

the unions whose history it recounts, even as it makes a timely plea for us to recognize how important these organizations have been and might be.

Mary Jo Maynes
University of Minnesota

Linda Fuller, *Work and Democracy in Socialist Cuba*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. xx + 274 pp. \$44.95 cloth.

Debates about democracy often focus on issues of form versus substance. Critics of formal democracy argue that contested elections, separation of powers, and civil liberties do not necessarily satisfy basic needs such as employment, education, health care, and housing. Consequently, they maintain that political rights ought not to be the sole democratic criterion: A democracy should also institute guarantees for economic and social rights. In addition, they contend that voting—the act by which most people partake in politics—is not meaningfully integrated into the lives of ordinary citizens. Democracy, therefore, should entail participation and control in the local community and at the workplace. The latter is particularly problematic: People, as citizens, may enjoy the full spectrum of formal rights and still spend, as workers, most of their days in an environment quite immune to democratic imperatives. Often, a radical critique of formal democracy also contains a rebuke of capitalism and the hope that more democratic forms of work organization could be possible under socialism.

Linda Fuller embraces these criticisms of formal democracy and presents the reader with an empirical study of what she considers to have been an ongoing democratization of the workplace in Cuba during the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1960s, the Cuban government sought to implement a sui generis model of socialism that avoided the pitfalls of “actually existing socialism” to follow a path of permanent mobilization and moral incentives. In spite of their appeal as an alternative to Soviet orthodoxy, the policies of the late 1960s failed miserably. The Cuban economy almost collapsed and ordinary Cubans became increasingly demoralized. Millenarian visions overlooked the exigencies of everyday life. After 1970, Cuban leaders launched an institutionalization process (based on the Soviet model but adapted to Cuban conditions) which included the trade unions, the organization of work, and labor-management relations. Fuller argues in the book’s core chapters that these changes brought Cuban workers greater control over the workplace.

These chapters are generally strong, well researched, and cogently argued. During the 1960s, when mobilizations prevailed over institutions, trade unions “withered away”: Ordinary workers had no meaningful opportunities to participate in workplace matters and had few institutional recourses to redress their grievances. During the 1970s, the labor movement increased its membership, strengthened existing unions, and created

industry where it originally was established in the early Cold War era as a moderate alternative to socialization; moreover, Schneider shows how the very rhetoric of codetermination has been deployed to suggest that since unions were part of the "partnership" the Federal Constitution established, it was inappropriate for them to use their force, particularly strikes, in a political fashion. Indeed, the whole history of codetermination lends support to those skeptical of various milder forms of "partnership" ("team concepts," "quality circles," etc.). In the final analysis, the constraints of competition and profitability built into capitalist economies have always put limits on how far power sharing could go. Even though there has been a undeniable rise in the standard of living for workers, Schneider notes that there has not been an accompanying decrease in inequality as measured by wealth distribution; indeed, as in the United States, measures of wealth distribution have shown increasing inequality.

Despite its attention to issues of critical importance to both labor historians and contemporary observers of the labor movement, however, Schneider's book ultimately is disappointing. Although he is quick to recognize the limitations of trade unions' past approaches—the narrowness of their scope of action, their failure to recruit more broadly on behalf of a democratic vision, and so forth—his own terms of analysis replicate these limits. This is narrow "trade union organization history" that rarely looks beyond the official, organizational perspective. But even within the confines of this genre, the reader could hope to hear a few more voices. Schneider is careful to regret once every fifty or one hundred pages that trade unions were not very good at recruiting women workers. He also notes in passing that the unions might have paid more attention to the working-class press and other cultural institutions. He decries their leaders' lack of ability to encourage and sustain grassroots initiatives. Still, while critical of these limitations, Schneider replicates them in his narrative. There is almost no attention to actual workers and their lives, to working-class families and communities, to their cultural activities and sense of identity, or even to everyday life on the job. To discover this history, readers will have to seek out the works of labor historians who take different approaches, who place the experiences, struggles, and concerns of workers of all sorts at the center of their inquiries. Schneider, instead, reinscribes the notion that labor history is made by union officials, parliamentarians, and other bigwigs. Brief asides notwithstanding, his story centers on the tale told by *Bonzen*, on the documents collected and preserved by the union leadership, on the minutes of trade union congresses and official trade union publications.

