
EUROPEAN VIOLENCE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION SINCE 1700

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News, Old and New

Words such as "protest", "disturbance", "disorder", "terrorism", and even "violence" do not stand for coherent social realities. People use each one to describe events which lack observable common properties, whose elements are not interdependent, and for which it is impossible to offer explanations covering the whole range of cases. Instead, the words designate the attitudes of observers -- especially authorities, rivals, and enemies -- to actions of which they disapprove. Except as ways of understanding the ideas of powerholders, then, "protest" and similar words do not serve as useful instruments of social analysis. Since the ideas of powerholders vary from one time and place to another, the words serve historical analysis even less well.

Collective action is, on the other hand, a coherent historical phenomenon. The specific ways in which people act together on their interests vary enormously from one social situation to another. Yet at a very general level they have some common properties. Repression, for example, generally works to deflect and decrease collective action by ordinary people, even if people fight back, now and then, against quick and visible intensification of repression. Again, groups that already have substantial internal organization are generally more prone to act collectively than groups that have only a threat, an opportunity, or an interest in common. From the history of protest and disorder, we can profitably turn to the history of collective action. Within the history of collective action, furthermore, the events people commonly label as "terrorism" and "violence" begin to make sense. They begin to make sense, not as coherent phenomena in their own terms, but as by-products of collective action, or as outsiders' labels for certain types of collective action.

To illustrate these broad assertions, let us look at a few events for which hostile observers of the time were inclined to use words like "disorder". Let us take four quick, biased, hundred-year sections of French history; let us cut at 1682, 1782,

1882, and 1982 to locate two events from each year.

In Languedoc, the wheat harvest of 1682 was poor. Yet Colbert and the king, hard-pressed as usual for money to pay for war, chose that year to revive the cosse in Narbonne. On paper, the king had the right to collect 2.5 percent of the price each time a non-resident of Narbonne sold grain in the city at retail; that was the cosse. But in 1682 no one had collected the tax for over a century. This year the government had leased the old impost to a tax farmer in return for cash in advance — less cash, obviously, than the tax's estimated revenue. In August, the farmer began trying to collect his 2.5 percent. "Many women and common people gathered," ran the intendant's report that reached Paris on 16 August, "and threw a few stones at the tax-collectors. But the Consuls and chief inhabitants rushed to the spot and stopped the trouble" (A.N. G7 296). Narbonne's people complained that the tax was unjust, while merchants called it a restraint on trade. City authorities began negotiating with the crown for removal of the cosse. Eventually, in 1688, they managed to buy it off.

On 28 September 1682, Paris' Faubourg Saint-Marcel was abuzz with news of a brawl. A Protestant wineshop apprentice had received a serious stab wound, and might well die. The Catholic curate of Saint-Médard went to hear the wounded man's confession, in hopes of managing a deathbed conversion. The young Protestant refused. Seven or eight hundred local workers, male and female, gathered outside the wineshop, shouted against the "Huguenots", demanded the surrender of the wounded man, shattered door and windows with blows of sticks and stones, and threatened to burn the house down. A police officer finally broke up the crowd. As for the apprentice, he resisted to the end, and died a Protestant the next day (B.N. Fr. 7050; Clément 1866: 270-271).

About a century later, on 20 August 1782, the sub-intendant of Castres, in Languedoc, went to La Caune to supervise the drawing of lots for militia service.

The mayor and consuls asked him to apply the recent edict of the royal council forbidding anyone to pasture goats anywhere in Languedoc without authorization of the intendant; the goats of local poor people, they complained, were ruining the community's woods. "At the woods," reported the sub-intendant,

we found Mr. Lacau, a resident of La Caune, who said in a rather imperious tone to Mr. Gardric, the mayor, 'Don't go where you're going! Stay here. Where are you going?' Since we kept on going toward the woods through a sunken road, Mr. Lacau and a swarm of women and children (to whom he said, others have told me, 'I won't abandon you, poor things, follow me!', and whom he had told to collect large stones in their aprons) went to the same part of the woods by a path running along the heights, even though we were going as fast as our horses could take us. I saw a hail of stones falling on me and my companions; the women were throwing them while belching all sorts of insults (A.N. H1 1102).

The sub-intendant spurred his horse and got away. He and his companions searched the woods for the offending goats, but found only groups of women threatening to stone them. He finally struck two women with his whip, and for that received a tongue-lashing from Mr. Lacau. On the way back to town, the little company ran into another ambush, this time including two men "with great staves". By choosing a different entrance into La Caune, the sub-intendant managed to escape a final assault from Lacau and his female supporters, who were waiting, with their missiles, at the main gate. He and the local officials concluded that the men were hiding the goats. When, the next day, they went to inspect the houses of people known to have goats, they found all the houses, and all the usual goat pastures, empty. The intendant of Languedoc, after hearing this and other reports, finally gave it up as a bad job: he left it to the Waters and Forests officials to police scavenging goats.

