

Reviews

John Green, *A Political Family: The Kuczynskis, Fascism, Espionage and the Cold War*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2017, ISBN 1138232319, 370pp

A Political Family explores a remarkable set of siblings caught up in the maelstrom of twentieth-century German-Jewish and communist history. Born to Berta and Robert René Kuczynski, the renowned pioneer of modern population statistics, the six Kuczynski children included Jürgen and Ursula, both famed in their own right, as well as four additional sisters, three of whom became active members of the British communist party. Jürgen, a hugely prolific demographer and labour historian, eventually became the doyen of East German intellectuals, a role aptly described in the title of his 1992 memoirs, 'A Party-Line Dissident' (*Ein linientreuer Dissident*). His sister Ursula, also known by her code name Sonja and pseudonym Ruth Werner, transmitted nuclear secrets to the Soviets. The family trajectory richly illustrates the nexus of bourgeois German-Jewish intellectual tradition, Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany abroad, and the allure and tragedy of Soviet-style communism.

Born in Berlin in 1876, René Kuczynski, the longtime director of the Statistical Office of Berlin-Schöneberg, tirelessly used statistical analysis to expose the plight of the working class. While all of the Kuczynski children imbibed their father's radicalism, Jürgen also followed his father's penchant for the scientific documentation of working-class distress. After university studies, he went to the United States, where he worked with the Brookings Institution and the AFL trade union. Back in Germany, he joined the German communist party (KPD) in 1930 and, in the course of his regular work as a writer and researcher, provided statistical and other information on German conditions to party and Soviet officials. In 1936, Jürgen and his

young family moved to England, following René, who had fled Nazi Germany in spring 1933 and taken up a position at the London School of Economics.

In England, Jürgen contributed to the anti-fascist cause and, among other activities, helped set up the radio station that broadcast to Germany, Freedom Radio, 29.8. Surprisingly, in 1944, he was hired to work on the American Strategic Bombing Survey, thereby becoming a lieutenant colonel in the US Army. He returned to (West) Berlin in 1945, and moved to East Berlin in 1950. Barely escaping antisemitic stalinist purges in the early 1950s, Jürgen spent the rest of his working life in East Germany as Director of the Institute for Economic History. For decades, he was the destination of choice for Western journalists and others seeking a conversation partner with good connections to the East German political elite.

His sister, Ursula, called by some ‘the most successful woman espionage agent of all time’ (p253), had an even more dramatic life story. Already a KPD member in 1926, she was variously stationed in China, Poland, Switzerland, and Britain in the 1930s and 1940s. Ursula was linked to three of the most notorious Soviet spies of the twentieth century: in China, Richard Sorge recruited her to the cause; in Switzerland, Sándor Radó utilised her in his highly successful hub of Soviet intelligence gathering; and in Britain, Klaus Fuchs passed his atomic bomb secrets through her to the Soviets. Ursula’s life as a spy was paralleled by a dramatic personal life, told in some detail. Despite her extraordinary success as a courier, Ursula was left high and dry by her Soviet handlers in the late 1940s. She and her family moved to East Germany in 1950.

With *A Political Family*, left-wing journalist John Green has a clear-cut agenda. He is eager to restore the Kuczynskis’ reputation, claiming that much that has been written about the family has been ‘speculative or inaccurate’ (p316). He eagerly seizes on dubious assertions and errors of past authors, insisting that the Kuczynskis’ role in Soviet espionage has been ‘in all probability exaggerated’ (p334). While Ursula’s role in passing on Fuchs’ nuclear secrets is surely significant, Green may be right that Jürgen passed on only information gleaned from published or other readily available sources. Green is also at pains to rehabilitate

the political position that five of the six Kuczynski siblings adopted. He rejects as ‘patronising’ those who ‘from the luxury of their ivory towers ... are only too ready to condemn others who at the time perhaps did allow their idealism and their fears of a fascist Europe to cloud their judgment about Soviet communism’ (p5). Adopting the language of today, Green writes that the Kuczynskis were genuinely committed to the aims of social justice, peace and democracy’ (p339) – suggesting that, in their time, the siblings were merely good progressives.

