Reviews

Jakub S. Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890-1918*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016; 288pp.; ISBN 978019878929, £60.00, hbk

With the rise of populism in America and across Europe forcing the mainstream left to rethink its entire reason for being, or risk extinction, Jakub S. Beneš's study of the relationship between internationalism and ethnic nationalism is a timely one.

Looking at German and Czech social democratic approaches to nationalism in the last two decades of the Habsburg Empire, Beneš seeks to examine an 'eventful understanding' of nationalism through the culture – socialist clubs, newspapers, literature – of the Austro-Hungarian Social Democratic Party. With this approach, Beneš aims to extend the historiography of the working class in Central East Europe from a 'history from below' perspective. For the most part Beneš succeeds in that. While Beneš cannot, and indeed should not, ignore the role played by Otto Bauer, Victor Adler and others in the rise of social democracy, his method of focusing on 'popular culture' and the uses of place and space to build a movement and create identity, is a sound one. Indeed Beneš successfully charts how the Social Democrats used these to their advantage. How the Social Democrats tapped into the feeling of exclusion from the Habsburg state using verse and public space is an interesting question that has yet not been fully explored.

What is particularly interesting about Beneš's work is his attention to the creation of an emotional bond between the working class and the social democratic movement. He focuses on the Social Democrats' forging of links between popular activism and Christianity, on Adler's drive to bring so-called 'high culture' to the masses, and on the use of national symbols such as the Hussite leader, Jan Hus. This shines a light on left-wing strategies to make their movement and ideas not only relevant to the working class of the Habsburg Empire, but also successfully appeal to a form of populism, thus claiming the ground other nationalist organisations would usually occupy. In this examination, Beneš clearly shows how the use of these symbols had both advantages and disadvantages; highlighting the difficulty in appealing to the working class of a diverse and disparate area. The aforementioned appropriation of Jan Hus is a perfect

example of this. While Hus was a celebrated figure amongst the Czechs, and the Social Democrats successfully played on his mythologised image here, they could not use him in Austria. Indeed as Beneš shows, finding a relevant figure in Austria was much more problematic. Furthermore, Beneš questions the idea of trying to 'outdo' the nationalists, suggesting to some degree that this only further pushed the Czech working class towards ethnic nationalism.

Indeed it is the weaknesses of Austro-Marxism that runs throughout Beneš's work. As his study shows, by playing to nationalistic tendencies whilst maintaining a 'pragmatic' line, the Social Democrat leadership encountered serious issues such as an increasingly radical, and nationalistic, rank-and-file membership, and the struggle for dominance amongst the working class in a climate of rising extremism from both left and right. Beneš's study is very good at charting these issues through his 'eventful' approach, setting out the ebb and flow of Austro-Marxism in his two decade period of enquiry. For example, the leadership's acceptance of 'war socialism' and support for the Habsburg Empire during the First World War, coupled with its cool view of wartime strikes and disruption of the war effort in 1918, only served to increase the distance between itself and the party's grassroots. As Beneš shows, what seemed to the leadership to be a perfectly reasonable argument of supporting the moderate concessions of the Habsburgs against a reactionary Tsarist Russia, only helped to forge a perception from the Czech side that Austrian-German social democracy was indistinguishable from its German Empire counterparts. This heightened the Czech feeling of separatedness and precipitated a split within the movement. Rather than rely on a solely theoretical understanding of Austro-Marxism to explain the split between Austrian-German and Czech wings of the Social Democratic Party, Beneš's focus on the 'grassroots' as a point of historical enquiry serves to show that the success and failures of the social democratic movement were much more linked to events 'on the ground' as they happened. As Beneš's work shows, the working class of the Habsburg Empire were motivated into action not by theory but by their own experiences.

Beneš is correct in his assertion that there is no inherent contradiction between internationalism and nationalism as a dual approach to building up support amongst the working class, but as evidenced in this work he is also right to stress that this 'nationalism' was not one of chauvinism but of commitment to democracy and progressive reforms. What this study also shows, is that the appeal to nationalism had its risks. Ultimately this work highlights the 'profound crisis of European socialism' in the early

twentieth century, a position that is in some ways being played out again in the present day. Social democracy had to build mass support and one way to do so was to claim national figures and symbols as their own. While in the short term this saw the Social Democrats grow in support, the resultant radicalisation of the Czech wing of the party, eventual demise of 'Old Austria' following the end of the First World War, and the squeezing of the Social Democrats between two seemingly attractive extremes – communism and fascism – showed that this strategy failed longer term. For contemporary socialists Beneš's work is a lesson worth learning. There are ways to challenge populists and even occupy their natural territory without abandoning the basic principles of social democracy, but this is the beginning of a long process of winning the trust of the working class, not the end. European socialists and American liberals ignore this at their peril.

Lewis Young

Mark Bulik, *The Sons of Molly Maguire: The Irish Roots of America's First Labor War*, Fordham University Press, New York 2015; 352pp.; ISBN 9780823262236, £25.99, hbk

The emergence of the Molly Maguires and their prolonged battle with mine owners is one of the most sensational episodes of American labour history. Popularised in a ballad by 'The Dubliners', the legend of the Mollies even made it as far as the silver screen, with Sean Connery and Richard Harris starring in 'The Molly Maguires' (1970). What Mark Bulik attempts to do is to place the labour unrest and violence in an Irish context, to wade through much of the myth and legend that surrounds the Mollies, and to examine the consequences of the violence.

The first question that needs to be answered is: who were the Molly Maguires? Who were the men who were hanged? The Molly Maguires were a secret, oath-bound society with roots in pre-famine Ireland known for committing revenge attacks on unscrupulous landlords and their agents. As a result of the wave of famine immigration they were transplanted from Ireland via the Ancient Order of Hibernians and union activity. After a number of violent incidents, twenty men accused of being Molly Maguires were hanged in 1877 and 1878. They became a subject of both controversy and folklore. They were either innocent men – valiant protectors of labour, or a band of cutthroats.

The troubles in the north-eastern coal fields ranged from resistance to nativist anti-Irish campaigns; opposition to the draft during the American Civil War, and a determination, from the mid-1860s through the mid-1870s, to maintain wage levels and improve working conditions by organising unions. In May 1862 troops occupied the towns of Heckersville and Forrestville during a strike. That autumn striking workers opposed to conscription staged a march from mine to mine. That December strikers invaded the Phoenix Park Colliery uttering the battle cry 'Mollie Maguire'.

