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## What's Happened to France? Sundays, Socialism, and Neoliberal Modernity

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WHAT'S HAPPENED TO FRANCE?  
SUNDAYS, SOCIALISM, AND NEOLIBERAL MODERNITY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Michael V. Metz

August 2016

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WHAT'S HAPPENED TO FRANCE?  
SUNDAYS, SOCIALISM, AND NEOLIBERAL MODERNITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

### WHAT'S HAPPENED TO FRANCE? SUNDAYS, SOCIALISM, AND NEOLIBERAL MODERNITY

by Michael V. Metz

The "Macron Law," liberalizing French Sunday shopping hours, created great controversy in the French media in the winter of 2014-15, with particular opposition coming from the political left and the religious right. The controversy seemed to symbolize deeper issues for French society, appearing to some as a watershed, to others a threat. Some citizens expressed concern that the "European way of life" was disappearing, being replaced by a more materialist, consumerist, extreme capitalist economic model that posed an overt threat to the traditional social protection system. Were these fears real or only imagined? To an observer, shops open on Sundays might only be a convenience, not an encroachment of "jungle capitalism," and the French welfare state, even with changes in recent years, still appeared quite generous. Was the Macron Law a simple adjustment of business hours, or was it an existential moment for the nation? Focusing on French socialism, the social welfare system, and the pivotal presidential years of François Mitterrand, this thesis argues that the evolution of the meaning of Sunday in France can be seen as a metaphor for the nation's political and economic development in the late twentieth century. The thesis contends that following the turbulent 1970s, as the neoliberal paradigm became dominant globally, France forged a unique approach, an acceptable path between that model and the nation's traditions, just as an accommodation was found in the Sunday shopping controversy, when aspects of religious and socialist traditions were compromised to meet the demands of modern life.

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I am appreciative to Doctor Pickering for her enthusiasm in sponsoring this thesis, and to Doctors Katsev and Mardellat for their careful review and insights. I am especially appreciative of Doctor Pickering's thoroughness in guiding my work. Her gracious and clear guidance improved the thesis immensely while her generous and collaborative attitude greatly enriched the experience.

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*You cannot seek for the ideal outside the realm of reality.*  
— Léon Blum

## **Introduction**

This thesis examines the evolution of the meaning of Sunday in France to help explain the social, political, and economic evolution of the country in the past half century. A 2014-15 effort to liberalize Sunday shopping restrictions caused a spirited national controversy that was eventually followed by an accepted, compromise settlement. The process reflected other conflicts and compromises involved in France's adaptation to the modern world. As we shall see in chapter three, the shopping legislation produced a remarkably passionate public debate, documented extensively in the French media, from *Le Monde* to *Libération*, and internationally, from the British *Independent* to New York's *Daily News*. The broad coverage suggested that the issue spoke profoundly to the identity of the nation. Similarly, the nation's political and economic adaptation to the strictures of late twentieth-century neoliberal modernity fundamentally shaped its sense of self.

Understanding the meaning of Sunday in the past provides background for the nation's modern development. In chapter three we shall see historical references from the writings of Virgil to the records of Catholic Church Councils, suggesting that ideals around the day often conflicted with practical necessities, and compromises resulted. From ancient times through the Middle ages, Sunday was a day of homage, set aside and differentiated from other days. Over time, Church doctrine normalized a Sunday

prescription for worship, rest, and work activities. Though today France has become more secular, the day retains a special character, one with less emphasis on worship and more on rest and relaxation, a day for family, friends, and self-restoration. Online discussions among French citizens published on the *Le Monde* website, (see pages 17-19) show that some believed that the legislation placed that formula under attack, and that an existential moment was at hand, with forces of global capitalism attempting to add a new component, commerce, to the Sunday formula, detracting from the sacrosanct nature of the day. Later in the same chapter we see media reports that the French left and conservative Catholics created a rare alliance vehemently opposed to the legislation.<sup>1</sup> The thesis examines the ancient and modern meaning of the day, the recent, alleged attack on the day, the fierce defense by the unusual alliance, and the compromise with the ancient ideal that the outcome represented.

In the United States, the nation of France is often thought of as a far left, socialist, unsustainable welfare state, but that analysis is too simple.<sup>2</sup> In fact forces of the last half century have caused the two countries to resemble each other in many ways. The countries' politics have become similar, with major parties of each country more alike than not in many of their policies. In France, radical socialist dreams are long past, and Marxist visions of a workers' revolution all but forgotten. The neoliberal political and economic construct that is dominant around the world today also reigns in France. The

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<sup>1</sup> Cole Stangler, "Macron Law: French Labor Reforms Force Vote of Confidence in Parliament," *International Business Times*, February 20, 2015, accessed August 27,

<sup>2</sup> Adam Nossiter, "Leaders of France's Socialist Party Defy Its Orthodoxy," *The New York Times*, October 16, 2015, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/17/world/europe/leaders-of-frances-socialist-party-defy-its-orthodoxy.html>.

critical transition occurred during the Mitterrand era of the 1980s, and the thesis examines this period closely.

However, there are unique attributes to the French adaptation to the dominant neoliberal modernity. In its acceptance of the realities of the modern world, France forced compromises, such as safeguarding its tradition of social welfare, demonstrated by the continued growth of the French welfare state, *le système de protection sociale*, as referenced in the work of economic historians Paul Dutton and Timothy Smith, cited in chapter nine. Today even the conservative *Front national* is as protective of citizens' welfare benefits (at least for the *vrai français*) as any party of the left.<sup>3</sup> This thesis argues that while accepting the strictures of the late twentieth-century neoliberal era, France followed a unique national path, an arrangement that maintained and carried forward aspects of its socialist tradition.

There is an immense amount of history on modern France; it is seemingly a particular favorite nation of academic study. Valuable overviews of the last half century were provided by historians Tony Judt, (*Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*), Konrad Jarausch, (*Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*), and Roger Price, (*A Concise History of France*). Revisionist historians who figure significantly in the thesis, especially because of their focus on the *système de protection sociale*, include the aforementioned Paul Dutton, (*Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947*), and Timothy Smith, (*Creating the*

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas B. Edsall, "The Rise of 'Welfare Chauvinism'," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2014 accessed August 6, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/opinion/the-rise-of-welfare-chauvinism.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/opinion/the-rise-of-welfare-chauvinism.html?_r=0).

*Welfare State in France, 1880-1940*), as well as Jean-Claude Barbier, (*The French Social Protection System in the Throes of Reform, 1975-2007*). Smith and Dutton in particular interpreted the thirties in France in a more positive light than did the better known Eugene Weber's *The Hollow Years*. Political historians who have written on the pivotal Mitterrand years include George Ross, Stanley Hoffman, and Sylvia Malzacher in *The Mitterrand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France*, and Julius Friend, who penned *Seven Years in France: François Mitterrand and the Unintended Revolution, 1981-1988* and *The Long Presidency: France In The Mitterrand Years, 1981-1995*. Economic historians who analyzed Mitterrand's failed Keynesian policies include Pierre-Alain Muet and Alain Fonteneau, in *Reflation and Austerity: Economic Policy under Mitterrand*. Jeffrey Sachs, Charles Wyplosz, Willem Buiter, Gerhard Fels, and Georges de Menil analyzed the shift from socialism to neoliberalism in *The Economic Consequences of President Mitterrand*. Richard Kuisel explored the *dirigisme* of successive French governments in *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* as well as the influence of Americanization in *The French Way: How France Embraced and Rejected American Values and Power*. Victoria de Grazia, in *Irresistible Empire*, detailed how the American way of doing business overpowered Europe on the way to achieving global cultural hegemony in the post-war years. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, in *The American Challenge*, presciently described an information-age future while positing a clear European response to the American challenge. François Denord provided valuable insights into the beginnings of neoliberalism in France with his essay *French Neoliberalism and Its Divisions: From the Colloque Walter Lippman to the Fifth*

*Republic*. This thesis examines philosophical views that underpin the neoliberal movement, including the idea of *homo economicus*, (man driven by self-interest), derived from the work of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mills, and it reviews extensive criticism of the neoliberal movement by Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jürgen Habermas. Benefitting from the analyses of these scholars, this work presents a case that sheds light on the social, political and economic compromises required to carry forward aspects of the nation's socialist tradition within the requirements of late twentieth-century neoliberal modernity.

The Sunday shopping legislation was debated in the National Assembly for over six months. The thesis presents the points of view of business people, politicians, shoppers, and French readers of *Le Monde*, who expressed their opinions in print and in online discussions. Protestors representing various interest groups took to the streets during the debate, and their words and actions are reviewed. For background on the evolution of Sunday, the thesis looks at the nineteenth-century historian A. H. Lewis and his review of the day in antiquity, from Babylonian kings to Greek philosophers, in *A Critical History of Sunday Legislation from 321 to 1888 A.D.* Defining decisions of Church Councils throughout the ages are assessed. The de-Christianization program of the French Revolution is examined in François Furet and Mona Ozouf's *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, Matthew Shaw's *Time and the French Revolution: The Republican Calendar, 1789-Year XIV*, and Joseph Byrnes' *Priests of the French Revolution: Saints and Renegades in a New Political Era*. Craig Harline provided extensive and useful research about Sunday activities during the *belle époque* in *Sunday:*

*A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl.* My thesis builds on the work of these scholars, showing that the historical evolution of the meaning of Sunday in France required concessions and compromises with forces such as urbanization, industrialization, and secularism, analogous to the compromises required of its socialist tradition in the neoliberal era.

France is a nation rich in ideals, of the Enlightenment, of *la Revolution*, of a long socialist tradition, but as Léon Blum noted, practical realities limit ideals, and necessitate compromise. The thesis argues that the nation's compromises around conflicting meanings of Sunday, as displayed in the shopping law controversy, are reflective of its conflicted, compromised, but distinctive adaptation to late twentieth-century modernity. The thesis concludes that faced with the realities of the modern world, France forged a new normal, an acceptable compromise of idealistic traditions and the neoliberal realities of the modern world, while successfully maintaining a unique national identity.

**I.**  
**Sundays, Socialism,**  
**and *Les systèmes de protection***

*In what kind of society do we want to live?*  
— Martine Aubry, Socialist Mayor of Lille

## *Le Mozart de l'Elysée*

In August 2014, Emmanuel Macron, former Rothschild investor banker, was appointed minister of the economy in a cabinet shake-up by President François Hollande and his fellow *Parti Socialiste* Prime Minister Manuel Valls. Macron, only thirty-six years old, an award-winning pianist, Jesuit-educated student of philosophy (with a thesis on Machiavelli), accomplished tango dancer, and Public Affairs graduate of *Sciences Po*, was a junior Hollande advisor before leaving government service in 2008 to join the Rothschild Bank, a week before the Lehman Brothers collapse.<sup>4</sup> During the subsequent financial recovery, his career at Rothschild blossomed, and he was described glowingly by a senior partner: “A rare mixture, especially at such a young age, of intellectual speed, work energy, certainty in judgment and charm, he would have been, if he had remained in the business, one of the best in France, perhaps even in Europe.”<sup>5</sup> At the bank in 2012, Macron led a successful \$12 billion merger of European titans Nestlé and Pfizer, a transaction that provided him “freedom from want for the rest of his days.” The banker’s private life was no less interesting to the public. As a high school student, he fell in love

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<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Chabas, “Emmanuel Macron, the ‘Mozart of the Elysee’ to Economy Minister,” *Le Monde*, August 8, 2014, accessed August 6, 2016, [http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2014/08/27/emmanuel-macron-de-mozart-de-l-elysee-a-ministre-de-l-economie\\_4477318\\_823448.html#L87TpUDZ4oRyPfQJ.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2014/08/27/emmanuel-macron-de-mozart-de-l-elysee-a-ministre-de-l-economie_4477318_823448.html#L87TpUDZ4oRyPfQJ.99).

