

of scholarship that this book also is. What it means is that the book would have benefited from a more balanced approach, more so because much of these data have been used by other scholars to convey more nuanced perspectives on craft guilds. To me, this suggests that the question of whether guilds were rent-seeking cannot be answered by a simple yes or no, and that we should perhaps use Ogilvie's impressive data collection to steer the debate on craft guilds in novel directions.

Ruben Schalk

Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University
Drift 6, 3512 BS Utrecht
E-mail: r.schalk@uu.nl
doi:10.1017/S002085902000668

KESSLER, MARIO. *Westemigranten. Deutsche Kommunisten zwischen USA-Exil und DDR* [Zeithistorische Studien, Bd. 60.]. Böhlau, Vienna 2019. 576 pp. € 54.99.

Based on broad archival research, online material, literature, and his own studies mainly in the biographical field, Mario Kessler presents the hitherto neglected and thus almost unknown history of the German communists who fled the Nazis to the United States, through the fate of those who, after the war, eventually decided to settle in Germany's Soviet Occupation Zone, which became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1949. The biographies of the forty women and men featured in this volume can be found in the Appendix. Most of them were of Jewish descent and intellectuals: writers; journalists; stage or film artists; some were medical or technical scientists. Not all of them had been a member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD); some turned to communist ideas in the course of emigration, some joined the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED – Socialist Unity Party of Germany), created in April 1946, later on.

The author takes a multi-level approach. Firstly, he examines the history of politics and policies concerning Germany after the war; secondly, he analyses the history of ideas, and, more specifically, of ideologies in as far as they concern the individual as well as the status of the communist parties: the KPD; the US Communist Party; and the SED. Finally, the author questions the history of the intellectual and cultural transfer of the German communist “West émigrés” to the communist part of Germany. Quotations from authentic sources, especially up-to-date ones such as letters, diaries, and reports, substantiate the historical narrative and the analytical conclusions. They reveal the interaction between the levels and the consistency or inconsistency of personal and political developments.

In his foreword, Kessler explains his method and his selection. The following eight thematic chapters, introduced by song lyrics from American popular culture, are largely chronologically organized and divided into multiple sections. In addition to the biographical section, the Appendix contains an index of sources and a bibliography, as well as a list of abbreviations – but not an index of persons. This is an incredible omission on the part of the renowned publishing house Böhlau.

The first two chapters are more or less introductions. In the first, the author outlines some general aspects of the complexity of “The USA and the Refugees”, beginning with the

interrelation between the socioeconomic achievements of the “Second New Deal” (from 1935 to 1938), the state of democracy, and the immigration rules in “Roosevelt’s America”. He subsequently looks at “American relief organizations and public opinion”, and lastly at “Friends and adversaries: Anti-fascists and America’s radical right”, with a special focus on xenophobia and anti-Semitism. The second chapter points to the tension “Between Integration and Marginalization” by focusing on the “Chances and problems of making a living”. Individual case examples in comparative perspective, for instance of the writer Bert Brecht and the composer Hanns Eisler, illustrate the *conditions humaines* with which the communist refugees were confronted. (A cartoon of Brecht and Eisler while setting Brecht’s “Solidarity Song” to music adorns the book’s cover.) The journalist and writer Stefan Heym, who entered the United States in 1935 and graduated at the University of Chicago in 1937 with a Master’s thesis on Heinrich Heine, the illustrious German émigré of the first half of the nineteenth century, is another example of the social and financial ups and downs of what might be called a whole collective. Heym, who like Brecht and Eisler never became a party member, is one of the outstanding figures in this study. Kessler shows how in word and action the editor of *Deutsches Volksecho*, a weekly newspaper published in New York from 1937 to 1939, “became an American adversary of Hitler” (p. 139). By precluding the book with his poem “Ich aber ging über die Grenze ...” [But I crossed the border ...], the author emphasizes his statement on Heym’s mental release from the national, the criminal homeland, yet this seems also to be an ode to this man and other émigrés who returned with a weapon to free their native country. Heym had believed in the validity of the Moscow trials, as his ideological comrades and many liberal intellectuals, whether American or émigré had done, though from different ideologies. A crucial event, particularly with regard to the cohesion among and social life of communist emigrants, was the “Hitler-Stalin Pact” of August 1939. With its contradictory policy, the Communist Party of the USA was no guide in the dilemma between the belief in the Soviet Union and the shock concerning its policy reversal in relation to the common fascist enemy. Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 was a wake-up call from near silence, the alliance between Great Britain and the Soviet Union, the US joining the alliance after Pearl Harbour, and at last the founding of the National Committee for a Free Germany (NKFD) in Moscow, 1943, gave increasing impetus to new political activities.