While much of the Kuczynski story is well known, Green worked through ninety-four files on the family released by the British secret services (MI5). Even though MI5 followed Jürgen, Ursula and other family members for decades, Jürgen was permitted to work for the American army, and Ursula to leave Britain just as Klaus Fuchs was coming to trial. Without confirming sensationalist allegations that MI5 was actually protecting Ursula, Green finds all this puzzling. Was MI5 incompetent? Shielding Ursula? Or is there more to the story than currently known? Similarly, it is remarkable that both Jürgen and Ursula survived Soviet-style communism unscathed, with neither succumbing to stalinist purges in the 1930s or the 1950s. Was this luck? Or is there another explanation?

Green rightly asks whether Jürgen, a long-time communist and hugely respected scholar, could have done more to right the flawed political system and promote democracy in East Germany. He notes Jürgen’s all-too-close relations with East Germany’s leaders, Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker. Green also gently questions the depth of Jürgen’s academic work. In the post-war years, Jürgen held the largest private library in all of Germany, some 70,000 volumes. Surrounded by books from floor to ceiling (as a picture shows), he was astoundingly prodigious in his academic output – some 4,500 publications, including over 100 books – during his long lifetime. The staying power of this monumental oeuvre, however, remains open to question.

Finally, Green relates the post-war doings of the other four Kuczynski sisters in Britain. He argues that the sisters’ political engagement may have eased their integration into British society, citing a study by Marilyn Moos that suggests that German-Jewish exiles experienced less psychological suffering if they saw their exile related to leftist politics

and Jewish origins, rather than just Jewish origins. Indeed, while all of the Kuczynski siblings led politically engaged lives, none identified as Jews, and none practised Judaism over the course of their lives. Green also describes – but does not analyse – the enduring role that family plays in shaping political, intellectual, and other predilections.

A Political Family is marred by poor writing and editing. There is endless repetition, perhaps the result of different pieces of writing being slapped together to form a book. While Green eagerly points out the errors of others, he has some himself, including calling what was the city of Posen in East Prussia Poznańska today (p9) (it is Poznań). The book also includes irrelevant and tangential material. At one point, Green details the history of another family with the Kuczynski name, even though, as he himself states, there is no evidence that the two families were related (p14).

Yet for all the book's shortcomings, the Kuczynski story is moving. With the collapse of East Germany and the delegitimation of Soviet-style communism, the siblings appear to have been on the losing side of history. They led lives that now seem almost quaint, a reflection of a fraught, yet familiar yesteryear. In today's world, however, their stalwart, incorruptible adherence to a communist vision of a better society compels both respect and admiration.

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Joanna Bullivant, *Alan Bush, Modern Music, and the Cold War: the cultural left in Britain and the communist bloc*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, ISBN 9781107033368, xvii + 270pp, £75

Alan Bush (1900-95) was the most prominent composer of classical music to sustain long-term membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain. His career and politics were the focus of a great deal of comment and analysis which highlighted important debates about Marxism and art, and difficulties about how to relate communist commitment to mainstream national culture.

Critics reached for crude binaries to position, and to diminish, Bush and his work. Many said that his early 'promise' as a modernist who crafted sophisticated and innovative European art music was squandered, as he turned to producing simplistic programmatic stuff in conformity with Stalinist edicts. He worked diligently for over fifty years as professor of composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London – but some claimed that this 'establishment' role was inconsistent with the fact that his greatest post-war successes were in communist East Germany, where his operas were given professional performances whilst being neglected in his own country.

Such simplistic counter-positions have no place in Joanna Bullivant's clear and thoughtful account of Bush's work. She explores the layered ways in which it responded to a range of cross-cutting political and cultural issues, and indeed how Bush helped define some of those issues. Her book will serve as a key reference on the composer, and its perspectives deserve full consideration by anyone studying twentieth-century music and communism.

The book does not take a biographical form. Instead, drawing on newly available archival material, it carefully considers key 'images' of Bush – as modernist, as left-wing political activist, national outsider, 'Stalinist'. The result is a nuanced assessment of Bush's ideas and position within both British and East German musical life. Detailed accounts of individual works, performances and a wide variety of working relationships show that his career was never simply an expression of current party orthodoxy, or a mirror of competing cold war ideologies.

Bullivant succeeds further in relating the different aspects of Bush's life to each other, noting that discussion of the composer always covers his 'relationship to modernism, to national identity, and to communism ... yet no attempt has adequately explained the interaction of these conflicting priorities within his work'.

Her treatment of Bush and modernism is sure-footed. She deftly sketches key debates, both in general and on the left: a 'democratic' or 'populist' view that sees modernist art, literature and music as 'bourgeois', elitist and disdainful of the need to reach 'the masses'; and an alternative range of positions which recognise modernism as vital, a stimulus to critical outlooks, and emancipatory.

