Reviews

V.A. Bazarov, ***Productive Labor and Labor that Generates Value***, David G. Rowley (ed., trans., and introduction), self-published, Alden MI 2019; 84pp; ISBN 9781088532454, £6.36, pbk

Sometimes a book has to wait a long time for its translator to come along. In this case, it has taken 120 years. Vladimir Rudnev (nom-de-plume: Bazarov) first published this pamphlet – an analysis and critique of Marx's economics – in Russia in 1899, when he was just twenty-five years old.

The case Bazarov made – on the basis of a close reading of the three volumes of *Das Kapital* – was that Marx had introduced an inconsistency into his own analysis of capitalist production in regarding the labour expended in banking, trade and commerce in capitalist society as 'unproductive', and the expenses of circulation of commodities as 'a *deduction* from the gross surplus value created by the labour of industrial workers' (p52). On the contrary, Bazarov argued, 'the labour of the safekeeping of commodities, of trade, of banking is *productive*, since it is socially necessary in the commodity-capitalist system of production' (p38), and further, production should be regarded as 'the entire totality of the *socially-necessary* manipulations necessary for an object of nature to be transformed into an object of use' (p43).

The significance of this work, from today's perspective, consists not so much in Bazarov's attempt to refine Marx's political economy to lend it 'a completely harmonious and finished form' (p6), as in what it tells us about the first generations of Russian Marxist intellectuals. Bazarov, along with his close colleagues A.A. Bogdanov and I.I. Skvortsov-Stepanov, was mainly concerned at this point with organising workers' circles and educating them in Marxian economics. Bogdanov's *Short Course of Economic Science*, first published in 1897 and issued in translation by the CPGB in 1923, was the major work of this group, and can still be regarded as a classic primer of its type. Bazarov's contribution was supplementary to these efforts. What we see here is evidence of the remarkable seriousness of these young people, the depth of their engagement with, and understanding of, Marx's ideas, and their keenness to make this knowledge available to Russian workers. At the same time, there is very little of the authoritarian outlook which later infected Russian Marxism, in which 'revisionism'

was heresy. Bazarov felt no need to pretend he was not trying to 'revise' Marx's economics. The case he made was frank, coherent, and, on its own terms, convincing.

Rowley's translation is fluent and generally accurate. He provides extensive citations from the German editions of *Das Kapital* in his editorial footnotes to situate the points Bazarov was making. The editorial introduction gives a potted biography of Bazarov, detailing his later career as a Bolshevik around 1905, as an independent social-democratic internationalist journalist in 1917-18, and subsequently as one of the pioneers of planning economics in the USSR. There is also a brief discussion of some of the wider literature on Bazarov, although this could usefully have been expanded.

This is a very worthwhile and affordable little book for anyone interested in questions of Marxian political economy or the intellectual history of the Russian revolutionary movement in its most original and creative period, over a century ago.

Francis King

Christopher Chitty, ***Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System***, Max Fox (ed.), Christopher Nealon (introduction), Theory Q series, Duke University Press, Durham NC and London, 2020, xii + 222pp; ISBN 9781478009580, £19.99, pbk

Christopher Chitty was undertaking a PhD thesis when he committed suicide in 2015. This book is based on his work for his doctorate and was prepared for posthumous publication by Max Fox. He claims to have discharged his responsibilities thoroughly:

> I tracked down nearly all of his sources and was able to verify their accuracy (or fix his citations), but between him and me and each of our limitations, there are bound to be errors for which we share responsibility (ppx-xi).

At the start of Chapter 4 (Homosexuality and Bourgeois Hegemony), Chitty refers to an anonymous eighteenth-century work, *Le nouveau tableau de Paris*, which contains an account of the author's visit to the Jardin des Tuileries:

> I no longer see this garden as it was under the reign of the voluptuous and shameless Louis XV, who presented a spectacle of dissolution to the Nation over which he exercised a tyrannical power: now I behold whores under the trees of the garden, turning the residence of our kings into a public brothel, and on the adjacent side, my gaze was on some dozen occasions drawn to that infamous traffic of the children of Sodom [*enfants de sodome*], whose species abounds in France and who have established a nightly rendez-vous on the terrasse de Feuillants for conducting the most abominable orgies under the name, 'The Path of Heavy Breathing' [*allé des Soupirs*] … (pp106-107).

Chitty informs us that the translations are his own. Suspicions are aroused by the erroneous lower case for *Sodome* and the loss of a final 'e' in *Allée* – which has also lost its capital. However, this is not the major problem. After the colon, the original text reads (on p14 of the original): 'dans ce temps, je voyois sous les arbres de ce jardin, des filles prostituées, faire de la demeure de nos Rois un b … public'. In the original, the author is clearly referring to the time of Louis XV. The 'dans ce temps' refers to that time, something clearly indicated by the use of the imperfect tense ('voyois' in the spelling of the time).

Either Chitty's French was unequal to the task or he has altered the text to support a point he wishes to make. He believes that the Revolution represented a moment of transformation in which the old order gave way to a new sexual order, allowing private sexual acts to move into public spaces:

> This movement initiated a struggle between proletarians and bourgeoisie over the legitimate use and moral order of the urban fabric and generated a wholly new kind of libertine literature, one declaring the solidarity of all bodies pursuing sexual freedom outside middle-class norms (p107).

This would be a minor matter if Chitty cited other sources in support. *Le nouveau tableau* is clear: the scene is from the time of Louis XV, not the Revolutionary period.

This is not the only source of concern. Where Chitty sees liberty, 'the solidarity of all bodies pursuing sexual freedom outside middle-class norms', the original text sees corruption and exploitation. The anonymous author talks about 'the children of Sodom … whose species abounds in France'. He later talks of 'defiling purity'. There is no doubt that he sees not sexual freedom but abuse. The term 'enfants' brings this

point home. Those in power and authority are abusing the young and powerless. What went on in the days of Louis XV was an ethical and political betrayal.

Trust in the accuracy of cited primary sources is crucial to scholarship. This inaccuracy leads one to ask if there are others. This raises a further question: why was this not spotted? Chitty wrote this as part of his thesis. His supervisor or supervisors should surely have picked this up. Fox's claim to have checked the accuracy of the sources simply is not true – at least in this instance.

Earlier on p82, Chitty writes of how texts from ancient Athens and Rome pointed to 'a world in which same-sex sexuality was not only tolerated but perhaps even celebrated as the foundation of cities and republics'. He claims that modern scholars play down the paedophiliac aspect of this sexuality with which they are uncomfortable:

> Much of queer theory and feminism have at least implicitly supported this censorship of the same-sex sexuality of the ancient world by adopting the view that pederasty was universally sexually abusive for the boy (p82).

