FIGHTS AND FESTIVALS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ILE DE FRANCE

Charles Tilly
University of Michigan

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Center for Research on Social Organization
University of Michigan
330 Packard Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

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An Anxious Spring

In France and other western countries, the standard means of popular collective action have changed surprisingly little in the last century. After a flurry of experimentation and transformation in the nineteenth century's middle decades, France settled into a collective-action repertoire that is now wearily familiar: strikes, demonstrations, meetings, rallies, election campaigns and social movements became ordinary people's usual ways of getting collective business done -- if they did collective business at all. Although the decor of such actions has altered somewhat, and their aims have varied widely, the basic routines have a remarkable constancy.

Under these circumstances, we might reasonably expect that powerholders improve their ability to baffle popular collective action faster than ordinary people develop skill in using the available forms. Since ordinary people are likely to have more of their total livelihood at stake in any particular action, however, we might also expect moments of vulnerability on the part of powerholders to encourage surges of popular collective action, and occasional victories of ordinary people to occur at those moments of opportunity. This essay follows those guesses through a description of big moments of popular collective action in the Ile de France -- Paris and its region -- during the twentieth century.

In 1906, spring found France agitated. There was plenty to be nervous about. Government employees were demanding the right

to organize, national labor federations were becoming ostentatiously muscular, and defenders of the Catholic Church were up in arms. Legislative elections, furthermore, were coming up on 6 and 14 May. For the first time, the newly unified Socialist Party was running candidates almost everywhere. A heated campaign raged through April, and on into May.

This time, too, organized Catholics had a real grievance. The government had enacted official separation of church and state at the end of 1905. All religions were now, at least officially, equal. Duly registered "religious associations" were henceforth to operate church institutions. The government had chosen February to begin inventories of church property before transferring control to the new associations. On the first day of February, opponents of the inventories barricaded Paris' churches of Saint-Clotilde and Saint-Pierre-du-Gros-Caillou, fought off the police who came to assure the inventories, and forced the unwanted visitors to chop their way in. Among the arrested at Sainte-Clotilde were counts Louis de Bourbon and Guy de la Rochefoucauld. Aristocratic legitimists were joining the ordinary faithful in their resistance.

The struggle at Sainte-Clotilde and Saint-Pierre-du-Gros-Caillou began a bitter series of confrontations in Paris and in the provinces. The most consequential occurred in Boeschepe (Nord) on 6 March. There, the son of an inventorying official defended his father by fatally shooting a demonstrator. The

parliamentary debate on the killing brought down the government. Ten days later, the new government sent its agents instructions to suspend inventories if open resistance seemed likely. By April, toe-to-toe confrontations had become less frequent, but had not disappeared.

The spring of 1906 also brought widespread owner-worker conflict. In Toulon, for example, April began with waiters on strike. On Saturday 31 March, striking waiters had marched through the city's streets, smashing the windows of cafes that remained open. On Sunday 1 April, waiters demonstrated again. That night the wine steward at the cafe de la Rotonde, once more surrounded and taunted by strikers, pulled out his stiletto and stabbed Jean Bruno, a waiter from nearby Hyères. Bruno died on the spot. Fearing a junction of leftist workers from the arsenal with the striking cafe employees, and faced with the refusal of the Socialist mayor to forbid demonstrations, the prefect himself took over. Three days later, Toulon's strikers held hostage a police officer whom the prefect had sent as his delegate; the strikers demanded permission to march. Toulon's struggles continued through the month.

Industrial conflict was thriving in northern France as well. After the disaster of Courrières (10 March), in which 1,101 miners died in a giant explosion and subsequent underground fires, much of the coalfield of Pas-de-Calais roared out on strike. Georges Clémenceau, becoming the new government's Minister of the Interior

on 13 March, soon sent troops to guard the mines; for roughly 60,000 strikers, Clémenceau put 20,000 soldiers in the field. The soldiers found themselves protecting both mine property against destruction by miners and non-striking miners against the attacks of their fellows.

During April, the coalfield battles continued. In the Pas-de-Calais and the Nord, miners blocked pitheads, roughed up comrades who stayed on the job, and stoned the trains bringing scabs from Belgium. On 2 April, a thousand workers showing red flags marched into Billy-Montigny to demand the release of miners jailed during earlier set-tos. On 4 April, the 557 men and 40 boys digging coal underground at Ligny-lez-Aire joined the thousands of miners in neighboring villages who were already on strike. On 5 April, women gathered at the guarded Courrieres pit no. 4 outside of Billy-Montigy, stoned the personnel who entered or left, then tried to break in and press the search for miners still trapped below. On 9 April the wives of miners at Billy-Montigny demonstrated with black, red, and tricolor flags.

More confrontations, some involving detonations of dynamite, occurred in the northern minefields almost every day from then to the month's end. Clémenceau activated the cavalry. Forty-odd union leaders went to jail. Thus Clémenceau's reputation began to shift. From Clémenceau, implacable Jacobin and scourge of governments, he became Clémenceau, strikebreaker.

In addition to miners, many other workers of northern France

joined April's action. On 4 April, for example, a crowd in Roubaix attacked the carriage of former minister Jules Méline, who had come to confer with the city's industrialists. On 6 April, strikers at Fressenneville, Somme, broke the windows of the lock factory in which they worked, then went on to shatter the windows of non-strikers, as well as to sack and burn the house of the factory owner; they sang the Marseillaise and the Carmagnole as they smashed.

Nor were striking waiters, locksmiths, and miners alone. Here are some more items from April's calendar:

1 April 1906: Twenty-odd Jews, impatient to emigrate to Canada, broke into the Paris offices of the Jewish Colonization Association and tore them up.

8 April: The official who came to inventory the property of the church in Saint-Amans (Lozère) met a hail of stones and a barricaded door before retreating to try again some other day.

10 April: Truckers who were on strike in Grenoble tried to unhitch the horses from the wagon carrying the effects of the new chief of gendarmerie; gendarmes and police fought them off.

10, 11, 12 April: Striking pitmen in the southern minefield of Alès (Gard) gathered in the city streets and fought with non-strikers; on the 12th, 250 of them marched with a red flag.

11 April: An important branch of the postal service (the sous-agents) went on strike. The government requisitioned troops to replace them.

13 April: Thousands of Catholics marched through Montpellier, battling the police as they protested the disestablishment of their church.

14 April: Workers of Limoges marched with red flags, and with a black flag bearing the word Germinal; they went to the tomb of Vardelle, a worker who had died in demonstrations the

previous year. 200 anarchists followed the black flag from the cemetery, sang revolutionary songs, stopped at the barracks to jeer the local garrison, then moved on to the city center. Police seized their banner and broke them up.

15 April: Demonstrating textile strikers battled gendarmes in Voiron, near Grenoble; when troops arrived four days later, much of the city's labor force struck to demand their removal.

16 April: Supporters of conservative and republican candidates for the Chamber of Deputies bloodied each other in Ville-Mal-Nommée (Vienne).

17 April: In the course of a strike, about a thousand wool workers of Lavelanet (Ariège) gutted the houses of local employers. That same day, French construction workers in Toul and Bruley attacked Italians who had come to work on the fortifications.

18 April: The striking miners of Alès fought nonstrikers and tried to overturn the carriage of the mine's superintendent.

21 April: Retail and business clerks on strike in Lorient (Morbihan) threw up barricades and fought off soldiers after attempting to close the city's businesses.

22 April: In Brest, a meeting of some 3,000 Socialists ended in a street battle with supporters of an antiSocialist candidate.

23 April: Striking and non-striking masons fought each other in Châtelguyon (Puy-de-Dôme).

25 April: Marseille's printers massed at their labor exchange, declared themselves on strike, and proceeded to non-striking printshops; the thousand workers who arrived at the Moullot printing plant confronted police.

26 April: L'Humanité published a manifesto of the Socialist International calling for a strike-demonstration on the 1st of May.

27 April: Clémenceau called in 26,000 troops to reinforce Paris' garrison of 15,000 men. A dynamite charge went off at the Argenteuil viaduct, but failed to destroy it. Demonstrators again battled troops in Lorient.

30 April: Paris' prefect of police, Lépine, stationed 50,000 troops and police throughout the city. An army lieutenant in

uniform appeared at the Paris labor exchange, declared himself a Socialist, and said he would never fire on his brother workers; he was arrested at the exit, and carted off to jail.

Much of France seemed to be fighting, striking, or both at once.

May Days Past

In Paris, meanwhile, the Prefect of Police was readying his forces for the 1st of May, 1906. May Day had already passed its second decade as the international festival of the working class. At its Chicago Congress of 1884, America's Federation of Organized Trades fixed on 1 May 1886 as the starting point of a great campaign for the eight-hour day. American workers responded by turning the old feast into a giant display of workers' strength. In 1889 the Second International, convening in Paris, designated 1 May 1890 as an international day of demonstration for the eight-hour day. Back then, le Père Peinard (alias Emile Pouget) likened the new holiday to the great day in 1870 when "everyone" had left work to follow Victor Noir's funeral procession.

Victor Noir had worked at Henri Rochefort's muckraking paper La Marseillaise. Louis Napoleon's kinsman Prince Pierre Bonaparte had killed Noir in an altercation during preparations for a duel between Prince Pierre and an editor of the paper; to mourn Noir ostentatiously was to demonstrate opposition to the imperial regime, without taking the risk of a manifestly political gesture. After all, could the regime risk punishing people for mourning a man who really had been murdered? The moment was too good to miss.

May Day had some of the same appeal: a holiday stolen back from the rich and powerful. In 1890, in fact, Père Peinard suggested taking advantage of the holiday by helping oneself at the city's bright new department stores, which so blatantly pandered to the bourgeoisie: "The Louvres, the Printemps, the Belle Jardinières, and the Potins reach out their arms and make eyes at us: It's so nice to have a new overcoat on your back, or good shoes on your feet!" (Pouget 1976: 33). "You have to be in the street to deal with social problems," declared the Pere Peinard, "and to see clearly who has too much to live on and who has too little" (Pouget 1976: 33).

When the director of Le Père Peinard received a sentence of 15 months in jail and 2,000 francs fine for publishing that issue, the paper put out a broadside. Signed, as usual, by Le Père Peinard, the new text trumpeted:

> And why? Because I shot off my mouth about the May Day demonstration. You can bet I'm not going to shut up. I'll keep on saying that the populo is being robbed, sacked, and assassinated, and that when a chance like the first of May comes along you'd have to be nuts not to grab it. In all this, what the big shots really don't like is when you yell at their Rothschild. He's their god, that animal. To hell with him. He's not immortal. After all, they cut off Louis XVI's head (A.N. BB^{18} 1816).

