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Space, Culture, and Labour in Santa Catarina, 1900–1960

ABSTRACT

The history of the Brazilian working class is complex: immigration, slavery, migration, ethnic-racial conflicts, strikes and paternalism have been important factors that shaped the world of labour and class formation in this culturally diverse society. The southern Brazilian state of Santa Catarina has been portrayed in the rest of the country as a white European state, predominantly German, and as a land of work and few strikes. The role of German immigrants in the development of Santa Catarina's working class itself is very complex and requires some further research. By analysing the working-class formation, including important strikes in the textile and mining industries during the 20th century, this article challenges the image of Santa Catarina as a state without any significant social conflicts.

Keywords: labour movement, working class, ethnicity, Santa Catarina, Brazil, German Brazilians, rural workers

Introduction

The aim of this article is to reflect on the working-class formation in the state of Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil. The focus is twofold: it aims to emphasise peculiarities of Santa Catarina within the Brazilian context, and it aims to enhance the understanding of the links between the experiences of the working class in this particular region and other regions of Brazil. What role did Santa Catarina play in the formation of the Brazilian working class? Any discussion of the working class in the context of Santa Catarina requires an examination of the situation in the first half of the 20th century, when the influx of immigrants began. This will help explain the connection between immigration flows and the multiple ways in which the working class was constituted. To that end, the article is centred on the connections between immigration, culture and work.

The state of Santa Catarina is located in the very centre of Brazil's southern region, occupying an area of 95,345 square kilometres. In the east, the ocean shoreline spans

450 kilometres. To the west Santa Catarina shares a border with Argentina, to the north with the state of Paraná, and to the south with the state of Rio Grande do Sul. During the 18th century, Brazil's southern coastlands were the object of special attention of the Portuguese Court's colonisation plans.¹ Consequently, innumerable fortifications were built in the region and a large number of settlers from Madeira and Azores founded settlements along the coast. Initially, the Santa Catarina coast was incorporated into the Atlantic whaling circuit as part of a monopoly established by the Portuguese monarchy, incorporating hunting and oil production, and administering contracts awarded to private investors.² In addition to the whaling stations, small farm holdings were established throughout the coastlands with an average area of 25 to 30 hectares and dedicated mainly to producing foodstuff for local markets. The mills, in which manioc (*cassava*) meal was produced, gradually increased in number over a long period. Together with whaling they represented the main economic activity in the coastal region.

Location and Brief Background

The strategy adopted to occupy areas far from the coast aimed to set up colonies or settlements, particularly of European immigrants. According to Oswaldo Cabral (a medical doctor and folklorist who founded the Santa Catarina Ethnographic Museum), the first settlement in the state was established in São Pedro de Alcântara, in 1828, with 523 German settlers. Eight years later, in 1836, a second settlement followed, this time with 180 Italian immigrants. A further settlement venture was the *Falanstério do Sai* in 1842, with 100 French settlers. In 1846 there was an attempt to set up a Belgian settlement, with 150 Belgian settlers.³ Until 1850, the flow of immigrants was small but constant. With the passing of the Land Law of 1850 (Nº 601) and the abolition of slave trade, the influx of immigrants (especially Germans) increased significantly. From 1889 onwards, new groups of Poles and Russians settled in the southern part of the state, particularly in the valleys of the Urussanga, Tubarão, Mãe Luíza and Araranguá rivers. During the same period, other Slavic groups relocated to the valleys of the Itajaí and Itapocu rivers in the region of São Bento do Sul.

- 1 Beatriz Galloti Mamigonian: Africanos em Santa Catarina: escravidão e identidade étnica, 1750/1850, in: Anais of International Seminar Nas Rotas do Império: Eixos Mercantis, Tráfico de Escravos, Relações Sociais no Mundo Português, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro 2006, pp. 609–644.
- 2 Myriam Ellis: A baleia no Brasil colonial, São Paulo 1969; See also Fabiana Comerlato: O declínio da pesca da baleia nas armações catarinenses, in: Fronteiras: Revista Catarinense de História 10 (2004), pp. 65–73.
- 3 Oswaldo Rodrigues Cabral: História de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis 1968, p. 47.

The Land Law of 1850 only makes sense when understood in the context of the development of capitalist society at that time, when land was a very valuable commodity. On the other hand, the closure of the slave trade in 1850 and the increasing numbers of immigrants arriving to Brazilian territory must also be taken into account. The Land Law ensured that land – a profitable asset – remained in the hands of the same owners, hence limiting the access of recently arrived European immigrants.⁴

In each of Brazil's southern states, immigration had its own peculiarities. In Rio Grande do Sul, for example, and in the south of Santa Catarina, the colonisation promoted by the government prevailed, while elsewhere in the Province (later to become the state of Santa Catarina) private settling companies “took on the task of occupying and settling the forested areas of the state.”⁵ The initial stimulus to colonise the lands of Santa Catarina should be viewed against this background, especially in the first half of the 19th century.

It has been estimated that between 1824 and 1937, approximately 4.5 million immigrants entered Brazil – 1,513,115 Italians; 1,462,117 Portuguese; 598,802 Spaniards and 253,846 Germans, the remainder being made up of various other groups.⁶ The Germans represent the most numerous and culturally important group in Santa Catarina, with the Italians in second place. The German immigration process was typified by the continuous flow of immigrants to open up frontiers, which gave rise to the formation of a rural population consisting mainly of small landowners. Of a total number of 1,643,000 immigrants that the three southern states of Brazil received up until 1934, 15 per cent were Slavs, and 22 per cent were Italians, but the vast majority were Germans. Santa Catarina, the smallest of the three southern states, received 28 per cent of the Germans, 18 per cent of the Italians and 11.4 per cent of the Slavs.⁷ According to the 1920 Census, the state had a population of 668,743 inhabitants, and European immigration was of decisive importance in the political and social configuration of the State.⁸ Generally speaking, the immigrants settled the forest lands between the coast and the inland Serrano plateau, a far cry from the traditional regions of Luso-Brazilian occupation with their large landholdings dedicated to raising beef cattle.

4 Emília Viotti Da Costa: *Da Monarquia à República*, São Paulo 1992.

5 Leo Waibel: *Capítulos de geografia tropical do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 1979, p. 236.

6 Renzo Maria Grosselli: *Vencer ou morrer: Camponeses trentinos (Vênteos e Lombardos) nas florestas brasileiras*. Santa Catarina. 1875–1900, Florianópolis 1987, p. 238.

