

## **Bill Peltz- A Personal Appreciation**

In the Socialist History Society we were honoured to count Bill among our long-standing members. Even though he lived on a different continent from most of us, Bill played an active part in the SHS - as an author of articles, as a participant in our conferences, and as a lecturer at one of our London meetings. His scholarship and erudition won him the respect of his audiences, while his good humour and enthusiasm won him their affection.

Through his Institute of Working Class History, Bill had co-sponsored and helped organise two of our now regular Norwich conferences, and we were all set to welcome him back for a third time in February this year. We were deeply shocked to learn in December 2017 of his sudden death at just 66, an age when many historians are just getting into their stride. Bill always impressed us with his incisive mind, sharp wit, originality and impeccable standards of research. His passion for history was a true reflection of his love of his fellow human beings and deep commitment to their liberation from oppression. Bill's ebullient and down to earth personality enabled him to strike up instant friendships among all who were fortunate to come in contact with him.

We were privileged to have known Bill as a friend, colleague and comrade, and his loss leaves a deep chasm that won't easily be filled. We send our condolences to Adrienne Butler, Bill's widow.



*Francis King*

### **'Echoes of Revolution' conference report**

'Echoes of Revolution' was the title of the Socialist History weekend conference in February this year - the fourth in our series of biennial events at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, organised in conjunction with the UEA School of History. Marking the centenary of the revolutionary reconfiguration of Europe in 1918 at the end of the Great War, and 170 years since the wave of revolutions in 1848, the conference looked at the complex relationship between national and social impulses in the events and movements of those years. A total of 35 participants heard 17 wide-ranging presentations, looking at areas as far-flung as Brazil, Egypt and Ukraine, and topics as diverse as linguistic chauvinism among nationalists, counterrevolutionary strike breaking and the baneful effects of state borders. This variety, and the high quality of the presentations and discussion made for a

very stimulating weekend for all who took part. Several of the papers presented will be appearing in our journal - two in the next issue, and further ones in our autumn issue.

Unfortunately, we had to start the conference on a sad note – one of its co-sponsors was the Chicago-based Institute of Working Class History, whose founder and driving force, Bill Pelz, died a few weeks before the event took place. A brief tribute was paid to his memory, particularly his participation in previous conferences.

Since its inception in 2011, the Socialist History Norwich conference at UEA has become a firm fixture in the SHS calendar, attracting scholars and activists from around the world - and from East Anglia. Preliminary discussions are already underway concerning the next one, scheduled for early 2020. Watch this space.

*Francis King*

## The legacy of Rodney Hilton

Juliet Barker, author of *England, arise: The People, the King and the Great Revolt of 1381* (Little, Brown, 2014) refuses to believe that the peasants' revolt really existed and she totally disapproves of the approach taken by the late Rodney Hilton, the distinguished Marxist historian who was also a former honorary vice president of the Socialist History Society.

Probably assuming few of her readers will know the work of Hilton, who died in 2002, Barker cites his view of the medieval peasantry as an example of crude Marxist "dogma".

But it is Barker's approach to Hilton's work that is crude because it is so wildly inaccurate. In her preface, Barker sets out her stall and claims the rising "...was not a 'peasants' revolt' at all".

She intensely dislikes the word "peasant" claiming that it "*has acquired a politically charged meaning which elevates the universalities of dogma above the differences of the particular.*"

### Class Struggle

At this point she traduces Rodney Hilton:

*"Marxist historians like Rodney Hilton identified the medieval English peasantry as a monolithic social class, inherently united in its opposition to lordship, which lived off the surplus of its labour. The 'Peasants' Revolt' therefore became understandable in terms of 'a separate peasant self-consciousness' and the 'inevitable antagonism' generated between the peasantry and its oppressors. In other words, the 'Peasants' Revolt' was an unavoidable result of the age-old class struggle."*

Anyone with more than a passing familiarity with Hilton's many books will know that he definitely does not seek to portray the peasantry as a "monolithic social class". He methodically explains the many different

social groups and varying relations that existed among the rural and urban communities during the medieval period. He constantly considers how these communities evolved over time and examines in painstaking detail the factors that brought about these changes.

In itself it is highly telling that a contemporary writer like Barker should produce a popular book of some 500 pages with the aim of denying the relevance of class struggle or that its subject, the peasants' revolt (significantly always coming in quotation marks) ever actually existed. The lesson we can learn from this shoddy scholarship is that the class struggle never ceases and that the

ideological struggle remains urgent and persistent.

### Lazy

Space is insufficient to list the many books that Hilton produced; unfortunately, Barker only mentions one of them, namely *Bond Men Made Free*, which is itself very misleading for her readers.

Barker is by no means a hack writer and surely must know that she is not reflecting Hilton's work at all accurately. She is the author of several well received studies of the Brontes, a biography of poet Wordsworth and her previous foray into writing popular patriotic English history led to a book on Agincourt.

### Unfair

Her unfair treatment of Hilton's legacy is a shameful example of lazy historical misinterpretation or possibly downright distortion. This should act as a warning to us not to leave unchallenged the misreading of Marxist historiography which has been so influential over many decades. Sadly, such distortions are easier to get away with when books become inaccessible or have gone out of print. Surely all Hilton's works deserve to be back in print.

David Morgan



Rodney Hilton

Book review

## Communism and Democracy

by Mike Makin-Waite Lawrence and Wishart, £18

This is an important book. Its focus is on non-Leninist forms of communism. It presents a history of the development of different forms of communism, with a comprehensive historical narrative and analysis of its development in theory and in practice. The book is thoroughly researched and the author demonstrates an extensive knowledge of the literature. The study is clearly based on the author's own experience in the break up of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the unsuccessful attempt to develop a form of democratic Marxist politics through the short-lived Democratic Left. Makin-Waite demonstrates a strong sympathy for Eurocommunism without having been captured by the cultural turn of the *Marxism Today* group which carried many communist intellectuals into the New Labour camp.

