
Reviews

Peter Berton and Sam Atherton, *The Japanese Communist Party: Permanent Opposition, but Moral Compass*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2018; 146pp; ISBN 9780415368865, £120.00, hbk

In its almost century-long existence (it was founded in 1922), the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) has never joined a national government, earning it the moniker of ‘permanent opposition’. In its first two decades it was nearly extinguished by the repressive imperial state, its leadership permanently jailed or forced to publicly recant. Liberated from imperial repression by the Allied occupation, the party enjoyed several years of popularity after Japan’s defeat in World War II, before falling afoul of the US interests in the Cold War. Revived in the 1960s, it built a stable following, never threatening the status quo but remaining a constant presence until the collapse of the Soviet Union, when it was faced with a new set of challenges. In the twenty-first century, its fortunes have been mixed. In the broader context of contemporary communist movements, the party is a strange beast; despite never seriously threatening the dominance of the ruling party (unlike other parties in Japan’s divided opposition), the JCP remains a force to be reckoned with. Much of its popularity comes from it being a convenient choice for protest voters: ‘In a country where there has been for several years only a choice between the LDP and their lapdog political alliance party, Komeito or a fractured opposition aka The Democratic Party of Japan – the last resort for the protest vote was the JCP’. [Jake Edelstein, ‘Japan may be moving right politically, but its Communist Party still holds some sway with the voters’, *Forbes*, October 30, 2017].

Few systematic attempts have been made to study the secret of the JCP’s endurance. Peter Berton, a veteran historian of the communist and leftist movements in Japan, was the first to address this gap in the past half-century in *The Japanese Communist Party*. Alas, Berton was not able to finish the monograph; he passed away in 2014, aged ninety-one. The Publisher’s Note explains that the study was completed ‘as far as possible by Sam Atherton, one of Peter Berton’s former students’. The resulting work, an ‘unfinished symphony’ that reflects the challenges of seeing to publication someone else’s work, will nevertheless be greeted with interest

by scholars and students with an interest in Japan's political system and domestic politics.

In writing the book, Berton, whose linguistic skills and life experience made him perhaps the best-equipped historian to author such a study, had a rationale that went beyond the simple need to address a long-standing gap in literature. He was fascinated by the JCP's special place as 'moral compass' among the Japanese political parties, and its steadfast adherence to a critical position toward other communist parties, especially those in Moscow and Beijing. Specifically, the book focuses on 'the rapid buildup of the Japanese Communist Party under Chairman Miyamoto from the late 1960s through the 1980s'. The resulting account is of a political movement that constantly found itself out of tune with Japanese realities, having to battle the image of an 'alien force' and readjust its message and image in accordance with the vicissitudes of Japanese domestic politics. Nevertheless, this brief book is not a simple account of the party's failures; on the contrary, it succeeds in providing a fair summary of the party's history, giving the JCP credit for holding the Japanese political establishment to account for its treatment of Japan's wartime atrocities. This is the theme running through the book: that the JCP succeeded in maintaining its position as the true moral compass among Japanese political parties despite the challenges of dwindling membership.

The book consists of three parts; Part I and II each contain two chapters, whereas the last part has five. This division betrays a separation that noticeably runs between the first two parts of the book, which are more descriptive in tone, and the third, which to this reviewer seems to be the most readable. Part I provides an overview of the party's history and organization, while Part II analyses the evolution of the party's ideology, as well as its showing in elections at various levels over the post-war decades. In Part III, titled 'International Relations', Peter Berton recounts in good detail the JCP's relations with the world's most important communist parties, using memoirs and records of negotiations.

In fact, Berton's analysis is at its best when analysing the JCP's tricky relationships with the Soviet (CPSU) and Chinese communist parties (CCP), and how it reconciled the demands of these relationships with the expectations of the domestic Japanese society. As the book demonstrates, the JCP chose to distance itself from the two large parties in order to evade accusations of foreign influence. This distancing act required taking a strong position against undemocratic measures of the CPSU and the CCP. This critical stance contributed to the image that the JCP cultivated of itself, that of an ethical movement.

The evolution of JCP's attitudes toward the other communist parties reflects the party's ability to adapt and adjust to the changing circumstances. It is in the peripeteias of the Cold War alliance politics that the JCP's independent line is forged; this line distinguishes the party not only internationally, but also in the face of the Japanese political establishment. It affords the JCP a moral high ground as a movement of incorruptible servants of the working people.

Besides providing useful summaries of the JCP's history, *The Japanese Communist Party* is also incisive in its criticism of the party's mistakes. This incisiveness would have been more useful had the author told us what the party could have done differently. Also, the book casts doubt on the party's future and claims, only half jokingly, that the JCP might end up the only non-ruling communist party left. Regrettably, Berton does not explain *why* this is even possible or analyse the factors that could make possible the JCP's endurance into the future. Thus, in its mission to provide a survey of the JCP's independent path, the book often favours breadth over profound analysis, ignoring to highlight some of the deeper-lying problems that have kept the JCP away from Japan's political Olympus.

Perhaps breadth of analysis is inevitable or even desirable in such a brief book, but it results in dry, descriptive prose at times. This is especially true about the first two parts, where the book packs the bulk of its factual material. Also, simply copying and pasting party documents and pronouncements is not helpful; the author's analysis of these sources would have been a lot more useful. At times, some of these insertions are hard to justify; there is an excerpt from an *Asahi Shimbun* article on pages 57-59 which is simply attached to the chapter without much explanation. Besides these questionable decisions, at times readers will wonder about the logic behind the organisation of chapters, sections and subsections. Many of these are too short – some sections consist of no more than one brief paragraph – and the division into sections is rather sporadic and difficult to understand, as are the links that bind them together.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, this little book will come as a useful addition to English-language literature on modern Japanese politics and history. The book will be beneficial not only to specialists with interest in the history of communism or leftist movements; undergraduate students will also profit from the book's succinct and clear-eyed analysis, for example, of the JCP's international relations, and other aspects of its history.