7 Isabela Albertina Barros Luclktenberg: *A indústria têxtil catarinense e o caso da Cia. Hering, Presidente Prudente 2004*, p. 31.

8 Synopsis of the 1920 Census. *População do Brasil*. Tipographia da estatística, 1924. Brazil had about 12 million German descendants scattered all over the country and Santa Catarina is home to 40 per cent of that total number, and thus roughly 4.8 million people of German descent.

These figures on European immigration have often concealed the presence of Africans and their descendants in Santa Catarina. The state is generally portrayed as a land of white Europeans, and where slavery had played only a residual and marginal role. The origin of such “forgetfulness” lies in the fact that Santa Catarina had never been part of the plantation circuit (slave labour, large landholdings, monoculture) that supplied the Portuguese markets, and was therefore excluded from the traditional framework used to explain the “purpose of the colonising process, whereby the role of the colony was to meet the needs of its respective colonising metropolis.”⁹ Accordingly, slavery was presented as an incidental phenomenon in the lands of Santa Catarina. Recent studies, however, have entirely refuted such a view, suggesting that behind it lies a certain political project to heighten the value placed on European traditions.

In the traditional interpretation, slavery in Santa Catarina has appeared as an exception in an overall picture of rural smallholdings occupied by white Europeans; the presence of slaves and Afro-Brazilians has rarely been afforded more than an anecdotal mention or a footnote in studies of the region. Such a portrayal has certainly been decisive in forming the image that the rest of Brazil has of Santa Catarina, even today. In 1915, the Secretary General for State Affairs, Fúlvio Aducci, sent a report to the President of the Province, Felipe Schmidt, which observed:

What cannot have gone unnoticed by those that have sought to reveal the causes of our backwardness in comparison to other peoples is the insignificant capacity for work of our race, which is usually attributed to a physiological factor, that is, a certain native indolence and to a physical factor, that is, the fertility of our soil which makes it easy to obtain the means of subsistence, thus dispensing the need to fight for a living.¹⁰

This report referred specifically to the situation in the capital, Florianópolis, whose inhabitants were mostly of Portuguese descent. In 1920, Florianópolis had 41,338 inhabitants and was neither the largest nor the most important city in the state.¹¹ The city was an administrative capital with a large number of civil servants and was portrayed by Aducci as backward and the opposite of the north of the state, which was at that time undergoing a process of industrialisation.

9 Oswaldo Rodrigues Cabral: *História de Santa Catarina*, Florianópolis 1968, p. 47; Fernando Henrique Cardoso/Octávio Ianni (eds.): *Cor e mobilidade social em Florianópolis*, São Paulo 1960; Walter Piazza: *A escravidão negra numa província periférica*, Florianópolis 1999.

10 Report presented to the Governor Felipe Schmidt by Dr. Fúlvio Aducci, Secretary General for State Affairs, 1915 (my emphasis).

11 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), census of the municipality of Florianópolis, 1872–1960.

The “insignificant capacity for work of our race” emphasised the alleged “backwardness” of the indigenous population, together with that of the Portuguese and their descendants inhabiting the coastlands (whose main activities were small-scale fishing and cassava growing, whether for direct consumption or for producing cassava meal), in contrast to the Germans or German-Brazilians in the north of the state. In that way, an opposition gradually emerged between the coast (native or Azorean, dedicated to a subsistence economy) and the north (modernising, German, industrial). This polarisation continued throughout the 20th century, defining relations between the various regions of the state and producing two results. Firstly, this polarisation was the basis for the image that Santa Catarina had been projected to the rest of the country as a white European state, predominantly German, a land of work and few strikes. The strikes in Santa Catarina were then stimulated by the influence of foreigners or migrants from other states. It is strange that, depending on the circumstances, the same immigrants/migrants could be construed as either vectors of progress or the conveyors of social disintegration. Secondly, this same polarisation contributed to the denigration of a whole series of workers (small farmers, sailors, construction workers, fishermen, street sellers) who disappeared under the weight of the “insignificant capacity for work of our race”. Moreover, in the capital of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, the presence of foreigners had been decisive in establishing industrial activity, which only served to reinforce the stereotypes.

In this context a certain value was increasingly attached to “German labour”, to the German’s “love and dedication” expressed by their superior capability, performance and ingenuity. This perception, allied to the “apparent self-sufficiency of the immigrants in opening up new areas helped to spread the idea of the superiority of German workers”¹², and that very superiority served as the basis for a certain feeling of “German-ness”, a set of physical and cultural attributes that were responsible for the “superiority of German workers”. *Perna-fina* (roughly translated as “skinny legs”) was the nickname for those who were “more Brazilian”. The terms “Brazilian” and *caboclo* (redskin, Indian, half-breed) were equally used to denote the poorest individuals, the thinnest or those with the darkest skin. Ethnic identity could be manipulated in several ways. It could be used as a mark of differentiation among the workers themselves, and was also often used by employers to neutralise movements of protest and to defuse collective actions. In view of the numerous accounts of difficulties in organising workers and the absence of strikes, it can be inferred that such ideological manipulation was largely successful.

In the 1930s, however, with the advent of a nationalisation policy, the polarity became inverted. The discussion concerning the formation of a nation was an old one; ever since the generation of 1870, the phrase “building a nation” had been the central theme of political and cultural debates. Even in the Modern Art Week of 1922, this phrase was

12 Giralda Seyferth: *Nacionalismo e identidade étnica, Florianópolis 1981*, p. 200.

present in both left and right-wing discourses.¹³ When the movement which brought Getúlio Vargas to power began in 1930, the motif was incorporated into state policies. In this context, the nationalisation policy was an expression of the desire to build a native land (*pátria*) that was “One, Indivisible and Homogeneous”.¹⁴ As a result, foreigners had to be “nationalised”, integrated into the project for constructing a nation and therefore cease to exist as foreigners, as different beings.

“Foreigner” became a very malleable category, continually widening, and it eventually came to embrace all those, whether originating from other countries or not, who might provoke feelings of strangeness, of difference. Gradually, the idea of “the enemy within” found fertile ground in which to proliferate, and “foreigner” – the alien – and “communist” became interchangeable terms. According to police reports, any individual displaying strange, unusual or unconventional behaviour could be classified as a “foreigner”. Although the original aim of the decree was clearly to block any possible channel for political-institutional interference by foreigners, its effect had a far greater reach. In two years, 1938–1939, all cultural associations, schools and newspapers in Brazil using or publishing in foreign languages were closed. On 25 January 1938, Decree 2.265 created the Nationalisation Commission with the object of implementing the necessary policies to ensure the assimilation of foreigners whether by forced mass nationalisation or by impeding contact with their countries of origin.¹⁵

As “a land of whites” and “a land of work”, Santa Catarina has appeared in the Brazilian collective imaginary as a state without any significant social conflicts – the only exception being the Contestado War from 1912 to 1916.¹⁶ Indeed, even the “dissolving ideologies” of socialism were slow to penetrate its collective political imagery. Thus, Santa Catarina has been perceived as a land of hard workers and few, or merely sporadic, social conflicts and strikes.

