

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND SOCIAL RADICALISM

British and French Workers' Movements and the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Crises

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Radicalism and Industrialization

Since France's revolution of 1848 and the British Chartist movement, numerous writers have linked the progress of industrialization to radical politics. Marx, like some other contemporaries, tended to draw examples of political radicalism and socialism from the French Second Republic, and a model of capitalist industrialization from Britain. This was misleading, for the more industrial country was the less radical. The confusion did not necessarily originate with Marx or other radicals. French Legitimists – “men of order” – conceived of popular agitation as both stemming from and producing “disorder.” The propertied classes of both France and Britain had long seen the “poorer sort” as lacking in self-control, irrational, and in need of moral discipline. Underestimating the extent of organization it took to produce a food riot or political protest, they saw these as the results of failures of order and discipline. It was but a short step from this long-standing view to the notion that industrialization brought a “breakdown” in the moral order, in which people's baser passions were set free to wreak havoc on respectable life. Sexual license, thievery, and socialism appeared as more or less comparable results of social disorganization. According to this “breakdown of moral order” view, riots or political agitation attending the process of industrialization are most importantly the product of early factory workers because of the breakdown of social organization among them.¹

The same central empirical assertion – that factory workers should be the predominant figures in protest during the process of industrialization – comes from Marx. Marx, however, worked with a different causal argument. Far from a “breakdown,” he suggested that industrial workers had a

variety of relatively new social strengths because they were united in cities and large workplaces, because they more obviously shared the same experiences of transparent exploitation, and because they were in more similar circumstances. The radicalism of the new proletariat, with factory workers at the core, would thus grow as capitalism grew, leading eventually to a working-class revolution. In his essays on the French revolution of 1848 and the class struggles of the Second Republic, Marx was insistent about the centrality of the proletariat and about the novelty of its task. In a famous passage of “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon,” he rejected the “venerable disguise and borrowed language” in which the proletariat carried out its struggle.² As he had written two years before:

The revolution could only come into its own when it had won its *own original* name and it could only do this when the modern revolutionary class, the industrial proletariat, came to the fore as a dominant force.³

Marx made his contempt for the traditional French peasants, “the great mass of the French nation,” manifest as he blamed them for the success of Louis Napoleon and the failure of the revolution.⁴ Abundant evidence from recent research, however, shows first the centrality of urban artisans to the existence of the socialist struggle under the Second Republic; second, the importance of peasants and rural craftsmen in the defense of the Republic and especially the insurrection of 1851; and third, the relative unimportance of factory workers to the whole affair.⁵

We need to see revolution against capitalism as based not in the new class that capitalism forms, but in the traditional communities and crafts that capitalism threatens. Rootedness in a social order challenged by industrial capitalism can make political and economic opposition radical and provide the social strength for concerted struggle. Those who fight on such a basis are not always the beneficiaries of revolutions in which they fight, and the success of those revolutions depends on a variety of other factors from weaknesses in state power to the presence of organizations capable to administer the postrevolutionary state. Nonetheless, I think such groups have been, and remain, crucial to a wide variety of struggles, including those of France between 1848 and 1851. And I think that describing them as members of the “working class” stretches that term beyond all recognizable connection to Marxian theory.

Tilly has captured something of this in his discussions of the “modernization” of protest in mid-century France, showing the extensive organization and mobilization of resources necessary to political agitation.⁶ He has also

stressed the importance of repression, suggesting that discontent usually is quite widely distributed; it is the means and opportunities to act that are scarce.⁷ Following Tilly, Merriman thus sees a radicalization during the Second Republic.⁸ The revolution of February 1848 removed much of the threat of state repression. Peasants, rural craftsmen, and others were then able to pursue long-standing collective goals – such as the desire of peasants to regain forest rights. But during the course of the Second Republic, more and more explicit political claims began to be expressed, intermixed with traditional grievances. Peasants who had previously only been concerned about immediate economic issues began to worry about the future of a republic that they had initially welcomed coolly at best. Where the early mobilization was traditional in orientation, based in the formal bonds of local communities, and provoked directly by the agricultural crisis, the later period showed more formal organization, more complex ideology, and a greater independence of immediate circumstances. The mobilizations of the later period, however, faced an intensifying state repression that limited their efficacy and eventually forced discontent underground during the Second Empire.

Tilly situates this scenario within a transition from defensive to offensive, “reactive” to “proactive” forms of collective action.⁹ The transition is marked by an increasing importance of formal organizations, especially coalitions among different organizations each representing special interests, and the corresponding disappearance of communal groups from politics. Reactive struggles occurred largely during the early nineteenth century in France, Tilly suggests, as the state attempted to expand and improve its centralized control. Proactive struggles replaced reactive after the state succeeded in asserting its control and a national market had been established.¹⁰ Proactive struggles fought for self-consciously chosen goods, with more complexly worked out strategies, within the arena defined by state power. Tilly’s examples of reaction include “the tax rebellion, the food riot, violent resistance to conscription, machine-breaking, and invasions of enclosed land.”¹¹ His work implies the view that proactive action represents progress over reactive, and thus might be taken to support a Marxist prediction of revolutionary mobilization in advanced capitalist societies (though he thinks strong modern repressive apparatuses will minimize the chances of success for such mobilizations).

Some of the limits of reactive collective action are apparent; we need to ask, however, whether proactive collective action does not also have important limits. I shall suggest two. The first is a limit of vision. The sorts of “proactive” movements Tilly describes, with their formal organizations, literacy,

and rational plans tend to grow up within advanced industrial societies, and their vision of alternatives is thereby diminished. With a characteristic rationalism, Marx and many other radicals have dismissed the traditions of common people as mere hindrances to their future emancipation.¹² Yet it may well be that only those with a strong sense of the past, with an immediately lived notion of what a more human, democratic, or socially responsible society would be like, are likely to conceive of a future radically different from those which capitalism and “actually existing socialism” are already bringing. Craft workers and peasants facing industrialization in Britain in the 1810s or France in the 1840s had such a sense. They had it not because they had read more history books, but because within their crafts and local communities they lived another kind of life from industrial capitalism.¹³ If they were “traditional” it was because of the manifold immediate exchanges in their everyday lives, not because of mere historical recollections. Community life and family life may still quite often pose that sort of alternative vision to the public life of industrial society. That vision may become part of a radical challenge to social trends that threaten it.

