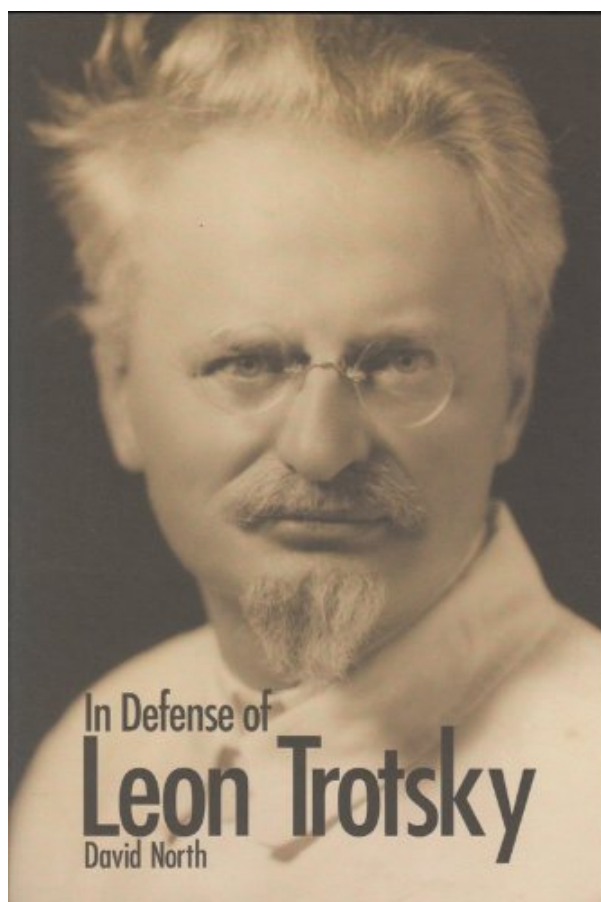
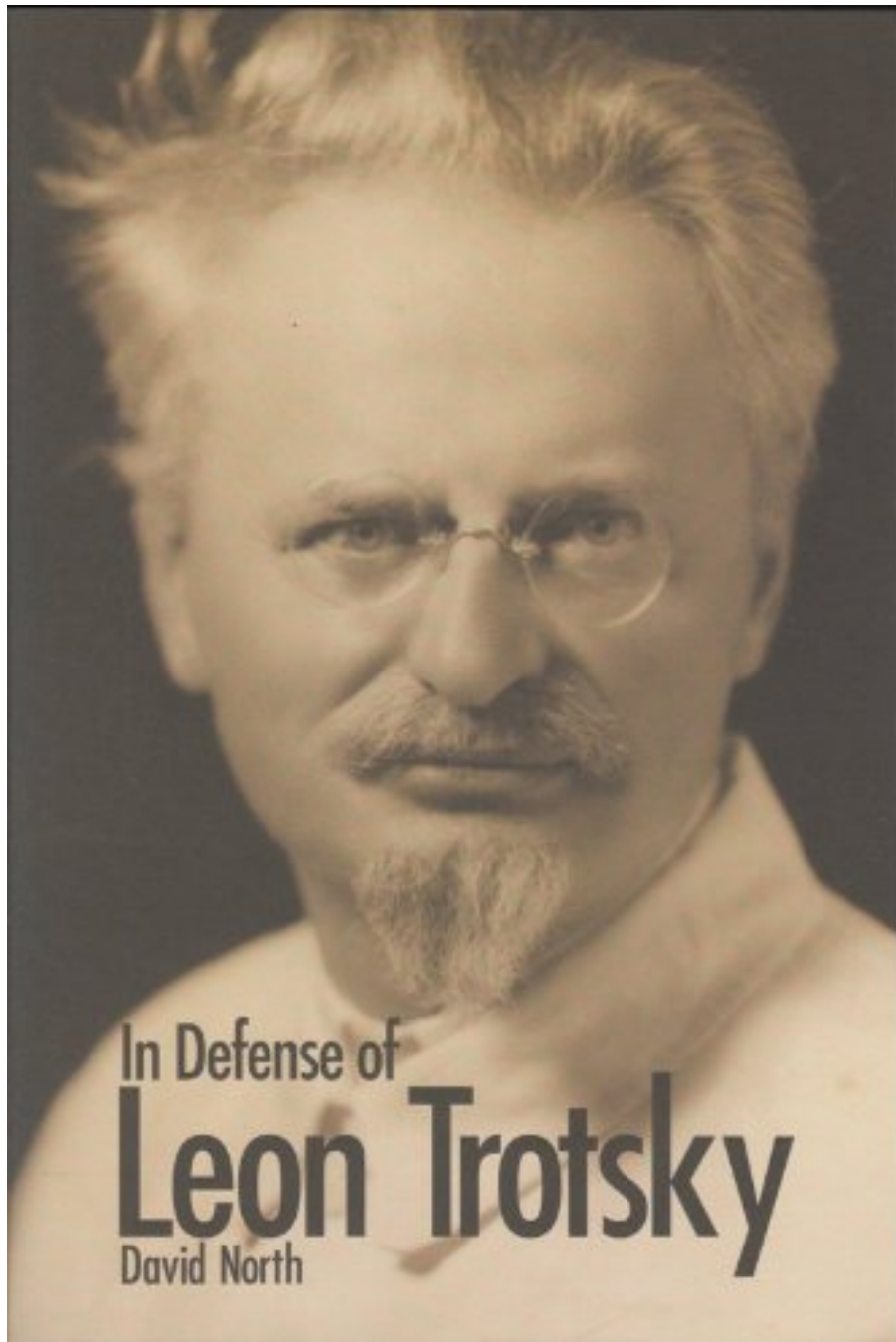