Locating Bush within the ‘rich discourse surrounding the social and political meanings of modern music in inter-war Britain’, unpacking his use of both traditional and modern elements, and showing how he used various ‘techniques in the pursuit of [styles] appropriate to his aesthetic and political goals’, Bullivant concludes that the ‘the image of Bush as an apolitical, individualistic, “difficult” modernist who gave it up for politics must be resisted’.

She identifies the significance of the time Bush spent in Berlin as a young man, between 1926 and 1931: he witnessed key moments in Weimar cultural life, and began developing the political consciousness and friendships which, in 1935, would lead him to join the CPGB. Bullivant notes the importance of Hanns Eisler’s thinking for Bush, and the related if lesser influence of Eisler’s collaborator Bertolt Brecht. In the 1930s, Bush used aspects of their approaches to experiment with the collaborative development of songs, and in organising some performances by the London Labour Choral Union and the Workers’ Music Association, which he helped form and then consistently championed.

Bullivant recounts how Bush’s music was briefly banned by the BBC in early 1941, in reaction to his promoting the CPGB-inspired ‘People’s Convention’: Vaughan Williams, EM Forster and Winston Churchill were amongst those opposing this ban as, variously, wrong or counter-productive. She has accessed recently declassified records to recover fascinating episodes, including that of the short-lived ‘William Morris Musical Society’, which aimed to co-ordinate the wartime activities of professional and amateur musicians who were members and supporters of the CPGB, but whose secretary was an undercover MI5 agent.

Later in the war, with Britain and the Soviet Union now allies, Bush did a great deal of work for the BBC: broadcasting, giving talks, composing, and increasingly becoming an ‘insider’ in British culture. This position was abruptly reversed from 1948, as the Cold War took hold. Bush is often seen from this point as a dogmatic Stalinist, backing Andrei Zhdanov’s cultural purges in the Soviet Union and promoting the line that art should be ‘directed along the lines of national tradition’.

Again, the pattern of Bullivant’s argument is to show that, in spite of widely-held views about the simplistic interpretations of Bush’s

positions and actions, properly informed consideration shows that, at the least, things were a little more complex. She shows how Bush was actively involved in developing new cultural policies in British – and East German – communism, rather than taking direction from any Stalinist bureaucrats. His view that music needed to take direct, national and accessible forms was not an abrupt jump under Soviet direction, but emerged logically from how he had been ‘rethinking and altering his interests in modern music’, focusing on the challenge of ‘allying individual artistic intentions with those of the people’.

The author is on her firmest ground in closely analysing several of Bush’s key works, including the Piano Concerto. Its finale features a chorus and soloist singing a rousing radical text by Randall Swingler. Bush himself played the piano part at the work’s premiere in 1938: a live broadcast by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult. The largely left-wing audience responded enthusiastically – but their applause and cheering was cut short. As Andy Croft recounts in *Comrade Heart*, his 2003 biography of Swingler, ‘the BBC was uncomfortable with the revolutionary implications of the finale, so Boult led the orchestra and choir straight into *God Save The King* in an attempt to “balance” the effect of the text on its listeners’.

Bullivant provides detailed treatment, complete with music examples, of two of Bush’s beautiful works written immediately after the Second World War – *The Winter Journey*, and *Lidice*, a brief choral work reflecting on the Nazi razing to the ground of the Czech mining village in 1942. And there is a whole chapter on Bush’s opera *Wat Tyler*, about the peasant’s revolt of 1381. The opera won a prize at the 1951 Festival of Britain, but then had to wait until 1974 for its semi-professional British premiere – and this was organised by the WMA, rather than by any ‘mainstream’ company.

In ‘working outwards’ to relate the specifics of Bush’s life to broader themes, Bullivant is sometimes tempted to overstate her subject’s importance and significance. But her overall judgement is characteristically balanced: ‘while Bush’s artistic path was idiosyncratic and provoked much antagonism in Britain, the questions he engaged with – the construction of a modern national culture, the legacy of war and renaissance of British music, the meaning and

significance of musical modernism, freedom of political and artistic expression – stood at the centre of twentieth-century British musical culture. Thus Bush was – and is – a lightning rod for considering how those themes unfolded.’

