

Title—The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France 1950-1976

Author—Christoph Kalter

Year—2016

Categories: Decolonization, Politics, Social Movements, Globalization, Migration

Place: France (French Empire)

Time: 1950-1976

Argument Synopsis:

Kalter's book is focused on the tandem development of the concepts of the Third World and the "new radical left" in France in the mid-twentieth century. He seeks to demonstrate how a French "new left" not only 'discovered' the Third World but was also defined and constituted by it. Kalter begins with the so-called triple crisis of 1956—Hungary, Suez, and Algeria—up through the 1970s. He argues that these two concepts, the Third World and the new radical left, developed in tandem beginning in the 1950s before declining together during the 1970s. The Third World and the new radical left were mutually conditioning concepts with experiential consequences. The book is organized into five chapters, which are all more or less freestanding. Katler makes use of a variety of methodological approaches, including conceptual history, political history, intellectual history, oral history, memory studies, and media studies. He begins with conceptual history, examining the rise and fall of the Third World as a concept and a disciplinary focus. Katler's next chapter utilizes a political historical framework, tracing the emergence of a "new left" away from the continentally root-bound socialist and communist traditions. He argues that a new formulation is needed for studying the new left because their non-Eurocentric orientation was genuinely radical. The following chapter is an essay in memory history, which follows the ways in which *topoi* derived from the French experience of the Second World War shaped and colored the activism and engagement of the Algerian generation.

The final chapter is an intellectual history of the new radical left as seen through the pages of the journal *Partisans*, which ran from 1959 to 1972. *Partisans* was the premier organ for the diffusion of information about Third Worldism. The journal questioned the relationship between decentering the West and the rest of the world. This publication embodied the links between knowledge and power, theory and action, at the heart of the Third World and new radical left matrix. The journal helped to set the terms of the debate—continuity or rupture; affirmation or criticism; hope or disappointment; mirroring or valorization of others' vanguardism. *Partisans* provided a common vocabulary for the French new left.

The book is organized around the themes of reflection (intellectual-political positions historically specific to the 1950s through 1970s) and mobility (an essential engine in global processes). Katler posits that mobility characterizes both the form and content of late modern globality. His book shows how models of social action thrive when they reflect and affect their times.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Real and imagined connections between France and the Global South fed disenchantment with existing political options
- The idea and reality of the Third World shaped the contemporary world
- French "new leftists" were both drivers and receivers of globalization, shaped by real and imagined border crossing and shaping them in return