

# HISTORY OF THE PRESENT

©

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#1

## A Newsletter

Michel Foucault's work opened up new possibilities for thought and research. His seminars here at Berkeley brought together students and professors from a number of different fields who are now pursuing a variety of such possibilities. The newsletter has grown out of our productive experience of collective study: we hope to provide a medium for an exchange of ideas and information and to establish a network between individuals from different universities and countries who are working on questions similar to the ones Foucault raised or who, in addressing their own particular intellectual and political problems, are making different uses of Foucault's work.

*History of the Present* is an open forum for presenting work that is in progress. We hope to receive from you descriptions of research projects, bibliographical information, names and addresses, suggestions and announcements. Our address is:

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### History of the Present

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### The Future of *History of the Present*

Our next issue is scheduled for May, and will be focussed on Paris. Inquiries along with \$2 to help defray costs should be sent to the above address.

# An Interview with Michel Foucault

The following interview appeared in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 17 March 1975, just after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*. In addition to his many other political activities, Foucault, as a member of the Group Information-Prisons (G.I.F.), was prominently involved in the movement in France to abolish prisons, to which he alludes briefly below. In the interview he discusses not only the ideas in his book, but also his attitudes on political action and his sense of the possible political role of his writing.

The interviewer is Jean-Louis Ezine. Translated by Renée Morel.

*Int: Yesterday madness, illness; today prisons: through this patient labor as an archivist of the social alcoves, do you hope to rescue philosophy from its powerlessness?*

Foucault: You know that I am not talking as a philosopher. When I started to get involved with these subjects that were in a way the dregs [bas-fonds] of social reality a number of researchers

such as Barthes, Blanchôt, and the English antipsychiatrists took an interest in them. But it must be said that neither the philosophical community nor even the political community has been even slightly interested in them. None of the journals, institutionally assigned to register the smallest jolt in the philosophical world, has paid any attention to them. The problem of social controls—to which are connected all the issues related to madness, medicine, psychiatry—did not appear in general view until after May '68. All of a sudden it was catapulted to the center of common concerns.

*Int: In spite or because of its aptitude to dismember the "dissocial," to take apart the mechanism [s] of power, for what can contemporary philosophy hope, other than helping these powers refine their strategies as soon it unmasks them?*

Foucault: Your question carries with it a postulate: I would be the author of a philosophical discourse that functions like any other, i.e. in the very directions of the mechanisms of power that it supports. We could argue about that . . . Whatever the process may be, it is absolutely true that it allows the power structure to refine its strategy, but I don't think we should be afraid of this phenomenon. To be sure, some political groups have long felt this fear of being co-opted. Won't everything that is said be inscribed in the very mechanisms that we are trying to denounce? Well, I think it is absolutely necessary that

it should happen this way: if the discourse can be co-opted, it is not because it is vitiated by nature, but because it is inscribed in a process of struggle. Indeed, the adversary pushing, so to speak, on the hold you have over him in order to turn it around constitutes the best valorization of the stakes and typifies the

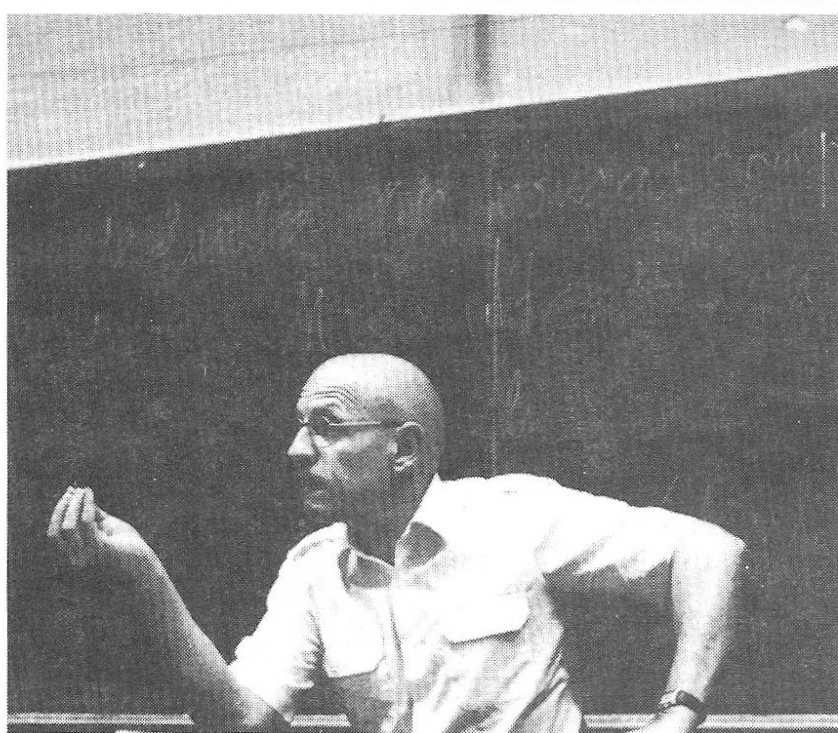


Photo by Randy Badler.

whole strategy of struggles: as in judo, the best answer to an opponent's manoeuvre never is to step back, but to re-use it to your own advantage as a base for the next phase.

For instance, as an answer to the movement organized these past few years against the penitentiary system, M. Giscard d'Estaing has created a new government post [secrétaire] on the penitentiary condition. It would be silly for us to see in that fact a victory for the movement, but it would be just as silly to see in it the proof that our movement has been co-opted. The counter-manoeuver of the power structure can only allow us to measure the importance of the attack that

caused it. Now it is our turn to find a new reply.

*Int: You have seen a postulate in my question; I had thought I had essentially put a sophism in it: indeed, one should consider that the power structure, defined exclusively as the principle of social oppression, has been ineluctably perfecting itself for two centuries despite the advent and the developments of democracy. This is precisely what your book wants to show: I am not far from seeing in it a certain taste for paradox, if not the traditional traces of philosophical skepticism.*

Foucault: As soon as a power infinitely less brutal and less extravagant, less visible and less ponderous than the big monarchical administration became necessary, greater latitudes for the participation in power and in the decision-making process were given to a certain social class. But at the same time and in order to compensate for it, a system of training was elaborated, essentially aimed at other social classes, but also at the new ruling class—for the bourgeoisie has in a way worked upon itself, it has developed its own type of individuals. I do not think that the two phenomena are contradictory: one was the price paid for the other; one was made possible only by the other. For a certain bourgeois liberalism to become possible at the level of institutions, it was necessary to have, at the level of what I call "micro-powers," a much stricter investment in bodies and behaviors. Discipline is the underside of democracy.

*Int: The more we are in a democracy, the more under surveillance we are?*

Foucault: In one way or another, yes: this tight control can take different forms, from caricatures—barracks or old religious schools—to the modern forms. We are now witnessing the rise of other types of surveillance, obtained virtually without people realizing it, through the pressure of consumption. At the beginning of the 19th century, the government tried to force workers to save, despite very low wages. What was at stake in the operation was certainly more than the elevation of the political over the economic order; the point was to try to inculcate in the population, through directives, a certain type of behavior, made of order and wisdom. Nowadays, this bombardment with moral precepts is no longer necessary: the prestige of the car, the politics of equipment, or the incitement to consumption make for normalizations of behavior that are just as efficient.

*Int: I am nevertheless holding on to the paradox and other facilities of logical derision: your thought processes provide other signs of this. For example that the relation between the rule and the exception define these two terms—this would be the a-b-c of Structuralism. Another thing is to base, the way you do, the rule on the exception, to the extent of defining, of justifying the existence and the exercise of the rule only by that which precisely escapes from it. The law is made in order to create the offense, the prison to produce delinquency, etc. . . .*

Foucault: You are right to cite Structuralism. We could go back to that major example, first in the structuralist method, which consists of the rules of the incest taboo and those of marriage in primitive societies, since it is finally through this example and thanks to the genius of Levi-Strauss that we are able to apply to the field of social sciences a certain number of formal models borrowed from linguistics and, occasionally, from mathematics. However, this is not what interests me, and I have always wanted to ask anthropologists, what is the actual functioning of the incest rule? I mean the rule not as a formal system, but as a precise, real, workaday, and subsequently individualized instrument of coercion. It is the constraint that interests me; how it weighs on consciences and how it is inscribed in bodies; how it revolts people and how they thwart it. It is precisely at this point of contact, of friction, possibly of conflict, between the system of rules and the interplay of irregularities that I always place my interrogation.

