

Spanish monarchy in the Americas (which was a native and Spanish condominium with constructive as well as destructive features) (pp. 113–116, 193).

The litany of errors continues in Scheidler's account of more recent times. What credence can one attach to a writer who thinks that Glasgow "became rich" through slaves (p. 168)? Or that nationalism was a consequence of industrialization (p. 184)? Or that "the birth of fascism" occurred after the First World War? Or that the atom bomb was "the fulfilment of Francis Bacon's vision" (p. 239)? Or that the movie *Jaws* "fulfilled an important ideological function by preparing [...] for a world of total competition" (p. 268)? Or that pandemics are "a consequence of the colonial domination project" (p. 319)? Who can take seriously Scheidler's admiration for "the world revolution of 1968" (p. 255) or his denunciation of Mickey Mouse and Aunt Jemima as agents of capitalist propaganda (p. 244) or his praise of the Gaia Hypothesis as "scientific" (p. 261)?

What of his proposed solutions? At times he puts his faith in "resistance" (p. 288), at others in delightfully old-fashioned anarchism: communal "self organisation" by citizens who must "take matters into their own hands" (pp. 288, 296). He has a touching affection for democracy, apparently unaware of the invincible popularity of the unsustainable growth and consumption rates he condemns. In the end, he reverts to the same paradox that bedevilled Marx: the state Scheidler detests is uniquely empowered to do his bidding, expropriating the rich (p. 298) and becoming – we are not told how – "an institution obligated to serve the common good". It is a pity that the author's errors and rhetoric

occlude his case: for Marx was, perhaps, right, or at least less wrong than his detractors have supposed. He deserves a better advocate.

#### Notes

- 1 A. Briggs, The Background of the Parliamentary Reform Movement in Three English Cities (1830–2), in: *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 10 (1952), pp. 293–317, at 317.
- 2 T. Picketty, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge, MA 2014.
- 3 É. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore, MD 1977.

**Maria Todorova: The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s, London: Bloomsbury, 2020, 363 pp.**

Reviewed by  
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The rehabilitation of utopia in the age of the end of ideology is the main objective of Maria Todorova's most recent book on the history of Bulgarian socialism. Covering chronologically approximately the period of the Second International (1870s–1920s), Todorova sets out to answer an ostensibly simple question: What drove young Bulgarian men and women to socialism in the late nineteenth century? In more detail, what did they dream, feel, think, and fight for? And most significantly, how did they form their socialist world view and convictions in a distant corner of Europe, and admittedly not exactly the epicentre of capitalistic development, such as Bulgaria?

Drawing on forgotten records that were initially assembled by the Communist Party Archives (and can now be found in the Bulgarian State Archives), especially records containing various forms of ego-documents such as biographies, autobiographies, questionnaires, and similar accounts of socialists' life stories from the entire country, Todorova weaves together a "thick description" of the first cohorts of Bulgarian socialists up until the Bolshevikization of the Bulgarian Communist Party in the 1920s. Without adhering to a single methodological approach, Todorova purposely narrates her story from different angles by incorporating different scales: from the bird's-eye views of the socialist movement to closer shots on specific generations and their characteristics to total close-ups of specific individuals and their prosopographies. The purpose of her analysis is to show a variety of entanglements between spaces, generations, genders, ideas, and feelings. Her story, however, is neither a history of the Bulgarian socialist movement "from below", nor "from above"; rather, Todorova occupies a middle ground.

In addition to well-known leaders, she revives unknown, forgotten, and ordinary figures that embraced and fought for the socialist ideal and thereby gives a voice to the often overseen or ignored social subjects. Her "heroes", nevertheless, still pertain to the category of "intelligentsia" rather than to the working class. As indicated by the book's title, her explicit objective is to narrate a history "from the margins". Here, margins are understood as being manifold, from the European periphery to the unknown foot soldiers of the socialist movement.

In the first part, "Centers and Peripheries", Todorova criticizes what she identifies as the "dominant narrative", which allegedly confines social democracy to Western Europe by insisting "on the exclusive authenticity of industrial environment and the working-class milieu" (p. 8) and which allegedly enforces a dichotomic polarization between a "Western" (i.e. European) and an "Eastern" (i.e. Russian) model of socialism (pp. 17–47). Todorova appropriately reconstructs the history of social democracy as one communicating European space; however, she fails to answer the question that she herself raises in her introduction: "what was socialism's unique appeal in a young nation state with an overwhelmingly rural population and incipient proletariat?" If the appeal of socialism was predominantly ethnical (since the socioeconomic preconditions were not conducive) or political (because parliamentarism was failing) – that is, if the conception of socialism in Bulgaria reflected in the first place the desire for emancipation and a better world (the well-known belief in science and "progress") and not the contradictions of capitalism – then one has to concede that it was at odds with the postulates of the "scientific socialism" of the Second International. It is possible to retrospectively condemn this attitude as "vulgar Marxism"; nevertheless, such were the spirit, the benchmarks, and the expectations of the times. Most socialists in the peripheries were painfully conscious of this dilemma and had to deal with it theoretically, one way or the other.