On May Day 1890, the demonstrations and strikes of Paris echoed

Pere Peinard's rebellious theme.

That was the May Day spirit. In 1906, Jacques Turbin wrote a song called "The General Strike". Its first two verses ran:

> Let's go, men of every craft,
> Every land of the whole world
> Let's make the same effort everywhere
> At the same moment, of our own free will:
> Let's all go on strike!
>
> Tired of being driven by force
> To work hard, like mere cattle,
> And tired of living without hope
> From day to day, from night to night:
> Let's all go on strike! (Brécy 1969: 97)

The idea that workers could liberate themselves through one great effort resonated with daily experience.

The holiday had a longer-range political message as well. Since 1890, France's May Day had been the annual rehearsal for the general strike, the revolutionary holiday workers seized for themselves. From the start, French workers -- especially those aligned with "collectivist" socialism rather than anarcho-syndicalism -- had used May Day to demand the eight-hour day, voice their shared grievances, and demonstrate their strength. At its Bourges Congress of 1904, the Confédération Générale du Travail had committed itself to a drive for the eight-hour day, focused on the 1st of May, 1906. Their official program had called for workers to walk off the job after eight hours from that day forward.

May Day 1906

In 1906, the moment seemed well chosen. Since 1886, the International had kept the eight-hour day on its own agenda. In 1905, French Socialists had joined to form the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), which became the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO). Although Socialists had cooperated with governments intermittently since the first entry of a Socialist into the cabinet in 1889, the party had broken with the government in November 1905 over the right of schoolteachers to strike. After wielding some influence in the election of the less conservative candidate, Armand Fallières, President of France in January 1906, the party was driving for success in the legislative elections of May. Support from the CGT -- which was officially apolitical, and actually quite resistant to party control -- would help the Socialists consolidate their support. Thus the party had exceptional incentives to align itself with the workers' movement.

Furthermore, the recent failed revolution in Russia offered a concrete example of a popular rising in a repressive state. The formation of Soviets and the temporary success of general strikes in Moscow and St. Petersburg held out the possibility that workers in other countries could act for themselves. (The appeal of Russia's example was so great that Jean Jaures himself felt obliged to write, in Humanité of 5 November 1905, that "When the French working class interprets the revolutionary events in Russia, it should not forget for an instant that it already has

the universal suffrage which the Russian proletariat is trying to seize from tsarism": Jaurès 1976: 124.) Many labor activists looked forward to May Day 1906 as the start of the great General Strike that would destroy French capitalism. A pamphlet circulated by the Federation of Construction Trades read:

> The eight-hour day will be nothing but an advance payment, an aperitif if you will, before the main course which will soon be served when workers decide to strike down the parasites of capitalism by a general strike which will be the social revolution, and which will establish a Communist regime (Lefranc 1967: 129).

Publishing his Reflections on Violence as a series of articles in Mouvement Socialiste from January to June 1906, Georges Sorel chose the right time for a hymn to the general strike.

The CGT actually gave its affiliates two choices: 1) start an unlimited strike on 1 May, or 2) begin enforcing the eight-hour day then and there. A banner hung from the Paris Bourse du Travail. "Starting the 1st of May," it read, "we will only work eight hours a day" (Julliard 1965: 23). The CGT's national committee found itself overwhelmed with calls for help -- help including inspirational speakers -- from union locals in Paris and elsewhere. The prefect put plainclothesmen on the trails of the committee members.

On the 26th and 27th of April the prefect's staff filed detailed "prognostications" of workers' intentions, first, to take

May Day off and, second, to go on strike for a longer term. They based their estimates on a confidential report from a high CGT official. The advisors predicted that 8,000 lithographers, 25,000 carriage-makers, 5,000 metalworkers, and so on, would begin indefinite strikes.

Those predictions were well-informed. Indeed, some of them came true ahead of schedule. On 30 April, 10,000 automobile workers of the expected 25,000 in carriagemaking added themselves to the 1,200 already on strike. Nevertheless, the prefect's labor-watchers properly spotted construction workers as the most active participants: 10,000 masons, 5,000 stonecutters, 20,000 painters, 2,000 carpenters and cabinetmakers, plus a full 30,000 navvies entered their calculations. "Leaving aside the typographers and the jewelers-goldsmiths, who are currently on strike," the report concluded,

> we can count on 185,000 strikers in Paris. But since the voluntary idleness of some leads to the forced idleness of others . . . the total number of strikers can be estimated at 200,000. The most troublesome will be the navvies, the bakers, the grocers, and the hairdressers; having little hope of getting benefits by means of peaceful strikes, they will try to intimidate their employers through sabotage (A.N. F^7 13267).

The prefect and his boss, Clémenceau, got the word. On 30 April, they had Griffuelhes, secretary of the CGT, arrested. In jail, he

joined his fellow committee member Pierre Monatte; Clémenceau had picked off Monatte earlier, at the height of the miners' strike in the north, on the charge of having incited to riot in Lens. For show, a Bonapartist leader (accused, implausibly, of subsidizing Monatte's agitation in the minefields) went to jail as well. The government forbade parades and gatherings on 1 May. Then the prefect and the minister spread their forces through the city.

After the fact, it is hard to say which explanation of what actually happened was correct: that repression worked or that the government had overestimated the threat. In any case, the large crowds of workers that gathered at the Bourse du Travail and in the nearby Place de la République during the day cheered militant speeches, but made no attempt to take over the city. Their shouts for the day were "Long live the eight-hour day! Long live May Day" (Le Temps, 3 May 1906). During the day, only a few scuffles between people in the street and police or dragoons broke the relative calm.

Toward the end of the afternoon, however, groups of a few hundred activists formed in the streets radiating from the Place de la Republique, and faced off with troops or police. Some sang the Internationale or the Carmagnole as they challenged. A group of workers started to build barricades in the rue de Belleville. But the government forces clearly had the advantage. The official scorecard for the day ran:

> 665 people arrested, with 173 held after questioning (among the 173, 53 were foreigners who would be deported, and 35 had

criminal records)

1 chief inspector, 12 policemen and 3 gardes républicains wounded

12 demonstrators likewise wounded (Le Temps, 3 May 1906).

No doubt many more demonstrators found it expedient not to report their injuries. Even if the civilian casualties ran several times the dozen reported, however, May Day 1906 would still look mainly like a peaceful show of labor's strength and determination, shadowed by the government's own display of strength and determination.

During the following days, strikes multiplied. In Paris, about 70,000 construction workers lay down their tools on 2 May. (That figure came remarkably close to the prefect's "prognostications".) Nationally, 158,000 workers -- more than a third of the year's total -- were on strike in May. After a high plateau from about 12 to 20 May, the national strike movement fell once more.

In national labor history, the strike wave of 1906 marked a crucial transition. Despite the importance of the northern mines in March and April, it was the first national strike wave to be coordinated in Paris, and to concentrate most heavily in the Paris region. For the first time, over the country as a whole all industrial sectors including agriculture struck at higher rates than normal. Proletarian workers such as the automobile makers of Paris played a far larger part in initiating the movement than ever before. The direct confrontation between labor's

organizations and the national government -- the first since the July Monarchy -- set off the strike wave of April-May 1906 as a major claim of organized workers to exercise power at the national scale. As the wave rolled on, furthermore, May's legislative elections gave the Unified Socialist Party almost 900 thousand votes, and 51 seats in the Chamber. Although their claims were disputed, most of those Socialist deputies claimed to speak for the strikers of 1906. The passage of a Sunday rest law in July 1906 and the establishment of a separate Ministry of Labor in October reflected labor's new national strength.

Nevertheless, many observers, including the CGT's own leaders, read the outcome of their campaign as at best a standoff. The eight-hour day did not come to pass, the definitive General Strike failed to materialize, and even the show of strength in the capital went on within limits set clearly by the government's own force. That was not what many labor activists had in mind. When the CGT held its congress in Amiens during October 1906, furthermore, its famous Amiens Charter declared its unwillingness to tie itself to any party, including the Socialists. The Charter called for "complete emancipation" based on expropriation of capitalists, affirmed that today's syndicates would be tomorrow's producing units, and reiterated its faith in direct action by workers (Lefranc 1963: 151-152). The CGT's activists had not given up the effort to have labor show its own strength for its own ends.

May Day provided an occasion for muscle-flexing during each of the next few years. Although the Socialist party tried repeatedly to use May Day to its own advantage, the national unions maintained control of the event. Organized labor was not, however, always able to show the same amount of muscle. As a confidential report to the Minister of the Interior put it just before May Day 1908:

> If the 1st of May 1906 was agitated, it was because the union rank-and-file thought they could get the eight-hour day from their bosses. The general failure of that effort, due to the withdrawal of several large organizations and the lack of agreement among the rest, made the 1st of May 1907 a fairly calm day: the long strikes that followed May Day 1906 had exhausted the national unions, especially in metallurgy, which still hasn't recovered from that test (A.N. F^7 13267, 26 April 1908).

For 1908, the prefect of police predicted widespread observance of the unofficial holiday in metals, construction, automobiles, tobacco, matches, and machine-building, with poorer showings in other industries. He also expected meetings, demonstrations, and declarations. He based his predictions on a large dossier of confidential reports from spies and informers within the labor movement.

In general, the prefect's predictions came true. Increasingly, furthermore, the prefect's forces (backed by the

army) were able to contain the holiday, and to reduce the likelihood that a general strike would issue from it. In 1910, indeed, the unions had so little hope of success that they cancelled the day's demonstrations.

Still, May Day had not run its course. In 1911, about 4,000 marchers, red flowers in their buttonholes, showed up for the festivities. When the marchers attempted to hold a rally in the Place de la Concorde, police moved to break them up, and battles ensued; two policemen left wounded. Later, other demonstrators clashed with police near the Place Saint-Paul. The same evening, when an orchestra in a Montmartre cabaret played the Marseillaise, "antimilitarists" in the audience replied with the Internationale; a brawl ensued (Journal des Débats, 2 May 1911: 1). Tally for the day: sixty-odd arrests, a few dozen hurt.

World War I cramped the May Day style, but did not eliminate the workers' holiday. The strike wave of 1919 and 1920 surpassed that of 1906; 2,047 officially-counted strikes brought out 1.3 million workers in 1919; in 1920, 1.1 million workers joined 1,879 strikes. What is more, both surges depended closely on the mobilization for May Day.