### Enlightenment

Makin-Waite situates the work of Marx within the Enlightenment tradition, while Engels is seen as the main originator of a rigid Marxism. The divisions between the Marxism of the Second International and the vanguardist approach of Lenin – as much an opportunist split as an ideological one, are considered in depth. Makin-Waite demonstrates that he is on the side of the Mensheviks who argued for a working class based mass movement rather than the insurrectionary capture of power by an intellectual leadership. He tackles head on the key question of the Bolsheviks' closing down of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly.

### Stalin

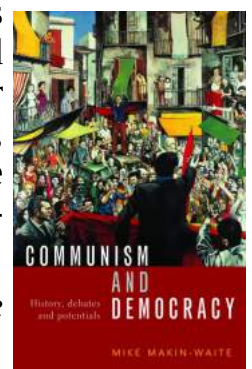
The author's treatment of Soviet power and Stalin is balanced, recognising Soviet achievements while criticising the increasingly autocratic and violent form of Soviet government. He then examines the attempts to build more democratic versions of communist government, first in Hungary in 1956 and then in Czechoslovakia in 1968. He also examines the experience of the Allende gov-

ernment in Chile; its failure to create strong alliances against attacks by the US supported right, and its impact specifically on the Communist Party of Italy who in its 'historic compromise' sought alliances with other progressive parties rather than seek power for itself. He discusses the influence of Gramsci and the relationship between political power and cultural hegemony. Makin-Waite then studies the growth of Eurocommunism, which he sees as a democratic and pluralist interpretation of Marxism – in effect as 'Menshevism reloaded'.

### Collapse

The final chapters trace the collapse of communist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the victory of neo-liberal ideology, examining the negative consequences of this dramatic shift. Makin-Waite then discusses the responses of the left to both globalisation and environmental concerns, and the growth of radical opposition movements such as Podemos and Syriza. He is critical of those theoreticians such as John Holloway, Michael Hardt, Tony Negri, Slavoj Zizek and Alan Badiou, who have become oppositionists with romantic notions of empowerment through protest. This is seen as non-Marxist. He agrees with Ernest Laclau that 'the horizontal dimension of autonomy' cannot achieve a radical transformation of the state. Instead Makin-Waite recognises the need for vertical political structures which involve participation in organs of government. He recognises the importance of democratic accountability and argues against the counterposing of direct democracy to representative government. While not naïve or over-optimistic, the author does point to a way forward for democratic Marxists and this book is essential reading for political activists who want to move beyond armchair intellectualism or self-righteous oppositionism, as well as being far more readable than most contemporary left political theory.

Duncan Bowie



## Striking the Right Chord

**This latest Newsletter covers a range of issues and events. I would like to mention just two. Not because they are better than the rest, but because they touched a chord on my own political development.**

Duncan Bowie's review of a recently published biography of the late Raphael Samuel reminded me of that little treasure of articles later published as a book that Samuel wrote in the 1980s, 'The Lost World of British Communism', first published in *New Left Review*. Written before the collapse of the communist experiment and the imploding of the old Communist Party of Great Britain the articles took a sympathetic look at grassroots communist activity and touched on the 'class against class period' in communist strategy.

This period which lasted from 1928 until 1935 has been chastised by more recent writers on British communist history who conclude that the policy was forced on a gullible British party by an omnipresent Communist International which was ruled by Stalin. The policy, it is claimed, was a disaster from start to finish and had no credit to its name.

### Ramblers

Interestingly, a few weeks ago I watched a programme on the latest addition to our National Parks, the South Downs National Park. National Parks with their protection for ramblers and the countryside were nonexistent in 1930s Britain. They took off as an idea only after an innovative intervention by a group of northern ramblers in 1932. The group led by a member of the Manchester Cheetham Hill branch of the Young Communist League, Benny Rothman, decided on a mass trespass of Kinder



Mass trespass on Kinder Scout

Scout in the Peak District which was barred to ramblers. Rothman and a number of others were arrested and found guilty.

The publicity around the incident was significant and the right to ramble moved up the political agenda.

The first National Park was created during the period of the first majority Labour government following the ending of the Second World War. Had it not been for a communist initiative during the height of the class against class period the right to roam might still be a far-off dream.

Raphael Samuel's recollections of his parents collecting for and selling the *Daily Worker* made me think of yet another achievement of the class against class strategy.

### Daily Worker

The *Daily Worker*, now renamed the *Morning Star* was founded in 1930 during the early part of the class against class years. Long castigated by the Communist International for not having a daily paper, the CP-GB, finally, on 1 January 1930 began publication of what has become the sole surviving English language daily communist paper. Changes have taken place in the last eighty plus years; not just the name, but control of the paper has shifted to a co-operative society. Now more a mainstream Labour paper, the *Morning Star* continues to reflect the political line of the Communist Party of Britain, the successor to the CP-GB.

So, two quite major contributions to Britain's political and cultural life had their origins in the class against class period. There were of course other notable achievements, communist party branches in universities, the first steps to counter racism, the growth of workers' sports and agitprop in the theatre. It was thanks to Ralph Samuel and his early work that a more nu-

anced view of this period of communist history came about.

David Morgan's contribution on the attempted refutation of the historian Rodney Hilton's view of the events of 1381 by Juliet Barker in her new book, led me to ponder on the truism that the winners write their own history. No small wonder that in a world where capitalism is triumphant there are many historians only too pleased to take the shilling and attempt to roll back any kind of Marxist view of development. Barker choose as her target Rodney Hilton, Marxist historian of the feudal period. In particular she decided to go for the jugular and claimed that there was no such thing as a peasants' revolt in 1381; something that Hilton had written extensively about. David Morgan's view after reading the book is that it is, "a shameful example of lazy historical misinterpretation or possibly downright distortion". Absolutely right and we can expect more of the same and not just the defamation of historians who championed history from below. There is a continued undermining of living politicians who stand by the many and not the few.

