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# BOOK REVIEWS

## Pennartz, Paul [and] Anke Niehof. The Domestic Domain. Chances, choices and strategies of family households. Ashgate, Aldershot [etc.] 1999. xii, 241 pp. £37.50.

Social historians have been systematically examining family households in the past for some four decades now: a long enough period of time for this kind of research to have developed a history of its own. In its first phase, there was a plenitude of comparative investigations of households according to structural type, as far back as sources would permit. In the second, researchers worried that the household was being studied far too much in isolation from other social configurations and too frequently as a static, timeless, entity. The third phase (the present) finds the historical study of family households paying proper attention to their embeddedness in larger social contexts and in the flow of time, but also somewhat frustrated at the inability of historical sources to provide an unambiguous picture of what went on "inside" these microentities. With respect to inner workings, research on the historical household is still mostly an exercise in inference and educated guesswork.

Given the nature of most historical sources, the internal history of the family household is likely to remain mostly hidden, especially for the distant past. The serious exploitation of various kinds of written personal testimonies makes the recent past somewhat more transparent, however. This fact renders *The Domestic Domain* a very useful work, because the authors focus precisely on ways of explicating "what goes on inside the 'black box' of households" (p. 1). Though the book was not written for historians, (the authors are members of the Department of Economics and Management at Wageningen Agricultural University), it neatly summarizes the theoretical approaches to the family household in various contemporary family sciences, and effectively discusses the multiplicity of approaches useful for understanding what transpires (and, perhaps, transpired in the past) inside "the black box". The work is thus a useful addition to the social science literature that has been part of historical family-household studies from the beginning. (It should be remembered that the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structures envisaged and portrayed its early investigations as an exercise in "historical sociology", and that the anthropologist Jack Goody, from whose writings the title of the present work – "domestic domain" – was drawn, authored a valuable chapter in the landmark publication, *Family and Household in Past Time*.)[1]

Pennartz and Niehof have organized their book rather schematically. An introductory chapter lays out the theoretical justification for considering the family household as an "active agent" (p. 5), rather than as only as an epiphenomenal battleground for larger social forces. The next seven chapters review the "approaches" with the help of which an understanding of the inner dynamics of the family household have been sought. The family household can be envisaged as a locus of rational choice (ch. 2), of reasoned action and planned behavior. It can also be looked at as a site in which household strategies of various kinds (ch. 3) are formulated and coordinated. In allocating resources, the household reveals

1. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (eds), *Family and Household in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972).

an organization aspect (ch. 4); and in the division of household tasks, the play of power and authority (ch. 5). Embededness in larger social networks and organizations require that the family household be investigated as having "opportunity structures" and as seizing opportunities (ch. 6). Changes in real time undergone by all social structures require that households also be approached longitudinally (ch. 7), as microentities with their own history; and, finally, the play of values and norms in the household context dictates the investigation of household morality (ch. 8). Each of the "approaches" chapters first lays out the relevant theory or theories guiding the approach, supplies information on one or two key studies using the approach, and then concludes with a discussion of what future research is needed within the framework of the approach. The case (key) studies are particularly interesting, insofar as they are drawn crossculturally. The rational choice chapter looks at the recycling of refuse in the Netherlands and the US; family strategies are examined with respect to temporary migration in Portugal and Indonesia; the organization approach uses case studies about resource allocation from Great Britain; the power approach looks at agricultural labor and domestic work in China and the Netherlands; the opportunity structures chapter examines the housing market and living arrangements in Kenya and Mexico; the longitudinal approach looks at family time and migration dynamics in the US and the Netherlands; and the morality approach uses case studies of caring and family responsibilities from Kenya and Great Britain. The final chapter of the book consists of a reprise of the various approaches, and returns to the theoretical justification of considering family households as agents and mediating agencies undergoing various changes in the contemporary world.

The list of approaches reviewed by the authors extends considerably and usefully the older trio of "production, consumption, and reproduction" that has guided historical household researchers for a long time. Whether historians will be able to use all the approaches suggested here remains to be seen, since, as the case studies show, much of the empirical information that makes them viable comes from face-to-face interviews and opinion surveys. Moreover, one suspects that the list of approaches can be extended: for example, at the University of Konstanz, the family sociologist, Kurt Luescher, and his colleagues have been investigating the paradigm of ambivalence – the family household as the locus of intergenerational relationships which are never resolved with finality. Nonetheless, Pennartz and Niehof have performed a useful service with this book and it should remain a standard reference for some time to come.

*Andrejs Plakans*

Silverman, Victor. Imagining Internationalism in American and British Labor, 1939–49. [The Working Class in American History.] University of Illinois Press, Urbana [etc.] 2000. xv, 299 pp. $59.95. (Paper: $24.95.)

As Lewis L. Lorwin once observed in his history of the international labour movement, unity of the "labor forces of all countries on a common program" was both the dream and the aim of the labour movement from the start. There have been few moments in history when the labour movement seemed on the verge of realizing this dream. Today is one of them. Even so, the issue of unity is not particularly prominent in contemporary debates. The situation was completely different over fifty years ago when, with the end of the Second World War, the world was preparing for a new order. After over a decade of

economic crises, political repression and military confrontation, the world appeared ripe for a new start. The Great Alliance between the Americans, Russians, and British could be depended on to guarantee peace, cooperation and development, and the United Nations would be instrumental in achieving this. The world of labour was closely involved, and felt the heartbeat of history. The leading elite in the three superpowers included senior figures from the labour movement. The cooperation between them would reflect the collaboration at the international level, while the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which they planned to establish, would become the voice of labour, both at the negotiating table and within the corporative model of cooperation and consultation. The aim was a sustained increase in the welfare and rights of the working population in a world of peace. It was a dream that inspired many, even those who, in the past, had had bitter experiences with communists in their own country and on the international scene. However, things turned out differently. The pluriform model of cooperation became a confrontational model between two antagonists. The WFTU did indeed come to mirror relations between countries. Before too long, the Cold War destroyed the structure and, immediately, the prominent role of labour within the international community. The cynics were proved right, and many, including those who had passionately believed in the dream and had even proclaimed it, joined them in concluding that the experiment was doomed to fail right from the start.

In this fascinating and engagingly written book, Victor Silverman attempts to reconstruct that pivotal period from the point of view of the "believers", those who had faith in the possibility of a new and harmonious world order in which labour would play a prominent role. There were many such believers within the labour movement, particularly among the rank-and-file. The switch to the Cold-War ideology that took place so quickly in political and government circles occurred much more slowly within the labour movement, where memories of the great dream continued to linger for a long time.

Silverman takes the labour movements in the two "Western" powers – Great Britain and the United States – as the starting point for his study. These also serve as useful comparisons. Following the failure in the mid-1920s of attempts to collaborate with the labour movement in the Soviet Union, the leaders of the British labour movement were among the most prominent and powerful opponents of the policy of unity. But among the rank-and-file this opposition was less one-sided. Without necessarily being communists, many British workers admired and respected the "workers' state" in Russia, though there was much scepticism about Russia's military potential. Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 relieved German pressure on Britain, and, in the words of the TUC's General Secretary, Sir Walter Citrine, led British public opinion to demonstrate an "almost unreasoning admiration" for the Red Army. Throughout Britain there were spontaneous initiatives designed to show support for and cooperation with the Soviets, in some cases at the instigation of the British government. The TUC also came under pressure to demonstrate its backing for Soviet Russia, and resorted to founding an Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, which led to the first structural collaboration between the trade-union leaderships of the two countries for fifteen years. So it was external factors that pushed the "right-wing" leadership of the TUC towards cooperation with the Soviets. In domestic terms, such cooperation was also convenient since it allowed the TUC to benefit from the goodwill evoked by association with the Soviet Union at that time; otherwise, the communists might have profited. At the international level, however, it precipitated a chain reaction over which the TUC leadership lost control. Against its

better judgement, the TUC opted for a new, all-inclusive, global trade-union federation. However, by then the tide was already turning within the British government; collaboration had given way to a sense of mistrust of the Russians – though they remained allies – and so political intervention was impossible.