13 Antônio Arnoni Prado: 1922: Itinerário de uma falsa vanguarda: os dissidentes, a semana e o integralismo, São Paulo 1983.

14 For a more specific discussion of how the debates around the national theme affected the working world during the 1930s, see Adriano Duarte: *Cidadania & exclusão*. Brasil, 1937/1945, Florianópolis 1999.

15 For a discussion specifically of the Nipponese-Brazilian community, see Adriano Luiz Duarte: *A criação do estranhamento e a construção do espaço público*, in: *Acervo: Revista do Arquivo Nacional* 10 (1997), pp. 129–146.

16 Paulo Pinheiro Machado: *Lideranças do Contestado: a formação e a atuação das chefias caboclas, 1912–1916*, Campinas 2005. Broadly speaking, the Contestado War was a civil war between settlers and landowners. The conflict was permeated by “religious fanaticism” expressed by the messianism and faith of the rebellious cablocos at the same time, it reflected the dissatisfaction of the population with its material situation.

Settler-Worker

A distinctive feature of the industrialisation process in Santa Catarina was the spread of industry, which led to a dispersed labour force.¹⁷ However, the aim of the settler-worker was to preserve, at least partly, the farming system made up of family-run smallholdings, and factory work did not lead to the end of family agriculture. On the contrary, the form industrialisation took extended the survival of family agriculture and disseminated it throughout Santa Catarina. Large families meant more hands for cultivating crops that could be exchanged or sold. As the seasonal nature of farm work periodically reduced the need for so many hands, the adults – both men and women – sought supplementary employment in road building, sawmills, and in the factories and workshops of nearby towns and cities. The distinction between rural and urban was not at all clear, and the fluidity between the two defies the establishment of a definitive concept.

This situation produced the unusual figure of the settler-worker.¹⁸ The sequence of the terms is not merely a coincidence, because, in general they referred to themselves primarily as settlers (that is farmers), and tended to view their factory work as something temporary and sporadic. These workers rarely saw themselves as factory labourers. This ambiguity may explain the lack of political organisation among these workers, and for this very reason the ambiguity was greatly encouraged by the employers.

Access to small plots of land seemed to play two important and complementary roles: first, it made it possible to keep wages low because the settler-worker enjoyed a “supplementary income” from growing agricultural produce; second, it served as a screen to ward off “radical ideas” – socialist, communist and anarchist – because it stopped the wage earners from identifying themselves wholly as factory workers. Therefore, the conflict between labour and capital failed to appear as a fundamental feature of labour relations.

This combination of ethnic schisms on the one hand, and the figure of the settler-worker on the other, functioned definitively as an obstacle to worker organisation. Thus, it became clear that in several state regions, employment preference was given to

17 Armen Mamigonian: Brusque: Estudo de geografia humana econômica, in: *Álbum do centenário de Brusque*, Brusque 1960, p. 390.

18 The settler-worker, that strange category of worker, came into being as a result of the splitting up of landholdings among many heirs leading to a scarcity of land. In that context, the factory emerged as a complementary alternative that did not altogether serve the “workers” bonds with the land. See Giralda Seyferth: Aspectos da proletarização do campesinato no Vale do Itajaí: os colos operários, in: José Sérgio Leite Lopes (ed.), *Cultura e identidade operária: aspectos da cultura da classe trabalhadora*, Rio de Janeiro 1987, ch. 5.

German workers over national workers, although that preference did not correspond to any particular privileges in terms of conditions or wages.¹⁹

Industrialisation and the European Wars

Industrial development in Santa Catarina was slow and gradual. It has been suggested by Brazilian historians, anthropologists and geographers that until 1914 industry in the state existed in relative isolation and essentially only supplied goods to local and regional markets. The beginnings of the Santa Catarina textile industry are marked by the installation in Blumenau of the *Trikotwaren Fabrik Gebrueder Hering*, which in 1929 took on the name of Hering Textile Company.²⁰ However, the period of the First World War saw a marked increase in the number of industrial units, as the regional economy acquired greater relevance, expanding the domestic market and giving impetus to industrial production. This was a direct consequence of the decrease in imported manufactured goods from the countries involved in the conflict.

With the end of the First World War, the consumer market expanded in the northern region of the state and new industries developed, not only in the textile sector but also in the metal sectors, with the opening of new factories, especially in the city of Joinville. This was the result of the arrival of businessmen and specialised labour from Germany following the crisis there in 1921.²¹ The accumulation of personal fortunes during the war years made the establishment of new industries feasible. Investments in small workshops ensued, primarily producing consumer goods that until then had not been produced in the state, such as celluloid products including buckles, tie clips, combs, buttons and decorations for women's hats, as well as musical instruments and more sophisticated types of clothing.

The favourable exchange rate of the period facilitated the importation of capital goods, which in turn encouraged industrialisation of the state's economy. The state of Santa Catarina was buffered from the great crisis of 1929 because of the regional market for the new metal working industry. The industrial park was relatively well structured and did not suffer significant losses because it was able to count on the growth of the regional

19 See Giralda Seyferth: Aspectos da proletarização do campesinato no Vale do Itajaí: os colonos operários, in: José Sérgio Leite Lopes (ed.), *Cultura e identidade operária: aspectos da cultura da classe trabalhadora*, Rio de Janeiro 1987, ch. 5.

20 The industry was founded in 1879, by the German immigrant Hermann Hering who purchased a circular loom and set up a weaving establishment. Francisco Foot Hardman/Vitor Leonardi (eds.): *Historia da indústria e do trabalho no Brasil: das origens aos anos vinte*, São Paulo 1982, pp. 174–175.

