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## Organized Labor in Postcommunist States: From Solidarity to Infirmity

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The authors point out again that the introduction of the BND is “more a re-arranging of policy measures than a revolution in design and delivery” (p. 139). Cebulla and Greenberg draw several lessons: client mix affects outcomes, the environment is important, results are often small, the effects wear off, and welfare-to-work programs incur a considerable cost in resources. It is useful to compare these lessons with those reported in PBJH, which collectively are far more nuanced.

There is much value in this book’s presentation of several viewpoints regarding social welfare reform and its detailed discussion of the U.K. program’s evolution, implementation, problems, and future possibilities. Some features of the book we particularly like are the numerous tables listing various social programs in the United Kingdom and United States, the use of Box plots to analyze data, and a good discussion of meta-analysis, particularly in Chapter 8, where lessons for future meta-analysis of welfare programs are drawn. However, the data collection methods used may be of concern, useful time series data are lacking, and there appear to be omissions in or aggregation of the data on race. These limitations may narrow the generalizability of the results. Also, we would have liked an analysis weighing the relative merits of other European countries’ non-punitive-based unemployment training programs and the BND’s punitive-driven programs. Which model produces better outcomes?

Because the book is a series of papers by authors from varied backgrounds, readers have the benefit of seeing each issue from different and often competing points of view. One trade-off, however, is that the chapters’ somewhat peripatetic paths often intersect, carrying readers over the same ground more than once. There is overlap, as well, across the chapters’ concluding reference sections; a single consolidated reference section would have been better. Another drawback of each chapter’s independence from the others is occasional inconsistency in emphasis. For example, following Chapter 6, which uses cross-section data to argue that “work first” yields better results than vocational training, Chapter 7 argues that good-quality time series data are needed in order for definitive comparisons to be made, and decries the unavailability of such data. The index is incomplete: although data—the characteristics of different data sets, their amenability to various types of analysis, and so on—are the subject of much of the book, for example, no listing for “data” is included; and not all authors’ names

are referenced. Perhaps a bit more editing was in order?

Carping aside, we recommend this book as a handy summary of the research in this field as of early 2005. Like the Peterson, Blank, Joyce, and Hamilton works mentioned previously, to which it is a solid addition, *Welfare-to-Work* can serve well to acquaint the general reader with approaches to building and measuring a social program to move welfare recipients into the work force.

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### **International and Comparative Industrial Relations**

*Organized Labor in Postcommunist States: From Solidarity to Infirmity.* By Paul J. Kubicek. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004. xiv, 256 pp. ISBN 0-8229-5856-2, \$29.95 (paper).

I rarely use the phrase “necessary reading” when recommending a book, as it begs the question of “to whom?” But I gladly do so in this case since the book speaks so well to at least two different constituencies. For those interested in the peculiar decline of east European labor after communism, as well as in globalization’s impact on labor in a broad comparative context, Paul Kubicek’s *Organized Labor in Postcommunist States* is indeed required reading. Kubicek wonderfully sums up the existing research on labor in postcommunist society, supplements it with insights from his own extensive fieldwork and interviews, and carefully considers the theoretical implications of his findings. The result is a superb, concise, well-written account of labor after communism.

The book is composed of three introductory chapters, setting the postcommunist context both conceptually and empirically, followed by country chapters on Poland, Russia, Hungary, and Ukraine. In the first chapters Kubicek documents and offers initial explanations for

the startling decline of unions after communism, and compares labor woes east and west. He acknowledges that there is a new east-west "convergence" here, with organized labor declining also in the west as a result of globalization, but argues that the negative social impact of labor decline is more significant in the east. Lacking the tradition of strong independent unionism that exists in the west, labor in the east is far less able to defend itself or to challenge social inequalities, with dangerous implications for the future of democratic political inclusion.

This political theme, as well as more traditional industrial relations themes, are developed in the country studies that constitute the heart of the book. These chapters constitute the best introduction to labor decline in these countries currently available. Kubicek has a wonderful ability to summarize difficult material, both the diverse arguments of other scholars and the complex realities of the different countries. I can speak to the former from my own experience: I have never seen my own writings summarized so skillfully, sometimes more concisely and adroitly than I have been able to do myself. As to the latter, the postcommunist experiences of all four countries are presented both richly and simply. Each chapter has sections on union issues, unions and politics, privatization, and globalization. We get indicators of postcommunist labor weakness in terms of membership decline, political marginalization, few collective agreements, and limited collective action.

In all four countries, unions are weak, and rank-and-file workers have had their incomes, benefits, and prestige sharply reduced, but the processes associated with these changes have varied by country. The worsening of labor's lot has been most dramatic in Poland, given the prior history of the great Solidarity movement. But Kubicek shows how the legacy of that movement in fact contributed to labor decline, both because Solidarity would not work together with the other unions that arose when it was delegalized, and because its ardent anti-communism made it unusually sympathetic to the emerging market society. Even while recognizing recent changes due to both the passing of the old Solidarity generation and the successful unionization of some transnational automotive plants, his conclusion that "mere survival may be the best [Polish] unions can do" (p. 94) seems well substantiated.

