

SURVEY

The Late Romance of the Soviet Worker in Western Historiography

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This essay is animated by a single, seemingly simple, question: “What has happened to Soviet labor and working-class history?”¹ The obvious answer is that it went the way of the Soviet working class. But to attribute changing scholarly interests or emphases to recent or contemporary Russian politics is too simplistic. It ignores too many other factors that impinge on why and how we study what we do. While the near disappearance of class from post-Soviet discourse certainly has had an impact on Western historians, I would suggest that both broader and narrower trends have been at work shaping our scholarly agendas. In 1990, just as the Soviet Union was in its last throes, Leo van Rossum published in this very journal an outstanding omni-review of “Western Studies of Soviet Labour during the Thirties”. A few years further on, “in the cold light of the post-Soviet dawn”, Ron Suny and I searched Soviet history for its working class.² It is time once again to revisit this terrain.

I will start with what I understand Soviet labor and working-class history to have been, tracing its contours and evolution up to the end of the 1980s, or, if you like, until the end of the Soviet Union. An excursion into the sociology of knowledge, this survey will be both “internalist” and “externalist”. I then will posit several conjunctural factors that help to illuminate the trajectory of this kind of history since then, and will conclude with some remarks about where we might go from here. I

1. An earlier version of this essay appeared as “Pozdnii roman s sovetskim rabochim v zapadnoi istoriografii”, *Sotsial'naia istoriia: Ezhegodnik 2004* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 53–71. I will follow the convention among social historians, exemplified in the journal, *International Labor and Working-Class History* (hereafter *ILWCH*), of referring to “labor history” as the study of labor movements and organized labor, and “working-class history” as the study of workers either within or outside the workplace.

2. Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald G. Suny, “Class Backwards? In Search of the Soviet Working Class”, in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald G. Suny (eds), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), p. 1.

apologize in advance to those who might feel aggrieved by my characterization of their work or its omission. The aim throughout is not to give kudos to, or cast aspersions on, the work of any individual, but to articulate what I perceive to be the main questions that have been posed, how those questions have been handled, and why they have or have not remained important to others in and outside the field of Soviet history.

BEFORE THE ROMANCE

Fortunately, I need not repeat the story of the once-dominant totalitarian paradigm challenged and (at least temporarily) displaced by a wave of revisionism. That oft-told tale has achieved legendary status in our field and, as happens with legends, tends to grow taller with each telling. It would be interesting – but hardly deserving of attention here – to analyze how much emphasis those working within the paradigm actually placed on social “atomization” and passivity, for I suspect that it was a good deal less than their critics allege.

In any case, much valuable labor history was written during the supposed heyday of the totalitarian paradigm. Beginning in the early 1950s (which admittedly was before the Soviet Union was theorized along totalitarian lines), and extending throughout that decade and into the 1960s, scholars gave attention to the conditions of industrial labor, skill acquisition, managerial structures and practices, and the evolution of the Communist Party’s role in the trade unions and on the shopfloor.³ One might mention here the Harvard Interview Project, which among other things asked DPs who had been Soviet citizens before the war detailed questions about socialist competition, the Stakhanovite movement (“How did you feel about the Stakhanovite movement?”; “Does the Stakhanovite movement cause workers to work harder?”; “Are most Stakhanovites willing to become so?”; “Does anyone ever ask to be a Stakhanovite?”; “Is it profitable to be a Stakhanovite?”), norms and their falsification, relations between foremen and workers, benefits (“How did one get to be sent to a rest resort?”), and so forth.⁴

3. Marcell Anstett, *La formation de la main d'oeuvre qualifiée en Union soviétique de 1917 à 1954* (Paris, 1958); G.R. Barker, *Some Problems of Incentives and Labour Productivity in Soviet Industry* (Oxford, 1956); Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry: Ideologies of Management in the Course of Industrialization* (New York, 1956); Joseph Berliner, *Factory and Manager in the USSR* (Cambridge, MA, 1957); Janet Chapman, *Real Wages in Soviet Russia since 1928* (Cambridge, MA, 1963); Isaac Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions: Their Place in Soviet Labour Policy* (London, 1950); Margaret Dewar, *Labour Policy in the USSR, 1917–1928* (London, 1956); Solomon Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1952).

4. The Harvard Project served as the basis for a number of pioneering studies in Sovietology by Barrington Moore, Jr, Alex Inkeles, and others published by Harvard University Press in the 1950s. See also Jerzy Glicksman, “Conditions of Industrial Labor in the USSR: A Study of the Incentive System in Soviet Industry”, manuscript, 1954, Harvard Interview Project on the Soviet Social System, Russian Research Center, Harvard University.

The scholarship of the 1950s and 1960s on Soviet labor and the factory reflected the positivist social science practiced in those decades. It relied heavily on Soviet official statistics and an often exhaustive reading of the Soviet press to produce critical commentary on labor legislation and institutional practices. In the case of Solomon Schwarz's classic *Labor in the Soviet Union*, the approach was explicitly comparative, in two senses: "the Five-Year Plan system" was compared to the situation (in wages, hours and working conditions, and social insurance) in the late 1920s as well as to contemporaneous data from other countries throughout the world, and found wanting in both respects. Schwarz not unreasonably attributed the deterioration of "labor" during the 1930s and 1940s to the abandonment of the goal of assuring "a maximum of security to all working people" once "maximum production became the prevailing consideration". He dates this "revision of [...] principles" to 1929.⁵

The spring of 1929 was the "terminal landmark" for E.H. Carr's *History of Soviet Russia*, which is really a history of the evolution of "Soviet policy", including labor policy, through all its twists and turns.⁶ The story that Carr told was largely one of party and state authorities grappling with a myriad of pressures and problems, many of them self-created, and through the give-and-take of debate eventually achieving a higher degree of organization and order. Thus, by 1928–1929, "a comprehensive social insurance scheme [...] was in operation in the Soviet Union", even if it was "restricted almost exclusively to the employed urban population", and was of an "eleemosynary character".⁷ In other respects the curve for labor was upwards, with wages, for instance, outpacing increases in productivity until 1929. Carr's relatively sanguine view of the trajectory of labor policy in the 1920s thus dovetailed with Schwarz's account of the "fall" thereafter.

