LABOR AND POLITICS

Reinventing the Left in the Global South: The Politics of the Possible. By Richard Sandbrook. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 309p. $94.99 cloth, $34.99 paper.
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— Fred Block, *University of California, Davis*

Over the last three decades, the ideas of Karl Polanyi have moved from the margins of social science discourse to the center. Scholars as diverse as Sheri Berman, Peter Evans, Nancy Fraser, John Ruggie, and Wolfgang Streeck have drawn heavily on the insights of this Hungarian refugee intellectual. But since the late 1990s, there has been a second important development; Polanyian ideas—admittedly often without acknowledgment—have increasingly entered the theory and practice of left movements and parties in different parts of the world.

This has happened in parallel with the declining mobilizing power of Marxist ideas within the global Left. While there have been imaginative recent efforts to reinvent the Marxist tradition, this project confronts the formidable problem of recasting a theory from the middle of the nineteenth century to fit the very different circumstances of the twenty-first century. Polanyi, in contrast, attempted to reconstruct socialist politics on a non-Marxist foundation just over 70 years ago in his 1944 book, *The Great Transformation*. Polanyi's intellectual development involved a sustained engagement with Marxism, but he became deeply critical both of Marxism's economic determinism and of the undemocratic nature of Soviet socialism. His version of socialism centered not on the transformation of property relations but on the extension of democratic control over the economy. In recent years, his radical and democratic-socialist vision has converged with the thinking of a new generation of left militants trying to challenge global neoliberalism. (One of the first studies to recognize this convergence was Marcos Ancelovici, "Organizing Against Globalization: The Case of ATTAC in France," *Politics & Society* 30 [September 2002]: 427–63.)

Richard Sandbrook's remarkable book is a sustained effort to map out this convergence. Using a Polanyian theoretical framework, Sandbrook carries out a richly nuanced analysis of three distinct currents within recent left politics in the Global South. To be sure, most of his empirical focus is on the "pink tide" in Latin America that brought the Left to power in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Venezuela. However, he also draws on the experience of left-wing governments in the state of Kerala in India and in Mauritius and South Africa. But the choice of cases is effective because the author's goal is to explain the dilemmas of left strategy so that readers will be able to apply his lessons to cases that he has not examined.

Sandbrook sets the stage with a powerful chapter that lays out the failures of neoliberalism in the Global South. By demonstrating its inability to produce sustained growth and its links to rising inequality and environmental destruction, he shows why many voters have turned toward political parties that promise an alternative. He then categorizes these alternative left political programs into three distinct types—Left populism, radical social democracy, and moderate social democracy. Most of the book is devoted to analyzing the strengths and pitfalls of each of these strategies.

The author insists that Left populism is distinct from earlier forms of populism in its unambivalent embrace of the Left and its commitment to radical or popular democracy. But drawing on the experiences of both Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Michael Manley in Jamaica in the 1970s, he argues that while populist policies can lead to significant redistribution, they have little ability to expand economic output since businesses are reluctant to invest when they have been politically marginalized. Moreover, because Left populism tends to emerge where political parties are weak, such regimes are usually dependent on the charismatic appeal of a leader. The result is that despite their embrace of democratic rhetoric, such regimes tend to reproduce earlier patterns of clientilistic relations between government and the people.

Sandbrook also is skeptical of the strategy of radical social democracy that he associates with Salvador Allende in Chile and a series of left-wing governments in Kerala. He does acknowledge the impressive achievements in Kerala of a government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in redistributing income and reducing inequality, but that administration also proved unable to spur investment and economic growth. Sandbrook's view is that given the current global economic context, the possibilities that a government pursuing this strategy will be successful both electorally and economically are slim indeed.

The author's sympathy and hope lie with the strategy of moderate social democracy that he associates with Chile under Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet and with Brazil under the Workers' Party. He also includes here the cases of Mauritius and Costa Rica, although these are discussed in less detail. His model of moderate social democracy involves four main elements. First, these countries pursue relatively orthodox economic policies that avoid antagonizing business at home or abroad. Second, within this constraint, they pursue redistribution by expanding access to education, health care, and income support programs. Third, they work to deepen democracy by creating new channels through which citizens, particularly at the local level, can influence decisions over budget priorities. Finally, they use public agencies to grow the economy by facilitating innovation and the upgrading of existing industries.

