

la grève générale de 1918. Cette mesure fut partiellement renversée dès 1922 sur l'initiative du conseiller fédéral Schulthess, lui-même grand patron de Brown Boveri. Mais tout cela devait se terminer par une cuisante défaite politique du patronat, car la nouvelle loi de 1922 fut elle-même rejetée par la population suisse lors d'un plébiscite tenu en 1924. L'arme du plébiscite fut employée avec succès par les forces syndicales et socialistes à plusieurs reprises dans les années 20, de sorte que le patronat fut contraint d'accepter une série de réformes importantes. Mais la grande Dépression devait modifier le rapport de force au profit du patronat, et un plébiscite de 1934 rejetait l'Initiative de crise proposée par les syndicats, pourtant inspirée du New Deal de Roosevelt.

Pourtant, l'attitude intransigeante du patronat envers les syndicats devait se modifier sensiblement au cours des années 30, parallèlement à l'évolution des syndicats eux-mêmes. Billeter se réfère ici au sociologue Robert Michels et à sa théorie de la bureaucratisation, qui relève le développement dans les grandes organisations d'une couche distincte de fonctionnaires permanents portés à défendre leurs propres intérêts en perdant de vue ceux de leurs commettants et en intériorisant les intérêts des autres forces sociales, désormais considérées au premier chef comme interlocuteurs et même comme partenaires. A vrai dire, Billeter ne traite guère de cette évolution en tant que telle dans son ouvrage, qui porte sur le patronat, mais elle en saisit les conséquences au niveau des relations de travail. Le rejet officiel du communisme par l'Union syndicale suisse en 1936 fut d'abord traité par nombre d'observateurs patronaux comme une simple manœuvre destinée à cacher les véritables positions d'une organisation toujours vouée au renversement du capitalisme, mais l'évolution syndicale n'échappait pas aux têtes pensantes du patronat et notamment au président de l'ASM, Ernst Dubi, habitué des tables rondes avec son vis-à-vis de la FOMH, Konrad Ilg.

La signature de la Convention de paix du travail en 1937 résultait donc d'une évolution convergente des sommets syndicaux et patronaux vers la collaboration de classe. Elle survenait par ailleurs dans une conjoncture économique favorable pour le patronat suisse. Les exportations étaient fortement stimulées par la dévaluation du franc suisse en 1936, alors même que l'économie mondiale traversait une conjoncture de reprise, et que la course aux armements suscitait une forte demande pour les industries militaires helvétiques, représentées justement par l'ASM. Le patronat avait donc la possibilité matérielle de faire des concessions. La menace nazie engendrait aussi une atmosphère de défense nationale surtout sensible dans les rangs ouvriers, surtout après l'entrée des nazis en Autriche en 1938. La guerre elle-même devait consacrer cette évolution vers la paix sociale, bien que son analyse sorte des limites de l'ouvrage.

C'est ainsi qu'en deux décennies, un mouvement ouvrier combatif et militant est entré dans la voie de la collaboration de classe et de la renonciation à la lutte gréviste, une évolution qu'on a aussi connue dans bien d'autres pays, mais qui a pris une saveur particulière en Suisse. L'apport de Billeter réside dans la mise à jour des politiques patronales face au mouvement ouvrier, car la lutte des classes est une lutte qui se fait à deux et sur laquelle pèsent les stratégies adoptées par les deux protagonistes, dans des circonstances concrètes qu'ils n'ont pas créées, mais qu'ils s'efforcent de modeler à leur avantage. Et il ne faudrait pas sous-estimer le degré de conscience du patronat sur ce plan. En somme, un ouvrage passionnant et très bien documenté dont on doit souhaiter qu'il fasse des émules.

François Moreau
Université d'Ottawa

* * *

Allan M. Brandt — *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Pp. viii, 245.

This well-researched, incisively written study brings the history of venereal disease in the United States into the mainstream of social history. Brandt's book is a timely reminder that attitudes,

mythologies, and counterproductive fears evoked by AIDS and herpes are nothing new in the history of the public response to sexually transmitted diseases. Faith in specific medical therapeutic solutions or “magic bullets,” (a term coined in 1909 by the German chemist, Paul Ehrlich in reference to his new synthetic drug cure for syphilis) is inevitably misplaced, Brandt argues, on several counts. First, effective treatments are problematic because of ongoing complex changes in the triad of epidemiological variables governing most infectious diseases: causative organism, human host, and material and social environment. Second, and perhaps more critical for the story here told, is the impact of dominant cultural values that have preferred to deal with these diseases by attempting to control extramarital sexual behavior (usually defined pejoratively) rather than to make use of medical prophylaxis or therapy. Except during periods of national military or economic crisis, specific medical measures, including approximations to the elusive “bullets” such as penicillin, yielded priority to essentially moralistic and largely fruitless efforts to prescribe and enforce sexual comportment.

Brandt starts with the Progressive era, a period when Americans, increasingly informed and alarmed about the myriad epidemic expressions of the “venereal peril”, began to peel away the Victorian conspiracy of silence on such matters. Early in the present century, before reliable diagnosis or treatment existed, venereal diseases already tended to be confined to medical jurisdiction, although Brandt makes clear that physicians could be relied upon to uphold middle-class morality in carrying out their mandate. They typically adhered firmly to the “medical secret”, protecting their patients with V.D. even when this meant withholding knowledge from wives and intended brides; the fair sex in turn was not subjected to the early marriage law requirements on the subject.

