International Labor and Working Class History
Number 17, Spring 1980, pp. 51-78

BOOK REVIEWS

Lion Murard and Patrick Zylberman, editors, *Le Soldat du travail*. Paris: *Recherches* no. 32 (September 1978). 556 pp.

In *Le petit travailleur infatigable* Lion Murard and Patrick Zylberman analyzed the ways in which nineteenth century French industrialists manipulated the public and private lives of their workers so as to exert greater control over them. At various points they suggested that company towns of the nineteenth century were forerunners of the European dictatorships of the twentieth century. *Le Soldat du travail*, a collection of nineteen essays which Murard and Zylberman have edited, takes the study of social control from the company town to the European state in the years 1914-40.

Foremost among manufacturers who practiced the authoritarian paternalism described by Murard and Zylberman in *Le petit travailleur infatigable* was Jules Chagot, director of the coal mines of Montceau-les-Mines. Chagot's approach to labor can be summed up in the eulogy he pronounced following a mine disaster which took eighty-nine lives in 1857:

> The workers are *les soldats du travail* and those for whom we mourn today died on the field of honor. We regret them as good and skilled workers who fulfilled their duty with dignity, but we regret them especially as we regret the loss of our own, because we form one great family of workers of which I am honored to be the *head* and the *protector*.[1]

The image of the worker as soldier was a favorite of nineteenth century industrialists because it expressed both the discipline and the *élan* which they desired in their labor force.

The *soldat du travail* developed new significance in the twentieth century as a result of three events: the spread of scientific management, the total mobilization of the state during the First World War and the establishment of fascist governments in Italy and Germany, and of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. Taylorism and the managerial philosophies which it spawned sought to replace the conflict characteristic of labor/management relations in the past by a management-controlled effort to get workers to produce more efficiently. However, if Taylorism suggested a "demilitarization" of labor, the First World War had an opposite effect. The term "*soldat du travail*" lost its metaphorical meaning as a result of state and

military intervention in the economies of France and Germany during the War. Finally, the fascist and Stalinist states which emerged in the post-War period provided fertile ground for the cultivation of a new *soldat du travail*.

Yet, the conclusion one draws from *Le Soldat du travail* is that interwar Europe was marked by conflicts between Taylorism and older styles of management, and between state planning and the "irrational" imperatives of fascist and Stalinist dictatorships. J.P. Querzola underscores the first of these debates in his essay on Leninism and Taylorism. He argues that Lenin approached Taylorism with a profound misunderstanding of the nature and development of working class consciousness, which was compounded by the different levels of industrialization in the United States and the Soviet Union. Whereas Taylor had discovered that a worker learned to restrict his output and to avoid managerial authority in the factory, Lenin viewed factory work as a schooling in discipline. The thrust of Taylor's work was to break down workers' self-imposed discipline, which gave them a technological and organizational hold over the workplace; after the Revolution Lenin interpreted Taylorism as a means to create workers who could accept factory discipline and therefore express proletarian class consciousness under the leadership of a vanguard party. Such an outlook led Lenin to turn to wartime Imperial Germany for an example of the militarization of labor—and of society—which would be required to construct a socialist state. Lenin's interest in state intervention in German economic life during the War gave his musings on Taylorism an additional irony: as Taylor projected a new basis of authority in the workplace, Lenin looked to the military-style discipline which had characterized much of nineteenth century industrial relations.[2]

Lenin's was only one of the images of society as an *usine nouvelle* susceptible to scientific management which inhabited the imaginations of European social planners after the First World War. Ellis Hawley points out in a contribution to this volume that the majority of those in America who projected the principles of scientific management into society felt that it offered the basis for a corporate society which would support rather than subvert the liberal order in politics and economics. However, if the liberal idea of progress was still relevant to American social theory, a fixation on stability and dynamism came to dominate much of European political thought. These concerns issued from the "total mobilization" of society by the wartime state to increase production, a phenomenon evoked poetically by Ernst Jünger and politically by Gerd Hardach in *Le Soldat du travail*. In a seminal article which first appeared a decade ago and is republished in this collection, Charles Maier analyzes the political role of scientific management in the Europe of the twenties. His conclusion, born out in the essays in *Le Soldat du travail*, is that scientific management was best received in countries where those in power hoped to overcome class conflict by distributing the fruits of improved industrial efficiency. As this vision faded, fascism provided a militaristic ideology to justify increased exploitation of the working class.

