Mehring Yay?nc?l?k holds screenings of *Tsar to Lenin* in Istanbul and Izmir

Our reporters
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Last month, Mehring Yay?nc?l?k, publishing arm of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Turkey, organized two public screenings of the unique documentary film on the 1917 Russian Revolution, *Tsar to Lenin*, in Istanbul and Izmir.

The events were held with the collaboration of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International) and its student and youth organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). SEP chairman Ula? Sevinç delivered a speech on "The Relevance of the October Revolution of 1917." Based on David North's introduction to the 2012 DVD release, the film's extraordinary story was presented to the audience at both events.

The film's first public screening in Turkey was organized by the Social Equality Group, in political solidarity with the ICFI, on November 16, 2014, in Taksim, Istanbul. At the event, the group's leader, Halil Çelik, gave a speech titled "The October Revolution and the struggle against imperialist war."

The next public screening took place in Kad?köy, Istanbul, in 2017. Çelik gave a presentation titled "The Relevance of the Russian Revolution on its centenary." It was organized as part of ICFI's lectures and events marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution.

The screening held in Istanbul on November 15, 2025, had a special historical significance. The venue, Tokatl?yan Han in Beyo?lu, was a famous hotel in the 1920s. In February 1929, Leon Trotsky, who co-led the October Revolution alongside Vladimir Lenin, was exiled to Istanbul by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The hotel hosted Trotsky for several weeks after he was forced to leave the Soviet consulate. He would eventually settle on Prinkipo (Büyükada). The film would be completed in 1931, while Trotsky was in exile on the island.

The event in Istanbul took place on the last day of painter Gülhan's exhibition, "Trotsky Was Here." Gülhan had played a significant role in initiating the annual Trotsky commemorations on Prinkipo. At the event, she presented her exhibition, "Trotsky's Path," which is a comprehensive work related to the places Trotsky visited throughout his life. The exhibition first opened in August at the "Third International Commemoration of Leon Trotsky" on Prinkipo, which featured an online interview with David North on the 85th anniversary of the assassination of Trotsky.

The event held in Izmir, an Aegean Sea city, on November 30 was the first public event of the SEP in this major city. With a population of 4.5 million, Izmir is Turkey's third largest city.

Ula? Sevinç began his remarks by drawing attention to the recent upsurge in workplace fatalities, including those involving children. Recently, seven workers died in Dilovas?, a 75-year-old truck driver died in Fatsa, and a 16-year-old child worker died in Mersin. The death of 15-year-old Muhammed Kendirci in Urfa was one of the latest examples of preventable workplace deaths in Turkey, caused by the pursuit of capitalist profit and wealth accumulation.

He stated that the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that approximately 3 million workers worldwide die each year due to workplace accidents and occupational diseases. As a global problem, this massacre stemmed from the capitalist system.

Sevinç pointed out that all of this occurred in a world where production and social wealth had grown enormously, alongside revolutions in science and technology. "Yes, there is massive social wealth, but it belongs not to the workers who produce it, but to capitalist oligarchs. We have the infrastructure and wealth to rapidly address basic social needs, such as food, health care, education, housing, employment, and culture. However, the interests of a handful of capitalists stand in the way."

The ruling class was aware that social tensions and discontent are steadily increasing. To protect and expand its wealth and power, it has two interconnected solutions: "declaring war on the working class and its living conditions and replacing democracy with authoritarian regimes. The second and connected solution is imperialist re-division of the world by war."

In this environment, we are witnessing the rise of political oppression and the elimination of democratic rights in Turkey, he continued, emphasizing that this does not stem solely from President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an, the so-called "strongman," as the pseudo-left claims. This was a result of the crisis of the entire capitalist system and the interests of the ruling class.

To understand the link between widespread child labor exploitation, increasing workplace fatalities, growing poverty, and authoritarianism, one must look at the enormous social inequality. According to UBS's 2025 Global Wealth Report, Turkey ranked second in wealth inequality across Europe as of 2024, based on the Gini coefficient. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜ?K), 7 million children (31.3 percent) in Turkey were living below the poverty line in 2023. Turkey ranked second in Europe

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among OECD members in terms of child poverty.

