

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SPANISH LABOUR

International Studies in Social History

*General Editor: Marcel van der Linden,
International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam*

Volume 1

*Trade Unions, Immigration and
Immigrants in Europe 1960–1993:
A Comparative Study of the Actions
of Trade Unions in Seven West
European Countries*

Edited by Rinus Penninx and Judith
Roosblad

Volume 2

*Class and Other Identities: Gender,
Religion, and Ethnicity in the
Writing of European Labor History*
Edited by Lex Heerma van Voss and
Marcel van der Linden

Volume 3

*Rebellious Families: Household
Strategies and Collective Action in
the 19th and 20th Centuries*
Edited by Jan Kok

Volume 4

*Experiencing Wages: Social and
Cultural Aspects of Wage Forms in
Europe since 1500*
Edited by Peter Scholliers and
Leonard Schwarz

Volume 5

*The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian
Students and Workers in 1968*
Michael Seidman

Volume 6

*Revolution and Counterrevolution:
Class Struggle in a Moscow Metal
Factory*
Kevin Murphy

Volume 7

*Miners and the State in the Ottoman
Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield,
1822–1920*
Donald Quataert

Volume 8

*Anarchism, Revolution and Reaction:
Catalan Labor and the Crisis of the
Spanish State, 1898–1923*
Angel Smith

Volume 9

*Sugarlandia Revisited: Sugar and
Colonialism in Asia and the Americas,
1800–1940*
Edited by Ulbe Bosma, Juan Giusti-
Cordero and G. Roger Knight

Volume 10

*Alternative Exchanges: Second-Hand
Circulations from the Sixteenth-Century
to the Present*
Edited by Laurence Fontaine

Volume 11

*A Social History of Spanish Labour:
New Perspectives on Class, Politics and
Gender*
Edited by José. A. Piqueras and Vicent
Sanz Rozalén

Volume 12

*Learning on the Shop Floor: Historical
Perspectives on Apprenticeship*
Edited by Bert de Munck, Steven L.
Kaplan and Hugo Soly

Volume 13

*Unruly Suburbs: The Other Side of
Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*
Edited by Wolfgang Maderthaner and
Lutz Musner

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SPANISH LABOUR

New Perspectives on Class, Politics and Gender

EDITED BY
JOSÉ A. PIQUERAS AND VICENT SANZ ROZALÉN

TRANSLATED BY
PAUL EDGAR



Berghahn Books
New York • Oxford

First published in 2007 by
Berghahn Books

www.BerghahnBooks.com

© 2007 José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz Rozalén

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without written permission of Berghahn Books

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A social history of Spanish labour : new perspectives on class, politics and gender / edited by José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz Rozalén ; translated by Paul Edgar.

p. cm. -- (International studies in social history ; 11)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-84545-296-4 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Working class--Spain--History. 2. Working class--Spain--Social conditions. I. Piqueras, José A., 1963- II. Sanz Rozalén, Vicent.

HD8584.S63 2007

331.0946--dc22

2007044674

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper.

ISBN 978-1-84545-296-4 (hardback)

CONTENTS

Introduction. Traditional History and the New Social History of Labour in Spain <i>José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz Rozalén</i>	1
1. The Formation of the Working Class: A Cultural Creation <i>Manuel Pérez Ledesma</i>	19
2. Women in the Workplace in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Spain: Methodological Considerations <i>Pilar Pérez Fuentes</i>	43
3. The ‘Hardest, Most Unpleasant’ Profession: The Work of Laundresses in Eighteenth-, Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Spain <i>Carmen Sarasúa</i>	64
4. The Toccata and Fugue of the Urban Factory: Working-Class Conflicts and Work Discipline in Valencia, 1840–1880 <i>Francesc A. Martínez Gallego</i>	92
5. Craft Work, Industry and Radical Culture in the Age of the First International <i>José A. Piqueras</i>	106
6. ‘Resistance, Resistance, Resistance!’ Skills and Disputes in the Castellón Espadrille Industry at the End of the Nineteenth Century <i>Vicent Sanz Rozalén</i>	134
7. Traditional Popular Culture and Industrial Work Discipline: Asturias, 1880–1914 <i>Jorge Uría</i>	153
8. ‘Rough Characters’: Miners, Alcohol and Violence in Linares at the End of the Nineteenth Century <i>José Sierra Álvarez</i>	176

9. Disputes, Protest and Forms of Resistance in Rural Areas: Huesca, 1880–1914 <i>Carmen Frías Corredor</i>	197
10. The Standard of Living of Miners in Biscaye, 1876–1936 <i>Antonio Escudero</i>	221
11. Republicans, Socialists and Anarchists: What Revolution Was That? <i>Javier Paniagua</i>	241
12. The Civil War – A Class Struggle? The Difficult Task of Reconstructing the Past <i>Julían Casanova</i>	258
13. Subordination, Supplies and Mortality: The <i>Montaña catalana</i> , 1939–1945 <i>Joan Serrallonga</i>	274
14. A Fundamental Instrument for Labour-Force Control? Reflections on the Vertical Trade Union Organisation of the Franco Regime <i>José Babiano</i>	298
Notes on Contributors	315
Index	317

INTRODUCTION

TRADITIONAL HISTORY AND THE NEW SOCIAL HISTORY OF LABOUR IN SPAIN

José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz Rozalén

The social history of labour and labourers is currently in the paradoxical position of having defined the subject of study in all its rich complexity as never before – a fact born 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 up-to-date methodology and with the ability to resolve questions by means of analysing and recounting basic problems of the past of many social groups which are truly relevant in all pre-industrial and industrialised 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 labour 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 field. 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 ideologised viewpoints of authors are not much better than the most politicised 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. Marcel van der Linden recently characterised 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 labour history, protest and working-class involvement in the changes taking place in the economic systems of countries undergoing industrialisation. In these latter countries, studies multiply at the same rate as the number of salaried workers, while at the same time highly active trade union and political organisations are being formed.¹ In this respect, we can conclude that working-class history is no different to any other branch of history. It searches 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 historical backgrounds which show how class was increasingly discernible in defence of their interests or in political conflicts.

It is appropriate to add a second observation, this time regarding the relevance of the topics and the upsurge or decline of subspecialities. Interest in the history of labourers 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. This resulted in major changes in the organisation 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 industrial sector. The process included the institutional regulation of labour conflicts and the normalised handling of negotiations with the labour movement in almost all western European countries. In Spain, this was carried out by means of the Moncloa Pacts (1977), the creation of mediation and arbitration organisations (1979) and the Workers’ Statute (1980).² All of this resulted in a substantial modification of what had been the Left’s history of resistance and struggle to modify the relations between capital and work; not to mention to influence the orientation of society and obtaining 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 change 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 labour and labourers, 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 sociolabour 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 labour 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 in Spain 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. First, it experienced a dramatic Civil War (1936–1939), in which working-class political and trade union organisations 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 organisations and left-wing organisations 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 organisations, 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.

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.³ 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' labour history. One was from 1916 and the second from 1925, the latter being intended for the students of a School of Business Studies.⁴ In 1950, José María Jover made a call – not exempt from prejudice – for the need to deal with the issue.⁵ In the 1960s, modest studies were published which were similar to the previous ones and which contributed to breaking the taboo. The year 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 in Princeton. 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.⁶ To a large extent, these four works mark the birth of the social historiography of work in Spain.⁷

The cultural traditions of the authors were different, however. Whereas Martí, Termes and Izard came from seminars which were promoted in the late 1950s at the University of Barcelona by Jaume Vicens Vives and later by Carlos Seco, Tuñón de Lara was exiled in Paris in 1946 and from 1965 onwards was a lecturer at the University of Pau in the south of France. From 1971 onwards, Tuñón organised yearly symposiums on Spanish history which brought together historians from inside and outside the country in Pau. The one organised 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 as to 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 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 explosion of social history dealing with the labour history, 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 disempowerment. 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 first one. 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 centralised state) among the opposition to the dictatorship. 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.⁸

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 which were very similar to each other and very different from those we have mentioned so far. In both cases, the authors had been educated in Oxford with Raymond Carr. Their history was traditional in style with considerable empirical content, and 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'). They also denounced 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.⁹ These traced the two main trends of the social history of labour in its modern-day origins in Spain.

