Editorial

Issue 53 of *Socialist History* is another unthemed issue which brings together four articles covering a very wide range of topics and approaches. In 'Rescuing John Stuart Mill', Peter Cockcroft challenges the appropriation of this nineteenth-century thinker by right-wing, 'libertarian', free-market fundamentalists. Cockcroft convincingly shows that their misuse of Mill's thought and writings to advocate for untrammelled capitalism is a gross travesty of his politics and legacy. Far from being a voice in defence of the wealthy against the poor, the powerful against the powerless, Mill's record as a thinker and a politician was fairly consistently on the side of the underprivileged in society. Setting Mill in the context of his time, Cockcroft demonstrates that Mill's campaigns for 'liberty' served above all to help emancipate the oppressed, whether they were slaves in the American south, Jamaicans under colonial rule, British workers unable to organise in trade unions or unenfranchised women. For all the deficiencies in Mill's thought from the standpoint of modern-day socialist or democratic conceptions, Cockcroft is surely right to conclude that Mill 'belongs now, as he did in his own time, to the left'.

The convoluted and much-debated story of the Communist Party in the Second World War is the subject of Lewis Young's study of the *Daily Worker* ban. The CPGB's paper was suppressed in early 1941, while it was promoting the Soviet-inspired line of hostility to the war against Nazi Germany. The party and its sympathisers waged a long campaign to get the ban revoked, which was particularly energised once Hitler had attacked the USSR and the CPGB swung round to full support for the war effort. Young shows how the party sought to use both campaigning tactics and diplomacy to get the *Daily Worker* out again, and suggests that the most important factor was the support that the party and paper managed to win in Labour-affiliated trade unions. Only once the 1942 Labour Party conference had voted to rescind the ban did the Labour Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, relent and allow the paper to reappear and play its part in mobilising the labour movement for the war effort.

The remaining two articles, originally presented as papers to *Socialist History*'s 'Echoes of Revolution' conference in Norwich in February 2018, take us to Eastern Europe and the complexities of socialist and

national politics before and after the Great War and the Russian revolution. Samuel Foster looks at the emergence and development of socialist ideas and politics in the Slav Balkans, among peoples that Friedrich Engels had contemptuously dismissed in 1849 as 'unhistorical'. Socialist thinkers and movements in these societies had to negotiate not only the objective difficulties of very rudimentary capitalist development and very small working classes, but also the explosion of nationalist sentiments which sought to divide by nationality those who should have been united by class interest. The ways the socialists sought to respond to these challenges determined not only their immediate fates but also the eventual development of an authentic South Slav socialist movement which by 1945 was able to take state power and suppress – for a time – the ethnic nationalists.

Olena Palko's study of Ukrainian politics after 1917 looks at a very different interplay between social and national impulses within the most far-reaching of all revolutions. With the fall of tsarism, revolutionary actors in Ukraine agitated simultaneously for both social and national emancipation, but in a context in which no one force was able to exercise authority over the whole territory. After three years of chaos, civil war, invasions, occupations and insurrections, it was the Bolsheviks – a pan-Russian force with relatively little indigenous support in Ukraine – who were the first to be able to take firm control of the territory. But in order to gain popular acceptance for Soviet rule, the Bolsheviks were obliged to carry out many of the programmatic demands of the Ukrainian national movement. Palko's article explores some of the issues and conflicts which beset the creation and early history of Soviet Ukraine – conflicts around the very meanings of revolution, socialism and liberation in the Ukrainian context.

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