21 Isa de Oliveira Rocha: *Industrialização de Joinville: da Gênese às Exportações*, Florianópolis 1997.

consumer market. With this development, at the beginning of the 1930s, Santa Catarina had the fifth largest industrial sector in Brazil embracing five per cent of the whole country's registered industries. The textile industry stood out, surpassing the neighbouring states of Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná in its production capacity. It was during this period that the Hering Textile Company consolidated its position as one of the largest manufacturers of white mesh in southern Brazil. In the 1930s, the metal working sector started to acquire greater regional importance transcending state borders and in 1938, the creation of the Tupy Industrial Company foundry brought national recognition to Santa Catarina's metal-mechanical sector.

Growth of Santa Catarina industrial production, 1920–1929 (in percentages)²²

Type of industry	1920	1921	1925	1928	1929
Textiles	14.30	8.50	43.54	40.78	41.67
Furniture	1.9	1.0	4.68	5.96	6.53
Food	54.30	30.42	23.85	23.38	30.84
Metallurgy	3.2	2.00	4.68	3.09	3.68
Beverage	—	—	12.38	6.69	7.6
Coal	3.0	0.05	5.02	0.78	0.84

Apart from the textile sector, metal-working and foodstuffs, another industrial activity that came to the fore in Santa Catarina was mining. Due to reduced fuel imports during the First World War, attention turned to the coalfields in the south of the state, which had been discovered in the 19th century. The first coal mining companies appeared in 1917 and exploitation was encouraged by a series of measures that were part of the Federal government's new policy, among them exemption from taxes and tariffs on imported machinery and material, as well as a reduction in freight and transport rates.

In spite of such incentives, the venture did not achieve the success that had been hoped for. It was only in 1931 with the creation of the *Sociedade Brasileira Carbonífera Progresso Ltda.*, and the *Sociedade Carbonífera Criciúma Ltda.*, in the municipality of Urussanga, that coal was to gain strategic importance in the Santa Catarina economy. In 1938, the companies *Carbonífera União Brasileira Ltda.* and *Carbonífera São José Ltda*

22 Isabela Albertina Barros Luclktenberg: A indústria têxtil catarinense e o caso da Cia. Hering, p. 50. Para o ano de 1920, dados do censo industrial do Brasil – II Parte, Vol. II, p. 445. For the other years: Ondina Pereira Bossle: Sinopse Estatística de Santa Catarina. Para o Carvão – recursos, possibilidades e desenvolvimento, in: Ondina Pereira Bossle: História da industrialização catarinense: das origens à integração no desenvolvimento brasileiro, Florianópolis 1998, p. 85.

were set up in the municipality of Criciúma. Most of these industries were not mechanised and only grew because of the tax incentives that were created after the movement of 1930 and the rise to power of Getúlio Vargas.²³

In the 1940s, propelled once more by a European war and the impossibility of importing machinery and other capital assets, industry in Santa Catarina made another leap forward. Industries in the textiles sector expanded their production and other products were introduced such as steel, paper and cardboard, which were produced in the west of the state and in the Rio do Peixe valley where there were large reserves of pine forests, and also waterfalls that could supply cheap electricity. Even so, some sectors suffered from the interruption of trade with Germany, which was one of the largest importers of the state's products and a major supplier of industrial machinery. Accordingly, to meet their own needs Santa Catarina's industries began to produce equipment they used to import.²⁴

Ethnic Distinctions on Hold: Strikes and Workers' Unity

Strikes, protests and conflicts have been recurrent features in the history of Santa Catarina's textile industry ever since the beginning of the 20th century. To some degree, they help to dispel the illusion of a homogeneous state with no serious conflicts. Two of the most significant moments of conflict between capital and labour, and very revealing of Santa Catarina's regional peculiarities, took place in the cities of Blumenau and Brusque, in 1950 and 1952. For a long time the heightened value attributed to "German labour" was an obstacle to workers organising themselves because it was in reality a strategy designed to hierarchically separate Germans (and their descendants) from Brazilians; indeed, it often encouraged the active collaboration of workers and businessmen alike.

In 1917, the first reports appeared in workers newspapers of strikes in Blumenau organised by anarchists as a sign of solidarity with the general strike in São Paulo. This wave of strikes essentially marked the highest point of the anarchist-inspired movement and the beginning of its decline. Strikes were only to appear in the news again in 1945 with the winds of political freedom that accompanied the fall of the *Estado Novo* (New State) and the Vargas dictatorship.

In the post-war period, there was a huge gulf separating the workers from the trade unions, the latter having been kept under tight control since the creation of the *Ministry of Labour, Industry and Trade* (MTIC) in 1931. The Spinning and Weaving Industries Workers Union started its activities in the city of Blumenau in 1941, at the height of the nationalisation policy and during the period when the 1939 Trade Union Law was in force. This legislation established the unions as "class collaboration entities" and obliged them to ensure that two third of their members were Brazilian born. This guaranteed,

23 Adriano Duarte: *Cidadania & exclusão: Brasil, 1937/1945*. Florianópolis 1999.

24 Bossle: *História da industrialização catarinense*.

from the outset, that the textile workers union was distant from the workers themselves but close to those in power.

Simultaneously, with the advent of the re-democratisation of the country in 1945, Blumenau workers began to re-organise themselves but remained far removed from the unions whose *pelego*²⁵ leaderships were consistently re-elected. The greatest wave of strikes in the history of the city took place against that background. There are some records of isolated strikes in 1945 and 1949, but on 15 February 1950, 1,400 workers at the *Empresa Indústria Garcia S. A.* joined in a strike that spread so swiftly that only two days later, over half the workers in the city had downed tools.²⁶ It was not until 18 February, however, that the only newspaper in the city to publish reports on the strike, printed the strikers' list of demands: a 30 per cent wage increase for those then earning 1,500 *cruzeiros* or more; a 50 per cent increase for those earning 1,300 or less; incorporation of the attendance bonus as part of the wages "on the same pay sheet so that it comes out on a single sheet"; "payment for the weekly rest period in accordance with the terms of the Law"; permission for workers "to seek a doctor of their choice when sick, other than the one appointed by the company."²⁷

The post-war years were marked by constantly rising prices for essential consumer goods as well as rents and public services, like water and electricity. As a result, there was a strong social movement against the high cost of living, demanding that inflation be curbed and salary losses compensated. Furthermore, right from the beginning of the 1950s there had been a strong wave of inflation with a consequent rise in the cost of living and a fall in the workers' purchasing power. From 1949 to 1951, the rise in the cost of living was 50 per cent.²⁸ The factory owners, however, found many ways to get around the law and in practice they managed to reduce wages even further. One of the cuts made was of the "incentive attendance bonus" which was paid whenever the worker completed a month without any absences or late arrivals at work. The "bonus" was paid as a separate item on the pay sheet. Including it as part of the salary, as the workers demanded, was a way of guaranteeing integral payment because according to Article 462 of the Consolidated Labour Laws (CLT), the salary "cannot be subject to alterations and no discounts

25 Pelego is the name given to the thick saddle blanket that is placed between the saddle and the horse so that the horse is not hurt by the saddle. It is used to designate those union directors that run the unions without any consideration for the workers' interests.

