

event, that which underpins in good measure any thesis that Asturias was different. Yet the 1934 insurrection is passed over all too rapidly, without a really thorough analysis of the curious trajectory of the single CNT regional confederation to support the “workers alliance” tactic, much less any investigation of the vital role that the CNT, especially in Gijón and La Felguera, played in the events themselves: the only significant leader to die was precisely the CNT’s José María Martínez. The suggestion, therefore, at the end of the conclusion (p. 432) that the proposal for a revolutionary alliance in 1936 – realised after the civil war had begun – “vindicated morally and materially all the previous trajectory of the regional confederation” is in no way an argument proven in the book. Equally, the assertion that the new orientation, accepted at the IV National Congress of the CNT in May 1936, “ratified the validity of Asturian postulates”, made at the start of the book (p. xvi), is, in the circumstances of a very brief summary of this factor at the congress and a complete lack of investigation into the situation of the Asturian anarchosyndicalist movement in 1936, no less unproven.

In conclusion then, the book, while providing a good deal of useful material on the early moments of trade-union development, particularly in Gijón, and whilst providing an analysis, from an Asturian point of view, of certain of the issues that occupied anarchosyndicalists during the first twenty-five years in the life of the CNT, does not give much data on the Asturian CNT itself, most certainly not on the organisation beyond Gijón and La Felguera. This is a big disappointment because that is precisely what is required and precisely what someone looking at the title of the book would assume to be present. The author claims that a lack of sources was responsible for this, adding that this lack “contributed in making extraordinarily difficult the verification of some previously formulated hypotheses” (p. xviii). No researcher should be seeking to prove preconceived hypotheses and certainly not at the expense of accurate and detailed investigation. Unfortunately, when it comes to working-class and trade-union history in Spain there have been too many theses and not enough basic research, though thankfully the position is gradually changing with a new generation of younger students.

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JULLIARD, JACQUES. *Autonomie ouvrière. Études sur le syndicalisme d’action directe.* [Hautes Études.] Gallimard, Le Seuil, Paris 1988. 300 pp. F.fr. 140.00.

In many ways, this is a very good book. It is full of intelligent arguments, forceful attacks on much recent history writing, and controversial re-interpretations of turn-of-the-century French syndicalism and of the usually overlooked Georges Sorel. At the same time, however, Jacques Julliard has written a book that must cause feminists to despair. Despite his careful research into his subject, he has managed totally to neglect all recent feminist scholarship. And this work has not merely been compensatory studies of hitherto invisible women militants or women’s unions. Rather, feminists have rewritten the history of unionism in France, as well

as that of socialist politics in the period of the Second International. Sadly, Julliard's ignorance of dozens of painstaking studies of women workers must be willful. He has read assiduously and widely in all the most recent English, North American, and French histories of his subject excepting only those concerned with France's female proletariat.

Thus this book is hopelessly flawed, not only because Julliard has limited his attentions to only one-half of his ostensible subject, but also because those studies he has not read have demonstrated the inescapable weaknesses in both revolutionary syndicalist and socialist practices. In other words, Julliard's main thesis in this book, that revolutionary syndicalism was not – as others have usually argued – a sign either of social or of economic retardation in France, but was, instead, “une composante essentielle de la culture politique des ouvriers français” (p. 219), is, at the very least, incomplete. Moreover, his delineation of this indigenous workers' culture (the culture of the “dominated”, as opposed to that created and imposed by leftist intellectuals, whom he numbers amongst the “dominators”) leaves a vast silence in the case of those dominated both by Julliard's “dominated” (i.e. male workers) *and* by the dominators.

Women of the French proletariat, furthermore, comprised a far from negligible group. In the industrial workforce, women provided between 30 and 40% of the workers (or perhaps even more, as statistics about women often undercount for various social and political reasons). Moreover, in key industries – i.e. textiles – they were a majority. And they were far from a quiescent workforce. In both formal and informal expressions of class militance, women workers played important roles. They were, *inter alia*, early enthusiasts for the Guesdists' brand of socialist-feminism in the Nord. Thousands, too, joined the very same “revolutionary *syndicats*” which comprise the subject of Julliard's book.

More damning still for Julliard's claim to have researched the everyday world in which syndicalism and workers' lives intersected is the fact that he ignores the CGT's own campaign – launched after the failure of the 1905 general strike – to organize women workers. Led by a number of women, including most prominently Maximilienne Biais and the journalist Marcelle Capy – the CGT's efforts enjoyed a substantial success in some parts of France, though in some areas they were undercut by male unionists, some of whom (notoriously Auguste Keufer of the printers' union and Victor Renard of the Guesdist-affiliated textile union) indulged a visceral scorn for women and others of whom expressed ostensible support for women's inclusion in patronizing, paternalistic gestures that inevitably had a negative effect.

