

Leon Trotsky commemoration on Prinkipo is widely covered in Turkish media

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1 September 2023

The August 20 event, “An Island at the Centre of World History: Leon Trotsky on Prinkipo” attracted a lot of interest and raised Trotsky as a living figure in debates on history and politics in recent weeks.

The event commemorated the four years that Trotsky spent on Prinkipo between 1929 and 1933 after his forced exile from the Soviet Union to Turkey. The meeting also coincided with the 83rd anniversary of the assassination of Trotsky by a Stalinist agent in 1940.

The event was hosted by Adalar Municipality with the contributions of Adalar City Council, the *World Socialist Web Site*, Mehring Yay?nc?l?k and History Foundation, and was moderated by historian Prof. Mehmet Ö. Alkan. The main speakers were David North, chairman of the WSWs International Editorial Board, Eric London, a member of the WSWs Editorial Board, and Ula? Ate?çi, editor of Mehring Yay?nc?l?k and a leading member of the Socialist Equality Group in Turkey.

The meeting, attended by leading representatives of the International Committee of the Fourth International, brought forward a historical and cultural heritage of international importance that had been neglected for decades: The restoration of the Trotsky House on Prinkipo and its transformation into an international center for the study of Trotsky’s life and work.

The widespread response to the event by the audience and the media testifies to the growing interest in Trotsky and Trotskyism today.

More than 160 people attended the event, which took place about an hour and a half from the city centre of Istanbul, and about 2,000 people watched the online video. The speeches were followed by a lively question and answer session. The audience also showed great interest in the literature published by Mehring Yay?nc?l?k. Among the literature was North’s *Leon*

Trotsky and the Struggle for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century, which has just been published in Turkish.

The historically important event was widely publicised through social media promotion and street posters, and received a mostly positive responses. Famous actress Bennu Y?ld?r?mlar shared the event poster with her followers on social media. Her response was among the notable reactions from the art world.

Media coverage and commentary on the event overwhelmingly reflected an awareness of Trotsky’s historical and political significance and the fact that his ideas are still relevant today.

T24 and *Art? Gerçek*, two of the most widely read oppositional media in Turkey, published detailed reports in the run-up to the event on August 20. In addition, the websites of *Avlaremöz*, *Ada Gazetesi*, *Medya Günlü?ü*, *Bizim Yaka ?stanbul*, *Seçkin Haber TV*, *Sol Medya*, *Susma Gazetesi* and *Kahveli Okur* announced the meeting to their readers.

Many media outlets published reports on the commemoration itself following the event. The weekly *?alom* covered the event on its front page.

“David North, chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, a prominent figure in the Trotskyist movement, summarised the historical points of the revolutionary struggle in his speech,” wrote P?nar K?lavuz Ekerbiçer in her report in the *?alom*. She added:

Citing Trotsky’s warnings against imperialism, wars and the crises of the new world order, [North] emphasized that Trotsky is still an important revolutionary and historical figure today. At the end of his speech, he

expressed his hope that the house where Trotsky lived will be restored and turned into an international study centre.

Ekerbiçer also pointed out Eric London's critical speech on the assassination of Trotsky and the "Security and the Fourth International" investigation launched by the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1975. She concluded her article with the hope that "the house where Trotsky lived will be restored to its original state as soon as possible and turned into an internationally known centre of research and study."

Yalçın Eralp, a Turkish retired ambassador, wrote an article in the *Serbestiyet* titled, "Funding sought for restoration of Trotsky's ruined mansion on Prinkipo." He called attention to North's comments on the Trotsky House on Prinkipo at the end of his speech. North had concluded his remarks by stating:

Permit me to conclude by expressing the hope that the villa where Trotsky lived will be fully restored and become an international center for the study of Trotsky's vast political and intellectual legacy. In undertaking such a project, with the necessary international support, Prinkipo will not only reaffirm its place in world history, but also make a significant contribution to mankind's future.

Eralp wrote that "The building known as the 'Trotsky House' on Prinkipo is now in ruins. Now a private individual has it and funding is being sought for the restoration of the building. Mayor Gül announced that he would help with the necessary permits." Eralp added: "If funding is found, perhaps the Istanbul Municipality, which restored the Stone School on the island, will also restore this historic building."

Aydan Çelik, who is on the editorial board of the History Foundation's respected journal *Toplumsal Tarih* (Social History), referred to the event in his article on *T24*, directing his readers to the link to the Turkish translation of North's speech for a more detailed review.

A predictably hostile reaction to Trotsky and the Prinkipo commemoration came from a former Maoist and now "liberal" journalist Oral Çalçınlar. He covered the event in his column in the daily *Posta*, one of the most widely read pro-government newspapers in Turkey.

Çalçınlar's article is completely devoid of the most basic criteria of objective reporting to which a journalist should adhere. His reaction epitomizes the cynicism of a one-time student radical who has easily made the transition from Maoist demagogue to petty-bourgeois careerist. Hatred of Trotskyism—that is, of principled socialist politics—is the enduring link that connects the two stages of Çalçınlar's philistine life.

We urge our readers to watch the video of the Trotsky commemoration and to carefully study the speeches that were delivered at the Prinkipo commemoration.



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