Chitty does not provide testimony from any source, ancient or modern, to back his contention. It is now accepted that the victims of child abuse (almost always by people who in positions of trust and who have a responsibility towards them) suffer a trauma that is deep-seated and lasting. At the beginning of the next paragraph, he says that this is 'a politically and ethically fraught subject'. Is it really? It is not enough to argue that it is unfair to hold the past to present standards (presentism). There may have been an evolution of attitudes (as there has been with regard to slavery, for example) but that should encourage the reader to engage ethically and politically with the past.

The reference to feminism raises another issue, Chitty's attitude to women. In his final chapter, he dismisses 'the liberal sexual ethics of high-income societies' which 'have become the basis for the interventions of a global civil society of NGOs analogous to the charitable organizations of the high Victorian period in Britain (p177):

> Whereas such phenomena led Victorian reformers to criticize the social relations of capitalism and to view such problems as consequences of a ruthless drive of capital toward extracting ever greater profit, the connection is less apparent to the Ladies Bountiful tending to the new

> global poor, who have been relegated to the hell of various informal kinds of subsistence and hustle (p177).

It is valid to argue that NGOs should question the structures that cause the deprivation they seek to address but the reference to 'Ladies Bountiful' is misogynistic and derogatory. It feminises NGOs in order to denigrate them. Nealon in his introduction is clearly aware that Chitty has much to do in this area: 'A pressing question for any student of the history of sexuality who reads *Sexual Hegemony* will surely be its relationship to feminism and to lesbian studies (p13). He concludes: 'it is hard to read *Sexual Hegemony* without a sense of its unfinished exploration of feminist scholarship' (p14).

This perhaps sums up my overall response to this book: more work needed to be done. At a very simple level, some of the sentences just do not make sense. Chitty did indeed have, as Fox writes in the Foreword, 'a rare eye and mind' (pviii). He was asking important questions. However, what we have is something that ultimately does not fulfil its promise and its publication is questionable.

John McCann

Andy Croft, *The Years of Anger: The Life of Randall Swingler*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2020; 317pp; ISBN 9780367344764, £27.99, pbk

The year after Randall Swingler died I went up to Essex University, and by December I was falling apart at the seams. At the end of my tether, I drove through the snows to Pebmarsh looking for my godmother, Geraldine Swingler. She took me in and I knew I had finally found someone who understood and could put my mind at rest. I became a regular visitor and later lived nearby until 1977.

The cottage then was still much as described in this book except that there was a cold tap in the kitchen. There was no bath or WC, one had to pee in the orchard, and the light came from Aladdin lamps which burned with a quiet white flame leaving smutty rings on the low wooden ceiling. In the evenings we sat up half the night talking by the stove, drinking wine and throwing mandarin peel on the coals until the whole room was heavy with the scent. Sometime in the small hours I would light a candle and climb the rickety stairs to a tiny bedroom snug between the stove and the thatch.

I write about the cottage and the welcome I received there because it was there that I first realised the expressive power of classical music (through hearing James Gibb play a Chopin Nocturne). It was from Geraldine that I learned to appreciate the human elements of music, she took me to hear Sviatoslav Richter and the young Radu Lupu, who she said (rightly) would be one of the great pianists of our age. She helped me study music at the Guildhall, and she told me about the poets who had frequented Mount Pleasant, Dylan Thomas made a pass at her (no surprises there), Louis McNiece and John Berger visited, and W.H. Auden wrote a poem in the orchard (she did not say if he was taking a pee at the time). In fact it was through Geraldine that I was enabled to see that it was free to find my own way in life rather than developing blindly along the paths ordained by accidents of birth and education. I was always very aware that Randall had a lot to do with that.

The journey detailed in Andy Croft's biography spans the most turbulent decades of the twentieth century. It paints a picture of a man who started in the idyllic circumstances of a large Anglican family before the first war, seemingly springing fully armed from the head of Zeus. He was a classical scholar, a fine flautist who played in professional orchestras, a prolific poet and an excellent athlete and cross-country runner. Just to put the cherry on the cake, he married a beautiful and intelligent concert pianist (Geraldine told me he came backstage after a concert, dropped a halfpenny in her cup, and asked her to marry him). From that idyllic beginning is here painted an obstacle course of political struggle, traumatic military adventures, disillusionment and finally descent into quietism and depression during his last decade in Pebmarsh.

This biography will be of interest not only to historians of the British left, but also especially to friends and students of Geraldine and Mary and James Gibb, who were all active as teachers for many years after Swingler's death. This second edition adds some detail to the first edition, most notably from his MI5 files which have now been released, about which more later. Croft is sensitive enough to show the way in which Swingler didn't so much rebel against his Anglican upbringing, but rather sublimated his Christian values into a form of messianic socialism. After joining the CP in 1934 he threw himself into political activity, writing, organising and founding and supporting many of the most prominent literary and political journals of the day. There is a wealth of closely researched information here for anyone wanting to know more about the small poetry presses and political journals of the period, and Croft unpicks for us the way in which Swingler's relations with the CPGB

head office at King Street waxed and waned. Concurrently with all these writing, editing and committee meeting activities, Swingler was organising revues for the Unity Theatre and maintaining a busy social life with a regular crowd of poets and musicians of the day. Croft lists the many contemporary composers who set Swingler's words to music, including Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Alan Rawsthorne, Bernard Stevens and Elisabeth Lutyens, who remarked that Swingler had been set by more composers than any other poet of his era.

Croft is good on Swingler's military campaign. He was in the Signals regiment in the Italian campaign and was awarded the Military Medal. The book details the way in which his officers came to trust and admire him despite his openly communist beliefs. A lot of this is culled from letters to Geraldine, which are quoted extensively, and which provide a very revealing window into the life of a soldier under fire. During the battle of Camino he was buried for several hours and emerged to find himself the only survivor of his unit, an experience which affected him deeply, and led to some fine poetry. Later, when the fighting was over and he was twiddling his thumbs with an army of occupation, he used to break the rules and fraternise with the Italian and Yugoslav partisans. Croft gives a hilarious account of an occasion when he confused a new officer by dressing up in a partisan outfit ('that weren't no partisan, that was old Randall').

After the war, there was the Cold War, and this biography discusses the way in which Swingler was treated by his contemporaries, Spender and Orwell denounced him, the BBC blew hot and cold, but mostly cold. Swingler continued his political activities until 1956, he was a founder member of *The New Reasoner,* and continued writing libretti for Alan Bush as well as publishing a collection of poems *The Years of Anger* in 1946. Stay at home contemporaries like Spender announced there were no worthwhile war poets and the guardians of the literary canon closed ranks against him. He threw himself back into writing and political organising. This often involved boozing, as mentioned earlier the MI5 files, whilst not containing any startling revelations, are often useful in that they show where Swingler was when nobody else seemed to know. Indeed, Swingler himself didn't always know where he was, one morning he woke up with a raging hangover and realised he had been supposed to give a lecture the evening before. He rang to apologise only to be told that he had given the lecture, and very interesting it was too.

