
Reviews

Ralph Darlington, *Labour Revolt in Britain, 1910-14*, Pluto Press, London, 2023; x + 326pp, illus; ISBN 9780745339030, £19.99, pbk; ISBN 9780745348063, PDF; ISBN 9780745348070, EPub

The Great Labour Unrest (GLU), as historians have come to call it, is the name given to the wave of radicalisation and militancy that affected Britain and parts of Ireland from 1910 to its abrupt termination by the outbreak of the World War in August 1914. The dimensions were awesome. One million workers were involved in strikes. In 1912, there were 40 million strike-days. Between 1910 and 1914, trade union membership increased from 2.5 to 4 million. Famously, George Dangerfield's *The Strange Death of Liberal England* argued that the irrationalism of the *fin de siècle* had crept across the English Channel from the odd, ever-restless lands of continental Europe to express itself in syndicalism, the suffragettes, and the third Home Rule crisis. The pessimism and fear of revolution engendered among the *bien pensants* by these three convergent challenges was captured brilliantly by Dangerfield and in volume VI of Elie Halévy's *History of the English People*, first published in French in 1932. Nor can their thesis be dismissed as gloomy hindsight about the eve of one world war inordinately shaped by foreboding about another. It received a fresh endorsement in Norman Stone's *Europe Transformed* (1983). The root of the unrest lay less in myth than the mundane reality of rising prices, and the perception that real wages were falling and that union officials and Labour MPs were failing to do their job. At the same time, the intriguing appeal of Dangerfield's thesis for scholars as well as fantasists and counterfactualists, lies in the fact that the years from 1890 to 1914 were a time of mounting disdain throughout Europe for what was regarded as an obsolescent social, economic, and moral order. Even union activists who had been stoking the fire for months were astonished by the ferocity of the militancy that erupted in the very dry summer of 1911. Whether those bullets in Sarajevo prevented a revolution is one of many 'what if?'s. Much has been written on aspects of the GLU over the years, with detailed studies of events in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Dublin. To some extent it kick-started the genre of the labour leader memoir. Participation became a badge of honour, as if it were a war, which in

some ways it was. Echoing the point, *Labour in Revolt* includes thumbnail biographies of the main characters. (The five-line profile of James Connolly contains two errors. In fairness, the eight lines on Jim Larkin are accurate). The GLU's centenary brought renewed interest, and a few conferences and publications, though not as much as one would expect in a country that once led the world in labour studies, guided by the twin towers of E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm. Remarkably, there have been just four end-to-end accounts of the GLU, and each was from a specific angle. (George Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (1920), George Dangerfield's *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935), Bob Holton, *British Syndicalism, 1900–1914* (1976), and Lewis Mates, *The Great Labour Unrest: Rank-and-file Movements and Political Change in the Durham Coalfield* (2016)) Ralph Darlington's book is the first comprehensive study, and timely given the current wave of strikes.

Darlington's aim is to re-interpret the GLU in a general theory grounded on 'a multidimensional portrayal of the context, origins, causes, actors, processes, outcomes, meanings and significance' of events (p9). His approach prioritises analysis over description. Those familiar with his extensive research on industrial relations will not be surprised that he writes from a 'distinct revolutionary Marxist' [read Trotskyist] perspective (p9) and is frankly on the side of militants and radicals. His argument essentially is that the GLU was not merely unrest, but a revolt. 'Revolt' implies a challenge to legitimacy. Class 'revolt' implies a revolutionary intent. What's the evidence, and can Darlington be objective, given his acknowledged partisanship?

Labour Revolt covers the topic in four sections – backcloth, revolt, assessment, and aftermath – and thirteen chapters. The introduction opens the case with an excellent chapter on context, setting out the nature and causes of discontent. The 'revolt' itself is explored episodically through accounts of the major strikes. More than usual attention is given to the role of women and to Ireland. An appendix of fifteen tables supports the analysis. The 'assessment' offers plenty of food for thought in discussions on the many political features of the GLU including union organisation, tensions between officials and the 'rebels', violence, class consciousness, syndicalism, Labourism, and industrial unionism. Darlington himself is an inveterate rebel. While the narrative highlights militancy and radicalism – and sources are rich in both – and treats counter-material more summarily, he does note awkward events, such as anti-Chinese racism in Cardiff. Similarly, while mustering the case for 'revolt', he takes issue with those

who stress its revolutionary content. The writing style, delightfully clear and brisk and jargon-free, makes rather too frequent use of dichotomies and paradoxes to argue that A was *both* B and C or that X was *both for and against* Y.

So where was the revolutionary element that would justify the label 'revolt'? The obvious, or most obvious, answer is syndicalism. One can trace a continuum from Tom Mann's foundation of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League at Manchester in November 1910 to the National Transport Workers' Federation, formed to create a network of direct action sufficiently extensive to make the Shipping Federation's scabbing tactics ineffective, to the seamen's strike in June 1911, which fired the opening salvo in a fresh strike wave that was more imbued with the spirit of revolt. Historians have long debated the influence of syndicalism. Pelling, Clegg, and Laybourn have pointed out that card-carrying syndicalists were marginal. Darlington comes perilously close to Holton, who chased them over all Britain to augment their profile. Yet, he also balks at Holton's claim that the unrest was 'proto-syndicalist', preferring 'Zeitgeist of workers' industrial and political militancy' (p248), but is ultimately, and unusually, uncertain about the contention.

Syndicalism is a conundrum only if treated as a regular Marxist ideology. The secret of syndicalism's success was that unlike other 'isms' it didn't tell you how the world worked if you read a book or listened to a lecture. It offered a menu of practical steps to improve your lot. Moreover, one could dine à la carte. A worker might see the value of direct action, industrial unionism, generalised action, or sympathetic strikes without embracing the full package. This made adherence to syndicalism difficult to quantify. Industrial unionism and sympathetic action became hugely influential throughout the movement. But did that mean workers were syndicalist? In some respects, it did, and it's worth emphasising the point as the impact of syndicalism has so often been overlooked. At the same time, it didn't mean that they had all become revolutionists. The limits of the GLU became evident in its greatest legacy: the merger mania that gripped trade unions in 1912-14. In 1912 alone, fifty-seven unions, with 400,000 members, sought to rationalise themselves into five amalgamations. For Connolly, this 'greater unionism' was 'old wine in new bottles', the old spirit of sectionalism poured into new industrial unions, the better to restrain the rank and file.

Darlington's supreme achievement is to raise so many questions and pinpoint the key arguments. The one lacuna is his neglect of the transnational dimension, which is given a brief acknowledgement in the epilogue.

Labour Revolt has revitalised the endless debate on the GLU. It will be essential reading on one of Britain's greatest ever waves of popular protest.

Emmet O'Connor
Ulster University

Anne Etienne and Graham Saunders (eds), *Arnold Wesker: Fragments and Visions*, Intellect, Bristol, 2021; 241pp; ISBN 9781789383645, £80.00, hbk

Arnold Wesker, the East End-born London dramatist, was born in 1932 and died in 2016. After many false starts, he embarked upon a playwrighting career that delivered an early run of enviable successes. These early plays, produced between 1957 and 1962, include *The Kitchen*, *Chicken Soup With Barley*, *Roots* and *Chips With Everything*: they combine a quasi-Brechtian intellectual and epic sweep with painfully intimate domesticity and emotional seriousness. The plays are sometimes revived on major stages and they have been the subject of much academic study. None of Wesker's later plays, despite their considerable technical ingenuity, surprisingly adroit comedy and cerebral ambition, ever received comparable audience recognition or scholarly attention. One of the purposes of this new collection of essays is to complicate the image of Wesker as an angry, proletarian writer frozen in a pre-1960s paradigm of kitchen-sink realism. It is a much-needed essay collection – studies even of Wesker's early plays have been scant in recent decades. Crucially, the contributors to this collection have been able to use the vast collection of Weskerian paraphernalia recently made accessible at the Harry Ransom Centre at Austin, Texas – Wesker was a monomaniacal collector of manuscripts, epistles, contracts and other professional and personal ephemera. The sheer knowledge of Wesker's professional business and personal affairs demonstrated by the contributors ensures that this book automatically becomes the most essential publication about Wesker to date.

Wesker was a man of charisma and substance, a devoted, prolific writer. He was a difficult individual. He wrote to me twice – on both times it was to whinge about things that I had written about his work. He even found fault with my *Times Literary Supplement* review of his 2005 novel, *Honey* – even though my review was the one review that praised the novel's lively narrative pep and its symphonic range of emotional colours. Most other reviewers panned it. That four-hundred-page novel, incidentally,

is mentioned only once in this book – and it is not even named (p2). Wesker's many short stories are over-looked entirely – so this essay collection is not a definitive, all-encompassing account of Wesker's *oeuvre*. Some of the later plays are barely mentioned too: *Denial*, for example, a late-1990s, coruscating play about the nefarious effects of false child abuse accusations, is mentioned only very fleetingly. More work on Wesker's provocative later plays is still to be done. To be fair, the editors express hope that the book will 'promote further interest in the work of Arnold Wesker' (p5). I do recommend the short stories – they are melancholy and evocative – they are about women who will never win the Pools, men who cannot write like Balzac and middle-aged men and women who gradually withdraw from life.

Denial was and is an unfashionable play because it makes an unpopular point – Wesker plays are often didactic and pointed. That unpopular point is that accusers should not be automatically believed and should be received with scepticism. Wesker was never afraid to take unpopular stances. He could start a fight in an empty room. Even in death he caused discomfort. On the day after Wesker died, the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, praised his hero Wesker and asked the Prime Minister, David Cameron, to join him in a tribute during Prime Minister's Questions in the House. Cameron didn't know who Wesker was and bluffingly mumbled a vague agreement with Corbyn. It was a moment that should have united the House. Instead, it illuminated the inability of Corbyn and Cameron to articulate even bland tributes in a complementary manner. The lack of a meeting of minds over the dead Wesker seems in retrospect to foreshadow Corbyn and Cameron's disastrous inability to campaign for Remain in a constructive, bipartisan manner. Even in death, Wesker seemed to illuminate disharmony rather than invite unambiguous respect. Combative and self-righteous, defensive and truculent but suffused with humanity and interest in others, he will always be a contradictory and divisive individual.