The author rightly points out that Molly violence, which occurred over a relatively short time period, did not emerge until conscription was used as a ploy for rooting out union troublemakers and political adversaries. The first murder attributed to the Molly Maguires was a disabled Union Army veteran in 1863. Over a week later two of the victim's acquaintances were shot down. In 1865, a mine boss was gunned down. The following year a mine superintendent was killed.

The task of prosecuting the Molly Maguires fell to the Reading Railroad company and other major coal companies. Franklin Gowen, president of the railroad company, served as one the lead prosecutors. Charles Albright, who had close ties to coal operators, had previously written a letter to President Lincoln calling for 'martial law' and 'summary justice' to be enforced during the coal strike and blamed the industrial strife entirely on the Irish – was now a lawyer for the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Company. Gowen concluded that the railroad needed to monopolise not only the transportation of coal, but its production and distribution as well. In order to do this he would have to crush not only the union, but also the Hibernian Order – a source of political power.

The execution of the Molly Maguires began on 21 June 1877, when ten men went to the gallows. It was the largest mass hanging in the history of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania – yet did nothing to stem the tide of union militancy. Strikes went on in the collieries of northeastern Pennsylvania, while in the weeks after the hanging the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 occurred.

Bulik is correct in his assertion that Molly violence was a by-product of a long and painful process by which Irish peasants, displaced by the Great Famine, transformed themselves into American industrial workers. The decline of Molly Maguire violence after 1867 cannot be understood outside the context of a new miners' union – the Workingmen's Benevolent Association spread throughout the anthracite region of northeastern Pennsylvania. The Workingmen's Benevolent Association bespoke

a growing maturity and class consciousness on the part of the region's miners that would ultimately serve the United Mineworkers of America.

The Sons of Molly Maguire is both a political and cultural history. Bulik's work explores in detail the link between Irish folk culture and the Mollies, 'A link', the author claims, 'so profound in famine era Ireland that it echoed across the Atlantic during the Civil War'. The key to understanding what happened in the anthracite region is that it was one of the few rural areas of the US where Irish Catholic immigrants settled in such an extent that they retained the folk culture of the countryside, and even the Irish language.

Bulik manages to connect the Irish 'secret societies' with mummers plays, that is, the sketches performed by men attired in straw masks, who went from house to house performing at certain feast days throughout the year. The plays performed by mummers, the meaning of the straw costumes, white shirts, and men masquerading as women do draw comparison to a party of armed men, led by 'Mollie Maguire' arriving at night at the house of an opponent but to act out a real rather than symbolic act of violence. Bulik's discussion of the mummers' relationship to popular political activity is the most wide ranging to date, and should encourage others to look again at the symbolic aspects of Ribbonism and the socio-political function of mumming, and how this played out with regards to the Mollies.

While the author makes a few overly simplistic comparisons with contemporary Irish society, all in all, Bulik manages to produce a thoroughly enjoyable study, original and deeply sourced in its content. *The Sons of Molly Maguire* is an important contribution to the history of the Irish working in the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania, and a further milestone in the study of the Molly Maguires. It will have particular appeal to anyone interested in Ribbonism, Irish-America, and in American labour history in generally.

Liam Ó Discín

Fedor Il'ich Dan, *Two Years of Wandering: A Menshevik Leader in Lenin's Russia*, translated, edited and introduced by Francis King, Lawrence and Wishart, London 2016; 236pp.; ISBN 9781910448724, £15.00, pbk

Memoirs constitute some of the most vivid and revealing sources for studying any history, and the Russian revolution and civil war is no exception. Thanks to the hard work and keen eye of Francis King, we can now add Fedor Dan's *Two Years of Wandering* to a long list of such published

personal accounts available in the English language. The work of a leading Menshevik writing from exile in 1922, Dan's superbly translated memoirs will undoubtedly prove valuable to both historians and critically-minded socialists looking back on this period for years to come.

The volume opens with an extended useful introduction, written by King, detailing Dan's family background, politics, party activities, and personal life before, during and after the Russian revolution and civil war. The subsequent nine chapters, comprising Dan's original memoir, document in his own words the Menshevik leader's dramatic, often alarming, sometimes tragic, but always readable and compelling personal life from May 1920 until late January 1922. From wartime Petrograd, Dan's account leads readers into internal exile in Ekaterinburg; then on to Moscow via Minsk and Smolensk, two cities on Russia's international military front; before returning to Petrograd and, finally, via Moscow, into European emigration. The book concludes with some thirty pages of appendices, including several valuable primary documents, and a list of further reading.

As King notes in his introduction, however compelling Dan's story itself may seem, his memoirs were written 'first and foremost as a political intervention' (p1). Their forthright and impassioned critique of the early years of Bolshevik rule must be seen within their immediate context of post-civil war Russian and émigré politics. At the same time, Dan's own Marxist commentary underscores the memoir's importance to socialists reflecting critically on this period today. Much of the memoir serves to decry the regime of 'war communism', established shortly after the Soviet seizure of power in October 1917 and lasting until 1921, which Dan portrays as a dark time marked by corruption, repression, and hunger. In his commentary on the Bolshevik political leadership, he does not mince his words. Taking aim at its most prominent figures, Dan condemns Lenin and Trotsky thoroughly, while Zinoviev he describes as 'the most repugnant and dishonourable of all the Bolsheviks' (p97). At the same time, Dan expresses his disgust at the lowest ranks of the regime. Reflecting the long-standing intelligentsia fears of Russia's 'dark masses', he repeatedly argues Bolshevik rule has empowered 'politically illiterate' chancers and thugs, drawing them into positions of administrative and cultural authority, military command, and the security apparatus without ensuring they have the knowledge and responsibility required for such roles.