Croft comments extensively on the poetry which he knows inside out. The poetry made a journey as varied and colourful as the man, from

Georgian lyricism to an end point which is confessional, almost mystical. No space to say more here, so I'll leave you with the opening lines of his last great poem *The Map*:

The bomb-bud burst
And blossomed
And blew
The map out of my hand.

Ben Thompson

Mike González, ***In the Red Corner: The Marxism of José Carlos Mariátegui***, Haymarket Books, Chicago IL, 2019; 248pp; ISBN 9781608469154, $19.00, hbk

José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930), was a Marxist intellectual born in Peru. The year 2020 marked the ninetieth anniversary of his death. Since then, a lot of water has passed under the bridge with regard to the diffusion, circulation and reception of his work in Peru, Latin America and the world. Anniversaries are symbolic events which provide occasions not just for posthumous 'tributes', but to take stock and consider perspectives for the present time. After all, as Walter Benjamin said, the fundamental concept of historical materialism is updating. It is in this sense that Mike González's political biography of Mariátegui allows us to explore his multidimensionality.

Over ten chapters, *In the Red Corner* rescues the original thought of Mariátegui, and seeks to reconstruct his political development in its various stages. González endeavours to explain and understand the themes addressed by the Peruvian thinker during the 1920s and relate them to the political and cultural processes experienced in Latin America in recent decades, thereby bringing the thought of Mariátegui to life. González applies Mariátegui's analyses to practical anti-capitalist politics, not as closed and homogeneous formulae, but in the context of a multiplicity of interpretations and actions in historical controversies. We should note that González is chiefly addressing an activist and militant (and not necessarily academic) audience, and that this book was accompanied by another study on the decline of the Latin American left.

The first chapter is one of the most interesting. González marks the

centenary in 1994 of Mariátegui's birth as a kind of 'resurrection' of his Marxism, a 'new political consciousness' in the face of a working class shaped by the exploitation and oppression of neo-liberal capitalism (p6). The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Eastern European bureaucracies opened up the possibility of discovering heretical authors of the Marxist tradition.

In subsequent chapters, González deals with the public trajectory of Mariátegui and his macropolitical context. Starting with a political, economic and social contextualisation of Peru in the first three decades of the twentieth century, González characterises the young Juan Croniqueur – the pseudonym adopted by Mariátegui in his writings between 1914 and 1917. The account then moves on to Mariátegui's time in Europe, and particularly Italy where he discovered Marxism, in the post-war context in Europe and the crisis of capitalism. Upon his return to Lima, Mariátegui taught at the Universidad Popular 'González Prada' in 1923 and 1924, a collective space created by sections of the student and labour movement in Lima. Mike González presents Mariátegui's political objectives on his return from Europe, inspired by 'the action of the multitudes' (p69): setting up a publishing house (Empresa Minerva), publication of magazines (*Claridad* and *Amauta*) and newspapers (*Labor*) to disseminate new ideas; studies on different aspects of Peruvian society, the dynamics of peripheral capitalism in the imperialist phase and the constitution of social classes in their ethnic form; establishing relations with workers' and artisans' guilds, indigenous leaders of the Andean regions, and intellectuals and artists from the country and Latin America and, finally, founding a political party.

The magazine *Amauta* and the book *Siete ensayos de la interpretación de la realidad peruana* stand out as far-reaching projects. González analyses and carefully reconstructs the fundamental questions explored in the magazine between 1926 and 1930, and in the book, published in 1928, highlighting the colonisation process, the memory of 'Inca socialism' and the different historical temporalities that marked a country on the periphery of the capitalist world system.

The final two chapters consider the type of socialist party founded by Mariátegui and his 'Marxism' – a difficult question to answer definitively because he made no systematic elaboration of his concept of the party. One of the pillars of Mariátegui's political development was forged in the communist movement of the 1920s. He adopted the united front policy, developed by Lenin and Trotsky at the Third Comintern Congress, and sought to find ways to accumulate social and political forces in the 'mass

organisms' and build a hegemonic force of the proletariat. González praises Mariátegui's Marxism for its 'Marxist method' that requires an 'understanding of the historical and cultural circumstances of Latin America', and for the 'sensitivity required of a young man working under limited personal and material conditions and at an enormous distance from the regions where Marxism originated' (p184).

Without wishing to detract from the merits of González's research, I would like to note some important gaps in the book. It does not spell out which questions have not yet been resolved or not formulated in this thematic field. It lacks a survey of the main works in the academic literature, and does not explore how far this study differs from those produced over the years by Genaro Carnero Checa, Diego Mesenger Illán, Oscar Terán, Osvaldo Fernandes Díaz and Miguel Mazzeo. Nor does González discuss the works already published on Mariátegui in English (Jesús Chavarría, Elizabeth Garrels, Harry E. Vander, Marc Becker, Melissa Moore). Although he occasionally cites some of these works, he does not consider the literature's scope and gaps and how far his political biography of Mariátegui differs from previous studies.

Moreover, there is an 'invisible' compass reference in Mike González's book – the Marxist historian Alberto Flores Galindo (1949-1990). Although Flores Galindo is cited at different times in the book, on Peruvian history or on Mariátegui, González has nothing to say about this person who was so crucial to the history of Mariátegui's reception. Flores Galindo was an extraordinary historian for his generation, who produced numerous works on the economic, social and cultural history of Peru. He was fully in tune with the 'Mariateguista' generation of the International Congress at the Universidad de Sinaloa in the city of Culiacán (Mexico), in 1980, who sought to highlight 'Mariateguian praxis' and 'remove dogmas', rejecting the orthodox and Eurocentric approach to the Peruvian thinker.

As long as there is capitalism, there will be anti-capitalists like Mariátegui, seeking to interpret and radically transform the world, indignant at its oppressive and exploitative rationality. Here is one of the thunderstorms on the periphery of the West that rend the homogeneous and destructive temporality of capital. Mike González's *In the Red Corner* is a political intervention that updates the critique of capitalism *with* Mariátegui.

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Robert Henderson, ***The Spark That Lit the Revolution: Lenin in London and the politics that changed the world,*** I.B. Tauris, London, 2020; xvii + 264pp; ISBN 9781784538620, £25.00, hbk;

Hjalmar Jorge Joffre-Eichhorn, Patrick Anderson (eds), ***Lenin150 (Samizdat)***, Kickass Books, Hamburg, 2020; xviii + 298pp; ISBN 9783000662126, €15.00 plus postage, pbk

It's sometimes argued that Lenin's politics cohered at a particular moment, such as when his older brother Alexander was executed for attempting to assassinate Tsar Alexander III, or in 1903, when his disagreement with Martov over membership rules split the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party into 'Bolshevik' and 'Menshevik' wings. Such notions link to the myth that once Lenin had set out an unswerving course towards revolution, there was an inevitability to subsequent events.