The dispersion of subjects, plus the excess of positivist and militant history were perceived early on. Fusi's denunciation, nevertheless, 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 legalisation 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 emphasising. Both confirmed the obsolescence of history committed to the working classes, the reductionism of summarising the history of the class as the description of organised workers and the non analytical means of approaching phenomena related to the world of work. The first line considered that there was indeed an area of study, which can be summarised 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.¹⁰ 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 analyses.¹¹ In 1982, another meeting of historians was held in Valencia and their critical and self-critical comments were published in the journal *Debats*.¹² 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 organise the above-mentioned conferences. *Historia Social* managed to establish itself as the most important means of publishing articles on labour history in Spain, but also as one of the main publications dealing with the history of society.¹³

All 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 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 1939.¹⁴

Once the transition to democracy had finished 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 did not take place. It caught the latest and most numerous generation of historians of working-class movements writing or finishing their doctoral theses or other research projects using arguments considered to be 'old history' – whatever the meaning of 'old' may be here – instead of using the new approaches. While there was talk of renovation, the 1980s seemed to indicate that what had aged was not the means of tackling the history of workers, but rather labour history itself as a research subject. And in this respect, the evolution of Spanish historiography is part of a general trend, but here the revisionist trend is more accentuated. Apart from the decline of Marxism, which had nominally inspired a large number of the studies, this is perhaps linked to the exceptional political and social moment of the 1980s. There was then an authentic rebuilding of the academic world as a result of new legislation which removed academics from the position of permanent discontent they had found themselves in for the last decade. This was done by promoting the majority of non resident lecturers to better-paid, life long posts and by creating academic careers along the same lines.

When reviewing the labour history and social history written and published between 1972 and 1988 – when the past of the working-class movement attracted numerous historians and a considerable amount of research was carried out – we find how heavy the presence of traditional history was, and how often concepts borrowed from traditional political history were used.¹⁵ 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 1850,¹⁶ the formation and evolution of the First International (mentioned previously), 'utopian' thought,¹⁷ anarchist ideas¹⁸ and anarcho syndicalism,¹⁹ violence,²⁰ the evolution of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and its associated trade union, the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT),²¹ the relationship between the working-class movement and populism,²² the institutionalisation of reformism,²³ trade union organisation in the service sector,²⁴ official communism and its heterodoxies,²⁵ gender and the working-class movement,²⁶ education,²⁷ the collectivist revolution of 1936–1939,²⁸ Catholic trade unionism,²⁹ the day labourer movement and peasant disputes,³⁰ approaches regarding the conditions of industrial work,³¹ the life of workers,³² etc.

The history of the working class was often limited to the study of its political and trade union organisations, or to the study of ideas. Also 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 and labour history has not ceased and it has been enriched by new perspectives.³³ The year 1988 saw the creation of the Association of Social History, which has periodically organised conferences and has become the main forum of discussion for senior historians and historians starting out in the profession. The published results have always reflected the full range of approaches which existed among the researchers.³⁴ 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 Ministerio de Trabajo published the journal *Estudios de Historia Social*, which dealt mainly with working-class history. With a large format and intermittent publication, 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 and labour history. Although there was still a certain amount of description of the history of organisations, 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 labour referred to here has been more pronounced in research into the nineteenth century than in research into the twentieth century. This uneven interest has been caused by the existence of a greater number of industrial workers and an increase in conflicts and disputes during the first third of the twentieth century, the situation during the Republic and the Civil War (1931–1939) and the reclamation of experiences suppressed 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 unaddressed, 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. 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 nineteenth 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 *Ancien Régime* when the privileges which protected the royal factories were lost is not exactly a mystery, but the issue has not been fully dealt with.³⁵ We have spent two decades listening to the virtues of the methodology followed by E.P. Thompson regarding the historical formation of the working class as the basis of history from below, which paid attention to the subject and the link between productive relations, experience and action, only to obtain such meagre results. One wonders whether Thompson's name has not been taken in vain in order to deal with a certain branch of history, either because of its sociostructural or mechanistic content or purely because of the events, or perhaps for reasons of another kind which ignore the sense of commitment of that author's works.

More precise information has been provided about the International, broadening and correcting previous views.³⁶ We are starting to have a greater awareness of the nature of associate workers and their forms of protest, although there is no 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 that 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. The result is that we still often use 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 mobilisation at any level.

If we are to characterise the social and labour history 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 and social history. Authors have taken an interest in the effects that 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 proletarianisation of master craftsmen and journeymen in ever more extreme conditions of poverty.³⁷ The training of the working class, bearing in mind the organisation 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. These refer to regions as different in terms of their importance in heavy industry and the manufacturing industry as the Basque Country and Catalonia.³⁸ We also have collective works – which we have edited – aimed at provoking reflections on these aspects.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

There are some studies which combine the analysis of salary levels, migratory movements and family strategies in the nineteenth century, relating them with the configuration of the labour market during the period of expansion of the factory system.⁴¹ The market and the organisation of labour was the subject of a symposium organised by faculties of Social Studies.⁴²

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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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. A book by Joan Serrallonga and Josep Lluís Martín Ramos⁴⁵

provides a broader perspective and examines the effects that living conditions may have had on social disputes.

It can be seen that these two regions, Catalonia and the Basque Country, have been the subject of the most research on labour history 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 supervised by him,⁴⁶ 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 1917.⁴⁷ 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 carried out research into social disputes and the response of employers' organisations in Catalonia at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁸

With regard to research on the world of women in the workplace, considerable research can be found which, like the rest, is 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.⁴⁹

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 civil rights (protests against wars or military recruitment).⁵⁰ 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 framework set down by James Scott.⁵¹

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 by Julián Casanova.⁵² During Franco's regime, mass meetings were banned and persecuted, and demanding workers' rights was regarded as a political activity in itself. On this subject, it is worth highlighting the studies carried out by Carme Molinero, Pere Ysàs and José Babiano.⁵³

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 from 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.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵

This Collection

For this book, we have chosen fourteen texts which we feel are representative of social and labour history in Spain. This is at least the case for twelve of them, and we took the liberty to complete the anthology with two articles of our own. In addition to considering them representative of the best methods of dealing with the subject, we have followed a series of criteria which it is worth explaining: (1) all the texts were published after 1990; (2) they were all intended to be independent articles or chapters in collective works; (3) they deal with various periods of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries; (4) they deal with various geographical areas which have a tradition of social movements in addition to a tradition of studying such movements; (5) they use complementary analysis perspectives: from the point of view of culture, class formation, gender or politics; (6) in certain cases, the articles deal with conceptual issues, others look at social behaviour, analyse situations or long periods in the development of a particular trade; and (7) they also consider classic subjects such as the living standards of industrial workers or the means of controlling and subordinating workers.

In eight cases the texts were first published in the journal *Historia Social*, in two instances the texts come from a collective book published by Biblioteca de Historia Social. The text of one of the writers was published recently by Biblioteca Nueva. In two cases, the articles come from other academic journals, *Arenal* and *Sociología del Trabajo*. Finally, another text comes from a collective book which the author also co-edited.

