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STRIKES, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND SOCIAL  
MOVEMENTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRANCE

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February 1984

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CRSO Working Paper 311

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## A Geographer's France

Through the incessant conflicts, changes of regime, alterations of national power structure, and varying issues of twentieth-century France, one surprising constant prevails: generally speaking, France's routines of popular contention in the 1980s followed the same essential patterns as they had a century earlier. Despite dramatic social change in most areas of life, popular politics held to the forms that came to prevail during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. That generalization holds across regions whose twentieth-century trajectories ran quite differently. The task of this paper is to document the continuities in Flanders, Burgundy, Languedoc, Anjou, and the Ile de France from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1980s.

In his great geography of France, Paul Vidal de la Blache linked the living country of 1900 or so with the experience of that corner of the earth's surface during many millennia. "The history of a people," he declared, "is inseparable from the land that it inhabits" (Vidal 1908:1). Accordingly, he mapped out regions neither in terms of historic political divisions nor strictly according to physical features. Instead, he looked for roughly-bounded niches that promoted coherent, interdependent rounds of human life.

Vidal's "Flanders", as a practical matter, covered the whole set of plains between the Ardennes and the coastal marshes -- Hainaut, Cambresis, pieces of Artois and Picardy, plus most of the

historical province of Flanders. Yet when Vidal arrived at the description of Flanders, he seemed dismayed by the smoky brick towns its people had laid down. "On this terrain," he pointed out,

each historical era has raised new ranges of cities; some of them disappeared while others began, but the creation of cities has never ended. The subsoil took its turn. It was toward 1846 that the search for coal deposits, already begun around Valenciennes a century earlier, arrived at Lens and Bethune. Beside the unified small-scale city formed a type previously unknown, the industrial agglomeration. Around the pitheads whose strange silhouettes stippled Lens's agricultural plain lined up rows of corons in eights or tens: sad, identical little houses, built at the same moment to contain existences that multiplied like ciphers. Sometimes the contrast is striking: Valenciennes, identifiable from afar (as in the paintings of Van der Meulen) by means of its elegant steeples and major buildings, gathers its narrow streets around a central square; but just outside its gates, like a growth, spreads an enormous unconnected set of suburbs with their rows of houses, bars, and factories (Vidal 1908: 79-80).

It was as if people had decided to deny their natural heritage.

Vidal found Languedoc less artificial. Languedoc, in Vidal's analysis, organized around a giant channel: plains and valleys

that had once lain under a sea, flanked by hills that had been its shores. "That corridor," he wrote,

where Roman road and royal highway, canal and railway crowd each other, was a passageway of peoples. To be sure, connections between Lower Languedoc and the rural regions of Toulouse or Albi were not exclusively concentrated in that passageway. Via Saint-Pons, Bédarieux, and Le Vigan, there always were relations based on the needs of exchange between mountain and plain. These small-scale connections, resulting from the juxtaposition of contrasting terrains, play a very large part in southern life (Vidal 1908: 324).

One could still, said Vidal, read the ancient landscape in the twentieth-century terrain of Languedoc.

Vidal's scheme of natural regions denied Anjou any unity: the old province spanned the eastern and southern edges of the Breton massif, the western edge of Paris' basin, and the Loire valley. Approaching Anjou from Touraine, Vidal offered a sketch that shaped many a later description: "Down below, abundance and easy living; up above, the beginning of the rough, poor life of the West's frontiers; a contrast whose reality the struggles of the Revolution help us appreciate" (Vidal 1908: 155). He wrote again of the rolling highland to the south that

borders the Loire valley with a continuous shelf. Above the smiling valley, that stiff bluff, topped by old, high villages, forms a threatening wall. That was the limit of

the old region called the Mauges, basically rural even in its industries, more Poitou than Anjou and, despite long commercial connections with the sea, hostile to the urban life of the river's bank. The region showed its character in 1793 (Vidal 1908: 288).

Vidal believed in continuities.

Burgundy followed another passageway. It united plains and hills: a "crossroads of Europe," Vidal called the region (Vidal 1908: 216). Connections between east and west, between the Parisian basin and the Saone valley, between the Mediterranean and the North Sea made of Burgundy, in Vidal's estimation, a natural site for commercial agriculture, military activity, and cultural creativity. Furthermore, the distribution of rivers and good soil favored the development of dense, well-connected settlements. Once again agriculture dominated the analysis; the mining and manufacturing that were growing at Burgundy's edges almost escaped Vidal's attention. In his view, the blue-ribbon winegrowing and commercialized wheat farming of Burgundy fulfilled the region's vocation.

Facing Paris and the Ile de France, Vidal could not blink the importance of human intervention. "The surroundings of Paris," he observed, "have always had an animated, lively air that Rome always lacked and Berlin lacks still. Today the great city sends out its front line of houses; they precede it like an army on the march, which invades the plain, climbs the heights, envelops whole

hills. But in the old days towns and villages, of which a number have been absorbed into the growing city, led an independent existence, due to local conditions which favored the development of little groupings everywhere" (Vidal 1908: 130). Then Vidal gave up the effort to analyze the city. "It is enough," he concluded, "to have studied where and how the seed of the future being was planted, how a lively plant grew that no stormy wind could uproot, and to have shown that in its vitality one can feel powerful sap coming from the soil, and a knotting of roots so well established in every direction that no one can dig them up or cut them all" (Vidal 1908: 133).

As he closed his book, however, Vidal began to wonder whether the growth of Paris had deprived provincial France of its nutriments. "Connections between Paris and the provinces abound," he mused, "but to the detriment of the ties that the provinces once had to each other. Thus the fruitful relations that existed between the East and West of our country, from the Alps to the Atlantic, have diminished so much that they are now hardly more than an historical memory" (Vidal 1908: 348). An artificially centralized country, he thought, ran the risk of losing the tough, adaptive genius that still resided in France's peasantry.

## A Population Transformed

Where was that peasantry? Vidal wrote his reflections at the start of the twentieth century. By even the broadest definition, however, peasants were then no longer France's dominant population. In 1901, France's labor force included about 19.7 million people. 8.2 million owners, renters, sharecroppers, wage-laborers, and others -- 43 percent of the labor force -- worked in agriculture. Agriculture was still the largest single sector, but a majority of the labor force worked in non-agricultural jobs. The remaining 11.5 million workers divided almost evenly between manufacturing and services, with a little left over for mining, fishing, forestry, and a few other extractive industries. Manufacturing did not actually outstrip agriculture until the 1950s.

Yet a plurality in agriculture was not enough to make France a peasant country. Within the agricultural labor force of 1901, only a minority held land as owners, renters, or sharecroppers. More than half the people in agriculture were wage-workers: hired hands, day-laborers, servants.

Consider these departmental figures for the male agricultural labor force of 1901 (source: 1901 census):



<u>department</u>	<u>heads of establishments</u>	<u>workers in establishments</u>	<u>individual workers</u>	<u>total</u>	<u>heads/total</u>
Aude	21,390	29,829	13,934	65,153	32.8%
Côte d'Or	20,415	21,794	18,470	60,679	33.6
Haute-Garonne	34,204	24,680	16,003	74,887	45.7
Hérault	25,061	34,528	24,905	84,494	29.7
Maine-et-Loire	39,246	37,975	19,003	96,224	40.8
Nord	23,810	50,820	24,951	99,581	23.9
Saône-et-Loire	45,215	38,464	26,408	110,087	41.1
Seine-et-Marne	11,824	25,226	14,953	52,003	22.7
Seine-et-Oise	17,898	31,094	17,519	66,511	26.9
ALL FRANCE	2,028,955	2,151,623	1,396,674	5,577,252	36.4

"Heads of establishments" included owners, tenants, and sharecroppers. "Individual workers" were mainly day-laborers, while "workers in establishments" covered hired hands, overseers, and working family members. Areas of household tenant farming in Haute-Garonne and Maine-et-Loire, plus the fine-wine region of Saone-et-Loire, topped the national average for heads of establishment. Areas of semi-industrial winemaking such as Aude and Herault, on the other hand, had relatively high proportions of hired labor. For **very** proletarian agricultural labor, one went to Flanders and the Ile de France; in Nord, Seine-et-Marne, and Seine-et-Oise, three quarters of the males in agriculture worked for a wage of one sort or another.

Although some of those wage-earners were children of peasants

who would eventually take over farms of their own, most of them failed to qualify as peasants by any criterion. During the century (as in the latter half of the nineteenth century), wage-workers left agriculture faster than smallholders did. As a consequence, owner-operators and substantial leaseholders represented a growing proportion of a shrinking sector. Nevertheless, more and more of those owner-operators and leaseholders came to organize their lives like small -- or even large -- businessmen rather than peasants. In short, according to a generous standard something like a fifth of French households were peasants in 1901. They kept on dwindling. By 1982, fewer than a twentieth of all households were peasants.

