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women's employment in the 19th and 20th centuries; proletarian and bourgeois women's movements; women and fascism.

Most of the women were active in so-called 'women's seminars', which as a result of the vigorous demands of the women's movement have been organised at various universities. Only a few were doing post-graduate research, while the majority can be described as advanced students.

But it is worth mentioning that quite a proportion of the participants were not academic at all. They were nurses or part-time secretaries, who were involved in the liberation movement and thereby had been stimulated to take interest in women's history.

As in any social movement, there is a strong demand for identification in the new feminist movement too. Women can only act self-confidently and independently if they have a consciousness which is based on a positive historical experience of their own being. Similar to the situation of the labour movement in the 19th century, they cannot find their history in the official sources, which have always been collected and interpreted by men to whom women as historical subjects have been of no interest at all. So history has to be written anew from a standpoint which discloses the mechanisms responsible for women's suppression in history. But apart from the attempts to elucidate structures of the historical process with regard to the women's question, any dynamic movement is in need of some positive landmarks from which it can draw its internal strength and cohesion. As the liberation movement is a decentralised one which rejects charismatic leadership or an authority structure, the strongholds capable of providing identity and solidarity have to be found in the past. Here starts the development which can end in a terrible trap: history may be reduced (again) to the legitimisation of a particular social group in so far as it has to deliver examples and traditions which help to shape and stabilise the movement's self-assertion. By concentrating on historical prototypes of emancipated women (extraordinary writers like George Sand or Rahel Varnhagen, female politicians etc.) and at the same time neglecting the dynamics of their

social status, the dialectical process of female suppression (and liberation) in history is reduced to a simple and static picture of 'great women in history'. This is a tendency which is very much present in the German women's movement – which is understandable from within, but nevertheless extremely dangerous for the movement itself as well as for the development of feminist history.

At the next meeting in October, there will be an extended paper on this very problem which will try to systematise the ideas mentioned above, and hopefully start a programmatic discussion of the theoretical aspects of a feminist view of history.

In the meantime, it is planned to set up a bibliography which will contain all the papers and projects in women's history the participants of the meeting are working on or know of. This detailed index may eventually be published by the Munich women's journal, which seems to be very interested in our work.

Up to now there are formal connections neither with the orthodox historical institutions nor with organisations on the left – as there is unfortunately no such centre of socialist historians in Germany as the History Workshop! But there has been a very strong feeling against those historians who accept women's history as a new fashion (like labour history ten years ago), or as a kind of empty space on the map of historical research which it is desirable (in terms of their reputation) to fill in.

This tendency makes it even more urgent to define our own version of feminist history – not by retreating into the pitfalls of personalised historiography, but by developing a new matrix of social(ist) history which no longer reduces the complex totality of contradictions to a single 'primary contradiction'.

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MARHO CONFERENCE, 16-17 April 1977

The fifth annual conference of the Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians' Organization (MARHO) was held in New York City on 16-17 April 1977. The two-day conference was attended by more than 600 persons including university and community college teachers, students and political activists, and was the

largest gathering of radical historians since the demise of the old Socialist Scholars Conference in the early 1970s.

Founded four years ago out of a shared concern among younger scholars, teachers and graduate students to counter the narrow boundaries of professional history, MARHO

has brought together through its forums and conferences an increasing number of radical historians from the East Coast. Through its publication of a quarterly journal, the *Radical History Review*, and its other educational activities, it has sought to encourage the development of a critical history and new approaches to teaching and research toward building a socialist political practice in the United States. MARHO working collectives are now located in New York City, Boston, Providence, Baltimore and Philadelphia.

The main theme of this year's conference was indicated by its general title: 'History and Culture: legitimation and resistance in class societies'. The overriding aim of the widely ranging sessions was to undertake a critical assessment of the durability of American capitalism and its apparently successful functioning on levels cultural and social – not generally seen as overtly political. Since the end of the Vietnam war and the subsequent collapse of the student movements of the late 1960s, such an analysis of culture in its historical forms and contemporary manifestations has emerged as an essential step in the building of any new political practice.

The conference was structured in order to address the question of culture as a whole, that is, both the dominant culture of capitalism and oppositional cultures under capitalism. In this way, it was hoped that the division in historical scholarship between intellectual history, on the one hand, and history from below, on the other, might be in a certain way overcome. In the United States, their separation has become particularly exaggerated in recent years, notably on the left where a rarified 'critical theory', of European inspiration, idealistic but in the end pessimistic with regard to any class analysis of 'mass society', has found little common ground with a social history from below, also European influenced, that has remained obsessively empirical and perhaps overly romantic in its optimistic vision of the autonomy and continuity of worker cultural forms. The evident need of the former for a wider social and historical frame of reference, and of the latter for a more developed theoretical position, generated the overall themes of the conference and informed all of its sessions, however implicitly.

These issues were succinctly placed on the agenda in a keynote session where Stuart Hall presented a critical framework for understanding new perspectives on cultural history, and Herbert Gutman and Paul Buhle respectively addressed problems of studying working-class history and popular culture.