As mentioned above, among the chapters which make up this selection there are two texts whose content deals with methodological and conceptual issues. These are the first chapters of the book with reflections on the formation of the working class (Manuel Pérez Ledesma) and on the role of women in the world of work (Pilar Pérez Fuentes). These subjects are also dealt with, either directly or indirectly, by the rest of the studies in this book in terms of specific geographical and temporal situations. These texts have been arranged in diachronic order. Despite the fact that all the texts share a common link which makes them part of this book, the wide range of subjects at hand means that it is preferable to arrange them in chronological order.

The text by Manuel Pérez Ledesma offers a conceptual rethinking of the working class by introducing a culturalist perspective to the analysis of its formative period. The ritualisation of working-class practices, the language of

class and the terms in which its discourse and its ideological corpus was composed became essential components in the organisation of a new collective identity. This article aims to open new channels of historical analysis on working-class reality and the formation of the working class in contemporary Spain.

In the following chapter, Pilar Pérez Fuentes reflects on the historical formation of a specific social and working gender role. Men and women were affected in different ways by changes in the nature and significance of work introduced during industrialisation. These transformations implied the division of work according to sex and the separation of what was public and what was private, which led to the configuration of a new gender identity in industrial society.

Carmen Sarasúa's contribution on the work of laundresses incorporates this gender element in a novel way into the most commonly used historiographical parameters. The article outlines the key elements which make up the technological transformation of this profession and the changes in the social condition of these workers. Over and above the mechanisation of the work and its impact on the organisation of the steps involved in the washing process, it was precisely the loss of professional status which resulted in the breakdown of the laundresses' social worth.

The chapter written by Francesc A. Martínez Gallego analyses the new disciplinary habits introduced in the mid-nineteenth century by the division of work in factories and workshops. Adaptation to the new ways of organising the productive process resulted in a complex conflictive process – both in urban and rural areas – which surreptitiously coordinated the resistance of craftsmen, an associative organisation with mutualist and cooperative overtones, and an employers' strategy aimed at subordinating workers to the new rules of production.

For his part, José A. Piqueras offers an analysis of the social condition of Spanish members of the First International. Their link with the professional world is examined, a world in which, even though it maintained practices and customs related to its corporative past, the links with the means of production imposed by capitalism transformed the practice of the profession and situated it in a sphere of subordination in social and labour terms. These are issues which help to form a specific political culture rooted in democratic radicalism of working-class origin.

The text by Vicent Sanz Rozalén refers to the way in which various factors concurred to affect workers' ability to put up resistance in an urban profession whose survival was in a precarious condition. The main point put forward in this text lies in understanding the extent to which the characteristics of the labour force itself, with a fragile but indispensable component of specialised labour, and the bonds of solidarity among workers through workers' associations were conducive to maintaining resistance in workers' confrontation with manufacturers and employers.

Jorge Uriá examines the disciplinary practices of the labour force in Asturias. The survival of traditional peasant culture among factory workers and miners diluted their total proletarianisation, which meant that their

adaptation to the rhythm of work and the demands placed on them by the new means of organising production met with a great deal of resistance. This all resulted in subversive practices arising from an ideological world which was hardly compatible with the system of values which capitalism intended to introduce.

The text by José Sierra is a good example of the Thompsonian approach to the social practices of miners at the end of the nineteenth century. The chapter sets out to relocate the uses of alcohol and violence in the context of confrontations and conflicts, in particular as part of 'life experiences', and endow them with a specific sociohistorical element.

Carmen Frías puts forward new ideas on disputes and protests in rural areas at the turn of the century. She examines the circumstances and factors which gave rise to such disputes following the ideas put forward by James Scott on everyday means of resistance. Her analysis is based on the effects of the marketing and privatisation of natural resources, which eroded the traditional forms of collective use of the land. These changes brought about protests which, because of their intensity and frequency, challenged the means of obtaining and organising work, property and production.

Antonio Escudero examines one of the classic debates of social and economic historiography concerning the configuration and determining factors in the formation of the working class by focusing on the issue of living standards. Basing his research on the analysis of the prices of basic goods, the level of real wages and nominal salaries among Basque miners, the author observes their evolution in order to put forward, beyond the dichotomy between pessimism and optimism – yet without shying away from or forgetting these approaches – a reflection on the configuration of class identity.

The chapter written by Javier Paniagua deals with the complex issue of the meaning of the term 'revolution' and its specific use among republican, socialist and anarchist groups. The different meanings given to the term by the various groups implied the articulation of different and at times divergent theoretical approaches and strategies.

For his part, Julián Casanova reflects on the character of class brought about by the Spanish Civil War based on its integration in the context of the social, political and economic crisis of the 1930s. The author takes up a theoretically inspired debate which goes beyond the empiricism, doctrinism and localism which dominates studies on the war and situates the phenomenon within the political, social, economic and cultural parameters of the time.

The text by Joan Serrallonga examines the mechanisms put in place by the fascist authorities during the early stages of the post-war period (1939–1945) which were aimed at taming a population that had traditionally been extremely conflictive. The control of supplies and systematic repression were combined in order to undermine traditional levels of resistance.

The book ends with a study by José Babiano of trade unionism during Franco's dictatorship which reassesses the role that has traditionally been attributed to vertical trade unions as a means of controlling and organising

workers. The author details the failure of the Spanish Trade Union Organisation (Organización Sindical Española – OSE) to do just that and introduces new factors to be taken into consideration in order to understand the regulation and discipline of workers during the dictatorship.

These last three works go beyond workers' collective action and delve into the realm of politics, and particularly into the context of politics under Francoism (1939–1975). The Spanish Civil War was both a national and international phenomenon of ideological and political confrontation in which workers – or rather their unions and parties – were the front line of resistance against the fascist-military movement while, at the same time, they carried out revolutionary experiments in industry, services and the collectivisation of agriculture.

The triumph of the Nationalist cause – which was a combination of traditional military dictatorship, fascism and conservative Catholic thinking – meant the imposition of strict rules on workers' activities. Independent workers' unions were suppressed, and their leaders were either shot or sent to prison or to exile. In stark contrast with other authoritarian or fascist dictatorships, the New State did nothing to incorporate the old union cadres into the system. Workers were just forced to join the new official unions, which were conceived in 'organic' and corporative terms. In the process even words such as 'workers' and 'working class' were replaced by expression such as 'producers' and 'social section'. Workers learned how to use the new structures for their own advantage, creating in the process alternative structures that developed into an independent labour movement. Eventually, those structures were unofficially recognised by employers as a valid negotiators, especially by big companies. The context was unusual for post-war Europe: a long, fascist-style dictatorship at first, an authoritarian one later, in the middle of a liberal-democratic continent, which still preserved many of its fascist traits.

