
FIVE FRENCH REGIONS, FOUR CONTENTIOUS CENTURIES,

TWO FUNDAMENTAL PROCESSES

by

Charles Tilly

University of Michigan

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

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What is There to Explain?

Since 1600, France has lived through several eras of collective action. As the seventeenth century began, it was common for the people who formed a community to assemble, to deliberate, to recite their grievances against their patron, to decide that they would withhold their services from that patron until he righted their wrongs. The patron could even be the king of France. Thus in seventeenth-century France mutiny, rebellion, and routine local politics bore an uncanny resemblance to each other. It was the age of tax rebellions, of regional insurrections headed by great lords, of resistance to marauding soldiers, and then -- at the century's very end -- of newfangled food riots.

In those food riots of 1693 and thereafter, local people sometimes blocked the shipment of grain from or through their communities, sometimes broke into private stores of grain and forced them into public control, and sometimes coerced the marketers of grain or bread into selling their wares below the going price. This form of action had some kinship with the invasion of enclosed fields, with mass poaching, with the attack on a landlord's dovecotes. As compared with the mutinous assemblies of the seventeenth century, they had an edge of anti-capitalism. Although they did not displace the tax rebellion and the resistance to marauding troops, they produced a new balance of collective action, one that endured a century or more.

In our own time, none of these forms of collective action occur in France. But French people do strike, petition, demonstrate, hold protest meetings, conduct electoral campaigns, and (now and then) organize revolutionary conspiracies. They act together, but not in the forms of the seventeenth century. The French have created a different repertoire of collective action, and use it routinely.

Why and how did the change occur? In the largest terms, because in the nearly four hundred years since 1600, France has become an intensely capitalist country with a powerful, centralized national state. The processes of capital

concentration and statemaking, broadly defined, account for the transformations of collective action over the interval. The point of this essay is not to prove that sweeping assertion, but to sketch a way of examining it closely. It provides an outline of structural change in France since 1600, then limns a comparison of five regions during the same period. This paper's preliminary portrayal of the five regions — Anjou, Burgundy, Flanders, the Ile de France, and Languedoc — will not provide an explanation of change in the regions, or in France as a whole. But it will, I hope, provide a context and a prologue for detailed examinations of the contrasting regional experiences with structural change and collective action.

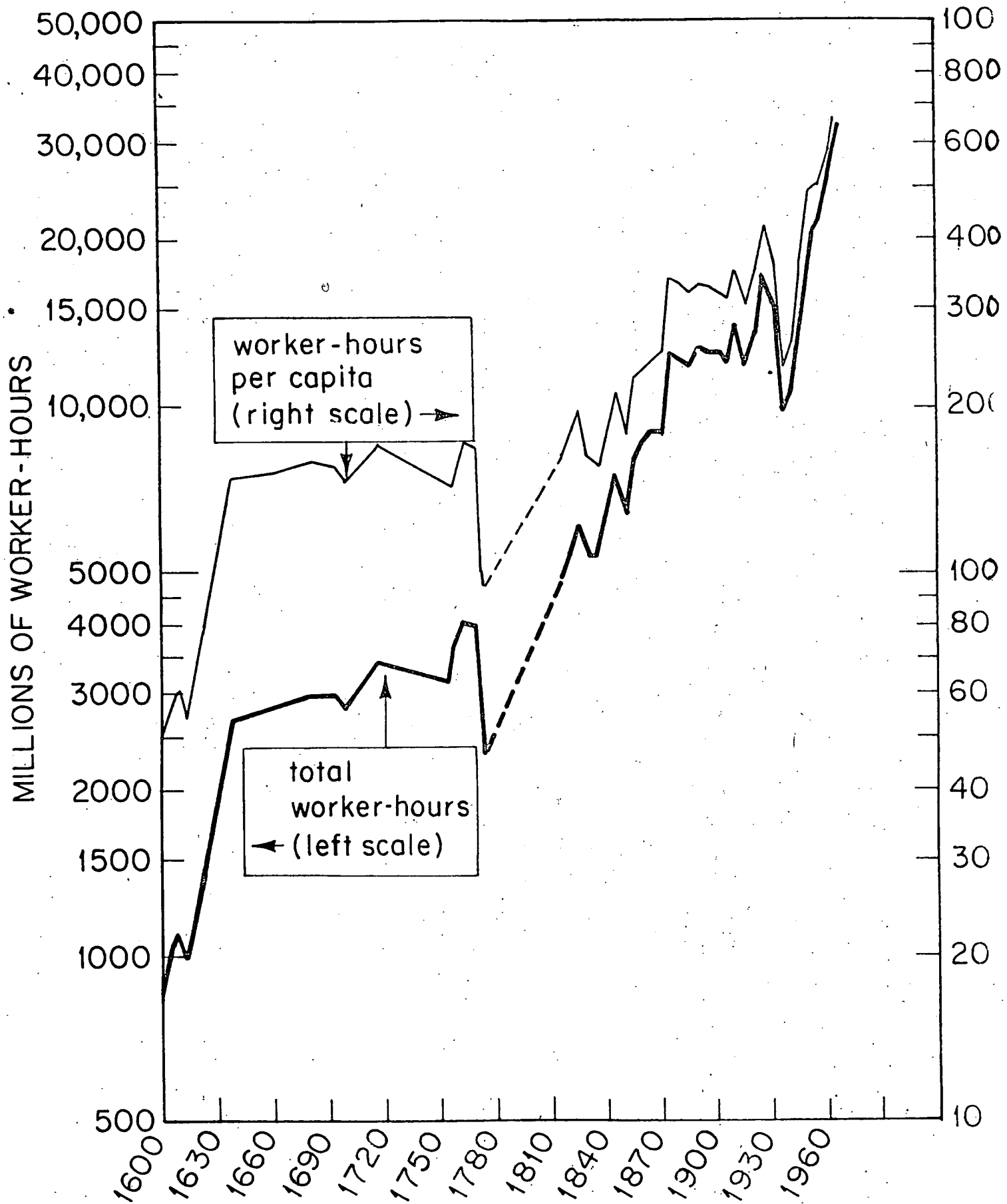
The changes we have to explain, then, are alterations in the character of popular collective action in France from 1600 to 1980. At the most general level, the development of capitalism and the growth of the national state produced those alterations. Let us begin with the national state.