As for Hungary, Kubicek documents the many signs of labor weakness, but is less sure how to explain it. He shows how successive govern-

ments, whether of the left or right, have sought to remove unions from influence on policy, and how unions have put up little resistance. Unlike in Poland, or even Russia and Ukraine, Hungarian labor played almost no role in the country's privatization process, which stressed sales to foreign owners. Kubicek sees Hungarian unions as so anemic that the only prospects for their revival may rest with the European Union, with its mandates for labor representation.

The chapters on Russia and Ukraine are the most interesting in the book, probably because these are the countries he knows best, and where he did the most research. (Among his previous publications is a book on Ukraine.) These chapters come alive with the voices of unionists at the national, regional, and enterprise levels. Kubicek's account of the privatization process in Russia is the best and most concise I have seen. He shows how a process that formally empowered workers (though not unions) through a voucher-sale program ended up depriving both workers and unions of virtually all influence on enterprise policy. He superbly describes how this happened:

Information was in short supply, so workers put their shares in their own enterprises, lacking knowledge about other options. Management was the beneficiary, using its access to information to its own advantage, misrepresenting the value of the enterprise to make purchase of additional shares easy, stripping firms of their assets, and frequently persuading or even coercing workers to turn over their shares in order to become not only de facto but also de jure owners. Having both capital of their own ... and managerial control, managers were able to become the true owners without much difficulty. (p. 119)

Kubicek's site visits in Russia give us a sense of how unions have responded to this: usually by maintaining their ties to management, accepting a role as a subordinate partner in order simply to survive. The result, he says, is "union passivity and workers' alienation from the unions" (p. 125), but because the arrangement works well both for union leaders and for management, he suspects it will prove quite durable. Trade union membership in Russia remains high, as in Ukraine, because workers, especially those outside the major cities, often still get from the unions payment in kind when no other pay is forthcoming.

Kubicek tells a similar story about Ukraine—workers cheated out of their shares, union leaders coopted, membership still high because of the underdevelopment of the market—with the added element of greater corruption and a

more aggressive state. Politically, this has meant that “since 1993, Ukrainian unions have not been visible” (p. 165).

The book makes two important theoretical contributions. First is the author’s discussion of how labor weakness poses a problem for democratic stability. Second, the book is a model of inductive reasoning. Kubicek constructs interpretations in a careful and judicious manner on the basis of a panoply of facts carefully laid out. Thus, for example, he explains unions’ weakness through both structure (downsizing and restructuring following the collapse of socialist industry) and agency (the end of compulsory unionism, skepticism among unionists themselves about the utility of unions after communism). Kubicek never settles for easy generalizations. While showing how privatization has weakened labor, he also points out how both it and globalization open up new opportunities for the future.

Not that he sees much likelihood of a union revival. Labor, he suggests, has been so profoundly weakened that “although a particular union might [become] successful, it is harder and harder to put faith in a revival of a union *movement*” (p. 150). No panaceas are forthcoming. Even employee ownership earns cool consideration: “ordinary workers fared poorly in this bargain, as managers, classified as workers for purposes of these transactions, frequently were able to acquire real ownership of the firm” (p. 186). All in all, this is one of the most informative books on contemporary unionism in a globalized world that I have read in a long time.

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### History

*Fighting against the Odds: A History of Southern Labor Since World War II.* By Timothy J. Minchin. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. 240 pp. ISBN 0-8130-2790-X, \$59.95 (cloth).

Twenty-five years ago when I substituted for former Secretary of Labor F. Ray Marshall as keynote speaker at a conference in Mississippi dedicated to the theme of labor in southern history, Marshall’s own book, *Labor in the South*, served as the basic source of information for my

talk. His was then the only scholarly general history about labor and trade unions in the American South. Since then, however, there has been a veritable scholarly revolution in the writing of southern labor history, one undertaken largely by a younger generation of historians rather than the economists and labor economists of Marshall’s and earlier generations who had published most of the scholarship in the field. Among the leading historians of this new generation has been the English academic now teaching in Australia, Timothy J. Minchin.

Minchin has previously written well-researched and detailed monographs about the failure of unionism in the southern textile industry, how the civil rights movement and federal actions opened that industry to the employment of African Americans, the impact of equal employment opportunity on the southern paper industry, and, finally, how mostly African-American workers allied with environmentalists to win a strike against the German chemical enterprise, BASF, in Louisiana. Now he has combined his own research and writings with those of the new generation of young historians of southern labor to produce the first synthesis of the subject since the publication of Marshall’s book in 1967.

Minchin’s study differs substantially from Marshall’s. Marshall sought to tell the story of southern workers and their unions across a broad span of time, with an emphasis on the 1930s and 1940s; Minchin looks at the years from 1945 to the present. Marshall focused on institutional history and formal industrial relations; Minchin writes about workers outside the unions, lets them speak for themselves through the use of his own and others’ oral history interviews, and is as sensitive to race and gender as he is to class. In one important respect, however, Minchin’s findings resemble Marshall’s. Both scholars agree that southern workers who attempted to form or join unions were, to borrow from the title of Minchin’s new book, “fighting against the odds.”

Perhaps the single most important contribution Minchin makes is to reveal that, however distinctive southern labor history has been and remains, its development has not been divorced from the experiences of workers and unions in the rest of the nation. In many ways, his tale of southern workers in the post-World War II years foreshadows the fate of all workers in the United States over the second half of the twentieth century. Like their northern brothers and sisters, Minchin’s southern workers fought for