

which, precisely because of its lack of citizen rights, can be hired cheaply. In 1862, at the beginning of the Civil War, the United States Senate outlawed the importation of coolies from China by American citizens and on American vessels because the practice was considered to be a continuation of the system of slavery. This law was aimed to stop the import of Asian coolies to the plantation belt in the states adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. It did not, however, change the fact that thousands of Chinese had already entered the United States through San Francisco, and that they could easily move to the Southern states after the Pacific Railroad was completed in 1869.

In the aftermath of the Civil War and the emancipation of the black population of the South, the planters launched a campaign to import Chinese labour under the guise of “free labour immigrants”. The planter elite pursued their interests, trying to shift from slavery to indentured labour, even though they calibrated their language and spoke about free labour and free immigration. They dreamt of tens of thousands of Chinese labourers flooding the devastated sugar plantations of the South and reviving what was once an important sugar-producing part of the world. Few Chinese actually came, but it was enough to sharpen racial tensions. In the wake of the Civil War, Southern “poor whites” and smaller planters had hoped for the reconstruction of a white-dominated Southern settler community and definitely not a multi-ethnic society. Actually, the latter did not happen. Even though Asian migrants were reluctantly accorded legal status by US federal authorities, socially they were confined to the status of coolies throughout the nineteenth century. In fact, Chinese labour migrants were excluded from the US altogether from 1882 onwards. As Moon-Ho Jung notes: “The last slave-trade law, from this angle, was simultaneously the first immigration law” (p. 38).

The debates on Asian coolies were at the heart of the identity formation of the United States as a settler colony. After the abolition of slavery, American citizenship and whiteness were no longer identical, while the United States was not yet ready to conceive of itself as a multi-racial nation. The country began to redefine itself in the early 1860s as a country for white immigrants. It was in those years that the word “trafficking” was used to describe the migration of Chinese coolies across the Gulf of Mexico. Indeed, the same word is in use today to describe unauthorized immigrants who are smuggled in under appalling circumstances.

Again, this book offers a lot more than a labour history of Louisiana in the wake of the Civil War, as it touches directly on the nexus between citizenship, labour, and migration. And all this is based upon a meticulous investigation using primary sources. Yet, a minor point of critique may be appropriate. Though there is an extensive literature on race, migration, and citizenship in the United States, the author makes only scant reference to it. There is no reference to the work of Adam McKeown, for example, and only one, a rather tongue-in-cheek one at that, to the work of Matthew Frye Jacobson rather than the more extensive engagement with his *Whiteness of a Different Color* one might have expected.

Ulbe Bosma

GERRITS, ANDRÉ. *The Myth of Jewish Communism. A Historical Interpretation*. Peter Lang, Brussels [etc.] 2009. 220 pp. € 36.30; doi:10.1017/S0020859009990526

Few topics, if any, in historical and political debates have been discussed with more emotion than the involvement of Jews in communist politics. As André Gerrits, Associate

Professor in East European Studies at the University of Amsterdam, writes, “Jewish communism was a powerful and persistent myth. Based on the attractive combination of two widespread political sentiments, namely anti-communism and anti-Semitism, it would attract a considerable number of supporters” (pp. 9–10). Apart from Nazism, the notion of Jewish Bolshevism or, more recently, Jewish communism, achieved its greatest influence in eastern and east central Europe, where it still remains a significant concept in the controversies about how to evaluate the Soviet-style regimes that shaped the societies of those countries for about forty-five years.

Given the political impact of this subject, relatively little research has been done so far on the history of the controversy. This book tries to explain the discrepancy between the much-debated popular discourse and the relative absence of source-based material, although relevant books by Jeff Schatz and Agnieszka Pufelska have recently been published. Gerrits’s work does not pretend to tell the full story. It deals instead with three interconnecting questions: first, how does one explain the lack of significant studies on the topic over many years?; second, how does one interpret the widespread interest in Jewish communism, mainly in Poland?; and third, how did the communists, and especially Polish communists, deal with this issue? Although focusing on internal Jewish discourse, Gerrits also examines scholarly debates that include participants of Jewish and non-Jewish origin.