The 'Introduction' to this book usefully outlines the two broad categories of essays: 'Early Visions' and 'Unifying Fragments'. The former refers to visions seen by characters in Wesker's earlier plays (socialist Utopias, cottage industries, international peace) as well as theatrical and cultural visions imagined by Wesker himself. The second, slightly more nebulous category, deals with the 'fragments' of identities constructed by characters in Wesker's later plays and the complicated intellectual and moral positions developed by Wesker publicly and privately. The 'Introduction' is followed by an odd 'Prologue' by Edward Bond – shouldn't this been

placed at the start? Bond uses his few pages to attack a few ancient targets. He complains about mid-twentieth-century dramatists' alleged comfort and toadying complacency under formal censorship laws and he abuses Harold Pinter for voting Conservative in 1979. Pinter has been dead for thirteen years and everybody who studies modern drama is embarrassed about Pinter's decision to back Thatcher – Pinter himself was ashamed that he did so. I just can't fathom why Bond is using a tribute to Arnold Wesker to abuse Harold Pinter over a last-century mini-scandal. The complex relationship between the works and public and private personalities of Pinter and Wesker is accounted for in the book's second essay proper, the amusingly titled 'Introducing Mr Harold Wesker'. It is a superb essay, written by one of the two editors, Graham Saunders, that does much to account for the similarities between Pinter and Wesker (their cultural Jewishness, their love of acting, their intellectual ambition, their geographical and social origins) as well as their political and temperamental differences and their chalk-and-cheese dramatic styles. Saunders points out that Wesker's characters generally seek love and withdraw from human contact only when broken and dejected whereas Pinter's characters manifest immediate 'guardedness, insincerity, mockery, lack of concern for others and sometimes outright hostility' (p45). This pithy summary of Pinterland is as good as any I have ever read.

One of Wesker's personal visions was for an all-encompassing left-wing cultural industry that would engage directly with proletarian lives and concerns. He directed the Centre 42 body to help achieve that. It failed long before his formal resignation in 1970. The failure of that project is subject to a sort of allegory in Wesker's play, *Their Very Own and Golden City* – that play is analysed in detail in a splendid essay by Chris Megson. The history of the actual Centre 42 is illuminated in an essay by Lawrence Black. This essay, richly furnished with information gleaned from the archives, offers profound and convincing explanations for the movement's failure. Wesker's astounding capacity for arousing hostility from politicians, grant-giving bodies, union leaders and other creative artists and impresarios is one reason; Wesker's patrician tastes and his inability to understand developments in 1960s popular tastes contributed to the gulf between the Centre and its desired working-class audiences. The essay is perfect in terms of facts and persuasive argument – but it is difficult to read at times. On one page it dates Richard Hoggart's seminal *Uses of Literacy* book to both 1957 and 1958 (p27) and the essay's use of acronyms makes some of it read like the tortuous minutes of a university committee meeting: it is hard to get through this sort of sentence

without some head scratching: ‘The GLC and LCC were minded to hear how the ACGB felt about C42 before committing (AW1963a)’ (p31). The ‘Visions’ section is rounded off with a stirring essay by James Macdonald about Wesker’s *Roots* and a nuanced account of the enigmatic and frustrating Pip from *Chips With Everything* by John Bull.

The ‘Unifying Fragments’ section has two essays that are, at times, laugh-out-loud funny: both address Wesker’s inability to step away from criticism and conflict. One, written by Harry Derbyshire, seeks to categorise the various, myriad troubles that followed Wesker around. As Derbyshire puts it, ‘Time spent with Wesker the public commentator is time spent raising one’s eyebrows, shaking one’s head and occasionally having to reset one’s jaw’ (p112). Derbyshire accounts for four areas of Wesker wars. The first, endless battle was against reviewers – Derbyshire doesn’t just dismiss Wesker as a thin-skinned egoist who petulantly reacted against bad notices but takes him seriously, believing that his tirades against reviewers derive from a deeply held conviction that theatre matters and that shallow reviewing perpetuates complacent and sterile cultural conformism as well as theatrical mediocrity. The second ongoing battle was against directors: some of these stories have been told before – it is well-known that Wesker never quite recovered from the National Theatre cancellation of *The Old Ones* in 1972 and the more notorious Royal Shakespeare Company cancellation of *The Journalists* during the same era. The third sort of battle was with other playwrights: much of this essay is deeply funny but the callousness of the rejection of Wesker by John Osborne and his family is plain sad. The fourth sort of battle is more general – Wesker’s battle with various forms of extremism. Wesker’s identification with Jewishness was complex but resonant. He infamously supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003 but Derbyshire takes care to give us a nuanced account of Wesker in this fourth section and indeed throughout the accounts of the many fights he fought. That said, one does not really want to be indulgent towards Wesker when one hears about him making obscene comparisons between reviewers and ‘mongoloid children’ (p113), about him comparing theatrical breaches of contract to ‘a kind of rape’ (p116) and about claiming that, metaphorically, the Provisional IRA was responsible for murdering innocent Catholics (p120). These barely lucid, eccentric opinions damaged Wesker’s career and will forever besmirch his reputation.

Michael Fry’s essay on Wesker’s semi-autobiographical depictions of women, likewise, has moments that are disturbing as well as hilarious. Wesker wrote back to everyone who wrote to him: Fry’s account of some

correspondents is hilarious: Daryl of Broadmoor Prison, who smashed a Westminster Abbey cross; a mad, would-be playwright who wanted the IRA to ‘blow up all fucking theatres and the bastards who run them’; and one Carole Denton who walked out of one of Wesker’s own readings of a one-woman play (p189). Denton told Wesker, to his chagrin, that the eponymous heroine of *Shirley Valentine* spoke to her whereas Wesker’s fictional woman was not relatable. I wonder, by the way, if Denton hit a nerve there because the creator of *Shirley Valentine*, Willy Russell, had a huge theatrical and cinematic hit with *Educating Rita* – a play about the relationship between a sleazy academic and a relatively naïve young female student. Wesker’s own play about the relationship between a sleazy academic and a relatively naïve young female student, *Lady Othello*, barely surfaced let alone sank without trace. Jealousy? Possibly. Fry goes on to carefully tease out connections between the women in Wesker’s 1980s plays and the man himself, finding much alignment. Other essays in the section are less critical of Wesker: some are even unambiguously laudatory. For example, Pamela Howard delivers a very fresh analysis of a little-known aspect of Weskerism – his drawings. Wesker drew prolifically: whereas his plays are full of fascination with people, his drawings are of things, spaces, possessions, stark emptiness. Many great dramatists have been decent visual artists in their spare time – August Strindberg, Tennessee Williams and Noël Coward come to mind. The supposedly out-of-touch Coward, by the way, had some correspondence with the new sensation, Wesker, during the early stages of the latter’s career. That correspondence is not mentioned here – although ‘Noel Coward’, sans umlaut, is mentioned in a different context on page 33, not on page 32, as the ‘Index’ claims – more about the ‘Index’ later. Several of Wesker’s drawings are reproduced here – indeed, one of the great contributions of this collection overall is its generous number of illustrations. Many of these professional and family photographs have been hitherto unseen by the public – I particularly liked Sebastian the 1970s dog (p210). Other essays in the section include a thorough examination of Wesker’s sensitivities about the curse of anti-Semitism (by Sue Vice), a thoroughly learned and informative essay about Wesker’s comparative successes in France (by the other editor, Anne Etienne) and a masterful, rather epic account of the importance and complexities of representations of community in Wesker’s professional stage plays as well as in his Ann Jellicoe-influenced, Basildon-specific community play, *Beorhtel’s Hill* (by Robert Wilcher).

Barring a disposable, short appreciation of *Roots* by a modern-day director, James Macdonald, every essay in this essential volume is full of

rich detail, is characterised by determined, serious thinking, is resplendent with thorough knowledge of primary and secondary literature and is responsibly annotated. Wesker would have found fault with the slightly inadequate 'Index'. The aforementioned Richard Hoggart is mentioned in Black's essay but there is no sign of Hoggart in the 'Index'; Bernard Kops isn't just mentioned on page 25; and the Labour Party isn't just mentioned on pages 25 and 26. Do researchers want to see an index entry that says "*Caritas*. See *Caritas*" or "*Friends, The*. See *Friends, The*" (p245). Quite baffling. But then, as Bernard Levin often pointed out, indexing is a specific skill – and not one that academics generally have. Wesker, however, might have enjoyed the outrageous description of Edward Bond in the 'Contributors' section. Bond is described here as 'widely regarded at the United Kingdom's greatest living playwright' – hopefully Bond did not write that himself and hopefully followers of Alan Ayckbourn, Caryl Churchill and David Hare will not react too brusquely to that very questionable claim (p229). Wesker would certainly be amused by the extraordinary misspelling of Bond's name – the UK's 'greatest living playwright' is referred to as 'EDWARD BONDT' (sic.). It is an embarrassing mistake but one that could be easily eliminated from future editions of this almost completely satisfying, attention-holding, knowledge-festooned essay collection. It is a terrific book, a necessary book about a great but difficult dramatist and man and I hope that it stays in print, in refreshed editions, for decades.

Kevin De Ornellas
Ulster University

Willy Maley (ed.), *Our Fathers Fought Franco*, Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2023; 189pp; ISBN 9781804250402, £12.99, pbk

Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War*, Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2023; 222pp; ISBN 9781913025366, £12.99, pbk

Our Fathers Fought Franco is a unique contribution to the steadily growing field of International Brigade and Spanish Civil war studies. It presents accounts of four Brigade volunteers from Scotland – Donald Renton, Geordie Watters, Jimmy Maley, and Archie ('AC') Williams – provided by in two cases their sons, in another by a daughter, and the fourth by

a grand-daughter. One of the sons is the editor, Willy Maley. All four men served with No. 2 Machine Gun Company at the Battle of Jarama in 1937, at which the British and Irish volunteers suffered devastating losses. Of the 120 members of this Company three survived, eighty-eight were killed and the remaining twenty-nine, including these four, were captured. They were held for several months in horrific conditions and under a constant fear of execution; groups of their Spanish fellow prisoners of war were shot by the Fascists on a regular basis. Eventually the British were released as part of a prisoner exchange. This common experience is one link between the four; others are their similar backgrounds as working-class men, with little formal education but well-read, active in trade unions, the Communist Party and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM).

Archie Williams is, I believe, the only new appearance in International Brigade histories, the other three being already known. Interviews with Watters, and Renton, were published in Ian MacDougall's *Voices from the Spanish Civil War* in 1986, the interviews being conducted by Victor Kiernan years earlier. Renton's was first published in *Scottish Labour History* in 1977, and he also has an entry in the *Dictionary of Labour Biography Vol. IX*, 1993. Jimmy Maley was interviewed in 1991 as part of the Imperial War Museum project with Spanish Civil War veterans and his recording is included in their archive. His life was also the inspiration for *From the Calton to Catalonia*, a play written by his sons, which had successful tours in the 1990s. Parts of their accounts have already appeared in some histories of the British battalion, but none of the above detracts from the value of a book which points to a new direction in the field, the perspective of later generations of their families.

