

Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-23. Ed. by Hans A. Schmitt. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville 1988. ix, 257 pp. \$ 29.95.

As the most complex event of the 20th century, the First World War continues to fascinate historians. They have produced more articles, monographs and general histories about the Great War and its aftermath than for any other comparable period in Western history. Almost all historians have, of course, concentrated on explaining the effects of the war on the belligerents, both victors and vanquished. Only a handful have attempted to explain the effects of the war on the neutral nations of Europe.

Thus, this monograph, edited by Hans Schmitt, is a welcome addition to the historiography of the Great War and its aftermath. In separate chapters, each contributor assesses the effect of the war on a neutral nation and attempts to answer the question posed by the editor in the Preface. "How did the echoes of battle disturb the peace, [the neutrals] insisted on preserving within their boundaries?" (p. viii).

The common answer offered by each contributor is that the war and its attendant revolutions jolted every neutral nation. Some were shaken more severely than others but, as Stephen Macdonald points out in his excellent summary essay, the powerful reverberations of the war are particularly evident when even those guardians of order, the Swiss bank clerks, go out on strike. Yet, in the final analysis, each contributor also concludes that nowhere among the neutral nations did the war produce a true revolutionary situation, not even in Spain. Each author examines and rejects the hypothesis that there was a missed revolutionary opportunity in the last years of the war.

Throughout the volume it is evident that whatever the level of the rhetoric, nowhere among the neutral nations was there a revolutionary leader who was prepared to risk everything in order to overthrow the existing social structure. Not even the leaders of the Norwegian Labour Party, who chose to accept Lenin's Twenty-One Conditions, were prepared to challenge by force the existing system. As Sten Nilson points out in his rather plodding essay, even revolutionary leaders in Norway shied away from communist militancy and the call to civil war. The same attitude prevailed everywhere. And, as Carol Gold explains in her finely crafted chapter on Denmark, revolutions can occur spontaneously but they never succeed without leadership.

Spain, which as we know was already close to revolution in the years of the Great War, provides the clearest example of a missed revolutionary opportunity. But, as Gerald Meaker demonstrates, even Largo Caballero, after the collapse of the general strike in August 1917, refused to promote any more revolutionary "adventures". Perhaps because the situation in Spain produced the richest potential for revolution, Professor Meaker has written the most satisfying chapter in the volume. In his analysis, Professor Meaker establishes that the events in Spain in 1917 fell short of a true revolutionary situation. However, he also establishes that those events did produce a crisis of authority – a crisis, as he says, "of the state and not of the people" (p. 43).

Throughout the volume, the contributors also tend to support the thesis of Arno J. Mayer in which he asserts that what happened during the Great War and its aftermath was the result of a reactionary crisis brought on by a "hegemonic bloc" which fought to retain its power and control. By 1923, everywhere in Europe, except Russia, the antirevolutionaries had emerged victorious and, as both Mayer and Charles Maier have demonstrated, had consolidated their hold on the levers of power. In the neutral states, this consolidation of power occurred less dramatically, but no less effectively, than in the belligerent states. As Hans Schmitt points out in his essay on the "Violated Neutrals", the neutral nations all followed a "pattern of spasmodic near-revolution, coupled with constitutional reform" (p. 228). The constitutional reform, often achieved with the collaboration of socialists, served to dampen the enthusiasm for revolution and to isolate further the Soviet Union. As Stephen Macdonald explains, nearly everywhere among the neutrals the reformists who dominated the Socialist parties never believed in the collapse of capitalist society. They were moderates who rejected the Bolshevik model of revolution and accepted the model of parliamentary reform offered by the bourgeoisie.

In most of the neutral nations, two factors influenced people to accept the reformist message. First, these nations had no tradition of violent uprisings against the state and, therefore, as Carol Gold points out, the people simply did not think in those terms. Second, most of the neutral nations possessed political systems that appeared to be evolving democratically and, consequently, most people expected reform to come through the existing system not through violence. Of course, none of the neutral nations were defeated in 1918 and, as we know, the post-war revolutions shook the vanquished, not the victors.

As is often the case, the essays in this volume are uneven in quality of analysis and presentation. Gerald Meaker and Stephen Macdonald offer the two most thoughtful and well-written pieces in the book. Professor Meaker's essay on Spain, based on the experience of a lifetime of study, presents an erudite examination of the war and its effect on that tortured nation. Professor Macdonald has written a lucid and judicious summary of the main arguments set forth by the contributors. At the other end of the scale, Professor Nilson's article on Norway is far too lengthy and detailed. He fails to place the Norwegian situation into a larger context and it is, therefore, not clear what he intended to prove with his essay. Professor Steven Koblik's chapter on Sweden is more focused than Professor Nilson's, but it too suffers from a lack of clarity. Too often sentences leave the reader perplexed. What, for example, does "The sharp distinction between liberal and socialist normal in Europe was avoided in Sweden – at least until the 1920s" mean? Perhaps some of the awkward language and construction results from the difficulties of translation, but the editor should ensure as smooth a translation as possible.

In addition to the authors already mentioned, Professor Heinz K. Meier presents an informative and valuable essay on the Swiss national strike of November, 1918. His chapter is particularly useful in its description of the fear of "outside agitators" that swept through the Swiss population in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. Professor Erik Hansen writes a cogent analysis of the situation in the Netherlands between 1917 and 1921. His main point is that the war and its aftermath had less effect on the Netherlands than it did elsewhere in Europe.

The major problem with this volume, however, is that it lacks the firm hand of the editor. Professor Schmitt should have established a uniform set of guidelines for the contributors. He should have insisted that the contributors analyze the issues from a national and international perspective so that the common themes would emerge more clearly. Alternatively, the editor could have written a more comprehensive introduction in which he established the common themes and demonstrated how the various contributors dealt with them. Either choice would have improved the book. The volume would also be more useful if it contained a thorough bibliography. The notes at the end of each chapter are helpful, but they do not substitute for a bibliography.

Even with its deficiencies, this volume makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of developments in the frequently forgotten European neutral nations. The essays contained in it should provoke further research into the questions raised in each of them. For, as long as there are historians, they will be gripped and challenged by all attempts to explain the First World War and its effects.

Charles L. Bertrand

BUSCHAK, WILLY. *Das Londoner Büro. Europäische Linksozialisten in der Zwischenkriegszeit.* Stichting Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam 1985. xiv, 359 pp. Ill. D.fl. 68.00.

The book under review is an edited version of a dissertation written in 1982 in Bochum and fills an important gap in the written history of the European socialist movement. In his introduction Buschak notes that at the beginning of the thirties many dissenting currents had split from the social-democratic and communist parties. His book describes these "intermediate" groups and especially their co-operation in the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity, better known as the London Bureau. This political current did not survive the Second World War, which perhaps partially explains the scant attention paid to it as a specific *international* current.

There are a number of reasons why a study of this current is not unimportant. In the first place because of its original political opinions, which were very critical of the main currents of the socialist movement. These parties and groups were confronted with developments such as the growth of Stalinism, Hitler's grasp for power, the threat of a new World War and the politics of the Popular Front, and had to formulate a position on each of them. Many outstanding individuals of the socialist movement were involved in the London Bureau, including Fenner Brockway, Henk Sneevliet, Andreu Nin, Paul Frölich, Willy Brandt and Marceau Pivert. Beside the considerations mentioned by the author, one can add that research of this current can increase our knowledge of continuity and fragmentation in the workers' movement.

When the split between the Second and Third International became definite, the radicalized British Independent Labour Party, affiliated as a party to the Labour Party, stayed in the LSI (Labour and Socialist International) through the nineteen