The 1960s, the decade in which the "new social history" first emerged, saw little reflection of this breakthrough in the historiography of the Soviet working class. This partly had to do with Sovietology becoming more closely identified with "the political" (and not incidentally, political science departments) at the expense of "the social", and partly the relative paucity or inaccessibility of the kinds of sources that new social historians of other countries were beginning to mine – broadsheets, workers' memoirs, the local press, court records, etc. Thus, books on oppositional currents within the Communist Party, the industrialization debate, Soviet

5. Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union*, pp. 308–309.

6. E.H. Carr and R.W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926–1929*, 3 vols (Harmondsworth, 1971–1978), vol. 1, pp. v–vi. This is the fourth in a set of chronologically organized volumes, all of which were published under the general title of *A History of Soviet Russia*. Indicatively, the indexes to the volumes contain lengthy entries for "labour policy" and less often "labour", but none for "workers" or "working-class."

7. Carr and Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol. 1, p. 646.

trade unions, and Bolshevik ideology remained within the orbit of political/party and intellectual history, with individual communist leaders, the party, and other formal institutions and structures as the main protagonists rather than workers or more amorphous class forces.⁸ To the extent that issues pertaining to the condition of workers were addressed, it was in cyclostyled pamphlets on workers' control, the Kronstadt mutiny, the workers' opposition, and other retrospective *causes célèbres* of the non-communist Marxist and anarchist Left in Britain and France.⁹ Some of these issues made their way into more scholarly publications in the 1970s.¹⁰

COURTING THE WORKERS' REVOLUTION

In the meantime, Leopold Haimson had published his two-part article on "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917". Haimson broke new ground by explaining the changing fortunes of Mensheviks and Bolsheviks as a function of the emergence of a new metalworking cohort of industrial workers.¹¹ The argument relied heavily on the perceptions of leading social democrats rather than more conventional social historical data. Nevertheless, its social explanation of essentially political phenomena pointed in a direction that quite a few graduate students would pursue. Their dissertations, dating from the latter half of the 1970s, and subsequent monographs clearly reflected their training in the new social history – hence the importance accorded to age cohorts, family circumstances,

8. Robert Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1960); Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924–1928* (Cambridge, MA, 1960); Jay Sorenson, *The Life and Death of Soviet Trade Unionism, 1917–1928* (New York, 1969); Frederick I. Kaplan, *Bolshevik Ideology and the Ethics of Soviet Labor, 1917–1920: The Formative Years* (New York, 1968).

9. The Solidarity Group in Britain published several Solidarity pamphlets throughout the decade on these issues. In France, the journal *Socialisme ou barbarie* performed a similar function.

10. See Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton, NJ, 1970); Chris Goodey, "Factory Committees and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1918)", *Critique*, 3 (1974), pp. 27–47; Maurice Brinton, "Factory Committees and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Critique*, 4 (1975), pp. 78–86; William Rosenberg, "Workers and Workers' Control in the Russian Revolution", *History Workshop Journal*, 5 (1977), pp. 89–97; *idem*, "Workers' Control on the Railroads and Some Suggestions Concerning Social Aspects of Labor Politics in the Russian Revolution", *Journal of Modern History*, 49 (1977), pp. D1181–D1219. Beginning in 1972, conferences of radical scholars of Soviet and East European Studies served as the incubus for the discussion in Britain of what seems to have been regarded with a fair degree of unanimity as the "bureaucratic degeneration" of the revolution.

11. Leopold H. Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917", *Slavic Review*, 23 (1964), pp. 619–642; 24 (1965), pp. 1–22. For a recent revisiting of his argument, see Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Political and Social Stability in Urban Russia on the Eve of War and Revolution Revisited", *Slavic Review*, 59 (2000), pp. 848–875.

occupational experience, diets, skill levels, strike propensities, and other quantifiable indices – and immersion in archival sources.¹²

Eschewing the “top-down” approaches of an older generation, this group tested and found wanting Soviet historians’ meta-narrative of proletarianization and its correlation with increasing labor militancy and class consciousness under the guidance of the Bolshevik Party. For Robert Johnson, it was precisely the maintenance of a “rural–urban nexus” that gave workers the “tactical mobility” (a term borrowed from Eric Wolf) to challenge those in authority in the late nineteenth century. For Rose Glickman, Russian factory women before 1914 largely remained “between feminism and socialism”, because while socialists tended to subordinate their gender-based complaints to class issues, feminists were reluctant to engage with their sisters on the factory floor. For Laura Engelstein, cross-class collaboration, the “liberal–radical, professional–proletarian alliance”, explained how the autocracy was brought to its knees in October 1905. For Victoria Bonnell, “craft consciousness” among the skilled, male, artisanal workers of St Petersburg and Moscow infused the trade-union movement in the years before World War I. Finally, for Diane Koenker and Steve Smith, the range of workers’ political behavior in 1917 was explicable in terms of the diversity of their backgrounds and the conditions that confronted them, the rationality of their calculations, and the unprecedented opportunities they enjoyed in acting upon those calculations.

Differing in their geographical and chronological foci, these works reached different conclusions about Russian working-class formation and militancy. But all were engaged in telling a story of the experience of oppression leading to protest and higher levels of class and political consciousness. Their collective enterprise was, in this sense, no different from that of other social historians whose accounts of similar processes elsewhere and earlier appeared in print more or less simultaneously.¹³ It

12. For representative examples, see Robert E. Johnson, *Peasant and Proletarian: The Working Class of Moscow in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1979); Diane Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); Laura Engelstein, *Moscow, 1905: Working-Class Organization and Political Conflict* (Stanford, CA, 1982); Victoria E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers’ Politics and Organizations in St Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 1983); David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power* (New York, 1984); Rose Glickman, *Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society 1880–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 1984); and S.A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories, 1917–1918* (Cambridge, 1983). For a social historical analysis that went against the current by stressing Bolshevik manipulation, see John L.H. Keep, *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (New York, 1976).