The second limit on the collective action of Tilly’s characteristic proactive groups is organizational. Traditional communities knit people closely to each other and provide social organization ready made to their members. This means not only that members of such communities do not have to pay high initial costs for the creation of organizations to pursue their interests, but also that they know more readily whom to trust and whom not to. This helps reactive mobilizations to survive in the face of repression – such as that of the Second Republic. Proactive struggles, based on associational groups, can be much more precise and flexible in their actions; their actions tend, however, to be “large and brief.”¹⁴ For related reasons, such as their investment in formal organizations and their awareness of numerous possible courses of action, the members of such groups are not often likely to be very radical in their actions. This is a central reason for the characteristic reformism of the modern working class.

Britain: From Radical Politics to Economic Reform

E. P. Thompson has understood the political implications of the emergence of associational, proactive politics as well as anyone. In a brilliant essay, he stresses the significance of 1832 as a watershed in the history of English popular struggle.¹⁵ In the first place, workers in 1832 did not face a relatively amorphous elite class, but a specific, predatory group – notably the landowners who stood most to benefit from high corn prices – that had control of the state apparatus, and therefore made “governing institutions appear as the

direct, emphatic, and unmediated organs of a 'ruling class'."¹⁶ The strength of popular struggle, however, threatened bourgeois, as well as agrarian, interests; the bourgeoisie did not make revolution against Old Corruption precisely because its members feared the sort of radicalization that did occur in the France of the Second Republic. As a consequence, struggle within the upper classes was resolved in favor of *laissez faire* and moderate reform of Parliament; because landowners in England were also capitalists this was hardly a victory for some ancient aristocracy. On the contrary:

1832 changed, not one game for another but the rules of the game, restoring the flexibility of 1688 in a greatly altered class context. It provided a framework within which new and old bourgeois could adjust their conflicts of interests without resort to force.¹⁷

This settlement changed the nature of struggle, perhaps permanently. Chartism was not defeated in 1848, Thompson suggests, but pulled apart from within well before that. Throughout his work Thompson has stressed the importance of "customs in common" as a source of radical visions and unity; he has argued the radical potential of struggles in defense of a "moral economy."¹⁸ He has also recognized that:

once a certain climactic moment is passed, the opportunity for a certain *kind* of revolutionary movement passes irrevocably – not so much because of "exhaustion" but because more limited, reformist pressures, from secure organizational bases, bring evident returns.¹⁹

Britain had made this transition by the early 1830s. The phase of industrial mechanization and factory building that began in the 1820s introduced a fundamental, if not necessarily insuperable, split into the ranks of workers. During the next forty years, capitalist industry conquered Britain. In one industry after another new capital was introduced, often accompanied by mechanization and the building of factories. By the 1840s handloom weaving had been virtually eradicated and there had been two major waves of factory building in the cotton industry. Steam power was becoming widespread and production units were becoming larger. Railroad construction proceeded rapidly; coupled with the preceding era's completion of thousands of miles of canals, it made Britain a much more unified market than France. All this does not mean that local markets or handcrafts ceased to exist. Rather, a balance had been tipped, and there was no retreat from the spread of modern capitalist production and distribution, at least for a long time.²⁰

Samuel²¹ has stressed the gradualness of the eradication of hand production, but it should be borne in mind that by mid-century, the leading sectors of the economy had been largely mechanized. Mechanization itself created new handcrafts, or welled the ranks of old ones, only to destroy them a short time later when it overcame the last of the bottlenecks in a particular production

process. Resistance to such a spread of capitalist industry and destruction of smaller scale and especially handcraft work had been much greater before 1820. From the first rumblings of such industrialization in the 1780s through 1820 there had been a growing populist attack on the new system. This continued through the 1820s and 1830s and was important in the birth of Chartism. The growth of a population for whom factories were the source of livelihood, rather than a threat to a way of life, greatly undermined this resistance. Industrial strikes supplanted machine breaking and populist attacks on the corruption of elites not because the same people were becoming more modern in their attitudes, but because a new working class was supplanting the members of the older, more heterogeneous trades of preindustrial Britain. By mid-century most Britons were anxious for the prosperity they expected to come with further developments of capitalist industry. Several rural crafts and urban artisanal trades survived with some prosperity into the last part of the century. They were, nonetheless, vanishing one by one from the 1820s on. The very gradualness of mechanization may have made resistance harder; unlike a cyclical depression that affected everyone, to be replaced by machines was an isolating experience. The early years of textile industrialization had threatened more unified craft communities. Handworkers were concentrated together in villages such as those of the Pennines where they completely predominated. In the Victorian period, artisans and craftsmen occupied an ever-shrinking niche in a larger economy, and became minority groups in industrial cities. When the pressure came, many of the crafts simply petered out, unable to support the children of once-proud master craftsmen. Throughout the Victorian era, the gradual transformation from a population of traditional craftsmen to one of modern industrial (including clerical) employees weakened the organizational base for British popular radicalism. It also gave the ascendant “modern” group the opportunity to compare its circumstances favorably to those of the people it was supplanting. The factory working class was stigmatized at its birth as unruly, immoral, and lacking in discipline. Into its maturity, much of its effort went into proving itself “respectable” in its own eyes and those of its alleged betters.