The situation experienced by the American labour movement differed markedly from that in Britain. In Great Britain the labour movement was basically unified, though within the large TUC a number of tendencies, often competing and politically opposed to one another, were active. The American labour movement ceased to be unified when, in 1937, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) formally broke away from the old American Federation of Labor (AFL). The AFL was a traditional American trade union, attracting most of its support from the craft trades; its abhorrence of communism was as deeply rooted as it was uncompromising. The CIO drew most of its members from the major industries and was generally more "left-wing" than the AFL; it had some considerable success in communist circles, and enjoyed close contacts with President Roosevelt and his administration. Inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal and his vision of a stable postwar world community characterized by stability and cooperation, the CIO was a prominent supporter of attempts by Britain and Russia to secure unity. Although the traditionally cordial relations between the TUC and the AFL made things difficult for a time, the CIO eventually succeeded in being admitted to the new WFTU, and it immediately began to play a prominent role. Until, that is, the death of Roosevelt, the enactment of antilabour legislation in the US, and the anticommunist climate that forced the CIO leadership to join the crusade against communist influence on American society. This reversal did not happen overnight though, since although the schism between the former allies was apparent as early as autumn 1946 the CIO continued to support the WFTU for a further two years.

Silverman convincingly argues that the Cold War was imposed on the labour movement and workers, while they fiercely resisted having to abandon their dream and the world they risked losing. There are some weaknesses in this account though. Silverman writes with the assurance and passion of an appeal, which explains the persuasiveness of his arguments. This approach has disadvantages too, however, since it is the nature of an appellant to be selective in the arguments and evidence presented. Nor is Silverman's book immune to this either. Were the arguments of the TUC and the CIO in support of international unity always sincere? Was it simply a belief in the new world and a conviction that society can be shaped to meet human needs that drove them, or were there more strategic considerations? Was the TUC not primarily concerned with maintaining its own position as a leading organ within the international trade-union movement? Is that not why it tried to make a success of the WFTU, while the old International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) was kept alive in case these attempts at unity failed? And was the CIO not primarily concerned to overcome the international isolation into which, to its great frustration, it had been driven several years before by the AFL? What motivated the CIO, the TUC and the AFL? Power, influence, or the dream?

Moreover, the author gives the somewhat misleading impression that he is writing about the entire American labour movement, when in fact the AFL, at that time still by far the largest trade-union federation, is scarcely mentioned. If public opinion and rank-and-file pressure were important in shaping the views of trade-union leaders on the issue of unity, that must have been true in the AFL too. The author suggests there were signs that the AFL rank-and-file did not share the virulent anticommunism of its leaders. If so, was there

no pressure from the AFL rank-and-file on its leadership, as there was in the TUC and the CIO? It is much more likely that both the AFL rank-and-file and the majority of the AFL's leaders were simply uninterested in international issues and indifferent to the dream. And that it was only a relatively small, ideologically-inspired minority within the American labour movement that cherished it.

A final remark on the evolution of the WFTU itself. The organization survived for four years as a unified labour movement. Can that really be attributed to the close collaboration and the trust between its partners? Is it not true that even before the WFTU was founded in 1945 the relative voting strength of the communists and noncommunists was a matter for serious concern? Is it not the case that right from the beginning, even at the founding congress, there were major differences of opinion between the communists and noncommunists regarding the fundamental objectives of an international labour movement, and that, to the horror of the rest, the communist delegates did everything they could to encourage the WFTU to adopt political views amenable to the Soviet Union? Is it not also true that the communists within the WFTU were absolutely adamant about controlling the international trade secretariats, and that no agreement was ever reached about this? And might one not be tempted to conclude then, as many others, including those who briefly believed in the dream, have, that the whole idea was destined to fail because of a fundamental irreconcilability between the two forms of trade union at the heart of the WFTU?

Despite his well-argued case, which leads him to conclude that the schism within the WFTU in 1949 was the consequence more of the loyalty of the labour-movement leadership to the foreign policy of their governments than of fundamental differences about trade-union issues, Silverman fails to make us forget the reality of the institutionalized suspicion within the WFTU.

In his final remarks the author looks to the present. He criticizes the lack of vision of the current political generation and the leaders of the labour movement, a lack he attributes to the failure of the great dream of the mid-1940s. A new dream is needed, Silverman claims, a "new universalism", without which we are doomed once again to bear the failure both of reason and imagination.

*Geert Van Goethem*

## Chase, Malcolm. Early Trade Unionism. Fraternity, skill and the politics of labour. Ashgate, Aldershot [etc.] 2000. 286 pp. £45.00.

This is an excellent book. Malcolm Chase has taken on the task of surveying the plethora of work which in the last twenty years has transformed the study of early British trade unionism and has succeeded with style and real clarity. In a text which rarely falters, he displays not only impressive powers of synthesis, integrating a surprisingly wide range of material, but also a deal of his own new and thoughtful research. As such it fills a major gap on the history shelves.

Chronologically the study begins in the eighteenth century and ends in the 1860s. Chapters cover the long eighteenth century, the rapid proliferation of combinations in the 1790s, the key decades of the 1820s and 1830s, the Chartist period and the rise of the amalgamated societies. In each, his three themes of fraternity, the delineation of "the trade" and links with radical politics provide the warp threads on which his account is woven.

Chase places fraternity at the core of trade unionism. Unusually for modern historians,

he stresses the relationship of eighteenth-century combinations to the guilds, convincingly arguing that early unions drew heavily upon the traditions, conviviality and rituals of the older organizations. In particular he emphasizes the way in which the trade was seen as a "moral community" (p. 25) with vibrant associational life, overlapping box club, freemasonry and friendly society, forming the lifeblood of organization. Friendly societies, he argues, were not mere fronts for combination – they were a fundamental element of the whole trade-union base and that aspect which provided continuity and coherence across the period.

Chase comprehensively undermines the Webbs' old and artificially limiting emphasis on formal organization. Combinations in the eighteenth, and for much of the nineteenth century, flourished on the basis of workshop and ale-house association, not on published rule books. In particular, he refuses to be drawn into the old tradition of seeing labour history as a continuous process of modernization. Combinations of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are judged within their own context. Indeed, Chase is particularly strong in his judgement of context and of tone. Thus, the Combination Acts are rescued from their usual cobwebs and shown to have been a significant shaper of labour relations, not because they were constantly in use but because they "had an immense psychological and practical impact on the way trade unionism evolved" (pp. 84–85). Trade unionism is reintegrated with the history of Luddism, from whence it has been too often forcibly removed by the compartmentalists, while the oscillations of trades towards federal organization and aspirations for a "New Moral World" in the 1820s are shown to have arisen from within the specific context of rapidly developing capitalist relations. If the structures to which these aspirations gave rise, most famously the GNCTU, proved ephemeral, this, Chase argues, "hardly matters. It is the general unionist mood that was most significant" (p. 151).

The other driving theme of the book is the link between unions and radical politics. Chase, an expert on the ultra radicals of London tavern culture, has no difficulty in locating the burgeoning popular radicalism of the 1790s within the equally rapidly growing development of combination in the period. The 1820s and 1830s are portrayed as key decades in shaping the growth of a new labour radical consciousness, with Tolpuddle and its aftermath returning to centre stage: it "was one of the hinges on which nineteenth century labour history turned" (p. 170).

Inevitably Chartism increasingly pervades Chase's narrative, as indeed it pervaded all areas of working-class life and organization in the late 1830s and 1840s. Here, Chase properly emphasizes the centrality of trade unionism in the movement's growth and development, advancing copious evidence to discredit the view that it was only decaying trades and those unable to organize effectively who saw in the Charter a solution to their problems. Chartism drew upon and worked within existing organizations, especially trade unions, and where they were strong the political movement was strong too. But a tension always lay within the relationship. While Chartism was an inclusive movement, seeking to mobilize all in pursuit of general rights, trade unions, for all their rhetoric of fraternity, were at base exclusive organizations, seeking to secure craft skills from the corrosive effects of women and unskilled workers. This tension was never really resolved, as the aborted sacred-month strike of 1839 and the extensive strikes of 1842 showed. If the former indicated the unwillingness of the trades to embark on political action, the latter showed how, once on strike, the trades, even the most "aristocratic" of provincial trades, proved to be more politically "militant" than did the Chartist leaders.