Dan's condemnation of the practices of the Soviet regime guaranteed his memoirs a hostile reception in Russia at the time. One review, penned by the literary critic, A.K. Voronsky, soon after the memoir's publication in Berlin in 1922, is included in full as an appendix to this volume. Sneering

at the Menshevik's 'little book', Voronsky concludes that it shows Dan 'stood for the overthrow of Soviet power' (p223). As King suggests, Dan's uncompromising view of the early years of Soviet rule may also explain why his memoirs have been overlooked for so long in the West, where many socialist critics of the Soviet Union were drawn to Trotsky, whose writings 'kept the romantic image of October 1917 intact' (p35). Nonetheless, any reading of the memoir must show that Voronsky was absolutely incorrect in his characterisation of Dan, who had a complex relationship with Soviet Russia. At the same time as condemning what he saw as the abuses of authority and governmental incompetence of the Bolsheviks, Dan consistently defends the revolution they have taken guardianship of. In the first episode Dan describes in his memoir, a workers' meeting to greet a delegation of British socialists, he recalls speaking up to expose the Bolshevik regime's crimes before 'protest[ing] against the [allied] intervention [in Russia] and […] appeal[ing] to the British workers to struggle to lift the blockade against Russia' (p49). Throughout the remainder of the memoir, he makes constant reference to the 'gains of revolution', which must be preserved not only from Bolshevik, but also from 'counter-revolutionary' (read: 'capitalist' and 'imperialist'), hands. This position would lead him, both during and after the period covered in his memoir, to defend the premise of the Soviet state and reject calls for its overthrow. Indeed, Dan shows a degree of fondness and respect for those Soviet institutions he sees as most intimately connected with the revolution itself. While decrying Bolshevik attempts to bring socialism to Europe 'on the bayonets of the Red Army' through their ill-fated invasion of Poland, he nevertheless lauds the Red Army as 'invincible when it is a question of defence, of protecting the peasants' revolutionary gains against encroachments from domestic reaction or foreign imperialism' (p82).

Whatever the importance of Dan's memoir as a political intervention, however, it remains an intimate personal account, and perhaps its most striking aspects are the portraits of human interaction and relationships it offers. The richness of these observations will ensure that, in coming years, his memoir will become a valuable source for historians of Russian society during the civil war and early Soviet period.

Two aspects of everyday life and human interaction stand out particularly clearly. The first is the trade and commerce, where Russians were forced to adapt their practices continuously to meet ever-changing material and political circumstances. Civil war markets and the practices they engendered are recalled as simultaneously desperate and colourful. On his way to Ekaterinburg in 1920, Dan recalls how 'crowds of peasant

men, old women, and children selling bread, milk, butter, curd cheese, cooked meat and poultry' mobbed railway stations to offload their wares before they could be apprehended, in a constant high-risk game of cat and mouse with Soviet authorities (p58). Once in Ekaterinburg, Dan acquainted himself with the local bazaar, where '"free trade" took place', attracting local peasants, soldiers, and residents to buy and sell their wares before, inevitably, Soviet authorities descended to shut down their operations (p61). By contrast, NEP markets are portrayed as depressing and soulless, reflecting the disappointment of revolutionary dreams. Between spells of incarceration by the Cheka in 1921 and 1922, Dan had the opportunity to see the new Moscow. As trade re-appeared 'in almost every building', poverty and vice appeared on the city's streets. Employees and workers were laid off en masse, leaving 'young women and girls' to 'mak[e] use of the "freedom of trade" in order to sell the only thing that remained to them – their own bodies'. Conspicuous wealth was on display in the form of prestigious foodstores and cafes, but shops were often devoid of any useful goods whatsoever. Dan recalls being left with 'the most depressing impression [of NEP Moscow]: not one iota of economic progress, and rapidly developing moral and political disintegration' (pp184-186).

The second particularly striking aspect of everyday life and human interaction vividly revealed by Dan comes from behind bars. Indeed, he spends so much of the time covered in his memoir in prison that his memoir might easily have been called *Two Years of Incarceration*. His prison reminiscences are surely some of the most remarkable and revealing to be published in English from this period, displaying the social and human dynamics of incarceration. In general, Dan describes early Soviet prisons, which were at that time filled with non-Bolshevik socialists and anarchists, as cramped, cold, and infested with vermin, although some were certainly worse and others better. His prison experiences evidently were a great burden, and he recalls movingly the desperation of being deprived of freedom. One constant, however, is the importance of personal relations in surviving prison.

Above all, the power relationship between prisoner and guard in Dan's memoir is not fixed and unchanging, but continually negotiated: in order to secure basic rights, prisoners engaged their jailers in whatever way they could. In the relatively benign conditions of the Peter and Paul fortress, Dan and other imprisoned socialists involved the military commander and Red Army men guarding them in animated political discussions. These discussions do not appear to have shifted the positions of

either prisoner or jailer, but they do seem to have contributed to better treatment and an altogether improved rapport between the two, ensuring Dan and others 'were given mattresses, books, newspapers, tobacco' and 'that the food improved' (pp120-122). By contrast, in the grim and desolate Butyrki prison, where Dan was held last before being released into European emigration, he recalls that prisoners were forced to take matters into their own hands and force concessions from the '[i]gnorant, dense, and cruel' head of the prison, Popov, and his 'small, slippery' assistant, Sokolov. While both men presided over a brutal and dehumanising prison regime, Dan and his fellow socialists and anarchists on the other side of the bars conspired to gradually expand their rights through a complex and coordinated plot involving such illicit schemes as the forging from scrap metal recovered from the prison yard of skeleton keys to open cell doors. The memoir reveals clearly the comradeship of prisoners, which brought together Mensheviks with Socialist-Revolutionaries of various stripes, dissident Bolsheviks, and even anarchists (a group which, as one document in the appendix to this volume reveals, Dan and his comrades otherwise felt very little political affinity towards at this time [p203]). Unable to counter the ingenuity and determination of their prisoners, Butyrki's head jailers, Popov and Sokolov, were forced to concede all manner of rights until one wing 'became a solid socialist oasis […], enjoying all the "freedoms" which are possible in a prison' (p170).

In bringing this fascinating memoir to light for an English reading audience, Francis King must be commended for his careful translation, which not only captures the core message, but also the human and emotional dimensions of Dan's writing. King has made great efforts to make the text both as accessible and as deeply contextualised as possible to readers not already familiar with his story. Some of the more obscure references Dan makes are explained in useful editorial notes. (Somewhat inconveniently, these notes appear at the end of each chapter, rather than in a single self-contained section at the end of the memoir or, better still, at the bottom of each page.) King has also selected five highly interesting documents as appendices, which will certainly prove to be valuable primary sources for students and professional researchers, along with a short annotated bibliography of further reading. Combined, King's dedicated editorship has ensured that Dan's memoir will endure for years to come as a key text for anyone studying this formative period of Soviet rule.

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Nicholas Deakin (ed.), *Radiant Illusion? Middle-class Recruits to Communism in the Thirties*, Eden Valley Editions, Edenbridge 2015; 187pp; 31 illustrations; ISBN 9780992972325, £10.00 pbk

Discussions of the fairly numerous middle-class individuals, many from the intellectual or artistic milieu, who in the 1930s chose to join the Communist Party, have some aspects of a folklore narrative, at any rate among politically minded historians. On the whole, mainstream judgement has dismissed these recruits as being at best well-intentioned dupes or, in Deakin's words '… children of the bourgeoisie suffering from acute class guilt', (p15) or even as scoundrels motivated by evil and treasonable intent.