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At the moment when the broad system of scientific and philosophical rationality produces the general vocabulary with which people have communicated since the 17th century, what happens to those whose behavior excludes them from this language? This is what intrigues me.

*Int: You go further in the analysis of the functioning of social rules: for example, you are not saying that prisons are imperfect because of their powerlessness to reduce delinquency; you say that they are perfect since they produce delinquency, and that they are made for this purpose.*

Foucault: I was coming to that; it’s exactly what I wanted to say, but I am doing this analysis, for the time being at least, only in regard to civil and penal laws. I am not applying it to the level of reason. It seemed to me, as I was examining them, that laws were not intended to prevent disorder, irregular behaviors, etc., but that their ultimate functioning was more complex: as soon as a law is instituted, it suddenly forbids or

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***“Writing interests me only in the measure that it incorporates the reality of combat, as an instrument, a tactic, a spotlight. I would like my books to be like surgeon’s knives, Molotov cocktails, or galleries in a mine, and, like fireworks, to be carbonized after use.”***

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condemns a certain number of behaviors. Thus, an aura of illegalisms immediately appears around it. And these illegalisms are not treated, not repressed in a consistent way by the penal system and by the law itself. Take, for instance, the category of laws concerning the respect for property: they don’t function in the same way according to the nature of property; so that one wonders if the law is not, under the guise of a general rule, a way to allow the appearance of certain illegalisms, differing one from the other, which will permit, for example, the enrichment of some and the impoverishment of others, which will now insure tolerance, now authorize intolerance. The penal system would be, to that extent, a way to handle these illegalisms, to deal with their differences, to maintain them, and ultimately to make them work.

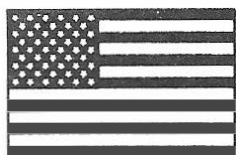
*Int: If I understood well, then, for the power structure, crime pays.*

Foucault: Certainly. Some crimes pay. Prison is a curious system of reform, rather akin to witchcraft. In fact, it was soon discovered that, far from reforming the individuals, prison did nothing but constitute them as a milieu: one in which delinquency proves to be the only mode of existence. It was realized that this delinquency, closed in upon itself, controlled, infiltrated, could become an economic and political instrument, most useful to society: the organization of delinquency through the penal system and the prison is one of the great characteristics of our society. Delinquency has become a social body foreign to the social body; perfectly homogeneous, closely watched and catalogued by the police, penetrated by informers and stool-pigeons, it was immediately used for two ends. An economic one: imposition of profit on sexual pleasure, organization of prostitution in the 19th century, and finally transformation of delinquency into a fiscal agent for sexuality. And a political one: it is with shock troops recruited from among criminals that Napoleon III—the first to do so—organized the infiltrations of the workers’ movements.

*Int: The prison issue is very topical. In the editorial mass devoted to it, where do you place your book?*

Foucault: It is only a short history, an aside, compared to the present struggles . . . Besides, it is necessary for historical analysis truly to be a part of the political struggle. The point is not to give to the movement a direction or a theoretical apparatus, but to set up possible strategies. It is a fact that Marxism—I mean scholastic Marxism, that traditional corpus of knowledge and texts—does not give us any instrument for

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## Governing Work & Social Life in the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.



Keith Gandall and Stephen Kotkin

As he was finishing his books on sexuality that took him back to ancient Greece and early Christianity, Michel Foucault was looking forward to working on a contemporary topic. He was planning a history and a political critique of the present public policies in Western societies. In December 1983, Foucault and some of us here at Berkeley designed a research project whose aim was the collective writing of a book.

Foucault had long been interested in "government" in a broad and fundamental sense: *practices of government* that were put into play, not only by the state and political organizations, but also, say, in the prison, the asylum, and the family; and *targets of government* that these practices did not so much single out as actually construct, such as delinquency, mental health, sexuality, population. He wanted to understand the practices of government and the political thinking that have shaped the present. As a new project he proposed studying the period of the Great War and its aftermath because he felt it witnessed the birth and spread of practices of government and exercises of power that are still with us today. Following Foucault's suggestion about the period and using his methods we began our own researches in anticipation of working with him. We were never able to find out exactly what he had in mind. All we had were his suggestions and a sense of the direction he hoped to pursue. Our research is immeasurably indebted to Foucault and his kind of analysis, but it is guided by our own interests and perceptions.

The war and post-war period is commonly understood to be a watershed in the history of Western government, usually because of the vast powers accrued by governments out of the need for total mobilization and the consequent extension of the State into new areas of society, and because of the transformation of liberalism and the founding of the Welfare state. But our discussions with Foucault and our own researches suggested that a more fundamental change had occurred: the elaboration and diffusion of a "social" art of governing that was historically and culturally singular.

This new art of government was being formed in the 19th century on a number of different fronts in response to *local problems*: the problem of contagion and the doctor's concern with the health of the social body, the menace of the uneducated housewife and the home economist's concern with the strength and order of the nation, the problem of women in the factory and the legislator's concern with the future of the race, the problem of shared housing and city planner's concern with the moral fiber of society, the hazard of railroad and industrial accidents and the insurer's concern with the regulation of social risk. Although their problems were disparate and the methods they used in addressing them heterogeneous, these experts nevertheless could "speak to each other," because they shared a logic, a rationality, that arose out of the new practices of government and gave these practices their intelligibility and self-evidence. In this new way

of reasoning, society was viewed as population that had to be counted and evaluated, to have its social life administered, to be made healthy and "socially secure." And the individual was understood in terms of his or her conformity to or deviation from certain norms of populations (production norms, psychiatric norms, standards of hygiene, standards of living) and in terms of the danger that he or she might pose to the "social security."

With the Great War and post-war reconstruction, the "social" art of government was deployed in response to an *urgent and "total" problem*: the problem of national cohesion and survival. With total mobilization, the domain of the new art of government was suddenly and greatly extended while its methods were further developed and expanded. Indeed, it was this "social" art of government that made possible the new liberalism and the Welfare State.

We have been investigating, therefore, how Western societies, in their executions of "total" wars, either invented or extended new forms of governing populations: new methods and new aims of government that were by no means demobilized at the war's end. We have been exploring the hypothesis that the problems and practices which would shape the peace-time societies were indeed developed in the experience of war, not only at the level of statecraft or state supervision of the economy, but also in the workplace, in the home, in the school. We present here a description of a project that uses Foucault's work to study the United States and Soviet Union. We plan to extend our analyses to include other twentieth-century regimes, such as fascist ones and those within the so-called third world.

### America and the Soviet Union: Opposites?

In the Great War Russia did not fit into Wilson's equation; how could America fight a war "to make the world safe for democracy" when one of its allies was the Tsarist autocracy? Thus, Wilson greeted the revolution in February 1917 that established a constitutional government in Russia as the salvation of his cause; he linked the world-wide struggle for democracy with the events in Russia, now a "fit" partner in the crusade. But before the war was won there was to be another revolution. It was a "Bolshevik" revolution, a socialist revolution, a dictatorship: everything that, in Wilson's eyes, liberalism was not. Wilson's program for the post-war world now had a rival—Bolshevism; against Wilson, there was Lenin. The Bolsheviks also proclaimed themselves on the side of "civilization": they saw themselves as overcoming the contradictions in the outmoded capitalist system, the very system that had given rise to the horrible war. The October revolution offered a model for all nations, a palpable reality for the whole world to emulate. Now the United States and the Soviet Union appeared as diametrical opposites: two different routes that the peace-time world might take. This polarity has served to organize geopolitics ever since, splitting the "world"

in two and giving rise, for the Americans, to the "free world" and the "communist world," and, for the Soviets, to the "socialist world" and the "imperialist world." The articulation of an "other" at the same time involved the elaboration of one's own "world," creating a kind of partnership in rivalry.

But despite the enmity and Manichean rhetoric on both sides, each side was fascinated with its "rival," and this mutual interest indicates something other than pure opposition. For the Soviets, America was synonymous with modern technology: many Bolsheviks viewed American mechanization as "the loftiest expression of human perfection" and advocated a "Soviet Americanism." The Bolsheviks thrilled to American skyscrapers; Mayakovskii eulogized Chicago; Bolsheviks dreamed about visiting Detroit; Lenin raved about the wonders of American efficiency and organization. On the other side, the Soviet Union was seen by all kinds of Americans as a "vast laboratory." Advertisements in American magazines offered the opportunity to visit "the world's most gigantic social experiment," and Americans flocked to see the experiment in person; in addition to teachers, lawyers, and engineers, the biggest American capitalists would eventually go there: Ford, Rockefeller, and others. Reformers saw their wildest fantasies being carried out on the widest possible scale, while industrialists were piqued by the challenge to their sacred economic beliefs.