13. See Michael Hanagan, *The Logic of Solidarity: Artisans and Industrial Workers in Three French Towns, 1871–1914* (Urbana, IL, 1980); Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago, IL, 1982); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York, 1984); and articles too numerous to cite here that appeared in the journals *Social History* and *History Workshop Journal*.

was essentially a Marxian story of the imminence of class, albeit one that was refracted through a Thompsonian emphasis on the agency of people in “determinate situations, within ‘the ensemble of social relations’, with their inherited culture and expectations”.¹⁴ This literature was part of what Ron Suny and I referred to as the reinvigoration of labor history which “shared in a general optimism about the political relevance of recovering experiences of earlier struggles”.¹⁵ Ironically, just as Suny was celebrating the triumph of this approach in interpretations of the Russian revolution, André Gorz’s *Adieux au prolétariat* appeared in English translation, and Reaganism and Thatcherism were delivering devastating blows to working-class militancy in the United States and Great Britain.¹⁶

THE ROMANCE BLOSSOMS

Aside from its contemporary political relevance, the story that social historians told of Russia’s militant proletariat begged the question of what happened to that class after the October Revolution. This question might be rephrased, in accordance with the historiographical emphasis, as: Why did the democratic potential of the October Revolution go unfulfilled? The French Marxist economist, Charles Bettelheim, sought the answer in “an objective process of conflict between social forces”, whereby the “economistic problematic” – developing Soviet Russia’s productive forces – won out over workers’ own regulation of production.¹⁷ In this conflict, which was above all a struggle between classes, the Bolshevik Party was cast as a participant in, rather than determinant of, the “movement of history”. Despite Lenin’s best efforts, this movement was toward the reproduction of capitalist relations of production and the formation of a “state bourgeoisie”, unlike in Mao’s China where “redness” prevailed.

Although covering a wealth of topics, Bettelheim’s *Class Struggles* really turned out to be about the evolution of the “Bolshevik ideological formation”. Its heavily structuralist orientation militated against considerations of the working class as anything other than “the masses”, who were assumed to embody revolutionary socialism, whatever the circumstances. By contrast, in a series of articles published during the 1980s, Bill Rosenberg identified workers’ primary objectives both during and immediately following the October Revolution as personal security and material well-

14. Edward P. Thompson, “Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?”, *Social History*, 3 (1978), pp. 133–165, 146–150.

15. Siegelbaum and Suny, “Class Backwards?”, p. 4.

16. Ronald G. Suny, “Toward a Social History of the October Revolution”, *American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), pp. 31–52; André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, Michael Sonenscher (tr.) (Boston, MA, 1982).

17. Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR, First Period: 1917–1923*, Brian Pearce (tr.) (New York, 1976), p. 61.

being. He argued that the “social reality” of economic disintegration made this agenda impossible to fulfill and encouraged the Bolsheviks’ tendency toward “totalistic authoritarianism” – “indeed, nourished it both by giving credence to its utopian visions and the view that alternative possibilities would prove ineffective (and were hence ‘illegitimate’)”.¹⁸

The interplay between social reality and the Bolsheviks’ agenda during the civil war and NEP years was a staple of social historians in the 1980s. As was the case with historians of other working classes, they paid particular attention to the impact of age, gender, skill level, occupation, and neighborhood on workers’ identity and engagement in work-place based struggles. Unlike their counterparts, though, they were studying a society with a Communist Party in power and (*pace* Bettelheim) without a ruling or rising capitalist class. Their contributions to our knowledge of Soviet working-class history – and there were many, too many to cite fully here – comprised something of a golden age of social historical inquiry.

Did the proletariat disintegrate in the course of the civil war as Lenin complained and Western historians subsequently contended? Read Diane Koenker’s article on “Urbanization and Deurbanization”, and the first chapter of William Chase’s book on Moscow workers. Did the opening of the party to masses of workers in the Lenin levy of 1924 lead to its “dilution” and a windfall for the apparatus under Stalin, as Trotsky alleged? Read John Hatch’s article on the social origins of Stalinism. Was there a “crisis of proletarian identity” among older, skilled (male) workers toward the end of the 1920s? Consult Hiroaki Kuromiya’s article by that title. In the light of the survival of patriarchal relations, ties to the village, and the “particularism of work culture” among textile workers of the Central Industrial Region, does it make sense to speak of an all-embracing class consciousness or even one that encompassed the entire industry? Chris Ward’s book suggests otherwise.¹⁹

The changing physiognomy of the Russian working class was a central

18. William Rosenberg, “The Democratization of Russia’s Railroads in 1917”, *American Historical Review*, 86 (1981), pp. 983–1008; *idem* “Russian Labor and Bolshevik Power After October”, *Slavic Review*, 44 (1985), pp. 213–238; *idem* “Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie i politika sovetского gosudarstva pri perekhode k NEPu”, *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 4 (1989), pp. 109–122; *idem* “The Social Background to TsEKTRAN”, in Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds) *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History* (Bloomington, IN, 1989), pp. 349–373.