Such is the mythology that was generated by the Cold War, when 'premature anti-fascism', namely any previous association with the erstwhile wartime ally, let alone an unrepentant continuing one, rendered the target of the accusation liable to suffer discrimination, denigration and exclusion from the civil service, academia, the arts or broadcasting – not to mention polite society.

This estimable volume with multiple authors takes up the challenge of presenting a number of these individuals in a truer light. Though short and brought out by an obscure publisher it is instructive and illuminating and well worth its modest price (all the proceeds are being donated to charity). Although the points noted above applied throughout all the 'Western' bloc, most intensely in the United States, this collection deals with the British experience.

In the opening chapter Deakin quotes John Saville's remark that 'analytical examples of the Communist experience are rare, in personal terms especially', but then goes on to note that through the work of Kevin Morgan and his colleagues such deficiency is now being amended, and that in addition through his own academic work he has had access to personal accounts and private papers. He advises that, '… it is important to stress that this exercise is not intended as an apologia – it is simply an attempt at securing a better understanding of the motivation and attitudes of a group of young people, not a post-Soviet-style rehabilitation process' (p16).

The CP in the twenties did include some members and sympathisers of middle class and academic background, such as the economist Maurice Dobb, the historian Leslie Morton and the scientist Desmond Bernal – not forgetting Palme Dutt himself. Nonetheless at that time the Party was resolutely proletarian and proud of it, as Kevin Morgan emphasises at the beginning of his chapter, which is entitled 'Recruiting the middle-class'.

In the earlier part of the thirties thanks to falling prices and new forms of consumer commodities coming on stream, the British middle class as a whole was doing quite well so long as their wage earners remained in employment. On the other hand intense misery was resulting from government economic and social policy among large swathes of the population, particularly in traditional centres of industrial production. British fascism was on the march both literally and figuratively, while abroad the political skies were darkening with Hitler's takeover in 1933 and military aggression and massacre by the fascist and quasi-fascist regimes ruling in Japan, Italy and Austria.

Throughout eastern Europe regimes of a similar character were in the ascendant, while by contrast the Soviet Union had apparently solved the problems of slump, unemployment and poverty by means of a planned economy of unprecedentedly impressive growth figures, and seemed to be moving towards a society of unprecedented social harmony; a 'new civilization', no less, according to the Webbs. A growing number of young middle class people, horrified at the realities around them, were attracted to the British representative of this seeming communist miracle. Among its members and sympathisers in the thirties were two future Nobel Prize winners in Chemistry, Dorothy Hodgkin and Richard Synge (though they do not feature in this volume).

Norma Cohen's account of her parents, Eve and Eric, is worth quoting:

> The Communist Party provided an alternative paradigm, a new 'family of man' they could both embrace, with its unswerving sense of purpose, its cultural activities and comradeship coupled with a gut response to the Depression years and a worship of all things Soviet with its unsullied vision of equality for all (p121).

As the decade advanced the fascist danger loomed larger, above all with military aggression in Spain 1936-39 being the 'most indelible' experience in attracting this cohort, according to Kevin Morgan. (p72). Even before that, in 1935, the seventh (and last) congress of the Communist International had reversed a very sectarian stance of so-called 'Class against Class' and called for the establishment of 'Popular Fronts' of all democratic forces against fascism. In response the CP began to actively propagandise among the middle class and seek recruits from that milieu. The party in Scotland, even more proletarian than in England, went so far as to establish a committee to promote 'middle class work'.

The experiences of eight specific individuals, prominent and otherwise,

from a variety of backgrounds, some wealthy, some working class, make up the bulk of these accounts. They are James Klugmann, Margot Heinemann, Len Jones, Eve and Eric Cohen, James MacGibbon, Mary McIntosh and Richard Clark. All were living in England at the time of they joined the Party, though James MacGibbon had grown up in Scotland.

The book is based on lectures and seminars at Gresham College in 2013 and 2014. The introduction is by Roderick Floud, a distinguished economic historian whose father was a communist in the 1930s, whose MI5 file remains denied to his son. There is also a short chapter reporting the discussion from the floor which followed the talks, participants including Denis Healy and Peter Hennessy.

Radiant Illusion? certainly succeeds in its purpose of appraising sympathetically but not uncritically the context of Communist Party membership in the 1930s for its middle class recruits. It is informative and at times moving as well as being copiously illustrated. The outward appearance of this paperback does look a bit unfamiliar in terms of present-day publishing standards, but this is deliberate – its producers wanted it to look like some of the publications of the 1930s, and it is printed by the Risograph method. There are a couple of minor factual errors, including the misspelling of Willie Gallacher's name, but overall the volume is to be highly commended.

Willie Thompson

Bob Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie: A Memoir of Mandela and the Failed Revolution, 1960-1963*, Jacana, Johannesburg 2013; 224pp.; ISBN 9781431407842, £15.95, pbk

Bob Hepple's autobiographical account of his time in the South Africa under Apartheid paints a fascinating story of the resistance, warts and all. He was a young lawyer, whose anti-racist upbringing led him to join the South African Communist Party and eventually become one of the defendants, alongside Nelson Mandela, in the Rivonia Trial of 1963-64. The book gives an insider's view of the decision to start the armed struggle against Apartheid. While it obviously only one man's view of the process, and a critical view at that, it serves as a valuable testament that provides answers to some of the questions historians would like answered about the period as well as giving activists food for thought about tactics use to fight a police state.

The son of Alexander Hepple, leader of the South African Labour Party, he was involved in anti-segregation activities as a student at the

University of the Witwatersrand and joined the underground South African Communist Party (SACP). He dropped out of the party in 1956, fed up with what he saw as its inertia and isolation, but rejoined in 1960 in the political crisis following the Sharpeville Massacre, becoming editor of *Workers' Unity*, the newspaper of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). He appears to have quickly risen into the leadership of the SACP, although his descriptions of discussions at Central Committee meetings have a strangely detached feel that leave one with the impression that he is not telling all he remembers.

