

aphor of “reverse salients”, which he uses to describe technical imbalances in the third phase of the model. Inventors and engineers viewed technology as a goal-seeking system and were therefore concerned, like military strategists, to identify components that hampered the system as a whole. These were then defined as “critical problems” and corrected. When such corrections failed to harmonize with existing components, new systems were called forth, a process illustrated by the resolution of the conflict between direct current and alternating current systems.

The order and coherence that distinguish this study are achieved at some cost. In adopting the systems approach of his leading individual and institutional characters, Hughes substantially accepts as his own framework their basic assumptions of technological rationality. The result is an engineer’s analysis of electrification from the inside out, and the social dimensions of the process, despite the book’s sub-title, receive comparatively little consideration. Still Hughes is not unaware of the Whiggish tendencies of his model. He insists that technology is man-made, that it is not neutral and that the capitalist entrepreneurship of Edison, Emil Rathenau, Samuel Insull and Charles Merz was integral to their system building. And if systems have an internal drive and a universal character, Hughes also argues that they are influenced and differentiated by culture, geography and historical contingencies. Certainly, readers with any awareness of Adam Beck and Robert Bourassa will acknowledge the force of his contention that technological systems acquire a conservative momentum.

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VERNON L. LIDTKE — *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. pp. x, 299.

This volume represents a rather unique attempt by Professor Lidtke to see German Social Democracy prior to 1914 from a radically different perspective. Instead of explaining this movement from the point of view of the Social Democratic Party or the leaders of the powerful pre-war trade unions, he has literally gone into the popular working-class associations of the time to determine more closely the feelings and ideas of Germany’s emerging laboring class. Making use of analytical techniques that have become common to social history over the past 20 years, Lidtke progressively examines working-class clubs, the festivals they held, the songs they sang, the poetry and drama that they listened to and the lectures and courses they attended. This prolonged look at working-class life from the bottom up is a major contribution to German historiography. Dr. Lidtke is at the very same time an extraordinary writer. There is real power in the clarity and simplicity of his writing style. His meanings are never in doubt. But this strength turns against itself as the volume progresses, primarily because Lidtke’s crystal-clear interpretations unfortunately, on occasion, carry him beyond the evidence he has himself accumulated.

The media by which the workers themselves, in the words of the author, created their own “social [and] cultural milieu” were the voluntary associations, or *Vereine*, of this era. They steadily sprang into existence before the anti-Socialist laws of 1878 and especially after those laws were struck down as of 1890. The two oldest and, as it turned out, the largest groups here were the singing and gymnastic clubs. Other voluntary organizations encouraged such physical activities as swimming, boxing and rowing as well as the exploration of nature. Because Lidtke is not strong when it comes to numbers, it is difficult to tell from his narrative just what percentage of the German working class belonged to these voluntary associations. According to the contemporary German historian, Michael Schneider, the free trade unions had enrolled by 1913 slightly more than two million members, of whom Lidtke says some 186,958 were organized into gymnastic societies. But the actual number of those involved in singing and other societies is never definitely stated. As a result, it is impossible

to tell whether they collectively constituted a significant majority or only a relative minority of those workers. The lack of information is, in itself, a disappointment. In any event, most of these organizations began to form centralized administrations through the 1890s and early 1900s, often with paid functionaries at the top.

The unrelenting growth of these working-class associations simultaneously provided their members with any number of diversions and opportunities. At this point in his story, Lidtke inserts the somewhat jarring claim that, as they grew and developed their own mores, these *Vereine* began to create a decisive alternative to the dominant bourgeois culture that existed in Wilhelmine Germany. Quite apart from whether this alternative culture was really there, the clubs did keep busy doing things. For example, in the Chemnitz district, 142 singing societies reported that they averaged 44 practice sessions a year, always after the workday or workweek was over. Meanwhile, in the Thuringian district, the various gymnastic clubs were able to hold a total of 14 local festivals spotted through the years 1908-1909. Festivals were obviously times when these private clubs went public. And after 1890, the most important festival in the labor calendar became, of course, the increasingly grandiose May Day celebrations. Lidtke's insights into the contribution that songs made to the labor movement constitute this book's most insightful chapter. He seems so correct when he insists that "The labor movement was a singing movement..." (p. 108), and that the texts of those songs did indeed "...highlight the complexity of the relationship between the Social Democratic labor movement and the rest of German society" (p. 133). Lidtke rounds out his discussion of this popular culture with an extended appraisal of the poetry, drama and after-hour schools that likewise influenced, in their way, working-class life before 1914.