Todorova does not really resolve this contradiction in her narrative, however. In fact, were one to analyse the historical moments when the Bulgarian social democrats were

at their strongest, then one must underscore the significance and exigence of the political factor over the social factor. It was no coincidence that the Social Democratic Party was created in 1893 and grew largely as a protest against Stefan Stambolov's political oppression. It is no coincidence either that they scored their best electoral results after the political catastrophes of the Balkan Wars and World War I. While it is meaningful to pay tribute as well as reconstruct and understand the motives and life trajectories of individual actors, there is something more to the dynamic of a social movement than the individual will of humans (or to that end, the inspiration emanating from specific readings or associating with specific circles).

Todorova deserves credit for providing her actors with agency and for offering us an additional angle from which to observe the Bulgarian socialist movement. This standpoint, however, cannot jettison the necessity to understand "movement" as the summation of wills and moreover as the effect of the positionality of political collectives within a bigger arena called the political system. Nor does Todorova really delve into the other major issues preoccupying the "peripheries": the agrarian question, the pace and nature of modernization, and all issues that preoccupied several Bulgarian socialists deeply.

The second part focuses on the formation of one "political" generation ("the Blagoev Generation") that set the tone of socialist politics until approximately World War I. Through quantitative prosopographic analysis (chapter 3), Todorova seeks to establish, on the one hand, the patterns of social provenance, types and places of education, and professional and political

networks of the early socialists. The qualitative accounts of chapters 4 and 5, on the other hand, analyse the "formation" (which Todorova juxtaposes with the notion of "transfer" in the history of ideas) of socialist individuals, that is to say, the different experiences of becoming socialist, with the last part emphasizing the significant role of women in promoting the emancipation of gender roles even if they were disproportionately represented in the Bulgarian socialist movement and party in comparison to men.

The third part is dedicated to "Structures of Feeling" (pp. 171–250). Here, Todorova draws upon newer approaches to the history of emotions to explore the interplay between subjectivity and memory. Three life stories serve as points of entry: the life of a lonesome female teacher and committed socialist, Angelina Boneva; the transatlantic life trajectory of Todor Tsekov; and the "making" of Koika Tineva into a modern socialist feminist.

Big political history is broken down as it intersects with and obfuscates private life trajectories – the life cycles of the individuals that are Todorova's main protagonists. This approach carries advantages and disadvantages. Readers familiar with Bulgarian history will appreciate the lively details and close-ups as they gain a different perspective and watch how political events affect and are affected by individuals and their decisions. However, readers with no background in Bulgarian history, though capable of appreciating the (at times too lengthy) life stories, will have problems fitting them into the larger contextual picture. For example, readers unfamiliar with the convoluted and ambiguous story of the Internal Macedonian Revolution-

ary Organization (IMRO) or important stations in Bulgarian history will have problems ordering people, ideologies, and events into that bigger (and indispensable) narrative called Bulgarian history.

Todorova is a historian that has taught us to challenge certainties. By mobilizing and skilfully combining an array of instruments and methodologies – for example, quantitative and qualitative approaches; social, cultural, and intellectual history; biography; and the history of emotions – Todorova has managed to bring back to life the “ordinary” in history. Her book diverts analysis from the hitherto prevalent focus on “development” to the wide range of topics that broadly defined “modernity” and sought solutions at the turn of the century, like the women’s and the national questions or the correlation of social progress and science. Hers is the first academic treatise on the Bulgarian Left to go beyond objectifying analyses of Bulgarian socialism to include vital novel perspectives of social history such as the subjectivity of social subjects. Moreover, Todorova diligently reminds us not to underestimate the power and the necessity of utopia. Whether she has accomplished her other more explicit agenda – that is to say, through the case of Bulgaria “to fracture the normative story of socialism from within” (p. 76) – is for the reader to decide and is an ideal occasion to delve into her newest book.

**Austin Dean: *China and the End of Global Silver, 1873–1937*, Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2020, 264 pp.**

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In *China and the End of Global Silver*, Austin Dean presents the history of China’s currency reforms from the 1870s to the 1930s from the perspective of its silver currency and its dependency on the global silver markets. Particular focus is paid to China’s entanglement with the United States. The demonetization of silver in many industrializing countries sent global and Chinese silver prices into a long-term decline beginning in the 1870s. When the US, as a leading producer of silver, shifted to the gold standard, the political influence of the “Silver Bloc” in US domestic politics created a strong interest in the Chinese market as a dumping ground for excess silver. This, Dean argues, made the US a key player in a global competition with Britain and Japan to influence monetary reforms in China.

Chapters 1 to 3 set the scene for the entangled story of silver in China and the US and reveal surprising similarities, but also differences. Spanish and Mexican silver dollars circulated in both China and the US until the latter outlawed them in the 1850s. Both countries created “native” dollars to compete with the Mexican dollar, though at different times. Both faced