During the 1830s, this long-term quest for “respectable” status was already underway. Sunday schools – both religious and secular – taught literacy and propriety.²² The temperance movement campaigned to restore moral discipline and to save working people from the evils of drink and themselves; it was not simply a movement imposed from without, but rather had strong resonance among workers.²³ This quest for respectability overlapped with political struggles. Workingmen differed over the extent to which they should allow their institutions to be engaged in political debate – let alone

action. Middle-class reformers, such as those behind the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, militated to put forward an anti-insurgent definition of respectability.²⁴ There were also traditions emphasizing the inherent dignity and respectability of labor, traditions that were perhaps more widespread among artisans.

Owenite socialists split on this wedge. For many members, the movement was focused on consumption and was simply an economic tool for providing cheaper goods; these were the famous “shopkeeper socialists.” For others, Owenism meant producer’s cooperatives; success was only occasional at best, and the cooperatives tended to appeal primarily to artisans suffering from extreme hardship.²⁵ For still others, Owenism was a political economic movement. Within it, such men as Hodgskin first formulated theories of class exploitation based on a labor theory of value.²⁶ Such a theory applied most directly to the “new working class,” for it was framed mostly in terms of the direct sale of labor rather than sale of goods and services characteristic of most artisans.

If the first twenty years of the nineteenth century had been dominated by the resistance of reactionary radicals to proletarianization, the second twenty or so years – up to the Chartist convention of 1839 and perhaps the riots and strikes of 1842 – were years of ambivalence. Some unity was forged between factory workers, privileged artisans, and degraded craftsmen; this unity gave birth to Chartism. But Chartism was pulled apart by the differences among these groups – differences in both their strengths and their interests. The early years of the movement were the strongest, because the reactionary radicals were still numerous and somewhat optimistic. The later years saw the movement rent by struggles over whether or not to use the threat of physical force, and how seriously to take Feargus O’Connor and Bronterre O’Brien.²⁷ Chartism was thus disintegrating throughout the 1840s and 1850s, even while men such as Ernest Jones were refining its theoretical foundations, and Marx and Engels were trying to push a Chartist revolution along. By the 1860s, factory textiles was an old industry; the cotton famine caused much misery and some protest, but little political activism. When popular politics was again important in Britain, it would be as labor politics, with the characteristic reformism of the working class predominant. This is the result, moreover, not of some failure of capitalist penetration or capitalist domination of government as Thompson’s opponents Anderson and Nairn would argue, but of the completeness and stability of capitalist transformation. Workers no longer had strong “radical roots” in preindustrial social organization.

From the 1820s, unions began to grow in Britain. Their progress was fitful, and made uneven use of the cultural heritage left by the reactionary radicals.²⁸ Many unionists, however, kept their economic struggles separate from the political activities of Chartism.²⁹ Groups such as the textile spinners were a prosperous elite concerned with maintaining their privileged position within industrial production. More generally, “economistic” trade unionism simply offered workers within “modern” industries a relatively low-risk, controllable, effective line of action. They did not need to turn to politics the way handloom weavers had, because they were neither desperate nor trying to stop a whole pattern of economic change. Capitalist industry and elite politics had strengthened and stabilized enough to offer concessions. For the most part, the factory workers’ cause, even though hard-fought, was not fundamentally radical.³⁰

There were still riots and some undercover organizing in the 1820s, in response to the 50% increase in the number of cotton mills during the middle years of the decade and a trebling of the number of power looms during the decade as a whole.³¹ The very scale of growth of the factory workforce within the textile industry indicates that the reactionary radicals were losing their battle there. In the early 1830s, during another wave of factory construction, the numbers of handloom weavers and factory workers in the cotton industry reached parity.³² The handworkers were much more important to Chartism, disproportionately active and disproportionately in the leadership. Their numbers declined rapidly after 1831. This is one reason why the 1832 mobilization was the watershed Thompson suggests. As handwork waned, cotton workers came to follow a separate set of concerns from those of other industries. The textile industry was not only the country’s largest industrial workforce, it was the industry in which industrialization had most clearly provoked a radical reaction. The metal industries had followed a largely similar pattern. Elsewhere, the members of privileged trades had mobilized, but lost the battle for an artisan vision of politics and economics.³³ The majority of British workers were still engaged in agriculture or handicraft production, but workers in the leading section of the economy had been split from them, fundamentally inhibiting united action. Factory workers – especially the skilled and prosperous among them – formed unions. Artisans outside of factories still defined collective interests, but they were seldom faced with rapid collective eradication. The need to have their children leave the old trade could be sad, but forced no radical response. Capitalism had stabilized, offering more shared prosperity and less sense of alternatives. Politics too had changed. Elites had embarked on a series of successful compromises with each other and the gradual inclusion of more and more common people in the electoral process. This crucially changed the scale of

politics. It became more centralized, more impersonal, and more inescapably the province of formal organizations. The overlapping insurgences of 1832–34 were the last major eruption left to the old populist radicalism.

Workers reacted to the Reform Act of 1832, which they had thought would bring substantial democratization to public affairs, but benefitted only the middle class. They reacted to the oppressive and degrading New Poor Law of 1834, with its attempt to coerce the poor into accepting a more disciplined life on the bottom rung of capitalism's ladder. They reacted to the artificially high food prices maintained by the Corn Laws. And, in a last major attempt to save traditional crafts and communities, they reacted to the growth of mechanized industry and the national unification of markets. In the course of all these reactions, the radical craft workers gave birth to Chartism, but as a disappearing breed they were unable to see it through to fruition. The "Plug Plot Riots" of 1842 were the last English riots of any scale to combine politics with anti-industrial agitation. They were part of a wave of agitation that included an attempted Chartist general strike and some specific trades' actions.³⁴ But the events are as significant for the struggles they reveal within Chartism and the workers' movement, as for their intensity. Chartism barely limped along for the next several years. During the crisis of 1846–48 it seemed momentarily to take on new life, but this was an illusion; whereas millions would sign petitions, very few were interested in risking much in an insurrectionary mobilization. O'Brien put on a brave front, but there was no movement behind.