### **USSR at 100**

To illustrate the point that history is written by the winners there can be no more telling example than the traducing of the USSR by the media around the hundredth adversary of its birth.

Forgotten were the twenty million war dead who helped save the world from fascism. Never mentioned was the electrification of this massive country. No hint that the USSR had been a consistent and militant opponent of colonialism. Never a word spoken about the USSR's backing for the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. A wall of silence surrounded the country's support for the democratically elected government of Spain between 1936-39. I could go on, but hopefully readers will know of the contribution the USSR made to world progress. There was a negative side, and no one can support the deformations of socialism that took place. The first attempt at building a new society failed and we need to learn

from its mistakes. But, unlike the acolytes of the ruling class who want to deny the many positive achievements that were made, it would be wrong for Marxists to write off the entire 20th century socialist experiment. We will come back wiser and stronger.

Like Brecht (see below) and Hilton we applaud the efforts of the underdog, and unlike those who rewrite history, we strive to ensure that they are given their rightful place in history's onward march.

*Mike Squires*

*Questions from a worker who reads.*

*Who built Thebes of the 7 gates?*

*In the books you will read the names of kings.*

*Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?*

*And Babylon, many times demolished,*

*Who raised it up so many times?*

*In what houses of gold glittering Lima did its builders live?*

*Where, the evening that the Great Wall of China was finished, did the masons go?*

*Great Rome is full of triumphal arches.*

*Who erected them?*

*Over whom did the Caesars triumph?*

*Had Byzantium, much praised in song, only palaces for its inhabitants?*

*Even in fabled Atlantis, the night that the ocean engulfed it,*

*The drowning still cried out for their slaves.*

*The young Alexander conquered India.*

*Was he alone?*

*Caesar defeated the Gauls.*

*Did he not even have a cook with him?*

*Philip of Spain wept when his armada went down.*

*Was he the only one to weep?*

*Frederick the 2nd won the 7 Years War.*

*Who else won it?*

*Every page a victory.*

*Who cooked the feast for the victors?*

*Every 10 years a great man.*

*Who paid the bill?*

*So many reports.*

*So many questions.*

*Bertolt Brecht*

# Death at the Frontier

I would like to comment on a letter in the Winter 2017 Newsletter entitled "*The Best Brexit*". It says: "*The worst outcome of the Brexit negotiations would be a fudged agreement with the EU under which Britain retained entry to the EU single market but in turn had to accept free movement of labour ...*".

This would seem to imply that, from a Socialist point of view, there is an objection to free movement of labour. The use of the term "we", in the context of being able to "*negotiate our own free trade deals with other countries*", would also seem to me to imply that the workers of an imperialist nation such as the United Kingdom have some shared national interest with their own ruling class, as opposed to international class solidarity with workers of other nationalities.

The ruling classes of the imperialist countries responded to the wave of internationalist radicalism that swept the world at the end of the First World War by strengthening the nation state, in particular reinforcing national borders. While patriotic nationalism may have been progressive in 1848, by 1918 it had been completely hijacked as the last refuge of imperialist scoundrels.

## **No Taxation without Representation**

We only have to go back another 200 years, to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, to see the beginning of the notion that states should have defined borders based on maps and mutual recognition. Thus the oldest formal borders are only a few hundred years old and do not represent historical peoples within their own territory, but rather a system for maintaining political control of an area, backed up by the threat of violence. Similarly, the concept of citizenship, with its origins in the French Revolution and an empowering concept in 1848, has, since the end of the First World War, despite conferring some democratic rights on some workers, become a means of social control using passports and ID cards, as well as a source of division among workers with different rights, from health care to residency, de-

pendent on often arbitrary designations of citizenship. This is particularly important at the present moment when the British government is using immigration regulations to restrict the right to strike by workers who are not UK citizens. Everyone accepts the concept of "No Taxation without Representation", yet we tolerate a situation where workers in Britain who are not citizens pay tax but get no vote.

## **Militarised Borders**

One of the tragedies of the post-1918 world has been the acceptance, by so much of the left, of the legitimacy of nation states with their militarised borders. In 1907, at the Stuttgart Congress, the German Social Democrat Party (SPD), supported a resolution in opposition to border controls that supported the "*abolition of all restrictions that prevent those of particular nations or races from residing in a country or which exclude them from, or prevent the exercise of, the social, political and economic rights of the nationals*".

Writing in the newspaper *Proletary* after the Congress, Vladimir Lenin criticised the "petty-bourgeois narrow-mindedness" of the US Socialist Party's support for restricting immigration from China saying:

*"This is the same spirit of aristocratism that one finds among workers in some of the 'civilised' countries, who derive certain advantages from their privileged position and are, therefore, inclined to forget the need for international class solidarity"*.

## **Class Collaboration**

Once in office, and following the defeat of the post-war revolutionary wave, the SPD government accepted the policy of "primacy for nationals" so that foreigners could be hired only when no German workers are available. The admission of foreign workers was to be monitored by commissions composed equally of representatives of management and unions. These measures helped undermine organised labour by incorporating the unions into the machinery of nationalist discrimination and by

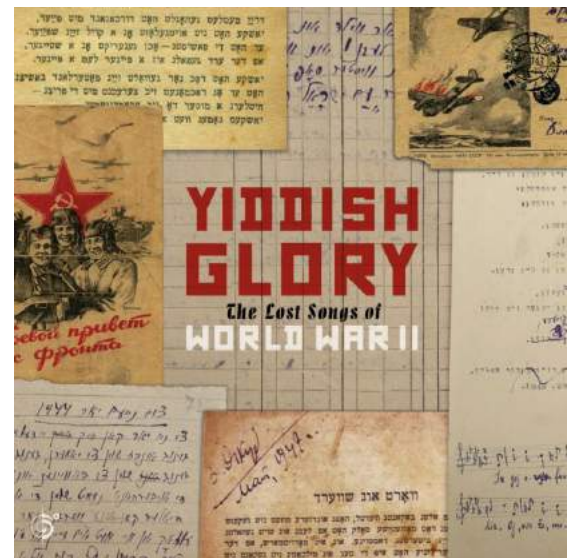
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**Death at the Frontier** *continued from page 6*  
 strengthening the line of demarcation between foreign workers and "citizens". Similarly, the adoption by the Soviet Union of the principle of "Socialism in One Country" tied much of the Communist movement to working within the rules imposed by nation states and their borders.

