

Seidman's book makes a significant contribution to understanding the plural ways in which anti-fascisms were generated across different geographical contexts. Ultimately though, it fails to fully recognize and account for the dynamism and multiplicity of Atlantic trajectories of anti-fascist activists and solidarities.

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PITTAWAY, MARK. *From the Vanguard to the Margins. Workers in Hungary, 1939 to the present. Selected Essays by Mark Pittaway.* Ed. by Adam Fabry. [Historical Materialism Book Series, Vol. 66.] Brill, Leiden [etc.] 2014. x, 333 pp. €134.00; \$165.00. (E-book: €128.00; \$168.00).

"Rereading Mark Pittaway" would be an apt title for this review. The volume, edited by Adam Fabry, contains twelve previously published papers by Mark Pittaway, many of them in leading international journals. The book is not only a commemoration of the life work of a renowned labour historian, who died at a tragically young age, but it brings together many inspiring ideas about the interpretation of Eastern European history and, in particular, labour history from a global perspective. Mark Pittaway was a Western scholar, who pioneered in the discipline of Eastern European social and labour history. Today, he is widely recognized by a younger cohort of "native" historians, who seek to go beyond both the "socialist glorification" and "post socialist disavowal" of the working class in the region. To reread Mark Pittaway is intellectually all the more rewarding because of his many instructive prognoses in the contemporary Eastern European social and political context, making his studies relevant not only for the past, but also for the topical political situation and the future of the region.

Mark Pittaway's interest in the Hungarian labour history originates in his PhD thesis, from which grew the book *The Workers State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944–1958* (2012), which his supervisor, Nigel Swain, has labelled pathbreaking (p. 293). Challenging existing orthodoxies about Hungarian Stalinism and the nature of Stalinism in general, with the help of extensive archival research, Pittaway demonstrated that Stalinist strategies of industrial reorganization in fact supported the individualization of production, rather than collectivism, as suggested earlier by the totalitarian thesis. Pittaway rejected both this totalitarian interpretation of Stalinism and the state capitalist thesis. He argued that legitimacy can be constructed in different ways than those offered by Western liberal democracies, and convincingly demonstrated that at certain historical moments Stalinism enjoyed a degree of legitimacy, necessary *and* sufficient for the regime to effectively function and maintain political order.

This re-interpretation of legitimacy led Pittaway to original conclusions about the nature of Stalinism: that the terror of high Stalinism was, in fact, the result of the *weakness* of the state power, rather than a demonstration of its totalitarian character; and that the state essentially failed to build a socialist working class, which, in the imagination of the Party,

should have been capable of building socialism. Kádár's decision to follow a new standard of living policy reflected this recognition. Although the revolutionary, united, and homogenous working class continued to appear in the propaganda and rhetoric of the Party, the working class in reality increasingly turned to consumerism, instead of building socialism.

Studies on Hungarian labour history rarely stir the interest of an international academic public, but Pittaway's work won international recognition, because his findings and his method led a cohort of younger Russian and Soviet studies scholars to adopt a post-revisionist perspective. They were committed to a less ideologically oriented research, seeking to surpass Cold War orthodoxies and simplified dichotomies. Pittaway's work was also pioneering because he offered a new approach to Hungarian Stalinism and the understanding of Stalinism in general. In one of his early papers, exploring Hungarian households at the peak of Stalinism (pp. 121–155), he showed that households invested in what he called social privatization, inventing individual strategies in order to survive, while for many industrial workers, the state sector became a realm of poverty and shortage: "Hidden discontent fueled informal bargaining and moonlighting, legitimized theft from the workplace, and increased absenteeism during the harvest period" (p. 154). While gender was rarely studied in Hungarian labour history under Stalinism, Pittaway drew attention to the fact that, despite its apparent egalitarianism, the state never challenged established ideologies of gender directly, but rather accommodated itself to them. He also argued that women, in charge of running the household, invested more in social privatization than men in order to ensure the survival of the family. Women were much less accustomed to participating in (any) organized labour movement than men, who brought this heritage with them from the prewar era. Pittaway's work thus pointed out another unknown chapter in Hungarian labour history: the gender(ed) dimension of labour in the interwar period continues to be a "blind spot" in Hungarian and Eastern European historiography.