It seems that the children and grand-children often knew little of their relatives' time in Spain and so to expand and build on the interviews the family members have drawn on a range of sources to piece together their contributions. As Willy Maley says, 'having to read as a scholar, not as a son'. They include some surviving letters, material from the International Brigade Memorial Trust, the Marx Memorial Library, Facebook pages and internet sites, YouTube newsreels, and sometimes the Comintern archive of International Brigade records, now freely available online. MI5 maintained surveillance on the four long after Spain and some of their records are included too. Each remained politically active in subsequent years, three remaining in the Communist Party whilst Renton left it in 1956 and became a Labour councillor. In a notorious if forgotten incident Jimmy Maley was actually arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1985

for selling an Irish Republican paper. The authors describe growing up as the children of locally well-known political activists, with the pride, strength and issues this could involve. As is not uncommon with the children of male activists of the 1950s and 1960s, Jennie Renton confesses that 'what I secretly yearned for was a Dad who was at home more'.

The accounts include fascinating material, some of it unpublished, such as AC's notebook, which he risked his life to record whilst in the Salamanca prison, and a verbatim transcript of his interrogation there. His granddaughter has researched his involvement with the Canadian unemployed movement in the early 1930s and recounts his imprisonment and deportation when the movement was suppressed. Renton, along with three other Brigade veterans, volunteered to be a human guinea pig in J.B.S. Haldane's gruelling and dangerous experiment to explain the sinking of the submarine *Thetis* in 1939. Renton's first-hand description of the experience was printed in *Tribune* at the time and is reproduced here. These volunteers' families did not know if they were alive after Jarama and confirmation only came when they saw footage of them herded as prisoners on a cinema newsreel. Watching the same newsreel for the first time on YouTube was an emotional experience for Tam Watters, realising that this was the sole photographic record of his father as a young man. The perspective of family members adds something lacking from the available interviews, and not just the amount of additional information about their backgrounds and lives after Spain. There is the sense of the personalities, the lives lived and the impact their service in Spain exerted and the meanings it had for their families.

Daniel Gray's *Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War* was originally published by Luath Press in 2008 and it was the first study of the Scottish contribution to solidarity with Republican Spain. It is one of those books on Britain and the Spanish Civil War to take a more comprehensive approach than dealing solely with the volunteers for the International Brigades. Thus it also includes the fund raising for food ships, the support for Basque refugee children, the role played by volunteers with the medical services and the Scottish Ambulance Unit; also the support for Franco articulated by some sections of the Scottish establishment. It has been re-issued to accompany *Our Fathers Fought Franco* and it provides an essential context for the companion book. The purpose of *Homage to Caledonia* is celebratory and thus it lacks the more analytical focus of another recent work on the subject, Fraser Raeburn's *Scots and the Spanish Civil War* published in 2020. Nevertheless this popular account is an extensive and well-researched study which makes use of

the full range of Scottish sources, and with a narrative often based on the words of the participants themselves.

The initial chapter provides contextual material on the attitude of the British government towards the Spanish Republic, and the responses in Scotland, a country where the Communist Party and the NUWM were particularly strong. This is the background to an account of the recruitment to the International Brigade, travel to Spain and training, contacts with home and the reactions of families. Besides accounts of the fighting and the toll of casualties in the International Brigade – and the fate of those who were captured – he describes life in the battalion, wall newspapers, political discussion, and entertainment. He does not ignore controversial issues such as discipline, morale and desertions, and he traces the damage caused by disputes within the military hierarchy. The Scottish contribution to the medical services comes mainly through the words of Annie Murray who nursed in Spain whilst her two brothers served with the International Brigade. The Scottish Ambulance Unit made three expeditions to Spain between 1936 and 1938 and were the first Scots to arrive there. They were funded entirely from voluntary contributions and their achievements in the field were impressive; at the same time they attracted almost continual controversy and rumour, either over personal conduct or alleged political sympathies.

There is an interesting section on Scottish opposition to the Republic and support for Franco. Apart from the attempts by the Catholic Church to influence working-class opinion there was explicit support for Franco from British Union of Fascists branches, and from establishment figures who formed links with the Friends of Nationalist Spain. Neither organisation was able to build popular support, due in no small part to the opposition they encountered from anti-fascists.

Gray covers the involvement of what he terms Scotland's 'other left' in solidarity campaigns, particularly the Independent Labour Party; it was headquartered in Glasgow after all and its four MPs represented Glasgow constituencies. John McGovern had a largely Catholic constituency in Shettleston and he battled to refute the Church's allegations of Republican atrocities against Spanish clergy; the Church's vociferous support for Franco actually proved a relatively insignificant factor in influencing Scottish public opinion. Gray points out that many Scottish volunteers had Catholic backgrounds, and a large number too were from the ILP although all but a very few served with the International Brigade rather than the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista / Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), whose revolutionary alternative to the Republican Popular Front was supported by the ILP. He discusses the conflicts this

generated with the Communists, particularly after the clashes in Barcelona and the suppression of the POUM. Gray highlights the work of the ILP's David Murray, both in general Spanish solidarity work and his role in negotiating the release of POUM prisoners after the Republican purge. His most notorious case was that of Bob Smillie of the ILP, who was arrested whilst leaving Spain because of incorrect documentation during the POUM suppression; his death from peritonitis in gaol was alleged to have been the consequence of politically motivated neglect. Gray offers a clear summary of the evidence, argument and rumour that was provided at the time and subsequently about this death, ending with Murray's own conclusion – still contested – that it was the result of unfortunate circumstances.

The year in Spain spent by Glasgow anarchist Ethel MacDonald is similarly covered. In her talks in English for the CNT-FAI on Radio Barcelona, and frequent letters to the Scottish press, she was the first foreigner to cover the Barcelona street fighting and challenge the Communist narratives about the events. She was nicknamed 'the Scots Scarlet Pimpernel' for rescuing anarchists from Republican prison although this role was hampered by her inability to work with allies. Gray is explicit that these are examples of how Scotland's opposition to Spanish fascism also reflected the destructive battles within the Republican left itself. He also believes that they do not detract from the breadth and strength of the Scottish movement to support the Republic and the value of the contribution it made.

Daniel Gray's Preface to his new edition lists the events, memorials and cultural productions commemorating Scotland and the Spanish Civil War which have been held since 2008. These two books – and both are copiously illustrated – make a valuable contribution to the continuous process of education, commemoration and discussion of an iconic episode in Scottish and working-class history.

Don Watson

Kenan Malik, *Not So Black and White: A History of Race from White Supremacy to Identity Politics*, Hurst and Company, London, 2023; ix + 380 pp; ISBN 9781787387768, £20.00, hbk

At the time of writing, a Scottish First Minister of Pakistani heritage is in conflict with a UK Prime Minister of Indian heritage over the possible partition of Great Britain. The irony is no doubt delicious but such

a situation serves to reinforce the key argument of Kenan Malik's latest book, namely that the real divisions in society are about power, privilege and wealth and only incidentally about skin colour or heritage. Malik, a journalist of long standing with a regular column in the *Observer*, focuses on the modern West. This is a book aimed at a wide public rather than an academic one but Malik has researched the area, providing documented evidence. It is a well produced volume and I only noticed a couple of errors. The 'Abbaye de Saint-Denis' (more usually 'Basilique cathédrale de Saint-Denis') has become 'Abbé Saint Denis' (a cleric rather than a place of worship) on p177. On pp147-8, Malik seems to imply that the Declaration of the Rights of Man preceded the storming of the Bastille.

Malik's aim is not just to illuminate the nature of discrimination but also to challenge the current preoccupation with identity politics. He believes the problems caused by discriminatory behaviour (which is not confined to race) are best addressed by fostering class solidarity among the disadvantaged.

Skin colour is not necessarily the primary issue. Although they might now be classified as belonging to the privileged, the Irish in both the USA and the UK were severely disadvantaged for a long time and only lately admitted to the table. Like people of African heritage, the Irish were (and still are to some extent) regularly portrayed as not being intellectually bright, thus justifying discriminatory practices. Jewish people likewise suffered discrimination but this time because they were supposedly clever and in control of events behind the scenes. Indeed, Malik argues, there is still widespread anti-Jewish sentiment in Western societies. Interestingly, the trope of the crafty Jew who deviously takes advantage of the honest dealer seems now to be applied to the Irish in certain quarters. I have heard Brexiters blame the Irish for manipulating the EU to the disadvantage of the British. As one put it, the Northern Irish protocol had 'the fingerprints of Leinster House all over it'. (Notice the connotation of criminality in the image.) But then discrimination is not necessarily logical or coherent.

To make his case that discrimination is, as the title puts it, 'not so black and white', Malik quotes Carlyle on the Irish and, perhaps more surprisingly, Engels on the Slavs. Indeed, it is perhaps worth bearing in mind that the word 'slave' derives from 'Slav'. Denigration is not just racial: Frantz Fanon expressed the view that 'the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual'. These words, according to Malik, are indicative of 'the mindset of many postcolonial nations which regarded homosexuality as the product of morally degenerate colonial cultures, as a phenomenon alien to black

or indigenous history, leading in many cases to the merciless persecution of gays' (pp169-170).

Fanon's remarks may be dismissed as cod psychology, prejudice dressed up in scientific garb. Malik's history is valuable in showing the pernicious confluence of racism and science – especially, but not exclusively, biology. It is not just that science can be used to give racism an aura of truth. In developing taxonomies of humanity which divided people into races, scientists created a hierarchy with the then ruling elite (who happened to be white people of European heritage) at the top. Science becomes, like religion, another ideology that justifies dominance and repression.

It is noteworthy, though not mentioned explicitly in the book, that at the time the Irish and most Slavic peoples, had no country of their own – the exception in the latter case being Russia which long saw itself as lagging behind European powers and sought to recast itself along more Western lines, a process going back to Peter the Great. It also overcompensated for its inferiority complex by according itself a special leadership role. It was the Third Rome, guardian of Orthodox values, and a bulwark against the barbarians from the East whose lands it gradually incorporated into its empire alongside the more westerly Belorussia and Ukraine (which it called Little Russia, Malaya Rossiya, suppressing indigenous language and culture as Britain did in Ireland).

