

trade to unify various groups. The rest of the book then explores the central issues and challenges facing the banana industry today, moving from environmental and trade problems to worker and small farmer organising, the potential for organic products, the rise of third-party monitoring within the industry, and the response of the corporate giants to fair trade. Frundt then finishes with a look at recent efforts to forge and promote fairer trade within the industry.

In the end, regardless of whether one shares Frundt's optimism with respect to the potential of fair trade, one is left with a true understanding how the banana industry emerged and currently operates, who benefits and loses from the system, and why a diverse range of groups now agree that we need a better banana. *Fair Bananas* is obviously a must-read for anyone interested in the banana industry, fair trade and international solidarity, but it also provides a wonderful way of understanding the global economy, US–Latin American relations, and collective action.

University of New Orleans

STEVE STRIFFLER

J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 42 (2010). doi:10.1017/S0022216X10000787

Allen Wells, *Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, and the Jews of Sosúa* (Durham NC and London, Duke University Press, 2009), pp. xxxi + 447, £69.00, £17.99 pb.

This fascinating book traces the story of Sosúa, an agricultural settlement established on the northern coast of the Dominican Republic in 1940 for refugees escaping Nazi persecution in Europe. The book recreates the protracted relocation to the tropics of 757 refugees, the fortunate few out of hundreds of thousands frenetically searching for a place of escape in a period when countries closed their doors to Jewish refugees.

This was a time when policies encouraging massive migration to the Americas, which had resulted in over 11 million immigrants relocating to Latin America alone between 1854 and 1924, came to an end. Due to fear and xenophobia, countries turned a blind eye to the plight of the persecuted. The consciousness of an imminent genocide and the very term used later on to refer to it, as coined by Rafael Lemkin, had not yet crystallised. Only the postwar revelations of the brutality of the Holocaust would enable the world to reframe the early plight of a stateless people, a plight at that time undefined as a humanitarian crisis and one which would convince the Nazis and their collaborators that they could carry out the grossest human rights violations and crimes against humanity of the modern era with impunity. Partly due to the fear of receiving a fifth column of Nazi collaborators but mostly due to the combination of a worldwide xenophobic zeitgeist reinforced by the economic crisis of the 1930s, governments adopted nationalist and protectionist policies that closed their doors to refugees in general and Jewish refugees in particular. The works of scholars such as Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro have amply documented this wave of relative closure of borders to Jews fleeing for their lives to Brazil, a restrictive trend replicated in most states throughout the Americas.

At the centre of the book – published shortly after Marion Kaplan's *Dominican Haven* (2008) – is the puzzling fact that the Dominican Republic, at that time a country of 3.5 million inhabitants controlled with an iron grip by the dictator Rafael Trujillo, was the only country attending the 1938 Evian Conference on refugees to offer to open its doors and receive up to 100,000 persons escaping from Germany and Austria. Making sense of this promise and its only partial fulfilment, the book

brings the reader the story of this tropical relocation as recounted by the refugees, the operating staff of the Dominican Republic Settlement Association (DORSA) and others, supported by extensive archival sources and interwoven with a comprehensive and penetrating analysis of the broader forces at work in Europe, the Dominican Republic and the United States. Wells reveals that the transnational interplay of all these forces at concrete historical moments shaped decisions and led to this unique experience of forced migrants becoming pioneers in the tropics.

Wells, a distinguished historian and son of one of the fortunate few selected for relocation to Sosúa, illuminates the converging motives of General Rafael Trujillo, the US administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the Jewish Distribution Committee and other Jewish organisations in supporting the initiative in lands that Trujillo personally donated, and in the fate of the settlement itself. In a clear and elegant style the author shows that Trujillo jumped on the opportunity to restore his reputation abroad, tarnished after a massacre of 15,000 Haitians in 1937. Trujillo also wanted to find avenues through which to influence the FDR administration in issues that he considered crucial for the Dominican Republic and his own finances, primarily ending the system of US-controlled receivership of his country's customs and broadening the Dominican quota in the US sugar market. Moreover, and perhaps paradoxically in hindsight, the xenophobic aversion towards the black component of the population led Trujillo to welcome the Central European Jews, whom he considered to be white and preferable to the Haitian peasants squatting in the western part of the country. Trujillo hoped that the male immigrants – the influx suffered from a heavily lopsided gender ratio – would marry local women and thus contribute to 'improving the race', his national project. For his part, FDR understood that a successful Dominican settlement project would deflect attention away from the United States' restrictive immigration policy and would not open new fronts for those who accused him of being philosemitic and his administration of having too many top Jewish officials. Moving away from a historiography on the rescue of the European Jews that centred around the fixing of blame, Allen builds a complex interplay of forces and what seems from our current vantage point to be a series of historical ironies, paradoxes and unintended consequences. In the author's own words, what distinguishes the book is 'the narrative's intersecting threads: the colony's fitful evolution, the US–Dominican relations, Trujillo's multifaceted domestic agenda, and American Jewry's squabbles' (p. xxxi).

