Winter Recommended Reading Series

Patrick Martin: “A deeply rewarding intellectual journey”

The History of the Russian Revolution by Leon Trotsky

Patrick Martin
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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 Patrick Martin, a regular contributor to the WSWS on US domestic and international politics. Last week’s recommendation by Nick Beams talked about The Essential Marx. Previous recommendations have also been made by Shannon Jones, David Walsh, and Tom Eley.

Reading Trotsky’s *The History of the Russian Revolution* is a deeply rewarding intellectual journey. You have to be ambitious to tackle this imposing work, more than 1,200 pages, by the most brilliant writer and thinker of the 20th century. But there is no better way to understand the decisive experience of that century, and no better preparation for the political tasks that confront working people and youth in the new one.

Trotsky’s *History* is unique in many respects. It is the first time that a leading participant in great events has given a clear account both of *what* happened and *why*. And what events! Tsarism plunging the Russian people into the cauldron of the First World War; masses of workers in the streets under the banner of Marxism; tens of millions of peasants rising up against feudal semi-slavery.

In the most remarkable year in human history, critical turning points follow hard upon each other: The February Revolution; the April Days, with Lenin’s return to Petrograd; the July Days, ending with the Bolsheviks driven underground; the Kornilov revolt and the resurgence of Bolshevism; the October insurrection, culminating in the nationwide victory of the Revolution.

As the author explains in the preface: “During the first two months of 1917 Russia was still a Romanov monarchy. Eight months later the Bolsheviks stood at the helm. They were little known to anybody when the year began, and their leaders were still under indictment for state treason when they came to power. You will not find another such sharp turn in history—especially if you remember that it involves a nation of 150 million people. It is clear that the events of 1917, whatever you think of them, deserve study.”

The History of the Russian Revolution was my introduction, both to the truth of the great revolution, and to the role of revolutionary Marxist leadership as the central factor in modern history. The greatness of the subject of this work is matched by the greatness of the thought of its author, Leon Trotsky. Reading *The History of the Russian Revolution* is a critical necessity for those who wish to prepare for the coming revolutionary struggles on a world scale.

The History of the Russian Revolution can be purchased online from Mehring Books by clicking here .

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