By May Day 1919, the CGT was once again organizing a great demonstration and general strike for the eight-hour day, and the government was again forbidding demonstrators to assemble. Under the pressure of those preparations on both sides, the Chamber passed its first enabling act for the eight-hour day. That move

transformed the CGT's program into a demand for immediate application of the law in the country's workplaces. The acquittal of Raoul Villain, who had assassinated Jaurès five years earlier, added another grievance to the list. On May Day 1919, labor's marchers tried to reach the Palais Bourbon, in order to address their demands to the Chamber of Deputies. Police and troops blocked them. Before the day's barricades and battles were finished, at least one worker was dead, and 600 people were injured.

In 1920, the railroad workers' union called its own strike for May Day. The CGT's appeal to miners and other transport workers for a supporting strike on 3 May persuaded relatively few workers, and the railroad employees found themselves replaced by volunteers. The dream was fading: the sequence running from workers' holiday to general strike to revolution seemed less and less likely ever to occur. From 1933 to 1936, in the heat of great struggles among left, right, and center, some Parisian Communists took the 1st of May as a day for challenges to the regime and its police. Then May Day virtually disappeared as an occasion for shows of strength.

Other People's Holidays

Other holidays, however, competed with May Day. The 14th of July, for example, continued to symbolize the regime's revolutionary origins. Made the official national holiday by victorious republicans in 1880, Bastille Day paraded the nation's

commitment, solidarity, and military might. For that very reason, it also provided a chance for different groups to act out their own relationships to the nation and its politics. During the holiday's early official years, anarchists and organized workers often boycotted the Bastille Day ceremonies as celebrations of a bourgeois revolution and glorifications of a bourgeois regime -- even though the bunting and street festivals appeared mainly in working-class neighborhoods. The victory parade for World War I, on 14 July 1919, temporarily drew all but the far left into the celebration, despite the fact that the great band marched up the eminently bourgeois path from the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe.

Then doctrinal splits reappeared: the 1st of May for organized workers, the 8th of May (Joan of Arc's feast day) for the royalist right, 11 November (Armistice Day) for organized veterans, Bastille Day for republicans who were willing to tolerate or even support the Republic.

There were more. With the fiftieth anniversary of the Paris Commune, in 1921, the newly-formed Communist Party marked the division within the left by mounting its great show on Sunday 29 May. Battling with anarchist hecklers and a Catholic procession along the way, some 20,000 Communist supporters paraded to the Mur des Fédérés in Père Lachaise cemetery. Veterans of the Commune, now fifty years older than in 1871, went in honor to Federation Wall.

As the site of 1871's massacre of Communard leaders, the wall nicely symbolized Communist determination to right past wrongs. So much so that when leaders of the non-Communist left decided in 1926 to commemorate the Commune for themselves with a march to the wall, they took care to choose another day from the Communists' 30 May (A.N. F^7 13322). With the multiplication of destinations in the late 1920s (in 1928, for example, Clichy's Communists gathered at their city's war memorial), followers of competing political factions had their choice of dates, itineraries, and endpoints. Thus the relative fragmentation or unification of memorials to the Commune registered the extent of disunity on the left.

Each of the sectarian celebrations provided a welcome occasion for counter-demonstrations by opposing parties. Armistice Day became a favorite time for antimilitarist demonstrations during the 1920s, and Bastille Day a preferred occasion for Communist displays of contempt for official republicanism. In 1929, for instance, sellers of Communist periodicals appeared at many municipal ceremonies in Parisian suburbs on 14 July; they and their comrades often heckled the official parades and staged small marches of their own. In Montereau:

> toward 11:30 P.M., the band had just played the Marseillaise in the courtyard of the city hall after the torchlight parade when 500 Communists invaded the courtyard singing the Internationale. The police chief had to call gendarmes to

get rid of the demonstrators. One sergeant was punched. A demonstrator named Grousselle was arrested and taken to the gendarmerie. The demonstrators having threatened to break down the doors if their comrade wasn't freed, the gendarmerie commander of Melun sent in a squad of Republican Guards, and order was restored toward 4 A.M. (Le Temps 15-16 July 1929: 4).

Competing shows of strength and opposition continued.

A Right, and then a Left

During the next few years, a new theme became more prominent. Increasingly, Fascists and right-wing nationalists became the targets of organized leftists and vice versa. At first, Italian Fascists and domestic rightists attracted the most attention; in fact, Italian leftists often fought their right-wing countrymen. As Hitler gained power in Germany, however, his supporters likewise entered the fray.

In the early 1930s, nevertheless, domestic nationalists such as Action Française and Croix de Feu far outshadowed echt Fascists of Italian or German persuasion. Action Française became adept at finding occasions to display their nationalism at the expense of the government or of left-wing opponents. A case in point was the French adaptation of a German play on the Dreyfus case at the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ambigu (Boulevard Saint-Martin) in February 1931. At the showing of 19 February "Beginning with the second act, demonstrators spread through all classes of seats, shouted

various things, threw stinkbombs, and forced the actors to stop the play"; police fought to expel them from the theater, and finally succeeded. They took 75 Action Française activists to arrondissement police headquarters (Journal des Debats 2Ø February 1931: 2).

On the following days, activists battled counter-demonstrators in the streets. Fights continued night after night into March. At the request of the Croix de Feu, Police Prefect Chiappe then banned the play. His decision scored a political victory for the right. On the rescinding of the ban under political pressure two weeks later, the right-wing coalition made the streets outside the theater so unsafe that the play closed after two more performances (Weber 1962: 298). The Camelots du Roi, shock troops of Action Française, had outmaneuvered both their leftist counterparts and the city's police.

A rhythm sounded through those turbulent years: occasion, demonstration, counter-demonstration, repression, tallying of gains and losses, new occasion. Although 1931, 1932, and 1933 brought many a battle, the following three years, 1934-1936, stand among the century's leaders for conflict in the Ile de France. January 1934 alone sounded a drumroll of incidents:

> **3 January:** 525 automobile workers in Nanterre went on strike against wage cuts.
>
> **5 January:** 17Ø foundry workers of Noisy-le-Sec likewise struck against wage cuts.
>
> **6 January:** Hawkers of left-wing and right-wing newspapers fought each other in front of the Lycée Henri IV.

9 January: After the newspaper Action Française called for demonstrations outside the Chamber of Deputies to protest the ties of the "thieves" and "assassins" in the government to the swindler Sacha Stavisky (officially reported to have killed himself on the 8th, and widely believed to have been murdered to keep him quiet), Camelots du Roi assembled on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, blocked traffic, tore up trees, railings, and benches, and battled police, but failed to reach the Chamber.

11 January: Camelots in larger numbers tried unsuccessfully to reach the Chamber, smashing and battling more vigorously than they had on the 9th. The same day, several hundred commuters "demonstrated" to protest the delay of a train from the Gare du Nord, and a group of suburban right-wing activists returned to Versailles from the doings in Paris, then broke into a Radical Socialist meeting there to challenge the speakers, as well as to fight with the audience (Journal des Debats 13 January 1934, Le Temps 13 January 1934).

12 January: Although heavy rain and negotiations with the police dispersed the main body of Camelot demonstrators without a fight, a group of sixty-odd activists marched from the Place de l'Opera toward the Place de la Republique struggling with policemen and shouting CONSPUEZ [prime minister] CHAUTEMPS. Police arrested Charles Moreau (a member of Solidarité Française, accused of shouting "Bandes de vaches, vous défendez les voleurs") and Pierre Amiaud, son of a former Action Française leader, who refused to keep moving (A.N. F^7 12963).

14 January: As 400 Croix de Feu members gathered for a commemorative ceremony, 200 Communists appeared to demonstrate against them. Police struggled, with imperfect success, to keep the two groups apart.

18 January: In Levallois, 150 bodymakers struck against wage cuts.

22 January: At yet another call of Action Française, demonstrators once more appeared on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, shouting, smashing, fighting, building barricades, yet failing to reach the Chamber. Later, a reported 3,000 unionized public service workers jammed the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville to protest reductions in their benefits.

23 January: Another 2,500 right-wing activists took to the

streets of the Latin Quarter with essentially the same routines as on previous outings, and saw 325 of their number arrested. On the same day, about 180 Parisian metalworkers went on strike against the reorganization of work routines, as 19 mirror-makers in Courbevoie struck to call for the rehiring of a fired colleague.

24 January: 350 Parisian metalworkers went on strike against wage cuts.

27 January: In Stains, 20 foundry workers struck against wage cuts. In Paris, meanwhile, perhaps 10,000 people, called and spearheaded by Action Française, gathered to demonstrate at the Place de l'Opéra; police barely stopped them from crossing the Place de la Concorde and the Seine to the Chamber. During the day, the Minister of Justice, and then premier Chautemps himself, resigned.

The right-wing crowds of Paris had helped bring down a government.

Stavisky, Chiappe, and Daladier

In fact, they soon tumbled another one. Jean Chiappe, Prefect of Police, had known ties and sympathies on the right; many politicians on the left felt he had indulged the Camelots and other right-wing activists while repressing their leftist counterparts. When Radical Edouard Daladier formed a government to succeed the fallen Chautemps cabinet, one of his first acts was to name Chiappe Resident-General in Morocco -- a prime colonial post, but one that would move Chiappe from Paris. Chiappe refused angrily. Daladier dismissed him. Soon the action in Paris streets began again.

On the 1st of February, 17,500 Parisian taxi drivers struck against a new gasoline surtax. On 3 February, striking taxi drivers attacked non-striking drivers, demonstrated at the Place de la République, and struggled with the police sent to disperse

them. The evening of 4 February (the Sunday on which newspapers carried the news of Chiappe's firing), Camelots practically broke up the Comedie Francaise's performance of Shakespeare's Coriolanus, with its theme of throwing the rascals out of power. On the 5th, they returned for more of the same. But the 6th made the previous month's street battles seem trivial.

In outline, the events of 6 February followed the pattern of January's anti-governmental demonstrations: a published call for action in Action Française, preparatory gatherings on the Boulevard Saint-Germain and in the Place de la Concorde, attempts to reach the Chamber of Deputies, barricades, combat with police, destruction, injuries, arrests. Yet this time the full range of rightist groups -- not only Action Française, but also the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Croix de Feu, the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Union Nationale des Combattants, the Fédération Nationale des Contribuables, and others -- summoned their followers to the streets. And this time 14 people died.

The Jeunesses Patriotes announced a rendezvous for "the Place de Greve, in front of the city hall, cradle of your communal liberties" and called for a march from there to the "Parlement" (Le Temps, 7 February 1934). The Communist Party and the Communist-affiliated veterans' group Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants called out their rank and file for a counter-demonstration against fascism. On the other hand, the Francistes -- then the most openly Fascist of all influential

French associations -- decided not to risk a public appearance.