About the same time, people in the countryside near Lille were working at the harvest. In that region, people from outside the household who helped harvest customarily had the right to picorée: one sheaf in twenty-five for themselves. At the harvest of 1782, "the poor didn't wait for the owner's invitation. They rushed to a field whether it was ready or not. They harvested, and each harvester carried off

his picorée; the farmers were robbed. In 1783, permanent posts of maréchaussée took up posts [in the suburbs of Lille] to stop the exercise of that so-called right, which was no more than an excuse for pillage" (Derode 1975 [1848-1877]: 355-356). At least so said a nineteenth-century historian. Another interpretation is simply that the proprietors had decided to break with a customary form of employment that had become costly and inconvenient, but the local poor resisted that break.

A century later, we are in Bordeaux. On Sunday night, 23 July 1882, a hundred-odd carpenters carrying clubs marched into the city's red-light district. They went to a bar on the rue Lambert, broke the plate-glass window, and did 100 francs' worth of damage inside. All this "on the pretext that one of them had been hurt by some pimps". Eight policemen and nine soldiers showed up, held back a crowd estimated at 400 people, arrested five offenders, and -- after a forty-five minute battle -- checked the avenging carpenters. None of the police was badly wounded (Le Temps 26 July 1882, p. 3).

In Arles, in October, the story was quite different. Legitimists (supporters of the old monarchy) were holding public banquets to advertise their cause and build its solidarity. They would often march back from the banquets, showing their colors to the world. On 9 October, such a cortege returned to Arles. Here is the newspaper report:

At the arrival of the Legitimists, the crowd started to shout, to jeer and whistle at them. The Legitimists retreated in good order to the edge of the Place du Forum, where they took refuge in the Café Brusque, the local Legitimist drinking-place. Others disappeared via winding streets and went toward the railroad station. Soon the Place du Forum was invaded by a crowd, which again jeered the demonstrators. Police and gendarmerie had to intervene. Toward 7:30 P.M., a Republican orator spoke to the crowd, which applauded and cried Vive la République many times. Then they sang the Marseillaise. Elsewhere, people turned to rough talk; some fistfights broke out. Since tension was growing from one moment to the next, the police force had to protect the Legitimists and accompany them to the station, where they took the 8 P.M. train (Le Temps 11 October 1881, p. 3).

Le Figaro told the story a bit differently, but the essence was the same: a Legitimist

demonstration of numbers and determination, a Republican counter-demonstration of their numbers and determination.

Nov: for 1982. This time let us take two events from Paris. On Sunday, the 20th of June, the Confederation Generale du Travail and the Communist Party organized a march from the Gare Montparnasse to the Place de la Bastille. This March for Peace occurred on a warm, sunny day; from 20,000 to 50,000 people (depending on your source) turned out. Most of them marched in groups identifying an organization and a place (e.g. CGI of the Rhone); many carried signs with slogans ("down with the warmakers", and so on), and many chanted or sang as they went. Although the bulk of the marchers came from the CGI and the PC, Palestinians, Iranians, and others of various political persuasions also appeared with banners, slogans, chants, and songs. Marchers and spectators were generally in good humor; it was a beautiful day, as police and parade marshals cleared the way. When the start of the march crossed the Pont de Sully from the Ile St. Louis to the Right Bank, however, a young woman rode along on a bicycle, holding a balloon on which was written **Brezhnev vous remercie**. As she pedaled a bit too close to the front rank, a man in his sixties shoved her off the bike and out of the line of march. A few incidents of that sort were all the "violence" to occur that day.

About six weeks later, on 9 August 1982, another event occurred not far from the Pont de Sully. In the early afternoon, two men walked down the predominantly Jewish rue des Rosiers, stopped at the Goldenberg Restaurant, and fired automatic pistols into the restaurant. They continued down the street, firing, and disappeared at its end. Behind them, six people lay dead, and another twenty-two were wounded. President Mitterand attended service at a nearby synagogue that evening. During the following days several ceremonies involving prominent public officials commemorated the dead and condemned the murderers. But the killers got away.

The massacre of the rue des Rosiers is the only event of our series to merit

the term "terrorism". It occurred that summer in the company of a number of other attacks on Jewish premises, and in the context of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon; although no group made an authenticated claim to have done the deed, the press and public figures, both Jewish and Gentile, generally interpreted it as an indirect protest against Israel. It counts as terrorism by directing damage at persons having little or no power over a condition in hopes of influencing other persons who do have power over that condition. In that regard, it resembles kidnapping, hijacking, and the random killing of people from a stigmatized population. "Terrorism" names a strategy rather than a form of action. That is why I say it does not stand for a coherent social reality: although in a given time and place only certain kinds of people with certain sorts of motives may use terror, in general its only common ground is strategic.

What Do French Conflicts Tell Us?

Our eight events by no means comprise random samples of conflict or collective action in the four different centuries in which they occurred. No catalog of seventeenth-century France, for example, could omit the great urban and regional rebellions, especially the Fronde. The conflicts of the eighteenth century included innumerable journeymen's brawls and food riots, not to mention the Revolution of 1789-1799. How could we discuss nineteenth-century collective action without considering strikes and working-class uprisings? In the twentieth century, factory occupations, mass meetings, and farmers' roadblocks would have to enter the list. We have before us two of the characteristic smaller events from each century, all of them involving at least a bit of damage to persons and objects. In the vocabularies of their times, they all qualified for at least one of the "protest" and "disorder" words. In a weak sense, then, they represent four centuries' collective action.

