



Against the grain: The British far left from 1956

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Against the grain is the first general history of the British far left to be published in the twenty-first century. Its contents cover a range of organisations beyond the Labour Party, bringing together leading experts on British left-wing politics to examine issues of class, race and gender from 1956 to the present day.

The events of 1956 set in train a realignment of the British left and British politics more generally. The Soviet invasion of Hungary and Nikita Khrushchev's 'secret speech' denouncing the crimes of Stalin challenged the Communist Party's predominant role to the left of Labour. Simultaneously, the Suez crisis and the early stirrings of the cultural shifts that came to prominence in the 1960s precipitated a change in Britain's political and socio-cultural landscape. A New Left, a counter-culture and a peace movement emerged; identity politics began to challenge the traditional Marxist emphasis on class as the focal point of 'struggle'. Given this, the essays collected here are designed to highlight the impact made by the far left on British politics and society. Though the predicted revolution did not come, organisations such as the International Socialists, the International Marxist Group and Militant became household names in the 1970s and 1980s. Taken as a whole, the collection demonstrates the extent to which the far left has weaved its influence into the political fabric of Britain.

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