Following the arrest of Nelson Mandela for his part in organising the May 1961 'stay away', Bob Hepple became the ANC leader's legal advisor and from this we get an interesting insight into the development of Mandela's thinking on the armed struggle. Hepple argues that Mandela had given up on peaceful protest in 1953 and started making the argument for full-scale guerrilla war. The increased repression of the late 1950s, with the State of Emergency, the arrests, the beatings, the deportations, the evictions and the burning of African people's houses, led the SACP to agree with this position and the 1961 stay-away was seen as the end of any attempt at a peaceful process.

The turn to full scale guerrilla war was outlined in Operation Mayibuye, drafted by Govan Mbeki and Joe Slovo. The plan called for the setting up of an armed wing of the ANC, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), with the intention of bringing 7,000 armed men, trained in friendly neighbouring front-line states, into South Africa to fight the apartheid regime, 'armed and properly equipped in such a way as to be self-sufficient in every respect for at least a month'. The plan continues:

> In the initial period when for a short while the military advantage will be ours, the plan envisages a massive onslaught on pre-selected targets which will create maximum havoc and confusion in the enemy camp and which will inject into the masses of the people and other friendly forces a feeling of confidence that here at last is an army of liberation equipped and capable of leading them to victory.

Bob Hepple himself describes Operation Mayibuye as being 'far-fetched', with many of the SACP Central Committee 'divorced from reality' and argues that the priority should have been organising the urban working class, with armed units as a secondary tactic; he himself was charged with reconstructing SACTU after its leaders had been arrested. However, he tells us that preparation of an elite for armed struggle quickly came to

take precedence over the trade union work in which he was involved and experienced trade union militants were frequently pulled out for guerrilla training. This led to the effective collapse of the SACP, the ANC and SACTU as internal forces. Hepple joined the Secretariat of the SACP Central Committee in April 1963, but says he had no idea who was actually running MK or who decided on the shift from sabotage to guerrilla war without consultation with the internal leadership of the SACP or the ANC. How much this is hindsight and how much he argued at the time will never be known, although as matters turned out, it is hard to disagree with his assessment.

The police raid on Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, a suburb of Johannesburg, captured practically the whole internal leadership of the MK, the ANC and the SACP, including Bob Hepple. Security had been poor and a vast amount of incriminating documents were found in the raid, providing the basis for the famous trial that put Nelson Mandela behind bars on Robben Island for twenty-seven years, with most of the other accused also receiving long jail terms. Bob Hepple managed to evade conviction by offering to be a prosecution witness in return for release from prison, then fleeing the country before the trial started without giving any evidence.

He was welcomed by the ANC in exile in Dar es Salaam, but when he arrived in Britain, following a remark by Walter Sisulu, quoted out of context in the press, that implied he had betrayed them by running away, he was expelled from the Communist Party. However, Joel Joffe, a lawyer on the Riviona accused defence team, in research for his 1995 book, *The Rivonia Story*, said that he found that the expulsion was mainly to do with 'political activities in which you were involved before the trial'. Hepple assumes this to mean his critical stance over the political direction of the party.

Hindsight is an exact science and it is easy for us today to see the pitfalls of the guerrilla tactic in South Africa but, in the wake of the successful Cuban and Algerian revolutions, the armed struggle had obvious attractions. However, South Africa was neither Batista's fragile, corrupt and unpopular dictatorship, nor an externally based colonialism with a metropolitan population out of sympathy with the settlers. Instead, it was a highly armed state, with solid support amongst the white population and considerable backing from the USA, Britain and Israel. This did mean that some kind of armed action combined with internal resistance was needed to defeat Apartheid. The circumstances in which these elements came together with a massive international solidarity movement could not have been foreseen in 1963. The defeat of the South African Defence Force by

the joint Cuban/Angolan offensive did play an important role in finally forcing the regime to compromise, but that was the armed struggle on an altogether different scale.

Perhaps the most interesting response he reports is from Ruth First who told him that, while she saw the dangers inherent in Operation Mayibuye, she was impressed by the determination of the MK comrades compared to the endless tiresome committee meetings of the political associations. This may not be the best way to approach a political decision, but the statement strikes a chord with many of us and demonstrates an audacity without which no resistance can succeed.

Steve Cushion
London

Christian Krell (ed.), *Thinkers of Social Democracy. 49 Portraits*, translated by James Patterson, Dietz, Bonn 2016; 368pp; ISBN 9783801204822, €26.00, pbk

No other left-wing party quite honours its intellectual tradition like the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). In *Thinkers of Social Democracy*, a number of historians and commentators do their bit to burnish said tradition, providing forty-nine pen portraits of its most significant contributors or *Vordenker* ('forethinkers'). The book as explained in stately fashion by its editor, head of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's *Akademie für Soziale Demokratie* Christian Krell, catalogues 'those who sought to make things happen'. It provides a 'first encounter' with pioneering social democrats (14-16). This selection of short, snappish biographies conveys a great deal about the present keepers of the social democratic flame, latter-day women and men of letters who wish to accentuate social democracy's credentials when compared with revolutionary socialism, economic liberalism and mere labourism.

Thinkers of Social Democracy includes iconic names from the first wave of social democracy such as Marx, Engels, Ferdinand Lassalle, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. In the 1890s and 1900s Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring wrestled with the problematic inherited from those early thinkers: how to accommodate the SPD's maturation into a parliamentary peoples' party whilst reckoning with German social democracy's revolutionary rhetoric and credentials. From the Weimar period, one has 'the leading theoretician of German social democracy in the Weimer Republic' Rudolf Hilferding (p151),

jurist Hermann Heller and Friedrich Ebert, whose inclusion, despite his reputation as a most atheoretical party boss, is justified by 'his highly responsible, practical work as the first Social Democrat to lead Germany' (p96). Kurt Schumacher and Otto Wels represent the SPD's darkest hour and its emergence therefrom, Wels being the sole member of the Reichstag who spoke against the Nazis' Enabling Law, and Schumacher, the architect of the SPD's post-war transition into an integral part of the fledging Federal Republic of Germany.

The Bad Godesberg years – the party's 1959 accommodation with its socialist lineage and its constitutional, embedded mid-twentieth century setting – are a rich period for *Thinkers*. Carlo Schmid, Susanne Miller, Willi Eichler, Wolfgang Abendroth, parliamentarians Heinrich Deist and Herbert Wehner were all lead actors in the debate around the SPD's turn away from quasi-Marxism and towards liberal democracy with an ethical twist. The SPD's revival as a party of government in the '60s and '70s is captured by pen portraits of Chancellor Willy Brandt, with his 'understudying of socialism based on freedom and democracy, with a society-shaping dimension, but without claiming the party is its sole representative' (p70), and of Karl Schiller, economist, minister and utterer of the quintessential Godesbergian line: '[c]ompetition as much as possible, planning as much as necessary' (p284).