People heeded these various calls. This time the scale exceeded anything Paris had seen since the great insurrections of the nineteenth century: the full range of right-wing groups mobilized plus a few from the far left, 120,000 people in the streets, lethal battles around the Place de la Concorde, 14 deaths, roughly 1,700 persons wounded and 600 arrested, the Daladier government brought to resign.

Daniel Guérin, himself a militant left-wing Socialist, recalls a series of vivid scenes from that evening: police and demonstrators face to face at the Pont de la Concorde; a burning bus in the Place; gas pipes and the Navy Ministry likewise on fire; the arrival of right-wing and left-wing veterans' groups singing, respectively, the Marseillaise and the Internationale; a counter-attack of police clearing the Place de la Concorde by firing their guns; men falling with bullet wounds; rows of police blocking some of the exit routes; an older, mink-wrapped American woman drinking in the spectacle and exclaiming "I **love** Paris!"; a well-dressed man with a bullet swelling his cheek bellowing "Assassins!"; and, at 2 A.M., an intellectual leader who took the occasion to show his true colors:

> hands behind his back, beard thrust ahead, traveling the boulevards alone like a missile, angrily stepping over the debris that lies everywhere, stumbling on the cobblestones, gesturing as if he were shouting vengeance: my uncle Daniel

> Halévy, who, unhinged, losing all restraint, discarding any mask, publicly declares himself on the far right (Guerin 1970: 69).

Many people aligned themselves publicly with the right at the time of the Stavisky riots, as these events came to be known. Yet in addition to bringing down another Republican government, the events of 6 February called forth a mobilization of the left. On the 7th and 9th, Communists led major anti-Fascist demonstrations; four more people died in the street-fighting of the 9th. On the 12th, multiple left-wing demonstrations coupled with a widely-followed general strike throughout the region. The 12th marked a turning-point for the PCF: the first time in its history that it had joined other parties in a national political strike, the beginning of its regular use of the strike as a political weapon. On the 17th, the funerals of workers killed in the strikes and demonstrations of the 9th and thereafter became demonstrations of leftist determination.

Throughout the Ile de France, furthermore, the tempo of strikes increased: After the general strike of 12 February came strikes of telegraphers (Paris) and navvies (Poissy) on the 14th, of plasterers (Rosny-sous-Bois) on the 17th, of metalworkers (Argenteuil) on the 20th, of rubberworkers (Saint-Denis) on the 21st, of more metalworkers (Clichy) on the 26th, of boxmakers (Paris) and navvies (Achères) on the 28th. Through it all, furthermore, striking taxi drivers and their blackleg competitors

bloodied each other in the streets. For the rest of 1934, organized workers, employers, leftist activists, militant rightists, and government forces interwove their many conflicts.

Popular Front vs. National Front

For over two years after, indeed, demonstrations, counter-demonstrations, and clashes in the street joining some combination of left-wing activists, right-wing activists, and police arrived in quick succession. As anti-Semitic and pro-Fascist actions became more common on the right, left factions began to ally with each other. In June and July 1934, with the blessing of Moscow, the Socialist and Communist parties worked out an agreement for unified action against the right-wing menace. By the time of the extensive leftist demonstrations of Armistice Day (11 November) 1934, Socialists and Communists were talking frequently of a general strike as the way to left solidarity and political power. During 1935, a Popular Front -- more clearly unified by its opposition to right extremism than by any shared program -- began to form. The Communist-led CGTU and the larger nonpartisan CGT started work on a merger. After long preferring other factional holidays, a reunited left made the 14th of July 1935 an immense demonstration against fascism.

With the elections of April-May 1936, a coalition of Socialists, Radical-Socialists, and Communists actually came to power. In May of that year began a great national wave of sitdown strikes. Strikes in which workers took over the premises

temporarily had occurred in France as far back as 1920. From 1933 to 1935, workers had occupied the premises of several major firms, including Citroen and Simca. Still, France had never before seen anything like the flood of May-June 1936.

Factory occupations began well outside Paris -- in the Aisne, the Haute-Garonne, and the Seine-Inférieure -- during the first two weeks of May. In Toulouse and Le Havre, sitdowns began when managers fired workers who took May Day off; in both cases, the intervention of the mayor led to reinstatement of the discharged workers. In the first occupation of the Paris region (at the Bloch aircraft factory of Courbevoie, beginning on 14 May), workers won their point in two days without direct intervention of authorities. But even there, both sides consulted extensively with government officials, and the officials watched nervously.

From then on, occupying workers commonly demanded not only the satisfaction of their immediate grievances, but also the establishment of collective bargaining and regular worker representation within their plants. Metalworkers in particular and the CGT in general had been making those two broad demands since the end of World War I. Now they became urgent and widespread. With Socialists and Communists about to join Radicals in control of the national government, workers began to demand power. The annual march to Federation Wall, on 24 May, brought 600,000 demonstrators into Parisian streets. During the following week, sitdown strikes swept through the large metalworking plants

(especially those in aviation) around Paris. After a pause for the Pentecost vacation, sitdowns spread farther on 2 June. The country's largest strike wave so far had begun.

Inside the plants, occupying workers organized their daily lives and their politics. In the great Renault plant of Billancourt, which had 33,000 workers, the sitdown began on 28 May. At the behest of Communist organizers, who were bargaining with Renault's management, workers left the plant on the evening of the 29th. They returned to the occupation, however, after the weekend. According to one of the participants:

> We organized food service right away. We let down baskets from the window on a rope and brought them back up full of bread, sausage, drinks, and cigarettes. After two days, we had the women leave. Inside, we organized dances and games. There were parades with Communist and Socialist flags. It was a real carnival. It lasted three weeks (R. Durand 1971: 66).

During the first week of June, millions of French workers were doing the same thing as their comrades in Billancourt.

Before 1936, 1919 had been France's most strike-filled year; in 1919, about 1.3 million French workers took part in 2,047 strikes. 1936's figures, then, had no precedent: 2.4 million workers in 16,907 strikes. Some 330,000 workers struck in the Seine alone.

Twelve thousand of the year's seventeen thousand strikes

began in June. Nine thousand of them involved workers' occupation of their workplaces. Every region of France had far more than its usual number of strikers. Nevertheless the strikes, especially the large sitdown strikes, concentrated in the northern band from Paris to Flanders. Over France as a whole, the rates of strikes and strikers ran higher where large plants prevailed and where the left had received more votes in April and May. In the course of the movement, proletarian workers in large shops rushed into the unions of the CGT. In 1936, as never before, wage workers in factories, department stores, and big offices called for change. Agricultural and public-service employees were the only large groups of wage-workers not to participate extensively.

No revolution occurred, but the movement shifted the national position of organized labor. On 4 June, Leon Blum's Popular Front government took office. Hard bargaining, and some public posturing, over the strikes began. The manufacturers' association unsuccessfully demanded evacuation of factories prior to a settlement. Chiappe, now elected president of the Paris city council, ostentatiously assembled the council's executive committee to discuss problems of "security and food supply" (Schwarz 1937: 79). In the Chamber debate of 6 June, Blum presented his plan to submit bills establishing collective bargaining and binding contracts; he received a vote of confidence. That weakened the employers' position.

By 8 June, the strikes had brought industrialists, organized

labor, and the government together in the Matignon Agreement, a deep transformation of the relations among the three. That agreement required management to accept collective bargaining, non-discrimination against union members, no penalties for striking, elected union delegates to management, and increases of 7 to 15 percent in real wages. The Matignon Agreement, in short, satisfied the chief demands of major labor federations. Organized labor gained a legal standing it had never before enjoyed.

At that point, national union leaders discovered limits to their power. As the immediate parties to the Matignon Agreement called for strikes to end, some unions and many workers continued the struggle. They sought advantages not built into the national accord: annual vacations, special wage agreements, particular hiring procedures, amelioration of local working conditions. New sitdowns occurred in smaller shops, including retail establishments, into July. Although Communist chief Maurice Thorez delivered his famous declaration that "You have to know how to end a strike" on 11 June, only a week or so later did individual settlements start accumulating into a net decline of the national strike movement.

Aftermath

On Bastille Day 1936, workers turned out in even greater numbers than for the demonstration of unity on 14 July 1935; they had a grand victory to celebrate. Yet the great boost to the power of the political left and of organized workers neither

squelched bosses, eliminated strike waves, nor silenced activists of the right. The Blum government's devaluation of the franc, its refusal to intervene in the Spanish civil war, and other controversial decisions weakened its connections with different parts of its constituency. Its official return to financial orthodoxy in March 1937 reassured capitalists, but marked another large compromise of its initial program.

As the Popular Front government faltered, its supporters urged it to go farther. At the same time, its enemies mobilized to regain position. Industrialists and their national association dragged their feet on the completion and execution of the plant-by-plant contracts required by the Matignon agreement. Although the pace of strike activity slowed dramatically after June, workers now occupied their plants and stores much more often than they had before May 1936.

When the Blum government dissolved the Croix de Feu, Jeunesses Patriotes, Francistes, and Solidarité Française on 19 June, some went underground and some reincarnated under new names; Colonel de la Rocque's Croix de Feu, for instance, reappeared as the Parti Social Français. As early as the end of June 1936, militant right-wingers appropriated the tricolor as their badge, and thus provoked leftists into attacking the national flag. Demonstrations, counter-demonstrations, and fistfights of the Parti Social and the Parti Communiste again incited each other.

The government's own activities as law-enforcer sometimes

encouraged its enemies and alienated its allies. In October 1936, for example, police forcibly dislodged sitdown strikers from the Chocolaterie des Gourmets in the rue Violet. Battles between left-wing activists and groups of the right (such as the affair in Aulnay-sous-Bois on 21 January 1937, when Communists attacked sellers of the Parti Social's paper Le Flambeau) likewise tended to bring in the police on the side of reactionaries.

Rightist organizers took advantage of that fact. On 16 March 1937, four or five hundred members of the Parti Social gathered in a Clichy cinema, thereby taking their message to the middle of Paris' working-class Red Belt. Five or six thousand demonstrators assembled at the city hall in response to a call from the city's Communist officials. Riot police then protected the cinema from a thousand of the demonstrators. Police gunfire, possibly started by shots from the crowd, killed five people and wounded three hundred more, including Léon Blum's chief of staff. The fusillade de Clichy occasioned both a CGT-called general strike and a giant funeral procession for the victims. When the Blum government resigned in June 1937, however, nothing like the demonstrations and strikes of its birth accompanied its demise.

True, an important new round of strikes, including sitdown strikes, started in the fall of 1937. Occupation of the big Goodrich plant in Colombes (23 December) and a general strike of Paris' public services (28 December) made a return to May or June 1936 seem possible. Indeed, February 1938 brought yet another

surge of occupations in the provinces. Blum (minus his former Communist allies) returned to power in March; at once Parisian metalworkers began to recapitulate June 1936. That ended the parallels: In its 1938 reprise, Blum's cabinet fell in four weeks, and the strike movement fell away without persuading many employers to sign or honor collective contracts with their workers.