But borders and immigration control represent much more than social control and attempts at racist "Divide and Conquer". Hard borders exist as much to prevent people leaving their country of origin as to prevent their arrival elsewhere. Borders define the edges of different regulatory spaces and limit the movement of labour, thus creating pools of low paid workers in areas with minimal environmental and labour regulations. Trump's wall is only partly about demagogic appeals to the apparent self interest of demoralised US "citizens", it is just as much intended to keep poor Mexican workers south of the border where their low wages and poor conditions can be exploited by US big business. The increasing number of deaths of migrants at dangerous border crossings and on perilous sea journeys serves as a dreadful warning to would-be migrants, thereby helping to maintain cheap labour regimes in the Third World.

Kato Tokijiro, delegate of the Japanese Socialists to the 1907 Stuttgart Congress, said: *"It is the duty of Socialists to welcome these poor brothers, to defend them and, together with them, to fight capitalism. The founders of socialism, above all Karl Marx, did not address themselves to individual countries but to all humanity. Internationalism is inscribed on our banner"*.

Steve Cushion



Six Degrees Records has released *Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of WWII*. On this collection of Yiddish music from the Second World War some very talented modern musicians perform previously unheard songs that call for the defeat of fascism and revenge on the Nazi oppressors.

In the manuscript department of the Ukrainian National Library, archivists found a number of sealed boxes. They contained hand-written Yiddish documents dating back to 1947. Upon examination, it turned out that the pages contained thousands of songs, written by Yiddish-speaking Jews in Ukraine during World War II. Leading Jewish Soviet ethnomusicologists and linguists, including the legendary Moisei Beregovsky, had archived this music by Jewish refugees, Jewish soldiers in the Red Army and Holocaust survivors, who had defied Hitler in song.

### **Believed Lost**

Stalin's authorities arrested Beregovsky and his colleagues as part of the campaign, started in November 1948, which aimed to liquidate Jewish culture, and the documents were sealed. Scholars believed them to have been destroyed forever. University of Toronto professor Anna Shternshis learned of these songs buried deep in the archive, none of which have been performed in nearly 70 years. Shtershis worked with Psoy Korolenko, a poet, philologist, and performer of Yiddish music, to reconstruct the tunes for these songs.

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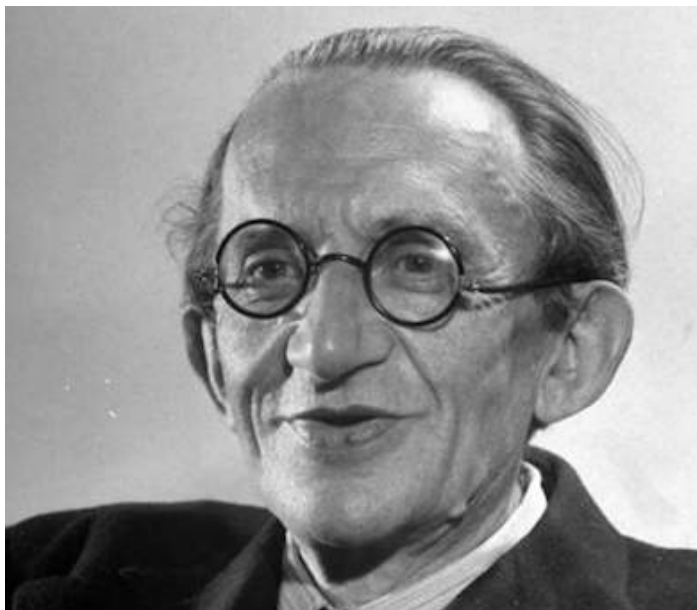
## **Yiddish Glory** *continued from page 7*

Through her examination of the songs, Professor Shternshis found a story of Jewish resistance and survival. Songs came in letters from refugees and soldiers, including Soviet women who joined the Red Army. Often they were written by people who met their deaths soon after writing them. Revenge is a prominent theme in the collection, often accompanied by graphic details, like one about a soldier named Misha chopping German soldiers into pieces. She says “*The presence of revenge and the importance of revenge is what makes these materials stand out from the body of other Holocaust literature*”.

At the time of transcription, it would have been obvious to the ethnomusicologists which popular Yiddish and Soviet songs the lyrics were sung to. Psoy Korolenko conducted what he referred to as “musical archaeology”, a process that included analysing and contextualizing the words to link the lyrics and popular melodies of the period. The project now consists of five vocalists and five classical instrumentalists, and their work has culminated into an album, *Yiddish Glory*.

More details and a chance to listen to the songs here <https://bit.ly/2tpY4FJ>

*Steve Cushion*



*György Lukács*

## **The Destruction of the Lukács Archives in Budapest**

On May 24, 2018, the last research associate at the Georg Lukács Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was banned from the archives after 28 years of employment. Despite local and international protest, the Academy, with the assistance of its own library, closed the archives of the renowned Hungarian Marxist philosopher, theorist and literary critic, which has existed since 1972. The locks on the doors were replaced, and the archives effectively ceased to exist as a venue attracting international interest and researchers.

