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STATES, TAXES AND PROLETARIANS

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These are heady moments for the study of European capitalism and statemaking. In the wakes of such general essays as Barrington Moore's, Perry Anderson's and Immanuel Wallerstein's have arrived whole schools of criticism and inquiry. Quite recently Jerome Blum has surveyed the end of the "old order" in rural Europe, Fernand Braudel has released the full three volumes of his Civilisation matérielle et capitalisme, and volume II of Wallerstein's Modern World System has gone to press. Another literary event has attracted little notice, but deserves our attention here. That is the recent appearance of Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly's Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe. Lis and Soly provide a rich, thoughtful survey of the whole period from the year 1000 to about 1850: the character and origins of the poor, the impact of capitalism on poverty, the attempts of ruling classes and governments to control poor people. Any effort to do all that in two hundred pages has to be sketchy, and is likely to lack systematic comparisons of one region, population, or process with another.

Lis and Soly's effort is sketchy. It does lack systematic comparisons. Still, it does an extraordinary job of digesting the abundant multilingual literature -- documenting, for example, the crucial importance of rural industry in the growth of a European proletariat. And the book has a point of view: it rejects notions of poverty as a natural consequence of technological backwardness or of unrestrained population growth, and insists that "poverty can be fully understood only as the consequence of an established structure of surplus-extractive relations" (Lis and Soly 1979: 215).

Accordingly, Lis and Soly emphasize the forms and mechanisms of inequality rather than the determinants of national income and per capita production. Confronted with the supposed crisis of the seventeenth century, for example, they challenge the standard Malthusian scenario: a rigid, inefficient

agricultural system buckles under the stress of a growing population, as an expanding state absorbs whatever surplus previously existed. They point out how similar pressures produced very different outcomes in France and England:

. . . subsistence crises were unavoidable in France because the forms of surplus extraction in an absolutist state which was based on the small peasant proprietor excluded any possibility of increased production. The old mode of production was simply 'sucked dry'; it was in no sense altered. In contrast, a nearly unique structure emerged in England, based on landlords, capitalist tenants, and wage labourers, which led to a radical transformation of agrarian production (Lis and Soly 1979: 100).

Consequences: general impoverishment, but little transformation of the workforce, in France; increasing productivity, but massive proletarianization, in England. France's era of rapid proletarianization came later. In both countries, and in Europe as a whole, "The rise of capitalist means of production required the construction of public mechanisms of support, which not only kept the reserve army of the poor under control in order to guarantee political order but also offered the possibility of providing employers sufficiently cheap wage labour at every moment to reach their economic targets" (Lis and Soly 1979: 220-221). Thus, to their eyes, the development of capitalism, the growth of the proletariat and the creation of national means of controlling the poor were not distinct processes, but different aspects of the same great change in the condition of ordinary Europeans.

I agree. One of the virtues of the Lis-Soly book is its presentation of materials for a connected account of capitalism, proletarianization, and state actions with respect to poor people. My purpose here is not to summarize the materials or to attempt the whole connected account, but to

call your attention to a few of the connections -- including some which Lis and Soly themselves don't make. In particular, I want to stress the widespread, if implicit, collaboration of European capitalists and statemakers in the extension of bourgeois property and the growth of wage labor. The fiscal strategies of European states played, I think, a significant part in linking statemaking and capitalism. Hence my subject: states, taxes, and proletarians.

Let's begin with a very general set of ideas on these connections: a cluster of working hypotheses, we might call them. In the era of capitalism, any group who controlled a state had some interest -- at least defensive -- in warmaking. War was increasingly expensive. It required the rapid mobilization of capital. In general only capitalists held, or had access to, the requisite capital. Over the long run, however, the resources for warmaking and other governmental expenses were embedded in the labor and property of the rest of the population. One form of taxation or another extracted those resources from the rest of the population.

Increasing taxation, especially taxation in cash rather than kind, had several important effects. First, it diverted resources from peasants, landlords, and others. Second, it promoted the commercialization of production by forcing people to market commodities and labor in order to acquire the wherewithal for tax payments. Third, it incited resistance, especially when in addition to causing economic hardship it:

1. enriched local powerholders at the expense of their neighbors;
2. violated previous rights, charters, and treaties; and
3. visibly reduced the ability of people to fulfill their moral and political obligations within household or community.

