

Thus, despite the marginality of the CPUSA, the lives of William Z. Foster and Benjamin Davis are definitely a key towards a more mature understanding of the United States. There is, however, a final point to be made. Perhaps these studies will provide those who today persist in denying that non-fascist market-oriented authoritarianism is the final stage of human history with not only moments of nostalgia but also elements of reflection on what a new stage of anticapitalism might contain.

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KERGOAT, JACQUES. Marceau Pivert, "socialiste de gauche". [La Part des Hommes.] Les Editions de l'Atelier/Les Editions Ouvrières, Paris 1994. 348 pp. Ill. F.fr. 130.00.

In this biography of Marceau Pivert (1895–1958), a left-wing social democrat, French historian Jacques Kergoat shows that Pivert remained a *social democrat* throughout his life. Until the 1960s, social democrats were characterized by their feeling that they *knew* which course of development was best for society. In 1951, Pivert still applied a formula for this context that was also common among other social democrats: "Nous, social démocrates, savons fort bien que [. . .]" [As social democrats, we know full well that [. . .]] By 1958, however, the leadership of the PS-SFIO in France did *not* seem to know any more, and Pivert, who was exhausted by then, no longer knew how to deal with this situation.

Kergoat has wisely invested substantial time and energy in this first biography of Pivert, a prominent figure in the history of the SFIO. The author conveys a sharp image of Pivert as a person. Despite Kergoat's sympathetic feelings toward Pivert, he offers substantiated criticism of situations where he believes this social democrat's actions revealed little consistency or were actually inconsistent. He also uses Pivert's life story to describe the history of the French social-democratic movement from its rupture in 1920 until 1958. At that point, Guy Mollet, the SFIO foreman who was thoroughly disconcerted by the Algerian war of independence, saw no other option than to request assistance from General de Gaulle. Guy Mollet and his fellow party member Vincent Auriol, the former president of the Fourth Republic, no longer *knew* what to do about the Algerian battle for freedom. Pivert was approaching the end of his life by then, and the words "I can't go on" appear on a note from 1956 that Kergoat has retrieved.

Pivert, who was born in a village east of Paris in October 1895, was of proletarian origin. Before they opened a small shop there, his father had been a day labourer, and his mother had worked as a maid. In 1904, the family moved to Nemours, where they established a rural guest house. Although Pivert excelled at school, an advanced version of primary school was considered the educational pinnacle for youths from his social class. In 1912, young Pivert was among 250 candidates competing for 40 places at teacher training school. By the summer of 1914, he was teaching a class of 55 children. He was all of eighteen years old. Pivert had not yet become a social democrat when the Great War began. He was drafted into the military and was enthusiastic about his army training, proving to be a talented marksman. Kergoat has succeeded in

using many letters from this period to convey Pivert's dismay upon discovering that he, unlike youths from higher social circles, was not eligible for the reserve officers' training course. In the trenches, Pivert contracted illnesses almost immediately and was classified as a semi-invalid in 1916. He resumed teaching but, the next year, Pivert returned to the army in spite of his ailments. His politics were right wing for France at that time and his views on women, for example, were staunchly conservative.

Although Pivert turned a deaf ear to the international rise of socialism after 1917, a friend introduced him to the SFIO. Kergoat has not succeeded in using his sources (which include *Mémoires d'un survivant*, written by Pivert for his granddaughter in 1957) to explain the exact reasons for Pivert's sudden conversion to socialism. The author also fails to provide any background to Pivert's overt propaganda for anti-militarist pacifism. A thorough explanation of the capricious nature of Pivert's career is therefore noticeably absent in this swiftly written biography. While Kergoat provides an ample selection of material, one wonders how the biographer explains Pivert's shift to the radical left-wing politics of the SFIO, his departure, his return after World War II, and his renewed dissatisfaction with the state of social democracy. Kergoat does elucidate stages in Pivert's life, including a very convincing explanation of his passion for freemasonry and of his ambition to teach secondary school science courses. Nevertheless, an overall interpretative framework is lacking.

After obtaining certification for teaching secondary school as well as a position at a school for advanced primary education in Sens, Pivert married Germaine Boulleau, another teacher. Horrified at the undemocratic aspects of Bolshevism, he joined the *Parti socialiste français*, a rightist splinter group of the right wing of the SFIO. In this light, Pivert viewed Trotsky as the most prominent and therefore the most dangerous Bolshevik in early 1923. When Pivert was threatened with dismissal from his teaching position because of his political involvement that year, his social circumstances forced him to accept a job as a regular instructor in the fifteenth arrondissement in Paris (the Piverts had a daughter by then). The next year, Pivert joined the SFIO, which the communists had abandoned following the rupture in December 1920. His leading role in the teachers' union strengthened his ties with the SFIO. On page 54, Kergoat gives a clear overview of the six distinct movements in the French social-democratic party, from the revolutionary socialists at the extreme left, through the left, the centre left, the centre right (under Blum, the party's leader), and the right, to Déat at the extreme right. Pivert chose the leftist movement headed by Bracke and Zyromski. Kergoat notes with surprise that Pivert did not join the right-wing movement and offers some explanations for this decision, albeit not thoroughly convincing ones. Pivert seemed to be well suited to the leftist federation of the Seine. In early 1933, his faction, the 15th (named after the fifteenth arrondissement), turned against the party's parliamentary faction, which broke with CAP politics and pursued a government of bourgeois radicals and social democrats.

Throughout these developments, Pivert remained an excellent and innovative teacher who never forgot to correct his students' assignments, despite the many party and union meetings. Nevertheless, he retained his passionate desire to realize socialism. Even though he objected to Trotskyism, which he considered undemocratic, he pursued united action against fascism after the fascist uprising

of 6 February 1934 and did not dismiss the idea of co-operation with the Trotskyites. In July 1934, however, the SFIO went even further by collaborating with the PCF, which sympathized with the Comintern. Pivert's anti-communist views prevented his inclusion in the socialist delegation that negotiated with the communists. In this period, he was involved in training and arming socialist workers and showed no hesitation in advocating a violent response to fascist violence at demonstrations. His worst fear was "another 1914". He wondered whether social-democratic workers would become involved in another war. He joined the extreme left-wing revolutionary faction, visited Trotsky in Domène (near Grenoble), accepted his esteem, but remained loyal to the SFIO when Trotsky ordered his supporters to abandon the social-democratic party. As a representative of *Gauche révolutionnaire*, he wrote "Tout est possible" in May 1936 for the party newspaper *Le Populaire*, in which he essentially advocated a *Front populaire de combat* instead of a *Front populaire* with the bourgeoisie and recommended *conquering* power instead of sharing power with the bourgeoisie. In 1937, when Léon Blum was forced to suggest a temporary interruption in the pursuit of social reforms, Pivert resigned in protest from his salaried civil service position with the government as an adviser on the press, radio, and cinema, which he had obtained through Blum's popular front government. Kergoat demonstrates that Pivert nevertheless remained sympathetic to Blum's quiet courage and desire for peace, even though Pivert rejected any social peace or political truce with the capitalist powers.

The Popular Front proved untenable, and Daladier's bourgeois cabinet seized control. The SFIO submitted to this change and decided to wait for better days. After hesitating briefly, Pivert left his party and formed the revolutionary PSOP (*Parti socialiste ouvrier et paysan*). Kergoat offers an excellent portrait of the political environment where Pivert's acts led him: the PSOP was hushed up by the SFIO and labelled as Trotskyist by the PCF, which shunned this movement because it was supposedly too dogmatic. The author does not conceal the resemblance between Pivert's conduct within the PSOP and the attitude of the SFIO leadership toward the *Gauche révolutionnaire*. Kergoat aptly refers to a *mimétisme frappant* [striking mimicry], but makes no attempt to explain this phenomenon. In this case, an interpretative framework is painfully absent.

On 23 August 1939, Pivert boarded a ship bound for the United States of America to represent revolutionary socialism abroad. In his absence, the PSOP fell victim to its internal dissent almost immediately and disappeared by the spring of 1940. In July of that year, Pivert arrived in Mexico. He did not become a Trotskyite. While he continued to disapprove of the communists in France, the détatists and the pétainists, he respected the gaullists. Pivert ceased his international activities in 1942. He resumed teaching and eventually obtained a position at a French institute for Latin America established through De Gaulle. Pivert earned great respect from those around him for his work of social importance. Unfortunately, Pivert suffered a heart attack in late 1944 and another in September 1945. He decided to return to France and reached Paris on 1 April 1946. He no longer saw any future for the PSOP. Back in the SFIO, he joined the party's leadership (which was then known as the CD) a year later. Pivert clung to dialectic materialism and the international class struggle. He pursued co-operation between democratic and socialist states in Europe. In the COMISCO, the provisional international, and the resulting Socialist

International, however, he encountered significant differences between socialist parties. For example, Kergoat asserts that the outlook of social democrats from the Dutch PvdA differed greatly from Pivert's views in the belief that socialism "could prevail only if it derived inspiration from the Christian and humanist tradition established by the European *spirit*" (italics added, HW).

In 1949, Pivert began to oppose the establishment of the CED because he wanted a *socialist* Europe that was based on class solidarity. In May 1953, the SFIO congress approved the CED. The MDSEUE (*Mouvement démocratique et socialiste pour les Etats Unis de l'Europe*) congress also supported the CED. As a result, Pivert wanted nothing more to do with this movement for which he had helped lay the groundwork in 1947. Following the French parliament's rejection of the CED, he abhorred a new plan to accept Germany as a member of NATO: "[. . .] this is the *Wehrmacht*." In 1954, Pivert was not re-elected as the SFIO's committee director, although he was in 1955. Kergoat has some difficulty fitting all Pivert's ups and downs into this biography. Readers find out about Pivert's re-election in 1955 only when Kergoat writes that Pivert *again* failed in his bid for re-election to the party leadership in 1956.

Even though Pivert was forced to resign his offices in the SFIO in 1956, he retained his membership and continued to pursue French recognition of Algerian independence. Social-democratic Prime Minister and party leader Guy Mollet refused to have any part of this idea. At the party council in December 1956, Mollet insulted his fellow party member by admonishing him for discussing warfare, as he "had spent the war [. . .] in Mexico". Pivert cancelled his SFIO membership, only to return to the party a few days later following pressure from his comrades. In February 1958, the national cabinet led by radical Félix Gaillard was responsible for the bombing of a Tunisian village in which 75 people were killed. Pivert exploded: "Marquet and Déat were mediocre predecessors compared to these assassins." He suffered more heart attacks during this period and lost all faith in the PS-SFIO, considering it "dead". Marceau Pivert died in June 1958. Shortly before his death, André Breton had called him "the last socialist".

In his study, a success in spite of its shortcomings, Kergoat concludes that Pivert did not wish to abandon social democracy in 1938 or in 1958. Rather, he yearned for an answer to the burning question of whether it was "impossible to be a leftist socialist *within* the social-democratic party".

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