Western Europe

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Bloody Nasty People: The Rise of Britain's Far Right
BY DANIEL TRILLING. Verso, 2012, 240 pp. $26.95.

Hate: My Life in the British Far Right
BY MATTHEW COLLINS. Biteback, 2012, 352 pp. £8.99.

What would motivate British neo-Nazi skinheads to invade a public library and beat up a reading group of retired Pakistani immigrants? And what would motivate half a million British citizens to vote for extreme right-wing parties whose rhetoric fuels such behavior? Trilling traces the rise of the radical right in the United Kingdom and condemns establishment figures for not taking it more seriously. Journalists, he argues, should not stoke prejudice against asylum seekers and multicultural policies. Politicians should not denigrate immigrants, tighten borders, or curtail government spending on housing and welfare. He believes that it is the retreat of government, not its failure, that creates an opening for radicals.

But a memoir by Collins, who spent years as a neo-Nazi and is now the director of Searchlight Educational Trust, a British foundation dedicated to fighting racism and fascism at the community level, inadvertently calls into question the idea that officials in the United Kingdom should ring alarm

bells about nativist radicalism. In breathless, awkward prose, he recalls spending his teen years consorting with pseudo-intellectual Holocaust deniers, profane Hitler worshipers, and violent psychopaths armed with heavy chains, hobnailed boots, and switchblades. Although the gratuitous violence is shocking, the overwhelming impression is of a bunch of cranky losers in seedy apartments and cheap pubs quarreling over nothing. Perhaps this explains why out of 100,000 local officials in the United Kingdom, only ten belong to extreme right-wing parties, and why no candidate of the extreme right has ever won office at the national level. Such parties have enjoyed success only in elections for the European Parliament, in which protest voters make up a large proportion of the few people who bother to go to the polls. Perhaps the problem, then, is not that the British have let their guard down but that commentators pay too much attention to sensational but marginal elements.

A Europe Made of Money: The Emergence of the European Monetary System
BY EMMANUEL MOURLON-DRUOL. Cornell University Press, 2012, 368 pp. $55.00.

Making the European Monetary Union
BY HAROLD JAMES. Harvard University Press, 2012, 592 pp. $35.00.

Most analysts agree that the ongoing financial crisis in Europe stems at least in part from flaws in the design of the euro system and that stabilization will require substantial institutional reform. This raises a vital historical question: Why did the European leaders who designed the European Central Bank and the other eurozone institutions leave out so many crucial elements? To answer this question, Mourlon-Druol considers the 1979 creation of the European Monetary System, the predecessor of the eurozone. He argues that the earlier system was weaker than it seemed, because participating governments disagreed about economic priorities—just as they do now. Germany prioritized the maintenance of anti-inflationary stability through austerity, whereas other countries sought more permissive policies. Just as today, the countries hoped to solve these conflicts by agreeing to modest monetary steps and hoping that, in the long term, their economic preferences would converge. Looking back, that was wishful thinking.

James, a colleague of mine at Princeton University, picks up the story, explaining how European governments agreed to a large-scale monetary integration in 1991 and then enacted it a decade later. Many critics now contend that European leaders did not think through the consequences of those steps or that they sought to promote the recent reunification of Germany no matter what the consequences. James shows that is not the case: the leaders did not act in response to German reunification, and they were fully aware that the system lacked essential fiscal rules and banking regulations that would encourage economic convergence, but they reckoned that these elements could be added later or might even prove unnecessary.

Both scholars make extensive use of newly available documents of the EU's monetary committees. This leads them to emphasize—perhaps overemphasize—the real-world effect of these committees'

ideas about integration. Still, both books add pieces to what is likely to be an important historiographical puzzle for some years to come.

The Official History of Britain and the European Community. Vol. 2, *From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*
BY STEPHEN WALL. Routledge, 2012, 688 pp. $100.00.

No diplomat could be more qualified than Wall to write an official history of how the United Kingdom become part of the EU. He served as the British ambassador to the union and as a private secretary or adviser to five British foreign secretaries and two prime ministers. As a historian, however, Wall has big shoes to fill: the author of the previous volume in this series was the late Alan Milward, the greatest academic historian of European integration, who sharply rejected conventional and official explanations of the EU's origins. What Wall presents, by contrast, is very much the view from Whitehall and No. 10 Downing Street. When it comes to explaining how British decisions were made, his account is balanced and copiously documented. Yet when he turns to the issue of why decisions were made, the story becomes murkier. British politicians seem to have thought the United Kingdom's membership was inevitable. But what role did economic, geopolitical, ideological, and more narrowly partisan considerations play in persuading them? Which justifications were fundamental, and which were just window-dressing? These issues remain for future historians to address.

The Political Economy of European Welfare Capitalism
BY COLIN HAY AND DANIEL WINCOTT. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 280 pp. $42.00.

Can European countries maintain their diverse social welfare institutions? To answer this question, the authors of this readable and insightful book move beyond simplistic pessimism about generous social welfare policies. Summarizing widely accepted scholarship, they show that considerable room remains for countries to pursue idiosyncratic policies, despite a common need for some austerity measures imposed by the increasing pace of economic and demographic change. Well-designed welfare systems can coexist with and even strengthen economic competitiveness, as demonstrated by the Nordic countries. Where Hay and Wincott advance their own views, however, the results are uneven. They argue unconvincingly that the European Court of Justice imposed more neoliberal policies on the European Union than governments wanted. But they present a compelling empirical analysis showing that the current economic crisis in Europe has been exacerbated by a decline in trade, which has disproportionately hurt competitive export economies with developed social welfare systems, such as Denmark and Sweden.