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Liam Cahill, *Forgotten Revolution: The Limerick Soviet, 1919: A Threat to British Power in Ireland*, Orla Kelly Publishing, Cork, 2019; 187pp; ISBN 9781912328413, €15.00, pbk

Between 1917 and 1923 Ireland experienced an extraordinary phase of industrial conflict, all the more remarkable as nothing like it has happened since, and it occurred at a time when the country was supposed to be pre-occupied with the national question. One of the more exotic forms of the direct action taken was the 'soviet'. Unrest included over one hundred 'soviets' as workers seized factories, farms, livestock, creameries, electricity stations, gasworks, fisheries, flourmills, timber yards, harbours, towns, and cities. It's impossible to be precise on the number as the definition and classification are open to debate. Irish soviets have been interpreted variously as mere strikes by other means or as indications of revolutionary intent, as expressions of class power or corruptions of class consciousness. The term 'soviet' obviously reflected popular interest in events in Russia, but partly because the Bolshevik policies of opposition to the world war and support for self-determination seemed to chime with Sinn Féin values. Generally they took three forms: workplace take-overs as an alternative to strikes during the economic boom of the later war and immediate post-war years; trades councils or strike committees which sought to enforce their authority over a district; and workplace take-overs as an alternative to pay and staff cuts during the slump and the employers' offensive from 1921 to 1923. As far as the issue of workers' control was concerned, the first two were largely demonstrative. The third kind was in earnest.

Aside from the Belfast soviet, when the General Strike Committee directed municipal services in the city during the engineering strike in 1919, all territorial soviets developed in support of the independence campaign. The supreme example is Limerick. Sinn Féin had won a landslide victory in the December 1918 general election, and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) began what came to be called the War of Independence in January 1919. On 13 January, Robert Byrne, chairman of the Limerick branch of the Post Office Clerks' Association and adjutant of the second battalion, Mid Limerick Brigade, IRA, was arrested for possession of a revolver. The IRA attempted to rescue Byrne on 6 April. A firefight led to the death of Byrne and one of his Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) guards, and prompted the British army to declare the city a Special Military Area, and try to control people and traffic movements through a permit system. Limerick United Trades and Labour Council denounced Byrne's death as 'murder' and on 12 April local members of the Irish Transport and

General Workers' Union voted to strike in protest. Next day, Limerick trades council agreed to co-ordinate a general strike. It also set up a citizens' police force, organised food and fuel supplies, fixed prices, issued a daily paper, and printed its own money. The *Irish Times* was the first to call the regime a 'soviet'. The term caught on and was soon being used in a more positive sense. Coincidentally, journalists from Britain, America, and France were loitering in Limerick to cover a proposed transatlantic flight to win a £10,000 prize offered by the *Daily Mail*, ensuring the soviet got widespread publicity.

The fame soon faded. The first book on labour by an Irish-based academic was published in 1920; the second was published in 1977. The historiographical indifference caused the public memory of the soviets to disappear for decades. Labour historians, you see, are important! The story of the Limerick soviet was revived in the 1970s by local socialist Jim Kemmy, and the first scholarly study, the initial edition of this book, appeared in 1990. This, second edition, arrived as part of an elaborate centenary commemorative programme organised by Limerick trades council, itself an indication of how attitudes have changed. Of course Ireland is currently obsessed with celebrating its 'decade of centenaries', and the enthusiasm for remembrance has more to do with local pride in being part of history than radicalism. In this updated version, packed with greater detail and additional illustrations, Liam Cahill strides with greater confidence to provide a more readable and analytic account. Cahill's own background is a life in journalism and public relations, and he writes from a perspective that is sympathetic but objective. The story is covered in eight chronological chapters, with another five assessing the response from Sinn Féin, the IRA, the Catholic Church, and Irish and British trade unions, and drawing conclusions on the meaning of it all. One problem with the format is that contextual information is introduced after rather than before the events. Surprisingly, this edition, unlike the first, does not include annotation, and the extensive sources used are merely listed in the bibliography. The index could also do with fine-tuning.

The Belfast and Limerick actions were unique among soviets in drawing a response from the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress. Influenced by the syndicalism of Jim Larkin and James Connolly, the Party and Congress were one and the same, to keep the Party under workers' control. Unionist Belfast wanted no truck with Dublin. In the Limerick case, the Congress executive met in the city on 23 April, and decided against calling a national strike. Congress's political officer suggested that the people evacuate the city (population 50,000) and leave the British army

with ‘an empty shell’. It was not so much a daft idea as a diplomatic way of saying they could expect no practical help from Congress. At leadership level, Congress wanted to keep its distance from the national revolution. It never recognised Dáil Eireann until after the ratification of the Anglo-Irish treaty in January 1922, lest it jeopardise relations with the Irish Department of the British Ministry of Labour. Another consideration was that the bigger unions had funds tied up in insurance sections, set up under the National Insurance Act (1911). British-based unions, who still represented some 40 per cent of Irish trade unionists at this point, were very reluctant to approve of action, seeing the soviet as ‘a political strike’ against Britain. The reluctance of Congress and of British based unions to back an escalation of action, pressure from the Catholic bishop and employers to end the protest, and a gesture of compromise from the British army, persuaded the trades council to recommend a return to work on 27 April.

Most observers agree that the soviet was inspired by a mix of influences: a gut republicanism, smouldering hostility to the RIC and British army, and an emotional response to the death of Byrne, filtered through the prism of a vague admiration for the Bolsheviks, an inchoate syndicalism, and the post-war zeitgeist. Kemmy, an inveterate anti-nationalist, used to present the soviet as a fruitless diversion from the class struggle. Cahill is more ambiguous. On the one hand he is critical of Connolly for joining a nationalist revolt in 1916, and argues – against the evidence – that the War of Independence had a detrimental effect on trade union activism. In fact, by paralysing the RIC, it facilitated direct action, notably in the Limerick region, which went on to produce a few more famous soviets. On the other hand, Cahill concludes that events like the Limerick soviet were an opportunity for Labour to shape the course of the independence struggle and the character of the new Ireland. Whatever one’s views on the debate, one will be better informed by reading this valuable contribution to Irish labour history.