Chase sees the events of 1842 as crucial in the drift away from overt involvement with radical politics. But while he is inclined to see the pattern of trade-union development thereafter as being influenced by the respectable amalgamated unions, he properly eschews regarding this as all-pervasive. Single-trade local associations, little changed in their modes of organization and methods from a century before, persisted into the 1860s, while, even for larger unions, local organization, attitudes and industrial relations did not see major change. It was, Chase argues, the context of the aftermath of Chartism which changed the ways in which unions were seen, not the reality of labour association itself.

In short, this is a volume which will appeal not only to students, for whom this series is particularly focused, but also to the specialist labour and social historian who will find its lucid prose, sharp insights, and judgements a major addition to scholarship.

*Adrian Randall*

MICHEL, LOUISE. Je vous écris de ma nuit. Correspondance générale de Louise Michel 1850–1904. [Essais et documents.] Édition établie, annotée et présentée par Xavière Gauthier. Les Éditions de Paris, Paris 1999. 799 pp. F.fr. 245.00; € 37.35.

MICHEL, LOUISE. Histoire de ma vie. Seconde et troisième parties. Londres 1904. Texte ét. et prés. par Xavière Gauthier. Presses Universitaires de Lyon, Lyon 2000. 180 pp. Ill. F.fr. 115.00; € 17.53.

*Correspondance générale* is not the same as *correspondance intégrale*. This volume presents all the letters Louise Michel wrote between 1850 and 1905, insofar as they have survived and Dr Gauthier has been able to get hold of them. She has also made a selection from the letters addressed to Louise Michel and extracts from quite a few of these are published here.

The editor presents the letters in chronological order, divided into nine periods starting with letters which were written between 1850 and 1862. Twelve of these letters were addressed to Victor Hugo at a time when Louise wanted to devote her life to *Dieu* and called Hugo her *maître*. Michel made Hugo her mentor and most of these letters concern problems of verse and prose writing. There is no allusion to a sexual relationship between the two, which some authors have suggested, but which is doubted by the editor as much as it was years ago by that great biographer of Louise Michel, Édith Thomas.[1] From the correspondence, it seems that Michel encountered only two categories of men in her life: those very few with the status of a half-god, and the rest who were ordinary comrades in arms.

Some of the letters to Hugo, the more substantial in the collection, contain biographical information. Louise Michel describes her youth as an illegitimate child in the castle of her "grandparents". Her almost illiterate mother, to whom she was very much attached, worked as a maid in their service. Louise, well educated thanks to the "grandparents", began writing during her childhood. She always wrote in a hurry and was therefore quite careless. She couldn't live by her pen after her "grandparents" died, and in 1851 the

1. Édith Thomas, *Louise Michel ou la Velléda de l'anarchie* (Paris, 1971), p. 32. See also Yves Murie, *Victorine. Le grand secret de Louise Michel* (Cherbourg, 1999), who has not convinced me that he is the great-great-grandson of Louise and Victor.

inheritors sold the castle at Vroncourt la Côte and she became a teacher. During the 1860s, from which period almost no letters seem to have survived, she had her own school in Paris. Gradually, her political convictions became radicalized and, by the time the correspondence resumes in January 1870, she had become a staunch socialist and republican.

The Paris Commune was, of course, the heyday of her activism, but only a small part of her correspondence from these days seems to have survived. This may reflect the actual evolution of her correspondence, but it seems more likely that many letters disappeared in the disturbances. Once in prison after May 1871, Louise Michel resumed her correspondence with vigour. Her letters reveal some traits of her character. She shows a great willingness to help other *Communards* in prison, especially those who, according to her, had played only a minor part in this revolution. She was self-denying to an extent that she seemed possessed by a death wish. She asked for the death penalty, and when she was sentenced to "just" exile she became very depressed. Every time she was in prison, she would display the same masochism.

Her inclination to self-denial was closely related to her adoration of her hero during the Commune and after: Théophile Ferré, one of the leaders of the Montmartre quarter. He was sentenced to death because of his involvement in the shooting of hostages. From the letters, it is very clear that Louise was completely devoted to Théophile, but it remains questionable whether her love ever transcended the boundaries of the platonic. Théophile, first and foremost, was one of the few half-gods in her life. On the other hand, his letters to her are rather aloof, as Édith Thomas noticed.[2] They convey friendship and esteem, and maybe that was the most he could bring himself to offer, facing his immanent death. Louise, nevertheless, tried to save the life of her hero and, when she failed to do so, fell into a deep depression. From vigorous pleading, only yearly threatening letters to the authorities (including Thiers) remained. Louise was exiled to New Caledonia and had to leave her mother. Whether her mother, Marianna, needed Louise's nurturing is doubtful; she was far from frail and could still take care of herself quite well, continuing to lecture Louise: if only she would become more obedient, if only she would trust in God a little more!

The letters from New Caledonia tell mostly about the daily problems Louise had with the other exiles. Here too she tried to improve their lives. She corresponded with Henri Bauer, illegitimate son of Alexandre Dumas Sr, who also tried to lecture her in vain: "Je n'imite personne, n'obéis à personne et ne subis ni influence de mes amis ni celle des indifférents". At last, while travelling to New Caledonia (she would write in a later letter), she embraced anarchism. During her stay in New Caledonia she came into contact with the Kanakas and supported one of their rebellions. The letters hardly mention this; only in one letter she asks for help from Victor Hugo, who had remained her *cher maître.*

In 1879, she was sent back to France and felt that as very unwelcome preferential treatment; she should have been the last to leave the island! Once back, she quickly became a media celebrity, but apparently could not cope with it. She received many flattering but also many threatening letters and was overactive in writing letters to various newspapers herself. In 1883, together with other anarchists, she was put in jail once more, this time sentenced to six years. Contact with her old mother became very intensive now. Sometimes Louise was in a state which bordered on complete hysteria. She was afraid that

2. Thomas, *Louise Michel*, pp. 125–130.

her mother was not being cared for properly and judged servants in a very unanarchist way. She panicked easily about the cats she had taken with her from New Caledonia. Moreover, she imagined all sorts of plots, aiming to steal her manuscripts from her, or rob her of her royalties. In jail she managed to write a great many books, and in this way could provide some money for herself and her mother. Her mother was generally sustained by an allowance from Henri Rochefort. Georges Clemenceau occasionally gave money and provided Marianne with free medical care. Nevertheless, when in December 1885 her mother came to die, Louise was at the end of her mental reserves.

In January 1886 Louise was released from jail and resumed her propaganda. Her correspondence informs us mainly about her relations with publishers and literary agents. It also gives a good idea of the financial troubles Louise usually had. She was very generous to the extent of forgetting herself. If she didn't ask her publishers, agents, or wealthy friends for her own sake, she would come forward with the financial troubles of other people. "Je préfère garder ma vie pour l'humanité."

In 1890 Charlotte Vauvelle came into her life, a young friend whose love for Louise even exceeded that for her dogs. The precise content of the relationship between Charlotte and Louise remains unclear. Since Louise's death comrades and scholars have speculated about it. Louise may have been a lesbian.[3] In this respect also the letters fail to give a definite answer.

In 1890 Louise again was put in jail. There she fell into a delirium of anger and during four days demolished everything in her cell. After being released she decided to leave France for England and subsequently lived an impoverished life in London together with Charlotte and her family. She was almost completely dependent on Rochefort's allowance and on the advances paid by the journal *L'Intransigeant*. At times she would travel through France, spreading propaganda everywhere in the country. She also made propaganda trips in other countries and was active in the international labour movement, albeit on the sidelines, but the letters tell us hardly anything about it. Only her feminism is put into relief. In January 1905 she died while on a propaganda tour through the south of France.