Following World War I, the French agricultural population stopped increasing after centuries of slow but sustained growth. In fact, the whole French labor force stopped expanding in the 1920s. It then contracted sharply until the 1960s. That shift accented a long-term trend in France: a decline in the share of the total population engaged in productive labor; retirement, unemployment, and increasing school enrollments, coupled with negligible natural increase and general aging of the population, all contributed to the shrinkage. By the end of the 1970s, with accelerated growth of the total population, the national labor force had returned to approximately its size in 1921. Figure 1 tells the story (Sources: Toutain 1963, table 57; censuses of 1962, 1968, and 1975; INSEE 1981).

FIGURE 1:  
THE FRENCH  
LABOR FORCE,  
1785 - 1981

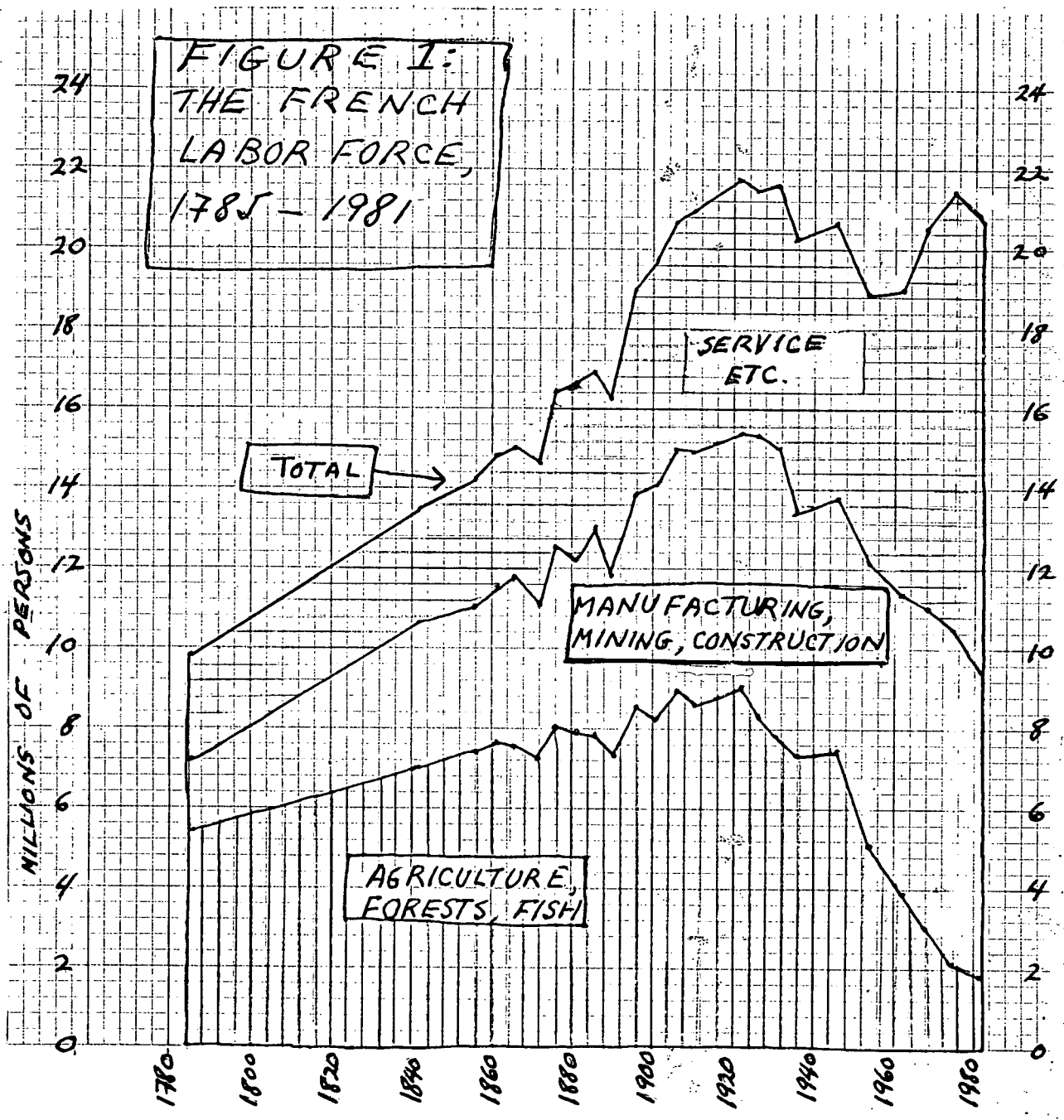
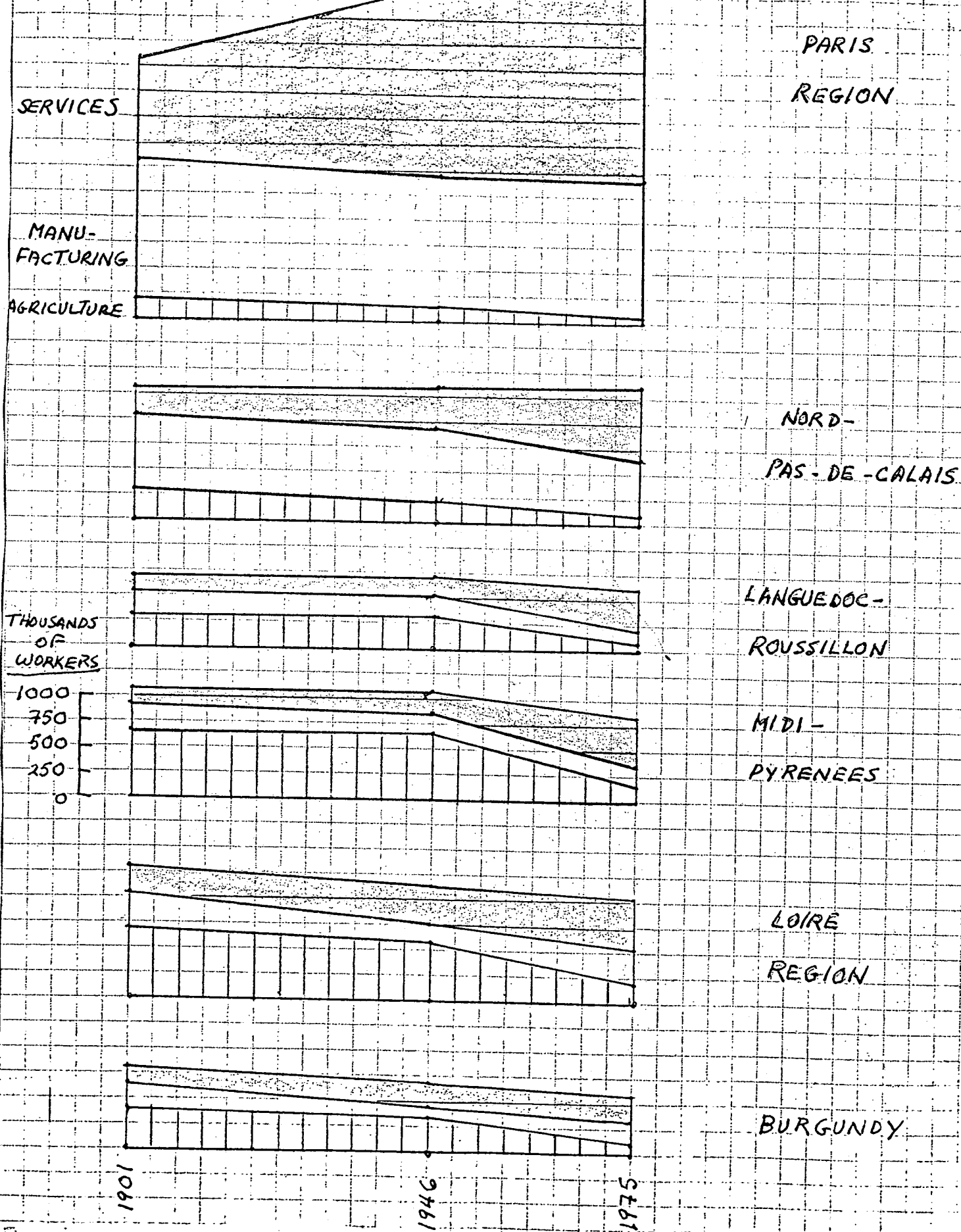


Figure 1 also shows the relative growth of three large sectors from about 1785 to 1981. (Warning: Before 1856, estimates are very rough.) Until the 1920s, manufacturing, mining, and construction (which the French often sum up as "industry") collectively increased a bit more rapidly than services (here including trade, transport, government, the professions, rentiers, unclassifiable occupations, and other small fringes of the economy). Services only began to expand faster than agriculture, forestry, and fisheries after 1900. Following World War I, as agriculture skidded, industry and services occupied more and more of the French economy. From the 1950s onward, the size of the manufacturing labor force stabilized. It was the service sector's turn to grow. By 1981, more than half of France's labor force worked in services. A legendary country of peasants had vanished. A legendary nation of industrial workers was also fading away.