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Vaneesa Cook, *Spiritual Socialists: Religion and the American Left*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019, cloth, index, pp261, ISBN 978-0-8122-5165-4, £43

Religious motivation can lead down many paths, including withdrawal from the world or such commitment to belief in an afterlife that the

politico-moral issues of this life are neglected. In America, the popular and scholarly focus on religion has been directed toward the rise of the moral majority and the Christian Right. The implications of their activism and influence in the political arenas at home and abroad is well addressed, making Vaneesa Cook's study of the religious Left doubly welcome and important. Coining a new term, 'spiritual socialist', her focus is on a specific section of the religious Left that stands in stark contrast to the Religious Right, but also to the secular American Left. Where the Religious Right promoted fear, spiritual socialists offered hope; where the Religious Right advocated individualism and materialistic rewards, spiritual socialists endorsed a vision of a selfless life lived for others. For many Americans the Left consisted of an alien ideology, a foreign import. Cook argues that spiritual socialists devised a home-grown, all-American version of socialism. Her study provides a detailed examination of an eclectic group of leftists, who, over the course of the twentieth century, despite a political climate hostile to all forms of socialism, stressed the link between it and religious values. Their vision, their hopes, their work is the focus of Cook's research.

With the American Left presently strengthened and re-vitalised by the Occupy movement, Black Lives Matter and Bernie Sanders' campaigns, the book is most timely. As Cook plainly states: 'Americans need to know what the rest of the advanced industrial world figured out long ago: that socialism has many forms and should not be relegated to a rigid definition' (p5). Cook emphasises how in mid-century America socialism was a 'dirty word', certainly compared to the present when it is being welcomed, at least in some quarters, as a 'moral' and 'democratic' alternative to traditional politics. It is a context that Cook argues makes knowledge about spiritual socialism critically important and a necessary corrective to American apprehension and misunderstanding about America's religious Left and its relationship to socialism.

The bulk of the book deals with the period from the First World War to the Civil Rights movement, an era when the identification of communism and socialism with 'godless' atheism was embedded in the American imagination. It was a feature that distinguished American attitudes toward socialism from that of their European cousins. Despite the same deluge of Cold War propaganda and anti-communism in Western Europe, the electoral success of socialists, and even communists, showed a more nuanced appreciation of the complexities of the religious-political landscape. America's spiritual socialists sought radical alternatives to capitalism at community level, accepting that it would be a slow and arduous process,

necessary to change hearts and minds and secure sustainability. They saw themselves as revolutionaries not reformers, 'small "s" socialists with a serious radical programme for fundamental political and economic change by way of social and cultural reconstruction' (p14). For Cook, their distinguishing feature was the way in which socialism was to be built from the bottom-up in cooperative communities rather than via the proletariat or the vanguard.

Many activists on the Left have been identified with and motivated by religion, a sense of the divine discernible in the wonders of creation and a determination to help better all those made in the image of God. Cook emphasises that spiritual socialists were a particular type of activist, different from Christian Socialists or Social Gospellers. Rather than dogma, theirs was the language of values, morality and the inherent dignity of all human beings. The spiritual socialists surveyed by Cook rejected Marxism, or at least its totalitarian manifestations and the form that rejected all religion. Spiritual socialists worked toward the long-term goal of bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth and rejected the more immediate goal of a socialist revolution that put first the pursuit of secular power. The one particular upon which all the spiritual socialists surveyed by Cook agreed was that the state would not be the vehicle that would usher in the Kingdom of God, nor would it come quickly.

The study might have provided more information about American leftist attitudes toward religion. Cook notes how secular socialists happily worked alongside spiritual socialists. This reader, given that religion was never the primary target of Marxists, would have welcomed more discussion of American Marxists and their attitude toward and relationship with religion. In Europe a Christian form of communism was first proposed by Karl Kautsky, the leading intellectual of the second generation of Marxists. He discerned a communist compulsion in the gospels. Certainly, European Marxists denounced religion as a reactionary curse, but they also recognised its revolutionary potential, well aware that many religious shared the struggle against Marxism's real enemy, economic and social exploitation. As did the spiritual socialists. They, however, perceived themselves as reclaiming the moral core of socialism in the aftermath of communist corruption.

Cook identifies a diverse range of individuals as being spiritual socialists. They include: Sherwood Eddy, A.J. Muste, Myles Horton, Dorothy Day, Henry Wallace, Pauli Murray, Staughton Lynd and Martin Luther King Jr. Most of these individuals are well known to scholars and many have been written about extensively. Cook, however, is able to bring a new

and stimulating perspective that adds to each of their stories. Of particular interest is the way in which she charts each one's journey to becoming a spiritual socialist and the evolution of their thoughts and ideas. She also emphasises how radical each one was. She observes of Dorothy Day that cultivating a Christian revolution instead of a Marxist or workers' revolution 'did not make her radicalism any less potent' (p93).

Cook painstakingly and persuasively shows how all were united by their conviction that radical activism could be transformed from projects of political policymaking into grassroots organising that reflected the idea that 'small, seemingly mundane acts could eventually change the world' (p25). All were committed to combating racism. Henry Wallace, Franklin Roosevelt's vice president who ran against Harry Truman for the presidency on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948, indicted America's shameful race prejudice as a precondition for international violence, declaring 'Hatred breeds hatred' (p138). Albeit race was always of concern to spiritual socialists, it was an issue brought to the fore by the civil rights movement. Nonetheless, for all, Martin Luther King Jr included, the civil rights movement was not solely about blacks' rights. It was about the human family as a whole and how to integrate it into a society that mirrored the Kingdom of God.

