

Sandbrook recognizes that there are dangers in this kind of incrementalist strategy. Too much adherence to financial orthodoxy can block the other initiatives, and so the regime ends up providing no real alternative to neoliberalism. He also understands that external pressures, such as the abrupt end to the global commodity boom, can put economies such as Brazil and Chile under intense pressure that can jeopardize this entire political strategy. But one of his central points is that if these moderate social democratic societies can stay on course, they can help to shift the rules of the global economy in a way that would open up more space for this social-democratic path.

The idea is that social-democratic countries, working in coordination with global social movements, have the potential to win reforms in global institutions and global regimes. If, for example, there were a significant increase in the availability of development finance through the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Bank, the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Global Green Fund, more countries could copy Brazil's use of the Brazilian National Development Bank as a driver for both clean energy and industrial development. And this, in turn, would open up the possibility of a more radical restructuring of globalization that would further expand opportunities for patterns of development that are democratic, inclusive, and sustainable.

Given the realities of global terrorism, financial meltdowns, failed states, and climate change, it is child's play for social scientists to construct dystopian narratives about the future of the planet. The great achievement of *Reinventing the Left in the Global South* is that Sandbrook constructs a narrative of a positive future that is not clouded by utopian thinking and that is grounded in the actual experience of specific social movements and political parties in the Global South. This is an achievement that deserves a broad audience.

**Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class.** By Immanuel Ness. London: Pluto Press, 2015. 224p. \$100.00 cloth, \$28.00 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592716000517

— Jason Schulman, *Lehman College, City University of New York*

Immanuel Ness has written a compelling book which, on one level, is a comparative analysis of neoliberal reorganization of industrial relations and of the relocation of capital to the Global South, much in the tradition of Beverly Silver's (2003) *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870*. On another level it is a sort of militant syndicalist manifesto, the core argument of which is that new, radically democratic forms of worker organization in the South are going to prove what one could call the "traditional Marxist hypothesis" correct: The

industrial working class will lead the way towards the global overthrow of capitalist society and the creation of an emancipated, classless world—although this thesis is more implied than explicit—and the locus of class struggle from below has moved away from the North and its non-participatory, class-collaborationist labor unions.

Ness is clearly frustrated with "leftists and postmodernists" who, beginning in the 1970s, claimed that capitalist society had entered an era of "post-industrialism" (p. 4), as well as with "researchers and journalists [who] have pondered the working class mostly without consideration of the vast majority of workers who are laboring in the Global South" (p. 5). He is certainly correct that the working class is now larger than ever before, constituting nearly 3 billion people, with over 80 percent of the world's industrial workers currently located in the South. There—unlike in Europe and North America—"worker struggles are rampant" (p. 6). His understanding for why this transference has occurred derives from the theory of "the shift from competitive to monopoly capitalism" (p. 17) first explicated in V. I. Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917) and further developed by writers in the "monopoly capital" school of Marxist economics such as Harry Magdoff, Samir Amin, and John Bellamy Foster. He does not address criticisms of this school by other Marxists who argue that from its inception, this understanding of capitalist imperialism "extrapolated far too generally from the monopoly trusts formed between industrial and financial firms at the turn of the century in Germany" (Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, 2012, p. 6). Nevertheless, it is quite clear that capital's response to the victories gained by organized labor in the North has often been to relocate to the South, a process repeated throughout the "neoliberal" era of capitalism. Ness also provides convincing proof that exploitation of Southern labor by Northern capital is intensifying, as profits that originate from the South are rising more rapidly than the arrival of investment capital to the South. Notably, as Ness stresses: Southern labor is often *migrant* and/or *contracted* labor, cheap and plentiful, a global version of Karl Marx's "reserve army of labor;" the traditional unions of these countries often fail to act as genuine workers' defense organizations; and frequently any organizing efforts by Southern workers is met by state repression.

But Ness is clearly inspired by the working-class resistance he describes in his case studies: India, China, and South Africa, three major Southern economies. The first case focuses on the Maruti Suzuki auto factories in Haryana State, where workers from 1995 onward have repeatedly engaged in sit-down strikes, walkouts, and factory occupations, leading to the creation of the independent Maruti Suzuki Workers Union, opposed to the official, company-run Maruti Udyog Kamgar

Union. Though these workers have endured brutal (and officially illegal) police repression, militant union organizing and strikes persist in Haryana State, proving to Ness that “newly proletarianized workers gain class consciousness as quickly as veteran workers from that region, and resiliently resist employer domination and persecution” (p. 106).