His publisher's blurb suggests that Robert Henderson aims to offer another such foundational claim: that it was in London 'that the roots of Lenin's political thought took shape'. In fact, Henderson does not himself make overstated judgments of this kind. *The Spark That Lit the Revolution* actually includes very little treatment of Lenin's theories, programmatic perspectives or factional positions: as Henderson makes clear, his focus is on aspects of 'Lenin the man', and his book is very successful, interesting and engaging in this respect.

More than that, Henderson's account of Lenin's six stays in London between 1902 and 1911 is rich in context. He provides detail on the shifting community of Russian political émigrés in the British capital between the 1890s and the 1910s; vivid description of their varied political and cultural initiatives; and remarkable pen portraits of some of the fascinating figures who knew and worked with Lenin. Henderson also provides original information on the efforts of Scotland Yard and the Tsarist political police to keep tracks on what various 'plotters against the Russian throne' were up to.

Henderson worked for many years as a Russian curator at the British Library, and his book makes excellent use of a wide variety of archival sources. He nicely recounts moments when he found 'little gems' of information, including Lenin's request for a reader's ticket at the British Museum, filed and forgotten for over eighty years under 'Oulianoff' rather than 'Ulyanov'.

Some such discoveries open up others. In 2015, Henderson discovered a photograph of Apollinariya Yakubova, said by some to have

turned down a proposal from Lenin, shortly before he married Nadezhda Krupskaya. Publicity about the photograph in Russian newspapers led to one of Yakubova's relatives contacting Henderson, and some of her personal papers and diaries surfaced.

As a twenty-one-year-old student, Yakubova had been a friend of Lenin's younger sister Ol'ga, who died of typhoid aged 19. Krupskaya, another of Apollinariya's friends, first met Lenin at a clandestine meeting to which Yakubova had invited her. And, with Lenin, Martov and others, Yakubova was a co-founder of the St Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class (taking over responsibility for running the group after Lenin's arrest). Clearly a remarkable and inspiring young woman, friends described her as exuding 'a fresh fragrance of meadow grasses … we called her the "primeval force of the black earth"'.

It is testimony to the warm feelings between Lenin and Yakubova that, despite growing political disagreements between them in the late 1890s, they maintained good personal relations (an unusual combination for Lenin). These continued even after Yakubova married Konstantin Takhtarev, a member of the RSDLP's 'economist' tendency. The Takhtarevs came to Britain as exiles in 1899, and when Lenin and Krupskaya moved to London in 1902, the already established couple provided support: as well as helping find lodgings for the new arrivals, it was Konstantin who first took Lenin to 37a Clerkenwell Green to meet Harry Quelch of the Social Democratic Federation (Lenin produced seventeen issues of *Isrka* from this building, now the Marx Memorial Library). Though they initially helped with its practical organisation, the Takhtarevs fell out decisively with Lenin and Krupskaya over the course of the 1903 RSDLP Congress, never to meet again: in a fascinating postscript, Henderson follows their story over subsequent years.

One chapter of the book covers the RSDLP's relatively clandestine 1905 Congress, attended only by Bolsheviks (as well as by Herbert Fitch, a young Special Branch officer who secreted himself in a cupboard, later assuring his superiors that the speeches he had heard from his hiding place were 'blood-curdling', even though it is thought that he knew no Russian).

Another provides a detailed account of the 1907 Congress, which was briefly addressed by the secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Ramsay Macdonald, and at which the Bolsheviks consolidated their ascendancy in the Russian socialist party. This Congress was attended by over 300 delegates, many of whom stayed at a disused barracks in Dalston, walking every morning to the venue along the Regent's Canal towpath. Amongst other anecdotes, Henderson describes how Lenin and the writer

Maxim Gorky were continually seen together during breaks in business, making time to visit Hyde Park and the British Museum (where Lenin knew the cloakroom attendant by name).

The twenty-five short pieces collected in *Lenin150 (Samizdat)* vary greatly in tone and quality. The best-known contributors include a clutch of writers who are sometimes grouped together, but between whom there are significant differences of style and substance: Alain Badiou, whose voluntarist injunctions are, nevertheless, thoughtful; Jodi Dean, who explores the nature of comradeship through re-reading Krupskaya's *Reminiscences of Lenin*; and a typically stimulating and exasperating (but unusually brief) provocation from Slavoj Žižek.

Across such an uneven collection, different readers will find different contributions most valuable. I thought Michael Brie's piece very worthwhile. He works at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Berlin, and responded to the invitation to write in 'critical solidarity with Lenin' by distilling 'eight methodological propositions' from Lenin's work, showing how they set challenges which are relevant to today's European left-wing parties and groups.

Ronald Grigor Suny's piece on the rise of Stalinism is one of the more historically grounded contributions (much of *Lenin150 (Samizdat)* comprises theoretical argument or pamphlet-style polemic). Owen Hatherley's enjoyable and considerate account of how he now makes sense of his parents' career in the Militant tendency was originally written for a Russian audience: it is good to have this in English. And Tora Lane succeeds in explaining how the remarkable novelist Andrei Platonov achieved a writing style which caught Leninism's 'real political impact in the form of peoples' contradictory understanding and application of it'.

Perhaps the most interesting contributions in the whole book are by two LGBTQ activists from Kyrgyzstan. Mohira Suyarkulova's notes on the interplay between the construction of gendered identities and the different phases of national economic development are a remarkable combination of personal writing and critical analysis. Georgy Mamedov also applies personal experiences in his thoughts about how Leninism can resource progressive 'identity politics', and in his sharp observation that 'the representation of Vladimir Lenin in the late Soviet and post-Soviet contexts … leaves almost no space for any serious critical engagement with Lenin's theoretical legacy'.

Unfortunately, too many of the remaining pieces in *Lenin150 (Samizdat)* amount to the strident but abstract assertions of Marxist-Leninist cadres, or attempts to replicate the crazy fizz and eclecticism of Žižek without any

redeeming substantive content. The best that can be said of contributions which finish with declarations that 'we have Lenin over our shoulders', or 'Lenin is dead, long live Lenin!', is that they provide examples of the sentiment which is animating some determined and sincere activists.

The main editor, Hjalmar Jorge Joffre-Eichhorn, was inspired to produce the book on a visit he made in 2011 to Kyrgyzstan, 'one of the few places in the world where every major town still hosts a monument to the great *vozhd* (leader) of the world proletariat'. Reflecting this, the book includes twenty-odd full-page colour photographs of the statues, murals and mosaics of Lenin which remain in place in and around Bishkek. The talented photographer, Johann Salazar, raises some pertinent questions about post-Soviet nostalgia, and, together with Joffre-Eichhorn, took the decision to 'highlight the many distortions of the man' by intentionally distorting 'some of the images of Lenin' when preparing them for inclusion in the book. Such questioning and 'highlighting' could have been taken further: the motives of the Kyrgyz authorities in maintaining their particular Lenin cult have nothing whatsoever to do with the hopes and intentions which were held by the hundreds of Russian émigrés who tramped every day alongside London's Regent's Canal to attend the RSDLP's Congress back in May 1907.