Mike Makin-Waite

Gleb J. Albert, *Das Charisma der Weltrevolution. Revolutionärer Internationalismus in der frühen Sovietgesellschaft 1917-1927*, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2017, ISBN 978-3-412-50754-1, 631pp

‘Whence will arise the sun of the socialist revolution?’ asked Alexsej Rykov at the vital All-Russian Conference of Bosheviks in April 1917. ‘I think that with all existing conditions, with our standard of living, the initiation of the socialist revolution does not belong to us. We have not the strength, nor the objective conditions for it.’ Indeed, a new society could never be built from scarcity, social democrats had always been at pains to argue, only from material abundance, once capitalism’s full progressive capacity had first been realised. In Trotsky’s rendition, moreover, ‘the real obstacle to the implementation of a socialist programme ... would not be economic – that is, the backwardness of the technical and productive structures of the country – as much as political: the isolation of the working class and the inevitable rupture with its peasant and petty-bourgeois allies’. In seizing power six months later, accordingly, the Bolsheviks were well aware of the stakes. And here Lenin supplied the escape. If the First World War was the dysfunctional consequence of the inter-imperialist rivalries in capitalism’s highest stage, and Russia was ‘the weakest link in the imperialist chain’, as he proposed, then capitalist Europe’s structural interconnectedness could bring the needed relief: if capitalist development was not only uneven but also combined, socialist revolution in the West could bail the new state out. Problems of backwardness would cease to matter inside the larger arena of a federated socialist Europe: the more advanced economies could close the developmental gap, countering the proletariat’s Russian isolation with international solidarity from the broader-based

workers' states. Revolutionary optimism, hinged to the internationalist perspective, was crucial to this vision. The solidarity and superior resources of a revolutionised West would be needed to justify and sustain the Bolsheviks' bold departure, but those advanced capitalist societies were indeed ripe for revolution.

As Gleb Albert shows, this internationalism – less an abstract hope than a sturdy expectation – inspired Bolsheviks at the grassroots and not just at the top. Redeploying Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority to capture the powerful emotional purchase of the internationalist credo for many of the party's recruits of 1917-18, Albert builds an argument about the distinctive registers of activist commitment entailed by these pioneering years of Soviet construction, when the new state's survival was still in doubt. After helpfully setting the historiographical scene (with the 1990s as baseline), his introduction moves from an interesting treatment of the character of early Soviet society to a rather heavy-weather explication of German practice theory as registered in debates on structure, agency and practice among social-science historians at the close of the 1990s. One key framing concept is *obščestvennost'*, conveying a complex amalgam of 'publicness', 'public sphere' and 'civil society', spiced with the German *Gesellschaftlichkeit* ('sociality' or 'associational life'). Another is *Subjectivierung* ('subjectivisation'), meaning the process through which individuals acquire and actively shape their personal political outlook. Identifying with the world revolution was a principal idiom of Bolshevik self-understanding during the years of revolution and civil war, Albert argues; it was an 'essential characteristic of any "true" Communist – for party leaders and local activists alike' (p547). Professing such loyalty required hard work and continual renewal. As Albert shows, using a rich array of central and local archives, newspaper and similar printed sources, and multifarious autobiographical and personal documents, the process of doing so was also embedded in the social practices and relations of everyday life.

During the years of violent and heroic militancy, the internationalist credo was palpable. For revolutionaries all too aware of their unpromising immediate environment it was a deep and sustaining passion, all the more so in places where the party lacked any elaborate organised presence or collective strength. As Trotsky had feared, outside the major

cities the party's membership contended with the embattled consequences of extreme isolation. Away from the main urban centres, with hopelessly poor communications, party activists could presume on few organised social supports or even reliable flows of information. At the start of 1918, the party claimed only 4122 rural members, amid a countryside population of 100 million. Even in industry the party's presence was chronically thin: by 1922 only 1.5 per cent of the industrial labour force were members; and a third of industrial workplaces lacked a party cell. From 1918 climbers and careerists were also diluting the activist expectations of what it meant to be a Bolshevik. As one Bolshevik journalist lamented from the provinces in November 1918: 'Along with the broad masses of workers and peasants, some individuals managed to push themselves into the party who found the world revolution no more interesting than last year's snow ... They hate the true Communists and take them at best for dolts who don't know how to exploit their position' (p164). Whatever the accuracy of Aleksandr Voronskii's reading of careerism (as we know, it was exactly 'workers and peasants' who tended to be the upwardly mobile beneficiaries), he nicely expressed the urgency of revolutionary hopes for the rest of Europe, above all for Germany, where the November Revolution was dramatically under way. For Voronskii, it was 'precisely internationalism that singled the "true Communists" out, dividing them from the "false"' (p164). Another provincial militant, the youthful Mikhail Voronkov, made the same point in a speech in Riazan' in July 1919. No less than the lonely efforts of a Bolshevik comrade 'in a sleepy village' nearby, he declared, it was 'the smallest upheaval of workers in the mountains of faraway Scotland' that would determine the revolution's fate: 'Every tiny deed, every movement arising in Russia, supports the world revolution; every event of international significance influences our life at home' (p179).

