

or Calcutta or Lahore, are curiously absent. Still, the authors of this volume have produced an important addition to the larger body of Indian social history.

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American Labor's Global Ambassadors. The International History of the AFL-CIO during the Cold War. Ed. by Robert Anthony Waters, Jr. and Geert Van Goethem. With a foreword by Marcel van der Linden. Palgrave Macmillan, New York [etc.] 2013. x, 302 pp. £ 60.00. doi:10.1017/S0020859015000115

American Labor's Global Ambassadors includes fourteen well-researched articles which, taken together, largely counter the view that the AFL-CIO's foreign policy initiatives were always and everywhere an obstacle to working-class progress. As co-editor Geert van Goethem makes clear in his opening essay, which explores the origins of the American labor movement's "active interventionism" in the wake of World War II, US trade unionists played significant roles not only in determining how a staggering sum of money was spent to fight fascism, but also in encouraging the direction of post-war, and post-colonial, reconstruction efforts. Moreover, far from dictating the course of events, the Americans were as often dictated to. On the evidence of this collection at least, with the possible exception of Solidarnosc in Poland, it is hard to find a movement or organization whose success or failure was decided on the basis of American labor support, or its lack thereof. In each of the countries and regions discussed here, American ambitions were regularly trumped by local requirements. It was a case of things being "more subtle than we knew" (pp. 165, 173), as the volume's other co-editor, Robert Anthony Waters Jr, titled his own essay on AFL policy in British Guiana (now Guyana) and British Honduras (now Belize) in the early 1950s.

The fourteen principal contributions are grouped into four sections. The first includes three essays focused on the international priorities and practices of the US labor movement at the national level, primarily the AFL but also the AFL-CIO. The second looks at the role of the AFL in Italy and France during the immediate aftermath of World War II, and at the AFL-CIO's involvement in Poland during the 1980s. The third consists of five perspectives on the evolving engagement of US unions with their Latin American counterparts from the 1950s through the 1970s. And the fourth provides three views of American labor's support for and complicated relationships with movements for decolonization and national liberation in Asia and Africa. In addition, there is an introductory overview from the co-editors, which aptly describes the AFL-CIO's foreign policy as "one of the last overlooked subjects in the field of Cold War studies" (p. 1); and a foreword from Marcel van der Linden, which notes that we lack not only comprehensive histories of labor's Cold War in many particular places, but also a global history of labor's

Cold War that encompasses the whole. As Frederic Romero concludes in his fitting coda to the volume, there is still much that we need to learn about “international labor politics in the Cold War era” (p. 269). But thanks to the scholars who contributed to this volume, as well as others, there is much that we have learned.

The range and quality of the essays is impressive. Geert van Goethem opens the volume with insightful comments on the “sheer scale” and exceptional character of the American movement’s “interventionist approach” (p. 9). Every country’s labor movement has a foreign policy, he observes, but the American labor movement’s independent policy, undertaken without regard to the priorities of the US government, has been both unusual and of long standing. Even during the first decades of the twentieth century, the AFL’s presence “did not go unnoticed at international meetings” (p. 10). The AFL’s first president, Samuel Gompers, played a leading role in the creation of both the International Labor Organization (ILO), founded in 1919 as the world’s only tri-partite deliberative body to promote and protect global labor rights, and the Pan-American Federation of Labor, founded in 1918. Van Goethem provides a useful overview of these early years, which is nicely complemented by Edmund Werhle’s discussion of the ideological and political underpinnings of AFL-CIO international efforts in the post-World-War-II era. Also illuminating are Mathilde von Bülow’s history of Irving Brown’s efforts to aid national liberation movements in North Africa; and Robert Waters’ essay on the AFL’s post-war policy in the Caribbean, mentioned above. Larissa Rosa Corrêa’s account of the various ways in which Brazilian trade unionists used the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) as cover for their own otherwise proscribed activities under the military dictatorship, and Angela Vergara’s survey of US labor’s role in Chile before, during and after the overthrow of Salvador Allende’s democratically elected left-socialist government in 1973, are also models of historical argument.