26 In 1950, the transformation industry in Blumenau employed 40.6 per cent of the city's employees, with 7,809 factory workers. Paul Israel Singer: *Desenvolvimento econômico e evolução urbana: (análise da evolução econômica de São Paulo, Blumenau, Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte e Recife, São Paulo)*, São Paulo 1968, p. 131.

27 *A Nação* (Blumenau), 18 February 1950.

28 Celso Furtado: *Formação econômica do Brasil*, São Paulo 1963, p. 266.

may be made from the specified amount.”²⁹ Furthermore, in Blumenau, the company owners had worked out a unique way of interpreting the legal provisions for a “remunerated weekly rest period” which determined that payment should be calculated on the basis of a 30-day month. The owners separated 17 per cent of the total amount to be paid as “remuneration for rest on Sundays and Holidays” as the law required, but they based their calculations on the 25 working days of the month and not on the 30 days set out in the legislation, so that workers actually received three per cent less than they should have received. Lastly, by forbidding the use of medical services other than those specified by the company, the employers could keep tighter control over the workers’ personal lives and ultimately control absenteeism caused by sickness.³⁰

At stake in the 1950 strike, apart from compensating losses in earnings, was an effort to make the employers comply with the legislation. The picket line that was formed in front of the factory, the “stonewall” as the newspapers called it, was the very heart of the strike. The workers erected shelters and guarded the main gates night and day. Two attempts were made to force a passage, but the police involved were all from Blumenau, and as members of the community they were somehow involved with the workers, and thus the former were repulsed by the “stonewall”. A detachment was sent from the capital, Florianópolis, with orders to dismantle the “stonewall”. In the early hours after midnight, on 19 February, in the midst of tear gas bombs and much fighting and tussling, the detachment made its assault on the “stonewall”. The situation was almost comical. In the end the police occupied the factory by climbing over the walls, but at the gates the “stonewall” was as strong as ever. The irony is that the police ended up as “prisoners” inside the factory. The police violence, the tear gas and the use of machine guns and rifles made the headlines in all the newspapers and the State Secretary for Public Security, the factory owners and the municipal authorities went on the defensive, thereby giving the strikers a breathing space.³¹

The strike lasted for 27 days, which was partly due to the political situation at the time in the city of Blumenau. A “factory committee”, elected by the workers themselves, ran the strike without any support from the union. At the time the strike broke out, campaigning for the upcoming municipal elections was in full swing. The president of the union himself, Leopoldo Ferrari, was running as a candidate for a seat on the Council on a National Democratic Union party (UDN) ticket, a party that was often classified as anti-worker because of its close links with big businessmen and its ferocious opposition

29 Article 462 of the Consolidated Labour Laws. See José Eduardo Duarte Saad/Ana Maria Saad Castello Branco Branco/Eduardo Gabriel Saad: *CLT comentada*. 46^a ed. 2013.

30 Ellen Annuseck: *Nos bastidores da festa: outras histórias, memórias e sociabilidades em um bairro operário de Blumenau 1940–1950*, Master’s Dissertation, Florianópolis 2005, p. 103.

31 *A Nação* (Blumenau): *Ameaça de greve atingiu a cidade de Blumenau ontem* (The threat of a wave of strikes hung over the city of Blumenau yesterday), 18 February 1950.

to unionism and the figure of Getúlio Vargas.³² For that very reason Councillor Otacílio Nascimento, ex-member of the board of the union and elected for the Brazilian Labour Party (PTB), was the strikers' most vociferous defender both in the council sessions and in the city's newspapers.

The city's administration was in the hands of the UDN, which in 1947 had only managed to elect six mayors in the entire state. The campaign proved to be challenging and any action against the workers may have been fatal to the candidature. The opposition, represented by the PTB and the Social Democratic Party (PSD), was united. The state government was in the hands of the PSD, which also enjoyed the support of the newspaper *A Nação*.

In addition to the tense electoral climate, the city of Blumenau, which had been the main target of Getúlio Vargas's forced nationalisation campaign, was in the middle of preparations to celebrate its centenary from 2 to 10 September. There had been an ongoing discussion since 1947 concerning the celebrations. In 1949 a committee was set up, composed of the "city's most illustrious personalities", industrialists, politicians, traders, and so on. The idea was to highlight the entrepreneurial, pioneering and industrialist spirit that had supposedly influenced the birth of the city. The "Germanic traditions" were to be mentioned with relative discretion, and greater emphasis placed on the love of Brazil and Blumenau's contributions towards National Defence. The centenary celebrations were a golden opportunity to shed the image of an "ethnic cyst", which the city had acquired during the years of the *Estado Novo*. To that end, the theme/motif of the festival was intended to emphasise harmony and love of work, as announced in the newspaper:

Have you ever visited our factories?

I have been to dozens of them. Garcia, Hering, Gaitas, Artex, Cremer, with hundreds of satisfied workers. [...] In this blessed Itajaí valley, where wealth is so perfectly distributed, labour disputes do not seem to exist. You can see contentment in the workers' faces: [...] this is where the word 'workers' really means what it says [...] Carry on working for the greater glory of Brazil!³³

Obviously, the workers involved in the "greatest strike in the history of Blumenau" were perfectly aware of the complex relationship between elections and centenary celebrations, when making their decisions. However, the most novel aspect of the situation, and what made the strike possible, was the solidarity among the workers established during

32 Yan de Souza Carreirão: Eleições e sistema partidário em Santa Catarina, 1945–1979, Florianópolis 1990.

33 O Lume: Blumenau 06 november 1949, in: Ellen Annuseck: Nos bastidores da festa: outras histórias, memórias e sociabilidades em um bairro operário de Blumenau 1940–1950, Master's Dissertation, Florianópolis 2005, p. 12.