The rhythms and shape of the 'daily lives and motivations' of this particular activist cohort (young, skilled and literate), who were vital to Bolshevik effectiveness in 1917 and during the Civil War, are at the centre of Albert's account and anchor its originality. The ringing emotional resonance of revolutionary events further to the west was formative for early Bolshevik élan. Isolated militants fervently *lived* their relationship to the revolutionary horizon of the distant elsewhere.

‘We wait for news from the West’, wrote one Bolshevik from Siberian Omsk to the Central Committee in mid-1918. ‘It cannot be that our older and more experienced revolutionary comrades will leave their younger brothers, the Russian proletariat, to fight alone against the international bourgeoisie. No, I believe so strongly that the comrades from the West will soon come to our aid, I am already counting the hours’ (p177). As Albert says: ‘activists pursued their subjectivisation as “true” Bolsheviks by assuming a stance of active solidarity towards revolutionary movements abroad, performed in manifold ways’.¹

Aside from his elaborate 57-page introduction and meaty conclusion, Albert distributes his account into six richly researched and tautly organised substantive chapters. The first (70 pages) provides a conspectus for Bolshevik internationalism across the whole period of the study, from the war to the later 1920s, opening three ‘time windows’ onto the shifting Soviet perceptions of how world revolution could be engaged: first, 1918-19 and the ‘Central European wildfire’; second, 1923 and the chimera of the ‘German October’; finally, 1926 and the ‘prescribed solidarity’ with the British General Strike. The trajectory thereby charted, as revolutionary internationalism moved from performative hopes and powerful emotional investment toward ritualised expressions of officially managed solidarity, reflects Albert’s overarching framework in the book. By the end of the 1920s, he argues, signalled by the turning to Socialism in One Country, the war panic of 1927, and the impending industrialisation drive, the active utopia of world-revolutionary expectation had died back into the emergent ground of an inwardly combative and self-reliant Soviet patriotism. Moreover, this shift decisively *predated* the Stalin period. Painfully apparent in the fiasco of the German October in 1923, which had inspired so many resurgent Bolshevik hopes, it had already been inscribed in the broader recession of radical energies registered by the adoption of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in March 1921. In seeking to institutionalise and embed the militant idealism of the revolutionary period inside the imagined social order of the new Soviet *obščestvennost’*, the Bolsheviks presumed a capacity of the masses for self-activation going far beyond either their own logistical resources or the existing forms of popular collectivism and the party’s organic presence on the ground. By 1923, internationalist

initiatives were becoming almost entirely top-down, as official bodies called for increasingly formulaic affirmations (epitomised for Albert by the solidarity campaign for the British General Strike) while relentlessly squelching any non-approved activity, such as personally based Esperanto networking and correspondence. With special poignancy, several of Albert's diarists withdrew from politics altogether. Over the everydayness of world-revolutionary expectation, the different everydayness of hardships, disappointments and recriminations now supervened.

The central five chapters of Albert's book form the empirical-analytical core. Chapter 3 (76 pages) proposes a threefold typology of 'activists, opportunists and functionaries', before exploring the wide array of concrete utopias and other futuristic projections generated by Soviet writers in the 1920s, along with the place imagined for Russia inside a global Communist society. In Chapter 4 (65 pages), Albert tracks the spoken and written word via the forms and contents of two public genres – speeches on the world revolution, plus a varied repertoire of internationalist declarations and manifestos – followed by the mass-circulation local and provincial press. As interpretive popular-cultural history, excavating a particular realm of ideas and thought, these two treatments are especially rich. Next comes a couplet of slightly shorter chapters on the circulation of internationalist ideas, dealing first with the mechanics of dissemination and limits of popular reception (59 pages), then with the main institutional arena of internationalist agitation, namely MOPR or the Soviet section of International Red Aid, founded after the Fourth Comintern Congress in December 1922 and properly up and running by 1924 (46 pages). With its over 5 million members and 43,000 cells by July 1925, MOPR affords a superb case study of the practice of Soviet internationalism by the time of its more routinised post-1923 performance. These central treatments are completed by a very long chapter 7 (138 pages) – necessarily more prosaic, if imaginatively drawn – on the practicalities of international exchange: international workers' and humanitarian aid; adoption of left-wing political prisoners in the West; pen-pal internationalism; international exchanges of flags and emblems; foreign visitors and visiting labour delegations. A coda (chapter 8, 17 pages) briefly considers Soviet dreams of contributing to revolutionary struggles in the European elsewhere.