<sup>5</sup> Rémi Noyon, “Au fait, il faisait quoi chez Rothschild, Emmanuel Macron?” *L’Obs Rue 89*, August 28, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/2014/08/28/fait-faisait-quoi-chez-rothschild-emmanuel-macron-254442>. All translations are my own.

with his French teacher, a woman twenty years his senior, causing his parents to ship him off to Paris from his home in Amiens. However, the affair would not die, and today the pair are happily married, sharing grandchildren from her previous marriage. With such interesting particulars, it is no surprise Macron is a favorite of the French press, where, in recognition of his keyboard skills and alleged near-genius, he is sometimes referred to as “the Mozart of the Elysée Palace.”

Genius or not, what would it mean for a government of the *Parti Socialiste* to have an investment banker as minister of the economy? Macron replaced Arnaud Montebourg, a more traditional left-wing socialist, a “quasi-Marxist,” according to *The Telegraph*. The newspaper reported that Montebourg had resigned after expressing strong disapproval of Hollande’s rightward shift away from his party’s anti-austerity campaign promises. In the midst of widespread perceived economic malaise, unprecedented lows in the president’s popularity, and high French unemployment, Montebourg had publically condemned Hollande’s ongoing support for the European Union’s austerity policies as a “descent into hell,” according to the British newspaper. With two other cabinet members, he offered his resignation, which was immediately accepted, and Macron’s appointment was announced the following day. France had switched out a left-wing, “quasi-Marxist” traditional socialist economy minister for a Rothschild investment banker minister in twenty-four hours. Not unexpectedly, controversy broke out in the media. The prime minister leapt to the defense. According to a French journalist;

Manuel Valls, who named Macron, went on France’s prime-time evening news hour to solemnly declare that ‘Emmanuel Macron is a socialist,’ the anchor interrupted him—‘Yes but a former Rothschild banker’—obliging Valls to ask the

essential taboo question at the heart of it all: ‘And so what? One can’t be an entrepreneur in this country? One can’t be a banker?’<sup>6</sup>

Certainly one could be an entrepreneur, or a banker, in France. There was no shortage of either, but the appointment of a banker as the economy minister in a socialist administration shocked the nation. The interviewer had asked the question on everyone’s mind. What would it mean to the nation to have a Rothschild investment banker as economy minister in the government of the *Parti Socialiste*? How did this come to pass?

In his 2012 presidential campaign François Hollande had not been kind to the financial community, “My true adversary does not have a name, a face, or a party. He never puts forward his candidacy, but nevertheless he governs. My true adversary is the world of finance.”<sup>7</sup> The candidate promised higher taxes on the rich and transaction tolls on financial services companies. He spoke of a “supertax,” a 75% marginal income tax rate, the mere threat of which drove the film star Gérard Depardieu to relocate to Belgium. The then banker Macron suggested Hollande’s policies would turn the country into “Cuba without the sun.” When his conservative opponent raised liberalization of Sunday shopping laws as an issue, candidate Hollande made his position clear:

Hollande lambasted the Right for its efforts to transform Sunday into a day like any other, devoted to business and material gain. The great battle of 2012, he

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<sup>6</sup> Renée Kaplan, “Who Is the Hot New Economy Minister Who May Mark a Turning Point in Hollande’s Presidency?” *Renée Kaplan, l’Amie américaine*, September 2, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://reenekaplan.carnets.liberation.fr/2014/09/02/who-is-the-hot-new-economy-minister-who-may-mark-a-turning-point-in-hollandes-presidency/>.

<sup>7</sup> James Boxell, “Hollande Hits at His ‘True Adversary’,” *Financial Times*, January 22, 2012, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/8abf4ca8-4520-11e1-a719-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3eTGKFUbu>.

declared, was over ‘the principle of Sunday as a day of rest, one that workers can devote to sport, to family, culture and to liberty.’ If elected, Mr. Hollande promised, he “would keep vigil” over this sacrosanct day.<sup>8</sup>

However, after two years of poor economic performance and increasing reform pressure from Brussels (France was in breach of EU budget-deficit rules), the president dramatically changed direction, and in January of 2014, he executed an extreme turnabout, announcing a “Responsibility Pact,” a package of tax cuts for business, exemptions for corporations from contributions to family welfare programs, and cuts in state social security and healthcare. *Libération*, a previously supportive left-wing newspaper, declared it “pro-business shock therapy.”<sup>9</sup> His more authentic left-wing party members rebelled, culminating in the August cabinet shake-up and the appointment of Macron. The turnabout was compared to François Mitterrand’s radical turn away from socialism to austerity thirty years earlier.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Zaretsky, “France's Sunday Pirouettes,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2015, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/26/opinion/frances-sunday-pirouettes.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Dominique Albertini, “Le «pacte de responsabilité», nouveau choc proentreprise,” *Libération*, January 14, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/01/14/le-pacte-de-responsabilite-nouveau-choc-pro-entreprise\\_972787](http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/01/14/le-pacte-de-responsabilite-nouveau-choc-pro-entreprise_972787).

## *Loi de Macron*

The French public soon found out what it meant to have a Rothschild banker as economy minister. Left-wing angst set off by Macron's appointment was soon dwarfed by his December 2014 introduction of a set of reform bills intended to deal with the nation's stagnant economy, rising unemployment, and pressure from European ministers for budget overruns that violated European Union rules. Macron's package as introduced contained over one hundred business-friendly components, privatizing state-owned assets to pay down debt, reducing regulations for business start-ups, streamlining courts of labor dispute, decriminalizing corporate violations of labor laws, simplifying layoffs and business bankruptcies, allowing bus lines to compete with state-owned railways, deregulating professions such as court officials, pharmacists, bus and taxi drivers, and the most publicized of all, reducing restrictions on Sunday shopping hours. During heated discussions of the bill in parliament, thousands of amendments were considered and many hundreds adopted. The bill doubled from one hundred articles to over two hundred.<sup>10</sup> The Assembly debate lasted over two hundred hours while court bailiffs, legal notaries, and pharmacists took to the streets in protest, the latter successfully escaping coverage by the law. Bitter opposition came from the right and left extremes,

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<sup>10</sup> Patrick Roger, "La loi Macron au fil de ses metamorphoses," *Le Monde*, September 2, 2015, accessed February 6, 2016, [http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2015/02/09/la-loi-macron-au-fil-de-ses-metamorphoses\\_4572597\\_823448.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2015/02/09/la-loi-macron-au-fil-de-ses-metamorphoses_4572597_823448.html).

but a majority of the French public, experiencing daily the impact of a depressed economy on their lives, knew change of some sort was necessary, and polls showed over sixty percent support for Macron's reforms.<sup>11</sup> The French employers association welcomed it as "a step in the right direction." In the United States and British media, there was bemusement at the level of French consternation over what appeared to be rather mild reforms.

When it appeared that the debate in the lower house might lead to an uncertain vote, the government finally determined to push the bill through without a vote, using a rarely invoked article of the constitution, a vestige of the presidential-centric Fifth Republic constitution, Article 49-3, allowing the president to supersede a vote and simply declare a bill law, as if by vote of the chamber. Retaliation from parliament could come only in the form of a no-confidence vote in the government, which the right opposition party, sensing an opportunity to embarrass the socialists, called for but lost. Hollande's fellow socialists were not willing to go so far as to bring down their own government, even over such liberalized business reforms. After more debate and extensive amendments in the Senate, mostly leaning toward even more liberalization, passage followed, with objections limited primarily to a few peripheral religious, Communist, and environmentalist members. Nearly six months after announcement of the reforms, a joint committee of both houses reviewed, reconciled, and passed a final version of the bill, to be known as the *loi de Macron*.

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Platiau, Reuters, "6 Français sur 10 approuvent la loi Macron," *Paris Match*, January 27, 2015, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Politique/Sondage-Paris-Match-Ifop-6-Francais-sur-10-approuvent-la-loi-Macron-698130>.

## *La controverse*

That final version of the Macron bill contained over two hundred articles, but the one that received the most publicity and stirred the most controversy was that which liberalized Sunday shopping restrictions. This issue seemed to hit a particularly sensitive spot with certain parts of the French public, while striking an ironic note with observers from outside the country. Opposition brought together an alliance of strange bedfellows, religious and social conservatives of the right, and socialists of the left. France today is much more secular than in previous times, and less than one in twenty citizens attends mass regularly. The priests celebrating mass average seventy-five years of age, and their pews are mostly filled with grey-haired pensioners. However, Catholicism can never be discounted as a force in French society, and Sunday as the traditional day for church, family, and rest is an integral aspect of Catholic French culture. On the left, a different if related form of opposition arose. “‘The Macron law is the opposite of modernity,’ said Philippe Martinez, the head of the nation’s largest labor union. ‘Modernity is about being able to enjoy time with friends and family, to spend time in the community.’”<sup>12</sup>

Martine Aubry, a former Socialist presidential candidate and mayor of Lille, established the battle lines early in December, with an op-ed in *Le Monde* entitled “Do

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<sup>12</sup> Stangler, “Macron Law.”

not reduce existence to consumption” (*Ne réduisons pas l’existence à la consommation*).

She asked;

Do we want consumption—even more than today—to be the alpha and omega of our society? Is the left now to offer as a way of life a Sunday walk to the mall and accumulation of consumer goods? . . . Sunday should be a time set aside for oneself and for others. It is a precious time to be spent with family and friends, in community life, culture and sport . . . Appreciating being, rather than having it all. Preserving time to think, breathe and live.<sup>13</sup>

Aubry positioned the issue as an existential question for the nation. “This is not a minor reform. It is a moment of truth around the only question that matters—in what kind of society do we wish to live?”

A French reader from Neuilly-sur-Seine responded in a letter to the *New York Times*, mocking Aubry:

Leave it to a Swedish company to show how illogical the French laws are forbidding companies to open on Sundays to preserve family togetherness and personal time. Years ago, IKEA decided to violate the law against opening on Sundays and pay a penalty. The fine was much less than their increased revenue. Young single workers wanting to work earned higher overtime pay. And IKEA stores were filled with, yes, couples spending time together shopping for family items for their homes on the one day they had free to do so. It was a win-win-win for all — except for politicians who always think they know better.<sup>14</sup>

Swedish-owned IKEA was not the only large store that paid fines and stayed open on Sundays, reflecting a straightforward financial decision. The British Virgin Megastore,

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<sup>13</sup> Martine Aubry, “Ne réduisons pas l’existence à la consommation,” *Le Monde*, October 12, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://abonnes.LeMonde.fr/idees/article/2014/12/10/ne-reduisons-pas-l-existence-a-la-consommation\\_4537701\\_3232.html](http://abonnes.LeMonde.fr/idees/article/2014/12/10/ne-reduisons-pas-l-existence-a-la-consommation_4537701_3232.html).

<sup>14</sup> Bob Mohl, “Open-minded on French Sundays,” *Letters, The Opinion Pages, The International New York Times*, February 4, 2015, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/opinion/deciphering-greeces-debt-crisis.html>.

selling music and books on the *Champs-Élysées*, and the American McDonalds and Starbucks also remained open on Sundays. French retail giants Leroy Merlin and Castorama joined the ranks of the defiant, staying open and paying required fines. Castorama employees responded to a poll with ninety-three percent favoring work on Sundays, perhaps due to a bonus for such work.<sup>15</sup> However the fashionable Qatari-owned Printemps department store, a favorite of tourists, reluctantly followed the rules while still lobbying heavily for the right to open Sundays.<sup>16</sup> The CEO of Darty, a chain of French electronic stores, spoke for many of his corporate colleagues when he suggested the socialist Aubry “thinks work is evil,” and argued that Sunday shop openings would be good for the consumer, good for business and good for the unemployed.

Somewhat lost in the latest controversy was the fact that this was only the most recent attempt to roll back Sunday shopping restrictions. When Michelle Obama, the wife of the American president, visited Paris in 2009 and wished to shop on Sunday, President Nicolas Sarkozy expressed his indignation at this latest example of French resistance to the ways of the modern world. "Is it normal that on a Sunday when Madame Obama wants to go to the Paris shops with her daughters, that I have to make

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Greenfield, “France Torn Apart by Sunday Shopping Crisis,” *Frontpage Mag*, October 1, 2013, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/point/205842/france-torn-apart-sunday-shopping-crisis-daniel-greenfield>.