Statemakers commonly loaned political power, including access to the

disposition of armed force, to those capitalists who advanced them funds for military activity. They also entailed future state revenues in favor of the capitalists, and provided political guarantees that those revenues would continue to flow. Thus, on the average, the importance of capitalists in the creation of state credit augmented their political power and gave them an interest in the state's financial viability. Presumably these effects were stronger where and when the state was relatively weak, its expenditure was large, and the economy was not extensively commercialized. Presumably the effects were also stronger when merchants and other capitalists had independent bases of power.

Under these circumstances, two partly independent changes -- the growth in capitalist political power and the commercialization incited by taxation -- promoted the concentration of capital. The concentration of capital, plus the direct effects of taxation, accelerated the growth of the proletariat at the same time as it helped transform a small portion of the peasantry into capitalist farmers. In the process, capitalists and statemakers collaborated in the creation of bourgeois property: unified, disposable and private. In place of fragmented, overlapping, multiple claims on the same land, labor or commodity arrived a situation in which, at the extreme, only two claimants remained: an individual owner and a taxing state.

Bourgeois land reforms, beginning with the French reforms of 1791 onward, sometimes consolidated peasant property, but generally gave the capitalists more leverage in squeezing out smallholders. Redistribution of church lands, desamortización, even the various abolitions of serfdom all tended in that same direction. Land reforms were especially potent in proletarianizing poor farmers who lived without firm title to the land

from which they drew their sustenance: squatters, customary tenants, people depending on common woods and fields. But capital concentration and commercialization also fostered the growth of the proletariat through the expansion of opportunities for wage labor, which in turn encouraged the natural increase of proletarian families. Presumably these effects were stronger where and when small landlords were already weak and few, where capitalists held extensive state power, and where markets were readily available.

This general account is, I remind you, a string of working hypotheses. It has its paradoxes and evasions. Despite Immanuel Wallerstein's declaration that the early modern Dutch and English states were strong ones (since they did their work of capitalist domination with relatively slight apparatus), most observers see something of an inverse correlation between capitalist power and the strength of the state: Prussia held its merchants in check, runs the standard account, while the Dutch state -- when it existed at all -- was a quintessential executive committee of the bourgeoisie. What is more, the political and economic geographies of Europe suggest a similar inverse correlation: the band of mercantile cities running from northern Italy, down the Rhine and over into the Low Countries was the last to consolidate into large, strong states. Yet my account suggests mutual reinforcement of state power and capitalist power.

I am still puzzling with this paradox, and tiptoeing gingerly around the minefield of a question which lies beyond it: to what extent are states simply the instruments of their dominant classes? I suspect that the answers reside in the recognition that statemakers wielded some independent power in the short run, that they were constantly involved in forming or responding to class coalitions rather than single classes, and that a middle position between complete bourgeois hegemony and total subordination of the bourgeoisie

avored a coalition which simultaneously strengthened capitalists and the state. In that case, my account should apply better to France and England than to Hungary or Holland.

So much for general approaches. In my own work, I am making no effort to assemble evidence for the whole risky interpretation. I have, however, cut into this set of connections at several different points. Perhaps we should focus on two of them: the process of proletarianization and the effects of taxation. First, some observations on the growth of the European proletariat. Then, some ideas on taxation and its consequences. Finally, an attempt to link the two topics to each other and to the broad theme of states, taxes, and proletarianization.

#### Proletarianization

Let us adopt a broad conception of the proletariat. Instead of the popular image of unskilled manufacturing workers producing for wages in large establishments under intense time-discipline, think of the category Marx proposed in Capital: all workers who survive by selling their labor power to others who dispose of the means of production. Proletarianization, in that broad conception, results from two coordinate processes: 1) the substitution of wage labor for other forms of return to labor, and 2) the expropriation of the means of production from the producers themselves. Expropriation, in my view, is the fundamental process, and the extension of wage labor primarily a means by which capitalists accomplish that expropriation. In any case, to the extent that work combines the two -- expropriated means of production and wages -- the workers are proletarians.

