

Boyer has produced an impressive work using a wide range of sources, including hitherto neglected archives, newspapers and memoirs. He explains the mechanisms of the Christian Social Party machinery, the personal rivalry and intrigues, the "politicization" of the city administration, all of which continue to regulate political life in major parts of Vienna. As a narrative *Culture and Political Crisis* has to disregard structures tied to *la longue durée* of the city's development – demography, ground rents, entertainment, public space, for example – and how these were interwoven with urban politics, especially with modern party structures. But this should not be considered a fundamentally significant omission. If there is an objection to the approach of the book as a whole, it might be that Boyer does not pay enough attention to the Christian Social ideology of a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. The phenomenon of economic regulation inspired by Christian ethics is still a powerful force not only in the post-communist states of Hungary, Croatia and Slovakia, but in Austria too. Nevertheless, Boyer's book will certainly stimulate scholars to consider more closely the inner-capitalistic corporatist "Alpine-Rhineland" alternative to the (liberal) "Atlantic" free-market economy.<sup>4</sup>

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BREMAN, JAN. *Footloose labour. Working in India's informal economy.* [Contemporary South Asia, 2.] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 1997. x, 278 pp. £50.00; \$59.95. (Paper: £16.95; \$22.95.)

In 1995, the World Bank produced a report wherein it claimed to offer a partisan solution for the dispossessed. Labour laws, the report argued, fetter the workers who will benefit from informalization. That is, less legislation does not benefit the congealed will of capital, but it will allow autonomous workers to fulfil their currently restrained potential. Jan Breman's new book is not only a culmination of his oeuvre, but it is a principled refutation of the premises of the World Bank's policy suggestion illustrated by Breman's longitudinal fieldwork (over thirty years) as well as his extensive use of the governmental and scholarly literature. *Footloose labour* offers a passionate, but analytical critique of the stereotypes that fuel academic research and policy development (both by agencies of the international finance organizations as well as the Indian government). With only 10 per cent of the Indian workforce in the "formal" sector, Breman notes that the "informal" sector is the norm and, from the standpoint of labour, the system resembles mercantile capitalism (p. 159 and p. 182). Further, those who argue from a dualist perspective (that the mission of capitalism in the periphery is incomplete) will find, on the contrary, that the pattern of capitalist development in regions such as South Gujarat operates with forms of exploitation quite different from those in advanced industrial states and in the mini-dragons, but which, nonetheless, demonstrate the dominance of the capitalist mode. As Breman argues, "after having been made mobile the workforce at the massive bottom of the economy is kept in circulation, does not become stabilized but finds itself

<sup>4</sup> Michael Albert, *Kapitalismus contra Kapitalismus* (Frankfurt and New York, 1992).

entrapped in an on going state of casualization, is not fully free in labour market negotiations but remains neo-bonded in some critical aspects, and is paid not constant (time) but flexible (piece) wage rates" (p. 264). The complexity of the "footloose proletariat" proffers for us another specific form of reproduction of labour-power within the capitalist mode of production.<sup>1</sup> These conclusions, borne from close analysis of his ethnographic and sociological materials, obviates the theories of neo-liberal social theorists who persist in an argument against a defensive, but tired, Keynesianism.

The setting of South Gujarat is important, given its place as the showcase of India's new economic policy from 1991. The region produces much of the export surplus that enables the state to prevent another serious balance of payments crisis. Artificial silk and diamonds are dominant, but there are other areas of employment which attract labour from the hinterland and from as far afield as Eastern India (notably, Orissa). Congested Surat and its environs, similar in some sense to the districts of England studied by Engels, produced a series of sectarian riots in 1991–1992 as well as a plague in 1994 – these events, Breman indicates, "should be read as signals that the informal sector outcasts cannot be kept in isolation and in a state of exclusion" (p. 263). Not only then must we create analytical categories beyond dualism, but the dualist urban structures (that seek to segregate the "informal") fail to produce an adequate cordon sanitaire. Given this structural lesson, the task for historical sociology must be to go beyond dualism and to seek theories and policy which facilitate the present unequal unity and a future unity of a different sort. Against dualism, Breman argues, for instance, that the workers live in a zone between the village and the city, a zone inhabited by them simultaneously. That is, the workers do not leave the village for the city in any simple teleological migration. The industrial/urban work is seasonal (not ruled by the agrarian work cycle, but due to industrial demand, to the worker's health and to the uneven rhythm of industrial production) and the workers circulate between their two habitations through the year in much the same way as those workers who trek ceaselessly between Redwood City, California and Aguililla, Mexico.<sup>2</sup> For anthropologists, Breman offers the reminder that the model of the isolated village or the self-contained city is not only inappropriate, but it obscures the historical borderlands inhabited by working people.