In my view, the main theme of this book is the question whether, and, if so, how far, communist West émigrés overcame ideological fetters. Under the heading of the third, and by far the longest chapter, titled “Policies and Contemporary History: Networks and Journalism of the German Communists”, the author provides particular information for at least a preliminary answer to these questions. Whereas Stefan Heym went to war, other communists operated in more or less non-party organizations. The key test for constructive cooperation with ideologically heterogeneous fellow emigrants was the participation in the Council for a Democratic Germany. The Council was fundamentally based on Western democratic values, and thus the counterpart to the NKFD. Kessler shows that within the Council as well as through *The German American* newspaper, the relationship of communists to the debates on Germany’s past, on the emergence of National Socialism, and, lastly, on a concentric concept of a new German order after the war, were also marked by a struggle for “spiritual hegemony within German exile” (p. 175).

What was the baggage that the communist émigrés remigrated with to the eastern part of Germany? They were hardly being asked to return. They did so of their own free will. Did they bring “American experiences”, positive or negative, with them? What can one regard as a heritage? Could they – or did they at least try – to continue the structure of the political and

supportive community that participation in the Council for a Democratic Germany and *The German American* had helped to create? What about their political, social, professional, and artistic status in those years? In the following chapters, the author illustrates these issues through individual cases. One of the most striking facts is that these communist remigrants became the subject of the surveillance and repressive measures of the GDR's state security apparatus, just as they had been subject to surveillance by the FBI in the USA (see Chapters Four and Six). The methods of those institutions were almost identical, but the motives for the suspicions and persecution were quite different.

In this meticulous, biographically based study, Mario Kessler offers a whole panorama of the history of the German communist "West émigrés" with regard to ideas and ideology, politics and policies, social life and mentality. In doing so, Kessler also offers us an insight into the psychological disposition of those who led the GDR.

Ursula Langkau-Alex

International Institute of Social History
PO Box 2169, 1000 CD Amsterdam, The Netherlands
E-mail: ula@iisg.nl
doi:10.1017/S002085902000067X

TRONTI, MARIO. *Workers and Capital*. Transl. [from Italian] by David Broder. Verso Books, London [etc.] 2019 (1971). xxxv, 364 pp. £70.00. (Paper: £19.99; E-book: £16.99).

There are few single books in the postwar Marxist tradition that can claim to not only have instigated a new "school" of Marxist thought, but also a current of political militancy still prominent among sections of the "radical Left" today. While one might fairly speak of Louis Althusser *et al.*'s *Reading Capital* as an example of the former, any concerted attempt to extract a form of political practice – let alone militancy – from such a tradition, I would contend, is a forlorn one. One might turn to Liberation Theology, Black Marxism, or Marxist Feminism as currents of thought and militancy that have combined theoretical innovation within a broad Marxist tradition and practice, but it would be difficult to find a single foundational text recognized as such by those seeking to establish their own politico-theoretical lineage. Perhaps the only text that could make the claim of having done both is Mario Tronti's *Workers and Capital*, a book collecting writings composed over a decade between 1962 and 1971. Typically, the core idea of *operaismo* (often mistakenly confused with "autonomism") is summarized in three sentences from Tronti's "Lenin in England": "We too saw capitalist development first and the workers second. This is a mistake. Now we have to turn the problem on its head, change orientation, and start again from first principles, which means focusing on the struggle of the working class." To put this differently, rather than focus on where capital is weakest, one must turn to where the working class is strongest. Rather, therefore, than a focus on the worker, on the categories of labour or labour-power, it is the working class – the true referent of the term labour-power – and the movements internal to that class that are foundational.

There are several ways these claims have been interpreted. The most prominent is probably that of Antonio (Toni) Negri. Negri emphasizes the active, creative, innovative moment of