The first part of the book deals specifically with interpretations of the historiography. The author shows how the controversy reached a new dimension during the famous German *Historikerstreit* (historian’s quarrel) in the 1980s when Ernst Nolte argued that Hitler’s anti-Semitism had a “rational core” and that Nazism was in essence a counter-offensive and a legitimate answer to Bolshevism. Later, Nolte insisted that because Nazism was the “strongest of all counter forces” to Bolshevism, a movement with Jewish support, Hitler may have had “rational” reasons for attacking the Jews. These anti-Semitic statements were refuted by the overwhelming majority of German historians.

The decision of Jews to join the communist movement was an option for integration into the secular, non-Jewish world. This was particularly true in eastern and east central Europe during the interwar period. It was, however, “not so much an act of assimilation as an act of exchanging one form of isolation, that of being a Jew, for another, that of being a communist (if not one add to the other; becoming a Jewish communist)” (pp. 39–40). The author sees Isaac Deutscher’s well-known notion of the “non-Jewish Jew” as a part of what he calls the “revisionist” discourse of Jewish history. This means “that the key to Jewish survival cannot be found in theology, law or any other incorporeal legacy only. Jewish politics and even Jewish ‘power’ also need to be taken into account” (p. 32). Jewish engagement in socialist and communist movements can thus be seen as an attempt to transform the humanistic values of Jewish ethics into practical politics.

In the second part of his study, Gerrits investigates the anatomy of and the responses to the stereotype of “Jewish communism”. He concentrates mainly on the Polish aspects of the controversy and discusses the pejorative term *Żydokomuna*, literally meaning “Jewish communism”, which blamed the Jews not only as mainly responsible for the Russian Revolution of 1917, but also identifies them with the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regimes in Poland between 1945 and 1989. In the interwar period, there was a remarkable percentage of Jews among the leadership of the small Communist Party of Poland. But the party rejected traditional Jewish manners and customs as well as Zionism and saw itself explicitly as an internationalist force. It was disbanded by Stalin in 1938. Many of its founder figures, Jews and non-Jews, perished in the Stalinist “purges”.

Following the Soviet invasion in 1939, Jews in former eastern Poland saw Soviet troops as a lesser evil in comparison with Nazi Germany. Gerrits shows to what extent the image of Jews waving red flags to welcome the Red Army had (and has) an important symbolic meaning in Polish memory. Indeed, Jews took a great part in what was called the policy of Sovietization. They often helped to disarm and arrest public figures from the former Polish local administration. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the belief in the *Zydokomuna* stereotype was a principal cause of the massacres of Jews by Poles, including the infamous Jedwabne massacre. The relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish resistance fighters remained mostly strained, although there was a kind of cooperation.

During the first few years of postwar communist rule, Jewish communists played a minor but highly visible role in the very unpopular security apparatus as well as in the party bureaucracy. The pogroms, such as that in the town of Kielce in 1946, can be seen as a violent reaction to the popular fear that Soviet-trained Jewish cadres were about to “conquer” Poland. Gerrits discusses the issue of to what extent traditional anti-Jewish prejudices, the radicalizing effects of the war, and the fear that surviving Jews would reclaim their poverty could merge. The massive anti-Jewish sentiment led to a new mass emigration of Holocaust survivors from Poland. Those who remained connected their interests with those of the new, Soviet-sponsored regime, although not all were public supporters of Stalinism. On the contrary, many intellectuals of Jewish origin were at the forefront of the fighting to humanize the existing order during the 1950s and 1960s. They became what were then called “communist revisionists”.

The specific nature of communist anti-Semitism in Poland after World War II is the central issue of the third part of Gerrits’s book. Although anti-Semitism had traditionally been viewed by Polish communists as reactionary, it now became clandestinely and even openly incorporated into the neo-Stalinist variant of Polish nationalism. The party hardliners, later called the Natolin faction (named after the place where they met), started to use anti-Semitic stereotypes as a political weapon during the “thaw” period of 1956–1957. They placed the blame for the insignificant success of Polish communism and its lack of popular support on the “Jewish apparatchiks”, the party functionaries.