Taxes and Statemaking

The mountainous growth of the national state appears clearly in the long-run rise of taxes. Figure One combines fragmentary evidence from old-regime budgets (drawn from Clamageran, 1867-1876) with official figures for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (from *Annuaire Statistique* 1966). Using Fourastié's series of estimated wages of a semi-skilled provincial worker (a manoeuvre de province: Fourastié 1969: 44-49), we can express the total tax burden as hours of work, then as hours of work per capita. 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. It has a larger margin of error for the old regime than for recent decades. The old-regime sources are flimsier and less reliable. Before 1750 or so, a large share of state revenue

FIGURE 1: GROSS FRENCH TAX RECEIPTS EXPRESSED AS WORKER-HOURS OF WAGES, 1600-1960



came from so-called "extraordinary" sources such as forced loans and the sale of offices. A significant portion of the taxes collected never reached the state treasury, because they went into the pockets of tax farmers, creditors, and sticky-fingered officials instead. Finally, the commercialization of the French economy made it easier to assess, to collect, and even to pay taxes; the disruption of social life caused by a given amount of taxation therefore surely declined as time went on (see Ardant 1975). As a result of all these factors, the earlier figures tend to overestimate the revenues directly available to the central government, but to underestimate the weight of the exactions borne by the French public. Nevertheless, the two curves give a good sense of the general trend. It runs upward, almost continuously upward.

The curves show us a breathtaking rise in the state's demands from the end of the sixteenth century to the 1640s, followed a by a slower growth up to the time of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). The flattening of the curve after 1650 is a bit misleading; it covers the great age of expedients: making do by mortgaging future income, repudiating debts, devaluating currency, forcing "gifts" and special payments, as well as creating and selling offices. (The selling of offices amount to long-term borrowing, since the offices carried salaries and/or fees, and often provided tax exemptions to boot.) The flattening of the curve probably does correspond, however, to some shift of the expenses of the state toward the merchants, officials, corporations, and property-owners who loaned the money and bought the offices.

The evidence has a regrettable gap for the period of the Revolution. France emerged from the Revolution with a tax burden at least as great as at the end of the Old Regime. From the early nineteenth century, the growth of the state's demands was rapid, and nearly continuous: accelerating in times of war, slowing or even declining in depressions, but frequently matching the dizzy expansion of the early seventeenth century. In the early centuries, the money that actually reached

Paris or Versailles went largely for armed forces and the expenses of the Court. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, military expenditures and the central bureaucracy continued to absorb large shares of the state's revenue, but more and more went into expanding state services, education, welfare, and policing.

The per capita burden rose and rose: In 1600, our hypothetical average citizen worked some 50 hours for the state each year (the actual worker put in much more time, of course, since the "per capita" includes the entire population of children, old people, and so on). The figure stood at 150 hours of work in the 1640s, about the same in the 1760s, around 200 hours per year a century later, over 300 at the start of the twentieth century, nearing 700 worker-hours per person per year in recent times. So far, the curves show no slowing of the state's incessant growth.

Out of the intersection of the rise of the national state, the growth of capitalism, and the previously existing structure of France came a further series of changes: the proletarianization, industrialization, urbanization, population growth, and shifts in communication which so altered the texture of life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. People often lump these changes together as "modernization". The word is misleading, both because it usually depends implicitly on the notion of an earlier, slow-changing, integrated, "traditional" society and because it suggests a standard process undergone by one traditional society after another. Certainly neither idea fits the French experience; no matter how far back we go in time, we never encounter that hypothetical static, integrated, traditional social world. Nor do we find France recapitulating the experience of England, the Netherlands, or other supposed early modernizers. As an explanation of French social change, "modernization" is a useless idea.

The value of the notion of modernization, if any, is not as an answer, but as a question: why have proletarianization, urbanization, industrialization, population growth, communications shifts, and so many other changes occurred together so

frequently over the last few centuries? In the case of France, there are strong connections between those changes and the master processes of capitalism and statemaking.

More exactly, the development of capitalism and the growth of the national state interacted with each other and with the previously existing social structure to produce a great series of further transformations of France: industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, population growth, proletarianization, concentration of capital, the increasing involvement of ordinary individuals in national politics, and many alterations in the quality of everyday experience.

