POLITICAL SHOEMAKERS*

> He had gone deeper into Arminianism and politics than any of his fellows. The *Methodist Magazine* and the *Weekly Dispatch* were regularly sent to him by his brother. He always had plenty of shoemaking, and was more independent than either the farmers or labourers. He used to make uncivil remarks about the landlords and the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the new poor law, bishops, parsons, Corn laws, the church, and class legislation.[1]

> A very curious thing is that each trade develops in the artisans practicing it, a specific character, a particular temperament. The butcher is generally serious and full of his own importance, the house painter is thoughtless and a rake, the tailor is sensual, the grocer stupid, the porter curious and prattling, the shoemaker and cobbler, finally, are gay, sometimes even lively, with a song always on their lips . . . Despite the simplicity of their tastes, the makers of new and old shoes are always distinguished by a restless, sometimes aggressive spirit and by an enormous tendency to loquacity. Is there a riot? Does an orator emerge from the crowd? It is without doubt a cobbler who has come to make a speech to the people.[2]

I

THE POLITICAL RADICALISM OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY SHOEMAKERS IS proverbial. Social historians of a variety of persuasions have described the phenomenon and assumed it needed no explanation. A historian of the German revolution of 1848, for example, concluded that it was "not accidental" that shoemakers "played a dominant role in the activities of the people". Historians of the "Swing" riots in England referred to the shoemakers' "notorious radicalism" and Jacques Rougerie accounted for the shoemakers' prominence in the Paris Commune by referring to their "traditional militancy". Even so heterodox a writer as Theodore Zeldin accepts the common view on this point.[3] The present paper attempts to account for the remarkable reputation of shoemakers as political radicals.

To say that shoemakers, or any other trade, have a reputation for radicalism may, of course, mean one or more of three things: a reputation for militant action in movements of social protest, whether confined to the trade in question or not; a reputation for sympathy or association with, or activity in, movements of the political left; and a repu-

* We would like to thank William Sewell Jr., E. P. Thompson and Alfred Young for their helpful comments.

[1] *A Village Politician: The Life-Story of John Buckley*, ed. J. C. Buckmaster (London, 1897), p. 41.

[2] M. Sensfelder, *Histoire de la cordonnerie* (Paris, 1856), quoted in Joseph Barberet, *Le travail en France: monographies professionnelles*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1886-90), v, pp. 63-4.

[3] Rudolf Stadelmann, "Soziale Ursachen der Revolution von 1848", in Hans-Ulrich Wehler (ed.), *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte* (Berlin, 1970), p. 140; E. J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, 1969), p. 181; Jacques Rougerie, "Composition d'une population insurgée: l'exemple de la Commune", *Le mouvement social*, no. 48 (1964), p. 42; Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1973), i, p. 214.

tation as what might be called ideologists of the common people. Though very likely to be associated, these are not the same. Apprentices and unmarried journeymen in traditional corporate crafts were likely to be mobilized readily, without any necessary connection with whatever counted at the time as political radicalism. French *universitaires* have, at least since the Dreyfus period, had a reputation for standing well to the left of their students. This did not necessarily imply, though it did not exclude, militant collective action. Australian sheep-shearers, though often both militant and associated with the left, are not generally thought of as greatly interested in ideology,[4] whereas village schoolteachers often are.

Shoemakers as a trade had, in the nineteenth century, a reputation for radicalism in all three senses. They were militant both on trade matters and in wider movements of social protest. Though shoemakers' unions were limited to certain sections or localities of a very large trade, and only intermittently effective, they were organized on a national scale rather early in both France and Switzerland, not to mention England where the London union, founded in 1792, was said to extend nationally in 1804. Shoemakers and carpenters were the first members of the Federation of Workers of the Argentine Region (1890), the first attempt at a national union body for that country. They occasionally struck on a large scale and were among the most strike-prone trades in France during the July monarchy. They were also prominent in revolutionary crowds. Their role as political activists can be documented amply. Of the persons active in the British Chartist movement whose occupations are known, shoemakers formed much the largest single group after the weavers and unspecified "labourers": more than twice the number of building-trade workers and more than 10 per cent of all occupationally described militants. In the taking of the Bastille, or at least among those arrested for it, the twenty-eight shoemakers were exceeded only by the cabinet-makers, joiners and locksmiths — and in the riots of the Champ de Mars and in August 1792 by no other trade.[5] Among those arrested in Paris for opposing the *coup d'état* of 1851, shoemakers were most numerous.[6] The

[4] The late Ian Turner of the Australian National University, Canberra, cited the case of a large number of these men, arrested after the October Revolution for holding a meeting in favour of insurrection and soviets. A careful search for subversive literature produced no printed matter of any kind, except a leaflet which a number carried in their pockets. It read: "If water rots your boots, what will it do to your stomach?".

[5] Jean-Pierre Aguet, *Les grèves sous la monarchie de Juillet, 1830-1847* (Geneva, 1954); David Pinkney, "The Crowd in the French Revolution of 1830", *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, lxx (1964), pp. 1-17; David Jones, *Chartism and the Chartists* (London, 1975), pp. 30-2; D. J. Goodway, "Chartism in London" (London Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1979), pp. 37-9, shows their proportional participation in London Chartism to be higher than any other large occupation (over three thousand members) except stone-masons; George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1959), appendix 4.

[6] Georges Duveau, *La vie ouvrière en France sous le Second Empire*, 7th edn. (Paris, 1946), p. 75.

workers involved in the Paris Commune of 1871 who suffered the highest proportion of deportations after its defeat were, as Jacques Rougerie observes, "of course, as always, the shoemakers".[7] At the other end of the world, the first anarchist ever recorded in a provincial town in Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil was an Italian shoemaker in 1897, while the only craft union reported as participating in the first (anarchist-inspired) Workers' Congress of Curitiba (Brazil) was the Shoemakers' Association.[8]

Militancy and left-wing activism alone, however, do not distinguish shoemakers as a group from some other craftsmen, who were at times at least as prominent in these respects. Carpenters and tailors were as "strike-prone" as shoemakers during the July monarchy. French revolutionary crowds included proportionately more printers, joiners, locksmiths and building workers than were in the Parisian population. If eleven shoemakers formed the largest group among the forty-three anarchists arrested in Lyon in 1892, construction workers were not far behind.[9] Tailors are associated with shoemakers as typical activists in the 1848 revolution in Germany, and if both were prominent among the German travelling journeymen who made up the bulk of the Communist League ("the workers' club is small and consists only of shoemakers and tailors", Weydemeyer wrote to Marx in 1850),[10] it seems clear that the tailors were more prominent. Indeed the apparently large number of shoemaker activists may sometimes merely reflect the size of a trade which, in Germany and Britain, constituted much the largest single artisan occupation.[11] The collective actions of the group do not therefore account for the shoemakers' radical reputation.

There can be little doubt, however, that as worker-intellectuals and ideologists shoemakers were exceptional. Once again, they were obviously not unique although, as we shall see, in rural villages and small market towns they had less competition from other settled artisans. Certainly their role as spokesmen and organizers of country people in nineteenth-century England is clear from any study of the "Swing" riots of 1830 or of rural political radicalism. Hobsbawm and Rudé report that in 1830 the average riotous parish had from two to four times as many shoemakers as the average tranquil one.[12] The local shoemaker quoting Cobbett — John Adams in Kent, William Winkworth

[7] Jacques Rougerie, *Paris libre* (Paris, 1971), p. 263.

[8] Edgar Rodrigues, *Socialismo e sindicalismo no Brasil, 1675-1913* (Rio de Janeiro, 1969), pp. 73, 223.

[9] Yves Lequin, *Les ouvriers de la région lyonnaise, 1848-1914*, 2 vols. (Lyon, 1977), ii, p. 281.

[10] Karl Obermann, *Zur Geschichte des Bundes der Kommunisten* (East Berlin, 1955), p. 28.

[11] Paul Voigt, "Das deutsche Handwerk nach den Berufszählungen von 1882 und 1895", in *Untersuchungen über die Lage des Handwerks in Deutschland*, ix (Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik, lxx, Leipzig, 1897); J. H. Clapham, *Economic History of Modern Britain*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1952), ii, p. 43.

[12] Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 181-2.

in Hampshire — is a familiar figure.[13] The craft's character as "red-hot politicians" was proverbial. In the shoemaking centre of Northampton, election days were celebrated as "traditional holidays" as much as the spring and autumn race meetings.[14] Yet the striking fact is the connection between politics and articulate literacy. Who says cobbler surprisingly often says journalist and versifier, preacher and lecturer, writer and editor. This impression is not easy to quantify, though shoemakers form the largest single group — three — in a sample of nineteen French "worker-poets" of the period before 1850, all of radical views:[15] Sylvain Lapointe of the Yonne, who stood as a candidate in 1848; Hippolyte Tampucci, the editor of *Le grapilleur*; and Gonzalle of Rheims, the editor of *Le républicain*.[16] The list could be easily added to — one thinks of Faustin Bonnefoi, editor of the Fourierist newspaper in Louis Philippe's Marseille,[17] of the autodidact "Efrahem", who wrote pamphlets urging "an association of workers of every *corps d'état*",[18] and of citizen Villy, a boot-maker who spoke at the first Communist Banquet in 1840 and who had published a pamphlet on the abolition of poverty.[19]

Of course nobody would claim that all, or even the majority among shoemaker activists, were artisan intellectuals. Indeed we have examples of militant shoemakers who were distinctly *not* great readers, at least in their days of activity, such as George Hewes, the last survivor of the Boston Tea Party.[20] Though as a craft shoemakers seem to have been more literate than the average, a fair percentage of bad readers would not be surprising in so large a trade containing so many proverbially poor men.[21] The less literate shoemaker may even have

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 218, 246.

