

cooperative movement, one which offered not merely alternative sources of supply but also a political and ideological rhetoric of their significance, which greatly aided a developing labourist perspective.

It is the combination of factors such as these, and the politicizing impact of World War I, which help to explain the ways in which a labour politics emerges against the grain of national navalist ideologies. Such growth is patchy, irregular, and unpredictable but that is the essential point of Hilson's argument and the strength of her approach. It is possible that a separate consideration of each town weakens the point of comparative history but there is a consistent presence of cross-referencing in each of the chapters and, in this way, the reader is always made aware of similarities and differences.

Ultimately, the volume is a brave enterprise, moving well beyond a narrative study of two dockyard towns. It certainly goes a considerable way to reclaiming the local without resorting to any form of antiquarianism. Its grasp of wider debates and the attempt to engage in some of the most complex discussions contained within labour history's pages in the last two decades provide more general readers with food for thought. This work may sometimes lack a decisiveness of intervention in these debates but it demonstrates a willingness to explore such issues and to state quite firmly the case for this kind of work. Above all, it can reassure us that the need for, and significance of, labour history has not been lost.

Kenneth Lunn

GORNY, YOSEF. *Converging Alternatives. The Bund and the Zionist Labor Movement, 1897–1985*. [SUNY series in Israeli Studies.] State University of New York Press, Albany 2006. xiii, 309 pp. \$27.95; DOI: 10.1017/S0020859007032968.

In the past decades, many studies have been devoted to the Bund and Poalei Zion (the Zionist Labour Movement) as part of the emergence and development of the two most important Jewish socialist movements in the twentieth century. Both movements developed at the end of the nineteenth century, when the situation of the Jews in Russia, plagued by extreme poverty and anti-Semitism, had become unbearable. The traditional religious and Jewish style of life offered no relief, and socialism and Zionism became, as it were, the new holy doctrines. The traditional hope of salvation through the intervention of the Messiah was replaced by the new ideals of international solidarity of all the earth's downtrodden masses or of the deliverance from the diaspora through a return to the Promised Land of their fathers.

These two worldly alternatives, with their very opposite ideals, strongly contested against one another in their publications. In a short time, the Bund managed to acquire a great many followers amongst the Jewish workers and craftsmen in the Czarist empire, and it was principally the "converted" Talmud students who were to be the organizers and propagandists of the new doctrine. Poalei Zion initially only attracted Jewish students from Russian universities and assimilated backgrounds, who felt little or no affinity for the Jewish workers. The students spoke Russian and adopted Hebrew as a new national language because they did not want to use Yiddish, the despised language of the diaspora, which they believed did not belong in the new Jewish homeland. Nevertheless, they were later forced to use Yiddish because it was the only language that the Jewish workers understood.

Followers of both groups did stand shoulder to shoulder defending against attacks on Jewish neighbourhoods during the violent pogroms which were organized from time to time, from 1881 to 1910, in Russia.

In his book Gorny assumes that this history is known to the readers, and only a few fragments emerge in quotations he cites by leaders of both parties. He restricts himself to a theoretical investigation of the idea of a “Jewish nation” in both parties’ writings. In this way he fails to make the Hebrew and Yiddish terminology understandable to readers who are not familiar with this material. Thus, the argument, which is based on long quotations from the writings by the leaders of both movements, is incomprehensible for the uninitiated. The key word in this theoretical explication is the Hebrew term *klal yisrael* (the community of Israel or the Jewish people), a term that comes from the religious life and which can have so many different interpretations that a separate chapter could have been devoted to the interpretation of this concept alone.

Without explicitly stating it, Gorny interprets *klal yisrael* as a purely secular concept, separated from every historic-religious explanation, and he equates it with “the Jewish people”, for which there is a completely different Hebrew term. Indeed, the Bund theoreticians elaborated the concept in a completely different way than those of Poalei Zion. With its socialist universalism, the Bund believed that there was enough room for Jews within a larger national context, if they were to be recognized as a national minority and become autonomous, and could live with their own language and culture. For Poalei Zion it was only possible to build a new socialist state in the traditional historic Jewish land of Palestine. It is clear that the ideological differences between both parties could not be bridged.