During the bulk of his presentation, Lidtke is not satisfied merely to let this story develop on its own. With thought-provoking persistence he insists that what the working class was doing through these activities was molding what he calls an alternative culture based on socialist principles. That alternative culture, he implies, was only partially conscious of itself. But, he argues, it nonetheless existed, fulfilling the workers' need "for companionship, sociability, recreation, learning and aesthetic satisfaction" (p. 3). The evidence he musters throughout the book, which is by no means overpowering, tends to prove the first three elements in this statement, but not the last two. Club activities did indeed lead "to socializing, to drinking, gossiping, laughing and singing" (p. 51). This happened so frequently that even Social Democratic party members were forced to accept the fact "that the chief function of clubs was entertainment and recreation and not ideological expression" (p. 71). In making this particular admission, Lidtke seems, at least temporarily, to be bowing to the weight of his own evidence and to be saying that what these workers wanted after a day's or week's work was diversion in the form of "conviviality, eating [and] drinking" (p. 86).

It is conceivable that these kinds of activities were by themselves enough to detach these workers, at least at the times they took place, from the dominant German culture of pre-World War I. But Lidtke makes far, far more of this notion. Club activities produced, he declares, a separate "social [and] culture milieu," the phrase he uses over and over again. But was this mostly a mostly of its own, sometimes overlapping into the dominant culture, sometimes not? If that world truly existed it was a shadowy one, not one that was clearly recognizable. Still, the author contends, it was there and it was inspired by socialist principles. Unfortunately, Lidtke never bothers to define the word "socialistic." Furthermore, he argues that this alternative culture was constantly manifesting itself in terms of convincing symbols such as "red banners," key words such as "workers" and "freedom," and didactic phrases like "the people of toil." The author is, however, unable to prove that these symbolic gestures and words were so indoctrinating that they pushed the members of these working-class associations in the direction of class consciousness and a certain exclusiveness. In his concluding remarks, all Lidtke is able to say is that the working class was tied together, supposedly, by a symbolic unity that formed the cohesive element for this new "social [and] cultural milieu." Moreover, in the final analysis, his major theme here is so undermined by a lack of direct evidence that he himself shies away from using the more resolute phrase, "class consciousness," for this alternative culture and he is compelled to leave the reader with the more commonplace conclusion that the workers were simply "bonded together, by being together" (p. 199).

By avoiding quantification, Lidtke leaves open the possibility that this so-called alternative culture was not really a popular culture. And his effort never does answer the nagging question of whether these clubs basically produced the recreation that these workers so badly needed or whether they were indeed institutions through which some kind of socialist indoctrination osmotically took place. Lidtke tries hard enough to milk this latter interpretation from the material, but it will not convince all of those who read this truly pioneering and continually fascinating study.

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CLAIRE GOLDBERG MOSES — *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984. pp. xiii, 311.

The history of French feminism is finally being written, or rather rewritten, with the methods of the new social history and the insights of the recent resurgence of feminism. Until the publication of Claire Goldberg Moses' study of the nineteenth century (and primarily the 1830s through the 1880s), the brief flourishing of feminist activity during the Great Revolution and the emergence of liberal and especially suffrage feminism under the Third Republic had attracted the most attention, and left the paradoxical impression of a tremendous gap in time yet a fundamental similarity of outlook, i.e., equal rights. To study the intervening decades, historians had to understand the political and social context of four quite different regimes and to analyze utopian, socialist, maternal and liberal feminism, which was discontinuous due to feminists' connections to the Left, recurring repression by governments expecting disorder from the Left and its allies, and contradictory traditions. Moses explains the weakness of the movement in the nineteenth century in comparison with Anglo-Saxon feminism, with which she is familiar, as a function of the periodic silencing of the press and restriction of the right to assemble, so that succeeding phases of publicity and organization began with new leaders and new goals. She also refers to the lack of meeting places for women in France, the absence of charitable associations under the control of women, and the greater isolation of girls and women, in contrast to England and America. Although Moses does not stress Saint-Simonians as a thread of continuity through the flux, because she emphasizes the shift from Saint-Simonian dualism to liberal egalitarianism, she shows how Saint-Simonians served feminists first as colleagues in the "missions" of the late 1820s and early 1830s, and later as influential individuals supporting feminist ventures through the 1860s and 1870s. Perhaps more research on the families and support networks of feminists would reveal more concrete assistance from Saint-Simonians or Fourierists.

The most unusual and useful sections of *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* deal sympathetically and critically with the Saint-Simonians who formed the first autonomous women's movement in the mid-1830s and those who resurfaced in the Revolution of 1848. Anyone who has had trouble understanding Utopian Socialist mysticism about the couple and the woman will appreciate Moses' account. If her explanation for the blending of religious and socialist discourse is not as persuasive as Barbara Taylor's in *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, which appeared too recently to affect her analysis, Moses provides a more compelling interpretation of Saint-Simonian feminists' rupture with Enfantin and his new sexual morality than Taylor in her thesis about the Owenite feminists' move away from free love. Moses explains the break with Enfantin by the theoretical critique of the double standard of sexuality, notably the practical problem of determining which men were "constant" and which "mobile", the different lower-class perspective of the women, and the hostility they encountered in response to their demands for recognition. The subsequent abandonment of their radical position on sexuality is linked to their social isolation, their changing personal situations and their deteriorating economic condition. In addition to humiliation, even by Saint-Simonian women,