the philosophical questions that surround what it means to fight for a cause.

The narrative of the book is quite unique. Taking the form of a traditional history text, Part 1 (titled 'The way we remember the past determines our dreams for the future') begins with the introduction of Frank Thompson, a British army officer with communist sympathies. A majority of Part 1 is spent discussing his involvement in the Bulgarian antifascist struggle. Thompson (the older brother of renowned historian E.P. Thompson) parachuted into Bulgaria as part of the British mission to disrupt the Nazi-allied Bulgarian government by assisting insurgent partisans with supplies and military consultants. Kostadin Lagadinov, along with his brothers Assen and Boris, and sister Elena, were some of the Bulgarian partisans Thompson fought alongside. This juxtaposition between the British Thompson and the Bulgarian Lagadinov family allowed Ghodsee to show that ideals do not conform to national boundaries.

In Chapter 9, Ghodsee provides an original English translation from the personal journal of Boris Lagadinov. This translation, titled 'Everyday life as a partisan', includes details about skirmishes with police and the monarcho-fascist Bulgarian army as well as the mundane: finding food, cutting wood and seeking hiding places. It gives an excellent autobiographical look into the life of a Bulgarian partisan: long periods of boredom punctuated by intense bouts of fear and combat.

Chapters 10 and 11 discuss the fate of Frank Thompson and Assen Lagadinov. Assen Lagadinov was killed in action by undercover gendarmes after approaching a false supply drop. He was decapitated and his head mounted as a warning to other partisans. Thompson, by comparison, was eventually captured by the Bulgarian police and imprisoned.

Ghodsee, Kristen. 2015. *The left side of history: World War II and the unfulfilled promise of Communism in Eastern Europe*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 256 pp. Pb.: £15.99. ISBN: 9780822358350.

Kristen Ghodsee's book is a unique and engaging interdisciplinary work that tackles the complexities of 20th-century communism in the Balkans as well as

Although the details are not authenticated, and a certain mythos has developed surrounding Thompson's death, Ghodsee presents her position: she believes Thompson – along with twelve other partisans – was executed by Bulgarian police at a roadside ditch in Litakovo.

Part 1 ends with a letter written by E.P. Thompson to his parents. After praising the ideals of his older brother, E.P. quotes the ancient Greek historian Thucydides: 'The whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men, and their story is graven not only on stone over their native earth, but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives' (p. 97). Ghodsee ends Part 1 questioning whether Frank Thompson's death was worth his ideology.

Part 2 (titled 'The remains of the regime') switches style to a more traditional ethnography. It begins with Ghodsee sitting in the home of – and interviewing – Elena Lagadinova, now an old woman, war hero and champion of women's rights due to her work as President of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement. As Ghodsee's social network expands from Bulgarian ex-partisans to communist-era bureaucrats, and her rapport with interviewees grows stronger, a richer context emerges out of the historical accounts of Part 1.

Ghodsee's main point is that communism, like any political or philosophical system, is rife with complexities. In much of the West, the word communism is synonymous with that of despotism and conjures images of gulags and secret police. The story of Frank Thompson and the Lagadinov family is important because they were not motivated by – nor reacting to – the Soviet victories during World War II. They were young idealists fighting with a goal of creating greater justice for the downtrodden and imbuing the working classes with political power.

Ghodsee's work sheds light on the thought process of early communist revolutionaries in Bulgaria as well as the accomplishments and failings of the communist state following the Second World War. At times, her style could be perceived as having a lack of objectivity. However, this reader tends to agree with her assessment of historical truth: 'Too often, I thought, historical "truth" was merely a tool to justify contemporary political arrangements' (p. 132). Ghodsee definitely has an established opinion about the topics covered in her book but does not try to hide this fact, which makes this ethnography refreshingly unique and enlightening.

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