With the consolidation of industrial capitalism in Britain there came a consolidation of labor reformism. Stable formal organizations could be constructed to carry on long-term campaigns for incremental but certainly not negligible gains. To pursue these struggles, and to recognize the commonalty of the members of the modern working class, might well be called "class consciousness." We need always to remember, though, that this was consciousness of the effectiveness of trade unionism and political reformism, not of a need for radical, transformative struggle for revolution.

France: The Struggle for a Social Republic, 1848–51

The economic crisis that toppled the July Monarchy began with potato blight and bad harvests; the politics and economics of the period had deep roots in traditional society. The agricultural crisis led to financial and industrial crises. Distress was widespread. At first rural areas were hit hardest, but later the new textile industries of the North suffered more because market constriction cut workers' incomes at precisely the time food

prices skyrocketed. When harvests improved, textile workers were still unemployed. At this point only does the story become novel. The crisis deepened into a full-scale depression because the Parisian bourgeoisie, acting in concert with radical artisans and a few others, toppled the government of Louis Philippe. The February revolution was remarkably easy, like blowing on a house of cards; still there was panic on the bourse, and a capital shortage that intensified the industrial crisis. This continuation of the depression, and the government's early tax measures, helped to alienate potential popular support.³⁵ The revolution initially took the form of a struggle among different factions of property owners; later, most of these joined together in fear of attacks on the privilege of property.

The ideology of the revolution was republican; it focused on political liberties and allowed its adherents temporarily to paper over their economic differences.³⁶ Though the artisans of Paris had been a crucial revolutionary force, the bourgeoisie remained in firm control of the Provisional Government. Louis Blanc had only a slight influence, and other radicals generally less. Still, unemployed workers had manned the barricades in Paris and they remained a threatening presence. The government responded with universal suffrage and make-work programs. The sense of unity and brotherhood of the early spring did not last long. In the countryside, peasants and rural craftsmen seized forests that had been taken from them, attacked tax collectors and the worst of the nobles, and paid only scant attention at first to the ideology of republicanism.³⁷ Workers in provincial towns proclaimed the republic and in many cases seized control of local government. They used the opportunity to advance their interests, often a defense of traditional working conditions, against employers.³⁸ For both peasants and workers, in the provinces and in Paris, the revolution offered a new chance to pursue key traditional goals. Peasants, of course, sought land and freedom from taxation. Workers sought both a respect for their labor and an opportunity to be their own masters and make a decent living. It was in these struggles, rooted in tradition and waged by whole communities, that the revolution was radicalized – not just in the abstract rhetoric of republicanism and socialism. Indeed, Amann has argued that the social revolution grew up outside and partially despite the “purely political” concerns of most of the radical Parisian clubs.³⁹

By June 1848 the illusion of solidarity between workers and bourgeoisie had broken down. Even the largely middle-class political clubs found themselves estranged from the government. There was an insurrection in Paris, with one or two provincial echoes; it was crushed. The gradual march into repression was underway. Repression gathered speed when Louis-Napoleon was elected president on December 10 of that year. Only in the spring of 1849 did the

left begin to gain strength nationally. Where conservatives and moderates had predominated in the elections of April 1848, in May 1849 Red Republicans, bourgeois socialists, and not a few radical artisans were elected representatives. Peasants who had initially been hostile to the republic because of its taxation program were the object of intensive propaganda from the left. It paid off. Through the repression of 1849–50, peasants in many parts of the country became increasingly radicalized and extreme measures had to be taken against them. The Bonapartist regime was even more concerned to keep the towns in ideologically dependable hands, and it had to win a number of fights to do so. By virtue of extensive repressive efforts, however, the government succeeded in preparing the way for Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851. The coup was followed by an insurrection, but only some seventeen departments were able to mount much of a radical mobilization.⁴⁰ Popular struggle to preserve the democratic republic and make it socially responsible involved new elements but had old roots. At no state of the struggle was a proletariat of the sort Marx would define in *Capital* prominent. In Paris, artisans and employees in small workshops formed the mainstay of popular radicalism – and to a large extent of popular conservatism.⁴¹ Elsewhere rural craftsmen, peasants, and urban artisans were the groups from which “democ-socs” came, led sometimes by their own members and sometimes by bourgeois socialists, especially professionals.⁴² Merriman has shown the weakness of support among the industrial workers of Limoges and the Nord, where repression was fairly complete and where radicalism had only prospered (a) under outside leadership, and (b) through workers' associations devoted primarily to narrow economic goals.⁴³

In France, factories spread much more slowly than in Britain and, in the end, much less completely. Part of the reason was the preference of French capitalists for government finance over industrial investments. Landes has noted the small size of establishments, the preponderance of very cautious family firms, and the delay of corporate financing until the boom of the 1850s and 1860s.⁴⁴ Most of the old crafts persisted, many even finding a way to adapt to partial mechanization. When factories did come in France, they tended to be smaller than in Britain.⁴⁵ In France, moreover, the industries characterized by small-scale establishments were the ones with the highest productivity, which gave them a greater resilience.⁴⁶ New transportation and communication industries were also relatively slow to develop in France. The canal age was virtually bypassed and railways lagged well behind Britain.⁴⁷ Most of all, Frenchmen stayed on the land. In Britain at mid-century, industrial labor produced only 84% as much, per capita, as agricultural labor, while in France at the same time, it produced more than two and a half times as much per capita as agricultural labor. The other side of this coin is

that in mid-century, when 67% of the British labor force was employed in industry, the same percentage of Frenchmen was employed in agriculture.⁴⁸ The vast majority, moreover, were owner-occupiers with only a few hectares of land – nearly 40% less land per agricultural worker than in England; not only was land scarce, but France had much less animal power to use in agriculture, perhaps only half as much and as good as Britain.⁴⁹ France was, indeed, even more rural than the predominance of peasant agriculture suggests, for rural handcrafts were common. These workers were often impoverished, but estimates of their wages have little significance, because they generally retained either small plots of land or close kinship ties to peasants that subsidized their cost of living. Domestic textile crafts were more widely dispersed in the France of 1847 than they had been in the Britain of thirty years before.