<sup>16</sup> Shellie Karabell, “Sunday Shopping and the Salvation of France,” *Forbes*, February 27, 2015, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/shelliekarabell/2015/02/27/sunday-shopping-and-the-salvation-of-france/2/#2715e4857a0b4bdb01de7bc0>.

phone calls to have them open?" The people of France, he charged, must use their Sundays to "work more, earn more."<sup>17</sup> After introducing radical legislation to open most shops on most Sundays, he faced vitriolic opposition from all sides, and after a lengthy legislative struggle and humiliating setbacks, Sarkozy settled for a watered down bill that allowed only a few more Sunday openings in tourist areas, and even those entirely dependent on local approval. "Don't bother voting this text, because it won't be applied," warned Madame Aubry, speaking as the local disapprover in the city of Lille.<sup>18</sup>

In 2009 the French people were about equally divided on the question. However by 2014, support for liberalization had grown and represented the majority, though emotions still ran high in the opposition. Emilia, a thirty-seven year old nurse in Alsace said, "Some of my colleagues would like to do more to earn more. Not me. I consider that there are other things to do than work on Sundays. The money, it is not everything."<sup>19</sup> Francis, a baker in Brittany, took the opposite view, working every weekend for a premium. "I'm here by chance, I don't have a degree, the people are pleasant . . . I have to work, so I take what I find."<sup>20</sup> Public opinion was so heated that in December *Le Monde* opened a special online discussion area, which showed the diversity

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<sup>17</sup> Linda Hervieux, "Michelle Obama Enjoys Paris Privilege Barred to Millions in France: Sunday Shopping," *Daily News*, June 30, 2009, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/michelle-obama-enjoys-paris-privilege-barred-millions-france-sunday-shopping-article-1.379302>.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce Crumley, "Sunday Shopping? France Says *Non*," *Time*, December 17, 2008, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1867053,00.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Brochen, Pierre-Henri Allain and Noémi Rousseau, "Comme si la semaine ne finissait jamais," *Liberation*, November 17, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/11/17/comme-si-la-semaine-ne-finissait-jamais\\_1144988](http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/11/17/comme-si-la-semaine-ne-finissait-jamais_1144988).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

of opinions across the populace. The majority of commenters were opposed to the law, wanting to maintain the day for rest, for family and friends, for oneself.<sup>21</sup>

Although an atheist I'm in favor of keeping Sunday as a day off. It synchronizes the social and family life of a majority of the French.

I am young and not very rich but I prefer to have my Sundays to enjoy family and friends, or even just rest rather than working to increase my loneliness and my misery.

Suffice to say that Sunday is priceless, not because it is the day of the Lord, but the time for "something else," family, friends.

Another took direct aim at Macron, ridiculing his argument that the law would be good for the economy, and suggested the minister misunderstood government's role, as well as the reality of citizens' lives:

I am extremely shocked to hear the arguments developed by Emmanuel Macron. He noted in particular that 'Sunday work is an opportunity for many.' But this argument will allow future child labor and prostitution, in addition to job opportunities. . . . Not only has this man no awareness of social struggles, but he does not even know that the role of government is to protect the weak.

Others, more defiant, took a stance against the law on moral and historical grounds, even using revolutionary tones:

Being forced to work on Sundays is theft. [One is] excluded from social time.

People, citizens, back in time the Romans at least had Sunday to rest. We are

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<sup>21</sup> *Le Monde*, December, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://abonnes.LeMonde.fr/politique/discussion/2014/12/05/le-dimanche-doit-il-rester-un-jour-chome\\_4535284\\_823448.html](http://abonnes.LeMonde.fr/politique/discussion/2014/12/05/le-dimanche-doit-il-rester-un-jour-chome_4535284_823448.html).

working to grease the industrial machine to produce even more money for shareholders. That is the only reason for this initiative.

A parent decried the damage to the nation's children with both parents potentially working on Sunday:

What of the children? For working couples [it is] another day they cannot be with mom and dad, but kept with nannies . . . if Sunday becomes a day like Monday or Tuesday . . . squeezes our little darlings !!! . . . More than ever we work to live, not live to work!

A small number indicated religious objections, basing their argument on the nation's Christian traditions:

Rest on the seventh day is the oldest social measure. The Hebrews who created it gave a religious coloring to make it respected. Christianity has maintained the principle of the seventh day of rest and set it to Sunday. We are a Christian land, so keep Sunday as a day off.

The Sabbath is a very important social achievement, a good balance between work and social life in general. It is important . . . to keep a day of rest shared among all people

Only a small minority of commenters favored the law. This writer suggested that in his case at least, when he was a student, Sunday work was acceptable:

An individual does not work on Sunday to fatten shareholders but to earn money to ensure his lifestyle. . . I myself worked on Sundays when I was a student and that helped me. We must live in a multifaceted and uneven society.

The comments compose a typical pastiche of a divided and emotional public on a sensitive subject. In reality, the change in Sunday shopping was not severe. From the date of passage, the law allowed all French stores to open twelve Sundays per year instead of the previous five. In addition, certain declared tourist areas (determined by

local authorities), such as the Champs d'Élysée in Paris as well as malls on the outskirts of towns, were able to remain open on all Sundays of the year. To an American, the bill seemed less than revolutionary, even much ado about not very much. The *New York Times*, underwhelmed by the impact of the law, called it “not a huge change.” In Britain *The Independent* headline smirked “France enters the modern world.”<sup>22</sup> Following the law’s passage, the defiance continued, as Paris television showed demonstrators joined by dissident French senators marching behind a banner reading “Books, we buy them during the week, we read them on Sunday.” Such extreme emotional response, both in 2009 and in 2014-15, did not seem to match the relatively modest changes in the law. We must then ask, what does this severe response represent?

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<sup>22</sup> John Lichfield, “France ‘Enters the Modern World’ with Plan to Open Shops on Sundays,” *The Independent*, February 15, 2015, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/france-enters-the-modern-world-with-plan-to-open-shops-on-sundays-10047597.html>.

## *Dimanche de l'Antiquité*

For Europe, the special nature of Sunday goes far back in history, long before the time of Christ. There are records of a day of veneration of the sun in Babylonia, Greeks dedicated the first of their seven days to the sun, and in the years preceding Christ, Manichean Persians fasted on a day set aside for worship of the sun.<sup>23</sup> Virgil's writings in the first century B.C. tell us what was and was not allowed on such holy days in Rome: "Works might be finished . . . but not begun . . . [one may] clean out . . . an old water-course [to prevent flooding] but not make a new one . . . snaring mischievous birds . . . a work of necessity . . . ordinary bird catching would not [be allowed] . . . old hedges might be repaired but new ones not made."<sup>24</sup> Even two thousand years ago we see the state deeply involved in citizens' behavior on a day of worship, providing interpretation of the rules and allowing work for "work of necessity." By the time of Christ, the Jews placed their emphasis on the last day of the week, the Sabbath, setting that day aside for worship. By the first century A.D., the Romans used the first day of their week, the day of the sun, also as a day for worship. Pre-Christian Rome had laws restricting judicial business during festival days, and Constantine, even before his conversion, extended the restrictions to the day of the sun, "to be observed by the general veneration; the courts

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<sup>23</sup> A. H. Lewis, *A Critical History of Sunday Legislation from 321 to 1888 A.D.* (New York: D. H. Appleton, 1888), 25.

<sup>24</sup> Virgil, with commentary by John Conington, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera: The Eclogues and Georgics* (London: Whitaker and Company, 1858), 172.

were to be closed, and the noise and tumult of public business and legal litigation were no longer to violate the repose of the sacred day.”<sup>25</sup> Let it be noted however that Constantine, as did Virgil, allowed certain exceptions to the rule, again, if “a case of great necessity.”

Though veneration of Sunday did not spring from Christianity, Christians early on established a practice of a specific day of worship, sometimes using the Sabbath, sometimes the Roman Sunday. By 150 A.D., Christian use of the Jewish Sabbath had faded, and the first day of the Roman week became their chosen day to venerate the Lord. The coincidence of Roman and Christian use of the same day was particularly helpful in the Roman armies, which by then contained a mixture of adherents to the older gods and the new religion. The Christian shift was finalized officially with the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336) when Sunday replaced the Sabbath in Church law as the Lord’s day. Nothing in the New Testament was used to justify this shift; it was reflective of the Church’s growing power. This was explained straightforwardly in a 1930 Convert’s Catechism:

*Q. Which is the Sabbath day?*

*A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.*

*Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?*

*A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea, (AD 336) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday....*

*Q. Why did the Catholic Church substitute Sunday for Saturday?*

*A. The Church substituted Sunday for Saturday, because Christ rose from the*

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Hart Milman, *The History of Christianity: From the Birth of Christ to the Abolition of Paganism in the Roman Empire* (London: John Murray, 1840), 2:358.

*dead on a Sunday, and the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles on a Sunday.*  
*Q. By what authority did the Church substitute Sunday for Saturday?*  
*A. The Church substituted Sunday for Saturday by the plenitude of that divine power which Jesus Christ bestowed upon her!*<sup>26</sup>

The choice of Sunday as the day of worship differentiated Church followers from the Jews, as indicated in the words of the twenty-ninth canon of the Laodicean Council: “Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day . . . But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.” The council specifically declared “Christians should abstain from manual labor and go to church” though again, as Virgil did, they left open a loophole, “if through need or other necessity anyone worked . . . this was not reckoned against him.”<sup>27</sup> For the next two hundred years, with help from the sermons of Augustine, Caesarius of Arles, and Martin of Braga, the formula solidified—more worship, less work, and rest from sinful activities. In 392, Christianity became the official religion of the waning Roman empire, and Christian worship on the day of the sun became a state-sponsored activity. After the fall of the empire in 476, the Church rose to power on the ruins of the empire, continuing to formalize and regulate the rules for worship, rest and work.

This trend continued to the point that in the sixth century, Gregory of Tours sermonized on the “miserable punishment” reserved for those who dared labor on the Lord’s Day, and in 538 A.D. the Council of Orleans declared:

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<sup>26</sup> Rev. Peter Geiermann, *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1930), 50.

<sup>27</sup> Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol.14, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), 148-49.

Whereas the people are persuaded that they ought not to travel on the Lord's day, with the horses, or oxen and carriages, or to prepare anything for food, or to do anything conducive to the cleanliness of houses or men . . . But from rural work, plowing, cultivating vines reaping mowing thrashing, clearing away thorns of hedging, we judge it better to abstain, that the people may the more readily come to the churches and have leisure for prayers. If anyone be found doing the works forbidden above, let him be punished, not as the civil authorities may direct, but as the ecclesiastical powers may determine.<sup>28</sup>

In 578 the Council of Auxerre caught an apparent oversight regarding the yoking of oxen, and amended the rules; "On the Lord's day it is not permitted to yoke oxen or to perform any other work except for appointed reasons."<sup>29</sup> In 585, at the Council of Macon the Church fathers exhibited frustration with non-adherents:

Let no one spend his leisure in litigation; let no one continue the pleading of any cause . . . [nor] allow himself to place a yoke on the neck of his cattle. Let all be occupied in mind and body in hymns, and in the praise of God. . . . this is the day of perpetual rest . . . if anyone shall disregard this wholesome exhortation, or treat it contemptuously, he shall in the first place, draw upon himself the wrath of God; and secondly, the unappeasable anger of the clergy.<sup>30</sup>

The repeated Councils established the authoritative position of the Church regarding the need to abstain from work on Sunday. However, as we saw beginning with Virgil and throughout the Councils, the rules were rarely absolute, and often allowed that exception for "necessity," a compromise with the ideal that would be available, and made use of, by M. Macron in modern times.

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<sup>28</sup> Severin Binius, "Council of Orleans III," *Councils of the Church*, canon xxviii, vol. xi (Paris: E Typographia Regia, 1644), 496.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., "Council of Auxerre," *Councils of the Church*, canon xvi, vol. xiii (Paris: E Typographia Regia, 1644), 44.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., "Council Macon II," *Councils of the Church*, canon ii, vol. xiii (Paris: E Typographia Regia, 1644), 75-76.