In fact, these strange fascinations and the lessons that each tried to learn from the other point to some fundamental experiences that these nations shared.

With the Great War and the Russian Civil War, work emerged as a problem, not just for industrialists, managers, and technicians, but also for doctors, hygienists, security agents, psychiatrists, insurance operators, social workers, nutritionists. Work became the object of new knowledges and the target of new practices. Work was governed by a host of new agents and agencies. The issues of the workplace and the space and activities attached to it were seen as social concerns, problems that confronted the social body and required the interventions of experts and scientists, security agents and social workers; in turn, practices developed outside of industry were borrowed to address the new labor problems and to govern the workplace. Work became a problem in a new field of reality that these methods of government articulated: a realm of social welfare and social security, social danger and social protection, social engineering and social waste, social concerns and social sciences. If these new agents in and around the workplace developed their own particular knowledges about work and their own particular methods for dealing with labor problems, they nevertheless shared a new social art of government and a logic of the social.

### **New Labor Problems and Shared Experiences of Government**

In America, two problems organized the mobilization of men and women for the work of war: one centering around the armed forces and the other around the labor force. The problem of "fitting the right man to the right position" had been taken up by business in the decades before the war, and, soon after America entered the fighting, the top army brass became interested in new corporate methods of evaluation and classification. Members of the Bureau of Salesmanship Research (who were studying methods for finding good salesmen) came to run the Committee on Classification of

Personnel in the army and to oversee the assignment of more than a million men to positions in the military. While these businessmen were developing personnel techniques (such as the rating system and the interview) for determining officer capability and occupational expertise, a number of psychologists were developing psychological or intelligence tests for the Council of National Defense. Psychologists initially used the tests for eliminating "misfits" and then for grading all recruits, assigning them to positions, and balancing battalions, all on the basis of intelligence norms. These wartime agencies gave a great boost to industrial psychology after the war.

The civilian labor problem was very different. Reformist leaders of both the war effort and private corporations were constituting low levels of productivity, labor turnover, and agitation as problems of labor *relations*. This particular formulation of the labor problem was new with the war. In the decade before the war, F.W. Taylor had been trying to counter labor's slowdowns of production with efficiency techniques: the "scientific" systemization of tasks coupled with a program of bonus payments as incentive. This initially acclaimed solution to industrial difficulties did not admit of a separate labor problem beyond that of efficiency. Both organized and unorganized labor put up resistance to Taylor's system (which was to leave the "scientific" determination of work methods and wages to management, and which was attacked as dehumanizing), and this resistance was stiffest in the unionized federal arsenals. The Wilson administration identified and confronted a labor problem that was quite different from Taylor's, and it pursued a new approach to insure high levels of productivity (for the war effort). It promised high wages and recognition of the right to join a union in exchange for increased productivity on the part of the workers. This wartime policy, involving contracts and agreements between the State and national labor leaders of the American Federation of Labor, would spur, after the war, the variety of corporate as well as political programs for "industrial democracy," in which labor would somehow take part in the management of work.

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At the local level, these programs sometimes meant labor unions, but more often company unions or shop committees; at the national level, "corporate liberal" organizations invited leaders from both big business and big labor to work out problems of personnel management and labor relations for all of industry.

Notwithstanding its general popularity, the problem of *relations* between labor and management did not rule out other formulations of industrial difficulties (insufficient production, turnover, strikes) that laid all the blame solely on workers, either individually or collectively. On the one hand, a movement for mental hygiene in industry grew out of the wartime Psychology and Psychiatry Committees, which had developed plans for "misfit" draftees (unskilled labor or institutionalization) as well as programs for shell-shocked and other disturbed servicemen ("re-education"). This movement

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# Foucault in Berkeley

**F**oucault first came to Berkeley in the spring of 1975. As Visiting Professor of French, Foucault conducted a seminar and delivered some public lectures. It was to be five years before he would return, the next time as both Visiting Professor and as the University's Howison Lecturer for 1980.

In the meantime, Foucault had developed further contacts at Berkeley outside the French Department. Professors Hubert Dreyfus (Philosophy) and Paul Rabinow (Anthropology), through their participation in an interdisciplinary seminar, discovered their common interest in Foucault's work. During a series of conversations between Dreyfus and Rabinow and Foucault in 1979, the idea of a collaborative book on Foucault's work took shape. Foucault was delighted that his work had been found productive for research in other fields.

Foucault's lectures in 1980 on "Truth and Subjectivity" drew enormous crowds. Highly publicized and widely discussed, they marked his arrival as a celebrity on the Berkeley campus. News of Foucault's presence at Berkeley spread, and some students came in the hope of studying with him. Though he was puzzled and made uncomfortable by the fanfare and notoriety, Foucault liked Berkeley very much, especially for the openness and the possibility of real intellectual exchange that he found here. He continued to establish new contacts as well as to deepen existing ones, both inside and outside the academic community.

In these lectures Foucault gave indications of the new directions of his work. As he now saw it, the focus of his project was not power per se, but the history of modern subjectivity, the analysis of how in our culture human beings are made into subjects and certain singular forms of experience are created. In his books on asylums and prisons, he had examined the human sciences and disciplinary practices that constituted individuals as mad and delinquent subjects, made possible the experiences of madness and delinquency, and produced populations of madmen and delinquents. In writing his multi-volume history of sexuality, Foucault had been led to consider, in addition to the exterior coercions and knowledges that made the experience of sexuality possible, the ways in which the individual fashions himself or herself according to dictates, images, norms of conduct. The combination of methods of domination and means by which the individual acts upon himself or herself Foucault called "government." In analyzing the government of populations, the self, families, souls, and so on, he explained that he was investigating, not necessarily a process of rationalization, but rather the specific rationalities that made these discourses and practices of government operative in our time intelligible and self-evident.

In the spring of 1983 Foucault returned, as Regents' Professor, and delivered a public lecture before an audience of several thousand on "The Culture of the Self." While here, Foucault made himself available for a series of informal discussions with various departments, and also met with students individually. Although the demands on his time were already considerable, he persisted selflessly in agreeing to virtually every request made on him and still made sure that he had time to get to know students. Before leaving Berkeley that year, Foucault met with a group of students to discuss the

possibility of returning in the fall to give a course. He was enthusiastic about the American system of teaching whereby he could get to work closely with a small number of students. He looked on the course as an opportunity to explore the pedagogical possibilities for him in America, and he was already inquiring about some sort of longer-term arrangement should he want to return regularly.

While at Berkeley Foucault participated in two extensive sets of interviews. One was a long interview in several parts with Bert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow on the three volumes in the history of sexuality project that Foucault was bringing to completion. The second set of interviews included Martin Jay, Leo Lowenthal, Paul Rabinow, Richard Rorty, and Charles Taylor. Foucault was always eager to engage in dialogue with critics who, though holding different positions, shared his sense of the fruitfulness of such exchanges. As the two sets of interviews were completed, a second edition of Dreyfus' and Rabinow's book on Foucault was issued with some of this material. A bit later, Rabinow put together a "Foucault Reader" that contained, in addition to more familiar work, more of this new material, including some of the last things Foucault did. Through the reader Foucault hoped both to summarize in some way a certain stage in his work and to respond directly to his American audience. Indeed, through his teaching at Berkeley, his many interviews here, the book by Dreyfus and Rabinow, the reader, and finally a collaborative research project that he would design with American students, Foucault sought to speak to specifically American concerns and to clarify the presentation of his work in America.

In the fall of 1983, Foucault taught as Joint Visiting Professor of French and Philosophy. He gave a series of lectures on the practice of truth-telling in Ancient Greece, in Greek "Parrhesia," a verbal activity that he linked to politics, ethics, and the care of the self, tracing its transformations through time. In addition, he conducted two seminars in which students presented their own researches on a variety of topics that in most cases had grown out of his writings.

