

## SURVEY

# The Social History of Work in Spain: From the Primitive Accumulation of Knowledge to Offshoring\*

JOSÉ A. PIQUERAS AND VICENT SANZ

The social history of work and workers is currently in the paradoxical position of having defined the subject of study in all its rich complexity as never before – a fact borne out by some excellent works – yet fewer and fewer social historians are working on the subject.

In general terms, it has become a branch of history which is increasingly based on the examination of documentary sources, with an up-to-date methodology and with the ability to resolve questions by means of analysing and recounting basic problems of the past of numerous social groups which are truly relevant in all pre-industrial and industrialized societies, and whose prominence in protest, associative, and political movements has been a significant factor of social life since the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, this has not prevented some authors from using the social history of work as an outlet for their ideological beliefs.

Nonetheless, over the last two decades in Spanish academic circles, prejudice against militant history has grown to such an extent that it is hardly taken seriously, since it is not seen to fulfil the strictest scientific requirements of the subject. Paradoxically, this attitude does not apply to the numerous political studies on the political history of the Restoration (1874–1923), or the history of conservatism. Neither does it seem to apply to critical reviews of the left-wing parties of the Second Republic (1931–1939). In these studies, the ideologized viewpoint of the author is not much better than the most politicized accounts of working-class history, yet no response is considered necessary, a fact which illustrates the prejudices of the academic establishment and its political leanings.

### WAYS OF MAKING SOCIAL HISTORY

The increasing lack of interest in working-class history is not something which is new to the last decade, nor is it peculiar to the Spanish case.

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Marcel van der Linden recently characterized the decline – which he described as “regional” – of the historiography of workers in countries which form the nucleus of traditional capitalism in similar terms. Likewise, Van der Linden highlighted the growing interest in the history of work, protest, and working-class involvement in the changes taking place in the economic systems of countries undergoing industrialization, in which studies multiply at the same rate as the number of salaried workers, while at the same time highly active trade-union and political organizations are being formed.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, we can conclude that working-class history is no different from any other branch of history and searches in the past for answers to questions which deserve the attention of present-day society. And it deals with the past either as a cause of the present, including the process of class formation, or as the reconstruction of routes which provide an increasingly visible image of class in defence of their interests or in the area of political conflicts.

It is appropriate to add a second observation here, this time regarding the relevance of the topics and the upsurge or decline of subspecialties. Interest in the history of workers appears to be greater in periods of disputes which are the result of industrial processes in progress, in situations where there are prospects for change, and at times when industrial working-class movements are on the increase. For one reason or another, so-called working-class history reached a crisis point at the end of the 1970s, at the same time or a short while after the economic crisis which affected advanced capitalist countries from 1973 onwards and which resulted in major changes: in the organization of production processes, in the characteristics of the labour market, in the impact of new technologies on employment and the economy in general, in a drop in the number of active workers employed in the primary sector, and in a fall in levels of union membership, above all in the productive sector.

With the institutional regulation of labour conflicts and the normalized handling of negotiations with the labour movement in almost all western European countries – in Spain thanks to the Moncloa Pacts (1977), the creation of mediation and arbitration organizations (1979), and the Workers’ Statute (1980)<sup>2</sup> – there was a drop in the history of resistance,

1. Marcel van der Linden, “El fin del eurocentrismo y el futuro de la historia del trabajo: o por qué debemos y podemos reconceptualizar la clase obrera”, in Javier Paniagua, José A. Piqueras, and Vicent Sanz (eds), *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo* (Valencia, 2000), pp. 301–322. In addition, John D. French, “El auge de los estudios sobre el trabajo en Latinoamérica”, *Historia Social*, 39 (2001), pp. 129–150, which is the Spanish translation of John D. French, “The Latin American Labor Studies Boom”, *International Review of Social History*, 45(2000), pp. 279–308.

2. The “Moncloa Pacts” were agreements made between the government, political parties, and unions, and were intended to create the conditions necessary for the consolidation of democracy at the start of the process and entailed a social pact. As a development of the Constitution, 1979 saw the creation of the Economic and Social Council, a consultative body for economic and socio-labour issues which was made up of employer organizations and trade unions. In 1980, the

and the history of the struggle to modify the historical relations between capital and work, to influence the orientation of society, and obtain certain social and political rights. Logically, a reduction in the number of disputes and the fact that these conflicts are being effectively managed affects the type of historical studies carried out, which changes the point of observation of social conflicts according to life experiences and to the negotiating strategies of actors of the past.

It is symptomatic that, at the same time as there has been a decrease in interest in subjects related to the social history of work and workers, books on this subject have often been replaced by an avalanche of “self-help” labour literature, in which the collective aspect is replaced by an exclusively individual perspective on socio-labour relations.

The sense of dissatisfaction with the results of mainly descriptive, and to a certain extent heroic, working-class history soon gave way to readjustments which involved maintaining the same line of study while making it “more social”, that is to say effectively integrating the issues in the framework of the historical society, and in a varied and in most cases inconclusive set of movements and protests (the revolution, the liberation of the fourth state, the destruction of capitalism).

The evolution of the social history of work in Spain has not differed very much from the route taken in other countries, although the point of inflection in the way social history is dealt with took place slightly later. In addition, when the “crisis” of traditional social history occurred, the amount of “traditional” knowledge based on the collection and description of social facts and events was greatly inferior to that of other countries in which this line of studies had not been interrupted and which had no direct experience of the so-called “working-class movement”.