The transformation took contrasting forms in different regions. To see the comparison, let us put the evidence together in terms of the regions used in recent censuses. Figure 2 displays the divisions (Sources: censuses of 1901, 1946, 1975). Translated into the departmental names and divisions of 1901, today's "Paris Region" includes the Seine, Seine-et-Oise, and Seine-et-Marne. The Nord joins its similar neighbor in the region called Nord/Pas-de-Calais. The historic province of Languedoc occupies major parts of two twentieth-century census regions: Languedoc-Rousillon (Aude, Gard, Hérault, Lozère, Pyrénées-

FIGURE LABOR FORCE IN  
 2:  
 FIVE FRENCH REGIONS,  
 1901-1975



Orientales) and Midi-Pyrénées (Ariège, Aveyron, Haute-Garonne, Gers, Lozère, Tarn, Tarn-et-Garonne). The Loire region combines Loire-Inférieure (now Loire-Atlantique, after the de Gaulle republic eliminated all inferiority from departmental names), Maine-et-Loire, Mayenne, Sarthe, and Vendée. The census Burgundy, finally, covers Côte d'Or, Nièvre, Saône-et-Loire, and Yonne.

Of these regions, only Paris saw an increase in its labor force from 1901 to 1975. The labor force of Nord/Pas-de-Calais remained more or less constant, while those of the four other regions declined. In every region, workers in agriculture, forestry, and fishing declined, especially after 1946. No region had a significant increase in its manufacturing labor force; in most regions, it diminished noticeably. (The numbers hide, to be sure, a substantial net movement of workers into larger, more heavily-capitalized firms and into nationalized industries.)

Service industry made the great gains; in the Paris region service workers rose from about 1.1 million in 1901 to 3.2 million in 1975; services thereby became by far the dominant sector in and around the capital. In the process, the Paris region captured an even larger share of the national labor force. In 1901, the region lodged 2.6 million of France's 19.7 million workers, for 13 percent of the total. The comparable area included 16 percent of the national labor force in 1946, and a full 22 percent in 1975.

Proportionately speaking, Burgundy, the Loire region, and the two Languedocs kept more of their labor forces in agriculture than

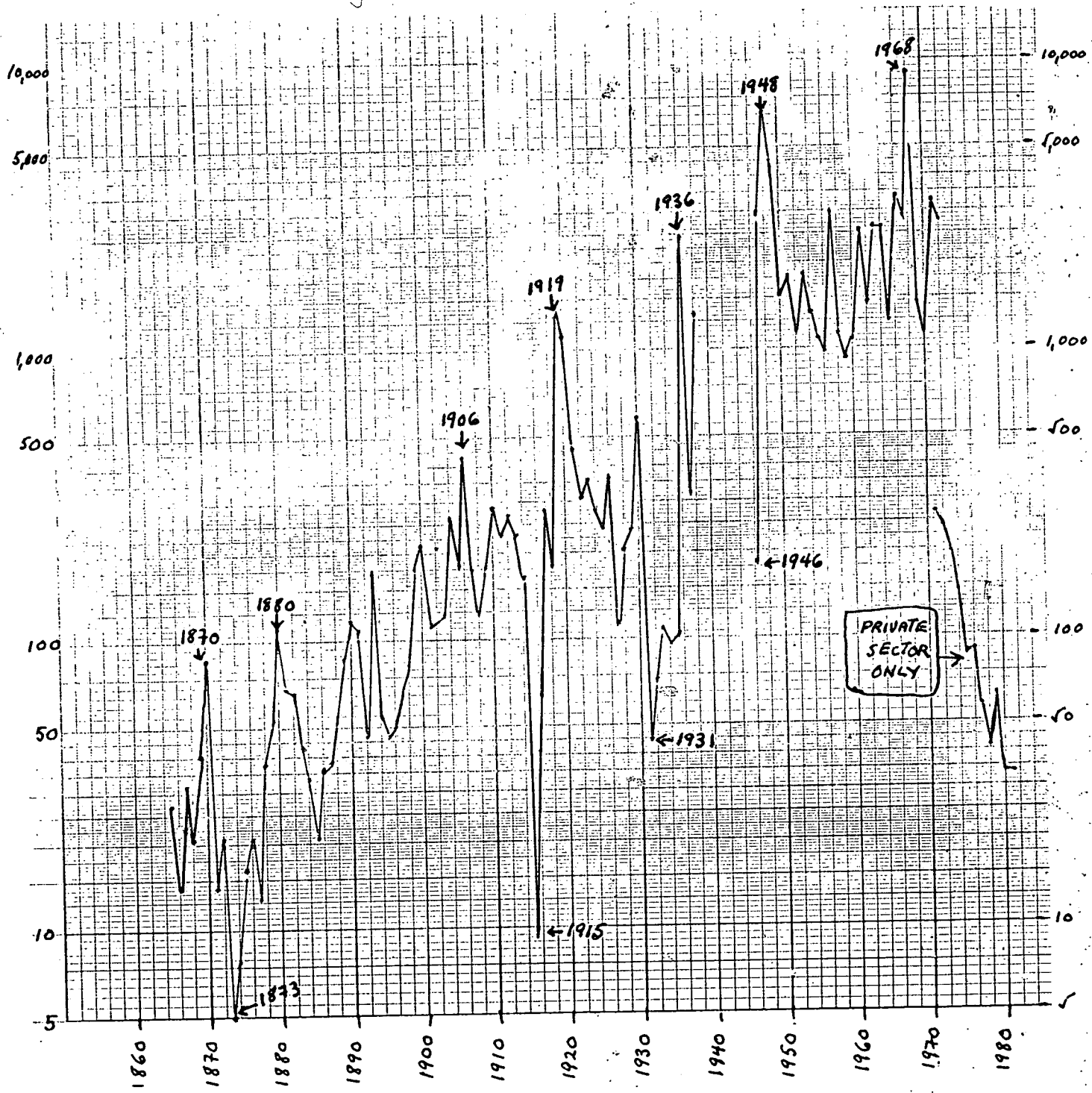
did the Paris region or Nord-Pas-de-Calais. By the 1970s, nevertheless, the textiles and mining of the Nord were collapsing. Despite much wringing of hands about the capital's dominance and despite frequent announcements of decentralization as governmental policy, the contrast sharpened: labor, capital, manufacturing, and expensive facilities concentrated in the Ile de France. With a few localized exceptions (such as steel mills, aircraft manufacturing, and nuclear power plants), the rest of France specialized increasingly in services, lighter industry, and what remained of agriculture.

### **Strike Trends**

Over the century before 1975, both in the Ile de France and elsewhere, French workers built more and more extensive organization. One consequence was a rising propensity to strike. From the legalization of the strike in 1864, strikes grew enormously more frequent. While strikes in the 1870s ranged from 40 to 150 per year throughout France, government reports for the 1970s -- which excluded agricultural and public-sector conflicts -- itemized from 3,000 to 5,000 strikes per year. In a century, strikes had become forty or fifty times more frequent.

Figure 3 presents annual totals of strikers from 1865 through 1981 (Sources: Perrot 1974: I, 61; Statistique des Greves 1890-1935; Annuaire Statistique de la France 1966, 1969, 1970, 1982; International Labour Organization Year Book of Labor Statistics 1951-2, 1957, 1966, 1969; Delale & Ragache 1978:

**FIGURE 3: STRIKERS PER YEAR IN FRANCE, 1865-1981**





226-227; Durand & Harff 1973). The graph clearly points upward. Over the very long run from the 1860s to the 1960s, the annual number of strikers increased at a rate of about 5 percent per year. In the average year of the later 1860s, some 27,000 French workers went out on strike. By the later 1960s, the characteristic number was 2.5 million workers. Corrected for the changing size of the labor force, those numbers correspond to a rise from roughly 200 strikers per 100,000 workers to 11,000 per 100,000. In an average year of the 1870s, roughly one worker in five hundred joined a strike. By the 1960s the equivalent of about one worker out of ten was striking each year.

But the increase came amid wide year-to-year swings. The rise occurred in spurts centered on strike waves, including those of 1906, 1919, 1936, 1948, and 1968. Repression and depression both held strikes back; times of repression such as those of the two world wars and times of depression such as the mid-1870s and the early 1930s generally saw very few strikes.