Foucault labored long and hard over his lectures, which he gave in English. He took a particular interest in the seminars. Towards the end of the course, Foucault initiated discussions with the students in one of the seminars on the success of the course, which all agreed, though not without problems, had been exciting and extremely valuable. At this time he proposed the formation of a working group whose purpose would be the collective writing of a book. The members of the group—Dario Biocca, Arturo Escobar, Keith Gandal, Kent Gerard, David Horn, Eric Johnson, Stephen Kotkin, Cathy Kudlick, David Levin, Mark Maslan, Paul Rabinow, Jonathan Simon, Jerry Wakefield, Tom Zummer, and Foucault—came from nine different disciplines. As possible topics for research, Foucault suggested the politics of health in the 19th century, the ethic of asceticism among revolutionaries, or what he called the new political rationality of the 1920s. After some discussion, it seemed that the proposal to investigate the 1920s and the rationalities of government that make possible the Welfare State, fascisms, and Stalinism was more consonant with the

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### Work in Progress

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constituted unemployment, labor turnovers, and grievances as so many individual psychiatric problems; it set out to eliminate the dangers presented by the "psychopath in industry." On the other hand, during the war and after, labor unions of all political colors were constituted and repressed as "radical," subversive, and un-American. During the war, "radical" labor organizations were denied mailing privileges under the Espionage Act (1917), and the federal government mounted raids against the International Workers of the World (IWW) union halls, culminating in mass trials and imprisonment. While the Wilson administration curtailed the worker's right to strike, businessmen disqualified every worker demand as some form of sedition. After the Bolshevik revolution and the war's end, the "stigmatizing" of organized labor reached an hysterical peak in a "red scare." In 1919, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer added a new "anti-radical" unit to the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation (headed by a young J. Edgar Hoover) that carried out raids against union offices and deported aliens under powers granted in the Alien Act of 1918. Meanwhile, employers' organizations, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, denounced labor's demand for a closed or union shop as "Sovietism in disguise" and declared simply that "unionism is nothing less than Bolshevism." Such tactics helped to break the nation-wide steel strike of 1919. Now even the American Federation of Labor, which had participated in the "great red hunt," was not immune from accusations of Bolshevism. By 1919, all strikes, regardless of their nature, were branded as "plots to establish communism." Well into the 1920s, employer groups constituted and attacked the closed shop as radical and un-American.

In effect, programs for harmonious labor relations worked in tandem with both psychiatric and repressive mechanisms for handling labor problems. Where shop committees or company unions (or labor unions themselves) failed to achieve the cohesion of labor and management, psychiatry could be called upon as a remedial device for integrating or excluding the individual "troublemaker," or political repression could step in to isolate intractable "anti-social" solidarities. Resistance to the terms of work was treated either as abnormality or subversion. In either of these "marginal" cases, the troublesome worker would be deprived of the very voice and participation in matters of work upon which industrial democracy was predicated. Thus, these alternative political mechanisms did not simply compete with the procedures of joint decision-making, but also served as coercions on workers to participate in a very circumscribed "democracy." Though the agendas of corporate reformers, mental hygienists, and anti-communists were by no means coordinated and were often at cross-purposes, in practice, their separate programs for solving labor problems (forms of industrial democracy, psychiatric treatments, and political repressions) were integrated in a single political strategy that legitimated the corporate system while safeguarding it against practices that hindered productivity and against demands that called for fundamental changes in the organization of work.

This three-pronged strategy for governing work not only repressed the smaller, more radical labor organizations, it

weakened the American labor movement as a whole and pacified the politics of the largest union, the American Federation of Labor. Union membership nation-wide declined sharply in the early 1920s: more than two million workers left the ranks of organized labor. The legacy of the war for the AFL was a commitment to scientific management—so long as it acknowledged a "human factor" in industry, so long as labor unions were recognized, so long as there were benefits, and, most of all, so long as wages remained high. The AFL gave up its demand for the closed shop, which had been stigmatized as Bolshevik, and it gave up its resistance to scientific management, which it now found "humanized" by industrial psychology and personnel practices.

The terms at issue between federated labor and management had taken on a new configuration, one much more appealing to management: the issues were now restricted to union recognition, benefits, working conditions and wages, and no longer included the control over work methods and workspace. A pacification of the AFL and consequent dissemination of scientific management techniques throughout industry had been made possible by this political strategy that had grown out of the experience of the war.

**T**he Great War had destroyed the Russian economy. The respite afforded to the new Bolshevik government by the signing of a separate peace with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk was cut short by the onset of civil war, which necessitated a new mobilization and the creation of a "red" army. Moreover, the ruinous economic situation, especially the need to feed the cities and the army, required immediate action. The Bolsheviks faced the task of raising the production back up to 1914 levels and, if they were to realize their dreams for a future of abundance and happiness, then it would have to increase well beyond all levels previously known.

In labor-rich, capital-poor Russia, the problem of production was viewed as a problem of labor discipline: not new machines and greater levels of investment, but the organization of a stable workforce and the inculcation of strict labor discipline were thought to hold the key for restoring and advancing the economic life of the country. With large numbers of workers in the cities fleeing to the villages (where there was food), others being called up for the recently-formed Red Army, and still others being drafted into administrative positions, the first task was to prohibit workers from leaving their worksites unless ordered to do so by agencies designed for that purpose. Secondly, overall factory production levels would have to increase quickly and dramatically through greater efforts and organization of the workers: there would be output norms for each factory. As this problem took shape, the Bolsheviks began haphazardly to apply military techniques for achieving labor discipline: the country was divided into "labor zones," workers were assigned to labor "posts," "labor papers" became mandatory, and "courts-labor"—workers' disciplinary courts—were established. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks singled out the all-important transportation industry to be organized and operated in the same manner as the Red Army, with a military chain of command and armed workers. Drawing on some workers' revolutionary enthusiasm, the Bolsheviks created a corps of "shock troops" [udarniki], teams of particularly dedicated workers assigned to specially difficult or urgent tasks. Soon these haphazard measures were developed into a

full-fledged program for the "militarization of labor." As it became clear in 1920 that the Bolsheviks would win the civil war, they did not demobilize the Red Army, but rather remobilized: the "battle" shifted from the Civil War fronts to the "labor front." The Defense Council, a body formed to coordinate all the agencies prosecuting the Civil War, was renamed the Council of Labor and Defense. The Ninth Party Congress in 1920 reiterated the clause in the 1918 constitution declaring universal compulsory labor, and now it was enforceable: absenteeism at work became "desertion," punishable by detention or "forced labor." Now the regime could enlist and distribute the labor force on an all-national scale, using army recruitment offices and sometimes simply rounding people up arbitrarily, making personnel decisions by administrative fiat. The militarization of labor in effect meant two complementary programs: on the one hand, employing the existing machinery of military mobilization for the recruitment of civilian labor as well as using Red Army units as "revolutionary armies of labor" and, on the other, re-organizing the workplace with military techniques.

The labor problem, formulated as a problem of labor discipline, was paralleled by another problem, that of "counter-revolution." When, against a background of rioting and public disturbances, the passive resistance of large numbers of Tsarist government employee holdovers led to the formation of a union and threatened to develop into a strike at the same time as the prospect of a coalition government with the Socialist Revolutionaries was pending, the newly-formed Bolshevik government established a special commission charged with combatting all forms of sabotage. Originally conceived as an investigative organ, the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Sabotage, and Speculation (*Cheka*) allocated to itself (with the tacit approval of the government) broad powers of prosecution and summary sentencing, including executions, and shortly became a permanent organ of administration. At first, the Cheka's activities were limited to sporadic acts of violence, a few coordinated operations, collecting fuel, helping in the fight against epidemics, and providing security for the new government and its offices. (From the start the Cheka was

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**Work became a problem in a new field of reality that these methods of government articulated: a realm of social welfare and social security, social danger and social protection, social engineering and social waste, social concerns and social sciences.**

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equipped with its own armed detachments.) With the attempt in 1918 on Lenin's life and the assassination of the head of the Petrograd Cheka, Uritskii, a campaign of mass terror was publicly proclaimed and put into effect, in an attempt to gain control of violence and to strike fear into the population. At the same time, the Cheka began developing the capacity for organized surveillance, using dossiers and informants. Through the use of informants the entire population would become part of the security apparatus, serving as a vast reservoir of co-workers for the regular troops. As Lenin cheerfully remarked, "A good Communist is a good Chekist."