By that standard, proletarians have been around Europe for a long time. They were important in rural areas well before the era of the factory. In an ill-documented but much-repeated estimate, Alan Everitt has opined that at the start of the seventeenth century a quarter to a third of England's



and Wales' rural population consisted of essentially landless laborers (Everitt 1967: 398). As of 1688, in an estimate repeated just as often as Everitt's, Gregory King was claiming that 66 percent of all English families were headed by laborers of one kind or another (Mathias 1957: 45). By the time of the 1831 British census, 76 percent of the males in agriculture were wage-workers (Abstract: xiii). If that were all we had to go on, we could plausibly conclude that Britain's rural population proletarianized early and extensively, and that the seventeenth century marked the major acceleration of the process. (We could also, incidentally, note that from a peak of 80 percent at the middle of the nineteenth century, the agricultural population deproletarianized from then up to our own time: landless laborers joined the rural exodus in disproportionate numbers, and family farms were left to dominate the countryside: Bellerby 1958: 3.)

That much we could fit, without too much effort, with the multiple local and regional studies revealing the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century growth of a rural proletariat: Chambers for the Vale of Trent, Levine for Leicestershire villages, Wrightson and Levine for a village in Essex, and so on. So far, so good. Unfortunately, other general estimates from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, notably those of Joseph Massie and Patrick Colquhoun, smudge the time line by running lower than King's (Massie 1957: 45; Colquhoun 1806, 1815). We can tidy up the line again by means of judicious manipulations of the definitions involved. But in fact all we may conclude with any confidence is that well before the nineteenth century a majority of Britain's rural population consisted of landless laborers, and that rural proletarianization continued to the mid-nineteenth

century before starting an unsteady but substantial decline.

Given the great increase of the total British population after 1650 or so, the absolute increase in the rural proletariat must have been in the millions. The evidence at hand suggests two further conclusions: that until recently the rural labor force was more proletarian than the urban; and that until some time in the nineteenth century the countryside, not the city, was the prime site of British proletarianization. Not only agricultural change, narrowly defined, but also the proliferation of cottage industry account for that rural predominance.

If that is the case, both landlords and merchants must have played significant parts in creating the opportunities which, in their turn, promoted the growth of the proletariat. Through consolidation and expansion of their holdings, landlords squeezed out the intermediate groups: customary tenants, smallholders, squatters. F.M.L. Thompson guesses that the "peasantry" -- essentially those who worked the land with their own labor -- had some sort of title to half of England's land in 1500, and that their share had sunk to less than a tenth by the end of the eighteenth century. "They emphatically failed to establish," says Thompson

a position of outright ownership in any way commensurate with their late medieval position as occupiers and customary dual-owners, and in this their history is in marked contrast to that of other European countries. One reason was the Tawney reason, the inability in the face of the vagaries of manorial customs or the unscrupulous conduct of lords, to establish tenures as copyholds of inheritance with fixed terms as to rents and entry fines, but it was a factor of limited operation. While some sixteenth-century yeomen prospered, grew rich at the expense of their neighbours, became freeholders through the neglect or indifference

of stewards of manors, and elevated themselves into the ranks of the gentry, others were reduced to the status of tenants-at-will or labourers by the financial pressure of the raising of rents and fines; nevertheless, many survived tenurially unaffected . . . The condition of survival for the peasant was less the tenurial one, whether he happened to live on a manor with certain or uncertain fines, and more the economic one, whether he was capable of making a living under changing market and technical conditions, and whether he was willing to resist the temptation to sell out at attractive prices (Thompson 1966: 514).

The neat escape into the passive "were reduced" and the convenient depersonalization of "market and technical conditions" shift the apparent responsibility to peasants who made bad bets on the future. Whether we put this benign gloss on the consolidation process or stress, with Marx, the role of forced enclosures (cf. Lazonick 1974, Cohen and Weitzman 1975), the key agents of the transformation remain the larger landlords and their managers. Great estates and capitalist farms, as F.M.L. Thompson says, came to dominate the English landscape.

We must not neglect the merchants who found the means to employ landless rural labor in the working of wood, metal and, especially, cloth for distant markets. Examining rural conflict in western England from the 1580s to 1660, Buchanan Sharp discovers the "existence of a large rural industrial proletariat living on wages earned in various clothworking occupations and dependent on the market for food" (Sharp 1980: 3). He points out their active involvement in the food riots and anti-enclosure risings of the period, and remarks on the way the government's own resort to deforestation and enclosure as an alternative to parliamentary taxation -- as a fiscal expedient -- threatened the livelihood of the artisans, and incited their resistance. What is more, Sharp makes a specific link between the creation

of that proletariat and capital concentration:

Capitalists had come to dominate the broadcloth industry and the new-drapery -- products, aimed at an export market, which demanded considerable investment in raw materials and in the distribution of the finished product. Similarly, in mining and ironmaking demand for increased output resulted in substantial capital investment in large units of production. In these sectors of the economy, the skilled man was a propertyless wage earner or pieceworker, depending for employment upon the clothier or ironmaster, and for his food, upon the market. The locations of such industries were among the most disorderly places in the kingdom, and the connection between landlessness, rural industrialism, and direct action can hardly have been accidental (Sharp 1980: 7).

