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John J. Kulczycki. *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement: Xenophobia and Solidarity in the Coal Fields of the Ruhr, 1871-1914.* Providence, R.I.: Berg Publishers, 1994. xiv + 297 pp.p. $52.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-85496-393-5.

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Students of Imperial Germany know John Kulczycki of the University of Illinois at Chicago for his 1981 *School Strikes in Prussian Poland* and for his numerous articles on Polish workers and their migration to the Ruhr. His new book provides a capstone to this latter research and makes a valuable contribution to the study of both the Ruhr labor movement and Poles in the *Kaiserreich*.

The "Polish Question" is a significant part of the history of modern Germany and well merits continued scholarly attention. Poles were the largest and politically most problematic of the national minorities in the new German nation-state of 1871. >From the late 1880s there was a mounting German-nationalist crusade against the Poles by the government and by nationalist pressure groups. In this context, the migration of a half-million Polish workers from the economically less-developed eastern provinces to jobs in the Ruhr coalfields was sure to spread national conflict into the Rhineland and Westphalia.

The Polish workers were not *Gastarbeiter* in the modern sense; they did not come from a foreign country. Most were Polish-speaking citizens of Germany who had, in theory, the same rights as any worker. In practice, however, officials, employers, and German- speaking miners perceived them as "foreign," and they suffered from prejudice, police harassment, and denial of organizational and language rights. Kulczycki's study confirms that this oppression only strengthened Polish separatism while helping to force the development of Polish nationalism. It is a fine example of how nationalists in Imperial Germany conjured into existence that which they feared. The unequal treatment of the Ruhr Poles thus exposes the inability of the *Kaiserreich* to reconcile cultural-nationalistic assumptions with the fact of a multicultural empire, or for that matter, with the logic of capitalism. The Ruhr mining companies were all too happy to bring in labor from the East and to keep Poles, Masurians, and others in ethnically homogeneous settlements. It mattered little that state officials and nationalists saw this practice as a threat to social order.

Much of Kulczycki's book is devoted to refuting stereotypes about the backwardness of the Polish workers. He argues that historians have been influenced too often by biased contemporary perceptions of the Poles as wage-depressors, strikebreakers, and unsophisticated migrants from the backward East who lacked understanding of class solidarity and collective action. Where Poles did protest, their actions were either characterized as irrational violence and drunken disorder, or attributed to traditional cultural and religious separatism. Kulczycki argues that such generalizations were completely wrong. His analysis of strikes shows that Polish miners acted rationally in pursuit of occupational and class interests. They also cooperated with other miners while often exhibiting greater union militancy or perseverance than their German-speaking comrades.

The key to the Polish miners' militancy was their "ethno-class consciousness" (8,47). Because they were doubly disadvantaged as Poles and as mine workers, they had a heightened sense of grievance and opposition to the state. In examining the strikes of the early 1890s, Kulczycki finds that the regions of the Ruhr with high concentrations of eastern workers also showed a high degree of militancy. He devotes Chapter 4 to arguing that the Herne strikes of 1899 were spontaneous, class-conscious actions by Polish workers without, in this case, support from German allies. Chapters 5 and 6 show that Poles were integral members of common fronts of the various unions during the waves of strikes in 1905 and 1912. Far from being a backward or divisive influence in the labor movement, Polish miners were catalysts for class-conscious action. The most serious impediment to labor unity was not the Polish element, but rather the growing antagonism between the Social Democratic *Alter Verband* and the Catholic, antisocialist, and increasingly German-nationalist *Gewerkverein* (224).

Kulczycki is at his best in working with newspaper reports of clashes, police analyses, interunion negotia-

tions, and strike statistics, though his work with the latter might have benefited from the use of multiple regressions in addition to his simple correlations and geographic comparisons. Still, his evidence concerning the consciousness of Polish workers, class or otherwise, is mostly indirect. The sources do not allow the author to get inside the heads of Polish workers to analyze what they thought, said, valued, and experienced in order to compare the influences of religion, culture, and class. Government records, which Kulczycki has thoroughly combed, show the Poles from a distance and through the filter of official prejudice. In this regard, the author is not always convincing when he quotes official sources to make the point that the Poles played a large role in the strikes. Did not Prussian officials and German nationalists have a vested interest in exaggerating the role of the Poles in any disorder?

Kulczycki's work suggests that neither religion nor ethnicity provided an insurmountable barrier within the working class. The Poles, to be sure, were driven by Social Democratic and Catholic indifference to form their own union, the ZZP, in 1902 (160). Yet this separate organization led the other unions to pay more attention to Polish workers and to accept the ZZP as a partner in the 1905 and 1912 strikes. In other words, the separate ethnic organization of Polish workers was a step towards their integration in functional coalitions. This is an example of a wider phenomenon that would bear more examination for Wilhelmine Germany, namely the ways in which separate organizations like those for the Poles might have potentially promoted integration depending on the attitudes and decisions taken by leadership elites. It is not convincing to dismiss the formation of separate organizations as "negative integration" (262). Some contemporary European political studies, Arend Lijphart's on the Netherlands for example, argue that societies organized in a highly segmented way can nevertheless provide a stable basis for pluralistic democracy. The separate organization of the Poles, although judged "negative" by Kulczycki, appears from his own account to have been a positive step that made possible, at least for a time, a real partnership with organized German workers.

Kulczycki argues that the promising cooperation of the Poles with the other unions broke down before the war. The unhappy results of the 1912 strikes, the inability of the Social Democrats and Catholics to work together, and the increasingly radical anti-Polish policy of the government convinced the leaders of the ZZP to break their alliances with German workers and to cultivate ties with the Polish-nationalist movement. Nationalism did prove stronger than solidarity by 1914, but perhaps the best aspect of Kulczycki's study is its demonstration that this result was not preordained.

One might quibble with the author's inflated moral outrage in the introduction and conclusion. Here he accuses German workers of a "betrayal of international solidarity" by supporting war in 1914 while arguing that "decades of xenophobia" paved the way for this treachery (259). Yet by which (a)historical standards is the author judging German workers? After conclusively demolishing the double standard for Polish workers, Kulczycki comes close to creating one for German workers - as if they should have been less prejudiced than workers in other countries. Only a few (and possibly somewhat rosy) comparisons with the American trade union movement support the author's implication that German workers were unusually "xenophobic." In any case, Kulczycki's book seems to this reader to show a xenophobia fundamentally driven not by the German working class but by the Prussian state, with its harassment and interference, its distortion of information, and its legitimation of popular prejudice. If Kulczycki wants to evaluate right and wrong, he needs a wider frame of reference together with fuller considerations of the state and of the respective German and Polish nationalist crusades.

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