The revolution had brought with it its twin: counter-

revolution. And counter-revolution proved to be a very elastic category. A counter-revolutionary might be a former Tsarist official, an industrialist, a shopkeeper, but he or she could also be a relative of an accused capitalist, someone found to be in possession of a little money, or simply a personal enemy of an administrator. Moreover, the Party arrogated to itself ultimate arbitration of Truth, in effect creating an "official" truth (in Russian, *Pravda*). Consequently, making statements that were contrary to the party line, even thinking such thoughts or having them imputed to one's mind, also qualified as counter-revolutionary. (Anyone who held a different political belief from the Bolsheviks was not only counter-revolutionary but insane, though in the early years of the revolution labelling of troublemakers as mentally ill was still rare.) In short, the term counter-revolutionary served as a floating signifier of denunciation.

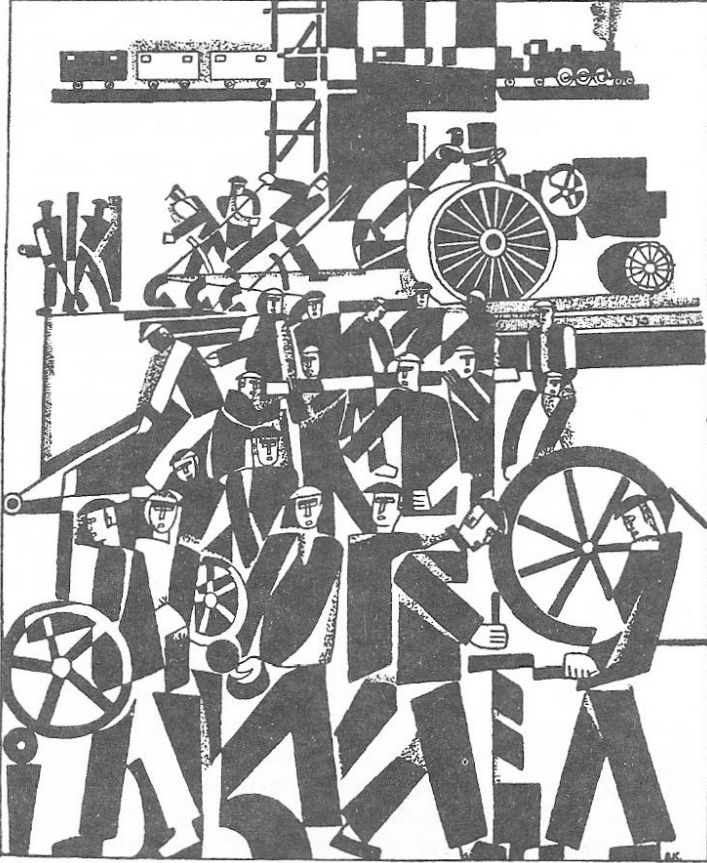
The sphere of the Cheka's responsibility was determined by the activity of counter-revolution. Since counter-revolution in principle was unlimited in scope or location, the Cheka was empowered to operate in all areas of life. A network of so-called "special departments" were created in the Red Army and in those agencies that handled the supplying of the army. Later special departments would be introduced into factories and would become a regular feature of the economy.

The answer to counter-revolution, applied to criminals and political opponents alike, was forced labor: it would transform counter-revolutionary behavior into exemplary behavior, through the performance of "socially useful work." The head of the Cheka, Felix Dzerzhinskii, in 1919 was appointed head of the newly-formed Main Committee on Compulsory Labor. Labor, according to Soviet penal policy, was the "principle method of correction and re-education." Labor camps, begun soon after the revolution and organized upon the same principles of strict military discipline as was labor in general (the prisoners were divided into companies, drilled, subjected to physical training, and marched in formation) operated as the chief devices for gathering and re-training the population of counter-revolutionaries. While resistances to the terms of work were treated as counterrevolution, problems of counter-revolution were solved by teaching labor discipline. In effect, discipline and counterrevolution functioned together as two inseparably linked aspects of the labor problem.

In the face of famine, peasant rebellion, and, most importantly, armed rebellion by the Kronstadt sailors who had all along played a vital role in the Bolshevik's success, Lenin conceded at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 that "military communism" [voenii kommunizm] had been premature. With the New Economic Policy (NEP) he called for a transition period of unspecified duration in which forced requisitions of grain would be replaced, first, by several taxes in kind and, then, by a single tax; the nationalization of industries policy would be modified so that some industries would be denationalized, others exempted, and others allowed to be leased; and the right to buy and sell on the open market would be restored, in effect recognizing the existence of a flourishing "black market." Improving productivity remained a problem of labor discipline, but with the abolition in stages of compulsory labor, it was hoped that discipline would improve through voluntarism rather than coercion. Universal compulsory labor was replaced by a labor market that was to be regulated through the reintroduction of official "employment exchanges," coordinated by trade unions and aided by a



developing industrial psychology movement that was called upon to classify and select unemployed workers for jobs. In many cases, workers and employers sidestepped this mechanism. In addition, unofficial employment exchanges existed. The government, though, was willing to ignore subversion of the exchanges provided that jobs were being assigned and work was being done.



“The Mechanized Worker”

Drawing by Krinski

Inside the factory, scientific management techniques (adapted from America) and surveillance replaced military discipline. New methods of work, piece-work rates, bonuses in cash and in kind, and free vacations were introduced to increase productivity. So-called “production conferences” were held to involve and galvanize the workers, and outstanding workers were singled out as models for others to emulate. Later, medals for outstanding work were awarded, such as the “Hero of Socialist Labor.” Through a combination of rewards and political agitation, workers were incited to the observance of “Bolshevik” attitudes and of strict discipline. In addition, industrial psychologists were employed to begin massive training of workers for “skilled” positions. Party experts and social scientists were enlisted to insure high quality in worker performance and thus high levels of productivity. Though the agendas of party activists, industrial psychologists, and security agents were not always the same and sometimes at odds, in practice, their various programs for identifying and addressing labor problems (revolutionary awareness, vocational training, forced labor) were integrated into a single political strategy that reinforced the political system at the

same time as it policed practices that hindered productivity and demands that called for fundamental changes in the organization of work. The terms at issue in the workplace were neither worker’s ownership nor control; by definition, both already existed by virtue of the regime’s self-definition as a “worker’s state.” What were matters of contention in the workplace were the performance of workers and all behaviors and attitudes that were related to their work performance, and the conditions of the work environment.

Meanwhile, the relaxing of industrial controls in fact necessitated the strengthening of the security apparatus. In effect, NEP permitted and even encouraged activities that were by the Bolshevik’s own definition counter-revolutionary. But the problem was not easily solved. The Cheka had become a symbol of arbitrary repression and, in the new atmosphere of conciliation with NEP, the continued existence of such a repressive apparatus belied the government’s conciliatory posture and undermined its attempts to win back some measure of popular confidence, essential to the success of the new policy. The dilemma was solved by the reorganization and renaming that was really an expansion of an institution’s powers. The head of the Cheka, Dzerzhinskii, also held the portfolio of People’s Commissar for Internal Affairs (NKVD), and had all along been coordinating the work of both agencies. In 1922 the Cheka was officially “abolished,” but its functions were taken over by a newly-created organ, the Main Political Administration (GPU), which was attached to the NKVD and was headed by the same Dzerzhinskii, had the same personnel, and was housed in the same location. Indeed, the activities of the security apparatus, under whatever name, despite

**If our contemporary reality has been constructed, and we know that it has, then the possibility opens up that it can be unmade. The end point of our history is not to reconstruct the past but to question the present.**

widespread hostility from the populace and many prominent Bolsheviks alike, continued to expand within its existing jurisdictions and into new ones. The Russian acronym for the security apparatus, “Cheka,” was an actual word whose meaning accurately captured its significance: it was the revolution’s “linchpin.”

Under the NEP, the worker was no longer assigned and required to remain until further notice at a particular place of employment, and could no longer be transferred at the regime’s behest. Military discipline gradually disappeared from everywhere except the forced labor camps. But work remained a material and moral necessity, a civic obligation. The failure to perform “socially useful labor” could all along mean arrest and reeducation through forced labor. In fact, work served as *both* the measure and the instrument of normality. Throughout both the period of Military Communism and the New Economic Policy, if measures of training, agitation and incentives failed, the security apparatus, in its battle against counter-revolution, would guarantee socially useful work. Indeed, for use as its office in Moscow the Cheka requisitioned the “Lubianka” building complex of the chief Russian insurance companies, as if to say that the “security” apparatus underwrote the emerging Bolshevik regime.