Mike Makin-Waite

Conn Mac Gabhann, ***The Barbarous Irish: The Ethics of an Insurgency 1968-98***, LamhDhearg.ie, Belfast, 2020; 205pp; ISBN 9781527223868, £10.00, pbk

The conflict in and about Northern Ireland, to use a generally accepted term for what is otherwise euphemistically referred to as 'the Troubles', has been subjected to intense scrutiny by leading scholars and journalists. The plethora of studies includes documentaries, books, journal articles and what are now substantive oral history collections featuring people from every walk of life, class, profession and gender orientation. Everyone who lived through the Troubles has a story to tell and for effective conflict transformation those stories need to be heard and lessons need to be learned. Some stories, however, are more told than others, those of former combatants in particular. Young scholars entering the field find some of their interviewees have already recounted their experiences upwards

of two dozen times. Hence, an entirely new approach to the conflict is exceptionally refreshing. Conn Mac Gabhann's *The Barbarous Irish: The Ethics of an Insurgency 1968-98,* is a bold and thought-provoking book that blends theology, history and politics. Its value is enhanced further by the appendices, a trove of key documents from the period.

Mac Gabhann, a student of philosophy and theology who studied at Oxford University, has clearly wrestled, as have so many before him over millennia, with the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in just war theory. He, however, has moved beyond theoretical discourse to test its applicability to the campaign launched by the IRA against the British state. In its conceptual stages, a theologian dismissed as 'immoral' Mac Ghabhann's proposal to examine the Irish Republican insurgency from a Just War perspective. In contrast, the project was welcomed by the liberation theologian Father Des Wilson. Wilson, recently deceased, was a much-loved Belfast priest and community activist. His passing brought forth torrents of tributes from all sectors of Irish society, from the bottom to the very top. The Irish president, Michael D. Higgins, noted he was revered as a 'champion of the people'. He was one of a number of religious, men and women, who undertook key roles that were essential in facilitating the peace process and helping bring an end to the violence plaguing their communities. Wilson wrote a long and carefully considered introduction to Mac Gabhann's book, which itself provides important insights into the conflict from a remarkable man who lived through and daily witnessed the suffering it caused. In commending the book, Wilson emphasised its significance. He argued that in an age now acknowledged by governments as one of 'continual war', there was now more than ever need to 'develop our ability for ethical thinking in order to better challenge this normalisation of evil' (p13). In Wilson's estimation, 'Conn Mac Gabhann has done us an immense service which, to be honest about it, many people have been too discouraged or too afraid to undertake. We must be grateful to him for it' (p13).

The author examines how the utility of Just War theory has been questioned, particularly in the context of the brutality of modern warfare and the twentieth century's immense death toll. Nonetheless, however imperfect, he argues it still offers a method of evaluating conflicts against a common standard of ethical behaviour. Addressing an important question that is increasingly relevant to modern warfare, Mac Gabhann examines whether or not a yardstick intended to measure the behaviour of states could be used for the sort of asymmetrical warfare that characterised the Troubles. Drawing on Irish history as well as the political context, Mac Gabhann persuasively illustrates precisely why it can. Notably, the Just

War tradition has two distinct branches, *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello*. The focus of the book is exclusively on the former, the legitimacy of the decision to engage in war, and very deliberately, as the author emphasises, not the latter, ethical conduct during a war. Hence the study is weighted toward the pre-conflict period and the early Troubles and the moral reasoning that contributed to the decision to engage in conflict.

Mac Gabhann seeks to present a balanced and measured analysis throughout. He carefully leads the reader through the intricacies of Just War theory and its evolution through various philosophical, religious and cultural settings. He explains how the book is an exercise in attempting to understand the Republican insurgency, emphasising that understanding does not equate to support for the cause, but is a means to better comprehend, illuminate and critique the rationale behind it. Obviously, that requires addressing the discrimination to which Northern Ireland's Catholic population was subjected in the late 1960s and early 1970s, acknowledged eventually by even the notoriously sectarian Reverend Ian Paisley. In 2014 he belatedly conceded that the treatment accorded the minority Catholic population '… wasn't fair … No, it wasn't justice at all' (p17).

Each of the *Jus ad Bellum* criteria receives a separate chapter, Just Cause, Legitimate Authority, Proportionality and The Possibility of Success. Mac Gabhann uses these 'orthodox' criteria to interrogate the strengths and weaknesses of the Irish Republican experience and perspective. There were of course a number of insurgent groups, of differing size, ethos and support levels. All, of course, were clandestine groupings. Hence, precision in defining their size, nature and aims is problematic. The book's focus is on the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) as the principal insurgent group and draws on Republican documents, such as IRA statements and Sinn Fein publications, to highlight 'corporate identity and ideology' (p23). Mac Gabhann shows, however, how it was civil rights and self-defence that fuelled the insurgency rather than traditional Republican ideology. Interestingly, from the beginning of the conflict Republican announcements stressed a consciousness of the Christian responsibility to ensure the well-being of all communities, of the oppressed and the oppressors. An Army Council statement from Easter 1970 proclaimed that 'Protestants, Catholics and Dissenters will have equal rights' (p158). Certainly, as the author acknowledges, the insurgents understood the power of propaganda and how to use it on a community imbued with Catholic values. Religion was a marker of identity in the Northern Ireland conflict. Christian values were important considerations in both Protestant and Catholic communities.

Mac Gabhann provides a valuable overview and critique of just war commentators whose evaluations of the Troubles and other conflicts derive from a selective use of evidence. Selectivity and subjectivity might be constants in most appraisals, as the author concedes they are in his, noting the importance of acknowledging and owning and explaining them, as he seeks to do from the outset. Mac Gabhann looks to elucidate and empathise with the perspective of the Other in order to demonstrate the necessity of recognising the alternative views that must be considered in order to achieve political settlements. The latter are delayed or put beyond reach by evaluations that dismiss insurgents simply as murderers. He argues that 'unacknowledged selectivity allows for the demonization of the Other, and often, for the extirpation or attempt at extirpation of the Other; it is an abandonment of a "political solution"' (p165). It also obscures injustice and is an obstacle to authentic peace. Given today's levels of global insurgency, Mac Gabhann's book is a timely reminder 'of the need to search beyond dominant narratives which obfuscate ethical, political and historical discussions within the terminology of "terrorism"' (p167).

