

Summaries of articles

The Present : the Crisis (II). Burdens and Potentialities of the 1980's

R. BOYER and J. MISTRAL

This article takes up an earlier hypothesis that the present crisis is of a structural nature and cannot be compared to any of the moderate recessions of the 1960's or to any of the great earlier crises (particularly that of 1929).

The authors examine the possibilities of solving the crisis by a shift to a post-industrial society and/or by the development of a form of dualism. After demonstrating the inappropriateness of these "solutions", the article stresses the complexity of the chain of circumstances required to reach a positive outcome to the present crisis. One cannot be content with solutions drawn from the past—such as a return to a competitive capitalism endowed with mythical virtues—nor with solutions that improperly extrapolate the trend toward deindustrialization and the emergence of a two-tier wage-earning class.

Indeed it is essential to define the right "New Deal" for our time : innovations in the socio-political sphere are more imperative than a mechanical reproduction of the changes that solved the crisis of the 1930's.

Capitalism's Response to the Crisis of 1974

P. SOUYRI

Inflation, an assault upon wages, recourse to the industrial reserve army of third world countries, exporting industries to the periphery and an expansion of urbanization—such were the forms of response which capitalism put in place since the beginning of the "crisis" of 1974. In reality, these have set in motion a new economic and cultural disorder whose dynamic simultaneously encompasses classic capitalism and its specific forms of Eastern origin.

Myth and History in the Elaboration of the fait divers : The Franca Viola Case

M. P. DI BELLA

Three different readings and an examination of the use of myth and history as concepts have enabled us to interpret this "trivial event" (fait divers) in all its implications. The first reading brought to light the "intentional discourse" of the press, for which the Franca Viola case must necessarily be regarded as a step for the Sicilians in the transformation of their "medieval" and "barbaric" customs through the agency of "emancipating civilization". The second reading, focused on the "references" used by the press, made us aware that the facts and people described were constantly linked with concepts derived either from novels or, far more often, from popular Catholic hagiography. The third reading, centered on the assessment of the weight of "context" in the protagonists' "acts", helped us to restore logic and rigor to this fait divers.

The Spectacle of Execution in Ancien Régime France

M. BÉE

In observing modes of behavior related to public executions in various societies and in different periods, one is struck by the repetition of certain acts and gestures, codified as rites and providing a universally familiar and recognizable language. The pervasiveness of these images and representations reveals the religious substratum in which social life was rooted. Executions called forth an enduring strategy of the collective imagination struggling against the anxiety provoked by the contagious presence of a type of violence both horrid and familiar : this strategy is that of the sacrificial system.

Sunday in Serra

R. COMASCHI

In May 1567, the criminal court of the Torrone di Bologna sent a notary to Castelbolognese in order to settle a dispute between two warring families. His murder led to a trial ultimately involving an entire community. The depositions of the peasants of Serra, a small town on the territory of the Castello, provide a wealth of detailed information on the Sunday of the crime. This article consequently seeks to reconstruct the material life of this peasant community and to define the power relationships in the village.

Fait divers and Social Tension in Jerba

L. VALENSI

This paper has two themes. Through the numerous reports we have a petty dispute which occurred in Jerba (Tunisia) in 1892, one can observe how, on the local level, a religious minority adjusted to a colonial situation. Beyond the minor episode described here, what is at issue is the contradiction between traditional leadership and foreign rule, between indigenous law and politics and western rationality.

Since the events of the 1890's are still remembered by Jerban Jews, one can also examine how collective memory is constructed and how it is re-enacted for the needs and concerns of present times.

Ancient Towns and the Organization of Rural Space : Villa, Town and Village

Ph. LEVEAU

The author seeks to further the discussion on the relationship between town and country in Roman antiquity by taking into account the findings of urban geography and sociology on the one hand, and those of rural archaeology on the other. Despite the fact that Roman towns drew the bulk of their resources from landed income, the relationship they maintained with rural space was an active one. Whereas recent authors have tended to emphasize the parasitic character of ancient towns, advances in archaeological knowledge concerning the Roman countryside have brought to light the organizational role of the towns. The creation and development of villa networks, and their disappearance in late antiquity—when they were replaced by a different, village-centered organization of the countryside—were the tangible signs of two forms of organization of rural space by two societies : a countryside organized by the town acting through the villa network, and a countryside faithful to the tradition of village-centered organization. This division corresponds to that between the Roman world and the native world.