In those regions where the CGT attracted female support, many women found a significant place within the “counter-culture” of revolutionary syndicalism. As the POF-SFIO turned increasingly toward electoral politics in the early years of this century, women who had been active socialists found themselves marginalized by the party they had helped create. For many, the a-political CGT offered a real alternative mode of public life.

One could continue these remarks at far greater length. The research has been done and the information is widely available. But to do so would have two undesirable consequences. First, it would do Mr. Julliard's work for him and he really ought to have to do it himself. Second, it would limit a discussion of the many positive

aspects of Julliard's book. And that would be too bad, because it is rich enough and fun enough to absorb even the fury his dismissal of feminist scholarship arouses.

Jacques Julliard has here set out to do three things. First, he intends to demonstrate that historians' and political theorists' insistence on the unimportance of revolutionary syndicalism is at best premature. Second, he has re-considered Georges Sorel, as well as those historians and Marxist theoreticians who have consigned Sorel to the historical dustbin. Finally, Julliard has indulged himself in many delightful asides about the nature of history writing in recent decades. In the process he attacks intellectual history, "social science" history and the writing of intellectual biography in a manner that reads a life backwards in order to demonstrate the inevitability of its intellectual end-point.

Julliard's method in what is more a collection of essays than a sustained argument is to attack the established interpretations of French syndicalism – all of which have minimized the importance of the movement – and then to offer his own alternative view, which is that revolutionary syndicalism was not merely an evolutionary stage in a move toward "real" revolutionary politics but was, rather, a specific historical phenomenon, the ideology of which grew directly out of workers' collective practice. This latter fact, Julliard insists, was what distinguished syndicalism from socialism. Socialist politics, in his view, depended upon an imposition of Marxist ideology upon workers by bourgeois political leaders (whose interests, he argues, were *necessarily* those of their class, however anti-bourgeois they claimed to be).

Julliard's revolutionary syndicalists practiced a special sort of workers' democracy. Their activities were consistently anti-hierarchical, anti- or a-political, and profoundly anti-jacobin. They "grounded" their collective beliefs in strikes, especially general strikes. In this they were, Julliard believes, highly original. Although both Rosa Luxemburg and Alexandra Kollontai articulated positions close to those expressed in France's revolutionary syndicalist practice (as have leaders of Poland's Solidarity movement, in recent years), it was the French workers themselves who were the pioneers of collective democratic practices, in which they expressed a genuinely indigenous political ideology. And because the author clearly believes such workers' movements to hold the only viable alternative political practice to a defunct Marxist-Leninism, the elements of this practice take on a new importance in the contemporary dilemma. These elements – juxtaposed against those commonly assigned to workers and which he attributes to bourgeois political leaders, who are expressing the "culture dominante du mouvement ouvrier" – include: philosophical pluralism (versus a unitary philosophy), moral pessimism (versus technological optimism), a hopeful search for useful social myths (versus the creation of utopias), primacy of syndical organization and direct action (versus primacy of party and parliamentary action, or "dictatorship of the proletariat", as the euphemism has it). Intellectuals also play a rather different role in revolutionary syndicalist practice. According to Julliard, it is their place to "denounce the parasitism of the intelligentsia", but never to act as "organic intellectuals" who direct – from outside the working class – the proletariats' "revolutionary" politics.

Of course many feminists (especially those of the "radical" tendency) might argue that these very elements Julliard claims for revolutionary syndicalism were those most evidenced by *female* proletarians in their union and strike activities. (The silk workers of the Isère and the Cévennes region, for example, practiced precisely what

Julliard is preaching, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards). Women excelled at direct action (as even a cursory reading of nineteenth-century police archives will demonstrate) and understandably shunned both hierarchies and parliamentary politics. Julliard, however, misses the opportunity to explore the reasons for his male revolutionary syndicalists' inability to reject what was certainly the primary hierarchical relationship in their culture, that of men over women. Not surprisingly, he never entertains the idea that it was their gender that drove both Luxemburg and Kollontai to recognize the primary importance of democratic practices.