This correspondence is not brimful of profound thoughts. Louise Michel was no great theoretician. Ernest Girault, who was with her on her last propaganda tours, found her neither *savante* nor *philosophe*, and her sentimentalism to him was bizarre, abnormal even.[4] F. Domela Nieuwenhuis thought she was not very critical; to him she relied too much on her intuition.[5] That characterizes her letters quite well. Except for those from prison (1883–1886), which throw a new light on Michel, this correspondence is an illustration of the Édith Thomas biography, but a beautiful one. Xavière Gauthier has

3. Karl Freiherr von Levetzow, "Louise Michel (La Vierge Rouge)", *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, 7 (1905), pp. 309–371, 324: "Ein virilerer Charakter als der ihre ist auch bei den männlichsten Männern kaum zu finden" (a more virile personality than hers can hardly be found even among the most male of men); F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Louise Michel 1830–1905* (Amsterdam, s.a.), pp. 68, 90, thinks she was asexual: "in haar was noch man noch vrouw, maar de mensch in zijn geheelheid" (in her was neither man nor woman, but humanity in its entirety).
4. Ernest Girault, *La Bonne Louise. Psychologie de Louise Michel* (Paris, 1906), p. iv. An astute interpretation of the same observations is found in Max Nettlau, *Geschichte der Anarchie.* vol. 3: *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre. Die historische Entwickling des Anarchismus in den Jahren 1880–1886*, Heiner Becker (ed.) (Münster, 1996), p. 79.
5. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Michel*, p. 88.

assembled many more letters than have previously been known. She even cites material from letters which have been sold at auction and apparently have not been able to be consulted since. Transcription and annotation are meticulous, as are the introductions and the biographical annexe.

In the meantime Dr Gauthier has started another project concerning Louise Michel. By 2005 (the centenary of Louise's death) her *opera omnia* should have been published, even those books which have not been published so far. Among them are the third and fourth parts of Louise's *Mémoires*, with which this series opens. It is a short text, written in August 1904. These memoirs seem to have been written down in one outpouring, as Louise used to do; they are quick and a bit superficial. They do not reveal much that is new, but give the impression that this is the way Louise liked to talk about her life. She is, in these memoirs, the convinced anarchist and militant and not without humour. As such, these memoirs are a good antidote to the common view of Louise as the champion of sorrow and suffering. Though she liked her poems for their sensitivity, Édith Thomas did not find Louise Michel to be a great author. She wrote too much and her style was bad. In 2005 we can judge whether she was right.

*Bert Altena*

## Gabaccia, Donna R. Italy's Many Diasporas. [Global Diasporas.] UCL Press, London 2000. xv, 264 pp. £14.99.

Not since Robert Foerster's seminal book on Italian emigration had a scholar sought to encompass in one single volume the emigration of Italians on a worldwide scale.[1] Eighty years later, Donna Gabaccia has taken up this challenge, thus confronting a subject that obviously has become far more complex than when Foerster tackled it. And this not only because the post-World-War-I years and decades witnessed significant movements of Italians across a world torn by politico-military conflict and economic upheavals; but also because of the intervening empirical and theoretical progress in the study of migration-related phenomena. Furthermore, a population movement that has connected Italy to a dozen major countries – in both hemispheres – and has left significant marks on their cultural and socioeconomic life could not but give rise to an imposing, if unequal, literature. Readers who are familiar with Gabaccia's previous work, who have come to appreciate her multilingual skills and her insistence on treating migration as a transnational phenomenon, will not be surprised to see her sailing leisurely through such a daunting historiographical corpus and, 264 pages later, presenting us with one of the most perceptive critical syntheses in recent English-language historiography.

Whereas much of the historical literature on Italian migration covers the years most associated with the hegemony of an industrial world order (the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s), *Italy's Many Diasporas* sets its time frame back to the Middle Ages and extends it up to the contemporary international scene. The almost perpetual movement of Italians out of their immediate universes (feudal territories; city-republics; principalities; kingdoms) is thus set against some of the most important contexts associated with the rise and development of a *civiltà italiana* – when artists, scholars, and adventurers brought Renaissance values and tastes to the four corners of the Western world; and then on to the

1. Robert Foerster, *The Italian Emigration of Our Times* (Cambridge, MA, 1919)

long and tortuous process of Italian national unification, when political upheaval and repression was as frequent a motive of emigration as was economic need.

In following the author through the more familiar context of post-Unification migration, readers will be treated to a virtuoso argumentation about the severe limitations of nation-centred histories that neglect or ignore – as most often they have – the de facto internationalism of a working class moving across sovereign borders. To be sure, as Gabaccia argues, this was not the consciously political internationalism that Karl Marx had envisaged and that most socialist movements professed at the time; its character, rather, grew more out of the variety of national and local contexts in which Italian workers settled, or merely transited through, while at the same time maintaining solid economic and spiritual ties with their towns and villages. "Proletarian cosmopolitanism" is the expression that best expresses this international reality of life and work and which, fundamentally, was "the product of each family's search for security in a global labour market" (p. 82).

Still, however remote the Italian nation-state may have been in the daily concerns of several million Italians scattered throughout the world, its legal and symbolic weight could hardly be dismissed. And so, in a brilliant chapter dealing with the inter-world-war era, Gabaccia takes us through the complex process that produced variant and competing forms of identification with the "Italian nation", especially once Mussolini's fascist regime sought to export a notion of *italianità* in ways that had a direct impact on international relations and on the intracommunal dynamics of Italian collectivities abroad.

Readers are then taken through the second half of the twentieth century, when the resumption of old migration networks and the emergence of new ones enlarged even further the global presence of Italians. As with previous historical contexts, here too Gabaccia is very careful to link the massive outflow of Italian migrants with major political and socioeconomic developments occurring in what became the Italian Republic. But now it was the modern, democratic state – one that boasted one of the most progressive workers' rights charts – that stepped into the migration arena, no doubt aware of the immense returns that the exporting of labour power would yield. As Gabaccia shows, the new "*padrone* state", while expressing juridical concerns regarding the treatment of Italian workers abroad – and in some cases also acting on them – also took over many of the informal mechanisms that in the past had served to move millions of workers and their families across the globe. Readers will also appreciate the author's discussion of the various national contexts within which these "last Italian migrants" sought to incorporate themselves – ranging from the *Gastarbeiter* model enforced in Germany to the multiculturalist approach favoured by Canada. Gabaccia's postwar narrative would have missed a significant note of historical irony had she ended her study before the epochal change occurring around the 1970s–1980s, when Italy, for the first time in its history, became predominantly a country of "immigration" – the favoured or temporary destination of increasing numbers of migrants, mostly from the North African and Baltic regions. But, in a few concluding pages, Gabaccia offers a very pointed and perceptive discussion of this issue, raising a number of questions that are likely to remain at the centre of Italian national debates for the foreseeable future. One of them – perhaps another irony of history – is the inability of Italian society to cope with disadvantaged minorities in its midst, and its difficulty in exhibiting the kind of cosmopolitanism that "diaspora Italians" proved capable of. Hardly a happy ending in a saga that has unfolded over a millennium.

As with all good works of historical synthesis, Gabaccia's too is informed by a theoretical perspective that has progressively unfolded thanks to the contribution of

scholars such as Frank Thistlethwaite, Rudolph Vecoli, Robert Harney, and Samuel Baily (among several others); a perspective that has dealt a blow to the once-popular "Handlin paradigm", and more recently, to what Gabaccia has termed "the immigrant paradigm of United States history".[2] Having successfully discredited the (host)-nation-centered approach, the research agenda that this new perspective has made possible is, in Gabaccia's own words, "the migrations' impact on human culture and identity, and on the evolution of human collectivities – nations, states, families, neighbourhoods, and home communities – that make life both human and culturally diverse" (p. 10).

Still, although able to rely on a number of solid works on Italian migration that grow out of a transnational perspective, Gabaccia offers her own contribution to this perspective through her use of the notion of "diaspora". However tentative and in some ways experimental her exercise may appear, it is clear that diaspora – both in the singular and plural – has afforded her a useful tool to move the narrative forward and give conceptual coherence to the treatment of developments whose spatial and temporal ramifications are overwhelming. Readers who are used to associate this concept with collectivities scattered around the world on account of religious, political, or ethnoracial oppression, will no doubt appreciate the nuances Gabaccia brings to this concept as she applies it to mostly "free-choice" migrants and to the various mechanisms of connectedness and group identity that have come into being. Comparative work informed by this perspective will certainly reveal how specific to the Italian case these "diasporic" dynamics were, and whether this concept can profitably be applied to the study and interpretation of other migrant experiences. We may be close to a new paradigm still in migration history.

Last but not least, though the primary objective of *Italy's Many Diasporas* is to analyse broad and complex historical processes, Donna Gabaccia has been able to use successfully a variety of narrative devices, allowing her to bring to the fore the lives of ordinary men and women and making her book a fascinating reading for specialists and laypersons alike.

*Bruno Ramirez*

## McCarthy, Jim. Political Theatre during the Spanish Civil War. University of Wales Press, Cardiff 1999. xix, 251 pp. £35.00.