With those qualifications, notice how much both the forms and issues of popular collective action changed over the centuries. In the disputes over Narbonne's

cosse and Paris's Protestants, we find two of the seventeenth century's great themes: resistance against royal attempts to extract the means of war from a reluctant populace, and battles among competing communities. With the struggles over goats and harvest payments, we notice how eighteenth-century landlords and officials collaborated in squeezing out rights of the landless, and promoted the dominance of the market, of the wage-nexus, of bourgeois property. In the café-smashing and demonstrating of the nineteenth century, we learn how organizations of workers, of political supporters, and of other special interests came to be major actors in public life. In the peace march and restaurant attack of 1982, however, we discover rather less change than in the earlier hundred-year comparisons: The demonstration-march takes a very large scale and the anti-Semitic shooting probably depends on an international network of dedicated killers, but both forms and themes have visible nineteenth-century predecessors.

The eight events were all violent to some degree. But they varied enormously in the extent, character, and centrality of violence. In 1982 we witness the extreme contrast: between a march to which any damage to persons and objects was entirely incidental and an attack whose entire rationale was to do visible damage. In the other cases violence occurred as a by-product of actions and interactions which displayed determination to act on behalf of conflicting interests, but which were not inherently violent. For these reasons and others, to lump together all the events in a category called "violence" obscures, instead of clarifying, our understanding. Nor do the labels "protest", "disorder", and the like serve any better; the main common ground of these varied events is that in their time their central actions belonged to the standard means that some groups used to advance or protect their interests. From the tax rebellion of the seventeenth century to the demonstration-march of the twentieth, we watch the evolution of a repertoire of collective action.

Britain's 1981 Conflicts in Perspective

France was not unique. Great Britain likewise experienced substantial change in its dominant collective-action repertoires from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Let us try to grasp Britain's continuities and discontinuities of collective action via a different approach from the one that took us to France. Let us start from the dramatic conflicts in British cities -- especially London, Liverpool, and Manchester, during the summer of 1981. In the Brixton area of London, a major sector of West Indian settlement, blacks battled police in the streets twice that summer. In July, the Southall area of west London, with its substantial Indian population, followed Brixton with its own street-fighting. Toxteth (Liverpool) and Moss Side (Manchester) likewise saw violent encounters between youths and police, but in those two places a substantial proportion of the youths involved were white natives. In the later stages of these confrontations, local people repeatedly broke into local stores and carried off valuable goods.

The news reports from 1981 provide many reminders of the British past; they call to mind especially the sustained effort of nineteenth-century British authorities to establish police control over working-class areas, both English and Irish, and the repeated resistance of people in working-class neighborhoods to that control. They recall how frequently Ireland has served as the proving ground for police routines later to be installed in Great Britain. The very routines of confrontation and looting have plenty of historical precedent. Notice that in August New Society began publishing a series called "the riots in perspective", emphasizing continuities between last year's conflicts and those of the earlier past. Jerry White's review of 1919 in the first article brings out that year's four rounds of rioting:

In May and June, there were race riots in seaports; in July, riots by soldiers who were awaiting demob or just discharged; in August, mass looting in Liverpool after the abortive Police Union strike; and in July and August, running battles between London youth and the police, with some casualties (White 1981: 260).

All those events had established nineteenth-century antecedents.

Flashback to 1919 provides a dual reminder: First, then as before and since, by using such words as "riot" and "disturbance", observers adopt the authorities' usual perspective, lump together forms of action which are actually quite distinctive, obscure the similarity of form between the violent and nonviolent instances of the same routine. Second, the nineteenth-century repertoire did not preclude violence or direct action, although neither was central to its operation. Sometimes the violence consisted of a direct attack on the person or premises of an enemy. Sometimes it spun off the edges of a largely nonviolent demonstration or strike. Sometimes it emerged from a struggle with a rival group which attempted to block the action's initiator from making its point. Most often, however, the violence resulted from a direct confrontation between members of the group making claims and police, or other representatives of the authorities, who sought to check their action. In almost all these cases, nevertheless, the violence simply cast into relief the same recurrent nineteenth-century routines: meeting, rally, and so on.

If we were tallying continuities between 1981's conflicts and those of the past, we could easily push back before 1919. Considering the recurrent theme of civilian resistance to police control, we could move all the way back to the very installation of the New Police in 1829 and thereafter. True, the conjunction of segregated racial minorities, police harassment, and outbreaks combining property destruction with looting has a twentieth-century American air; almost every American ghetto rebellion of the 1960s that did not begin with police intervention in a black civil rights demonstration began with a contested police arrest of a black person in the presence of many others, and in the context of repeated complaints against discriminatory patrolling of black areas. That particular combination, so far as I know, never appeared in nineteenth-century Britain. Nevertheless, the recent confrontations in

Britain's urban minority areas have their counterpart in the contested policing of Irish areas in nineteenth-century British industrial towns. Here the central action was not typically a demonstration or a strike; instead, people employed the very old routine which had served against such powerful but unwanted outsiders as tax-collectors and billeted troops: gathering, threatening, taunting, stoning, impeding, retreating, only to regroup elsewhere.

This nineteenth-century defensive routine actually antedates the nineteenth century. We can see it clearly and repeatedly among the food riots, Rough Music, machine-breaking, and other standard forms of eighteenth-century conflict. Few of those forms of action survived much past the 1830s. The routine for defending a territory against powerful outsiders was an exception. It survived to occupy a regular place in a new and distinctive repertoire.