How did the concentration of land and capital promote the growth of a proletariat? Mainly by narrowing the alternative employment opportunities for the local population, and secondarily by providing incentives for proletarian families to reproduce at a rapid pace. The chief competing explanation of rural proletarianization is population pressure resulting from autonomous declines in mortality (see Chambers and Mingay 1966, Flinn 1970). That explanation cannot be expunged in the present state of the evidence, but it certainly does not provide much of an account of the geography or timing of proletarianization; activities of landlords and merchants do.

As the tangled estimates for Britain suggest, for the time being we are in no position to build up estimates of the magnitude and timing of

European proletarianization, region by region. However, it is possible to get an idea of the quantities involved by extrapolating from the few well-delineated regional analyses we do have. After some exploration, I have used Karlheinz Blaschke's study of the Kingdom of Saxony as a basis for thinking about the continent as a whole. Saxony, the region of Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz, was a major arena of German industrialization. Like many other industrial regions, Saxony experienced widespread growth of cottage industry well before the industrial concentration of the nineteenth century.

If the whole continent had behaved like Saxony, according to my estimates, Europe's non-proletarian population would have risen from about 39 million people in 1500 to 50 million in 1800 and 85 million in 1900. In that period, the urban proletariat would have risen from 1 million to 10 million to 75 million, the rural from 16 to 90 to 125. As in the case of Britain, the figures have some strong and mildly surprising implications: a massive, disproportionate increase in the proletarian sector of the population, a countryside which was long much more proletarian than the city, a process of proletarianization which took place mainly in rural areas before 1800, a contrast between the moderate numerical growth and substantial increase in the proportion proletarian before 1800 and the rapid numerical increase combined with moderate rises in proportions after 1800. Nor are these implications arbitrary consequences of basing estimates on the most industrial areas of Europe: a similar computation based on changes in rural Sweden yields estimates of a huge proletarianization of the whole population, due especially to the growth of a rural proletariat. Although the

words "proletariat" and "proletarianization" have now taken on a big-industry air, this stress on rural proletarianization jibes nicely with Marx's own emphasis on expropriation in the countryside.

One question which Marx did not address at all effectively was the demographic side of proletarianization. Marx criticized Malthus vigorously for having generalized the peculiar conditions of population growth under capitalism into general laws. But Marx's own alternative to Malthus was neither clear nor consistent. So far as I can make out, Marx usually assumed that whatever increase in the size of the proletariat occurred resulted directly from the expropriation of workers -- especially, in the cases he discussed, agricultural workers -- who began life with some control over the means of production. Proletarians who were already proletarians simply reproduced themselves. The natural increase of proletarians, in other words, was zero, and all growth of the proletariat was due to social mobility.

There are, of course, not two but three broad sources of growth or decline in a population: natural increase (the difference between fertility and mortality), social mobility (the difference between changes of status into and out of the population) and net migration (the difference between geographic moves into and out of the population). Thinking about the possible weights of those components of change in the European proletariat since 1500 or so leads to some interesting conclusions. Although migratory movements within Europe were complex and crucial, we can sum up the likely effects of intercontinental migration on the European proletariat simply: between 1500 and 1800, most likely a net loss on the order of 10 million proletarians, and very few non-proletarians. During the nineteenth century, a net loss of some 50 million people, almost all of them from the European proletariat.

