The editors of this book have a long and interconnected history, and the book itself has been long in the making. Having participated in the upheavals of the 1960s and spent the next two decades on the socialist left in different parts of the country, the three of us met in the late 1980s on the Boston collective of the journal Socialist Review. Although our faith in the socialist project subsequently ebbed, we remained both committed to progressive politics and fast friends.

As our political views evolved, our friendship endured and was nurtured over the next fifteen years through regular outings to action movies of uneven quality that our vastly more discriminating wives refused to see. When one of us departed for California in 2003, we looked over the next several years for ways to keep in touch beyond the occasional e-mail and visit. It was then that the fourth member of our movie group, Lou Ferleger, suggested to Jim Cronin that with our collective expertise on European and American politics, the three of us should collaborate on a book. With the center-left parties that we all studied and agonized over in difficult straits, Jim proposed an edited volume on the parties on both continents. The other two of us jumped at the chance to work together on a project close to all our hearts.

We pulled together a stellar cast of contributors who wrote draft chapters that were presented and discussed at a stimulating conference at the Center for European Studies at Harvard in May 2008. A conference in spring 2009 to celebrate George Ross’s retirement at the Brandeis Center for German and European Studies was also used to present work based on some of the chapters in this book. After several rounds of revision by our authors and two lively, scotch-fueled editorial meetings near Lake Tahoe and on Cape Cod, we produced the book before you.

In pulling this volume together, we have of course accumulated many debts. First and foremost, we wish to thank our authors, who we think have contributed chapters of exceptional quality. We also appreciate the help of Valerie Milholland and Miriam Angress at Duke University Press in shepherding this book through the editorial process.
Lou Ferleger deserves another mention, both for suggesting this volume and for being our great friend through all these years. Thanks too to Peter Hall and Patricia Craig at the Center for European Studies and to Sabine von Mering, Karen Hansen, and Judy Hanley at the Brandeis Center for German and European Studies and Department of Sociology for supporting and hosting our two meetings. Thanks as well to Joanne Barkan, Andrea Campbell, Joel Krieger, Michel Löwy, Richard Valey, Eleni Varikas, and Kathrin Zippel for joining us and commenting on the chapters presented at the Harvard conference. We also want to thank James Clifton for his excellent work on the references.

Last but by no means least, we want to thank our wives—Laura Frader, Jane Jenson, and Barbara Baran—exemplary scholars and professionals all, for contributions to this book and to our lives, too numerous to mention. We love you all and appreciate your tolerance.