

BOOK REVIEWS

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<i>Labour in the Caribbean</i>	Malcolm Cross Gad Heuman	Gert J. Oostindie
<i>Deutsche und englische Gewerkschaften</i>	Christiane Eisenberg	Wolfgang J. Mommsen
<i>Bakunin and the Italians</i>	T.R. Ravindranathan	Jaap Kloosterman
<i>Growing Up Working Class</i>	J. Robert Wegs	Siegfried Mattl
<i>Dictatorship, Workers and the City</i>	Sebastian Balfour	Walther L. Bernecker

Labour in the Caribbean. From Emancipation to Independence. Ed. by Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman. Macmillan Caribbean, London, Basingstoke 1988. xviii, 329 pp. £ 10.95.

The Caribbean is inhabited by a population of fairly recent origins. In fact, almost five centuries after the beginnings of its European colonization, the region today is almost completely populated by descendants of immigrants. With the exception of the Spanish Caribbean, the vast majority of these immigrants were brought to the region to work on plantations as slaves, or as indentured labour, often perceived as "a new form of slavery". The picture is more complicated for the Spanish Caribbean, where plantation agriculture after an abortive start in the early days of colonization only made its comeback from the late eighteenth century onwards, culminating in the complete domination by the Spanish Caribbean of sugar production by the late nineteenth century. Yet in the history of all these islands, labour migration has shaped society. The Cuban sugar-revolution was started with African slaves, later reinforced with indentured Chinese labourers, whereas after the abolition of slavery labour was provided by Afro-Cubans, seasonal workers from the neighbouring islands, and Spanish immigrants. Puerto Rico had its share of this immigration too, and the Dominican Republic's booming sugar industry of the late nineteenth century had to rely on immigrant labour as well. Even today, most of the

Dominican cane is cut by labourers brought in from the destitute western part of the island (Hispaniola, as it was called by the Spanish), Haiti.

The editors of *Labour in the Caribbean* may therefore convincingly argue that “the history of the Caribbean can be defined as the history of labour” (p. 1). This book is supposed to prove the point. It is a collection of fourteen articles, most of which were presented at two symposia organized by the editors for their Centre for Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick, which has published this book in its series of Caribbean Studies.

To say that a variety of themes connected to the history of labour are dealt with in this book is an understatement. Making a coherent book out of such a divergent set of papers must have been an editor’s nightmare – as much as it is a trial for the reviewer to properly judge this heterogeneous book. In spite of an introduction in which the editors “admirably” (quoted from Sidney Mintz’s Foreword, p. xvii) make the effort to make one book out of this set of papers, the book remains what it is: a highly mixed collection of articles around a rather loosely defined theme. Also, the ordering of the articles defies at least my imagination. Finally, “the Caribbean” is a rather pretentious title for a book which does not deal at all with the French (apart from the unique case of Haiti) and Dutch Caribbean.

In spite of these objections, *Labour in the Caribbean* is a valuable book on one (if not *the*) central topic in Caribbean history. Written by a group of mostly prominent scholars from different origins and scholarly traditions, this collection provides a useful and carefully edited introduction both for those interested in the Caribbean as such and the general student of labour relations in largely agrarian societies – albeit that the (non-Spanish) Caribbean is unique precisely because of its early pattern of rural industrialization.

No review can do justice to all of the individual articles, and accordingly I will only briefly comment on the book’s contents. In their introduction (preceded by a short laudatory foreword by Mintz), Cross and Heuman define certain central issues in the sphere of labour. They rightly emphasize the importance of various themes, such as the development of a proto-peasantry out of slavery, transitions from slavery to free labour, new forms of labour control and resistance after emancipation, the conditions for labour organization in the rather unfavourable context of *rural* industrialization, rural, and particularly peasant, reactions to plantation penetration, the crosscutting loyalties of ethnicity over class in a Caribbean context, metropolitan influences, and, finally, perhaps a bit obliquely, gender and culture.

With the exception of the latter two themes, the topics enumerated above indeed figure prominently in this book. More specifically, as the editors point out, “themes of resistance and control permeate these essays” (p. 10). Even so, focuses differ, particularly with the territory discussed. Thus, in the contributions on the British West Indies, the emphasis is on slave labour (Turner), British perceptions of the former slave population (Lobdell, Rich), labour organization in the first decades of the twentieth century (Hart, Bolland), and ethnicity as a factor in the political articulation of labour unions (Cross). Clearly, there is little focus on peasants except perhaps in an article on gender and agriculture (Momsen). There is a clear contrast then with the articles on the Spanish Caribbean and Haiti. Contributions which focus on the Dominican Republic specifically highlight the peasants’ reactions to plantation imperialism (Baud), and labour recruitment beyond the countries’

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). Strikes 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