The discussion that follows offers a very general account of the shift from the repertoires of collective action prevailing in Western Europe -- and especially Britain and France -- through the early nineteenth century to the repertoires prevailing in Western Europe since then. The discussion concentrates on discontinuous gatherings, occasions on which a number of people come together in the same place and make claims of some sort: demands, complaints, threats, entreaties, declarations of support. That restriction excludes important kinds of collective action: organized but dispersed terrorism, some sorts of conspiracy, bureaucratized pressure-group politics, and others as well. The reasons for concentrating on discontinuous gatherings are at once theoretical and practical. Theoretically, discontinuous gatherings have a special power to communicate collective claims, and therefore deserve attention for themselves. Practically, discontinuous gatherings are likely to be more visible to an investigator than are the workings of a conspiracy or the activities of an informal pressure group. To the extent that different kinds of collective action change and vary in tandem with one another, we therefore have much to learn from following the more visible

forms.

Repertoires of Collective Action

Within both France and England, a distinctive nineteenth-century repertoire came into being as a result of major changes in the organization of capitalism and the state. On the one side, we have the concentration of capital and its increasingly sharp separation from labor. On the other hand, we have the beginning of direct popular participation in national politics. The new repertoire emphasized the same characteristics as are rewarded by national electoral politics and labor/capital struggles: the mobilization of numbers and commitment on behalf of articulated claims to power and/or on powerholders. When it comes to demonstrations, strikes, public meetings, social movements, and similar forms of collective action, those groups are more successful, on the whole, which can produce the highest multiple of numbers, commitment, and articulation of claims. The new repertoire operated in two overlapping circles: the one defined by the deployment of coercion, the one defined by the deployment of capital. It still operates in those circles.

Don't all repertoires work that way? No, in past and present people have organized repertoires around displays of lethal force, of links to powerful patrons (not necessarily human or even earthly), of certification by sacred texts, of one esoteric skill or another. Once claims cross international boundaries, furthermore, the mobilization of numbers and commitment on behalf of articulated claims to power and on powerholders has little impact in the contemporary world; the effects of those forms operate almost entirely within the bounds of a single state. Illusions and hopes to the contrary result, I think, from confounding the direct effect of a demonstration or rally on a foreign powerholder with the impact of the demonstration or rally on the host state's actions toward the foreign powerholder. We are examining a repertoire of collective action that grew up with, and is still largely confined to, action within the sorts of polities created as national electoral politics developed in

western Europe and its extensions.

Whether national electoral politics and the concentration of capital somehow caused the repertoire is more difficult to say. Another sort of connection is equally plausible: the same struggles that created some direct national representation of ordinary citizens and the beginnings of a national organization of labor also crystallized the repertoire and gave it precarious legitimacy. A variety of different groups with a considerable range of interests and power acquired a common interest in protecting the means of action involved. The repertoire's availability for electoral claims made it difficult for authorities to block its extension to non-electoral claims, and thereby increased the advantages offered by the new repertoire to all sorts of contenders. In comparison to other forms of action people might, in principle, have adopted, the routines in the new repertoire were more likely to convey a clear message and less likely to call down vigorous repression.

All such advantages impose costs. The new repertoire inevitably disserved some kinds of groups: those for whom small numbers or secrecy were essential, those concerned mainly with their own right to exist rather than with the structure or exercise of national power, and so on. Where the object of a group's wrath was visible and local, meetings, rallies, demonstrations and the like were likely to be indirect, ineffective ways to reach the object, as compared with older forms of retribution. Out of incessant struggles among claimants, objects of their claims, and intervening authorities grew a series of half-stated but compelling definitions and rules: when a meeting was really a meeting, when the police could and should enter a gathering, who could march where, and so on. The definitions and rules, being political products themselves, tended to work against groups with few powerful allies. The resulting structure simultaneously encouraged and contained popular collective action.

We need a few qualifications to these very general statements. First, it is an exaggeration to speak of a single repertoire. Although national repertoires of

collective action emerged in both France and Britain, each pair of groups consisting of people making claims and the objects of those claims developed its own particular version of that repertoire. On the whole, for example, groups whose sphere of operation remained quite local also retained more of the older repertoire; youth groups kept on using the forms of sanction called charivari in France and Rough Music in England, as craftsmen organized in small shops continued to put pressure on their employers by means of the turnout. Second qualification: Because of the multiplicity and complexity of repertoires, my stress on capital concentration and electoral politics necessarily neglects many particular causes of change. In Britain's creation of the national social movement as a form of collective action, for example, the innovation of such leaders as John Wilkes, William Cobbett, and Francis Place unquestionably helped shape the specific forms that social movements took in that country.

Let us sharpen the contrast between the "eighteenth-century" and "nineteenth-century" repertoires. We should do so in full realization a) that the "eighteenth-century" repertoire stretched back in time before then and survived into the nineteenth century, while the "nineteenth-century" repertoire continued into our own time; b) that the dichotomy suggests a neat distinction which the historical reality denies.