In the concluding chapter Cook examines how religious progressives, lacking an overarching party or organisation, were scattered and wounded by America's culture wars during the 1980s. Whilst Democrats, which have never represented the Left, religious or secular, saw religion as belonging to the private sphere, Republicans happily embraced cultural conservatives and anti-abortionist activists who bestowed upon the party a coherent and recognisable religious base from which they could lay claim to the moral high ground. As progressive politics appear presently to be gaining traction in America, Cook argues it is essential for the revitalised Left 'to grapple with its ungodly image in the American mind that still equates radicalism with immorality and social justice with Soviet-style autocracy. Cook's book is a part of this process, reminding America that it has long had a religious Left. Spiritual socialists produced an all-American alternative to discredited forms of secular radicalism.

A well-written book that should be of interest to a wide audience.

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John Green, *Willi Münzenberg: Fighter against Fascism and Stalinism*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2020; 288pp, 30 b/w illustrations; ISBN 9780367344726, £34.99, pbk

‘With his large forehead, deep-set eyes and ingratiating smile, Münzenberg seemed to resemble some gentle monster from a silent horror movie ...’ (Jonathan Miles). ‘Willi Münzenberg is little remembered today, but there was a time, not so long ago, when the utterance of his name aroused fear, loathing, and admiration among the world’s political classes ...’ (Sean McMeekin). ‘Of course most of the fellow travellers ... had no idea that their consciences were being orchestrated ... With a light sneer, Münzenberg dubbed this vast horde of the radical devout “innocents” ...’ (Stephen Koch).

John Green’s new and sympathetic biography of Willi Münzenberg (1898-1940) is a valuable and scholarly contribution to our understanding of this most extraordinary man, and a welcome antidote to the hammy melodrama of writers like McMeekin, Koch and Miles and their Cold War division of the world into Knaves and Fools. Well-told and well-researched (including new material presented at the recent Willi Münzenberg Congress in Berlin), the book tells the vivid story of a man – charismatic, charming, energetic – whose life was inseparable from the international events that shaped him and from the international movement he helped to shape.

Münzenberg was a founder member of the KPD, a member of its Central Committee and a Communist deputy in the Reichstag from 1924-33. He was secretary of the International Union of Socialist Youth Organisations and a delegate to the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. He founded and directed the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH) to raise money for the famine in the Soviet Union, set up the League Against Colonialism, helped lead the international campaign for the release of Sacco and Vanzetti, and in 1932 organised the Amsterdam World Congress Against War.

At one point his media empire included Neuer Deutscher Verlag and the Kosmos publishing house, the Universum book-club (which published over 100 books), three film production and distribution companies, the national newspapers *Welt am Abend* (with a daily circulation of 175k) and *Berlin am Morgen* (80k), a women’s magazine *Der Weg der Frau* (100k) and the satirical *Der Eulenspiegel* (50k). His most famous creation was *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, which drew on a national network of worker-photography clubs, and the talents of writers and artists like

Georg Grosz, Kurt Tucholsky, Käthe Kollwitz, Heinrich Zille, Erich Kästner, Anna Seghers and John Heartfield, *AIZ* enjoyed a circulation of 420k. Münzenberg even took over a tobacco-factory once in order to produce packets of cigarettes containing left-wing cigarette-cards.

After the Nazis came to power, he organised the Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism. He helped establish the Reichstag Fire Trial Enquiry in London, and in Paris set up Éditions du Carrefour, which published the international best-selling *Das Braunbuch/The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag*, eventually translated into seventeen languages. In 1934 he toured the US with Aneurin Bevan to raise support for Dimitrov.

John Green is very good on Münzenberg's development from the young insurrectionist who met Lenin in 1915 to the strategist and organiser who understood the need to make the broadest possible alliances around winnable positions, to mobilise what he called 'those millions of apathetic and indifferent workers, who take no part in political life, who are not interested in the economic and cultural struggle of the proletariat, who simply have no ear for the propaganda of the Communist Party ...' Green points out that Münzenberg actually referred to non-aligned fellow travellers as 'harmlos', which means 'harmless', rather than 'innocent' (*'unschuldig'*). Moreover, Münzenberg used this term in a speech in which he explicitly argued that cultivating such individuals was relatively unimportant compared to the larger task of 'penetrating the broadest sections [of society], and winning over artists, professors, to use the theatre and cinema ...'

But this meant that Münzenberg's intellectual trajectory increasingly came into conflict with the Comintern autocracy and with the appalling sectarianism and factionalism of the KPD. The more successful he was, the less his projects were dependent on the political and material support of the Party. As early as 1922 Ruth Fischer was complaining – in a letter to Stalin – that Münzenberg was 'a law unto himself' and that he was so busy with the IAH that 'he no longer took part in factional struggles'. At the Sixth Congress of the Comintern he was severely criticised for working with 'bipartisan' (i.e. non-Party) organisations. In 1936 he was asked by the Comintern's Control Commission to explain why the League Against Imperialism had once employed a typist whose father was later a Franco supporter. Münzenberg's 1937 book *Propaganda als Waffe/Propaganda as a Weapon* was attacked by Wilhelm Pieck because it acknowledged the success of the Nazis' propaganda campaigns, especially their manipulation of German popular-cultural traditions ('the writer makes no use of Marxism but rather an idealist-psychologising methodology').

Green quotes several long letters written by Münzenberg to Dimitrov and to Stalin ('most objective and upright friend'), asking for their help in combating attacks on him inside the KPD. Stalin's response was to tell Dimitrov to persuade Münzenberg to return from Paris to Moscow ('when he arrives here, we'll arrest him immediately'). Münzenberg refused to go, observing, 'they'll shoot me as they have the others, then 10 years later, they'll say they have made a big mistake!'

He was expelled from the KPD in 1938 ('The main threat is not Trotskyism but Münzenberg'). The following year he was interned by the French government. Following the fall of Paris, the camp was evacuated and Münzenberg escaped. His body was later found in woods near Grenoble. Anti-communist historians have always assumed that he was murdered by the NKVD – 'in Münzenberg's ghastly death there is a kind of justice, although for the millions of victims of communism, there will never be justice enough' (McMeekin), 'he died the victim of what he had helped to create' (Koch). Green argues persuasively that it was unlikely the NKVD could have killed Münzenberg in the circumstances of the German Occupation, especially in Vichy France. Suicide or the Gestapo are equally plausible explanations. Münzenberg's death – like his life – requires more research. This book is a very good start.

