

transnational, but it is informed by an implicit comparative perspective in some parts, especially in the section on cooperative cultural and recreational activities, where she argues that the movement's attempts to construct an alternative culture were similar to those of the continental social democratic parties in the same period.

Certainly a strong case can be made for this, and Robertson's work sheds important light on the nature of grassroots cooperation in this respect: its sports and social clubs, its educational activities, and its links with labour informally as well as formally, for example through the cooperative provision of relief for areas affected by the 1926 General Strike. Comparative studies of cooperation are still rare, unfortunately, but it would be fascinating to examine the British cooperative movement in comparison with the "social democratic world of consumption" created by the famous Vooruit cooperative of Ghent, for example, or the integration of cooperation with other forms of socialist organization in "Red Vienna".³

There has been a revival of interest in cooperation recently. As Robertson herself points out in her introduction, cooperatives have been cited by UK politicians as both a sound business model and a means of social regeneration. The UN's declaration of 2012 as International Year of Cooperatives may help to stimulate further interest in cooperation. It is to be hoped these debates will also lead to further interest in cooperative history, and they will undoubtedly benefit from well-researched and empirically detailed studies like this one.

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RODRÍGUEZ GARCÍA, MAGALY. *Liberal Workers of the World, Unite? The ICFTU and the Defence of Labour Liberalism in Europe and Latin America (1949–1969)*. [Trade Unions Past, Present and Future, Vol. 5.] Peter Lang, Oxford [etc.] 2010. xvi, 338 pp. € 45.50; doi:10.1017/S0020859012000041

When the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) was established in 1949 it adopted a *regional* structure of organization for the promotion of *free* trade unionism. Regionalism represented a new departure in the long history of labour internationalism and was specifically represented as an alternative to the centralized control practised in the rival World Federation of Trade Unions. The ICFTU's regional structures were to operate with a measure of devolution, allowing national affiliates to exercise more initiative in international affairs. In particular, they were intended to facilitate a stronger emphasis on organising. As vigorous proponents of this approach, US union leaders, especially from the American Federation of Labor, saw it as a means of transcending the mere exchange of information on conditions of labour that had characterized the approach of the International Federation of Trade Unions, the mainly social-democratic

3. Peter Scholliers, "The Social Democratic World of Consumption: The Path-Breaking Case of the Ghent Cooperative Vooruit Prior to 1914", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 55 (1999), pp. 71–91; on Red Vienna, see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 212–213.

predecessor of pre-war years. In the rhetoric of the day, this would better equip the ICFTU as a “fighting organization”.

The inclusion of the word “free” in the title of the new organization was an expression of the prevailing anti-communism of its founders and the insistence that, unlike in the Soviet bloc, unions needed to be controlled by their members and not subject to the dictates of the state. The Americans pressed for a more specific form of words involving freedom from domination by “political parties, government, employer or church”. In the end social-democratic trade unionists, linked as they were to political parties, succeeded in having the more general expression “freedom from external domination” written into the constitution. However, in deference to the American trade unions and the central role of collective bargaining in their practice, the preamble to the constitution referred to the importance of “free bargaining instruments [...] which derive their authority from their members”. A balance had thereby been struck between European labour movements with their close trade-union-party links and American unions largely lacking such ties. Free trade unions operating in devolved regional formations were, for the architects of the new International, the way to tackle the challenge of communism in the global labour movement.

The specific form that regional organization would take was subject to vigorous debate and the founding congress could only agree on the *principle* of regionalism, leaving the details for later decision. There were divergent views over how much devolution of power was appropriate and how speedily regional structures needed to be erected. Again, the debate reflected mutual suspicions between the Americans and the Europeans. The former were determined to avoid the ICFTU becoming a Eurocentric organization run by social democrats. They pressed for substantial autonomy at regional level and were keen that the *Confederación de Trabajadores*, which they had been instrumental in launching in 1948 as a hemispheric organization covering North and South America, would become the regional arm for the Americas with its autonomy largely intact. Holding out for a more cautious, experimental approach, and hoping to contain excessive American enthusiasm, the British Trades Union Congress argued successfully for a step-by-step procedure with fact-finding missions despatched in the first instance and further deliberation before permanent structures were put in place.

In practice, the regional organizations that were eventually established – *Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores* (ORIT), European Regional Organization (ERO), Asian Regional Organization (ARO), and African Regional Organization (AFRO) – reflected a compromise system of “decentralized centralism”, all but the self-sufficient European region becoming dependent to a greater or lesser extent on finance from the ICFTU and subject to possible “interference” from its headquarters in Brussels. Formally empowered to set their own dues and priorities, the regions were required to account to the parent body. A Regional Activities Fund administered from Brussels became a key source of seed corn for development work, but because effective control was in the hands of a small sub-committee based in Europe, the Americans soon turned against it. In truth, the regional bodies never set the international labour scene on fire in the way that their promoters had hoped, and it was a measure of the disappointment felt by the Americans that by the 1960s they had sufficiently lost faith in ORIT, AFRO and ARO that they created their own regional institutes – American Institute for Free Labor Development, African-American Labor Center, and Asian-American Free Labor Institute – as the vehicles for financing their activities in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Increasingly seen to be unsuitable, ERO was wound up in 1969.