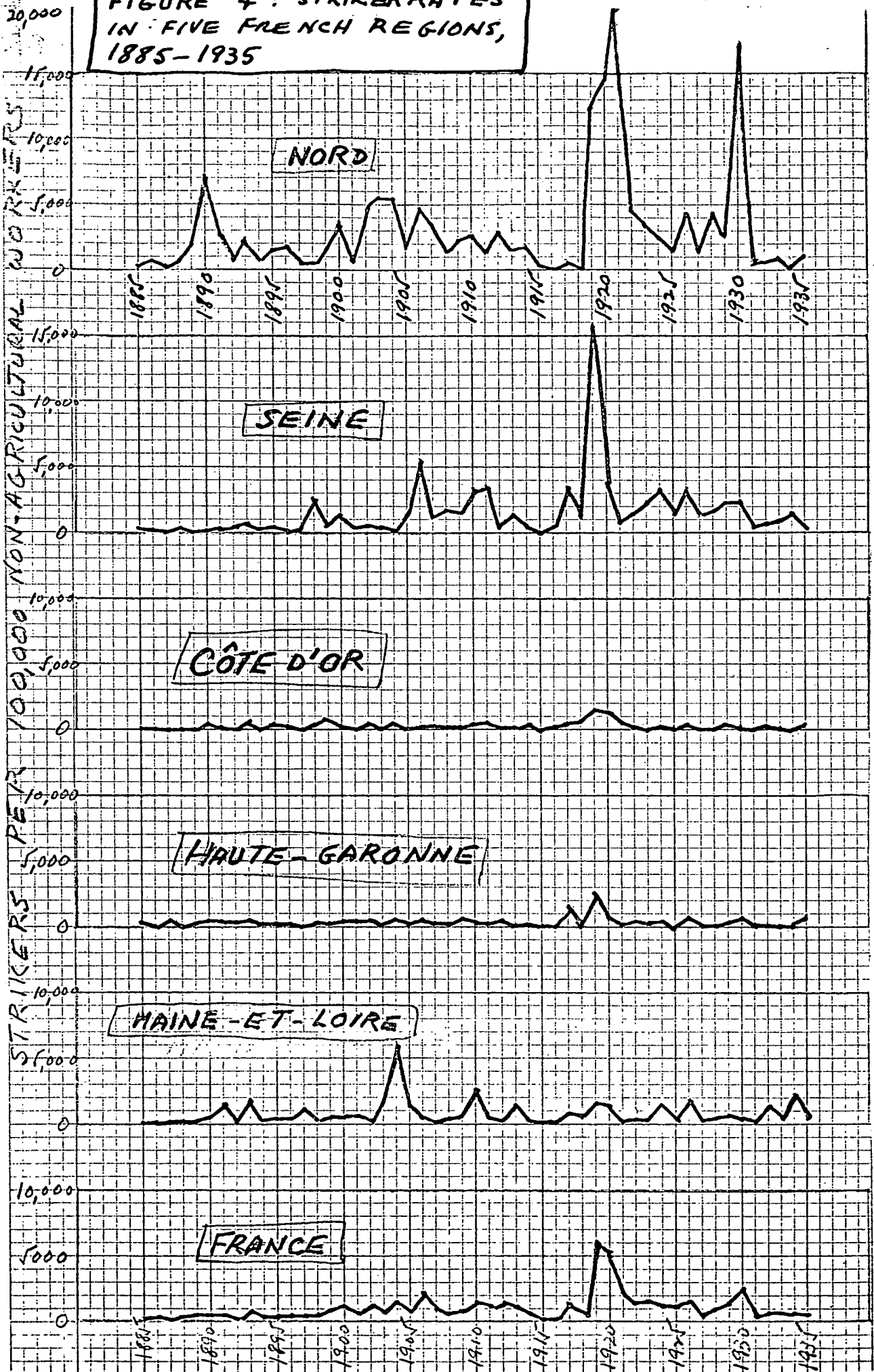
At the departmental level, comparable, continuous evidence on strike activity is hard to find. In 1885 French governmental officials began publishing comprehensive statistics on strike activity. By the 1890s, the routine was working well; it reported the great bulk of strikes from all of France in considerable detail. Despite lapses such as the incomplete reporting of World War I's industrial conflicts, the system lasted until the strike wave of 1936. The giant strikes of the Popular Front shattered

the series. Since then, official French strike statistics have staggered from bad to worse -- fragmentary in the later 1930s, non-existent during World War II, scattered in the postwar years, broken again by the strike wave of 1968, confined to a dwindling private sector in the 1970s.

Figure 4 takes advantage of the golden half-century of strike reporting from 1885 to 1935. It compares rates of strike activity over five departments and France as a whole (Sources: *Statistique Annuelle 1885-1889*; *Statistique des Greves 1890-1935*). With a few interesting exceptions, the graphs separate Nord and Seine from the rest of France. Anjou's textile and quarry workers occasionally raised Maine-et-Loire's rate of strikers per 100,000 workers well above the national average. To some degree, workers of Côte d'Or, Haute-Garonne, and Maine-et-Loire all joined the national strike movement following World War I. Yet through most of the fifty years it was the Seine and, especially, the Nord that brought up the national average.

Because the Seine and the Nord had so many more workers in their labor forces than the other departments, these higher strike propensities meant that the Seine, or the Nord, or both together, commonly brought out a majority of entire country's strikers. The strike movement of 1890, for example, concentrated very heavily in the coal basin of the Nord and the neighboring Pas-de-Calais. In 1906, the strike wave began in the north, only to envelop the Paris region. By then, however, strike waves were becoming

**FIGURE 4: STRIKERATES IN FIVE FRENCH REGIONS, 1885-1935**



national in scope. Although Flanders and the Ile de France still contributed the largest numbers in 1906, high proportions of workers in the Mediterranean coastal area and the region of Lyon likewise struck.

That pattern stuck. The geography of 1919-1920 resembled that of 1906, although overall levels of participation ran much higher. In 1936, when the vast majority of French departments had participation rates above 2,000 strikers per 100,000 workers, France's northeast corner, including the Nord, still led the pack. After World War II, the thinness of strike statistics makes it more difficult to follow the geography as closely as before. In the great strike waves of 1947-48 and 1968, nevertheless, metalworkers of the Paris region and miners of the Nord stood out in the action. As strike waves rose and nationalized, workers along the old axis from Paris to Lille continued to play a disproportionate part.

#### **A Concatenation of Crises**

The conflicts of 1906 promoted and dramatized a nationalization of strike movements that was already under way. They occurred in the midst of a great series of national struggles. During the years from 1905 to 1907, organized industrial workers made their presence in national politics known as never before. Despite the nonpartisan stance of the CGT, the arrival of a strong socialist party in the Chamber of Deputies gave labor much a much more direct voice in government than it had

ever before enjoyed.

But the struggles of labor, capital, and government were only part of the story. From the beginning of the century, smallholders and wage-workers in Languedoc's winefields were mounting strikes, protests, and demands for government help. In 1907, they joined together in a movement that shook the whole country. From 1902 onward, furthermore, a succession of republican governments started circumscribing the place of the Catholic Church in national life: canceling the salaries the government had paid priests since Napoleon's Concordat, closing religious schools, then enacting a definitive separation between church and state. At each step, organized Catholics resisted.

Catholic resistance reached its peak in February and March 1906. To prepare for the assignment of church property to the religious associations newly required by the law, the government sent emissaries to take official inventories of that property. In town after town, the faithful occupied their local church and drove off the officials. In Paris, Action Francaise leagued with local people to barricade Sainte-Clotilde and Saint-Pierre-du-Gros-Caillou. Elsewhere in France, the activists were more often ordinary parishioners, with a sprinkling of local notables.

In general, active involvement of a locality in the resistance depended on the presence of two elements: well-established Catholic practice and spirited local leadership. That combination appeared most frequently in Brittany and the adjacent

areas of western France. Secondary centers of resistance, however, developed in northern Languedoc and neighboring areas (the bloc of departments including Aveyron, Lozère, and Haute-Loire) and a few scattered departments including the Nord. The geography of resistance anticipated later Catholic boycotting of public schools. In 1957, the twelve French departments with more than 30 percent of their primary school children in Catholic schools were Morbihan, Ille-et-Vilaine, Loire-Inférieure, Vendée, Maine-et-Loire, Mayenne, Finistère, Aveyron, Lozère, Ardèche, Haute-Loire, and Côtes-du-Nord (Mayeur 1966a: 1272). The correspondence between the maps of 1906 and 1957 is well-nigh perfect.

Among our five regions, Anjou and the Nord joined most actively in the movement. The Ile de France and Languedoc had a marginal involvement, and Burgundy remained indifferent. Thereafter, Anjou and the Nord went separate ways. In Anjou, the struggle for and against the established church congealed into a long-term political division. There, the clericals generally kept the upper hand. As in the adjacent Vendée, the choice of schools became a bitter, visible political choice.