**W**ith the Great War for America and the Civil War for the Soviet Union, the workplace emerged as a point of intersection for a variety of expertises and governments. Personnel managers, psychiatrists, national officials, patriots, and engineers were “allowed” to tell the truth about the worker. Their practices in and around the workplace created new objects of knowledge: the worker’s mental health and “relations” to management (in the United States) his or her normality, political awareness, and social usefulness (in the Soviet Union) and his or her loyalty, aptitudes, methods and pace of work (in both countries) were produced as new targets for a variety of “governments.” We have outlined how these various governments of the worker in each country interacted with one another and functioned together in unintended ways—in what we have called “political strategies.” We have been mainly considering how the American and Soviet worker’s participations in new organizations of the work process and in the standardizations of work (scientific management in the U.S. and disciplinary regimens and output norms in the U.S.S.R.) was secured and guaranteed by similar political strategies that involved the production and exclusion of populations of subversives and deviants. No doubt in both cases there were individuals and groups who sought to undermine the system; what is important here is that the discourses on radicalism and counter-revolution and the practices employed to combat these problems fit into larger strategies that secured and guaranteed the production of “acceptable” workers.

In the United States, repression was not an aberration to the “normal” course of democracy; it was a set of political techniques that assured worker participation in “industrial democracy.” In the Soviet Union repression was not simply inherent in Bolshevik ideology nor merely an unhappy consequence of the contradiction between Bolshevik dreams and Russian realities; rather, it functioned as one of the primary techniques in the construction of workers who would participate in “Socialism.” Our argument is not that similarities existed in the overall organizations of economic life (state intervention, monopolies, “mixed” economies). True, both countries sought to control economic life in order to fight total wars. But beyond this, in both cases labor became a focal point for new expertises and, even if these experts identified different problems of labor and attacked them with different sorts of agencies and mechanisms, there emerged in both cases similar governments of work, insured by strikingly similar political strategies.

### **New Social Lives**

In creating a socialist regime, the Bolsheviks felt impelled to take care of the material needs of the workers. During the period of military communism, in conditions of unbelievable scarcity and with the virtual disappearance of paper money, workers were provided with clothes, housing, food, and alcohol by various agencies under the coordination of trade unions. But it wasn’t enough just to take care of material exigencies; in addition, the Bolsheviks gave themselves the task of creating the new Communist Man.

All agencies, organizations, institutions would be part of the great mobilization to remake men and women. One of the most important mass incubators for making Bolsheviks was the Red Army: along with basic military and physical training, it including an elaborate apparatus for “political” training. Formal schooling was another critical “factory for refining

people.” Pedagogues designed a program for national education that included building new schools and improving existing ones, but also called for the creation of new types of schools based on improved teaching methods and for a unified and “politically aware” curriculum for all schools. Outside of schools, two extended campaigns were waged: one, to end illiteracy through organizing reading rooms and clubs, and founding libraries, and, the other, to combat religion through “enlightenment cells” that would hold meetings, sponsor

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public lectures, place anti-religious inscriptions in front of churches, and publish books and periodicals celebrating the “godless.” The Bolsheviks even attempted to create new “red” rituals for baptism, marriage, and death, new festivals such as processions of industry and of worker-peasant friendship and theatricalized re-enactments of the storming of the Winter Palace on a grand scale, new holidays to commemorate a “workers’ history,” and new forms of address, such as “comrade” and “citizen.”

It was felt that labor, a strong and ever-present sense of the “Revolution” and intense political awareness (through the activity of the party and the youth groups, plays, the press, radio, meetings, lectures, museums, excursions, exhibitions, songs, posters, cinema), in conjunction with a vast array of socializing agents and agencies guided by proper political attitudes, would bring forth the men and women of the future. In the process, a variety of personal matters—drunkenness, diet, toothbrushing, marital relations, raising children—became social concerns answerable to agencies and experts, the Cheka and the Party.

During the NEP, despite chronic fiscal distress, the Bolsheviks retrieved the original program of social insurance (decreed right after the revolution but rendered impractical and inoperative by the Civil War): social insurance for all wage earners and state relief for the handicapped, war veterans, and victims of broken families (there was also a system of compulsory mutual aid for peasants). Payments for temporary incapacity included nursing grants, paid maternity leave, and a bonus paid upon the birth of a child. Moreover, with the new market relations, workers now also had to be protected from exploitation. Trade unions, along with their roles as “schools of communism,” took on the new responsibility of labor protection. They took part in a campaign to reduce industrial accidents, through safety posters and on-site inspections. They initiated a grievance procedure, whereby workers could seek redress against employers by whom they felt to have been abused. And trade unions took part in efforts to guarantee fair wages, benefits, tolerable hours, and healthy and satisfactory working conditions.

In addition to measures of social insurance and labor protection, the Bolsheviks began programs of social welfare:

workers' clubs (which involved prescribed reading and conferences, didactic plays, propaganda lectures, and an elaborate program of "physical culture," health, and hygiene), sports clubs and facilities at most factories, day care for children so that women could work, consumer cooperatives, "subbotniki" or Saturdays set aside as celebrations of communism during which the workers labored for free, trade union and factory schools, and a vigorous and widespread system of youth leagues. These programs of social welfare were intended not merely to make the worker happy but as well to "Bolshevize" him or her.

The political programs of social insurance, social welfare, and social activities were designed in the immediate sense to restore and then raise production and, in the longer view, to make a new society populated by new people enjoying a communist social life. "Socialism," whatever it had originally meant, had come to mean the Party's monopoly on political power and its administration of truth combined with a new social realm of existence inhabited by new men and women. While a new social life was opened up, all but "official" politics was closed off. Party activism of course was all along a crucial aspect of the government's policy, but all the efforts of the activists were directed toward maintaining the party's monopoly on political power and its official *Pravda* and looking after the social realm. In effect, the parameters of the political were radically redefined. Offenses against the authorities, seditious statements and violence, as well as illiteracy, lack of hygiene and laziness were collapsed together and construed as incidences of psychological disorder, alcoholism, a poor family life, residues of class origin, in short, they were medicalized and personalized. Yet any activity that resisted, or was simply beyond, the terms of the new social realm—no matter how apparently trivial and innocuous—was a matter of social concern; as such, it could be identified as politically criminal, and bring on repression of the activity and the compulsory "opportunity" to participate through socially useful work. If in the "diagnosis" resistances were denied their political significance, in the "treatment" they were very much handled as political acts. The Bolsheviks sought to build the apolitical society of abundance and happiness. The programs they employed to build this future, centered around work and insured by "extraordinary means," had the unintended consequences of creating a labor society in which everything outside of the new social life, indeed all unsolicited activity and thought, was potentially politicized. Programs aimed at depoliticization ended up unwittingly engendering entirely new realms of political activity. As well, the attempt to govern work and the workplace formed part of a new social realm in which work became the basis of the regime itself, a matter of honor, courage, and heroism, as the inscription on labor camps proclaimed.

In America, with the war, the problem of labor unrest was given new urgency; more importantly, it was given new meaning: it was constituted as part of a general menace of sedition. Dissenters from the war, a variety of immigrant groups, and unionized workers or those with simple employment grievances were all suspected or accused of subversion. A number of repressive measures were taken by authorities as well as private groups to solve the problem of sedition by immigrants and other "un-Americans." During the war, the



"Let's take the storm of revolution in the U.S.S.R. and unite it with the pulse of American life and do our work like a chronometer."

— Alexei Gastev, Head of Soviet "Central Institute of Labor"

Espionage Act and the Trading With the Enemy Act (1917) legitimated prior censorship and the denial of mailing privileges to repress foreign-language newspapers, "radical" labor organizations, and minor political parties, and the Sedition Act (1918) allowed arrests and imprisonment of persons speaking out against the war or simply criticizing the nation. Furthermore, quasi-vigilante groups, such as the American Protective League (which had a membership of 250,000 and official ties to the federal government), bugged, burglarized, slandered and illegally arrested Americans, opened mail, and carried out extralegal and often violent raids against alleged dissenters. After the war, the Attorney General's office would have help from these same organizations as well as the Ku Klux Klan in executing break-ins and arresting "radical" aliens who could be and were deported

without a trial. The Emergency Act of 1921 and the permanent statute of 1924 would restrict immigration, discriminating against prospective immigrants from southern and south eastern Europe, whence more radical groups were thought to come.

