

hazardous, and above all, aesthetically dull “proletarian aesthetics” of Stalinstadt (German Democratic Republic), Sztalinvaros (Hungary), Nowa Huta (Poland), and other “socialist” cities. Finally, the definition of socialist realism as a genre “in which heroes were heroes, villains were villains, and nature was a villain too”, and the statement that “[i]n the Urals, money for ecological study or environmental law enforcement did not grow on trees” because “in many places there were no trees” demonstrate that wry humor has a place too.

It is quite clear that much of the socialist world’s technological utopianism originated in the capitalist West. Moreover, with the onset of the Cold War it became incumbent on the USSR to devote enormous expenditures on ever more fancy and costly projects, both to avoid the impression of weakness and to impress the rest of the world. With precious few exceptions – the diversion of rivers flowing north to the Arctic to irrigate central Asia, being the best-known – state authorities did not have to contend with domestic opposition to their plans. Hence, the relatively smooth arc from the Volkhov electrical power station project of the 1920s to Chernobyl in 1986.

Alas, this *tour d’horizon* of the physical and moral devastation caused by technological utopianism has its own excesses. One is the rhetorical use of “socialist workers’ paradise”, the repetition of which does nothing to explain the Bolsheviks’ actual political rhetoric. Another is the repetitiousness of the argument that the technology adopted by socialist leaders, planners, architects, and engineers did not reflect truly socialist goals. But, over and above these matters of style and taste, is the truly extraordinary number of simple errors of fact, wrong dates, and misspelled names that distract attention from the argument the author builds against “large-scale, resource-intensive, symbolically important, yet highly irrational projects”. Better than most, Josephson knows that one needn’t wear a Bluetooth to get things right, and it is too bad that neither he nor the Johns Hopkins University Press managed to catch these mistakes before committing them to print.

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MESKILL, DAVID. *Optimizing the German Workforce. Labor Administration from Bismarck to the Economic Miracle.* [Monographs in German History, Vol. 31.] Berghahn Books, New York [etc.] 2010. xi, 276 pp. £55.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000125

David Meskill’s initial thesis is that the German economy was able to recover quickly after the Great Depression as well as after World War II. As an important factor in this, he identifies the German workforce’s high level of training, which had been made possible by the registration of school-leavers through public vocational counselling and the increased readiness of companies to train them. The decisive factor here, however, was that the production potential of the German economy had for the most part not been destroyed.

Since placement in apprenticeship positions by vocational counselling was closely tied to general job placement, the author describes in chapter 1 the beginnings of public job placement prior to World War I. Here he argues that a decisive turning point in the subsequent *Totalerfassung* (complete inclusion or registration) of the German workforce was the Job Placement Law of 1910. It should be pointed out, however, that the law of 1910 was intended primarily to better protect job-seekers from exploitation by commercial placement agencies. While the law was also supposed to strengthen public job placement

over the long-term, it contained no norms about the shape of job placement or even about control through a national authority, as was subsequently the case with the Labour Exchange Law of 1922. Furthermore, many representatives of the labour-exchange movement around 1900 had not supported such an extensive registration of job-seekers and had tolerated private job placement. Specifically, Ignaz Jastrow (1856–1937) was a supporter of (collective) self-help; Jastrow, who had coined the political term “social-liberal”, was strongly opposed to a central authority such as the Reichsanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung and Arbeitslosenversicherung (RA) (National Agency for Job Placement and Unemployment Insurance) established in 1927.<sup>1</sup>

The second chapter of the book focuses on the situation of vocational training prior to World War I, in particular the revision of the Commercial Code in 1897, through which training in the crafts was improved. The central objective of this policy was to make the German economy competitive on an international level: “Made in Germany” was to become a positive designation. Despite various efforts, however, no legal regulation of training in industry was implemented before the war. One reason for this delay was considerations about the introduction of a Taylorist model in industrial mass production, which would have rendered a skilled workforce superfluous. Nevertheless, the introduction of systematic vocational counselling for all youths was regarded as indispensable. Here an important role was played by the Deutscher Ausschuss für Berufsberatung (German Committee on Vocational Counselling), in which Richard Freund, director of the Verband Deutscher Arbeitsnachweise (German Labour Exchange Association), was also active.<sup>2</sup> The issue of the organizational affiliation of vocational counselling initially remained open. Unfortunately Meskill only hints at the seminal significance of the women’s movement in the development of vocational counselling in Germany.