### **Legacy**

The Lukács Archives International Foundation (LANA) continues the struggle to preserve the philosopher’s legacy. Scholars around the world who have had the opportunity to work with the archives, and for whom access to its holdings is essential to their future work, are standing in solidarity with LANA, calling on the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and its library to reverse this decision.

### **There is still time to protest**

Please share this information with as many organizations and/or individuals as possible. The archives are under threat of total closure, and this is probably the last opportunity to act.

If you want to add your name to the protest letter, please send an e-mail to: [muvesz.feelos.szolidaris@gmail.com](mailto:muvesz.feelos.szolidaris@gmail.com)

For further information see:

<https://bit.ly/2sNUq8z>

The May 2018 issue of *e-flux* journal features a newly translated archival text by Georg Lukács on Andrei Platonov, see:

<https://bit.ly/2lk5bf8>



## Powerful Women in 12th century Early Renaissance Sicily

Palermo is the European city of culture 2018. In February we went on a historical tour to study the ancient cathedrals, churches and palaces. "We used to think of 1066 as the most famous event in our calendar, and here we find out that the main European stage of action took place on the island of Sicily", someone in our group remarked. Indeed, it is said that by the 12th century, Sicily was experiencing an early Renaissance. Our explorations illustrated to me how, apart from the men of the time, powerful women also had a hand in this early flowering of human civilisation.

When the Norman, Roger I, began his rule in Palermo in 1072 it was already a vibrant centre of commercial and cultural activity. At the time of the Muslim conquest in 827 Sicily was part of the Byzantine Empire, with Greek the main language. Nevertheless, many languages, including Arabic, were spoken amid the great mixture of cultures on the island. Inscriptions in Greek, Latin and Arabic illustrate the open-minded attitude of the Normans once they began their Christian rule in Palermo. Their approach was to assimilate and work together with other cultures. All the influences are represented in the many architectural features of Palermo, such as its many palaces and churches. The stilted arch roofing contrived by domes over rectangular arches and the use of water for cooling buildings can be seen as Arabic features. Many of the churches combine the Western shaped basilica with the Byzantine dome. Great pictorial mosaics are featured in palaces and churches, such as la Martorana, Monreale, the Hall of Roger and the Palatine Chapel. They were executed by artists from Constantinople. Other more geometric mosaics, often inlaid in white marble, reflect the Arabic love of complex abstraction.

In 1130 Palermo became the capital of Sicily and on Christmas day that year Roger II was crowned first king of Sicily in the cathedral which Roger I had built. Byzantine art and culture flourished together with the architectural tradition of the Maghreb and the Latin cultural influences from central Italy and northern Europe. Roger II extended the royal palace and had a chapel built inside it called Capella Palatina with all its walls covered in mosaics. Roger II was succeeded by William I who had palazzo Zisa built

with a great royal park outside the city. William I was followed by William II who had the great cathedral and the Benedictine monastery built called Monreale. The interiors of the cathedral and monastery are richly decorated in Byzantine mosaics. The Normans' passionate pursuit of art and culture was an encouragement to many learned people of science, the arts, architecture and philosophy to gather at Palermo's court, turning it into a magnificent centre of international activity. Following in the Byzantine tradition as part of the Roman Empire which allowed women to own and inherit property, decide not to marry or remarry if they wished, a number of women rose to power.

### **Adelaide del Vasto (1075 – 1118)**

Adelaide was the daughter of Manfred del Vasto, the brother of Boniface del Vasto, marquess of Liguria. She married Roger I who was then 58 in 1089. She soon became his trusted and capable advisor. When her husband died at the age of 72 she was less than thirty years old. Her sons, Simon and Roger, were too young to reign. She became the regent and reigned competently. She was highly respected, especially after forcefully crushing a rebellion in parts of Calabria and Sicily 'like earthenware dishes'. She is said to have ruled in a prudent fashion.

Several official documents have survived from the period and show that she exercised great care in governing. Of them the most evocative is the charter of 1109, the oldest surviving paper document in Europe. It is a document written in Greek and Arabic. It describes Adelaide as 'the great lady, the malika of Sicily and Calabria, the

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### **Powerful Women** *continued from page 9*

protector of Christian faith'. Adelaide stepped down when her son Roger (Simon had died at age 12) became sixteen. She continued to play a significant role in politics as her name can be found on official documents after 1112, when her son Roger II started his reign. She was careful to work together with local officials and donated generously to the local Greek monasteries ensuring their favours.

She consented to marrying King Baldwin of Jerusalem on the condition that should Baldwin not have an heir her son Roger would become king of Jerusalem. She became queen of Jerusalem. She brought with her an enormous amount of badly needed money, some Muslim archers and a thousand Sicilian soldiers. However, her desires for Roger's kingship were frustrated when Baldwin died only six years after and his vassals prevented Roger from receiving the crown. Adelaide sailed back to Sicily, died a year later in 1118 and was buried in Patti.

### **Margaret of Navarre (1135 – 1183)**

Margaret was the daughter of King Garcia Ramirez of Navarre and Margaret del'Aigle. Margaret was a powerful and intelligent person, often giving William I advice when he tended to remain undecided. She had four sons by him, two of whom died before their father. William II became the successor, while Henry became prince of Capua. Queen Margaret was the third wife of William I who died in 1166. After his death Margaret took over the regency as her son William II was only twelve. She ruled Sicily from 1167 to 1171. She declared a general amnesty of the realm and also revoked her late husband's least popular act: The imposition of redemption money on rebellious cities. She enjoyed the support of the local population. By 1167, when Margaret sent money to the besieged Pope Alexander III in Rome, then opposing their common enemy Frederick Barbarossa, the people of Sicily were less happy with Margaret. They called her 'the Spanish woman'. In 1168 events came to a head when rebellious vassals who opposed the Navarese and French courtiers were ousted. Margaret began to lose her hold on to power in Sicily.