Sevinç explained that the situation in Turkey was part of a global crisis and that the epicenter of the crisis was the United States, the heart of the imperialist system. This was a revolutionary crisis. He reported that North gave lectures titled “Where is America going?“ in Berlin on November 18 and in London on November 22, noting that he drew attention to the enormous social inequality in the US as a key to understand the escalating crisis.

North drew parallels between the pre-French Revolution period and modern-day America, stating, “It is a characteristic of every ruling class that as it heads for extinction it becomes increasingly aggressive.” A similar situation applied to Turkey and other countries.

The Trump administration was demonstrating the international drive towards authoritarianism. The complicity of the Democrats and “democratic socialist” Zohran Mamdani who has embraced Trump, emphasized that there is no solution to this trajectory under capitalism. Sevinç said, “There is no alternative to capitalism other than a revolutionary solution. This situation applies not only to the United States but also to Turkey and other countries. The capitalist-imperialist system and the interests of the ruling classes are incompatible with democracy, social equality, and peace.”

The ruling class in Turkey, sitting on a powder keg of social unrest, was also directly affected by the emerging imperialist war and geopolitical tensions across the region: the genocide in Gaza, preparations for war against Iran, and the US-NATO war in Ukraine against Russia which posed the risk of a nuclear conflict.

Sevinç emphasized that Trump’s attempt to reach an agreement with Russia on Ukraine or the “peace” he declared in Gaza would not end the war stemming from the contradictions of the capitalist system. The same was true for the US-backed negotiations between the Turkish state and Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). The Marxist-Trotskyist movement’s “peace program” was based on the socialist revolution of the international working class.

Led by Lenin and Trotsky, the October Revolution of 1917 brought an end to World War I through the independent political intervention of the working class. It continued to show the way forward for ending imperialist wars. The same was true for eliminating social inequality and dictatorship arising from the contradictions and crises of the capitalist system.

Sevinç continued:

> The power of this revolutionary perspective, which paved the way for the October Revolution 108 years ago, stems from the fact that it is the only valid and progressive perspective in today’s conditions.
>
> This Marxist perspective also explains how capitalism’s internal contradictions lead to disaster while simultaneously preparing the ground for social revolution. The ruling class can no longer rule as before. At the same time, opposition is growing among the working class and youth worldwide, and the sense is developing among the masses that it is no longer possible to live as before.

The great political confusion that emerged after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991—the final betrayal of the October Revolution by the Stalinist bureaucracy—has begun to be overcome, said Sevinç. An alternative to Stalinism existed from the beginning and was represented by the Left Opposition, and the Fourth International led by Trotsky. New generations of workers and youth were searching for an alternative to capitalism. A striking example of this was a survey showing that 62 percent of young people under the age of 30 in the US view socialism positively.

Sevinç recalled the mass protests that erupted in Turkey in March, the mass movements developing in Africa and South Asia, protests around the world against the genocide in Gaza, the “No Kings“ demonstrations against Trump in the US, and the recent general strikes in Belgium, Italy, and Portugal.

The decisive question was not “whether mass revolutionary movements will erupt, but rather, what perspective and leadership will guide them”:

> The 1917 October Revolution would not have been possible without the leadership of the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky. The outcome of the question of barbarism or socialism, which stands before us today as an urgent problem, depends on our struggle and on developing socialist consciousness within the working class. To achieve this, a break from all parties defending capitalism and repeating the old lie that this system can be reformed is necessary. This means consciously joining the struggle for socialism.

In conclusion, Sevinç informed the audience that David North had announced Socialism AI at the Berlin and London lectures, representing a major breakthrough in the struggle to develop socialist consciousness within the working class. As North stated, just as Diderot’s *Encyclopaedia* contributed to the French Revolution, Socialism AI will be an instrument of the world socialist revolution.

At both events, the Mehring Yay?nc?l?k book stall was open, and lively discussions were held with participants.

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