In chapter 3 Meskill identifies an actual turning point in the organization of public job placement: with the Auxiliary Service Law of December 1916 the military assumed control of public job placement and systematically expanded it. Vocational counselling gained additional momentum through the now necessary vocational rehabilitation of the war-wounded. The rise of women working in industry also led to an expansion of training and advising by female vocational counsellors. An important step for the future organization of job placement was the resolution by unions and employers in their Zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft (ZAG) (Central Working Association) in November 1918 to jointly introduce labour exchanges. Since Germany’s military defeat had led to significant losses of raw materials and markets, it was believed that the economy could re-attain its previous status only through “skilled labour”. For this reason developments in vocational training interrupted by the war were supposed to be vigorously resumed. Already in December 1917 Bavaria resolved the organizational question of vocational counselling by tying it to communal labour offices. Josephine Levy-Rathenau (1877–1921),<sup>3</sup> the “mother”

1. Dieter G. Maier, *Ignaz Jastrow. Sozialliberale Positionen in Wissenschaft und Politik* (Berlin, 2010).

2. *Idem*, “Richard Freund (1859–1941). Ein Berliner Sozialreformer von nationalem und internationalem Rang”, in *Der Bär von Berlin. Jahrbuch 2006 des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 107–126.

3. *Idem*, *Geschichte der Arbeitsmarktpolitik und Arbeitsverwaltung in Deutschland. Ausgewählte Texte 1877–1952. Schriftenreihe der Fachhochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung*, LII, (Brühl, 2008), pp. 180–184.

of German vocational counselling, fully supported this decree, which was later called the “birth certificate of vocational counselling”. Only in May 1923, however, did the responsible Prussian minister decide to tie vocational counselling to Prussian labour offices. Prussia was thus by no means the sole “pioneer” of German vocational counselling.

With the Labour Exchange Law of 1922, public job placement in Germany was given the organizational form it still possesses today. After the prohibition of commercial job placement (beginning on 1 January 1931), the closing of employer and trade-union exchanges, as well as the steady decline of non-commercial agencies, public job placement predominated already by around 1925. At this point in time, however, the Labour Administration had by no means gained complete control of the labour market. Thus trade unions complained that many companies did not notify labour offices of their openings and also called – unsuccessfully – for the introduction of obligatory notification, which would have been possible according to the law.

Chapter 4 examines the continued expansion of vocational training and the centralization of vocational counselling during the Weimar Republic. Vocational counselling initially suffered from various difficulties: a poor image, little use by young people and by companies, insufficient personnel in both quantitative and qualitative terms, a lack of materials, and not yet fully developed methods of counselling and aptitude assessment. The first multi-week courses for vocational counsellors took place only in 1925.<sup>4</sup> With the law of 1927, vocational counselling finally became – next to job placement and unemployment insurance – the third central responsibility of the RA. Its establishment as a national agency and the resulting disempowerment of the municipalities were the consequence of the latter’s (in part) inadequate engagement in the expansion and cultivation of public job placement as well as vocational counselling.<sup>5</sup> Vocational counselling now also sought to establish cooperation with schools, especially through the use of “school cards” to be filled out by teachers. Gradually it was able to win the trust of companies as well as young people and parents.

Meskill also depicts how beginning in the mid-1920s – despite all attempts at rationalization – insight into the necessity of “quality work” grew and German industry made constant efforts to increase the number of skilled workers. The institutions of vocational training and vocational counselling (now used more frequently) contributed decisively to this. There is, however, no analysis in Meskill’s book of the draft of a vocational training law presented to the Reichstag in 1927 or the reasons for its failure in the legislative process.<sup>6</sup>

In chapter 5 Meskill describes how the Great Depression slowed down these positive developments. The RA was compelled to make cutbacks also in the domain of vocational counselling, which especially slowed its personnel expansion. After 1933 the National Socialists quickly pushed for an acceleration of the “human economies” within the framework of their rearmament policy. Beginning in the mid-1930s, there was increasingly close cooperation between the participating organizations. The Labour Administration

4. *Idem*, *Anfänge und Brüche der Arbeitsverwaltung bis 1952. Schriftenreihe der Fachhochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung*, XXXIII, (Brühl, 2004), pp. 56–59.

5. *Idem*, “Ein Prüfbericht von 1926 führte zur Gründung der Reichsanstalt. Das AVAVG beseitigte den ‘kommunalen Partikularismus’ in der deutschen Arbeitsverwaltung”, *Arbeit und Beruf*, 9 (2006), pp. 257–260.

6. Ludwig Preller, *Sozialpolitik in der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart, 1949), pp. 454ff.

gained the exclusive monopoly over job and apprenticeship placement. Shortly thereafter, notification by companies of apprenticeship positions became compulsory, as did the use of vocational counselling by school-leavers. By 1938 the personnel of vocational counselling had doubled numerically. Occupational profiles and training regulations were also issued for industry. At the latest with the decrees of March 1938, *Totalerfassung* and vocational steering – within the scope of the so-called *Nachwuchsplanung* (next generation planning) – had become reality. Vocational counselling (as well as job placement) now functioned as instruments of the armaments industries and the war policies of the Nazi regime.

Meskill's depiction of this development is insufficiently critical, as those seeking counselling were completely dependent in their vocational decisions on the job opportunities determined by these policies. The claim Meskill cites by leading vocational counsellor Walter Stets – that vocational decisions ultimately remained the affair of young people and their parents – was purely formal, if not downright cynical. Finally, and specifically after World War II, vocational counselling was identified with the steering policies of the Nazi regime and long suffered from this negative image. Furthermore, there had also been discrimination within the Labour Administration against opponents of the Nazis and “racially” persecuted people.<sup>7</sup> Industry and the Labour Administration had maintained their steering and training policies until the end of the war, not least because they regarded them as indispensable beyond wartime. In addition to other factors, the German workforce's high level of training doubtless also made possible the surprisingly positive developments resulting in West Germany's “economic miracle”.

Chapter 6 depicts the seamless resumption of vocational counselling as well as vocational training after the war. The founding of the Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung (BA) (Federal Agency for Job Placement and Unemployment Insurance) around 1952 reestablished the previous structures and responsibilities of vocational counselling according to the law of 1927. Relations between labour offices and companies were also revived and strengthened. For vocational counselling the “*Totalerfassung*” of all school-leavers continued to be paramount, while for companies training the largest possible number of workers remained the central focus. Beginning in 1949, however, when the Basic Law (including Article 12, the right to freely choose occupation, place of work, and place of training) came into force, a compulsory registration of school-leavers was no longer permitted. Vocational counselling did attempt to get around this prohibition through intimate cooperation with schools and a more intensive use of school-cards. However, economic developments – especially the increasing shortage of labour – as well as a growing democratic consciousness among the population promoted a critique of the BA's bureaucracy and as a result reduced its usage, especially by industry. Finally, in 1956 an external report criticized the policy of *Totalerfassung* by vocational counselling.<sup>8</sup> The discussion this triggered, within the Federal Agency as well as among trade unions and employers, ultimately led to the recognition of the principle of free choice and to more individual counselling. Surprisingly, the use of vocational counselling did not decrease to the extent previously feared.

7. See Maier, *Anfänge und Brüche der Arbeitsverwaltung bis 1952*, pp. 108–113.

8. Regarding n. 107: Copies of the external report can be found in the library of the college of the Federal Agency for Labour (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) in Mannheim as well as the Historical Collection of the Federal Agency (SEAD) located there.

Thanks to his substantial source materials Meskill has provided an informative study that identifies important political, economic, and social contexts. His book should be translated into German as soon as possible.

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NYSTROM, DEREK. *Hard Hats, Rednecks, and Macho Men. Class in 1970s American Cinema*. Oxford University Press, Oxford [etc.] 2009. x, 251 pp. Ill. \$24.95; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000137

Hollywood, long accused of being a serial class denier, surprised many commentators in the 1970s with the release of a cluster of films focusing on working-class characters and their lives. Labour scholars noted this welcome development and attempted to account for the phenomenon; few cinephiles, though, took an interest. That Derek Nystrom, who teaches English at McGill University, returns to the intellectual challenge in his stimulating and provocative fusion of film and class analysis is to be applauded by social historians.

Some suggested that nostalgia for a disappearing world of industrial communities accounted for this cinematic efflorescence – by itself, a rather unsatisfactorily explanation, in my opinion. Nystrom, who has the advantage of a four-decade gap, explores the question with a far more sophisticated and nuanced model. Looking at the overlap between movie industry restructuring and broader shifts in the political climate and class relations, *Hard Hats* suggests that the 1970s represented a brief window of opportunity. Between the death of the old vertically integrated Hollywood studios, the emergence of a young, middle-class audience, and the consolidation of conglomerate “New Hollywood”, a group of Young Turk directors, encouraged by the collapse of the production code, looked closely at the failings of a society coming to terms with the Vietnam defeat and political corruption at home. At the same time, the end of the long postwar boom and the restructuring of industrial America tilted the balance of class power away from the working class and toward mobile capital and their middle-class consorts. This brief “Hollywood Renaissance” terminated with industry reconsolidation at the end of the decade and, more and widely, with the abrupt shift to the right in the Reagan 1980s. In retrospect, the 1970s in Hollywood was a decade that temporarily allowed greater artistic license to explore the disappointments and unfinished business of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

For Nystrom, it is not the working class that is central to his study: “I will argue that these depictions of white, blue-collar men [...] are best understood as products of middle-class fantasy about that class.” And further: “What do the decade’s films reveal about the class unconscious of the middle-class film-makers who invented these characters, as well as the middle class critics who evaluated and interpreted them for their (intended) middle-class audiences?” (p. x) Working-class heroes, variously seen as threats or allies, were the social “other” around which displaced middle-class concerns, anxieties, and dilemmas were debated. Drawing on Barbara Ehrenreich’s ideas, Nystrom argues that during the 1970s a new middle class, or “professional managerial class” (PMC) emerged. This new social formation, located between capital and labour but independent of each, was objectively antagonistic to the working class – a class that it managed and ideologically directed in the interests of capital.

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