It should not be forgotten that, in the European context, Spain is a unique example for two reasons. Firstly, it experienced a dramatic civil war (1936–1939), in which working-class political and trade-union organizations played a very important role. Secondly, the country lived under a long, very strict dictatorship (1939–1977), which during its first twenty-five years continuously and systematically repressed working-class organizations and left-wing organizations in general. During the war, and during the immediate postwar period, the dictatorship physically eliminated numerous members of parties and trade unions, sent others to jail and dissolved their organizations, confiscated or destroyed their files and books, and persecuted their traditions and their intellectuals. For almost four decades, the Franco regime rewrote history and ignored issues related to working-class history. In such political conditions, academic historians directed their attention to fields of study which required less commitment.

centrist government passed a law regulating workers’ rights (the Workers’ Statute), the consecutive modifications of which were precisely the reason for the country’s main union-organized protests.

In Spain, it was not until 1959 that professionals started making references to working-class history. The first publication was written by Casimir Martí, a Catholic priest who had just earned his doctorate in sociology from the Gregorian University of Rome with a study on Catalan anarchism.<sup>3</sup> There was a tradition of militant history prior to 1939 and also among historians in exile. There were also two previous examples which can be considered “academic”. One was from 1916 and the second from 1925, the latter being intended for the students of a School of Business Studies.<sup>4</sup> In 1950, José María Jover made a call – not exempt from prejudice – for the need to deal with the issue.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1960s, modest studies were published which were similar to the previous ones and which contributed to breaking the taboo. 1972 saw the publication of two important and, to a large extent concomitant works: one by Josep Termes on the First International, and the other about anarchism and revolution in the nineteenth century by Clara E. Lida – an Argentinean historian who was a follower of the exiled Spanish historian, Vicente Llorens at Princeton University. Publication of the latter had been delayed for two years due to censorship regulations. At the same time, Manuel Tuñón de Lara published the first, albeit rather basic, textbook on the Spanish working-class movement from 1832 to 1936. One year later, Miquel Izard published an extended version in Spanish of a previous work written in Catalan about the most important manufacturing workers’ association during the nineteenth century, namely that of the cotton textile sector.<sup>6</sup> To a large extent, these four works mark the birth of the social historiography of work in Spain.<sup>7</sup>

The cultural traditions of the authors were different, however. Whereas Martí, Termes, and Izard came from seminars which were backed in the late 1950s at the University of Barcelona by Jaume Vicens Vives (and

3. Casimir Martí, *Orígenes del anarquismo en Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1959).

4. Manuel Núñez de Arenas, *Notas sobre el movimiento obrero español*; appendix to Georg Renard, *Sindicatos, Trade Unions y Corporaciones* (Madrid, 1916); Manuel Reventós, *Els moviments socials a Barcelona en el segle XIX* (Barcelona, 1925).

5. José M. Jover Zamora, *Conciencia burguesa y conciencia obrera en la España contemporánea* (Madrid, 1952); re-edited in Jesús Izquierdo and Pablo Sánchez León (eds), *Clásicos de historia social de España. Una selección crítica* (Valencia, 2000), pp. 219–257.

6. Josep Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España. La Primera Internacional (1864–1881)* (Barcelona, 1972); Clara E. Lida, *Anarquismo y revolución en la España del siglo XIX* (Madrid, 1972); Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *El movimiento obrero en la historia de España* (Madrid, 1972); Miquel Izard, *Industrialización y obrerismo. Las Tres Clases de Vapor, 1869–1913* (Barcelona, 1973) (first, shorter edition published in 1970 in Catalan).

7. Other pioneering works from the same period or earlier periods can also be cited, but their impact was considerably less important: Albert Balcells, *El sindicalisme a Barcelona (1916–1923)* (Barcelona, 1965); David Ruiz, *El movimiento obrero en Asturias: de la industrialización a la Segunda República* (Oviedo, 1968) (very limited circulation until its reissue a decade later); Pere Gabriel, *El moviment obrer a Mallorca* (Barcelona, 1973).

which were later continued by Carlos Seco), Tuñón de Lara was exiled to Paris in 1946, and from 1965 onwards was a lecturer at the University of Pau in the south of France. From 1971 onwards, Tuñón organized yearly symposiums on Spanish history which brought together historians from inside and outside the country in Pau. The one organized in 1974 was dedicated to the working-class movement. The period, at the end of General Franco's dictatorship, was one in which there was a marked resurgence in trade-union and political opposition, and this allowed left-wing circles to maintain the hope of a regime change in which the working class would be able to play a prominent role. Likewise, publishing houses had greater freedom in what they were allowed to publish, and there was a large demand among university students and professionals for books about the working class and Marxist theory, works which had previously been banned for decades.

By the end of the dictatorship the conditions were such that attention once again turned to studies about social movements. The political implications which this type of studies involved – because of the subject and because of the militancy of the authors – helped them to gain support and become increasingly widespread. During the years that followed, there was a veritable eclosion of social history dealing with the history of work, revolutionary ideas, and social movements. Following the French model, in Spain the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is referred to as the contemporary period, and this attracted the attention of the majority of university history students, who from 1973 onwards studied a specific university degree course which was separate from philosophy and arts.