Andy Croft

Anita Prażmowska, *Władysław Gomułka*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2016; 296pp; ISBN 9781848851337, £95.00, hbk

This is the most recent volume in the Communist Lives series edited by Matthew Worley. It follows from biographies of Thorez, Togliatti, Dimitrov, Nagy and Tito. Biographies of Thälmann, Gramsci and Ceaușescu are also expected, though some of these volumes seem to be taking years to appear. This is the first biography of Gomułka in English since Nicholas Bethell's 1972 study in Pelican's 'Political Leaders of the Twentieth Century' series. Prażmowska is a professor at the LSE and has written seven previous books on Polish history.

Gomułka is important as an Eastern European communist leader who was 'home grown' and sought to develop a form of national communism which was appropriate to Poland and who resisted the imposition of a standard Soviet model. He challenged the Comintern leadership and unlike many of his contemporaries such as Dimitrov, Togliatti and Thorez, was never part of the Comintern structure or a Comintern placement.

Gomułka came from a trade union background, rather than an intellectual one. From 1926 he combined trade union work with the chemical workers union with a role in the then illegal Communist Party. After two terms of imprisonment, he joined the Lenin school in Moscow in 1934. Gomułka however became critical of the Soviet collectivisation of agriculture, which he viewed as not appropriate for Poland. Returning to Poland the following year, Gomułka was again arrested, while many of his exiled Polish Communist colleagues were murdered in Russia in a Stalinist purge. On the outbreak of war, Gomułka moved from Warsaw to Lviv which was then under Soviet occupation, and joined the Soviet Communist Party. Gomułka therefore avoided the Warsaw uprising and its violent suppression by the retreating Nazis. With the establishment of the provisional government, Gomułka became deputy prime minister and minister for the recovered territories, i.e. those recovered from Germany after the German defeat. The Russians annexed East Poland which they had occupied since the 1939 Ribbentrop/Molotov pact. Gomułka however was in conflict with the communists who were directed from Moscow, led by the president Bolesław Bierut. Gomułka lost the factional struggle and was expelled from the government and the Communist Party and imprisoned for four years. Stalin's death was however followed by a partial de-Stalinisation of the Polish Communist party and by Bierut's death. After worker protests, Khrushchev recognised that Gomułka, who was the most popular communist in Poland, was the best leader to restore order and keep Poland within the Russian orbit. A repetition of the Hungarian revolt and suppression needed to be avoided. Gomułka became first secretary of the Polish Communist Party and in effect leader of the country. Gomułka stayed in power until 1970, when he was ousted after a new round of worker protests, to be replaced by Edward Gierek. He died in 1982.

Prażmowska's study is thorough and well researched, using archives not available to Bethell. It includes considerable detail on the internal politics of the Polish left, both before and after the Second World War. Prażmowska shows the inter-relationship of factional struggles within the Bolshevik party, the Comintern and then the Cominform on Polish politics, often with little regard for the realities of the Polish context. Gomułka struggled to develop a form of communist politics and government that was appropriate to Poland. He comes across as basically a decent person. There are negatives – his Polish nationalism developed anti-Semitic aspects, and in his later years he became increasingly authoritarian. He certainly suffered for his beliefs, being imprisoned both by the pre-war Polish authoritarian government, and then, on Moscow's orders,

by his Polish communist comrades. He was however the great survivor. He was not a reform communist, like Nagy of Hungary or Dubček of Czechoslovakia. He never sought to take Poland out of the Warsaw Pact or the Soviet orbit. His political life was a balancing act between defending Poland's interests and not alienating Moscow – not an easy task given Moscow's stance was hardly consistent. Despite his fall from power in 1970, he was more successful than many of his fellow Eastern European leaders. At least he died in his bed.

Of the Communist Leaders series, only the Thorez volume has been published in a paperback edition. This may be because communist leadership is seen as a minority interest these days and perceived as being limited in demand. This is regrettable. I.B. Tauris has since been taken over by Bloomsbury. Perhaps a new policy would widen the readership for this and other volumes in the series?

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Danny Reilly and Steve Cushion, *Telling the Mayflower Story: Thanksgiving or Land Grabbing, Massacres and Slavery?*, SHS, London, 2018; 62pp, eight illustrations; ISBN 9780993010484, £4.00, pbk

The Mayflower's voyage from Plymouth in 1620 carrying passengers who settled in North America has become one of the most famous events in the city's history. In the United States, the Mayflower and the colony of Plymouth founded by Mayflower's passengers have iconic status. The Plymouth colony is seen as the beginning of English settlement in North America and thus of the United States, though in fact Jamestown, founded in 1607, was the first permanent English settlement in North America.

In this pamphlet, Danny Reilly and Steve Cushion challenge traditional histories of the Mayflower's voyage, describing them as 'narrow, limited and ideological' and argue that the voyage of the Mayflower has to be seen in the wider historical context of English colonisation of North America. They tackle major historical issues, going beyond the Mayflower to look at seventeenth-century English colonialism, its catastrophic impact on Native American communities and its connections with slavery and the slave trade. They discuss the politics of historical commemoration, the protests against sanitised depictions of the colonisation of the Americas and the educational material produced for Plymouth's Mayflower 400 commemoration. The authors believe input from Native American,

African American and Afro-Caribbean communities is essential for an authentic retelling of the Mayflower story, and see the struggle against racially biased and inaccurate history as a political issue as well as a historical one.

Reilly and Cushion stress that while the Separatists – Calvinist Protestants who had established their own church separate from the Established Church – who sailed on the Mayflower had a religious motivation, the voyage was part of the English colonisation of North America. The migrants had been given a patent to settle in North America by the Virginia Company, set up by King James to facilitate American colonisation, and were supported by London merchants. The authors reveal how the fifteenth century ‘Doctrine of Discovery’ was used to justify European colonialism and the military conquest and enslavement of indigenous populations, and how New England’s settlers were influenced by this colonialist ideology. *Mourt’s Relation*, written in 1622 by two leaders of the Plymouth colony, asserted that the English King had authority over much of North America.