## *Le Moyen Âge*

Through the Middle Ages, Church law ruled supreme in Europe, and Sunday worship became the norm, though practical details were still to be worked out and the pendulum swung back and forth from absolute to compromise. In 789, Charlemagne publically denounced Sunday labor as violation of the Lord's commandments. Canute of Denmark, newly crowned king of England in 1017, brought with him continental ways, and sponsored Sunday festivals, demanded fasts, and banned hunting, markets, and other "worldly activities."<sup>31</sup> In 1409 his descendent Henry IV threatened six days imprisonment for "He that playeth at unlawful games on Sunday."<sup>32</sup> French Annales historian Jacques Le Goff notes that the Lateran Council of 1215, while requiring annual confession, raised a question of Sunday work in certain situations, "Should the necessities of the job take precedence over prescriptions of the Church concerning fasting, Sunday rest?"<sup>33</sup> He concludes that a need for some flexibility was becoming apparent. "Sunday rest was no longer strictly prescribed but rather, in view of occupational necessities, given in the form of recommendations to be interpreted according to the spirit rather than the letter."<sup>34</sup> Again we see the use of compromise, hearkening back to Virgil, and the

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, originally published 1840 (Clark, New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2003), 190.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, 90.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Age*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 118.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

need for careful distinction between that which was necessity and that which was not. In the fifteenth century, however, Henry VI brooked no compromise, and severely went after cobblers and cordwainers (skilled boot makers), who were “forbidden on any Sunday in the year . . . cause to be sold, or place or put on any one’s feet or legs, any shoes, hose or galoches, under penalty of forfeiture of the article, and a fine of twenty shillings.”<sup>35</sup> No compromise with cordwainers was allowed in Henry’s time.

Lest one think he or she might escape the Sunday laws by leaving Europe, the future Saint Francis Xavier arrived in the Portuguese capital of Goa in India in 1541 to establish a Jesuit presence and found shocking disregard for Sunday Church practice by so-called Christian inhabitants, whom he condemned for their “Jewish behavior,” i.e., Sabbath worship. Such flaunting of Church doctrine called for strong measures, and straightaway Xavier wrote to Pope Paul III, asking permission to implement a drastic measure—an Inquisition. The event was chronicled by a French doctor, Charles Dellon, who fell victim to Xavier’s zeal, yet lived to write about his experience:

He is sent for to the Audience, where he is asked if he knows the cause of his imprisonment. To this of course, he answers in the negative. He is then exhorted to consider seriously, and confess, as his only chance of freedom . . . he is charged by a great number of witnesses of having *Judaized* . . . of having attended the solemnization of the Sabbath . . . The innocent man persists in denying what he is urged to confess; he is . . . to be punished according to law, that is, to be burnt . . . Of an hundred persons condemned to be burnt as Jews, there are scarcely four

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<sup>35</sup> Lewis, 92.

who profess that faith at their death; the rest exclaiming and protesting to their last gasp that they are Christians, and have been so during their whole lives.<sup>36</sup>

Xavier, a member of the Jesuit order, “the pope’s soldiers,” was not a strong believer in compromise, though it should be noted that Monsieur Dellon lived to tell his tale.

The sixteenth-century Reformation changed much in Europe, but not Sunday as the day of worship. All the various antagonistic factions maintained the day in their different ways. Reformed churches did it with less pomp, fewer vestments, and without relics, but with the same general formula of more worship, less work, and some rest on the Lord’s day.

Taking exception, Martin Luther, in this case unpersuasively, argued that Sunday was simply a Catholic decree, not a practice commanded by scripture:

As for the Sabbath or Sunday, there is no necessity for its observance; and if we do so, the reason ought to be, not because Moses commanded it, but because nature likewise teaches us to give ourselves, from time to time, a day's rest, in order that man and beast may recruit their strength, and that we may go and hear the Word of God preached.<sup>37</sup>

In the *Augsburg Confession*, the authoritative confession of faith for his church, Luther disdained all the legalistic arguments about Sunday as distractions from scripture, calling such arguments “snares of consciences.”

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<sup>36</sup> Charles Dellon, *Dellon’s Account of the Inquisition at Goa* (London: Joseph Simmons, 1815), 56-64.

<sup>37</sup> Jules Michelet, trans. William Hazlitt, *The Life of Martin Luther, Gathered from His Own Writings* (London: David Bogue, 1884), 271.

There are wonderful disputations concerning . . . the changing of the Sabbath-day, which all have sprung from a false persuasion and belief of men, who thought that . . . Christ committed to the apostles and bishops authority to invent and find out ceremonies necessary to salvation. Some dispute that the keeping of the Sunday is not fully, but only in a certain manner, the ordinance of God, They prescribe of holy days, how far it is lawful to work. Such manner of disputations, whatever else they be, are but snares of consciences.<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, John Calvin called the fourth commandment a “shadowy commandment” and was unenthusiastic about its observance:

I do not lay so much stress on the septenary number, that I would oblige the church to an invariable adherence to it; nor will I condemn those churches, which have other solemn days for their assemblies, provided they keep at a distance from superstition.<sup>39</sup>

Elsewhere he comes down more strongly on Luther’s side, speaking of that same “snare of conscience:”

When certain days are represented as holy in themselves, when one day is distinguished from another on religious grounds, when holy days are reckoned a part of divine worship, then days are improperly observed . . . When we, in the present age, make a distinction of days, we do not represent them as necessary, and thus lay a snare for the conscience. We do not reckon one day to be more holy than another.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Christian Scott, *Unaltered Augsburg Confession* (New York: H. Ludwig & Co., 1848), 175.

<sup>39</sup> John Calvin, trans. John Allen, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1 (Mulberry, Indiana: Sovereign Grace Publishers Inc., 2002), 354.

<sup>40</sup> John Calvin, trans. William Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1854), 124.

In France, the Huguenots, the largest reform group, followed the guidance of their countryman and inspiration John (Jean) Calvin. “Like Calvin himself . . . [they] did not think it necessary to avoid all things on Sunday more than on other days.”<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, opinions continued to vary among the reformers, and Nicholas Bownd in Puritan England opposed Luther and Calvin, defending and emphasizing the specialness of the Lord’s day and emphasizing the standard formula of worship, rest, and no work. In his English church, Sunday morning, afternoon, and evening prayers were typical, and the Puritans, as uncompromising as Xavier before them, took the hard line, explicitly forbidding all Sunday work, “even in an ‘emergency’ such as hailstorms threatening a harvest.”<sup>42</sup> However, in France, the Waldenses, early reformers, kept to the biblical tradition and held the Sabbath as the day of the Lord. “On Saturdays, [they] eat flesh, and feast it bravely, like the Jews.”<sup>43</sup>

At the Council of Trent, 1545-63, the Church took seventy-five sessions over eighteen years to debate and finalize an official response to the Reformation challenge. Near the end, in 1562, Archbishop Tommaso Reggio of Genoa spoke, reaffirming Sunday as the day of the Lord, and used the principle to explain the right of the Church, through tradition, to supersede scripture. Heinrich Holtzmann, nineteenth-century religious historian, quotes Reggio;

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<sup>41</sup> Lucian John Fosdick, *The French Blood in America* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1911), 413.

<sup>42</sup> Craig Harline, *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 93.

<sup>43</sup> A. H. Lewis, *A Critical History of the Sabbath and the Sunday in the Christian Church* (New York: Alfred Center, 1886), 73.

The Protestants claim to stand upon the written word only. They profess to hold the Scripture alone as the standard of faith. They justify their revolt by the plea that the Church has apostatized from the written word and follows tradition. . . . The written word explicitly enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath. They do not observe the seventh day but reject it. If they do truly hold the scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined in the Scripture throughout. Yet they not only reject the observance of the Sabbath enjoined in the written word, but they have adopted and do practice the observance of Sunday, for which they have only the tradition of the Church. Consequently the claim of ‘Scripture alone as the standard,’ fails; and the doctrine of ‘Scripture and tradition’ as essential, is fully established, the Protestants themselves being judges.<sup>44</sup>

It was clever speechifying on the Archbishop’s part. In one oratorical rush he affirmed Sunday as the Lord’s day, defended the Church’s right to assert doctrine to overrule scripture, and convicted the Protestants as inconstant heretics who failed to live up to their own claims of the primacy of scripture.

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<sup>44</sup> Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Canon and Tradition* (Ludwigsburg: Druck and Verlag von Ferd, Riehm, 1859), 263.

## *Dimanche modern*

In France, with the 1787 *Édit de Tolérance*, issued by Louis XVI, hostility between religious factions subsided somewhat in the years before the upheaval of revolution. The 1789 *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme* officially, if not always in reality, promised equal rights to Protestants. However, dramatic change was in the air, and the meaning of Sunday was to be challenged as revolutionary ideals of the time would conflict with deeply held religious tradition and once again, compromise of sorts would result. The distrust of the eighteenth-century French revolutionaries for the conservative Church, and the Church's connection to the *ancien régime*, largely placed the two sets of ideals in conflict throughout the era. By 1793, full throated revolutionary secularization and dechristianization was underway, led by the Jacobins. Secularization in France is and was a long term trend, from the Enlightenment to the present day, and though some argue that "prerevolutionary France was already profoundly indifferent to religion," there is no denying "that eighteenth-century France underwent a process of abandonment of Christian practices unequalled in Europe."<sup>45</sup> A major blow for such abandonment was struck with the adoption by the Jacobin-controlled National Convention of *le calendrier républicain* in 1793. The calendar had twelve months, divided into three ten day weeks, called *décades*, with *décadi*, the last day of each week,

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<sup>45</sup> Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 93, 109.

in place of Sunday as the day of rest and festivity. Revolutionary festivals, reverence for republican ideals, and for the most dedicated, celebration of Reason and the Supreme Being were all intended to replace traditional worship. This effort can be interpreted as an attempt to supplant the time-honored rhythms of national life, “to pull the entire social and economic life of France outside the sphere of the traditional Christian weekly rhythm, so as to make the latter absolutely irrelevant to daily life.”<sup>46</sup> It was no less than an attempt to control time itself, an effort of revolutionary idealism that would be dramatically compromised by the force of tradition.

It is debatable to what degree dechristianization of the calendar was a popularly supported effort versus a top-down affair, but no matter, the effort proved challenging, and historian Mona Ozouf delivers a judgment:

A veritable ocean of texts attests to popular opposition to the new way of reckoning days and seasons. . . . the reform was . . . an extremely ambitious project whose effects were short-lived. . . . Its contents, though incongruous, were nevertheless emblematic of revolutionary regeneration. In short, the revolutionary calendar was full of contradictions.<sup>47</sup>

Those who suggest the effort was top-down can point out, “Most French citizens simply ignored the new calendar and many shopkeepers refused to keep their businesses open on Sundays.”<sup>48</sup> At best ambivalence to the calendar was evident as “many couples would go

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<sup>46</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 32.

<sup>47</sup> Mona Ozouf, “The Revolutionary Calendar,” eds. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 539.

<sup>48</sup> Justin Dunn, “Secularizing the Sacred: The Effort to Dechristianize France during the French Revolution,” accepted for unpublished *Primary Source*, vol. 3, issue 1 (Fall 2012), accessed August 27, 2015,

through a civil wedding on *Décadi* and would still also have their marriage sanctioned by a priest on Sunday. . . . merchants would take off both *Décadi* and Sunday.”<sup>49</sup> In rural areas, Church support remained strong, and in the year VI of the new calendar (1797-98), traditional religious festivals were held in the village of Charnay, south of Paris. When *gendarmes* arrived, the villagers met them with cries of "Where are your orders? Those are only departmental decrees. We don't give a damn. If we had a flute, we would dance despite you." The villagers claimed the republican calendar was not really a fixed law, simply a decree, and it represented an attack on their revolutionary right of free practice of religion.<sup>50</sup> A report on the situation to the Directory from the Committee on Public Instruction noted;

People detest our national festivals . . . we have managed in the end to drive the people away . . . Sundays and Catholic holidays . . . have for some time been celebrated with as much pomp and splendor as before. The same cannot be said for *décadi* . . . The first to disobey the law are the wives of public officials.<sup>51</sup>

One can imagine the trauma that the calendar must have caused ordinary citizens, but especially those maintaining Church values.