Acknowledgements

The chapter by Manuel Pérez Ledesma was first published in the book edited by Rafael Cruz and Manuel Pérez Ledesma, *Cultura y movilización en la España contemporánea*, Madrid, 1997, 201–33. The article by Pilar Pérez Fuentes was published in *Arenal. Revista de Historia de las Mujeres*, 2:2 (1995), pp. 219–45. The text by Carmen Sarasúa appeared in *Historia Social*, 45 (2003), 53–77. The article by Francesc A. Martínez Gallego was published in *Sociología del Trabajo*, 19 (1993), 123–41. The text by José A. Piqueras was published as a chapter in the book edited by Javier Paniagua, José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz, *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo*, Valencia, 1999, 165–209. The text by Vicent Sanz Rozalén is part of Vicent Sanz and José A. Piqueras (eds), *En el nombre del oficio. El trabajador especializado: corporativismo, protesta y adaptación*, Madrid, 2005, 295–315. The chapter by Jorge Uria was published in *Historia Social*, 23 (1995), 41–62. The text by José Sierra was published in *Historia Social*, 19 (1994), 77–96. The study by Carmen Frías appeared in *Historia Social*, 37 (2000),

97–118. The text by Antonio Escudero was published in *Historia Social*, 27 (1997), 87–106. The text by Javier Paniagua appeared as a chapter in the collective work edited by Paniagua, Piqueras and Sanz, *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo*, 243–69. The text by Julián Casanova was published in *Historia Social*, 20 (1994), 135–50. The text by Joan Serrallonga appeared in *Historia Social*, 34 (1999), 45–66. And finally, the text by José Babiano was published in *Historia Social*, 30 (1998), 23–38.

Notes

1. M. 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 J. Paniagua, J. A. Piqueras and V. Sanz (eds), *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo*, Valencia, 2000, 301–22; and J.D. French, 'El auge de los estudios sobre el trabajo en Latinoamérica', *Historia Social*, 39 (2001), 129–50.
2. The 'Moncloa Pacts' were agreements made between the government, political parties and unions. They 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 sociolabour issues which was made up of employer organisations and trade unions. In 1980, the 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-organised protests.
3. C. Martí, *Orígenes del anarquismo en Barcelona*, Barcelona, 1959.
4. M. Núñez de Arenas, 'Notas sobre el movimiento obrero español', Madrid, 1916; and M. Reventós, *Els moviments socials a Barcelona en el segle XIX*, Barcelona, 1925.
5. J.M. Jover, *Conciencia burguesa y conciencia obrera en la España contemporánea*, Madrid 1952 [republished by J. Izquierdo and P. Sánchez León (eds), *Clásicos de historia social de España. Una selección crítica*, Valencia, 2000, 219–57].
6. J. Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España. La Primera Internacional (1864–1881)*, Barcelona, 1972; C.E. Lida, *Anarquismo y revolución en la España del siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1972; M. Tuñón de Lara, *El movimiento obrero en la historia de España*, Madrid, 1972; and M. 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: A. Balcells, *El sindicalismo a Barcelona (1916–1923)*, Barcelona, 1965; D. Ruiz, *El movimiento obrero en Asturias: de la industrialización a la Segunda República*, Oviedo, 1968 (very limited circulation until its reissue a decade later); and P. Gabriel, *El movimiento obrero a Mallorca*, Barcelona, 1973.
8. This is according to one of the pioneers, M. Izard, 'Orígenes del movimiento obrero en España', in S. Castillo *et al.* (coords), *Estudios sobre Historia de España (homenaje a Tuñón de Lara)*, Madrid, 1981, 295–314.
9. J.P. Fusi, *Política obrera en el País Vasco (1880–1923)*, Madrid, 1975; and J. Romero Maura, *'La Rosa de Fuego'. El obrerismo barcelonés de 1899 a 1909*, Barcelona, 1975.
10. The minutes of the meeting may be consulted in '20 años del encuentro de Barx', *Historia Social*, 34 (2000), 157–60.
11. J. Álvarez Junco and M. Pérez Ledesma, 'Historia del movimiento obrero. ¿Una segunda ruptura?', *Revista de Occidente*, 12 (1982), 19–41 [republished by Izquierdo and Sánchez León, *Clásicos de historia social*, 259–80].
12. 'Los movimientos sociales', *Debats*, 2–3 (1982), 90–135.
13. An analysis of what had been published until 2000 can be found in J.A. Piqueras, 'La práctica editorial de *Historia Social*', *Op.Cit. Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, 12–13 (2001), 93–108 [University of Puerto Rico].