By this time the only member of the family she had left was her underage son. She fought hard and wrote letters to the pope and to Thomas Becket asking for support and reinstatement of members of her family. Little support came forth. Her son took over the reign in 1171. She lived until 1183. She donated as her legacy the Benedictine abbey at the site of Santa Maria in Maniace. She is buried in Monreale, Palermo.

She was pious and maintained close contacts with her family in France and Britain. She corresponded with Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Records show that she had given refuge and support to relatives of Becket after Henry II had banished them and confiscated their properties. Sicily was torn between support for Becket who was backed by the pope and Henry II. Margaret and William were close allies of the pope, but they were also seeking closer relationships with the English court. The future marriage between William II and Joan Plantagenet, Henry's daughter, had already been discussed. Margaret was able to maintain a middle ground in the conflict between Henry II and Becket and his family, friends and intermediaries. After Becket's murder in 1170, Sicily became one of the first places to introduce the cult of Saint Thomas of Canterbury.

### **Joan Plantagenet, Queen of Sicily (1165 –1199)**

Joan was born at Chateau d'Angers in Anjou and spent her youth at her mother's courts at Winchester and Poitiers, the seventh child of Henry II. In 1176 William II sent ambassadors to ask for her hand in marriage. She travelled on a hazardous journey and arrived on 13th February 1177 to marry William II. She became queen of Sicily. Joan and William had no surviving heir. When William II died, his cousin Tancred seized power and all the land that belonged to the queen. He imprisoned Joan. It was only when Joan's brother, Richard the Lion-

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heart, arrived in Italy in 1190 and threatened Tancred who conceded and returned Joan's properties to her and freed her.


The marriage between William II and Joan took place in 1177. Joan continued the devotion to the cult of Beckett. At least two churches were founded in Sicily and dedicated to Beckett, one in Catania and the other one in Marsala. A reliquary of Beckett, given to Joan herself was preserved in Marsala. Most impressive is the first effigy of Beckett, which was produced on the orders of Margaret and Joan. It is a tall statue standing in a prominent position in the central apse of Monreale. Joan supported Constance de Hauteville, daughter of Roger II and Beatrice of Rethel, as the next regent of Sicily. She was promised to marry Henry VI who was the son of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.

### **Constance de Hauteville (1154 – 1198)**

Constance was the incumbent queen of Sicily as well as Holy Roman empress by her marriage to Henry VI. Her life was tumultuous. Tancred, Constance's nephew, was still holding on to power preventing Constance from taking on her heritage. He confiscated her vast estates. Henry's father was Frederick Barbarossa. The couple had to stay in Germany while he was still alive. Upon his death in 1190 Constance and Henry were crowned empress and emperor. However, they were still battling to take ownership of Sicily from Tancred, Henry having to be away on battles. Tancred held Constance captive in Castel dell'Oro near Naples after Joan of England, widow of William, had forcefully expressed he should let Constance take her rightful place as queen of Sicily. She was finally released in 1192. Her health was frail. She was not able to join Henry for the coronation, because she was pregnant and stayed on in Iesi on the mainland. Constance was forty by now and had been married for nine years, most of them spent fleeing or being held prisoner. She worried that the people would question whether the child was hers. She decided to give birth in a pavilion tent in the market square of the town and invited local women to witness her giving birth. A few days after the birth she returned to publicly breastfeed the baby.

However, her life remained short. She died in the year 1198, having put her son Fredrick under the guardianship of Pope Innocent III. Henry died in 1197. An illustrious life lay ahead of Frederick who was crowned King of the Romans in 1212 and Holy Roman Emperor in 1220. He initiated one of the earliest law treaties in history, the Assizes of Capua. He remained in charge of Sicily for over fifty years.

*Greta Sykes*

<b>The Annual Conference of the ORAL HISTORY SOCIETY</b>	in association with <b>LLAFUR</b> <small>Local People's History Society</small> and <b>Britain at Work</b>	supported and hosted by  <b>Prifysgol Abertawe Swansea University</b>	<b>KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:</b> <b>Arthur McIvor</b> , Professor of Social History and Director of the Scottish Oral History Centre at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland <b>Tom Hansell</b> , documentary film maker and installation artist, Appalachian State University <b>Beth Thomas</b> , former Keeper of History & Archaeology at Amgueddfa Cymru and content lead for the redevelopment of St Fagans National Museum of History
5-6 July 2019 University of Swansea, Singleton Campus			
<b>Oral History@Work: RECORDING CHANGE IN WORKING LIVES</b>			
<b>CALL FOR PAPERS</b>			
The deadline for submission of proposals is 14 December 2018. More details from the Oral History@Work conference Administrator, Polly Owen, at <a href="mailto:polly.owen@ohs.org.uk">polly.owen@ohs.org.uk</a> .			

# The Windrush Scandal and the History of Slavery

The long standing and steady deportation of people of dark skin has been going on for a long time seemingly with impunity. The systemic targeting of 'low hanging fruit' of people from the Caribbean in such a brutal fashion eventually led to opposition from decent people in the media and elsewhere.

That people who came to this country at the invitation of a Labour Government to help rebuild this country after the Second World War should be treated with such callous disdain was eventually too much for ordinary human beings to simply stand by and see it happen and remain silent.

Amber Rudd, the then Home Secretary, could not produce figures or straight answers to many of the questions put to her and her lying to Parliament eventually led to her downfall.

There are issues for all of us in the way the deportations were handled by private contractors. In seeking to distance themselves from this nasty piece of work the Government farmed it out to the cheapest and nastiest bidders so they could sleep well at night as the dirty work was done. There must be an end to such privatisation.

It is hard to imagine that in this century politicians could make the kind of decisions so bereft of feelings and then execute them.

