

business in American political life and of the inescapable contradictions inherent in industry's own efforts at self-regulation is compelling, the presentation of industrial unionism exclusively in terms of the needs and ideas of manufacturers flies in the face of the dogged resistance of prominent corporations to unionization of their own employees and to the enforcement of the Wagner Act. Moreover, it expands an analysis which Stanley Vittoz had developed for three sick industries of the 1920s (*New Deal Labor Policy and the American Industrial Economy*) into a more dubious depiction of *all* industries, while ignoring the influential domains of finance and retailing altogether. Readers may find a more satisfactory account of the emergence of a new group of policy-makers and of their links to the business world in Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor*.

Federal labor agencies, and even more the friendly state and municipal officials who created a more favorable political climate for workers' organizations, set out to transform industrial life, not simply through new administrative mechanisms, but also by empowering workers to act collectively on their own behalf. "Although arguments from the business community shaped federal legislation," Gordon writes in a less strident formulation, "they scarcely constituted support for the Wagner act" (p. 218). That leaves unanswered the question: just who did support it?

To understand the origins of the New Deal future historians will need to take careful account of both the dominant role of business in national life and Senator Connally's observation: "Businessmen do nothing but bellyache" (p. 286). Nevertheless, periods of significant political transformation cannot be explained solely by the short-term pursuit of economic gain by members of one social class.

David Montgomery

HORNE, GERALD. *Black Liberation/ Red Scare. Ben Davis and the Communist Party*. University of Delaware Press, Newark (NJ) 1994. 455 pp. £42.50.

JOHANNINGSMEIER, EDWARD P. *Forging American Communism. The Life of William Z. Foster*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1994. xiv, 433 pp. Ill. \$29.95; £25.00.

Just as the First World War opened the twentieth century, the events of 1989–1990 with the collapse of the socialist camp and the communist movement outside of it may represent its finale. In this somewhat shortened century one of the essential threads was the communist attempt to overthrow and replace capitalism or at least limit its most brutalizing aspects. The failure of this movement, however, does not negate its role as a historical protagonist which at times did strongly influence the course of events.

In comparison with many other communist parties, that of the United States was far more marginal. Eradicated as a political force by the end of the 1950s – the events of 1956 coming before the general anticommunist offensive of the Cold War had terminated – its development did, however, foreshadow what would happen in general to the entire movement. In this sense the history of the CPUSA may take on a greater significance than at first seems apparent.

These two studies are the first major biographies of national CP leaders. This concentration on the central structure of the party usefully contrasts those who wish to rehabilitate the CP, painting this organization as a loose collection of mere grass-roots democrats trying to better the life of ordinary Americans: as is well known, the CPUSA was anything but a decentralized New Left grouping. Equally positive, these studies reject the Draper-Klehr theorem of the relation between the US party and the Soviet Union as the only key to understanding the former. Both, in fact, add richly to an understanding of the actual roots of the CPUSA in US society. While FBI files and interviews are present the authors have based themselves primarily on manuscript collections: Foster's papers in the recently opened former Central Archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (now called the Center for Research and Preservation of Documents on Modern and Contemporary History) and Davis's in the extremely rich Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in the New York Public Library. Both studies are clearly written although Johanningsmeier's style is occasionally disturbed by obscure and abstract literary terminology while Horne's at times seems excessively colloquial.

William Z. Foster (1881–1961) and Benjamin Davis (1903–1964) were two of the leading personalities of the communist experience in the United States: Foster was the party's trade union expert, occasional presidential candidate, main influence in the party's post-1945 period and prolific historian in his last years; Davis, for his part, lawyer and journalist, came to political maturity during the Depression and was, in the mid-1940s until the fury of the Cold War cancelled proportional representation, twice elected to the City Council of New York. Part of the top leadership, both were indicted during the Cold War under the Smith Act and Davis served over three years in prison (Foster was never tried due to severe health problems). The history of these protagonists, however, goes beyond that of a specific organization. Foster's biography recounts how one of the most original and restless representatives of native US radicalism and trade unionism searched out a path of liberation. Davis's, instead, is that of a leading personality of that part of the black community which refused to accept the conditions in which it was forced to live.