Seventeenth-century France was already a capitalist country in many regards, and already had a relatively strong state. It was also an industrial power with a large population and important cities -- not only Dijon and Paris, but also great international centers such as Lyon, Toulouse, and Marseille. Yet in all these respects and more the changes of the seventeenth to twentieth centuries far surpassed those of the previous four hundred years. The France that emerged was an essentially urban country despite its sentimental attachment to the countryside; a country in which most people worked for wages in large organizations despite a certain bias toward the independent artisan or shopkeeper; a nation in which the state bureaucracy found its way into every corner of daily life despite a widespread belief in the independence of the ordinary French person. The role of capitalism in all this change was to concentrate productive resources and decisions in a few hands and to transform most workers into proletarians employed by those few decision-makers. The role of the state was to facilitate that concentration and to create a parallel concentration of political power.

What was France?

At the close of the sixteenth century, the ideas of "France" and "the French" were sharp at the center, but blurred indeed at the edges. A well-bounded French

world, netly distinct from the worlds of Spain, Italy, or Switzerland, only emerged from the heroic statemaking of the following centuries. Speakers of Breton occupied a large western arm of the territory claimed by the French crown, speakers of various langues d'oc the southern half of the land. The Pope ruled a large enclave around Avignon. The entire eastern frontier consisted of duchies and principalities of uncertain loyalty. About one fifth of what would become the continental France of the twentieth century -- including Artois, Flanders, Alsace, Lorraine, Franche-Comté, the French Alps, and much of Provence -- lay under the control of the Habsburgs or the Dukes of Savoy. Burgundy, which now sits comfortably distant from the borders of Germany and Switzerland, was then a troubled frontier province, vulnerable to invasion, insurrection, and smuggling.

In the interior, the subordination of great lords to the French crown was grudging and intermittent, punctuated by conspiracies, rebellions, and foreign alliances. Protestant magnates who feared the Catholic crown and treasured their own autonomy maintained effective control of major cities and substantial regions in Guyenne, Languedoc, Saintonge, and Poitou. The Edict of Nantes (1598) had confirmed the claims to survival of that series of Protestant states within the Catholic state. As of 1600, France was less a centralized monarchy than an uneasy confederation coordinated from Paris.

Yet all is relative. In that world of Elizabeth I, Philip II, and Henri IV, of Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Theophile de Viau, the French kingdom was exceptionally unified, its territory unusually continuous, its crown surprisingly powerful. What is more, in its seventeenth-century context, France was rich and populous. Some 18 million people inhabited its 450,000 square kilometers, as compared with the 11 million of the sprawling Russian empire, the 8 million of Spain, the 4.5 million of England, the single million of the Netherlands. Via the great fairs of Lyon the woolens and linens of France journeyed around the Mediterranean. Wines of Bordeaux

graced the meals of prosperous Flemings, while salt from the Bay of Bourgneuf streamed to the Baltic. Marseille, Bordeaux, La Rochelle, Nantes, and Rouen stood among the most important European ports. Inside the kingdom, the bustling markets of Paris and Lyon drew upon the agriculture and manufacturing of broad hinterlands. France was starting to overcome the commercial advantage of Spain, and appeared to be holding off the mercantile challenges of England and Holland.

A century later, in 1700, much had changed. Relative to England and Holland, if not to Spain, the economic and political importance of France had receded. While England was experiencing population growth on the order of a third, and thus nearing 6 million inhabitants, France was only edging up about a twentieth, to 19 or 20 million. It began to look as if Louis XIV -- just past the War of the League of Augsburg, and soon to undertake the War of the Spanish Succession -- would keep France in a state of perpetual combat. Parts of the country had suffered acute food shortages in the 1690s, and would face them again in the next decade. The century as a whole had been a time of massive popular rebellions, including the Fronde. The prosperous, powerful France of 1600 had certainly not evolved into a stable, placid state.

Yet again all is relative. By comparison with the start of the seventeenth century, French manufacturing had multiplied. Nantes and other Atlantic ports were shipping French textiles widely through Africa and the Americas. French artists such as Molière and Couperin set standards for all of Europe. The drive of Richelieu, Mazarin, Colbert, and Louis XIV had built up an army and a state apparatus which were much stronger, and several times larger, than they had been in 1600. That army and that state had conquered and incorporated Franche-Comté, Alsace, Lorraine, Artois, and some of Flanders; on the eastern frontier, substantial numbers of people speaking Germanic languages now lived under French control. The beginning of the eighteenth century was a time of vigorous economic and political expansion.

In sheer territorial terms, the French expansion was nearing its peak a century later, in 1800. By that year Napoleon's conquests had pushed the boundaries of the French Republic to the Rhine and into Savoy, and brought much of Italy under the power of France. Within a few years after 1800 France and its satellites governed all Italy, all Spain, Illyria and, beyond the Rhine, Holland and Westphalia as well. Although the Revolution of the previous ten years had shaken and transformed that expanding French government, for its time it was a marvel of centralization and extractive power. The French economy had likewise felt the weight of the Revolution, with the increasing demand for military goods not compensating the loss of markets for export industries.

Nevertheless, the eighteenth century as a whole brought great expansion to French agriculture and industry: a likely rise of 25-40 percent in agricultural production (Le Roy Ladurie 1975: 395), a plausible annual growth rate of 1.5-1.9 percent in the industrial sector (Labrousse et al. 1970: 521). The population of France (excluding the new territories seized by its revolutionary armies) had risen to 27 million. That figure still towered over the 10 or 11 million of Spain and the combined 16 million of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. However, the German empire-in-the-making visible in and around the Prussian territories contained some 20 million people, a disciplined military force, and important industrial nuclei. As a commercial and industrial power, France had lost ground to England. As a large, centralized national state, France found others, including Britain and Prussia, threatening her preeminence.