Plymouth colony was helped to survive by Native Americans such as Squanto, who spoke fluent English, and Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag Indians. The authors emphasise that, despite these examples of cooperation, there were tensions with Native Americans even in the earliest years. The dramatic growth in the number of English settlers and their encroachments on Native American territory caused violent confrontations. In 1636, the colonists fought a brutal war with the Pequot Indians in Connecticut. Plymouth colony’s aggressive acquisition of Wampanoag land was strongly opposed by Metacomet (whom the colonists called King Philip), Massasoit’s son and successor as leader of the Wampanoags, and provoked warfare in 1675. Several other Native American communities joined the Wampanoags in what was called King Philip’s War. The colonists were victorious and New England’s indigenous population was decimated.

The pamphlet identifies key features of the Indian wars in seventeenth-century New England – the use of irregular forces, the deliberate destruction or disruption of Native American food supplies and the use of ‘extravagant’ violence in the form of massacres of non-combatants – and argues these methods became established features of warfare with Native Americans, including the United States’ Indian Wars. It contains a lucid and informative analysis of the connections between New England and slavery. The settlers in the seventeenth century believed there was religious sanction for slavery. Native Americans captured during the Pequot

War and King Philip's War were sold as slaves. The black slave population in New England was small but the region developed a symbiotic relationship with British colonies economically dependent on slave labour. New England ships played a major role in transporting slaves and dominated trade with the West Indies which became pivotal in New England commerce. New England's textile industry depended on raw cotton from the slave plantations in the South which in turn relied on investment by New England banks. By the late eighteenth century, the bulk of New England's industries and the region's economic life depended on the slave trade and the slave plantations.

The pamphlet 'examines the politics of historical commemoration and the political interests influencing the portrayal of the Mayflower's voyage in 1620. Making Thanksgiving a national holiday reinforced the idea that the United States' origins were in the Plymouth colony and the Mayflower tercentenary in 1920 was an important political event in both the USA and Plymouth in Britain.

Reilly and Cushion observe that historical commemorations are affected by social change and the identity of those organising commemorations. The anti-racist struggles of Native Americans and African Americans include campaigns against ethnocentric and sanitised histories of colonialism. Native American activists in New England mark Thanksgiving with a National Day of Mourning. Commemorations of the history of European colonisation have become controversial. Native Americans and African Americans made vocal criticisms of the quincentenary of Columbus' landing in America and the preparations for the 400th anniversary of Jamestown's founding because of their celebratory tone and their omission of the genocide and slavery resulting from colonialism.

The authors criticise the education material being produced for Plymouth's Mayflower 400 event for not recognising that the Mayflower expedition was part of England's colonisation of North America and ignoring the New England colonies' role in aggression against Native Americans, genocide and slavery. The shortcomings of the material provoked criticism in Plymouth, including public protests from the local schools' education union. In response the Mayflower 400 scheme of work incorporated new material on Native Americans.

The authors conclude that historical commemorations should involve all relevant communities and Native Americans, African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans are the groups best fitted to decide how the Mayflower's voyage and its consequences should be remembered. Previous commemorations have promoted a sanitised version of history which ignored

or downplayed colonialism and slavery. Despite the addition of a new module, most of Mayflower 400's teaching resources neglect colonialism, slavery and genocide. Reilly and Cushion conclude by asking if Plymouth's Mayflower quatercentenary will break with the tradition of sanitised history.

This is a stimulating work providing valuable information about a range of topics – the concepts used to legitimise colonialism, New England's complicity in slavery and the slave trade and the politics of historical commemoration. It places the history of the Mayflower's voyage and Plymouth colony in the context of colonialism and provides a necessary alternative to eulogistic and Eurocentric historical narratives.

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Plymouth

George Yerby, *The Economic Causes of the English Civil War: Freedom of Trade and the English Revolution*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2020; 420pp; ISBN 9780367189235, £120.00, hbk

In this new book George Yerby pursues the challenge to revisionist and post revisionist historiography of the English Civil War and Revolution which he lay down over ten years ago in his *People and Parliament. Representative Rights and the English Revolution*. In that he claimed in rather Whiggish terms the revolutionary nature of Parliament's assertion of its legislative authority and hinted at the key role of statute law as an instrument through which the merchant interest could be defended. Their frustration at the failure of the parliaments of 1621 and 1629 to pass any legislation, he argued, was considerable. Expectations left unfulfilled by the impasse of 1629 and the following years of personal rule quickly resurfaced in the Long Parliament. This provided the context for the Triennial Act of 1641 which obliged the King to call a Parliament after a three year gap; its radical intent, minimised by revisionist historians, constituted a frontal assault on the royal prerogative. In this new work Yerby returns to this argument but yokes the Triennial Act much more firmly to the Tonnage and Poundage Act of May 1641. This severely limited the grant of this traditional subsidy to the King, obliging him to return to Parliament for further aid. Most critically it declared in unambiguous terms that: 'it hath been the ancient right of the subject of this realm that no subsidy, custom, imposition or other charge whatsoever ought not to be laid or imposed upon any merchants ... without common

consent in parliament'. It was, says Yerby, the culminating act in a long battle over freedom of trade by which in the words of the great Whig historian, Gardiner, 'Charles surrendered forever his claim to levy customs dues of any kind without a parliamentary grant' (p268). The Tonnage and Poundage Act effectively completed the re-modelling of the constitution which the Triennial act had begun and marked the 'real inception of the English Revolution' (p270).

