

Matt Perry (editor), *The Global Challenge of Peace: 1919 as a Contested Threshold to a New World Order* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021)

Dr Arturo Zoffmann Rodriguez
Institute of Contemporary History
New University of Lisbon

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This edited volume explores the historical watershed of 1919. Formally, peace had finally come and political and social actors sought to fill it with content. Therefore, this turning point was characterised by its extraordinary contingency, as contested visions of the post-war order came into conflict in a context of tremendous convulsion and fluidity, shaped by the collapse of empires, colonial re-division, social effervescence, and the Russian Revolution. As the introduction and various other chapters note, the interplay and competition of different vistas for the future of humanity was most manifestly condensed, though not confined to, the clash between Leninism and Wilsonianism. The liminal character of 1919 is borne out in many of the volume's chapters, which describe the competition between socialist, nationalist, liberal, and other projects.

The recognition of 1919 as a historical watershed is not new in the field. Classics such as Charles Maier's *Recasting Bourgeois Europe* already explored the contesting agendas for the post-war world. Most significantly, during the last decade, coinciding with the conflagration's centenary, historians redefined the chronologies surrounding the First World War and its consequences. Comparative studies by scholars such as Robert Gerwarth, John Horne, Erez Manela, Michael Neiberg, and Enzo Traverso have put forward longer timeframes that transcend the narrow limits of conventional warfare in Europe in 1914-1918, suggesting 1914-1923 or even 1914-45 as possible alternatives. *Longue durée* theorists such as Charles Tilly and Mike Davis have situated the First World War and its aftermath in centuries-long chronologies of capitalist modernisation, war, and revolution. These scholars are sensitive towards the continuation of strife, anomie, political radicalisation, and violence after the armistice. They all identify 1919 as a crucial year. These general histories have been complemented by a multiplicity of national and local case studies on the year 1919, such as Roberto Bianchi's work in Italy or Francisco Romero Salvadó's on Spain, to name but two countries.

Consequently, the subject chosen by this volume is, as such, not particularly original. In fact, recent research by Matteo Millan and Alessandro Saluppo and their team (2019, 2021) has consciously straddled the watershed of the First World War. These scholars have emphasized continuity rather than rupture in analysing the themes of social conflict in the early twentieth century, questioning the impression that the war and its aftermath represented an absolute caesura. Arguably, historians in the 2010s overstressed the disruptive character of 1914/1918/1919 and overlooked continuity. Therefore, *The Global Challenge of Peace* possibly goes against the grain of current historiographical trends. Having said this, debates on rupture-continuity before, during, and after the war are not over. There is clearly the space for additional comparative research and theoretical reflection on the year 1919, its contingency and its liminality, as Matt Perry convincingly explains in the introduction. And this volume puts forward a variety of original themes and perspectives to do this.

Perry identifies race, gender, and labour as crucial drivers of social and political conflict in 1919 that he attempts to bring together in this volume. Historians have not disregarded these

analytical categories, but they certainly remain understudied. Most importantly, these categories tend to be treated separately, when, as many of the chapters reveal, they interacted dynamically. For example, Neelam Srivastava's chapter explores the coming together of socialist, feminist, and anti-colonial and anti-racist politics through the figure of Sylvia Pankhurst, one of the pioneers of communism in Britain whose networks extended across Europe and the Americas. Yet the interplay between race, gender, and class at times had reactionary iterations. Paul Griffin's chapter, for instance, illuminates the episodes of racist violence in Glasgow that revealed cleavages in the local working class traditionally obscured by the epic of Red Clydeside. Similarly, Christopher Loughlin excavates the cosmos of working-class conservatism in Britain and Ireland, which exploited religious divides.

While the interlaced perspective of race, gender, and labour is ostensibly the *idée-force* behind the book, other chapters adopt more general approaches. Indeed, the volume combines different methodologies and scales: social (Anthony McElligott's chapter on revolutionary Germany), political (Jacopo Perazzoli on the Italian socialists), intellectual (Neelam Srivastava on Pankhurst), cultural history (Jude Murphy and Nigel Todd on education), biography (Christian Høgsbjerg on CLR James), as well as national (such as Tim Kirk's chapter on Austria), regional (Megal Trudell's study on the Adriatic), local (Tyler Stovall's chapter on the Elaine massacre), and transnational dimensions (Sarah Hellawell's contribution on the Women's International League). This enriches the variety of materials and insights of the volume - at times, in fact, to the detriment of the book's cohesion, as the connections between chapters are lost out somewhat.

More significantly, the variety of case studies notwithstanding, the authors deal overwhelmingly with Europe and North America, belying the global agenda set out in the book's title and introduction. Alas, this is not exactly a global history of 1919, which cannot be written without devoting attention to momentous events such as the May 4 Movement in China, the closing phase of the Mexican Revolution, and the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, none of which is dealt with in any detail. Ultimately, the scope chosen by the editor may have proven overambitious for an edited volume.

The Global Challenge of Peace is an important contribution to the field, as it identifies understudied perspectives (such as the interaction of race, labour, and gender in the aftermath of the war), provides new evidence on the contingency and liminality of this year (such as the dynamic struggle between Leninism and Wilsonianism), and contributes to unresolved debates about the chronologies of this period (making a suggestive case for 1919 as a historical threshold). It points to new, exciting avenues for research. Its shortcomings notwithstanding, it is a stimulating read for historians of this period and, more generally, for scholars of labour, revolution, and social conflict.