The Bund attained its greatest successes in the interwar period, when Jews received the official status of a national minority in the new states of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and Yugoslavia, which had been created by the League of Nations, and were represented as a national bloc in the parliaments. In Russia the Bund had already begun to lose its influence in the 1920s, when Bolshevik power became strongly established. The Bund was the most important political party among the Jewish blocs in the national parliaments, and the unions played an important role in this. Poalei Zion began to have an important role in the growing Jewish centre in Palestine during the British Mandate. This party was also supported by the unions, even when there was a rapid division in the movement when a left-wing grouping, the Mapam, became independent. Gorny only discusses the opinions of the majority group, Mapai, and especially those of its leader, David Ben-Gurion. In the interwar period, the collective settlements were extended, the Arabic workers were excluded from Jewish economic life, and the unions were consolidated.

The “tragic illusion”, as Gorny characterizes the Bund, was destroyed in the German death camps. The attempts after 1945 to have it survive as a cultural-social movement in the United States and other large centres of Jewish immigration were not successful. Gorny ends his defence of the Bund with a report of the commemoration of the Bund centennial in New York in 1997, which he saw as a burial ceremony for the movement.

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, it seemed that nothing could stand in the way of the embodiment of the ideals of Poalei Zion, the largest political party that had the support of the unions. But nationalism and an emphasis on military might in national life eroded the socialist ideals of the party internally, and by the end of the twentieth century Poalei Zion had also lost its power.

Both parties had areas of tangency in their world of ideas, such as an idealistic and

utopian vision of a Jewish society built on social justice and a new Jewish culture, but that was the extent of it. A peaceful society that included other peoples who were characterized as a group that was self-conscious, with its own language and culture, was the ideal of the Bund; Poalei Zion's goal was to build a strong national identity, albeit that of a socialist Jewish state in the historic fatherland. However hard the author tries to see agreements and convergences between these visions, he does not succeed in convincing the readers. All the more because he has restricted his readers to the initiated who are familiar with the history and the Hebrew and Yiddish terminology of the two movements.

Rena Fuks-Mansfeld

VAN GOETHEM, GEERT. *The Amsterdam International. The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913–1945*. [Studies in labour history.] Ashgate, Aldershot [etc.] 2006. vi, 320 pp. \$99.95; £50.00; DOI: 10.1017/S0020859007042964.

This study by Flemish historian Geert van Goethem, which is based on the author's dissertation, is the first scholarly overview of the history of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), the umbrella organization closely tied to social democracy during the interwar years. The organization was known by its city of residence during the decisive stages of its existence (hence the title of the book). Previous depictions of the IFTU have appeared primarily in smaller publications written by various leading figures of the organization, such as Edo Fimmen, Johannes Sassenbach, Walter Schevenels, and after World War II, Hans Gottfurcht. These works were intended as a political and ideological defence of the IFTU against its rival organizations or as intra-trade-union political education and focused for this reason on the presentation of programmatic lines and organizational successes. In other words, they pursued more propagandistic aims and were not intended as critical or scholarly analyses.

It is perhaps surprising that until now historians have dealt only marginally with the IFTU. After all, in comparison with its communist, Christian, and anarcho-syndicalist rivals, the IFTU was by far the most influential trade-union international. It was also active in the League of Nations' International Labour Organization (ILO) as the quasi-official representative of the working classes within the international system. In this sense, the IFTU was a pioneer for NGOs during an era when the term did not yet exist.

The boom in labour history after the 1960s, however, focused primarily on national issues, despite the fact that there is perhaps no other modern movement whose self-understanding has been more shaped by the claim to be international than the labour movement. Does this tension merely reflect the fact that while capitalism was already thoroughly international, the labour movement's main field of activity remained confined to national borders during this era? Trade unions fought almost no battles on an international level. Such efforts were limited essentially to demonstrations of international solidarity for important struggles within individual nations. In a similar way the activities within the ILO did lead to numerous resolutions, most of which, however, remained declarations of intention or had only a very limited effect.

Or is this dearth of scholarship on the IFTU the result of the labyrinthine complexity of an international organization which requires a scholar to process materials written in many different languages and thus to be concerned with conditions in numerous countries as