[14] Keith Brooker, "The Northampton Shoemakers' Reaction to Industrialisation: Some Thoughts", *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, vi (1980), p. 155.

[15] Sample taken from Librairie A. Faure, 15 rue du Val du Grace, catalogue 5, Livres anciens et modernes, items 262-324; checked in Jean Maitron (ed.), *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français, Pt. 1, 1789-1864*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1964-6).

[16] David M. Gordon, "Merchants and Capitalists: Industrialization and Provincial Politics at Reims and St. Étienne under the Second Republic and Second Empire" (Brown Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1978), p. 67.

[17] William Sewell Jr., "The Structure of the Working Class of Marseille in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century" (Univ. of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. thesis, 1971), p. 299.

[18] "De l'association des ouvriers de tous les corps d'état", repr. in Alain Faure and Jacques Rancière (eds.), *La parole ouvrière, 1830-1851* (Paris, 1976), pp. 159-68.

[19] Gian Maria Bravo, *Les socialistes avant Marx*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1970), ii, p. 221.

[20] Alfred F. Young, "George Robert Twelves Hewes, 1742-1840: A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution" (forthcoming in *William and Mary Quart.*).

[21] Maurice Garden, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1970), pp. 244 ff. Above-average literacy is noted for rural cordwainers in David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 130-6, but average or sub-average literacy for the lower classification of "shoemakers" both in London and countryside. For various reasons Cressy's London figures are more problematic than his rural ones.

become more common as the trade expanded and was diluted during the nineteenth century. And yet the existence of an unusually, perhaps a uniquely, large number of shoemaker intellectuals is impossible to deny, even if it may be supposed that such persons would draw special attention to themselves in a largely non-literate society. When ideology took a primarily religious form, they pondered the Scriptures, sometimes coming to unorthodox conclusions: it was they who brought Calvinism into the Cevennes,[22] who prophesied, preached (and wrote) messianism, mysticism and heresy.[23] In the secular era the majority of the (largely Spencean communist) Cato Street conspirators were shoemakers, and their attraction to anarchism was notorious. Émile Pouget's *Le Père Peinard* symbolically carried on its cover the picture of a cobbler in his workshop.[24] More generally there is, at least in English, a substantial literature of collective shoemaker biography in the nineteenth century, such as, to our knowledge, exists for no other craft.[25] The overwhelming majority of its subjects are commemorated for intellectual achievements. Their success in this field may explain the appearance of such compendia in the age of self-improvement.

It may even be argued that such proverbs as "Shoemaker stick to your last", which are found in many countries from antiquity to the Industrial Revolution, indicate precisely this tendency of shoemakers to express opinions on matters which ought to be left to the officially learned — "Let the cobbler stick to his last and let the learned men write the books"; "Preaching cobblers make bad shoes"; and so on. Certainly similar proverbs are distinctly less common with reference to other crafts.[26]

Even if we leave such indirect evidence aside, the number of shoemaker-intellectuals is impressive. They were not necessarily radicals, though their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century eulogists preferred to dwell on their achievements in fields which would impress socially

[22] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966), i, pp. 349–51.

[23] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), pp. 38–9.

[24] Jean Maitron, *Le mouvement anarchiste en France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1975), i, p. 131.

[25] For example, Anon., *Crispin Anecdotes: Comprising Interesting Notices of Shoemakers, who have been Distinguished for Genius, Enterprise or Eccentricity* (Sheffield and London, 1827); John Prince, *Wreath for St. Crispin: Being Sketches of Eminent Shoemakers* (Boston, Mass., 1848); Anon., *Crispin: The Delightful, Princely and Entertaining History of the Gentle Craft* (London, 1750); William Edward Winks, *Lives of Illustrious Shoemakers* (London, 1883); Thomas Wright, *The Romance of the Shoe* (London, 1922); Anon., *Lives of Distinguished Shoemakers* (Portland, Me., 1849); Joseph Sparkes Hall, *The Book of the Feet* (New York, 1847).

[26] "Bei leisten, drät und pech der Schumacher sol bleiben und die gelehrten leut lassen die bücher schreiben", "predigender Schuster macht schlechte Schuhe": *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon*, 5 vols. (Aalen, 1963), iv, cols. 398–9. The injustice of such proverbs so outraged the nineteenth-century compilers of this encyclopaedia that they added a footnote citing two highly intellectual shoemakers who also produced excellent shoes (col. 399).

superior readers — learning, literature and religion — while not concealing their reputation as folk-politicians. Still, the historian will not fail to note that the religion in which shoemakers distinguished themselves when not associated with anticlericalism and atheism,[27] was often heterodox and radical by contemporary standards. One thinks of Jakob Boehme, the mystic, persecuted by the Lutheran church of his city, and George Fox, the Quaker. One also notes the combination of radicalism and literary activities, as in Thomas Holcroft, the ex-shoemaker playwright and English Jacobin, in Friedrich Sander, the founder of the Vienna Workers' Union in 1848, who also wrote poems,[28] and in the anarchist Jean Grave, shoemaker turned printer, and editor of magazines with a distinct literary-artistic bent.[29]

We cannot of course allow the shoemakers a monopoly of plebeian intellectual activities. Samuel Smiles, always the apostle of self-help, in an essay on "Astronomers and Students in Humble Life: A New Chapter in the 'Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties' " lists examples from other trades also.[30] Nevertheless the fact that "in country places, it is very common to find the situation of parish clerk held by a shoemaker" suggests an uncommon degree of literacy.[31] In any case the intellectualism of shoemakers as a trade impressed more than one observer, and could not readily be explained. Both W. E. Winks and the *Crispin Anecdotes* confessed themselves baffled by it, but agreed "that more thinking men are to be found among shoemakers, as a fraternity, than most others".[32] In his autobiography the radical shoemaker John Brown commented that: "Persons possessing the advantages of a more refined education would hardly guess what an amount of knowledge and book-learning is to be met with amongst the members of my ancient trade".[33] In France shoemakers were said to be "thinkers . . . [they] think about things they have seen or heard . . . they fathom more than most the concerns of the workers".[34] In England an eighteenth-century verse recorded that:

[27] Charles Bradlaugh, the champion of atheism, was elected M.P. for Northampton, a shoemaking constituency.

[28] Karl Flanner, *Die Revolution von 1848 in Wiener Neustadt* (Vienna, 1978), p. 181.

[29] Eugenia W. Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform: France and Belgium, 1885-1898* (New Haven, Conn., 1961), pp. 14 ff.; for the shoemaker's revenge on Apelles, who originally invited him to stick to his last and abstain from art criticism, cf. the enormous influence (through Grave) of anarchism on post-Impressionist painters, see *ibid.*, pp. 184 ff.

[30] Samuel Smiles, *Men of Invention and Industry* (London, 1884), ch. 12.

[31] See *Crispin Anecdotes*, p. 144; cf. also Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 63, 70.

[32] *Crispin Anecdotes*, p. 45; Winks, *Lives of Illustrious Shoemakers*, p. 232.

[33] John Brown, *Sixty Years' Gleanings from Life's Harvest: A Genuine Autobiography* (Cambridge, 1858), p. 239, cited in Nicholas Mansfield, "John Brown: A Shoemaker's Place in London", *History Workshop*, viii (1979), p. 135.

[34] Barberet, *Le travail en France*, v, pp. 62-3.

A cobbler once in days of yore
Sat musing at his cottage door.
He liked to read old books, he said,
And then to ponder what he'd read.[35]

In Russia a character in a work of Maxim Gorki is described as "like so many other shoemakers, easily fascinated by a book".[36]

The shoemaker's reputation as popular philosopher and politician pre-dates the era of industrial capitalism and extends well beyond the typical countries of the capitalist economy. Indeed one has the sense that the nineteenth-century radical shoemakers were fulfilling a role long associated with members of their trade. The patron saints of the craft, Crispin and Crispinian, were martyred because they preached unorthodoxy to their customers in their workshop in Soissons — in this instance Christianity under the pagan emperor Diocletian.[37] In Act I of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* a cobbler appears leading a crowd of protesters through the streets. The journeymen in Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*, an Elizabethan exercise in public relations on behalf of the "gentle craft" of London, appear characteristically militant: they threaten to leave their master if a travelling journeyman is not given a job. Almost contemporary with these theatrical allusions, we find the following reference to the shoemakers Robert Hyde and a certain Lodge of Sherborne:

> And he further sayeth that a little before Christmas one Robte Hyde of Sherborne shomaker seinge this depont passinge by his doore, called to him & desyered to have some conference wth him. and after some speches, he entered into these speches. Mr Scarlet you have preachett vnto vs that there is a god, a heaven & a hell, & a resurreccion after this Liffe, and that we shall geive an accompte of or worckes, and that the soule is immortall; but nowe sayeth he here is a companye aboute this towne that saye, that hell is noe other but povertie & penurye in this worlde; and heaven is noe other but to be ritch, and enioye pleasueres; and that we dye like beastes, and when we ar gonne there is noe more rememberance of vs &c. and such like. But this Examint did neither then demande whome they were; neither did he deliuer any particulers vnto him And further saieth That it is generally reported by almost euery bodye in Sherborne, and the sayd Allen & his man aforesayde ar Atheistes. And alsoe he sayeth there is one Lodge a shomaker in Sherborne accompted an Atheiste.[38]

The shoemaker, as what the poet Gray called a "village Hampden", is commemorated in an engraving of Timothy Bennett (died 1756) of Hampton-Wick, Middlesex. He challenged the king's closing of a right of way through Bushy Park by threatening to bring a prosecution —

[35] Wright, *Romance of the Shoe*, p. 218.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

[37] Paul Lacroix, Alphonse Duchesne and Ferdinand Seré, *Histoire des cordonniers et des artisans dont la profession se rattache à la cordonnerie* (Paris, 1852), pp. 116-17.

