

Winter Recommended Reading Series

Nick Beams: “A brilliant introduction to dialectical and historical materialism”**The Essential Marx****23 February 2010**

Mehring Books continues its Winter Recommended Reading Series, in which writers for the World Socialist Web Site are asked to share their thoughts about works of Marxist literature that have influenced them and to explain why. This week's recommendation is from Nick Beams, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) and a regular contributor to the WSWs on economic questions, including the evolution of the world economy over the course of the 20th century and the significance of globalization. Last week's recommendation by Shannon Jones talked about David Riazanov's Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: An Introduction to Their Lives and Work. Previous recommendations have also been made by David Walsh and Tom Eley.

Many people upon beginning a serious study of and involvement with the revolutionary socialist movement feel they would like to read and study Marx, especially his magnum opus, *Capital*. But it seems a daunting task. Where is a good place to start is a question often asked.

The Essential Marx provides an answer. It consists of an abridgement by Otto Rühle of Volume I of *Capital* with an introduction by Leon Trotsky. While Trotsky wrote relatively little on *Capital* per se, he had the most profound understanding of this work, something which becomes clear when reading his introduction. Originally published under the title *Marxism in Our Time*, in a few pages Trotsky provides a brilliant introduction to dialectical and historical materialism and the application of the materialist method to the

study of capitalism.

Marx wrote of his work that every beginning is difficult and that the first chapter of *Capital* requires some effort and close attention. But there is no better introduction to an analysis of the law of value, which forms the centre of Marx's work, than that provided by Trotsky.

In addition, in these pages Trotsky provides a devastating critique of the economics and politics of the New Deal of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. For many years this might have been regarded as somewhat “dated.” No longer. The deepening world economic crisis makes Trotsky's comments sparkle with contemporary relevance.

In the text selected by Rühle, the reader will find Marx's essential analysis of the law of value, the origins of surplus value, and the general law of capitalist accumulation. This small book does not replace a study of *Capital*, but it certainly provides a sure guide for those who want to be acquainted with its fundamentals and a good starting point for those who want to begin the longer journey.

The Essential Marx can be ordered online through *Mehring Books* by clicking [here](#).

Price: \$8.95



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact