

"The End is the Beginning" completes series on socialist opposition to Stalinism in the USSR

Final volume of ground-breaking history presented at tribute to Vadim Rogovin

Our own correspondent
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The seventh and final volume of "Was There an Alternative to Stalinism" by Marxist historian and sociologist Vadim Z. Rogovin was presented on May 15 at the Moscow Institute for the Development of the Press. The meeting was organised by Vadim's widow, Galina Rogovina-Valuzhenich, and was timed to commemorate what would have been Vadim's sixty-fifth birthday.

The meeting was an important scientific and historical event of international significance. Under conditions of the profound political, cultural and intellectual decline which has accompanied the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent period, the meeting represented an important step towards restoring the Soviet historical record and the tradition of an international socialist culture.

The seventh volume of the historical research carried out by Vadim Rogovin, under the title *The End is the Beginning*, was published in Russian at the end of April of this year. The volume is the conclusion of the work to which the author had dedicated his life in the 1990s—the elaboration of the history of the Marxist opposition to Stalinism in the Soviet Union between 1923 and 1941.

The End is the Beginning illuminates the events of 1939 and 1941 and deals with three fundamental themes: the situation in the Soviet Union after the Great Terror up until the invasion of Hitler's troops; international relations in this period, in particular between Hitler's Germany and the Stalin regime; and the circumstances surrounding the murder of Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1940.

Amongst the more than 70 participants at the meeting were students, workers, journalists, friends and colleagues of Rogovin from the Sociological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as representatives from left-wing political tendencies. Also present were the children of supporters of the Left Opposition who survived the bloody Stalinist terror: Valeri Borisovich Bronstein (great grandson of Leon Trotsky), Tatiana Ivarovna Smilga (daughter of the well-known Bolshevik Ivan Smilga), Sorja Leonidovna Serebriakova

(daughter of Lenin's secretary, Leonid Petrovich Serebriakov) and Yuri Vitalievich Primakov (the son of the army commander, Vitali Primakov).

Mikhail Illarionovich Voikov, doctor of economic science and professor at the Russian Academy of Science and president of the Russian Trotsky Institute, remarked at the beginning of the meeting that the gathering was an "historic event in the life of our country, and not just our own country". He expressed his enthusiasm for Vadim Rogovin's astounding contribution to the elaboration and understanding of the history of the Soviet Union.

Voikov emphasised that it had only been possible for Rogovin to bring together such a colossal amount of material because he had devoted his life to a study of this theme. "After reading the works of Rogovin," Voikov said, "one begins to understand the entire power and strength of Trotsky's intellect, as well as the reality of the alternative which I hope will be realised in the Soviet Union, with which we are familiar."

The next speaker was the widow, friend and companion of Vadim Rogovin, Galina Rogovina-Valuzhenich. It is due to her efforts that the incomplete seventh volume of Vadim's historical work has now been published. (See: A tribute to Vadim Rogovin: "A passion for historical truth")

Galina Rogovina spoke of Vadim's personal development, how his interest in the struggle of the Left Opposition matured and the conditions under which he completed his great work. She spoke of the almost complete isolation experienced by Vadim in the final period of perestroika, as he began to work out his ideas in written form, when he was ridiculed for defending his socialist ideals by all those who embraced the hysterical campaign for capitalism at the beginning of the '90s and gave first priority to their own careers.

It was finally through his collaboration with the International Committee of the Fourth International, she said, that Vadim drew encouragement and constructive support for his work. In a moving passage she described the battle they both fought against his cancer, whereby the couple were able to defy all of

the doctors' prognoses predicting Vadim's imminent demise. He in fact lived for another five years and was able to personally supervise the publication of the fifth volume of his work.

Following Galina, the next speaker was David North, the chairman of the editorial board of the WSWs, who praised in particular the scientific and historical significance of Vadim's life and work. (See: A Tribute to Vadim Rogovin) Referring to Rogovin, North spoke of people who were able to reach beyond the limits of their finite physical existence to contribute something new and important to the "collective social being of humanity" and permit them to enter the consciousness of successive generations. "Such a life was that of Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin," North said.

Boris Slavin, doctor of philosophy and professor at the Gorbachev Institute, spoke of the extraordinary power of Vadim Rogovin's books, which gripped the reader's attention as if he were reading a crime thriller.

"It seems to me," he said, "that the decisive historical achievement of Rogovin consists in the fact that he conveyed an understanding of the fact that there is an alternative history. The history which we came to know was a falsification of real Russian history—it was the Stalinist version of this history. But now based on the books by Rogovin we can learn this alternative history, through his attempt to undertake an objective analysis of all the processes of that period."

"The most important question posed by Rogovin," Slavin continued, "and to which we can find an answer in his books, is what happened to us in the '20s, '30s and '40s, but also at the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s. What took place? What was the nature of the society which we lost? What did it consist of? What was good and what was bad? Can one depict this society in a one dimensional manner, or was it contradictory? In fact, it contained people who fought for the realisation of those ideas embodied in the October Revolution—ideas which remained unfulfilled up until today, but which perhaps will be fulfilled in the future.

"Therein lies the particular pathos of the books by Rogovin. He was a unique person and he was alone. But this loneliness was a political loneliness, because the forces which predominated and wrote history in this period did not share his political opinions and were not the sort of forces who were prepared to support him."

Writer Olga Trifonova, the widow of Yuri Trifonov, then spoke of the intellectual kinship between Rogovin and Trifonov, himself one of the most significant Soviet writers in the post-war period.

Olga Trifonova said, "The views of Vadim Zakharovich must have had great influence on Yuri Valentinovich, who was devoted to and loved history, and was not just a writer but also a serious historian. This naturally explains his communication with Vadim Zakharovich.

"When I look at the last photos of Vadim Zakharovich," she

said, "and see the very pronounced wrinkles around his lips, then the picture is very familiar to me. You should know that despite everything he was a happy person. Fate awarded him this remarkable wife, this love which not everybody has; not everybody has the fortune to receive such a gift. Fate allowed him to meet exceptional friends, who were very close to him. This is demonstrated by the words we have heard at this meeting. In addition, all of his books have been published, which is also good fortune.

"We have gathered together to commemorate a person who has had success, experienced fulfilment and the realisation of his greatest hopes and wishes—his books. I am convinced that his name will never be forgotten."

Subsequent speakers included Professor Andrei Ivanovich Vorobiov (member of the Academy of Medical Science), a representative of the Militant political organisation from Ireland, Mark Golovisnin, a former collaborator and assistant of Rogovin, who read a written message from Jean-Jacques Marie, a member of the Workers Party (PT) in France.

Following the meeting, many of those present spoke informally and reported on their personal encounters and discussions with Vadim and his significance for their own lives and work.

In general, the meeting pointed to an important change in the attitude of significant layers of the population to the work of Vadim Rogovin. The broad participation and lively discussion demonstrated that disillusion with the prospects of a capitalist Russia and a capitalist world must inevitably lead to a new interest in a study of the October Revolution—and its main participants freed from Stalinist falsification.

While Vadim lived and worked in almost complete isolation, with his death worthy of only a small mention in *Pravda*, the significant presence of the Russian media at this latest meeting was also indicative of a change. The following day an extensive and favourable report on the meeting was broadcast on *Echo Moscow*, one of the city's main radio stations.

It is no longer possible to cover up with the old lies the history of the struggle by those Marxists gathered together in the Left Opposition—a new debate over these issues will arise. Then the life work of Vadim Rogovin will lie at the heart of an international debate and contribute to the realisation of the ideas which he defended.



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