Racists could therefore not just accept with equanimity a genetic superiority that placed them in a privileged position but could ensure that such privilege was protected with messianic zeal. The colonial powers insisted that they were acting in the best interests of colonised peoples by bringing them the benefits of civilisation. But if that failed, then more extreme methods were to be authorised. Those who resisted were to be chastised or brought to heel by any means necessary. Indeed, it is more than ironic that the methods employed by the colonisers were sometimes nothing short of barbaric.

While proximity to the seats of power might ensure some restraint, at least in Europe, this was not always the case. There were pogroms against the Jewish populations of those parts of eastern Europe ruled by Russia. The zenith of this barbarity was the Nazi attempt to cleanse the German people of what they saw as degenerate elements such as the Jews, Roma, gays and people with mental and other disabilities. Science was summoned not just to guide the policy but also to provide the means of implementing it – the gas chambers.

Critical Race Theory, and in this it accords with Malik, seeks to draw attention to the way privilege is located in position and not genetics.

Discrimination has cultural and structural causes. However, Malik is sceptical of the efficacy of such an approach in combating the evil, believing that advocates of identity politics end up strengthening the very boundaries that keep people from coming together in the struggle for justice. It is a dead end. Group solidarity is detrimental to class solidarity. Malik is good at teasing out the difficulties inherent in adopting such an approach just as he pointed out the inconsistencies in Enlightenment liberal thought.

Malik's book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of race. The plenitude of its detail is convincing but limited in focus. It neglects huge areas of the world. Non-Western societies get barely a mention. Malik does express disappointment that those who struggled successfully to liberate former colonies did not create better societies but there is surely more to be said. Similarly, we are given the tragic tale of Lovett Fort-Whiteman, a black American communist who emigrated to the USSR in 1927 and who died in a labour camp in 1939, a victim of Stalin's purges. However, the Soviet Union, a multi-ethnic political entity and successor to the Russian Empire, surely merits more investigation. Fort-Whiteman's demise is attributed by Malik solely to his involvement with Bukharin. Many would be uncomfortable with the justification of a death in custody as having nothing to do with race and everything to do with political association – especially since Bukharin was rehabilitated in 1988. Yet the sign of a successful book is that it leaves you wanting more and my observations are an indication that Malik has started a conversation that needs to be continued. This is a book that is well worth reading. Highly recommended.

John McCann

Keith McLoughlin, *The British Left and the Defence Economy: Rockets, guns and kidney machines, 1970-1985*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2022; 232pp; ISBN 9781526144010, £85.00, hbk

Most historians have written British history since 1945 as a story that outlines the rise, consolidation and fall of the welfare state. David Edgerton has challenged that view by arguing that Britain was really a 'warfare state' that was, in good liberal tradition, hidden from much public scrutiny or attention (*The Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970*, 2005). Edgerton emphasised the ways in which military research and development played a crucial role not only for economic growth and employment until at least the

1970s, but also for regional economic structures; and he has highlighted the importance of government investment to keep this system alive. Keith McLoughlin's important book traces the debates on the British left, specifically within the Labour Party that this orientation of British statehood engendered and entailed.

The debates McLoughlin covers – the curtailing of some NHS services in the early 1950s; the discussions about the nuclear weapons development, as well as discussions within the trade union and anti-nuclear weapons movements – have been covered well elsewhere and will not come as a surprise to readers familiar with that history from other contexts. Nonetheless, McLoughlin's perspective offers a genuinely novel interpretation by interpreting these episodes as part of a history of debates about the shape of social democracy in post-1945 Britain. In doing so, he draws attention to traditions of socialist anti-militarism that have tended to be neglected for that part of contemporary history; he also shows how the Cold War in Britain manifested itself not only in ideological debates about the status of socialist ideas, but also with regard to tangible issues that affected the structure and ordering of the British economy. For him, the Cold War was a 'war over the direction of social democracy' (p4).

McLoughlin develops this argument through a range of chronological accounts – from the debate in the immediate post-war period, over the late 1950s and early 1960s, to the discussions within Harold Wilson's government in the 1960s as well as the debates about Labour's defence review in the 1970s – and two case studies: the contribution of debates around industrial relations in the Lucas Aerospace and peace activism. In his first chapter on the defence economy in the early Cold War that covers the period until the late 1960s, McLoughlin shows, following Rhiannon Vickers, how rearmament and defence investment featured in the 'socialist critique of "Atlanticism"' (p17) and how that critique picked up on traditions of socialist anti-militarism by highlighting how defence led to the weakening of a peacetime economy. Then, Harold Wilson still argued that 'state-funded science should have an economic and social utility' (p20) that went beyond merely creating jobs. In that vein, Frank Allaun and others on the left of the Labour regarded the UK's investment in nuclear weapons not merely as question of moral opposition, but also as a question of political economy.

One of the most interesting aspects of McLoughlin's book is that he demonstrates how these debates mirrored or even adopted international debates, such as Seymour Melman's work on 'Pentagon capitalism',

Lewis Mumford's book on the US military-industrial complex as well as the Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute (SIPRI) that the Swedish government had established in 1966 and whose first three directors – Robert Neild, Frank Barnaby and Frank Blackaby – all came from the UK. Mary Kaldor, one of the key intellectual voices to speak out against the political economy of the British warfare state since the 1970s, also had strong links to SIPRI and published some of her first work on arms control in the context of the Institute.

The second chapter discusses the debates around Labour's defence review around 1974-1975. Here, the positions that emerged over the course of the 1950s and 1960s clashed when Labour was in government. While Labour politicians like Roy Mason, as secretary of defence, continued to 'use employment to justify military expenditure' (pp41-42), Barbara Castle, Frank Allaun, the young Robin Cook and others continued to call for directing defence investment to socially more useful branches of the economy, such as spending on kidney machines or other healthcare-related products.

In the following years, as McLoughlin shows in his third chapter, Labour presented its record in defence as 'an example of sound economic management with the added bonuses of upskilling workers [...], technological "spin-off" to the commercial sector, a profitable arms trade and deterring the Soviet Union' (p69). The 1977 report of the Labour Party Defence Study Group, *Sense about Defence*, with contributions from Kaldor and others, provided the key politico-economic critique of that approach by highlighting the ways in which a military-industrial complex had emerged in the UK after 1945 and by proposing the 'conversion' of defence into civilian economies. The Labour government, however, continued to see the 'defence economy [as] an indispensable component of the government's wider economic and industrial strategy.

The following two chapters provide astute analyses of the ways in which such debates mattered for activism. Chapter 4 discusses how workers at Lucas Aerospace in Birmingham – a key supplier of electronics for civilian and military aircraft – sought to develop a plan for 'socially useful production' by 'challenging the profit motive from within' in 1976 (p99), and how this plan was discussed in the Labour Party and the wider labour movement. The fifth chapter highlights how the debates about the defence economy featured in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Campaign against Arms Trade (CAAT) of the 1980s, thereby challenging the idea that CND was a reflection of post-materialism in British political culture and activism. Through a careful reading of the archival documents,

McLoughlin is able to show how these discussions harked back to two key initiatives from the 1970s: the St Andrews student Zoe Fairbairns' initiative *Study War No More* (1974) that questioned the morality and utility of defence contracts at British universities, and CND's *Arms, Jobs and the Crisis* (1975). The final two chapters trace these debates, over the contestations of the Conservative government's defence policies in the 1980s, to the present day.

Given the focus on the Labour Party and movement, it is not clear whether the material assembled here can support the author's bold claim that 'the Cold War was an economic and social necessity' and that it was 'primarily an economic experience' (p1). Nonetheless, based on a range of government, Labour Party, trade union and CND records, this important book encourages us to rethink not only some of the key debates among the post-1945 British left. It also provides us with a novel interpretation of the ways in which the Cold War left an impact on British politics and society and, in doing so, how the Cold War framed debates within the Labour Party materially, beyond ideological questions of social democracy and socialism.

Holger Nehring
University of Stirling

Philip B. Minehan, *Anti-Leftist Politics in Modern World History. Avoiding 'Socialism' at All Costs*, Bloomsbury Academic Press, London, 2021, 288pp; 15 illustrations; ISBN 9781350170643, £85.00, hbk; ISBN 9781350229792, £28.99, pbk

In the preface to the hardback edition the author recounts how his research into European wars of the 1930s and '40s led him to question the common conception of the Second World War as Hitler's war. He became convinced that, if Western opposition to Hitler had been genuine, war could have been averted and that a common hatred of socialism by the Western powers far outweighed opposition to Nazism until war was inevitable. The current book arises from that argument and extends it to suggest that opposition to socialism is endemic to capitalist society (pXII). To show this the author examines a wide sweep of modern history, from the early nineteenth century until the present day.

This is an ambitious project to achieve in 267 pages, so the author carefully structures the evolution of capitalism into different stages:

imperialism and Fascism run from colonialism in 1871 to the end of the Second World War. Post-war is a period of global anti-communism led by the US, examined in various sectors and geographies; Europe and Indochina, Africa and the Middle East and the US, Latin America and Europe in the '70s. Imperialism's success in these areas is seen as leading to 'overkill' and a neoliberal solution, involving wars of aggression in Latin America, Iran and Afghanistan as well as the war on terror, the globalisation of production and the collapse of the USSR.

In conclusion Trumpism and its imitators are seen as the latest form of attack on socialism, but the hope is expressed that Biden will adopt more progressive economic policies and that new social movements will have a positive effect in changing the direction of history.

The book has many strengths. It provides a panoramic picture of modern history with extensive footnotes that would be valuable both to the researcher and to the student. The illustrations alone are striking. Especially valuable are the fine-grained footnotes with their high level of detail, although the detail seems concentrated in the early periods and to fall off somewhat as we approach the present.

There are of course discrepancies in a narrative of capitalism versus socialism. There is no clear definition of what leftism is, with in some cases the definition extending to anti-colonial capitalists (p28). If hostility between capitalism and socialism is endemic, how then are we to explain the alliance of Stalin with Hitler? The switch of the USSR to collaboration with the allied powers? The effective exclusion of modern social democracy from the left and their long history of collaboration with imperialism?

Stalin's turn to the Hitler-Stalin pact and the sharp reversal following the Nazi invasion are explained as sharp strategic changes in time of war and a short collaboration with imperialism that ran against the western anti-bolshevism that preceded the war and that was resuming even before Hitler's defeat. By implication Stalin is seen as playing a bad hand skilfully, a view contradicted by many other accounts.

