

Mehring Publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair

Our correspondents
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Mehring Verlag (Mehring Publishers) has its own stand at this year's Frankfurt Book Fair. The annual Frankfurt Book Fair is the biggest book fair of its kind in the world, featuring some 7,500 exhibitors from over 110 countries.

The stand for Mehring Verlag features a number of new publications, including beautifully illustrated photo books. The thematic focus of the presentation is the October Revolution of 1917, including books dealing with historical analysis, documentations of the revolution in text, image and film, and the struggle by leading protagonists of the revolution against Stalinist reaction—all issues which have retained their significance up to the present day.

Occupying a central place in the stand is the book *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* by David North, which has now been published in a second, expanded edition. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), leader of the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and of the Red Army, was the founder of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International.

Throughout his life this outstanding Marxist was the target of malicious lies and slander. Seventy years after his assassination by a Stalinist agent, long since discredited Stalinist falsifications of history are re-emerging in recent Trotsky biographies.

The comprehensive analysis provided by David North refutes the recently published biographies by historians Robert Service, Ian Thatcher and Geoffrey Swain, and illuminates the personality of Trotsky for the reader. The first edition of North's *In Defense of Leon Trotsky* won widespread support from renowned historians in the United States, Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Shortly before the Frankfurt Book Fair, Mehring Verlag presented the second edition of *In Defense of*

Leon Trotsky at a panel discussion during the Historian's Convention in Mainz, featuring author David North and Professor Mario Kessler (ZZF Potsdam). (See "Meeting in defense of Leon Trotsky at German Historians Conference")

Also prominent at the Mehring Verlag stand is the latest work by David King, *Ordinary citizens: The victims of Stalin*. British author David King possesses one of the largest collections of Russian revolutionary art and Soviet historical documents in the world. His new book contains photographs of those people who, on the basis of false accusations, were arrested, convicted and shot under Stalin's rule. The police photos from the official interrogation records, neglected for decades in the depths of the Lubyanka prison (secret police headquarters in Moscow), vividly communicate the fear, anger, defiance, desperation and sometimes the enormous sadness of the victims.

The stand also features the illustrated volumes *Russian Revolutionary Posters* and *Red Star Over Russia*, also by David King. *Red Star Over Russia* is a captivating visual history of the USSR from 1917 until the death of Stalin. The viewer is thrust into the centre of cataclysmic events which initially filled the citizens of the first workers' state of the world with hope and enthusiasm, only to give way later, under Stalin's leadership, to resignation and terror.

Russian Revolutionary Posters is a comprehensive collection of 150 posters on political and cultural issues of the period, some of which are amongst the finest examples of poster art.

Dealing with the history of the Russian Revolution, Mehring Verlag in presenting a new publication at the Book Fair: *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The*

Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd. This is the first ever German edition of the work by the American historian Alexander Rabinowitch and is especially topical in the run-up to the anniversary of the October Revolution.

Professor Dr. Heiko Haumann of Basel, Switzerland, writes that Rabinowitch's work has "changed historiography": "Open Minded, carefully based on the available sources and characterised by a detective-like systematic approach, this analysis refutes the long prevailing view in the West that the October Revolution was merely a coup carried out by a small circle of Bolshevik fanatics."

The book makes clear that "the coup of October was both well planned and carried out, but must also be understood as the expression and result of the radicalization of broad layers of the population".

Prof. Dr. Hermann Weber, Mannheim University, writes: "This enthrallingly written, magnificent work by an important (previously outlawed in the Soviet Union) historian ... deserves many German readers."

The sequel by the same author, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd*, is also featured on the Mehring book stand.

Another highlight is the cinematic documentation of the October Revolution, *Tsar to Lenin*, now available on DVD. The film is based on archive material collected over more than 10 years by the legendary Herman Axelbank (1900-1979) with commentary by the former American revolutionary Max Eastman (1883-1969).

Tsar to Lenin provides a unique portrait of the drama and pathos of the Russian Revolution, beginning with the mass revolt and overthrow of the tsarist regime in February 1917, the uprising in October 1917, up to the victory of the new Soviet government in 1921, following three years of civil war. (See *Tsar to Lenin* trailer)

Special mention should also be made of the photo documentary book *Building the Revolution*. The book traces the development of Russian avant-garde architecture from 1922 to 1935 and documents the works of architects such as Konstantin Melnikov,

Moisey Ginsburg and the Vesnin brothers, and features many designs and paintings by artists of the constructivist movement, such as Malevich, Tatlin, Popova and El Lissitzky.

Building the Revolution is also included on the shortlist for the DAM Architectural Book Award. This international prize is awarded by the Frankfurt Book Fair and the German Architecture Museum (DAM) for the best architectural book of the year. Sixty-three publishers have participated worldwide, with a total of 148 titles featured in the competition.

Mehring Verlag can be found at the Frankfurt Book Fair through October 14 in Hall 4.1 at stand E 168.



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