Gleb Albert's book is a splendid accomplishment. For the first time we are taken deep inside the early Bolshevik internationalist imaginary, with results fully comparable to the best of the social and cultural histories of local communisms produced since the 1970s, country by country, for the rest of Europe. Having this fine work available in English would be wonderful indeed.

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Note

1. Gleb J. Albert, 'Activist Subjectivities and the Charisma of World Revolution: Soviet Communists Encounter Revolutionary Germany, 1918/19' in Klaus Weinhauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirsten Heinsohn (eds), *Germany 1916-23: A Revolution in Context*, Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag, 2015, p183.
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Jane Lazarre, *The Communist and the Communist's Daughter – A Memoir*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017, ISBN 978022369370 hbk, 240pp, £22.99

Bill Lazarre (1902-70), the author's father and her memoir's main character, is a man with many names and identities. Bill – known by his 'old country' name Itzrael Lazarovitz; his anglicised name, William Lazar, later to become Lazarre; and his Communist Party name, Bill Lawrence – was a Jewish immigrant from Russia, a devoted father and husband, and a dedicated communist who fought in the Spanish Civil War and held several leadership positions in the American Communist Party (CPUSA). Author Jane Lazarre has pieced together a story based on legal documents, her father's extensive FBI file, personal letters, autobiographies of fellow party members, academic studies and her own memories – some vague and some lucid. The result is a fascinating memoir that describes the rise and fall of a staunch supporter of the Popular Front ideology and offers the readers very personal insights into communist family life during the McCarthy era.

Soon after emigrating from Kishinev in modern day Moldova to the United States in 1921, Bill began a long career as a radical activist in the CPUSA. In his early days, he was arrested for sedition and served an eight-month sentence in a Philadelphia prison. Upon his release, he moved to New York City, where he resumed organising for the party and taught at the Communist Party's New York Workers School. There, he met the author's mother, Tullah, with whom he lived in lower Manhattan with their two daughters until her untimely death in 1951. From the early 1920s until 1958, when he resigned from the party's New York State staff, Bill devoted himself to the CPUSA, despite the doubts he periodically struggled with.

According to the author, her father was often described as a Lovestonian, after Jay Lovestone, a CPUSA founding member. Following Nikolai Bukharin, Lovestone asserted that each national party had a right to interpret the communist ideology according to its own history and conditions. However, the author also recalls how her father spoke of Lovestone with a tone of contempt. She feels that this contradiction is exemplary of her father's political life; and while researching him she came to realise that it was impossible to write a clear and coherent story about Bill and his place in the CPUSA. Instead, she focused on more general themes such as love, grief, sacrifices, humanity and the illusive nature of memory. Jumping back and forth in time, she weaves her own story and that of her African-American civil rights activist husband with her father's, and explores her history with her father in various ways.

In her seventies today, the author – like so many other red diaper babies – looks back at the past with love and forgiveness. Still, it is clear that living with her father was not always easy. She admits to rebelling against him and some of his beliefs when she was a young woman, although she never goes into much detail about the conflicts she reportedly had with him. In college, she immersed herself in Freud's theory of the unconscious and, much to her father's discontent, fell in love with traditional psychoanalysis. A love that is visible in this memoir that so carefully analyses her father's but also her own emotions and behaviour.

She describes her father as fiercely secular yet Jewish to his very bones, and links this cultural identity to her father's public display of emotions. While many communists would consider it a moral virtue to

be emotionally restrained, her father 'wept and laughed until the waters of his infamously easy perspiration flowed'. Her father's overt displays of emotions aren't the only thing about Bill Lazarre that stand out as 'uncommunist': his love of glamorous women may also be viewed as out of the norm. The author's mother, a gentile woman and a party member, was a buyer in the handbag department of Macy's, a job that supported the family when Bill was a full-time Communist Party functionary. The author remembers her mother's exquisite taste and her fondness for dark sleek suits, elegant dresses, and long fur coats. She also describes how her father found his wife's preferences for material comforts endearing and comforting, and excused these preferences by noting that they were matched by extraordinary courage and commitment to the cause. After the author's mother passed away, Bill found himself attracted to equally glamorous women, including a 'fiery actress' and a 'passionate painter'.