19. See respectively Diane Koenker, “Urbanization and Deurbanization in the Russian Revolution and Civil War”, *Journal of Modern History*, 57 (1985), pp. 424–450; William Chase, *Workers, Society and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918–1929* (Urbana, IL, 1987); John Hatch, “The ‘Lenin Levy’ and the Social Origins of Stalinism: Workers and the Communist Party in Moscow, 1921–1928”, *Slavic Review*, 48 (1989), pp. 558–577; Hiroaki Kuromiya, “The Crisis of Proletarian Identity in the Soviet Factory, 1928–1929”, *Slavic Review*, 44 (1985), pp. 280–297; Chris Ward, *Russia’s Cotton Workers and the New Economic Policy: Shop-Floor Culture and State Policy, 1921–1929* (Cambridge, 1990).

concern not only for these historians but for those who pursued workers into the Stalin era. If I may be permitted a personal reminiscence, I vividly recall the moment at the Second World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1980 when I became aware of the plethora of historians from throughout Europe who, like me, were pursuing topics on workers under Stalin. This was three years after the publication of *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, the collection edited by Robert Tucker that broke new ground by introducing Stalinism into our historical vocabulary and providing us with Moshe Lewin's brilliant contribution on "The Social Background of Stalinism". It was two years after the publication of *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, which contained Sheila Fitzpatrick's now classic essay on "cultural revolution as class war". And it was one year after the appearance of her own monograph, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, a book that catapulted social mobility to the forefront of discussions about social support for the Stalinist enterprise.

Some historians were more persuaded than others by Fitzpatrick's emphasis. Donald Filtzer, for example, hardly mentions "promotees" in the first of his many books on Soviet workers, and only then to assert that promotion "did not in any way change the class character of the society which promoted them", and "never altered the basic fact that the *Stalinist elite was at war with its own society*".²⁰ But both Kuromiya's book on workers during the First Five-Year Plan and mine on Stakhanovism argued that shock workers and Stakhanovites did not see it that way.²¹ Meanwhile, Vladimir Andrie's book which also appeared in 1988 – a banner year for Soviet working-class history – stressed making out rather than rising up. The shopfloor world he analyzed was one of mutual interlocking dependencies where the reciprocities and loyalties established by workers and their immediate bosses could be, and frequently were, disrupted by both Taylorist-inspired managerial schemes and mobilization campaigns, but where collusive responses to these efforts returned industrial relations to the more balanced *status quo ante*.²²

20. Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928-1941* (Armonk, NY, 1986), pp. 48-49, (emphasis in original). One should also acknowledge the tremendous influence of Moshe Lewin and particularly his formulations of the "rural nexus", the "quicksand society", and the "ruralization of the cities". Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York, 1985), pp. 209-285.

21. Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1932* (Cambridge, 1988); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Industrial Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge, 1988). On Stakhanovism, see also Francesco Benvenuti, *Fuoco sui sabotatori! Stachanovismo e organizzazione industriale in Urss, 1934-38* (Rome, 1988), and Robert Maier, *Die Stachanov-Bewegung, 1935-1938* (Stuttgart, 1990).

22. Vladimir Andrie, *Workers in Stalin's Russia: Industrialization and Social Change in a Planned Economy* (Hemel Hempstead, 1988).

These and other works of social history, somewhat misleadingly dubbed “revisionist”, put workers and the shopfloor at center stage in the drama of “Stalin’s industrial revolution”. They identified which practices were replications or adaptations of older arrangements, which were borrowed from the contemporary capitalist world, and which were peculiarly Soviet. They helped clarify the possibilities and limits of social transformation during the 1930s, thereby expanding our understanding of the interface between politics and society. They also were the seedbed for local- and enterprise-based studies that, appearing in the 1990s, both qualified the macro-level conclusions and challenged the premises of these works.²³

The limitations of this body of scholarship now appear no less obvious. These include:

- (1) A privileging of the industrial workplace over other sites such as offices, dwelling places, collective and state farms, shops and queues, streets, schools, etc., where everyday life – if not class – happened.
- (2) A preference for colligation whereby individuals’ life (hi)stories were pared down to fit into larger (“grand”) narratives of class, oppression, protest, resistance, etc.
- (3) A tendency to regard official rhetoric and literary expression as misleading or useless in understanding social reality, rather than as discursive fields governing expectations, actions, behavior, social identities, in a word, subjectivities.
- (4) An obliviousness to nationality as a marker of official identification and self-identity.
- (5) A limitation of the chronological purview to the pre-war decades.

Some of these were common to the field of labor history as it was practiced nearly universally in the 1970s and 1980s; others are peculiar to the evolution of Soviet studies. All are constituent of what I am calling the “romance of the Soviet worker”.²⁴ To refer to this scholarship as such is not intended to belittle it. Rather, I want to convey something of the excitement that many of us felt in pushing the field of Soviet history in a new direction, in the discoveries we made about a world that up to that point had been obscured by Soviet shibboleths and by Western historiography’s own predilections, and in partaking in an enterprise that

23. I have in mind Anne D. Rassweiler, *The Generation of Power: The History of Dneprostoi* (New York, 1988); David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941* (Ithaca, NY, 1994); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA, 1995); Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin’s Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1997).

24. The medievalist, Richard Southern, defined romance as “a seeking and a journeying” and those pursuing it as “pilgrims and seekers”. See his *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, CT, 1953), p. 222. For its use in more recent academic discourse, see Michael Kazin, “The Agony and Romance of the American Left”, *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), pp. 1488–1512.

validated – or seemed to validate – our own commitment to social justice which we believed had been violated in the case of the class in whose name the October Revolution had been made.

We wrote about the 1920s and 1930s at least partly because we were fascinated – and appalled – by what was done in the name of building socialism during those decades. We tended to elide nationality (and religion) because we were not looking for it and probably wouldn't have known what to do if we stumbled across it. We cleaved to collective subjects because, as labor historians, we believed that it was through them that individuals obtained social agency. We were drawn to industrial work sites because of the Soviet romance with steel and coal, and, perhaps, because of our own materialist assumptions.