14. The self-critical concurrence and chronological imbalance was highlighted by, among others, C. Forcadell, 'Sobre desiertos y secanos: los movimientos sociales en la historiografía española', *Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (1992), 101–116.
15. P. Gabriel, 'A vueltas y revueltas con la historia social obrera en España. Historia obrera, historia popular e historia contemporánea', *Historia Social*, 22 (1995), 45–51. Gabriel 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. J. Benet and C. Martí, *Barcelona mitjan segle XIX. El moviment obrer durant el Bienni Progresista (1854–1856)*, Barcelona, 1976.
17. J. Maluquer, *El socialismo en España (1833–1868)*, Barcelona, 1977.
18. J. Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política del anarquismo español (1868–1910)*, Madrid, 1976; and J. Paniagua, *La sociedad libertaria. Agrarismo e industrialización en el anarquismo español (1930–1939)*, Barcelona, 1982.
19. X. Cuadrat, *Socialismo y anarquismo en Cataluña (1899–1911). Los orígenes de la CNT*, Madrid, 1976; A. Barr, *La CNT en los años rojos. Del sindicalismo revolucionario al anarcosindicalismo (1910–1926)*, Madrid, 1982; and T. Abelló, *Les relacions internacionals de l'anarquisme català (1881–1914)*, Barcelona, 1987. Among regional studies, the following can be highlighted: J. Casanova, *Anarquismo y revolución en la sociedad rural aragonesa (1936–1938)*, Madrid, 1985; and A. Barrio, *Anarquismo y anarcosindicalismo en Asturias (1890–1936)*, Madrid, 1988.
20. R. Núñez, *El terrorismo anarquista (1888–1909)*, Madrid, 1983.
21. See various regional studies and the fragmentary work of Santiago Castillo, in addition to the series of three books coordinated by S. Juliá: *El socialismo en España. Desde la fundación hasta 1975*, *El socialismo en las nacionalidades y regiones* and *Socialismo y guerra civil*, Madrid, 1986–1987. Also the collective synthesis directed by M. Tuñón de Lara, *Historia del socialismo español*, Barcelona, 1989, 5 vols. It is worth highlighting the monographs of A. Elorza and M. Ralle, *La formación del PSOE*, Barcelona, 1989; C. Forcadell, *Parlamentarismo y bolchevización. El movimiento obrero español (1914–1918)*, Barcelona, 1978; P. Biglino, *El socialismo español y la cuestión agraria (1890–1936)*, Madrid, 1986; and M. Pérez Ledesma, *El obrero consciente. Dirigentes, partidos y sindicatos en la II Internacional*, Madrid, 1988.
22. R. Reig, *Obrers i ciutadans. Blasquisme i moviment obrer. València (1898–1906)*, Valencia, 1982.
23. S. Castillo, 'Estudio introductorio a Reformas Sociales', *Información oral y escrita publicada de 1889 a 1893*, Madrid, 1985, 27–164; and J.I. Palacio, *La institucionalización de la reforma social en España (1883–1924). La Comisión y el Instituto de Reformas Sociales*, Madrid, 1988.
24. S. Castillo and L.E. Alonso, *Proletarios de cuello blanco. La Federación Española de Trabajadores del Crédito y las Finanzas (1930–1936)*, Madrid, 1994.
25. F. Bonamusa, *Andreu Nin y el movimiento comunista en España (1930–1937)*, Barcelona, 1977; and R. Cruz, *El Partido Comunista de España en la Segunda República*, Madrid, 1987. Of a different, unacademic nature, yet still the best present presentation of the PCE during Franco's regime, is G. Morán, *Miseria y grandeza del Partido Comunista de España*, Barcelona, 1985.
26. From M. Nash, *Mujer y movimiento obrero en España (1931–1939)*, Barcelona, 1981. Professor Nash, of Irish origin, is based in Spain.
27. P. Solà, *Els ateneus obrers i la cultura popular a Catalunya (1900–1939). L'Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular*, Barcelona, 1978; A. Tiana, *Educación libertaria y revolución social (España, 1936–1939)*, Madrid, 1987; J.A. Piqueras, *El taller y la escuela*, Madrid, 1988; and J.L. Guereña and A. Tiana (eds), *Clases populares, cultura y educación*, Madrid, 1990.
28. We refer here to the summary by J. Casanova (comp.), *El sueño igualitario: campesinado y colectivizaciones en la España republicana (1936–1939)*, Saragossa, 1988.
29. J.J. 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 M. Pérez Yruela, *La conflictividad campesina en la provincia de Córdoba (1931–1936)*, Madrid, 1979; E. Sevilla and K. Heisel (eds), *Anarquismo y movimiento jornalero*, Córdoba, 1988; and L. Garrido, *Riqueza y tragedia social. Historia de la clase obrera en la provincia de Jaén (1820–1930)*, Jaén, 1990.
31. A. Soto, *El trabajo industrial en la España contemporánea (1874–1936)*, Barcelona, 1989.
32. C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, *Patria, justicia y pan. Nivell de vida i condicions de treball a Catalunya (1939–1959)*, Barcelona, 1985.
33. Evaluations of the labour history can be found in: R. Miralles, 'Historiografía del movimiento obrero en el País Vasco (1880–1936)', *Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (1992), 237–55; P. Gabriel and J.L. Martín, 'Clase obrera, sectores populares y clases medias', in F. Bonamusa and J. Serrallonga (eds), *La sociedad urbana*, Barcelona, 1994, 133–53; Gabriel, 'A vueltas y revueltas'; J. Uría, 'Sociología e Historia. Una década de historia social en *Sociología del Trabajo*', *Sociología del Trabajo*, 31 (1997), 149–77, and J. Uría 'La historia social y el contemporaneísmo español. Las deudas del pasado', *Revista de Historia Jerónimo Zurita*, 71 (1995), 95–141. Two appraisals from the same author with almost a decade between them are: A. Barrio, 'A propósito de la historia social, del movimiento obrero y los sindicatos', in G. Rueda *et al.*, *Doce estudios de historiografía contemporánea*, Santander, 1991, 41–68; and A. Barrio, 'Historia obrera en los noventa: tradición y modernidad', *Historia Social*, 37 (2000), 143–60.
34. The results were published: S. Castillo (coord), *La Historia Social en España. Actualidad y perspectivas*, Madrid, 1991; S. Castillo (ed), *El trabajo a través de la historia*, Madrid, 1996; S. Castillo and J.M. Ortiz (coords), *Estado, protesta y movimientos sociales*, Bilbao, 1998; and S. Castillo and R. Fernández (coords), *Historia social y ciencias sociales*, Lleida, 2001.
35. Some initial points with reference to the rural context are found in A. Peiró, *Jornaleros y mancebos. Identidad, organización y conflicto en los trabajadores del Antiguo Régimen*, Barcelona, 2002.
36. J.A. Piqueras, *La revolución democrática (1868–1874). Cuestión social, colonialismo y grupos de presión*, Madrid, 1992.
37. F. Díez, *Viles y mecánicos. Trabajo y sociedad en la Valencia preindustrial*, Valencia, 1990; and V. Sanz Rozalén, *D'artesans a proletaris*, Castellón, 1995.
38. R. Ruzafa, *Antes de la clase. Los trabajadores en Bilbao y la margen izquierda del Nervión (1841–1891)*, Bilbao, 1998; G. Barnosell, *Orígens del sindicalisme català*, Vic, 1999; and recently, J. Romero, *La construcción de la cultura del oficio durante la industrialización (Barcelona, 1814–1860)*, Barcelona, 2005.
39. Paniagua, Piqueras and Sanz, *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo*; and V. Sanz and J.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. S. Castillo (ed.), *Solidaridad desde abajo. Trabajadores y Socorros Mutuos en la España contemporánea*, Madrid, 1994.
41. E. Camps, *La formación del mercado de trabajo industrial en la Cataluña del siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1995.
42. C. Arenas, A. Florencio and J.I. Martínez (eds), *Mercado y organización del trabajo en España (siglos XIX y XX)*, Seville, 1998.
43. R. Huertas and R. Campos (coords), *Medicina social y clase obrera en España (ss. XIX y XX)*, Madrid, 1992. Also L. 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. P.M. Pérez Castroviejo, *Clase obrera y niveles de vida en las primeras fases de la industrialización vizcaína*, Madrid, 1992; and P. Pérez Fuentes, *Vivir y morir en las minas. Estrategias familiares y relaciones de género en la primera industrialización vizcaína (1877–1913)*, Bilbao, 1993.
45. J. Serrallonga and J.L. Martín, *Condicions materials i resposta obrera a la Catalunya contemporània*, Barcelona, 1992.
46. L. Castells, *Los trabajadores del País Vasco*, Madrid, 1993.

47. J. Sierra, *El obrero soñado. Ensayo sobre el paternalismo industrial (Asturias, 1860–1917)*, Madrid, 1990.
48. S. Bengoechea, *Organització patronal i conflictivitat social a Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1994.
49. C. Sarasúa, *Criados, nodrizas y amos. El servicio doméstico en la formación del mercado de trabajo madrileño (1758–1868)*, Madrid, 1994; C. Borderías, *Entre líneas: trabajo e identidad femenina en la España contemporánea. La Compañía Telefónica (1924–1980)*, Barcelona, 1993; and P. Candela, *Cigarreras madrileñas: trabajo y vida (1888–1927)*, Madrid, 1997. Also C. Borderías, A. Calvo and P. 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; and more recently P. Pérez-Fuentes, *Ganadores de pan y amas de casa: otra mirada sobre la industrialización vasca*, Bilbao, 2004.
50. C. Gil, *Echarse a la calle. Amotinados, huelguistas y revolucionarios (La Rioja, 1890–1936)*, Saragossa, 2000.
51. See the references in note 30. Also A. Sabio, *Tierra, comunal y capitalismo agrario en Aragón (1830–1935)*, Saragossa, 2002.
52. J. Casanova, *De la calle al frente. El anarcosindicalismo en España (1931–1939)*, Barcelona, 1997.
53. C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, *Productores disciplinados y minorías subversivas: clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España franquista*, Madrid, 1998; and J. Babiano, *Paternalismo industrial y disciplina fabril en España (1938–1958)*, Madrid, 1998.
54. J. Uría, *Una historia social del ocio: Asturias (1898–1914)*, Madrid, 1996, dealing mainly, but not exclusively, with working-class or popular leisure.
55. M. Morales, *Cultura e ideología en el anarquismo español (1870–1910)*, Málaga, 2002.