This is not to argue that there is not an important place for this research, but rather, that in isolation from other sources of working-class history and in the absence of other voices, it remains barren and bureaucratic, empty of the lives and hopes and struggles that ought to play a major role in the story. Schneider's union history embodies the problems of

chapters in most enterprises. Collective work agreements began to regulate labor-management relations; union leaders joined management councils; the councils that arbitrated labor disputes became functional once again; enterprises began to hold monthly assemblies where management and union leaders discussed work-related issues with the rank and file. To her careful research of primary sources, Fuller adds the voices of the Cuban workers she interviewed in the early 1980s. Her most important insight with regard to the changes of the 1970s and early 1980s is that the input of ordinary workers in the daily conduct of their workplaces was more significant than the formal structures perhaps indicated. She presents interesting data and arguments in support of this insight.

Unfortunately, Fuller is considerably weaker when she steps away from the workplace and the empirical documentation of the institutionalization of the labor movement. Her discussion of the Cuban Communist Party is seriously flawed: She falls prey to the "formalism" that radical critics of formal democracy so aptly underscore. Descriptions of party structures and membership profiles tell us little about decision-making processes. Although I agree with Fuller that Cubanists too often have viewed post-1959 Cuban politics through the lenses of elite struggles and factions, these cannot be summarily dismissed without losing an important analytical component of any sound interpretation. Moreover, although she finished her book in 1991, she did not include a preliminary reconsideration of vanguard party politics in the light of recent East European and Soviet experiences. Her efforts at explaining the many winding roads of Cuban socialism likewise fall well short of the expectations raised by her thoughtful analysis of union and workplace changes. Most glaring is her failure to address fully the consequences of the post-1986 rectification process, the labor congress of 1990, and the mounting economic crisis since 1989 for the workplace democratization she claims accompanied the institutionalization of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Democracy, indeed, is more than elections and the rotation of elites. Without contested elections, however, there is no democracy. We who have sympathized with the Cuban Revolution and have attempted to carry out scholarly interpretations of the past thirty-five years need to overcome the polarization—intellectual and political—in Cuban studies. We should not dismiss the imperatives of formal democracy. We cannot continue to emphasize the efforts of the Cuban government to democratize the local context without at the same time looking critically at political institutions and the people who actually make the decisions that affect the lives of ordinary Cubans. In this respect, Fuller could have advanced our understanding of Cuba by placing the institutionalization of the labor movement in a broader perspective, but she does not.

"Actually existing socialism" lost the competition with capitalism. As we approach the mid-1990s, there can be little doubt that Cuban socialism is reaching the end of the road and that, at some point, Cuba again will

have a capitalist economy. Formal democracy will then be an important weapon for Cuban workers in defending their interests. It behooves Fuller and the rest of us to explain why supposedly it was less so under socialism. I am by no means minimizing the significance of democracy in the workplace. I do, however, insist that the analysis of democracy at all levels is imperative. Since socialism (for the time being) no longer is a feasible option and there never were any models of "actually existing *democratic* socialism," we need to look again at the troublesome relationship between democracy and capitalism. The old dichotomies will simply not do—intellectually or politically.

Marifeli Pérez-Stable

State University of New York, College at Old Westbury

Paola Nava, ed., *Operate, serve, maestre, impiegate*. Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1992. 460 pp. 48,000 lira.

This collection of papers presented at an international conference at Carpi in 1990 begins to make up for the lack of historical studies on female labor in modern Italy. Though methodologically and conceptually very different, the essays share the search for some analytic framework able to make women's history integral to a critical rereading of labor history in Italy. For this reason the four thematic sections on industrialization, urbanization, state intervention, and work are introduced by theoretical essays. Ranging from the eighteenth century (Raffaella Sarti's research on female and male servants in Bologna and Maura Palazzi's on Bologna's Casa d'industria, which was contradictory oriented toward both charity and profit, assistance and labor markets) to World War II, the book concentrates mainly on female occupations in postunification Italy, documenting changing but persistent sex segregation (Venetian pearl stringers, milliners, cigar makers, and elementary-school teachers).

The feminist reconceptualization of the unity between market work and work for private consumption and of the sexual division of labor has led to a redefinition of work itself in specific historical contexts. This has brought about a reconsideration of the long-lasting processes of the separation of production for the market and for self-consumption and of the difficult identification of female work under historically different definitions of family businesses.

The essays give many examples of the necessity to critically question sources such as ecclesiastic censuses in which married women were only listed on the basis of their relationship to the male head of family, and not on the basis of their own occupations. In modern history, women's work (and men's work as well) can be analyzed only by looking at the intersection of the state, the family, and the market, as frequently stressed in Chiara Saraceno's sociological studies and in her preface to this book. In