

workplace, but otherwise his analysis does not stray beyond Canadian borders. The demands of increasingly mobile capital and the pressures on domestic governments, however, increasingly come from abroad, and Vogt's prescriptive analysis of property and democracy needs to address the phenomenon of globalization, its dangers and its possibilities.

Although Vogt suggests a potentially attractive vision of enhanced property rights, the analysis is too fleeting to satisfy the specialist, and not engaging enough to capture a larger imagination. This is too bad because Vogt's efforts to reclaim the idea of property and to put it to work for those whose claims have not been accorded such privileged protection is long overdue.

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Michael Torigian, *Every Factory a Fortress: The French Labor Movement in the Age of Ford and Hitler* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999).

Following the 1936 electoral victory of the Popular Front coalition, the French Third Republic faced the biggest wave of labour unrest in its history, with over 1.8 million workers on strike during June of that year alone. Given the heady atmosphere extant in the wake of an historic left-wing triumph, one might think that Marceau Pivert, leader of the pro-revolutionary faction of the French Socialist Party, captured the spirit of the time when he entitled one of his newspaper editorials "Everything Is Possible." But in fact, the situation was far less straightforward. *L'Humanité*, the organ of the French Communist Party (PCF), immediately countered that "Everything Is Not Possible." This encapsulated the new, "pragmatic" approach the party had adopted as a leading architect of the Popular Front, in stark contrast to its hardline revolutionary stance of only a few years earlier. Moreover, even Pivert's concrete demands were more limited than his rhetoric implied, concentrating upon wage increases and the election of workers' delegates.¹

Insofar as the working class was concerned, then, there was a sharp contrast between the tremendous expectations aroused by the Popular Front, and the limited changes wrought by the government of the Socialist leader Léon Blum. To be sure, the Matignon Accords – hurriedly signed so as to end the strike wave – ushered in the 40-hour work week and significant wage increases for some. But by 1938, most historians of contemporary France agree, they had been undermined by continuing economic problems, a growing pressure to increase armaments output, a vigorous (and, many would add, vindictive) employer counter-offensive, and bitter political conflict.

It is this last factor which most interests Michael Torigian in his study of the Paris metal industry during the era of the Popular Front. Asserting that “the labor movement is inherently non-political, serving as a vehicle neither for a party nor an ideology” (x), he contends that the most effective unions are those which follow an English or German model. Those organizations worked to establish an enduring presence in the factories, and engaged in party politics only in support of such goals. In France, conversely, unions faced a strong state, and were weak in the factory. This made the Parisian *métallos* and many other workers more inclined to engage in “politics” rather than unionism, with ultimately deleterious results.

Torigian begins his account by emphasizing the structural changes which took place in the metal industry during the interwar period. Hitherto France had been characterized by gradual industrial growth and the persistence of a sizeable rural sector, but with the advent of World War I a shift towards more “American-style” methods took place. By the end of the 1920s, the “Fordist-Taylorist mode of production”(9) had been widely introduced. For the working class, the social consequences included a narrowing of their defined tasks, and a growing sense of *anomie* in the midst of what Torigian deems a superficial mass culture. The union movement could provide few alternatives to this new order. It was “political” in orientation, and sharply divided between the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and the Communist-dominated General Confederation of Unitary Labour (CGTU). While the latter did establish a presence among Parisian metal workers, it could only offer “a proletarian counter-society [which] was ... less an alternative to liberal society than a mass or democratized version of it” (25).

The ideological character, and thus in Torigian’s view the long-term ineffectiveness, of French unionism was further enhanced by the crisis of the Third Republic during the 1930s. In fairness, the onset of the Great Depression was initially accompanied by greater attention on the part of the Communists to shopfloor issues. But the 6 February, 1934, riots, during which a bevy of mostly ultra-nationalist groups had marched on the Chamber of Deputies, quickly sidetracked this trend. Confronted with pressure from their militants to cooperate with other groups against the domestic far right, as well as Soviet desires to see France become an ally in containing Nazi Germany, the PCF and CGTU worked towards building the Popular Front coalition with the Socialists and the centrist Radical party. Indeed, the two wings of the labour movement reunified under the banner of the CGT in 1936, though the restructured organization would experience serious internal tensions.

Though the fusion was the result of political pressures, Torigian concedes that in general the rise of the Popular Front greatly boosted worker confidence, and “had also made the daily problems of the shop floor – the bread-and-butter issues of industry – matters of general political concern” (92).

Nevertheless, in the second half of the book he emphasizes that the coalition was always beset by deep fissures, implying that since many of its constituent elements were not focussed upon instilling a union-based consciousness in the workers, its achievements were doomed to be ephemeral. Thus, while the strike wave which began in 1936 was accompanied by a massive growth in CGT membership, and did pose challenges to the social structure, most of the new supporters were “slaves of political ritual,” with little inclination to follow “experienced union leaders”(120). Yet although the Communists had capitalized upon the situation to extend their support base, by appealing to the tradition of Jacobin Republicanism, Torigian concludes that the expansion was less the result of their machinations than the conformist mass society in which the workers lived.

