

better-off craftsmen in the food and construction branches; support among some “mass” crafts for Social Democracy, which was nevertheless divided and grew slowly; and the growing strength of Political Catholicism, which successfully mobilised both craftsmen and the new industrial working class. Lenger argues thoughtfully that it was Political Catholicism which first bridged the gulf between a persistent *Handwerker* milieu and the new proletarian suburbs – although the SPD was later to benefit. The last two chapters lack some of the verve of the earlier ones, where Lenger is both scrupulous and masterly in using difficult data to establish his arguments. Overall, though, this is a beautifully researched and imaginative book with an importance that goes beyond its title.

David Blackburn

SAVILLE, JOHN. 1848. *The British state and the Chartist movement*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, London, New York 1987. ix, 310 pp.

This is a thoroughly researched and lucidly argued study of Britain during the revolutionary year of 1848. Its subtitle – the British State and the Chartist Movement – is indicative of the author’s determination to avoid the almost obsessive localism and parochialism that have tended to characterise studies of Chartism in recent years. His intention is clearly to re-consider Chartism as a national political movement in the wider context of the continental upheavals of 1848, and which by implication addresses the major question as to why events in Britain took a different course to the experience of many of her European neighbours.

Saville begins with a wide-ranging survey of conditions in England, Ireland and France at the beginning of 1848, where the centralised efficacy of the British state is contrasted with the chronic instability of its French counterpart, and where its overwhelming coercive presence in disaffected Ireland is convincingly demonstrated. Although not elaborated theoretically, the author’s conception of the state is something more than merely “government”. Rather, the latter is seen as a continuum of administrative legal, bureaucratic and coercive systems that attempts not only to establish acceptable relationships between civil society and public authority, but also to establish acceptable relationships *within* civil society, including economic relations. Indeed, a particular strength of this book is its documentation based on Home Office papers, in addition to other state papers, which highlight the purposive mobilization of state power in the service of the interests of law and order. Yet Saville stresses that this would have been impossible without the mass support of “solid men” who extended far down the social scale from the narrow retinue of patrician aristocrats directly responsible for initiating government strategy. As he is at pains to emphasize, it was the possible conjuncture in 1848 of Irish insurgency and Chartist insurrection, which combined with possible intervention from a potentially sympathetic provisional government in Paris, succeeded in mobilizing most of the *petite* as well as *haute bourgeoisie* in mainland Britain in the defence of property, in a striking demonstration of unity in the face of what was

widely perceived as a serious threat to the very foundations of social life. In contrast with the tortuous word-spinning of some recent Marxist theorising of the state in capitalist society, readers of this book will find its approach refreshingly vigorous and free of jargon.

The reader is then taken through the events of January-February and the Spring of 1848 when the massed Chartist assembly on 10 April at Kennington Common is conventionally seen as the final challenge posed by the movement to the established order of the state. Saville argues that it is too easy to accept this view at face value, and he subsequently shows that Chartism took a decidedly insurrectionary turn during the summer months of 1848, with activists in the industrial North as well as in London threatening to combine with disaffected Irish migrants in a challenge of a distinctively “physical force” variety. Police spies reported the formation of Chartist rifle clubs, organized in sections and trained by their own “captains”, and the situation required the rapid deployment of the military, police and volunteer constables during July and August before the threat was finally crushed. Although Saville does not deny the importance of divisions within the movement, organizational failings and tactical errors in accounting for the defeat of the Chartists, the latter can only be understood in the context of the insurmountable levels of mobilization achieved by the state and its supporters, and which in turn is inexplicable without reference to the economic hegemony enjoyed by British capitalism during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Although based on the triumph of the liberal *economic* tenets of *laissez faire* orthodoxy, Saville is careful to emphasize in his detailed scrutiny of the trials of Chartist leaders that underpinning the liberal gloss of early Victorian Britain was a brutally repressive legal system, which relied primarily on the testimony of informers and spies to convict the defendants and where, in the case of Ireland, the majority Catholic populations was almost totally excluded from participation in the judicial process. Revisionist writers on Chartism like Stedman Jones who stress the role of “liberalising” tendencies during the 1840s in explaining the demise of Chartism would do well to ponder the findings of this book.

The concluding chapter of this book, which is entitled somewhat curiously “A Commentary By Way of Conclusion”, is perhaps the least satisfactory part of an otherwise impressive monograph. Its essential argument is that whilst Chartism had indeed been “broken by the physical force of the state”, it was subsequently “submerged in the national consciousness, beneath layers of false understanding and denigration” (p. 202). It would be difficult to deny how the evocation of a national past does involve a process of “silencing”, in the interests of the dominant ideological imperatives of the present, yet surely this goes only halfway to explain the demise of a mass movement like Chartism, Saville’s emphasis on the more stable economic environment of the 1850s and 1860s is a necessary but not sufficient explanation of Chartism’s defeat, especially in light of his earlier argument that it was the very resilience of the British economy during the 1830s and 1840s that was crucial in mobilizing such a broad spectrum of “solid men” in support of the established constitution. More critically, the intellectual weaknesses of the Smithian socialists are singled out for failing to develop an effective critique of what was a new phase of capitalist development, which seriously limited the scope of subsequent working-class radicalism, and which does point to a more fruitful *beginning* of a

search for a more satisfactory account of Chartism's demise. The author correctly identifies the central problem here as one of agency, i.e. how class attitudes can become translated into class consciousness and class action. Saville proposes that the key to understanding the latter is the work situation, which demands much more research before this issue can be resolved. Few would dispute the importance of work experience in shaping class consciousness, yet the very complexity of the former in mid-Victorian (or any other) society renders its translation into consciousness extremely problematic. The formulation of an alternative to a dominant social order requires an imaginative leap of a qualitatively fundamental kind, which cannot simply be "read off" from the experience of work. What historians of post-Chartist Britain must do, as subsequent generations of socialists have repeatedly tried and largely failed to do, is to re-conceptualise the significance of work in its broader social setting, and to assess the political means that were (and are) available for its social transformation. Yet the difficulty of constructing such new forms of civil society – so markedly different from the kind of state Saville so expertly analyses – testifies to the stultifying effects of imaginative and intellectual *closure* in the wake of aborted oppositional movements like Chartism. Yes, further research into changes in work experience is relevant to the question of Chartism's decline, but this must be combined with an understanding of popular perceptions of the significance of work in relation to present and future expectations and, above all, in relation to what contemporaries thought was the proper deployment and social distribution of the fruits of work. After all, the latter has been the primary objective of all states in every period of history.

*Keith Burgess*

JAMES, DANIEL. *Resistance and Integration. Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne 1988. viii, 301 pp. £ 27.50.

MUNCK, RONALDO, with Ricardo Falcón [and] Bernardo Galitelli. *Argentina: From Anarchism to Peronism. Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985*. Zed Books Ltd, London, Atlantic Highlands (N.J.) 1987. x, 261 pp. £ 28.95. (Paper: £ 8.95.)

Few countries on earth are as puzzling as Argentina. Endowed by nature with abundant natural wealth, it has been mired in economic stagnation for thirty years. Possessing one of the best-educated, most sophisticated, and most skilled and homogenous populations in all of Latin America, it has experienced an alternating series of failed civilian governments and equally unsuccessful military dictatorships since 1930. Considered the leading nation in the region and on the verge of recognition as a major global force in the early twentieth century, Argentina has since then consistently failed to realize its considerable potential and, much to the chagrin of its citizens, has found itself overshadowed by neighboring Brazil and