Ultimately, the author questions the concept of Just War as a tool of Christian moral reasoning and the subjectivity involved in its application. Nonetheless, he also demonstrates that it remains a useful template through which systematically to address areas of ethical concern. It certainly serves to provide a new prism through which to view the Northern Ireland conflict. Mac Gabhann's study is an important contribution to the on-going reflections about the Troubles. It transcends the competing narratives' model that seemingly seeks largely to re-write the past. Most importantly, it contains cogent lessons for analysts concerned about insurgencies world wide in the global 'War on Terror'. It deserves to be widely read.

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Hattie Naylor (playwright), Barrie Stott (director), *The Marxist in Heaven*, play review, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Studio Theatre, Friday 6 March 2020

The National Theatre annually commissions news plays suitable for performances by companies of youth players around the UK. One of the 2020 plays, written by the prolific dramatist, Hattie Naylor, is a play about

a delightful paradox: what happens when a Marxist who doesn't believe in Heaven dies and finds herself in Heaven? This particular performance was one of the last cultural events held in Aberystwyth's magnificent Arts Centre before the Covid-19 crisis closed everything. It was a rather shambolic performance – because it was played by amateurs/teenagers I am not going to name names. The blocking was crude; timings of entrances and exits were not always adept; one actress' hair accidentally came undone when she was speaking; and the main actress had not learnt her lines properly and relied largely, unsubtly, on a printed script. Despite or maybe even partially because of these technical limitations the event offered an extremely moving and memorable evening.

Valerie wakes up in Heaven. She has died in a bike crash: fastidiously green and righteously ethical in every way, her response to arriving in Heaven is initially incredulous and then dyspeptic. She doesn't want to be in Heaven because she doesn't believe in it. She is a Marxist who regards Heaven as a construct contrived to distract proletarians from awareness of material inequalities and injustices. But the Heavenly authorities have decided that she must come to Heaven because she has fought the good fight: her contributions to campaigns against ecological vandalism, intensive agricultural cruelty and globalism-caused poverty are compatible with Christian views – so she is in whether she likes it or not. Valerie's complaints against brutal exploitation of animals and poor humans are both articulate and harrowing – just hearing young people discussing such issues through the medium of drama made the performance inherently worthwhile.

Ironies abound. Valerie soon discovers that Heaven isn't very Heavenly. In fact, Heaven is a grossly unequal world where people jockey for position in the conspicuous yet insecure hierarchies presided over by a suspiciously elusive God. People are not contented with their lot – everybody wants to be an angel, to climb up the ranks. This Heaven is a sort of dystopian cross between the crass aspirational Western world of reality television and the conformist world imposed by totalitarian states, such as North Korea, that pervert Marxism. Like drones watching Western reality television, Heaven's inhabitants admire those with more gaudy status but like drones in *Animal Farm* or North Korea they also dance exactly on cue to whatever music the state/hierarchy orders.

Tenacious, pushy and confoundedly righteous, Valerie bangs every door until she speaks to every manager she can find. She works her way up to God's deputy – the supremely oleaginous Mighty Metatron. This individual, who is suspiciously vague about the whereabouts of the actual

boss, God, is basically running Heaven as a fiefdom. He does not want things to change: self-interested profoundly, he is the ultimate reactionary. Because his people are brainwashed into believing that because this is Heaven they must be doing fine, they cater to his every whim and dance literally to his tunes.

Valerie, however, spreads discontent: the inhabitants of Heaven are made by her to want better things. They learn to want to dance to the songs they like – not the state-approved musak of Metatron. Civil disobedience gradually spreads – Valerie finds that some victims of Heaven's inequalities are more easily persuaded to revolution than others. Eventually disorder in Heaven is so rampant that God herself appears. It turns out that she has been asleep since 1979 – a date that will of course mean more automatic horror for British socialists than for socialists anywhere else. God has simply been neglectful: she has not noticed the inequalities in immortal Heaven – let alone on the mortal Earth that she created. Bullied by Valerie into facing up to the dysfunctional injustices and material inequalities of Heaven, God facilitates great change – to the chagrin of Metatron and other reactionaries. The inhabitants dance wildly, celebrating their new, actually Utopian circumstances with excited dancing. Seeing young actors enjoy themselves with such cathartic abandon was inherently moving – but the play's greatest moment was when the actors slowed down and lined up to sing a deliberately faltering, vulnerable, damaged yet defiant few verses of 'The Red Flag'. Coming just a few months after Britons rejected their first opportunity since 1983 to elect a socialist Labour Party, this song sounded both elegiac and hopeful. The Valeries of Britain have been beaten by the Brexiteers and the imperialists and the meat-eaters and the exploiters – but at least there are young people to sing the Leftist songs – even if they do so in character. Despite her righteous disposition and rather charmless pushiness Valerie has become a genuinely revolutionary hero who has brought real change to Heaven. But the sense of triumph is conditional. Ultimately this is a sad play because we are forced to reflect on the greatest irony of all: real Marxism is perennially rejected in the mortal world – a genuinely Marxist revolution has happened only in the immortal, non-existent Heaven.

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Jairam Ramesh, ***A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of V.K. Krishna Menon***, Penguin India, Gurugram, 2019; 744 pp; ISBN 9780670092321, Rs. 999, hbk

Krishna Menon was active in British politics for twenty-nine years in the service of India, and he remained in that service until his death in 1974. He arrived in London in 1924, the protégé of Annie Besant, but was soon to join the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and enrol as a student at the LSE. More important, he joined Besant's Commonwealth of India League and threw himself into the campaign to gain Dominion status for India. His intelligence, energy and determination ensured that he rose to a leadership position in the League and these qualities meant that the League became a factor in Left politics and Menon commanded the respect of fellow socialists in the ILP, the Labour Party and the Communist Party. In 1931 the renamed India League followed the Indian National Congress in demanding independence for India. MI5's file on Menon, opened in 1927, discloses intensified interest from the mid-1930s, when he was in almost daily contact with the CP leadership. The suspicion that he had Communist affiliations would last. William Beveridge acted on that suspicion in 1934 when, as Director of the LSE, he ended Menon's decade-long student registration, during which he had acquired multiple degrees and Harold Laski's endorsement as a 'brilliant' intellect, on the grounds that he was a Communist, spreading dangerous ideas among the student population. But the following year Menon began his long friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru, a kindred spirit blessed with the patience of Job, who would protect him in the years to come from himself as well as his many critics in India.

