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Enyeart, John P. 2019. *Death to Fascism: Louis Adamic's Fight for Democracy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 238 pp. \$25.00 (paperback) ISBN 978-0-252-08432-4

Reviewed by Tariq Khan

In the 1930s and 1940s there emerged from the Left what historian Michael Denning called “an anti-fascist common sense in American culture,” in opposition to the white supremacist, capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal common sense of dominant U.S. culture and politics.¹⁰² Scholars such as Erik McDuffie, Jennifer Guglielmo, and Kenyon Zimmer, among many others, have unearthed histories of vilified groups in the United States—Black communist women, Jewish and Italian migrant anarchists, and radical working-class immigrant women—whose organizing and agitating is what created that antifascist common sense.¹⁰³ One person, largely forgotten, but highly influential in the antifascist movement in the era, was Louis Adamic. Enyeart’s work comes at a moment in which forging the multiracial, multiethnic, working-class-based, transnational antifascist movement Adamic championed is urgently necessary.

Adamic (1898–1951), along with his Slovenian peasant family, was among the South Slav refugees displaced by the violence of the Austrian Empire, to become proletarianized in the United States. Enyeart focuses on Adamic’s political development from a scrappy low-wage working-class

¹⁰² Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), 11.

¹⁰³ Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women’s Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

radical to a leading literary figure and antifascist organizer. Enyeart does so largely through an examination of how Adamic's writing developed over time.

Adamic's writing contrasted with other leading socialist authors, particularly because of his deep skepticism about what the United States is. Themes of alienation, exile, liminality, and displacement pervaded his early work. In contrast with socialist idealism, represented by authors such as Upton Sinclair, Adamic's work was infused with peasant fatalism. For Adamic, the United States was not a melting pot. The melting pot notion was antidemocratic because it treated assimilation into whiteness as a laudable goal rather than what it was: surrender and death. Hard work did not lead to success, and attempts to assimilate were a fool's game. Enyeart writes, "In contrast to Sinclair, Adamic's protagonists could never successfully assimilate, whether they embraced capitalist individualism and Anglo-Saxon values or... converted to socialism. Any effort to become an 'American' resulted in death" (p. 29). Here one can see strong similarities between migrant peasant fatalism and Black radical Afro-pessimist writing.

Enyeart recognizes that Black radicalism profoundly affected Adamic's thinking about fascism. Adamic saw white supremacy as the greatest stumbling block to socialism and antifascism in the United States. While many white leftists praised Franklin D. Roosevelt for taking a stand against Adolf Hitler, Adamic pointed to Jim Crow, Japanese internment, and anti-Black pogroms as evidence that fascism was part of the fabric of U.S. empire. The military under supposed antifascist Roosevelt was racially segregated, symbolizing the hypocrisy of the notion that the United States was fighting fascism. Adamic saw the Black press as the cutting edge of antifascist thought, and urged his audience to read Black newspapers. Adamic recognized that the Black press was internationalist, and connected antifascist struggle with anticolonial struggle. Enyeart observes, "Adamic saw the mostly black writers and activists leading the anticolonial movement as the vanguard in the fight against fascism" (p. 106).

Adamic worked to build antifascist solidarity between South Slavs and other “ethnics” with Black anticolonialists. This work did not survive the repression of Cold War liberalism. Though Adamic was not a party member and was highly critical of Stalinism, his explicit anticolonialism, opposition to white supremacist U.S. policies, and advocacy for the self-determination of colonized peoples was enough for the state to vilify him as a subversive foreign agent. Some South Slav immigrants turned to red-baiting against radicals such as Adamic as a way to access whiteness and become “Americans.” During this same period, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in an effort to appeal to the Truman administration, distanced itself from anticolonial politics and expelled W. E. B. DuBois for maintaining his anticolonial stance. Enyeart observes, “DuBois went into exile, black journalists turned their attention to the civil-rights movement, and Adamic either committed suicide or was murdered” (p. 133). By removing the people on the cutting edge of antifascist organizing, anticommunist repression effectively erased much of the antifascist common sense of the preceding decades.

Enyeart is quite upfront that he intends *Death to Fascism* to be relevant to organizing against fascism in the current era. He discusses some of the major social movements against white supremacy and fascism since 2016. Missing, however, from this discussion is the importance of Indigenous people organizing in recent years. One question for Enyeart, or perhaps Adamic’s focus, is that for all of the critique and analysis of corporate power, white supremacy, and U.S. empire, there is little attention to settler colonialism. What does it mean to achieve democracy on stolen land? How does Adamic’s notion of pluralism hold up in light of radical Indigenous critiques of the United States? Discussions of Adamic’s politics, and antifascism in general, could be deepened with a discussion of how it fits (or perhaps does not fit) within Indigenous antifascist and anticapitalist politics.

Death to Fascism is both praiseworthy and relevant to scholars and organizers alike. Enyeart suggests that in this current moment in which the far Right is globally resurgent, the old antifascist common sense must be revived: the common sense that fighting capitalism requires fighting against white supremacy, that antifascism must explicitly aim at U.S. empire itself and not just cartoonish racist outliers, and that “dealing a death blow to fascism clearly requires more than voting. People must directly confront white supremacy, xenophobia, corporate hegemony, and imperialism for democracy to truly exist” (p. 167).

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