



The Communist and the Communist's Daughter

Jane Lazarre

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This is the story of a family and its struggle between old and new homelands, between idealism and reality.

Bill Lazarre was an immigrant from what's now Moldova, an organizer for the Communist Party in the United States, a soldier who fought for Republican Spain in its civil war and, eventually, a single father juggling family and political life. No stranger to writing memoirs, his daughter Jane explores her often-complicated relationship with her father in her strong new work, *The Communist and the Communist's Daughter*.

Jane Lazarre includes a lot of information in this concise book. She tells of her father's family, who fled what was then Russian and Romanian territory at a time when Cossacks regularly carried out bloody anti-Semitic pogroms. She tells of her father serving time for dubious sedition charges and of his stint volunteering as part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fighting in Spain. These events all took place before Jane's birth, so she relates them through a compelling mix of source material.

Some of the memoir's best sections come from getting to hear Bill's story via primary sources, such as transcripts of his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee and the notes the FBI compiled about him during its efforts to make him an informant after the party began to fall apart.

One transcript from a 1958 HUAC hearing in New York effectively demonstrates the questionable tactics the government used in attempts to deport him. Another, from his arrest before the Spanish Civil War, lets Bill speak in his own words; he comes across as principled and quick witted.

That kind of material mixes with Jane Lazarre's memories to truly flesh out her father as a character throughout the book. She describes the difficult time when her mother became ill and died, and explains her father's efforts to raise her alone while fighting possible deportation. She compares his efforts with her own parenting and writes about her father's relationship with his son-in-law and first grandchild.

The Communist and the Communist's Daughter tells the story of a family, of the struggle between old and new homelands, and of a man trying to balance his idealism with a reality that falls short of it.

JEFF FLEISCHER (University Press 2017)

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