Menon was often criticised for arrogance and an inability to get on with others. These defects in his personality did not prevent him from attracting the loyalty of activists in the India League. Nor did they get in the way of his own indefatigable efforts. In addition to his books, pamphlets, reports (such as *The Condition of India*, 1934), lobbying, speaking tours and his freelance work as an editor with several London publishers, he was also called to the bar, and worked with D.N. Pritt and the Haldane Society. He organised the London visits of Subhas Chandra Bose and Nehru, campaigned for Republican Spain and against fascism and militarism. In November 1934 he was elected as a Labour Councillor for St Pancras and served in that capacity for fourteen years, working alongside friends Barbara Betts and JBS Haldane. During the war he was an energetic civil defence worker and air-raid warden. He even had a hand in

launching the St Pancras Arts Festival in 1946, precursor of the Camden Arts Festival.

By November 1946 Menon had become Nehru's special diplomatic envoy and an alternate member of the Indian delegation at the UN. He was one of the first to establish close relations with Mountbatten when the latter became Viceroy in January 1947 and it was Menon who, championing India's membership of the Commonwealth, found a constitutional formula to make that membership acceptable. In July 1947 he became India's High Commissioner in London. He proved to be very much more than a gifted agitator. Nehru takes much of the credit for this. During his seventeen years as Prime Minister of India he backed Menon, constantly reassured him during his many phases of self-doubt and protected him from domestic critics. Menon was someone with whom he shared an 'uninhibited intellectual camaraderie' (p353) and Nehru recognised that he was often a lightning rod for criticism of himself. In 1952 Menon became the most prominent member of the Indian UN delegation and quickly immersed himself in the Korean crisis, working out the deal which resolved the POW problem blocking the way to peace. He further irritated the US at Geneva in 1954 in attempting to end the war in Indo-China and opposing the myth that the Vietnamese nationalists were tools of the Soviet Union or China. He denounced the French war in Algeria and the British invasion of Suez and was prominent at the Bandung conference in 1955. This led to his first visit to China and the release of 4 American pilots, held since the Korean conflict. What was sometimes perceived as his fierce anti-Americanism has to be viewed in the context of McCarthy and Dulles as well as the hostility shown by the US towards Indian foreign policy. Eisenhower called him a menace and a boor and as late as 1959 'The Americans were convinced that Krishna Menon was the head of the communist cabal around Nehru' (p500).

Though he remained head of the UN delegation Menon entered the Nehru Cabinet in 1956 as Minister without portfolio and member of the Planning Commission. He played a constructive role over Suez but abstained at the UN on a vote condemning the Soviet invasion of Hungary. This confirmed his domestic critics in their suspicions of his fellow-travelling inclinations but even they were disarmed by his acclaimed defence of India's Kashmir policy at the UN in 1957 and in his moment of patriotic triumph he was elected to the Lok Sabha. He also became Defence Minister. In December 1961 India took Portuguese Goa by force and Menon was re-elected to the Lok Sabha. After the Sino-Indian War of 1962, however, his patriotic credentials were again called into question

as the critics blamed him for India's unpreparedness, lack of military equipment and poor military leadership. Ramesh endorses the criticism of Menon's weakening of the high command, if only because the maligning of top military officers and the promotion of less competent men occurred on his watch. Nehru remained loyal but accepted Menon's resignation as Defence Minister. Contemporary research contests the notion that Menon neglected India's defences in the period 1956-1962.

His political career was by no means finished – his last election to the Lok Sabha was in 1971. But his best days were over. Jairam Ramesh's excellent research in numerous archives establishes what Indira Gandhi was referring to when she famously said, on hearing of Menon's death, that a 'volcano has been extinguished'. It will help to ensure, in the words of India's first Foreign Secretary, that he will 'long remain in the memories of men and the annals of history'. And no socialist history of twentieth century Britain is complete that ignores the contribution of V.K. Krishna Menon.

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Giles Udy, ***Labour and the Gulag: Russia and the Seduction of the British Left***, Biteback, London, 2017; 660pp; ISBN 9781785902048, £25.00 hbk

This is a rather odd book. The endorsement on the back cover by Michael Gove should have warned me. This is not the first book on relations between the Labour Party and Soviet Russia in the inter-war period, nor is it the first study of Soviet sympathisers within the Labour Party or of Russian agents in the late 1920s , which have been covered comprehensively, and from differing perspectives, by writers such as Victor Madeira, Gill Bennett, Timothy Philips, Kevin Quinlan, David Burke and Kevin Morgan (as well as a set of what are best described as more populist espionage factionalised works). Udy has a different perspective. His main interest is the persecution of Christians in inter-war Soviet Russia and he is an associate of the Keston Institute in Oxford which focuses on this subject. The objective of Udy's work, his first book and clearly magnum opus at 660 pages, is both to report on this persecution and on what he considers as the failure of the 1929-1931 Labour Government to take up the issue with the Soviet government. The core of the book is a study

of the Christian Protest Movement, pursued by a number of anti-Soviet clerics with the support of some leading Conservatives, such as Joynson-Hicks, Lord Brentford, the former Conservative Home Secretary who had expelled Soviet diplomats and broken off diplomatic relations with the Soviets in 1927.

While this chapter of the book provides an interesting and detailed narrative, it is the early chapters of the study that demonstrate the extent of the author's bias. Udy argues that the Labour Party, not just in the 1920s but at its foundation was a Marxist party. He goes so far as to argue that the Independent Labour Party was Marxist. This is not a view to my knowledge shared by any other historian of the early British socialist movement. Both contemporary observers and subsequent generations of historians have concurred that the ILP was largely based on ethical socialism (as distinct from the Social Democratic Federation which was to a large extent Marxist and was to evolve, via the British Socialist Party, into the British Communist Party in 1920). He claims that Marx attended the ILP foundation conference in 1893, which is curious given that Marx had died ten years earlier. He then goes on to argue that the Labour Party, being Marxist was anti-religious. This he does by quoting Labour Party figures, mainly from the post-1931 ILP, acknowledging the value of Marx's economic analysis, and quoting Marx's and Bolshevik anti-religious statements – clearly a case of guilt by association. In a chapter headed 'More Methodist than Marx?', he questions whether socialist leaders coming from religious traditions such as Keir Hardie (evangelical), Ramsay Macdonald (Scottish Presbyterian), Arthur Henderson (a Methodist lay preacher) and George Lansbury (a high Anglican) were really Christians, or if they were, how they subsumed their Christian beliefs to their Marxian beliefs and Soviet sympathies. The links between the ILP and John Trevor and the Labour Church are not mentioned, while socialist Sunday schools are seen as Marxist propaganda. There is no mention of Philip Snowden, who wrote a pamphlet on socialism as 'The Christ That is to be' or on the religious based ethical socialism of Isabella Ford, Carolyn Martyn, Margaret McMillan and other leading ILPers. Lord Parmoor, leading Anglican layman and Leader of the House of Lords in the 1929-31 Government is presented as a hypocrite.