In the Nord as well, inventories divided communities. In Tourcoing, for example, socialist workers went through the streets breaking the windows of factories whose owners they suspected of having supplied the bales of cloth with which Catholics had barricaded local churches (Mayeur 1966a: 1265). Nevertheless, in

the Nord and elsewhere the great majority of inventories proceeded peaceably. By April 1906 the Nord's great divide did not separate Catholics from Republicans. It drew the line between organized workers and capitalists.

### **An American Insect**

The second great crisis that opened the century followed a very different geography. The troubles of French winegrowers between 1900 and 1910 had their origins two decades earlier. Enterprising growers of Nîmes' hinterland introduced hardy, high-production American vines in the 1880s, hoping to raise their own yields. The roots of American vines carried a microscopic insect, phylloxera vastatrix, to which they were immune but French vines were not. True to its name, the blight devastated French winefields. The terrible task began: tearing up all the nation's vineyards, and planting resistant American vines. To hold their markets, merchants and large producers tolerated or even encouraged two practices they would later condemn bitterly: first, the importation of cheap wine from Spain, Italy and, especially, Algeria; second, the stretching of the available stock by judicious addition of water and sugar.

As the South recovered, its larger owners and merchants responded to new competition by shifting toward large-scale production of ordinary wines. Shipment of wine by railroad tank car made it easier to reach the national market, but gave the advantage to large producers of reliable, low-priced wine. That

meant concentration of capital and proletarianization of labor. During the 1880s, for example, the Compagnie des Salins du Midi built itself from nothing into one of the country's great wine producers. By 1900, the CSM had more than 700 hectares of Herault in grapes. In its holdings, its industrial methods produced about twice the department's average yield of wine per hectare. The firm was turning out 100,000 hectoliters in good years, and averaging on the order of 10 percent profit per year on its capital (Pech n.d.: 153-178).

From year to year, the prosperity of Languedoc's wine industry depended on the national market price for cheap wine, which varied mainly as a (negative) function of the previous year's national production. During most of the years from 1900 to 1906, prices were depressed and winegrowers' incomes declining. Three different conflicts overlapped temporarily with each other: All producers, large and small, felt the competition of cheap wines from elsewhere. Organized producers cried against "fraud" (as exemplified by watering, the use of beet sugar to fortify wine, and the sale of untaxed wine) and called for governmental intervention. Smallholders saw themselves being squeezed by capitalist winegrowers. They complained about taxes, bankruptcy laws, and unfair competition. Meanwhile, wage-laborers felt the pressures of underemployment and declining wages. Some of them formed unions and organized strikes.

During the concentration and proletarianization of the 1890s,



scattered winegrowers' unions had formed in zones of large-scale production. In 1904, workers in southern winefields attracted national attention with a moderately successful round of strikes against major producers; in Pyrénées Orientales (especially near Perpignan), Aude (especially near Narbonne) and Herault (especially near Beziers and in the sections closest to Narbonne), 129 growers' strikes occurred during the year (Gratton 1971: 164).

In 1907, however, the three currents -- large producers, smallholders, and wage-workers -- flowed together. Deputies from winegrowing regions organized a January debate on "fraud" in winegrowing, and launched a parliamentary inquiry into the question. In March, the parliamentary commission came to Nimes. Rapidly local winegrowers' committees began meeting and complaining. Grower and innkeeper Marcellin Albert of Argelliers, who had been trying to organize winegrowers' action committees for several years, now reached responsive audiences.

On 11 March a fateful series of processions began: About 90 winegrowers marched from Argelliers to Narbonne, where the parliamentary commission was sitting. Then marches multiplied. Although large growers sometimes gave their blessing and regular wage-workers sometimes joined the action, the core of the movement consisted of two overlapping groups: smallholders and those skilled vineworkers who split their effort between tending their own small plots and working for wages on other people's (Smith 1978). They organized village by village, then consolidated into

regional federations.

By May the meeting-demonstrations were converging on the regional capitals -- Narbonne, Béziers, Carcassonne, Nîmes, Montpellier -- and attracting hundreds of thousands of participants. Sundays were the great days. On Sunday 5 May, roughly 45,000 people arrived in Narbonne from 150 villages. Perhaps 150,000 came to Béziers on 12 May, 170,000 to Perpignan on 19 May, 250,000 to Carcassonne on 26 May, 150,000 to Nîmes on 2 June. On 9 June, the mass meeting of Montpellier -- some 500,000 participants from an estimated 430 villages -- topped the series (Smith 1978: 118). The marches were among the most colorful of the twentieth century. Symbolic objects displayed during demonstrations included:

portraits of Marcellin Albert, prophet's beard and all

little guillotines with the words FOR CHEATERS or DEATH TO CHEATERS

little gallows with cheaters or sugarbeets hanging in them  
vines draped in black

a scythe with threats of death to cheaters

empty purses and turned-out empty pockets

official notices of tax sales inscribed RESULT OF FRAUD

a sardine labeled THE PEOPLE'S PITTANCE

a bottle bedecked with mourning crepe

a little coffin with the sign WINEGROWER, MY FRIEND, ARE YOU READY? I'VE COME FOR YOU.

a piece of bread on a sign, draped with mourning crepe,  
reading LOU DARNIE CROUSTET (the last crust) (Gibert 1970:

328).

Some of the demonstrations (for instance, at the Perpignan railroad station on 8 June) spilled over into confrontations with troops and police. Meanwhile, the winegrowers' committee of Argelliers, led by Marcellin Albert, organized a tax strike backed by the resignation of hundreds of municipal councils in Aude, Hérault, and Pyrénées-Orientales. Clémenceau sent in troops.

The arrival of military forces in Narbonne, Montpellier, Perpignan, Agde, and other cities precipitated a new round of demonstrations and attacks. But these new battles were manned largely by city-dwellers rather than winegrowers (Smith 1978: 118-119). While the government was arresting Marcellin Albert and members of his committee for their advocacy of resistance, the National Assembly was passing laws against watering and undue sugaring of wines.

At summer's end, the partly-successful movement began to disband. Some of the participants formed a General Winegrowers' Confederation, modeled on the CGT. (To the later chagrin of many socialists and labor leaders, it united smallholders and skilled workers in a common demand for protection of their livelihoods. A proletarian party found itself depending on a petty-bourgeois following. Nevertheless, from 1908 to 1911 organized vineworkers succeeded in a series of strikes to raise wages).

Meanwhile, a beleaguered government was releasing its prisoners and dropping its charges. Once again a movement had

ended with the tacit amnesty that usually sealed success, however partial.

### **Proletarians and Others**

Burgundy's winegrowers did not join the movement of 1907. While substantial clusters of vineyard strikes were occurring in Languedoc during the decade after 1900, in fact, not a single one appeared in Burgundy. In July 1907, the prefect of the Côte d'Or commented, rather smugly, that "The events of the Midi dominated political concerns in my department during the month of June 1907. The people of Côte d'Or received the news of the troubles in those departments with more surprise and curiosity than sympathy" (Archives Départementales Côte d'Or, dijon: 20 M 60). The difference stemmed largely from contrasting responses to phylloxera two decades earlier. On the whole, the Midi's winegrowers had moved their industry to mass production of cheap table wines from hardy American plants. In the process, wage-labor became the dominant mode.

In Burgundy, smallholders and larger producers alike had chosen to reconstitute high-quality production by grafting French plants on immune American roots. The skill required for that operation and the subsequent care of the vines gave smallholders and wage-workers leverage their southern confreres lost. Swings in production, demand, and prices did not affect them so greatly. The contrast between industrial and artisanal forms of winegrowing accentuated.

Later and elsewhere, smallholders and skilled agricultural workers proved perfectly capable of collective action. When the winegrowers of Champagne met their crisis in 1911, for example, small producers led the attacks on big merchants, participated actively in tax strikes, and joined the demand for governmental action against "fraud". Yet thereafter, in Champagne as elsewhere, wage-workers moved toward the organization of unions and strikes, while smallholders split off in the direction of cooperatives and pressure groups.

At a national scale, to be sure, agricultural workers never played a very large part either in strike activity or in trade union federations. Through the entire history of French strike statistics, agricultural workers hardly ever contributed more than 5 percent of all French strikes or strikers. In the years from 1890 to 1935, while the non-agricultural labor force as a whole turned out strikes at about 60 per year per million workers, agriculture produced about 3 per million. During the earlier decades of the twentieth century, wage-workers in relatively large mines and manufacturing firms constituted the core of French industrial conflict.

