



Review

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Michael Heale's chapter on the role of citizens in fostering anti-Communism between the wars could also more obviously emphasise the pivotal influence of economic conflict and debate. Few scholars have done as much as Heale to enlarge understanding of the long and complex origins of American anti-Communism. And he is right to suggest that the federal government's role in leading "anti-Communist drives" was gradually substituted, in part, by "the American tradition of an active [anti-Communist] citizenry." Yet this statement risks minimising the vital leadership role that "the very top of the American polity" played in fomenting anti-Communism, even at community level. Heale does document this. I would, however, have preferred him to state baldly that the "citizens' alliance" moniker was essentially fraudulent. Citizens were involved in such groups but they were big business fronts, whose moral crusade against "Communism" and "civic" activity legitimised and obfuscated strike-breaking, the destruction of trade unions and the exploitation of child labour. Chad Pearson is more forceful on this point, describing "business owners seeking profit, control over labor and public legitimacy" as the "most consistent activists and principal beneficiaries of pre-McCarthyite" anti-Communism.

Two contributions by Timothy Reese Cain and Stephen Leberstein, which examine conflict over the content of school and college curricula and the "loyalty" of those teaching it, also illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the book. Leberstein concentrates on the New York legislature's 1940–41 inquiry into Communist infiltration of school and college faculty. Cain explores the influence of diverse organisations, including the American Legion, the Hearst media empire, the National Association of Manufacturers and various state government inquiries on the suppression of freedom of thought and association among educators. Both essays are informative and well argued but they do not reference each other and are separated by 150 pages. Like any mature concept of the evolution of American anti-Communism, they should not be interspersed.

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NICK FISCHER

Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, trans. Dafydd Rees Roberts (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). pp. 227. £41.73 ebook.

The Cominternians who are the subject of Swiss historian Brigitte Studer's book are the foreign Communists working for the Comintern, mainly in Moscow, in the interwar period. It is the specificity of their experience in what Studer describes as a "transnational space" that interests her. At the same time much of the experience she describes would have been recognisable, albeit in exaggerated form, to Communists operating only in their national parties. The Moscow Comintern community, isolated, fractious and anxiously self-deceiving, tended to be a *reduction ad absurdum* of Communist life more generally, perhaps because the foreign Communists – unlike their Soviet counterparts – lived entirely in the Communist bubble. Whereas the Orwellian dystopia never had a strong resemblance to life as it was lived by ordinary people in the Soviet Union, it fitted life as lived by the Cominternians more closely. The Comintern, set up in 1919 at a congress in Moscow and dissolved by Stalin's fiat in 1943, started off in a spirit of optimism despite the difficult conditions of

that year in the midst of Russia's civil war, because a more general revolution still seemed a possible or even likely outcome of a disastrous European war. The foreign Communists who came to Moscow then were welcome emissaries of a revolutionary world beyond, and had access to top-rank Soviet leaders. As Stalin's faction prevailed over the cosmopolitans supporting Trotsky and Zinoviev in the latter half of the 1920s, the Comintern's status declined and suspicion of foreigners grew. By the 1930s, a conservative swing in Soviet social policy dismayed many Cominternians, for whom the emancipatory bohemian mores of the 1920s were part of being a Communist. Foreign women Communists, to whom Studer devotes a chapter, were particularly disconcerted by the Soviet ban on abortion in the mid-1930s and other signs of retreat from a Communist-feminist agenda.

Formally in the Comintern's schools and informally in the course of working in Moscow for an institution always subject to Soviet oversight and increasingly Soviet-bureaucratic in its *modus operandi*, Cominternians learned the rules of conspiracy, party discipline, and "self-criticism," which meant unhesitating repudiation of one's own errors under collective criticism as well as willingness to denounce the alleged errors of others.

In 1936, the Comintern and its foreign employees became one of the first institutions subjected to the Great Purge, a process of hysterical and almost random accusation of spying and treachery to the Soviet Union that (in contrast to previous small-p purges of the party) led not only to expulsion from the party but also to arrest and, in many cases, death. It was a nightmarish time for foreign Communists, even those remaining at liberty (but without the possibility of exiting the Soviet Union), as institutions where foreigners worked closed down, often leaving them without employment or housing. So spectacular was the carnage that the formal closing of the Comintern in 1943 (as a concession to the Allies) came almost as an anti-climax.

The book's strong Moscow focus means that some aspects of Comintern experience outside the Soviet Union, including the developing entanglement of Comintern and espionage activities, go unexamined. The author is one of the pioneers of the sociocultural approach to Comintern history, but her work has previously been published mainly in German and French. It is based on extensive archival work in Moscow (where the Comintern archives have been opened for some years) and elsewhere, and its intellectual framework reflects recent trends in Western Soviet studies on "Soviet subjectivity" and the Stalinist everyday.

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Kyle Harvey, *American Anti-Nuclear Activism, 1975–1990: The Challenge of Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). pp. 221. £60.00 cloth.

In the decade following the Vietnam War, many peace activists turned their attention to the threat of nuclear war. Kyle Harvey's *American Anti-Nuclear Activism, 1975–1990* attempts to analyse this mobilisation during the Carter and Reagan administrations.

Published through the Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements series, this revised thesis is focussed solely on the United States and presents a series of interesting case studies that highlight the diversity of the US disarmament