CHAPTER 1

THE FORMATION OF THE WORKING CLASS A CULTURAL CREATION

Manuel Pérez Ledesma

To consider the working class as a ‘cultural creation’, as in the title of this article, is nothing new and it is certainly not a provocation. There is little need to mention that E.P. Thompson is responsible for the idea that all classes are a ‘social and cultural formation’, in other words a group of individuals who, despite having different professions and incomes ‘share the same set of interests, social experiences, traditions and system of values’. This formulation, and the corresponding definition of class as a historical phenomenon and not as an immutable reality – as an event and not as ‘a thing’, as Thompson himself would say – accounts for the vast bibliography on the ‘formation of the working class’ which has appeared over the last thirty years; a bibliography whose starting point, in accordance with the same approach, is the consideration of this formative process as ‘a fact of political and cultural history’ and not only of economic history.¹

Apart from the differences and even the intense controversy which have arisen from the successive interpretations of this process, there are certain common ideas which are worth remembering. If it is considered to be a historical subject and not only a sociological category, the working class – and the same could be said for other social classes – is not the inevitable result of the relations of production or of economic evolution. Instead, it is a collective identity shaped by those involved over time. Of course, identity does not mean total unity without fissures; on the contrary, as Michael Mann has recently recalled, social classes were never fully unified entities, but instead have been divided by numerous fractures (to which, according to Mann’s terminology, the various class *sectors*, *strata* or *segments* correspond). Neither is it a single or predominant identity at all times and in all places; in fact, class identity has coexisted throughout history, in a difficult and at times conflictive

relationship, with other collective identities – based on race, nations, religion, gender or belonging to *the people* – without any of them taking precedence over the others.²

However, despite internal divisions and coexistence with other collective identities – i.e. despite the relatively ‘volatile’ nature of class identity – it is true that throughout a long period of history, in most Western countries, membership of the working class defined the behaviour of millions of people. This is surprising considering the fact that, contrary to many predictions, economic progress and more specifically the development of capitalism did not favour the homogeneity, but rather the differentiation of workers as a result of the division of work, of various different wage levels and hierarchies within the production process. The factors which allowed workers to join together and act as members of a unified class cannot, therefore, be found at an economic level. Other components were required for the creation of a collective identity. It is a well-known fact that for Thompson, workers’ ‘common experiences’, to a large extent determined by the relations of production, played the major role. However, in subsequent studies, in addition to these experiences, special importance has been given to other factors: to ideological traditions, which were present at the same time as the process of industrialisation but were endowed with ‘autonomous causal strength’ (Sewell); to language as the organiser of experiences and not as a simple means of expressing these experiences (Stedman Jones); and to the influence of the different ‘visions of society’, from which identities such as ‘*el pueblo*’ or ‘class’ were constructed (Joyce).³

In any case, and on whichever aspect greater emphasis is placed, it is important to indicate that there is agreement on one fundamental point: that the working class, as a collective subject, was the result of a formation process, understood as the cultural construction of an identity. This is the issue which shall be examined in this chapter.

In Spain: From Economic Explanation to Cultural Analysis

Both Thompson’s pioneering work and the subsequent developments and even the intense controversy to which they have given rise, are well-known in Spain.⁴ Despite this, in the ample Spanish historiography on the evolution of the working class, these ideas have not as yet had a clear influence beyond certain theoretical declarations. On the contrary, the formation of the working class is still considered to be the almost automatic result of the industrialisation process or of the fusion of two unique ingredients linked to capitalist development. On the one hand, there were the difficult economic and working conditions faced by workers, especially industrial workers, and on the other hand the diffusion of new ideologies after the establishment of the Spanish Regional Federation of the IWA (International Workers Association).

This chapter is not intended to be a detailed review of this synopsis, the limitations of which have been pointed out in various recent works.⁵

However, it is at least necessary to mention some points of discrepancy between such a vision and the argument put forward here. If we accept that the working class is a collective identity and not simply a sociological category, and if we define its formation as the process of creating a historical subject – that is to say, a collective protagonist of social action – then it is evident that the protagonists of such a process were not the new industrial workers. In fact, the driving force behind it were the craftsmen and workers of traditional trades who were not (or to a lesser extent, at least) subject to the new methods of production which characterised industrial capitalism, such as mechanisation and the concentration of labour in large establishments. This feature is not unique to the Spanish case: Thompson himself explained that in England trades such as ‘cobblers, weavers, leather workers and trimmers, booksellers, printers, construction workers, small traders and other such workers’ played a similar role. And in a global appraisal of the working-class historiography of the last few decades, Sewell pointed out that there is ‘practically universal agreement’ over the idea that in the formation of the working class, the most important roles were played by specialised craftsmen in the workshops, and not by workers in the ‘dark, satanic factories’.⁶

For the same reason, the imposition of low wages by the new industrial employers did not trigger a class uprising or class-related action. In fact, many of the instigators were included in a category which, according to the usual terminology among Marxist historians, could be defined as the ‘working-class aristocracy’, that is to say, on a higher level than the majority of urban day labourers or factory workers. They were superior not only because of their higher salaries, but also, and perhaps above all, because of the way they carried out their work. In the middle of the nineteenth century, spinners from Barcelona, among others, brought attention to the fact that the working conditions of these workers were not the same, and were even comparatively better than those of factory workers. In their opinion, no comparison could be made between ‘our work [in the factories] and that of the majority of craftsmen’. Whereas the craftsmen’s activities had ‘the incentive of variety and the attraction of receiving the approval of others’, the only incentive for textile factory workers, whose work was ‘monotonous’ and ‘tedious’, was the ‘harsh discipline of manufacturers defined as ‘the eyes which keep watch over us and spy on what we do’. Thirty years later, the detailed descriptions of the productive tasks put before the Commission for Social Reforms once again revealed the differences, and also the comparative advantages of some categories of workers – precisely those who were most actively involved in the formation of the class identity – compared to the rest of the manual workers.⁷

In view of the limitations of the traditional paradigm, it is worth considering the problem from another angle, more specifically from a perspective which takes into account the cultural aspects of the process. If the working class is a collective identity, what we need to know is how sectors which are so different – a workforce as ‘diverse, fragmented and heterogeneous’ as the one Joyce described in Victorian England – managed to perceive (‘feel and articulate’, Thompson would say) that despite their differences, they were part of one unit and shared common objectives and

interests which, in addition, conflicted with those of other classes.

When examining these cultural ingredients, it would seem necessary to start by analysing the *language* itself. This is partly because, as Stedman Jones explained, language is not simply a means of expression, but shapes experiences instead. But it is also, on a more basic level, because while there was no exact nomenclature, a basic set of terms with which to refer to the social structure and the various entities of which it was comprised, it was impossible to know for sure if a person belonged to one of them. It is this restrictive conception – the ‘language of class’, as Asa Briggs defined it – which interests us here. Just as in England and France, in Spain the term *class* began to be used during the last decades of the eighteenth century to refer to social differences arising from economic inequalities. In a text from 1779, Dánvila y Villarrasa referred to ‘two classes, one of proprietors and another of wage earners’. Other examples from that period highlight the fact that the economic meaning of the term was already well-known. However, that meaning of the word was not the most common at that time. The word *class* was more often used as a synonym of the old name for ‘state’, or to define the subdivisions of ‘states’. The modern meaning of the term must have become more widespread during the reign of Isabel II (1833–1868), but it was from the 1880s onwards that the ‘language of class’ became more commonly used, both in cultured circles and among the majority of the population. This can be seen from the new definitions and, above all, the new examples which were included in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia* in the mid nineteenth century (craftsmen class, military class, artisan class) and finally, the inclusion in 1884 of the expression ‘middle class’, which was defined as ‘the class between the one comprising the powerful and the wealthy and the one comprising wage earners and day labourers’.⁸

During the same period, other terms which were equally important to the language of class also became commonly used in academic vocabulary. The term *burgés* (*bourgeois*), which according to the *Diccionario de Autoridades* had recently entered the Spanish language and which came from French, was defined during the nineteenth century as ‘something belonging to a hamlet or small village, and anyone who was born there’. Not until the 1884 edition of the *Diccionario de la Real Academia* did the spelling change (to *burgués*) and a new meaning was given – ‘a middle-class citizen’ – which was more in keeping with the new visions of society. The same edition of the dictionary included the word *burguesía* (*bourgeoisie*) for the first time, and the definition given was the ‘body or group of bourgeois or middle-class citizens’. This same edition also included a definition of *proletario* (*proletarian*) as ‘an individual belonging to the indigent class’, which replaced the older meaning of the term (a Latin word which was seldom used in Spanish and which meant ‘author of little importance’ according to the *Diccionario de Autoridades*) and supplemented the meaning that had appeared in the dictionary throughout the nineteenth century (‘A person who has no possessions and who is included in the neighbourhood lists of the village in which he lives by name only’). The process was completed in the twentieth century with the inclusion, in 1914, of *proletariado* (*proletariat*) – the ‘social class made up of

proletarians' – and the precedence given in 1927 to the sociological definition of *bourgeois*, which from that time onwards became the most accepted meaning of the term ('Well-off or affluent middle-class citizen, used commonly in comparison to proletarian').