That was not the perception of contemporaries such as the *Syndicats* tendency within the CGT, which criticized the Communists for “colonizing” the unions, and for their subservience to Moscow’s strategy for confronting Nazism, which they believed entailed the risk of war. Thus, as early as the fall of 1936 the organization was divided into three factions, with the centrists led by Léon Jouhaux unsuccessfully seeking to bridge the gap between the Communists and the *Syndicats* group. Neither a faltering economy, nor an increasingly powerful counter-offensive by the employers, served to reinvigorate pro-unity impulses. Furthermore, since the unions’ victories were so closely tied to the political constellation obtaining in 1936, any reconfiguration could, and soon did, lead to an erosion of those gains. Once Blum’s administration retreated from some of its reforms, and then gave way to more conservative governments, the *métallos* found themselves increasingly on the defensive. Tens of thousands quit; those who remained suspected that their own leaders had subordinated the interests of workers to foreign policy concerns and governmental stability.

Torigian provides a detailed reconstruction of the disheartening, and sometimes overlooked, labour struggles which ensued, culminating in the attempted one-day general strike of 30 November, 1938, when the metal workers and their colleagues were “thoroughly outmatched” (170) by the government of Édouard Daladier. Thereafter, he argues, demoralization continued into the *drôle de guerre* of 1939-40. The economic recovery which began in 1938, and the somewhat larger pay packets which resulted, made the situation only slightly more bearable. Political fractiousness within the union movement also continued, reaching its peak in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, which was followed by a dramatic shift in the official position of the Communists against the war effort, and thereafter their expulsion from the CGT. In Torigian’s view, the connection between such distracting conflicts and the catastrophic defeat of 1940 is clear: “This half decade of violent contention – with its sitdown strikes and vengeful lock-outs, mass

demonstrations and street murders – undermined whatever community of sentiment and self-sacrifice had previously defined the nation” (190).

Such assertions have been challenged; recent scholarship has pointed to a growing determination, by 1939, on the part of the French public to resist the Nazis.² Torigian concedes that by the spring of 1940, the country’s aircraft and tank production had begun to overtake that of Germany. While this may seem to be a relatively minor point to make about a book dealing primarily with unions during the pre-war decade, the author’s views on this matter are indicative of the very high standards he has set for French society, especially the labour movement. Few would dispute his contentions about the Popular Front’s profound shortcomings, and his characterization of the union movement as politicized is sound. But the question of the extent to which unionism can and should be divorced from “formal” politics is a complex one.

Of course, Torigian does not argue that the union leaders should have disengaged themselves altogether. Rather, his concern is that they were imbricated in party manoeuvring to the extent that they rendered their members highly vulnerable to the vagaries of day-to-day politics. Yet under the circumstances, calls for non-political unionism could seem risky. Elements of the far right, such as Lieutenant-Colonel François de La Rocque’s Parti Social Français (PSF), sought to appeal to workers by calling for the establishment of “non-political” unions – but within the framework of an authoritarian corporatist state. As the author points out, such movements eagerly capitalized upon any problems the left-wing unions encountered.

More generally, it is crucial to remember that the stakes in the 1930s were very high. The PSF alone had approximately one million members, and the French left had plenty of other enemies. The threat of a right-wing takeover between 1934 and 1936 was real to many, and time was of the essence. Given the relatively weak levels of union consciousness which Torigian himself highlights, it is perhaps unsurprising that appeals to defend the Republic, invoked on past occasions, were re-deployed to build a coalition in a time of urgent crisis. As the author points out, the Republican tradition was ambivalent as far as workers were concerned. Yet it was sufficiently pliable to build a broad-based (albeit fragile) movement, even though the Communist leadership can certainly be accused of a degree of cynicism in their appropriation of it.

As my dissent from some of its conclusions suggests, this is a stimulating work, which raises important questions about the character and strategy of the interwar French labour movement. It is also written with verve; Torigian does a commendable job of reconstituting the perplexing socio-political context in which the *métallos* operated. The activities of the various union tendencies and left-wing political parties, but also the employers, the state, and the right, are smoothly integrated into a fast-paced analytical nar-

rative. In sum, this is a solid contribution to the political history of the French labour movement, one which readers both familiar with and new to the subject will find engaging.

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¹ Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-1938* (Cambridge, 1988), 85, 95-96.

² For a succinct argument to this effect, see William D. Irvine, "Domestic Politics and the Fall of France in 1940," in Joel Blatt, ed., *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments* (Providence, 1998), 85-99; for an account highlighting an ambivalent public mood of solemnity coupled with determination, see Robert J. Young, *France and the Origins of the Second World War* (New York, 1996), 113-129.

Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

I imagine I am not alone in having grown up with the definitions of anarchy memorably advanced by Johnny Rotten (aka John Lydon) and the Sex Pistols in their trenchant cultural analysis of 1977, "Anarchy in the U.K." Between repetitions of the chorus ("I wanna be anarchy"), Rotten/Lydon snarls two phrases that encapsulate a common understanding of anarchy: "Don't know what I want, but I know how to get it," and "I give a wrong time, stop a traffic line." We might nominate these the personal and political faces of contemporary commonsense anarchy. While the former articulates a drive toward untrammelled self-gratification, the latter implies a repertoire of strategies for interrupting business as usual and preventing the hostile corporate takeover of the lifeworld (the line continues "your future dream is a shopping scheme"). The lines certainly capture an anarchy richer than is often imagined in more academic accounts. They preserve an understanding of anarchy as tricksterish, libidinal, humorous and creative as well as angry and potentially destructive.

One of the most useful and impressive things about Allan Antliff's fine study of anarchism in American politics, culture, and art between 1908 and 1920 is the success with which it conveys precisely the multiple and creative aspects of anarchism condensed and recirculated by Johnny Rotten. By this, I do not mean simply to say that Antliff recovers the