During the rest of the year, events turned badly for the left end of the coalition that had made the Popular Front. Although scattered sitdown strikes occurred into the fall of 1938, plant owners were increasingly successful in calling the police to empty the premises. A growing share of conflicts involving workers consisted of struggles between strikers and nonstrikers, between members of rival unions. Now when department store employees paraded through the Boulevard Haussmann to protest firings of their fellow workers, police easily broke up their marches.

After the Reynaud government announced its austerity measures on 12 November, workers organized wildcat strikes in major plants of the Paris region while union leaders temporized. On 24 November, the management of Renault announced its own austerity plan, rescinding the gains of the Popular Front; when workers laid down their tools and occupied part of the plant, management called in the government's armed force; the evacuation of the plant was violent but successful. Then Renault shut down the plant indefinitely. By the time the CGT decided (on 25 November) to

call a general strike for the 30th, most of the region's other strikes had ended. If the big plants of the banlieue rouge responded well to the one-day strike call, results in Paris itself were very uneven; covered with a dense net of troops and police, the city continued to function. On 11 December 1938, Edouard Daladier formed a government far to the right of its predecessors. Clearly capital and amred force were joining hands.

The Popular Front heaved its last sigh on 12 February 1939, the fifth anniversary of the 1934 general strike. A week earlier, the government had refused amnesty to the hapless strikers oof 30 November. On the 12th, twenty-five thousand marchers (fewer than in previous years) went through the motions: demonstration in the Place de la République, appearance of Leon Blum, singing of the Internationale, minor scuffles with the police, 40 arrests. Thereafter the rapidly changing directives from Moscow tore the Communist Party from its former allies. The mobilization of French industry for war, furthermore, divided Socialists and absorbed workers into a temporarily expanding economy. Governmental repression, justified by the approach of war, tightened. Employers took advantage of the changed governmental attitude to tighten on-the-job discipline and fire union leaders. Before the Nazi conquest of June 1940, the whirlwind of the 1930s had already blown away.

Repression, Resistance, and Release

From mid-May to mid-June 1940, Paris underwent one of the

most startling transformations of its history. Within a month the metropolis went from maelstrom to mausoleum: from a great city through which millions of people fleeing the advancing German armies wheeled and dragged their movable possessions to a silenced, darkened, depopulated prize of war. By 13 June, the national government had deserted Paris. So had more than two-thirds of the city's residents. The Germans who rolled in the next day rapidly imposed their own order. Under Nazi military occupation, the former capital felt the tightest grip of governmental repression it had ever experienced -- even more severe repression than the city had felt during the early empires of the two Napoleons. Just to make its commanding position clear, each day at noon the occupying army marched a detachment of troops up the Champs Elysées to the Arc de Triomphe, where they passed in review.

If the conquering Germans were now free to tramp through the streets, almost no one else was. With German encouragement, nevertheless, a number of Fascistic groups of varying tints organized, uniformed themselves, and strutted about attacking Jews, Freemasons, Communists, and other enemies. Most of these collaborating pseudo-parties were tiny and ephemeral; only the Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire (reconstituted from the Cagoule by Eugene Deloncle), the Francistes (led more or less directly from the Third Republic into the Occupation by Marcel Bucard), the Rassemblement National Populaire (a new creation of Marcel Déat)

and, especially, the Rassemblement pour la Révolution nationale (Jacques Doriot's German-authorized version of his Parti Populaire Français) had much size and continuity. The larger groups survived within limits set by the German administration, and as instruments of its control over the French population.

Although the few hundred Communists remaining in Paris toward the end of 1940 kept a semblance of their organization, at that moment of relatively cordial relations between Moscow and Berlin leading Communists were advocating a measure of cooperation with the occupier, and agitating for the liberation of comrades whom the now-dead Third Republic had imprisoned. Neither part of the program, however, lasted very long; some Communists had quickly turned to resistance at the occupation, and all plans for cooperation exploded when Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Soon after, both the occupying forces and the Vichy government began the active pursuit of Communists -- imagined and real, past and present. In September 1941, bothered by murders of their troops in occupied France, the Nazis adopted the policy of executing 50 to 100 imprisoned Frenchmen, Communists before the rest, for each German soldier killed. Both the occupying forces and the Vichy government, to be sure, used the label <u>Communist</u> freely, but their very broad use of the label tended to identify authentic Communists with opposition to the new regime. Communists soon formed the best organized and most active nuclei

of resistance to the Germans and their collaborators.

Open defiance was dangerous and difficult. Those Parisian energies that were not commandeered or snuffed out by the occupying power and its French collaborators flowed mainly into survival, individual and collective: the creation of escape routes, information channels, black markets, and networks of mutual aid. Slowly and later, however, a few of these half-hidden structures became means of collective resistance.

In the Paris of 1940, students were one of the few groups to build a collective political life that did not lie under direct German control. University authorities reopened their doors soon after the occupation began, in order to avoid having the conquerors take over their facilities. The Germans, for their part, chose to leave the university and other educational institutions in operation under surveillance. Students at the Sorbonne created an underground culture of resistance: jokes, slogans, rituals, anonymous tracts. At the arrest of Paul Langevin, the well-known leftist academic, on 30 October 1940, students and professors campaigned for his release; graffiti, tracts, and word of mouth spread the message. On 8 November, at the scheduled time for Langevin's course, a crowd of supporters dared to gather outside the College de France and demand that he be freed.

On Armistice Day, 11 November 1940, groups of students and teachers gathered on the Champs Elysées, some of them shouting

"Vive la France" and "Vive de Gaulle" outside cafes frequented by members of Fascist youth organizations. Although city police broke up those crowds, about a thousand demonstrators marched up the Champs Elysées to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. Later, some of them regrouped outside Fascist meeting places, shouting and singing. Police chased them, but were unable to clear the streets. When German troops arrived around 7 P.M., they charged with clubs, guns, and grenades. It took about a quarter of an hour, three or four serious injuries, and over a hundred arrests to end the action.

In broad outline, demonstrations of this sort had been everyday occurrences in the turbulent days of the Popular Front. Now, under military occupation, that even one demonstration should occur bespoke extraordinary organization and determination. Repression raised the stakes and altered the scoring system. As repression deepened, resistance shifted to assassination, smuggling, sabotage, and protection of people threatened by occupiers and collaborators; demonstrations and similar actions virtually disappeared. In the Ile de France, four years of occupation brought a great decline in popular collective action.

The occasional escapes from control came as comets in a dark night. Small demonstrations occurred in 1941: near the Place de la République on Bastille Day, and at the Porte Saint-Denis on 13 August. In 1942, students demonstrated at the Lycée Buffon on 10 March; on 31 May, women broke into a food storehouse on the rue de

Buci. For these and a few other rebellious gatherings, the Germans retaliated quickly and fiercely.

Faced with severe repression, Parisians found more subtle ways to display their solidarity. Pierre Audiat recalls what happened on 8 November 1942, when news came of a British landing in French Morocco:

> Early in the afternoon, a crowd of Sunday strollers went to the major streets, spilling out into the roadways as on holidays. Montmartre had the atmosphere of a silent village fair; from Barbès-Rochechouart to the Place Clichy, there was a continuous, packed parade of apparent idlers who were, in fact, demonstrators. People looked at each other smiling; when German soldiers went by, discreet scorn showed in their eyes and lips (Audiat 1946: 196).

When a phalanx of blueshirts belonging to Doriot's pseudo-party rumbled down the Champs Elysées later that afternoon, the crowds in the streets greeted them with disciplined silence. Silence could be a safe, effective weapon; students and faculty at the Sorbonne, for example, commemorated Armistice Day 1943 by means of a single minute of intense, concerted stillness (Audiat 1946: 224).

1943 was no doubt the darkest year of all, with students who had demonstrated at Buffon put to death on 8 February, prisoners executed almost daily at the Fresnes prison, Jews being rounded up, herded into camps and shipped off to Germany, able-bodied

Gentiles being dispatched to work in German industry, shortages and hardship intensifying throughout the year, Allied bombardment of Paris and its suburbs becoming more intense. Organized quiet stifled a scream.

Not until Bastille Day 1944, six weeks after the Allied landing in Normandy, did another major public display of opposition occur in Paris. On that day, a Communist-organized group of workers dared to march along the boulevards. They managed a demonstration of 45 minutes before German troops dispersed them, killing one demonstrator in the process. After German forces began evacuating Paris on 9 August, first railroad workers (10 August) and then police (15 August) went on strike. The next large action occurred on 19 August, when Allied troops were approaching Paris and the French puppet government had fled from Vichy to Belfort; that uprising shook off the control of the remaining Germans and their collaborators.

Gunfire rattled the capital for almost a week. By 25 August, however, Leclerc's army had entered Paris and the Germans had surrendered. Charles de Gaulle arrived late that day. For all its joy, it was a delicate moment: In the face of competing claims from the American commander and from several factions of the Resistance, de Gaulle meant to establish his own embodiment of the French state, and therefore of legitimate rule. He managed to outplay his competitors. He refused, for example, to go through the nineteenth-century routine of declaring a Republic from a

balcony of the Hôtel de Ville; the Republic, he claimed, had never dissolved; it had merely gone into exile in his custody. The man had confidence and determination.

On the following day, de Gaulle enjoyed a city-wide celebration. This time a grand motorized parade proceeded down the Champs Elysees from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde, then by the rue de Rivoli to the Hôtel de Ville, finally to Notre Dame for a Mass of victory -- an itinerary whose later stages recalled great processions before the Revolution.

Paris Revives

"Is Paris burning?" asked Hitler as his troops retreated. His dreams of empire shattering, he hoped passionately for the destruction of Paris. His followers failed him. Although German occupiers packed explosives into the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, and other great monuments, they never got around to detonating them. The city went almost free. Paris had only the wrecking of the Grand Palais and scattered damage from earlier Allied bombing to show for its liberation. As compared to London, Berlin, and a number of other European capitals, France's capital emerged from World War II physically intact.

Yet the Ile de France had much rebuilding to do. The war had destroyed a great deal of the capital's political and organizational structure. The French had to reconstitute a government of their own, restart an exhausted economy, and recreate social bases for both of them. A depression decade, four

years of occupation, and another year of war at the region's edge, furthermore, had left the physical plant itself in decay. It needed a great deal of refurbishing. Parisians took up the work with impressive energy. Over the country as a whole, production **tripled** in the twenty years from 1946 to 1966. The renewal of Paris played a major part in that speedy expansion.