Ness’s chapter on China centers upon the mass strike in 2014 at several Yue Yuen shoe-manufacturing factories in the Pearl River Delta. This wildcat strike by over 30,000 workers against the world’s largest shoe company—one of thousands of similar strikes between 2009 and 2014—was a success, leading to higher wages and greater retirement benefits. Of particular interest is the relationship between “spontaneous” workers’ actions and the state-managed All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the country’s only legal union. Though the ACFTU has enrolled hundreds of thousands of workers in private plants as China has progressed along its transition to capitalism, it has done so with the intent to control workers’ activity and prevent strikes. But it lacks a developed system of processing grievances and Chinese labor law, now delegated to the city level, is not enforced. As a result, though workers currently cannot revolt at the regional or national level or form a non-state union, the number of local strikes (often in response to failures to pay wages) is extremely high—and very effective at winning concessions from private employers. The great irony, Ness rather convincingly argues, is that Chinese workers seem to have achieved more power on the job than most of today’s Northern workers purely through industrial militancy, “without the existence of the restrictive labor laws that inevitably accompany recognition of Western-style unions” (p. 117), and this may remain so even if—or when—a national independent labor movement emerges out of these localized class struggles.

In his chapter on South Africa, Ness analyzes the wave of platinum miners’ strikes between 2009 and 2014. Particular attention is paid to the Marikana strike of 2012, in which 34 workers were killed and dozens more injured by police under the orders of the African National Congress (ANC) government. The ANC, in power since 1994, has continuously implemented a neoliberal agenda. The participation of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in a Tripartite Alliance with the ANC has only led to the SACP and COSATU becoming apologists for neoliberalism and opponents of workers’ militancy. Tired of working under abysmal conditions for paltry wages, the miners—toiling in the country’s largest industry—directly confronted not only their employers, but also the pro-employer National Union of Mineworkers (NUM, part of COSATU) by joining with a militant independent union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). Despite the Marikana

massacre, the 2012 strike led to a 22 percent wage increase, with the most recent strikes winning further increases. Soon afterward, South Africa’s metalworkers union (NUMSA) criticized COSATU’s policies and was subsequently expelled. Ness expects a radical restructuring of the South African labor movement that will challenge the Tripartite Alliance.

Ness’s descriptions of what might be called the Southern version of “alt-labor” are fascinating and deserve close study. However, it remains to be seen if what he sees as 21<sup>st</sup> century variations on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) will retain their combativeness or, as they become more nationally cohesive and institutionalized, will end up just as docile as so many unions of the Global North. There is also something of a conflict between his book’s subtitle, which invokes the *global* working class, and his lack of consideration that the service-sector and public-sector workers of the North, with their often stagnant or declining living standards, might prove to be just as militant as their Southern industrial counterparts. Furthermore, nowhere in this Marxist book is the question of workers of the Global South forming socialist parties ever posited. Nevertheless, *Southern Insurgency* provides a powerful corrective to those who have failed to notice that not only does the industrial proletariat still matter, but that it may prove to be the “vanguard” of the international working class after all.

#### **Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified**

**Discontent in India.** By Rina Agarwala. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 272p. \$99.99 cloth, \$29.99 paper.

#### **Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India.**

By Tariq Thachil. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 352p. \$99.00.  
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— Ashutosh Varshney, *Brown University*

The two books under review focus on the politics of the subaltern, but in different ways. Rina Agarwala seeks to understand how informal workers, generally viewed in political economy as hapless victims of capitalism, organize themselves. Tariq Thachil attempts to explain how a political party catering to elite interests can also capture the vote of the subaltern. Both books concentrate on India but frame their inquiry comparatively and theoretically.

Informal workers comprise 93% of India’s labor force. They “construct buildings, build roads, grow and sell fruits and vegetables, clean homes and streets, sew clothes, weld car parts and make shoes—not to mention the boxes they come in” (*Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India*, p. 2). They are informal because their work conditions, benefits, and wages are not contractually protected, as is true of the “formal working class.” Because of the nature of their work, their dispersion, and their widespread