It is the ICFTU's regional bodies, ORIT and ERO, that provide the focus of the recent monograph by Magaly Rodriguez Garcia. In this study, based on her doctoral dissertation, she uses them as a prism through which to gain a more nuanced understanding of the international free labour movement. She analyses the methods and achievements of the two bodies in a running comparison, a juxtaposing of European and Latin American trade unionism that is as unusual as it is welcome. By and large, the routine interests of ERO and ORIT were not the most pressing issues facing the ICFTU, and they have tended to be neglected by scholars. In the case of ERO it was decided early on that, in order to avoid overlapping with the work of the ICFTU secretariat, it would focus on longer-term problems such as housing or the balance of payments while leaving critical issues of a more immediate concern to the ICFTU secretariat. Yet, as Dr Rodriguez Garcia ably demonstrates, when subjected to scrutiny, this bread-and-butter regional fare does tend to reveal the collective values and mindset of the International. Examination of such material as reports of summer schools, trade-union seminars, and training manuals throws useful light on the mentality of its regional leadership.

In three central chapters that showcase her findings, she describes the quotidian concerns of ERO and ORIT, examining the way they set out to strengthen the political and socio-economic environment within which the labour movement was forced to operate. Among the various foci, she tackles their approach to the problem of totalitarianism in Francoist Spain and the Venezuela of Perez Jimenez; the way they sought to assist labour exiles from totalitarian regimes, and their success or otherwise in promoting free trade unionism. In the field of socio-economic policy, her focus is on such issues as trade-union support for productivity initiatives, full employment, price controls, international trade, and housing. The notion of "modernization" figured prominently in trade-union discourse in both Europe and Latin America, and in the latter this also embraced issues of industrial development and land reform. A chapter on strengthening the international environment looks particularly at trade-union attitudes to American aid which affected both Europe and Latin America in the age of the Marshall Plan and the Alliance for Progress, and the debates associated with a shared general commitment to economic integration manifest in Europe in the Coal and Steel Community, Euratom, and the European Economic Community, and in the Latin American Free Trade Association.

The book is tightly written, often dense, and meticulously referenced, making it difficult to summarize in the space allowed here. What is striking is the undoubted way the personnel in the regional organizations absorbed the modernizing rhetoric – much of it of American provenance – concerning economic growth, the pursuit of productivity, and the benefits of the managerial revolution – all with an accompanying sense that labour-management conflict was becoming outdated. It may be that such cultural borrowings left a permanent imprint on the free trade-union movement, though the author is at pains to point out that, while understanding the need to deal with the Americans, trade unionists in ERO and especially ORIT, refused to follow blindly the lead that the US unions often sought to give.

Throughout, the author emphasizes what she sees as the essential "moderation" of the ICFTU; indeed there is no shortage of reminders that the International had "little to do with orthodox Marxism". This terminology is potentially tricky – what was "orthodox" and does it imply varieties of *unorthodox* Marxism? Again, "moderate" and "radical" are laden with ideological baggage and can often belong to a discourse where traitors and finks soon make an appearance. But Dr Rodriguez Garcia understands the dangers here, insisting on scholarly impartiality and so rejecting the temptation to "wander in the dark meadows of counterfactual history".

Her depiction of the free trade-union movement as perennially “moderate” has more to do with her attempt at a nuanced appreciation of the ICFTU as a manifestation of Labour-Liberalism – hence the book’s title. Again, this seems to run the risk of judgement by labels, though, of course, some terms have to be employed if we are to offer any kind of explanation. Doubtless many in the ICFTU would not take exception to being deemed “liberal”, and it can be safely stated that the ICFTU regarded liberal democracy as an essential environment for free trade unionism to flourish. But free trade unions defined themselves very broadly and offered an umbrella beneath which people of many different persuasions could engage pragmatically. Did this necessarily demand moderation? I suspect not, although in the circumstances of Cold War competition there were certainly pressures in this direction. And what might constitute “moderation” was not necessarily the same in all situations – or to all those involved. One person’s “moderation” might well be another’s “radicalism”. As for whether the ICFTU’s members were better described as “liberal” than “free”: it is moot. But one can guarantee that the question is more likely to arouse passion in the groves of academe than in the ranks of the unions themselves. All in all, the book makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the ICFTU in the period, and particularly through its focus on regional bodies in Europe and Latin America.

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WHITE, ASHLI. *Encountering Revolution. Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*. [Early America. History, Context, Culture.] Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2010. ix, 267 pp. Ill. £28.50; doi:10.1017/S0020859012000053

The Haitian Revolution is surely among the most important events of the “Age of Revolutions”, which shook the Western world in the late eighteenth century. As important as the French or American revolutions, it would have been strange had it not had such a major impact on the slave societies around it.

For a long time, scholars including David Geggus, John Garrigus, Laurent Dubois, Malick Ghachem, and Carolyn Fick have emphasized the importance of studying more deeply not only the Haitian Revolution itself, but also its transnational history. This is what makes historians of slavery throughout the Atlantic world, such as Ada Ferrer, João José Reis, and Flávio Gomes, in publications such as *The World of the Haitian Revolution*,¹ come to emphasize the profound impact of the Haitian Revolution in neighbouring regions such as Cuba or in distant – but still highly interconnected – lands like Brazil.

Similarly, scholars such as Eric Foner and Ira Berlin have been advocating the need to examine the history of the United States from an international and transatlantic perspective, rejecting the narratives that, even to this day, emphasize American exceptionalism. For them, even the discussions about the concepts of nation and citizenship, crucial to understanding the first years of the early republic, must be understood not only in the context of the American Revolution, but also in that of the French and Haitian revolutions.

1. David Geggus and Norman Fiering (eds), *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN, 2008).