And within the contemporary period, studies about working-class history undoubtedly occupy first place, followed by equally incipient studies on the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the history of agrarian disamortization. Today, a large proportion of lecturers in the speciality, who were educated in the 1970s, prepared their doctoral theses on one of these subjects, many on the former. At times, the studies were undertaken at national level and on many other occasions at local or regional level, a sign of new approaches to the past, but also of the growing autonomist feeling (against the centralized state) among opposition to the dictatorship and its corresponding intellectual circles. Together with the anti-Franco beliefs of the young authors, there was also their emotional identification with the exploited classes, who in the Spanish case were also defeated in 1939, and the fact that they were part of an international historiographical trend.<sup>8</sup>

Just after this phenomenon had started, when it was practically still in its infancy and with Franco still alive, in 1975 two books were published

8. This is according to one of the pioneers, Miquel Izard, "Orígenes del movimiento obrero en España", in Santiago Castillo *et al.*, *Estudios sobre Historia de España (homenaje a Tuñón de Lara)* (Madrid, 1981), p. 295.

which were very similar to each other and very different from those we have mentioned up to now. In both cases, the authors had been educated at Oxford with Raymond Carr, their history was traditional in style with considerable empirical content, they had a political outlook on history and adopted a liberal tone from which they denounced history made from theoretical abstractions (to refer to the categories “working class”, “bourgeoisie”, and “class struggle”), and historians who, guided by their ideology, had been quicker to adopt the role of advocate than that of researcher. We refer here to the works of Juan Pablo Fusi and Joaquín Romero Maura on Basque socialism and the working-class movement in Barcelona, respectively.<sup>9</sup> These traced the two main trends of the social history of work in its modern-day origins in Spain.

The excess of subjects and the excess of positivist and militant history were perceived early on, although Fusi’s denunciation was equivalent to applying a bandage even before the wound had appeared, no doubt due more to the desire to be different which tends to accompany an author’s first works than to reasons of political intent.

#### THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

At the end of the 1970s, a critical reflection of a different kind began to emerge which was more closely related to the problem of developing the historiography in relation to the historical moment. It had been several years since the legalization of political parties and trade unions, the constitution had been endorsed, but two parliamentary elections (1977 and 1979) had also shown the strength of the moderate left represented by socialists and the hegemony of the centre-right. At the same time, the two main trade unions, which had low membership levels, were attempting to reach agreements with employers and the public administration, a far cry from the old tactics of confrontation which perhaps existed more in the books of historians than in the past itself.

The “first conference of historians of Spanish working-class and peasant movements”, held in Barx (Valencia) in December 1979, helped to establish the need for a change in direction. For the first time, fifteen historians, brought together by Javier Paniagua, assessed the recent development of Spanish historiography on the subject and distinguished two lines which were worth emphasizing. Both confirmed the obsolescence of history committed to the working classes, the reductionism of summarizing the history of class as the description of organized workers, and the non-analytical means of approaching phenomena related to the world of work. Yet, while the first line considered that there was indeed an

9. Juan Pablo Fusi, *Política obrera en el País vasco, 1880–1923* (Madrid, 1975); Joaquín Romero Maura, “*La Rosa de Fuego*”. *El obrerismo barcelonés de 1899 a 1909* (Barcelona, 1975).

area of study, which can be summarized as being close to that of Eric Hobsbawm and along the lines of the interrelationships between material conditions, social experience, and class action outlined by E.P. Thompson, the second line dissolved the working class into popular movements and its protests into the response to established power, with explicit references to the suggestions of Foucault.<sup>10</sup>

In a well-known article published in 1982, two of the historians present in Barx, José Álvarez Junco and Manuel Pérez Ledesma, reiterated the critical approaches of the conference and formulated the second of the aforementioned stances.<sup>11</sup> In 1982, another meeting of historians was held in Valencia and their critical and self-critical comments were published in the journal *Debats*.<sup>12</sup> The third and last of this series of seminars took place in 1987. On this occasion, a project was presented which began to take shape in 1988, namely the journal *Historia Social*, founded and edited by Javier Paniagua and José A. Piqueras, who had been working together for a decade to arrange and organize the above-mentioned conferences. *Historia Social* managed to establish itself as the most important means of publishing articles on the history of work in Spain, but also as one of the main publications dealing with the history of society.<sup>13</sup>

This revision, which began in 1979 and 1982, was similar to what had been taking place in other historiographies for a decade, but in Spain, the existence – and not only the persistence – of more traditional history (committed and institutional) could be explained by internal reasons, firstly due to Franco's dictatorship and then due to the task of rediscovering the history of those defeated in 1939.<sup>14</sup>

Once the transition to democracy had finished and with the Socialist Party's electoral victory in 1982, it would appear that a cycle interrupted by the civil war and Franco's dictatorship had come to an end. However, what should have been a great leap forward after the change caught the latest and most numerous generation of historians of working-class movements writing or finishing their doctoral theses or other research projects using postulates which were categorically considered as "old history" – whatever the meaning of "old" may be here – instead of using the new approaches.

10. The minutes of the meeting may be consulted in "20 años del encuentro de Barx", *Historia Social*, 34 (1999), pp. 157–160.

11. José Álvarez Junco and Manuel Pérez Ledesma, "Historia del movimiento obrero. ¿Una segunda ruptura?", *Revista de Occidente*, 12 (1982); reprinted in Izquierdo and Sánchez León, *Clásicos de historia social de España*, pp. 259–280.

12. "Los movimientos sociales", *Debats*, 2–3 (1982), pp. 90–135.

13. An analysis of what had been published until 2000 can be found in José A. Piqueras, "La práctica editorial de *Historia Social*", in *Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, 12–13 (2001), pp. 93–108.