On balance, performances in the older repertoire involved:

1. people's frequent employment of the authorities' normal means of action, either as caricature or as a deliberate, if temporary, assumption of the authorities' prerogatives in the name of the local community;
2. common appearance of participants as members or representatives of constituted corporate groups and communities rather than of special interests;
3. a tendency to appeal to powerful patrons for redress of wrongs and, especially, for representation vis à vis outside authorities;
4. extensive use of authorized public celebrations and assemblies for the presentation of grievances and demands;

5. repeated adoption of rich, irreverent symbolism in the form of effigies, dumb show, and ritual objects to state grievances and demands;
6. convergence on the residences of wrongdoers and the sites of wrongdoing, as opposed to seats and symbols of public power.

One might sum up the repertoire as parochial and patronized. Concretely, the repertoire included such routines as food riots, collective invasions of forbidden fields and forests, destruction of barriers, attacks on machines, Rough Music, serenades, expulsions of tax officials and other unwanted outsiders, tendentious holiday parades, fights between gangs from rival villages, pulling down and sacking of private houses, forced illumination, mobbing of outcasts, and the acting out of popular judicial proceedings. Those and a few other forms like them constituted the eighteenth-century repertoire.

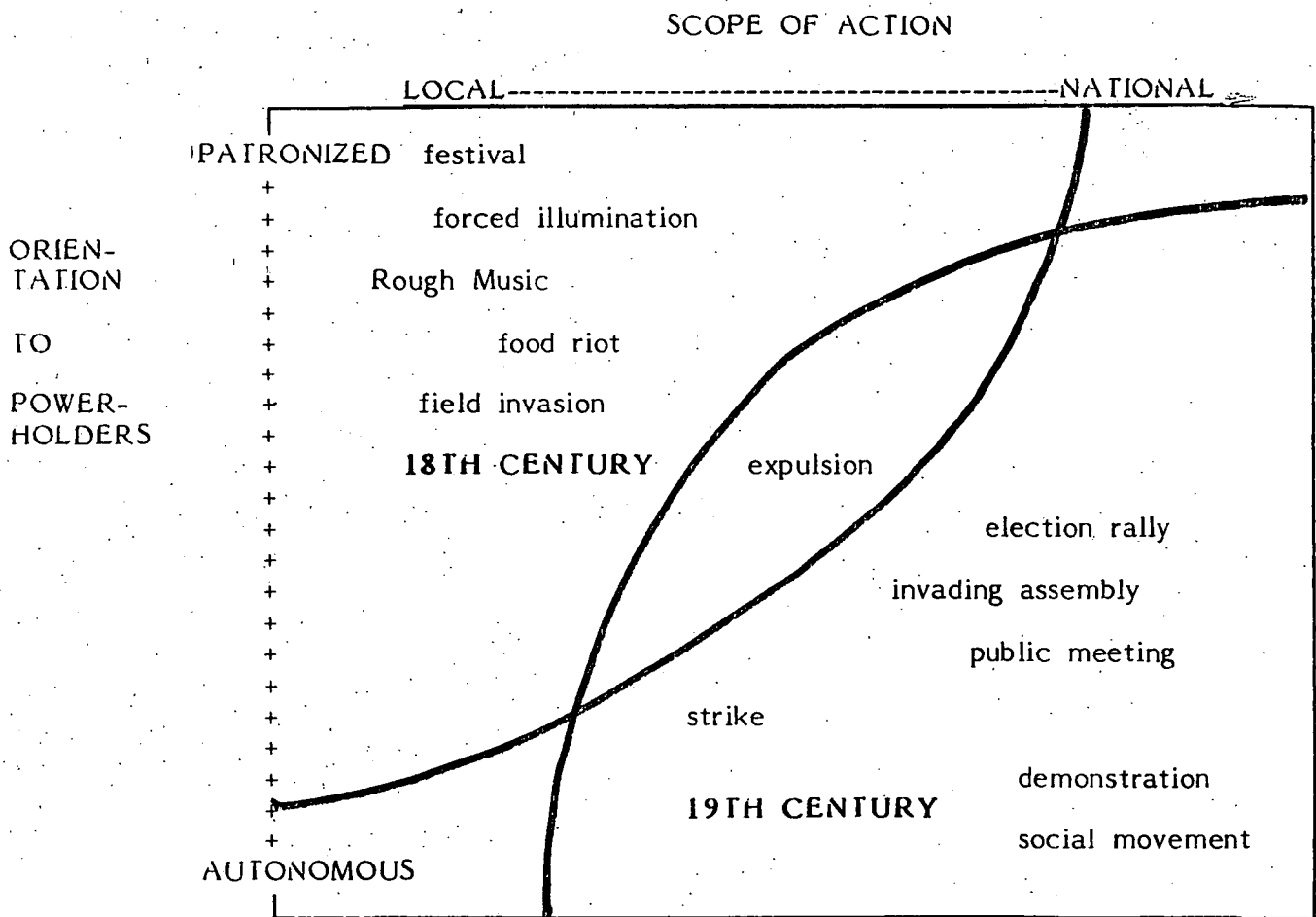
The "nineteenth-century" repertoire with which we still live operates on quite different premises. As compared with the earlier repertoire, its performances show these tendencies:

1. The employment of relatively autonomous means of action, of a kind rarely or never employed by authorities;
2. frequent appearance of special interests and named associations or pseudo-associations (e.g. Coalition for Justice, People United Against _____);
3. direct challenges to rivals or authorities, especially national authorities and their representatives, rather than appeals to patrons;
4. deliberate organization of assemblies for the articulation of claims;
5. display of programs, slogans, signs of common membership;
6. preference for action in visible public places.

