

Victim of Stalinism protests at threats

Professor Nathan Steinberger writes to the Student Union at Humboldt University, Berlin

28 November 1998

The Socialist Equality Students group at the Humboldt University in Berlin, are hosting the memorial meeting to Vadim Rogovin on December 5. They approached the 'ReferentInnenrat' (student union) for their support for the memorial meeting, as is the usual custom. This was rejected in a provocative letter signed by Mario Pschera, which ended with the words: 'I still have an ice-pick in the fridge'.

Professor Nathan Steinberger, who will be addressing the Berlin meeting, spent 20 years in Stalinist prison camps and exile. He wrote the following letter of protest to the student union.

Dear Members of the *ReferentInnenrat*,

I have been invited by the Socialist Equality Students group to speak at a memorial meeting for the recently deceased Russian historian Professor Vadim Rogovin.

His works represent a fundamental contribution to the history of the Soviet Union, especially of the Stalin era and its terror.

As I myself lived through the Stalinist regime, and am both a witness and victim of this time, permit me to say that the writings of Vadim Rogovin far exceed what has so far been published on this matter. The fundamental error of all these other works consists of their undifferentiated presentation of the Soviet Union, from the revolution of 1917 to its dissolution in 1991, as a uniform development of 'socialism'.

In his detailed studies, Rogovin proves that Stalin's policies were completely opposed to what the Bolsheviks began in the years of the revolution and shortly afterwards. In the final analysis, it was Stalin's policies that sealed the fate of the revolution and the Soviet Union. His bureaucratic regime, despite the orthodox phraseology, contradicted all the elements and fundamental principles of socialism. The crudest

expression of this anti-socialist regime was the terror directed, in the first instance, against the champions of socialism and the activists of the October Revolution. Quite literally, only a handful of these people have survived.

The decline of the Soviet Union was not the result of the defeat of socialism, but a consequence of the suppression of all socialist ideas and tendencies. Rogovin's writings not only preserve the honour of the millions of victims of Stalinist destruction; they also form the beginning of a fundamental re-evaluation of this period.

It is to the credit of the Socialist Equality Students group that in hosting the meeting commemorating Vadim Rogovin, they have sought to give an impulse to the objective study of this period in history. All the more astonishing for me was the reaction of the *ReferentInnenrat* to refuse the meeting even formal support.

Do you at all understand the implications of the concluding sentence of Mr Pschera? This demonstratively condones the murder of the most significant opposition fighter against the Stalin regime. Not only do I expect a personal reply from you, but so do all those who are coming to the memorial meeting. I demand you draw the necessary conclusions from this morally repulsive and scandalous behaviour.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Nathan Steinberger

See Also:

Vadim Rogovin and the significance of his historical work

Memorial meetings to be held in Berlin and London

[27 November 1998]

An interview with Nathan Steinberger:
Lifelong socialist and survivor of Stalinist prison camps
[7 April 1997]



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