In the heated context of the interwar crisis, the impact of the Spanish Civil War and its outcome was enormous beyond Spanish borders, but, of course, nothing compared to the dramatic legacy that it left in Spain. The military uprising of 1936 attempted to eradicate by force the democratic tradition that had led to the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931. The attempt failed and the Republic had to defend its integrity on the battlefield for nearly three years, becoming the symbol of the struggle against fascism throughout the world. Only under these circumstances of armed resistance can we understand one of the most interesting and least studied cultural expressions of the history of Spain, the *Teatro de Urgencia*.

Jim McCarthy sheds light on political theatre in Spain from 1936–1939, after obtaining texts located in public archives or provided by individuals. His work goes way beyond mere explanation and description of the material compiled, as he questions it with the aim

2. Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History", *The Journal of American History*, 86 (1999), pp. 1115–1134.

of positioning this cultural phenomenon in a broader spatial and temporal dimension. Instead of seeing it as a specific product, which had its origin in the war and which disappeared when it ended, the author raises questions which go on to form the backbone of the book. What links did the *Teatro de Urgencia* have with other forms of European experimental theatre? To what extent is there continuity between the *Teatro de Urgencia* and prewar political theatre?

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first three cover Russian and German experimental theatre, its impact on Spain and the subsequent appearance of political theatre with a clear socialist orientation. The author defends the idea that the *Teatro de Urgencia* was a continuity rather than a rupture with these experiences developed in the 1930s, although the War undoubtedly influenced the development of significant innovations. The functions and objectives were new: subordination to the propaganda needs of the Republic and, closely linked to this, education and recreation for the spectators, both at the front and in the rearguard. The submission of the theatre to state bodies was also new, the latter designing specific cultural strategies, such as the creation of the "theatre guerrillas" in December 1937, in line with the needs imposed by the war effort. It was precisely the circumstance of full-scale war that generated the urgency of reaching a broad range of diverse social sectors, which were above all different from those which used to go to the theatre before 1936. These demands also dictated notable transformations in the plays and their performance.

The changes affected both form and content, and responded to a desire to create a new relationship between the audience and the play. Indeed, according to Jim McCarthy, this is the defining feature of the *Teatro de Urgencia*. Drama became an instrument of education, aimed at producing a new citizen involved in the defence of the Republic. For the citizen to participate actively in actions outside the limits of the theatre, it is necessary to transform the spectators into actors in the struggle against fascism. The formal changes are a logical consequence of these ambitions: open-air performances and those in improvized venues, such as stations, streets and hospitals, an increase in the physical closeness between the actors and the spectators – these and other special features are, however, still elements rescued from the past. Appeals to the "people", the prominent role given to travelling theatre troupes, and to open spaces, are identifying marks of Spanish popular theatre which go back as far as the Golden Age.

The last four chapters describe in detail the favourite subjects of the plays. The enemy is portrayed as an evil being, made up of a number of forces, such as the church, the army, the local political bosses, the falangists; the rebel soldiers are sometimes seen as confused, mistaken people, blind to the good and the truth embodied in the republic. The latter, in turn, is fully identified with a specific idea of Spain, a paradise set upon by the fascist powers of Germany and Italy. This leads to the idea that the armed conflict is the result of a foreign invasion. The Republican soldier becomes a true collective hero, personifying the essence of the "people". Although no longer belonging to the popular militias, which arose in the heat of the revolution in the summer of 1936, but rather to an increasingly complex people's army, the figure of the soldier is used to insist on the ideas of order, discipline and hierarchy. The watchwords that have to be obeyed to achieve victory are frequently repeated: a criticism of defeatism, a sense of duty, the importance of education, the need to increase production. Finally, the romantic concept of "the people" is a constant feature, an abstract idea now converted into a unifying element, a sort of religious icon that shares the same values and virtues as the Republic.

The author concludes that prewar experimental theatre displayed a lack of definition of objectives that it was possible to clarify mainly thanks to the wartime conditions. Instead of limiting itself to the tasks of opposition that it had performed until 1936, political theatre had to confront the challenge of meeting the needs of the Republic at war and, therefore, to highlight the civil responsibilities of citizens and their duties to the state. The Spanish *Teatro de Urgencia* thus contributed to strengthening the Republic as a political and military entity.

The results of Jim McCarthy's study amply achieve his initial aims and the book is a brilliant contribution to the study of political theatre during the Spanish Civil War. Some points can, however, be identified which require further information or analysis. The theatre project of the Republic, which depends on state bodies hardly mentioned in the book, is not at all clear; nor is its connection with the production of plays, in the hands of authors whose background and development we do not know. This gap is partly a result of the lack of attention paid to the chronological dimension of the conflict. The evolution of the Republican state, from its collapse to its reconstruction, is not traced. It is true that the author alludes to the socialization of the conventional theatres in the summer of 1936, and to the contradictions that arose between a theatre industry controlled by the workers' organizations and the maintenance of repertoires intended for bourgeois audiences, but he says very little about the long period from the summer of 1936 to the creation of the theatre guerrillas in December 1937. The Civil War is reduced to the backdrop against which the theatre experiments take place. The Republic is presented as a monolithic whole throughout the war period and as an abstract being, as the social groups which uphold and defend it, the working class and the middle classes, united in a popular front coalition, do not appear anywhere.

Also, the author does not attempt to establish adequate causal connections between the political and social processes that the conflict generates and the theatrical expressions. For this it would have been very interesting to describe more clearly the state bodies, their functions and the degree of fulfilment of the same, and to examine in more depth whether or not the different political organizations fighting for power in the Republican rearguard had different propaganda strategies. Indeed, in chapter 4, the author alludes to the absence of a centralized control of propaganda by the Republican state. This takes us to another more important question: whether the *Teatro de Urgencia* was really the result of certain strategies imposed "from above", or whether it was rather the product of cultural initiatives "from below". If this was the case, the latter would maybe have contradicted the former, and may even have challenged in some way the increasing Republican state authority.

Finally, it would have been very interesting to give a human face both to the Republican decisions on culture and propaganda and to the production of drama, that is to say, to pay more attention to the individuals who were directly responsible for the development of the *Teatro de Urgencia*. These omissions could have been mitigated to a great extent by using the relevant bibliographic references on the Spanish Civil War, which are very abundant in Anglo-Saxon historiography. Indisputable reference books, such as those by Gabriel Jackson or Paul Preston, or the more recent contributions of Helen Graham on the reconstruction of the state during the war, would have enriched this remarkable study of a cultural product that, like so many other things, was lost with the Republican defeat.

*Angela Cenarro*

Buhle, Paul. Taking Care of Business. Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor. Monthly Review Press, New York 1999. ix, 315 pp. $40.00. (Paper: $18.00.)

The "business of America", as President Calvin Coolidge once put it, "is business". So, too, with American labor. In *Taking Care of Business*, Paul Buhle chronicles the dominance of precisely such a business-oriented outlook among labor's top brass, whose commitment to a narrow, exclusionary form of "business unionism" represents "the tragedy of American labor" referenced in the book's subtitle.

*Taking Care of Business* focuses on the leadership of three men – Sam Gompers, George Meany, and Lane Kirkland – who, together with William Green, presided over the modern American labor movement for all but one of its first 115 years. It is a record of bureaucratic continuity (and intransigence) without equal anywhere in the world. As Buhle notes, "no world government, however dictatorial, and virtually no corporation of any size and significance" can match the organizational stranglehold that these men held over their constituency: the American working class (p. 203). This book is an attempt to understand how Gompers, Meany, Kirkland, and their labor lieutenants, attained such power and how its exercise shaped the increasingly conservative trajectory of organized labor in the United States and in many other parts of the world

Buhle makes it clear that he has little patience for the "suffocating authority of the labor bureaucracy". He is especially critical of those highly-placed labor leaders who, operating as unresponsive bureaucrats, become divorced from their followers, invariably drifting to a more conservative position in defense of the status quo and their accumulating privileges under the present system. It is a story sadly familiar to activists, and the subject of considerable attention from a long line of scholars stretching from Robert Michels to C. Wright Mills. While Buhle's own contribution to this line of analysis is not always clear, he does an excellent job of documenting the "iron law" of oligarchy within the ranks of organized labor in the United States.