Meanwhile, progressive reformers identified a different problem from sedition. The problem was that America lacked a national solidarity and a "national idea." According to these reformers, what America needed to unify itself for the war effort was "Americanization": out of immigrants, the United States needed to make Americans. Besides the obvious measures of teaching immigrants English and promoting their naturalization, Americanization involved programs for education in the American way of life and in the meaning of America, the improvement of factory and labor camp conditions, and the establishment of "an American standard of

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### **The individual's "private" life and "personal" activities were now matters of the well-being of the population: they entered into a calculus of social costs and needed to be governed.**

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living" in every home. Factories should be made healthier and safer; immigrants should be provided with decent and sanitary camp housing; immigrant homes ought to be made healthy and private; immigrant women ought to be taught to care for their homes and their children, how to have an "American" family life, and how to run autonomous households through savings. The means of Americanization were those of social welfare.

To immigrants at work and at home who faced economic hardships or ethnic prejudice and therefore might be susceptible to the view that strikes and sabotage were the way to ameliorate their situation, these social welfare measures offered another set of concerns, another version of their problems, a social one: these measures construed the immigrants' problems as those of health, factory conditions, home life, and family cohesion. In other words, a host of social welfare measures would create Americans out of immigrants and build a national solidarity based on the shared social concerns at issue in these measures. Of course, social welfare programs already existed before the war: management had become concerned with the health of its workers (corporate reformers had gone so far as to proclaim that, independent of production, social welfare was a discrete aim of business), and social workers had intervened in working class homes to bring about cohesive families and healthy individuals. Indeed, the production of certain social concerns and a certain social life amongst workers could have deradicalizing effects. Workers who saw their economic problems as issues of health, education and family life would not look to unions, strikes and sabotage as answers. During the war, social welfare measures were being used for the particular political aims of Americanization and national unity. Whereas social welfare measures had had since their inception unintended deradicalizing effects, the Americanization movement gave them an explicit political formulation and extended these effects. Moreover, social welfare should not be understood simply as a competing alternative to repression: they served together in a strategy to produce "acceptable" workers. Politically troublesome workers could be isolated or silenced while the

deployment of social concerns could create workers and families resistant to radical politics. A variety of social programs aimed at the workplace, the school, and the home had the unintended consequence of creating a social realm in which private life and political life were animated by social concerns.

The war and post-war periods witnessed the creation in the Soviet Union and the elaboration in the United States of new social lives for their populations. In the Soviet Union, personal fulfillment was to come from work, now a matter of honor and heroism, and social life was to be restricted to a number of sanctioned activities. In the United States, satisfaction was to come from a healthy private and family life which, in effect, could serve as compensation for a work experience that had become mechanized and dehumanized. These social lives were indeed very different, but their deployment and administration partook of the same social art of government. In the Soviet Union and the United States, work, the family, and the city became important points of intersection for a variety of new social concerns (the engineer's concern with social waste and standards of production, the doctor's concern with substandard hygiene and the health of the social body, the nutritionist's concern with improper diet and the vigor of the social body, the psychiatrist's concern with abnormality and social protection, the criminologist's concern with individual dangerousness and social defense, the Chekist's concern with counter-revolution and the social whole, the social worker's concern with substandard living and social security, the general concern with accidents, old age, and unemployment and social insurance) and a variety of new social practices (family case work and welfare visits, health and safety inspections, "shock troops" and production checks). The individual's "private" life and "personal" activities were now matters of the well-being of the population: they entered into a calculus of social costs and needed to be governed.

Violations of or resistances to the new norms of social life—an individual's failure to show up for a meeting, a child's lack of enthusiasm for the Revolution, a worker's poor health, drunkenness, indiscipline (in the Soviet Union) or a child's failure at school, a family's insolvency, an individual sickness, the simple fact that one was an immigrant (in the United States)—might bring on interventions by authorities. In the Soviet Union this might mean instructions by a nutritionist or a trade union official, but it could also mean interrogation by a Chekist and even relocation to a labor camp. In America one's family might be intruded upon and "corrected" by a social worker. The intervening official in the Soviet Union would always be acting in concert with (or at least not going against) the Party's policy and directives; the remedial authorities in America would be "social" agents who did not necessarily have ties to public officials. But in both countries social life was governed and policed.

### **Rethinking Global Analyses**

Perhaps the greatest difference commonly recognized by Americans between the United States and the Soviet Union is in the area of the state and its relation to civil society. The Soviets are thought to have a "party-state" and the Soviet experience is usually understood as the swallowing up by this party-state of the civil society. In the American case, there is a parliamentary state and it is understood that, despite frequent and far-reaching "interventions" by this state, civil society

continues to exist and maintains considerable autonomy. Correlated with these political forms is, on the one hand, a "command" economy and, on the other, a "market" economy. Meanwhile, for Soviets, it is commonly understood that they have a "workers' state" and America a "bourgeois state." In America, a minority class exploits all other classes, whereas in the Soviet Union this exploiting class has been liquidated and all remaining classes enter into an alliance. These "global" understandings, in overarching categories of states, of economies, of classes, of ideologies, of systems—whatever their analytical merits—have the effect of creating for each country an "other," which already in the years following the Great War had begun to serve as a rationale for repression at home and, later, along with military considerations would make possible the constitution of a "third" world that would necessitate competitive intervention from the "first" and "second" worlds. The emerging partnership of "otherness" would be transformed, with great difficulty, into an actual alliance during World War II; afterwards, the antagonistic partnership underwent another transformation into the so-called "cold war," later to be "regularized" as a "detente." It seems advisable to stop serving the strategy of cold war: in our case this means refusing the analyses in terms of aggregates, such as states, economies or classes. This does not mean ignoring differences between these two countries; rather, it means understanding their partnership and identifying an alternative set of differences within an analysis that can have different political effects.

As a first step towards breaking the global logic of cold war, we are attempting to demythologize the United States and to de-demonize the Soviet Union, to disentangle them from their partnership. This means considering the cold war and detente as something other than tension and confrontation, or alliance and coexistence, between two opposite regimes. The partnership works more like an "alliance in opposition" leading to repression at home and intervention abroad. This also means rethinking the notion of repression. Instead of treating repression exclusively as an exercise of power that isolates and eliminates opposition, we are considering it as productive, in this case of marginal populations, and, in doing so, re-placing it in its relation to other exercises of power with which it comes to function. Moreover, instead of apologizing for American episodes of repression or unmasking Soviet repression as the essence of the regime, we have examined how repression has functioned during and after the wars in both countries.

Of course, practices of repression did not occupy the same role in the two countries. Though they have operated by a number of political means of varying brutality and sophistication, Soviet regimes have all along been readier to use repression and have relied more heavily upon it than American ones. In the United States repressive activities have been more or less (less in this period) constrained by constitutional guarantees and questions of public morality. Moreover, they are generally less necessary to insure the "consent of the governed" to social directives: the hope of giving one's children the chance for a better life and the lure of consumption are just as effective and much less costly means of deriving consent to the terms of work than networks of surveillance, terror, and punishment. Regimes in the United States mostly rely upon less violent and ponderous and more refined and subtle exercises of power; on the whole, they work

by a greater "economy" of power and force than do those of the Soviet Union.

### **Discourses, Practices, and the Production of Truth**

For the global analysis of political and economic systems we propose to substitute a more particular examination of practices and discourses—what was done and what was said—in and about the workplace, the school, the home. It is just such an history that can interrogate our familiar ways of thinking, our "self-evident" problems, and our common political "truths" (such as the cold war as well as detente mentalities and the verities about American society and the Soviet Union) because it understands these problems, rationalities, and truths as *productions*. We are studying, not "ideologies" that reflect or hide the truth and sciences that unmask it, but rather discourses. "Things said" are themselves practices that produce knowledge, constitute some practices as problems, and create possibilities and justifications for others; discourses construct a reality that people come to inhabit, and they program interventions in that reality that people try to

**Our task is rather to consider historically how discourses, which were neither true nor false in themselves, functioned in societies that had their own "political economies" of truth—their own mechanisms for "recognizing" true statements and their own more or less rigid rules about who could speak the truth and who could not.**

carry out. Meanwhile, practices generate knowledge and thus enable some discourses and disqualify others; practices possess their own logic or rationality which people come to experience as natural and self-evident.

