

## **Soviet-American Colloquium on World Labor and Social Change**

The Fernand Braudel Center of the State University of New York at Binghamton hosted a three-day meeting of historians from the Soviet Union and the United States, August 21-23, 1980. The gathering was small and the discussion somewhat relaxed, though the planners' hope of having all papers circulated in advance was frustrated by the post offices of both countries involved. Present from the U.S.S.R. were T. T. Timofeev (director of the Institute of the World Labor Movement of the Soviet Academy of Sciences), Aleksandr A. Galkin (Professor at the Institute and author of many studies of workers' movements in advanced capitalist countries), Igor Mihailov (senior researcher on U.S. history in the Scientific Council of the Academy of Sciences), and Dimitry V. Kucherenko (Learned Secretary on International Cooperation of the Institute and specialist on Third World labor). Four members of the Braudel Center took part: Immanuel Wallerstein (the director), Melvyn Dubofsky (historian of American and comparative labor), John Higginson (specialist in African labor), and Giovanni Arrighi (specialist on European workers). Also attending from the United States were Joan Scott of Brown University (historian of French workers), Sharon Stichter of the University of Massachusetts-Boston and Ben Magubane of the University of Connecticut (both African specialists), Mark Selden of Boston University and Linda Shaffer of Tufts (both historians of China and Japan), and David Montgomery of Yale University (editor of *ILWCH*). The meeting was made possible by the American Council of Learned Societies and the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Much of the discussion necessarily took the form of various participants' acquainting the others with research done in their countries or fields. Nevertheless, there was also substantial discussion of a wide range of topics. Five focal points of the discussion were: the process of development of world capitalism (in both core and peripheral areas, to use Wallerstein's terms), the formation and differentiation of the working class and the role of household structures within it, the influence of the working class and its organized movements, the role of the state in economic development and class conflict in the twentieth century, and the changes in demands and forms of struggle of workers from one stage of capitalist development to another. Although questions about workers in socialist countries frequently arose, the discussion was organized around the history of the capitalist world.

In many respects the encounter between the American and Soviet historians bore more of the aspect of a diplomatic exchange than of a direct engagement over historical analysis. Nevertheless, all participants agreed that they had learned a great deal from each other, and that the conversation often produced enlightening insights and significant disagreements. Such topics as the relationship of workers' organizations to workers' struggles in contemporary capitalism, the historical relationships of nationalism to working-class movements, and the significance of the scientific-technical revolution provoked the most explicit convergences and divergences of interpretation among the participants.

A second meeting is planned for the summer of 1981 in Moscow.

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