Johanningsmeier's study documents Foster's extremely rich life and work experiences: at first apprenticed to a local sculptor, Foster later worked as a laborer in a foundry and a fertilizer mill before becoming a sailor and locomotive fireman. Well detailed and analyzed is also his distinct ideological development as he moved in and out of the Socialist Party and the IWW before forming his own Syndicalist League of North America, dedicated to opposition to dual unionism and to work within the existing AFL unions. Self-taught and able to read French and German, Foster's authors included Gibbon, Darwin and Spencer. Different from Eugene Debs he was essentially rootless and had about him nothing of the utopian. Hardly original on the theoretical level, his organizational enthusiasm, modelled directed on the modern corporation, led him to deny that socialism could or would bring about a fundamental change in industrial organization; on the other hand a practical approach based on the idea that "the workers follow the man who organizes them" did not prevent his *Toward Soviet America* (1932) from explaining in detail what exactly a revolutionary government would do once it gained power.

The study appraises Foster's central role in trade union organization after the First World War among the meat-packing and steel workers, his activity in the

CP-oriented trade union groupings in the 1920s where he tried to keep the Party in the mainstream of what existed of a working-class movement and finally his position in the party strife at the end of this decade where he did not always enjoy favor with Moscow. Only a quarter of the book is dedicated to the long period after his breakdown during the presidential campaign of 1932. During these last thirty years he operated mainly in the background even when national chairman, his publications increasing in proportion to his decline in health. Compared to the preceding turbulent years, this last period of his life saw relatively little change in his outlook as he steadily championed an approach which combined political independence of the communists, economic struggles and fidelity to the Soviet Union.

Horne's study of Davis is a somewhat more narrowly conceived political biography, centered on precisely those decades to which Johanningsmeier understandably gives limited attention. Possessing a Harvard Law degree Davis was, however, far less interested than Foster in ideas. Despite, or because of, his family origins – a privileged Georgian family, important in the Republican Party – he became essentially an agitator and a tribune of his people, legally defending those willing to fight and continually underlining the absence of social, economic and political rights of the black population.

The study is filled with the day-to-day micropolitics of Harlem in which Davis was immersed. His relations with figures like the conservative George Schuyler, the opportunistic Adam Clayton Powell and the pro-communist Paul Robeson as well as his roots in the black community among ordinary working people, professionals, and jazz musicians and singers are all elements underlined by Horne. The author notes that blacks were, in fact, far less touched than whites by anticommunism and even during the Cold War this phenomenon was less virulent and disappeared earlier. Interesting is the annotation that it was not difficult for blacks to accept the Party position during the German-Soviet pact that London and Berlin were equal threats to the Afro-American and African peoples.

The shortcomings of Horne's study are not in his sympathy for the history of the Party or for Davis himself. The author necessarily gives much attention to the institution of the New York City Council, a good example of how the CP functioned as a form of "americanization" in bringing blacks into US political life. One sees quite clearly how Davis tried to link his work in the Council to the concrete help and organization of Manhattan's poor. There is, however, little analysis of the social structure of the black community in the United States and of how the New Deal changed the situation of blacks.

In addition, many aspects – the Comintern and the Soviet Union and also the intellectual history of black liberation – are inadequately treated. It may be that the description of the Communist International as "a Moscow-based agency", "the umbrella grouping of worldwide Communist parties" or the comment that the CPUSA was merely "inspired" by the Bolshevik Revolution are forms of ironic understatement; they seem, however, more a result of the author's ingenuousness. Surprisingly, there is nothing on what the Soviet Union represented to US blacks, specifically with regard to the positive evaluation that many gave in the 1920s and 1930s of the Asian republics. The studies of Herbert Aptheker on black history are hardly mentioned, and neither is the important question of black-Jewish relations in the CP. More important, the treatment of

the Black Belt thesis and the ideas of the black nationalist Harry Haywood as well as the meaning of the right to self-determination are insufficiently discussed, perhaps because they were not that important to Davis himself.

Horne does have a guiding thesis: that of the connection of the red scare to black liberation in the post-1945 period. It does seem reasonable that the ruling class became directly or indirectly convinced of the necessity to make concessions to the black population – primarily in the form of desegregation – in order both to contrast the Soviet Union on an international propaganda level and to block the domestic communists in their attempt to explain black inequality as part of the socio-economic structure. While this policy certainly did improve the material situation of parts of the black community it was especially useful to the government and those organizations willing to break with the communists.