Julliard's portrait of an alternative progressive politics is intriguing, especially as he links the French past to the Polish present in an extended argument that Solidarity (and especially its intellectuals, such as Adam Michnik) utilizes the very same techniques and ideologies that underpinned French syndicalism at the time of the Second International. Like the French workers, the Poles have seen that revolutionary syndicalist practice offers the only politics that will not sink into Leninist, statist goals. At the same time, of course, and given Solidarity's recent (controversial) decision to join the parliamentary system (such as it is) of Poland's rulers, Julliard's description of syndicalism's ultimate failure in France is instructive. He argues that after the Amiens Congress (of 1906), the organized union movement gradually lost ground to the socialists. Why? Because the newly-unified SFIO possessed a national presence (attained because they practiced a sort of jacobinism in their organizational structure) and several charismatic bourgeois leaders (e.g. Jean Jaurès), as well as the powerful backing of the Second International. Such strength gave socialism sufficient power to contest the control of the state by the bourgeoisie. And in the often violent political context of the years leading up to the First World War, the non-political workers' movement, committed to an inefficient, de-centralized organizational structure, to a rejection of utopian promises of imminent victory for the working class, to democratic practices within individual unions or informal workers' organizations (except, in many cases, where real democracy would have meant the equal treatment of female proletarians), scarcely stood a chance.

Not everyone will agree with the arguments adduced to support Julliard's plea for a fresh look at revolutionary syndicalism, or for his notion that it offers a real alternative politics for the present. Everyone will, however, find all of this book stimulating, especially the author's careful and provocative re-reading of both Georges Sorel and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (both, in his view, "fathers" of revolutionary syndicalism). The former – customarily dismissed by more programmatic Marxist historians or theoreticians (most notably, Louis Althusser), or by anti-fascists, such as Zeev Sternhell, who see in Sorel a progenitor of French fascism – was for Julliard 'un des rares penseurs socialistes à avoir conçu le pluralisme non seulement dans la sphère politique mais aussi dans celle de l'organisation de la production' (p. 239). Moreover, Sorel – like Julliard – never thought Marxism was either idealist utopianism or a science. Rather, Sorel thought Marxism was "le vecteur privilégiée de l'idéologie prolétarienne la plus authentique: lutte des classes et révolution socialiste" (p. 241). For Sorel (as for the author), Marxist ideology was the myth that offered proletarians a necessary collective representation of their struggle.

This book, then, is Jacques Julliard's highly personal prescription for progressive politics in the present. Intellectuals, according to this work, should address themselves both to a re-reading of Sorel and to an extended denunciation of the dependence of the left intelligentsia upon a bourgeois ruling class. They should as well practice a history grounded not in teleology but rather in that painstaking, time-consuming archival research that alone reveals the quotidian activities of the dominated which in turn gives a genuine context for their political actions. Finally, intellectuals must take special care never to "collaborate" in the statism implicit both in bourgeois democracies and in communist countries. Pluralism of all kinds – social, economic, philosophical – must be the ruling principle. (And, one cannot avoid adding, Julliard's plea for a new generosity of thought and practice, his insistence on the absolute necessity of pluralist behaviours, his commitment to a politics of the working class developed from within that class, all support a new effort to include the most marginalized of social and economic groups, working-class women.)

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MCDERMOTT, KEVIN. *The Czech Red Unions, 1918–1929. A Study of their Relations with the Communist Party and the Moscow Internationals.* East European Monographs, Boulder 1988; distr. by Columbia University Press, New York. xiii, 350 pp. \$40.00.

This is a meticulously researched, well-written account of an important period in the development of social democratic and communist trade unions in Czechoslovakia. While the study does not come to any startling conclusions, it does tell us a great deal about the relationship between the Communist Party and industrial labor in the 1920s, an experience that foreshadowed the tragic demise of Czechoslovak free trade unionism once the Communists came to power in 1948.

Although the book focuses on the interaction between the social democratic and communist trade unions, and between the communist unions on the one hand and the Communist Party and the Moscow internationals (the Profintern, or Red International of Labor Unions, and the Comintern, or Communist International) on the other, it first presents a valuable discussion of the emergence of a Czech labor movement in the late Habsburg Empire. The first labor organizations sprang up in Prague in the 1860s. Czech socialist unions subsequently evolved both as part of an international movement centered in Vienna and as an expression of the Czech national revival, just as Czech socialism was influenced by both German socialist ideas and Czech nationalism. The tension between nationalism and internationalism informed the development of Czech labor for several decades. The leaders of Czech social-democratic trade unionism pressed for greater recognition of their autonomist aspirations within the framework of the All-Austrian union center – the Viennese Imperial Trade Union Commission, or simply "Vienna Commission", after 1893 – but to little avail. Understandably, the Vienna Commission saw the Czech demands as a threat to its own power and to labor unity, though even the