It is impossible to sum up here the book's rich findings, but at least some of these ironies and unintended consequences of history should be stressed. For instance, the book shows how the United States' domestic and international priorities in the Second World War period worked to strengthen relations with Latin American dictators, among them Trujillo and the Somoza family, for decades to come; how the North American Jewish leaders tolerated FDR's inaction towards the European Jewish refugees as a result of their wish to be accepted in US society and retain their access to power; how the multiplicity of different political positions of Jewish organisations played into the hands of FDR; how leading figures in the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Settlement Association as well as the settlers repaid their rescue with a client's full loyalty towards Trujillo, lobbying for him and trying to influence US public opinion and the US administration; how the enclave character with which Trujillo endowed Sosúa as part of a policy of 'threat containment' eventually led to the failure of his project of miscegenation; how the changed postwar landscape diverted Jewish interests and funds toward the

reinforcement of the Zionist project in the Holy Land, even among Jewish organisations such as the American Jewish Committee and the JDC that had long resisted Zionism and considered Sosúa and other settlements alternative models; and how the decline of such funding led unintentionally to the self-reliant success of those settlers who remained in the Dominican Republic after the war and led to a successful employee-owned dairy cooperative.

The reader will find in this excellent book rich hindsight on these and other unintended workings of human action as well as ample documentation to follow the complexities of this historical experiment of Jewish refugees escaping Europe and forced to recreate their lives in the tropics.

Wake Forest University

LUIS RONIGER

J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 42 (2010). doi:10.1017/S0022216X10000799

Helen Yaffe, *Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. xiii + 354, £17.99, pb.

When people hear the name Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, they invariably think of an almost mythical, today even iconic, guerrilla leader. In contrast, few are aware of his contributions to the debate about the future of socialism, or his footprints as minister in Revolutionary Cuba. It is quite symptomatic that Steven Soderbergh’s films about Che deal exclusively with his role as a guerrilla leader in the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship (1956–8), and (in the second film) with his subsequent role as leader of the guerrilla struggle in Bolivia (1966–7). Not a film sequence can be found about Che’s role in framing the strategies and policies of Revolutionary Cuba (1959–65); nor do recent biographies of Che give much attention to this side of his story.⁸

However, several books (also in English) have been published in which Che Guevara is specifically recognised for his thoughts on economics and economic planning, and as a socialist visionary.⁹ Helen Yaffe’s book *Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution* is a valuable complement to these studies. The book is an exciting, well-written and well-documented narrative and analysis of Che’s economic thought, based on years of research with primary (interviews and unpublished files) and secondary sources.

The book deals at length with Che’s role in the so-called Great Debate in Cuba (1963–5) – in fact, it leaves one with the impression that there might not have been a debate at all had it not been for Che’s strong positions on a number of issues. What is a little strange, however, is that in the Cuban debate there was practically no mention at all of similar debates in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, which could have served as challenging points of departure. This is, of course, not Yaffe’s fault, but it is interesting in retrospect to draw some parallels.

Nikolai Bukharin, one of the leading Bolsheviks at the time, wrote his reflections on the transition to communism in 1920, just after ‘war communism’ had been a

⁸ Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (London, 1997); Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Guevara, also known as Che* (New York, 1997).

⁹ Bertram Silverman (ed.), *Man and Socialism in Cuba: The Great Debate* (New York, 1971); Michael Löwy, *The Marxism of Che Guevara* (New York, 1973); Dave Deutschmann (ed.), *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution: Writings and Speeches of Ernesto Che Guevara* (Sydney, 1987); Carlos Tablada, *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* (Sydney, 1989).