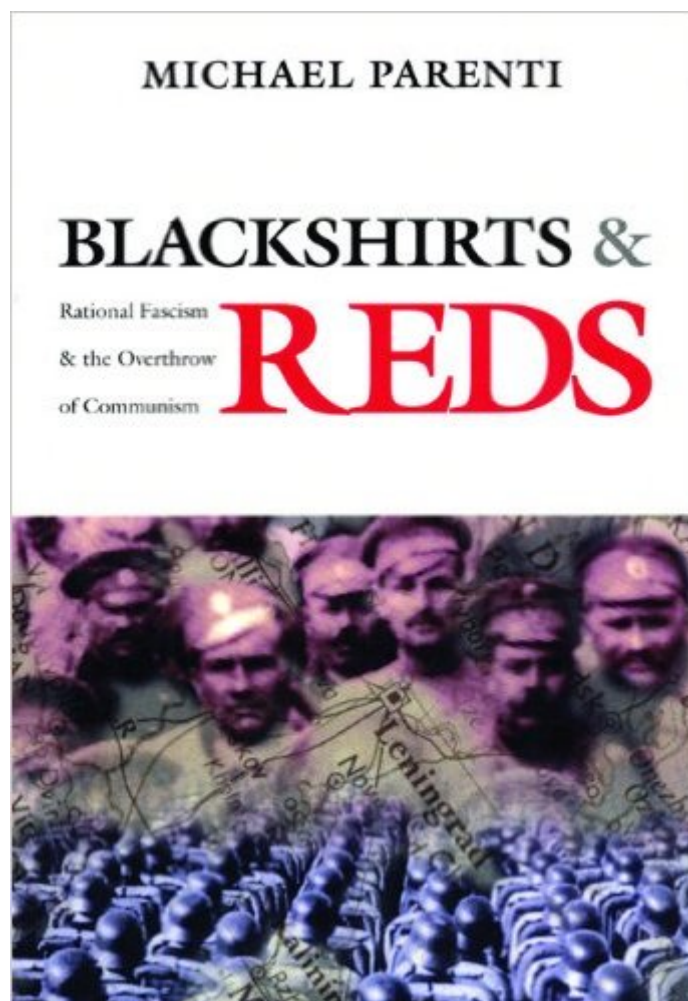


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Blackshirts And Reds: Rational Fascism And The Overthrow Of Communism



Synopsis

Blackshirts & Reds explores some of the big issues of our time: fascism, capitalism, communism, revolution, democracy, and ecology—terms often bandied about but seldom explored in the original and exciting way that has become Michael Parenti's trademark. Parenti shows how "rational fascism" renders service to capitalism, how corporate power undermines democracy, and how revolutions are a mass empowerment against the forces of exploitative privilege. He also maps out the external and internal forces that destroyed communism, and the disastrous impact of the "free-market" victory on eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. He affirms the relevance of taboo ideologies like Marxism, demonstrating the importance of class analysis in understanding political realities and dealing with the ongoing collision between ecology and global corporatism. Written with lucid and compelling style, this book goes beyond truncated modes of thought, inviting us to entertain iconoclastic views, and to ask why things are as they are. It is a bold and entertaining exploration of the epic struggles of yesterday and today. "A penetrating and persuasive writer with an astonishing array of documentation to implement his attacks."—The Catholic Journalist

Blackshirts & Reds discusses the great combat between fascism and socialism that is the defining feature of the Twentieth Century, and takes every official version to task for its substitution of moral analysis for critical analysis, for its selectivity, and for its errata. By portraying the struggle between fascism and Communism in this century as a single conflict, and not a series of discrete encounters, between the insatiable need for new capital on the one hand and the survival of a system under siege on the other, Parenti defines fascism as the weapon of capitalism, not simply an extreme form of it. Fascism is not an aberration, he points out, but a "rational" and integral component of the system."—Stan Goff, The Prism

Michael Parenti, PhD Yale, is an internationally known author and lecturer. He is one of the nation's leading progressive political analysts. He is the author of over 275 published articles and twenty books. His writings are published in popular periodicals, scholarly journals, and his op-ed pieces have been in leading newspapers such as The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times. His informative and entertaining books and talks have reached a wide range of audiences in North America and abroad.

