Andrew Glyn

Andrew Glyn, one of Britain’s best known Marxist economists died in Oxford on the 22 December.

Andrew Glyn came to national and international prominence in 1972 with his book, co-authored with Bob Sutcliffe, *British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze*. At a time of slowing growth in the 1960s, the accepted view among leading economists had swung back towards the pre-War ‘Treasury View’ that the fault in the British economic system lay in the labour market, and the subjection of wage bargaining to excessive union power. In their book Andrew Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe gave a much more radical, classical account of this argument. The slow growth was due to a generalised fall in the rate of profit due to, on the one hand, union militancy and, on the other hand, increasing foreign competition. The book galvanised British Marxist economists out of doctrinaire disputes and gave a much-needed policy focus to the deliberations of the left. Andrew Glyn followed this up with further analyses of political economy from a Marxist stand-point. He was a Trotskyist in the 1970s, and criticised the Tribune/Communist Party’s *Alternative Economic Strategy*. In the 1980s he contributed solid statistical research to trade union struggles, most notably that of the National Union of Mineworkers in their show-down with the National Coal Board and the Thatcher Government. Sadly, the dispute was not about reason, but a struggle for power.

Andrew Glyn continued with a stream of publications, right up to his death, documenting and analysing economic policy, its distributional consequences and the effects of both for the economic dynamics of various capitalist countries. Among his less political works was an important study of the export market competitiveness of OECD co-authored with his second wife Wendy Carlin, and John van Reenen, published in 1999. His last book was *Capitalism Unleashed*, published in 2006. This criticises global capitalism for its tendencies to inequality and the dominance of finance. In all these works his use of solid statistical research, rather than moralising or textual exegesis to present his radical case, brought his work to audiences beyond the dwindling band of Marxist economists.

Andrew Glyn was born in 1943 into a wealthy banking family. After an education at Eton College, he studied politics, philosophy and economics at New College Oxford. On graduation he went to work as a government economist during Harold Wilson’s first administration. In 1966, Andrew Glyn returned to Oxford to Nuffield College. In 1969, he was appointed to a fellowship at Corpus Christi College, where he taught with conspicuous enthusiasm until last summer. To its shame the University never honoured one of its most prolific and well-known economists with a Chair. But then he had little time for academic baubles. Despite his best efforts Andrew’s death leaves behind an economics profession more than ever addicted to conventional wisdom.

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