionist movement. For better or worse, he forecast, the Jewish nationalists would end up in the Jewish Workers’ Bund.

Trotsky was wrong in that. The Bund continued to be a firm critic of Zionism, also of leftist Labour Zionism. Already in 1905, members of the Bund warned of an impending potential conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, which could transform the Middle East into a war zone for decades to come—a prescient warning.

The leftist Zionist Marc Jarblum and former Social Revolutionary Moshe Novomeisky, also at that time a Zionist, reported that Trotsky attended the 6th Zionist Congress in Basel in 1903 as a visiting journalist. [4] This was the last congress attended by Theodor Herzl. On the agenda was the issue, amongst others, of Palestine or East Africa. Herzl stressed that the “Uganda” solution was only a temporary arrangement and that the goal remained establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Nevertheless, almost all the Russian Zionists quit the congress.

The exit of the Russian Zionists meant that Herzl had a majority of the remaining delegates, who voted for the dispatch of a committee to East Africa to explore possibilities for a Jewish settlement. As we know, nothing came of it. Trotsky’s assumption that Zionism would quickly exhaust itself turned out to be wrong, though at that time this seemed a quite realistic prospect.

It’s a shame, but no doubt significant, that none of these significant facts are addressed in Service’s biography of Trotsky. There is a series of investigations of the issue of Trotsky and the Jews by authors from very different political camps: Yechiel Harari, Baruch Knei-Paz, Joseph Nedava, Edmund Silberner and Enzo Traverso. Robert Service refers to Nedava and Knei-Paz in his bibliography, but their work is not evaluated.

It was only in his last years that Trotsky softened his opposition to Zionism, although, as with all forms of nationalism, he assessed it critically. At the end of the 1930s, he regarded Palestine, rocked at that time by civil war, as a death trap for the Jews, because British colonialism would treat Jews and Arabs as its pawns to be played off against one another at will. Such a view really does not testify to ignorance in relation to that burning problem.

Service mentions this fact, but only very briefly and only to make fun of Trotsky in the immediately following passage because Trotsky raised fears of a rise of anti-Semitism in the US which could wipe out equal rights for Jews, as was already the case in Nazi Germany. Instead of poking fun, Service could have mentioned the Ku Klux Klan, a veritable mass organization of American fascism, and the anti-immigrant and anti-Jewish societies that sprang up in the US like mushrooms at that time. Even if Trotsky’s concerns were not confirmed by history, was it unreasonable to raise such dangers in light of the fact that no country—including the US—was prepared to welcome the Jews driven out of Germany, as David Wyman demonstrates in a series of studies?

As far as a critical but fair overall assessment of Leon Trotsky is concerned, I would recommend a concise, well-written biography of Trotsky by Joshua Rubenstein which has been published in English. It takes up Service with the necessary objectivity and serves to answer and refute a number of his assertions and presumptions. This biography does not scrimp on criticisms of Trotsky and is sometimes harsh in its judgements, but is never unfair or malicious. [5] It deserves much more attention than Service’s book and should be translated into German.

**WSWS:** One of the central allegations made by David North is the following: Even if he himself is not an anti-Semite, Service is accommodating the anti-Semitic prejudices of a certain clientele in numerous formulations and passages, including the reproduction of a Trotsky caricature by the fascist ideologue and Nazi Party co-founder Dietrich Eckart without indicating the source or distancing himself from

it.

This charge is supported by the historians' letter to the Suhrkamp publishing house, which lists a considerable number of such passages in the book and points to their "repugnant connotations."

Ulrich M. Schmid in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and Lorenz Jäger in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* counter this allegation and state it is perfectly legitimate for a historian to reproduce the "moods of the people" of that time, even when it has to do with anti-Semitic sentiments and prejudice.

**MK:** The letter of the 14 historians, which I signed, included a number of characteristic quotations in this respect. I was struck less by blatant anti-Semitism—I also do not regard Robert Service as an anti-Semite—than by half-knowledge instead of real knowledge on the subject. How can he seriously claim: "As in the rest of Europe, Jews [in Tsarist Russia] could establish themselves in the professions and in the arts. Quite a number of the Russian Empire's leading doctors and lawyers came from the Pale of Settlement.?"

If only this had been the case! The truth is that the careers of Jews were systematically blocked. They could for the most part only study abroad, and they faced considerable bureaucratic hurdles before they could establish a practice as a doctor or lawyer. It was the February Revolution that did away with this formal discrimination, but without preventing anti-Semitic agitation—all this is dealt with in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* [5].

But what struck me, and I am not alone in this respect, is how Service quotes anti-Semitic attacks on Trotsky sometimes with downright pleasure...