In studying discourse, the question is not one of determining what in a discourse is true or scientific and what is erroneous or ideological. Our problem is not to show what portion of the discourse on, say, the worker's aptitude was truth and therefore appropriate and what portion, on the contrary, was dubious science and consequently abused the worker. Our task is rather to consider historically how discourses, which were neither true nor false in themselves, functioned in societies that had their own "political economies" of truth—their own mechanisms for "recognizing" true statements and their own more or less rigid rules about who could speak the truth and who could not. Our methodological problem—which is also a political problem because it takes up the question of truth—is not to show where a scientific practice was poisoned by its link to an incorrect ideology. Nor, conversely, is it to guarantee that our own research is underwritten by a correct ideology. Our problem is not to speak a progressive truth that gives the lie to all other truths, but rather to throw into question the very status of truth in our society and the political role that it plays.

### **History of the Present**

Part of our analysis of the fundamental experiences of government since the Great War will be a consideration of the fundamental experiences of the governed. We want to discuss, for example in the Soviet Union, the experience of constant vigilance in safeguarding The Revolution in one's own neighborhood and against one's own doubts and, in the United States, the experience of new concerns about savings and

## Work in Progress

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shopping. Our investigations of programs for the government of identity, such as Bolshevik measures to make communists out of Russians and the Americanization campaign to make Americans out of immigrants, comprise a part of a history of modern *subjectivity* of new Soviet and American *subjects*. We want to examine what we Americans have been subjected to and what we have subjected ourselves to; to inquire who we were and who we have become. We hope to comprehend the Soviets, neither as embodying the character that we generally impute to their regime nor as unwilling prisoners of it, but as products of practices and discourses of government and of indigenous forms of resistance.

Our task is to understand how multiple practices of governing individuals and populations (personnel technologies, scientific management operations, social security mechanisms, forced labor) have put into play certain rationalities, produced certain types of subjects, and made possible certain events, including forms of resistance. We want to demonstrate that the things that seem most evident and natural to us today have a political and precarious history; that they are the result, not of necessity and progress, but of contingent relations of power, fortuitous encounters and unintended effects. By our historical analyses, we want to suggest that what is most obvious to us today did not have to come into being and does not have to be. If our contemporary reality has been constructed, and we know that it has, then the possibility opens up that it can be unmade. *The end point of our history is not to reconstruct the past but to reconstruct the present.*

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## Archives

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*continued from page 3*

this, whereas attacks have multiplied on all fronts: sexuality, psychiatry, medicine, the penal system . . . . Do you know what the marxist psychiatrists did in the 60s? Their problem was to find out how Pavlovism could be applied to psychiatry; they have not perceived for an instant the question of psychiatric power, nor that it supported the renewal of sexual roles and the functioning of the family. There came a time when the in-crowd [tout-venant] of the psychoanalyst analyzing the in-crowd of his patients started to function as an agent of normalization and of the reinforcement of the powers of the family, the male, and heterosexuality. If the two big losers of the past fifteen years are Marxism and Psychoanalysis, it is because they were far too connected, not to the ruling class, but to the mechanisms of power. It is precisely against these mechanisms that the popular upheavals have been directed. Having failed to distance themselves from the mechanisms of power, Marxism and Psychoanalysis had no part in the popular upheavals.

*Int: Aren't you taking pleasure in a certain negativism?*

Foucault: Yes, and I am taking pleasure in the deepest sense: the bourgeoisie is not at all what Baudelaire thought, a pack of stupid and sluggish fools. The bourgeoisie is intelligent, lucid, calculating. No other form of domination has ever been so

efficient, and subsequently so dangerous, so deeply rooted. It won't suffice to call the bourgeoisie villainous; it won't simply disappear like the flame of a blown-out candle. This justifies a certain sadness; it is thus necessary to bring into the struggle as much gaiety, lucidity and determination as possible. The only really sad thing is not to fight. . . . Basically, I don't like to write: it is a very difficult activity to master. Writing interests me only in the measure that it incorporates the reality of combat, as an instrument, a tactic, a spotlight. I would like my books to be like surgeons' knives, Molotov cocktails, or galleries in a mine, and, like fireworks, to be carbonized after use.

*Int: And yet this dark and baroque writing gives neither the appearance of the ephemeral nor of the quick fix [express-service].*

Foucault: The use of a book is tightly linked to the pleasure it can give, but I don't conceive what I'm doing at all as an oeuvre, and I am shocked that one can call oneself a writer. I am a dealer in instruments, a recipe maker, an indicator of objectives, a cartographer, a sketcher of plans, a gunsmith . . .

# Researches

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Berkeley, CA  
8 February 1985

In the Basque country, language planning—the deliberate reform, documentation and regulation of usage through legislation and educational programs—has come to be regarded by the Basque nationality as an indispensable technique for establishing and maintaining a sense of their cultural identity. While Basques may disagree as to the proper method for planning, the inevitability and necessity of regulation of some sort is accepted as a matter of common sense.

My research seeks to explore how the “common sense” of language planning has been constructed and propagated, and what its effects have been. In contrast to traditional theories that language planning is a reaction to the declining state of the language, I hold that arguments for planning arose only in conjunction with a conception of Basques as a population accessible to scientific description, analysis and corrective interventions. In 1918, programs for the reform of Basque and methods for encouraging its usage were developed by the newly-created Basque Studies Society as part of a broader project for building a healthy Basque society. Basque identity was now a problem for urban planners, eugenicists, educators, doctors, linguists; being Basque and speaking Basque came to be situated in a new field of social concerns: concerns with health, improving the race, the conditions of cities, effective pedagogy, safety in the workplace, savings.

Through an analysis of the “talk” about language, especially reports of the conferences of the Basque Studies Society, and through ethnographic study of a Basque town, I hope to analyze language politics as part of the construction of Basque identity.

Jackie Urla  
UC, Berkeley

Rome  
8 February 1985

I am engaged in anthropological study of the assistencial, medical, and demographic aspects of the “care of the race” in fascist Italy. In the wake of the Great War, and on the basis of developments in the nineteenth century, jurists, doctors, and social scientists identified as political a new set of interrelated problems, including health, hygiene, fertility, urbanization and social dangerousness. This new series of problemizations of the welfare of the population, by no means restricted to Italy, was linked to the elaboration of new kinds of knowledge—demography, eugenics, and “political biology,” legal medicine and criminal anthropology, sociology, domestic sciences—and to the spread of new techniques of government—censuses, health inspection, welfare visits, organized recreation, social insurance, and public security measures. Although heterogeneous, these discourses and interventions identified common targets—the home, the school, the workplace, the army—and common goals—the diagnosis, cure, and protection of the social organism.

In Italy, fascist legislation not only gave new juridical and institutional coherence to the government of the population, but further developed its underlying rationality, subordinating the rights of individuals and groups to the biological imperative of the collectivity. Indeed, this political rationality organized both assistencial and violent aspects of fascism: “social defense” required not only the physical and moral strengthening of the race, but also the elimination of contagions, whether in the form of disease or of the dangerous individual.

My research will trace the deployment of fascist biopolitical strategies among the working classes of Milan. On the basis of government records and oral histories, I will link the development of a new political rationality to the policing of everyday life—particularly the life of the family—and to the corresponding emergence of new points of resistance: a range of practices (urban migration, shared housing, contraception and abortion) identified as threats to the social body, and challenges to the new political order.

David Horn  
UC, Berkeley

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## Places

*continued from page 6*

interests and expertise of the group. Foucault favored that choice as well, since it would allow him to take up a contemporary topic. He hoped not only to participate in an innovative teaching experience and to work together on a book with American students, but to establish lasting connections between Berkeley and Paris.

After leaving Berkeley to resume his teaching responsibilities at the Collège, to organize the Parisian end of the joint project, and to finish the volumes in the history of sexuality series, Foucault kept in touch with some of the members of the working group. He expressed his excitement and eagerness to

turn as soon as he was free to the research of the new project. Meanwhile, the working group continued to meet regularly in order to discuss the nature of the project and each member's potential contribution.

Foucault died last summer. In Berkeley, he left behind an intellectual community pursuing lines of research that he opened up and establishing lines of communication with all those interested in similar questions or making use of his work.

Keith Gandal  
Stephen Kotkin

# Announcements

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*A Conference on*

## **MICHEL FOUCAULT: HISTORY OF THE PRESENT: Sex, Law, Literature, and Contemporary Social Issues**

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MARCH 29-31, 1985

University of California, Berkeley

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*Panels on:*

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- Sexuality and Power
- Foucault, Literature, and Literary Criticism
- Foucault and the Third World
- From Discipline to Regulation: Law and Society
- Doing History of the Present

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— **No admission charge** —

— **No pre-registration** —

**For more information write:** Foucault Conference, c/o Dept. of Anthropology,  
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

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