

and Kropotkin's role in it. There are references to many individuals but Cahm tells us little about them and they remain for the most part just names. In fact it is not so much *the* movement which plays a central role as certain members of the "inner circle" which had formed around Bakunin and remained active after his death.

The separate treatment of the subjects dealt with in parts two and three is unfortunate. It leads to the same questions being considered too often, while other aspects are insufficiently considered. More serious, however, is the loss which results to the unity and cohesion of Kropotkin's ideas. The relationship between secret and non-secret organization, of such considerable importance for the inner circle and Kropotkin's attitude towards syndicalism, is repeatedly mentioned, but never really explained. The conclusions Cahm draws from real events (the Mano Negra conspiracy in Spain, attacks in Germany, for example) are in general rather arbitrary. Furthermore, it is to be doubted whether J. Most should be mentioned in the same context as the police spy A. Serraux (p. 276)!

There is also the fundamental question of the importance of "action theories" in the totality of anarchism. When spontaneity, solidarity and "Act for yourselves" play such a central role, ideas about revolutionary action are connected far more closely to time and place than Cahm realizes. In December 1886, at the end of the period dealt with by Cahm, Kropotkin wrote: "Action must be dictated by the needs of the moment" (*Act for Yourselves*, p. 30).

In the Conclusions, which is certainly of some interest, Cahm agrees with the critical judgement made by Kropotkin's sympathizers Malatesta and Nettlau. The relevant parts of Nettlau's *Geschichte des Anarchie* are mentioned in the bibliography, but Cahm tends to refer to the unreliable French compilation *Histoire de l'anarchie*, which does less than justice to Nettlau's *Geschichte*. More than her own study, Nettlau's book is the "in-depth examination of Kropotkin's development" which Cahm found lacking in the existing biographies (by G. Woodcock and J. Avakumovic, 1950; by N. M. Pirumova, 1972; and by M. Miller, 1976).

*Rudolf de Jong*

KRIEDEL, ANNIE. *La Grève des Cheminots: 1920*. Armand Colin, Paris 1988. 255 pp. F.fr. 149.00.

Annie Kriegel's *La grève des cheminots: 1920* is an autonomous reprinting of the second section of the author's *thèse de doctorat d'état, Aux origines du communisme français*, originally published in 1964 and long out of print. It retains a certain power which is undiminished by time, even if one of its claims appears dated. *La grève des cheminots* is an exhaustive political and ideological history of one event, the May 1920 general strike of French railway workers. The author uses this single moment of great crisis to illuminate larger issues revolving around it, wherein lies the importance of this work. This strike involved fully three protagonists, the state, the employers, and the workers, in a genuine social struggle which played itself out in the political arena. Its outcome destroyed revolutionary syndicalism, demonstrated

the adaptive and recuperative powers of French capitalism and the state, and prepared the way for the rise of French communism.

Conveying the drama involved despite the plethora of details so characteristic of a French doctorate, Kriegel lays out all the factors that made this one strike so fundamental in the social and political history of modern France. Concerning workers first, World War I and the Russian Revolution had precipitated a crises for french revolutionary syndicalism by deepening a split between the majority faction (*majoritaires*) of the movement which saw in these events an opportunity for modifications in the social structure leading eventually to its radical transformation, and a minority or revolutionary wing (*minoritaires*) which viewed within these same events an objective chance for an immediate anti-capitalist, anti-middle-class revolution. Two different strategies and outlooks came to a head around the May 1920 strike. In May 1920 revolutionaries within the railway workers' federation capitalized on a long uninterrupted history of unionism among railway workers and long pent-up feelings brought about by the intensification of work conditions during the war to wage a significant social battle against their employers; they would demand the nationalization of the railway system and also pressure the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), their parent revolutionary syndicalist confederation, to back them with a general strike call to all organized French workers aimed at securing significant structural changes in French society. This in outline is what happened in May 1920 and Kriegel covers at length the debates, maneuvers, and preparations of revolutionary syndicalist leaders as May approached. Kriegel also interprets the meaning of "revolutionary" and "reformer", *minoritaire* and *majoritaire* within the CGT in the course of these events, definitions that bear on her conclusion. The author stresses that both sides were revolutionary, differing only in the timing of and means for revolution. Authentic reformism, the desire for change without structural transformation, was not a factor in the 1920 strike movement. Accusations to the contrary arose after the strike movement failed, as the factions within the CGT began to attack each other.