**WSWS:** Strictly speaking, Service does not provide quotes, because he largely avoids specifically naming the authors of the cited anti-Semitic attacks or providing the precise circumstances or sources. In a rare example of when he does name the source of anti-Semitic prejudices against Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders—namely, the German delegation at the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk—his citations prove to be unfounded on closer inspection. Neither in the protocols, nor in the memoirs and letters of General Max Hoffmann or Foreign Minister Richard von Kühlmann is there any evidence that the German delegates regarded the Bolsheviks as scum because they had so many Jews in their leadership, as Service maintains.

**MK:** I agree. Kühlmann's memoirs are particularly still worth reading, an important source. In any case, Service would have done well if, when he referred to anti-Semitic sentiments and attacks, he had named names and placed them in the appropriate historical context.

Specifically, in the Russian Civil War of 1918-21, anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism entered into such a brutal and unfortunately effective alliance that even opponents of the October Revolution amongst the Jews of the Russian Empire eventually joined the Bolsheviks, seeking protection from the White pogroms. This was the main reason, and not the careerist motives emphasized by Service, that many Jews became involved in the Bolshevik Party.

In order to understand this problem, Service could and should have made himself familiar with the People's Commissars' decree on combating anti-Semitism of July 27, 1918 [7] and its rigorous implementation. This would have been better than pondering about the "loud voices and sharp feathers" of the Jewish Bolsheviks. The readership has a right, after all, to learn about the complex historical context.

**WSWS:** Even after the Civil War, anti-Semitic sentiments and prejudice still existed in the Soviet Union in certain layers.

**Mario Kessler:** Here too, more concrete details should be given than can be found in Service, especially from Trotsky's essay "Thermidor and anti-Semitism", which, unfortunately, remained unpublished in his lifetime.

The anti-Jewish prejudices from Tsarist times had survived revolution

and civil war for the most part. How could it be otherwise? Many opponents of the revolution tried to present this event as the work of the Jews, personified by Trotsky. Since the layer of petty traders that arose under the New Economic Policy [8] included many Jews, professional jealousy and anti-Semitism often coincided. Even within the party there were prejudices against Jewish officials, most of whom became Bolsheviks only after 1917. Previously, they had mostly belonged to the socialist groups that were enemies of the party of Lenin.

In the 1920s, the Bolshevik Party initially fought anti-Semitic phenomena by a variety of means. Remarkably, it was often non-Jewish communists who distinguished themselves here: Kalinin, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky, Lunacharsky, Riutin. Of course, Jewish Bolsheviks were also involved in the fight against anti-Semitism. They published a series of enlightening and analytical writings, among which Yuri Larin's book *The Jews and anti-Semitism in the USSR* (1929) stands out.

In this, Larin wrote about the spread of anti-Semitism "in the backward sections of workers bound up with the peasantry and among women", and continued: "We often hear workers making anti-Semitic remarks who do not recognize the counterrevolutionary role of anti-Semitism. Many facts point to the presence of Komsomol (Communist youth organisation) members and party members among the anti-Semites". [9] Trotsky also cited anti-Semitic remarks and behaviour among workers in his *Problems of Everyday Life*.

Anti-Semitism among workers was accompanied by anti-Semitic attitudes among a section of Russian intellectuals. This was nourished by a (groundless!) sense of inferiority towards the internationally-oriented and often educated Jews. Political activists who before the revolution had been members of the Jewish Labour Federation or the Poale Zion entered the party apparatus of the Bolsheviks in the wake of the process of radicalization and the dissolution of these two most important Jewish socialist parties. Thus, a type of Jewish "neophyte" arose, who sought to conceal his anti-Bolshevik past by an excess of loyalty to the party line.

Of course, this did not apply to all Jewish members of the party, not even to all those whose date of admission was after the October Revolution and the Civil War. However, by their prominent actions, some of these "newly converted" Jewish Bolsheviks considerably influenced the picture that non-Jewish Soviet citizens had of Jewish party functionaries.

This includes some of the administrative actions of the Jewish Section of the Communist Party, the Yevsektsiya. Its officials sabotaged the exercise of religious worship often practised by their Jewish fellow citizens, in part by ruthless means. They also denounced Hebrew as an allegedly Zionist idiom and tended to propagate the official ideology in very clumsy ways. Probably unintentionally, with their fight against "Jewish religious relics", they weakened the basis for the livelihoods of their people, since, given the lack of a self-contained territory (apart from the Birobidzhan project), religion and ethnicity were more closely related among the Jews than other nationalities.