While the author's story involves memory and solid research, she also admits to using her imagination to recreate her father's thoughts, making this work perhaps less suitable for scholars who are interested in the history of the CPUSA or more traditional communist biography. However, certain sections, such as the transcripts of Bill's 1929 sedition trial in Philadelphia as well as the excerpts of Bill's 1951-8 FBI files, including his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, are very insightful.

The FBI's futile efforts to recruit Bill as an informant began after a 1952 party congress, where Bill was attacked and accused of cowardice in Spain where he had fought as political commissar of the Lincoln Brigade – an accusation that, according to several accounts consulted by the author, brought him to tears. It should be understood as part of the post-war conflict between people like Bill who, following Earl Browder, valued alliances with democratic organisations to create a movement for radical social change, and communist hardliners who denounced these revisionist ideas. The latter triumphed and those who had supported Browder were scorned. In the case of Bill, this was done very publicly at a party conference, when Bob Thompson, who represented the official party line and had fought in Spain and the South Pacific, attacked Bill and discredited his efforts during the Spanish Civil War.

Bill had joined the International Brigade in December 1936 and

fought in Spain until October 1937. The author clearly recalls the many times her father recounted stories of Spain: ‘mythological’ stories that she compares to descriptions of scholars like Peter N. Carroll and Helen Graham. Bill’s exaggerated recollections of Spain resemble the propagandistic accounts of communist resistance fighters in the Second World War. For Bill too, reminding himself and others about the communist movement’s heroic past in Spain had an almost soothing and comforting effect, especially during the height of the Cold War when his doubts about the party grew. Bob Thompson knew how much Spain meant to Bill, and using it to discredit him was particularly cruel and unfair.

The author admits that her father’s stories and the repetition of his losses during the war were exhausting. However, this didn’t deter her from visiting Spain in 2013 to further her understanding of the war and her father’s role in it. Somewhat disillusioned, the author came to realise that this part of history is not only rarely taught in the US, it is virtually erased in Spain. At Madrid’s only memorial dedicated to the International Brigades, removed in 2015, the author recalled how, in the years after the Second World War, much fell apart for her father, as he was denounced into political and spiritual exile, his faith shaken and his mental health destroyed.

Bill eventually resigned from the party in 1958. Interestingly, his break with the party impacted upon his children tremendously. After the author and her sister were informed by their father about the Khrushchev secret speech, the author remembers shouting at Bill in confusion and anger, denouncing him for his denunciations. She writes, ‘Suspensions and accusations that for years had formed a kind of background buzz of lies for me had become world-altering truths.’ Like so many other red diaper babies, the author had considered the party as her extended family, and felt abandoned by the people she had loved and admired and whom she had referred to as ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’. But no-one was more devastated than her father. When he broke with the party – or more accurately, when the party broke with him – he felt a betrayal that threw him into a deep depression that would last until his death.

This betrayal, however, did not move Bill to co-operate with the FBI. Shortly after his resignation, in June 1958, he was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. During his testi-

mony, he invoked the First and Fifth amendments and refused to give any information regardless of his fears of deportation. In the event he was not deported or sent to prison, and spent the remainder of his life working in a local restaurant and then a factory, both owned by former comrades. Just before he passed away he gave a letter to the author which emphasised that, no matter how much he was tested, his faith in communism never wavered: 'I profoundly believe in the righteousness of the cause I worked for and still do'.

While written in an unconventional format, Bill's story is very recognisable for those familiar with communist biography. Certainly, some readers will not appreciate the author's non-linear approach and may criticise her failure to discuss the end of the popular front brought about by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, and its impact on her father and other Jewish supporters of the CP. Still, because she chose a much wider perspective within which to discuss her father's life, this beautifully written coming-of-age story will appeal to a wide audience.