The mining and textile towns of the Nord provide some of the purest examples. Take Halluin, a factory town 17 kilometers due north of Lille. Halluin stands on the frontier, directly across the Lys river from the Belgian fortress city of Menin. With the mechanization of linen spinning during the middle decades of the

nineteenth century, the village of Halluin filled in quickly as a compact city of small shops and domestic weavers. Its shops sent linen goods to merchants in Lille. In the 1880s, local entrepreneurs built steam-driven weaving mills; mills came to dominate the cityscape. People flocked in from the Belgian countryside -- many of them becoming permanent residents, but several thousand more crossing the border to work each day. Flemish became an everyday language.

Halluin grew to about 16,000 inhabitants, not counting the daily commuters or the dwindling number in surrounding villages on both sides of the border who wove and did other forms of outwork for the city's industry. It remained near that figure past World War II. The inhabitants lived, for the most part, in tight rows of low, uniform two- or three-room houses built along narrow streets, courtyards, or culs-de-sac -- the very environment Vidal de la Blache deplored. Like other working-class towns in the Nord, Halluin organized a great deal of its public life around its corner bars, the estaminets; in 1901, the city had one cafe for every eleven houses (Vermander 1978: 35). Halluin kept the appearance and condition of a nineteenth-century mill town. In 1968, for example, only 34 percent of the city's dwellings had a bath or shower, and only 19 percent had an inside toilet (Bruyelle 1976: 59).

A constant population and a fixed environment, however, did not mean a silent people. In the 1890s, the strike-prone workers

of Halluin and its Belgian suburbs organized a socialist union and a Bourse du Travail. In the next decade, local organizers followed the Belgian model by maintaining two rival labor unions, one Catholic, the other anticlerical and socialist. Now and then they cooperated. When union recognition became an issue during the big, long weavers' strike of 1909-1910, for instance, the two camps joined forces, and won. Over the long run, however, the secular socialists squeezed their rivals into a corner. Halluin unified to the left.

The leftward unification played itself out in local politics. Until World War I, local capitalists kept control of the municipality; the mayor was typically a textile entrepreneur. From 1919 onward, however, Socialists and Communists took charge. With the split of the national labor federation in 1922, the Communist-affiliated CGTU became the dominant local union. During the general textile strikes of 1928-29 and 1931, the CGTU led the way. In the course of the huge regional strike of 1931, the Journal des Debats ran a typical story:

A Communist parade of 400 people took place Thursday afternoon in the main streets of Halluin. During the march, a number of incidents occurred. Mobile guards were insulted and shoved by a number of demonstrators. Two young women workers were arrested, as well as a male striker from Menin. The demonstrators left the march little by little after the arrests; the parade finally fell apart for lack of

demonstrators. Following these incidents, the prefect of the Nord issued a decree forbidding all parades in the towns of the Nord (Journal des Débats 11 September 1930).

Strike, parade, and demonstration converged.

Although the CGTU and the CGT had rejoined forces by the time of the 1936 sitdown strikes, the Communist forces remained strong at Halluin. Indeed, Halluin was one of the few places in the Nord (or, for that matter, anywhere else) where the Communist call for a general strike on 30 November 1938 received a wide response. The distinction between labor struggles and national politics declined. Halluin became famous as "red city".

By the 1930s, Halluin belonged to one of the country's densest clusters of red cities. Consider the nationwide strikes/demonstrations of 12 February 1934, when the left showed its strength in response to the Parisian right-wing demonstrations of 6 February, and the PCF broke out of its isolation to join other left parties. Despite the failure of the Nord's Communists and Socialists to achieve unity of action, the Nord produced more individual demonstrations than any other department of France. Not all were peaceful; in and around Roubaix, Communist strikers blocked the frontier to keep 2,000 Belgians from coming to work, stoned their buses, spread paving stones across the road, burned a truck, broke in to sack a carding plant whose workers were not striking, and fought those workers in the street. Unionized workers likewise struggled with non-strikers in Abscon and



Dunkerque. The same day, Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing together brought out roughly 25,000 marchers in three separate demonstrations against fascism. That compares with perhaps 65,000 in Paris, 32,500 in Toulouse, 6,500 in Montpellier, 1,600 in Dijon, 2,000 in Angers (Lefranc 1965:33; Prost 1966: 27).

Despite the failure to bring out a unified left in such departments as the Nord, the demonstration-strikes of 12 February gave a premonition of the themes and geography of the Popular Front. On the May Days of 1936, 1937, and 1938, for example, the Seine, Seine-et-Oise, and Nord again led the country for sheer numbers of demonstrations (Prost 1964: 91). Some further indications of the geography appear in this table (Source: Prost 1964: 214-219; Bulletin du Ministère du Travail 1936; 1936 census; in good French style, the "percent voting left" refers to all registered voters, including those who did not vote at all):

DEPARTMENT	PERCENT OF WORKERS AND OFFICIALS UNIONIZED IN:		PERCENT OF METALWORKERS UNIONIZED IN 1938	PERCENT VOTING LEFT IN 1936	STRIKERS PER 100,000 WORKERS, JUNE 1936
	1936	1937			
Côte d'Or	11	42	20	30	6189
Haute-Garonne	22	58	33	46	4678
Maine-et-Loire	16	41	34	6	1199
Nord	15	57	84	47	37838
Seine + Seine-et-Oise	13	78	72	43	12639
ALL FRANCE	11	60	60	29	9036

One fact stands out: As the Popular Front gained momentum and

strikes spread, workers rushed into unions. Over the whole country, the rate of unionization almost sextupled from one year to the next. Strike waves had always promoted union affiliation in France, but the wave of 1936 had an extraordinary mobilizing effect. Again, over France as a whole nearly one worker in ten struck in June 1936 -- and the base for these rates is the total labor force, including agricultural workers, professionals, executives, shopkeepers, and everyone else. Although the rates for Côte d'Or, Haute-Garonne, and Maine-et-Loire ran below those for the country as a whole, those departments still had very high strike participation by ordinary standards; from 1.2 to 6.2 percent of their workforces joined strikes in June 1936.

Practically every French department (and certainly all of these) had at least some sitdown strikes in June 1936. The Haute-Garonne, despite its relatively low strike rate in June 1936, had the distinction of helping to initiate the national movement; the sitdown strike at Toulouse's Latécoère factory (13 May) began in response to the firing of workers who had taken off the First of May; from 27 May onward, many other Toulousan plants followed the example.

With respect to unionization and strike activity, the Nord and the Paris region stand out from Côte d'Or, Haute-Garonne and Maine-et-Loire; the combination of relatively high unionization, left voting, and extensive sitdowns mark them as bastions of working-class activism.

In the logic of French politics, working-class activism also made the Nord and the Paris region favored sites of confrontation between fragments of the left; when they were not caught temporarily in a tight alliance, both in the 1930s and later Communists and Socialists (or their union counterparts) often battled each other. By a similar logic, the Nord and the Paris region had a disproportionate share of public struggles between organized leftists and activists of the right: Action Française, Croix de Feu and other authoritarian groupings before World War II, Gaullists, supporters of French Algeria, Poujadists, and others after the war.

Yet no region lacked for left-right clashes. During the national pulling and hauling between Gaullists and Communists during the spring of 1948, for instance, Communists tried repeatedly to sabotage public meetings of the Gaullist RPF. In Toulouse, on 21 March, three or four hundred Communists managed to enter among the 1500 in the audience. When the speaker began to attack their party, the Communists started a demonstration in the midst of the meeting, shouting and singing the Internationale. Gaullists naturally replied with their own shouts and the Marseillaise. As the meeting's marshals tried to expel the demonstrators, the predictable fight broke out. Some of the combattants used brass knuckles ("coups-de-poing américains"), blackjacks, and switchblades. By the time riot police had arrived and cleared the hall, 16 people (8 Communists, 5 RPF, and 3

policemen) were seriously wounded, another 50 or so cut and bruised. Later, the meeting resumed under police protection (Le Monde 23 March 1948; Le Figaro 23 March 1948). Some variant of Toulouse's scenario recurred in most of France's cities for decades. Wherever fiercely rival parties recruited young activists and held public displays of their determination, the opponents sometimes came to blows.

In the first difficult years after the war, likewise, all regions saw concerted resistance against government efforts to manage the economy. In Dijon, on 21 May 1947, the government's invalidation of bread-ration tickets brought a march to the Prefecture. "Eight thousand storekeepers, industrialists, traveling salesmen, members of the professions and workers," reported the New York Times, stormed the offices of the economic control system in Dijon, burning archives and food tickets and smashing furniture and windows" (New York Times 22 May 1947). Combat, closer to the scene, wrote of a "monstrous crowd of workers" (Combat 22 May 1947). The prefect ordered validation of the bread tickets. On 2 July of the same year, workers met in Angers at the CGT's call. They deplored the government's wage controls. After sending a delegation to see the prefect, 5,000 people went to demonstrate at the prefecture. When they broke into the courtyard, the prefect stalled them by distributing wine and butter. The prefect's move, however, did not get rid of the demonstrators. Police cleared the prefecture (Le Monde 3 July

1947).