Let me insist that these are average differences, not absolutes. They describe a tendency toward action we might label national and autonomous. Concrete examples of these "national and autonomous" forms are strikes, demonstrations, electoral rallies, public meetings, petition marches, planned insurrections, and invasions of official assemblies. Sometimes several of these combine into the sustained challenge on

behalf of an unrepresented constituency we commonly call a "social movement" or "political movement". Sometimes, likewise, they coalesce into the series of claims for votes we call an "electoral campaign". Those are the dominant performances available within the nineteenth- and twentieth-century repertoire.

We could schematize this already schematic summary as a two-dimensional diagram; the diagram places some of the characteristic performances within each repertoire with respect to the usual scope of their action, and the usual orientation to the authorities -- patronized or autonomous -- involved:



The diagram indicates a) that the various performances occupy somewhat different positions with respect to their characteristic scope and orientation to powerholders, b)

that taken as wholes the two repertoires overlap somewhat in both respects, c) that nevertheless a significant net movement along both dimensions -- toward autonomous action which was national in scope -- occurred in the shift from one dominant repertoire to the other.

Let us be clear about one thing. The notion of repertoire is a simplifying model. As I have stated it so far, it incorporates a sense of regularity, order, and deliberate choice into conflict; the model may well appear to leave no room for anger, drunkenness, spontaneity, and the pleasure of a good whack at an enemy's shins. In my sketch, it makes little allowance for variation by time, place, and social group, and implies neat, rapid, comprehensive transitions from one limited set of forms to the next. It neglects other dimensions along which forms of collective action: legality/illegality, size, extent of violence, and so on. All that sounds hopelessly unrealistic.

I do mean to stress the order in collective action, in opposition to the disorder communicated by words such as "mob", "riot", and "disturbance". I do, furthermore, want to draw attention to the widespread and relatively rapid alteration in the means of collective action which occurred in Britain during the era of Reform, and in most other European countries within the next eight decades. We might date the comparable transitions, very roughly, around 1848 for France, 1870 for Germany, 1870 in Northern Italy, 1914 in the Italian South. Although the dates and the completeness of the transitions are contestable, there is little doubt that the people of all these countries, and more, made decisive shifts to the new repertoire by early in the twentieth century. In that sense, violence and collective action depended on an underlying order.

Nothing, however, requires that rule-bound collective action be bloodless and calm, any more than a rough conformity to the rules of football excludes a bit of mayhem on the field. Nor is a massive net shift in the prevailing modes of action

inconsistent with the occasional revival of the displaced modes of action. Workers' direct-action "outrages" still occurred in Sheffield and Manchester in the 1860s; but they were the more outrageous by then for being remnants of a time when physical attacks on strikebreakers' persons and employers' premises were standard accompaniments of local turnouts.

In its weakest version, the notion of repertoire is simply a metaphor to remind us that routines such as the turnout recur, become recognizable to participants as well as to observers, and have something of an independent history. In its strongest version, the notion of repertoire amounts to an hypothesis of deliberate choice by contenders among well-defined alternative modes of action, with both the available alternatives and the choices contenders make among them changing continuously as a consequence of the outcomes of previous actions. In its intermediate version, the notion of repertoire states a model in which the accumulated experience -- direct and vicarious -- of contenders interacts with the strategies of authorities to make a limited number of forms of action more feasible, attractive, and frequent than many others which could, in principle, serve the same interests. This intermediate version of the simplifying model is the one I have in mind here.

France vs. Britain

The comparison of nineteenth-century changes in France and Britain sheds light on the whole process by which repertoires change. At the century's outset, the two countries stood about even in the creation of new repertoires. On one side of the channel, Britain had produced a series of innovations -- from John Wilkes to Lord George Gordon to London's Radicals, with some assistance from others such as Protestant Dissenters and Spitalfields weavers -- which came close to constituting the national social movement as we know it: the sustained challenge to national authorities in the name of an unrepresented constituency, in the course of which people make organized public displays of their strength and determination. On the

other side, however, the French had gone through a Revolution in which -- at least for two or three years -- public meetings, organized marches, and demonstrations in something approaching their contemporary form did a significant share of the nation's political work.

Three or four decades later, the contrast had become much sharper. Under a series of repressive regimes, France had returned for most purposes to a reduced version of its eighteenth-century collective-action repertoire. Ordinary people who shared a grievance or a hope were most likely to act, if they acted at all, by staging a mocking ceremony, by simulating the same punishments and controls that authorities usually visited upon offenders, by organizing a turnout, by taking advantage of an established public ceremony to voice or symbolize their claims. The Revolution of 1830 ruptured the continuity for a few months, as relaxed repression and National Guard mobilization encouraged a temporary return to some of the militant action of the earlier Revolution. During the 1830s and 1840s, bourgeois circles and clubs, working-class journeymen's associations and mutual-aid societies, and conspiratorial political groups led lives ranging from clandestine to semi-public. Occasionally they broke the silence with a public meeting, an electoral rally, a demonstration, an attempted insurrection, or a banquet devoted to a cause. (The subscription banquet, for example, became a major vehicle for the voicing of opposition to the regime in the months just before the Revolution of 1848.) Turnouts, and even strikes, became more frequent.