[38] Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, I. i; Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, iv. 48-76. The quotation is from the Cerne Abbas Inquiry of 1594 (Brit. Lib., Harleian MS. 6849, fos. 183-90), in *Willobie His Avisa*, ed. G. B. Harrison (London, 1926), appendix 3, p. 264. We are obliged to Michael Hunter for this early example of English radical shoemakers.

and won. The engraving represents him in "a firm and complacent aspect, sitting down in the attitude of his conversation with . . . [Lord Halifax]" (the ranger of the royal park), symbolizing a democratic confrontation with and triumph over privilege.[39] Another source describes a shoemaker walking "from village to village with his kit in a basket on his back. On getting a job he would drop down on the doorstep, and while at work, he and his customer would strike up with a song, or talk politics".[40] The notoriety of shoemakers as leaders led Sir Robert Peel to ask some shoemakers, who had come to him to press the demands of their trade society: "How is it . . . that you people are foremost in every movement? . . . If there is a conspiracy or political movement, I always find one of you in it".[41] E. P. Thompson quotes a Yorkshire satirist's 1849 portrait of a "Village Politician":

> He is, typically, a cobbler, an old man and the sage of his industrial village: "He has a library that he rather prides himself upon. It is a strange collection . . . There is the 'Pearl of Great Price' and 'Cobbett's Twopenny Trash' . . . 'The Wrongs of Labour' and 'The Rights of Man', 'The History of the French Revolution' and Bunyan's 'Holy War' . . . It warms his old heart like a quart of mulled ale, when he hears of a successful revolution, — a throne tumbled, kings flying, and princes scattered abroad . . .".[42]

Englishmen believed, moreover, that French shoemakers shared these traits. More than one account of the French Revolution described "cobblers . . . haranguing under the splendid domes of the Valois and the Capets" and then leading crowds to torture and murder the king.[43] In France as well as in England the shoemaker was known for his love of liberty and his role as village politician. Shoemakers were admired for "independence of their opinions". "The freedom of the people", said one writer, "is expressed in their demeanour".[44] The revolt of the Maillotins in 1380 was said to have been sparked by a shoemaker, whose empassioned oration inflamed a crowd.[45] And the downfall of Concini, the Italian statesman, in 1617, was said to have been assured by one Picard, a shoemaker and popular orator, who insulted the admiral when he was alive and defiled him when dead by roasting and eating his heart.[46] Anthropophagy is not a characteristic usually associated with shoemakers, unlike a taste for strong drink, but the shoemakers' reputation for radicalism was deserved and it was not limited to France.

[39] *Crispin Anecdotes*, p. 150.
[40] Wright, *Romance of the Shoe*, p. 109.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[42] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), pp. 183-4.
[43] *Crispin Anecdotes*, p. 126.
[44] Lacroix, Duchesne and Seré, *Histoire des cordonniers*, pp. 206-7.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[46] Barberet, *Le travail en France*, v, pp. 64-5.

II

To what extent was the shoemaker as philosopher and politician a product of his craft? There seem to be two aspects of this question, one having to do with literacy, the other with independence.

The question of literacy and the shoemaker's proverbial fondness for books and reading is difficult to explain, as there is nothing in the nature of the craft to suggest any occupational connection with the printed word — as among printers. The desperate guesses that their skills with leather were often called upon to bind or repair books, and that sometimes their stalls adjoined those of booksellers, appear to be unsupported by any evidence.[47] Moreover, so far as we can tell, there is nothing in the customs and traditions of the craft journeymen which stresses or even implies a special interest in reading; and though Hans Sachs of Nuremberg was, as every opera-lover knows, the most famous of the *Meistersinger*, there is no evidence that shoemakers were disproportionately represented among these poetic artisans. The link between shoemakers and books could not have been established before the invention and popularization of printing, since the written word could hardly have been directly accessible to the poor before then. The general character of the shoemakers' journeymen customs suggests that they had been largely formed by this time.[48] It may, of course, be argued that once books were available, they were naturally likely to attract a profession given to speculation and discussion. Nevertheless the question remains.

It may be that the relatively primitive division of labour in shoemaking allowed or compelled vast numbers of shoemakers to work entirely alone. Certainly Mayhew surmised that it was "the solitude of their employment developing their internal resources" which accounted for their being "a stern, uncompromising and reflecting race".[49]

[47] Wright, *Romance of the Shoe*, p. 46; Hall, *Book of the Feet*, pp. 196-7. Despite the suggestion of these authors no association between shoemaking and bookbinding has been established. In London sons of shoemakers are probably under-represented in the trade between 1600 and 1815. While bookbinding was not infrequently combined with some other occupation such as merchant-tailor, draper, barber, mason, glazier, weaver, dyer, needle-maker and wheelwright, in *no* case was it combined with shoemaking. Calculated from Ellic Howe, *A List of London Bookbinders, 1648-1815* (London, 1950).

[48] Cf. the role of one Hans von Sagan in the traditions of German shoemakers. He gained the emperor's favour and the craft the right to include the imperial eagle in its coat of arms, by intervening in a fourteenth-century battle. The relative scarcity of formalized custom in the trade has been noted in Rudolf Wissell, *Des alten Handwerks Recht und Gewohnheit*, ed. Konrad Hahm, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1929), ii, p. 91; Andreas Griessinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre: Streikbewegungen und kollektives Bewusstsein deutscher Handwerksgesellen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, Berlin and Vienna, 1981). We are very grateful to Andreas Griessinger of the University of Konstanz for making the manuscript of his book available to us prior to its publication.

[49] *The Unknown Mayhew*, ed. Eileen Yeo and E. P. Thompson (London, 1971), p. 279.

Itinerant cobblers were, of course, isolated workers. But even in his workshop, the lonely shoemaker was typical. In Germany in 1882 two-thirds of them employed no assistants at all.

Yet even the single cobbler was not culturally isolated. He might receive his training in a small establishment. The master, a few journeymen and one or two apprentices, as well as the master's wife, seems to have constituted the ideal-typical artisan establishment. In the most traditional regions of nineteenth-century Germany there were on average only 2·4 or 2·6 journeymen per apprentice.[50] The rapid turnover of journeymen, however, would widen both the masters' and the apprentices' horizon, and journeymen were notorious and prolonged travellers. A Swabian rural shoemaker describes their impact on him as an apprentice: "There were much-travelled and intelligent people among the journeymen. So I heard and learned a good deal". And he in turn worked in seventeen establishments in fifteen different places between finishing his apprenticeship and setting up as a small master and social-democratic activist.[51] If, as was the case in Jena, journeymen stayed only six months on average in a shop, the typical apprentice would, in the course of three years, have close contact with perhaps fifteen widely travelled men, and the typical travelling journeyman with a great many more.

The journeymen would meet each other not only in workshops but on the road and in the inns which functioned as houses of call, where jobs and relief, asked for and received in highly ritualized form,[52] were to be found. There was plenty of occasion for discussing the problems of the trade, the news of the day, and the diffusion of information generally. In larger cities shoemakers, like most other tradesmen, might live and work in specialized shoemakers' rows or streets. In centres of market shoemaking, urban or rural, there was no shortage of others in the trade. Since the work took little space, several semi-proletarian outworkers or garret-masters might share a workshop together. Even the loneliest cobbler had probably been socialized in the culture of the "gentle craft" at some time.

That "shoemaker culture", which Peter Burke has recently described as stronger than any other craft culture except the weavers',[53] was unusually marked and persistent. In Scotland, for instance, its

[50] Richard Watteroth, "Die Erfurter Schuharbeiterschaft", in *Auslese und Anpassung der Arbeiterschaft in der Schuhindustrie und einem oberschlesischen Walzwerke* (Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik, cliii, Munich and Leipzig, 1915), p. 6.

[51] Calculated from Joseph Belli, *Die Rote Feldpost unterm Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn, 1978 edn.), pp. 54-94. We are obliged to Rainer Wirtz for this reference. Julius Pierstorff, "Drei Jenaer Handwerke", in *Untersuchungen über die Lage des Handwerks in Deutschland*, ix (Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik, lxx, Leipzig, 1897), p. 36, notes that journeymen stayed a maximum of six months in the same shop.

[52] Griessinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, pp. 102-7, describes these rituals excellently for eighteenth-century Germany.

[53] Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 38-9.