How could they? Is it because that for 300 years they have taken Africans and enslaved them in the Americas for their economic gain?

The treatment of the Windrush generation is not far removed from the treatment of the enslaved Africans. They were both informed by the same ideology of racism. People of colour were simply not seen as fully human.

Many parallels can be drawn.

1. The slave owners received compensation for the loss of their chattel-slaves. The enslaved received not a penny for the many years of their loss of freedom and brutal exploitation of their labour. The Windrush Generation, after many years of their labour to rebuild 'The Mother Country' - as many

regarded Britain- were suddenly not needed anymore and faced a 'hostile environment.'

2. The Government took away housing benefit from many of the Windrush Generation- some found themselves living on the streets. After emancipation in 1838 many of the freed slaves were made homeless and had no help from the state.

3. Some homeless immigrants have been swept up and deported. Some Freed slaves were locked up as 'vagrants' and made to work for the state.

4. I will end with the fact that chattel slaves had no right to family life and children, lovers, sisters and brothers mattered not- they were sold to the highest bidder whenever the slave owner pleased-often to someone far away -usually another island. The cruel immigration laws and deportations have separated families and loved ones-with some Windrush Generation kept from their families for decades.

This can only happen because of the history of slavery. A history Cameron, Blair and Theresa May would all have us forget. 'In the past , it was legal', they say, 'time to move on.' But have they really forgotten slavery, when they can act with such callous savagery to a people of darker skin? If an apology for slavery is not forthcoming, it shows that those in power have not changed in their attitude to Africans. They count for nothing, even though they have done no wrong, and their appalling treatment will continue.

May refused a call of the 14 CARICOM leaders at the recent Heads of Commonwealth Conference, until the scandal of Windrush made the headlines. She was partly refusing to meet the leaders because of the letter from them asking for a serious discussion about reparations for slavery.

There is much work to be done, but we fight on. No Justice! No Peace!

*Luke Daniels*  
*President, Caribbean Labour Solidarity*

## ***Yes to Europe The 1975 Referendum Campaign and Seventies Britain***

By Robert Saunders, Cambridge University Press, 2018

The British public is suffering from Brexit fatigue. ‘I wish they would get it over with and we can then get on with our lives’, or words to that effect are often voiced by members of the public. There is, however, another year of tortuous negotiations ahead and even if these are successful (and this is by no means certain) they will be followed by a transitional period of up to two years. Indeed some loose ends will not be tied up for several years. This prompts the question: is there any demand for another book on Brexit? Strictly speaking Robert Saunders book is not about Brexit as such, but about the previous referendum on British membership held in 1975, and it is well worth reading. It is thoroughly researched, well-written, as the author places the referendum against the social background of the 1970s.

### **Low Profile**

In 1975 the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, remained largely detached from the referendum campaign as did the old Gaitskellites, Denis Healey and Tony Crosland. The Tory leader, Edward Heath, who was hardly a vote winner, also kept a low profile during the campaign.

The Remainers were led by Roy Jenkins, David Steel and Jeremy Thorpe; the Leavers by Tony Benn, Michael Foot and Enoch Powell. Interestingly, Margaret Thatcher campaigned to remain in and Neil Kinnock to leave. Both changed their positions in following years.

The Remainers were well resourced and the Leavers’ campaign was run on a shoestring. All the national newspapers except the Morning Star favoured Remain. The BBC and ITV attempted to be neutral but there is little doubt that their coverage favoured Remain. The Remainers branded the Leavers ‘extremists’ and ‘eccentrics’ and

argued that there was a strong economic case for staying in the Common Market. Foot and Powell emphasised the loss of sovereignty and Benn was concerned that membership would be a check on the implementation of socialist policies. Highlights of the campaign were a televised studio debate between Jenkins and Benn, and a televised debate at the Oxford Union Society with Barbara Castle leading for the Leavers and Thorpe for the Remainers.

### **Remain**

The result was that British voters chose to remain in the European Economic Community (as it was then called) by 67.2% to 32.8%. After reading the book I was struck by the thought: Why did British electors vote Remain by such a substantial majority in 1975 but voted by a much smaller, but still decisive, majority to Leave in 2016? It is a question that needs to be addressed and no doubt some academics and others are working on answers. We can expect a spate of books on the subject. In the meantime it is interesting to look back on the 1975 referendum campaign.

*Archie Potts*



Book review

## The Histories of Raphael Samuel

by *Sophie Scott-Brown*, Australian National University Press

Available as a download from <https://bit.ly/2K7qllu>

This is the first time that I have reviewed a biography of someone I have known. Scott-Brown is an Australian academic who is now based at East Anglia University, whom I suspect must be too young to have known Samuel. This perhaps makes the study more independent and less hagiographical as Samuel has become something of a cult figure among radical and socialist historians.

Samuel is best known as the founder of the History Workshop movement, but it is his political trajectory as well as his historical methodology and writing that make him an interesting subject for a biography. Most historians are certainly not worthy of a biography. Samuel grew up in a communist family and was politically active at a younger age than most of us – attending meetings of the Communist Party History group while still a schoolboy of 16. A student at Oxford from the age of 17 in 1952, he was secretary of the University's Communist Party and wrote for the Oxford Left journal. On graduating in 1956, he moved to London to start a PhD at the LSE on unskilled workers only to abandon it in favour of political activity. Active in the protests against the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, he left the Communist Party to become involved in what was to be known as the 'new left', helping to

establish the Universities and Left Review and running the Partisan Café in Soho.