The pages dealing with this period (pp67-70) are essentially description rather than explanation. It is suggested that the Soviet strategy was always alliance with the West and that anti-bolshevism delayed this alliance. However, the context is that Stalinism arose around the suppression of the old Bolshevik leadership and the proclamation of 'socialism in one country'. Stalin rejected world revolution in favour of defence of the territory of the USSR. This demoralised international opposition to imperialism both before and after the war, not only in an abstract way, but in specific struggles around the Spanish civil war and in the struggle

to prevent the rise of Hitler. The critique of Stalin argued that the Yalta conference distorted post war revolutionary surges, with the suppression of Greek communism being a prime example of this process.

The role of social democracy (p95) is again described, rather than explained, as a societal shift left following the war that involved the British Conservatives as well as Labour and that coexisted with a hatred of Bolshevism and transformed the Labour party into a bulwark against communism. In fact, it is late on in the book (p212) before the author provides his model of the conflict between capitalism and socialism. He argues that the bourgeoisie, as it advances its own interests, lays the grounds for a collectivist opposition. The strategy of capitalism is to control and diminish this opposition. However, there is no final success. After each victory further progress by capitalism creates new forms of leftist opposition that have to be demolished in turn.

Philip Minehan quotes approvingly from left writers such as Eric Hobsbawm (p239), arguing that each historical moment generates its antithesis. He says that Hobsbawm did not complete the analysis and suggests that neoliberalism is itself the synthesis of liberalism and the period of war which followed the liberal age. However, of equal importance to the concepts of dialectical and historical materialism is the Marxist conception of base and superstructure. The base, the material conditions in which value is produced and the class exploitation and resulting struggle for survival, give rise to a superstructure, the various social structures and institutions that produce the binding ideologies that sanctify bourgeois rule. Material conditions are the base, ideology the superstructure.

His book is a valuable source as an account of the depredations of capitalism and imperialism, but the analysis falls short in that it focuses on ideological differences rather than on the material conditions of class struggle that give rise to these ideologies. In my view the various phases of history of capital are best seen in the raw – that is as how capitalism develops and resolves its many contradictions. The theories of imperialism, fascism and so on emerge after the fact. This applies particularly strongly in relation to neoliberalism. The liberal world order depended on high profit rates that allowed the working class to be held at bay by reform. When the rate of profit fell Regan and Thatcher moved to reverse reform, seizing on the ideas of neoliberalism and monetarism to justify their actions. The thesis would have been better presented as a battle between capitalists and workers, with anti-leftist ideology coming behind as a justification for struggles based in material reality. This makes a difference. In a battle of ideas, we can see a movement back and forward

to an indefinite future. In a materialist conception we are witnessing the disintegration of the capitalist world order and we are left with the choice presented by Marx: Socialism or Barbarism?

John McAnulty

Merilyn Moos, *Living with Shadows*, London, 2022; 94pp; ISBN: 9798405399737, £8.25, pbk

On the cover of this book is a photo of Ossip Zadkine's statue in Rotterdam called *The Destroyed City*. Merilyn's parents took her to see it as a ten-year-old child. She was never quite sure why they had crossed a stormy sea and walked through a rainy city to reach it, but it showed 'screaming defiance against those who had torn out its heart'. To her, it also appeared to be holding up an invisible world. These are two determining factors in the author's own life: defiance and the struggle to build a better world.

Merilyn Moos has spent her life haunted by shadows. 'Not', she writes, 'B-movie ghosts in gothic hallways, but something emanating a sense of death'. A distant relative of Albert Einstein and daughter of German refugees, she was born into a home of secrecy and paranoia. Her parents had lived under Nazism and Stalinism. Her father, Siegi, was a member of the Red Front and was a leading figure in anti-fascist agit-prop. He witnessed sailors declaring a Soviet on the steps of Munich Town Hall in 1918. After the Reichstag fire, he escaped the Gestapo by walking across Germany.

Her mother, Lotte, followed her Irish communist lover to the USSR and felt guilty that she may have contributed to his death. He was sent to Spain at the time of the Civil War there. In a postcard she wrote to him, she praised the leftist, anti-Stalinist POUM. He was kidnapped, sent back for 'trial' in the Soviet Union, accused of Trotskyism and died in the gulags. She never stopped mourning him, or blaming herself, for what she had innocently written.

Her parents arrived separately in the UK where, in 1940, Lotte was incarcerated in Holloway Prison as a German spy. They were burdened with regret and guilt. Her mother shut her bedroom door and found refuge in writing plays and poems, while her father expressed himself with painting. This short memoir is a penetrating and personal reflection on her early life in Durham. She communicates to the reader how much of our lives are determined by the cultural and political shadows we inhabit and absorb.

For my father culture and politics were inseparable. Our house was a bit like an expressionist museum. On one wall was a relief bust of the revolutionary, Alexandra Kollontai, over other walls hung my father's paintings. Dark and dramatic, they were clarion calls against injustice and inequality.

Of her mother she writes,

If annoyed my mother would not speak to me for days, sometimes weeks. She did this without telling me what she was upset about. I was terrified. I felt unreal and without any right to exist. I learned not to speak to her. Sometimes, as the three of us sat eating a meal, she said to my father, 'Tell Marilyn', and then he would.

Marilyn found her own comfort in books and, as an adult, in her sculptures and her own political activism. (The book contains photos of Siegi's paintings and Marilyn's sculptures.) She thought she was rebelling against her parents' politics, only to discover how similar hers were to theirs. She acknowledges that she has spent her life carrying the baton passed to her by her parents. After many years as a trade union militant in further education, Marilyn started to write about her family history. She first wrote about her parents in an earlier book, *The Language of Silence*, but in recent years, she has dealt with the history of anti-Nazism within the German working class to help counter the view there was no significant German resistance.

David Wilson

Maria Power, *Catholic Social Teaching and Theologies of Peace in Northern Ireland: Cardinal Cahal Daly and the Pursuit of the Peaceable Kingdom*, Routledge, London, 2022; 186pp; ISBN 9780367536992, £34.99, pbk

Biblical exegesis is akin to that of Marxism in terms of instrumental interpretations justifying authoritarian forms of governance, human rights abuses and violence, to name but a few of the adverse consequences that have derived from projects meant to benefit the most deprived and disadvantaged. From its origins as a religion of the poor and dispossessed, Christianity evolved into a religion of empire supported by a social and

legal framework that involved coercion, control and an alliance with state authority. The complex history of the Catholic Church bears testimony to the contradictions inherent in Christianity, which have culminated in its present-day crises, riven as it is by divisions between its conservative and progressive wings and rocked by scandals and accompanying cover-ups at the highest level. Throughout the ages, however, Catholicism has been a persistent and positive presence in numerous grassroots struggles against violence, injustice, poverty and suffering. It is difficult to quantify if the good outweighed the bad. Hence Maria Power's study of Cardinal Cahal Daly and Catholic Social teaching during the conflict in Northern Ireland, euphemistically termed the 'Troubles,' is extremely timely in terms of both nuancing and further complicating evaluations.

The scholarly consensus depicts the Troubles as an ethno-nationalist conflict. More recently, scholars have documented a religious dimension that mattered. At the very least, religion was a cultural reality, a marker of identity that conveyed a sense of belonging. Significantly, within both the churches and the warring parties there existed recognition that if religion was part of the problem, it could potentially come to be part of the solution. It is now well known how those most concerned to stop the fighting looked to involve Northern Ireland's churches. Power's sources included eight volumes of Daly's sermons, public addresses, and newspaper articles, 'all of which were concerned with peace and social justice in Northern Ireland' (p3).

In 1967, Daly, a peritus at Vatican II and a leading ecclesiastical intellectual, was appointed Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise; in 1982 Bishop of Down and Connor, which takes in most of the Belfast region; in 1990 he became Archbishop of Armagh and spiritual leader of Ireland's then 3.7 million Catholics. In 1991 he was made a cardinal. He was the only member of the hierarchy to hold office from the start of the conflict in 1968 until the cease-fires of 1996. From the beginning, Daly was one of the hierarchy's most outspoken members. Following the outbreak of violence in 1969 the Troubles became his prevailing preoccupation. Advocating for peaceful and constitutional movements for change, he continually stressed the impossibility of coercing nearly a million Northern Ireland unionists into a united Ireland. A trenchant critic of Stormont injustice, he condemned all violence, state and non-state. A hate figure among republicans, he was also bitterly criticised by Unionist politicians and the British media.

Committed to the importance of ecumenical dialogue, he was known to be the main intellectual force behind the most important statements

emanating from Irish bishops. Preaching a gospel of justice and peace to an often-hostile public, Daly wanted to provide an ethical road map to both. Using the prodigious paper-trail he bequeathed to Belfast's Linen Hall Library, Power examines the extent to which he managed to do so by attempting to understand how the Catholic Church met the challenges of the Troubles using an ecclesiological rather than a political lens. She explores how the Church spoke in the public square as it responded to the conflict, seeking to determine if a Catholic public theology emerged. She persuasively argues it did, centred upon the teachings of Christ and Catholic social teaching and inspired by Vatican II (1962-65).

Power explains how Daly sought to enable 'lived Christianity' to flourish in communities as part of his concern to eradicate the structural violence to which he attributed the origins of the conflict. Power illustrates his endeavours with key examples: 'First, instead of saying that businesses should invest more in deprived areas of Northern Ireland so as to create jobs, he placed his teachings on this within the framework of the Catholic social teaching concept of the "social mortgage," showing how such practices were fundamental to the Christian faith' (p164). This appears to have been an area in which he had some success according to Daly's *Irish Times* obituary. It noted how during his time in Belfast he was the prime mover behind a Catholic Church-inspired initiative to bring jobs to the unemployment blackspots of north and west Belfast. Aware of anxiety within the Northern Ireland Office to direct funding into community employment projects that were devoid of republican involvement, Daly encouraged priests and Catholic businessmen to set up a network of job creation and training schemes deploying British government funds.

At the heart of Power's analysis is the impact Vatican II had on Daly. Pope John XXIII's supposedly stop-gap papacy became a ground-breaking one with the 1959 call for an ecumenical council to update the place of the church in the modern world. Power's study of Daly's response helps illustrate the ways in which religion can function as an integral part of a hegemonic system and support an oppressive dominant order yet can at the same time also be one of the most vigorous critics of both and even a fervent opponent. Power's book is a powerful reminder that the post-Vatican II Catholic Church committed to a programme with revolutionary potential. Widely viewed as a watershed in Catholicism with a radical effect on other faith organisations, Vatican II embraced freedom of conscience and dialogue. It was to transform Catholicism and relations between organised Christianity the world over. It also had a profound

influence on relations with the Left. It should be recalled that well prior to the Second Vatican Council Marxists who denounced Christianity as a reactionary curse acknowledged its revolutionary potential. Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), the leading intellectual of the second generation of Marxists, proposed the idea of a Christian form of communism, referring to the impulse toward it in the gospels. While many Christians derisively labelled communism a pseudo-religion, others recognised that the intensity and commitment of communists to social justice mirrored that of Christianity. Equally important, within the churches considerable attention was devoted to the historical conditions that had contributed to the emergence of communism, particularly their own failings, something Power shows Daly fully appreciated.