Discourse or the “linguistic turn” was another matter. At a conference held at Michigan State University in November 1990, several of the discussants from outside the Soviet field tried to nudge or push authors in this direction. Their aim was not to dissolve class into language (although, on second thought, that may have been exactly what some discussants were advocating), but to persuade participants that “social relations, individual and collective identities, and their representation in language work on each other in complex ways”.²⁵ Results were mixed, I think. Contested meanings of class and worker identity were addressed by most contributors, but if, as David Shearer has noted, the book that resulted from the conference was “intended to chart a new course in Soviet social history”, it failed, for it “sparked no controversy, no new research, and no new synthesis”.²⁶

THE ROMANCE IS OVER

This is not to say that research on Soviet workers ceased. On the contrary, the opening of Soviet archives in the 1990s spurred a veritable flood of such scholarship, though its nature changed. Archival access gave researchers the possibility of focusing on particular enterprises and cities to chart the process of class formation up-close, as it were. These closer encounters with workers – mediated of course by the institutions that collected information about them – were paralleled by the first contact that many Western scholars had with real live workers.²⁷ The experience in both cases could be invigorating.

25. Siegelbaum and Suny, “Class Backwards?”, p. 8.

26. David Shearer, “From Divided Consensus to Creative Disorder: Soviet History in Britain and North America”, *Cahiers du monde russe*, 39 (1998), pp. 559–591, 575.

27. I am drawing here on personal experience which resulted in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Daniel Walkowitz, *Workers of the Donbass Speak: Survival and Identity in the New Ukraine, 1989–1992* (Albany, NY, 1995).

Among the best examples of this kind of history were the two monographs that centered on Moscow's proletarian district. In *Peasant Metropolis* David Hoffmann argues that peasants who entered Moscow's industrial workforce during the First Five-Year Plan established understandings of the world and their place in it that were at odds with both the culture of more experienced proletarians and what Soviet authorities prescribed for them. More important to their self-identities were their residential segregation in "barracks and hodgepodge shantytowns on the outskirts of the city", and the village networks, family ties, and migration traditions that guided and effectively shielded peasant migrants from both shopfloor discrimination and the state's agenda for their transformation into obedient Soviet workers. The "new Soviet working class" of earlier studies thus emerges as an oxymoron, except in the crude sociological sense of an agglomeration of industrial workers and in official Soviet discourse. More emblematic of self-identity was the migrant who remarked that "at the factory I call myself a worker, but in the village – at the village assembly – I call myself a peasant".²⁸

This is reminiscent of Bob Johnson's analysis of late nineteenth-century peasant workers' "tactical mobility" (though not of Barbara Engel's study of peasant women migrants during the same period). The difference is that because the ruling Communist Party had institutionalized class categories, "'working class' symbolized neither collectivity nor revolutionary opposition to the established order" for peasant migrants of the 1930s. Hoffmann's conclusions appear to be almost diametrically opposed to those that Ken Straus reached in *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia*, which focuses on the same group of workers in Moscow's proletarian district. Like Hoffmann, Straus notes the shift in party policy away from attempting to control the labor market through organized recruitment and toward a combination of draconian laws against turnover and educational and training programs. But unlike Hoffmann, he interprets the shift as coinciding with migrants' own desire "to abandon their old identities and [...] gain the status of members of the working class", as well as management's reorganization of job profiles, pay scales, and welfare provisions that turned the factory into a "social melting pot" and a "community organizer".²⁹

Who is "correct" here would seem to hinge on the interpretation of certain behaviors that involved "making out", "making do", "getting ahead", and so forth. That peasant migrants retained or adapted certain features of their village culture does not preclude the possibility that the factory accommodated them into its "community". Nor is it clear that what was brought from the village originated there. What I am suggesting

28. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis*, pp. 157, 215.

29. Straus, *Factory and Community*, pp. 275–276.

is that the line between peasant and worker may have been less stark in reality than in their conceptualization. Similarly, Hoffmann's emphasis on migrants' "non-confrontational resistance" may be another way of getting at Straus's "self-making of a Soviet working class".

But there also was resistance of a more confrontational kind, more of it, apparently, than was suspected before Soviet archives opened to disgorge their secrets. Jeff Rossman studied workers' resistance to ration cuts and other measures threatening their livelihoods in the early 1930s.³⁰ His fine-grained study of strikes and other forms of protest in the Ivanovo industrial region east of Moscow put the relationship of workers to the party and state in a new light. He noted, for example, that "official discourse – including but not limited to the concept of class – was a double-edged sword", because "[t]he official claim that the USSR was a workers' state gave workers motive to express dissatisfaction when they perceived that their interests had been betrayed".³¹ In this light, does the paucity of information about workers' strikes after the early 1930s reflect researchers' failure to dig deeply enough in the archives, or was it because workers had learned the limits of protest and resorted to other more subtle or less costly "arts of resistance"? If the latter, how are we to interpret limit-learning – as indicative of class struggle by other means, or part of a process of mutual if unconscious accommodation between Soviet authorities and workers?

Even while some historians continued to pursue these questions others were breaking away from the political considerations that may have provoked them. Mark Steinberg's *oeuvres* provide a useful illustration of this trajectory. His first book, on printers in late imperial Russia, stressed the moral underpinnings of these workers' attitudes toward their trade, and their "developing sense of self-worth". Even as the book broke new ground in emphasizing subjectivities shaped by moral and religious (rather than political) impulses, its teleology was rooted in the older historiography. Rejecting an earlier image of employers "as benevolent but powerful fathers", printers posit "a more fraternal relationship" to which employers were unwilling to accommodate.³² The revolution, so it was thereby implied, was not far off. His subsequent work on proletarian writers (or more accurately, worker authors) argues that these liminal characters were highly ambivalent about their status as workers, their association with "industry", and more generally, the urban world they

30. Jeffrey Rossman, "The Teikovo Cotton Workers' Strike of April 1932: Class, Gender and Identity Politics in Stalin's Russia", *Russian Review*, 56 (1997), pp. 44–69.

31. Rossman, "Teikovo Cotton Workers' Strike", p. 69. This point is echoed in Matthew Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2001).

32. Mark D. Steinberg, *Moral Communities: The Culture of Class Relations in the St Petersburg Printing Industry* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), pp. 113–115, 249.

inhabited.³³ Similar to Jacques Rancière's treatment of Parisian artisans undergoing proletarianization, Steinberg highlights their spiritual and emotional lives, asserting that the terrain on which they fought was not that of hours, wages, or other conditions imposed by employers and the state, but their own doubts about the collectivist ideology of the Bolsheviks and the direction the revolution was taking.