This book looks equally closely at ways in which the railway companies and the state prepared to meet the challenge of the May strikes. Kriegel demonstrates that, contrary to the popular opinion in the 1920s that French capitalism was in a weakened state, rail companies, entirely aware of the workers' impending general strike, decided to organize a broad defense of the employer class with all the technical, political and economic means at their disposal. Preferring to enlarge this conflict and enlisting on their side all non-revolutionary, non-socialist forces in France, the railway firms would then appear as the defenders of order as they joined forces with the state to crush the strike. Looking at these events in terms of a social war, Kriegel documents the many weapons employed by the employers and the state against workers. These ranged from running the trains with technical personnel and the use of a reserve army and voluntary police to maintain order, to legal action against syndicalist leaders. The data evidence that French capitalism and the state were relatively stable after the war, determined and quite able to defeat the strikers. The latter, on the other hand, entered the conflict full of deep hesitations and confusion. The CGT, not receiving the full support of its rank-and-file, pulled out of the strike movement in mid-May; the railway workers, alone and overwhelmed by the opposition, capitulated at the end of the month.

In her concluding interpretive speculations, Kriegel points out that the tactics of revolutionary syndicalism, worked out long before World War I, did not fit the reality of the post-war world. *Majoritaires* and *minoritaires* misinterpreted the current situation. Neither faction realized how powerful the counter-revolutionary forces were. The *minoritaires* confused revolutionary élan with an objective revolutionary situation. For the most part, in 1920 revolutionary syndicalist leaders were more revolutionary than union members. The failure of the strike movement, given the magnitude of the struggle and the fundamental issues involved, destroyed the pre-World War I revolutionary syndicalist movement. Its revolutionary mantle fell to the newly emerging French communists.

The only dated quality to this book is the author's claim to have advanced the study of social history beyond the boundaries of merely focusing on new subject matter, the political history of a strike. Near the end of this study, Kriegel applies a sociological analysis to this strike by investigating the age distribution of the strikers and their length of service in the union in order to show that the strikers were not "hotheads" but stable members of the railway workers' federation. True enough in its own day, this assertion of methodological innovation has become a commonplace within the historical profession. Moreover, a contemporary historian examining such a strike most likely would have extended the analysis beyond political and ideological considerations to include information on such topics as the work site experiences and family life of the railway workers and strike rituals, in short, to a more complete portrait of the rank-and-file and its universe. However, one cannot fault a book reissued twenty four years after its initial appearance from this perspective. What we have under review is a classic, a definitive political analysis of a fundamental strike set within the crossroads where the state, capitalism and the workers intersected, seen largely from the perspective of its leading participants, and of its deeper meaning for the social and political history of modern France.

*Nicholas Papayanis*

MAIER, ROBERT. Die Stachanov-Bewegung 1935–1938. Der Stachanovismus als tragendes und verschärfendes Moment der Stalinisierung der sowjetischen Gesellschaft. [Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, Band 31.] Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1990. 441 pp. DM 80.00.

The Stakhanov movement continues to attract the attention of Western historians. Studies by Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Francesco Benvenuti appeared in 1988; Maier's book is the third monograph to appear on the subject. There have also been a few articles. (For the titles see *International Review of Social History*, XXXV (1990), p. 438, n. 13.) However, the reader who thinks that Maier's book therefore repeats much that has already been stated, and even that it is superfluous, is mistaken. While Benvenuti and Siegelbaum are especially interested in the function of the Stakhanov movement within Soviet society as a whole, Maier pays more attention to internal developments. He presents, for example, new data on the birth of the Stakhanov movement in the Donbass mining area (pp. 60–85), and on the