14. The self-critical concurrence and chronological imbalance was highlighted, among others, by Carlos Forcadell in "Sobre desiertos y secanos: los movimientos sociales en la historiografía española", *Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (1992), p. 110.

While there was talk of renewal, the reality of the 1980s seemed to indicate that what had aged was not the means of tackling the history of workers, but rather the history of work itself as a research subject.

And in this respect, the evolution of Spanish historiography is part of a general trend, but the revision is more accentuated for reasons which are difficult to figure out. However, apart from the decline of Marxism, which had nominally inspired a large number of the studies, it is perhaps linked to the exceptional political and social moment of the decade we are referring to, and to the rebuilding of the academic world as a result of new legislation which removed academics from the position of permanent vindication they had found themselves in for the last decade by promoting the majority of non-resident lecturers to better-paid, life-long posts and by creating academic careers along the same lines.

Viewed in perspective now, the history of work and social history written and published between 1972 and 1988, in which the past of the working-class movement attracted numerous historians and in which a considerable amount of research was carried out, was similar to the general study of history in this country, and in many cases the explanation of the phenomena analysed even used a set of variables which was used in traditional political history.<sup>15</sup> This sub-subject gave a leading historical role to social groups which had until then been ignored or neglected by academic history, which as we know ends up being the main route to the construction of official history.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, it can be said that important works were carried out on the working-class movement around 1850,<sup>16</sup> the formation and evolution of the First International (mentioned previously), “utopian” thought,<sup>17</sup> anarchist ideas<sup>18</sup> and anarcho-sindicalism,<sup>19</sup> violence,<sup>20</sup> the evolution of the Socialist Party and its associated trade

15. In Pere Gabriel “A vueltas y revueltas con la historia social obrera en España. Historia obrera, historia popular e historia contemporánea”, *Historia Social*, 22 (1995), pp. 45–51, the author reacts against what he calls the cliché established by criticism and self-criticism of the historiography, which he does not consider to be in line with the best bibliography of the time.

16. Josep Benet and Casimir Martí, *Barcelona mitjan segle XIX. El moviment obrer durant el Bieni Progresista (1854–1856)* 2 vols (Barcelona, 1976).

17. Jordi Maluquer de Motes, *El socialismo en España, 1833–1868* (Barcelona, 1977).

18. José Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política del anarquismo español (1868–1910)* (Madrid, 1976); Javier Paniagua, *La sociedad libertaria. Agrarismo e industrialización en el anarquismo español (1930–1939)* (Barcelona, 1982).

19. Xavier Cuadrat, *Socialismo y anarquismo en Cataluña (1899–1911). Los orígenes de la CNT* (Madrid, 1976); Antonio Barr, *La CNT en los años rojos. Del sindicalismo revolucionario al anarcosindicalismo, 1910–1926* (Madrid, 1981); Teresa Abelló, *Les relacions internacionals de l'anarquisme català (1881–1914)* (Barcelona, 1987). Among regional studies, the following can be highlighted: Julián Casanova, *Anarquismo y revolución en la sociedad rural aragonesa, 1936–1938* (Madrid, 1985); and Ángeles Barrio, *Anarquismo y anarcosindicalismo en Asturias (1890–1936)* (Madrid, 1988).

20. Rafael Núñez Florencio, *El terrorismo anarquista (1888–1909)* (Madrid, 1983).



union, the UGT,<sup>21</sup> the relationship between the working-class movement and populism,<sup>22</sup> the institutionalization of reformism,<sup>23</sup> trade-union organization in the service sector,<sup>24</sup> official communism and its heterodoxies,<sup>25</sup> gender and the working-class movement,<sup>26</sup> education,<sup>27</sup> the collectivist revolution of 1936–1939,<sup>28</sup> Catholic trade unionism,<sup>29</sup> the day-labourer movement and peasant disputes,<sup>30</sup> approaches regarding the conditions of industrial work,<sup>31</sup> and the life of workers,<sup>32</sup> etc.

21. In various regional studies and the fragmentary work of Santiago Castillo, in addition to the series of three books coordinated by Santo Juliá: *El socialismo en España; Desde la fundación hasta 1975; El socialismo en las nacionalidades y regiones y Socialismo y guerra civil* (Madrid, 1986 and 1987). Also the collective synthesis directed by Manuel Muñón Lara, *Historia del socialismo español*, 5 vols (Barcelona, 1989). It is worth highlighting the monographs of Antonio Elorza and Michelle Ralle, *La formación del PSOE* (Barcelona, 1989); Carlos Forcadell, *Parlamentarismo y bolchevización. El movimiento obrero español (1914–1918)* (Barcelona, 1978); and Paloma Biglino, *El socialismo español y la cuestión agraria, 1890–1936* (Madrid, 1986); in addition to Manuel Pérez Ledesma, *El obrero consciente. Dirigentes, partidos y sindicatos en la II Internacional* (Madrid, 1988).

22. Ramir Reig, *Obrers i ciutadans. Blasquisme i moviment obrer. València, 1898–1906* (Valencia, 1982).

23. Santiago Castillo, “Estudio introductorio a Reformas Sociales”, in *Información oral y escrita publicada de 1889 a 1893* (Madrid, 1985), pp. 27–164 (separate numbers); Juan Ignacio Palacio Morena, *La institucionalización de la reforma social en España (1883–1924). La Comisión y el Instituto de Reformas Sociales* (Madrid, 1988).