One of the signal contributions of this collection is its global scope, which allows us to compare the experience of America’s “labor ambassadors” in Europe with those in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The contrasts are instructive. The AFL’s European foreign policy began as part of a global war against fascism and continued, after the defeat of Nazism, in the form of a global campaign against Soviet socialist regimes and policies. American trade unionists understood the difference between the two. They were willing to participate in a tactical alliance with the latter, but not with the former. After the war, however, having seen the racist, anti-democratic priorities of the fascists defeated, they did not want to see another set of illiberal, anti-democratic policies, whatever the differences, take their place. US trade union leaders believed strongly that wage earners were best served by politically independent trade unions and voluntary collective bargaining agreements. They also remembered the perfidious part German communists had played in the Nazi rise to power and they had no desire to repeat the experience. They therefore worked hard to ensure that workers everywhere might enjoy the advantages of independent or “free” trade unionism, as they understood them. It was an instance of thinking and acting upon their convictions, including the old adage that oppression anywhere is a threat to freedom everywhere.

The volume has inevitable gaps and at least one major flaw. Readers would have benefitted from more attention being paid to the different parts that representatives of the AFL and the CIO played in different parts of the world before their merger in 1955. (Yvette Richards’s history of the AFL and the ICFTU’s Women’s Commission does discuss the contrasts to some extent.) One would also like to know more about countries other than those covered here. A more problematic failing is the assumption, which runs

throughout the volume, that the dominant form of trade unionism in the US has always been some kind of apolitical “business unionism”. Not so. The American labor movement, including the AFL, has always been actively engaged in politics, as the work of Julie Greene, among others, has shown. It has not generally trusted the state to solve the problems of workers. It has also always been more concerned with securing its own freedom of association than with abolishing “the wages system”. But these traits have not made it “apolitical”. It has been simply differently political than, say, those movements which insisted that the solution to workers’ problems lay in public – i.e. state or government – ownership and control of the means of production. Nor should we take the American movement’s desire to give wage earners themselves a direct and determining voice in the terms and conditions of employment as evidence that it was business-minded or coddled employers. “Business unionism” was not a phrase invented by the labor movement to describe its activities; rather, it was coined by its adversaries to impugn its integrity. Until we get these matters straight, it will be difficult to understand the international history of the American labor movement, which has always been of a piece with its domestic history.

These gaps and blind spots are fortunately counterbalanced by the volume’s refreshingly non-dogmatic, serious treatment of many significant themes – most importantly, that whatever outcomes American labor’s “global ambassadors” may have sought, the trade unionists with whom they worked in other countries had their own goals and objectives. They were not patsies but partners, as committed to a vision of free, democratic trade unionism as were the Americans. If this shared desire or framework has to be labeled, the best name for it, I think, is “democratic syndicalism”. The American labor movement has long championed the view that labor is the best guarantor of labor’s rights; and, that a free people ought not, and most probably will not, sell its birthright in return for the mere promise of better days to come – especially if those better days are not to be the product of their own efforts. American trade unionists have also long been associated with, and lent their support to, others around the world who thought along similar lines. These allies and associates came to their democratic loyalties and anti-communism by their own paths, and had their own ideals. If the essays in *American Labor’s Global Ambassadors* are any indication, it may now be possible, finally, to tell their stories.

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A Justiça do Trabalho e sua história. Os direitos dos trabalhadores no Brasil. Org. Ângela de Castro Gomes [e] Fernando Teixeira da Silva. Editora Unicamp, Campinas 2013. 525 pp. R\$60.00. doi:10.1017/S0020859015000127

This collection of essays aims to illuminate the historical role and reach of Brazil’s labor-court system, created in the 1940s as an independent branch of the country’s judiciary.