If we take those guesses as facts, we can place some logical limits on the contributions of natural increase and social mobility to the growth of the proletariat. Let's assume that my extrapolation from Saxony to the entire European population is accurate. In that case, any plausible assumptions about the relative natural increase of proletarians and non-proletarians lead to the conclusion that natural increase, not social mobility, played the major part in the growth of the proletariat since 1500 and, especially, after 1800. If, for example, we set non-proletarian natural increase for the nineteenth century equal to proletarian natural increase at about 0.8 percent per year, we arrive at the conclusion that proletarian gains through social mobility must have been on the order of 0.2 percent per year -- and, in fact, it is quite unlikely that non-proletarian natural increase ran that high. A more plausible scenario would resemble this:

	<u>1500-1800</u>	<u>1800-1900</u>
non-proletarian natural increase	0.25	0.60
proletarian natural increase (percent per year)	0.50	0.90
proletarian gains through social mobility (percent per year)	0.35	0.10

Although the numbers merely sum up informed speculations, they sum up the speculations within limits set by the logic of population growth. Any reasonable reconstruction, I think, attributes the major role in the proletariat's growth to natural increase.

If that theoretical conclusion holds up, it has strong implications

for the character of the proletarianization process. Consider this implication: commonsense discussions of proletarianization portray it as an event which happens to individuals in their own lifetimes: they lose control of land, tools or materials; they start working for someone else. If that is the predominant experience, we can readily understand themes of resistance and revolt in working-class life, but we should be puzzled by indications of continuity from one generation of workers to the next. To the extent that natural increase is the predominant source of proletarian growth, continuity is easier to understand, and we begin to resolve the apparent discrepancy between the frequency of dispossession and the rarity of overt resistance. That is only one of several important implications of the balance between social mobility and natural increase.

By now the documented historical literature on European migration, social mobility and natural increase is vast. But it is also fragmented and disorderly. I have tried to draw order out of it elsewhere (e.g. Tilly 1978a, 1978b, 1979). I can't undertake to review the evidence here. Let me rest with simple assertions. First, my strong emphasis on natural increase is defensible, but far from proven, in the light of the work which has accumulated so far. Second, the most controversial feature of my account of the population changes involved is not really the emphasis on natural increase, but either a) the suggestion of considerable fertility control of one sort or another in poor, benighted populations or b) the small role attributed to externally-generated population pressure as a cause of proletarianization. Third, regional and temporal variations were strong, and correspond to variations in the local organization of production.



In order to understand the variation, we need to divide Europe into very different productive settings: estate systems such as those of East Prussia; large-farm systems like those of southern England; specialized farming areas of the type of coastal Flanders; peasant farming of a western French style; cottage industry such as that of Lancashire before steam-driven factories; urban craft production like that of northern Italian cities; and the large-shop or factory production which has so shaped our current image of proletarianization. Each of these settings had its own characteristic pace, extent and form of proletarianization; the mix among settings of these different types was probably the most important proximate determinant of the timing and character of a given country's proletarianization.

The place of markets, merchants and landlords in the economic geography of proletarianization is no doubt obvious. Petty merchants held the whole system of cottage industry together, linking cheap village labor to distant markets. Now, petty merchants were not expropriators in the classic image: they spent relatively little effort on seizing other people's means of production; only relatively late in European industrialization did they often convert themselves into commanders of big shops and large, grouped, disciplined workforces. Their contribution to proletarianization was profound and subtle: they opened up the opportunities for wage labor to which rising natural increase was a standard response, and they expropriated indirectly by means of transfers of capital. As Jan de Vries, reflecting on Rudolph Braun's important work, puts it:

The society being created in the Zurich uplands had its counterparts wherever rural industry spread. It was a society of great insecurity because employment depended on the putting-out merchant's circulating capital, which could be withdrawn quickly whenever the conditions of distant markets, currency uncertainties, or raw material supply problems encouraged the merchant to place his capital elsewhere. Almost inevitably such a society suffered from desperate poverty (de Vries 1976: 110-111).

Merchants and landlords played different roles, but likewise had strong effects on the paths of proletarianization, in each of the other productive settings.

### Proletarianization and Statemaking

What does all this have to do with states and taxation? I see two important connections. First, a state's general fiscal strategy affected the relative viability of different forms of production. One standard comparison deals with the way taxation impinged on large landlords. In Brandenburg-Prussia after the Thirty Years War, we find great landlords largely exempted from taxation and allowed enormous administrative, political and military power within their own districts, while excise taxes aimed at merchants and commerce supported much of the growing state apparatus. In England, we find relatively light land taxes and few categorical exemptions, while customs revenues loomed large. In France, we find considerable reliance on land taxes with the crown bartering widespread exemptions to old nobles in return for political acquiescence and military support, and to new nobles in return for the mobilization of capital and the staffing of public offices.