Nevertheless, the chief innovations in political expression in France between the Restoration of 1814-1815 and the Revolution of 1848 involved pressing old, established forms of action to the limits of official toleration: turning the funeral of a public figure or a victim of repression into a mass march, directing a charivari or serenade away from the offender or defender of private morality toward a public figure, and so forth down our checklist. For the most part, the contentious

gatherings which occurred in France during those three decades took familiar eighteenth-century forms: food riots, mobbing and expulsion of tax collectors, invasion of enclosed or posted fields and forests, displays during authorized public ceremonies and celebrations. Only the fever of meeting, marching, and deliberating during the spring of 1848 shifted the balance toward what I am calling, with increasingly obvious inaccuracy, the nineteenth-century repertoire.

By 1848, Britain had already experienced ten years of Chartist meetings and marches. She had left the final campaign for Catholic Emancipation twenty years behind, had gone sixteen years past the great mobilization for Reform, had produced round after round of strikes, and had thoroughly installed the open meeting, the electoral rally, and the demonstration as ways of doing collective business. One might still detect eighteenth-century tones in the resistance to the new municipal police, in strikers' applications of Rough Music to recalcitrant members of their trades, in the hauling of effigies through protest marches, and perhaps in the brawling of rival candidates' supporters. Other prominent eighteenth-century forms — notably the pulling down of enemies' houses, the breaking of machinery, invasions of enclosed or posted land, attacks on tollgates, and the classic food riot — had, however, virtually disappeared.

To be sure, each of these changes has a particular history: Parliamentary enclosures slowed, the declining relative price of corn and the increasingly efficient distribution of food reduced the incentives and opportunities for people's forceful intervention in the market, the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824 eased workers' ways to legal and public action against employers, a generation of workers grew up with big machines. All these changes, and more, affected both the interests different groups had in acting collectively, and their capacity to do so.

We must, furthermore, take care: there is a risk of conflating "backward-looking", "traditional" and "eighteenth-century" forms of action into a formless

category of resistance to innovation. As John Stevenson declares:

What is important to recognise is that they were present at least as much in the seventeenth century and earlier and continued into the industrial era: although sometimes regarded as 'pre-industrial' forms of protest or communal expression, they can be found in Luddism, 'Captain Swing', anti-Poor Law disturbances, reactions to cholera hospitals, to the professional police, and to the immigrant Irish. Even in late Victorian and Edwardian England examples of popular resistance to innovation which are recognisable in these terms can be found, as in the reactions to compulsory vaccination during the 1870s, attacks on the Salvation Army in the 1880s, and the actions of 'jingo' crowds during the Boer and Great Wars (Stevenson 1979: 310).

It is not, in short, their frequently defensive deployment that distinguishes the eighteenth-century forms from the nineteenth-century repertoire. Despite a broad, on-the-average, association between certain forms of collective action and certain issues, we must separate the form as such from the circumstances in which it most frequently occurs. That is, indeed, the justification for introducing the alien term repertoire.

Transition to the "Nineteenth Century"

Through all these qualifications, certain important differences between Britain and France still appear. After an irregular series of collective-action innovations beginning after the Seven Years War, the pace of change in Britain's predominant forms of collective action accelerated after Waterloo, and reached a peak around the time of Reform. By the 1840s, for most purposes, the eighteenth-century repertoire had given way to a recognizable version of the repertoire that has prevailed since then. In France, a similar transition occurred, but significantly later. Despite the precocious innovations of the early 1790s, rapid, extensive, and durable alteration of the French collective-action repertoire did not begin until the 1840s. What is more, it halted during the extensive repression of the 1850s, and only completed its cycle in the 1860s. Nevertheless, the crucial moment of the transition arrived during the revolutionary months of 1848. 1832 for Britain, 1848 for France, mark the installation of the nineteenth-century repertoire.

Britain's 1832 and France's 1848 have something important in common. Each brought a decisive expansion of the national electorate, and a clear establishment of the principle that persons, not corporate interests, had the right to representation at the national level. The Reform Bill of 1832 fell far short of universal suffrage. Yet its extension of the vote to most bourgeois and some master craftsmen by means of a property-tax requirement defined a general limit within which almost all persons qualified. It thereby shifted the debate to the proper location of that limit. By eliminating rotten boroughs and establishing constituencies for growing population centers, the Bill ratified the radical notion of representation in rough proportion to the number of persons represented.

In France, the right to vote in national elections followed a zigzag course for sixty years before 1848: swinging between near-manhood suffrage and various tax-payment qualifications during the revolutionary regimes, moving to stringent property qualifications with the Restoration, and somewhat less stringent property qualifications with the Revolution of 1830. In the revolutionary enthusiasm of spring, 1848, however, France enacted manhood suffrage with few exceptions. Although Louis Napoleon managed to reduce the effective electorate by tightening registration requirements and broadening the interpretation of 1848's rules for disqualification, even he did not dare to break with the official principle of manhood suffrage. The more so, because he used the plebiscite -- simulacrum though it was of a true general election -- to advertize the legitimacy of his regime. Nor did any subsequent French regime dare attack manhood suffrage, not even the fearful Republic that formed after the Commune of 1871.

