

are currently preparing *Understanding Comparative History: Britain and America since 1760* as a replacement for the now-defunct course mentioned earlier and are looking for new perspectives and fresh directions on familiar themes. We look here in vain. No distinct viewpoint emerges. All the new work seems merely to confirm the sorts of conclusions that OU undergraduates could have reached at any point in the past ten years. After having read these volumes I feel as though I have been shown the promised land but denied the right of entry. Perhaps, though, I ask for too much? Certainly, it would be churlish to end the review on a critical note. Neville Kirk's study represents a welcome contribution to the study of working-class movements. It is a valuable teaching and scholarly resource for which those interested in labour studies and comparative history will long be grateful.

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AUGUSTINE, DOLORES L. *Patricians and Parvenus. Wealth and High Society in Wilhelmine Germany*. Berg, Oxford [etc.] 1994. xii, 383 pp. £44.95.

Dr Augustine's work is a particularly interesting study of the 502 businessmen who appeared in the *Yearbook of Millionaires of Germany (Jahrbuch der Millionaire Deutschlands)* in 1910–1914. The *Yearbook* presented comprehensive biographical information on Germany's wealthiest men and families, derived from the data of the government wealth and income tax statistics levied throughout most of Germany. These statistics were collated by Rudolf Martin, a civil servant who had access to confidential information concerning them; he corrected inaccurate taxation claims, especially the under-reporting of assets. The *Yearbook* was a widely popular work at the time which has in recent years been rediscovered as a primary and most important source in German social and economic history of the Wilhelmine period. Its objective and comprehensive nature potentially allows the historian empirically to test the validity of many widely held historical and sociological theories about the nature of the pre-1914 German elite and it has been exploited in a number of works, most notably in W.E. Mosse's *Jews in the German Economy: The German-Jewish Economic Elite, 1820–1935* (Oxford, 1987), and in a number of studies by Dr Augustine. Her present work is, essentially, a study of the social and economic characteristics of the 502 wealthiest German businessmen, those assessed as worth 6 million marks or more. This work, it should be noted, apparently concerns only the wealthiest businessmen, and – unless I have missed something – not the wealthiest among the non-business elite (who are discussed by Mosse) from the Kaiser on down. This is perhaps somewhat unfortunate, as information on the non-business wealth sector would have provided excellent comparative data.

Nevertheless, in most respects this is a model study of its kind, wide-ranging, original and very sensible in its conclusions, questioning, for example, the factual basis of the "refeudalization" thesis which heavily relies on a basic dichotomy in social behaviour between the business elite in Prussia and in more "liberal" parts of the Reich. Dr Augustine's study, originally a 1991 doctoral dissertation at the Free University of Berlin, contained 117 statistical tables, only five of which make it to the book. Many social historians would, I am sure, wish to

see her complete dissertation made available to a wider audience. Its discussion of wealthy women breaks new ground, and its final conclusion, that “fusion with the nobility only took place in the cases of a very few families [...] neither a coherent upper class nor a cohesive upper bourgeoisie came into existence in pre-war Germany” (p. 254), though undramatic, is based in wide-ranging evidence. Probably the most basic line of division identified by Dr Augustine (and, by definition, in Mosse’s study) is that between the phenomenally over-represented Jewish business elite and the others, who were overwhelmingly Lutheran. Roman Catholics, accounting for only 9 per cent of the German wealth elite, were greatly under-represented, thus bearing out the famous theses of Weber and Sombart. A comparison of the Jewish and (chiefly Lutheran) gentile wealth elite forms a major component of this work. Once again, Dr Augustine’s conclusions, that Jews did not assimilate but often formed exclusively Jewish social circles, and that anti-semitism was diminishing, not increasing, seem sensible. It is important not to read this subject backwards from the catastrophe which was to follow, unforeseen by anyone at the time. On the other hand, the break in the development of the German wealth structure which occurred as a result of the First World War and the attendant changes it produced appears even more fundamental.

One possibly useful way of placing Dr Augustine’s data in context might be to compare it with British data which is as nearly identical in scope as possible. This reviewer has for some time been engaged in a systematic study of everyone leaving £100,000 or more in Britain during the nineteenth century, now nearing completion. This study is far wider than the group studied for my book *Men of Property* (which is referred to by Dr Augustine), a work which researched those leaving the much higher figure £500,000 or more. Dr Augustine’s sample consists of those worth 6 million marks or more, a figure equivalent to about £300,000 or more at the time. Among those deceased in 1897–1899, the last three years of my study, 634 persons left £100,000 or more and 117 £300,000, suggesting, on the normal “multiplier” of 30:1, that about 1,170 persons in Britain at the very end of the nineteenth century were worth the equivalent of 6 million marks or more, a figure which is itself an understatement, since all land passing by settlement is excluded from the valuation figure while no attempt has been made to ascertain the “true” wealth of these individuals, compensating for duty avoidance and the like, as Rudolf Martin did for the German wealth census. Of the 117 worth £300,000 or more, 95 were businessmen (the others being landowners, professionals or unknowns), implying that 950 British businessmen (at least) or their close relatives were worth the equivalent of 6 million marks or more, compared with 502 in Germany.