Of the four countries which receive extended treatment in *Le Soldat du travail*—France, Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union—only France did not experience a dictatorship in the interwar years. Articles by Martin Fine, Aimée Moutet

and Henry Peiter suggest that this was in part because existing means of social control weathered the War better in France than elsewhere. Fine describes the wartime work of the socialist Albert Thomas in fostering worker/management cooperation in a modernized and rationalized industrial economy. In Thomas' view the War prepared labor, industry and the state to plan for postwar economic development.[3] Such was not to be the case, however. Neither the corporatism of the left preached by Thomas nor corporatism of the right triumphed in interwar France. Moutet shows that the authoritarian paternalism characteristic of business in the pre-War years emerged strengthened by the wartime experience of state control and Taylorization. Peiter goes one step further, arguing that French business made a conscious decision to mimimize its use of new managerial techniques in order to preserve what it saw as the traditional fabric of French life.

If social conservatism shaped the application of scientific management in France, Maurizio Vaudagna shows that economic backwardness limited its effectiveness in fascist Italy. Victoria de Grazia examines the *dopolavoro*, the program of "Taylorized" leisure-time activities introduced under fascism to compensate for growing exploitation and the denial of political and union rights. Her conclusions complement those of Vaudagna while showing how scientific management could be used to confirm existing patterns of labor relations: at large mechanized firms *dopolavoro* activities were run with the strict discipline characteristic of the assembly-line; in the new capital-intensive industries, like electric power production, the *dopolavoro* were conducted closer to an American corporate model; in traditional labor-intensive industries such as textiles the *dopolavoro* reaffirmed existing paternalist values.

The articles by Anson Rabinbach and Tim Mason trace similar developments in Nazi Germany. Rabinbach shows how the cult of the machine and of modernistic art and architecture came to triumph over the anti-modernism of the first years of the Nazi regime. The Nazi Beauty of Labor program was intended to provide an aesthetic resolution to class conflict by reintegrating the alienated Taylorized worker into a modern clean workplace: instead of questioning the effects of Taylorization, the Nazis constructed an environment in which these would appear normal. Rabinbach, like Murard and Zylberman in *Le petit travailleur infatigable*, traces this approach to labor from its origins in the company towns of the nineteenth century. Mason's article on Nazi labor policy concentrates on the activities of the Labor Front, an organization dedicated to the creation of harmony at the workplace which encompassed all workers and supervisory personnel. By means of the "Strength through Joy" movement the Front attempted to provide entertainment outside of the workplace to make up for the repression within it. Mason makes abundently clear however that such programs could not prevent workers from trying to take advantage of the competition for manpower created by the industrial mobilization of the late thirties.

Mason's study of the economic and social dislocation issuing from the conflict of economic and political goals—the militarization of labor which characterized the First World War pushed one step further—is paralleled by Gabor Rittersporn's essay on Stalinism. Rittersporn analyzes the chaos in the Soviet

Union of the late thirties in terms of a conflict between "centrifugal" and "centripetal" forces within a state apparatus which prevented significant reform of the bureaucracy or the economy.[4]

Murand and Zylberman's contribution to the collection, "Le roi peste," pursues the argument presented in *Le petit travailleur infatigable* that conceptions of public health and hygiene and the drive to classify and to identify the origins of individuals and institutions characterize twentieth century totalitarians. American readers will recognize in their argument an extreme form of Susan Sontag's attack on the use of illness as metaphor.

Le Soldat du travail presents a varied and valuable set of essays on the exercise of power in the workplace and the state in continental Europe during the twentieth century. Americans wrote several of the best essays and their translation into French makes the collection of particular interest to Europeans. Why Americans have played such an important role in this field is difficult to say, although the fact that so many European countries were self-consciously trying to respond to the perceived challenge of American methods during the interwar years—see Vaudagna's essay in particular—may explain the attraction for American scholars who want to evaluate the American experience in the twentieth century in a comparative context.

Le Soldat du travail focuses on the relation of liberal and fascist political systems to scientific management. The excellent essays on state efforts to "compensate" for increased exploitation at the workplace fall into this category. On the other hand, a reading of *Le Soldat du travail* suggests that more work needs to be done on rationalization from the point of view of the European working class. Two essays in this collection outline the pre-history of this subject. Michelle Perrot's study of machine-breaking in nineteenth century France shows how certain elements of the working class like weavers were destroyed by the introduction of machinery, while others, like mechanics, were given power by their technical expertise in machine construction and repair. Perrot's article serves as an introduction to Patrick Fridenson's application to pre-1914 France of David Montgomery's studies of workers' responses to management efforts to take control of the mechanized workplace. Only more studies of workers' responses to rationalization both in the workplace[5] and in their unions and political parties[6] will enable us to fill in the gap in our knowledge of the interwar European worker, framed in Murard and Zylberman's collection between the Taylorists' opinion of him as one who "soldiers" and the capitalist/state view of him as suitable material for the creation of a *soldat du travail*.

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NOTES

1. M. Sutet, "Jules Chagot: fondateur de la Compagnie des Mines de Blanzy (1801-1877). Étude de la mentalité d'un grand patron au XIX[e] siècle" in *Actes du quatre-vingt-neuvième congrès*