24. Santiago Castillo and Luis E. Alonso, *Proletarios de cuello blanco. La Federación Española de Trabajadores del Crédito y las Finanzas (1930–1936)* (Madrid, 1994).

25. Francesc Bonamusa, *Andreu Nin y el movimiento comunista en España (1930–1937)* (Barcelona, 1977); Rafael Cruz, *El Partido Comunista de España en la Segunda República* (Madrid, 1987). Of a different, non-academic nature, yet still the best present presentation of the PCE during Franco’s regime, Gregorio Morán, *Miseria y grandeza del Partido Comunista de España* (Barcelona, 1985).

26. From Mary Nash’s book, *Mujer y movimiento obrero en España, 1931–1939* (Barcelona, 1981). Professor Nash, of Irish origin, is based in Spain.

27. Pere Solà, *Els ateneus obrers i la cultura popular a Catalunya (1900–1939). L’Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular* (Barcelona, 1978); Alejandro Tiana, *Educación libertaria y revolución social (España, 1936–1939)* (Madrid, 1987); José A. Piqueras, *El taller y la escuela* (Madrid, 1988); Juan L. Guereña and Alejandro Tiana (eds), *Clases populares, cultura y educación. Siglos XIX y XX* (Madrid, 1990).

28. We refer here to the summary by Julián Casanova (comp.), *El sueño igualitario: campesinado y colectivizaciones en la España republicana, 1936–1939* (Zaragoza, 1988).

29. Juan José Castillo, *El sindicalismo amarillo en España. Aportación al estudio del catolicismo social español (1912–1923)* (Madrid, 1977).

30. In this popular subject, it is worth highlighting the books of Manuel Pérez Yruela, *La conflictividad campesina en la provincia de Córdoba, 1931–1936* (Madrid, 1979); Eduardo Sevilla Guzmán and Karl Heisel (eds), *Anarquismo y movimiento jornalero* (Córdoba, 1988); and Luis Garrido González, *Riqueza y tragedia social. Historia de la clase obrera en la provincia de Jaén (1820–1930)* 2 vols (Jaén, 1990).

31. Álvaro Soto Carmona, *El trabajo industrial en la España contemporánea (1874–1936)* (Barcelona, 1989).

32. Carme Molinero y Pere Ysas, *Patria, justicia y pan. Nivell de vida i condicions de treball a Catalunya: 1939–1959* (Barcelona, 1985).

It is true that the history of the working class was often limited to the study of its political and trade-union organizations or to the study of ideas, and that particular attention was paid to outbreaks which only sporadically affected the normal course of lives which were becoming dispensable insofar as they did not show any signs of achieving their emancipation. History had a lot to do with the construction of a revolutionary subject, the *conscious worker*, even when this was not done explicitly and did not comply with the requirements of the subject. Despite this, such history provides useful information and can be examined in a different way in order to provide a fairly complete description of the social condition.

#### A CHANGE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDY

Although it has experienced a decline, the study of social history and the history of work has not ceased and it has been enriched by new perspectives.<sup>33</sup> 1988 saw the creation of the Association of Social History, which has periodically organized conferences and has become the main forum of discussion for senior historians and historians starting out in the profession. The results published have always reflected the full range of approaches which existed among the researchers.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned *Historia Social*, other publications also deal with this speciality, such as *Sociología del Trabajo*, *Historia Contemporánea* (University of the Basque Country) and, to a lesser extent, *Arenal. Revista de historia de las mujeres*. However, until very recently, the quarterly journal of the Association of Contemporary History, *Ayer*, had included practically no articles on the subject since its launch fourteen years ago. Previously, between 1977 and 1991, the Ministry of Work published the journal *Estudios de Historia Social*, which dealt mainly with working-class history. With a large format and intermittent publication,

33. Evaluations of the history of work in: Ricardo Miralles, "Historiografía del movimiento obrero en el País Vasco: 1880–1936", *Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (1992), pp. 237–255. Pere Gabriel and Josep L. Martín Ramos, "Clase obrera, sectores populares y clases medias", in Francisc Bonamusa and Joan Serrallonga (eds), *La sociedad urbana* (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 133–153; Pere Gabriel, "A vueltas y revueltas con la historia social obrera en España", in *ibid.*; Jorge Uría, "Sociología e Historia. Una década de historia social en *Sociología del Trabajo*", *Sociología del Trabajo*, 31 (1997), pp. 149–177; *idem* "La historia social y el contemporaneísmo español. Las deudas del pasado", *Revista de Historia Jerónimo Zurita*, 71 (1995), pp. 95–141. With almost a decade between two appraisals from the same author, Ángeles Barrio, "A propósito de la historia social, del movimiento obrero y los sindicatos", in *Doce estudios de historiografía contemporánea* (Santander, 1991); and "Historia obrera en los noventa: tradición y modernidad", *Historia Social*, 37 (2000), pp. 143–160.

34. The results were published: Santiago Castillo (coord.), *La Historia Social en España. Actualidad y perspectivas* (Madrid, 1991); *idem* (ed.), *El trabajo a través de la historia* (Madrid, 1996); *idem* and José M. Ortiz de Orruño (coords), *Estado, protesta y movimientos sociales* (Bilbao, 1998); Santiago Castillo and Roberto Fernández (coords), *Historia social y ciencias sociales* (Lleida, 2001).

around sixty issues were published, many of them double issues, and they were the main indicator of the kind of research being carried out, at least until the appearance from 1988 onwards of other more dynamic academic publications with more plural and more independent selection procedures.