Some other comparisons of the two groups are also possible: among these 95 wealthy British businessmen, 22 were engaged in finance, 21 in commerce, 30 in manufacturing and industry of all varieties, and 18 in the food-drink-tobacco trades. Religiously and ethnically, this group appears to be more of a random sample than Dr Augustine found for German wealth-holders, with its grossly over-represented Jewish component and its meagre number of Roman Catholics. The 95 British wealth-holders included only six Jews, in addition to one Greek, one French Roman Catholic, one Swede (Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who was closely connected with industrial Glasgow and left over £400,000 in Britain),

and one gentile German, Peter Ermen, a Manchester cotton manufacturer whose partner had been none other than Friedrich Engels. There were also ten Protestant Nonconformists, nine Scots and Presbyterians, and two Catholics, although it seems very probable even with information lacking on many wealth-holders that the great majority were certainly Anglicans. Rather surprisingly, too, only a very small number of this group had secured a title, only eight businessmen of the 95: The picture found here was, perhaps, to change during the Edwardian era (and after) when many more businessmen received titles than in the past. In spite of the importance of the City of London, with its very large foreign component (heavily Jewish, although Jews probably comprised only a minority of all wealth-holders of foreign background), during the late nineteenth century the evolution of British capitalism apparently produced a wealthy elite which was, it would seem, more “normal” than that in Germany at this time. It was broadly representative of the religious divisions in British society as a whole and contained a significant representation in all provincial cities, although London was still predominant. Presumably this “normality” was the result of the ubiquity of capitalist development throughout all sections of post-Reformation British society and, as well, the lucrative nature of mercantile capitalism and other forms of entrepreneurship favoured by Anglicans (as opposed to Nonconformists and migrants). The traditional elite, based chiefly in British landed society, had been unchallenged in its authority until just before this period, and while the trickle of businessmen securing titles had certainly widened by the 1880s, the great majority of British businessmen remained to be ennobled.

While it is now common for historians to talk of the “peculiarities of the English” it will be seen that, paradoxically, the development of capitalism in Britain produced a wealth structure less “peculiar” than that found in Germany or, almost certainly, anywhere in central or eastern Europe. In particular, given the centrality of this matter for modern German history (as reflected in Dr Augustine’s study) it produced a capitalist wealth structure whose Jewish and other foreign origin component was swamped by its “native” wealth elite, so that this sector of Britain’s wealth structure was large, but not ludicrously over-represented as was evidently the case in Germany and, one feels very likely, elsewhere in central and eastern Europe. The relatively small size of the Jewish and foreign component of Britain’s wealth structure, and its locus in the City of London, whose overseas orientation led its magnates away from any direct nexus with “ordinary” Englishmen, was clearly a powerful factor in negating the development of political anti-semitism and anti-foreigner xenophobia in Britain. To be sure, other powerful actors influenced Britain’s liberalism as well – the Protestant tradition; the comprehensive internalization, by the late nineteenth century, of democracy and “fairness” in political behaviour, the relatively satisfied and affluent status of Britain’s middle classes – but the ubiquity of capitalism and the representative nature of Britain’s capitalist elite was clearly an important factor. It is perhaps significant that the only part of the United Kingdom which failed to produce a representative capitalist elite on the scale of the rest of Britain, Roman Catholic Ireland, demonstrated perpetual turbulent hostility to Britain’s “Establishment”, a hostility often returned by many sectors of the British population. Dr Augustine’s fine study provides much food for

thought here, not least for the comparative light it sheds, when placed in a wider context, on these broader European developments.

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RUIZ, DAVID (Dirección). *Historia de Comisiones Obreras (1958–1988)*. Siglo Veintiuno editores, Madrid [etc.] 1994. xx, 543 pp. Ptas 4000.

Following the Nationalist victory in 1939, the new regime established by General Franco set out to complete the task begun with the war itself, the destruction of the organized labour movement in Spain and disarticulation of the working class itself. Strikes were declared illegal, unions and political parties banned and thousands executed, imprisoned or driven into exile. An authoritarian corporatist system of labour relations was created, based on the notion of individual contracts between workers and employers and enforced membership of both in the State's Vertical unions, the last redoubt of the proto-fascist *Falange*. The episodic acts of collective protest which did take place in the 1940s, notably in Catalonia and the Basque Country, provoked further fierce repression. More generally, workers' resistance was confined to absenteeism, individual acts of indiscipline and sabotage. Yet by the time of Franco's death in November 1975, strike levels were comparable to those in other Western European countries and the labour movement had become a major force in the struggle for democracy. Although this is not unexplored territory, this useful book is the first attempt to produce a serious general history of the principal collective protagonist of this metamorphosis, the *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) or Workers' Commissions.¹

Two excellent chapters outline the circumstances from which the CCOO first emerged: the evolution of the elaborate but increasingly redundant Vertical Union apparatus set up by the State, and the situation and experience of the working class in the immediate post-war decades. Repression and the struggle for survival itself – only in the late 1950s, or even later in the countryside, would living standards reach pre-war levels – made the 1940s a decade of “hopeless resignation” for the working class. Ruiz relates the shift towards “mobilization for demands” to broad social, economic and cultural changes which began in the 1950s and intensified during the following decade. A mass exodus of mainly young migrants, with little or no experience or tradition of organization, flooded to the cities to work in the industrial sector, where they found poor working conditions, worse housing, and wages eaten away by inflation. The vehicle for the labour protests of these and other workers, would not be the pre-war organizations, the socialist UGT or the anarchist CNT, but *Comisiones Obreras*. These were informal workers' commissions usually elected in illegal assemblies to present the grievances and demands of workers in a

¹ Besides the important works cited below, other recent studies of the working-class and labour movement under Franco and during the Transition include: M. Del Alamo, *CC.OO. del País Valencià. Aproximació a la seua història (1966–1992)* (Valencia, 1994); J. Foweraker, *Making Democracy in Spain: Grass Roots Struggle in the South 1955–1975* (New York, 1989); C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, “*Patria Justicia, y Pan*”. *Nivell de vida i condicions de treball a Catalunya 1939–1951* (Barcelona, 1985); M. Redero San Román, *Estudios de la Historia de la UGT* (Salamanca, 1992); and the many contributions to J. Tusell, A. Alted and A. Mateos (eds), *La oposición al régimen de Franco* (Madrid, 1990), I.