Yerby's major concern however is not simply to resurrect a Whig discourse but to challenge the wilful disregard by revisionists of the economic causes that were 'fundamental to the contest between king and parliament' and to 'draw out the specific connections between economic developments and the momentous political overturning of the 1640s' (p1). The crux of his argument is that the battle for freedom of trade without impositions and monopolies of any sort was an active freedom being symbiotically attached both to a concept of absolute property rights and to the principle of consent. Moreover that 'the freedom of trade' agenda also informed a 'less conspicuous yet fundamental division of opinion about what constituted good government in general' (p154). For Charles I Parliament was merely a means to obtaining financial support. He had a very limited concept of the public interest and was quite unable to emulate Elizabeth's ability to identify herself with it. He was stubbornly opposed to a sea or trade war with Spain, an objective espoused by the merchants. Parliament was thus able to assume the role of defender of the general welfare proposing measure after measure at the initiative of merchant communities to combat the 'decay of trade'. Yerby's detailed knowledge of both parliamentary debates and a wide range of other contemporary commentaries and memoirs, together with his grasp of their nuances, enables him to develop his central arguments in highly persuasive fashion.

He also places them successfully in a longer and broader perspective beginning with 'the liberation, peculiar to England, of the more substantial tenants from manorial control, creating a distinctive, broad body of commercialising yeoman farmers', and a proliferating gentry whose rise was facilitated by the redistribution of monastic lands. He is particularly perceptive about the way in which the enclosing of the common land or the consolidation of individual holdings on the open fields undermined 'the moral restraints that had guided the communal system' displacing 'the idea that property was held conditionally on obligations to the common good' with an 'assumption that property was owned absolutely ... to be used and "improved" for profit' (p227). The chapter on a changing ethos

adds a fresh look to the old debate about the impact and significance of enclosures. The picture is completed by a discussion of the emergence of new network of interregional exchange and an integrated market system in a country almost devoid of internal barriers to trade. The socio-economic transformations also provided the parliamentarians with the support of a broad swathe of the population often referred in contemporary discourse as 'the people' from the craftsmen and small merchants to the gentry. The alliance of merchants and gentry was crucial. Neither this nor Yerby's insistence on the allegiance of England's ports and market towns to the parliamentary cause is particularly novel but he moves on to a striking and original case study of West Nottinghamshire where coal mining, stocking and glove manufacture were transforming the political and physical landscape. Freedom of trade he concludes was 'a defining purpose for the merchant-gentry alliance against impositions, as well as the enclosing and commercialising yeomen farmers, as also for the ports and towns that served the extended markets, and indeed for the industrialising regions' (p297).

By this point in an already substantial book Yerby's case is well made and it is not entirely clear why he felt it necessary to write a further hundred pages. Certain passages such as that recounting the role William Pierrepoint, an MP of ancient gentry stock, in promoting the Triennial Bill or that explaining how little the revolution served the interests of the poor might have been better reduced and integrated into the earlier discussions of social allegiances. As it is they overflow into somewhat tangential discussions of Pierrepoint's intention to curb the military prerogatives of the Crown and of what Leveller ideas tell us about which side they were on. The final chapter is on the mutually reinforcing relationship between the emergent nation-state and developing capitalism and returns to the theme of an integrated market and body politic broached in earlier chapters. Yerby also leaves the reader with the challenging claim that the development of the nation state was distinctive to England and driven by 'sovereign representative law'. Oddly there is no mention of English Common Law.

In some way Yerby completes the interpretation of Marxist historians, notably Christopher Hill, who took developing capitalism as a given without showing how precisely it connected with the political struggles. At the same time Yerby is at odds with those who emphasise the primary importance of agrarian change. Despite his own stress on the significance of enclosing and engrossing in breaking down old communal practices and values, 'the claim of absolute property', he says, 'grew from the

assumption of a right of freedom of trade in the general context of economic activity, rather than in the defence of landed property'. At times perhaps his insistence that merchants rather than a commercialising land-owners farmers were the prime agents of change, leads to an unconvincing splitting of hairs. He claims, for instance, that J.P. Sommerville's treatment of Parliament's opposition to impositions, covering much the same ground as his own, mistakenly interprets it as a surrogate for a struggle over land taxation. Yet Somerville's account of the debate over impositions and customs dues is unambiguously designed to show their importance in the framing of the idea of absolute property rights. Yerby could easily have enlisted Sommerville in his own cause. An excessive reaction to suggestions that merchant communities and their representatives were not always at one in their opposition to the Crown similarly diverts him into unproductive criticisms. Maurice Dobb's view of the conservatism of merchant elites is dismissed in one sentence. As Dobb's consideration of early merchant capitalism did not venture into the seventeenth century it is not clear why Yerby finds it necessary to even allude to it. Robert Brenner who postulated a divide between the royalism of merchants of the great monopoly companies and the parliamentarianism of the interloping and new traders is also taken to task for fastening on divisions within the merchant community. Objecting to David Sack's description of the undeniably exclusive character of Bristol's merchant elite Yerby passes over the fact that Sacks wanted to show, exactly as Yerby does himself by reference to Plymouth and Dartmouth, that the concerns of its merchants were more than local and they followed the national debates with the closest of attention. Yerby's objections are all the more curious as elsewhere he does recognise the divisions between monopolists and free traders and also between the Merchant Adventurers and the wider body of London merchants. As he knows, it took a municipal revolution in London to secure it for the Parliamentary cause.

These digressions are hardly necessary to sustain the central proposition that there were indeed economic causes (both short and long term) of the English revolution or indeed Yerby's view of the central role played by the merchants. Even less essential is his attempt to deal with the revisionists head on. Whilst various observations about the primacy of economic rather than religious issues are pertinent and well made, particularly in the case study of Nottinghamshire, the lengthy deconstruction of the revisionist idea that the conflicts of mid century are best understood as a War of the Three Kingdom is an unnecessary diversion from his main theme. Yerby gets rather carried away by his scorn for revisionist historians whom

he regards as ‘the academic wing of neo-liberalism’ (p6). One can certainly agree that revisionist historians of the English Revolution simply refused to engage with the possibility that the English Revolution had economic causes. Their stance undoubtedly reflected, and contributed to, a wider ideological drift to the right. It is also true that because of overt or unconscious prejudices, Marxist historians may not always get the recognition they deserve by their bosses or their peers. But the latter are not uniformly or universally hostile and Yerby’s accusation of wilful misrepresentation sustained by ‘the vested interests of an academic system’ (p237) will certainly raise eyebrows, particularly as the vested interests and their *modus operandi* are not identified.