*Footloose labour* analyzes the problems of the reproduction of labour-power in the context of that domain of work which is not "informal", but unregulated. Here, in this "unregulated and unsteady market" capitalists "pass on the entrepreneurial risk" onto the workers who are bereft of more than the basic means of survival (p. 123). The workers are not given much training beyond the pedagogy of the process and they are given to majurikam, or heavy and unspecified tasks in a production process marked by technological stagnancy (p. 32). The principal mark of differentiation among these workers is on gender lines, wherein men are the focal figures (as cane-cutters, quarrymen, road workers, brick-makers and overseers), while women fulfil "the classic role of 'helper' although the severity of her work gives no reason for that subordinate term" (p. 116). Consequentially,

<sup>1</sup> For more on this, see Jairus Banaji, "Modes of Production in a Materialist Conception of History", *Capital and Class*, 3 (1977), pp. 1–44.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism", *Diaspora*, 1 (1991), pp. 8–23.

men suffer from the caprices of arbitrary wage differentiation, while women are condemned to structural wage differentiation (p. 145). The workers are under intense surveillance from the employer, who prefer to hire outsiders and to hire "casual workers" so as to avoid the surveillance of the state (which might work to the benefit of labour). For the workers, debt is a political instrument, often (as indicated by the historiographical literature) under the control of an overseer. On the political front (and in line with the recent work of G.K. Lietaen on West Bengal), Breman notes that the communist regime in Bengal would not countenance the brazen extra economic coercions that have become commonplace in Gujarat, dominated as it is by the theological fascist ensemble of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

In Breman's account, merchant capital does not control the production process (itself controlled by imperialist forces) nor does it attempt to transform the process itself, "but rather preserves and retains it as its own precondition".<sup>3</sup> Those who hope that the "reforms of 1991" will transform India into a "maxi-dragon" might consider these words from Marx which are well elaborated in Breman's book. For the World Bank and the IMF (which Che Guevara called the "watchdog of the dollar"), Breman's book offers an indictment of their crop of analysts whose blindness to the fundamental realities of our world is in inverse relation to the power they wield.

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LEWIN, MOSHE. *Russia/USSR/Russia. The Drive and Drift of a Superstate*. The New Press, New York 1995. xiv, 368 pp. \$30.00.

As historiography on Soviet Russia moves towards completing its transformation into what could be called a "normal" historiographical field, with a "normal" availability of primary sources and a "normal" historiographical debate, the need for interpretation does not seem to be losing its centrality. On the contrary, amid the abundance of archival evidence which has enriched research into Soviet history in recent years, strong interpretative ideas are essential in order to make sense of what sometimes seems to be a *mare magnum* of illuminating contributions.

*Russia/USSR/Russia*, Moshe Lewin's latest work, is a reconstruction of the Soviet historical experience from its beginnings, free from the chronological constraints of a conventional "History of the Soviet Union". It is organized around some broad analytical cruxes and contains sixteen essays (some of which have been previously published) in which we find some of the traditional conceptual elements of thirty years of scholarship devoted to the Soviet system: a system considered as a historical phenomenon of an original kind and worth being studied as such. Moreover, new issues have been included in an innovative research perspective: Lewin does not just re-examine the Soviet experience in the light of its downfall, he also reflects on the demise of the Soviet Union as a scarcely unpredictable event, as an enduring process whose seeds were sown in the making of the Soviet system itself. The making and the unmaking

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* (London, 1981), vol. 3, p. 452.