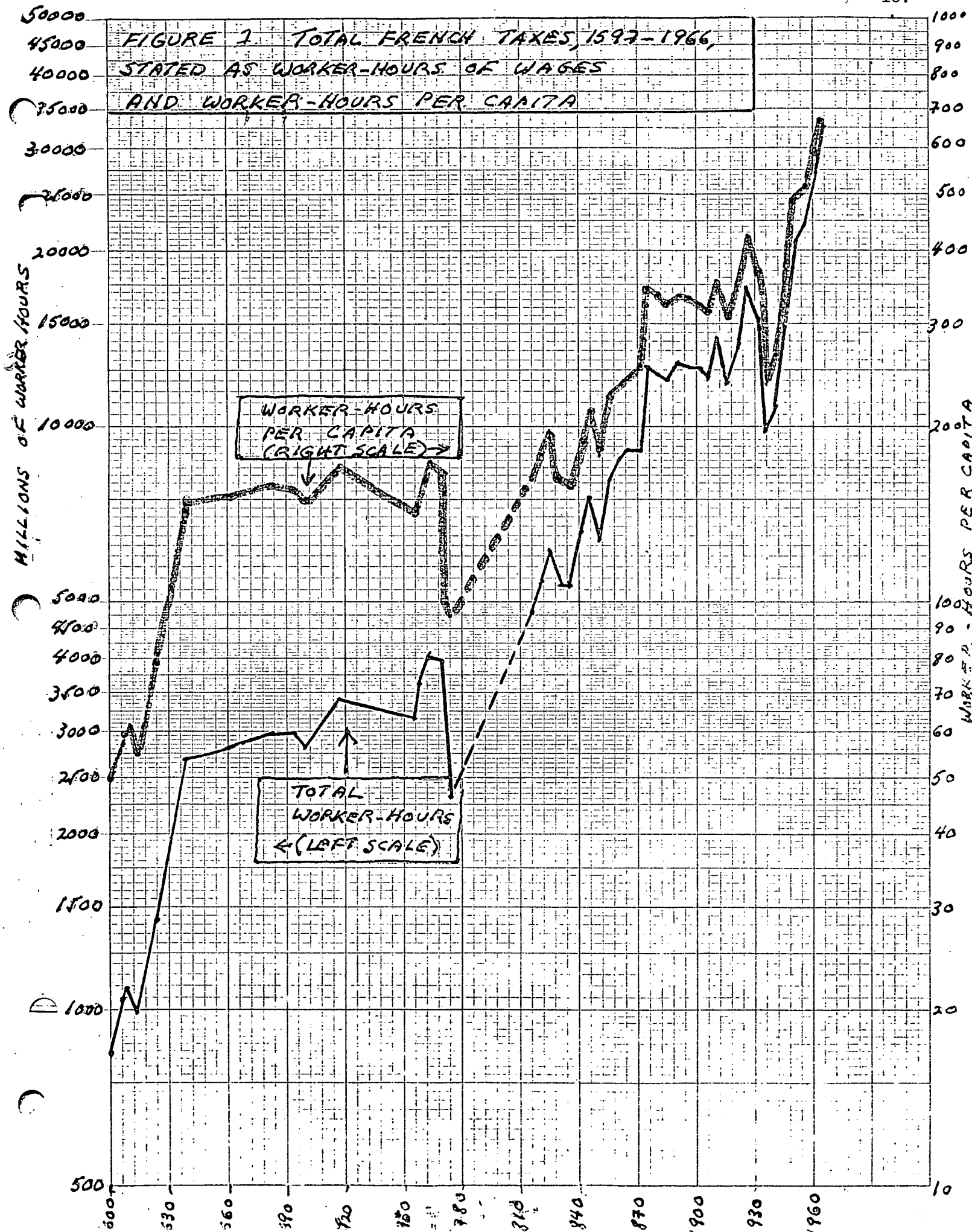
The Prussian strategy promoted large, grain-exporting estates producing with coerced labor service. The English strategy promoted a general commercialization of agriculture, with landlords actively involved in stepping up production. The French strategy promoted the transformation of landlords and capitalists into rentiers. To be sure, such a summary simplifies excessively. Admittedly, the relationship ran both ways: the configuration of social classes in Prussia, England and France shaped the fiscal strategy each state followed. Yet, with Gabriel Ardant, I believe that state fiscal strategies, once adopted, have durable effects on the economic options within states as well as on the structures of those states as such.