In the 1990s there was a significant change in the direction of studies concerning social history and the history of work. Although there was still a certain amount of description of the history of organizations, of workers in specific geographical areas and of certain situations, there was the beginning of a reversal in the selection of the subjects, guided by specific problems and processes involving the formation or evolution of class. The decline of the social history of work referred to here has been more pronounced in research into the nineteenth century than in research into the twentieth century. This has been aided by a greater number of industrial workers, an increase in conflicts and disputes during the first third of the century, the situation during the republic and the war (1931–1939) and the reclamation of experiences purloined by Franco's regime.

There was still a lot more to learn when interest in the subject fell and the fragmentation of its study took place. This has left certain issues unresolved: for instance, the framework of professional societies and local federations which followed the dissolution of the epigone of the International (1888), and covers the period which links the foundation of the anarcho-syndicalist trade union (CNT) in 1911; the fate of independent trade unionism; anarchist groups going underground; and the causes of the disparate introduction of the working-class movement. We are referring here to the best-known period of the Restoration and some classic subjects which have not been formally dealt with. On the other hand, our knowledge of the relationship between republicanism and the working-class movement has been enriched. Previously, history considered this relationship to have been abruptly interrupted with the introduction of a Bakuninist or socialist working-class movement, and we know more about anarchist violence and to a lesser extent about violence instigated by the state against workers.

With regard to the earlier part of the century, almost nothing is known. The transition from corporative work to industrial freedom, which has more numerous and sounder studies, is almost exclusively dealt with in local or professional monographs. The fate of salaried workers of the Antiguo Régimen when the privileges which protected the royal factories were lost is not exactly a mystery, but the issue has not been fully dealt with.<sup>35</sup> We have spent two decades listening to the virtues of the methodology followed by E.P. Thompson regarding the historical

35. Some initial points with reference to the rural context in Antonio Peiró, *Jornaleros y mancebos. Identidad, organización y conflicto en los trabajadores del Antiguo Régimen* (Barcelona, 2002).

formation of the working class as the basis of history from the bottom up, which paid attention to the subject and the link between productive relations, experience, and action, only to obtain such meagre results. One ends up wondering whether Thompson's name has not often been taken in vain in order to confront it with history, perhaps for its socio-structural, mechanistic content or purely dealing with the events, or perhaps for reasons of another kind which ignore the sense of commitment of his works.

More precise information has been provided about the International, broadening and correcting previous views,<sup>36</sup> and we are starting to have a greater awareness of the nature of associate workers and their forms of protest, although there is a lack of specific analysis of, for example, the Manufacturing Union, which was the main professional federation of the time and which was only partially connected to the International. There is no study which brings together, analyses, and typifies the labour conflicts which took place in Spain from 1868 to 1874, and which occurred more often and more intensely than ever before. With all its advances in macroeconomics, economic history has for the time being proved incapable of offering a rough guide to production and its characteristics, including the labour factor, and as a result use is still being made of estimates and testimonies. It is therefore difficult to establish a correlation between the nature of the productive processes, the characteristics of the labour force (with regard to skills, subordination to capital and education), membership of a radical culture, and social mobilization at any level.

If we are to characterize social history and the history of work carried out in this decade by means of the main contributions made, we must start with issues related to the changes in the craftwork, manufacturing, and industrial productive structures throughout the nineteenth century, which have been the object of attention of economic history and social history. Authors have taken an interest in the effects which these changes had on the workers, either from the perspective of the differences between master craftsmen belonging to the same guild, or stressing how this process created bonds of dependence, in a process of proletarianization of master craftsmen and journeymen in ever more extreme conditions of poverty.<sup>37</sup>

The training of the working class, bearing in mind the organization of the productive processes, the creation of new working relations, and the role played by professional workers has been the subject of some outstanding monographs which refer to regions as different in terms of their importance in heavy industry and the manufacturing industry as the

36. José A. Piqueras, *La revolución democrática (1868–1874). Cuestión social, colonialismo y grupos de presión* (Madrid, 1992).

37. Fernando Díez, *Viles y mecánicos. Trabajo y sociedad en la Valencia preindustrial* (Valencia, 1990); Vicent Sanz Rozalén, *D'artisans a proletaris* (Castellón, 1995).

Basque Country and Catalonia,<sup>38</sup> and collective works – which we have edited – aimed at provoking reflections on these aspects.<sup>39</sup> For the period dealt with in these studies, it is interesting to explore the links created by professional benefit societies, as an initial and one of the workers' most enduring responses to the hostile environment in which they found themselves.<sup>40</sup>

There are some studies which combine the analysis of salary levels, migratory movements and family strategies in the nineteenth century, relating them to the configuration of the labour market during the period of expansion of the factory system.<sup>41</sup> The market and the organization of labour was the subject of a symposium organized by faculties of social studies.<sup>42</sup>

The classic subject of health and illness among these sectors of the population has been worthy of attention from the field of the history of science and medicine.<sup>43</sup> The living conditions of miners and factory workers in Vizcaya have been the subject of two outstanding works by Pedro M. Pérez Castroviejo and Pilar Pérez-Fuentes.<sup>44</sup> The conclusions, however, are a subject of considerable controversy, as has usually been the case in almost all the countries where similar research has been carried out. The economic historians, Emiliano Fernández de Pinedo and Antonio Escudero, have put forward contrasting figures and arguments which are worth taking into consideration. The book by Joan Serrallonga and Josep Lluís Martín Ramos<sup>45</sup> provides a broader perspective and examines the effects that living conditions may have had on social disputes.