As Figure 1 shows, the postwar period changed the relationship between the Parisian population and that of the rest of France. After nearly two centuries of very slow increases and occasional decreases, France's overall population rose rapidly from 40 million in 1946 to 50 million in 1968. The city of Paris, however, did not share in the increase; after fluctuating at a little under 3 million residents from the beginning of the twentieth century to around 1960, its size began to decrease rapidly: 2.8 million in 1962, 2.6 million in 1968, 2.3 million in 1975, 2.2 million in 1982. Through most of the two centuries, Paris' share of the national population had increased steadily -- from 2 percent in 1801 to 7 percent in 1921. Now it began to sink, reaching 4 percent in 1982.

Those numbers refer to the city of Paris, not to the whole built-up area centering on the city. If, to make comparison possible, we take the population in the department of the Seine (or, from 1968 onward, the slightly-larger area occupied by Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-St.-Denis and Val-de-Marne) as an approximation of the number in built-up areas, we see the

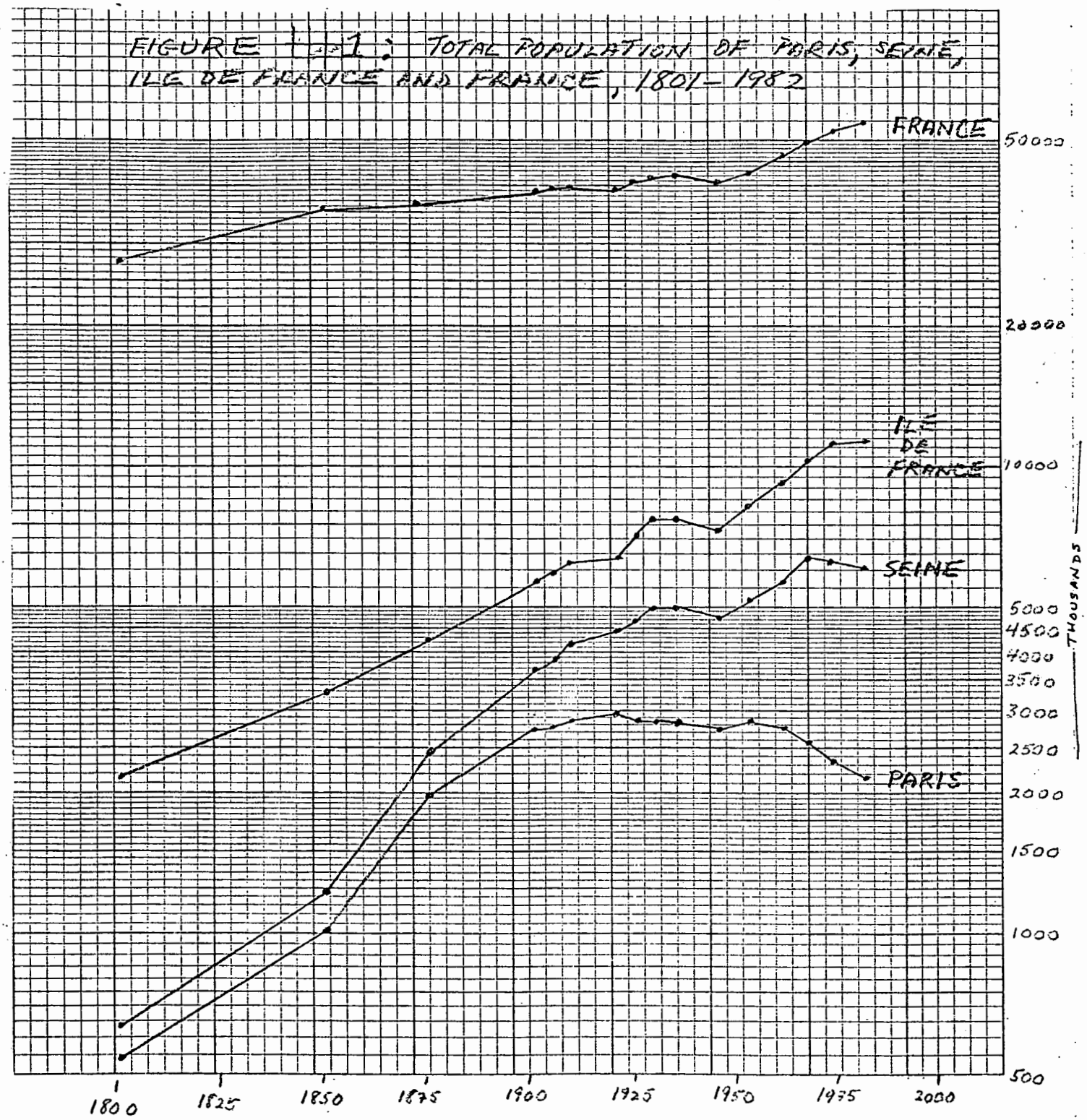
FIGURE 1.1: TOTAL POPULATION OF PARIS, SEINE, ILE DE FRANCE AND FRANCE, 1801 – 1982
FRANCE
ILE DE FRANCE
SEINE
PARIS
50000
20000
10000
5000
4500
4000
3500
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
THOUSANDS
1800
1825
1850
1875
1900
1925
1950
1975
2000

beginnings of strong suburbanization around 1900. We also see the slowing of suburban growth with the Depression of the 1930s, the decrease due to the Second World War, a spurt of growth from 1946 to the late 1960s, and then the start of a decline. At that point, the agglomeration centered on Paris was still growing, but growing largely through new construction outside the old limits of the Seine.

The postwar period also altered the national position of the Ile de France (broadly and crudely defined as the Seine plus Seine-et-Oise, Seine-et-Marne, Oise, and Aisne before 1960, as Paris, Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-St.-Denis, Val-de-Marne, Val-d'Oise, Yvelines, Essonne, Seine-et-Marne, Oise, and Aisne thereafter). Although the region's share of the total French population has increased more or less continuously since some time in the eighteenth century, until World War II the region's growth resulted almost entirely from increases in Paris and the Seine. Since the war, the rest of the region -- especially the section close to Paris -- has increased disproportionately. A vast metropolitan complex has formed around the Parisian nucleus. Although it looks superficially like dispersion, this process has concentrated even more of France's precious resources in and around one giant city.

The logic of concentration took a while to tell, but within a few years of the war it was working as powerfully as ever. Throughout the twentieth century's first four decades France's

really expensive activities -- major industrial plants, scientific research, arts and entertainment, governmental administration, and a great deal more -- accumulated disproportionately in the Paris region. Almost by definition these activities, with their high ratios of capital to labor, concentrated valuable facilities more rapidly than population.

After the 1950s, the appearance of tall buildings in the Paris skyline gave telling evidence of that concentration; even the apartment buildings, such as those springing up around the Place d'Italie and at the Fronts de Seine, generally replaced rundown high-density housing with lower-density housing for families with higher incomes. Those families included far more than their national share of people staffing big organizations and expensive facilities. The construction of towers for business and research, as in La Défense, Montparnasse, and Censier, followed the logic of concentration quite directly.

As a result of these processes, Paris' share of the national population -- as great as it is -- has long run far below its share of such critical facilities as banks, ministries, rail connections, newspapers, publishing houses, research centers, corporate headquarters, libraries, large factories, universities, or computers. Despite repeated gestures toward decentralization, most of these facilities have built up in the Paris region far faster than population. They have continued to build up, furthermore, as the city's resident population has started to

decline. Facilities and income per capita have generally risen more rapidly in the Paris region than elsewhere in France. That means growing inequality.

Second, the total population of the city of Paris itself changed little during the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s, it finally began to decline noticeably, as business, government, and transportation took over high-density dwelling areas and as the relatively high-income people remaining in the city expanded their housing. In the neighborhoods of les Halles and Saint-Merri, for example, population declined more than 30 percent between 1968 and 1975. What happened? As the monumental Centre Georges Pompidou and the huge Forum des Halles went up, developers cleared small merchants and low-income households from the area. The old residents gave way to offices, shops, galleries, restaurants, and luxury apartments. Result: a substantial decrease in the stock of housing for low-income people. Another result: a great increase in the daytime, non-resident population in the area.

Over the city as a whole, the net effect of many such changes has been to reduce the total population. It has also shrunken the proportions of petty-bourgeois and working-class families, sharpened the contrast between rich and poor, increased the number of old people, decreased greatly the number of children, and swollen the foreign-born population. In contrast, the built-up area ringing the city and the satellite towns around the built-up

center continued to grow.

Planners and developers favored the new urban geography by means of a sort of radial segregation: vast, high-density housing developments for poor people along some radii outside the city, new single-family or low-density housing and shopping centers for richer people along others. Increasing numbers of Parisians commuted long distances to work in or near the center. A genuine measure of the city's evolution would have to include these voyagers in its effective population.

Postwar Struggles

The liberation of Paris did not end the war. German troops had retreated from most of France by the end of September 1944, but it took months more to dislodge them from their last toeholds. When the European war ended in May 1945, about 1.8 million French citizens were still in Germany as prisoners or forced labor. France's transport system had fallen apart. Her industrial plant had suffered from almost fifteen years of decay. Factories, offices, and homes faced acute shortages of fuel. An immense black market handled distribution of food and other necessaries. A major part of France's housing had run down or disappeared. The French had all that to repair.

The French had to repair it, furthermore, at the same time as French powerholders struggled to reconstitute a government. The provisional government that formed in August 1944 faced a situation resembling that of a new revolutionary regime: its

sovereignty and legitimacy uncertain, only a tattered, improvised army to back up its commands, much local administration still in the hands of people who had served the toppled power, thousands more collaborators in jails and internment camps, its own supporters determined to avenge past wrongs and get their share of influence, allies and rivals ready to struggle for a say in the state's future. Even the prestigious, forceful Charles de Gaulle, who headed the government until January 1946, encountered serious competition from Communists and from Resistance groups that had remained independent of his liberation forces.

Using that political system to restore a ruined economy challenged de Gaulle and his partners. Unlike many revolutionary rulers, de Gaulle incorporated his strongest rivals, the Communists, into the provisional government. Like the revolutionaries of 1792 and 1793, however, the government adopted a number of expedients to make the existing structure produce change: installing prefects having strong ties to the new rulers, establishing or absorbing provisional departmental committees simultaneously implanted in the region and personally tied to the government, dismantling the militias those committees had commonly set up at the time of liberation, sending out specially-powered commissars to represent the central government, setting up special courts to manage the identification and punishment of former collaborators, imposing rationing and requisition.