The role of Jews in the campaign of forced collectivization in the early 1930s, mainly the implementation of this brutal campaign by Kaganovich, a Jew, in the Ukraine, contributed greatly to the growth of rural anti-Semitism. Still, it seems to be clear that the Stalinization of the Soviet Union did contribute to the growth of anti-Semitism, and that the Stalin faction adeptly exploited anti-Jewish sentiment. But without the overt pre-revolutionary impact of anti-Semitism upon the masses, all of this would not have been possible. On the one hand, the Stalinists used anti-Semitic sentiments to their own advantage, on the other hand, they often encouraged anti-Semitism behind the scenes. They did not act against anti-Semitism in any way—something that was both necessary and possible.

The ban on emigration from the USSR after 1928 also contributed to the alienation between Jews and non-Jews. While this affected all citizens, the ending of Zionist immigration to Palestine by the Jews created a specific

“emigration jam”. (As the ban was gradually interpreted less restrictively in the 1970s, there were waves of Jewish emigration, seeming once again to make the Jews more privileged than other Soviet citizens).

In the run-up to the Hitler-Stalin-pact in 1939, a number of Jews were removed from the diplomatic service, including Foreign Minister Litvinov. This seems to be related mainly to the fact that most Jewish diplomats were involved in Litvinov’s policy of collective security, and thus advocated an alliance with the West against Hitler.

But the heaviest losses Jews suffered were those caused by the closure of many cultural institutions, the dissolution of a number of organizations, and the execution of many party and state officials in the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan in the Far East. Where had Trotsky—for Service so similar to his opponent Stalin—tolerated these things, let alone initiated them?

**WSWS:** The stirring up of anti-Semitism also played a role in the fight of the bureaucracy led by Stalin against Trotsky and the Left Opposition. What form did this take?

**MK:** From about 1926-27, the Stalin faction began to make use of anti-Semitic prejudices in the struggle for power against the rival United Opposition. As explained earlier, these prejudices stemmed from the Tsarist era and still slumbered in rural areas or in working class layers still strongly rooted in the peasantry.

At that time, Stalin, according to Trotsky, semi-publicly said that the opposition was headed by three disaffected Jews: Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev. In the campaign running beneath the surface, the word “Jew” was only rarely used. But Stalin’s assertion that the opposition troika was being fought not because its members were Jews, but because they were enemies of the party, there was an implicit invocation of the constructed Russian-Jewish antagonism. At the same time, the identification of Jews with the opposition would have occurred even without any direct encouragement. Stalin and his faction took advantage of anti-Semitic sentiments, but they did not create them.

The Moscow show trials of the 1930s, however, provided a new “quality”. The terror trials were accompanied by an anti-Semitic propaganda campaign, poorly disguised as “Soviet patriotism”, against the defendants as allegedly “alien to the people”. Stalin exploited a dilemma that faced all internationalist-oriented Bolsheviks after the late 1920s: “[T]he Bolsheviks of Jewish origin were the least likely of all to idealize rural Russia in its crudity and barbarity, and drag the local farmers’ carts at a ‘snail’s pace’ behind them”, wrote Isaac Deutscher. “Not for them was the ideal of socialism in a single country.” [10]

The new Soviet patriotism did not necessarily have to have an anti-Jewish component; on the contrary, anti-Semitism was officially declared to have been overcome and the fundamental antagonism was to Nazism. But the anti-Semitic undertones of the show trials raised the temperature, as did, in a seemingly opposite way, the relatively large presence of Jews in the organs of power and repression.

**WSWS:** In what way could these anti-Semitic undertones be observed in the show trials? Were existing or latent anti-Semitic prejudices aroused or utilised by addressing the Jewish defendants not by their party name, but by their Jewish name?

**MK:** Of course. Trotsky himself pointed this out, and rightly so. “In order to strengthen their rule,” he said in an interview in January 1937 in Mexico, “the bureaucracy is not afraid to resort to even thinly veiled chauvinist, especially anti-Semitic, tendencies. For example, the last trial [of Zinoviev, Kamenev and fourteen other Bolsheviks] was carried through with the barely concealed intention of presenting the internationalists as faithless Jews who sold themselves to the Gestapo. Since 1925 and especially since 1936, a veiled, intangible anti-Semitic demagoguery has gone hand in hand with symbolic actions against real pogromists. [...] The leaders employ clever means to channel the discord, which is directed against the bureaucracy, and focus it particularly on the

Jews.” [11]

Given the virulent anti-Semitism that obsessed Stalin in his last years, this assessment resonates, unfortunately, far more convincingly than it could have to many contemporaries of Trotsky. Subsequent research findings by Salomon Schwarz, Zvi Gitelman and, more recently, Matthias Vetter—all authors who were or are far from Trotskyism—have confirmed Trotsky’s statements empirically. Why would Service ignore all this?