After Israel’s victory in the Arab–Israeli War of 1967, the Polish party leadership, following the Soviet policy, launched an anti-Semitic campaign under the guise of “anti-Zionism”. However, the campaign did not resonate with the general public. Instead, many Polish gentiles saw similarities between Israel’s fight and Poland’s past struggles for national independence. Indeed, they welcomed the decisive Israeli victory over the Arabs as a defeat for the Soviet Union. The fact that many Israeli officers were Polish Jews was widely discussed. The slogan “Our Jews beat the Soviet Arabs” became very popular. In March 1968, “international Zionism” was blamed for having incited Polish students to anti-government protests. The non-Jewish communist party elite used the “Jews as Zionists” myth to purge Jews from scientific and cultural institutions and from the mass media.

However, an unexpected consequence of the campaign was that the communist regime was further discredited among left-oriented Poles. Many of those who opposed the anti-Semitic policy of the regime were also members of the Solidarity movement of the 1980s, particularly of its left wing, and became proponents in achieving a pluralistic society in Poland.

The reason for the discrepancy between the significant popular discourse and the relative absence of scholarly studies lies, as Gerrits shows, in the fact that there was no “Jewish communism” as a distinct political or cultural phenomenon in either Poland or in

other eastern European countries. It was and has remained an anti-Semitic construct. The only examples of a kind of “Jewish communism” were the Jewish sections of the Soviet Communist Party between 1918 and 1930, the communist organizations in the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan in the Soviet Far East, short-lived Jewish groups in various communist parties that were temporarily established in order to integrate Jewish members into the mainstream party culture, and, of course, the Israeli Communist Party, a majority of whose members now are Arabs.

Gerrits’s book demonstrates that no study that interprets communism as a Jewish conspiracy can be regarded as a serious contribution to historical research. Such pseudo-academic works treat “the Jews” as a coherent entity. They grossly exaggerate the Jewish involvement in communism and often neglect the fact that Jews were also victims of Stalinist anti-Semitism. The surviving Jewish communists are now often labelled as the perpetrators of the “dark years of Soviet occupation”. Gerrits’s final conclusion is that those Jewish communists who had been among the leading instigators of the communist revolutions in eastern Europe were also among “its primal victims” (p. 200).

Mario Kessler

LARMER, MILES. *Mineworkers in Zambia: Labour and Political Change in Post-Colonial Africa* [International Library of African Studies, 18] Tauris Academic Studies, London [etc.] 2007. 256 pp. \$80.95; doi:10.1017/S002085900990538

The mines of the Zambian Copperbelt were fundamental to Zambia’s industrialization and urbanization. That urbanization and industrialization has led to the development of some of the most nuanced and extensive social science research in the world.¹ In that sense this book, which is based on a doctoral thesis completed at Sheffield University, builds upon a long and distinguished tradition. Yet it is determined by an explicit awareness of the enormity of what happened in Zambia between 1973 and 2005; a period in which the Zambian economy essentially collapsed and widespread poverty and unemployment became the norm.² That collapse almost destroyed what was formerly one of the most powerful trade-union movements in Africa, the Mineworkers’ Union of Zambia (MUZ).

Essentially chronological in arrangement, the book is based on extensive research in Britain and Zambia, where state, company, and union archives were investigated, and on no fewer than sixty-two interviews conducted with trade unionists. Apart from an introduction and conclusion, the book consists of six chapters, parts of which have been published elsewhere as journal articles.

Apart from setting out the structure of the book, the extensive introduction deals with the mass of academic literature that has been written on the Zambian Copperbelt, dealing

1. The “Manchester School” of social science research essentially began with the Zambian mines; Lyn Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham [etc.], 2001).

2. On the consequences of that collapse see James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).