the years of the nationalisation policy and precipitated by the years of austerity, inflation and miserable wages during the post-war period. The most outstanding leader on the “factory committee” was Alfredo Moritz, a factory worker of German descent who had possibly been close to the Communist party during the period from 1945 to 1947, when the party was legal, although that connection has not been clearly defined by any of the studies undertaken to date. Moreover, the *Empresa Industrial Garcia S.A.* was the only one in the region that was not administered by a family, but by paid managers, so that the direct relationship between the owners and the workers, so dear to the hearts of the Santa Catarina textile industry, had fallen away a long time ago. The company was also located on the very edge of the urban perimeter, in the heart of Garcia, the biggest workers’ residential district in Blumenau. The company had an active policy of contracting workers migrating from other regions of the state and even from other states, so that the neighbourhood also had the city’s highest concentration of migrants among its residents. One by one, the factories affected by the strike returned to production after drawing up separate agreements. The last one to end the strike, on 17 March, was Garcia after reaching an agreement whereby the owners agreed to the immediate payment of a bonus of 500 *cruzeiros* to all workers and not to persecute or dismiss strikers. The latter in turn, promised to present their claims and complaints through the legal channels for collective bargaining.³⁴

The strike had all the ingredients necessary to understand the formative process of the working class. First, it encompassed the regional specificities such as the nationalisation policy, and the mainly German ethnic mix used to impose a hierarchy among the workers. Furthermore, the Santa Catarina strikes shared other common factors with the strikes in the rest of the country such as organisation taking place outside the sphere of the unions, the connections, not always visible, with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), the use of picket lines and the astute use of the complex political situation (for instance, the Blumenau strike broke out together with the imminent elections and the centenary celebrations).

The 1952 strike in Brusque marked a momentous moment for the city and for Santa Catarina as a whole.³⁵ For 37 days, textile workers paralysed the city of Brusque. The

34 In the collective dispute, the Regional Labour Court granted a 40 per cent increase in wages for Cr\$30,00 daily wages; 30 per cent for the Cr\$31,10 to Cr\$40,00 wages, and 20 per cent for the wages over Cr\$40,00. The 1946 constituent assembly acknowledged the right to strike, but created the collective dispute in the Regional Labour Court as one stage in the negotiation process between workers and employees, mediated by the state, in order to prevent a strike boom. If a strike started before the conciliatory stage of collective dispute in the Regional Labour Court, it was considered illegal and a serious penalty, likely to lead to the termination of employment contract.

35 Jover Teles: O movimento sindical no Brasil, São Paulo 1981, p. 106.

1950 census showed that of a total population of 32,351 people in the municipality, more than 4,000 men and women worked in the textile industries.³⁶ However, it was not the first strike to take place in the city; in 1933, a similar movement had brought the Renaux factory to a halt. In 1948, there was a strike in the Schlosser Industry, and in 1949 a more extensive movement had managed to gain a 30 per cent increase in salaries. During all these incidents, the Uniformed Police Force had been mobilised and troops brought in from other cities. The unique feature of the 1952 strike, however, was the fact that work stopped simultaneously at all the textile factories. The length of time the strike lasted and its relative success can be best explained by the political arrangements that were in place during the post-war period.

The main demand made by the workers' movement was a 60 per cent wage increase. The factory owners rejected it, and the dispute went before the Regional Labour Courts in Porto Alegre, which arbitrated in favour of granting the workers a 7.1 per cent increase in wages. The increase was supposed to be paid from the month of July, in accordance with the terms of the respective law, but until December nothing had appeared on the workers' pay slips. The political situation in the city then created favourable conditions for the strike to break out: in 1951, Irineu Bornhausen of the UDN party had been elected Governor of the state – in opposition to Getúlio Vargas, President of the Republic and the so-called “Father of the Poor”. In the 1952 municipal elections, an unusual alliance was formed that clinched a victory for Mário Olinger, backed by an alliance of UDN, PTB and PSP (Progressive Social Party) and running against the government candidate in office, Antônio Haendchen, of the PSD. The elections also divided the businessmen of the city: the textile manufacturing groups Renaux and Büettner had to step aside for the Schlosser group linked to the UDN. What was even more unusual, however, was the alliance formed around the PTB, made up of workers and businessmen linked to the traditionally conservative UDN. This situation meant that elections had a very different meaning in the three spheres of government, and that political agreements paid much more heed to local impositions than to any national arrangements arrived at by party bosses.

The strike started on 19 December in the *Carlos Renaux* textile factories. There may have been a certain degree of connivance on the part of the factory owners, as it broke out precisely in the factories belonging to the group that had lost the previous elections and had failed to grant the 7.1 per cent wage increase decreed by the Labour Courts. However, the strike quickly spread. Picketing was the most common tactic used as one worker explained: “We used to go there every morning and the picket was constantly renewed. In the morning, there was one group, in the afternoon another, and so there

36 IBGE – Serviço Nacional de Recenseamento: Série Regional, volume XXVII, Tomo II. Estado de Santa Catarina, Censos econômicos, Rio de Janeiro 1956.

was always a block there, in front of the factory gates”.³⁷ The factory owners counterattacked by hiring new workers, but the pickets prevented the trucks transporting them from entering the factories.

As was typical at that time, this strike also materialised without the intervention of the union and was led by an internal wage negotiating committee.³⁸ However, on 27 December, at a general assembly and in the presence of the Regional Labour Officer and Inspectors of the Ministry of Labour, the union proposed the creation of a negotiating committee to be elected by the assembly itself. Another equally important detail is that the Police Superintendent for the city of Brusque was Adelino Alves, a member of the PTB party. Thus, the workers shrewdly took advantage of disagreements among the factory owners – those who were taking over command of the municipality and those that were relinquishing it – and of the extraordinary alliance of the PTB and the UDN, supported by the very same police officer, Adelino Alves, to develop their strike movement.

The businessmen were quick to press the State Governor to remove Adelino Alves from office, and he was indeed replaced by Major Pedra Pires, who was given the task of putting an end to the strike. Once the change of command had been completed, a number of troop detachments were moved into the city and on the night of 25 January they occupied the gates of the larger factories and ensured the safe entrance of raw materials, foremen and supervisors. On 26 January, the union called a huge general assembly that voted to go back to work. The owners gave assurances not to punish strikers, but instead to pay the 7.1 per cent retroactive to July 1952, as well as to set up a branch of *SESI* (Organisation Social Services of Industry) and deduct from the vacation pay the days lost in the stoppage. The greatest victory was that the strike actually took place. As one striker put it: “After that, there was never such a strike as lovely as that one.”³⁹

37 Interview granted to Marlus Niebuhr by Mr. Francisco in 1990. Marlus Niebuhr: *Memória e cotidiano do operário têxtil na cidade de Brusque: a greve de 1952*, Florianópolis 1997, p. 111. On the importance of pickets in strikes in the 1950s, see Paulo Fontes: *Centenas de Estopins acessos ao mesmo tempo. a greve dos 400 mil, piquetes e a organização dos trabalhadores em São Paulo, 1957*, in: Alexandre Fortes (ed.), *Na luta por direitos: estudos recentes em História social do trabalho*, Campinas 1999, pp. 145–180.