Catholic patron saint survived the Calvinist reformation as "King Crispin", and in England St. Crispin's Day was celebrated as a shoemakers' holiday, often with processions of the craft, until well into the nineteenth century, or was revived by journeymen for political purposes, as in Norwich in 1813. It was still alive or remembered in some purely rural areas at the end of the century. The early decline of organized gilds and corporations in England makes such survivals all the more impressive.[54]

Yet there appears to be nothing in the formal or informal craft traditions that linked shoemakers specifically to intellectualism, or even to radicalism. They stressed pride in the trade, based largely on its indispensability to high and low, young and old. This is the commonest theme of journeyman shoemakers' songs.[55] They stressed independence, especially journeyman independence, as proved by the shoemaker's control over his time of work and leisure — his capacity to celebrate Saint Monday and other holidays as he chose.[56] Since social leisure and drink were inseparable, they also stressed drinking, an activity for which shoemakers were celebrated, and that other by-product of bar-room culture, settling disputes by fighting. "Look for the best beer where carters and shoemakers drink", says a Polish proverb. Johann Nestroy's farce *Lumpazivagabundus* (1836), which follows the fortunes of three ideal-typical journeymen, presents its shoemaker both as an amateur astronomer (his interest in comets may be inspired by the reading of almanacs) and a spectacular and quarrelsome soak. But these are not particularly intellectual associations.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation of the trade's intellectualism derives from the fact that a shoemaker's work was both sedentary and physically undemanding. Probably it was physically the least taxing labour for men in the countryside. As a result small, weak or physically handicapped boys were habitually put to this trade. Such was the case of Jakob Boehme, the mystic,[57] of Robert Bloomfield, author of *The Farmer's Boy*,[58] of William Gifford, later editor of the *Quarterly Review*, who was "put . . . to the plough" but "soon found . . . too weak for such heavy work", of John Pounds, pioneer of the "Ragged Schools", who became a shoemaker when an accident maimed him and

[54] Robert Chambers, *The Book of Days*, 2 vols. (London and Edinburgh, 1862-4), ii, p. 492; A. R. Wright, *British Calendar Customs: England*, ed. T. E. Lones, 3 vols. (Folk-Lore Soc., xcvii, cii, cvi, London and Glasgow, 1936-40), iii, pp. 102-4. In England (but not in Scotland) it may have been aided by the association of St. Crispin's Day with nationalism, for this was, as readers of Shakespeare's *Henry V* will recall, the date of the battle of Agincourt against the French.

[55] As surveyed in Griessinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, pp. 130-3.

[56] Brooker, "The Northampton Shoemakers' Reaction to Industrialisation", *passim*, on conflicts arising out of this during industrialization. See also Mansfield, "John Brown: A Shoemaker's Place in London", *passim*.

[57] *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, iii, entry for Jakob Böhme.

[58] *Dictionary of National Biography*, v.

drove him out of his original trade as a shipwright,[59] of John Lobb, founder of a celebrated firm in St. James's which still exists,[60] and almost certainly of numerous others. In Pomeranian Loitz "almost the only people who devote themselves to this trade are crippled or unsuited to agricultural or industrial work". Hence the tendency of village shoemakers unable to make ends meet by their craft to take (as in the town of Heide, Schleswig) such second jobs as night-watchmen, school caretakers, messengers, waiters, town criers, assistants to the pastor, or assistant postmen and street-sweepers.[61]

The number of deformed shoemakers and tailors ("crooked, humpbacked, lame") in the Italian corporate processions of these crafts was noted by Ramazzini.[62] Unlike the tailors, however, the shoemakers were not proverbially associated with feebleness, an observation supported by nineteenth-century statistics of British occupational mortality.[63] On the other hand the *lame* cobbler is recorded as early as the Latin dramatist Plautus. Perhaps the frequency of rural shoemakers who combined their trade with agricultural activities is relevant here. Nevertheless the craft was at least to some extent selected by boys incapable of competing with other labouring men of their age in the conventionally valued physical activities. This may have provided an incentive to acquire other kinds of prestige. And here the quiet and semi-routinized nature of much of their work, which could readily be combined with thinking, watching and conversation, may have suggested intellectual alternatives. Shoemakers working together in larger workshops were among those crafts (tailors and cigar-makers are others) which developed the institution of the "reader" — one of the men taking turns to read newspapers or books out aloud, or an old soldier being hired to read, or the youngest boy having the duty to fetch and read the news. (George Bloomfield, a minor shoemaker-poet, not unreasonably suggested that this was the point to which "those who say that 'Shoemakers are politicians' might trace the solution of their wonder").[64] Such quiet and undemanding indoor occupations

[59] Winks, *Lives of Illustrious Shoemakers*, pp. 81, 180.

[60] Brian Dobbs, *The Last Shall Be First: The Colourful Story of John Lobb, the St. James's Bootmaker* (London, 1972), pp. 27-8.

[61] B. Aebert, "Die Schuhmacherei in Loitz", in *Untersuchungen über die Lage des Handwerks in Deutschland*, i (Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik, lxii, Leipzig, 1895), pp. 39, 49; Siegfried Heckscher, "Über die Lage des Schuhmachergewerbes in Altona, Elmshorn, Heide, Preetz und Barmstedt", in *ibid.*, p. 2.

[62] Bernardino Ramazzini, *Health Preserved, in Two Treatises*, 2nd edn. (London, 1750), p. 215.

[63] John Thomas Arlidge, *The Hygiene, Diseases and Mortality of Occupations* (London, 1892), p. 216, quoting William Farr's data of 1875 — below-average mortality at all ages except 20-25 as against the very high mortality of tailors — and Ratcliffe, an analyst of the mortality of members of Friendly Societies, who considered their "vitality" inferior only to that of farm-labourers and carpenters.

[64] *Crispin Anecdotes*, p. 126.

existed in towns, but in the villages it is difficult to think of others — certainly not the blacksmiths or the wheelwrights.[65]

The shoemaker's work thus permitted thinking and discussion while working; his frequent isolation during working hours threw him on his own intellectual resources; he was selectively recruited from boys with a likely incentive to compensate for their physical handicaps; the training of apprentices and the tramping of journeymen exposed him to the culture of the trade and to the culture and politics of a wider world. We may perhaps add that the lightness of his tool-kit actually made it easier than in some other trades to carry books with him — a fact for which there is also some evidence. Whether all this provides an adequate, still more a testable, explanation of his bookishness, we cannot be certain. Nevertheless three things are clear.

First, the more literate artisan crafts shoemakers, as we shall shortly see, were unusual in being widely distributed in predominantly illiterate rural and small-town environments, where they could become unofficial clerks or labourers' intellectuals. They had little competition. Secondly, once the popular image of the shoemaker as intellectual and radical existed (as it undoubtedly did) it must have affected reality in several ways. Every time a shoemaker fitted the role, he confirmed popular expectations. As a result shoemakers' behaviour in this role was probably more often noted, recorded and commented upon. The popular image may have attracted young men with literary or philosophical tastes and political interests; or conversely, boys brought into contact with philosophic and radical cobblers might acquire an interest in these matters. Finally, the culture of the trade might develop some of these traits among its practitioners not only because material conditions facilitated them, but because its mores did not stand in the way. In many occupations a "reading man" would have such tastes knocked or mocked out of him. Among shoemakers they might be more easily accepted as one version of behaviour compatible with group norms.

The shoemaker's independence was clearly tied to the material conditions of his trade and from it stemmed his ability to be a village politician. In addition the humble status of the trade and the relative poverty of its recruits, at least in the nineteenth century, help to explain its radicalism.

The two characteristics are linked. The trade was essentially based on leather, whose preparation (skinning, cleaning, tanning, and so on)

[65] "The frequency of the development of literary talent among shoemakers has often been remarked. Their occupation, being a sedentary and comparatively noiseless one, may be considered as more favorable than some others to meditation; but perhaps its literary productiveness has arisen quite as much from the circumstance of its being a trade of light labor, and therefore resorted to, in preference to most others, by persons in the humble life who are conscious of more mental talent than bodily strength": Hall, *Book of the Feet*, p. 4.

is noisome and dirty, and therefore often confined to persons of low social status or outcasts (as in India and Japan). In their origins shoemakers and tanners were closely linked, since shoemakers often tanned their own leather, as they still did until the mid-nineteenth century in the Pomeranian shoemaker community of Loitz.[66] In Leipzig the tanners and shoemakers originally formed a single gild.[67] The low status of shoemakers and the contempt in which they were often held in antiquity — at any rate by writers[68] — may be partly due to this association with "uncleanness" or the memory of it. Conversely it is not unreasonable to suppose that the craft (which emphasized its indispensability and gentility) was inclined towards radicalism by resentment. Certainly an element of low status seems to have persisted, possibly also influenced by the shoemaker's reputation for physical neglect, possibly a reason for this reputation. Even in the late nineteenth century an author could write of the traditional (pre-factory) trade: "As a class . . . the common shoemakers were neither clean nor tidy in their habits and persons, and the calling was looked down upon as one of low social grade; a fitting employment to which to apprentice the boy inmates of workhouses".[69]

Moreover, as the costs of apprenticeship were minimal, families which could not afford to bind their sons to a more prosperous, exclusive (and more costly) trade could scrape together the fees required for learning shoemaking. Indeed the association of the craft with poverty was also proverbial. "All shoemakers go barefoot", goes a Yiddish saying. "The shoemaker always wears torn shoes". A mixture of leftover scraps of food was known, around Hamburg, as "shoemaker's pie".[70]

The coexistence of independence and poverty in the trade is partly

[66] Aebert, "Die Schuhmacherei in Loitz", p. 38.

