

boundaries as an alternative in view of local reluctance to settle for plantation labour (Hoetink). The Dominican working class is portrayed in the context of dictatorship and American Neocolonialism (Espinal); the same goes for Haiti (Lundahl) and Cuba (Hennessy). Strikés of the rural labour force tied to the Puerto Rican sugar industry (1873–1905) are discussed in a context of a change of political status and ownership (Spain to the U.S.) which was still far off in the case of the British Caribbean (Ramos Mattei). Even in a contribution on labour control in Cuba after emancipation (Scott), it is the differences rather than the parallels between the Spanish and the British Caribbean which catch the eye.

On reading these articles then, we are reminded mostly of the divergent experiences of the British and the Spanish Caribbean. In terms of labour, the contrast is between, on the one side, a British West Indian history of plantations with bonded labour, out of which only with the demise of this sector a peasantry and the beginnings of a modern labour movement hesitantly evolved. In the history of the Spanish Caribbean, on the other hand, the plantation boom came late and clashed frequently with already firmly established peasantries. Moreover, rural labour became far more complex in these territories due to its scale, heterogeneity (with a local proletariat finding itself in severe competition with seasonal and racially-different migrants of the neighbouring islands) and also its uneven ability to assimilate itself into the national politics of the present century.

Many questions are raised in this book, though it is debatable indeed whether any answers are given that link together the histories of these parts of a fragmented region. Yet this book may inspire further research on Caribbean labour, as the editors too modestly indicate is the objective of this collection. It is a compilation of perhaps uneven, but generally valuable, articles on the way labour has shaped the social and political history of the Caribbean.

*Gert J. Oostindie*

EISENBERG, CHRISTIANE. *Deutsche und englische Gewerkschaften. Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1878 im Vergleich.* Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1986. 391 pp. DM 75.00.

This is a comparative study of the German and British trade-union movements from the late eighteenth century to the 1870s, and is strongly influenced by Jürgen Kocka's methodological approach to comparative social history. In empirical terms, it relies primarily upon an analysis of the tailors' unions in both countries, partly because in this case the documentary evidence is comparatively rich. In the case of the German trade-union movement many of the other sources are archival; for Britain, there is a much greater reliance on the rich secondary literature which is available.

Dr. Eisenberg is primarily interested in explaining the peculiarities of early German trade unionism against the blackcloth of the British trade-union movement. In the eighteenth century there existed a lively and dynamic trade-union movement in both countries. However, whereas in Britain the trade unions were

able to build upon their firm eighteenth-century positions and entered upon a period of continuous growth, in Germany during the first part of the nineteenth century the development of the older artisan-based trade unions came to a sudden halt.

The author places her explanations of why there was such a substantial deviation in the development of trade unionism in both countries into the context of the so-called "Sonderweg" thesis. The development of a viable and effective trade-union movement in Great Britain, on the basis of which the "new model unions" emerged in the 1860s is accounted for in terms of the relatively liberal social climate. In eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, pressure by the central government upon society was limited; besides, governmental authorities were not interested in interfering in trade-union affairs, all the more so since the early trade-union movement did not recognize a sharp distinction between employers and entrepreneurs. Besides, the trade unions offered a wide range of benefits for individual workers, and thereby made it attractive for them to join these. Accordingly, the unions were able to secure for themselves a firm place within the gradually emerging market economy, despite the often hostile attitude of the courts.

The experience of Germany was very different. Here from the start the comparatively strong state was prepared to interfere in labour relations; also governments took over many of the social services which in Britain were provided by the trade unions for their members and the public alike. More importantly, the author argues, though in the reviewer's opinion not always convincingly, that, unlike in Britain, in the German case there developed from the beginning a sharp class distinction between the masters and the journeymen which hampered the further development of the traditional handicraft unions which had not known a sharp-edged differentiation between masters and their journeymen. The unions were viewed by the governmental authorities with growing suspicion; they usually took the side of the masters rather than of the men. The comparatively authoritarian governmental system in operation in the various German states did not allow the free development of working-class associations for the joint pursuit of economic and social objectives. Accordingly in Germany the trade unions were unable to establish themselves as firmly within the market place as their British counterparts, nor to build up quite the same network of social services for their members which was an important source of union strength in the British case. The elaborate system of economic support for migrating journeymen, which had been customary on the continent, also worked against the creation of a comprehensive system of relief for members in cases of illness, unemployment, or other grievances. Unlike in Britain, where a strong chain of continuity linked the eighteenth-century trade unions with the gradually emerging working-class movement, in Germany the unions had to be founded anew in the 1860s, largely at the initiative of the political parties, liberal and social democratic.

Here, the author strongly challenges some more recent interpretations of German trade-union history which maintain that there was, after all, a substantial degree of continuity in the trade-union movement from the eighteenth century onward, in spite of continual governmental impediments to union activities. In Britain unions were allowed to develop freely, even though they continued to be subjected to judicial restraints of different sorts which often substantially impeded effective strike action. She maintains though that in Germany, on the other hand, the trade unions were subjected to continuous governmental control; they were

neither able to establish themselves as labour agencies in the labour market, nor were they allowed to create a health insurance system of their own. In short, the comparatively late development of trade unions in Germany, unlike those in Great Britain, is explained in terms of the authoritarian governmental structures prevailing in Germany.

In the last resort the varying experiences of trade unionism are attributed to the diverging developmental paths of Great Britain and Germany, an explanatory model which bears the hallmark of the Bielefeld school of social history. Whereas in Britain national unity had already been achieved in early-modern times, and an industrial economy developed within a comparatively decentralized political system which allowed for the relatively free development of various social and economic groups in the market place, including the trade unions, in Germany the bureaucratic state held the ring from the start, and industrialization got under way comparatively late; the establishment of national unity had to wait even longer.

It may be doubted whether this explanatory scheme, which tends to idealize English conditions during the nineteenth century, and perhaps overrates the role of governmental interference in the German case, provides an altogether satisfactory explanation of the differences between the German and the British trade-union movements. But certainly it demonstrates convincingly the usefulness of a comparative approach to the history of trade unionism.

*Wolfgang J. Mommsen*

RAVINDRANATHAN, T. R. *Bakunin and the Italians*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston, Montreal 1989. x, 332 pp. £ 34.15.

A series of telegrams now in the Bologna State Archives relates how in the early 1870s police spotted Michail Bakunin crossing the Italian border near Locarno, and had him shadowed as he surreptitiously made his way to Milan and down the Peninsula, until a former acquaintance employed at Naples headquarters discovered that the traveller not even remotely resembled the Russian revolutionary. As this should have been plain from his description in the very first telegram the anecdote may be taken to reflect sadly, or happily, depending on one's perspective, on the ineffectuality of the Italian police apparatus at that, or any, time. It may also be construed as one of many indications that by then Bakunin had definitely taken on epic proportions in the minds of those who followed his tracks.

Although abler investigators have since applied their skills to the task, Bakunin largely continued to be cast in the role of either the hero or the villain of their stories. He has been variously portrayed as a precursor of Lenin, Durruti, Hitler, Mao and Abu Nidal, and as a prophet of both liberty and chaos. Interestingly, methodological differences hardly seem to count: an American psycho-historian has recently found him just as loathsome as any turn-of-the-century German Marxist would have done, and the works of some liberal admirers bring to mind what Leo Lowenthal wrote of popular biographies: "One browses through the index of a mail-order house which depends on a large turnover. Everything is the best and the most expensive, the opportunity of a lifetime."