With the extension of the suffrage, in both countries, came a degree of protection for the right to campaign, to organize, to meet for the purposes of choosing, supporting, or influencing candidates. In both countries, especially Britain, non-electors had long taken the occasion of elections to assemble, to display their

colors, to cheer, jeer, and brawl on behalf of their preferences. The broadened suffrage extended the protection for those activities, and increased the incentive to build durable political organizations which could mobilize votes. The warrant for electoral activity and organization provided an opening for quasi-electoral, semi-electoral, even pseudo-electoral activity and organization; because protected parties developed a strong interest in the right to assemble and to state preferences, it became more difficult for governments to deny those rights arbitrarily. The increasing importance of national elections, in its turn, reinforced the advantage of groups who could muster large numbers of disciplined followers, and thus pose the threat or promise of converting the numbers and discipline into effective votes. Numbers and discipline became the keys to successful strikes, demonstrations, public meetings, petition drives, and other newly important forms of collective action. In these ways, the rise of national electoral politics promoted the shift to the nineteenth-century repertoire.

Yet the influence was surely mutual: in both Britain and France, disfranchised citizens used the new forms of collective action to press their demands for the expansion of suffrage and the guarantee of free, binding elections. Rather than being an automatic by-product of electoral politics, the new repertoire grew through a series of historically specific innovations and transfers. In Britain, for example, the success of Daniel O'Connell and his allies in pressing for Catholic Emancipation on the base of a mass-membership Catholic Association offered a model and a precedent for the organizers of Political Unions to press for Reform from 1830 onward. In France, the July Monarchy's relative tolerance of workers' mutual-aid societies made them a convenient vehicle for the creation of underground trade unions and political associations.

In both countries, the demonstration came into being as a distinctive form through a series of more or less deliberate alterations in older, protected forms of

action -- for example, through Wilkes' and Gordon's provocative expansion of the petition march to Parliament or the king into a public display of mass support for their causes. In both countries, the creation of the social movement as a way of doing collective business resulted from a cumulative learning process in which the lessons usually emerged from the successes and failures of the country's own contenders, but sometimes came from careful observation of contenders in other countries.

My working hypotheses, then, come down to the idea that the nationalization of power and politics from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century provided incentives to collective-action innovations which increased the national visibility of a given group's claims, as the expansion of national electoral politics created a milieu favorable to the protection and success of those innovations. The same processes reduced the feasibility and effectiveness of the standard eighteenth-century repertoire, with its emphasis on patronage and local scope. The eighteenth-century forms declined rapidly in importance, although they never quite disappeared. Since the frenzy of change in collective action centered on 1832 in Britain and 1848 in France, the pace of innovation has slowed.

Especially since 1968, European observers have often claimed the contrary: that new, post-industrial or style-of-life forms have taken over. Alain Touraine, for example, declares that:

fresh upsurges are being felt, new thrusts forward, which have not yet been defined or which refused to be defined by social relations: these include the rejection of an industrial society grown overwhelmingly crushing, the return to the lost great times of stability, the anguish of crisis and the fear of catastrophe, freedom movements of all kinds for the assertion of identity but without clear definition of their opponents, and liberal or libertarian critiques of the state (Touraine 1981:1).

Within the realm of industrial conflict, Pierre Dubois distinguishes between two types of radicalism -- explosive direct attacks on management, and planned assertions of workers' rights. The 1970s revival of explosive radicalism, he suggests, was temporary, while planned radicalism "is an entirely novel form that has some chances of being pursued" (Dubois 1978: 11). Worker takeovers of plants, such as the famous opposition to the closing of the Lip factory, and the deliberate, coordinated disorganization of production serve as examples.

Looked at closely, however, almost all of the cases in point involve forms of action that already have their own histories. The novelty consists of different groups or different demands. Within industrial conflict, for example, the strike continues to dominate the repertoire, but white-collar and high-technology workers become more involved, and some groups of workers demand a say in decisions concerning production and investment. Again, demands for regional autonomy, sexual rights, or freedom to pursue a distinctive style of life have become more prominent since World War II, yet the proponents of those demands have typically presented them by means of demonstrations, marches, and similar routines from the nineteenth-century repertoire.

One might, nevertheless, want to single out sitdown strikes, mass picketing, urban guerrilla, hijacking, hostage-taking, occupation of public buildings, or some other forms as genuine additions to the collective-action repertoire. The taking over of a contained space and its occupants as hostages to a set of specific demands has the

strongest claim to being a twentieth-century innovation. Perhaps squatting, factory occupations, and the American sit-in -- all of which have much in common with space- and hostage-taking -- also qualify. One might want to argue that the presence of mass-media reporting has recast all the nineteenth-century forms. One might want to inquire whether amid the massive power of corporations and states the puny efforts of demonstrators and strikers now make any difference to the actual exercise of power. One would certainly want to round out my account with an analysis of the changing technology of repression. One could profitably look forward, and ask whether new forms, or even whole new repertoires, are in the offing. Meanwhile, I think, we continue to find people acting together in ways that were almost inconceivable during the eighteenth century, and yet which crystallized in something like their present forms well over a century ago.

NOTE

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