In another century, by 1900, a great simplification of the European map had occurred. Just nine states -- Spain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, and France -- occupied the great bulk of the European land mass and population. The French state, for its part, had ballooned: during the nineteenth century, in real terms, the national budget had quadrupled, while France's

economy was growing a bit less rapidly than that; the effect, according to Jean Marczewski, was to raise the ratio of the state budget to the gross physical product slightly: from 13.7 percent (1803-1812) to 14.7 percent (1905-1913) (Marczewski 1965: lxx). France had lost its demographic superiority: to its 39 million people, Germany now had 56 million, Britain and Ireland 42 million, Italy 34 million. At that point, France had given up Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, but had gained a chunk of Savoy plus the regions around Avignon and Nice. During the century, France had likewise acquired vast areas of northern and western Africa, as the European powers divided up the continent.

Although agriculture still played an important part in French national life at the start of the twentieth century, France had become a recognizably urban-industrial country. In 1800, some 15 percent of the French population had lived in urban places (by which French census-takers meant communes with 2,000 or more people in their chief agglomeration); by 1900, that figure had become 41 percent. In labor force terms, agriculture, forestry, and fishing had declined from about 55 percent of all employment in 1800 to about 40 percent in 1900; the labor force shift is less dramatic than the population shift because an important part of France's nineteenth-century urbanization consisted of a transfer of industry and services from countryside to city; the result was to leave the countryside more purely agricultural in 1900 than it had been for centuries before.

At our terminus, in the 1980s, the European map of 1900 was still visible. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, it is true, had cracked into a series of states, most of them beholden to Russia's successor state, the Soviet Union. In the Balkans, areas such as Bulgaria and South Serbia had shaken loose from the Ottoman Empire, spent some time in or under the shadow of Austria-Hungary, and eventually reformed into new states. A separate Poland had appeared in what had previously been western Russia and eastern Germany, while Germany itself had split -- or, rather had been

split -- into two hostile states. An independent Ireland and an independent Finland had come to life. France itself had recovered Alsace-Lorraine from Germany. Yet the alterations of the European map from 1900 to 1980 were much less dramatic than had been those of the nineteenth century.

Within the French boundaries, change continued. A population whose total numbers only increased slowly (from 39 million in 1900 to 52 million in 1976, including the effect of regaining Alsace-Lorraine) nevertheless redistributed radically. The French moved out from the interior, especially toward the north and east, piling up in cities as never before: 16 million people in urban places in 1901, 21.5 million in 1946, 28.5 million in 1962, 37 million in 1975. During the first three quarters of the twentieth century, real per capita income rose, according to Alfred Sauvy's measurements, from 58 francs in 1901 to 78 in 1946, 167 in 1962, and 315 in 1974. Whereas up to the beginning of the century agriculture, forestry, and fishing had merely declined relatively as a result of changing little while manufacturing and services increased much, as the twentieth century moved on agriculture declined absolutely; a little under 9 million workers in 1901, still around 9 million in 1921, about 7.5 million in 1946, just under 4 million in 1962, fewer than 2 million in 1975.

Equally important, but harder to illustrate with simple statistics, was the knitting together of the country by roads, trains, airplanes, and mass communications -- all systems centering on Paris to such an extent that it is often difficult to pass from one secondary point to another without going through the capital. The rhetoric of decentralization becomes an indispensable tool of administrations that nevertheless continue to concentrate their activity at the center. What people call decentralization is actually an increasing division of labor: surveillance and decision-making the growing specialities of Paris and its region, production, extraction, and amusement the expanding functions of other cities and other regions of France.

Five Cities, Five Regions

In order to get some sense how these processes worked, and how they transformed ordinary people's collective action, we must descend from the national heights. A comparison of five cities and their regions will help. Here is the roster: Dijon and Burgundy, Paris and its Ile de France, then Angers with Anjou, Lille with Flanders (and sometimes pieces of Hainaut, Cambrésis, and Artois as well), Toulouse with the Toulousain (and sometimes the whole of Languedoc).

In 1652, Peter Heylyn published a book demurely titled Cosmographie in Four Bookes. Containing the Chorographie and Hiftorie of the Whole World, And all the principall Kingdomes, Provinces, Seas, and Ifles Thereof. The section titled "FRANCE, Properly fo called," runs:

The firft place which the Franks or French has for their fixt habitation, was by that people honoured with the name of FRANCE; the firft green turf of Gallick ground, by which they took livery and feifin of all the reft. A Province now bounded on the Eaft with Champagne, on the North with Normandie, on the Weft and South with La Beauffe. To difference it from the main Continent of France, it is called the Ifle of France; as being circled almoft round with severall Rivers, that is to fay the Oife on the North, the Eure on the Weft, the Velle on the Eaft, and a vein-Riveret of the Seine toward the South. A Countrie not fo large as many of the French Provinces, but fuch as hath given name unto all the reft, it being the fate of many fmall, but puiffant Provinces, to give their name to others which are greater than they, if conquered and brought under by them . . . A Countrie generally fo fruitful and delectable (except in Gaftinois) that the very hills thereof are equally to the vallies in moft places of Europe; but the Vale of Monmorencie (wherein Paris ftandeth) fcarce to be followed in the Wor[1]d. An Argument wereof may be, that when the Dukes of Berry, Burgundie, and their Confederates, befieged that City with an Armie of 100000 men; neither the Affailants without, nor the Citizens within, found any fcarcitie of victuals; and yet the Citizens, besides Souldiers, were reckoned at 700000 (Heylyn 1652a: 154).