Elke Weesjes

Andre Liebich and Svetlana Yakhimovich (eds), *From Communism to Anti-Communism: Photographs from the Boris Souvarine Collection at the Graduate Institute, Geneva, Geneva, The Graduate Institute, 2017, ISBN 9782940503971, 160 pp*

This volume brings together photographs from two distinct periods of Boris Souvarine's life, both his early enthusiasm for the communist cause, and the anti-communism of his later years. The anti-communist period is less interesting for the historian. There are anti-Soviet posters – poking fun at the anti-Christmas campaign in post-war Poland, the subservience of the French Communist Party to Stalin, and the peace movement of the 1950s – that merit a second glance, but in the main these later photographs are mediocre stuff. The very opposite is the case, however, for photographs relating to Souvarine's communist years. These, of people rather than posters, are of enormous interest, and every photograph is introduced and contextualised by a truly expert commen-

tator; Alexander Rabinowitch, Lars Lih, André Liebich and Hiroaki Kuromiya are leaders in the field.

The collection starts with some photographs from 1917. The very first is a particularly rare photograph of one of the April Days demonstrations of 20 or 21 April 1917. Taken on Nevskii Prospekt, Petrograd's main shopping and commercial street, it shows a crowd of banner carrying workers, before violence broke out on the evening of the twenty-first; the demonstrators are relaxed, shoppers are still shopping, and soldiers and sailors mix and chat. Equally rare is the photograph of the pro-war Demonstration of War Veterans, held on 17 April in an attempt to shame the anti-war stance of Lenin and the Bolsheviks: the carriages carrying the war wounded are holding up the tram traffic on Nevskii Prospekt. Photographs of the 18 June demonstration are far less rare. Called to support the Soviet's policy of supporting a coalition with the liberals, but subverted by the Bolsheviks to support their policy of 'All Power to the Soviets', the photograph reproduced here is particularly clear, with the slogan 'Down with the capitalist ministers' to the fore. Those standing behind the banners are almost certainly left-wing SRs, who also campaigned for a Soviet government; the slogan 'All land to the people' [*narod*] is one of theirs. Other photos from 1917 include a rather unclear image of May Day in Petrograd.

However, the most interesting photographs in the collection relate to 1920. There is a photo of Zinoviev heading the May Day celebration, but most of the photographs for that year relate to the Second Congress of the Comintern, which opened ceremonially in Petrograd in July, before moving to Moscow for the rest of its sessions. Not surprisingly, Zinoviev is a prominent figure again, as political leader in Petrograd and Comintern chairman. These photographs are an eclectic mix – delegates, including Karl Radek, sightseeing at the Pavlovsk estate, the decorated gateway to the Smolny building where the ceremonial opening took place, Lenin lost in a crowd of delegates. After an initial ceremony in the Smolny Institute – the Bolshevik headquarters in October 1917 – and the official opening in the Tauride Palace – home of both the Imperial State Duma and the Petrograd Soviet – delegates paid their respects to the victims of the February Revolution at the Field of Mars. The rare photographs of this event include one made all the more special since it

captures John Reed, author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, among the leaders of the procession. One Comintern delegate seems to have slipped away from the official ceremonies and strayed to the massive Putilov factory, to snap a mass meeting of workers for the Soviet elections taking place at the same time as the Comintern congress. Similar scenes have been captured on many occasions, but this photograph gives a beautifully clear image of the masses who made 'October'.

Among other photographs in the collection from the revolutionary years are two of the May Day demonstration of 1918 – one of the marchers assembling and one of Zinoviev making his address at the Field of Mars – and one photograph of the rather relaxed crowd listening to a speaker at a May Day rally in Petrograd in 1919. Two photographs commemorate the *Subbotnik* movement of 1920, when the whole of society volunteered a Saturday of unpaid labour to help restore the country after the civil war. One last photograph of note is that of Soviet prisoners of war, held by the Poles after the Russo-Polish War of 1920. In recent years, the Putin administration has made much of the mistreatment of captured Red Army soldiers during that war, in an attempt to balance an alleged Polish crime against Russians to the murder of Polish officers at Katyn in 1940. Although this is a haunting picture, and several of the prisoners are clearly wounded, there is no evidence here of maltreatment.

The collection also contains some rather propagandistic photographs from the 1920s and 1930s. There are some familiar images – a female doctor treating a bearded peasant, villagers listening to the radio, Uzbek girls at a Pioneer rally and Ukrainian girls shouldering their rakes ready for harvest – but there is also an evocative picture of fishermen mending their nets on the Black Sea shore. Of even greater note is 'the factory entrance', where ramshackle reality contrasts with the grandiose poster urging the completion of the five-year plan in four years. All in all, then, there is excellent visual material in this volume for anyone interested in the history of the Russian Revolution.

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