

EDITOR'S REMARKS

Community and Politics

At the very end of the nineteenth century industrial capitalism shattered the forms of productive organization, patterns of urban development, and geographic confines that had shaped working-class life and movements during the previous half century. Subsequently workers' struggles in Europe and the Americas first mounted to unprecedented size, intensity, and audacity, then abruptly subsided, so that only the lonely voices of party and union militants still echoed the popular thunder of the immediate post-war years. Localized and sporadic struggles of the early 1930s heralded a new wave of activity with new forms of organization, which rose through the bloody experiences of war and resistance to crest as the formidable working-class presence of the mid-1940s. Simultaneously, capitalism's global expansion gave rise to workers' movements in the Third World, which bore the clear stamp of their own distinctive conditions, despite their links (sometimes only superficial) to the ideologies and organizations of Europe and North America.

Explaining both the "great silence" of 1922–1935 in industrial towns of France and Italy, which had previously boasted lively revolutionary movements under the domination of skilled workers, and the social basis of Communism's ultimate triumph as the dominant political culture, is the task to which Yves Lequin and his fellow researchers of Lyon have addressed themselves. Their analysis of "turbulent" residential and job turnover, the restructuring of work relations, and the ossification of older styles of class organization raises important questions about both the causes and the periodization of the ebb and flow of workers' struggles during this century.

Family life emerges from oral histories in France, Italy, and the United States with compelling emotional intensity. In Lequin's view, the centrality of family in workers' experience was new—a product of declining community life. As a residual repository of class allegiances, family loyalties paradoxically refreshed everyday resistance to fascism. Recent studies of working-class life in the United States have also placed family life at the center of the analytical stage. That is where it belongs, according to John Bodnar's survey of these works, but historians still exhibit confusion about the way in which the role of family ties has evolved. Bodnar finds a continuing conflict in the socialization of workers' children between the teachings of public education and the imperatives of physical survival for working people.

Emilia da Costa has provided us with an insightful discussion of recently published documents from the history of Brazilian workers. She finds in them abundant material with which to confront questions which have been slighted by available studies of Brazilian movements: the role of material conditions in shaping workers' responses to the initiatives of organized groups, the prominence of native-born Brazilians (and especially blacks) among the activists, the importance of

women in early struggles, and the wide and complex range of subjects to which workers addressed their attention.

All these questions and more were brought to bear on the social history of Russian workers during the late nineteenth century and the revolutionary decades of this century by a group of scholars who assembled at Berkeley last March. Their two-day gathering was a model working conference of serious historians identifying and rolling back the frontiers of meaningful historical research. In reporting its proceedings to readers of *ILWCH* Ronald Suny has offered us, not a review of new literature, but a preview of literature to come.

While *ILWCH* proudly presents all this innovative work, however, it must also mourn the untimely death of Richard N. Hunt, who not only labored so fruitfully at those frontiers of historical knowledge, but also played a decisive role in helping Bob Wheeler bring *ILWCH* into existence and in keeping it going after Bob's death. All of us have been enriched by Hunt's writings on German Social Democracy and on Marx and Engels. A proper tribute to this work will appear in the next issue of *ILWCH* (No. 23). What needs emphasis here is his selfless contribution to the study of the history of working people everywhere. Richard Hunt was a true socialist scholar, an internationalist.

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