

Summaries of articles

The Management and Organization of Work in Railroad Companies from their Origins to 1860

G. RIBEILL

The railroad revolution mobilized not only capital but also men and techniques. How did the companies invent management systems, an organization for work, and tools of mobilization, not to mention the integration of personnel? In the course of this pragmatic apprenticeship period, directors and engineers invented piecemeal management methods, often by way of response to a particular event or conjuncture.

Certain characteristic features of railroading and its professional cultures were gradually forged on the basis of the weighty principles of hierarchy, security, regimentation, and discipline, as well as of the social isolation of a young company, progressively bound by the golden chains—well designed and tempered, however—of the Companies' first social institutions.

This article uses a genetic approach in the a posteriori clarification of the "French Rail System's" sturdy structural traditions.

A Taylorian Turning Point in French Society (1904-1918)

P. FRIDENSON

The study of Taylorism calls for new perspectives, ones emphasizing its importance in the history of the production process. In the case of France from 1904 to 1918, Taylorism should be resituated in its then new intellectual and industrial climate characterized by the Americanization of French society, the threat to individuality posed by the rise of mass society, and the emergence of technical authority and a new economy of time. Such an analysis should not, however, be limited to business, for the debate concerning Taylorism involves productivist values found, since that time, in all social groups. These latter are nevertheless unable to form a coalition influencing productivity policy, except when the state manages to direct them towards necessary compromises.

The Rationalization of Work in French Industry in the 1930s

A. MOUTET

The economic crisis brought problems concerning sales and cost prices to the top of the list of industrialists' worries. But, nevertheless, the rationalization of production was not shelved. On the contrary, it was integrated into the system of business management thanks to the introduction of new methods. This crisis rationalization, however, had detrimental effects on personnel, seen in workshops in the form of growing responsibility concerning results, but a loss of power over methods. It led to increasing returns, while ignoring workers' interests. Salary scales were used as sanctions instead of incentives. The tension in social relations thus gave rise to strikes in mining and metallurgy at the turning point marked by the years 1935-36.

Factory Mirrors: Industrial Photography and the Organization of Work at Ansaldo

A. DEWERPE

Thanks to its very extensive photography collection, Ansaldo, one of the very large engineering and metallurgy industries in Northern Italy at the beginning of the 20th century, allows one to analyze the social conditions of industrial photography production. Their commercial policy of offering products to be marketed in a visual form—related to the business' dynamic strategy to open up new avenues in an otherwise closed market—was accompanied more generally by the image the company created for itself evoking the power of the metallurgy industry, the greatness of the Italian nation, and Ansaldo's vocation to dominate the country's industrial structure. It is only by explaining this rhetoric of the image, programmatically staged by the company, that factory photography can become a prolix source for industrial history.

“Pantouflage” in France

C. CHARLE

The movement of upper-level bureaucrats into the private sector (le pantouflage) has been developing in France for about a century. This article attempts to synthesize the monographs on the subject, clarifying it in the light of new research and opening up new avenues of interpretation suggesting further studies. This phenomenon first appeared in the stratum of bureaucrats with technical capabilities (e.g. state engineers and finance inspectors), then in the main body of bureaucrats—due to political purges—and finally, in the twentieth century, amongst high-level army officers. The reasons vary with the particular stratum in question, economic and administrative conjunctures, the age of resigning bureaucrats and their social extraction. At a deeper level this phenomenon is a sign of the disfunctioning of the French administration, especially during the Third Republic but also of the lack, up until the years between the two World Wars, of channels designed to provide special training to upper-level officials in economic sectors who were partly siphoned off from the public sector. This “brain drain”, whose importance should not be over-stated, was not entirely negative in its effects; it led in the long run to a reform of the administration's all too obvious shortcomings, and contributed to the indirect democratization of recruitment in business circles. It contributes to economic power's domination over the field of administrative power, even when social differentiation of recruitment of these two types of elites is accentuated.

On "Sovietology"

W. BERELOWITCH

This article continues a line of reasoning begun in the July-August 1985 issue of the Annales (including articles and reports by Marc Ferro, Régine Robin, and others) concerning sources, methods and concepts used in studies of Soviet history. Certain theses, sometimes claimed to be "revisionist", are criticized here: the concern with describing the evolution of the Russian regime leads their authors to misunderstand the constant features of the regime, whose institutions and ideology formed during the first few years of its history, and to over-interpret the dissensions which have racked it. On the other hand, the emphasis placed upon the study of Russian society tends to take sociological schemas (such as social mobility) for active historical forces, as if "consensus" were based upon the spontaneity of the population's forms of support. The worship of Lenin, for example, is defined as authentic folklore instead of as an artificial official creation.

Words, Fluids and Dizziness: Oral Festivals of Mysticism as seen in the Work of Gautier de Coinci

M.-C. POUCHELLE

Juggling words, Gautier de Coinci attempts to lead his 13th century contemporaries onto the shifting ground of miraculous proofs, into the realm in which one can be awake while sleeping, in which statues walk, and in which saying is doing.

This article explores the mental and emotional universe which makes miracles plausible in the work of this religious writer. It is a universe in which symbols act very concretely upon beings and things, one which is par excellence linked to the Incarnation of the Word. The flesh is patently present in the writing of this avid lover who savoured the Virgin every time he pronounced her name. The narrative style of his tales has many affinities with that of incantation. Neither naive nor cunning, his text is so "efficacious" that word plays can be seen to be more than mere intellectual entertainment: they constitute a technique for achieving ecstasy.

Hell in Medieval Poland (14th-15th Centuries)

S. BYLINA

The article based on written and iconographic sources reproduces the picture of eternal punishment in religious didactics and collective imagination. In the country situated on the peripheries of christianism, the Church transmitted to the believers a moderate vision of hell with sufferings less refined than those which were preached to people in Western Europe. The technics of infernal tortures were more primitive and limited, probably in connection with the long absence of tortures in Polish trials. In the 15th Century the sources emphasize the closing of hell, resembling to prison. Its hermetic closure was in opposition to popular beliefs concerning contacts of living with condemned. The vision of hell played also a part in the dialogue of the Church with the traditional popular culture, comprehended as practising of superstitions and "relics of paganism".

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