



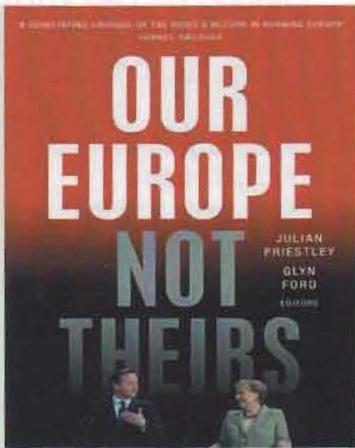
BOOK REVIEW

“Our Europe Not Theirs”, by Julian Priestley and Glyn Ford, published by Lawrence and Wishart, €18,46

25 September - October

November

26 November 2016



In 2013 a group of Labour MEPs, officials and a former MEP, came together to produce a book of essays outlining a radical agenda for change in the EU. Among them were former MEP Glyn Ford and former European Parliament Secretary General Julian Priestley. Their thesis was that the policies currently pursued in Brussels are unremittingly conservative, the product of the technocratic right's dominance of EU institutions and most national capitals and that the left and the right had competing visions for the future of the EU. Now, in the light of the forthcoming British referendum on whether or not to remain in the EU, they have produced a second edition, outlining the left's new challenge on Europe. The new part of the book takes the form of a lengthy new Introduction titled “The Left's New Challenge on Europe”.

Although being published slightly before the completion of the four “baskets” of renegotiation achieved by British Prime Minister

David Cameron, the text addresses itself to these but concentrates on a critique of current EU policy on many of the pressing issues of our time such as austerity and the immigration crisis.

For those who did not read the first edition, which addressed itself to the then upcoming 2014 European Parliament elections, the contributions from a range of centre-left authors remain interesting. These cover economic policy, environment and climate change, social policy for a competitive Europe, international trade and “an internationalism for the twenty-first century”. The main theme of the nine chapters is to demonstrate that the left and the right have competing visions of the future of the EU.

Now, with an eye to the British referendum, Ford and Priestley briefly outline some pointers as to how progressives should vote. They contend that the left needs to remind itself of the great challenges to be faced in the next

fifty years such as global warming, massive migratory flows, striking a balance between combating terrorism and preserving liberty, harnessing the digital revolution so that it works for people and is not just synonymous with large-scale job destruction and shielding communities from “the arrogance of unaccountable corporate power.” Would we be better off confronting these challenges alone or through Europe, they ask. It is no surprise that they contend that separatism is rarely the answer in a globalised world.

Membership of the EU is not a panacea for all the ills of the world. But we believe that if Britain set on an isolationist course it would have a lesser impact. The authors contend that the cause of staying in the EU is the progressive cause and the case for the EU needs to be made by progressives. In conclusion they say the cause of staying in the EU is the progressive cause and the left needs to be a very prominent presence in the campaign to remain. Leaving the EU, they argue, is for the left to take a fork in the road which leads to a dead end.



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