38 On the absence of trade unions in the organisation of strikes in those years, see Hélio da Costa: *Em busca da memória: comissão de fábrica, partido e sindicato no pós-guerra*, São Paulo 1995.

39 Interview of Mr. Francisco granted to Marlus Niebuhr. Marlus Niebuhr: *Memória e cotidiano do operário têxtil na cidade de Brusque: a greve de 1952*, Florianópolis 1997, p. 145. *SESI* (Social Services of Industry) is part of the “S” system (*SESI*, *SENAI* and *SESC*) created in 1946 for the purpose of providing social assistance to industrial workers in the state of São Paulo. For further information, see Barbara Weinstein: *(Re)formação da classe trabalhadora no Brasil, 1920–1964*, São Paulo 2000, pp. 135–186.

Similar to the 1950 strike in Blumenau, the strike in the city of Brusque revealed a combination of elements in the working-class formation that are peculiar to Santa Catarina (the strong presence of Germans and their descendants and, in this particular case, the figure of the settler-worker; the existence of family-run companies, combining paternalistic methods of control like encouraging division among the workers by stigmatising “German workers”) with other characteristics it has in common with the formative process of the working class in the rest of the country (picket lines; predominantly female labour in the textiles industries; the clandestine presence of the PCB; contracting migrant labour from rural areas whose average salaries were lower than those established in the cities; and the complex triangle formed by businessmen, workers and the state).⁴⁰ However, the most notable feature of the strike was its demonstration that the settler-worker was not an insuperable obstacle to the workers’ organising themselves, that is to say, in certain specific conditions the unusual connections between city and country could be overcome.⁴¹

In the late 1930s, the region of Criciúma became an important economic pole in the south of the state. However, the constant crises generated by the instability of the coalmining economy led the region to initiate a process of industrial diversification in the 1960s and 1970s. Against that background, parallel to coalmining, prosperous productive activities began to appear like brick and tile making, which benefited from the policies of the National Housing Finance System, as well as clothing and footwear industries.

Together with the growth of companies, the degree of worker organisation also increased. According to recent studies, rising inflation in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s, without any compensation in salaries, together with the wretched working conditions of the miners, made the Santa Catarina coalfields region the scene of numerous strikes, many of which took place without any union support. A summary synthesis of the major movements of this category of workers in the 1960s, presented by Goularti Filho (based on information from local newspaper archives, minutes from regional miners’ union meetings and personal interviews), suggest that from 1951 to 1968, the coalminers went on strike 13 times because of working conditions and wages that lagged behind inflation.⁴²

The miners of the Lauro Muller municipality seem to have had the worst and most precarious working conditions of all miners. The Barro Branco Company, originally

40 Paulo Fontes: Centenas de Estopins acessos ao mesmo tempo. a greve dos 400 mil, piquetes e a organização dos trabalhadores em São Paulo, 1957, in: Alexandre Fortes (ed.), *Na luta por direitos: estudos recentes em História social do trabalho*, Campinas 1999, pp. 145–180..

41 Marlus Niebühr: *Memória e cotidiano do operário têxtil na cidade de Brusque: a greve de 1952*, Florianópolis 1997, p. 146.

42 Alcides Goularti Filho: *Memória e Cultura do Carvão em Santa Catarina*, Florianópolis 2004.

owned by Henrique Lage and later by Álvaro Catão, was the only one in the area, and exercised almost absolute power over the city. For that reason, there are press reports of several instances of resistance to company domination, either on the initiative of workers or on the part of opposition politicians.

The *Jornal de Criciúma*, a newspaper published in the region from 1961 to 1963, which had informal links with the PTB, carried various denunciations of working conditions and poor treatment of miners in the city. In the issue from 14 January 1962, the following headline appeared on the front page: *Campaign against White Slavery: Catão Group Enslaves Workers in the South of the State. White Slaves in the Catão Company Receive Starvation Wages.*⁴³ The newspaper goes on to denounce that “the poor miners, in addition to earning criminally small amounts are further obliged to feed themselves and their families on rotten meat.” This mistreatment exhibited by employers was imposed on them through a coercive system of vouchers that obliged the workers to purchase the goods they needed in special stores set up by the company itself.

The miners in the south of the state have had a long history of labour union organisation, political participation and disputes with employers. Studies on the mining region suggest that, generally speaking, the unusual working conditions in the mines gave rise to a singular culture, which placed high value on physical strength and masculinity. On more than one occasion, the miners paraded through the city during one of their strikes with sticks of dynamite strapped to their waists. These same conditions also stimulated bonds of friendship and solidarity that were essential for survival in the depths of the pits. Such class culture was clearly visible in the miners’ public demonstrations, in strikes and political rallies, but above all, in their passionate defence of “their” football team, Metrópol (the five-time winner of the State Championship and the two-time winner of the Southern Brazil competition in the 1960s), especially when it was playing against *Comerciário*, the team supported by the city’s middle class.⁴⁴

Final Remarks

The state of Santa Catarina offers an excellent opportunity for the history of labour to reflect on two specific themes: the role of complex inter-ethnic relations in the formative process of the Brazilian working class, and the relationship between the urban and rural

43 “Campanha contra a escravidão branca: os trabalhadores escravos do grupo Catão no sul do estado e Escravos brancos do grupo Catão recebem salário de fome.” *Jornal de Criciúma*: Campanha contra a escravatura branca, 14 January 1962.

44 On “The Culture of Coal”, see Terezinha Gascho Volpato: *A piritá humana: os mineiros de Criciúma*, Florianópolis 1984; Jose Paulo Teixeira: *os donos da cidade*, Florianópolis 1996; Maurício Ghedin Corrêa: *Lembrando os heróis do passado: uma história social do futebol em Criciúma, 1950/1970*, Florianópolis 2007.

worlds. In the Brazilian collective imaginary, even today, the State of Santa Catarina stands out because of the overwhelming presence of immigrants, especially Germans and those of German descent. Successive generations of politicians have contributed enormously towards exaggerating the features of a Germanic culture in the state, at the centre of which is the city of Blumenau. The emphasis placed on dedication to work, discipline, creativity and skilled cultivation of the land are cited even today, to explain the city's development and the distinctive features of Santa Catarina in the national scenario.

