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Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

The Global Chancellor: Helmut Schmidt and the Reshaping of the International Order

BY KRISTINA SPOHR. Oxford University Press, 2016, 240 pp.

Helmut Schmidt served as chancellor of West Germany from 1974 to 1982. He earned near-universal respect for his unique combination of working-class directness, practical intelligence, and artistic ability. (He was a talented pianist who once performed and recorded a Mozart concerto.) Yet he is not generally considered a successful politician. Schmidt lacked the personal charisma of his predecessor, Willy Brandt, and never enjoyed the comfortable parliamentary majorities and unique diplomatic opportunities that later benefited his successor, Helmut Kohl. But Spohr makes the case that Schmidt's chancellorship was defined by foreign policy successes. Schmidt was a pragmatist who joined French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in creating the European Monetary System and helped implement NATO's "dual-track decision," which combined an increased deployment of ballistic missiles to Europe and an offer to negotiate with the Soviet Union. The Soviets saw the deployment as a provocation and

rejected the offer, bringing down Schmidt's government and ushering in the end of détente—but probably hastening the Soviet collapse, as well. Although Spohr sometimes exaggerates the impact of Schmidt's achievements, she has done readers a service by crafting a well-documented English-language treatment of this leading twentieth-century statesman.

From Convergence to Crisis: Labor Markets and the Instability of the Euro

BY ALISON JOHNSTON. Cornell University Press, 2016, 248 pp.

This book analyzes the ongoing euro-zone crisis on the basis of a simple but penetrating insight about the domestic politics of the currency union's member states. Johnston rejects the flawed notion that the crisis is the result solely of government overspending or a one-time financial shock. Instead, she borrows the "varieties of capitalism" theory, which maintains that each European state has institutions for regulating economic activity that differ fundamentally from those of its neighbors. For example, the powerful, centralized unions of northern European countries such as Germany have long tended to eschew wage increases in the interest of maintaining export competitiveness. Prior to adopting the euro, southern European countries with less centralized labor-market institutions tended to offset wage increases by depreciating their currencies or tightening monetary policy. After the introduction of the euro, northern countries could continue to use their preferred strategy. But the single

currency made it impossible for southern countries to do so. This explains why the crisis has damaged even those European countries that maintain sound fiscal policies and why the extended application of austerity measures has not restored the continent to economic health.

Primo Levi's Resistance: Rebels and Collaborators in Occupied Italy

BY SERGIO LUZZATTO.

TRANSLATED BY FREDERIKA RANDALL. Metropolitan Books, 2016, 304 pp.

Primo Levi may well be the most celebrated chronicler of the experience of European Jews in the middle of the last century. His first masterpiece, *If This Is a Man* (known in the United States as *Survival in Auschwitz*), was first published in Italian in 1947 and described in horrifying detail how Auschwitz turned inmates into beasts—an insight based on his own experience as a prisoner there. His subsequent writings examined how memories of the Holocaust placed barriers between survivors and those who never experienced the camps. He committed suicide in 1987 by throwing himself down a stairwell. This book tells the little-known story of Levi's brief time as a member of the Italian antifascist resistance. He faced complex moral dilemmas, notably the decision to murder fellow partisans so that the group as a whole could survive—a step that eventually led to Levi's internment at Auschwitz. Luzzatto, an award-winning Italian historian, writes in a sensitive and

insightful manner about times and troubles no one should forget.

Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics

BY RICHARD SEYMOUR. Verso, 2016, 256 pp.

Jeremy Corbyn is perhaps the most radical politician to head the British Labour Party in half a century. He lacks personal charisma, a significant record of legislative achievement, and any realistic prospect of leading his party to victory over the Tories in a parliamentary election. His views on world politics—a mix of praise for the UN, support for disarmament, opposition to global capitalism, and a tepid attitude toward the EU—appeal to an archaic version of British leftism. This book by a Marxist British journalist seeks to explain and justify the enthusiastic support that Corbyn has gained from many Labour Party members. Corbyn, Seymour argues, is a spokesman for those left behind by the twenty-first-century economy, similar in that respect to Marine Le Pen, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump. Corbyn may sometimes seem diffident and even hapless, but the United Kingdom needs a “movement politician” who can make use of social media and assemble large rallies of the faithful. Seymour's book is by turns inspiring and implausible. Yet it is required reading for those trying to puzzle through the rebirth of more extreme parties in Western democracies.