The French [would] find it almost impossible to even keep track of the days of the seven-day week when almost their entire affairs would be regulated by a ten-day rhythm of activity. . . . how would anyone be able to preserve the traditional Christian way of life and attend [even secret] church regularly every Sunday,

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<http://www.indiana.edu/~psource/PDF/Archive%20Articles/Spring2014/2014%20-%20Spring%20-%205%20-%20Dunn%20Justin.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Zerubavel, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Suzanne Desan, "Redefining Revolutionary Liberty: The Rhetoric of Religious Revival during the French Revolution" *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 60, no.1 (March, 1988): 13.

<sup>51</sup> Ozouf, 545.

when stores could be closed only on Décadis and Quintidi afternoons? Similarly, given that fish markets were held only on Duodi, Quintidi, and Septidi, how would citizens be able to keep eating fish every Friday?<sup>52</sup>

Pamphleteers and playwrights of the time depicted the struggle as a contest between *Monsieur Dimanche* and *Citoyen Décadi*. Fines and penalties were issued to those holding religious Sunday activities, and fairs and markets were rescheduled to fit the *décades* weeks. Still, the architect of the *calendrier républicain*, Charles-Gilbert Romme, claiming himself a scientist first and only secondly a de-christianizer, argued he was only working to further reason and science:

Placing reform of the calendar within the context of the broader project for the systematisation of all weights and measures, a scheme ‘of the greatest importance to the progress of the arts and of the human spirit’. Logically, progress demanded ‘new measures of duration’ freed from the errors that credulity and ‘a superstitious routine’ had passed down through the centuries.<sup>53</sup>

However, when the Bishop Henry Grégoire asked why the revolutionaries pushed so hard with the calendar against popular objection, Romme “‘admitted to me,’ wrote Gregoire, that he did so ‘in order to destroy Sunday.’ The priest retorted, ‘Sunday existed before you and it will exist after you.’”<sup>54</sup>

On top of its other problems, the unpopular calendar stretched the work week to ten days. “The surprising thing is not that the revolutionary calendar disappeared but that

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<sup>52</sup> Zerubavel, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew Shaw, *Time and the French Revolution: The Republican Calendar, 1789-Year XIV* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2011), 87.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph F. Byrnes, *Priests of the French Revolution: Saints and Renegades in a New Political Era* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2014), 125.

its demise took so long,” says Ozouf.<sup>55</sup> The first step away from the calendar came when Napoléon, seeking domestic stability, signed the Concordant of 1801 with Pope Pius VII, re-establishing the Church in France, and allowing worship on the tenth day, once again to be called Sunday. After negotiations ended, without consulting the Pope, Napoléon unilaterally added a list of “Organic Articles” to the published agreement, intended to protect the interests of France. One such article states “The new [Republican] calendar . . . is preserved . . . [however] the names of the days shall be as in the ancient calendar,” and beginning the strategic retreat, “Sunday shall be the day of rest for public functionaries.”<sup>56</sup> The final end to the revolutionary calendar came at Napoléon’s order in 1805, with the reversion to the Gregorian. However, the state’s attempts to influence how the French spent their Sundays would continue.

Radicals’ interest in the topic of Sunday did not end with the revolutionary era. In mid-nineteenth century, the French philosopher and political activist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a veteran of 1848, contemporary of Karl Marx and equally fervent advocate of socialism, expressed his opinions about Sunday. Early in his career, in an award-winning essay at the Academy of Besançon, “The Celebration of Sunday” (*De la Célébration du dimanche*, 1839), Proudhon laid the groundwork for many of the ideas that would become the core of his later work. Proudhon began by making clear his disdain for the Sunday practices of his day:

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<sup>55</sup> Ozouf, 545.

<sup>56</sup> Napoléon, in *The New Annual Register of History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1802* (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1803), 154.

In the cities, Sunday is now hardly anything but a holiday without motive or aim, an occasion for parades for the women and children, for consumption for the restaurateurs and wine-merchants, of degrading idleness, and increased vice. On Sunday, the tribunals are closed, the public courts recessed, the schools vacant, the workshops idle, and the army at rest—and why? So that the judge, casting off his robe and his gravity, can freely attend to concerns of ambition and pleasure, the scientist can cease to think, the student can stroll, the workers can stuff themselves, the grisette can dance, and the soldier can drink or just be bored. The trader alone never stops.<sup>57</sup>

With the disapproving note “the trader alone never stops,” the philosopher’s position was opposite to that of Emmanuelle Macron today, and though Sunday activities were successful in “connecting persons,” the Sunday activities of his time only fomented “selfishness” and provided nothing for “the common good.” Though a man of ambivalent religious feelings, Proudhon used Biblical writings to establish his arguments, and while he recognized the high esteem in which Sunday was held by workers, he hoped for more potential good that the day might someday provide for their class:

Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, for which respect seems to have diminished, will be revived in all its splendor, when the guarantee of labor is won, with the well-being that is its prize. The working classes are too interested in the maintenance of the dominical holiday to ever let it perish. Thus all will celebrate the day, even though they don’t attend the mass: and the people will see, by this example, how it is possible that a religion be false, and the contents of that religion be true at the same time; that to philosophize about dogma is to renounce faith; to transform a religion is to abolish it.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “The Celebration of Sunday,” *The Libertarian Labyrinth*, 12, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://library.libertarian-labyrinth.org/items/show/2680>.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Proudhon ridiculed the Abbé of Saint-Pierre, a somewhat enlightened religious thinker of the eighteenth century, who felt that too much Sunday rest might lead to sin, and suggested that society overall and the workers would be best served by a few hours of Sunday instruction, then field work for the remainder of their day. Anticipating Hollande and Macron's economic arguments of the next century, the good Abbé felt three to four hours of worship followed by eight hours of work might be the right Sunday formula for the poor:

It would be a great charity and a good work, more agreeable to God than a pure ceremony, to give to poor families the means to meet their needs and those of their children, by seven or eight hours of [Sunday] labor, and the means to instruct themselves and their children in the church, for three or four hours in the morning.<sup>59</sup>

One hears strong echoes of Macron's economic argument in Saint-Pierre. Easy enough for a man of wealth to suggest, Proudhon would say, and mocked the well-off Abbé. "Our philanthropist in a cassock wanted to make the poor work seven to eight hours each Sunday, plus three a four hours of mass and sermon, which makes in all eleven to twelve hours of exercise on the day when others rest." From the skewed point of view of the wealthy Abbé, of course the poor working on Sunday seemed reasonable; "the abbot of Saint-Pierre, who, enjoying a fine abbey and having nothing to do, was perhaps not absolutely wrong to find the obligation to rest on Sunday unreasonable." Unfortunately, says Proudhon, the poor do not share the Abbé's enviable advantages. "To provide for the subsistence of the poor, we must have regard for the measure of their strength as well

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 15.

as their moral and intellectual needs.”<sup>60</sup> Give the poor workers at least their Sunday rest, argued Proudhon.

In the “most difficult” of his ruminations on Sunday, Proudhon spoke of the *moral utility* of the day, the potential positive influence on the person and the society of a day of rest and common public worship. The philosopher suggests this *moral utility* shows one can “separate the material from the spiritual, the nominal from the abstract, the human from the revealed . . . every religious observance has its natural as well as its theological reason.”<sup>61</sup> The Abbé Doney, who awarded Proudhon his prize, recognized both the talent and the threat in the young man and judiciously “reproached him with having adopted dangerous theories,” warning that “zeal for the public welfare cannot justify rash solutions.”<sup>62</sup> The Abbé may have glimpsed the future revolutionary “father of anarchism” in the young Proudhon’s work and attempted to stifle any talk of use of the Lord’s day to justify social change. However, change was to come nonetheless in the nineteenth century, an intense era of industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of the working class, as well as continued increasing secularization of the Lord’s day.

Such secularization of the Lord’s day was taken to new heights by Auguste Comte, Proudhon’s contemporary and fellow Frenchman, founder of the philosophy of positivism and father of modern sociology. Comte, who rejected religion, focused on the study of society and fundamentally believed, as the French revolutionaries before him, in “social reform that could be accomplished through the application of scientific principles

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>62</sup> J. A. Langlois, quoting Sainte Beuve in the preface, *The Works of P. J. Proudhon* (Princeton: Benj. R. Tucker, 1878), xx.

to social problems.”<sup>63</sup> Undeterred by the revolutionaries’ lack of success, the high priest of reason suggested that the Sunday of Christianity should be transformed into a day of festivals, and he created a rational, astrolactic calendar with festivals to fall on each and every Sunday, celebrating and commemorating famous men and women. Though his calendar had a similar end as the earlier radicals’, Comte’s larger work was influential in the century of the industrial revolution, when the public was enthralled with advancements in science, industry and technological invention. Scientific thought began to be competitively juxtaposed in the public mind with religion, scientists such as Charles Darwin and Louis Pasteur became well known, and the work of Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx became widely influential. “Ideas govern the world, or throw it into chaos,” said Comte. Emotions must not govern how a man’s Sunday should be spent, and certainly the Catholic Church should not. The Lord’s day would later prove significant in the philosopher’s personal life, when Comte’s Sunday dinner with his unmarried lover was interrupted by a policeman and an accusation of prostitution. This led to a most rational solution, an immediate marriage proposal from Comte, albeit fulfilled only after receiving parental permission. Comte’s festivals of Sundays were a harbinger of times to come, when the old Christian balance of worship, rest, and work was to shift away from the first and toward the second, enhanced with new forms of leisure and entertainment. The coming era of *la Belle époque* would dramatize the shift.

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<sup>63</sup> Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29-30.

## *Belle époque dimanche*

Sunday practices continued to evolve throughout the century. In 1898, Parisian illustrator, caricaturist and *bon vivant* Louis Morin, seemingly as a bit of a lark, wrote and published an account of his Parisian Sundays, while accompanied by a female companion, “Pompom.”<sup>64</sup> Though his account represents how only a slice of the French people spent their Sundays, he painted a clear and engaging portrait of those he saw. From working class origins, Morin had risen to the leisure class, and considered himself philosophically a member of the *décadents*, a group of artists, writers, and intellectuals who held a somewhat condescending attitude toward popular culture. An exploration of the Sunday activities of the more common Parisians seemed intriguing, almost a foreign adventure to Morin.

Their excursions began with a most common Sunday activity, promenades on the boulevards of Paris. On any day the Paris sidewalks were crowded, just as today, but on Sunday the workers and shopkeepers took over Haussmann’s boulevards, all looking to see and be seen. The *flâneurs*, the solitary, disconnected observers could be seen along with the working folk in their Sunday best and their betters in theirs. Fried foods and crepes were sold by sidewalk vendors, brass bands played in the park, and visitors crowded the museums, including the popular *Musée Grévin* wax museum. They avoided

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<sup>64</sup> Louis Morin “Parisian Sundays: Notes of a Decadent,” quoted in Harline, 107.

bourgeois and working-class cafes, but enjoyed free park concerts with singing and dancing shows, while remarking on the garish dress of their fellows. The *decadent* pair strolled in the *Bois de Boulogne*, attended races, and traveled by crowded bus to mingle with the masses. Once they ventured as far as the country lakes, taking a train from St. Lazare station. For another trip they hired bicycles, popular among the working class, and were forced to dodge the occasional motor car. Dance halls such as the Moulin Rouge attracted them with afternoon events, and the dancers reminded them of Renoir's paintings. Less gay places were also part of the Sunday scene, and their walks took them to the edge of town where "desperate young prostitutes" worked, driven by "a need for food." The "sad and mean atmosphere," was not the sort of gay adventure Morin sought.

One Sunday, just for the experience, he and Pompon attended Mass in an old church, not a typical *decadent* activity, as he generally regarded churchgoers as "morons and idiots."<sup>65</sup> The experience surprised him; he found it enjoyable, and described the Mass as "the most beautiful tragic poem ever written by man . . . [of] delicate charm."<sup>66</sup> He was disappointed that other attendees did not share his wonder, and he observed that "young people yawned, the old snored, and no one seemed to mind."<sup>67</sup>

Following the Mass, Morin chose a restaurant—at the time Paris boasted over fifteen hundred, with eleven thousand employees. He selected one catering to the lower bourgeoisie, to avoid the snobbery of the more refined. They ate mutton, mincemeat,

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<sup>65</sup> Harline, 119.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 120.

eggs, and strawberries with sugar for desert. The place held hundreds of diners, children scampered about, and waiters, working on their Sundays, flew round the tables. There was excitement in the room, as this meal was looked forward to all week long. For most it was a day of happiness.

All in all Morin and Pompon ventured out nineteen Sundays in total, and in the end considered their experiment of mixed results. Jam-packed trains, crowded promenades, rude motorists, and snoring churchgoers were balanced by excellent meals, beautiful parks, and enjoyable concerts. “The Sunday’s of the ‘little people’ were ‘no more ridiculous’ than the pastimes of ‘our people’, decided Louis. ‘We are full of chic,’ yet the people’s Sunday’s were not necessarily any more vulgar, common, tedious, and clichéd than ‘our own.’”<sup>68</sup> Morin’s book showed that French Sundays had evolved to become filled with diverse leisure activities, entertaining, lively, and increasingly secular. Though the *decadent’s* final verdict on Sundays in Paris was ambivalent, his love for the city showed through when, after the book’s publication, he tried country life in the rural Loire valley, but quickly returned to the more exciting life of the capital.

Not all nineteenth-century Parisians’ Sundays were as leisurely as Morin’s. French sociologist Frédéric le Play conducted a series of interviews with workers toward the end of the century to learn about their workaday lives, and found that many were forced to work on the Lord’s day. His records included Jean, a carpenter who “worked ten hours every day, including most Sundays.” Marie, Jean’s wife, took the children to

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.,138.

church, but on the Sunday after payday the family celebrated together with a promenade that all looked forward to. Sophie, a sewing maid and single mother of Lille, attended Mass every Sunday, then would “wash her floors, do laundry and mend her own clothes.” There was the tailor who regularly “took his son to Mass . . . then went to a café after to play cards, followed by visits to friends’ homes.” A water-carrier of Auvergne rarely went to church, and instead spent his Sundays dining with friends. The wife of a cabinetmaker had given up on church attendance, and instead “hosted family parties, including picnics and winter ice skating.”<sup>69</sup> As seen from le Play’s interviews, the Church still played a central role in Sunday culture, but in the nineteenth century, many of the French working class saw work on the Lord’s day as a necessity.

The new century brought a major change to the nation, in the form of the 1905 Law of Separation of Church and State, and introduced the principle of *laïcité*, which attempted to eliminate all influence of religion from the French government. Implemented by a center-left coalition known as the *bloc des gauches*, the law was a watershed event in the nation’s history, intended to free the government from the historical influence of the Catholic Church. In 1906, with support from both unions and religious groups, the *bloc* introduced legislation guaranteeing workers one day off in seven, strongly suggesting though not requiring that day be Sunday. France was the second to last European country to require such an allowance for workers, with only Italy lagging behind in the following year. The 1906 law, with its support for Sunday as a day of rest for the workers, would come back to haunt Macron a century later, when the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 144-5.

religious right would fight to protect the day for worship, while the left would fight to protect the day for rest.

Government-ordained *laïcité* juxtaposed sharply with the religious traditions of the Catholic French, especially in the countryside. Historian Ruth Harris explored that tension in her work on Lourdes. “As I examined [nineteenth-century] Parisian physicians’ confident assertions that a new scientific age had dawned and that religious belief was to be swept away like cobwebs from a musty closet, I wondered how it was that Lourdes was living through its ‘golden age’ at the very same moment.”<sup>70</sup> The revisionist Harris argued that the assumed decline of religion was wholly inaccurate and that religion remained a strong force in the national fabric throughout the century and even into the present. “The history of the nineteenth century is still seen as the inevitable triumph of the republican ethos of secularization. . . . This view is wrong . . . Lourdes shows the continued vibrancy of peasant belief and the sustained appeal and evolution of modern Catholicism.”<sup>71</sup> As Emmanuel Macron would find out with his twenty-first century Sunday shopping proposal, the religious right remained a potent force long after some historians had prematurely reported its demise.

Lourdes was only the most famous of a nation-wide wave of Marian apparitions that coincidentally aided the government campaign for the day off. Virgin appearances occurred in Alsace, Tours, LaSalette, and half a million faithful visited the Lourdes site in 1900. The message of these ‘golden age’ visions was familiar and consistent—Sunday

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<sup>70</sup> Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body And Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), xiii.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

was for worship and rest, and not for work. The Virgin announced “Nowhere else was Sunday transgressed ‘more audaciously and impudently’ than in France.”<sup>72</sup> At LaSalette she spoke bitterly to two young children, voicing the thoughts of her Son:

I have given you six days to labor in. I have reserved the seventh for myself; yet they will not give it to me. . . . Only a few old women go to Mass, the others work on Sundays during the summer . . . And in the winter, when they know not what to do, the youths go to Mass only to make mockery of religion. In Lent, they go to the shambles [meat market] like dogs.<sup>73</sup>

The age-old argument about “necessary work,” hearkening back to Virgil, had reared its head again. The Lady of La Salette made it clear that the balance had shifted too far, that the nation’s salvation was at risk, and that heavenly patience was running short.

Eventually, the alliance of the Virgin, religious conservatives, workers, and the *bloc des gauches* carried the day for the progressive legislation, reinforcing Sunday for worship and rest. However, the Middle Age balance of Sunday worship, rest and work continued to face unrelenting pressures from urbanization and industrialization, forcing compromise, and the trend toward Sunday secularization continued.

To summarize our history of Sunday, it has roots in ancient times, long before Christianity. The Jews, Babylonians and Greeks all played a role in the development of the Roman holy day, which then influenced the Christian observance. Through the Middle Ages the Church consistently preached the formula of worship, rest, and only the most necessary of work on the Lord’s day. Later the French revolutionaries worked

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<sup>72</sup> Harline, 157-8.

<sup>73</sup> Reverend J. Spencer Northcote, *The Times*, October 26, 1852, 3, quoted in Michael P. Carroll, “The Virgin Mary at LaSalette and Lourdes: Whom Did the Children See?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 24, no. 1 (March, 1985): 64.

against tradition to secularize the day as best they could, and attempted to substitute reverence for Republican ideals. LePlay's nineteenth-century interviews made clear that for many, the increasing need for Sunday work in an urbanizing, industrializing nation often superseded worship. At this time, all classes of French people still recognized the specialness of the day, but only some had the means to celebrate it, and for those, the celebrations were more and more secular. The nineteenth century brought non-religious Sunday activities to the forefront, and *la belle époque* was a time of wide-ranging enjoyment of the day for some, while for others, work on the Lord's day was a necessity. The question of how much work should be done on the day brought intervention of the Blessed Mother, in whose name the Church aligned with the government and the *bloc des gauches* as protectors of workers' Sundays. As in the time of Macron, the leftists of the period and representatives of the Catholic Church became allies. In order to understand these seemingly odd alliances of the political left and the Church, we must review the history of the leftists, particularly the socialists of modern France, their support for social welfare and the rights of workers, including the workers' right to Sunday rest.

## *Socialisme en France*

Today in Europe each country has different Sunday shopping regulations for its citizens. Seventeen of the twenty-seven European Union countries allow open shopping on Sunday while rules vary widely in the others. Since World War II there have been a spectrum of governing parties across the continent, but there is no consistent correlation between political parties and Sunday shopping laws. Post-Franco Spain did away with most Sunday restrictions, social democratic Norway has quite restrictive laws, while Catholic Poland has none. The United Kingdom, birthplace of Fabian socialism and the Labor Party, resembles the United States, with minimal restrictions. Perhaps most interesting for our purpose is Germany, led by both socialists and Christian Democrats since World War II, with the strictest of Sunday shopping limits:

Stores in Germany—which has the strongest economy in Europe—are closed on Sunday, with even fewer exceptions than in France. ‘The Sunday day of rest enjoys consensus in Germany among unions, employees, consumers, and business owners,’ Werner Zettelmeier, the research director of Paris’s Center for Information and Research on Contemporary Germany, wrote . . . ‘Any politician who proposed opening stores on Sunday would risk his or her career.’<sup>74</sup>

Citizens of the Communist German Democratic Republic did not receive a Sunday day of rest, so were unencumbered with shopping restrictions. There, most shops were open everyday, if with fewer goods to sell. When the Berlin Wall came down, the

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<sup>74</sup> Alexander Stille, “Why the French Are Fighting over Work Hours,” *The New Yorker*, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/why-the-french-are-fighting-over-work-hours>.

easterners had to get used to shorter shopping hours, probably considered a small price to pay. A 2009 German Constitutional Court ruling reaffirmed the ban on Sunday shopping, and ruled in favor of a complaint brought jointly by Protestant and Catholic Churches, citing “a clause in the German constitution that Sunday should be a day of rest and "spiritual elevation.”<sup>75</sup> German newspapers broadly supported the ruling, with echoes of the arguments of France. From the right: “If the state does not use some of its regulatory power to give a dependable rhythm to at least one free day—and that is still Sunday—then the family faces the threat of being pulled further apart.” The left newspapers also sounded familiar themes:

The ruling is humane. It is an act in favor of the public spirit. . . . Those who regularly go shopping on Sundays today will have to work regularly on Sundays tomorrow. . . . Sunday is Sunday because it is unlike other days. This is not about tradition or religion or a social heritage. . . . The treadmill is closed for 24 hours. The court has given relaxation, rest and 'spiritual elevation' precedence over the thirst for profit and the right to a consumer fix.<sup>76</sup>

Clearly there is diversity of opinion on the subject of Sundays in Europe across all the various governments, but despite the echoes in Germany, there is still something deeper and more complex about the modern French controversy. We must return to the question asked earlier; why such an emotional response in France to the Macron Sunday shopping law, and why especially among the left? What does this represent? Arthur Goldhammer, a prominent American translator of French works is affiliated with the

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<sup>75</sup> Siobah and Dowling, “German Court Enforces Day of Rest,” *ABC News*, Dec. 3, 2009, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/Travel/court-rules-shopping-sunday-germany/story?id=9236076>.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Harvard Center for European Studies. He publishes a Francophile blog on the subject of French politics, and puts forward an opinion.

‘It’s an identity issue for the left. . . . They see this as a transformation of the identity of the Socialist Party, which has been affected surreptitiously.’ The outrage over Sunday labor reflects ‘a kind of general resistance to the commercialization of culture,’ says Goldhammer, even if the work-free weekend is mostly imaginary. ‘It harkens back to a nostalgic version of France that no longer exists. It’s not like people are staying home on Sunday, going to church and eating dinner with their grandparents.’<sup>77</sup>

The importance of Sunday struck a particular resonance with the French left, ironically at a time when some argued there were few true socialists remaining in France. The question of why French socialists care so deeply about Sundays is answered with their longstanding support for social welfare, and in their defense of workers’ rights, especially the workers’ right to rest on Sunday. Over time, these traditions found their way into the national fabric and spoke to the issues of national identity raised in the Macron Law controversy. To understand the meaning of the controversy and how it speaks to the nation’s identity, we must review the modern history of the socialists of France.

