

agreement" quickly evolved: North Vietnam did not overrun remote northern Laos; the Americans did not block the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the south. The trail was vital to the Communists' hidden, unending "slow invasion" of South Vietnam; used for replacements and re-supply, it would enable them to wage war there forever, on their own terms. But Washington always feared a wider conflict. In 1964, before Lyndon Johnson sent U.S. troops to Vietnam, Hannah writes, "there were two [logical] choices—either to block [Hanoi's] invasion through Laos or avoid commitment in South Vietnam. The United States chose neither."

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF LABOR: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925
by David Montgomery
Cambridge, 1987
494 pp. \$27.95

On the evening of June 27, 1874, Lodge No. 11 of the Rollers, Roughers, Catchers, and Hookers Union of Columbus, Ohio, gathered to discuss the terms of their new agreement with the Columbus Rolling Mill Company. The mill had offered these skilled iron workers \$1.13 per ton to produce iron rails for the nation's railroads; it was up to them to decide how to fix work schedules, divide the labor, and parcel out the pay.

"The very men who appear here," writes Montgomery, a Yale historian, "managing collectively the productive operations of the rolling mill, regulating relations among themselves, and arranging their own social affairs were also pioneers of the late 19th-century labor movement."

For more than a decade, scholars have pondered the fate of such men. Why, they ask, did the "native American radicalism" of the working class fail to win "economic democracy"? Montgomery pulls together these studies in a sweeping, sometimes numbingly encyclopedic account of organized labor's rise and ebb between the end of the Civil War and the onset of the Great Depression. His is a tale, though seldom couched in such explicit terms, of "cruel and invincible" capitalism, government repression, and the workers' betrayal by union bosses, notably Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor.

The dream of economic democracy finally faded during the early 1920s, when an economic depression stripped the unions of up to a third of their members. The labor movement came back to life during the 1930s and '40s, but its energies focused on more limited concerns, namely wages

and work hours. "Slogans like 'workers' control' and 'production for use'... were seldom heard any longer," says Montgomery, "except ironically in the rhetoric of corporate public relations."

Contemporary Affairs

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY: Democratic Prospects in 1988 and Beyond

by Robert Kuttner
Viking, 1987
265 pp. \$18.95

It is time, says Kuttner, economics correspondent for *The New Republic*, to run a "real Democrat" on a "real Democratic platform." The modern party "begins with Roosevelt" and "peaks with Johnson." Since 1964, the party has lost its nerve—and every presidential election but one.

Many Democrats, and most political commentators, concluded as early as 1970 that the party should abandon its commitment to activist government and economic populism and cleave to a cautious, centrist policy. This so-called cure only made matters worse, Kuttner maintains. But ever-more-costly campaigns kept Democratic candidates in thrall to big-money contributors, individual and corporate. All but ignored, the party's progressive-populist wing splintered into mutually destructive special-interest groups, variously clamoring for clean air or women's rights.

Kuttner prescribes a host of remedies for the ailing party. These range from fund-raising strategies (direct-mail campaigns aimed at small donors) to ways of attacking voter apathy. The best cure for such indifference, Kuttner holds, is for the party to champion truly liberal programs, including workfare, national health care, and higher taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals. Not to do so, says Kuttner, will only vindicate Harry S. Truman's words: "When the voters have a choice between a Republican and a Republican, they'll pick the Republican every time."

CHINA'S SECOND REVOLUTION:

Reform after Mao
by Harry Harding
Brookings, 1987
369 pp. \$32.95

After Mao Zedong's death in September 1976, the leadership of the People's Republic of China (PRC) faced not only a succession crisis but many nation-crippling ills: economic stagnation and inefficiency, bureaucratic breakdown, and the alienation of millions of the Cultural Revolution's surviving victims. Harding, a fellow at the Brookings Institution, offers an astute overview of the decade-old "second revolution" that has, after fits