This degree of historical misinterpretation, to the point of falsification, does make it difficult to take the core of Udy's study seriously. This is not helped by Udy's postscript which refers to the Corbyn leadership of the Labour Party taking the Party back to the familiar territory of 'Marxian Socialism'. This is a pity, as the story of the anti-religious

campaigns of the Soviet state in the 1920s needed to be told, though some contextualisation in terms of the historic alliance between Russian orthodoxy and the Tsarist State and the role of priests in resisting collectivisation and Soviet power more generally would have strengthened the narrative. It is also somewhat odd that the narrative focuses on the persecution of Catholics, Protestants and Baptists, rather than on the suppression of the Russian Orthodox church (which, incidentally, has been revived by Putin as a supporter of the new autocracy). Moreover, Udy does not acknowledge that in the 1920s with famine and an impoverished state, there may have been a case for the church's riches being seized – Thomas Cromwell's suppression of the monasteries in early Tudor England being an interesting parallel. It is perhaps not unreasonable to treat clerics as not making a positive contribution to a productive economy. Udy is little interested in the Leninist and Stalinist suppression of political opponents including non-Bolshevik socialists, which perhaps understandably raised more concerns in the British labour movement than suppression of religions. Udy's argument is clearly that the Labour Government should have set aside other objectives in relation to re-establishing diplomatic relations and trade with the Soviet Union in favour of protecting Russia's religious minorities. This is not to say religious freedom (as opposed to the redistribution of church wealth) should not have been a matter of concern. The chapters on the campaign against slave labour in the Russian timber industry, which brought together church leaders such as Cosmo Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, anti-Communist Tories and the Anti-Slavery Society and the Labour Government's failure to take up the issue, despite the past involvement of several Ministers in anti-sweating campaigns in the UK, is perhaps the most useful and novel section of this long book. The final chapters on the Webbs' and Shaw's defence of the Soviet state are predictable and covers familiar territory, though the extracts from Shaw's 1921 *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* are profoundly shocking – Shaw supporting the extermination of those considered to be non-productive and even suggesting the use of gas to deliver this.

However, to imply as Udy does that the Labour government and the British left as a whole was seduced by the Soviets, because the Labour Government and the Labour Party as a whole were Marxist and therefore anti-religious and consequently unethical and amoral, is an argument too far. If Michael Gove considers this book to be 'scrupulous' with an 'unflinching commitment to the truth', we have even more reason to be worried. However, there are elements of the book which are compelling

and it is regrettable that Udy's prejudices weaken the argument and detract from the important narrative he is telling.

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Clara Zetkin, ***Fighting Fascism: How to Struggle and How to Win*****,** Mike Taber and John Riddell (ed. and introduction), Haymarket Books, Chicago IL, 2017, 131pp; ISBN 9781608468522, $11.95, pbk

Clara Zetkin was one of the most influential leaders of both the German and the international working class movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She was in some ways as important in her day as Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg, though she did not suffer martyrdom as they did. This book presents the texts of both her report to the Comintern on *The Struggle Against Fascism* of 1923 and her *Resolution on Fascism* which was adopted by the Third Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in June of that year. The editors have done an excellent job of contextualising both documents and provide a useful glossary.

Zetkin saw fascism as essentially the product of 'the ongoing dissolution of the capitalist economy and the disintegration of the bourgeois state' which were, in their turn, the result of the destructive effects of the First World War. She paid less attention to fascism's ideological, cultural roots, and the crucial significance of the personal experience of the First World War as a catalyst which brought these factors together to give birth to the Fascist movement in Italy. However, she did admit that it was a movement of 'ideals'.

Her fears that fascism could spread rapidly throughout Europe must have seemed to have been realised when, in imitation of Mussolini's March on Rome, Hitler attempted a 'beer cellar putsch' in Munich in November 1923. The failure of that attempt was probably the reason why Gombos, the leader of the Hungarian fascist movement abandoned his plan to stage a 'March on Budapest'. On the other hand, Zetkin's belief that Italian Fascism would soon collapse from its own internal conflicts and contradictions was overoptimistic, even if, initially, that optimism seemed to be justified: Mussolini's government was nearly overthrown during the course of the events in the following year when Mussolini's hold on power slackened during the Matteotti Crisis of June to November

1924. Thereafter the Fascist Regime survived until Mussolini was unseated by the combined machinations of dissidents in the Fascist Party, leading generals and the King in July 1943.

Zetkin's analysis of Italian Fascism and her fears for its easy and quick spread throughout Europe was predicated on the assumption that Italy was not very different from other countries. In fact, Italy was, in today's terms, an essentially 'underdeveloped' country in 1923, with a small industrial base restricted to the industrial triangle of Milan, Turin and Genoa, and until 1945, the proportion of the work force employed in agriculture was still over 50 per cent. Germany was, of course, quite different, being a heavily industrialised, modern state. A consequence of Italy's relative economic backwardness was that the *agrarian* wing of the working class movement, the Socialist-controlled agrarian labour unions and peasant groups, especially in northern and central Italy was larger than in any other European country with the possible exception of Spain. Agrarian socialism was thus inevitably a special target of Fascist squadrist violence between 1919 and 1922.

Zetkin's belief that the organisation of the working class could defeat fascism was not borne out by the resistance which the Italian working class put up against the Fascist takeovers of Turin, Milan, Genoa, the San Lorenzo district of Rome, not to mention the united resistance of workers and other democratic forces in Parma. All of these efforts ended in failure. Like other observers, Zetkin also overestimated the revolutionary potential of the Italian working class movement which arguably should have made a bid for power during the workers' occupation of the factories in the summer of 1920. But the Italian Socialist Party and its allied union confederation woefully lacked a revolutionary leadership. It is indicative of their passivity that in November 1919, when the party had secured enough votes in the general election to form the largest party in Parliament, the party newspaper *Avanti!* came out with the headline, 'All we have to do is wait!', Lenin despaired of his Italian comrades and in February 1921 the revolutionary wing split to join the Comintern as the Communist Party of Italy (PCI).

For ten long years, Zetkin sought to persuade her party and the Comintern of the accuracy of her analysis of fascism and of the steps required to defeat it. Though the Enhanced Plenary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern meeting in June 1923 had adopted her resolution, there was increasing resistance within the organisation to her proposals, and much of the dissent came from the Russian delegates. Thus in 1924, the Comintern abandoned her proposal for a united front

of the workers, i.e. including even the German Social Democratic Party, in favour of narrower, leftist policy, treating all potential allies as 'social fascists'. She continued her struggle throughout her remaining years, but she was swimming against a Stalinist tide which engulfed both the Soviet Union and the Comintern. By an extraordinary irony, after the July 1932 elections, which made the Nazis the largest party in the Reichstag Zetkin, as the oldest member, was entitled to speak at its opening session. She had little need to warn against the danger of fascism because the presence of the Nazis in the chamber was warning enough, but she used the opportunity to once again call for working class unity against fascism and for the continuation of the struggle for women's rights.

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