Labor-capital conflicts revived rapidly after the war, but now involved state officials even more intensely than before. By the middle of 1947, France was producing yet another strike wave. After the Parisian metalworkers' strike of May, general strikes of railway workers, miners, and bank employees developed in June and July. In November, the classic pair of Parisian metalworkers and miners of the Nord struck. By the end of the month, there were strikes on the railways, in the ports, and in many other industries. Sabotage and factory occupations were widespread. Strikers took over a number of railroad stations and post offices. Around Béthune, pickets stopped motorists, searched their cars, and demanded identity papers.

The movement of 1947 came close to a general strike in Alpes-Maritimes, Gard, Hérault, Haute-Garonne, Tarn-et-Garonne, Loire and Allier -- that is, in a bloc of southern departments centered on Languedoc. National and international politics hovered over the entire strike: in the organization of a strike committee based on the PCF and outside the CGT, in the resignation of Paul Ramadier's government to make way for Léon Blum, in the coalition of Communists and right-wing parties to block Blum's installation as premier, in the demand for a nationwide 25 percent increase in wages, in the symbolic destruction of English and American flags, in the settlement of the strikes by means of a national agreement between the strike committee and the

government. The workers' movement resembled a revolutionary force even more than it had in 1936.

### **Embattled Agrarians**

Despite memories of 1907 in Languedoc and of 1911 in Champagne, France's farmers almost got lost in the workers' mobilizations of the 1920s and 1930s. The exceptions were often lively. For example:

**14 January 1933:** occupation of the departmental prefecture in Chartres by organized farmers from the Beauce

**June 1933:** demonstration against the judicial seizure of property from Comité de Défense Paysanne activist near Amiens who refused to collect social insurance payments from his employees

**1934 and 1935:** series of protest meetings ending in confrontations with police and counter-demonstrators

**16 March 1935:** collective resistance of farmers to payment of market fees in Figéac

**throughout 1935:** scattered opposition of small distillers (bouilleurs de cru) to fiscal controls, involving frequent resignations of municipalities in Normandy and Brittany

**22 September 1935:** bloody fight between members of the Front Paysan and Communist counter-demonstrators after a meeting in Blois on 22 September 1935

**24 November 1935 and 26 January 1936:** similar affairs in Montpellier and St. Brieuc

**fall 1936 onward:** strikes of agricultural laborers, coupled with battles between strikers and non-strikers, in the Ile de France and the Nord

**June 1938:** destruction of vegetables belonging to non-striking farmers by commandos of the Comité de Défense Paysanne in Finistère

As compared with the ferment surrounding industrial workers in the 1930s, these and a few more incidents like them added up to very

little action by cultivators.

During those years, collective action by and on behalf of French agriculture centered on four elements which from 1934 to 1936 consolidated into the Front Paysan: 1) the Union Nationale des Syndicats Agricoles led by Jacques Le Roy Ladurie, 2) the Parti Agraire of Fleurant Agricola [nom de guerre of Gabriel Fleurant], 3) the Comite de Defense Paysanne of Henri Dorgères [pseudonym of Henri d'Halluin], and 4) a set of specialized producers' associations, such as the beetgrowers' Confederation Generale des Betteraviers. All four tended to take extremely conservative political lines, prefiguring Vichy's stress on work and family. As a practical matter, however they organized lobbying and electoral campaigns around price supports and protection of the French domestic market. After the Front split in 1936, Dorgère's Jeunesses Paysannes and their paramilitary Greenshirts clearly took the lead among self-styled peasant organizations. It was they, for example, that supplied shock troops to break the harvest strikes begun by day-laborers of Nord and Ile de France in 1936 and 1937. The Greenshirts paralleled in their rural sphere the antileftist activism carried on in cities and towns by the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Croix de Feu, and other protofascist formations.

Although none of the collaborating formations survived the Liberation, Dorgères himself -- after trial for collaboration, conviction, and rehabilitation -- returned to action in 1949. Via

his newspaper Gazette agricole, he found that there still was a rural public for opposition to government controls and taxes. His *Défense Paysanne* reappeared as a rival of the *Parti Paysan*, and then of the more formidable *Fédération Nationale de Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles* (FNSEA). Dorgères once again scored great successes in organizing small Norman distillers of apple brandy. Dorgères' organizational strength concentrated heavily in the band from Bordeaux up the Atlantic coast to Anjou, Normandy, and Brittany, then along the channel coast to the Nord; that zone included the main areas for France's production and consumption of applejack: Royer 1958: 170-181.

In the early 1950s, Dorgères' followers were meeting to break the seals on stills and invade the offices of the national liquor authority. In the mid-1950s, Dorgères carried on an uneasy courtship with Pierre Poujade's *Union de Defense des Commerçants et Artisans* (UDCA). Together they blocked tax inspections, sabotaged official ceremonies, and sacked the offices of tax collectors.

Still, in the postwar years Poujade came much closer than Dorgères to building an effective national movement. Through much of the country his UDCA mobilized shopkeepers to block governmental fiscal controls. Poujade first attracted national attention in July 1953, when he organized resistance to tax inspectors in his home town of Saint-Céré, Lot. His organization started to gain a broad following in 1954, through its defense of



shopkeepers in the Southwest. In November 1954, for example, they managed to bring out riot police against them in Castelsarrasin, Montauban, Rodez, and Toulouse.

By January 1955, Poujade was holding a large demonstration and addressing a mass meeting in Paris, playing the electoral game with one hand as he stirred up shopkeepers' strikes and fiscal resistance with the other. By 1956, with Poujade and fifty of his collaborators sitting in the Chamber of Deputies, a significant part of the UDCA's action directly concerned national politics. In Beaune, on 27 June 1956, fifty or sixty Poujadists blocked the entrance of a store owned by a rival deputy; police arrested two of the demonstrators as they cleared the way. By that time, the UDCA had enough visibility to attract Communist counter-demonstrators -- and thus pitched battles -- to many of its meetings.

Poujadists never had much success in mobilizing farmers. That is mildly surprising, since the 1950s saw a great surge of rural mobilization. In common with the tactics of Dorgeres and Poujade, organized farmers took to direct action on a scale rivaling that of 1907. They not only held the conventional meetings, marches, and demonstrations, but also staged tractor parades, blocked roads, occupied public places, and dumped surplus produce in the streets. On 1 February 1955, some 15,000 farmers from the Nord and Pas-de-Calais gathered at the trade fair in Lille. They demanded government help in lowering costs and

entering foreign markets and protested governmental restrictions on beet sugar. When they marched toward the prefecture from the war monument and broke through police barricades, riot police fought them, using tear gas to break up the crowd.

During the following days, farmers blocked roads in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais to dramatize their case. Outside of Bethune, farmers who were blockading the city unhitched their horses and drove them against the police. Near Douai, their confreres met to pass out 12 tons of potatoes. The action in the north resonated elsewhere in France. During the first two weeks of February 1955, farmers blocked roads in the Ile de France, Beauce, Normandy, Brittany, and Languedoc. The demonstrators in Hérault and Gard not only stopped motorists, but gave them free wine. Soon the distribution or dumping of underpriced produce became a standard feature of farmers' actions.

Varying as a function of price swings and government policy, farmers' protests continued vigorously into the 1960s. In June 1961, meetings, demonstrations, and road blockages multiplied through rural France in a great arc around from Provence to Normandy, with the Nord and Pas-de-Calais involved as well. Brittany had the most intense and concerted action. On 27 May, for instance, producers from around Pont-L'Abbé dumped hundreds of kilograms of potatoes, marinated in tractor fuel, in the city streets. On 8 June:

At about 2 A.M., the order was given to all members of the

farmers' union to go to Morlaix with their tractors or cars. At 5 A.M., 3 or 4 thousand farmers surrounded the city and blocked all the roads. A small number of them -- 300 or 400 -- occupied the subprefecture (Mendras & Tavernier 1962: 650).

In fact, the demonstrators broke down the door and chased out the subprefect. Later, the subprefect and the prefect both refused to meet with them to discuss their demands for government help in marketing their meat and vegetables. The prefect said that "although he was ready to receive leaders of the agricultural trade that wanted to defend its interests, he could not receive demonstrators who that very morning had invaded the subprefecture" (Ouest-France 9 June 1961). That night someone cut a dozen telephone lines serving the city. During the following days Brittany saw more phone lines severed, railroad tracks blocked, eggs dumped by the hundreds in streets, and many other acts of agrarian opposition. Farmers used a battering ram to break into the city hall of Pontivy. In far-off Moscow, Pravda printed a long article on French unrest featuring a photograph of that incident, and headlined it PAIN AND ANGER OF THE FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE.