At the same time that the new language of class gained recognition from the Royal Academy, the dichotomised vision of society – which was not necessarily expressed by means of this language, but which could instead use more traditional formulas – was reaching its peak. Both the more clearly conservative authors, who divided society into 'rich and poor people', as well as the various republican schools of thought which presented 'the people' against 'the privileged', in addition to the more aseptic formulations of the Commission for Social Reforms – the *Questionnaire* its information came from was based on the difference between 'capital and work' – took it for granted that Spanish society at the turn of the century was divided into two large and clearly disparate, even opposing, blocks.⁹

Harmonious Relations and Popular Identity

Nevertheless, it is one thing for academics to accept the new language of class and for a dichotomic vision of society to spread throughout intellectual circles, whatever their ideological viewpoint may be, and another very different thing for workers to immediately adopt such a vision as a starting point for their class identity. In order for both the linguistic formations and the images previously mentioned to become shared 'cognitive structures' – of fundamental importance, as A. Melucci explained, in the formation of a collective identity – a long process to formulate and diffuse these meanings was required.¹⁰ But it was also essential to overcome certain obstacles which came from previous visions.

Let us first of all examine the obstacles. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, judging by the information from the Commission for Social Reforms, an initial difficulty was the survival of traditional forms of social relations, which were impossible to fit into the formulations based on antagonism. In addition, there was another obstacle: even those who accepted the existence of division and antagonism habitually expressed it in what can be defined as a 'vision of the people', and not by means of a 'vision of class' on which proletarian identity could be based.

The endurance of traditional social relations is not an invention of conservative literature. Among replies to the question regarding the 'relations between workers and the other social classes' included in the *Questionnaire* of the Commission for Social Reforms, there were plenty of references to the bonds of 'friendship' or 'cordiality' which existed between workers and their employers. This was not only true in rural areas where practices inherited from the 'domestic society of previous centuries' were still common and where there were still paternalistic bonds of friendship ('farm workers lived among the farm owners and employers like members of the same family', read one clearly exaggerated statement). In small towns, too, and even in larger

urban areas, such as Valencia, there were reports of the 'good relations' and the 'kindness and closeness' that existed between employers and their workers.

It is also true that in other replies to the *Questionnaire* that also referred to small and medium-sized cities, the tone was more cautious. There were references to 'indifference', 'isolation', 'rare friendship' or 'prejudices' between employees and employers. However, it was above all in the most important cities, in certain industrialised areas and in the big towns of Andalusia where the replies were at the other extreme. One informant from Madrid, not professionally linked to any of the sides, referred to 'a warlike attitude between the classes'. With the same radical approach, many workers used terms such as 'dislike', 'hostility', 'open conflict', 'antagonism' and 'hatred'.¹⁰

The fact that it was not only a question of words can be seen from the more detailed accounts of the two sectors' coexistence in various areas. In the majority of rural communities, the close contacts between landowners, tenants and servants or day labourers favoured the continuing existence of relationships which had nothing at all to do with antagonism. Such contacts refer more specifically to apprenticeships, artificial kinship as Godparents (the day labourers 'are often the ones who watch over the first steps of the landowners' children, and members of the latter's family are usually the ones holding the day labourer's children at the baptismal font') or 'asymmetric' forms of friendship (according to J. Pitt Rivers' well-known term). In small and medium-sized cities too, the fact that they worked together in small workshops, the paternalistic attitudes of employers and certain working-class sectors' belief in cooperation, in addition to the fact that they lived and socialised in the same places, enabled the friendly relationships to continue, or at least made it possible to avoid conflict.¹¹

Even in the big cities, the atmosphere was far from being especially conflictive. If the liberal newspaper *El Correo* is to be believed, the working-class group which had declared 'open war on the capital' was only a small group, whereas the vast majority of workers accepted the 'social inequalities' as the natural result of 'the diversity of talents and vocations'. Two statements illustrate such an attitude. One worker from Madrid, who was a member of the Quarrymen Society and a professed 'democrat', said before the Commission for Social Reforms:

Capital by itself is unable to exploit the land and carry out all aspects of production: it requires the cooperation of those of us who can do all kinds of work, in the same way as we workers can do nothing without the help of capital; luckily capital and labour are two essential factors which need each other.

In terms of personal relationships, according to the description of a republican from Valencia, there was 'no difference whatsoever' between the various social classes. On the contrary, the members of each class 'walk together and during the festivals nobody minds rubbing shoulders with the workers'.¹²

Of course, it was not all harmony. As mentioned previously, in the big cities and also in some less important towns, it was also possible to find an

atmosphere of 'hostility', although it was not perhaps true of the majority of places. One informant declared to the Commission for Social Reforms that this was partly due to 'greater (in comparison with smaller centres of population) differences in culture, habits, uses and customs' between the rich and the rest of the population. But it also came down to pure economic differences and the fact that 'the wealthy classes enjoyed the comforts of life more'. For that reason, in these places the triumph of a 'vision of society' centred on inequality and the antagonism between classes should have been easier to achieve, at least in theory. Yet theories do not always coincide with social reality, in this case because the other obstacle mentioned previously came between both: the existence of a very deep-rooted identity of belonging to the *people*, as opposed to belonging to a particular class.¹³

Just like class, the sense of being one of the *people* is a collective identity, the result of a cultural creation. Yet unlike class, this identity does not have a clearly defined sociological profile and nor does it have such exact boundaries (as all attempts to characterise it by contemporary and modern-day historians have highlighted). Reference can therefore be made to an ambiguous and inclusive identity – based more on moral criteria than on economic criteria –, as opposed to the greater preciseness of restricted class identity.¹⁴

In fact, what best characterised the *people* was their opposition to another category which was equally ambiguous from the sociological point of view but more exact from the political viewpoint: that of the *privileged*. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the *people* appeared as the protagonists of most political speeches, the definition was still fairly simple. It was made up of 'the common people or the masses as opposed to the nobility', according to the *Diccionario provisional de la Constitución política de la Monarquía española*; or of 'ordinary citizens who, without having any distinguishing features, income or job, live by means of their trades', according to Bartolomé José Gallardo. However, when in the mid-nineteenth century, being a member of the privileged classes was no longer the exclusive right of the nobility, but instead a condition of both old and new elites, the distinction also became more complex. Now the privileged classes included members of the 'aristocracy, nobility, military, clergy and merchants' according to Fernando Garrido; or members of 'the feudal classes of militarism, bureaucracy, exploitation, speculation and fanaticism', according to Valentí Almirall. And the *people* included common citizens who, whatever their social position, were not included in such oligarchic circles.¹⁵

Two fundamental characteristics separated the *people* from these sectors, at least in the opinion of their defenders: whereas the *people* contributed to the national wealth with their labour – in other words, they were the 'productive classes' – the *privileged* were defined as 'idle' or 'lazy' ('the parasitic classes' in the words of Almirall). In spite of this, the *privileged* occupied the positions of power, something which the *people* certainly did not.