In more neoliberal times, what constitutes a thinker in the eyes of contributors to *Thinkers* is keeping social democracy abreast with contemporary developments. One has the Peter Mandelson-esque Peter Glotz, environmentalist Hermann Scheer and Erhard Eppler, pietist doyen of the SPD's leftist internationalism and a long-time chair of the party's Basic Values Commission (the Commission is incidentally a body on which several of the composers of the forty-nine portraits sit). Glotz was the editor of the *Die Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte* for over twenty years, the SPD's dynamic executive director in the mid-1980s, and something of a media guru. Scheer's commitment to the environmental dimension of public policy made him, according to his biographer Michael Reschke, as responsible as anyone for 'the political-ideological superstructure' (p281) behind the increasing mainstream movement for alternative energy in Germany and Europe.

'[T]he selected thinkers', Krell acknowledges, 'include markedly more men than women' (p15). Those female thinkers that have made it in are unfamiliar names to an Anglo-American audience. Renate Lepsius, parliamentarian, magistrate and author, made telling legislative interventions in the 1970s, helping liberalise divorce and abortion statutes. Herta Gotthelf

was a journalist, editor of the SPD's periodical for female members *Genossin*, before going into political exile in London in 1934. Returning to Germany in 1946, having been active in SPD exile organisations, she was appointed the Women's Secretary of the SPD and became editor again of *Genossin* in 1947. The winner of the German Order of Merit in 1956, Hessian Elisabeth Selbert helped draft the constitution of the fledging Federal Republic, the Basic Law, in 1948. When other parties initially 'rejected the SPD motion "men and women have equal rights"' (p308), Selbert, representing the SPD, saw it inserted into the Basic Law.

There are a few telling interpretative points in this collection. On social democratic leaders, those who achieved high office, stressed moderation and had an aversion to anti-statist, class essentialist positions, they are the good comrades. Social democracy, for the chosen *Vordenker*, is nothing if it is not a constructive opposition within the German polity. Take Ebert, the first social democratic president. He made Weimar work. He established a functioning constitutional order and never wavered in his commitment to parliamentary governance (the *Freikorps* are glossed over). There was Schumacher, the Marxist sympathiser who nevertheless made sure that social democracy had no truck with organised communism. Minister-President of North Rhine Westphalia and later President of Germany Johannes Rau's socialism, such as it was, held that social democrats should intervene where it was appropriate, promote social solidarity but never ride roughshod over individual interests.

The editorial line in *Thinkers of Social Democracy* is not so partisan that it would dictate an anti-hagiographic approach towards those thinkers who do not fit the liberal socialist mould. Given that Marx's political theory is deemed 'unprofitable' (p224) – a contribution outside the mainstream delineated in *Thinkers* – Engels, Bebel and Kautsky, heavily associated with the sins of social democracy's phase as an orthodox Marxist ideology, are not simply decried; indeed, they are treated with kid gloves. Kautsky is portrayed as a methodical as opposed to a metaphysical Marxist, 'well worth reading today' (p169). Engels was a pragmatist who believed in various routes to the socialist commonwealth; Bebel, a facilitator of worker participation in civil and political society.

It is Luxemburg who is more in the firing line as regards the Marxist generation of social democratic intellectuals. She is chided by her biographer Helga Grebing for her 'romanticism' and her short-sighted conception of the immediate material benefits of capitalist growth (pp215-16). Luxemburg 'cannot be considered a direct precursor' (p218) to the type of social democracy celebrated in *Thinkers*. Other lefties in *Thinkers* receive

the same charitable readings as Engels, Bebel and Kautsky. Abendroth and Peter von Oertzen, both high profile anti-Godesbergians, are credited with at least a commitment to democratic socialism: they were not Marxist-Leninists in disguise.

Where the writers behind *Thinkers of Social Democracy* make clear their predilection is their promotion of those who enabled social democracy's Godesbergian shift to centre-leftism, for example, the liberal socialist axis of Leonard Nelson, Willi Eichler and Susanne Miller. Weimarian Nelson in contrast to 'the party Marxism which … pervaded the SPD's official platform' (p253), emphasised individual freedom, his liberal element, and the notion of intervention, the socialist. Importantly, Nelson's socialism was as radical as the left Marxists', principled and committed, although his antipathy towards democracy countered this in part. His protégés, Eichler and Miller, dedicated themselves to the Nelsonian principle that socialism was to be the translation of 'the ideal … on earth … [by] acting, responsible people' (p235). Militant in its prioritising of values before political expediency, yet hostile to utopian authoritarian schemes, 'Nelson's left-wing Kantianism' (p236) was the basis of Eichler and Miller's pet project, the Bad Godesberg Programme. With social democracy's Bad Godesberg moment, party socialism became an appeal to common values. Krell, the biographer of Nelson and Eichler, notes that with Bad Godesberg, a more inclusive era was ushered in – religious thought, for example, became more of a social democratic concern.

One other tangent highlighted in *Thinkers of Social Democracy* is worth noting, that of economic democracy. In the social democratic tradition of codetermination, trade unionists and scholars such as Fritz Naphtali and Viktor Agartz helped develop policy on worker involvement in economic planning. For Agartz, 'one of the leading economic policy minds of the West German labour movement' (p41) the government had a determining role in areas left in the more Anglo-Saxon model to microeconomics. West Germany should have a wages and prices policy. In Naphtali, German social democracy has its forefather of industrial democracy. His key policies – worker involvement in company management; collective bargaining – would be prominent long after Naphtali advanced them in the late 1920s.

Thinkers of Social Democracy is primarily about creating a canon. Its mini-biographies, rather grandiose in their combination of big words and bold claims, map onto a familiar narrative. Those thinkers whose contributions were before the Bad Godesberg moment, part of an older social democratic milieu, can be recognised and celebrated insofar as they were wedded to liberal democratic or nascent parliamentary politics. Thinkers

who are contemporaries of or postdate the moment are to be commended for making sure social democratic thought maintained 'a broad conception of freedom' (p29) alongside the natural impulse of social democrats to correct social and economic injustice. Revolutionary, anti-capitalist 'social democracy', the legacy of Luxemburg, is not represented here, the kind of in-house social democratic intellectuals contributing to *Thinkers* being very much on the other side from radical left activism and its origins in the new left of the '60s and '70s. Social democracy, an ideological constellation that comprised Luxemburg, Ebert, Bernstein, Lenin and Trotsky at one time, is now the official, exclusive story of a particular party trying to justify its past.