Anti-venereal preparations for entry into World War I included the harsh repression of prostitution, at first in areas around military training camps and subsequently, by means of a nation-wide civilian campaign. Ultimately, some 18,000 women were subjected to detention under war-time laws requiring compulsory examination of prostitutes for venereal diseases. While the prostitute became “the war’s scapegoat”, federal agencies aided by the YMCA and social hygiene groups, devised propagandist and punitive measures to keep the soldiers “clean”. American zeal was badly misunderstood by French premier Georges Clemenceau who offered special brothels to General Pershing after the General had ordered regular houses off-limits to his troops. Moralists initially even opposed chemical prophylaxis after exposure to infection, but the magnitude of the venereal diseases problem eventually led to widespread employment of mercurial treatment for soldiers in Europe.

Not until the New Deal did public health authorities aided by federal funding again devote sustained attention to the problem of venereal diseases. This time under the leadership of Thomas Parran, surgeon general under President Roosevelt, practical medical measures for diagnosis and treatment prevailed over efforts to reform behavior. Reversing the policy of the First War, condoms were provided to soldiers during World War II. As well, the punitive law taking away the salary of those incapacitated by venereal diseases was, after vigorous debate in Congress, finally repealed. Yet Parran’s vigorous medical campaign was marred by exaggerations about the “great plague” that intentionally created fears amounting to “syphilophobia” and exacerbated existing racial and class tensions. In late 1943, penicillin began to revolutionize treatment in spite of lingering misgivings even among public health officials about making illicit sex safe.

As is well known, the magic bullets of antibiotics did not terminate the history of venereal diseases as major medical and social problems. After a low point in their incidence, both syphilis and gonorrhoeas had a resurgence during the late 1950s and 60s as a result, Brandt notes, not only of the “sexual revolution” but of continuing moralism and a withdrawal of government support for programs.

Brandt, a young historian at Harvard University, has made an important contribution to American social, intellectual, and medical history. He makes excellent use of a wide array of archival sources, including records from the army bureaucracy and private papers of leading figures in the story, and an enormous sampling of popular literature, posters, plays, films, etc. Popular attitudes are skillfully evoked — ironically, some of the serious propagandist material appears in retrospect more caricatural than the explicit cartoons on V.D. Not surprisingly, much less is said about the

personal experiences of victims and their families. While a coherent synthesis, the book deals best with the periods around the First World War and the Great Depression. Displaying a fine sense of selectivity, Brandt presents a restrained, balanced, and convincing analysis of the American response to venereal diseases from a number of perspectives beyond his central focus on federal health policy. *No Magic Bullet* uses the historical case example of venereal diseases to raise provocative general question about social stigma and the social construction of disease.

Toby Gelfand
University of Ottawa

* * *

K.N. Chaudhuri — *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Pp. xiv, 269.

The human significance of the sea, as portrayed by Fernand Braudel in his work on the Mediterranean or as here by K.N. Chaudhuri on the Indian Ocean, is in its interplay with the land. Over the great rivers — the Euphrates, Tigris, Indus, Ganges, Chao, Mekong, Hsi King, Yangtze — the sea fingers inland drawing to itself people, trade, art, and ideas. And beyond the farthest reaches of the rivers to Merv, Bukhara, Samarkand, Yarkand, Lop Nor, to Delhi, Agra, Lahore, Kabul caravan routes extend the links. The monsoon winds and rains, product again of land and sea interacting, gave the lands adjoining the Indian Ocean a unity of which contemporaries, both Moslem and Chinese, were aware. The unity was not simple. Indeed, it was the diverse ecological niches, deserts and tropics, arid plateaus and rain watered river plains made proximate by the Indian Ocean that resulted in interaction.

Each area had specific locational and physical attributes which gave rise to a unique blend of taste, culture, output and exchange. In Hangchou at the time of the Mongol conquest merchants at the Rice-market Bridge and Black Bridge sold over seventeen varieties of rice. The rice consumers of the Far East were as particular, not to say as snobbish, about the rice they consumed as the consumers of wheat of the near East and India were about the bread they consumed. The vast areas of rice production and consumption, nicely illustrated with maps in this text, drew to themselves the spices of Indonesia and India; not so much the fine spices, nutmeg, mace, cloves, which moved westward, but black pepper. The rice-producing areas of China and India, especially the provinces of Fukien, Chekiang, and Kwantung in China, and the Ganges plain in India, because of the agricultural surpluses, were centres of manufacturing and manufacturing export: porcelain, lacquerwork, silk, steel, swords, ironware, chintz, raw silk and rough cotton goods.

The monsoons themselves were not simple and did not facilitate a simple and complete voyage across the southern sea from Aden or Basra to Malacca or Canton. Trade goods passed over the whole distance but in stages corresponding to phases of the monsoon and through three regional centres of trade centred on the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the South China Sea.

Chaudhuri's Indian Ocean, compared to Braudel's Mediterranean, is vast, open, with a lower and less distinct profile. In part this is a reflection of the fact that his is a short work covering a thousand years of history. Physical geography and its historical relevance is presented more often by frequent and provocative allusions to geographical facts, than by systematic exposition. In part the less distinctive character mirrors the area itself. It is more vast and less enclosed by land and mountain ranges, and opens on the Antarctic Ocean 3,000 miles to the south. To the east and northeast the limits are uncertain. Sometimes the Straits of Malacca and Sunda with the Timor Sea are taken as the eastern boundary: at others the boundary is pushed to the Banda Sea. Chaudhuri's maps and his text suggest he draws the limits at the eastern fringe of the Indonesian archipelago and Philippines. But, as he notes, beyond the Straits of Malacca the gravitational pull of China becomes increasingly important