Pittaway's studies always reflect a profound and extensive knowledge of the whole of Eastern and Central Europe, best demonstrated by his book *Eastern Europe 1939–2000* (2004), an excellent introduction to the complex and conflict-ridden history of the region. He accomplishes the difficult task of surpassing national histories (and grievances), offering a balanced view on the diverse political, economic, and ethnical conflicts that have determined the histories of the states that became part of the Soviet interest sphere after World War II. Rather than speaking of the "Sovietization" of the region, he argues that, initially, popular front policies were followed, not yet implying the direct export of the Soviet system to Eastern Europe, also detecting the internal effects and forces that reinforced the eventual Communist rule in the region. While, undoubtedly, it was the Soviet response to the Western challenge that determined the fate of the Eastern European states, Pittaway calls attention to the essential differences between the social structures of Western models and the examined states, which traditionally belonged to the semi-periphery of the capitalist world economy. The lack of liberal bourgeoisies comparable to those in Western Europe essentially rendered the building of democracy difficult if not impossible, as we can see from the example of the authoritarian regimes that emerged in most of Eastern Europe in the interwar era. These anti-democratic traditions, alongside the continuing weakness of the "middle classes", contributed to the development of a socialist experiment of "catching up with the West" by disconnecting from the capitalist world economy after 1945.

Mark Pittaway remained loyal to the working class: in one of his last writings he developed an instructive analysis of how workers experienced regime change and why the political mobilization of the left failed in Hungary, eventually leading to full-scale privatization

and the implementation of neoliberal policies (pp. 245–256). As a result, more than twenty per cent of socialist workplaces were lost, leaving the mainly unskilled workers in a precarious situation. While the radical left has never succeeded in mobilizing workers in Hungary after 1989, disappointment in the change of regimes continues to influence political opinion. The ruling right-wing party, FIDESZ, which succeeded in winning four parliamentary elections in Hungary, coined the term “illiberal democracy”, aptly reflecting the defeat of liberalism in Hungary and other countries of the region such as Poland.

For the *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, Pittaway wrote “Fascism in Hungary”. While there have been serious national debates on the interpretation of the interwar era, partly intending to “whitewash” the Horthy regime, which FIDESZ considers as a forerunner to its right-wing “illiberal democracy”, Pittaway argues that anti-liberalism and hegemonic nationalist-Christian ideas from the 1920s led to the radical right-wing and racist rhetoric and politics of the 1930s, including the deportation of the Hungarian Jewry from the countryside, which occurred during the period when Horthy was (still) the governor of Hungary (p. 261).

Pittaway’s work thus provides a historical context to the rebirth of the radical right in Hungary after 1989. He observed in 2009 that FIDESZ leader (and now prime minister) Viktor Orbán integrated the radical right into his electoral coalition and “became rhetorically more radical, casting itself as the sole legitimate representative of the nation, thus denying legitimacy to its political opponents” (p. 275). Pittaway concluded with the pessimistic prognosis that, although its past was complicated, the radical right seems likely to have a future in Hungary, a prognosis that has come true: FIDESZ, which continued to incorporate radical right-wing voters (although “traditional” anti-Semitism was replaced with anti-migrant rhetoric), again won a two thirds majority at the parliamentary elections of 2018 and the radical right-wing party JOBBIK established itself as the second largest political party in the parliament.

On the basis of Pittaway’s life work, one can reconstruct twentieth-century Hungarian social history: a weak liberal bourgeoisie, high levels of agrarian poverty, an authoritarian regime, and support for a strictly “national Christian” ideology are the main characteristics of the interwar era. After 1945, anti-fascism and socialism promised a solution for the poverty and political exclusion of the lower classes, and the anomalies of the Hungarian caste system inherited from the feudal order. An unprecedented social mobility in the postwar period can be observed in the region. After the 1956 revolution, workers had a real chance of becoming incorporated in the “middle class”.

Many of these – however limited – social and economic results were lost after the change of regimes. The disappointment in the political left led to the rejection of the left-wing alternatives to state socialism, and the lack of a strong trade union movement rendered any working-class resistance to privatization and neo-liberal policies illusory. The anger and frustration of the “little man” were channelled into support for right-wing populism, and a willingness to embrace the radical right, confirming the sad prognosis of Mark Pittaway: the radical right *does* have a future in Hungary.

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