

In Defense of Leon Trotsky presented at Moscow Book Fair

Our correspondents
15 December 2018

The Russian edition of David North's *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* was successfully presented in Moscow at the international book fair non/fiction, which took place from November 28 to December 2 at the Central House of Artists at Krymskii Val.

The 20th annual book fair non/fiction is the largest of its kind in Russia. Over 300 publishing houses from 24 different countries were represented there, offering readers some 1 million books on the most diverse subjects, including science, culture, history and philosophy.

The book, *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*, published this year by the German Mehring Verlag, was presented alongside a number of other books of the publishing house, at the stand of the Frankfurt book fair.

Its author, David North, has played a leading role in the international socialist movement, and is the chairperson of the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP-US).

The book is dedicated to refuting the attacks, in a series of recent books by British historians, on the ideological and political heritage and personality of Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), one of the leaders of the October Revolution and the main opponent of Stalin. As North shows, almost 80 years after the murder of Trotsky at the hands of a Stalinist assassin, the Stalinist distortions and falsifications of historical facts have found their way into contemporary Western academia, which is now in a deep crisis.

The publication of the book is of particular importance in Russia. Here, more than 100 years after the October Revolution, and in the year of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International, the disputes about questions of history have the most immediate political significance. Some 30 years after

the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy, social inequality in Russia has reached record heights, while the war drive by US and European imperialism raises the immediate danger of another world war.

Yet none of the major social and political issues facing the working class in Russia can be addressed outside of a historical understanding of the fate of the Russian Revolution, and above all the struggle of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition against the betrayals of Stalinism. Trotsky once described the historical lie as the ideological cement of social and political reaction. The survival of the Russian oligarchy, no less than the existence of the Stalinist bureaucracy, from which it directly emerged, depends upon them.

This is why, to this day, Trotsky is widely slandered in Russia by both pro-Stalinist and anti-Communist historians that receive substantial backing by the Kremlin. In 2017, the centenary year of the October Revolution, a state-sponsored television serial filled with historical falsifications and anti-Semitism was released to discredit Trotsky and disorient the growing interest in his political legacy.

The Russian publication of *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* marks a major step in the defense of historical truth about Leon Trotsky and the Russian Revolution, and in laying the political foundations for the building of a Russian section of the ICFI.

Discussions by our correspondents at the book fair with several students and intellectuals reflected the growing interest in these historical and political questions and significant support for the publication of the book.

Denis, a student in Moscow, said that he was interested in books about contemporary Trotskyism and questions about neo-fascism, the growth of far-right

forces and the fate of German social democracy. He said that American and Western scholars often come to visit his university. When he asked one of them about the aggressive actions of the West and the US, the scholar was forced to acknowledge that the entire American establishment, not only Trump, were extremely aggressive. Denis himself expressed great concern about the growing threat of war between Russia and the US and NATO.

Igor, also a student, stated that a clarification of all the historical questions bound up with Leon Trotsky was very important for understanding the contemporary world. He also said that his friend, who is currently writing his dissertation, was researching the far right in Germany and reads German.

At the stand, the books *Warum sind sie wider da?* (*Why are they back?*) by Christoph Vandreier and the volume *Wissenschaft oder Kriegspropaganda?* (*Science or War Propaganda?*), which are essential to understanding these questions, were also presented to Russian readers.

Lev Moskovkin, the parliamentary correspondent of the newspaper *Moskovskaya Pravda*, and a trained geneticist who studied with the internationally renowned biologist and geneticist Nikolai Timofeev-Ressovsky (1900-1981), said that he had been interested in Trotsky for a long time. “The book is interesting, and its author has undertaken a curious analysis, exposing anti-Semitism in the British assessment of Trotsky’s role.”

On his blog, Moskovkin wrote after the book fair: “The figure of Trotsky is key to an understanding not only of Russian history, but of the entire history of the 20th century worldwide—I had assumed that no one would really doubt that. Just like the fact that Trotsky was the creator of the Red Army.”

In discussion with our correspondents, he stated that he highly values the publications on the *World Socialist Web Site*. In particular, he was glad to find an article on the WSWs dedicated to the German communist Nathan Steinberger (1910-2005), who had spent many years in Stalinist camps and whose name is mentioned in the famous memoirs by Yevgenia Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind*. Nathan Steinberger and his wife, Edith, had visited the family of Moskovkin’s grandfather many times in Moscow after they had returned from the Stalinist camps in Kolyma (a region in Russia’s far-

north).

Oleg from Moscow, 54 years old, said he was interested not only in the history of the Russian Revolution and the legacy of Leon Trotsky, but was also collecting artifacts that are related to the history of the October Revolution. He told us that his grandfather had been a doctor and was in Ukraine during the Civil War, where he went over to the side of the “Reds” (the Bolsheviks). As a child, he listened to his grandfather’s stories about this time, which made clear how fundamentally different the depiction of these events in the official Soviet propaganda was from the actual reality.

Yuri Primakov, the son of the commander and Left Opposition member Vitali Primakov, who was shot in 1937 in the “Tukhachevsky trial” against leaders of the Red Army, welcomed the publication of the book with the following words: “Its [the books] appearance is a very important event. In Russia, the name of Trotsky is still either silenced, or subject to the most vulgar attacks. The Russian edition of David North’s book *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* should help the Russian-language readers not only to discover the real Trotsky, but also to understand the tragic fate of the Russian Revolution, and to acknowledge the profoundly negative role that Stalinism played in Soviet history.”

The Russian edition of In Defense of Leon Trotsky is available both as an eBook and in paperback, and can be ordered here.

Vladimir Volkov’s preface to the Russian edition is available here.

The English edition of In Defense of Leon Trotsky is available from Mehring Books.

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