

Mick Reed/Roger Wells (Hrsg.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside*, Frank Cass, London 1990, hbd., 236 S., 19,50 £.

Six scholars have collaborated to produce a collection of essays on the structure of rural society in England between 1700 and 1880 and on the different ways in which farm labourers and village craftsmen protested against the harsh conditions under which they lived, particularly in times of agricultural depression. Seven of the ten essays have already appeared in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. The contributors are quarrelsome colleagues. They appear to agree on fundamental issues but to quarrel over relatively minor matters.

The authors criticise the traditional division of English rural society into three classes – landlords, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. They claim that historians have failed to appreciate the significance of a fourth group, namely the village craftsmen and providers of services. In most villages there were self employed workers such as innkeepers, blacksmiths, farriers, joiners, carpenters, carriers and shopkeepers. Some men had two or even three jobs. A publican, for example, might also be a bricklayer and would probably have a smallholding as well. Members of this group generally relied upon family labour. From time to time they furthered their interests by collaborating with one of the other social groups in the village.

The contributors to this volume also criticise historians who have discussed unrest in the English countryside in the first half of the nineteenth century by describing the depression of 1815–16, the Swing riots of 1830–1 and the Rebecca riots of 1839–43. By concentrating upon major outbursts of rural violence there is a danger that unrest in other periods may be overlooked. Villagers had many grievances – low incomes, tithes, road tolls, the game laws, and the poor law. It is hardly surprising that sheepstealing, fowl thieving, cattle rustling, poaching and the burning of haystacks and barns were endemic in the English countryside. And in some districts the introduction of threshing machines was delayed because farmers were intimidated by violent attacks upon them.

In the final essay Roger Wells appeals for further research into English rural history. To the topics that he mentions may be added – developments in the north of England and in Scotland and Wales and the significance of enlistment in the army and emigration to the colonies as means of escape from the harsh conditions of life in the countryside.

*William Otto Henderson, Hemel Hempstead*

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John Saville, 1848. *The British State and the Chartist Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, 310 S., hardback, 37.50 £, paperback, 13.95 £.

Few aspects of British social history have been more thoroughly investigated than the Chartist movement. A recent bibliography lists 40 books on the subject. The early works, such as those of Gammage, Hovell, West and Dolléans, surveyed the movement as a whole, while in recent years the emphasis has been on regional studies (London, Bradford, Bristol, Scotland) and biographies (Doherty, Lowery, Harney, Ernest Jones).

Professor Saville has adopted a fresh approach to the subject. He has examined Chartist activities month by month in the critical year 1848. His approach is different from that of earlier writers since he devotes much attention to the link between Chartism and affairs in France and Ireland. A number of Chartists expected a revolution in France, led by the Paris workers, would be a signal for popular risings in England and on the Continent. When Louis Philippe fell from power in February 1848, the Chartist leaders Julian Harney and

Ernest Jones crossed the Channel to congratulate the Provisional Government. On the other hand General Cavaignac's ruthless suppression of a rising of the Paris workers in June was a blow to the hopes of the Chartists.

There were also significant links between the threat to law and order in England by the Chartists and the serious unrest in Ireland. Agrarian outrages and attacks on the police were endemic in Ireland where the Catholic population was ruthlessly suppressed by the Protestant minority. The situation was aggravated by the great famine of the late 1840s. Any link between Irish malcontents and the more militant Chartists was bound to be a concern to the British government, particularly as there were large numbers of Irish immigrants in some English towns such as Liverpool.

Two factors favoured the maintenance of law and order in England in 1848. One was the recent opening of many railways which made it possible to move troops quickly to trouble spots. The other was the excellent response to appeals to men to enrol as special constables. Finally the author argues that the failure of the Kennington common demonstration of April 10 should not be regarded as the climax of Chartist movement. It was the unrest in the summer of 1848 – after the demonstration – that provoked the government to bring the Chartist leaders to trial.

*William Otto Henderson, Hemel Hempstead*

Joseph White, Tom Mann, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991, 242 S., geb., 29 £.

Tom Mann was one of a group of young men who emerged in the 1880s as leaders of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers in Britain. The strike of the London dockers in 1889–90 heralded the emergence of a new type of trade union which championed the interests of dockers, gas workers and general labourers. The activities of Tom Mann are not so well known as those of John Burns, Benn Tillet and Will Thorne. Scholars have had to rely upon Mann's memoirs and Donna Thor's incomplete biography. The appearance of Joseph White's well researched biography of Tom Mann is therefore to be welcomed.

Having completed his apprenticeship as an engineer in Birmingham in 1877, Tom Mann moved to London. In the 1880s he began to make a name for himself as an advocate of the eight-hour day and as a member of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society and the co-operative movement. He was actively involved in the London dock strike and became president of the dockers' union. But he resigned in 1891. Next he became the secretary of the Independent Labour Party serving four years in this capacity. He was forced out of office in 1898 largely because he had left his wife to live with his mistress.

Mann then spent eight years in Australia and New Zealand where he was actively engaged in promoting the trade union movement. On his return to England he was involved in the social unrest of 1910–14. The final phase of his career after the first world war was that of an elder statesman of the extreme left. He joined the Communist Party and championed the cause of revolutionary syndicalism. In Joseph White he has found a sympathetic biographer.

*William Otto Henderson, Hemel Hempstead*

John D. Hunley, The Life and Thought of Friedrich Engels, Yale University Press, New Haven etc. 1991, XIII + 184 S., geb., 14 £.

The author of this survey of the career and beliefs of Friedrich Engels criticises scholars who have suggested that there were significant differences in the opinions held by Marx and