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Yves Cohen, Rmi Baudoui. *Les chantiers de la paix sociale (1900-1940).* Fontenay-aux-Roses: ENS Editions, 1995. 335 pp. 160 FF (cloth), ISBN 978-2-902126-16-3.

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The Professionalization of the Social in Inter-War France: The Worksites of Social Peace

The ambitions of this book–the result of a colloquium organized at the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie* in Paris in October 1989 on "Techniques et figures du social d'une guerre à l'autre"–are broad. Its goal is to explore the efforts of those seeking to guarantee "la paix sociale" (social peace) between 1900 and 1940, and especially during the inter-war period.

The first impression is of a multiplicity of subjects and themes, whose only common concern is to show the appearance of techniques directed at the management and the rationalization of the "social" in the public sphere, business, and the urban world. As Yves Cohen and Remi Baudoin explain in their introduction to the book, there are many ways of defining what they call "social techniques," and the very multiplicity of the book's essays illustrates the point well. The book is divided into three apparently quite distinct parts. The first of these, whose title is "Vers des techniques sociales" (Towards social techniques), passes from inquiries on family budgets to industrial psychology, via "l'Inspection du travail" (workplace inspection) and social technicians' discourses about their methods. The second part analyses the influence of Catholicism, in particular the social role of the engineer or of the senior managers of firms. The third part is concerned with the city and the firm. Suzanna Magri and Christian Topalov analyze modern wage-earners' housing in France, Great Britain, Italy and the USA. Annie Fourcault studies sub-standard housing in the Paris region, and Katherine Burlen examines Henri Sellier and the Suresnes doctrine. As far as business is concerned, Aimee Moutet and Daniel Colson analyze the consequences of 1936 and the Popular Front for social management in business.

Urban historians will not only be interested by the book's final section dealing directly with the city itself and with urban policy. Indeed, after the first impression of a somewhat heterogeneous collection, the book's real strength derives precisely from the fact that these various subjects and approaches help us understand one of the specificities of the inter-war period: the professionalization of new activities whose aim was both to accompany and to compensate for the changing character of work methods and ways of living.

The authors are also led to reflect upon the value in historical analysis of the concept of professionalization (On this see Michael Burrage and Rolf Torstendahl, Professions in Theory and History: Rethinking the Study of the Professions, Sage Publications, London, 1990). They show how particular processes of professionalization–which sometimes failed to become "closed" professions recognised by the State–can enrich a theory that has been too often concerned only with "success stories".

1. Professionalisation as a means to understand the inter-war period:

It might be useful to recall the importance of the inter-war period, marked as it was by a concern to understand, to dominate, and to control men and women, whether they be workers, consumers, citizens, and so on. In their general introduction to the book, Yves Cohen and Remi Baudoui show the importance of the inter-war period, situated after the reformism of the 1890s and before the Second World War and then the Liberation, which gave the State its status as manager and organizer of the social. In other words, social techniques and professions, which found both definition and experience between 1900 and 1940, derived the basis of their organization from the activity of the State ("Gouverner le social, 1890-1945", pp. 7-25). This concern for control led to the appearance of new actors in the inter-war period, who sought to establish their professional status: social workers, factory superintendents, factory and workshop inspectors, city planners, etc. As in any professionalization process, professional discourses, based on new sciences (especially the social sciences) were very important, seeking to demonstrate the indispensable character of the service which they offered to society.

The first international conference on social service was organized in Paris in 1928, and the term "social techniques" was used for the first time (see Yves Cohen, "Le travail social: quand les techniciens sociaux parlent de leurs techniques", pp. 105-126). The aim of this discourse was to promote the idea of technical expertise ("la pensée technicienne"): applied knowledge that was oriented toward action. The use of established sciences such as medicine, psychology, statistics or sociology, directed explicitly to support action. Psychology was particularly important, as is emphasized in the essays by Vincent Viet ("La course aux techniques d'hygiene et de securite: les premiers pas de l'Inspection du travail", pp. 77-103) and Anson Rabinbach, ("Entre psychotechnique et politique: la psychologie industrielle dans l'Allemagne de Weimar", pp. 127-150).

These discourses sought amongst other things to demonstrate the legitimacy of the new professions, insisting, as in the case of factory inspectors, on the importance of the service provided. Stress was laid on the competence of the new professionals, comparable to that of lawyers or doctors. This discourse was linked to new schools or teaching institutes, such as the *Ecole des surintendantes d'usines* (Factory Superintendent College), created in 1917, or the *Ecole des hautes etudes urbaines* (Urban Studies College) set up in 1919. These schools diffused discourses and practices, and issued diplomas, such as those to social workers in 1938. The growing role of the state, especially after 1928, helped these new professions, though more through encouragement and subsidies to associations, mutual societies, and so on than by direct action.

