

MONTELEONE, RENATO. *Filippo Turati*. Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, Torino 1987. xii, 583 pp. Ill. L. 48000.

Renato Monteleone's massive biography of Italian Socialist party founder Filippo Turati comes at a time of increasing interest in this much-maligned figure's career. Because of Turati's gradualism as a method for achieving socialism in Italy, he went out of vogue in the turbulent decade following his death in 1932. Given his championship of "legalitarian" and reformist tactics which ill-suited the antifascist struggle, and the Communist cultural hegemony in Italy following World War II, Italian leftists – first among whom the Socialists themselves – ignored or denigrated Turati's heritage.

From this point of view, therefore, Monteleone's book is most welcome as a contribution to the literature which might appeal to a general reading audience interested in the person behind the myth which Turati has become despite the cultural oblivion which his still-fierce ideological enemies hoped to consign him. In the same vein, the publisher is to be congratulated for producing a beautifully printed and illustrated work and for the obvious latitude which it gave the author in a time of rapidly escalating costs.

To some extent, the author has justly exploited this generosity by covering every aspect of Turati's life from the professional to the intimately personal. Since many of the sources for studying Turati are scattered, Monteleone makes a real contribution by conveniently listing many of them and by providing brief comments which might be useful to future researchers. A chapter minutely describing Turati's personal life at times appears necessarily speculative and, though entertaining, should be used with caution by professional historians. One chapter of almost a hundred pages discusses Turati's library – was it up to snuff (it wasn't), what works in it did Turati actually read, and what happened to it after his death? On the whole, Monteleone's discussion of the personal aspects of Turati's life is an attractive feature.

In other respects, however, one comes away with the feeling that the author could have made better use of the apparent "freedom" bestowed by his publisher. For example, in contrast to the chapter cited above on the library, the section on World War I, the postwar period, and fascism appears sketchy and unsatisfying. While not the highlight of Turati's influence, this period has a particular interest which merits a fresh interpretation. Monteleone gives copious details about Turati's relationship with Velia Matteotti, for example, but says very little about his participation in the dramatic political events of the era, such as the Aventine. In general, the later periods of Turati's life are the most unsatisfactory parts of the book.

In fact, while the work abounds with anecdotes and interesting information, it suffers from two defects. The first, ironically, is that the wealth of information about Turati's personality and quirks blocks an overall assessment and understanding of the man and his historical stature. Granted the importance of personal elements, piling them one on top of another does not automatically guarantee a sensible conclusion. In Turati's case, he was prone to throw off comments of all kinds in his voluminous correspondence, especially with Anna Kuliscioff. In the context of those letters, one has the feeling that Turati did not make many of the remarks in as serious a vein as Monteleone has taken them.

The second defect is one of method. Should an author impose his or her own political and social views on the past and on the life's work of the subject under consideration? Probably historians will agree that authors cannot put aside their own views, but to maintain some distance is desirable; as in other disciplines, a fine line usually divides the best history from the less good.

Monteleone does not like Turati's "reformism" and what it implied for the Socialist leader and his times. This attitude permeates the book's entire interpretation of Turati and all his actions, from the beginning to the end of his career. The reader does not come away with the feeling that this particular leader may have made his errors but also provided some correct or interesting interpretations, or perhaps performed laudable actions. In short, despite its self-assuredness, Monteleone's book fails to provide a balanced interpretation of Turati's life work – and that is its greatest failing.

The book may thus serve as a starting point to find out about Filippo Turati, but it would be a poor place to end.

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WALLER, P. J. (Ed.) *Politics and Social Change in Modern Britain. Essays presented to A. F. Thompson.* The Harvester Press, Brighton (Sussex); St. Martin's Press, New York 1987. xx, 236 pp. £ 30.00.

For forty years A. F. ("Pat") Thompson has been a History Tutor at Wadham College Oxford and also, as these essays testify, the supervisor of a large number of doctoral theses on modern British political and social history. With Hugh Clegg and Alan Fox, he was a contributor to the magisterial Oxford survey of British trade-union history from 1889 to 1911; but apart from that he was a "teaching don", as is stressed in the two short prefaces discussing his career written by C. S. L. Davies and L. G. Mitchell. As Dr Mitchell says, there is no "Thompson school", but perhaps a "Thompson style" – lucid, wide-ranging and sceptical of existing views and dogmas. This attitude is well exemplified in the essays that comprise the bulk of this volume.

Phil Waller himself contributes a study of the variety of dialects within Britain, and their relationship to social class. Although "vernacular vestiges" are on the way out, pursued by radio and television, it may be that a "Black British" patois is emerging in some areas, while Scots and Welsh accents have long been "acceptable" in a way that English regional accents are not. As befits the editor of the Gladstone Diaries, Colin Matthew examines helpfully the topic of "Rhetoric and Politics", explaining how speeches were delivered as much to the press as to the live audience in the later nineteenth century. It would have been interesting to have learnt from him how Lord Randolph Churchill shot to fame on the basis of a few speeches lampooning Gladstone in the early 1880's. P. R. Ghosh returns to the study of Disraeli and Social Reform, to conclude that the social legislation of 1875, though bi-partisan in origin, was propelled by "the self-interest of the party and the remarkable gifts of its leader". The extent to which Dr Ghosh modifies the views of Professor Paul Smith seems rather less than he suggests.