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Customer Reviews

Parenti shares his most current thoughts on fascism, socialism, communism and capitalism in an unique and personal ways, without apologies. Although it's true that the book rehearses running dispute between leninism and anarchism, it does carry a sense of intellectual honesty in defending and explaining his political convictions -- especially when most leftists find it now more opportune to be seen as a liberal socialist, even if their personal histories don't confirm such wish. Parenti has always been out there defending revolutions and revolutionaries, although one can question his personal emphasis on the russian revolution and east european countries over other third world liberations. At the same time, he is quick to point out genuine concerns with the bureaucratic natures of soviet states and their inefficiencies. Although this is similar to other liberal socialists, he distinguishes himself from the pack by showing a truer appreciation and understanding to the difficulties of revolutions within the international domination of us imperialism as best exemplified by the sandanista revolution. The book devotes a whole chapter on "communist wonderland" on this subject. After reading this chapter one cannot honestly call him a communist apologist. Ironically when the current political tide encourages more leftist intellectuals to be more critical of communist revolutions, Parenti refuses the opportunity to step in with the pack. There is a sense of sincerity in his uncompromising stance as one of the last remaining soldiers down in the trenches of fighting capitalism and imperialism.

Parenti does it again! In this book he traces brilliantly the appeal and development of the fascist movement, explaining how fascist leaders use irrational symbols to manipulate people who have very rational concerns about their diminished living standards. Parenti is one of the very few analysts who actually assesses the real economic impact of fascist governance; he proves that fascism lead to ever-greater brutalization of the workers, and a gross redistribution of wealth upward

to the system's corporate benefactors. Parenti explores closely the actual record of Communist leadership; he provides a nuanced analysis that both praises the Communists for their achievements in the matter of social equity, and criticizes these states for their oppression of their people. Nonetheless, Parenti proves that even tyrants like Stalin were not quite as bad as their fascist counterparts, for every Communist leader had to constantly resist the imperialist pressures of the capitalist west. Parenti also brilliantly derides those so-called liberals who ignore the issue of class today. He points out that true progressives should be more concerned with the living conditions of working people than with some sterile, lofty, and ultimately meaningless debate over cultural issues. All in all, a very solid book; I didn't agree with everything in it, but I did agree with most of it. Parenti writes well, persuasively, and coherently. His writing comes as a much needed rejoinder to the rightist and centrist blather which currently dominates TV punditry, newspaper editorials, the mainstream news magazines, et al.

This is an unsparing, uncompromising defense of Marxism-Leninism from a respected scholar of political science. No politically engaged person should fail to read Parenti's book. It will be outrageous to some, inspirational to others, but thought provoking to all. The author takes on critics from the right and the left in a highly accessible writing style. His ideas are presented clearly and forcefully, without technical or theoretical jargon. Among his politically-charged topics: communism and fascism, revolution, delusions within the left, the collapse of the soviet bloc, and perhaps most important, the ongoing necessity of class analysis in a postmodern world. Parenti's book serves as a clear statement and reassessment of where Marxism-Leninism stands in a world that has seemingly rejected those ideas but whose triumphal market economies move increasingly in a Marxian direction. "Blackshirts and Reds" fills a huge gap for the general reader and is not to be missed.

An accessible critical analysis of the reactionary historical role of fascism by one of the most advanced and consistent scholars today. One wishes, though, that Parenti would have given more details on the early, corporatist designs of fascism -- designs which appear disturbingly similar to what institutional far-right planners and politicians in the U.S. are attempting to implement in the present context by whatever pretext they can to impose their more deceitful and technologically distracting but no less oppressive agenda on the entire world. Nevertheless, Blackshirts and Reds is an excellent overall criticism of fascism because it serves at least as importantly as a principled and unapologetic primer on the continuing practical relevance of Marxism to social change, the author

making concisely clear why the honest study of Communist theory and practice -- undistorted by its dedicated enemies -- is no idle exercise in nostalgia, but a necessary prerequisite to really understand and transform present-day society. Parenti also includes, here and there, a welcome critique of Noam Chomsky, whose political shortcomings and acknowledged ignorance of and indifference to fundamental Marxism and its actual development may not be readily apparent to the casual observer unfamiliar with his particular anarchistic anticommunist bias, notwithstanding his progressive stand on certain issues whatever his way of reasoning.

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