It was this feature – clearly opposed to the reflections of moderate liberalism, which identified the popular masses as the 'riffraff', the 'plebs' or the 'lowest class'¹⁶ – which formed the basis of republican discourse on the identity of the *people*. The root of all the evils to which the *people* were

subject be found, from the republican point of view, in politics. Economic and social inequalities were the result of the fact that the *privileged* occupied the positions of power. This referred to both the old sectors of the privileged classes – the nobility – and above all the new sectors: a new middle class which, once ‘emancipation’ had been achieved, had forgotten about those who had helped them towards their victory. As a result, the solution also had to be political: a new revolution, a democratic revolution which would finish with the *privileged* and eventually lead to what Pi i Margall called ‘the political and social emancipation of the working classes’. Because only after gaining political rights would it be possible to achieve other popular demands. This is how the situation was explained by Fernando Garrido: ‘The acquisition of political rights (by the people) supposes the defeat of their adversaries, in which case they will not have to ask for social rights but instead declare such rights, which have only ever been enjoyed by the victors’.¹⁷

The fact that this line of argument, maintained by republican culture until the twentieth century – and very similar to the arguments of English radicalism, the centre of Chartism according to Stedman Jones – was decisive in the creation of an identity of the *people* can be seen by the lasting support given to republican groups, both in uprisings and in the most prosaic electoral activity. One only needs to remember Lerroux’s electoral successes at the beginning of the twentieth century among the workers of Barcelona, the main industrial city of the country, or the permanent, albeit fluctuating, electoral support given to republicans in the popular districts of Madrid until the 1920s.¹⁸

Constructing the Working Class: The Hope of Emancipation and the End of Social Mobility

Faced with the identity of the *people* and the corresponding ‘vision of the *people*’, the construction of class identity and the corresponding increase in the classist image of society was without doubt the result of a long historical process. The problem thus lies in defining who promoted this construction and in explaining how they converted that identity into a fundamental part of the image of society and of the collective action of an ever more wide-ranging group of Spanish workers. It is in response to these questions that the ‘common experiences’ referred to by Thompson and the discourse – or the language, in the sense in which Stedman Jones uses this term – of class become central issues.

But to which common experiences does the process of constructing a class identity refer? Of course, it is useless to refer to the experience of industrial labour: we already know that it was workers belonging to different trades with different working practices who were involved in the formation of the working class both in Spain and in other European countries and certainly not industrial workers. Neither can reference be made to the experience of poverty, since in general those involved earned more than the majority of

workers. It may therefore be worth analysing other types of experiences which were less conspicuous but which had a greater effect on the process.

In the Spanish case, just like in other countries, a fundamental ingredient of workers' experiences during the last decades of the century was related to the fact that it was increasingly difficult for workers to change their professional situation. In other words, it was related to the increasingly widespread idea that the 'emancipation' of the worker, seen as the possibility of becoming a master or an employer, was turning into an unattainable dream. As a result, the condition of belonging to the working class was no longer a temporary one, as it was under the guild system, but permanent instead.

The most direct and ingenuous recognition of this change can be found in Juan José Morato's autobiography. When he first began to work as an apprentice in a printing shop, his aspirations were typical of the traditional guild system: he hoped to find 'good, kind bosses', to work in a 'patriarchal workshop' which would be 'an extension of the family', to earn 'enough money to cover the modest needs of a craftsman' and finally, to eventually become the owner of his own printing company. 'I thought,' Morato later said, 'that the reward for skill, hard work and thriftiness was becoming the owner of a printer's'. However, he soon discovered how unrealistic his expectations were. Instead of respecting the boss of the workshop, 'we feared and hated him', he regarded the level of his salary to be akin to 'exploitation' and his hopes of prospering and starting his own business were destroyed when he discovered that the owner had been 'a bad worker, more fond of a deck of cards and the bottle than of books', whereas the good, virtuous workers 'had worn-out boots and threadbare suits and hats'.¹⁹

More relevant as a reflection of the generalised nature of this experience, were the statements made before the Commission for Social Reforms during the early 1880s. In response to one of the questions of its *Questionnaire*, 'Is it common for workers to become company owners and how can this come about?', the majority of those interviewed claimed that such a change, which had been fairly common in the past, was becoming increasingly difficult, if not practically impossible. Aside from certain exceptions, the tone of the replies was very similar in big cities and in smaller towns: 'it is difficult', 'it happens very rarely', 'it is by no means common', only in 'very special' circumstances, as a result of 'fortuitous conditions' and not because of 'savings gathered from working'.²⁰

Even more relevant was the fact that the difficulties were recent ones. The director of the newspaper *Diario de Barcelona* wrote that it had previously been common to progress from being a worker to a boss. However, at the time when he wrote his article, as a result of technical developments and intense competition, small industrial companies were going bankrupt and nobody could manage to become a businessman without a considerable amount of capital. Many other reports also echoed this new situation. 'Nowadays, manufacturers are all sons of workers who were lucky when times were better', stated the local commission of Alcoy, and in areas as disparate as Oviedo, Vizcaya and Valencia it was acknowledged that many employers had

enjoyed opportunities that their employees had not. According to the Typographical Society of Valencia, for example: 'Nowadays, the vast majority of established industrialists were at one time simple machine operators, or at least their fathers were'. It was also added that in the majority of cases, shop owners 'began as apprentices or shop assistants on very modest salaries'.²¹

What were the possible causes of this change in workers' possibilities and prospects? With regard to large and medium-sized industries, the main obstacle was the difficulty in raising the starting capital, which two characters as different as Mañé y Flaquer and Pablo Iglesias both estimated to be in the region of 200,000 *duros* (the term *duro* refers to five pesetas, irrespective of the period). It was more difficult to explain what was happening in small workshops, which in principle did not require any major investment and which could be set up with only rudimentary equipment and a few workers.

Iglesias himself said that in printing companies it was enough to have 'half a dozen boxes and another half a dozen work benches', which could be easily paid for 'in instalments' or by means of a loan. According to Perezagua, in locksmith's workshops it was enough to have 'a pair of bellows, a vice and a couple of files', which were all on sale in Madrid's flea market. What is more, it was not difficult for new employers to find work, as long as they offered to do the work for less money than the competition. As it was not necessary to make advance payments, because employers could delay paying their workers until they themselves had been paid for the job, and could even employ cheap labour by contracting children, the logical conclusion was that it should not have been very difficult for workers to set themselves up in business.²²

So, at least, went the theory. In practice, any worker attempting to embark on such an adventure had to be prepared to face almost insurmountable obstacles. This was partly due to the competition. Whereas a new locksmith could only acquire 'limited, poor quality materials', a well-established employer who owned a larger company 'gets better and cheaper materials and represents such a source of competition for workers who have recently set themselves up in business that they go bankrupt and are forced to go back to being paid labourers'. However, in addition to the competition, economic instability was a major problem for anyone who had limited resources. For all those reasons, setting up a company, although in theory a reality, had at that time turned into an impossible dream.²³

To use the language of the time, workers had lost the possibility of achieving their *emancipation*. If previously workers could still 'aspire to becoming emancipated', at the time the questionnaire was carried out, such an ambition only lived on as an unattainable dream for 'a few poor workers who hang on to it like a shipwrecked sailor hangs on to a burning nail'. In the best cases, workers who managed to set up a small workshop and get 'a mediocre apprentice or a bad journeyman', were still a long way from becoming true businessmen, even though they now 'exploited' their ex-colleagues (or 'sucked their blood', to quote the expression used by one person from Madrid). At the most, they could be considered 'workers who managed to get close to emancipation but no further'. Thus, the only possible means of emancipation was through collective action because, as the Society of Typographers of Madrid said: