

Siegfried Mielke (ed.): Internationales Gewerkschaftshandbuch. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1983. X, 1263 pages, DM 148.-

For some time now we dispose of the first of a comprehensive handbook on the world's trade unions in the German language. It is both a source of quick information about organisations, data, addresses, and a summary of current research on trade union history, past and present. According to a more or less standardized scheme information on the following subjects is provided (only major headings quoted):

- Economic, social, political framework and history of T.U.s;
- Strength and structure, esp. organization;
- Ideology, programs;
- T.U.s' and workers' representation on shop level;
- Relations between T.U.s and employers, as well as with parties and state;
- Priorities and strategies in T.U. activity;
- Literature;
- Addresses.

In addition, the necessary information on the International Federations is contained, both the general ones and the federations on the branch level. To collect all this data and analyse it is undoubtedly an impressive editorial achievement which facilitates the integration of scientific and political discussion in this field.

Trade Unions in the true sense of the word, however, are a historical outcome of industrial capitalism, so that it is quite clear that function and character of T.U.s in the industrialized socialist countries and in underdeveloped countries of the Third World differ greatly, even if the latter are dominated by internal and external capitalist forces. "Eurocentrism" looms large. The problem has been taken into account by some summary articles preceding the country articles. Especially two of these summaries (Franz Ansprenger on Africa, and Peter Waldmann on Latin America) give a clear picture of the core problems:

- Almost nowhere in the respective regions does the "typical" freedom of T.U. activity exist;
- As a result of dependent development the market-oriented industrial sector is small, the internal antipode of the workers is often non-existent;
- Involvement of the government in industrial production is often greater than in Western Europe, so that conflicts or else direct alliances between the State and the Trade Unions prevail;
- Unionized workers and clerks are in a privileged position where un- and underemployment or marginality is endemic, - with a corporative or clientelistic approach as an outcome;
- Drastic changes of the whole T.U. position and structure appear with a

change of the "accumulation type", comparable to the change within European fascism (cf. 128).

Complex problems like these are handled more superficially in the summary articles on Asia. Rolf Hanisch on market-oriented Asian countries sums up what seems to be generalized of the various aspects under which we are accustomed to talk about European T.U.s, too. Oskar Weggel on socialist countries deals with the fundamental problem that T.U.s must have a different role within such a framework, i.e. they cannot act as a simple opponent to "employers" or the "state".

He handles the problem by using a lot of ironically meant quotation marks for concepts of Leninist T.U. theory which fail to meet the real tension between a desired closer link of the workers with what is conceived as their own government and the necessary freedom on the other hand, which is seldom respected as the Polish example has recently shown with all its consequences.

The country articles undoubtedly meet the requirement of basic and comprehensive information. But they reflect the present state of research on the subject which is unfortunately not a well-established branch of its own. This is not without consequences. First: it has obviously not been possible to find specialists for some of the countries and their unions (India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, to mention Asian examples). Second: research on several matters does not even exist. For instance, involvement and success of T.U.s in collective bargaining/wage agreements etc. is apparently seldom investigated or far more difficult to identify than the legal position (cf. 139; 155; examples: Irak, Sri Lanka, and others). The reviewers often resort to hearsay, very general judgements, or they concentrate on T.U. regulations and laws which have, in the Third World, less meaning than in Europe. This is especially true for the articles on socialist countries, – mainly from the well-known reason of the lack of information. So, instead of describing the actual working of the above-mentioned contradiction we find a lot on legal framework and reference to general Leninist theory. Not one single article on Asian socialist countries fails to quote the famous "transmission belt" statement which, by the way, is far from being an adequate catchword for Lenin's contradictory and a bit more open opinion.

Only some of those shortcomings could have been avoided. The first and foremost restriction is of course: space. But more space could nevertheless have been provided. The editor is proud of the light shed on all these minor and micro-states which for the most part have come into existence in recent years. Now we know all the essentials on the T.U. movement in places like Antigua, Dominica, Kiribati, Nauru, St. Vincent, Tuvalu, Belau (there is a T.U. movement), or Tonga (there is none). Omissions in this regard would have been accepted. Also, the scheme of topics the editor urged the authors to follow is necessary for standardiz-

ation and comparability, but it produces its redundancies. Several facts about "Einheitsgewerkschaft oder Richtungsgewerkschaft", T.U. leadership and internal democracy, are told twice.

Space could have been reserved for e.g.:

(1.) Short descriptions of key conflicts in T.U. evolution. If a reader is not familiar with the 'famous Hongkong-Shanghai dockworkers' strike of 1922' etc, three lines of description are helpful.

(2.) Thanks to repression, corruption, 'corporativism' in a lot of countries sometimes even essential T.U. functions are transferred to spontaneous movements or informal organizations. The function of the Christian Churches and its priests e.g. in the Philippines, South Korea, Hong Kong is sufficiently well known. Such phenomena are mentioned only very briefly, if at all, thereby shifting the balance too much in favor of the official unions.

(3.) European observers tend to play down cultural and welfare activities of T.U.s, in particular everything which has to do with leisure time organization or looks like a pure gratification to the workers who stand faithfully behind their unions. It has the air of deviation from the true or classical duties of a T.U., last not least because some of the so-called yellow unions in Asia confine themselves solely to these tasks. Nevertheless, through this kind of activity many T.U.s try to fulfill welfare functions in countries where the government ("Sozialstaat") does not take care of them.

A final but crucial remark: information on Third World T.U.s becomes often completely obsolete in a few years' time because of fundamental political or economic turmoil. To cite the example of the country where the reviewer is presently living (Burkina Faso, formerly Upper Volta); here, ninety-five percent of the findings on the T.U. landscape have become out-dated after the Revolution of August 1983. Therefore, it is absolutely essential for this valuable handbook to be regularly updated.

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**Anindita Niyogi Balslev:** *A Study of Time in Indian Philosophy.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983. 172 pp., DM 40.-

**Sachchidananda H. Vatsyayan:** *A Sense of Time. An Exploration of Time in Theory, Experience and Art.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981. 64 pp., Rs 25.-

Change and transitoriness have puzzled mankind from time immemorial, probably since the origin of the human race. It is therefore quite natural that each cul-