

This volume's final contribution, shared with the Hett biography, is to trace the symbolic use of Litten after 1945. In the German Democratic Republic, Irmgard Litten's 1940 English-language volume, *A Mother Fights Hitler*, appeared in German in 1947, with cuts to sections dealing with Litten's politics. In 1951, the street in front of the Amtsgericht Berlin-Mitte in the Nikolaiviertel was renamed Littenstraße; it survived post-reunification efforts to return its name to what it had been before the GDR. In 2001, the Bundesrechtsanwaltskammer renamed its headquarters at Littenstraße 9 the Hans-Litten-Haus, combining what Hett calls the "political Litten" with the "lawyers' Litten." This apotheosis of Litten completed the work of Irmgard Litten and left-leaning lawyers of the 1970s Federal Republic to celebrate the leftist lawyers of the Weimar Republic and anti-Nazi resistance. The year 2008 saw the appearance of Hett's biography and a predecessor volume by the authors of this updated biography, on the seventieth anniversary of Litten's death (*Denkmalsfigur. Biographische Annäherung an Hans Litten, 1903-1938*). And in 2020, Litten achieved fictionalized immortality as a recurring character in the television series *Babylon Berlin*, which, together with the discovery of new archival material, occasioned the publication of this revised biography.

This perceptive, sensitive, comprehensive study of the formative influences, personal qualities, and courage of Hans Litten is a broadly useful illustration of the ferment, diversity, and promise of early-twentieth-century Germany, and the tragedy of its self-destruction.

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## **New Lefts: The Making of a Radical Tradition**

**By Terence Renaud. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.  
Pp. 362. Paperback \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0691220819.**

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If you peruse the shelves of one of the few remaining left-wing bookstores in a German city, you will inevitably find a section devoted to the West German New Left of the 1960s and 1970s. If the shelf is divided thematically, you will find, on one end, books about anti-imperialist struggle and "Third World" themes, and, on the other, books about Weimar-era communism and council socialism. These two dimensions are both necessary to understand the history of the German New Left. One is synchronic: looking at the often geographically distant events happening parallel to those in Germany which influenced young people in diverse ways. The other is diachronic: looking at the predecessors of the New Left within German politics and society itself.

Since the early 2000s, not coincidentally in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the global war on terror, there has been an overwhelming interest by historians in one side of the shelf only: that dedicated to internationalism alongside questions of race, empire, and colonialism. The overarching goal of Terence Renaud's book is to point back to the other end of the shelf, to insist that no history of the New Left is complete without tracking a local multigenerational narrative of political and experiential transfer. He does this through a focus on a group formed around 1930 called New Beginning (Neu Beginnen). The organization, though small, was prolific in its intellectual production and has the advantage for the author of some thrilling features of underground activity, including secret cells and covert operations. The fact that some of Renaud's primary sources came from a suitcase dragged

out of a lake and written in code gives a sense of the drama that he is able to work with in the text. Although *New Beginning* was not the most well-known of the leftist groups from this period, it is arguably their very marginality that makes them interesting for Renaud, as one example of many micro-experiments in political form.

Renaud's overall topic is what New Leftists themselves called the *Organisationsfrage* (organization question). The question was as simple as it was vexed: if one rejects the party form and seeks another format for pre-figurative political organization, what emerges? The members of *New Beginning*, many of whom went into exile, worked at times with the Western Allies, at other times with communists, and later the most prominent among them, including Richard Löwenthal and Fritz Epler became key members of the postwar reformist SPD. Some of Renaud's story recalls earlier books by Catherine Epstein and Jeffrey Herf, which reconstructed the pre-history of the East German political elite. But, as Renaud points out himself in his conclusion, the dominant mode of his book is irony. Outcomes are often different from what one might expect, and lineages rarely run smoothly. His narrative tracks a sequence of generational upheavals whereby the work of forebears is superseded by new experiments in what he calls "neoleftism."

The book is written with great detail and a clear sense of the stakes of the discussion. What is one left with by the end, and how does this change our understanding of the West German left? Renaud's work is helpful in drawing attention to the centrality of a domestic German communist and socialist movement. In this sense, he follows a recent revival of interest in the importance of Wolfgang Abendroth, the foremost proponent of what has been called "left legalism," suggesting the possibility of a transition to socialism through a strictly literal reading of the German Basic Law. Renaud's focus on the organization question also helps to decenter the photogenic events of 1967 and 1968 and to remind us that there are many decades of engagement with the challenge of doing politics differently. By filling in the gap of the 1950s, his work also fulfills a similar function to that of historians of the U.S. left like John Munro and Penny von Eschen. One is not left with the feeling that the newer histories of internationalism can be discarded. Indeed, Renaud himself points out the importance of the Spanish Civil War as a "proxy for the global south" (103) at an earlier moment. But it is certainly praiseworthy to be reminded that the other end of the shelf exists, and that a pendulum in trends of history writing should and indeed must eventually swing back to attention to the local.

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## **Blood and Ruins: The Last Imperial War, 1931-1945**

**By Richard Overy. New York: Viking, 2021. Pp. xliii + 990. Cloth \$42.00. ISBN: 978-0670025169.**

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Scholarly surveys of World War I abound, yet there are far fewer up-to-date scholarly histories of World War II as a whole. For that reason alone, the publication of Richard Overy's massive history of that global conflict is very welcome. What is more, reflecting a lifelong engagement with that war by one of its most prominent Anglophone scholars, *Blood and Ruins* is a wonderfully ambitious monumental history of World War II that