David Parker

Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *The Castle of Truth and Other Revolutionary Tales*, Jack Zipes (ed. and trans.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2020, 187pp, 17 illustrations, ISBN 9780691201252, \$19.95, pbk

Born into Austrian aristocracy, Hermynia Zur Mühlen (1883-1951) was a surprisingly passionate and radical socialist. Her early twentieth-century political fairy tales are oddly modern parables that advocate strongly for the working class. Her stories reflect on her society, radically envisioning a future in which exploited citizens recognise their own power to overthrow a corrupt economic system. Jack Zipes’ translation of these stories is long overdue, rescuing Zur Mühlen from obscurity, making her work accessible to the English-speaking world, and recognising her as an important voice of both societal injustice and the development of the fairy tale genre. Despite her prolific publishing career – which includes numerous fairy tales, story collections, novels, memoirs and translations – the included bibliography of criticism on Zur Mühlen is notably short compared to her own publication profile. This collection is therefore pivotal, paving the way for an increase in scholarly interest in Zur Mühlen’s writing.

Zipes has selected a wide range of fairy tales from across Zur Mühlen’s oeuvre and arranged them chronologically. This structure allows readers to see very clearly how her writing changes and progresses over time. In his succinct but informative introduction, Zipes captures not only the political motivations behind her work but also the remarkable story of her unconventional life. Despite her privileged upbringing, Zur Mühlen turned her back on her husband, an Estonian Count, instead choosing

a life of economic uncertainty and hardship to be with Stefan Klein, a Hungarian writer and Communist. As Zipes states, 'From childhood onward, she questioned these arbitrary social codes and rarely minced her words in an effort to speak the truth in the face of oppression and hypocrisy' (p1).

This collection is interesting for fairy tale scholars as, even though the fairy tale is her chosen medium, Zipes notes that, Zur Mühlen reflected critically on 'how children's literature played an important role in the socialization of young people' (p4). It is certainly clear when reading these stories that she breaks with convention. Yes, her tales are crudely simplistic at times; the socialist allegories are extremely obvious in order to be unmistakable for young readers: politics takes precedence over stylistics. Yet, despite her binary tales of good and evil, Lionel Gossman notes how, 'nevertheless, Zur Mühlen's fairy tales prescribe models of behaviour radically opposed to those of traditional fairy tales, the basic lesson of which had been that all one's wishes will come true if one overcomes temptation and faithfully observes established norms of good conduct' (p13). After all, the dark illustrations that accompany her stories are a great addition to this collection, and they undermine fairy tale utopianism. Often it is the good and innocent characters that suffer here. For example, Karl Holtz's illustration for 'The Miraculous Wall' depicts the severed head of a worker, who stands up for his rights, resting in a pool of blood (p146). These are stories designed for a dual readership, the author utilising fairy tale didacticism in order to force readers to morally question the injustices inherent in the status quo. Another prime example of the radicalism of these fairy tale narratives is their open endings that question whether we have learnt the lesson, will take action, and will instigate change. For example, at the closing of her tale 'Why?', we learn that, despite being chastised for his constant questions in the poorhouse, Little Paul's superpower rests in his gift to probe others into questioning reality and the order of things. Little Paul represents the reader, who learns from a wise owl and a dryad to 'ask the poor people this [why?] so often and so repeatedly until the question finally springs up in their heads like a hammer that pounds against the building of injustice and smashes it to pieces. Are you willing to do this?' (p52). Overall, it is evident that Zur Mühlen skilfully works within the fairy tale framework whilst also subverting it, making it clear that 'happily ever after' will evade us until we act to make the world a better place.

Despite keeping her metaphors simple, there are also moments of aesthetic beauty that are striking in this collection. The titular tale, 'The Castle

of Truth', contains a good example. The following passage depicts a young woman, who was born into poverty but married a rich man, looking into the castle's mirror and confronting her own guilt at not helping a poor beggar:

The diamonds that crowned her blonde hair changed themselves [...] into drops of blood that slowly trickled down her face. The pearls wrapped around her slender neck became large tears. The splendid fine lace that hung gracefully on her silk gown became [...] tired sore eyes that looked up at her with sad reproach. Then soft accusing voices sounded from the gems and lace, and their painful sounds squeezed and crushed Amina's heart (p114).

This encapsulates the highly emotive nature of Zur Mühlen's writing, designed to confront her readers with the pain of the oppressed. She continually uses motifs that encourage us to educate ourselves, 'let the scales from our eyes', wake us up from our slumber. Her personification of inanimate objects captures this sense of breathing life into dehumanised workers, allowing them to see their own worth and humanity.

In the twenty-first century, Zur Mühlen's pressing urgency still resonates. We recognise the same tactics of injustice: the use of strategies of separation to heighten our sense of 'the other', preventing subordinated groups from recognising their collective strength, and the use of nationalism to give us a false sense of belonging, numbing us to our oppression within the system. The story of 'The Red Flag' encompasses these ideas, relating how refugees from various countries are stranded on an island ruled by 'the exploitative and oppressive monsters of the world' (p172). It is their engrained delusions of each other as 'foreign' or 'the enemy' that prevents the different groups from seeing their shared humanity until five young men, one from each nation, hold hands in a show of solidarity. These men become martyrs, shot for this revelatory act. The bloodied sheet used to wipe their bodies becomes an emblem for the slaves to unite and overthrow their oppressors. Clearly this story, and the collection as a whole, resonates powerfully with the struggles of many oppressed groups in our contemporary world, reminding us that strength comes from breaking down our perceived separations and standing together for the good of all:

If you put your ear to the ground, you will then hear a mighty rumbling of millions upon millions of marching steps. This is the oncoming

army, the army of those people who have been deprived of their rights and have been exploited. Their soldiers speak in all kinds of different languages and yet understand one another. They are the victorious army of the future, and the red flag flutters above their heads (p172).

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