

“An Island at the Center of World History”: Leon Trotsky commemoration to be held on Prinkipo on August 20th

Our reporters
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“An Island at the Center of World History: Trotsky on Prinkipo,” will be livestreamed from Turkey on Trotsky.com at 5:00 pm local time, 2:00 pm GMT, 10:00 am EDT (full time zone conversions) on Sunday, August 20, 2023. (The url, Trotsky.com, will forward to the event page before the event takes place.)

On August 20, 2023, Trotsky’s four-year exile in Turkey from 1929 to 1933 will be honored at an event on Prinkipo, an island in the Sea of Marmara off the coast of Istanbul. Trotsky took refuge on Prinkipo following his expulsion from the Soviet Union by the Stalinist regime.

The event is titled “An Island at the Center of World History: Trotsky on Prinkipo.” The principal speakers will be David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*; Ula? Ate?çi, a leading member of Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu [Socialist Equality Group] in Turkey; and Eric London, an editorial board member of the WSWS, who has written extensively on the assassination of Leon Trotsky. Professor Mehmet Ö. Alkan, the chairman of the History Foundation in Turkey, will moderate the event.

The commemoration is sponsored by the Prinkipo (Adalar) Municipality, led by Mayor Erdem Gül. Prior to his election in 2019, Gül established a reputation as a principled journalist. In November 2015, when he was the Ankara representative of the daily *Cumhuriyet*, Gül was arrested and jailed for three months, along with the newspaper’s Editor-in-Chief Can Dündar, for reporting on the so-called “M?T trucks.” The story pertained to the discovery of weapons believed to be destined for Islamist jihadist forces in Syria in trucks belonging to the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (M?T)

that were stopped in the southern Turkish provinces of Hatay and Adana in January 2014.

The meeting coincides with the 90th anniversary of Trotsky’s departure from Prinkipo in July 1933 and falls exactly on the 83rd anniversary of his assassination in August 1940.

David North, who has played a leading role in the international Trotskyist movement for almost a half-century, stressed the historical significance of the commemoration, telling the WSWS:

The four years spent by Leon Trotsky on Prinkipo were among the most consequential, not only in his own life, but also in the history of the twentieth century. He arrived in Turkey in February 1929, several months before the outbreak of the world economic crisis that precipitated the political upheavals of the 1930s. Trotsky left Turkey several months after the rise to power of Hitler in Germany, the most serious defeat ever inflicted on the working class.

Despite the remoteness of Prinkipo from the great political centers of Europe and North America, Trotsky’s political analyses of the major events of the period were without equal. No one understood more clearly, or wrote so passionately, on the danger posed by the growth of Hitler’s Nazi movement. Had Trotsky’s warnings been heeded by the mass working class parties in Germany, the world would have been spared the catastrophe of World War II.

North also called attention to the fact that Trotsky, even as he wrote prolifically on contemporary political and social events, managed to write other important works.

Notwithstanding his intense engagement with the events of the day, Trotsky wrote his autobiography *My Life* and *The History of the Russian Revolution*. Both works are acknowledged masterpieces of 20th century literature.

But the most important of Trotsky's actions while on the island of Prinkipo occurred shortly before his departure. In July 1933, Trotsky issued his call for the building of the Fourth International. That action, provoked by the betrayals of Stalinism, ensured the survival of the international socialist movement.

North expressed his appreciation of the decision of Mayor Gül and the Prinkipo Municipality to host the event.

"I believe the decision to sponsor this event reflects a serious attitude toward history and an understanding of the great and enduring significance of the work carried out by Trotsky during the four critical years of his stay on Prinkipo. Between 1929 and 1933, it was truly an island at the center of world history. This is a magnificent chapter in the history of Prinkipo for which it shall forever be honored."

Ula? Ate?çi, who is the editor of Mehring Yay?nc?l?k, which publishes Trotskyist literature in Turkey, told the WSWS: "This event on Prinkipo, which had the privilege to host this great Marxist revolutionary during the first years of his exile from the USSR, has an international and historical significance. The ideas of Trotsky, who was assassinated 83 years ago as an arch-enemy of the imperialist powers and the Stalinist bureaucracy, are becoming more and more important in a world shaken by crises and hurtling towards a global war."

Ate?çi welcomed the participation of Professor Alkan as the moderator of the event. "Professor Alkan has a long and distinguished career as a scholar. He is currently the head of the Division of Political History at

Istanbul University, has published more than 300 articles and wrote or edited over 20 books. Among these works are *The History of the Turkish Working Class from the Tanzimat Era to the Present 1839-2014*; *150th Anniversary of Das Kapital, 1917: Revolution in Russia* and *The Republic: A Centenary Evaluation*."

One of the villas on Prinkipo where Trotsky lived still exists, but it is in extreme disrepair. North expressed the hope that the holding of the meeting will lead to its full restoration. "The house where Trotsky lived is a major historical site," North told the WSWS. "It should be restored to pristine condition and serve as a center for the study of the life of a monumental figure in the history of the 20th century whose work remains the foundation of the contemporary world socialist movement."

The public event will be streamed live to allow viewing by an international audience. Details will be posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* as they become available.



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