

Swarthmore College

Works

History Faculty Works

History

Fall 2000

Review Of "Workers And Intelligentsia In Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections" Edited By R.E. Zelnik

Robert Weinberg

Swarthmore College, rweinbe1@swarthmore.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-history>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Let us know how access to these works benefits you

Recommended Citation

Robert Weinberg. (2000). "Review Of "Workers And Intelligentsia In Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections" Edited By R.E. Zelnik". *International Labor And Working Class History*. Volume 58, 355-356. DOI: 10.1017/s0147547900283804
<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-history/94>

This work is brought to you for free by Swarthmore College Libraries' Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

International Labor and Working-Class, Inc.

Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections by
Reginald E. Zelnik

Review by: Robert Weinberg

International Labor and Working-Class History, No. 58, Wartime Economies and the
Mobilization of Labor (Fall, 2000), pp. 355-356

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of [International Labor and Working-Class, Inc.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27672700>

Accessed: 08/09/2014 11:28

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and *International Labor and Working-Class, Inc.* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *International Labor and Working-Class History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

ber of their family) and, despite their limitations and recent contractions, welfare state schemes provide poor families with a safety net that did not exist during the 1890s.

Themis Chronopoulos
Brown University

Reginald E. Zelnik, ed., *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. ix + 349 pp. \$24.50 paper.

It is fitting that this volume of fourteen essays is dedicated to Allan Wildman and edited by Reginald Zelnik, two historians whose seminal books a generation ago helped to define the parameters within which all future explorations of the complex relationship between Russian workers and their would-be labor organizers and political leaders would take place. This collection of essays stems from a conference held in St. Petersburg in 1995, the full proceedings of which were published two years later in a Russian-language edition. Now an English-language audience can sample articles written by the American, British, French, German, and Russian participants.

I must admit that I approached this volume with some degree of skepticism since I wondered how much more we could cull from extant materials on worker-intelligentsia relations. But the contributions amply demonstrate that there is still much to learn. Not only have archives in the former Soviet Union opened up more broadly than before, but there is a willingness to ask new questions of old materials, to apply novel approaches and methodologies, and to examine what would have once been considered marginal and even unusual topics. Consequently, the contributors have invigorated the study of Russian workers during the final years of tsarist rule. Indeed, it is a treat to return to issues that I first encountered as a graduate student many years ago and that stimulated my initial interest in the history of the Russian labor movement.

The essays assembled run the gamut from the interaction among workers, radical students, and revolutionaries in the 1870s (selections by Reginald Zelnik and Deborah Pearl) to the organized activities of St. Petersburg workers just before and during the 1905 revolution (contributions by Sergei Potolov and Gerald Surh), from the social and political identities of workers (essays by Iurii Kir'ianov, Leopold Haimson, and Steve Smith) to the relationships among workers and Socialist Revolutionaries, workers and liberals, and workers and Communist party schools in Capri and Bologna (articles by Manfred Hildermeier, William Rosenberg, and Jutta Scherrer), and finally from theaters run and operated by workers and stories and poems written by literary workers (selections by E. Anthony Swift and Mark Steinberg) to the social and political attitudes and values expressed by workers in court cases and during the First World War (Joan Neuberger and Hubertus Jahn). In all instances, the authors draw con-

clusions buttressing the view that worker-intelligentsia relations embodied many of the same social, cultural, and political fractures and fissures that made late imperial Russian society fragile and ripe for revolution. While this line of analysis is hardly novel or surprising, the essays add dimensions of depth and breadth and, in some instances, force a rethinking of certain phenomena such as economism.

In particular, the majority of the volume's authors engage in analyses of the language (written and oral) employed by workers and intelligentsia. Exploration of linguistic discourse enables the authors to enter the minds of their subjects, thereby giving them the opportunity to uncover workers' and intelligentsia's perceptions of each other. The essays reveal the complexity of social identities and class relationships, underscoring the mistrust that animated interactions between workers and intelligentsia who came from the educated and privileged strata of society. In particular, many authors find that the patronizing attitude of the intelligentsia toward workers helps to explain the strained relations between them.

In sum, *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia* offers new insights into the study of the Russian revolutionary movement. The richness of the research and the subtleties of analysis make reading the individual chapters a rewarding experience that I recommend to all those interested in labor history in general and the Russian Revolution in particular. Finally, Zelnik has done an outstanding job of editing and has provided a compelling introductory essay that highlights the major themes and demonstrates the scholarly contributions of the volume as a whole. Now I must excuse myself while I run to the library and borrow the writings of Russian Marxists such as Georgii Plekhanov, Pavel Aksel'rod, and Fedor Dan. I am convinced that revisiting their works will bring me a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social, cultural, and political conflict in Russia on the eve of 1917.

Robert Weinberg
Swarthmore College