We see how Samuel Gompers, the father of the American Federation of Labor, drifted from the Marxian socialism of his youth toward a more "pragmatic" brand of craft unionism on his way to becoming a capitalist ideologue of the worst sort in his old age. As the main architect of business unionism, Gompers laid in place the theoretical and organizational foundations for what would become the exclusionary paradigm of American unionism, a model that was to remain in full force until the organization of basic industry in the 1930s. Gompers's celebrated political "voluntarism", Buhle shows, was less about avoiding all political entanglements than it was about using politics selectively to advance his anti-immigration, anticollectivist conservative agenda.

With Gompers's death in 1924, the leadership of the AFL passed into and through the hands of William Green whose own death in 1952 ushered in the era of George Meany, the quintessential modern labor leader. The cigar-chomping Meany was the consummate political operative, a man of limited intellect and even more limited vision. Despite lip service to the civil rights agenda of the early 1960s, Meany was clearly a champion, not of racial integration which he failed to promote in most unions, but of preserving the AFL as a bastion for the male and pale skilled workers who comprised its core membership. A strong supporter of America's postwar imperial expansion, including its disastrous invasion of Vietnam, Meany was a staunch cold warrior who devoted his life to defending an increasingly indefensible form of business unionism.

Whereas Gompers, the cigar maker, and Meany, the plumber, were both products of

working-class trades and union families, Lane Kirkland was neither. The son of a southern businessman, Kirkland, who eased into the AFL-CIO's top spot in 1979, represented the fruition of business unionism. Presiding over a shrinking union movement and facing a Republican ascendancy, Kirkland all but abandoned labor's war at home in favor of his first love: spreading the gospel of American capitalism overseas. With covert backing from the CIA and the state department, Kirkland's foreign policy, like that of his predecessors, was directed at destabilizing independent labor movements abroad. Indeed, one of the clear themes running through Buhle's account is the inseparability of America's imperial aspirations overseas from the practice of business unionism at home.

*Taking Care of Business* places the careers of all three men under a common lens, revealing, but also magnifying, the essential continuities in their views and practices of unionism. Parts of this story have been presented elsewhere, although this is the most comprehensive treatment yet of America's peculiar institution of business unionism as seen from the perspective of those leaders who gave it form and direction. Buhle is at his best and most original in linking the foreign and domestic arenas of organized labor and in providing a voice for the many unskilled laborers, workers of color, women, and others who were often relegated to the margins and silenced by the mainstream of American labor.

While Buhle has provided a moving account of the costs incurred by business unionism, neither the phenomenon itself nor its sources are very closely examined. Business unionism, which is never defined with any precision, appears here in multiple forms. Sometimes it refers generally to leaders who are "self serving" or who have "accepted existing social arrangements". Other times, it refers to specific policies that condone racism or sexism, or advance elitist and antidemocratic measures at home or abroad. In the end, it is not clear if business unionism is an organizational logic (of exclusion), a style of (bureaucratic) leadership, a set of (conservative) social policies, or perhaps all three.

In the absence of a clear working definition of business unionism, its sources become all the more difficult to locate outside of the individuals who espoused it. Although Buhle insists at the outset that he is less concerned with understanding "personalities" than with analyzing "generic phenomenon", the latter is not specified much beyond his blanket indictment of trade-union bureaucracy. Missing from this account is any serious engagement with the classic "dilemma" of modern organization: namely, that hierarchical command structures are often essential to effective mass mobilization yet those same organizational structures, if left unchecked, can undermine the very goals of mobilizing. So, the question is not how to root out bureaucracy in any and all forms – a position that is at the very least an invitation to failure – but rather: what kind of bureaucracy, under what conditions, and for what ends?

As a sophisticated observer of American radicalism, Buhle wisely avoids the old Left's habit of blaming labor "fakirs" and "misleaders" for every failed strike, organizing campaign, and union election. But, like many other studies of leadership, his account endows Gompers, Meany, and Kirkland with almost superhuman powers, failing in the process to fully consider how the rank-and-file may have conspired in the reactionary agenda of their leaders. However much business unionism was a product of (mis)leaders, men like Gompers, Meany, and Kirkland were never operating in a vacuum, either in relationship to their followers or to their many opponents within the wider society. Recognizing these constraints is not about making up excuses for failed leaders but simply understanding the historical context of those failings.

*Taking Care of Business* accomplishes its goal of offering a sweeping and well-documented indictment of the men who led American labor over the course of the last century. It is an accessible account, told with equal parts historical insight and political passion. If it is possible to learn from history, one can only hope that this book is read widely by the new generation of leaders who sit atop the American labor movement.

*Howard Kimeldorf*

MAGAT, RICHARD. Unlikely Partners. Philanthropic Foundations and the Labor Movement. ILR Press (Cornell University Press), Ithaca [etc.] 1999. x, 242 pp. Ill. $39.95; £30.50.

The author, formerly president of a foundation himself, and a one-time union activist, has written an engaging, revealing, and almost entirely original account of the relations between organized philanthropy and organized labor in the United States. His book is quite encyclopaedic in its coverage, ranging from the early years of the twentieth century well into the past decade, where it is particularly strong. It is thematically structured and offers, at the least, an invaluable collection of leads into an area of American life otherwise neglected, uncharted, and mostly unknown. Howard M. Gitelman's *Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), on the Rockefeller family, firms, and foundations in the early twentieth century, is the only other substantial work dealing with this subject. Magat is rightly generous in his praises for Gitelman's overlooked monograph, which stimulated his own interest and research.

The book is difficult to summarize or criticize. This is because large parts of it are, in effect, chronologically structured catalogues of labor union/foundation interaction on the major issues of common interest Magat has identified: research into the pathologies of industrial society; race relations; problems of working women; farm and southern labor; education, and particularly workers' education; health, safety, and environmental issues; economic development; public policy, from the Wagner Act to NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Area); the encouragement of internal union democracy; and, in recent years, assistance with organizing the working poor. In all of these areas Magat turns up interesting, sometimes surprising findings, offers suggestions for further research, and provides the start of a bibliographic trail other researchers might be advised to pursue. His book is more a resource than a work of analysis.

A great strength of his work is its very amateurishness, in the best sense. Magat has no scholarly hangups. He pursues his subject without too much regard for any attempt to make sense of it in any theoretical fashion. Instead, he supplies a couple of hundred pages of useful information, some of it gathered from his own extensive direct, personal experience, much from an exploitation of his wide-ranging contacts among union and foundation officials. He reports the results of a questionnaire exercise to which he persuaded hundreds of the latter to respond. Direct quotations are often very frank and revealing, notably on the extreme timidity of foundation officials forced to choose between their generally weak liberal convictions and the threat of attack from successive generations of right-wing politicians. In most cases, foundations appear to have preferred discretion to valor.

What general impressions or conclusions emerge from reading this interesting volume? One is that, as Magat is the first to acknowledge, "partnership" between the worlds of organized philanthropy – funded by the very rich, who often maintained a personal and

quasi-proprietary interest in their charities, and administered by a small, tight group of white, male, middle- to upper-middle-class professionals – and organized labor has been, not only "unlikely", but also quite rare. For the most part, issues to do with labor relations have been marginal to American "philanthropoids"; when their concerns have embraced the world of work, that has mostly occurred as a by-product of their enduring core interests in the promotion of research and direct services in the areas of health, education, poverty and its reduction, and gender or racial justice.

A second conclusion, not spelled out by Magat, is that, in this respect, the results of his study of the volume and direction of charitable giving, and the exploration of the reasons for the slight interest of American philanthropoids in labor relations *per se*, mirror the general coolness or indifference, occasionally warming up as far as ambivalence, between the American educated middle classes and the organized manifestations of working-class interests. For example, in the post-Second-World-War years, foundations have been more interested in the promotion of democracy within unions, and the investigation and exposure of unions' shortcomings in this respect – an enterprise in which their contributions have fuelled, in a small way, the larger disenchantment with organized labor, the tendency to dismiss it as just another corrupt interest group – than they have been in the larger problem of America's growing deficit in economic and industrial democracy. Again, when liberal foundations have given money for the organization of poor people's movements in recent years, they have mostly directed this money outside of established union channels, and seen the labor movement more as an enemy of than as a potential resource for the working poor with whom they are concerned.