[67] Nicolaus Geissenberger, "Die Schuhmacherei in Leipzig und Umgegend", in *Untersuchungen über die Lage des Handwerks in Deutschland*, ii (Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik, lxiii, Leipzig, 1895), p. 169.

[68] Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-encyclopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft*, 2nd ser., iv (1), cols. 989-94, under "sutor". The low status of the trade is demonstrated in the language as well. In France *savetier* was a term of derision; in England a cobbler also meant a "botcher" or unskilled workman. See Lacroix, Duchesne and Seré, *Histoire des cordonniers*, p. 179.

[69] Arlidge, *Hygiene, Diseases and Mortality of Occupations*, p. 216.

[70] On these references to shoemakers, see *Crispin Anecdotes*, p. 102; *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon*, iv, cols. 398-401; *English Dialect Dictionary*, i, under "cobbler", "Cobbler's dinner — bread and bread to it". The popular impression from colonial America to Europe held that, whatever else he was, a shoemaker was rarely prosperous. Poverty and a propensity for philosophizing were not at all contradictory; indeed they may help to explain the long-standing reputation of shoemakers as radicals. Thinking men among the poor were very likely to become political or ideological radicals. John Brown's memory of "the great orators of the craft" described "men in ragged habiliments and of squalid looks" who "pour forth in touching and eloquent language their appeals": Mansfield, "John Brown: A Shoemaker's Place in London", p. 131.

due to its peculiar ubiquity. It was organized early in both town and country, at least in temperate zones where it had long been recognized that "there's nothing like leather" for tough outdoor labouring footwear. The shoemakers, often of humble origin themselves, served a clientele which included large numbers of humble people. The making and repairing of leather footwear requires specialists of some kind, unlike a good deal of other making and mending. At the end of the nineteenth century there were still shoemakers who specialized in going round the Alpine farms of Austria (*Störschuster*) to make and mend the year's footwear from the hides and leather provided by the farmers.[71] Shoemakers and cobblers were therefore not only a craft organized as such at an uncommonly early date (they are among the earliest documented craft gilds in both England and Germany)[72] but one of the most numerous and widely distributed crafts in town and country. In eighteenth-century Seville, as in nineteenth-century Valparaiso, they exceeded in numbers all other crafts.[73] So did they in Prussia in 1800 (followed by tailors and smiths). In Bavaria in 1771 they were exceeded in numbers only by weavers, but in market villages they were first, followed by brewers and weavers.[74] In rural Friesland in 1749 there were 5·79 of them per thousand inhabitants, compared to 4·53 weavers, 4·48 carpenters, 3·70 bakers, 2·08 smiths, 1·76 clergymen, 1·51 innkeepers and 1·45 tailors; shoemakers were to by found in 54 per cent of all settlements, carpenters in 52 per cent, smiths in 40 per cent and innkeepers in 32 per cent.[75] It seems clear that people found it harder to manage without specialized shoemakers and menders within close reach than without other specialized craftsmen and services.

The shoemaker's trade, though it extended over a very wide range of skill and specialization, remained sufficiently primitive in technology and division of labour, and with a sufficiently homogeneous product, to continue essentially as a single craft. There is no equivalent in it to the growing fragmentation of metalworking into specialized separate crafts so often found in the medieval gild economy. Broadly speaking, once the trade had separated from the tanners, leather-sellers and

[71] Max von Tayenthal, "Die Schuhwarenindustrie Österreichs", *Sociale Rundschau* [Arbeitsstatistisches Amt im k. u.k. Handelsministerium], ii pt. 1 (1901), p. 764.

[72] George Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (London, 1908), p. 82; Geissenberger, "Die Schuhmacherei in Leipzig und Umgegend", p. 169; Watteroth, "Die Erfurter Schuharbeiterschaft", p. 15.

[73] In Santiago and Valparaiso provinces in 1854 there were 5,865 of them, compared to 3,720 carpenters, 1,615 tailors, 1,287 masons and bricklayers and 1,088 smiths and farriers: L. A. Romero, *La Sociedad de la Igualdad: los artesanos de Santiago de Chile y sus primeras experiencias politicas, 1820-1851* (Buenos Aires, 1978), p. 14. See also A. Bernal, A. Collantes de Teran and A. Garcia-Baquero, "Sevilla: de los gremios a la industrialización", *Estudios de historia social* [Madrid], nos. 5-6 (1978), pp. 7-310, esp. Cuadro 8.

[74] Griessinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, pp. 87-90.

[75] J. A. Faber, *Drie Eeuwen Friesland*, 2 vols. (A. A. G. Bijdragen, xvii, Wageningen, 1972), ii, tables 111.8, 111.9, at pp. 444-5, 446-7.

other producers and suppliers of its raw material, its main internal fissures were commercial — between shoemakers and shoe-merchants (whether or not these also made shoes). There was also a division between those who made and those who merely repaired shoes, defined in various ways — cordwainers and cobblers (*savetiers*, *Flickschuster*, *ciabattino*), though it must be noted that the merchants developed essentially from among the cordwainers. The separation between makers and menders was sometimes institutionalized in separate gilds, though cobblers' gilds had difficulty in emancipating themselves completely from cordwainers' control or in remaining viable.

Cobbling was clearly the inferior branch, and the term (in English) is used for any work of poor quality. However, the line between the two was and had to be unclear, especially in times and regions (like eighteenth-century Germany) where fairly static demand confronted growing supply in the towns.[76] To live only by *making* shoes was hardly possible for more than a few. In fact it was assumed that makers cobbled. Thus to reach a "decent" income (91 gulden a year) it was claimed, no doubt rhetorically, that a master "would have to work up one pair of new shoes or three pairs of soles and patches every day, and in addition rely on customers paying". It is thus not surprising that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the terms seem to have become interchangeable in English,[77] while in French the word *cordonnier* came to mean both maker and mender, as *Schuster* did in popular German usage, in spite of the tendency for the more high-class *Schuhmacher* to gain ground at its expense.[78] And indeed, outside strongly gild-controlled cities, which were becoming weaker, how was it possible to keep the making and mending of shoes strictly apart?

The widespread demand for specialized shoemakers and menders made it impossible for corporate cities to monopolize the craft. Village shoe-mending could hardly be banned, and though this type of countryside cobbling was (no doubt inevitably) free of gild control and qualifications, it had almost always to be learned from some kind of shoemaker. There was no way of preventing the local cobbler from also supplying the local demand for shoes, especially of the rough working kind, until the rise of large-scale production and distribution. So journeymen with poor chances of becoming masters in the controlled trade of the city might well prefer to set up on their own in some village or country town. Indeed a growing tendency to do so in Germany was noted as late as the nineteenth century. When in 1840 the prohibition

[76] Griessinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, pp. 90-5.

[77] Thus Winks discusses the problem of the intellectual distinction of shoemakers under the heading "A Constellation of Celebrated Cobblers": Winks, *Lives of Illustrious Shoemakers*, pp. 229 ff. For interchangeability, see also *Scottish National Dictionary*, under "souter".

[78] C.N.R.S., *Trésor de la langue française* (Paris, 1978), under "cordonnier"; *Grimms Wörtenbuch*, under "Schuster".

on rural shoemakers (as distinct from cobblers) was finally lifted in the countryside of Saxony, a single master (without apprentices) being henceforth permitted per village, a considerable number of rural shoemakers immediately appeared.[79] It is a good guess that many of them had simply changed their official title.

On the other hand, if there was no sharp line between the best and most specialized shoemaker and the most modest cobbler, the enormous size of the trade suggests that it must generally have included an unusually large section of the marginal, who could not live by their craft alone, especially as shoe-mending — from which German village cobblers might draw half their income — was notoriously unremunerative. Pre-industrial data are hard to find, but a calculation for a Swabian village in the nineteenth century suggests that because of insufficient demand a shoemaker there could not, on average, have made more than seven pairs of footwear in a year,[80] so that for most of them the craft could not have been more than a source of supplementary earnings, possibly taken up as such. The reputation of the trade for poverty thus had a sound base, though the reasons for its overcrowding are not quite clear. Perhaps this is partly explained by the cheapness of the basic equipment and the possibility of practising it at home; perhaps also by the fact that shoemakers were recruited externally, outside the ranks of practising craftsmen and their families. Printers and glass-workers restricted recruitment to their sons, relatives and a few privileged outsiders; shoemakers could rarely do so.[81] As a result shoemakers controlled neither entry into nor the size of their trade, hence its overcrowding.

The trade was therefore far from homogeneous. Yet so long as it remained essentially a manual artisan trade — and until the 1850s not even the domestic sewing-machine entered it — the divisions within it were vague and shifting. Hence, though there were "aristocrats" or favoured sectors among shoemakers as among tailors (for example, in the high-class bespoke trade of the cities), neither trade as a whole stood high in the pecking order of the crafts, as the artisan communist Wilhelm Weitling observed.[82] For both, and especially the shoemakers, were unusually numerous, and therefore contained an unusually high proportion of the marginal and unprosperous. Among the hundreds of journeymen artisans who flocked into industrializing Wiener Neustadt in the 1840s and applied for permission to stay there, no less than 14·7

[79] Geissenberger, "Die Schuhmacherei in Leipzig und Umgegend", p. 175.