To the array of revolutionary techniques, the provisional

government of 1944 added one the Jacobins had not used: In the fall, de Gaulle made a triumphal tour through the provinces, whipping up support for the new regime, and identifying it even more strongly with his person. As in 1792 and 1793, all these expedients -- when they worked -- substituted central authority for local autonomy.

Not all expedients worked; the government, for instance, never gained a tight enough grip on the supply and distribution of food to make rationing work well. But those efforts precipitated the major contention of 1944 and 1945. In fact, 1945 ended in a storm of complaints about food supply. On 31 December, people waiting in line at Parisian bakeries began smashing their windows and breaking up their furnishings when the stocks of bread ran out. Through 1946 and 1947, for that matter, struggles over the government's controls over wages, prices, and food repeatedly brought Parisians to the streets. It was not easy to restore a battered economy.

The restoration took a long time. France returned to its 1938 level of industrial production around the end of 1947, to its 1938 level of agricultural production around the end of 1950. During the painful recovery, Gaullists, Communists, supporters of the MRP (Mouvement Républicain Populaire, formed on the base of Catholic Resistance groups), and remnants of the prewar parties fought for control of the government and its policy. Within the labor movement, Communists finally succeeded in their long effort

to control the CGT, at the price of accepting a sharper separation between the CGT and other federations, and of contending with an internal minority, Force Ouvrière, that sought a politically-independent labor movement.

France's internal struggles coincided with the cooling of relations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. -- and, by extension, of their respective allies -- into the Cold War. The international tugging and hauling made bargaining between French Communists and other parties even more difficult.

Although de Gaulle left the government in January 1946, and did not form his Rassemblement du Peuple Francais until April 1947, his followers were taking political action long before they organized a party. After a Gaullist parade on 18 June 1946, commemorating de Gaulle's 1940 call for resistance to the Germans, participants regrouped to shout "de Gaulle to power." Others broke the window of a Communist bookstore, grabbed the books displayed there, and burned them; the next day, Communists and unionized workers mounted an "antifascist" demonstration to protest the attack. For the next few years, the polarization of Gaullists and Communists informed political conflicts at both local and national levels. Once leaders of the old parties forced Communists out of the government in May 1947, the Gaullist/Communist struggle drastically narrowed the space in which any government could stand.

As that struggle developed, French workers returned to

large-scale strike activity. The Communist departure from the cabinet, indeed, resulted from Communist support for another great strike at the newly-nationalized Billancourt Renault plant; this one began on 25 April 1947 as a wildcat, but the CGT eventually took it over. The May Day celebration of 1947, which featured a march from Bastille to Concorde, ended in a confrontation between members of the Billancourt strike committee and the leaders of a still-hesitant CGT.

National strike waves occurred in June-July 1947 and again in November; in the November series, a national coalition demanded a 25 percent wage increase and challenged the government directly, as workers once more began to occupy their plants. During that same strike wave, Communist deputies took a leaf from the workers' book -- occupying the National Assembly itself to block a bill imposing sanctions on industrial sabotage and incitement to strike; the Garde Républicaine finally expelled them from the Chamber at 6 A.M. on 2 December.

By this time, many of the characteristics of French popular politics in the 1930s had reappeared:

-- the conjunction of strike waves with national political struggles and, especially, changes in the national political position of organized labor

-- the difficult, contingent alliance between national labor federations and the major parties of the left, especially the Communists

-- the coupling of strikes with demonstrations

-- the further matching of demonstrations by political groupings with counter-demonstrations by their rivals,

with frequent fighting a by-product of their confrontations

-- the occupation of premises to emphasize a claim for power and forestall countermeasures of authorities.

These remained standard elements of French political life from the 1930s onward.

Although French people continued to pursue plenty of their politics at the cafe, in the press, at peaceful meetings, and around the ballot box, with each new issue of the 1950s and 1960s the characteristic street politics reappeared. As deputies debated NATO, war in Indochina, German rearmament, the presence of American troops in France, North African independence movements, the anti-tax challenges of Pierre Poujade's followers, or the 1956 insurrection in Hungary, their allies and opponents outside demonstrated, counter-demonstrated, struck, occupied, and fought. Sometimes, as in the great Parisian public-sector strikes of August 1953, the action in the streets **was** the issue before the government. National politics and street politics intertwined.

As compared with prewar conflicts, more of the issues that now brought partisans to the streets concerned international politics. Bombings and other attacks on premises also accompanied the contention more often than they had in the 1930s. As North African independence movements mobilized in the 1950s, armed attacks by groups of North Africans on police, soldiers and, especially, compatriots of different political persuasions become relatively common. Deliberate blocking of traffic and of public

places likewise characterized the conflicts of the 1950s and 1960s more frequently than those before 1940. Otherwise, veterans of prewar strikes, rallies, demonstrations, street fights, and other forms of contention found much that was familiar in the struggles around the new issues.

Popular Rebellion or Coup d'Etat?

The familiar wrought the unfamiliar. Although all the terms are debatable, one can reasonably say that before 1958 Napoleon's coup of 1799 was the last time the French military as such intervened directly in national politics and played a major part in the destruction of a regime. Never before 1958 had the intervention occurred chiefly outside of continental France. By May 1958, French residents of Algeria had been complaining for months of the failure of the metropolitan government to wipe out the indigenous Algerian independence coalition, the Front de Libération Nationale. After a large demonstration by Europeans in Algiers on 26 April, the Echo d'Alger had published an appeal to de Gaulle on 11 May. On the 13th, two new demonstrations -- one of European civilians, the other of military men -- challenged the Pfimlin government. At the end, some of the demonstrators rushed to the Governor General's palace, and took it easily. With a crowd outside, the occupants named a Committee of Public Safety, then composed a telegram to President Coty in Paris; it proposed the naming of a national Government of Public Safety. Many participants called for de Gaulle to take power.

On the 15th, Raoul Salan, French military commander in Algeria, hailed de Gaulle as the country's likely savior. Without committing himself openly, de Gaulle made clear in his Paris press conference of 19 May that he disapproved of the existing political system. "Now I shall return to my village," he closed, "and I shall remain there at the disposal of the country" (Maier & White 1968: 293). Five days later, another Committee of Public Safety took over Ajaccio, capital of Corsica -- not quite continental, but at least part of metropolitan France. The organizers of Algiers and Ajaccio started making plans and preparations for a coup in Paris itself. In the meantime, feverish consultations went on in and among Algiers, Corsica, Paris, and Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, home of Charles de Gaulle.

Events in the Mediterranean had wide repercussions in mainland France. On the 13th of May itself, before news of the takeover in Algiers reached Paris, a veterans' march to the Arc de Triomphe had turned into a demonstration for "French Algeria" then into a fight with police who blocked access to the Chamber and other likely targets (Combat 14 May 1958). After the seizure of Ajaccio, Committees of Public Safety formed in Lyon and other continental French cities, if not in Paris itself.

In Paris, prime minister Pierre Pfimlin searched for a combination and sent emissaries to all the parties. Yet Pfimlin resigned on the 28th, after de Gaulle had issued a statement strongly implying his readiness to take over the government. That

day a military delegation from General Salan, summoned by de Gaulle, came to Colombey and briefed him on the situation in Algeria and Corsica. The same day a Republican/antifascist demonstration including Pierre Mendès France, François Mitterrand, and Edouard Daladier marched from the Place de la Nation to the Place de la République. That demonstration of the non-Communist left revealed another exceptional feature of the 1958 struggle: organized labor divided so sharply between the Communist-led CGT and the remaining federations that for once no major strike movement accompanied the crisis of government.

Negotiations with de Gaulle continued; they closed with his demanding emergency powers and a new constitution. On the 29th, President Rene Coty asked de Gaulle to form a new government. On 30 May, as the engineers of that invitation maneuvered to create the necessary majority, supporters of de Gaulle took over the Champs Elysées, and received a degree of protection from the police. Leftist counter-demonstrators who arrived shouting "Fascism will not pass" and singing the Marseillaise battled police for about half an hour.

This time, however, the supporters had their way: Charles de Gaulle received full powers from a badly-divided Chamber of Deputies on 1 June. That day the Communist Party made its last appeal; 10,000 demonstrators gathered in different parts of Paris to oppose de Gaulle and broadcast that "Fascism will not pass"; in the encounters with police that followed, 190 people were arrested

and 5Ø wounded. Meanwhile, de Gaulle was recruiting a cabinet. His government, drawn largely from the old parties, gained the approval of both assemblies on 3 June. The very next day he was in Algiers, declaring:

> I have understood you. I know what has happened here. I see what you wanted to do. I see that the road you have opened in Algeria is one of renewal and fraternity (Maier & White 1968: 347).

As it turned out, the road led to Algerian independence, and to a massive repatriation of French nationals from North Africa. But its first stretch brought France to a new regime.

Days of May and June

The institution of a Fifth Republic deflected French struggles, but did not end them. For another four years, all sides of the Algerian conflict -- competing Algerian movements, French settlers, dissident military officers, the French government, and others -- fought out their differences in the Paris region as well as in North Africa. Taking up the theme of Algérie française, far-right groups reappeared in public. Students again became active, both over their own local concerns and over national political problems. Vietnam reappeared, now in the context of opposition to American, rather than French, imperialism. Most of these themes converged with the problems of workers in May and June 1968.

Beginning in the mid-196Øs, a postwar combination of economic

expansion and baby boom brought an unprecedented number of young people into French higher education. The new suburban university at Nanterre, among others, went up to house the overflow from the Sorbonne. It summed up the expansion and its consequences: rapid construction from scratch on a former military base in the midst of an immigrant working-class area; liberal arts program with wide offerings in the social sciences; dean interested in promoting wide consultation among students, faculty, and administration; weak relationship between teaching programs and later employment of students; as of the end of 1967, no university library or research facilities; in short, an assembly plant for standardized education.

Students at Nanterre formed a number of leftist groups, and gave strong support to the left-leaning UNEF (National Union of French Students); its new school of law (an undergraduate program in France), in contrast, provided a base for a small but active group of right-wing students, centered on the Occident movement. On 16 March 1967, a Nanterre student organization dedicated to freedom of expression began a campaign for "free circulation", including the rights to hold political meetings and to circulate or post political material on campus. In the course of that campaign, 150 male students moved in with the residents of a women's dormitory. On 21 March, police called by the administration surrounded the building, and a crowd of students surrounded the police; after a long night of negotiations, the men

left the dormitory unidentified and unpunished.

In the fall of 1967, clashes between leftist and rightist students intensified on the Nanterre campus. At the same time, the student union launched a campaign against the government's pending reorganization of examinations and certificates. In November, its members organized a strike against the application of the reforms at Nanterre, and kept non-strikers from classroom buildings. Although the strike failed, it led almost directly into a series of actions organized around educational policy, campus discipline, and the war in Vietnam. The actions included sabotage of examinations and confrontations with authorities.