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## About the Author

David North is the chairman of the international editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site. He is the author of numerous books, articles, and lectures on questions relating to contemporary US and international politics, European and Soviet history, and the history of the Trotskyist movement, including; *The Crisis of American Democracy*; *Marxism, History and Socialist Consciousness*; *Leon Trotsky and the Post-Soviet School of Historical Falsification*; and *The Heritage We Defend*.

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Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) the leader of the Russian Revolution and Stalin's unyielding opponent remains an immensely controversial figure seventy years after his assassination in Mexico City. In this collection of essays and lectures, David North, an authority on Soviet history, examines the disputes surrounding Trotsky's life and ideas and explains their contemporary relevance. Exposing recent efforts by several British scholars to denigrate Trotsky's historical role by falsifying history, the author insists that their aim is to forestall a resurgence of interest in the great revolutionist at a time when millions of people are becoming disenchanted with capitalism. The passions evoked by [Trotsky's] name testify to the enduring significance of [his] ideas, North writes in the introduction of his book. Arguments about Trotsky are never simply about what happened in the past. They are just as much about what is happening in the world today, and what is likely to happen in the future. In the first section of *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*, North explores Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution and insists that it had a decisive impact on the events of October 1917, which is often overlooked by scholars. Examining Trotsky's varying treatment at the hands of the liberal left intelligentsia over the post-war period, North argues that shifts in the attitude of scholars towards the Russian revolutionary have been bound up with changes in the objective political and economic situation. He challenges today's historians to once again turn serious and honest attention to Trotsky's life and ideas. In the last two parts of the collection, readers will find reviews of recent biographies of Trotsky written by Geoffrey Swain, Ian Thatcher, and Robert Service. North demonstrates that these biographies reproduce many of the same claims made by Stalin in order to besmirch Trotsky's reputation and undermine his political authority in the working class. Rather than shedding light on the man and his work, these books, which are riddled with factual errors, are part of the unrelenting campaign of vilification of which Trotsky has been the object for decades. *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* contains numerous photographs of Trotsky and family members interspersed throughout the text, as well as a complete index.

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Sets the Record Straight

By John Burton

There may be no political figure of the Twentieth Century more unfairly maligned and misrepresented than Leon Trotsky. There have been three particularly unfair biographies published about him recently: those by Swain, Thatcher and Service. North's book not only exposes their shoddy scholarship, particularly Robert Service's, but sets forth in a very readable and non-dogmatic fashion Trotsky's considerable contributions to culture as well as politics.