Thus the Fronde, just ending, provided Heylyn with evidence of both the centrality and the richness of the Ile de France.

When he came to the Dukedom of Anjou, rather enlarged in his account, Heylyn remarked that

The Countrie for the moft part is very fruitful and pleafant, efppecially in Tourein; as is the whole tract upon the Loir. Anjou is fomewhat the more

hilly, but otherwise little inferior to Tourein, affording plenty of white wines, the best in France: and yielding from those Hills above 40 Riverets, falling into the Loire from thence . . . (Heylyn 1652a: 167).

Languedoc was different:

The Country on those parts which lie next to Auvergne, is like the higher parts thereof, mountainous and not very fruitful; in all the rest, as rich and pleasant as the best provinces in France and having the advantages of Olives, Raifins, Figs, Orenge, and other fruits not ordinary but here, and in the neighboring Provence. In that participating the commodities both of France and Spain. The people have somewhat in them of the ancient Goths, and draw nearer to the temper of the Spaniards, than any other of the French, as being accounted very devout, great vaunters of themselves, affecting bravery above their condition and estates; not caring how they pinch it on the working days, or at home in private, so they may flaunt it in the street, and be fine on holydays. The humour also of the Women, and in them more pardonable (Heylyn 1652a: 183).

Peter Heylyn found Burgundy rather less appealing:

A Province so well watered with pleasant and profitable Rivers, that as Qu. Catherine de Medices used to say of France, That it had more fair rivers than all Europe; so we may say of this Country, That it hath more fine Riverets than all France; here being the Rivers of 1 Armanan, 2 Serun, 3 Curi, 4 Terney, 5 Valence, 6 Dove, 7 Brune, 8 Sein, 9 Louche, and 10 Soasne, (the Araxis of the ancient Writers) this last dividing the two Burgundies from one another. Yet, notwithstanding this great plenty of waters, the Country generally is less fruitful than the rest of France: hardly yielding sufficient for its own inhabitants, except wines only (Heylyn 1652a: 193).

As for Flanders, Heylyn reserved that description for his second volume, and the section on Belgium; in 1652, Flanders was not French, but Spanish, territory:

The Soyle indifferently fruitful in corn and pastures; the aire healthfull, temperate and pleasant. The whole Country not in length above 90. miles, and in breadth but sixty; and yet containing in that compass above thirty Cities (for they reckon all Cities which be walled) 1154 Villages; which stand so thick (as needs they must in so narrow a compass) that the Spaniards at their first coming in with King Philip the second, took the whole Province for one Town (Heylyn 1652b: 7).

Five regions, then, quite different in character: a capital and its hinterland, an old agricultural district, a vast and culturally distinctive southern province, a relatively poor frontier area blessed with a rich vineyard, a thickly-settled commercial region just beyond the border. These are the five sections whose experience with contention

we are exploring and, in the measure possible, attempting to explain.

The selection of five regions from the fifteen or twenty that easily suggest themselves is necessarily arbitrary. Dare we neglect Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, Nantges, Le Havre, or even Limoges? Can we let those five provinces speak for Alsace, Provence, Corsica, Berry, Brittany? No: There is no way to choose five areas that sum up all of France, especially when we have four centuries to survey. Yet the attempt to follow the ebb and flow of contention throughout the entire country over nearly four centuries would be even more futile than the search for a scientific microcosm. The point of scrutinizing five cities and their regions is to keep the analysis manageable, yet to assure some differences among the points of observation. If common patterns emerge, we gain confidence that they hold for the country as a whole. If persistent differences appear, we acquire a sense of the factors that underlie those differences.

Dijon and Burgundy. For most purposes our "Burgundy" is a shrunken relic of its historic self, the territory of the present-day department of Cote d'Or. Now and then we stray into the adjacent department of Saone-et-Loire, which includes the lower portion of the Burgundy incorporated by France in the fifteenth century, and which extends almost to Lyon. The region remained a national frontier until Louis XIV made his conquests to the east; for a long time, like other military frontiers, it remained under the patronage of great princes, whose loyalty to the crown was always contingent on the benefits they received. Wine dominated Burgundy's long-distance trade, and fine wine capped the products of an essentially agricultural region. In addition to Dijon, Chatillon-sur-Seine, Semur-en-Auxois, Beaune, and other Burgundian cities all figured importantly in the region's collective action.

Paris and the Ile de France. The "island" of France consists of the territory blocked out by the rivers Eure, Yonne, Marne, Aisne, and Epte, cut through by the greatest river of them all, the Seine. Beauvais, Compiègne, Fontainebleau, and

Chartres mark its outer limits, its areas of competition with Maine, Normandy, Picardy, Champagne, and the Orleanais. Since the 1960s the administration of the Ile de France has fallen into seven separate departments: Val d'Oise (capital: Pontoise), Yvelines (capital: Versailles), Essonne (capital: Evry), Val de Marne (capital: Créteil), Hauts-de-Seine (capital: Nanterre), Seine-St. Denis (capital: Bobigny), and Paris itself. Today's Seine-et Marne (Melun), plus significant chunks of Oise (Beauvais) and Aisne (Laon) also belonged to the old-regime province.