The second connection with states and fiscal strategy is the likely impact of taxation on the commercialization of the factors of production. When rising taxes bore especially on households that were little involved in production for the market, they tended to force those households to sell their labor power, commodities, and -- in extremis -- capital. Under some circumstances, that pressure might stimulate increases in productivity and might form barriers to proletarianization. On the whole, however, the pressure to commercialize probably promoted the growth of the proletariat via the differentiation which ordinarily occurred in prospering agricultural communities, via the effects of wage-earning opportunities on natural increase, and via the advantages achieved by local capitalists in a more extensively commercialized economy.

#### Taxes and Statemaking

Although these effects were indirect, they could be very large. Think about the French experience with taxation. For purposes of illustration, let us express the total national tax burden from 1600 to 1966 in terms of hours of work per capita per year, using Fourastié's long wage series for a semi-skilled provincial worker as our reference point (Clamageran 1867-1876; *Annuaire Statistique* 1966, Fourastié 1969: 44-49). These are conservative measures. Because real wages rose greatly in the long run, they greatly understate the increase in the state's purchasing power. On the other hand, by using personal work-time as a standard, they give a sense of the state's rising impact on the daily life of the average citizen.

The statistic in question is gross receipts from regular taxes. As of 1600, they were equivalent to about 50 hours of work per person per year. By 1700, they had more than tripled, to 180 hours per capita. In 1800, the figure was back around 180, after great perturbations during the early Revolution. By 1900, the number was 320 hours. And in 1966, after



a spectacular rise from the early Dépression, the figure had reached above 650 hours of work per person per year. From 50 in 1600 to 650 in 1966 represented a thirteen-fold increase in the amount of time a hypothetical average person spent working to generate revenue for the state.

The great increases arrived during the seventeenth century, especially before 1650, and during the twentieth. Before the twentieth century, war and preparations for war had the major impact on rises in the tax burden. After 1900, war remained the most volatile major determinant of tax levels, but expenditures for administration and social services took over the majority position.

The dramatic seventeenth-century rise in taxation marks the age of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, of Richelieu, Mazarin, and Colbert. In order to subdue their domestic rivals and, later, their international competitors, these great statemakers attempted to recruit, equip, supply and pay armies of an unprecedented scale, and to do so without relying on the good will of princes and lords who controlled their own private armies. The essential resources for that effort were embedded in the countryside -- in the daily routines, mutual obligations, collective and private property of ordinary people. The statemakers' problem was to extract those resources without inciting uncontrollable rebellion and without destroying the people's capacity to pay again in the future. They often failed in the first regard, and sometimes failed in the second.

France has known more than one age of rebellion, but the seventeenth century certainly belongs among them. How resounding the roll call of great revolts: the Croquants, the Nu-Pieds, the Tardanizats, the Sabotiers, the Lustucru, the revolt of Audijos, that of Roure, the Bonnets Rouges, the Camisards and, of course, the mid-century Fronde. Most of these great events actually consisted of multiple local rebellions which federated or interacted,

and which resembled the much more numerous isolated rebellions stretching from one end of the century to the other. Almost without exception the great revolts and small began with resistance to some new or expanded form of taxation. They began, most often, with a violation of local rights, the deliberate overriding of a previous agreement, an official's visible profiteering by means of his fiscal powers, or an attack on a local institution which had served as a bulwark against royal demands. As the crown pressed every means possible to augment its revenues, the seventeenth century became the golden age of anti-tax rebellions.

Yet the armies grew, taxes rose, the statemakers succeeded. In recent decades, historians have much occupied themselves with debunking Absolutism: contrasting the bold theory with the feeble practice, displaying the absolutist state's limits, compromises, and continuities with its predecessors. As J.S. Morrill has recently commented, that demonstration has been so successful that we now need a reminder, from time to time, of the power the French crown did acquire during the seventeenth century:

In the course of the seventeenth century the monarchy extinguished all other patrimonies and ancient principalities within the bounds of the kingdom. Louis XIII and XIV ruled as kings of France, not as king here, duke there. Their writs, the same writs, ran everywhere. The Crown enunciated the doctrine 'no land without seigneur', extinguished the allodia and declared the whole of France to be royal domain. The seventeenth century witnessed the creation of a common coinage throughout France and the sponsorship of linguistic unity and purity. The Crown's legislative autonomy was acknowledged . . . The king asserted (though this was periodically challenged) complete freedom to choose his own ministers, advisers, judges, a freedom restricted in practice but not in theory by the spread of venality and the introduction of the paulette. The king's claim to be the source of all justice was greatly strengthened.