This image of variety is important, for the radical workers of the Second Republic struggled at once for a variety of particular goals and for a common vision of democratic socialism. Sewell has chronicled the rise of the ideology of respectable labor and socialism through the early nineteenth century. He stresses most of all the continuity of the language of labor that motivated the “democ-socs” of 1848 with the corporate traditions of the old regime. Artisans had come under increasing pressure over the years, both from excessive competition with trades and from the introduction of more capitalist organization. It had grown hard in the first place for a journeyman ever to advance to the status of master, and in the second place, for an artisan to find steady work. Radical artisans drew on a notion that had long been developing – that labor is the source of all wealth – to demand that the republic recognize both the right to labor and the sovereignty of labor.⁵⁰ The former called for the Provisional Government to guarantee work to everyone. The latter held that work was to be organized on the principle of association that united men “for the defense of rights and common interests.”⁵¹

It was by developing the idea of association – that is, the voluntary aggregation of individuals into a constituted “society” of some sort – that workers eventually made their corporate organizations and their projects of collective regulation consonant with the revolutionary tradition.⁵²

This idea had been developing through the July Monarchy and had found expression in various smaller protests. By 1848 it had made workers’ ideology “distinctly socialist in character.”⁵³

If Parisian and many other workers had developed a broader socialist sense of commonality by 1848, it was not in opposition to their particular trades’

identities and concerns, but through them. Labor was not an undifferentiated category, but came in an infinitude of particular varieties; a worker was always a worker at some particular task, with some particular skill. Thus it was that “from the very beginning of the February Revolution, trade communities had acted as units in revolutionary politics.”⁵⁴ This particularism was carried to a fault in the desire of each corporation to have its own deputy in the Assembly (anticipating syndicalism), which meant that virtually none could succeed in getting elected because each trade was too small.⁵⁵ But trade communities did provide important intermediate associations, making the workers’ vision of a democratic and social republic perhaps a more viable one than the radical individualism/totalitarianism of the Jacobin “One and Indivisible Republic.”

Part of the corporations’ demand for the sovereignty of labor was a call for self-regulation within craft communities. In the countryside the demand for local autonomy was also strong. Joigneaux, a leading Montagnard propagandist and representative of the Cote d’Or, offered a populist message that stressed “the natural organization of the village unit as an ‘association’ benefitting all of its members.”⁵⁶ Where Paris had been organized through corporations and political clubs, local *chambrées* and *cafés*, with their old traditions and loyal members became key vehicles of provincial organization, along with traditional mutual-aid societies, producers’ cooperatives and consumers’ cooperatives.⁵⁷ Kinship could be crucial to uniting republicans in opposition to legitimists.⁵⁸ Local carnival traditions were harnessed to radical symbolic purposes; singing, allegory, and street theater were central to the perpetuation and dissemination of the message of the democratic and social republic.⁵⁹ More explicit messages were also spread through traditional relationships. This was important, for it alone allowed the continuation of the Montagnard campaign in the face of the repression; communities knit their members closely together, making it unlikely that anyone would willingly betray his fellows. In Albi, six masked men buried the Republic shouting “Down with the reaction” amid pomp and ceremony. Twenty-eight witnesses refused to identify them. As a result, “the repression failed to break completely the links of the radical apparatus at the communal level, especially among many rural artisans and proletarians.”⁶⁰ The ability of the Montagnard propagandists to find or make supporters of the democratic and social republic in the countryside was dependent on the fact that “they offered economic incentives not to isolated individuals but to groups of men who already shared a sense of collective solidarity.”⁶¹ It was their ability to work through already existing relationships that first brought the radical success, and then allowed them to keep up resistance to the repression and ultimately to launch the insurrection following the coup. So closely did lines

of radical social organization follow community membership, that “in the eyes of some young men, Montagnard societies were fraternities that they joined for social purposes; not to belong was tantamount to declaring oneself an anti-social being.⁶² Community was, in short, both the means by which radicals reached and mobilized peasants and rural craftsmen, village and Parisian artisans, *and* a part of the value for which they struggled.

The continuity of community life and traditional occupations was greatest in Paris and in small towns and villages. Only a few of the larger towns had comparable craft organization. Where they did, as in Rouen, there were militant attacks on the factories that threatened traditional livelihoods.⁶³ Margadant had indicated there was a good deal of movement from agriculture to rural crafts under the July Monarchy, but he still shows strong communities both among peasants and among rural craftsmen.⁶⁴ A key reason for this is that French handicrafts were generally rural, set up in or near the villages in which the peasant parents of current craftsmen had lived. Networks of kinship and communal relations could be expected to persist. More broadly, we see here the importance of France’s relatively stable population. The very fact of rapid growth contributed both to Britain’s larger population aggregates, and to her higher level of permanent mobility. French workers were much more likely either to remain in the same place or to maintain close ties when migrating. In both comparisons the French pattern would seem to promote greater communal solidarity. The smaller population aggregates within which most Frenchmen lived were more likely – sheerly on an argument from size – to be densely-knit with social relationships.⁶⁵ Frenchmen also worked in smaller workshops than their English counterparts; this too, on the same argument, implies a better social basis for mobilization.⁶⁶

In the struggle for a democratic and social republic, artisans and outworkers were the most important participants. They were more prominent in urban areas than unskilled workers.⁶⁷ And they were more prominent in rural areas than peasants.⁶⁸ Craftworkers were not the worst off people in France, though they were very poor. Paris’s urban artisans were quite prosperous by most contemporary standards. Why then should they have been at the center of the struggle? The central motto – democratic and social republic – gives a clue. A Parisian placard from 23 June 1848, held that the republic should be “democratic in that all citizens are electors . . . social in that all citizens are permitted to form associations for work.”⁶⁹ To whom could the second phrase mean more than to artisans and craftsmen?