When a Nanterre student was arrested for bombing the American Express building in Paris, students held an unauthorized meeting in a campus lecture hall, then occupied the university's counncil chamber. That was the night of 22-23 March 1968. When leaders of the "22 March Movement" called for a day of Critical University, on the German model, on 29 March, the dean shut down classes until 1 April.

From that point on, student groups multiplied meetings and counter-meetings, attacks and counterattacks; by the end of April, UNEF, 22 March, and Occident were all arming themselves. In Paris, on 19 April 2,000 students demonstrated to protest a recent assault on German student leader Rudi Dutschke. On the 22d, 5,000 demonstrated against the Vietnam war. Raids and counter-demonstrations set Occident againt its leftist foes at the

Sorbonne as well as at Nanterre. The government began legal proceedings against Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a French-born Nanterre sociology student leader who had taken German citizenship, with an eye to deporting him. On 2 May, the dean, claiming a "war psychosis" had taken over in Nanterre, closed down the campus and hailed eight students before the university's governing council.

Action shifted to Paris. On May Day, the CGT (permitted to march on the holiday for the first time since 1954) had failed in its effort to bring out a unified demonstration of left opposition to the de Gaulle regime, but had attracted many students. The CGT's marshals had forcefully excluded far-left groups and banners from the parade. On 2 May a fire, which UNEF officials blamed on rightist students, broke out in the Sorbonne. On 3 May (the day Humanité dismissed Cohn-Bendit as a "German anarchist"), student organizations at the Sorbonne held a meeting in its courtyard; at the meeting, Cohn-Bendit called for protests of fascist attacks. Citing the danger of attacks from rightist groups, the rector called police to evacuate the courtyard. Police arrested about 600 demonstrators as they left the Sorbonne. After the expulsion, small groups of students skirmished with police in nearby streets. They continued into the night.

On Sunday 5 May student groups called for demonstrations the next day, and the teachers' union asked for a general strike of all university faculties. On Monday the 6th, university authorities closed the Sorbonne, and four students were sentenced

for participation in Friday's fighting. When police charged the file of marchers, a demonstration protesting the Sorbonne's closing gave way to street-fighting through much of the Latin Quarter. On 7 May, UNEF organized a march from Denfert-Rochereau, through the Latin Quarter, and to the Arc de Triomphe; later, students began throwing paving stones at police near the Sorbonne.

Meetings and demonstrations likewise started at provincial universities. President de Gaulle declared that he would not tolerate violence in the streets. For the following two days, student and union organizers sought to contain the movement and aim it at a concerted series of demands on the government. On Friday the 10th, however, some demonstrators (saying "We have to occupy the Latin Quarter whatever it costs") began building barricades, as well as smashing or burning automobiles. Starting at 2 A.M., police spent the night clearing the neighborhood, barricade by barricade.

After that violent night, the CGT and CFDT called for nationwide demonstrations and a general strike on Monday 13 May, anniversary of the Algiers rebellion that started de Gaulle back to power. The demonstration in Paris brought out a possible 700,000 marchers. If the strike itself was less than general, the appeal received a large response outside of Paris. During the day Premier Georges Pompidou asked for the reopening of the Sorbonne, and agreed to consider requests for amnesty of students arrested in the previous week's struggles. Arrested students did go free,

and discussions went on all night in the reopened Sorbonne. For the next few days, student assemblies began debating programs for reform of their institutions, and students began refusing to take scheduled examinations. Meanwhile, on the 14th right-wing students demonstrated in Paris; they repeated their counter-demonstrations a number of times in the following weeks.

On May 14th and 15th workers in Nantes, Cleon, and Flins occupied their factories. On the 16th, students marched from the Sorbonne to the newly-struck Renault factory in Billancourt. From that point on, a massive strike movement grew to the dimensions of a general strike; in Paris, strikes paralyzed transportation, public services, and supplies of goods.

In detail, many of these strikes concerned the organization of work and worker power rather than wages and hours. Many of them, furthermore, began without union sponsorship; indeed, some strikers resisted union attempts to channel their strikes. White-collar workers and employees of high-technology industries played a larger part than in any previous strike wave. The demands looked serious. President de Gaulle (declaring "La reforme, oui, la chienlit, non."), hurried home from a trip to Rumania.

When French authorities denied Cohn-Bendit reentry into France from Germany on 23 May, new demonstrations and new confrontations with police began. That same day, the Chamber voted down a motion of censure against the Pompidou/de Gaulle government. The

following day, de Gaulle went on the air to announce a referendum for 13 June; he was going to consult the country on the question of greater participation of students and workers in the running of their enterprises. If the referendum did not pass, promised de Gaulle, he would resign. That night, UNEF demonstrators marched toward the Hôtel de Ville, possibly with the idea of declaring a Commune there; police deflected them to the Bourse, les Halles, and the Latin Quarter, where groups broke doors, uprooted trees, and built barricades.

On the 25th, prime minister Pompidou invited representatives of labor and management to a general assembly at the Ministry of Labor. On the 27th, national labor unions emerged from that bargaining with wage increases and shorter hours, as well as commitments to establish firm-by-firm contracts and to review the position of organized labor within firms, the organization of welfare programs, the income tax, and training for young people. During the next few days, however, most organized workers rejected that Grenelle Agreement. On the 28th, about 9 million French workers were out on strike. This was an unusual strike wave. Not only did it set records for size and draw in professionals, technicians, and white-collar workers as never before, but also it introduced new forms of action; the general assembly of the establishment and the overall strike committee elected by workers owed something to the students' example. The demands for more worker control in high-technology industries, furthermore, gave

the strikes a new air. Nevertheless, from early in June strikes began to end rapidly, with particular settlements following the pattern of Grenelle.

In the Latin Quarter, students continued to debate and reorganize in occupied buildings, as a student watch kept order. On 30 May, de Gaulle announced the dissolution of the National Assembly and new elections for the time of the referendum. That same day, the president's supporters held a giant demonstration, similar in scale to the anti-government march of the 13th. A large counter-mobilization was occurring.

During the first three weeks of June, students continued their work of reconstruction. Some new strikes -- notably the occupation of the national radio and television by its employees -- began. But police also began to clear resisting workers from occupied plants. Strike settlements accelerated, as the government dissolved a number of left-wing groups and forbade demonstrations. By the time that the elections of 23 and 30 June produced a Gaullist landslide, little remained of the organized movement.

One More May

Fifteen years after May 1968, May Day still brought thousands of people to Paris streets. On 1 May 1983, after four years of sharp separation, the CFDT, the CGT and FEN (Fédération de l'Education Nationale) each sent delegations to the same parade. Force Ouvrière, by making its own morning march to Federation

Wall, kept the event from being quite as "unitary" as advertised. On a chilly afternoon, perhaps 100,000 people marched or rode (on floats or sound trucks) from the Gare de l'Est to the Place de la Bastille, via the Place de la République. This time there was a difference: A significant proportion of the groups represented other causes than organized labor: feminists, homosexuals, pacifists, supporters of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, opponents of Khomeini, opponents of the Turkish regime, Palestinians, and many more.

On the Left Bank, from the Invalides to the Pantheon, marched another parade. Its 3,000 participants were almost as heterogeneous as their Right Bank counterparts; although representatives of small business, complaining about government controls and the power of labor unions, led the march, right-wing students, members of Solidarité Chrétienne, the National Front, other anti-communist activists, and some demonstrators with strictly personal causes joined the procession. After the left marched on the Right Bank, the right marched on the Left Bank.

Neither demonstration-parade represented the struggles of recent months as clearly as their predecessors in 1906, 1936, or 1968 had. During April, medical students were on strike to oppose governmental reforms; the proposed changes installed examinations after the sixth year of medical school (like law, an undergraduate program in France) that would restrict the entry of students into popular specialties. Interns and clinic heads were likewise

striking because of proposed reforms, but more for involvement in their planning than against the principles of organization they embodied. During the month, dental students (whose demonstrators chanted "dentaire . . . en colère!") joined the movement.

In the medical schools, the CGT and CFDT did not organize the strikes, but they played their part in maintaining them. Partly in response to that union presence in the movement against university reforms, law students began organizing a counter-movement -- similarly opposed to the reforms, but opposed to the Socialist government as well. They, too, mounted strikes and demonstrations. Their work attracted support from far-right forces such as the Groupe Union-Défense. On 27 April, when some 7,000 law students from schools throughout the region converged on the National Assembly, those who actually arrived there instead of going off in separate demonstrations faced a line of riot police. On the 29th, another group of similar size went from the Sorbonne toward the National Assembly, but likewise found the way blocked. On both occasions, students stoned the police, who chased them from the streets with tear gas, water cannon, and nightsticks. People began to talk of another May 1968, this one from the right.

Nothing of the sort happened. As the university year dragged toward its end, and the government continued to discuss proposals for reform, the movement deflated. By May Day, it was already clear that students were too divided, and too distant from the concerns of France's workers, to start anything like the movement

of May and June 1968. Nor, despite the activation of right-wing forces, did they have a chance to initiate another February 1934.

Yet an observer has a strong feeling of déjà vu. By 1983, the essential forms of action by which Parisian students, workers, and other groups used to make their claims had very long histories behind them. The routines of meeting, demonstrating, striking, braving the police had changed relatively little in a century. All parties -- organizers, participants, police, government officials, labor unions, others -- knew the routines well, and had worked out standard rules for their own involvement. The press regularly (if not always accurately) reported numbers, social composition, signs of determination, slogans, arrests, injuries, responses of authorities.

Yes, there had been some changes: from the beginning of the century, organized workers tried the short national general strike as a warning to government and capital. From 1936 on, it became more common for strikers and demonstrators to occupy premises deliberately, claim rights to control those premises over the longer run, and bargain hard over their departure from the premises. All sides adopted more powerful technical apparatus as time went on; bullhorns, soundtrucks, printed signs, riot-police buses, and water cannon became part of the scene. Newspapers, radio, and television gave the activists of 1968 or 1983 coverage their predecessors would have envied them.

Yet the fundamental fact is continuity. As the issues and

alignments have changed, the means of action have stayed largely the same. On the general principle that powerholders learn at least as fast as their challengers, and have much greater means to put their learning into practice, the probable result is this: most likely the collective-action repertoire inherited from the nineteenth century has become less and less effective as a way of changing the structure of power, more and more effective as a signal of preferences within that structure of power. The challengers of 1968 gave some signs of breaking through those limits. They failed. The challengers of 1983 did not even try.

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