38. Rafael Ruzafa, *Antes de la clase. Los trabajadores en Bilbao y la margen izquierda del Nervión (1841–1891)* (Bilbao, 1998); Genís Barnosell, *Orígens del sindicalisme català* (Vic, 1999).

39. Paniagua, Piqueras, and Sanz, *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo*; Vicent Sanz and José A. Piqueras (eds), *En el nombre del oficio. Corporativismo, protesta y adaptación del trabajador especializado* (Madrid, 2005). In both cases there is a comparative perspective with other international areas.

40. Santiago Castillo (ed.), *Solidaridad desde abajo. Trabajadores y Socorros Mutuos en la España contemporánea* (Madrid, 1994).

41. Enriqueta Camps, *La formación del mercado de trabajo industrial en la Cataluña del siglo XIX* (Madrid, 1995).

42. Carlos Arenas, Antonio Florencio, and José I. Martínez (eds.), *Mercado y organización del trabajo en España (siglos XIX y XX)* (Seville, 1998).

43. Rafael Huertas and Ricardo Campos (coords.), *Medicina social y clase obrera en España (ss. XIX y XX)* (Madrid, 1992). Also Llorenç Prats, *La Catalunya rànica. Les condicions de vida materials de les classes populars a la Catalunya de la Restauració segons les topografies mèdiques* (Barcelona, 1996).

44. Pedro M. Pérez Castroviejo, *Clase obrera y niveles de vida en las primeras fases de la industrialización vizcaína* (Madrid, 1992); Pilar Pérez-Fuentes, *Vivir y morir en las minas. Estrategias familiares y relaciones de género en la primera industrialización vizcaína (1877–1913)* (Bilbao, 1993).

45. Joan Serrallonga and Josep L. Martín Ramos, *Condicions materials i resposta obrera a la Catalunya contemporània* (Barcelona, 1992).

It can be seen that these two regions, Catalonia and the Basque Country, have the largest amount of research on the history of work and there are study groups which have been working on the subject since the 1950s in the first case and since the 1980s in the second. In the case of the Basque Country, this must include the work undertaken by Luis Castells, which consists of his own work and also theses directed by him,<sup>46</sup> and the line of research developed by Ricardo Miralles on the history of socialism.

The study of workers has not often been considered in relation to employers. However, one monograph stands out which has brought a breath of fresh air to a subject which often appeared destined to engulf itself. We refer here to the book by José Sierra, *El obrero soñado*, which reflects on the function of industrial paternalism in Asturias between 1860 and 1917.<sup>47</sup> In the book, precise reference is made to the mechanisms used to “domesticate” workers and their families, which sought to make workers depend exclusively on the wages paid to them and to dispense with the mechanisms of self-consumption. With a different approach set in a developed urban framework, Soledad Bengoechea has carried out research into social disputes and the response of employers’ organizations in Catalonia at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to research on the world of women in the workplace, considerable amounts of research can be found which, like the rest, are limited to certain sectors and regions. In addition to Mary Nash’s extraordinary efforts to promote such studies, the work of three authors stands out here: the work of Carmen Sarasúa, the author of an important study on the world of domestic service and the dominance of female workers in the nineteenth century; the book by Cristina Bordería on female employees of the telephone company; and the work of Paloma Candela on the tobacco industry in Madrid.<sup>49</sup>

At times, the subjects dealt with go beyond the boundaries of working-class history and give rise to studies on the “popular classes”, which interweave conflicts related to class, specifically political disputes, and other disputes related to protests about the cost of living or demands for

46. Luis Castells, *Los trabajadores del País Vasco* (Madrid, 1993).

47. José Sierra, *El obrero soñado. Ensayo sobre el paternalismo industrial (Asturias, 1860–1917)* (Madrid, 1990).

48. Soledad Bengoechea, *Organització patronal i conflictivitat social a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1994).

49. Carmen Sarasúa, *Criados, nodrizas y amos. El servicio doméstico en la formación del mercado de trabajo madrileño, 1758–1868* (Madrid, 1994); Cristina Borderías, *Entre líneas: trabajo e identidad femenina en la España contemporánea. La Compañía Telefónica, 1924–1980* (Barcelona, 1993); Paloma Candela, *Cigarreras madrileñas: trabajo y vida (1888–1927)* (Madrid, 1997). Also Cristina Borderías, Ángel Calvo, and Pilar López, *Empleo, cualificación y género en la formación del mercado de trabajo barcelonés, 1840–1930. Estado de la cuestión, análisis de fuentes y metodología para su estudio* (Madrid, 1999).

civil rights (protests against wars or military recruitment).<sup>50</sup> In a similar way, although with a different methodological perspective, in recent years research into peasant disputes has gone from analysing large-scale protests and day-labourer revolts to studying resistance against attempts to integrate the rural world into society and capitalist relations, often following the guidelines set down by James Scott.<sup>51</sup>

The classic subject of the Spanish working-class movement, especially for foreign specialists, is anarchism and its peak period, the republic and the civil war. One particularly famous study is the work of Julián Casanova.<sup>52</sup> During Franco's regime, meeting together – which was banned and persecuted – and demanding workers' rights were regarded as political activities in themselves. On this subject, it is worth highlighting the studies carried out by Carme Molinero, Pere Ysàs, and José Babiano.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to this, progress has been made in determining the cultural history of social issues, the greatest exponent being Manuel Pérez Ledesma. He has introduced and disseminated successive methodological proposals in Spain, ranging from work on collective action by Charles Tilly to culturalist approaches referred to here. And there is indeed a social history of culture, one of the main promoters being Jorge Uría.<sup>54</sup> In Spain, however, little has been done to develop the line of study on working-class sociability, Maurice Agulhon style, despite frequent bilateral meetings promoted by French Hispanists. The most important representative of this school is Manuel Morales Muñoz.<sup>55</sup>