Other historians' investigations of working-class culture turned up a darker side. For Charters Winn, anti-Semitism "seemed at times to be the only unifying force within the ranks of industrial workers" of the Donbass-Dnepr bend in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This, it appears, was because though many Jews were proletarians, they were not miners or factory workers, and thus did not share in the barracks accommodation, stupendous alcohol consumption, and ritualized fist-fights that defined the ethnically Russian and Ukrainian male working-class culture of the region.³⁴ In an article published in 1995, Diane Koenker analyzed another component of male working-class identity, namely the "deep-seated hostility toward the participation of women in the hitherto masculine world of work". This hostility, intensified by the party's official promotion (but often weak implementation) of gender equality in the 1920s, manifested itself among printers in definitions of skill, the slighting of women's complaints about gender discrimination, and in insults, obscenities and even violence against women on the shopfloor. Wendy Goldman found much the same thing occurring on a larger scale when women were recruited *en masse* into factories during the industrialization drive of the First Five-Year Plan.³⁵

Darker still is the view of the masses that pervades Orlando Figes's history of the revolution. This was a "people's tragedy", "which they [the 'people'] helped to make" by "the tyranny of their own history", the brutalization of the war, the Bolsheviks' legitimization of "the anarchic tendencies of the Russian masses", and later, the Terror that "came up from the depths". Figes's admonition that "as we enter the twenty-first century we must try to strengthen our democracy, both as a source of freedom and of social justice, lest the disadvantaged and the disillusioned reject it

33. *Idem*, "Workers on the Cross: Religious Imagination in the Writings of Russian Workers, 1910–1924", *Russian Review*, 53 (1994), pp. 213–239; *idem*, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910–1925* (Ithaca, NY, 2002). Note also that these works transcend the revolutionary divide of 1917.

34. Charters Winn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass–Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), p. 65. See also Theodore Friedgut, *Iuzovka and Revolution: Politics and Revolution in Russia's Donbass, 1869–1924* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 76–90, 149–155.

35. Diane Koenker, "Men Against Women on the Shop Floor in Early Soviet Russia: Gender and Class in the Socialist Workplace", *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), pp. 1438–1464, 1461; Wendy Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender, Politics, and Planning in Soviet Industrialization* (Cambridge, 2002).

again”, is a long way from the “general optimism about the political relevance of recovering authentic experiences of earlier struggles” that Suny and I invoked.³⁶ What previously was couched in terms of workers’ adamancy or rationality in confronting employers and the state, becomes the “people’s” impulsiveness; they are victims of their own revolt against oppression.

Workers, in short, were de-romanticized. They no longer were represented as heroic resistors or martyrs to lost causes that historians authorized themselves to resurrect, but ordinary people who reacted to their extraordinary circumstances in a fascinating variety of ways. Most importantly, the assumption that class was paramount in telling the story of Soviet workers – or even that “worker” would be the primary category by which those employed on the shopfloor identified themselves – did not survive, and it is in this sense that the romance came to an end.

CLASS DISMISSED OR THE WAY FORWARD?

Figes’s eschewal of class was indicative of the tectonic shift that had occurred in the social historical landscape, especially, it seems, in Britain.³⁷ But within the field of Soviet history, nobody did more to dislodge class from its privileged position as a window onto social reality than the US-based Sheila Fitzpatrick. In a series of essays published in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Fitzpatrick argued that history mocked the Bolsheviks for whom class was paramount by “declassing” Russian society after the revolution. What in effect replaced real classes were “ascribed” ones. Class was “a Bolshevik invention” that rapidly took on dimensions of the old tsarist system of social estates (*sosloviia*) with its panoply of rights and obligations. While individual class identities remained protean and fragile, class assumed tremendous political and social significance in Soviet law and everyday life, encouraging a great deal of role-playing and masking.³⁸

Fitzpatrick’s insights informed much of the scholarship on nationality, the other ascribed macro-category of Soviet discourse. Indeed, as many of these scholars have been arguing, nationality took on many of the

36. Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924* (New York, 1997), pp. 812–813, 824.

37. See, for example, Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914* (Cambridge, 1991); and David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York, 1999).

38. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “The Bolsheviks’ Dilemma: Class, Culture, and Politics in the Early Soviet Years”, *Slavic Review*, 47 (1988), pp. 599–613; *idem*, “Klassy i problemy klassovoi prinadlezhnosti v sovetskoi Rossii 20-kh godov”, *Voprosy istorii*, no. 8 (1990), pp. 16–31; “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia”, *Journal of Modern History*, 65 (1993), pp. 745–770. For revised versions of these and other essays on class and its “masking”, see *idem*, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ, 2005).

dimensions of class, and by the late 1930s began to supplant it as the key category by which the communists distinguished friends from enemies.³⁹ Serhy Yekelchuk puts it thus:

[...] in a “workers’ and peasants’ state” populated exclusively, at least on paper, by workers and *kolkhoz* peasantry, the category “class” lost its taxonomic value. Nationality, then, became the only universal label for classifying – and ruling – the Soviet populace. While in the 1920s the USSR was a state of equal nationalities and unequal classes, by the late 1930s it had become a state of equal classes and unequal nationalities, in which a party-state increasingly identified with the Russian nation.⁴⁰

Nationality and empire also supplanted labor and working-class history as the subject of greatest interest among graduate students interested in imperial Russian and Soviet history. Indicative of the marginalization of workers from the mainstream of Western historiography as the century turned was Fitzpatrick’s book on everyday urban life under Stalin, which did not approach the factory gate, dispensed with class as a useful category of historical analysis, and instead posited *homo Sovieticus*, a “social species” with unique habits and skills mostly of a materialistic bent.⁴¹

Of course, trends come and go. Scholars still found it possible to make contributions to our knowledge about workers and work in the Stalin era, as many of the notes to this essay testify. Within the past few years, new ground has been broken both empirically and conceptually with respect to coerced labor (a subject all but neglected previously by social historians), the proximate origins of the “double burden” that women workers faced, and trade unions.⁴² And, just within the past year or so, two monographs have been published on particular sites of “class struggle” and “worker resistance” under Stalin, the Moscow Proletarian District’s Metal (Hammer and Sickle) factory and the Ivanovo industrial region. Each,

39. Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism”, *Slavic Review*, 53 (1994), pp. 414–452; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY, 2001); Francine Hirsch, “Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities”, *Russian Review*, 59 (2000), pp. 201–226.

40. Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian–Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto, 2004), p. 4.

41. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York, 1999).

42. See respectively Paul R. Gregory and Valery Lazarev (eds), *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* (Stanford, CA, 2003); Steven A. Barnes, “All for the Front, All for Victory! The Mobilization of Forced Labor in the Soviet Union during World War II”, *ILWCH*, 58 (2000), pp. 239–260; Thomas G. Schrand, “The Five-Year Plan for Women’s Labour: Constructing Socialism and the ‘Double Burden’, 1930–1932”, *Europe–Asia Studies*, 51 (1999), pp. 1455–1478; Diane Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian Printers and Soviet Socialism, 1917–1930* (Ithaca, NY, 2005); Wendy Goldman, “Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign”, *American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), pp. 1427–1453.

lavishly citing archival sources, restates the case that Soviet workers in the late 1920s and early 1930s were capable of defying party blandishments and police repression to exhibit behavior ranging from “simmering, but fractured, discontent” to “open revolt”.⁴³

Nevertheless, despite the high quality of these and other works, there is no doubt in my mind that labor history has lost its cachet. Many factors – both internal to Soviet studies (itself a field with diminished purchase on the public’s attention) and more broadly, to trends in the discipline of history – can be adduced. The one I would like to highlight here has to do with the relatively recent extension of the historical optic past its traditional Stalin-era (or even Great Patriotic War) boundary. The proliferation of dissertations, articles, and books on the post-Stalin era, surely among the most noteworthy developments in Soviet studies, has already transformed our understanding of the trajectory of the entire “Soviet experiment”.⁴⁴ What is striking is how little labor historians have contributed to this body of scholarship.

The difficulty of distinguishing workers as subjects may be one reason for the paucity of books on Soviet labor history for the postwar decades. Aside from Donald Filtzer’s three volumes on production relations, the only one that falls within the category of labor history – and then, only equivocally so – is Samuel Baron’s monograph on the Novochoerkassk massacre of workers in 1962.⁴⁵ Filtzer’s observation that the industrial workforce of the Gorbachev years “was not a class in the Marxist sense of the term, since it lacked internal cohesion and even a primitive consciousness of itself as a coherent social group with its own distinct interests” could just as well apply to the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁶ Even as they grew as a proportion of the entire population and continued to be honored retrospectively for their contributions to the building of socialism, workers fit awkwardly as a class into socialism’s “mature” stage. One

43. Kevin Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Class Struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory* (New York, 2005), p. 228; Jeffrey J. Rossman, *Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, MA, 2005). According to Rossman (p. 236), his book “demonstrates that Stalin’s revolution ‘from above’ was perceived by workers to be a betrayal of the October Revolution”. All workers?

44. I address this in my “Mapping Private Spheres in the Soviet Context”, in Lewis H. Siegelbaum (ed.), *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York, 2006), pp. 1–21.

45. Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations, 1953–1964* (Cambridge, 1992); *idem*, *Soviet Workers and the Collapse of Perestroika: The Soviet Labour Process and Gorbachev’s Reforms, 1985–1991* (Cambridge, 1994); *idem*, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge, 2002); Samuel Baron, *Bloody Saturday in the Soviet Union: Novochoerkassk, 1962* (Stanford, CA, 2002).

46. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and the Collapse of Perestroika*, pp. 115–116.

index of this awkwardness was that the production novel with its working-class heroes faded away from Soviet fiction in the post-Stalin era. Or rather, as Katerina Clark noted, they mutated into stories “written largely by and about young people of the urban middle class, precisely the sociological category that was now in the ascendant in Soviet society”.⁴⁷ By the 1970s, the “scientific-technological revolution” (NTR), with its emphasis on improving economic planning and management via the application of systems theory, further marginalized workers, which may be why Soviet labor sociologists discovered – to their evident dismay – that few workers hoped their children would become workers.⁴⁸

If this is true, it behooves us to ask why. One answer is provided by Stephen Kotkin’s *Magnetic Mountain*, perhaps the most frequently cited work of Soviet history published in the 1990s. Standing astride several subdisciplines of history (urban, social, intellectual, political), and inspired by Michel Foucault’s pursuit of power at the micro-level, *Magnetic Mountain* treated the new steel town of Magnitogorsk and its inhabitants in terms of “the grand strategies of the state” and “the little tactics of the habitat”. Its central argument – that Soviet workers experienced “positive integration” into a larger political community by virtue of “the game of social identification” that involved learning “the terms at issue and the techniques of engagement” – remains unparalleled for its imaginatively bold sweep, even while criticized for not going far enough in acknowledging the ways that the idealized “Soviet man” worked on individuals’ subjectivity.⁴⁹

Others have reinforced Kotkin’s point. Barbara Engel and Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck were particularly struck by the fact that, among the elderly Russian women they interviewed, even those “who did not benefit from the regime’s policies of advancing workers and poor peasants came to share its overall goals [...] [which] became inextricably bound up with a kind of Soviet nationalism”. Bruce Grant’s account of the Nivkhi of Sakhalin Island comes to a similar conclusion, despite – or perhaps precisely because of – the utter devastation that Soviet power wrought to the Nivkhi’s indigenous culture.⁵⁰ Oral history and ethnography, the

47. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, IL, 1981), p. 234.

