

Mehring Books Holiday Sale feature

Bolsheviks Against Stalinism 1928-1933: Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition—Translator's Foreword

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Recently published in English, Rogovin's second historical volume, Bolsheviks Against Stalinism 1928–1933: Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition, focuses on five critical years during which the Stalinist bureaucracy careened from one economic and political crisis to the next. Stalin's expulsion of Trotsky from the Soviet Union in 1929 failed to silence the great revolutionary and his followers. Trotsky's exposure of Stalin's betrayals encouraged the emergence of a broad network of oppositional groups, which the regime met with intensifying political repression.

Of Rogovin's monumental series, David North wrote, "[A] critical element of Vadim's historical cycle is its interpretation of the conflict between the Stalinist regime and the Left Opposition as a clash of two irreconcilable social principles—those of equality and inequality."

During its Holiday Sale, Mehring Books is offering this volume at a sharply reduced price of \$15 for the black and white version or \$20 for the color version.

This book was published by Vadim Rogovin in Moscow in the fall of 1993, slightly less than two years after the Soviet Union had been dissolved. It is the second volume of what would become a seven-volume study of the struggle of the Left Opposition, both inside the Soviet Union and abroad, as it fought the Stalinist degeneration of the workers' state established after the October Revolution in 1917.

The first volume raises the question: "Was There an Alternative to Stalinism?" It studies the rise of the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky in 1923, and ends with the expulsion of Trotsky and his supporters at the

Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927. The succeeding volumes examine the history of the resistance to Stalinism up through Trotsky's assassination in August 1940 and the outbreak of World War II.

Rogovin began collecting material about the inner-party struggle as a teenager, soon after Stalin's death in 1953. During the "Thaw" in 1956, signaled by Khrushchev's famous secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February, Rogovin's hopes were raised that a true history of this period could be written. But Khrushchev's de-Stalinization was partial; many of the most odious falsifications of history remained.

After Khrushchev's fall in 1964, relatively bleak years dominated on the historical front. Trotsky's name was taboo. None of his works were readily available in the Soviet Union, and Rogovin could not assume that he would ever be able to publish the history he yearned to write. After Gorbachev began the process of "perestroika" in 1985, one of the slogans of that time was "glasnost" (openness). Official Communist Party publications started to publish documents of previously banned topics in Soviet history. Soon a flood of these documents was published in journals, newspapers, and books, often in enormous press runs (the relatively obscure newspaper, *Arguments and Facts*, reached a press run of 33 million!).

Rogovin devoured this material, thoroughly assimilated it, and began to write his volumes with incredible honesty, courage and speed. By 1991, the first volume appeared. By 1992, Rogovin was able to begin collaborating with members of the International Committee of the Fourth International. This collaboration was crucial, since many of Rogovin's

former colleagues and friends were abandoning Marxism and renouncing the entire history of the Soviet Union. Rogovin, on the contrary, eagerly sought interlocutors who were approaching this history from a Marxist perspective. He found them both in Moscow and abroad, as he delivered lectures based on his research in London, Glasgow, the United States, Australia and Germany.

In May 1994, Rogovin was diagnosed with cancer. The prognosis was not good — he was initially given six months to live. Despite this tragic news, Rogovin continued to lecture and write in a way that astounded his oncologists, family, and newly found collaborators. Rogovin worked assiduously until virtually the day before he died, on 18 September 1998.

Rogovin's achievement as a historian is monumental. He was not able to see many of the volumes of documents that have appeared in the former Soviet Union since his death. These include thousands of pages on the NEP; the inner-party struggle; collectivization and industrialization; the Comintern; the Great Terror; and the outbreak of war. Yet what he wrote, based on what he managed to see and use in his analysis of these complex events, stands the test of time. Although published in Russian in 1993, little in this book needs to be changed to be historically accurate.

Given the new socialist wave that Rogovin felt was inevitable, he called for a profound understanding of the historical lessons of the past, in order to avoid fatal mistakes in the coming political battles. This requires a study of the political and ideological heritage of Marxists of the 1930s, many of whom are unknown to the readers Rogovin anticipated, but whose history assumes urgent significance today.

To aid the reader, brief biographies of many of these Marxists have been appended to the book. More volumes are planned to appear in English, joining the two others that have already been published by Mehring Books.



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