[80] Utz Jaeggle, *Kiebingen: Eine Heimatgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1977), p. 249. Hardly any of the local shoemakers belonged to the upper stratum of the village, and the majority not even to the middle stratum. "Even today shoemakers count for nothing in the village": *ibid.* We are obliged to Rainer Wirtz for this reference.

[81] We are informed, however, that among eighteenth-century London cordwainers inter-generational continuity in the trade was unusually high.

[82] Wilhelm Weitling, *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (Berlin, 1955 edn.), p. 289.

per cent (17 per cent of those from Bohemia) were shoemakers, followed at some distance by 10 per cent (14·6 per cent among Bohemians) of tailors and 8·3 per cent (9·1 per cent among Bohemians) of joiners.[83]

The village shoemaker was self-employed. His business required little capital. Equipment was cheap, light and portable, and he only required a modest roof over his head to work and live, in the worst case in the same room. While this made him unusually mobile, it did not distinguish him from a number of other crafts. What did distinguish him was his contact with large numbers of humble people and his independence from patrons, wealthy clients and employers. Farmers depended on landlords; wheelwrights and builders relied on orders from farmers and persons of substance; tailors served the wealthy since the poor made their own clothes. The shoemaker also served the wealthy, since they needed him; but his main clientele must, in most cases, have been among the poor, since they could not do without him either. That fact is undeniable, even if we know less than we might about the actual use of leather footwear among the poor, which was certainly more restricted than in our prosperous times.[84] Indeed there is evidence that, as wealthier villagers in the later nineteenth century advanced to store-bought shoes manufactured elsewhere, if not to high-class bespoke footwear, the village shoemaker became increasingly dependent on the custom of those who needed tough footwear for outdoor labour.

He could thus express his opinions without the risk of losing his job or his customers — if he were good enough, even his respectable customers.[85] Moreover he was closely linked with his clients by bonds of confidence. This was in part because they were likely to be his debtors, since farm-workers and perhaps peasants could only pay at rare intervals when they received lump sums, for example, after the harvest (pay-day in Pomerania was St. Crispin's Day, 25th October)[86] or between Easter and Whitsun, when annual hirings were renewed. He had to trust his clients, but they had no reason to distrust him. Unlike so many with whom the poor had dealings — the miller, the baker, even the tavern-keeper, who could give short weight or measure — the shoemaker produced a new or mended shoe which could be readily judged, and variations in quality were most likely due not to cheating

[83] Flanner, *Die Revolution von 1848 in Wiener Neustadt*, pp. 26-7. Since the city specialized in the metal industries as well as textiles, metal craftsmen (less numerous though they were than shoemakers) are omitted as likely to have been over-represented.

[84] We need to know more, in particular, about the extent of the practice of going barefoot (widespread among women and children) and the use of alternative footwear — clogs, felt or bast boots and shoes, and the like.

[85] Cf. the Calabrian shoemaker cited in E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959), appendix 9, who prided himself on working even for the *carabinieri*.

[86] Is there a connection between this agricultural rhythm and St. Crispin's Day on 25th October?

but to variations in skill.[87] The shoemaker thus had licence to express his opinions, which there was no reason to distrust.

That these opinions were heterodox and democratic should cause no surprise. The village shoemaker's life was akin to that of the poor, not the rich and powerful. He had little use for hierarchy and formal organization. There was little enough in his trade, and in many cases he found work outside and in spite of gild or craft regulation. He knew the value of independence and had ample opportunity to compare his relative autonomy with that of his clients. How far this ability to articulate independent views was confined to the minority of relatively successful craftsmen rather than the (presumable) majority of marginal part-time cobblers, we cannot say, since it is difficult or impossible to compile a representative sample of the radicals in the craft. The question must be left open. However, in the specific context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it is natural to find radical shoemakers reading Cobbett, who cried out against the demolition of all small tradesmen and who denounced a system which replaced "master and man . . . every one was in his place and every one was free" with "masters and slaves".[88] Nor is it surprising to find them in the ranks of sansculottes and later of anarchists. In all cases the insistence on modest means, hard work and independence as solutions to problems of injustice and poverty were within the experience of village shoemakers.

Much of this argument might also apply to other village artisans. But while, say, the blacksmith's shop was noisy and his labour made conversation at work difficult, the shoemaker was strategically well-placed to pass on city ideas and mobilize action. His village shop provided an ideal setting for the purpose, and articulate men who worked alone most of the time might grow loquacious in company, and could do so while they worked. The rural shoemaker was always present, his eyes on the street, and he knew what went on in the community, even when he did not happen to double as parish clerk or in some other municipal or communal capacity. Moreover their quiet workshops in villages and small towns were social centres second only to the inn, open and ready for conversation all day. Not surprisingly in the French countryside of 1793-4 shoemakers, together with tavern-keepers, "seem to have had a veritable vocation for revolution". Richard Cobb stresses:

> the role of the shoemakers, those village revolutionaries who, installed as mayors by the revolutionary upsurge of summer 1793, or at the head of the committees of surveillance, led the sansculotte minorities against *les gros* . . . On the lists of "terrorists

[87] We owe this point to Dr. Mikuláš Teich, who quotes the proverb from his native Czechoslovakia: "Where there is cutting, weighing or pouring, money is to be made".

[88] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York, 1960), p. 16, citing the *Political Register*, 14 Apr. 1821.

to be disarmed" which were drawn up in the year III in the countryside, they formed a majority. We have here an undeniable social phenomenon.[89]

Of course the cobbler's shop and the tavern differed as meeting-places in one important respect. Men gathered to drink in groups, but in cobbler's shops in ones and twos. Taverns were only for adult males, but women, or more likely children, had access to the village intellectual. In how many village and small-town lives did the shoemaker as educator play a role! Thus Hone's "Every-Day Book" recalls "an honest old man who patched my shoes and my mind, when I was a boy . . . my friend the cobbler, who, though no metaphysician, was given to ruminate on 'causation' ". He lent the boy books "which he kept in the drawer of his seat, with . . . the instruments of his 'Gentle Craft' ".[90] And as late as the 1940s a future distinguished Marxist labour historian was introduced to politics in boyish conversations in a small-town cobbler's workshop in his native Romania.[91]

The shoemaker was thus a key figure in rural intellectual and political life: literate, articulate, relatively informed, intellectually and sometimes economically independent, at least within his village community. He was constantly present in the places where popular mobilization was likely to take place: on the village street, at markets, fairs and feasts. Whether this is sufficient explanation for his frequently attested role as crowd-leader is not so clear. Under the circumstances, however, we are hardly surprised to find him on occasion in such a role.

III

Among social historians the reputation of shoemakers as radicals is associated mostly with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the period of the transition to industrialism. We cannot measure whether or not there was an increase in the number of militant shoemakers, but it seems likely that two developments stimulated an intensified radicalism. The first stemmed from the slow decline of shoemaking as an essentially artisan occupation and a consequent period of extreme tension within the trade. Specific problems varied from place to place (relations between masters and journeymen were different in Northampton and London) but it is undeniable that the trade as a whole was politicized. Thus a young journeyman experienced strikes and participated in discussions of alternate political and economic systems as he acquired his skills. Those who ended up in small village shops knew about Jacobinism and carried radical ideas from cities to small towns. The second development was tied to the growing discon-

[89] Richard Cobb, *Les armées révolutionnaires*, 2 vols. (Paris and The Hague, 1961-3), ii, pp. 486-7.

[90] *Crispin Anecdotes*, pp. 154-5.

[91] Dale Tomich and Anson G. Rabinbach, "Georges Haupt, 1928-1978", *German Critique*, no. 14 (1978), p. 3.

tent of village populations as they faced the consequences of the growth of agricultural capitalism. Villagers were increasingly open to the ideological formulations for their grievances which shoemakers were in a position to provide. The combination of trade and village circumstances could readily turn the village philosopher into a village politician, as it most certainly did during the "Swing" riots.

What changes affected the shoemaking trade during the period which extended, roughly, from 1770 to 1880?

The first point to recall is the sheer numerical size of the trade which, until mechanization and factory production transformed it, grew with urbanization and population. The number of shoemaking workers in Vienna (where factories were negligible) more than trebled between 1855 and 1890, most of this increase occurring before the early 1870s.[92] In Britain the number of adult males in the trade grew from 133,000 to 243,000 between 1841 and 1851, when there were more shoemakers in the country than miners.[93] Between 1835 and 1850 an annual average of between 250 and 400 shoemakers entered Leipzig and, since the city was growing, a somewhat smaller number left each year. Over this fifteen-year period there was a minimum number of 3,750 arrivals and 3,000 departures.[94]

The second point to note is the spread of manufacture for the market as distinct from individual clients and the ubiquitous repair-work. The "market shoemaker", making rough ware for sale on local and regional markets, might in many places still have as close a relationship with his clients as the bespoke shoemaker, since he could be found regularly at his stall on market day by men and women he knew well and who knew him. His was probably a closer relationship than that of his growing rival, the shoemaker-hawker, who went from house to house.[95] Both these arrangements, however, lent themselves to various forms of putting-out system — hence the development of both rural and urban shoemaking communities, which might range from agglomerations of traditional craft workshops with minimal workshop division of labour to larger centres which were, in effect, unmechanized factories working with operatives confined to special processes supplemented by urban or village outworkers with their own subdivision of labour.[96] Here large-scale production for export or army and navy contracts could be undertaken. It is possible that many such semi-skilled

[92] Richard Schüller, "Die Schuhmacherei in Wien", in *Untersuchungen über die Lage des Handwerks in Österreich* (Schriften des Vereins für Socialpolitik, lxxi, Leipzig, 1896), pp. 49-50.

