

# Joseph Kishore, Eric London discuss DSA's celebration of Trotsky assassination on "Eclectic Radical with Chris Richards"

**Our Reporters**  
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On Saturday, June 5, Socialist Equality Party National Secretary Joseph Kishore and WSWs writer Eric London appeared on the podcast "Eclectic Radical" hosted by Chris Richards. The discussion focused on the campaign by the leadership of the Democratic Socialists of America celebrating the assassination of Leon Trotsky and praising the crimes of Stalinism.

On May 18, the WSWs posted a report detailing the highly coordinated character of this campaign. On May 22, WSWs International Editorial Board Chairman David North issued an open letter to DSA National Director Maria Svart demanding the DSA repudiate this campaign. The open letter has not been answered.

Here are six highlights from the podcast.

## **Joseph Kishore (2:45)**

The DSA is glorifying an act which was one of the most politically consequential crimes of the 20th century. We also have an open letter which we've directed to DSA Political Director Maria Svart, which she still has not answered, calling on her to repudiate these attacks. But it really gets to why these questions are so critical, the basic issues of history: What was Trotskyism? What was Stalinism? Was there an alternative to Stalinism? One of the lines that one sees among those who are tweeting these things and justifying them is, "Oh, this was all 80 years ago, what does it really matter, it's not a big deal that we're joking about the murder of Leon Trotsky." In fact, it's a very big deal. The crimes of Stalinism had an incredibly disastrous impact on the socialist movement—the physical liquidation of between 700,000 and one million people in the Soviet Union, the violence directed against the Fourth International, and also in discrediting or associating socialism with this monstrosity. In fact, the socialist movement and its historical continuity runs through the opposition to

Stalinism, which was led by Trotsky, and then the founding of the Fourth International. These historical issues, what actually happened in the 20th century, are of such monumental importance in orienting a revolutionary movement today.

## **Eric London (6:15)**

Who was Leon Trotsky? Why is this something which we take so seriously? Trotsky was, alongside Vladimir Lenin, one of the two leaders of the Russian Revolution of 1917. This was the first time in the history of humanity that the working class had taken power. And they did so in the midst of a brutal world war, which they ended. They were then invaded by over a dozen capitalist countries. They successfully fought, with Trotsky at the head of the Red Army, against the fascistic White Army. They defeated them. They then were isolated in the Soviet Union and the bureaucracy, a privileged caste, usurped power with Stalin at its head. Trotsky dedicated his entire life, and what he said were the most important years of his life, to the fight to expose the Stalinist bureaucracy, to defend the fight for international socialist revolution, and its independence from the parties of capitalism—which is the theory of permanent revolution, which is our perspective, the perspective of the Socialist Equality Party today. In the course of defending its privileged interests against the interests of the Russian and international working class, the Stalinist bureaucracy engaged in a political genocide in which up to one million people were exterminated. This is what the DSA thinks is hilarious, very funny, worthy of making memes. Think about what the political implications of this are.

## **Joseph Kishore (12:58)**

The campaign against Trotsky has a broader provenance. There's a series of biographies written over the past couple decades, including one by Robert Service,

a right-wing, establishment historian. He made a statement when he was talking about his biography, which is a scurrilous historically falsified book, full of basic errors, that “if the icepick didn’t finish Trotsky off, I hope the biography will.” That his book would put an end to Trotsky. Service is speaking on behalf of the ruling class, under conditions in which there’s a growing political radicalization of young people, of workers, a turn to the left, growing interest in socialism, which all the polls show. Under these conditions, there is a fear that this political radicalization will connect with the genuine history of socialist politics, which is Trotskyism. And that goes back to the Russian Revolution itself and the whole tradition of revolutionary Marxism of which the Trotskyist movement is the contemporary political expression. ... And there’s a middle class layer who view history with contempt, who know really nothing about the history of the socialist movement, about principled politics, and they’re drawn into it. This is driven from the top. There is a coordinated campaign, with calculated political and social interests behind it.

**Eric London (20:20)**

Here’s why the dynamic of the attack on Trotsky and the celebration of the assassination of Trotsky are so important. The dynamic is: The *World Socialist Web Site* criticized Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez from the left, for defending Joe Biden. In response, the DSA leadership launched a coordinated campaign to joke about the assassination of Trotsky and to praise Stalin. It was a direct response to the response which we got for our article, which was read over 100,000 times, and after which we were exchanging messages with a very, very high number of DSA members all over the country. The defeat of the AFL-CIO unionization drive at Bessemer also played a part, where this right-wing bureaucracy, the RWDSU, with the support of the DSA and every other organization, couldn’t even win support from 15 percent of the workforce at this massive Amazon facility. Point being, they are attacking us from an extremely defensive standpoint.

**Eric London (48:39)**

The DSA, from its founding by the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, was explicitly founded as a part of the Democratic Party. And its orientation within the Democratic Party was throughout the Carter administration, throughout the Tip O’Neill reign of the conservative Democratic Party in the 1980s, throughout the 90s throughout the Congressional Progressive Caucus. So the DSA has had 50 years to push the Democratic

Party to the left from within. Over that period the Democratic Party has gone further and further to the right, to the point where the DSA is in the absurd position of trying to be a socialist organization that has five members of the Democratic Caucus in Congress supporting Joe Biden and Nancy Pelosi.

**Joseph Kishore (1:01:09)**

The important thing to understand in all of this is that the fundamental target is the working class. The UMW, what they are terrified of is the growth of opposition within their so-called “own” members, that is, the workers they claim to represent. And what they are very fearful of is that the opposition among the workers will take an organized and conscious form. That’s why there’s the hysterical opposition to the development of rank-and-file committees, independent organizations of working class struggle through which the workers can in fact fight for their interests, can organize and unite and develop a coordinated struggle not only in the US but all over the world. The ruling class has created a social powder keg. To put it in a somewhat broader framework, the response to the pandemic, decades of social inequality, of relentless assault on the working class, in which the unions have worked to suppress opposition, the incredible concentration of wealth in the oligarchy, then the pandemic which has killed over 600,000 people—in fact, more like a million—in the US, 3.5 million around the world, the oligarchy has used it to amass unprecedented levels of wealth, they’re carrying out austerity measures and demanding that the workers pay for it. This is producing a social explosion. And that is what they’re really terrified of. But we are oriented toward building a movement in the working class. That’s what they don’t want, an independent movement of the working class to break the working class from the Democratic Party.



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