A third observation is how enormously important foundation support has been to our ability to understand what has been going on within American society in the century of organized philanthropic activity. Magat's book is full of evidence that the most substantial connection between the world of the foundations – and their academic and voluntary-sector clients and collaborators – and the world of labor has been through the promotion of research by the former into the life and activity of the latter. Magat emphasizes, without altogether intending to, quite how dependent so much of the best and most enduring scholarship on the overlapping problems of race and gender inequality, for example, has been on foundation money and initiative. In many respects, the philanthropoids have determined the research agenda, social scientists have responded to the call (and the lure of the big grants obedience will bring), and historians now stand as the principal beneficiaries of this joint enterprise.

Foundations in the United States are hugely endowed, tax-sheltered, loosely regulated, and extremely numerous. They are a vital force in public policy making. They are also, as Magat points out, in another of his book's interesting messages, quite plural and diverse in their political orientations. Readers will emerge from this book impressed by and better informed about the range of their activities, the importance of their contributions to social knowledge and policy, and – in some respects – their occasional, surprising radicalism. The general political orientation of the philanthropoids Magat has studied has been towards a cautious and smug elite reformism; but there is more evidence in this book of the important contributions of the minority of left-liberal foundations to sustaining social experimentation and protest than there is of any chilling, hegemonic effect of the foundations' activities on the confinement of the zone of respectable discourse in the United States about the subjects he discusses.

*Howell John Harris*

PALMER, DAVID. Organizing the Shipyards. Union Strategy in Three Northeast Ports, 1933–1945. ILR Press of Cornell University Press, Ithaca [etc.] 1998. 264 pp. xvii, 264 pp. Ill. $39.95; £29.95.

In *Organizing the Shipyards*, David Palmer examines the creation and early development of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America (IUMSWA). His purpose is to explain the successes and failures of the organizational strategies adopted by the union's leadership with the hope that this will provide, "a living perspective for those today facing a similar crisis in their workplaces and unions" (p. 13). Although Palmer concedes that the National Labor Relations Act's procedures for protecting unions and other forms of state aid were important, he argues that "the level of local union membership and involvement and the existence of local leadership that could mobilize these members into an active movement" was "most decisive" (p. 9) in accounting for the union's rise. In other words, the shopfloor, not the state, is where unions need to direct their attention.

Palmer bases his argument on an impressive body of evidence mined from collections of union, government, and company papers as well as a wide range of published primary documents. He moves far beyond the readily available sources with an extensive set of interviews of union leaders – many of whom allowed access to their privately held personal papers. The result is at once a study in union formation and a "collective biography" (p. 2) of the workers who built the organization. This focus on activists is the great strength of the book because these men, standing at the center or IUMSWA's campaigns, had a vantage point from which to observe both rank-and-file workers and the union's top leaders. Sadly, information on the ethnic and racial composition of the workforce was insufficiently available to support generalizations on this important part of the story.

*Organizing the Shipyard*s begins with the IUMSWA's campaign at New York Ship in Camden, New Jersey. The union grew out of the workers' disgust with moribund craft-based American Federation of Labor (AFL) locals, desperation in the face of the depression, and hope borne of the early New Deal. Leaders of the drive came from among the yard's 3,300 employees; the most prominent of these had connections to nearby Philadelphia's vibrant socialist movement. The unionization drive was supported by the strong working-class community of Camden and, surprisingly, by the city government and police. In 1934 union leaders exploited a series of missteps by New York Ship's management during to win the IUMSWA's first contract. A management counteroffensive the next year prompted a second phase of organizing. The union solidified its base among workers during this conflict and proved capable of mobilizing the entire Camden community to back their demands. The IUMSWA also fought within the halls of government convincing President Franklin D. Roosevelt to force a settlement of their fifteen-week strike in the union's favor.

The Roosevelt administration's role in settling the strike helped convince union president John Green and other top leaders to distance themselves from socialist politics and ally with New Deal liberalism. Green also pursued an accommodation with management as a means of securing his organization within the union. Rank-and-file militancy, union democracy, and direct action were important to initial union victories, but the leadership came to believe that the left-wing ideologies held by many activist members, and the threat of strikes taken without official sanction, endangered the union. Efforts to centralize control at the top created internal conflicts that would bedevil the union through the 1940s.

With a firm base at New York Ship, the IUMSWA sallied forth to organize other yards on the east coast. In 1936 the union, now part of the newly minted Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), began an all out assault on the entire New York Harbor region. Federal Ship, an US Steel subsidiary in Kearny, New Jersey, was its main object. Palmer writes that technological change and yard layout had an important impact on the drive. As welding replaced riveting in ship production, welders grew to form a significant body of the yard's employees. These workers tended to be younger and more militant than those in the hierarchically structured craft of riveting. Moreover, welders at Federal Ship were located in a central shop with access to all parts of the yard. Savvy union leaders thus concentrated their efforts on this core of militants and soon were able to launch a short strike that resulted in the local's first contract in 1937.

Their victory built, in part, on an accord between the CIO's Steel Workers' Organizing Committee and US Steel, did not settle matters. Management at Federal Ship surreptitiously resisted the union while workers continued to fight for their rights on the shopfloor. Green, meanwhile, sought an accommodation with management based on arbitration of grievances and the maintenance of contractual provisions against strikes, and defended the union by petitioning the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for redress. Palmer's account of the Federal Ship fight ends with the IUMSWA local's 1940 NLRB election victory, one won with a combination of legal and direct action tactics. He writes, however, that even then the union had only lukewarm support among the workers. This is a curious point to break off the narrative. The reader is left ignorant of how the different strategies of Green and the activists in Local 16 played out as the shipyard mobilized for war. Disputes at Federal Ship in 1941 compelled Roosevelt to seize the yard in 1941 and conflicts between the union and management remained a major headache for the National War Labor Board in 1942. Surely knowledge of these events would have shed light on the merits of IUMSWA's organizing strategy.

Palmer does not hide the fact that he is on the side of those activists who favored direct action over Green's "updated business unionism". His opinion finds partial support the IUMSWA's tortured effort to organize the Fore River Shipyard outside Boston, Massachusetts. Ownership by Bethlehem Steel placed this yard in a category with Federal Ship, but a variety of differences made it much more difficult to organize. Importantly, its mostly native born workers were more "culturally conservative" and anticommunist than those in the mid-Atlantic states. Moreover, the Fore River management implemented its parent company's sophisticated anti-union personnel policies and had skillfully created and maintained a company union that it effectively shielded from attack by the IUMSWA and the NLRB into the 1940s.

Palmer makes the case that the union's attempts to organize the yard during the 1930s and early 1940s were compromised by the bureaucratic political/legal strategy of its international officers. This included "red-baiting" local union activists so as to be more acceptable to the workers and the state, and attempts to substitute paid outside organizers from the CIO and IUMSWA for the local left-wing militants who had been so effective in other campaigns. Secret negotiations between Green and Bethlehem resulted in an a 1941 agreement to end legal challenges to the company union even as local IUMSWA organizers were making such a challenge the centerpiece of their organizing campaign. This action effectively ended the drive. It was only in 1944 that earlier practices of ideological exclusion were reversed and a new mid-level leadership brought into the campaign. This change, combined with the workers' rising concerns

over job losses after demobilization, allowed the IUMSWA local to finally win a NLRB election.

Fore River was to be the IUMSWA's last great victory. Government orders for ships had already begun to fall off by 1944 and dropped precipitously after the war's end. The union's membership declined from 178,300 in 1945 to 76,800 the following year and a mere 18,700 in 1962 (p. 232). Palmer, however, is concerned more with the beginnings of the union than the reasons for its decline.

The prospective organizer reading his book would certainly learn the value of rank-and-file mobilization, strong mid- and top-level union leadership, detailed knowledge of plant geography, community mobilization, and a clear, yet flexible strategy for each campaign. Clearly, as Palmer argues, mobilizing workers is a central, perhaps even the "most decisive", factor in forming unions, but much of his evidence points to the necessity of securing the national state's support as well. In two of the three cases reported here, intervention by the federal government was absolutely essential to victory. If this book is intended for use as a manual for organizing, it might have emphasized more the need to ally with the national state and the techniques used by the likes of Green and his close associates to build and maintain that alliance. Likewise, a history of the IUMSWA's organizing drive must come to terms with the fact that the larger context of working-class political mobilization within the New Deal coalition made possible much of what the IUMSWA achieved. To his credit, Palmer provides enough evidence for the reader to come to a conclusion different from his own – and this is deserving of high praise in itself.