From a commercial and political viewpoint, Paris has dominated this entire region since the later Middle Ages. Until recently, however, the area outside the great walled capital divided into three quite different sorts of places: estates of great magnates (ecclesiastical, noble, and bourgeois alike); zones of intensive cash-crop farming, sometimes overlapping with the estates; towns and small cities having their own commercial rationales. For the century before the Revolution, Versailles partly displaced Paris as the effective capital of France. In the twentieth century, despite repeated attempts at comprehensive planning, and despite the survival of gorgeous forests, parks, and castles, the entire region has coalesced increasingly into a single built-up metropolis centered somewhere between the Eiffel Tower and the Hotel de Ville.

Angers and Anjou. Angers, these days, is a city of 100,000 straddling the Maine River, a few kilometers north of the Loire, with a metropolitan area reaching down to the Loire. When the Constituent Assembly of 1790 blocked out France's departments, it did a fairly good job of approximating the old duchy of Anjou with the new department of Maine-et-Loire, and of separating it from the adjacent territories of Brittany, Poitou, Touraine, and Maine. Thus for most purposes the contemporary limits of Maine-et-Loire will serve as our Anjou. Under the Old Regime, Angers stood only in the third echelon of French political structure: it had no Parlement or Estates, and was administratively subordinate to an Intendant based

in Tours. Saumur, Beaufort-en-Vallée, Baugé, Segré, and other small cities play parts in the history of Angevin contention, although by comparison with Burgundy or the Ile de France Anjou's experience of the last three centuries is rather rural.

For a major part of that period, the province's fate depended especially on the fortunes of the Loire. The river carried Angevin wheat elsewhere in France, and the wines of its valleys -- Saumur, Layon, Muscadet, Cabernet, rosé d'Anjou -- into the export market. As the slave trade of Nantes flourished in the eighteenth century, a vast, export-oriented textile industry grew up in rural areas both north and south of the Loire. As a result of the nineteenth-century decline of slaving and the acute competition of cotton fabrics with the linens of Anjou, that Angevin textile industry contracted, and concentrated in a few small cities such as Cholet.

Lille and Flanders present quite a different picture. Only wrested definitively from the Habsburgs in the seventeenth century, on the Belgian frontier to this day, partly Flemish-speaking and strongly tied by culture, trade, and population movements to portions of the Low Countries that remained outside of France, the region was conquered foreign territory to a much larger degree than any portion of Anjou, Burgundy, or the Ile de France. The Department of the Nord, which will serve as our practical definition of Lille's region, does not approximate any previously-existing unit, social or political, very accurately. It corresponds roughly to the northern territories France acquired from the Habsburgs in the 1678 Treaty of Nimwegen, by which Franche-Comte also became French. The name "Flanders" is an inaccurate shorthand: after centuries of struggle and transfers between France and its neighbors a major part of the Flemish territory remained outside of French control; furthermore, the Nord not only touches Picardy, but contains sections of the historic provinces of Cambresis, Artois, and Hainaut as well.

None of this means the region of Lille was insignificant. It was one of France's earliest and most important manufacturing regions. Lille was a great textile

city, and its countryside hummed with small-scale spinning and weaving, long before the Revolution. During the nineteenth century, coal mining brought dust and prosperity to such centers as Anzin, as cotton spinning brought smoke and prosperity to such centers as Roubaix. The industrial triangle of Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing began to coalesce and to grow in that same century. Cambrai, Dunkirk, Valenciennes, Armentieres and other cities also participated in the expansion of manufacturing and commerce. Yet agriculture survived, and even prospered, in the Nord: among French departments, says Michel Morineau, only the Nord and the adjacent Pas-de-Calais "stand up to comparison with England, Belgium, and the Netherlands, the pioneers of European agriculture" (Morineau 1971: 30).

Toulouse and Languedoc. To go from Lille to Toulouse takes us almost from the English channel to the Mediterranean, into a different world. The Counts of Toulouse came under the control of the French crown long before 1600, yet the region maintained a distinctly Mediterranean language and culture long after then. A commercial and political capital back to Roman times, Toulouse retained its exceptionally autonomous municipal institutions, the Capitolat, against the claims of lords, bishops, judges, and kings. Nevertheless, the Generality (and therefore the Intendant) of Languedoc was not quartered in Toulouse, but in Montpellier. The modern-day department of Haute-Garonne, on which we will focus here, approximates the Toulousain, heart of old Languedoc. Languedoc as a whole is large; the province extends from the Mediterranean to fill an area west of the Rhone and northeast of the Pyrenees; Roussillon, Gascony, Perigord, Auvergne, the Lyonnais, Dauphiné, and Provence are all its neighbors. The Toulousain itself is Mediterranean and Roman: settled in large towns, raising olives and grapes in addition to its wheat.

Comparisons to Come

Dijon, Angers and Toulouse resemble each other as commercial and administrative headquarters for large rural regions. They also differ in important

ways; because their regions differ in culture and geopolitical significance; because Angers lost its political autonomy and influence to the French crown very early, while in different ways Toulouse and Dijon held onto important levers of power up to the Revolution; because the fine wines of Burgundy, the textiles of Anjou and the polycultures of the Toulousain, not to mention other economic differences among the regions, pulled their capitals in different directions. Paris and Lille have in common their major industrial concentrations, but differ dramatically in many other respects. If the histories of contention in these diverse regions display common characteristics, we will have some assurance that they result from processes that operated very generally in France. If they differ significantly, we will have some hope of identifying the bases of their differences.