In essence, Power's analysis is a theological treatise based on a historical case study of one man trying to navigate his Church through a conflict in which Christians of one persuasion were killing those of another, with victims and perpetrators alike victims of an unjust society's structural violence. Power writes persuasively in an engaging manner that is clear and accessible to all. Her research and analysis will naturally be of interest to students of conflict, peace, reconciliation and religious studies, as well as history and politics. Power has produced a unique and innovative contribution to the history of the Troubles as well as to theological studies. A thought-provoking and rewarding read. Highly recommended.

Dianne Kirby
Las Casas Institute, Oxford University

Sophie Scott-Brown, *Colin Ward and the Art of Everyday Anarchy*, Routledge, London, 2022; 294pp; 11 illustrations; ISBN 9780367569303, £27.99, pbk

After her intellectual biography of socialist historian Raphael Samuel, Sophie Scott-Brown has turned to another key and sometimes overlooked figure of the British intellectual left: the anarchist writer Colin Ward (1924-2010). This is a very interesting book, which fills a gap in the existing literature, as the first full account of Ward's life or, more precisely, of his 'life as it informed the work' (p10).

The kind of intellectual history Scott-Brown has developed is stimulating for several reasons. First, these are 'micro-histori[es]', grasping both the individual and wider historical processes through intermediary

phenomena: the relationships and organisations within which the individual evolves, works and thinks. This is not just a book about Ward: it deals extensively with several of the groups and organisations in which he was centrally involved – most notably the Freedom Press (FP) group and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA). Scott-Brown is constantly weaving together these different stories, and the resulting picture is made intelligible through her highly engaging style.

What is most interesting is that Scott-Brown should use such a micro-historical approach in intellectual history. Both her books are attempts to grasp ideas through close attention to the ordinary social practices and relations – producing journals, organising events, giving talks in different contexts, building working relationships with several sets of interlocutors – which gives them context and meaning. Thus, though her work includes a discussion of many of Ward's published articles and books, these are rarely interpreted in isolation, but rather in light of original archival and oral material.

Thirdly, this approach seems particularly suited to the kind of intellectual figures Scott-Brown favours. Indeed, the terms in which both Samuel and Ward often defined themselves – 'organiser', 'propagandist', 'communicator' –, and the very nature of their intellectual work – often collaborative, responding to specific contexts, and targeting many different kinds of audiences – makes it difficult to treat them like a classical intellectual historian would, reconstructing an author's system of ideas. Indeed, such an approach might neglect thinkers such as Samuel or Ward who, as Scott-Brown reminds us, had little time for abstract theoretical thought. She is thus able to offer a full appreciation of these intellectuals' importance in their own times, and to suggest the lasting interest of some aspects of their thought.

The book follows familiar chronological steps – youth (ch. 1), war experience (ch. 2), the end of the forties (ch. 4), the fifties (ch. 5 and 6), the sixties (ch. 7, 8 and 9), the seventies (ch. 10), the eighties and beyond (ch. 11 and 12). However, the order is more analytical than chronological, as each chapter is focused on the activities and relations of Ward within one or two defining social contexts. The third chapter is different from the others, as it tells the story of the FP anarchists from 1936 to 1945, when Ward became a member.

Having left school at fifteen, Ward gets a job in 1941 as assistant in Sidney Caulfield's architectural practice. He discovers the work of William Richard Lethaby, first director of the Central School of Arts and Craft. He is also an avid reader of the journalism of Orwell, who appeals

to him through his ‘faith in the “common-sense” of “common-people”’ (p28) and his colloquial style. In August 1942, posted in Glasgow, he encounters the Glasgow Anarchist Group, and starts reading FP publications – before becoming, after the war, a central if younger member of the FP group. This is at a time when *Freedom*, the group’s journal, is trying to renew itself to reach a broader public. However, according to Scott-Brown, this is made difficult by the hold the older generation maintains over the journal, the persistence of the same vocabulary and the recurrence of factional disputes. Ward represents a different generation as well as social and political background, and thus the possibility of a different standpoint, mobilising new intellectual references, and connecting anarchism with contemporary experiments in collective autonomous action. But in the 1950s *Freedom* remains marginal, and is unable to feed on the protest against Stalinism and Suez, in spite of links with the CND.

Ward only starts reaching a wider audience through editing the journal *Anarchy*, a monthly supplement to *Freedom* appearing from 1961 to 1970, with thematic issues, beautiful covers and well-researched articles. It tries to enlarge the anarchist canon and to tackle important contemporary themes such as progressive education, housing and environment, or crime. In 1973, Ward publishes his best-known book, *Anarchy in action* (1973), an accessible synthesis presenting anarchism less as a theory or as political strategy, than as any process ‘through which people enlarge their autonomy and reduce their subjection to external authority’ (Ward, quoted p156). Between 1971 and 1976, he is also appointed education officer for the TCPA’s new education unit, and tries to ‘subtly infuse his anarchist perspective’, defending environmental education as an experiment in ‘de-schooling’ allowing us to envisage what a ‘school without walls’ might be (p186).

Scott-Brown then describes Ward’s attempts to face the challenge Thatcherism raised for anarchists, with Thatcher successfully ‘playing to many of the same values and instincts that were important’ to them (p214). In his 1985 book *When we build again*, Ward criticises not only Thatcherism but also the left’s answer to it, which tends to favour ‘paternalistic state intervention’ (p215) and to see in people’s desire to own their home an expression of pathological individualism. Ward prefers to understand this desire as one for ‘control over their own lives’ (p216), and suggests ways in which an alternative socialist strategy might build upon past experiments in cooperative housing. In his column writing, Ward deploys his ‘anecdotal approach’, addressing anarchist themes (decentralisation, self-sufficiency, workers’ and dwellers’ control, etc.) through

carefully crafted stories of everyday episodes, presenting himself as ‘the archetypal “Everyman”’ and appealing to ‘plain good sense’ (p237).

In an afterword, Scott-Brown tackles a question which was ever-present throughout the book, that of the nature of Colin Ward’s anarchism. She sees a tension at work within his thought, as more generally within social anarchism, between a tendency to construct ‘intelligent social designs’ (p246), and a tendency to trust in the anarchistic tendencies lying within existing practices. Ward’s emphasis on one tendency over the other varies according to his perception of the immediate and wider contexts of his interventions. The sheer volume of these, and the very different kinds of audiences he so addressed, makes it ‘fair to say that he did more than anyone to raise the profile of anarchism in Britain’ (p248).

Though Scott-Brown is keen to highlight the inventiveness of Ward’s anarchism, she regularly suggests possible criticisms: the focus on local experiments might foster political fragmentation; the ‘common’ experience invoked is often that of white working-class children and men; and Scott-Brown detects in Ward’s thought an ‘undeniable Anglo-centrism’. These limits notwithstanding, she asserts that Ward’s anarchism remains relevant today. In seeking solutions to the present crisis, one should start from the ‘seed beneath the snow’ (*Anarchy in action*, opening words), the anarchistic potential inherent in local practices and experience.

Delphine Frasch
École Normale Supérieure de Lyon

Nathan Stoltzfus and Christopher Osmar (eds), *The Power of Populism and People: Resistance and Protest in the Modern World*, Bloomsbury Academic: London, 2022; 288pp; ISBN 9781350201996, £70.00, hbk; ISBN 9781350202009, £22.99, pbk

As a strategy for acquiring and exercising power, popular autocracy is not new, as twentieth century fascism amply exemplified. The twenty first century, moreover, has shown that the lifting of repression does not automatically advance democracy, as the weakening of the post 1989 democracies has cogently illustrated. The stability of western democracies has also been compromised by the rise of the popular political right with their anti-global and xenophobic narratives. The slide towards authoritarianism around the world is examined in an excellent collection of essays edited by Nathan Stoltzfus and Christopher Osmar. *The Power of*

Populism and People: Resistance and Protest in the Modern World brings together distinguished scholars from a variety of disciplines and perspectives to examine significant case studies of recent national experiences that investigate how while millions daily demonstrate for democratic freedoms, 'millions more collect in support of autocrats who repress individual rights' (p1). All the case studies are valuable and insightful. They include examinations of the Arab Spring, two essays, Ukraine's 'Maidans', Putin's Russia, Malaysia, China, Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Africa, Latin America, and the United States. The essays are well served by the insightful introduction.

The editors' introduction notes how the role of popular protest movements acting as catalysts that contributed to the demise of communist regimes in Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany led to assumptions about popular mobilisations as democratising forces. The focus of the various essays is the exploration of how popular mobilisation can support, even demand, authoritarian rule. Populist and democratic leaders alike seek legitimacy through claims of representing the will of the people, 'either enshrined in a set of institutions or embodied in an individual'. As Andrew Bacevich poignantly points out in the closing essay, Donald Trump, 'in his own bizarre way', without deliberate purpose beyond self-aggrandizement, gave voice to millions who felt 'dispossessed, abused and forgotten' (p261). Bacevich argues that the 2016 election became a de facto referendum on post-Cold War US policies revealing the collapse of the previous underlying consensus that, while it bestowed tremendous wealth on some, greatly exacerbated inequality. For Bacevich, more shocking than the top one per cent controlling more wealth than the bottom ninety per cent, was the apparent indifference of Americans to this widely known statistic. Bacevich calls out American society's chronic afflictions: pervasive alienation and despair, the epidemic of chronic substance abuse, morbid obesity, teen suicide, world's highest incarceration rate, a seemingly insatiable appetite for pornography, the permanent crisis afflicting urban schools, regular mass shootings, to name but the better-known ills. Bacevich concludes that the post-Cold War consensus 'that promoted transnational corporate greed, mistook libertinism for liberty and embraced militarised neo-imperialism as the essence of enlightened statecraft created the conditions that handed Trump the presidency' (p262).