The first day was given over to four workshops examining various aspects of dominant culture: bourgeois self-legitimation in the age of revolutions; civic uplift and social control in the second industrial revolution; the extensions

of scientific management; and the creation of mass culture. It seemed important to begin with the era of political and economic upheaval at the turn of the 18th-19th centuries, at which time the idea of 'culture' in its modern bourgeois connotations was first defined. That definition included both the expression of high cultural forms, and norms and values which the middle class saw as being bound up with its way of life and threatened by the processes of industrial and social levelling. It was in this sense, debatable of course, that the expression 'culture' was used in the conference, that is, both as a self-legitimizing ideology and as a means for civic and social control of an emerging industrial working class. Discussion of the way in which this 'culture' developed into a dominating, blanketing ideology was encouraged by calling attention to the systematic methods devised to disseminate mystifications of real social relations: through the educational system, by means of new mediating institutions such as theatre networks and youth movements, inside industrial firms or as agents of them in the community and, finally, in the 20th century, extending throughout the society as a whole through the use of the mass media. The inclusion in each workshop of papers devoted to European as well as American topics ensured that in the discussions the structures of capitalism as a whole were examined and not, as has frequently been the case, solely the particularities of American development.

The morning session of the second day, devoted to the formation of oppositional cultures primarily in the 20th century, concentrated on five major themes: worker control and opposition to Taylorism; capitalism and the family; ethnic culture and class consciousness; authenticity lost and regained in American popular music; and film and history. In several of the groups, debate focused on the way in which resistance has been organised through cultural means when more overt ways of political expression were either impossible or impractical.

The concluding sessions opened the questions of the possibility for popular action in cultural spheres that many have considered irrevocably closed to all political action. Three workshops examined the problems of party intellectuals and cultural organizing; writing for the people; and cultural imperialism and cultural decolonization in Latin America. A final workshop was devoted to debate among editorial representatives of current newspapers and journals on the left.

While it is hard to assess the overall success of so large and diverse a conference from inevitably fragmentary impressions, it was clear by the end of the second day that many of the workshops had far surpassed the expectations of their organizers and generated discus-

sions between panellists and audience in which important new directions for research and critical analysis had emerged. A specific example which serves to exemplify the special combination of scholarship, experience, age and cultural practice that marked so many of the livelier sessions was that which concentrated on American popular music. In this session Daniel Czitrom presented a conceptual overview of the relations between folk music and the commercial market in the United States; Angeliki V. Keil examined the changing forms of the polka and their socio-economic support among Polish-American working people to exemplify the interpenetration of class, musical craft and ethnicity; and Howard Johnson, a former member of the Dancing Demons of the Cotton Club of Harlem in the 1930s, now a professor of sociology, talked on jazz and black working-class culture with an appropriately active demonstration of dance practice.

While the conference was successful in opening a wide range of questions, it was possibly less so in focusing the individual sessions toward the solution of concrete problems.

This may have been a result of the formal structure adopted – panellists, chairpersons and audience – or it may have reflected the uneven levels of preparation of the participants. But it was clear that the overall intention of MARHO to reduce ‘academicism’ and encourage a high degree of participation in the making of critical history was only partially accomplished in this conference.

Another explicit goal of MARHO – the more complete integration of inquiry into the specific conditions of women under capitalism into an analysis of contemporary United States society – was similarly not realized. Inevitably the categories under which cultural concerns have been considered tended to exclude any particular consideration of women, and much of the scholarly work available, no matter how recent, falls too readily into such categories.

Victoria de Grazia

Abstracts of the papers presented at the conference, together with a list of those who presented or commented on papers, may be obtained by writing to MARHO, Box 946, New York, New York, 10025.

MANCHESTER HISTORY WORKSHOP, 22-24 April 1977

This year's Manchester History Workshop, the second, was again held under the cool gaze of 'Charity' from the stained glass windows of the former board-room of the Poor Law Guardians of the Manchester Union, now the Polytechnic administrative and conference centre. An open evening was held on Friday 22 April in the very different surroundings of the home of Ruth and Eddie Frow, where the Working Class Movement Library is housed. The Frows' hospitality and their fascinating collection of books (over 10,000 items) made a warm introduction to the weekend.

The Workshop was attended by 70 or 80 people, a mix of local residents, students and teachers of history and others using history in their work. A magic lantern show of photograph slides taken in Salford recaptured the atmosphere of Edwardian times and a display of rescued business records, family photographs and papers, together with surveys of the streets from which they had been collected, illustrated the role which the Manchester Studies Team from the Poly is playing in recording and preserving local history.

Papers and events were arranged around three themes. The first of these was *Popular and Socialist Theatre in Lancashire*, which included Brian Maidment's account of

nineteenth-century dramatic production, and a lively paper presented by Eddie and Ruth Frow on working-class theatre between the wars, which drew in members of the audience for a short play-reading from *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* and for poetry readings. This session was supported by an exhibition of photographs and theatre ephemera and by a performance of 'Just a Cog', a play about engineering workers, by the North West Spanner theatre group. Immigrant Manchester, the second theme of the workshop, revealed the perhaps little-known fact that several contemporary African leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, had been resident in Manchester in the 1940s. Colin Bundy's paper on the Pan-African National Congress in 1946 evoked a Manchester of the period in which African residents played a lively part in social and business life while pursuing their political activities. The structure of Jewish communities, particularly the relationships between various groups and gangs such as the notorious 'Napoo', was explored in a paper given by Bill Williams and Rosalyn Liushin, who illustrated their subject with oral material and with a large street map coloured to show the ways in which the Jewish community was socially divided. This paper provoked a very lively and challenging discussion amongst the