Of course there are some common trends. In all these regions, we witness the rise of the state and the expansion of capitalism. We also see the impact of the two great changes on the contention of ordinary people. In all of them, we observe a seventeenth and an eighteenth century in which the state is reaching incessantly into local affairs and resources, in which the contention of ordinary people often aims at fending off the insatiable demand of royal officials for men, for money, for food, for services. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the fending off continued, but an increasing share of the action consisted of demanding something from the state; that new trend correlated with a nationalization of political power, a centralization of decision-making.

In all the regions, we also notice the growing prevalence of capitalist property relations: the destruction of common use rights, the shift toward production for sale, the setting of prices for all factors of production, including land, the growing dominance of wage-labor, the increasing power of the owners of capital as compared with those who own land or labor or technical expertise. These trends continued into the nineteenth century, when a new trend joined them: an increasing concentration of

capital, and a corresponding rise in the scale of producing units. Not all these trends were unilinear: by the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, there were few common use rights left to destroy, and the government was moving slowly toward the creation of new common facilities such as schools and hospitals; again, the family farm regained a measure of importance as wage laborers began to flee the countryside toward 1900.

It is also possible that since World War II, with the nationalization of a few industries and the increasing deliberate involvement of the state in economic policy, the power of capitalists with respect to government officials has declined. Possible, but not self-evident; the sticky question is how much government officials continue to serve capitalist interests. In any case, the drift of our period a a whole runs powerfully toward capitalism, more capitalism. On the whole, we find ordinary people resisting that drift, but ineffectually -- attempting to hold off the increasing power of the capitalists among them, attempting to hold on to their prior collective rights to land, labor, crops, and goods, resisting proletarianization, fighting the growth of disciplined large-scale production. Now and then we find them attempting to deflect the process, for example in the sporadic nineteenth-century visions of small-scale socialism. The great revolutionary moments involve a temporary synthesis of the resistance to the present with an alternative vision of the future. In 1789, for example, we discover a coalescence of resistance to the rising exactions of the state with a vision of a world in which property is the only basis of privilege.

In all the regions, finally, the bases on which people acted together, when they did act collectively, altered greatly. In very general terms, they moved from community to association. When our seventeenth-century Angevins, Toulousains, Burgundians, Flemings, and Parisians got together, it was generally as members of groups that included a large round of life: villages, guilds, age-grades, and the like. Those communities frequently had a recognized collective identity and distinctive

privileges, but they usually encompassed a broader range of shared interests and less often resulted from a deliberate decision to organize than is the case with the collective action of our own time. With the nineteenth century we observe a great increase in the deliberate creation and use of special-interest organizations: firms, unions, clubs, parties, and the like. Communities did not disappear, but they lost their dominance as the bases of collective action. In the process, the sheer scale on which people organized and acted tended to increase. On the average, it became more common for thousands of people from dozens of localities to take part in the same action: a strike, a demonstration, a boycott, an electoral campaign. Specialized associations and large-scale collective action rose together.

Specialized associations that organized action frequently drew their memberships from a single social class, and represented the interests of that class. Although unions and parties provide the salient examples, clubs, citizens' associations, and even recreational groups often worked the same way. Why not, then, speak of the emergence of a society of classes? After all, many observers have read the nineteenth century that way.

The reason for rejecting that label is simple: social classes also existed and acted in earlier centuries. They did not, however, bear the names capitalist and worker. They called each other landlord, rentier, peasant, agricultural laborer, artisan, and so on. In a world in which relationships to land made the profound sort of difference that relationship to capital makes in our own world, people who bore a common relationship to a given chunk of land were likely to build a whole round of life around that common relationship; classes were likely to form communities. Common relationship to the same land tended to mean not only common work, but also common residence, common means of subsistence, common privileges, common access to services, common religious identity, common marriage pool, common subjection to political authority. Interlaced, those common ties formed communities.

Because of the fluidity and spatial discontinuity of capital, a common relationship to a given block of capital does not generate communities as regularly as common relationship to a given block of land does. To be sure, that is a matter of degree: the capital fixed in a single large factory promotes the creation of homogeneous communities of owners, managers, and workers, unified by shared work and shared residence. But on the average capital generates fewer communities than land. When people having a common relationship to capital organize, they almost necessarily do so on a larger scale than do people who already belong to class-based communities. They frequently do so through the deliberate creation of specialized associations. The rise of capital as the great divider means the proliferation of associations and the increase of collective action's scale. Changing patterns of contention in Anjou, Burgundy, Flanders, Languedoc, and the Ile de France showed the net shift from community to association, from small scale to large, quite clearly.

Not only the scale, but also the character of collective action changed. Some features of the change should already be clear. For one thing, the relationship of collective action to daily, weekly, or annual routines altered. Back in the seventeenth century, a large share of all collective action went on in the context of routine, authorized public gatherings such as markets, fairs, processions, festivals, hangings, and local electoral assemblies. As the twentieth century approached, the relative importance of routine, authorized public gatherings declined. Instead, deliberately-called meetings, rallies, strikes, demonstrations, and other prepared actions became common means of getting together to act on shared interests. They broke with everyday routine. As a result, they gave the average individual a sharper choice between joining or not joining a collective action than his seventeenth-century ancestors faced. The organizer of a meeting or a demonstration can't count on the membership's being there as a matter of course.