Because of their deep roots in traditional crafts and local communities, artisans had a vision of a self-regulating, community-based social organization. Each tended to work on a whole labor process and sell the goods he finished, rather than simply selling his labor for use by a capitalist within a higher subdivided production process. This contributed to the notion of society as a federation of more or less comparable associations, and further suggested the only secondary importance of central government or centralized industrial control. One could translate this image, as did the radical journalist Joigneaux, into the terms of peasants' experience of village community, kinship, and common lands. Nothing would have pleased peasants more than to be rid of government intervention, which meant primarily tax collectors and military recruiters; even priests were only marginally tolerated outsiders in many areas.⁷⁰ For the most part, neither craftsmen nor peasants proposed to abandon private property; though a number of cooperatives were formed, mostly among craftsmen, they were both a minority choice and generally focused only on parts of economic life – marketing, usually, or consumption. Peasants and craftsmen did not attack property as such, but a new capitalist use of property, in which large properties destroyed smaller ones. It is accurate to say these groups were “reactive,” but not to imply they were merely reactionary. Their reactions to the incursions of capitalism, and capitalism's government, into their lives were quite radical, and used the experience of life in traditional corporations and communities to offer a distinctive alternative vision of a democratic and social republic.

Like the reactionary radicals of early nineteenth-century Britain, the democratic socialists of the Second Republic expected to be able to use peaceful persuasion and the vote to effect their programs. As the former group sought to gain universal manhood suffrage, so the latter group sought to retain it. This was not in itself very radical. Although the vote would be a major tool of working-class and popular reform; by the turn of the twentieth century, some radicals would feel it gave workers too much incentive to “work within the system.” The reason elites could tolerate universal suffrage by the late nineteenth century, or at least the early twentieth, was that by then “the people” were more fully a part of capitalist industrial society. This was even more true of Britain than of France, but in both cases, though workers might elect socialist representatives, they did not pose such fundamentally radical threats as the reactionary radicals had.⁷¹ The state, in any case, had built up a much more secure base and apparatus of coercion; it could deal with radical syndicalists and unions in a way the early nineteenth-century state could not deal with artisans and peasants. When the artisans and peasants sought to protect the republic, within its guarantee of universal manhood suffrage, they had more than continuous reform in mind. They had in mind such ideas

as a guaranteed right to productive employment for everyone – a “non-reformist reform”⁷² – for it could not readily be granted by the emerging capitalist elites without fundamentally altering the nature of their economic system. The growth of capitalism had rendered certain traditional demands quite radical.

The attempt to radicalize the revolution of 1848 failed, not just because of the defeats of June, but also because of the effective government repression. This repression was not, however, entirely the work of the bourgeoisie. Traugott has shown that the people on both sides of the June barricades were drawn from similar occupations.⁷³ Tilly and Lees have stressed the extent to which the June Days show protest in France becoming more modern.⁷⁴ This may have been true to some extent, but their article also suggests that one of the greatest differences between the artisans and workers who fought for the government, and those who fought against it, was that the latter were likely to have been mobilized through corporations and clubs. As Sewell and Amann have shown, however, these corporations and clubs were importantly based on tradition and community.⁷⁵ The workers of the June insurrection, or for that matter of the 1851 insurrection, were not first and foremost categories of individuals mobilized through formal organizations. They were members of close-knit communities, mobilized on the basis of those communities, to pursue ends congruent with and indeed defensive of those communities. Amann documents the great extent to which the clubs were local bodies⁷⁶; craft organizations were equally or even more communal. Their members had a new awareness of themselves, shaped in opposition (as Marx was right to note) to their newly manifest enemies in the bourgeoisie, but they were still reactionary radicals.

The research of Gossez, and especially more recently of Traugott, suggests that the clearest objective distinction that can be made between the groups of artisans and workers on either side of the June barricades is one of age.⁷⁷ That this factor was so important points up the centrality – and a central weakness – of the corporate sources of the radicalism in behalf of the social republic. Under increasing economic pressure, the trades has been transformed since the days of the old regime. First, masters in many industries had become capitalist employers, setting themselves apart from even the most skilled of artisans, for whom independence became a distant, if still real, hope. Then, work itself began to become scarce, especially in the crisis of the late 1840s. The more senior journeymen protected their positions not only by political mobilization, but by the exclusion of younger, especially immigrant, workers. The latter were more likely to be unemployed; when they had work, it was not likely to be in the highest quality workshops, but in cut-rate shops,

sometimes with a greater division of labor, nearly always making cheaper goods. Protecting the pride of the craft meant little to them, and the corporations were hardly their friends, because corporate seniority rules kept them from working. Though the radicals' demands for full employment would have benefitted these their poorer cousins, they were unable to make common cause with them. The very defensiveness of the radical orientation was one reason.