Scott-Brown has produced an excellent study. She has interviewed many of Samuel's colleagues and provides excellent contextualisation for his political and historical work. She has clearly read everything Samuel wrote and provides a solid and readable analysis both of Samuel's work and his historical methodology. The trajectory of History Workshop is traced with a good analysis of the debates within the movement, Samuel's role within it and his relationships and differences with some of his fellow historians. She also examines the controversies around Samuel's later work on heritage and patriotism and also summarises Samuel's impact and legacy. The study is well informed – sympathetic without being uncritical. The book engages with the debates over socialist history and theory without adopting the over-theorised academic style of much of New Left writing epitomised in the jargon ridden elitism of the contemporary New Left Review, which has distanced so much leftist historical writing from the wider socialist and activist readership. The book is also a reaffirmation of why history can be relevant and that the history of ordinary lives is as important as the history of the rich and powerful.

*Duncan Bowie*



*Raphael Samuel*

# INTRODUCING THE SCOTTISH LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY

## Beginnings

In 1958, a young Edinburgh history student circulated a proposal for a journal devoted to labour history, giving impetus to the establishment of the Society for the Study of Labour History (SSLH) and its Bulletin (now Labour History Review) the following year. Ian MacDougall's next initiative was a meeting in 1961 which formed an SSLH Scottish Committee and elected him as Secretary. By 1966, an amicable autonomy established the Scottish Labour History Society (SLHS), preceding the rest of Scotland in devolution by over thirty years.

## Journal

Scottish Labour History Journal was first published in 1969 comprising two dozen cyclo-styled pages. Now in its fifty-second edition, the Journal is a printed and peer-reviewed annual volume of almost two hundred pages, with Gregor Gall and Jim Phillips jointly continuing its line of distinguished editors. Thanks to grant funding from the Amiel & Melburn Trust, the entire archive of the Journal is available on the SLHS website (see below). Publishing rights income, with world-wide subscriptions, attest to the Journal's standing as an authoritative research source with some two hundred historical studies.

## Conferences

Whilst we envy Our Friends in the North-East who luxuriate in the Newcastle Lit. & Phil. (Willie Thompson, Socialist History Society Newsletter, Winter, 2017), we find hospitality and support for our public activities from long-standing links with academic, local authority and trade union organisations, notably our regular themed conferences. Among over thirty such, the most recent have been: War, Women, Work, Resistance (2014); Easter Rising: Scottish Connections (2016); and Scotland and the Russian Revolution: Impact and Legacy (2017).

## Other Activities

Our Research Seminars feature ongoing investigation and new publications: with committee members in most Scottish universities we aim to expand such events. Since 2014,

we have run a programme of labour heritage walks during Glasgow Doors Open Week (September), presenting an alternative history of World War I – Red Clydeside, the Easter Rising, rent strikes, war resistance and all. 'Representing Revolution', a film festival organised in Dumfries supported by the local film theatre, trade unions and the Morning Star was highly successful. SLHS also sponsored the crowd-funded and recently premiered 'Nae Pasaran', Felipe Bustos Sierra's film of the blacking of Chilean Hawker Hunter engine parts by Rolls Royce workers in East Kilbride after the 1973 coup – a critical triumph which no socialist should miss.

## New Publications

This year, we have initiated our own series of publications, with 'Cowie Miners, Polmaise Colliery and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike', reprinting two pamphlets by the late Steve McGrail with an introduction by mining community historian Jim Phillips and an afterword by victimised miner Jim O'Hare. The book has received welcome and fitting promotion on the SHS website, as we at SLHS take SHS Occasional Publications as a model. We hope to launch next a biographical essay on Alexander 'Sanny' Sloan, miners' agent and Labour MP for South Ayrshire (1939-46), introduced by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn MP.

## Membership

SLHS individual subscriptions cost £15 per annum, unwaged £10; organisational subscriptions are £40 per annum (print & online), £25 (print only). Our annual Journal is free to subscribers (cover price £10), and discretionary rates are given for events. New members can subscribe by sending the appropriate fee (payable to 'Scottish Labour History Society') plus contact details to: Stewart MacLennan, SLHS, 0/1, 64 Terregles Avenue, Glasgow, G41 4LX – [stewart\\_maclellan@btinternet.com](mailto:stewart_maclellan@btinternet.com). Website: [scottishlabourhistory.blogspot.com](http://scottishlabourhistory.blogspot.com). 'Cowie Miners, Polmaise Colliery and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike' is available to SHS members at the special price of £6 (p&p free).

*Stewart MacLennan,  
Chair of the Scottish Labour History Society*

## Prostitution, Pimping and Trafficking

a series of six talks at Conway Hall, curated by Deborah Lavin

Sept 5th - *Forced Prostitution, unpacking the links between globalisation, neoliberalism and the illicit sex trade.* Speaker Dr Stacy Banwell

Sept 12th - *Syphilis and Fallen Women.* Speaker Dr Kevin Brown

Sept 19th - *Josephine Butler and the Ladies Campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts.* Speaker Dr Jane Jordan

Sept 26th - *White Slaves to Hard Girls, Increasing Criminalisation and its Consequences.* Speaker Dr Julie Laite

Oct 3rd - *Yellow Ticket to Bourgeois Evil, Prostitution in Russia 1900-1930.* Speaker Dr Siobhan Hearne

Oct 10th - *Contemporary Prostitution, Politics and Policy.* Speaker, Prof Roger Matthews

More details from <https://bit.ly/2K6iudW>

**Price reduction for SHS Members**



## Future Socialist History Society Public Meetings

2pm September 22nd 2018

***The Political Victims of the Nazis*** with Marilyn Moos

2pm November 17th 2018

***Reflections on the Legacy of 1968*** with Mike Makin-Waite and David Parker

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FREE TO ATTEND – ALL WELCOME

## The Labour Party in Historical Perspective

Launch of a Socialist History Society *Occasional Publication*

Housmans Bookshop, King's Cross

On Tuesday 7th August, 6.30pm

For further details see the Housmans Bookshop website <https://bit.ly/2GxnVnD>

They normally charge an entry fee reclaimable on a purchase