If you look only at the nineteenth- and twentieth-century end of the

continuum, the change is easy to misconstrue. From the point of view of a contemporary organizer, it looks as though ordinary people used to be passive, unmobilized, uninvolved in politics -- as though it took the strenuous organizing of the last century to mobilize the masses. What actually happened was quite different: centralization of power tended to demobilize ordinary people and to make their ordinary routines irrelevant and ineffective as means of collective action. The nationalization of politics that eventually grew from the centralization of power did create new opportunities for collective action built around elections and similar institutions. It created the "problem" of mobilization, and an unprecedented opportunity for professional organizers to work at solving that problem. The social movement -- the sustained, organized challenge to the existing structure or exercise of power in the name of some large interest -- took shape. The whole repertoire of collective action changed.

As the repertoire of collective action detached itself from local daily routines, some of its quality as folklore disappeared. The ritual mockery, the effigies, the fifes and drums, the songs, the garish symbols faded from the forms of contention. The matter is not easy to sort out: part of the reason that a Lanturelu or the parading of a dummy on a gallows now looks like folklore is that twentieth-century observers see an antique sheen on almost any feature of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century life. The language is quaint, the clothing is museumlike, the names of people, shops, and trades are unfamiliar. A twenty-second-century student of American demonstrations in the 1960s will undoubtedly be impressed with the folklore of Yippies and Flower Children. Yet by virtue of its specialization and its detachment from everyday routine, the contemporary repertoire carries over less of the ritual and symbolism shared by particular local populations than did now-forgotten forms of contention such as food riots and charivaris. In that sense, at least, the history of French contention shows us a decline of folklore.

The same change has another side. Many of the older forms of action consisted of a crowd's carrying out -- sometimes in parody, sometimes in deadly earnest -- a routine that normally belonged to the authorities. Hanging in effigy, seizing stored grain and selling it below the current market price, decapitating a traitor and displaying his head, refusing the permit the collection of a tax until the collector produced full documentation of his right to collect it were all standard governmental routines; they also became significant features of "seditions" and "emotions". That borrowing of the place and the action of the authorities did not disappear in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it became less common and less salient. In a sense, the autonomy of the crowd and of the action increased. The power of the crowd and the efficacy of the action did not necessarily grow as a consequence; patronage and the borrowing of established routines were often very effective ways of pursuing common interests. The crucial change was the creation of autonomous, specialized forms and organizations for collective action.

In general terms, the forms and intensities of collective action vary as a function of three broad factors: interests, organization, and opportunity. All three altered significantly from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. We can see already that the rise of the national state and the expansion of capitalism greatly altered what sets of people had pressing common interests in collective action as well as the character of the interests they shared. The corporate trade and the self-sustained religious community, for example, virtually disappeared as the political coalition or the specialized occupational group became prominent interests. There is no doubt that the characteristic organization of such interests has changed. The most obvious change has been the rise of various forms of special-purpose association. Along with that change has come the increasing importance of professional organizers, running from committed revolutionaries to sleek fund-raisers.

The opportunities for collective action, too, have shifted dramatically. So far,

the aspect of that shift we have seen most clearly has been the nationalization of power and politics. Increasingly the action (or, for that matter, the inaction) of large organizations and of national states has created the threats and opportunities to which any interested actor has to respond. Increasingly, national politics have provided the channels within which an actor can deal effectively with the interest in question. Increasingly, the repression or facilitation applied to a particular actor by organizations of national scope -- and, especially, by the national state itself -- has determined whether the actor could act effectively at all.

For the moment, it would be idle to weigh the relative importance of changes in interests, organization, and opportunity. It would be premature to specify the ways they influenced each other. It is enough for now to realize that they were profound changes, that they occurred together and interdependently, and that they comprise much of what people have in mind when they talk about the modernization of politics or about political development.

In one perspective, these changes sum into the creation of a bureaucratic, capitalist, specialized world dominated by power governments, large organizations, and big cities. In another perspective, they amount to fundamental changes in the interests, organization, and opportunities that together govern the intensity and character of collective action. In yet a third perspective, they mean a profound alteration in the repertoires of contention employed by ordinary people. The three perspectives converge.

A comparison of five regions will serve to document and to specify the grand trends. It will help us understand how they work, and how they interact. There are, for example, strong correlations among the concentration of power in the state, the nationalization of politics, the enlargement of the electorate, the rise of the association as the chief vehicle of political action, and the increasing employment of the meeting and the demonstration as means of collective action. Why, how, and

with what regularity did those correlations occur? That is not so clear; a close look at the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will clarify the connections.

Consider another problem. We have all too many plausible explanations of the food riot's rise and fall: the changing cost of food, the changing policies of local officials, the changing beliefs and organization of poor people, the changing practices of merchants, and others. All of them probably played their parts in the seventeenth-century rise and the nineteenth-century fall of the food riot; but in what proportions, and in what connection with each other? Observation of food supply and of conflicts over food in the five regions should make the proportions and connections easier to grasp.

Comparisons will also identify significant differences. We will notice, for instance, a contrast between the more or less artisanal producers of fine Burgundies, who produced plenty of republican activists during the nineteenth century but remained aloof from large winegrowers' movements in the twentieth, and the increasingly proletarian winegrowers of Languedoc, who at one time supplied many recruits to anarcho-syndicalism, and later mounted large strikes and demonstrations aimed simultaneously at large distributors and at the state. We will see associations becoming prominent bases of contention in Paris and the Ile de France earlier than in the other four regions, and will have occasion to wonder why. Thus the differences, as well as the similarities, will lead us to further reflection on the relationships among capitalism, statemaking, and changing forms of contention.

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