This book reveals how the study of the professionalization of new activities can be fruitful not only for an understanding of the social professions themselves, but also, more generally, for that of inter-war France. Indeed, the book invites us to extend this approach to new spheres.

One example is the way this professionalization of social activities can be compared to that of advertising specialists in the inter-war period, and more generally to the growing role of specialists in sales and marketing in the 1930s (See Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, *"L'émergence de la publicité. Publicitaires, annonceurs et affichistes dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres,"* Ph.D. Thesis, History, European University Institute, Florence, 1996.) Y. Cohen and R. Baudoui show that industrialists, faced with uncertainties in both the social and marketing spheres, turned to social action as well as advertising and publicity for solutions. Inquiries into family budgets, organized by sociologists such as Halbwachs (following Le Play), by the state or by private movements (such as the *Jeunesse ouvriere chretienne*) and examined here by Antoine Savoye (*"Les enquetes sur les budgets familiaux: la famille au microscope,"* pp. 55-75) were, as Y. Cohen shows, common practices for all social workers, visitors, superintendents and so on. These must be situated within a larger context. One in which a variety of actors–managers, advertisers, the first marketing specialists–sought during the inter-war period to develop a better understanding of markets and consumers. Propaganda methods used to prevent accidents and so on in factories can be situated in the more general context of the use and sophistication of advertising and publicity in the 1930s. The definition of the "human factor" in employers' discourse, stressing the unpredictability of workers' behaviour and the related the use of psychology, can be compared to the discourses of advertisers about the irrationality of consumers, and their attempts to shape them with rationalising messages. Finally, if the professionalization of social work occurred earlier in the United States than in France, the same can be said of professionalization in the fields of work organization and advertising.

2. The concept of professionalization and a reconsideration of "success stories":

The concept of professionalization is useful for understanding the inter-war period in general, but the study of particular professions–which the State did not recognise officially as it did those of lawyers or doctors–is especially interesting. In an indirect fashion, the book answers important methodological questions. Is the concept of professionalization useful even where the story of the profession is not a "success story"? How important is it to take into account more marginal developments which stood apart from the dominant process? In other words, is the history of failure not as important as that of success?

Anson Rabinbach's article (pp. 127-150) is very pertinent to these issues. Rabinbach shows that professionalization is not a linear success story, but is often the result of conflicts. The field of industrial psychology, which appeared in Germany during the First World War, was divided into two movements. The aim of the first was to train industrial practitioners through psychotechnology, whereas the second movement wanted to study in a more scientific way the social aspects of the method. Otto Lipmann represented this second tendency from 1906 until his death in 1933. But he never obtained any post nor official recognition and, in contrast to the experience of the practitioners of psycho-technology, he

became a victim of National Socialist policy. Rabinbach reintroduces politics and conflicts to provide a better understanding of a story that has long been considered as one of simply linear success: the story of psychotechnology. Opposition to professionalization constitutes a further challenge to the linear conception of professionalization. Methods developed by the *Action catholique specialisee* provide a good example (Michel Chauviere, *"Le monde de l'action catholique specialisee: techniques sociales et ambivalences face a la professionnalisation,"* pp. 157-165). Catholic action was voluntary and charitable by its nature. Although increasingly professional in its approach, it constituted a brake on the classic professionalisation of social technicians.

Andre Grelon also shows the failure of the model of the social engineer defended by the *Union sociale d'ingenieurs catholiques* (USIC) during the inter-war period (*"L'ingenieur catholique et son role social,"* p. 168). The events of 1936 reduced to nothing the communication between the classes lauded by the Union, and with this change, the role of the engineer as mediator also decreased dramatically. Indeed, the social explosion of 1936 highlighted the limitations of the French conception of rationalization, according to which the organization of the human factor was integral to this very process (Aimee Moutet, *"Sous le gouvernement de front populaire: problemes humains de la rationalisation et action ouvriere,"* pp. 287-310). Moutet notes the way that the events of 1936 reveal workers' discontents with Taylorism. Abandoned by both employers and workers, engineers were not able to play the social role which they had given themselves, according to Andre Grelon. This was at least the case for the inter-war years, and it became a possibility only in the 50s, with the foundation of the Association nationale des directeurs et chefs du personnel (ANDCP). The conception of the social engineer may have been a failure in the inter-war period, but it was prepared for the post-war years.

This book reveals how the study of the professionalization of new occupations can produce a better understanding of the inter-war years, a period of experimentation which actively paved the way for the activities of professionals–managers, town planners and so on–and the state itself after the Second World War. The concept of professionalization is of value so long as one accepts that its usefulness does not depend on the success of any particular process (that is to say, official recognition by the state and formal "closure"). Failures and limitations can even provide a useful critique to refine the concept itself. Here, surely, is one of positive benefits of the historical approach?

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