This vision is firmly based on the historically constructed myth of the “German worker”, the usual formula used to draw attention to ethnic differences. The affirmation itself and the differentiation made by an ethnic group is based on the supposed efficiency and superiority the immigrants brought with them.⁴⁵ The “German worker” became the symbol of group unity and helped to keep the immigrants united at the same time as it differentiated them from immigrants of other nationalities (Italians, Japanese, Slavs etc.) and above all, from native Brazilians. The Santa Catarina industrialists soon perceived that this “sign of distinction” offered the opportunity to handle workers as if they and their employers were part of the same “ethos”. Much more than a merely paternalistic link⁴⁶ (the traditional formula that Brazilian business owners used to draw closer to their workers), the ethnic identity of employers and workers (all German workers together, after all) established a bond that was capable of keeping the rest of the workers “on the outside”. The paternalistic relationship presupposed certain reciprocity between those “at the top” and those “below” and consequently, it was a bond that could be severed if the reciprocity broke down. However, the bond established by a form of “ethnic identity” was a blood bond, determined by birth and in principle not to be denied. Therefore, breaking that bond by taking part in a strike movement or taking a stance against the employer was similar to denying your natural heritage and abandoning the community you were born into, that is to say, your German nationality. Taking such a step meant going into a sort of social limbo.

In spite of its resistance (even today, it is a kind of symbol and a source of regional pride), the ethnic bond has been overcome on innumerable occasions by the force of *class identity* as was the case in the 1950 and 1952 strikes, just to use two examples mentioned in the text. Class identity is not a natural endowment acquired at a certain moment of a trajectory and then never lost. Class identity is a bond that is constructed and reconstructed with each new clash, each new confrontation and each new dispute. In the same way, at certain moments it can superimpose itself on other bonds, yet at other moments, it may disappear altogether.

45 Giralda Seyferth: A representação do “trabalho alemão” na ideologia étnica, in: Boletim do Museu Nacional – Antropologia 37 (1982), pp. 15–29.

46 Edward P. Thompson: Costumes em comum: estudos sobre a cultura popular tradicional, São Paulo 1998, ch. 3.

The long experience with the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* (1937 to 1945), during which Germans – and all other foreigners too – were exhorted to abandon their ethnic bonds, when schools utilising foreign languages were forbidden, when speaking in German (or Italian or Japanese) might mean spending months in jail, most certainly contributed towards undermining the superiority that the ethnic bond presumed to exist.⁴⁷ There are innumerable studies proving that those Germans and German descendants who owned some property and had good political relations were never affected in any way by the policy of nationalisation. The so-called “internment camps” where many German, Italians and Japanese in the State of Santa Catarina were detained were never graced by the presence of the well-off members of those communities. The only people confined in them were the poor, workers and those persons with no political connections to protect them. The experience of the “internment camps” was therefore yet another class-related experience.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the intense exploitation that workers – Brazilians and foreigners alike – were submitted to during the war years, with extensions of working hours, suspension of vacation rights, and the emasculation of the trade unions which were turned into “class collaboration entities”, all helped to check the “common ethos” myth of the “German worker” that united those “at the top” and those “below”.

When the war ended, a void existed, fermented by the class experiences, in which the workers no longer found self-identified as Germans, Italians or Brazilians but simply as workers in conflict with their employers. This did not mean that the mythical figure of the “German worker” had entirely disappeared; quite the opposite, it is a resource that is repeatedly used, often by workers themselves when their aim is to accentuate differences and divisions and establish hierarchies. Whenever this mythical figure prevails, class identity weakens.

It must also be stressed that the specificity of Santa Catarina’s world of labour challenges our understanding of the relations between the city and the rural environment, traditionally based on the form established in the industrial states of the southeast, like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which from the 1930s received an influx of more than 30 million rural workers especially from the north and northeast of Brazil.

The figure of the settler-worker widely disseminated in the north of the state shows us that relations between the rural world and the urban world can be much more complex than a simple concept like the “migratory flows” from country to city is capable of explaining. After the 1930s, Santa Catarina became the fifth largest industrial park in

47 João Klug: *A escola teuto-catarinense e o processo de modernização em Santa Catarina – a ação da igreja luterana através das escolas, 1871–1938*, Doctorate Thesis, São Paulo 1997.

48 Janaina Santos Macedo: *Campos de Concentração em Santa Catarina e os conflitos envolvendo alemães e descendentes durante o Estado Novo*, Master’s Dissertation, Florianópolis 2007.

Brazil even though it remained predominantly rural until the 1960s. With the exception of the beef cattle raising areas in the Serrano plateau, family-run smallholdings predominated, where the labour of every member of the family was fundamental. In that context, factory work appeared as a temporary, complementary activity for men and women who in reality continued to consider themselves as *colonos*, the generic term for small farmers or rural workers and labourers. Working in the factory by no means signified that they had become a permanent part of the industrial proletariat because they saw it merely as a way of supplementing the family income. Thus, the town and the country complemented one another in a continuous flow of comings and goings.

In the case of the settler-workers, the experience often meant a double working shift, even though interviews with workers that experienced such conditions showed that they had a positive vision of their double working hours as a way of escaping from becoming totally “proletarianised”. This emphasises that they perceived working in the factories as a permanent way of life to be something degrading. It must also be pointed out that this ebb and flow in the country/city relationship, without any rupture on either side, takes place in state-of-the-art industries producing for the export market. Obviously, the kind of continuous flow described above does not preclude the existence of numerous migratory flows of the traditional kind, that is, country to city with no return, and to the very same industries and partnership arrangements frequented by the “settler”. All the evidence proves that from the 1960s, the considerable growth in agricultural productivity led to the migrants’ becoming permanent members of the proletariat.

Finally, it must be stated that in spite of the peculiarities of the state of Santa Catarina, with the local workers’ movements and the strategies unfolded by the unions, it was always closely connected to what was going on in the other more highly industrialised centres of Brazil. The experience of the “factory committees” and the “organisational strategy of picket lines” reinforce the supposition that local unionists and workers maintained very close links with the rest of Brazil, and through these connections they were able to improve and perfect their methods of engaging in the struggle. Thus, the State of Santa Catarina is at one and the same time uniquely different and an essential part of the whole jigsaw puzzle that we call the worlds of labour in Brazil.

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