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Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill NC 2016; 264pp, 11 graphs, 1 table; ISBN 9781469630175, £25.00, hbk

'Too many figures', is how Leonid Brezhnev is said to have dismissed a report on the Soviet Union's deteriorating economy prepared for him by the head of the central planning agency in the late 1970s. The story goes that the pair abandoned their meeting and went to hunt wild ducks instead (p76).

As this anecdote illustrates, economic policy was not a priority for the aging conservative leadership of the Soviet Union in the years following Nikita Khrushchev's removal from office in 1964. This all changed with the ascent of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. He inherited the vast and stagnating machine of the Brezhnevian economy. Chris Miller's work charts the ultimately-doomed attempts of Gorbachev and his allies to reform this machine, the so-called perestroika programme, during his tenure as general secretary.

The main contribution of Miller's work is to demonstrate the important role Deng Xiaoping's market socialist programme played in influencing attitudes to economic reform amongst Soviet intellectuals and bureaucrats. Miller does this through extensive reference to government and party papers, the pages of Soviet literary and academic journals – *Novyi Mir, Literaturnaia Gazeta* etc – and the output of 'think tanks', most importantly the Far East Institute, in the form of detailed reports produced for the Soviet leadership. He describes attempts to 'mimic' Chinese-style

reforms, by, for example, setting up a 'Special Economic Zone' in the city of Nakhodka. His work benefits from detailed discussion of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, to the extent that it sometimes feels like a dual-history of the USSR and PRC, and is all the more rewarding for feeling so.

Miller makes no serious attempt to discuss popular attitudes to economic reform – which were likely shaped more by visions of fast food and VCRs than 'Special Economic Zones'– and is at times guilty of labouring the Chinese point. Nonetheless, he has produced an informative exploration of the attitudes of intellectuals and policy-makers during the last days of the USSR.

Any comparison of China and the Soviet Union in the 1980s naturally invites one to ask the question: why did the Soviet economy collapse when China's, to use a colloquialism, 'took off'?

There is little debate about the immediate cause of the Soviet crisis – inflation and production paralysis, instigated by a disastrous policy of printing rubles to plug an ever-growing budget deficit. In 1985, the Soviet Union had a roughly balanced budget, by 1988 it had a budget deficit estimated by the IMF to be approximately 10 per cent of GDP, which grew to over 30 per cent by 1991 (p145). Over the same period, grain production fell from 200 million to 50-60 million tonnes and the money supply increased by some 15 per cent (p155).

Accounting for this dramatic deterioration, Miller attempts to provide a more nuanced answer than that previously offered by historians. In particular, he takes issue with Stephen Kotkin, Yegor Gaidar and others' emphasis on the role played by declining oil prices in destabilizing the Soviet economy, memorably characterised by Kotkin in his *Armageddon Averted* (2001) as a 'hangover' caused by the country's 'long oil bender'. Miller points out that 'between 1985 and 1990, the decrease in earnings from trade (above all, oil) was less than half the level of the increase of the Soviet Union's budget deficit' (p62).

Miller notes the decline in revenue from liquor taxes as a consequence of Gorbachev's authoritarian attempts to reduce alcohol consumption, and, briefly, the reconstruction costs incurred after the 1988 Armenian earthquake (curiously, Miller omits any mention of the costs associated with Chernobyl accident).

He places his prime emphasis, however, on the resources consumed by three important sectors of the Soviet economy – energy, the military-industrial complex and agriculture. These three pillars of the USSR's centrally-planned economy consumed a staggering proportion of the country's total budget. The CIA and other foreign observers estimated

that the Soviet military absorbed between 12 per cent and 20 per cent of Soviet GDP by the late 1980s, or, as Gorbachev-ally Georgy Arbatov lamented to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in 1989: 'our economy has been literally eviscerated by military spending'.

The situation was brought to a head, argues Miller, by the compromises Gorbachev was forced to make. Miller's detailed study of party and government papers show the political realities facing the general secretary, who was forced to agree to massive increases in capital spending, which grew from an annual average of 170 billion rubles 1981-85, to 218 billion in 1988 (p100), in exchange for the begrudging acquiescence of the Soviet bureaucracy in his structural reforms. It was this spending, which did little to improve productivity, that precipitated the budget crisis. In Miller's conception, Gorbachev reluctantly agreed to the capital spending programme in the hope that perestroika would dramatically improve Soviet economic performance, thus allowing him to square the Soviet budget circle.

While thousands of new 'enterprises' were set up during these years, the country's overall economic performance remained underwhelming. In explaining this failure, Miller points to the campaign of obstructionism pursued by bureaucrats at all levels of Soviet government. Reforms introduced were not as radical as those pursued in China (for example, new private 'co-operatives' were not allowed to employ workers). Miller implies that had Gorbachev had free rein, he would have pursued a more radical programme that may have produced better results. In making this argument, Miller echoes Gorbachev, who in his autobiography bemoaned 'the mighty bureaucracy that had formed under the totalitarian system' and that refused to 'relinquish power'. Gorbachev, of course, demurred from the traditional methods employed to assert the will of the Kremlin. It is curious to think that Mao Zedong's bloody campaign against Soviet-style bureaucratisation may have inadvertently facilitated Deng Xiaoping's later dismantling of China's Maoist economy.

To try and embody glasnost, Gorbachev regularly escaped the Kremlin to travel round the country and speak openly with Soviet citizens. Miller's study may have benefited had he taken a similar approach to understanding perestroika. His sources are mostly confined to those produced for and by the highest bodies of Soviet government. Rarely does he discuss how perestroika was experienced at the proverbial 'coal face'. He does not address in any detail, for example – how decrees such as the 'Law on State Enterprise', changed (or did not change) realities 'on the ground'; the strengths and weaknesses of individual factories or farms; how their

efficiency may have been improved through altered working practices, accounting methods etc; how 'obstructionism' worked in practice. In doing so, Miller limits the extent to which his work can be seen comprehensive study of perestroika, or, used to understand the working of centrally-planned economies *in genere*. A couple of informative case studies would have made this a more wide-reaching work.

What's more, when comparing the Chinese and Soviet experiences, Miller only briefly addresses the profound structural differences between the two economies in the early 1980s. The idea that reforms that worked in China may not have been appropriate in the Soviet context is never really discussed, nor does Miller question the underlying assumption that the way to 'save' the Soviet economy was to pursue 'capitalist' reforms.