[93] J. H. Clapham, *Economic History of Modern Britain*, i, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1930), p. 169.

[94] Geissenberger, "Die Schuhmacherei in Leipzig und Umgegend", p. 190.

[95] Tayenthal, "Die Schuhwarenindustrie Österreichs", pp. 764-5; Heckscher, "Über die Lage des Schuhmachergewerbes in Altona, Elmshorn, Heide, Preetz und Barmstedt", pp. 4, 6.

[96] P. R. Mounfield, "The Footwear Industry of the East Midlands", *East Midlands Geographer*, xxii (1965), pp. 293-306.

handworkers came to the trade untrained or unsocialized in the craft, especially when drawn from agriculture.[97] It may well be that apprentices at this period were largely drawn from the rural poor. In Europe, however, the nucleus of apprenticed shoemakers around whom this semi-skilled labour force grew was substantial. This is suggested even for factory operatives in (the radical) J. B. Leno's handbook of shoemaking, and certainly in Erfurt, one of the main German centres of mechanized factory production, one-third of a sample of 193 workers had learned the trade, and half of these were the sons of shoemakers.[98] Since, outside the United States and a little later Britain, no technical innovation other than the small sewing-machine (which spread between the mid-1850s and the early 1870s) was of significance until very late in the nineteenth century, this is not surprising.[99]

The third point is that the press of numbers and the proliferation of putting-out manufacture (referred to by honourable craftsmen as "dishonourable" or "junk" work) undermined the independence of the trade and also depressed wages. An inquiry into employment in Marseille in the 1840s revealed that shoemakers were the largest occupational group, notoriously underpaid. They earned an average daily wage of only 3 francs, and an average annual wage of 600 francs, which placed them lower in earnings than many unskilled labourers.[100] The worker-poet Charles Poncy protested in 1850 to St. Crispin:

> Hunger harnesses us to its black wagon: our wages are so reduced. For bread and rags we burn the midnight oil.
>
> My children, piled pell-mell on ancient bedding, have sucked dry their mother's scrawny breast. We eat the seed-corn that should grow food for the young.[101]

[97] For the situation in Lynn, Massachusetts, see Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976).

[98] James Devlin, *The Guide to Trade: The Shoemaker*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), is the best manual of shoemaking techniques before mechanization. The author, a radical, activist and minor literary figure (he contributed to Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*) was the best craftsman in the London trade: Goodway, "Chartism in London", p. 245. For the later nineteenth century, see John Bedford Leno, *The Art of Boot- and Shoe-making ... with a Description of the Most Approved Machinery Employed* (London, 1885). Leno, though a printer by trade and poetaster/reciter by avocation, was long associated with the craft as owner and editor of the journal *St. Crispin*; see his *The Aftermath: With Autobiography of the Author* (London, 1892). For a more recent treatment, see R. A. Church, "Labour Supply and Innovation, 1800-1860: The Boot and Shoe Industry", *Business Hist.*, xii (1970). For Erfurt, see Watteroth, "Die Erfurter Schuharbeiterschaft", esp. pp. 113-14.

[99] Barberet, *Le travail en France*, v, pp. 71, 85, 116, 163; Émile Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières et de l'industrie en France de 1789 à 1870*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1940 edn.), ii, p. 567; Christopher Johnson, "Communism and the Working Class before Marx: The Icarian Experience", *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, lxxvi (1971), p. 661; David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus* (London, 1969), pp. 294-6; Direction du travail, *Les associations professionelles ouvrières*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1894-1904), ii, pp. 11-87; *The Unknown Mayhew*, ed. Yeo and Thompson, pp. 228-79.

[100] Sewell, "The Structure of the Working Class of Marseille", p. 217.

[101] Charles Poncy, "La chanson du cordonnier", in his *La chanson de chaque métier* (Paris, 1850), pp. 80-5.

The English shoemaker John Brant attributed his part in the Cato Street conspiracy to low wages and the loss of independence that entailed. His statement suggests that he sought to strike back at those in power, asserting his ability to think and act independently:

> He had, by his industry, been able to earn about £3 or £4 a-week, and while this was the case, he never meddled with politics; but when he found his income reduced to 10s a-week, he began to look about him . . . And what did he find? Why, men in power, who met to deliberate how they might starve and plunder the country . . . He had joined the conspiracy for the public good.[102]

The spread of manufacture for a remote market rather than known clients affected the trade in different ways. At one extreme it might, at least temporarily, lead to a reassertion of the values and claims of the craft as such, shared by both masters and journeymen, against slop-work or "dishonourable" work locally or in large-scale manufacturing centres like Northampton. At the other extreme, journeymen or proletarianized small masters who perceived that they had become permanent wage-workers, might find their way to trade unionism and conflict with employers, which sharpened the edge of shoemaker radicalism. Thus the Parisian shoemaker "Efrahem" spoke of the day when "on the signal being given, all workers will simultaneously leave their workshops and abstain from labour in order to obtain the rise in the price-list they have demanded from the masters".[103] As already observed, shoemakers took rapidly to forming militant unions. In Britain, at least, the roots of unionism went deep. James Hawker, who occupies a modest place in history as a brilliant and politically conscious poacher and village radical in Leicestershire, was the son of a poor tailor, apprenticed to the Northampton shoe trade. In the intervals of joining and deserting from the army, he drifted into any job he could in the eastern midlands. Yet he joined a union whenever one was available: "I ran home as quick as I Could and Drew my Travelling Card. For by this time I was a Trade unionist — almost before I knew what it Meant . . . Had I not been a union man I might have been compelled to Beg or Steal".[104]

The line between craft and wage-work, between economic and political militancy, was as yet vague enough to discourage excessive classification. Not until 1874 did traditional shoemakers and manufacturing operatives diverge sufficiently in Britain for the latter to break away from the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association to form the National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers — the future

[102] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 704.

[103] Cited in Faure and Rancière, *La parole ouvrière, 1830-1851*, p. 161.

[104] *James Hawker's Journal: A Victorian Poacher*, ed. Garth Christian (Oxford, 1978), pp. 15, 16. See also Mansfield, "John Brown: A Shoemaker's Place in London", pp. 130-1, who cites John Brown in 1811: "So soon as I was settled in a regular seat of work, it became necessary that I should join the trade or shops-meeting, which is a combination for the support of wages".

National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives. The union of 1820 contributed to the cause of the defendants in the Cato Street conspiracy. And the unions in putting-out and manufacturing centres drew on the old craft tradition in their protests. At Nantwich in Cheshire, for example, a strong union of this sort celebrated St. Crispin's Day in 1833 with:

> a grand procession — King Crispin on horseback attired in royal regalia . . . attended by train-bearers in appropriate costume. The officers were attired in vestments suitable to their rank, and carrying the Dispensation, the Bible, a large pair of globes, and also beautiful specimens of ladies' and gents' boots and shoes . . . Nearly 500 joined in the procession, each one wearing a white apron neatly trimmed. The rear was brought up by a shopmate in full tramping order, his kit packed on his back and walking stick in his hand.[105]

The union's banner, "emblematical of our trade, with the motto 'May the manufactures of the sons of Crispin be trod upon by all the world'. . ." was much admired.[106] A gild procession would not have looked very different.

However, the lines leading to our village radicals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries originate more often from contexts like London, where masters and journeymen shared Jacobin positions such as those articulated by the London Corresponding Society and members of the Cato Street conspiracy, or Paris, where shoemakers were among the most numerous followers of Étienne Cabet. The village shoemaker shared with honourable urban shoemakers the cause of the independent small artisan. In defence of that cause he offered a critique of the economy and the government which could focus the grievances of other workers and spur them to action. The call to action rested upon the assumption that men like himself were capable of action; indeed it assumed that small groups of intelligent "citizens" could act to remedy injustice independently — without the leadership of more learned men or the support of central formal organizations.

Nevertheless, if changes in the trade itself heightened the awareness of its members to the inequities of society, we cannot simply say that shoemaker radicalism emerged in the late eighteenth century as a response to early industrial capitalism. As we have tried to show, the cobbler as a labouring man's intellectual and heterodox philosopher, as the common people's spokesman, as a trade militant, long antedates the Industrial Revolution — at least if the argument of this paper is accepted. What the early stages of industrialization or pre-industrialization did was to broaden the base of shoemaker radicalism by increasing the numbers of shoemakers and menders and by creating a large body of at least intermittently pauperized semi-proletarian out-

[105] "The Reminiscences of Thomas Dunning (1813-1894) and the Nantwich Shoemakers' Case of 1834", ed. W. H. Chaloner, *Trans. Lancs. and Cheshire Antiq. Soc.*, lix (1947), p. 98.

[106] *Ibid.*

workers. Many craft journeymen were forced out of the traditional framework of corporate artisan activities and expectations, and towards the trade union militancy of skilled workers.