This work should stimulate more constructive discussion and research into Trotsky's life.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

North exposes lies, tells truth about Trotskys's historic role

By jwstern

David North sets fact from fiction in his review of claims made in recent biographies featuring Lenin's co-revolutionist and outspoken critic of the Stalinist beaureaucracy. North carefully examines the quality of Trotsky scholarship and calls into serious question the integrity of those complicit in the falsification of history. He finds that many of the claims about Trotsky's life have origins in Soviet fabrications, or are simply made up and unsupported by the authors. North clears the record on Trotsky and restores him to his proper place in history.

This book provides the reader with a decent starting point for studying the life of a brilliant and influential man. I recommend it for anyone seeking to better understand the life of Leon Trotsky or the roots of the international Trotskyist movement.

13 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Why Trotsky is important

By Dave

We are probably all familiar with the casual attitude that tells us, "Now is not the time to think. Now is the time to act. Arguing about revolutionary theory is an unnecessary diversion. Trotsky is irrelevant. We need to organize without getting bogged down in abstruse and divisive theoretical debates." Such is the sort of thinking that passes for strategy in much of what is commonly identified as the "left." But one dismisses the lessons of history at one's own peril. The agents of the ruling class are much less daft with their political strategies.

As the crisis of our society deepens, more and more people will begin to ask questions about potential alternative systems of social organization. Inevitably, this leads to the question of socialism. The standard answer to that question provided by the apologists of the existing order--that the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, as well as China's transition to a market economy, marked the end of socialism for all time--becomes increasingly dissatisfying in its facility and superficiality. Inevitably, those who inquire seriously into the nature and history of socialism and whether there was ever a socialist alternative to the Stalinist system which developed in the Soviet Union (and was later replicated elsewhere) will come to the work of Leon Trotsky, including both his theoretical work and his revolutionary politics.

This is where Ian Thatcher, Geoffrey Swain, and Robert Service come in. Essentially, they provide a service (no pun intended) to the ruling class by ideologically disorienting and thereby politically disarming those inquisitive minds who get as far as asking questions about Trotsky and what he stood for. Since they are mostly incapable of polemicizing against Trotsky's extensive theoretical work, and since in any case they

wish to suppress rather than stimulate interest in their ostensible subject of study, these biographers pay little attention to the substance of Trotsky's ideas and instead concentrate on slinging mud at Trotsky the man. And in doing so they have a wealth of dubious material to draw upon, coming down from previous generations of both counter-revolutionaries and Stalinist apparatchiks. In other words, a new school of historical disinformation has arisen with the purpose of preventing the development of revolutionary political consciousness within the working class. That school achieves a veneer of legitimacy by relying on sources of disinformation cultivated previously by enemies of socialism of various stripes, including both anticommunists and Stalinists, about Trotsky, the man whose name has become synonymous with international socialist revolution.

David North is himself a revolutionary. His purpose is to defend not merely the man Leon Trotsky, but the theory and practice of revolutionary socialism that Trotsky's name stands for. North convincingly refutes the gross falsifications that Thatcher, Swain, and Service rely upon in their efforts to construct a version of history that will prevent people from developing an interest in the real substance of those theories and the real history of that practice. He helps the reader cut through the mass of disinformation and expose the real motives of the modern-day enemies of socialism and the working class who have set about to miseducate yet another generation in the history of the modern world and thereby prevent the development of socialist consciousness in the working class.

In essence, North's struggle against the new school of historical falsification is a continuation of Trotsky's struggle against his own enemies to whom Service et al. pay tribute. On one side there is the power, wealth, and prestige of the official institutions, completely subordinated to a venal elite that can perpetuate its rule only by means of mass deception and violence. On the other side is a relatively small group of revolutionaries whose voice has been systematically suppressed but nevertheless is making itself heard to ever wider layers of the population: to those who are dissatisfied with the standard myths used to justify the status quo and willing to pursue the truth of the past and present even in the face of immense struggles.

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