*Andrew A. Workman*

## Drew, Allison. Discordant Comrades. Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left. Ashgate, Aldershot [etc.] 2000. vii, 309 pp. £43.00.

Allison Drew offers a detailed, absorbingly vivid account of the development of "the Left" in South Africa over the first half of the last century, providing us a valuable resource to come closer to the history she studies. Her study is meticulously researched with the added value of being, to the best of my knowledge, the first comprehensive published account to draw on the Comintern archives.

Drew makes a welcome contribution to that too limited historiography which does not reduce "the Left" to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and does not reduce the politics of the CPSA to its official positions. Her work takes us into tensions and differing political tendencies inside the CPSA and to Left politics, primarily Trotskyist, outside and in opposition to the CPSA. She gives appropriate weight and detailed attention to a range of organizations of struggle including the National Liberation League, the Non-European United Front, and the All-African Convention (AAC).

Recognizing "structural parameters", Drew insists that there were choices and decisions, not a simple preordained linear historical process; "that events did not have to unfold as they did". In her conclusion, she gives particular weight to two major examples of "opportunities which may have been lost". In September 1931, several members of the CPSA were expelled. Amongst them was Sidney Bunting who had been central to attempts to orientate the party to black workers. Drew raises the real political option of those members forming a "new socialist body". In 1928 Bunting had founded the League of African Rights (LAR) with a programme of "both democratic and national liberation components". This was an "organisation of ordinary people – as opposed to the then tiny

ANC, which was dominated by chiefs and other political and economic elites". In October 1929, the Comintern ordered its disbanding "just as [it] [...] was gaining ground".

In line with her insistence on recognizing contingency, Drew appropriately raises the question of what might have developed without the dissolution. She is right in insisting that these examples amongst other possibilities, posed real historical options; that what happened was explicable, but not preordained. But recognition of that needs to go further. Bunting *chose* both to obey the Comintern directives and not to form (or join) a new socialist "organization". What is at issue here are questions of theoretical perspective, political vision and principles in terms of which real historical alternatives were identified and chosen or not. Central then are *political judgement* and the bases on which this is made. The fact that Drew (as I) clearly would have preferred different judgements does not define Bunting's out of existence as judgements themselves. True, as Drew insists, there were impositions of a destructive "line" and policy zigzags. These were characteristics of the Stalinization (rendered by Drew as Bolshevization) of both the Comintern and the CPSA. Real political alternatives were concretized in the situation around a whole set of inescapable questions: What would the policy of the LAR have been? What form of organization would Bunting have formed? What policies would it have pursued in relation to the different and sometimes conflicting class interests amongst blacks? What policy would it have adopted in relation the 1935 popular fronts? Would it have pursued a working-class united front instead? In opposition? How would it have dealt with the relations between black and white workers? Would it have, like the CPSA, have favoured production for "the war effort" against strikes by workers for higher wages? How would it have related to the Stalin/Hitler Pact – the international Left opposition? Would it have supported the AAC, the ANC, neither? This set of issues emerges, not as simple speculation, but because they were posed in the situation. As such, these – and others – were precisely the issues on which "the Left" *was* making political choices – *different* political judgements. The existence of alternatives was *being reflected* in the political *discord* which she seems to bemoan as unnecessary and imposed.

Her work is filled with information constituting a vivid picture of many aspects of the organizations and individuals self-identifying as socialist. But what constitutes identity as socialist or Left? Drew provides detailed information on the Left in relation to issues of theory, programme, practice and relations to the working class, but seems to regard self-identity as largely sufficient (although she draws her own implicit lines, excluding some of the racists of the SA Labour Party). Despite the empirical detail which she brings in relation to the struggle of workers and the relationships of socialists to that struggle, there is a tendency to focus primarily on socialist identity as being constituted in the ways in which self-identified socialists relate to *each other*. The problem for Drew, highlighted in her title, is discord *amongst* "comrades". By implication, the solution is accord and people who self-identify as socialists could have been loyal to each other, rather than what she sometimes trivializes as doctrine. In the answer of unity, however, is the set of questions to which different *chosen* answers historically led to real disunity. Sidestepping issues of "doctrine", however apparently attractive, merely means reposing them at another point. With whom would there have been accord? On what basis? To do what? In struggle for what and against what? We are returned to the same types of political questions around which there were *different* political choices being made.

Drew points to how Comintern orders from 1929 onwards interfered with the development of a more "advanced tendency" inside the CPSA (linked to Bunting). She

has earlier provided us with material allowing us to see how the Bolshevik revolution and the politics of internationalism promoted precisely that development in an earlier period. South Africans in struggle have shared the support of probably the most extensive solidarity movement in human history. At a time when "international" appears meaningful only as the prefix for competitiveness, there is a particularly acute need to search history past and present for those examples of a different, enriching proletarian alternative of crossing capitalism's national boundaries. There is a well-trodden path along which the hope of Marxist and proletarian internationalism is analytically reduced to the foreign policy dictates of the Soviet bureaucracy. If the description seems to mirror the actual degeneration of the Comintern, it is regrettable that Drew does not allow for the real historical alternatives posed in the situation, tending to portray that degeneration as itself ineluctable and preordained – the problem of Marxist internationalism *per se*.

Her tendency is to move from developments inside the Left to the broader movement of resistance, to the working class. Looking inwards to self-identified "comrades" as the point of departure for consideration of the broader context has the advantage of making more vivid the lived experience of the Left. It allows the reader to encounter developments in the broader context through the prism of the Left's life and preoccupations. But it means that for the reader unfamiliar with the history of struggle in South Africa, organizations and events are sometimes encountered in a jarring way, before they are later outlined with greater detail and information. More importantly, it expresses a key aspect of Drew's approach – the tendency to focus her explanations of intra-Left developments *on* intra-Left developments (whether local or international), rather than issues about relating *outwards* to the workers' struggle. It is in fact at the point at which two strengths of her work intersect – the recognition of options in history and the focus on discord amongst people declaring common commitments – that there is most to question. Drew will know that for some, "Bolshevization" was not that at all but in fact Stalinization. The use of the term is itself a reflection of different choices being made in the context. While Drew deals fully with developments in the broader context, her approach sometimes means that she neglects them as examples of the contingency she wishes to emphasize – examples which posed fundamentally different choices of position for those on the left. In 1922 striking white workers were supported by the CPSA but not by hundreds of thousands of black workers. In 1942 black workers forged the then biggest strike wave in South African history – but their action was not supported by the CPSA. There were points at which the AAC had broader support than the ANC – but the CPSA supported the ANC. In the 1940s a radicalizing layer of the black petty bourgeoisie rejected participation in the "toy telephone" Native Representatives Council but the CPSA tailed the conservative leadership of the ANC on the issue. In each of the examples, the reality of alternatives was posed in the event itself. Stalinists, Trotskyists and others on the left were divided on these issues exactly because there were different options and choices made in the situation. The identification of the real choices has to be focused outside of the self-identified Left to workers and activists in struggle.

Beyond her primary focus on the Left, Drew's work emphasizes that the history of the ANC is embedded in the struggle of different classes and development amongst different alternative organizations, none of which had a preordained mass base. Her history is to be welcomed at a time when the history of struggle in South Africa is sometimes rewritten as the history of the convergence of the anti-apartheid pragmatism of capital and the anti-apartheid struggle of the masses, both expressed in the ineluctable rise of the ANC in order to take the nation forward in the struggle for international competitiveness.

Whatever my reservations about aspects of the underlying approach, I believe her work should be welcomed and used as a richly documented, detailed and comprehensive contribution to the exploration of the history of the left in South Africa. The additional source of the Comintern archives means that Drew's work is enriched by the ability to better test sources against each other. Notwithstanding its particularities, the struggle in South Africa throws up issues faced by the Left, workers and oppressed people internationally. This, and the fact that the struggle in South Africa belongs to workers and progressive people through the world, makes her work also a valuable resource for those whose primary focus of interest may not simply be the (too) small Left in South Africa in the first half of last century.

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