Readers looking for a comprehensive history of perestroika will be disappointed. Nonetheless, Miller has made an important contribution to the historiography of the late Soviet Union, at the same as producing a readable, light on figures, introduction to some of the key economic problems facing Gorbachev and his fellow reformers in the late 1980s.

Alec Burt

Dave Rich, *The Left's Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism*, Biteback Publishing, London 2016; 292pp.; ISBN 9781785901201, £12.99, pbk

A contentious issue during the Corbyn revolution has been the relationship between the Labour left and the Jewish community. Historically this is an aberration, as the British left was long considered a welcoming place for Jews, whether practising or secular. Of the main parties, Labour was perhaps the most explicitly pro-Israel until at least the 1960s, whilst at one point the Communist Party of Great Britain had an estimated 10 per cent of its membership of Jewish heritage (p6). How then do we get to a situation where *Jewish Chronicle* (4 May 2016) poll data suggests only 8.5 per cent of British Jews are likely to vote Labour, and where the party has conducted three inquiries into alleged anti-Semitism almost in succession?

Dave Rich is arguably better placed than anyone within the Jewish community to analyse this dislocation. Deputy Director of Communications at the Community Security Trust, the primary organisation established to provide security advice and protection to British Jews and their property, Rich was completing a PhD on left wing anti-Zionism from the 1960s-1980s as Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party. His

historical knowledge ensures that as well as seeking to explain contemporary political controversies, there is plenty here for the political train spotter and fan of socialist esoterica. That the Young Liberals considered themselves part of the new left (p42), that George Galloway was a member of the British Anti-Zionist Organisation (BAZO) or that Israel produced an anti-Zionist communist party, Matzpen, that significantly influenced British Trotskyites (p101) is easily forgotten.

Rich situates the formation of Israel in a distinct background – that it was created by Jews within Europe's left tradition. Zionists had to fight a traditional colonial power – Britain – in an insurgency to establish their state. This is a book which works hard to bring in overlooked and perhaps inconvenient historical facts – in 1944 Labour supported transferring Arabs out of Palestine to make way for Jews (p5) and the Soviet bloc's initial support for Israel came via both rhetoric at the United Nations and arms shipments to fight Arab forces (pp2-3).

Public criticism of Israel on the left seems to have begun not in 1948 with what Palestinians designate the *nakba*, but with Israel's greatest military triumph – the Six-Day War against Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The noun 'Palestinian' did not appear in *New Left Review* before 1967 (p24). Rich observes the seismic change that was commencing on the left as identity politics began to meet, match and in time supplant socio-economic concerns. His categorisation of the new left in class terms is particularly valuable:

> … the new Left effectively represented a new social class, rooted in intellectual and cultural professions, populated by public sector workers, and whose political agenda would come to be dominated by identity and iconoclasm (p8).

From the new left is seen to come the view Zionism is racist and Israel a remnant of western imperialism (p11). Organisations such as the International Marxist Group began to conceive of revolution spreading from the third world inwards, and Tony Cliff's International Socialists declared Israeli workers could not be revolutionary. Zionism is an issue where definitions really do determine debate, and Rich gets his in early with regards to Israel, arguing that criticisms of the state may become anti-Semitic when they 'use language and ideas that draw on older anti-Semitic myths about Jews' (pxxii). This was a problem for both the new left and orthodox communists, as by 1967-68 the much-admired revolutionaries of the FLN in Algeria were adopting anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, and the USSR returned to one of its periodic bouts of anti-Semitism (pp20-21).

Interaction between Matzpen, the new left and Palestinian exiles in the UK seems to have run aground though on more concrete problems, which Rich perhaps sums up adroitly:

> … is it a conflict between two competing national movements, both with a legitimate claim to the same piece of land; or is it a case of coloniser and colonised, with all the right on one side and all the wrong on the other? (p104)

In 1975 the UN General Assembly declared Zionism to be a form of racism (a position it rescinded in 1991). Rich gained access to the National Union of Students archives, and there is much here on how the UNGA resolution led to attempts to 'no platform' both Zionists and Jewish Societies (JSOCs) on campus. Here the left divided, with the Broad Left and Communists generally opposed, the Trotskyites for (pp129-131). In this controversy, we again see the centrality of identity politics, and its ability to produce division and stalemate. In the 1970s JSOCs had responded to criticism by using the language of democratic rights and free speech. By the 1980s they too had adopted that of identity politics, comparing themselves to 'every other minority group' (pp137-138). To deny Jewish students their right to organise on campus would be deeply problematic. But to anti-Zionists, if Jewish students use that political space to exercise a Zionist identity, they are propagating racism. Student unions are yet to square that circle.

Chapter five 'The New Alliance: Islamists and the Left' critiques the relationship between exiled Islamists, usually but not always from Muslim Brotherhood backgrounds, and both the revolutionary and Labour left. Jeremy Corbyn has been central to these alliances. Whilst they did not stop the Iraq war nor bring freedom to Palestine, they have changed the composition of the left in Britain (p162) paving the way for Corbyn's eventual victory. However, for these relationships to prosper, the left has had to turn a blind eye to political attitudes it would usually reject, and actively opposes, when articulated by the far right. In what is the strongest section of the book, Rich cites examples in the fields of human rights, suicide attacks and racism.

The Hamas Charter cites anti-Semitic forgery the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as fact, whilst believing the United Nations was created by the Zionists (p176). The British left is inexorably sucked into this nonsense via its affiliations with Islamic actors in the Middle East and here. In 2003 the Cairo anti-war conference, which brought together regional activists with anti-war figures such as Corbyn and John Rees, adopted the position the

Iraq war was 'part of the Zionist plan' (p189). Socialists chanting 'We are Hezbollah' at Stop the War's 2006 protests against the Israel-Hezbollah conflict either did not know, or did not care, Hasan Nasrallah has called for all Jews to go to Israel, so they can best be killed in one place (p178).

Labour's recent anti-Semitism controversy has involved former Mayors in London, Bradford and Blackburn, plus councillors in Luton, Nottingham, Burnley, Newport and Renfrewshire (pp197-198). Rich's book goes a long way in explaining how we got there. It ends with the hope that the left and British Jews can again have a positive relationship. The issue of re-admittance of Momentum's Jackie Walker to Labour demonstrates how tricky this will be. Rich traces her 'analysis' that the Jews financed the slave trade, to a 1991 book by the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan. Identity politics has brought the left more problems than answers.

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