48. On NTR, see Erik P. Hoffmann and Robbin F. Laird, *Technocratic Socialism: The Soviet Union in the Advanced Industrial Era* (Durham, NC, 1985), and L. Bliakhman and O. Shkaratan, *NTR. Rabochii klass, intelligentsia* (Moscow, 1973). On working-class parents’ preferences, see Walter D. Connor, *The Accidental Proletariat: Workers, Politics, and Crisis in Gorbachev’s Russia* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), p. 76.

49. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, pp. 23, 236–237. For an early and probably still the most trenchant critique of the book’s reliance on the game metaphor, see Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin’s *Magnetic Mountain* and the State of Soviet Historical Studies”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 44 (1996), pp. 456–463.

50. Barbara Alpern Engel and Anastasia Podadskaya-Vanderbeck (eds), *A Revolution of Their Own: Voices of Women in Soviet History* (Boulder, CO, 1998), p. 87; Bruce Grant, *In the House of Soviet Culture: A Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton, NJ, 1995).

approaches adopted by these and other scholars, are particularly good at getting at these questions of internalization and identity.

But “what about the workers?”. This is the title of a book that inaugurated a major ethno-sociological series on workers across the Soviet/post-Soviet divide.⁵¹ One of its co-editors was Michael Burawoy, a self-described “Marxist ethnographer” who, as a participant observer in wood-processing and coalmining enterprises of the Russian far north, tracked the transition to capitalism from below. Before that, in the early 1980s, he had worked in a factory in Hungary (“Red Star Tractor”), previous to which he put in a stint at a Chicago metalworks factory.⁵² I cite Burawoy’s experience, not to suggest that it be emulated (a tall order indeed!), but to illustrate how it provided him with a rich comparative basis for analysis. For I believe that if there is a way forward – or back – for Soviet labor and working-class history, it may be on precisely this basis.

Burawoy’s work, as well as that of Sarah Ashwin and David Mandel, helps explain why class identity and class-based solidarity were so little in evidence during the traumatic upheavals of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet years.⁵³ They show that perhaps the most important dimension of workers’ positive integration into the Soviet welfare state was the enterprise paternalism that occluded differences between management and workers while *heightening* those between workers in different industries. A hallmark of the Soviet system, dependency on enterprise management and the distributional system administered by the trade unions (a policy referred to as “social partnership”), proved too risky to challenge or forego in the absence of alternative civic institutions.⁵⁴

We know from Kotkin that the origins of these arrangements go back to

51. See Simon Clarke *et al.* (eds), *What About the Workers?: Workers and the Transition to Capitalism in Russia* (London, 1993).

52. Michael Burawoy, “From Capitalism to Capitalism via Socialism: The Odyssey of a Marxist Ethnographer, 1975–1995”, *ILWCH*, no. 50 (1996), pp. 77–99. See also *inter alia* Michael Burawoy and Pavel Krotov, “The Soviet Transition from Socialism to Capitalism: Worker Control and Economic Bargaining in the Wood Industry”, *American Sociological Review*, 57 (1992), pp. 16–38; Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism* (London, 1985); and *idem*, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago, IL, 1979).

53. Sarah Ashwin, *Russian Workers: The Anatomy of Patience* (Manchester, 1999); David Mandel, *Labour After Communism: Auto Workers and Their Unions in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Montreal, 2004).

54. On enterprise paternalism, cf. Peter Bizyukov, “The Mechanism of Paternalistic Management of the Enterprise: The Limits of Paternalism”, in Simon Clarke (ed.), *Management and Industry in Russia: Formal and Informal Relations in the Period of Transition* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 99–127; Stephen Crowley, *Hot Coal, Cold Steel: Russian and Ukrainian Workers from the End of the Soviet Union to the Post-Communist Transformations* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1997); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, “The Condition of Labor in Post-Soviet Russia, a Ten-Year Retrospective”, *Social Science History*, 28 (2004), pp. 637–665, 656–658.

the 1930s, MMK (Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Industrial Complex) having been ahead of the curve. The real gap in our knowledge lies in the intervening decades when such arrangements were, as Filtzer puts it, consolidated. Scholars are beginning to pursue this process outside the production sphere, examining such dimensions as housing, material culture, and more generally, consumption.⁵⁵ But there is a great deal more to do. So long as we remain attached to a romantic view of Soviet workers, that privileges their cultural autonomy and capacity for resistance at the point of production, we will miss a great deal of what went on during these decades that was of significance to workers and that helps to explain their response – or lack of response – to the collapse of Communism.

Here is where Soviet labor and working-class historians have much to learn from their colleagues who study workers in the other Soviet bloc countries. A recent issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History* devoted to “Labor in Postwar Central and Eastern Europe” points the way, with articles *inter alia* on party recruitment in Romania during the 1950s, working-class life in Sztálinváros (Hungary’s first socialist city), and a prize-winning female workers’ brigade in a Hungarian hosiery factory.⁵⁶ The fact that most of the contributors hail from and reside in these countries is also instructive. It is surely one of the benefits of the end of a divided Europe that their work is now so accessible, and an indication that in this post-communist age both “romance” and “Western historian” are somewhat anachronistic terms.

55. See for example Steven E. Harris, “Moving to the Separate Apartment: Building, Distributing, Furnishing, and Living in Urban Housing in Soviet Russia, 1950s–1960s” (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 2003); Susan E. Reid, “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev”, *Slavic Review*, 61 (2002), pp. 211–252; and Deborah Ann Field, “Communist Morality and Meanings of Private Life in Post-Stalinist Russia 1953–1964” (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1996).

56. *ILWCH*, no. 68 (2005). There is a useful introduction by Mark Pittaway. See also a previous issue (no. 50, 1996) of the same journal which is devoted to “Labor Under Communist Regimes”; Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (eds), *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Postwar Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2000), and *Idem*, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford, 2002).