#### STUDY PERSPECTIVES

One of the characteristics common to the social history of work and workers in Spain has been its inconsistent relationship with the international panorama of the subject. Adept, from a certain time onwards, at capturing the predominant tendencies, translating them – in the sense of adapting the method to the Spanish situation – and internalizing them, the historiography of other realities has only been used as a source of academic

50. Carlos Gil Andrés, *Echase a la calle. Amotinados, huelguistas y revolucionarios (La Rioja, 1890–1936)* (Zaragoza, 2000).

51. See the references of n. 30. Also Alberto Sabio, *Tierra, comunal y capitalismo agrario en Aragón (1830–1935)* (Zaragoza, 2002).

52. Julián Casanova, *De la calle al frente. El anarcosindicalismo en España (1931–1939)* (Barcelona, 1997).

53. Carme Molinero y Pere Ysàs, *Productores disciplinados y minorías subversivas: clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España franquista* (Madrid, 1998); José Babiano, *Paternalismo industrial y disciplina fabril en España (1938–1958)* (Madrid, 1998).

54. Jorge Uría, *Una historia social del ocio: Asturias, 1898–1914* (Madrid, 1996), dealing mainly, but not exclusively, with working-class or popular leisure.

55. Manuel Morales Muñoz, *Cultura e ideología en el anarquismo español (1870–1910)* (Malaga, 2002).

authority which – although based on different interpretations – confirms or backs up the conclusions of the research itself and serves as the inspiration for subjects and fields of study.

During the last decade, the fall in interest in the history of workers has meant that less attention has been paid to the new and truly innovative contributions from other countries which would have been readily published in Spanish during the 1970s or 1980s. The phenomenon has been accompanied by the withdrawal of academic subjects related to the world of work or the working-class movement from history degrees or as the subject of specialization. This has been the route taken instead of making changes to these subjects. It is based on the belief held by certain lecturers that it is unsuitable to teach what is more an expression of cultural history and mentalities than a specific area of social relations during a long phase of capitalism, which has a wide range of situations, and which has given rise to very specific types of disputes which are also related to the fight to increase and universalize workers' rights and which have also forced adversaries, the other social players and the state, to respond.

Exchanges with international historiography have, as mentioned above, been inconsistent due to the lack of a two-way comparative perspective. This should perhaps be the approach taken by this field in the future: a two-way comparative perspective based on the one hand on the comparison of social experiences in different places with comparable circumstances and during similar periods or at similar levels of economic development; and on the other hand the comparison of the present and the past, because there are phenomena present in developing countries which are particularly reminiscent of previous situations in the industrialized world, and because new strategies concerning the organization of production in these latter countries, among which we include ourselves, help us to understand everyday conditions which were thought to have been eradicated.

In this respect, the social history of work and workers cannot ignore general and international studies, and at the same time must pay attention to the rapidly changing social reality of our time. The sociology of work and other similar subjects become an important supporting instrument in the historian's work – or in alliance with history, if we want to avoid the expansionist intentions for which historians have reproached sociologists – since they provide methods of analysis and current information, even an empirical variant which was unavailable to the specialist in the past, making us examine aspects we would not perhaps have noticed in a "classical" understanding of historical research. Recent studies on the "black economy", a phenomenon which is extremely widespread in Spain and southern Europe and also in many other areas outside Europe (by this we refer, for example, to the submergence of the auxiliary industry, the loss of job stability, the polyvalence and lack of job definition, means of contracting workers, and employers' consistent demands for greater



“flexibility” in terms of work contracts, making it easier for them to end contracts), provide historical information on periods which we have all too hurriedly classed as overcome.

Those of us who are experiencing these current times of change are perhaps better placed to deal with the revision and reconstruction of the first industrial experience and its dynamics during times of adaptation caused by crisis or growth than historians were during the years after World War II. We are better placed to be able to perceive the specific circumstances in the area of working relations, where the line between the formal and the informal is getting fainter and fainter, in addition to the effect of these changes on the political scene, where workers once again delegate their affairs to administrators from different social backgrounds and are less and less involved in public life.

Let us be optimistic. We are witnessing the birth of a more complex version of the history of work and workers which is more technical, more factual, one which deals with a greater number of variables and which takes into account aspects of economic development and the techniques, organization and skills involved in work, of the productive processes and the way they interrelate at a national and international level. At the same time, it is understood that the life of the worker and his *raison d'être* is not confined to the world of work, but neither is it placed outside the productive area and, when this is the case, it converts the worker into a citizen, as if his or her condition disappears when the siren sounds or when he or she clocks off at the end of the day.

On the other hand, this present situation, which is so useful for the aforementioned analysis, leads us to lose the political dimension linking social condition and collective action, one of the main characteristics of what was called the working-class movement from the moment in which its activities were dissolved into movements which cover a much wider range of interests than those specifically related to working-class affairs. This is one of the weak points which the history of work must overcome if it hopes to provide a tried and tested understanding of the past, when political and social affairs were so often linked together. Are there really enough reasons to be optimistic?