The Fruits of Struggle

We can only speculate about how the political-economic balance of the Second Republic would have been shifted had France been industrializing faster, or had her birthrate been higher. Perhaps the latter circumstance would have meant more youthful workers on the government sides of the barricades – or perhaps a sufficient weakening of the old communities so there would have been no barricades. But the struggle was fought, and fought in defense of traditional crafts and communities, in favor of old goals that would have produced a very new society. The movement was strong enough to mount a major insurrection against the *coup d'état*, even after two years of active government repression and a series of defeats beginning with the June Days. This certainly sets it apart from late Chartism. In Britain, mild petitions, and an only marginally successful demonstration, brought out a much better display of middle-class consciousness and strength. The British government made what seemed stringent preparations to preserve public order during the Chartist demonstration in London in 1848, yet its efforts were paltry beside the repression mobilized by the government of Louis Bonaparte. There had been little if any “preemptive” action in Britain; that was the order of the day in France. Of course, British workers had not had the boost of a recent bourgeois revolution. Still, the struggle in France was a major one, by any standards. To repress it bourgeois leaders whom we have no reason to suspect of being on principle antirepublican were forced to connive in the establishment of the Second Empire. The bourgeoisie had to give up its own republic to protect its capital and to have a stronger government, in no small part under pressure from below.

The struggles of the French Second Republic represent an important historical type. The revolution was set off by an “old-style” agricultural crisis, not by industrial overproduction or some other more “modern” cause. Struggle was conditioned, however, by new possibilities and new threats, even though it was carried out by largely traditional groupings. The radical struggle for a social and democratic republic was the product of a transitional moment. The social foundations of traditional craft corporations and local communi-

ties were strong enough to form the basis for the mobilization; at the same time the growth of capitalism and popular recognition of the threat it posed made such a struggle quite radical. Capitalism itself was not so strong that it was necessarily invincible – any more than in Russia in 1917. And capitalism had not yet recreated the majority of the working population in its more individualistic and bureaucratic image. Struggle like this may even have been an important limitation on the extent to which capitalism could ever completely destroy traditional communities.

NOTES

1. See, e.g. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution*. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959); "Sociological History: The Industrial Revolution and the British Working Class Family," in N. J. Smelser, *Essays in Sociological Explanation* (Prentice-Hall, 1968).
2. Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in D. Fernbach, *Surveys from Exile* (Penguin, 1973), 143–249.
3. Marx, "The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850," *ibid.*, 35–142.
4. "Eighteenth Brumaire," 238, 239.
5. See, among many, R. Price, *The French Second Republic: A Social History* (Cornell, 1972); J. M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848–1851* (Yale, 1978); T. Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton, 1979); and Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labour from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge University Press, 1980).
6. C. Tilly, "How Protest Modernized in France, 1845–55," in W. O. Aydelotte, A. G. Bogue, and R. W. Fogel, eds., *The Dimensions of Quantitative Research in History* (Princeton, 1972).
7. C. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, (Addison-Wesley, 1978).
8. In *The Agony of the Republic*.
9. C. Tilly, L. Tilly, and R. Tilly, *The Rebellious Century* (Harvard, 1975) 46–55. Tilly also notes an earlier competitive form of collective action, which is less political and less important to either his or our discussion. Feuds and rivalries between communities are examples. Throughout, Tilly's focus is on popular action, not the collective action of elites, which was proactive from an earlier date.
10. F. Caron, *An Economic History of Modern France*. (Columbia, 1979), 91–93 has argued that a national market only came to be established during the Second Empire.
11. Tilly, et al., *Rebellious Century*, 50.
12. This argument is developed in C. Lasch, "Democracy and the 'Crisis of Confidence,'" *Democracy*, 1/1 (1981), 25–40; and C. Calhoun, "The Radicalism of Tradition," *American Journal of Sociology*, 88/5 (1983).
13. See W. H. Sewell, "Social Change and the Rise of Working Class Politics in 19th Century Marseille," *Past and Present*, 62, 75–109 on craft-based social networks.
14. Tilly, et al., *Rebellious Century*, 53.
15. E. P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English," in E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory* (Monthly Review Press, 1979), 245–301.
16. Thomson, "The Peculiarities of the English," 258. 17. *Ibid.*, 260.
18. See especially E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, rev. ed. (Penguin, 1968), and "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, 50, 76–136.
19. Thomson, "The Peculiarities of the English," 281.
20. Issues of economic history, per se, are reviewed in C. Calhoun, "The 'Retardation' of French Economic Development and Social Radicalism During the Second Republic: New Lessons from the Old Comparison with Britain," in E. Burke, III, ed., *Global Crises and Social Movements* (University of California Press, forthcoming).
21. R. Samuel, "Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in Mid-Victorian Britain," *History Workshop Journal*, 3, 6–72.
22. T. W. Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability* (Yale, 1976).
23. B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815–1872* (Pittsburgh, 1971).
24. H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1790–1880* (Routledge and Kegan