Meanwhile, other farmers rammed their way into the prefecture at Poitiers. A thousand farmers on tractors blockaded the Vendée's prefecture at La Roche-sur-Yon. Around Toulouse, tractor parades blocked many roads. Toward the month's end, rural

demonstrators surrounded Béziers while others threw beams and trees across railroad tracks in the city's hinterland. The issues and actions varied from one region to another; their main common grounds were an orientation to the interests of farmers who had something to market, and a direction of the action to the national government. It was the broadest rural mobilization that had occurred since the insurrection of 1851. It changed government policy: In 1962, the so-called Pisani Charter established a series of incentives to smaller farmers who were willing to invest and innovate.

If 1961 was a high point, it was not the end of rural action. A survey of the years from 1962 to 1971 catalogued an average of 60 demonstrations per year, 13 of them violent. Over the decade, the reliable producers of farmers' demonstrations and related actions were Brittany, the Nord, Provence, and Languedoc. An impressive 59 percent of the events involved demands concerning government agricultural policy, and another 26 percent concerned prices. In the winegrowing regions of the South, "the struggle for a good price pairs with the fight against wine imports" (Pinol 1975: 120). The potato growers of Nord and Pas-de-Calais and the vegetable growers of Brittany worried about prices, but saw a proper government agricultural policy -- including a measure of protection from competitors within the Common Market -- as the way to assure their well-being.

By the 1970s, variants on the planned disruption of traffic

had become a specialty of rural activists. On 20 July 1973, stockraisers near Brive dared to commit a sacrilege: to protest low wholesale meat prices, they blocked the road and delayed for an hour the departure of the great annual bicycle race, the Tour de France. The issues and precise techniques of rural contention varied from one producing region to another. Beyond the regional variation, however, rural collective action had two remarkable things in common: first, questions of wages, tenure, or techniques of production mattered little as compared with control of prices and markets; second, it went almost without saying that the national state had the means and obligation to act on rural needs.

### **Retaking Possession**

The twentieth century brought one central innovation to France's repertoires of contention: the seizure of a space, often including the persons within it, as a means of exerting pressure on people outside that space. Collective squatting in vacant dwellings, hijackings, hostage-takings, sitdown strikes, occupations of public buildings all had that routine in common. To be sure, those actions shared some properties with the erection of barricades to defend a neighborhood against outsiders; that practice already existed in 1648, and temporarily became a revolutionary way of life during the nineteenth century. The old agrarian routines of breaking down enclosures to pasture forbidden animals on former common land likewise acted out the claimed right to the space. Furthermore, the twentieth-century actions often

began with a defensive gesture: blocking an eviction, avoiding a lockout, and so on. Yet twentieth-century people created an aggressive, offensive version of the occupation. That version asserted the occupants' **right** to hold the premises, and used their control of the space as the basis of demands on authorities who likewise claimed rights to the same space. The combination of occupation and offensive bargaining marked off a set of practices with few precedents before World War I.

The sitdown strikes of 1936 to 1939 and the extraordinary days of May and June 1968 brought the greatest clusters of deliberate seizures of spaces. But the practice became more common outside the great moments of rebellion as well. In the 1970s, workers occupied workplaces -- the Lip watch factory, Titan-Coder, even the passenger liner France -- to keep them from closing down permanently. Workers attempted to operate a number of these concerns on their own, generally without great success.

Outside of the great sensational cases, the occupation was generalizing to small, local conflicts. On 17 November 1981, about 250 employees of the little Myrys shoe factory of Limoux (Aude) struck against Louis Riu, owner and operator of the firm. They had asked for a reduction of the work week to 38 hours, for a slowing of the pace of production, and for early retirement at 55; Monsieur Riu had refused, and proposed a 44-hour week without overtime in peak season, a 36-hour week in slack season, plus some alterations in vacation pay and schedules. As employees got the

news at work on the 17th,

They went at once to block departmental road 118 and started turning vehicles away from the factory. At the same time, unhappy at the refusal to negotiate, they blocked the exits from the executive offices. It was then 9:50 A.M. M. Louis Riu, the boss, pushed his way through the thick picket line and got to his car, which was parked in the factory's courtyard. The car was immediately surrounded by about ten people, who kept it from leaving. M. Louis Riu got out of his car. After walking back across the courtyard, he walked out onto a local road which winds along the nearby hills. The strange parade, led by a boss with his brief case, and consisting mainly of a colorful, noisy demonstration, continued to the middle of the vineyard, where the strikers stopped the head of their firm and started a discussion. Neither the foggy location nor the morning hour favored genuine negotiations; they made a date for later, and the odd gathering dispersed as quickly as it had formed (Babou et al. 1981: 27-29).

That afternoon the strikers, reinforced by delegations of strikers from other plants in nearby Carcassonne and Quillan, paraded through Limoux. The parade ended at the subprefecture, where the subprefect and the strikers agreed on a three-way discussion: workers - management - government.

Those discussions led union representatives to call off the

strike. The bulk of the workers, however, thought otherwise; they proposed to stay out, and to block deliveries to the plant. Strikers blocked the entrances to vehicles for two weeks, setting up a camp outside the plant. Non-strikers continued to work inside, but no raw materials entered and no finished shoes left.

As workers occupied the delivery zone, they continued to parade, and sent delegations to see the prefect and the bishop. Limoux's city council voted them moral and material support. Negotiations continued. On 2 December, management announced the layoff of the non-striking employees because "it is impossible to deliver raw materials and heating fuel, or to send out finished goods" (Babou et al. 1981). At the same time, management threatened those who blocked the plant with legal action. But that was a late maneuver. On the morning of 4 December, management and strikers reached a settlement -- a 39-hour week with 40 hours' pay, plus most of the other demands. Workers had gained significantly by means of an action that was not quite a classic sitdown, nor yet a simple picket line, but a blend of the two.

Occupying the premises, or part of them, was not always so successful. At the big Talbot automobile plant in the Paris suburb of Poissy, owned by Peugeot, management planned in 1983 to meet declining sales by laying off about 3,000 workers. Under pressure from unions and government, they reduced the figure to 1,905. The threatened workers, largely African immigrants, had no



guarantee of reemployment. A sitdown by a few hundred of the laid-off workers, plus some of their comrades who still held jobs, led to pitched battles within the factory. Strikers and non-strikers hurled bolts and other auto parts at each other. On 5 January delegates of the CFDT and CGT, unable to halt the fighting, agreed to the calling in of riot police. The plant gradually went back to work, filtering out the laid-off workers at its gates, as the government proposed lump-sum payments to immigrants who would return to their native lands. A Socialist government in a contracting economy found itself with a sharply-divided labor movement.

The occupation of space had also become a way of showing determination on behalf of a cause, without bargaining for departure from the space. About the time that the conflict at Talbot-Poissy was coming to a head, farmers in Brittany were once again demonstrating. During the first week of January, Breton farmers occupied the prefecture of Morbihan in Vannes, destroyed meat in the streets, and installed blockades on roads. These shows of strength backed up demands for government protection. By then, they were familiar routines.

Indeed, much of January's action had a familiar visage. In his Paris dispatch of 24 January, Paul Lewis wrote that:

Social unrest is increasing in France as workers and farmers continue to protest the Government's new austerity policies. The protests are directed at Government plans to lay off

thousands of workers in industries that are suffering losses, like steel and shipbuilding. And the discontent is also focused on programs to reduce inflation and cut the soaring cost of agricultural subsidies by paying farmers less for what they produce. Today, more than 3,000 workers from the Nord-Mediterranee group of shipyards marched through Paris to protest a plan that would eliminate up to 6,000 jobs. Angry farmers in northern France parked trucks and tractors on railroad tracks, blocking traffic to Paris in a continuation of their protest against low pork and poultry prices and low-priced imports. This week they have smashed local government offices, battled riot police and hijacked trucks bringing in pork sausages from Britain, the Netherlands and West Germany. In addition, five unions plan a general strike in the state-owned coal mines beginning Feb. 17 to protest 6,000 expected job losses this year and up to 20,000 over the next three years, as the Government prepares to reduce coal output. And steelworkers, angry that the Government has refused to bail out their industry, have skirmished with police in Alsace-Lorraine over the potential loss of 35,000 jobs. Even Government workers are planning a "week of action" involving work stoppages and slowdowns (New York Times 25 January 1984).

The conflicts of January followed the pattern of times of contraction: resistance to losses, demands for restitution,

warnings not to touch existing rights and privileges. Contraction or expansion, however, public statements of demands and complaints repeatedly followed the same routines. By January 1984 most of those routines, in their essentials, had been operating for a century or more.

GENERAL NOTE. The National Science Foundation and the Horace Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan, have supported the research reported in this paper.

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