But what this period did above all was vastly to increase both the tool-kit of political radicalism and its repertoire of ideas, demands and programmes. Secular democratic, Jacobin, republican, anticlerical, co-operative, socialist, communist and anarchist ideologies of social and political criticism multiplied, and supplemented or replaced the ideologies of heterodox religion which had previously provided the main vocabulary of popular thought. Some had greater appeal than others, but aspects of all of them spoke to experiences of shoemakers, old or new. The media for popular agitation and debate also multiplied: newspapers and pamphlets providing greater scope for the writing of labouring intellectuals could be read and discussed in the shoemaker's shop. And as the philosophic or heretical shoemaker turned into the politically radical shoemaker, the emergence of movements of protest and social liberation, of a world turned upside down by great revolutions attempted, achieved and anticipated, gave him a vastly increased public ready to listen, perhaps to follow, in town and village. No wonder that the century beginning with the American revolution was the golden age of shoemaker radicalism.

IV

There is a final question which should be asked. What eventually happened to the radicalism of the gentle craft? We have been concerned overwhelmingly with the period before shoemaking became a fully mechanized and factory industry and before the rise of the modern socialist and communist working-class movements. During this lengthy period shoemakers were associated with virtually any and all movements of social protest. We find them prominent among religious sectarians and preachers, in republican, radical, Jacobin and sans-culotte movements, in artisan co-operative, socialist and communist groups, among atheist anticlericals, and not least among the anarchists. Were they equally prominent among the socialist movements in the new era?

The answer is no. In Germany they were indeed among the six groups of skilled workers who provided at least two-thirds of the social democratic worker-candidates for the Reichstag elections before 1914: together with woodworkers, metalworkers, printers, cigar-makers and, later, building workers. Nevertheless by 1912 they were well behind all these (except the builders) in elected members, and very far indeed behind metalworkers, builders and woodworkers, though level with the much smaller printers and ahead of the smaller cigar-makers

in providing candidates. (See Table.) The shoemakers' union, though as usual early off the mark as an organization, declined from the eighth position in size-ranking in 1892 to ninth in 1899 and twelfth in 1905-12. In the German Communist Party after 1918 they were negligible, for out of 504 leading members only 7 were apprenticed shoemakers. Among the 107 skilled trades (omitting the overwhelmingly predominant metal trades) they were far behind printers (17) and woodworkers (29), though on the same level as tailors (7), bricklayers (7) and plumbers (8). Apart from the unskilled and unapprenticed shoe factory worker Willi Münzenberg, the great propagandist, the German Communist Party contained no eminent shoemaker.[107]

TABLE

REICHSTAG ELECTION OF 1912: OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS AS A PERCENTAGE OF CANDIDATES AND DEPUTIES*

Occupational group	*Candidates*	*Deputies*
Metalworkers	15·6	15·5
Woodworkers	14·8	10·9
Builders	12·8	3·6
Printers	6·6	7·3
Shoemakers	6·6	4·5
Tobacco-workers	3·8	6·4
Tailors	2·7	4·5
Textile-workers	0·8	2·7

* Note and source: W. H. Schröder, "Die Sozialstruktur der sozialdemokratischen Reichstagskandidaten, 1898-1912", in *Herkunft und Mandat: Beiträge zur Führungsproblematik in der Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt and Cologne, 1976), pp. 72-96. All figures are percentages.

In France the shoemakers were clearly somewhat over-represented in the Parti Ouvrier Français of the 1890s compared to their share in the occupied population (3·6 per cent), with 5·3 per cent of party members and 7·7 per cent of party candidates (1894-7), but local data do not show them unduly prominent except in a few localities.[108] Nobody would have chosen them, as seemed reasonable for the anarchists, to symbolize the militants of the socialist movement. Indeed the most prominent left-wing shoemakers were certainly Jean Grave the anarchist and Victor Griffuelhes the revolutionary syndicalist, both with their trade's characteristic bent for political writing. There is not much doubt that the role of the shoemaker diminished as the movement's

[107] Based on the biographical data in Hermann Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1969), ii.

[108] Claude Willard, *Le mouvement socialiste en France, 1893-1905: les Guesdistes* (Paris, 1965), esp. pp. 335-7. See also Tony Judt, *Socialism in Provence, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 73, 112.

centre of gravity shifted to the large-scale industries and public sector employment. Though the most prominent Communists in 1945 contained two former joiners and a former pastry-cook, shoemakers were absent from the list, whose centre of gravity lay in metals and railways. Among the fifty-one former artisans elected to the French chamber in 1951 there was only one shoemaker (a Socialist).[109]

If any occupations were typical of Austrian Socialist Party activists, they were those of locksmiths/mechanics and printers.[110] Prominent shoemakers are hard to find in this party, and though the Spanish Socialist Party had Francisco Mora, a shoemaker, at one time as its secretary and eventually (and characteristically) its historian, the occupation that clearly dominated that body of craftsmen was the printing trade. We can no doubt discover a few prominent shoemakers in lesser socialist parties, as in Hungary, but the only brands of modern socialism and communism in which the radical cobbler seems genuinely to have been prominent are those which notably failed to become mass parties, or even typical parties of the industrial working class. The general secretary of the tiny Austrian Communist Party and its (symbolic) presidential candidate were both former journeymen shoemakers from provincial Carinthia and Bohemia respectively, and much the most eminent shoemaker radical of the twentieth century is doubtless President Ceausescu of Romania, whose party, at the time he joined it, probably contained a maximum of something like three hundred ethnic Romanians.

In industrialized Britain the shoemakers, so prominent between the days of the London Corresponding Society and the election of the atheist radical Charles Bradlaugh for the shoemaking constituency of Northampton in 1880, played no marked role in the era of the Labour Party, except in their own union. They were barely represented among Labour M.P.s, nor were they especially visible in other ways. The only man with some (unskilled) shoemaking experience early in his chequered career, who became at all prominent, is the transport workers' leader Ben Tillett.[111]

There seems little doubt that, on the whole, the role of the radical shoemaker was no longer as prominent in the era of the socialist mass labour movements as it was before them. No doubt this is partly due to the transformation of shoemaking from a numerically large artisan or semi-artisan craft into a numerically much smaller industry distributing its products through shops. There were no longer so many mem-

[109] Parti Communiste Français, *Des Français en qui la France peut avoir confiance*, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1945); Maurice Duverger (ed.), *Partis politiques et classes sociales en France* (Paris, 1955), pp. 302, 304.

[110] Based on data in Jean Maitron and Georges Haupt (eds.), *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier international: l'Autriche* (Paris, 1971).

[111] Based on Joyce Bellamy and John Saville (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (London, 1972-, in progress).

bers of the most characteristic of "those sedentary crafts which allow a man to 'philosophize' while carrying on with familiar tasks of work" among whom the anarchists found so many of their supporters.[112] Most men and women manufacturing shoes increasingly became a subspecies of the factory operative or outworker of developed industrialism; most who sold shoes had no connection with their making. The radical shoemaker as a type belongs to an earlier era.

His period of glory lies between the American revolution and the rise of the mass socialist working-class parties, whenever that occurred in any particular country (in so far as it did). During this period his bent for democratic and self-confident thinking, talking and preaching, hitherto expressed chiefly through religious heterodoxy and radicalism, found theoretical formulations in secular egalitarian revolutionary ideologies, and his practical militancy in mass movements of social protest and hope. The association with such specifically political ideologies of radicalism turned the age-old "philosophic cobbler" into the "radical cobbler" — the poor village intellectual into the village sansculotte, republican or anarchist.

The combination of ubiquity with occasional large concentrations of semi-proletarianized craftsmen gave the shoemaker his universal and prominent role as poor man's advocate, spokesman and leader. He was rarely in the front rank of national movements as an individual. Even among manual workers who gained a reputation as theorists and ideologists, people like Tom Paine the stay-maker, Weitling the tailor, Proudhon and Bray the printers, Bebel the wood-turner, Dietzgen the tanner are more likely to be remembered than any shoemaker. His strength lay at the grass roots. For every Thomas Hardy or Mora or Griffuelhes, there were hundreds of men whom even the specialist in the history of radical and labour movements has difficulty in rescuing from the anonymity of the local militant, for little is known about them except that they spoke and fought locally for other poor men: John Adams, the Maidstone cobbler in the 1830 farm-labourers' riots; Thomas Dunning, whose determination and ingenuity saved the Nantwich shoemakers from what might well have been the fate of the Dorchester labourers; the lone Italian shoemaker anarchist who brought his ideas into a Brazilian provincial town. His milieu was that of face-to-face politics, of *Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft*. Historically he belongs to the era of workshop, small town, city neighbourhood and above all village, rather than that of factory and metropolis.

He did not disappear totally. One of the authors of this paper still recalls as a student attending Marxist classes given by an admirable Scottish member of the species, and first had his attention drawn to the problem of shoemaker radicalism in the workshop of a Calabrian

[112] Maitron, *Le mouvement anarchiste en France*, i, p. 131.

cobbler in the 1950s. There are no doubt still places where he survives, not least to inspire the young to follow the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, as the shoemaker uncle of Lloyd George taught his nephew the elements of radical politics in a Welsh village of the 1880s. Whether or not he is still a significant phenomenon in the politics of the common people, he has served them well. And he has, collectively and through a surprisingly large number of individuals, made his mark on history.

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