

Habsburg emerges from their position at the top of a system based on personal connections and blood ties, but also from their participation in a constant dialectic between individual sensibilities and experiences within a common vision, a common Habsburg project that constituted one of the bridges between medieval Christianity and early modern Europe and one of the most lasting and fundamental legacies of the Spanish monarchy in its European and overseas territories.

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David Matthews, *The Class Struggle and Welfare. Social Policy under Capitalism*, Monthly Review Press, New York 2024, pp. 231.

David Matthews' book analyses the evolution of the welfare system from an interesting historical perspective, positioning it as a central feature within the class struggle and the capitalist system's development. The extension of welfare benefits the labour and capital forces, which push welfare to advance and support their economic self-interests. A broad social coverage improves labour productivity, reduces capital costs for reproducing labour forces, and promotes the acceptance of the capitalist system within society, particularly among the working class, especially during the classical era of Fordism. Industrialisation transforms the rules of industrial capitalist accumulation, which leads to the progressive destruction of the pre-capitalist world and its social reproduction forms. Welfare functions as a stabilising mechanism for these transformations following decades of strikes and workers' resistance. It is an income redistribution action by the state which does not affect or alter the industrial productive capacity and thus does not penalise the profit rate.

However, we cannot fully understand the rise in welfare without first discussing the transformations of the state. From an institutional form representing specific class interests, i.e., with the Constitution and Parliament reflecting bourgeois-based interests, the state gradually incorporates not only the capital forces but also those of labour (as well as rentier interests) by expanding the electorate. Thus, when the state's legitimacy derives from the recognition of both capital and labour forces, the creation of welfare becomes a tool to achieve a synthesis of their respective interests, alongside improvements in wages and a reduction in working hours. Adopting progressive fiscal policies makes the transfer of resources for welfare more acceptable, as does the shift in economic mentality that, following the Second World War, placed

Keynesian ideas at the centre of Western economic policy. Additionally, it is pivotal to remember that we cannot understand the adoption of a universal welfare system after World War II without considering the Cold War and the capital forces' fear that a resurgence of workers' struggles could increase the influence of communist ideas in Europe. Welfare, therefore, became a system of extended and collective social security that allowed mass industrialisation to overcome friction with labor forces, launching European capitalism into one of its most prosperous phases.

The book consists of eleven chapters, five of which analyse in detail various aspects of social spending, including social security, disability, health, housing, and education.

David Matthews' research undoubtedly has the advantage of being an easy, intuitive read, presenting the subject matter clearly and concisely, particularly through a fundamental historical approach. It is a valuable read, especially today, considering the progressive dismantling of European welfare systems in favour of privatization and, consequently, private profit. Initially designed to quell social protests on the one hand and facilitate capital accumulation on the other, the end of the welfare system could reopen a period of "permanent conflict," which would certainly not benefit the forces of capital themselves.

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M. Rabà, G. Sabatini (eds.), *Face Up. Faces from the past. The fight for freedom and democracy in Albania during the regime of Enver Hoxha*, Special Issue, *Ri.Me.*, 14/V n.s. (June 2024), pp. 257.

The special issue of the journal "Ri.Me" focuses on a topic that has until now been neglected by historical research: the complex history of Albania under the communist regime. Featuring contributions from Italian and Albanian historians and researchers, the volume aims to delve deeper into the Albanian people's struggle for freedom and democracy. The volume not only represents a first step in the study of Albanian history since the Second World War, but also an opportunity for Europe as a whole, as it provides a case study on the threats posed by totalitarian regimes, from the perspective of the search for truth and reconciliation.

Gaetano Sabatini's contribution, which also serves as an introductory chapter, provides an immediate understanding of the work's content and approach, explaining the collaboration between Italians and