During the intense inner-party conflict of 1956–1958 Foster and Davis were allies against those who wished to dissolve the CP's Leninist composition and its link with the Soviet Union. Though effective in holding the line against the revisionists, they were unable to chart a new path. Neither of the studies, however, comes to grips sufficiently with the root of the question: the transformation of the party during the Second New Deal, although Johanningsmeier does document Foster's resistance to Browder's increasing submersion in the New Deal center-left synthesis. The roots of Browderism were structural and thus cannot be seen merely – as does Horne – as a wartime policy which went overboard. It is interesting that Gates and the renewers (or revisionists) were supported by white intellectuals but opposed by the constituencies of Foster (trade unionists) and Davis (blacks). The final failure of the CPUSA was, in any case, its inability to contribute to and be revitalized by the student, pacifist and black upsurge of the 1960s and 1970s.

If necessary these biographies once again point out how police and government persecution of serious organized dissent is an integral part of what is generously called "American democracy" and how the ruling establishment rarely questioned the premise that a communist party could not be covered by the Bill of Rights. But, more important, they help us understand how the party left its imprint on US life and history. If the biography of Foster shows him as representing one tendency towards the empowerment of the US working class in the twentieth century, that of Davis underlines that the CPUSA was, up to the 1950s, the only large-scale interracial organization militantly engaged in the struggle for black rights. It is no exaggeration to state that this ability to anticipate what will become part of the national agenda seems sufficient to guarantee for this party a favorable reference in any history of the United States.

The CPUSA burned itself out – or was burned out – earlier than the rest of the international communist movement. With regard to these two biographies one can well ask – utilizing the words of Christa Wolf with regard to the historical experience of the German Democratic Republic – "what remains?". First of all, these life histories emphasize that this century, in the United States as well, has seen the presence and activity of talented individuals who completely rejected capitalist society as it was. Secondly, we see how the involvement of the communists forced the ruling elite to ameliorate, at least temporarily, the material and legal conditions of the working class and the black population. Thirdly, biographies like those here discussed show us something of the techniques, methods and strategy of those trying to delineate an alternative to capitalism in the most industrially advanced country.

Thus, despite the marginality of the CPUSA, the lives of William Z. Foster and Benjamin Davis are definitely a key towards a more mature understanding of the United States. There is, however, a final point to be made. Perhaps these studies will provide those who today persist in denying that non-fascist market-oriented authoritarianism is the final stage of human history with not only moments of nostalgia but also elements of reflection on what a new stage of anticapitalism might contain.

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KERGOAT, JACQUES. Marceau Pivert, "socialiste de gauche". [La Part des Hommes.] Les Editions de l'Atelier/Les Editions Ouvrières, Paris 1994. 348 pp. Ill. F.fr. 130.00.

In this biography of Marceau Pivert (1895–1958), a left-wing social democrat, French historian Jacques Kergoat shows that Pivert remained a *social democrat* throughout his life. Until the 1960s, social democrats were characterized by their feeling that they *knew* which course of development was best for society. In 1951, Pivert still applied a formula for this context that was also common among other social democrats: "Nous, social démocrates, savons fort bien que [. . .]" [As social democrats, we know full well that [. . .]] By 1958, however, the leadership of the PS-SFIO in France did *not* seem to know any more, and Pivert, who was exhausted by then, no longer knew how to deal with this situation.

Kergoat has wisely invested substantial time and energy in this first biography of Pivert, a prominent figure in the history of the SFIO. The author conveys a sharp image of Pivert as a person. Despite Kergoat's sympathetic feelings toward Pivert, he offers substantiated criticism of situations where he believes this social democrat's actions revealed little consistency or were actually inconsistent. He also uses Pivert's life story to describe the history of the French social-democratic movement from its rupture in 1920 until 1958. At that point, Guy Mollet, the SFIO foreman who was thoroughly disconcerted by the Algerian war of independence, saw no other option than to request assistance from General de Gaulle. Guy Mollet and his fellow party member Vincent Auriol, the former president of the Fourth Republic, no longer *knew* what to do about the Algerian battle for freedom. Pivert was approaching the end of his life by then, and the words "I can't go on" appear on a note from 1956 that Kergoat has retrieved.

Pivert, who was born in a village east of Paris in October 1895, was of proletarian origin. Before they opened a small shop there, his father had been a day labourer, and his mother had worked as a maid. In 1904, the family moved to Nemours, where they established a rural guest house. Although Pivert excelled at school, an advanced version of primary school was considered the educational pinnacle for youths from his social class. In 1912, young Pivert was among 250 candidates competing for 40 places at teacher training school. By the summer of 1914, he was teaching a class of 55 children. He was all of eighteen years old. Pivert had not yet become a social democrat when the Great War began. He was drafted into the military and was enthusiastic about his army training, proving to be a talented marksman. Kergoat has succeeded in