His ability to tax at will, or at least within the limits of practical prudence, his ability to sustain a large standing army (and, as the century wore on, to monopolize coercive power) and his growing control of the Church in France, most obviously through the restoration of religious unity and the revocation of the edict of Nantes, more subtly through his rights within the Church, and sponsorship of the catholic reformation, are all extensions of inherent strengths of the monarchy (Morrill 1978: 962-963).

How could all that happen? The full answer to that question comprises France's seventeenth-century political history. But there were some recurrent elements. The great statemakers used military force. They made alliances which divided their enemies. They routinized the collection of revenues, and created specialists in the extraction of those revenues. They gave more and more groups -- purchasers of public offices, corporate bodies which received charters and privileges, great lords who were drawn into the circle of the court -- a political and financial stake in the crown's survival. The definitive establishment of the intendants as provincial representatives of the crown cemented the new governmental structure.

More than anything else, the intendants served to accelerate the flow of resources to the central government. They did so by taxing, by borrowing, by selling offices, by commandeering, by a hundred other expedients. Recurrently, however, the critical routine looked like this: locate some store of capital, persuade or coerce the holder of that capital to put it at the disposition of the crown, locate or create some future source of revenue which can be exploited by royal authority, give the persons who have advanced capital claims on the future revenue, and back the claims with the state's growing coercive power. Tax farming took exactly that form. So did forced loans, the sale of offices, and most other means by which the seventeenth-century crown raised the means to wage war. The system lumbered along to the Revolution, and helped create the fiscal crisis behind the Revolution.

In addition to profound political implications, this system had significant economic consequences. First, it created a complex, ambivalent relationship between capitalists and statemakers. The statemakers both tracked and courted the mobilizers of capital, seeking on the one hand to capture them, on the other to assure their continuing activity. (The rules forbidding nobles to engage in many sorts of commerce, I believe, had less to do with maintaining the honor of a superior caste than with the statemakers' desire to make sure that rich men who bought enobling and tax-exempting positions passed on their money-making activities to others who would continue to generate capital and pay taxes.) Willy-nilly, the state developed an interest in promoting and protecting the accumulation of capital.

Second, the drive to raise the means of warmaking promoted the commercialization of labor and of commodity production. Rising taxes forced ordinary people to sell commodities and labor power they had not previously supplied through the market. As a state fattened with increasing revenue and strengthened with growing armed force shifted from the direct commandeering of resources to their purchase via the market, merchants and producers gained new incentives to commercialize. Moreover, the statemakers knew it: when they surveyed the "prosperity" of various provinces in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, intendants and other observers consistently emphasized production -- actual or potential -- for cash. Promoting the national market became something of a state religion, and resisting it a civil sin. The expanding efforts of royal officials to assure the supply of food to the national market marked the most visible aspect of an unrelenting campaign for commercialization. Shriller and shriller rose the condemnation of attempts to withhold food from the market, or to give priority to local subsistence needs.



Here we arrive at the junction between the two broad processes I have traced in this paper: the rise of national taxation and the growth of the proletariat. Both the protection afforded capitalists and the commercialization of the economy facilitated proletarianization. They facilitated proletarianization by means of their effects on the concentration of capital, by means of the political power they lent to expropriators, and by means of the pressure to market labor power. To be sure, the linkage was anything but simple, uniform and automatic; the startling contrast between a Spain (in which the vast landless labor force of the South seems to have formed with the grant of great estates to the military leaders of the Reconquest) and a Holland (in which peasants seem to have collaborated in their own destruction with little pressure from great landlords) instructs us to search for alternative paths to the proletariat. To be sure, I have not come close to surveying the evidence for my hypothetical links between taxes and proletarianization. That comes next.

In this discussion, however, I will be satisfied if we reach agreement on simple principles. First principle: that the form and intensity of taxation had some independent importance in the political and economic histories of European states. Second principle: that the growth of the proletariat in one part of Europe or another, while depending especially on the strategies of local capitalists, responded indirectly to state policies, including fiscal policies. Third principle: that the delicate but enduring interdependence of statemakers eventually worked, with many variations, to produce a world of capitalist institutions and proletarian workers.

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