- Paul, 1969) chs. 7, 8; T. Tholfson, *Working-Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England* (Croom-Helm, 1976) ch. 7; J. F. C. Harrison, *Learning and Living* (Routledge, 1961).
25. J. F. C. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (Scribners, 1969); S. Pollard and J. Salt, *Robert Owen: Prophet of the Poor* (Macmillan, 1971).
 26. T. Hodgskin, *Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital* (Kelley, 1822).
 27. D. Thompson, ed., *The Early Chartist* (South Carolina, 1971) chronicles the early period, when Lovett was particularly important. Most histories of Chartism concentrate more on its latter years. See R. G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement* (Merlin, 1969; orig. 1854); R. W. Slosson, *The Decline of the Chartist Movement* (Cass, 1967; orig. 1916); F. F. Rosenblatt, *The Chartist Movement in Its Social and Economic Aspects* (Cass, 1967; orig. 1916); J. T. Ward, *Chartism* (Batsford, 1973); D. Thompson and J. Epstein, eds., *Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830–1850* (Croom-Helm, 1982).
 28. Craft unions within old trades drew considerably on traditional culture; see, for example, R. W. Postgate, *The Builders' History* (National Foundation of Building Operators, 1923). Newer factory workers like spinners drew less on this heritage; see R. G. Kirby and A. E. Musson, *The Voice of the People: John Doherty, 1798–1854* (Manchester, 1975).
 29. See discussion in A. G. Read, "Chartism in Manchester," in A. Briggs, ed., *Chartist Studies* (Allen and Unwin, 1959); H. A. Turner, *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy* (Oxford, 1962); A. E. Musson, "Class Struggle and the Labor Aristocracy 1830–1860," *Social History*, (1976), 335–356.
 30. Perkin has argued this on the grounds of cultural, as well as economic, analysis.
 31. A. D. Gayer, W. W. Rostow, and A. J. Schwartz, *The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy, 1790–1850* (Harvester, 1975), 198.
 32. B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 187.
 33. I. Prothero, *Artisans and Politics* (Dawson, 1979) is the premier source on this process; see also Perkin.
 34. See F. C. Mather, "The General Strike of 1842: A Study in Leadership, Organization and the Threat of Revolution During the Plug Plot Disturbances," in J. Stevenson and R. Quinault, eds. *Popular Protest and Public Order* (Allen and Unwin, 1974), 115–140; A. G. Rose, "The Plug Plot Riots of 1842 in Lancashire and Cheshire," *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, LXVII, 75–112.
 35. Price, 123. 36. See M. Agulhon, *Marianne Into Battle* (Cambridge, 1981) 62–69.
 37. M. Agulhon, *La République au Village* (Plon, 1970). 38. Merriman, 3–25.
 39. P. Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton, 1975) esp. 164.
 40. Margadant.
 41. Price, 95–154; M. Traugott, "Determinants of Political Orientation: Class and Organization in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848," *American Journal of Sociology*, 86/1, 32–49; "The Mobile Guard in the French Revolution of 1848," *Theory and Society*, 9/5, 683–720.
 42. Margadant has shown this at length, but see also P. McPhee "On Rural Politics in Nineteenth Century France: The Example of Rodes, 1789–1851," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 23/2, 248–27.
 43. Merriman, 138–163.
 44. D. Landes, "Family Enterprise," in E. C. Carter, ed., *Enterprise and Entrepreneurs in 19th and 20th Century France* (Johns Hopkins, 1976), 43–80.
 45. P. K. O'Brien and C. Keyder, *Economic Growth in Britain and France 1790–1914: Two Paths to the Twentieth Century* (Allen and Unwin, 1978).
 46. It is worth remembering, though, that even in Britain at this point, the huge textile factories showed a productivity below the national average (O'Brien and Keyder, 157). Economists notwithstanding, increases in size often have much more to do with power than with efficiency or economies of scale.
 47. A. L. Dunham, *The Industrial Revolution in France, 1815–1848* (Exposition, 1955).
 48. O'Brien and Keyder, 94–95; P. Dean and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1815–1848* (Cambridge, 1969), 142–143, use a narrower definition of industry, but show a comparable distribution.
 49. O'Brien and Keyder, 105, 117, 127.
 50. Sewell, esp. 67.
 51. R. T. Bezucha, *The Lyon Uprising of 1834: Social and Political Conflict in a Nineteenth Century City* (Harvard, 197), 105.
 52. Sewell, 201–202.
 53. *Ibid.*, 251; see also Sewell, "Social Change and the Rise of Working Class Politics in 19th Century Marseille," *Past and Present*, 62, 75–109.
 54. Sewell, *Work and Revolution*, 252.
 55. Amann, 117–8; Sewell, *Work and Revolution*, 262.

56. Merriman, 42.
57. Agulhon, *La République au Village*, 230–245; Merriman, 57–59.
58. See McPhee for an excellent discussion on the continuities and importance of family bonds in political alliances.
59. Agulhon, *La République au Village*, 407–417. 60. Merriman, 87, 191.
61. Margadant, 140. 62. *Ibid.*, 161. 63. Merriman, 14. 64. Margadant.
65. B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics, 1750–1975* (Facts on File, 1980), 68–70; 81–83.
66. In Reims, the situation resembled the Lancashire of 15–20 years before. Most of the 3000 spinners worked in factories, but some 7500 weavers worked in 3500 shops. The latter were the most active politically, though there was more unity between groups than in England; Merriman, 70–1. I would suggest that weavers had both a stronger communal basis and a more pressing economic reason for struggle – though their long-term position was weaker. Studying Paris, Tilly and Less, 193, found a seemingly contradictory pattern – a low number of workers per patron implied a low rate of participation for an industry in the June insurrection. Traugott “The Mobile Guard in the French Revolution of 1848,” however, has shown their results to be the product of faulty categorizations of data.
67. Price, 163–166; C. Tilly and L. Lees, 170–209; Traugott, “Determinants of Political Orientation.”
68. Margadant, 92, 98, 100; Merriman, 202–03.
69. Merriman, 51. 70. Agulhon, *La République au Village*, 168–187.
71. Hirschman, indeed, has suggested that electoral politics may actually be depoliticizing: *Shifting Involvements* (Princeton, 1982).
72. Cf. A. Gorz, *A Strategy for Labor* (Beacon, 1968).
73. Traugott, “Determinants of Political Orientation,” and “The Mobile Guard in the French Revolution of 1848.”
74. Tilly and Lees.
75. In Tilly’s languages (borrowed from Harrison White), these groupings comprised “CATNETs”; that is, they were at once categories that could clearly distinguish their members from their enemies, and dense networks socially binding their members to each other. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, 62–64. They were, I suggest, novel or “modern” in the extent to which they mobilized “categories” through formal organizations, for proactive goals. Some of the most important of those organizations, however, were themselves quite old.
76. Amann, esp. 84.
77. R. Gossez, *Les Ouvriers de Paris, I: Organisation, 1848–1851*, *Bibliothèque de la Révolution de 1848*, vol. 24 (1967); Traugott, “Determinants of Political Orientation,” and “The Mobile Guard in the French Revolution of 1848.”

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