**WSWS:** In the first four chapters of his book, Service seeks to convince his readers that Leon Trotsky was called Leiba during his childhood and youth. Only at the age of 18, Service claims, did he decide to change his forename—a fact which, Service says, Trotsky concealed in his autobiography *My Life*. Service thereby seeks to prove that Trotsky is an unreliable author. In almost every paragraph, Service refers to Trotsky only by the name “Leiba,” probably to work on the reader until he believes the claim in the absence of any evidence.

**MK:** If Trotsky had been raised in a Yiddish-speaking environment, he could certainly have been called “Leiba”. But that was not the case. He was called by the name of Lev, and this is what he should probably be called in the German edition of the book, if one can trust the announcement by Suhrkamp on the Internet. Once more, the impression arises that wherever Trotsky can be shown in a dubious light, Service does so, even if the historical facts take a hammering.

**WSWS:** What is to be understood by the fact that Service revives this pattern well known from the time of Stalin’s persecution? What is the context?

**MK:** I see two reasons. One has to do with the atmosphere, specifically in parts of the Anglo-Saxon intelligentsia, where, according to my observation, some pertinent prejudices thrive at present. It’s about, I must say, a vulgar materialistic view of the Middle East conflict and Israel. The necessary and principled criticism of the Israeli occupation regime in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is confused—perhaps on purpose—with adventurous ideas to “boycott” and “end the Zionist project,” and this includes the Israeli left and left-liberals.

Concretely, in England a few years ago the linguist Gideon Toury, whose father was a progressive historian who had been banished by the Nazi Reich, was thrown off the advisory board of a scientific journal, not at all because of his political stance, but simply due to the fact that he is Israeli. As far as I could follow, British “left and liberal public opinion” did not see it necessary to exercise solidarity with Toury or distance themselves from the editors of the magazine, in contrast to the National Student Association and the American philosopher Judith Butler. [12]

Is this the policy of “Solidarity with Palestine”—calling for an indiscriminate boycott of Israeli academics, no matter what their political positions? Is that not a blanket condemnation of Israelis? How far removed is such an attitude from anti-Semitic sentiment? Don’t such sentiments at least prepare the ground? Is this the way to anti-Semitism in Enlightenment garb?

I’m not going too far when I fear that a “dose” of mockery of Trotsky, the revolutionary, theorist, and Jew, fits very well in an atmosphere in which former “salon lefts” have abandoned everything they once learned about class analysis to foster old and new prejudices—whether these come in the guise of a false “anti-Trotskyism” or a genuine, though measured, anti-Semitism.

The second, more general reason is that in the whole world, right-wing circles, but also reactionaries, liberal sections of the capitalist elites and their intellectual phrasemongers are gripped by a great fear of a renaissance of socialist ideas. To counteract it, every socialist alternative to Stalin must be burdened with the stigma of violence and terror. What could be more convenient than to present Trotsky—the wisest and most courageous opponent of Stalin, whose writings still give cause to reflect on socialism—as being, in principle, barely distinguishable from Stalin?

**WSWS:** Thank you for your time.

**Notes:**

1. Published November 23, 2011 on the *World Socialist Web Site*
2. Leon Trotsky, *On the Jewish Question*, New York, 1970, p. 29 (emphasis in the original)
3. Leon Trotsky, *1905*, Vintage Books, New York, 1971, pp. 131-40
4. See Joseph Nedava, *Trotsky and the Jews*, Philadelphia 1972, p. 272
5. Joshua Rubenstein, *Leon Trotsky. A Revolutionary's Life*, New Haven/London, 2011.
6. Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Pathfinder, New York, 2010, "The problem of nationalities," pp. 1,032-65
7. Published in *Dekrety sovetsoy vlasti*, Bd. 3, Moscow, 1964, p. 93
8. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in the Soviet Union in 1921 following the end of the civil war.
9. Ju. O. Larin, *Evrei i antisemitizm v SSSR*, Moskau/Leningrad, 1929, p. 239
10. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929*, New York and London, 1959, p. 259
11. The passage can be found in German in the book by John Bunzl, *Klassenkampf in der Diaspora. Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Arbeiterbewegung*, Vienna, 1975, p. 150.
12. Regarding the position of the *World Socialist Web Site* in the case of Gideon Toury, see: "Against the boycott of Israeli academics," statement by the *World Socialist Web Site*, 12 July, 2002; "A letter on the boycott of Israeli academics and an answer by David North and Bill Vann," 17 July, 2002; and "WSWS replies to letters on boycott of Israeli academics," 30 July, 2002



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