Adam Roberts' opening essay, 'Civil resistance versus authoritarian rule: The Arab Spring and beyond', cites the overview document for the conference from which the book emerged to stress the politically sensitive and intellectually difficult propositions the contributors were required

to negotiate. It noted the proclivity toward populist dictatorships at the same time as ‘people power’ protests and initiatives were resisting tyranny. Roberts’ chapter focuses on some issues that arise when people power and dictatorship confront one another. He reaches a number of important conclusions as well as raising important questions. Noting that the transition to democracy is immensely difficult and even hazardous, he emphasises that calls for regime change that lack a clear idea of what comes next are hugely problematic. Roberts also questions how helpful it is, both as a policy framework or analytically, to cast global events in a simplified structure of democracy versus dictatorship.

Civil society as a threat to democracy is addressed by Grzegorz Ekiert. He uses the turn to authoritarianism in Poland, the country identified with ending communism, to explore a distinctive trajectory of civil society transformation that can lead to cultural and political polarisation. There is a second essay on Poland, along with Hungary, by Michael Bernard. He identifies Poland and Hungary as the two countries critical to sparking the process that made 1989 pivotal to what appeared to be the expansion of democracy. Yet three decades later both have lapsed into democratic backsliding under illiberal populist governments. Rejecting the teleological assumption that the fall of authoritarianism leads to democracy, Bernard reconceptualises the process as ‘extrication from authoritarianism’ to illustrate the uncertainty of the final outcome (p206). He presents a cautionary tale with regard to popular mobilisation by showing how in both Hungary and Poland authoritarian populists reinterpreted 1989 to their own advantage. They replaced notions of democratic breakthrough with narratives of national betrayal that justified their own authoritarian rule.

Azat Zana Gundogan examines the ebb and flow of authoritarianism across almost a century of Turkish state formation. Conceptualising the masses as ‘auxiliary power’ (p182), he situates them within Turkish history, noting their agency as well as the cultural and ideological influences on their behaviour, reflected in mass violence and mass mobilisations. Gundogan argues that: ‘As *auxiliary power*, masses remain compliant when they are dormant and contribute to populist agendas as electorates’ (p183). He examines emblematic case studies to show how when active or mobilised the masses can be ruthless, brutal and destructive, emphasising how they reflect the cultural and ideological themes that Turkish authoritarianism draws on for legitimisation. Gundogan argues that the AKP’s authoritarianism derives from an established authoritarian continuum marking modern authoritarian policies (p197).

Marina Ottaway's study of 'The Arab uprisings and people's power: Romantic views and hard realities', reaches a pessimistic conclusion. She highlights the failure of most Arab opposition movements apart from the Islamists. She argues that the Arab uprisings of 2011 illustrated the limits of grassroots participation and spontaneous action. Albeit mass participation can be transformative, it is for but a short period and quickly wanes, succumbing to organised political forces and institutions.

Olga Onuch provides some compelling insights into "Maidans" and movements: Legacies, innovations and contention in independent Ukraine'. Emphasising how from the 1960s onwards most Ukrainian activists deployed innovative cultural repertoires that relied exclusively on non-violent protest tactics, Onuch explores the turn to violence in three historical 'Maidans', or mass mobilisations in Ukraine. With a long history of contention and protest, 'cultural choices' had been key to the success of Ukrainian activism, which required '*discipline, coordination and a united master frame*' (p91). Onuch reveals the factors causing activist disunity, delay in coordination and loss of control over the dissemination of information, mistakes that facilitated those determined to use violence. The failures alienated the median voter and opened the way for a new populist leader: '2019 saw the election of a movie star, comedian and entertainment mogul Volodymyr Zelensky to the presidency ...' (p107).

It is impossible in a short review to mention never mind do justice to all the contributions in this fine collection of essays. Together they make for a very important book of immense relevance to the present and the future. Obviously of interest to students and scholars, it has important lessons for political activists. All the essays are written in lucid prose with themes and ideas made accessible for all. It deserves to be read widely.

Dianne Kirby
Trinity College Dublin

Elke Weesjes, *Growing Up Communist in the Netherlands and Britain: Childhood, Political Activism, and Identity Formation*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2021; 294pp; ISBN 9789463726634, €105.00, hbk

Historiographies of communism often focus on those who were at the vanguard of the movement, overlooking the lived experience of less prominent individuals and rarely delving into communists' home lives. In this

valuable book, Elke Weesjes takes an alternative look at the movement, dedicating its pages to the oral histories of cradle communists.

Growing Up Communist in the Netherlands and Britain draws on thirty-eight interviews with Dutch and British people who grew up in communist households, exploring their day-to-day lives at home, at school, at work, and – in some cases – in the party. The selection of interviews, conducted between 2001 and 2019, enables Weesjes to uncover common ground and differences among the interviewees, whilst finding trends both nationally and internationally. A number of authors including Alexei Sayle and David Aaronovitch have written autobiographical works about growing up in a communist family – but Weesjes provides a bigger picture by surveying the collective memory of individuals rather than recounting a single experience. She also uses excerpts from published autobiographies and archival material to give context.

Weesjes's decision to focus on the Netherlands and Britain is influenced by recent historiography on western communist parties, including work by Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, Andrew Flinn, Norman LaPorte, and Matthew Worley. The comparative approach is critical in the analysis of political movements because it allows us to determine if some issues are the result of specific national conditions, or are indicative of a larger international trend. As a result of this method, we can see how pervasive certain issues were throughout the wider communist movement, particularly those pertaining to the cold war and Eurocommunism.

The Dutch and British communist movements shared similarities; for example, both the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) only obtained minor parliamentary influence in comparison to most of their western European counterparts. Both organisations were highly involved in student, anti-fascist, and countercultural activities before dissolving in 1991, after Eurocommunists assumed control. On the other hand, the differences are stark – for example, the CPN was banned during the Second World War, with a handful of its members being sent to concentration camps; the CPGB never faced such harsh political repression, albeit members were still subject to arrests and harassment by the secret service and police.

Weesjes's book is divided into two sections. Part I examines the history of the Young Communist League of Britain (YCL), the Communistische Jeugdbond – the Dutch Communist Youth League, and the Algemeen Nederlands Jeugdverband – the General Dutch Youth League (ANJV). This section, which spans the years 1920-1991, breaks down the different developmental paths that each organisation took, how they interacted

with wider society, and their periods of decline later on. Throughout the years, the YCL and ANJV encountered similar struggles, including difficulties appealing to youth culture and ‘new social forces’, dwindling party electoral successes, and organisational decay.

By the mid-to-late 1980s, both the YCL and the ANJV had succumbed to the Eurocommunist crisis; however, whereas the former’s membership had peaked in 1967, the latter had reached its peak in the early 1980s. Despite the fact that they deteriorated at various rates, Weesjes highlights similarities in their pattern of decline, and shows that this was interconnected with trends in the larger communist movement in western Europe.

Part II delves deeper into the interviews and looks at peoples’ life growing up in communist households. Being raised by communist parents was far from orthodox, yet it had a significant influence on the formation of the interviewees’ identities and values in life. Communists in the Netherlands and Britain were often situated on the peripheries of society. This was particularly the case in the Netherlands, because of ‘pillarisation’: the political-denominational segregation of the population along the lines of different religious commitments or political ideologies. Weesjes explains that the Catholic, Calvinist, liberal, and social democratic

pillars had their own institutions: newspapers, broadcasting corporations, trade unions, schools, hospitals, building societies, universities, sports clubs, and choirs. Every pillar, which united people from all classes, amounted to a subculture (sometimes isolated) within society. As the cold war intensified in the 1950s, pillars, already not particularly welcoming to outsiders, closed their ranks to keep communists out.

Weesjes highlights how social stigmatisation also grew from key international events such as the cold war and the Hungarian uprising of 1956, fuelling anti-communist sentiments throughout Europe, and seeing communists being heckled and even attacked. To make things more difficult for households, parents’ war trauma resulted in dysfunctional family circumstances. As such experiences are retold through the eyes of children who grew up during such hostile times, we gain an idea of how their upbringing and social status influenced their identity and awareness of the world.

Weesjes notes that ‘children were born into a life rather than choosing it and, as expected, I found them to be less defensive in their responses than their parents. Even those who were initially somewhat defensive let

their guards down during follow-up interviews and shared very intimate details about their upbringing’.

The interviewees’ honest accounts provide insight into the experiences of not only themselves as children, but also their mothers and fathers. Although communist households differed in many ways from the rest of society, issues such as patriarchal values continued to persist. For many interviewees, their fathers were the most active party members, whereas the mothers were expected to do housework and look after the children. Comparing Britain and the Netherlands, Weesjes notes that a lot more of the mothers in Dutch communist families were party members.

Analysing the different types of communist family units, Weesjes distinguishes between militant hardliners, ordinary ‘rank and file’ members, and the Eurocommunist-predisposed bohemians. Such categories highlight dissimilarities in upbringing between different groups of interviewees. For example, the most militant households saw communism dominate every element of life, whilst ordinary members were able to dissociate themselves from the party in their private lives.

Reading about the various communist family units gives us a glimpse into a bygone age, and how, despite the fact that most of those who were the parents in these families have now passed away, their legacy lives on in the ongoing lives of individuals who grew up in them. Despite the fact that some of the interviewees are no longer communists, it is evident that the majority of them saw their communist upbringing as a plus rather than a negative. Many children were actively encouraged by their parents to pursue an academic career and to serve as role models in the workplace and in their communities. Through such parental influence, many of them were able to become model citizens.

Weesjes’s decision to interview such a large sample of individuals doesn’t come without its setbacks. The key difference between her two samples is that there are twenty-six Dutch interviewees and twelve British, with the Dutch sample having a somewhat higher average age. Nonetheless, Weesjes admits these shortcomings from the start, stating that the interviews will never be genuinely reflective of both parties. One interesting find is that the Dutch sample were more likely to have been born into a third-generation communist household, whilst only a minority of the British interviewees’ parents had even grown up in a socialist environment.

Unlike in regard to the Soviet Union or the larger western European parties such as the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), the history of communism in the Netherlands and Britain is not widely known to the general

public in either country. The oral testimony that Weesjes has recovered and analysed is therefore very valuable. At this current point in time, the communist movements in Britain and the Netherlands are seeing an upsurge in membership, particularly among young people born after 1991; there is a chance that we may one day see a return of communist households. Weesjes' work is important not only to communist history enthusiasts, but also to a new generation of young people who were not alive to witness both communist parties in their heyday.