Following the heroic but disastrous Paris Commune of 1871, the left experienced hard times in France, resolving in 1905 in the formation of a new, non-revolutionary, reformist party, which brought together a sufficient number of groups to impact national politics. The party was known as the French Section of the Workers' International, *le Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*, (SFIO) and was led by Jean Jaurès, an assembly deputy from Tarn, in the southwest of the country. Jaurès, an ardent defender

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<sup>77</sup> Stangler, “Macron Law.”

of the working class, was a leading proponent of social welfare ideas that would become a blueprint for the socialist vision of the French welfare state:

Insure the workers against the consequences of illness, unemployment, disability, and old age, so they do not come to the point of going on strike with their hearts already embittered by excessive suffering . . . Make sure the child of the worker can attend school and remain long enough to gain something that cannot be lost: a hunger for greater knowledge, for a methodical and reflective way of life. By a legal limit on the working day, give workers enough leisure so they can live, as well as the two things that make for serenity and balance: enough family life and enough life out of doors . . . Give the working masses — too often crammed into slums or exploited by the usury of rents — sufficient and decent lodging at a price that will not overwhelm them. Institute a minimum wage in all the household industries . . . which are like shadowy hollows where ignored miseries, silent despairs, and implacable grudges accumulate . . . Add to the schools medical services to monitor children for the first signs of inherited disabilities, and respond to their effects with appropriate aid. Fortify, thus, the nervous balance of the working class.<sup>78</sup>

Jaurès's ideas of social welfare, though radical at the time, helped establish the long-term association of French socialists with the French welfare state.

On the political spectrum, Jaurès's new party, known as *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*, or SFIO, was sandwiched between the misnamed centrist Radical Party, and the smaller though truly revolutionary parties of the left, which maintained substantial strength in the trade unions. Jaurès was heavily influenced by the

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<sup>78</sup> Jean Jaurès, *L'Organisation Socialiste de la France. L'Armée nouvelle*. (Paris, France: Jules Rouff, 1911), translated and quoted by Geoffrey Kurtz, "An Apprenticeship for Life in Common: Jean Jaurès on Social Democracy and the Modern Republic," *Academia*, accessed February 22, 2016, [https://www.academia.edu/10020064/An\\_Apprenticeship\\_for\\_Life\\_in\\_Common\\_Jean\\_Jaur%C3%A8s\\_on\\_Social\\_Democracy\\_and\\_the\\_Modern\\_Republic](https://www.academia.edu/10020064/An_Apprenticeship_for_Life_in_Common_Jean_Jaur%C3%A8s_on_Social_Democracy_and_the_Modern_Republic).

German Eduard Bernstein's ideas of non-revolutionary, reformist socialism, but there was no doubt about Jaurès' true social revolutionary feelings:

The domination of one class is an attempt to degrade humanity. Socialism, which will abolish all primacy of class and indeed all class, elevates humanity to its highest level. It is therefore a duty for all men to be socialists. . . . All this misery, all this injustice and disorder result from the fact that one class monopolises the means of production and of life, and imposes its law on another class and on society as a whole.<sup>79</sup>

Jaurès was an eloquent speaker, and in addition to championing the rights of workers and their welfare, he was a leading anti-militarist. He was founder and editor of *L'Humanité*, a left newspaper, and an early leader in the fight to defend and eventually free Alfred Dreyfus. He supported the involvement of his party in the Radical administration of 1905, and as a leader in the *bloc des gauche* he was instrumental in passage of the law separating church and state, as well as the 1906 law advocating Sunday as the one day of rest per week. Jaurès's primary rival at the time was the popular Radical Party leader Georges Clemenceau, the future World War One Prime Minister, who held no socialist ideals but displayed sufficient sympathy for the working class to earn a good portion of their votes.

As tensions rose in Europe during the first decade of the century, Jaurès became internationally known as a leader of the anti-war movement. However, in France he faced rising nationalism and a desire for revenge for the defeat of 1870, and return of the Alsace and Lorraine provinces. Jaurès worked tirelessly to rally international socialist

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<sup>79</sup> Jean Jaurès, *Studies in Socialism*, trans. Mildred Minturn (New York: The Knickerbocker press, 1906), 7.

opposition to the war and called for general strikes in the case of hostilities. One month before the war began, he was murdered by a French nationalist, who shot him through the window of a Paris café as he ate his dinner. Jaurès had been scheduled to speak at the Second Socialist International conference a few weeks later, in August, 1914. Without his leadership, the conference still half-heartedly “resolved unanimously that it shall be the duty of the workers of all nations concerned not only to continue but to further intensify their demonstrations against the war, for peace, and for the settlement of the Austro-Serbian conflict by international arbitration.”<sup>80</sup> With less harmony than the resolution suggested, the conference adjourned, and war broke out within days, with international socialist brotherhood bowing to nationalist fervor at recruiting stations across the continent. The remains of Jaurès reside today in the Pantheon, and his heartfelt socialist pacifism is remembered by the French:

I was walking the other evening in the country . . . with a young friend . . . Our way led over a broad upland . . . full moon lit up the clear space, and the pale distant stars shone with a tender sweetness. . . . ‘Yes’ I said to him, ‘the thing that angers me in our present society is not the physical suffering that might be mitigated by another *régime*, but the moral suffering that is brought by a state of warfare and monstrous inequality.’<sup>81</sup>

Jaurès’s passion for peace and the rights of the working-class, and his dedication to class struggle have secured for him a hollowed place in French history. Years later, Léon Blum, first socialist Prime Minister of the country, used Jaurès’s own words to describe

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<sup>80</sup> “The Second International,” *Marxist International Archive*, accessed August 27, 2015, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/>.

<sup>81</sup> Jaurès, 184.

the nation's feelings of loss of the martyr's passion. "Its flame can be kept burning, but its dead ashes can never be revived."<sup>82</sup>

Jaurès's socialism followed the ideas of social democracy and had deep roots in French political history. One historian suggested, "His aspiration was to base socialism on the Declaration of the Rights of Man rather than those of orthodox Marxism."<sup>83</sup>

Jaurès's contemporary Bernstein was a founder of the German Social Democratic party and an associate of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Bernstein believed the founding pair of communists had the proper economic and philosophical analysis, but not the correct solution. He firmly did not believe in their prediction of a likely impending demise of capitalism.

I set myself against the notion that we have to expect shortly a collapse of the bourgeois economy, and that social democracy should be induced by the prospect of such an imminent, great, social catastrophe to adapt its tactics to that assumption. That I maintain most emphatically. The adherents of this theory of catastrophe, base it especially on the conclusions of the *Communist Manifesto*. This is a mistake in every respect.<sup>84</sup>

Bernstein, like Jaurès, felt some version of capitalism was here to stay and that peaceful evolution from capitalism to a socialist state could be achieved by electoral and legislative reform within the Western democracies. Violent proletarian revolution was, they felt, unnecessary, and socialism could and would bring ethics to capitalism. The state would act as a determining player, working for the good of its citizens. Bernstein's

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<sup>82</sup> Léon Blum, *For All Mankind*, trans. W. Pickles (New York: Viking Press, 1946), 30.

<sup>83</sup> Henry Heller, *Jean Jaurès: A Socialist History of the French Revolution*, trans. Mitchell Abidor (London: Pluto Press, 2015), x.

<sup>84</sup> Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1911), x.

thinking found fertile ground in France, nurtured by the republican idea of the state as the protector of its citizens. However, he was bitterly opposed by traditional Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, who in 1900 wrote *Social Reform or Social Revolution*, a bitter attack on the German. Bernstein's politics came to be known disdainfully among Marxists as reformism, or gradualism, but in many countries, including France they were embraced by the socialists. Luxemburg was to die a violent death in 1919 in Berlin during the abortive German revolution. Bernstein served as an elected member of the German Reichstag as a Social Democrat during the interwar years, and also died in Berlin, like Luxemburg, but peacefully in his sleep. His following was substantial in Europe, and his belief in working within the system was shared by many of the pre-war French socialists, such as Jaurès; Alexandre Millerand, the first socialist to serve in a French cabinet; and Léon Blum, Jaurès's disciple, just beginning his political career.

During this early period of the century in France, the Radical party remained in power, but the *bloc des gauche*, under Jaurès's leadership, was quite influential in determining laws in the assembly. At this time, *laïcité*, that uniquely French, extreme separation of church and state, was to become more firmly rooted, along with the concept of an official weekly day of rest for workers. Critically in this period Jaurès and his peers successfully established features of what would become the modern French welfare state; a progressive income tax, workers' pensions, regulation of work hours, and initial social protection legislation. Jaurès and Bernstein, defenders of workers' rights and pioneers of social welfare, together helped to build the socialist non-revolutionary approach to social change, a European alternative to revolutionary Marxism. Their approach began to show

concrete results, and in France in particular, the beginnings of the modern welfare state became forever identified with Jean Jaurès and his fellow socialists. A century later, when Emmanuel Macron would be accused of attacking the day of rest, he would be perceived as not only violating French religious tradition but attacking the legacy of Jean Jaurès and his fellow socialists' defense of the rights of workers and their right to Sunday as a day of rest.

## *Protection sociale entre les guerres*

There are two general types of European welfare systems, one developed after World War II in the United Kingdom by William Beveridge, which tends toward benefits that are universal in coverage, and the other model established in the nineteenth century by Otto von Bismarck of Germany, with benefits associated with a worker's employment. Both systems were implemented top-down, the British by a post-war Labor government, and the German by a conservative government, largely to stave off rising worker rebellion across the continent at the time. The French model, known as *protection sociale*, is somewhere between the two. It was built more piecemeal, by upward pressure on the government from workers, the Church, and the political left over a period of many years, as we have seen with the foundations implemented by Jaurès and the *bloc des gauches* around the turn of the century. The development of the French system was that of an evolution from Bismarckian beginnings, with a basis in the employer-worker relationship, toward Beveridge-like universality. Significant opposition prevented various attempts at comprehensive rationalization of the different programs, as was accomplished in Britain with the Beveridge plan. Hence throughout its existence, the French welfare state was saddled with a hodge-podge of systems developed separately for medical, unemployment, and retirement benefits.

The roots of these systems go back to medieval fraternal societies and craft guilds, nurtured by Catholic social thinking. In the period discussed in the previous chapter,

Radical and Socialist deputies launched the beginnings of the modern systems, with free, if limited, medical assistance, an early child welfare program, and assistance to infirm and elderly citizens. Compulsory worker insurance for certain trades and industries soon followed, with employers and employees sharing costs, and importantly, employers owning responsibility for administration of the system.

Growth of the system was dramatically furthered by developments between the world wars. The Great War fundamentally changed French thinking about social protection. A million and a half Frenchmen lost their lives in WW1, and their dependents and the survivors of battle required care. The historian Timothy Smith wrote; “A civic right to welfare emerged . . . the war propelled the French toward a more activist social policy at a faster speed, and from a more distant starting point, than the British or Germans.”<sup>85</sup> In the postwar period, two branches developed separately, family welfare, better known as family allowances (*allocations familiales*) and social insurance (*assurances sociales*). These two initiatives came about as a result of many conflicting protagonists—employers, urbanized unions, and agricultural workers, mutual aid societies (*sociétés mutualiste*—private insurance clubs), doctors, Catholic family and pronatalist advocates—all acting upon and through assorted left, centrist, and conservative politicians. These protagonists sometimes worked together, sometimes in opposition, fashioning the systems in place today through public debate and eventual compromise. We will review first the immediate post-war developments and Smith’s suggestion.

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<sup>85</sup> Timothy B. Smith, *Creating the Welfare State in France, 1880-1940* (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 54.

