

Eleanor Davey's contribution to human rights history is a genealogy of *sans-frontiérisme*, the approach to humanitarianism adopted by that most famous organization of 'French doctors', Médecins sans Frontières (MSF, 'Doctors without Borders'). Debates surrounding 1960s *tiers-mondisme* (third world solidarity) were formative for *sans-frontiérisme* and many of its proponents, including Bernard Kouchner. A leftist in the 1960s, Kouchner later professed to reject ideology in the name of humanitarian concern for suffering before serving in French governments from left to right, most (in)famously as Sarkozy's Foreign Minister (2007–2010). He is thus one symbol of a controversial intellectual shift from the left to liberalism in French politics (and thus not by accident one of the chief villains of Kristin Ross' *May 68 and its Afterlives*). Kouchner makes numerous appearances in the text, but *Idealism beyond Borders* is not about him. Nor is it primarily about the organization he helped found, though MSF's history is woven into the developments discussed here. Rather, Davey has written a critical intellectual history of humanitarianism in France focused on one of its most internationally influential trajectories.

The first of the book's three sections examines the origins of *sans-frontiérisme* (Chapter 1) and *tiers-mondisme* (Chapter 2). (In a nod to their specificity, Davey retains these French terms throughout the text.) The latter's key points of reference included not only elements of the left's modern history (1789, the Paris Commune, the Spanish Civil War), but especially the Second World War and the Algerian War. *Tiers-mondisme* thus represented a post-1945 'reworking' of Marxism (p. 68) in which revolution became the pinnacle of resistance to both fascism and colonialism. *Sans-frontiéristes* shared many of these points of reference, but Kouchner and others have (retrospectively) constructed an origin myth for their brand of humanitarianism 'without borders' around the 1967–70 conflict over Biafra's attempted secession from Nigeria. Despite the Biafran leadership's portrayal of the ensuing famine as a 'genocide' against the Igbo people, Biafra failed to attract the support of the *tiers-mondiste* left, because its credentials as an Algerian-style 'national liberation movement' were weak and because it poorly aligned with Cold War narratives (both superpowers backed Nigeria). In this context, the *sans-frontiériste* emphasis on 'speaking out' about the suffering humanitarians witnessed (*témoignage*) became a means of differentiating it from the anti-imperialist partisanship of otherwise vocal *tiers-mondistes* on the one hand and from the Red Cross model of neutrality (itself never as monolithic as *sans-frontiéristes* claimed) on the other.

Davey's second section, 'Violence and Morality', focuses on three overlapping sets of debates of the 1960s and 1970s that arguably undermined *tiers-mondisme*. Chapter 3 charts *tiers-mondistes'* own declining support for third world guerilla movements, shifting from enthusiasm (at the Russell Tribunal's accusations of a US 'genocide' in Vietnam) to questioning (following the capture of Régis Debray with Che Guevara in Bolivia) to outright disappointment (after the Cuban government's arrest of writer Heberto Padilla). Around the same time, *tiers-mondisme* came under sustained attack within France (Chapter 4) by self-described 'anti-totalitarians' (i.e. liberal anti-communists), including ostentatiously repentant former Maoists like Jacques and Claudie Broyelle and *nouveaux philosophes* like Bernhard-Henri Lévy. (In 2011, 'BHL' was a leading proponent of military action against Qaddafi.) Finally, changes in Holocaust memory (Chapter 5) inflected the French left's own rejection of political violence (especially following the killing of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics) as well as the increasing salience of 'genocide' to describe events in Cambodia and to frame possible humanitarian responses (Kouchner's 'rhetoric of responsibility').

Part III, 'Ethics and Polemics', moves the discussion into the 1980s, when *sans-frontiérisme* emerged politically triumphant. Chapter 6 charts its intellectual ascendancy in phases, first examining Foucault's enthusiasm for the Iranian Revolution as a last hurrah of *tiers-mondisme*, then the 'ecumenical' French campaign for refugees fleeing communist Vietnam (supported by Sartre, Raymond Aron, Foucault and the Broyelles), and finally humanitarian engagements during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Taken together, these cases show how humanitarian interventions were increasingly imbued with 'anti-totalitarian' discourses about 'rejection of ideology', to the point that humanitarian action became a terrain for the 'transferral of ideological confrontation' and 'the channelling of criticism of left-wing ideology' (p. 213). The increasingly overt anti-communism of MSF is the topic of Chapter 7, which discusses the organisation 'speaking out' in (and subsequently being thrown out of) Marxist-controlled Ethiopia, the founding of Liberté sans Frontières (LSF) as a think tank to challenge *tiers-mondiste* humanitarians, and the split between MSF-France and MSF-Belgium over LSF's political posturing.

Throughout the book, Davey convincingly argues that *tiers-mondisme* and *sans-frontiérisme* were never so far apart as their advocates subsequently claimed, showing that they always shared key points of reference (the post-colonial third world, the Second World War) and even key practices (e.g. 'speaking out', 'the refusal of complicity', p. 255). Biafra was not so much a 'dramatic mutual rupture' as the start of a 'diffuse' process (pp. 47–8) of distancing in which understandings of the third world were reinterpreted through debate. The very areas of overlap between *tiers-mondisme* and *sans-frontiérisme* permitted some, such as Kouchner, 'to adjust their horizons without fully questioning their paths' (p. 256).

It is partly in service of this nuanced view, and in fairness to her protagonists, that Davey generally avoids identifying *sans-frontiéristes* as 'leftwing' or 'rightwing', though she might have addressed more directly how these labels are themselves part of the controversies discussed. The chapter (and book) conclusions also tend to bring up new issues (the 'figure of the political prisoner', *tiers-mondiste* solidarity with the Sandinistas, Kouchner's *droit d'ingérence*) that are not examined in detail and which thus distract somewhat from Davey's core arguments. Nevertheless, the book provides a clear account of *sans-frontiérisme*'s development, nicely structured around critical debates among French intellectuals (broadly understood), rather than simply presenting a parade of Great Thinkers. *Idealism without Borders* thus delivers an intellectual history of French debates surrounding 'the third world and its relationship to the West' (p. 10) that includes Sartre, Foucault, 'BHL', and Kouchner, but always alongside equally decisive, lesser-known theoreticians, practitioners, and critics of humanitarian action.