Sandbrook recognizes that there are dangers in this kind of incrementalist strategy. Too much adherence to financial orthodoxy can block the other initiatives, and so the regime ends up providing no real alternative to neoliberalism. He also understands that external pressures, such as the abrupt end to the global commodity boom, can put economies such as Brazil and Chile under intense pressure that can jeopardize this entire political strategy. But one of his central points is that if these moderate social democratic societies can stay on course, they can help to shift the rules of the global economy in a way that would open up more space for this social-democratic path.

The idea is that social-democratic countries, working in coordination with global social movements, have the potential to win reforms in global institutions and global regimes. If, for example, there were a significant increase in the availability of development finance through the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Bank, the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Global Green Fund, more countries could copy Brazil's use of the Brazilian National Development Bank as a driver for both clean energy and industrial development. And this, in turn, would open up the possibility of a more radical restructuring of globalization that would further expand opportunities for patterns of development that are democratic, inclusive, and sustainable.

Given the realities of global terrorism, financial meltdowns, failed states, and climate change, it is child's play for social scientists to construct dystopian narratives about the future of the planet. The great achievement of *Reinventing the Left in the Global South* is that Sandbrook constructs a narrative of a positive future that is not clouded by utopian thinking and that is grounded in the actual experience of specific social movements and political parties in the Global South. This is an achievement that deserves a broad audience.

Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class. By Immanuel Ness. London: Pluto Press, 2015. 224p. $100.00 cloth, $28.00 paper.
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— Jason Schulman, *Lehman College, City University of New York*

Immanuel Ness has written a compelling book which, on one level, is a comparative analysis of neoliberal reorganization of industrial relations and of the relocation of capital to the Global South, much in the tradition of Beverly Silver's (2003) *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870*. On another level it is a sort of militant syndicalist manifesto, the core argument of which is that new, radically democratic forms of worker organization in the South are going to prove what one could call the "traditional Marxist hypothesis" correct: The industrial working class will lead the way towards the global overthrow of capitalist society and the creation of an emancipated, classless world—although this thesis is more implied than explicit—and the locus of class struggle from below has moved away from the North and its non-participatory, class-collaborationist labor unions.

Ness is clearly frustrated with "leftists and postmodernists" who, beginning in the 1970s, claimed that capitalist society had entered an era of "post-industrialism" (p. 4), as well as with "researchers and journalists [who] have pondered the working class mostly without consideration of the vast majority of workers who are laboring in the Global South" (p. 5). He is certainly correct that the working class is now larger than ever before, constituting nearly 3 billion people, with over 80 percent of the world's industrial workers currently located in the South. There—unlike in Europe and North America—"worker struggles are rampant" (p. 6). His understanding for why this transference has occurred derives from the theory of "the shift from competitive to monopoly capitalism" (p. 17) first explicated in V. I. Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917) and further developed by writers in the "monopoly capital" school of Marxist economics such as Harry Magdoff, Samir Amin, and John Bellamy Foster. He does not address criticisms of this school by other Marxists who argue that from its inception, this understanding of capitalist imperialism "extrapolated far too generally from the monopoly trusts formed between industrial and financial firms at the turn of the century in Germany" (Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, 2012, p. 6). Nevertheless, it is quite clear that capital's response to the victories gained by organized labor in the North has often been to relocate to the South, a process repeated throughout the "neoliberal" era of capitalism. Ness also provides convincing proof that exploitation of Southern labor by Northern capital is intensifying, as profits that originate from the South are rising more rapidly than the arrival of investment capital to the South. Notably, as Ness stresses: Southern labor is often *migrant* and/or *contracted* labor, cheap and plentiful, a global version of Karl Marx's "reserve army of labor;" the traditional unions of these countries often fail to act as genuine workers' defense organizations; and frequently any organizing efforts by Southern workers is met by state repression.

But Ness is clearly inspired by the working-class resistance he describes in his case studies: India, China, and South Africa, three major Southern economies. The first case focuses on the Maruti Suzuki auto factories in Haryana State, where workers from 1995 onward have repeatedly engaged in sit-down strikes, walkouts, and factory occupations, leading to the creation of the independent Maruti Suzuki Workers Union, opposed to the official, company-run Maruti Udyog Kamgar