Nathan Czapnik

Chief Editor of Challenge: the magazine of the Young Communist League

Tom Wilber and Jerry Lembcke, *From Vietnam's Hoa Lo Prison to America Today: Dissenting POWs*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2021; 181pp; ISBN 9781583679098, £75.00, hbk; ISBN 9781583679081, £15.99, pbk

Wilber and Lembcke's study of Vietnam POW dissent and the extremes to which the US resorted to counter it is an informative, fascinating and revealing book. Image management is important to all governments but none more so than the United States, even now still imbued with its chosen nation conceit and the conviction it is a model democracy to the world. From the beginning of the Cold War, the United States determined to present what was essentially a power-struggle with the Soviet Union into a morality play. It deployed its vast resources, what Jonathan Herzog has termed the 'spiritual-industrial-complex', to portray its post-war bid for hegemony as a conflict between good and evil, the godly US versus the godless Soviets. It proved a tremendously successful propaganda ploy, especially on the home front, the most consequential target audience. It was crucial in persuading the American population to accept the global role to which government aspired but knew was the antithesis of inherent national isolationist convictions. The Cold War narrative constructed following the Second World War played on historical notions of the United States embedded in the popular imagination of it being a saviour nation with a God-given destiny. It was crucial in creating and consolidating domestic support for the quest to secure American hegemony.

Wilber and Lembcke expertly illustrate how the Vietnam War threatened to compromise the Cold War image the United States sought to convey abroad as well as at home. Nonetheless, as they cogently reveal,

damage limitation began virtually at the same time as the war, a war which in the beginning was popular and well supported on the home front. Wilber and Lembcke's research demonstrates the extent to which government efforts to control the narrative about the Vietnam War have been ceaseless, perhaps most cogently illustrated by Ronald Reagan's 1980 claim that the Vietnam War was 'in truth, a noble cause'. American triumphalism following the demise of the Soviet Union claimed victory in the Cold War and the historiographical terrain of the war became itself a battlefield. The Vietnam War became a conflict that the United States apparently lost at the time, but fighting it was crucial to the larger cause of winning the Cold War, hence ultimately success in the final analysis. Wilber and Lembcke provide an invaluable reminder of the levels of dissent against the war and government Cold War propaganda. The focus of the book is on the dissent within the military. It powerfully illuminates the lengths to which the American authorities were prepared to go to control the narrative and the image of America and its military forces during and after the war.

Wilber and Lembcke set out to rectify the historical neglect accorded anti-war voices within the Prisoner of War, POW, population. They are motivated by what they regard as a void in American political culture that leaves new generations of uniformed war resisters and civilian activists without significant role models. The book's in-depth research is directed toward dismantling the carefully constructed 'official story' that American POWs remained at war throughout their captivity, that they were heroes to the bitter end. They returned home with honour. Detailed attention is given to claims that American POWs were tortured. With the prisoner-at-war as the central figure in the hero prisoner story, allegations of torture, always denied by the Vietnamese, validated the notion of the POW system as a form of war. The authors challenge the torture narrative, pointing in particular to objective data from a 1975 Amnesty International report, reinforced by a subsequent 1978 report, that testified to the good physical and mental health of released POWs, including in comparison to a control group of non-captive Vietnam veterans and even POWs from previous wars.

The release and repatriation of POWs in early 1973 naturally garnered media attention. It also meant that the different claims surrounding POW treatment and behaviour were addressed. The press were interested in hearing dissenting voices from within the prison population. The Pentagon and the Nixon White House were, however, determined that those voices would not be heard. Ensuring this was the case meant

threats of courts-martial and ostracism, accompanied by the intimidation, humiliation and attempted discrediting of those who challenged the official story. Wilber and Lembcke provide detailed profiles of dissenters that reveal the extent to which for many individual conscience was a driving force. High-ranking military lawyers advised government officials against the prosecution of dissenters who had advocated peace during the war. This led to a significant and telling switch in official tactics. Rather than pursue punishing dissenters, they were recast as mental health casualties damaged by what they had endured during the course of their imprisonment as POWs. These depictions would be merged into the victim-veteran discourse that was already at play in the public sphere and an established influence on public perceptions: 'They weren't criminally "bad," but emotionally and psychologically wounded, traumatised.' (p72) It was to prove an extremely effective tactic. Strategies of punishing and stigmatising were replaced with claims of mental health problems. Dissenters were transformed. They were no longer presented as bad. Now they were simply mad. They shifted from being villains to victims. From the official perspective it was far better to medicalise than to criminalise dissent. At the same time, other Vietnam veterans were being diagnosed with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), victims of conflict generally rather than the Vietnam War specifically. Post traumatic stress was a preferable diagnosis to post-Vietnam syndrome. Pathologising dissent as a symptom of trauma obscured, indeed repudiated, any notion that opposition to the war was a matter of conscience.

Another important theme explored in the book is the trajectory of the brain-washing thesis that reflected American Cold War obsessions with communist mind-control and internal subversion. It was a crucial factor in the way in which the memory of POW dissent would be erased. As the authors cogently observe: 'History books, news media, memoirs, novels, film and folklore all play roles in shaping American memory of the war in Vietnam' (p76). One of the most powerful image-makers when it comes to POWs is of course Hollywood and the authors examine in detail how the dream factory scripted the POW narrative. As the authors cogently point out: 'Hollywood had begun portraying Vietnam veterans as damaged goods since the mid-1960s and, consequentially, writing political veterans out of their stories' (p101).

The authors persuasively conclude that fifty years after the Vietnam War ended the acts of conscience it aroused and the reaction to them 'continue to drive American political culture.' The book is a captivating read for all interested in the dynamics of conflict both on and off the

battlefield and particularly in the corridors of power and the machinery of propaganda. It will interest all scholars concerned about historiographical construction and national identity.

Dianne Kirby
Las Casas Institute, Oxford University

Vladislav M. Zubok, *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2022; 576pp; 30 b/w illus; 2 maps; ISBN 9780300268171, £14.99, pbk

This book is the best I have read on the end of the Soviet Union. Zubok has the advantage over some other commentators of being Russian, having graduated from Moscow University. He is currently Professor of International History at the LSE, and has written several earlier books on Russian politics. *Collapse* provides a comprehensive narrative and analysis of Soviet and Russian politics from the era of Andropov, through to Gorbachev's forced resignation from the Soviet presidency, as the USSR disintegrated around him. Zubok has used a wide range of sources, including interviews with some of the leading characters. This study, at over 500 pages including notes and references (and a very useful *dramatis personae*), is actually much more readable than is normally the case for an academic work covering such a complex subject.

Zubok is fairly critical of some other studies of the period, which tend to focus on the rise of nationalism in the Baltics, Georgia and Ukraine as well as in autonomous regions within the Russian Federation such as Chechnya. While not understating the role of non-Russian separatism, he rejects the view of the Ukrainian historian, Serhii Plokhy, whose 2014 study, *The Last Empire*, argues that it was Ukrainian separatism which collapsed the USSR, a view apparently shared by Vladimir Putin. (Plokhy's study is nevertheless certainly worth reading and I intentionally read that book before tackling Zubok).

Zubok's main thesis was that it was the collapse of the Soviet economy and Gorbachev's failure to manage the transition to a market economy that was the main reason for the degeneration and collapse of the Soviet state. The second main factor was the political conflicts within the political leadership, with Boris Yeltsin hitching himself to the Russian nationalist agenda. Yeltsin in effect stole the Soviet state, both what was left of the state economy and its revenues as well as key state organs such as the

KGB from Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership. Zubok is highly critical of Gorbachev's performance. He is shown as indecisive, and unwilling to exert his authority over his colleagues, partly because of his reluctance to use force. In contrast, Yeltsin is shown as opportunist and decisive, as well as being drunk, bombastic, boisterous and unpredictable – a behaviour that made him popular with Russians, while Gorbachev was seen as a distant bureaucrat, highly regarded by Western states, but increasingly unpopular within Russia. This is not surprising given the decline in living standards and basic public services as the economy and governance systems disintegrated. Much of the narrative in the later chapters focuses on the duel between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, with Yeltsin being more often the winner.

Zubok is also thorough on the alternative economic plans proposed by a range of economists on the management of the transition, with Yeltsin's team, led by Yegor Gaidar, promoting a big bang in the form of an unmanaged and speedy transition to privatisation and a fully market economy. This programme proved catastrophic, leading to the fall of Yeltsin and the return to an autocratic and centralised government under Putin. In his turn, Putin blamed Gorbachev, along with the Ukrainians, led at the time by Leonid Kravchuk, for the end of the USSR, which Putin in effect viewed as a Russian Empire, which he is now seeking to recreate.

Zubok demonstrates the extent to which Gorbachev was dependent not just on the advice of American economists, but on loans from the US and Germany in his attempt to maintain some form of Soviet state. As the Russian republic's strength grew vis-à-vis the all-Union centre, the Communist leaders of the other republics had no choice but to seek to establish their own independent states, otherwise they would have been swallowed up by Yeltsin's new Russian republic. Gorbachev's attempt to establish a new Union treaty inevitably collapsed as his argument for a Federation of republics with himself at the centre was unacceptable to the republican leaders who sought a confederal state of equals (with of course Russia as *primus inter pares*). Zubok's narrative of the attempted coup by Soviet hardliners led by the KGB's Vladimir Kryuchkov, shows how close Gorbachev came to deposition, and how he was saved by the resistance led by Yeltsin, but how he was unable to re-establish his authority and how Yeltsin used the failed coup to establish his own predominance. What is perhaps surprising is to learn that the dissolution of the Soviet Union with the agreement of Yeltsin, Kravchuk and the Belarusian soviet leader Stansislav Shushkevich in a hunting lodge near Minsk was unplanned and derived from an idea floated by Yeltsin's economist Stanislav Shatalin This

forced the other republican leaders, notably Nursultan Nazarbayev, the chairman of the Kazakh Soviet, to choose between Gorbachev's federal union or Yeltsin's Commonwealth of Independent States (apparently based on the structure of the British Commonwealth), with the former option clearly being no longer viable. It is somewhat ironic that it was only the western states led by the US who sought to preserve a federal Soviet state, but even George Bush had to recognise that his friend Mikhail Sergeyevich, though still collaborating with him on trying to impose a peace settlement in the Middle East, was no longer a power within his own country, and that his new partner was the unpredictable Boris. Yeltsin took over not just the Soviet state bank, but managed to disconnect Gorbachev's access to the nuclear missile codes without the latter's knowledge. Gorbachev's now inactive nuclear briefcase was formally handed over on the day of his resignation, when, surrounded by American film crews, he signed with the pen of CNN's producer as his own pen could not work. A sad end, but one for which Gorbachev could only blame himself. We should however recognise that the transition of power and dissolution of what had been the second most powerful state in the world, was achieved largely without violence. The violence and economic catastrophe was still to come.

Duncan Bowie