During the first year of World War I, a young French housewife, Marie Pireaud, wrote to her husband Paul, a soldier on the frontline, replying to his inquiries about the state of the harvest. Paul had asked,

whether the village had pulled together in a spirit of fraternity to bring in the crops. Marie had little good to report. ‘As for goodwill, what can one say, it’s like all the other years . . . The war changes nothing and nobody helps anyone else now . . . If one poor person suffers a misfortune then the others laugh behind her back, so let’s not talk about it any more because it’s shameful.’<sup>86</sup>

Smith suggested this attitude underwent a major transformation by war’s end, that in fact the Great War was the impetus for a new period of French collectivist thinking, and a primary stimulus for the modern French welfare state. Smith referenced the work of a Dutch scholar, Abram de Swann who argued,

that before nation-states were capable of creating national social policies, they first had to undergo a lengthy collectivizing process. That is, the political leaders from all parts of each country would have to realize that the nation was an organic whole; bound by problems and interests that transcended classes, parishes, cities, and the countryside.<sup>87</sup>

Smith maintained that the Great War was exactly that collectivization process for France. “In effect, the war was the greatest impetus to national consciousness and national social welfare legislation since the Revolution. Above all, it accelerated the ‘collectivization process.’”<sup>88</sup>

In the nineteenth century, most French welfare programs were local and charity-based, situated in the larger cities and towns, grounded in the communes, the Church,

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<sup>86</sup> Martha Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 52.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, 10.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

hospital boards, and the charitable contributions of local notables. This model was an early casualty of the war, as local charitable sources simply ran dry and the need for more centrally coordinated efforts with a larger resource base became apparent. In addition, a significant sense of collectivism grew with the war. Smith notes, “A powerful image of national unity—both intellectually and geographically—of the French rallying together in defense of the nation, with public assistance being one of the key rallying points, was a recurring and unprecedented theme in the early 1920s.”<sup>89</sup> We shall see that this period of post-war national unity displayed during the inter-war years was a major step forward for the French welfare state. Smith added; “never before, or since, has French society been so redistributive towards the needy and the lower-paid workers.”<sup>90</sup>

During the war, many employers added family benefits to worker salaries, with bonuses to incentivize births. To support the war effort, to keep salaries within inflationary bounds, and to follow government guidance, manufacturers and unions in many industries moved to a new compensation model, the *salairé vital*, which added a family allowance component to workers’ salaries, based on family size, to address workers’ social needs.<sup>91</sup> Following the armistice, in a period of severe worker unrest, unions fought for, and employers agreed to, maintenance of these additional funds as a base salary component. However, it soon became clear that an allowance based simply on family size was an awkward and unfair measure, given different sizes of families.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>91</sup> Paul F. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947* (Cambridge, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2002), 17.

Moreover, it encouraged employers to hire unmarried men. This result conflicted with a strong Church and state-sponsored pronatalist movement sweeping the country after the war, as France attempted to come to grips with its long term birthrate decline, one that had begun in the nineteenth century. These forces led employers, with government encouragement, to band together and aggregate their welfare funds, the *caisses de compensation*, in order to spread and equalize employer costs across regions and industries. To deal with the widespread labor unrest at the time, employers were more willing to increase contributions to the shared *caisse* as a less expensive concession than wage hikes, since many workers had small families. Government legislation in the early twenties began regulating the allocation of the *caisse* funds for medical, disability, and retirement purposes.

The second branch of French welfare, social insurance, grew out of a long tradition of mutual aid societies, in which members paid a monthly fee, and then received funds to cover certain events as needed, such as funerals and burials. In the early twentieth century, the aid societies, common among craftsmen and tradesmen in large and mid-size French cities, were generally unavailable in rural areas. In addition, increased urbanization, with women workers and a growing proletariat, tested the limits of this inconsistent, voluntary model. Pre-war legislation attempted to establish standards and legal frameworks for the societies, but during the post-war period of labor unrest, the voluntary mutual aid agency model simply proved unsatisfactory. Forces in the assembly pushed toward a national model of social insurance, helped in no small part by the wartime recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, which, under pre-war German administration, had

benefited from the Bismarckian model of social insurance. Inhabitants of the region pressured their deputies to ensure welfare benefits and retirement pensions would not be lost with their return to French citizenship. After nine years of debate, beginning with a defeated Vincents Bill in 1919, and ending in 1928, the nation's first national social insurance bill was passed, the fight led by a doctor and deputy from Alpes-Maritimes, Edouard Grinda. The final bill provided state-mandated coverage for risks of illness, maternity, death, disability, invalidity and old age. It was a *mélange*, using and building upon both the existing voluntary mutual aid society and employers' *caisse de compensation* models. The bill mandated employer and worker contributions, allowed for voluntary participation for some workers while mandating participation for others, and provided uneven coverage for women. It established the foundation for the French system in place today. "Grinda proclaimed that the revised bill represented . . . in essence a grand mutual society."<sup>92</sup> Within a year of passage of Grinda's bill, France joined Britain and Germany in spending over 5% of GDP on social welfare.

With the exception of the Alsace and Lorraine regions, employers and their associations were not supportive of the new law, and many turned to their *caisses de compensation* as a tool to provide workers an attractive and less costly alternative to the government system. Thus the passage of Grinda's bill led ironically to increased employer support for the *caisses*, accelerating the aggregation effort and turning many of them into "super *caisses*," as employers extended benefits and increased coverage levels

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 55.

to compete with the government plan.<sup>93</sup> Thus for some years, the two models, the government system and the private *caisses*, competed with each other for workers' support, while in the assembly, debate raged anew between reactionaries wishing to repeal the benefits and those wishing to extend them. This struggle continued until the appearance of a worldwide economic depression brought a pause to the rivalry.

Feminist organizations played a strong role in the fight for social welfare legislation. Heroic French women such as Hubertine Auclert, inspired women to engage in political activism; "Just as men who have taste invade the kitchen, women instinctively must move to engage in politics."<sup>94</sup> Women's groups such as the *Conseil National de Femmes Françaises* (CNFF) and the Catholic women's *Union Féminine Civique et Sociale* (UFCS) were actively involved in the legislative struggle for both the Vincent's and Grinda bills. The movement for welfare rights for women faced particular cultural challenges, as historian Susan Pederson points out:

Women had trouble throughout the interwar period claiming the identity of worker, since the marriage bar, protective legislation, union restrictions and indeed cultural norms all turned on the assumption that marriage was for them, under normal circumstances, incompatible with waged work. Social insurance mirrored this assumption.<sup>95</sup>

Maria Vérone, one of France's first female lawyers and president of the *Ligue Française des Droits des Femmes* was a strong supporter of the Vincent bill. "Our legislators, out of concern for all kinds of misery, have presented a universal remedy, a beautiful social

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>94</sup> Genevieve Fraisse, *Hubertine Auclert, pionnière du féminisme: Textes choisis* (Saint-Pourcain-sur-Sioule, France: Blue Autor, 2007), 186.

<sup>95</sup> Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 419.

reform that will place France at the head of civilized nations.”<sup>96</sup> *La Française*, a Catholic womens weekly, proclaimed, “Finally the arrival of a baby in a modest household will no longer constitute a financial catastrophe.”<sup>97</sup> However, the bill, compromised to ensure passage, disappointed supporters in its lack of coverage for maternity expenses and for single working women. However the disappointment of the initial bill only strengthened the alliance of feminists, Catholics, and nationalist pronatalists to carry on the fight, the latter driven by concern with the ongoing population decline. Ongoing improvements to the original bill resulted in maternity leave and maternity payments for women workers. Other social welfare measures of the time included a forty-hour week and vacation, but only for some craftsmen. This period of small but not insignificant social progress came to an end when the depth of the aforementioned economic crisis became apparent.

The mid and late thirties were politically chaotic years under the Socialist-led *Front Populaire* and were seen by many as difficult times for social welfare. However, both Smith and fellow historian Paul Dutton make a strong revisionist case that these were far from “hollow years” for the French welfare system, as Eugene Weber would famously describe them. The government was awash in economic and social challenges, from rising unemployment to the declining birthrate. The Spanish Civil War raged on one border while German militarism threatened on the other. Attempts to extend family welfare programs to agricultural workers in the countryside were less than entirely successful, though pronatalist fears about the national depopulation were exacerbated by expectations of coming war. “In the aftermath of a war which had reduced our active

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<sup>96</sup> Dutton, 130.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

population by several million men, the recuperation of our ‘Human capital’ was a vital preoccupation.”<sup>98</sup> However there were two major successes on the social front. First, Léon Blum’s government managed to pass binding labor laws that ensured the right of workers to collective bargaining, the right to strike, and a nation-wide “a five-day, eight-hour-a-day work week, (with Sunday and either Saturday or Monday as the two rest days).”<sup>99</sup> The bill also permanently limited the control of employers over their family allowance contributions in the *caisses*. Secondly, by beating back repeated conservative attempts in the assembly to repeal welfare legislation, and maintaining the established programs through the most difficult of economic times, Blum’s government not only guaranteed their survival but their successful integration, as an accepted component, into the French social fabric. Timothy Smith again;

France did, indeed, dither in the realm of foreign policy, and certainly it had an unstable polity during the 1930s. Indeed, the country may have been on the verge of a civil war. At the least, its politicians were at war with one another. Politically, as critics have argued for decades, the nation was surely “decadent” in some areas. But where social policy is concerned, these could not be termed ‘the hollow years.’ Rather, they were the most important two decades in French history to date. The economic, political, administrative, and intellectual foundation for France’s national welfare state, which is generally thought to have been built only in 1945-46, was in fact constructed between the wars.<sup>100</sup>

Going even further than Smith, Paul Dutton asks and answers the question “Why are the French so attached to their welfare state?”<sup>101</sup> He contends it was in these formative inter-

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<sup>98</sup> Smith, 91.

<sup>99</sup> Joel Colton, *Léon Blum: Humanist in Politics* (Durham; Duke University Press, 1987) 171.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, 191.

<sup>101</sup> Dutton, 11.

war years that French *sécurité social* became "an intrinsic part of French democracy. . . . simultaneously both the agent and evidence of national solidarity."<sup>102</sup> With World War II on the horizon, the French welfare system had advanced to become an integral part of the national identity.

The challenges facing Blum's government in the thirties were titanic. Blum, a Jew and the first elected socialist premier of France, faced economic, diplomatic and ideological trials on all fronts. It was an era marked by the Great Depression, growing militarism across Europe, civil war to the south, national socialism to the east, and Stalinist Russia demanding adherence of all socialists worldwide to the strictures of the Third International. Weber wrote, "The Popular Front dreamed, and dreaming is no sin even in politics, of solving the country's problems. Even if it had come close, and it never did, the problems that other countries raised were going to prevent this."<sup>103</sup> Blum himself admitted, "No one knows better than I that my generation failed in its task."<sup>104</sup> The writer Henry Miller, living in France in the thirties, commented "I'm cured of Europe . . . anybody who was not 'neurotic' during this period must be abnormal."<sup>105</sup> For Blum to have held fast and made even limited progress on the social front through this extraordinary period was a remarkable achievement. He knew very well his government was under threat from within as much as without, and later wrote of the former:

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<sup>102</sup> Eugene Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1994), 172.

<sup>103</sup> Blum, 18.

<sup>103</sup> Weber, 176.

Despite all appearances France really has been ruled for a century and a half by her bourgeoisie . . . the *Front Populaire* was no more than a defensive coalition . . . In 1936, when a *Front Populaire* government tried to secure . . . the great reforms that had become the one alternative to bloody revolution, the bourgeoisie accepted them only reluctantly, through fear, and then, ashamed and embittered by its own fear, did all it could by violence or by trickery to go back on its word.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the difficult times, his commitment to social progress and social democracy never wavered:

There is, indeed, no way of evading the social problem when the facts themselves render its solution so urgent. How shall we continue to tolerate a system in which men have neither sufficient food, nor healthy houses, nor the whereabouts to protect their families from hunger, cold, illness, and vice?<sup>107</sup>

In the long march toward the modern French welfare state, Léon Blum was an heroic figure, a humanist of socialist ideals who recognized the limitations of his times and the necessity to compromise with reality, but one who never failed to support workers' rights and their social welfare, strengthening the linkage of socialists with the *systèmes de protection sociale*. As Dutton reminds us, it was during this period that the system became an integral part of the French identity. Blum's support of the welfare state was in the tradition of Jaurès's struggle for workers' rights, both core socialist tenets. Eighty years later, when Emmanuel Macron proposed liberalization of Sunday shopping laws, his attack on the sanctity of Sunday would be seen by his fellow socialists as an assault not only on the workers' day of rest, but on the historic socialist struggle for workers' rights, and by implication, on the legacy of Jean Jaurès and Léon Blum.

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<sup>106</sup> Blum, 79.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

### *Après la guerres: les Trente Glorieuses*

The twenty-five years following World War II were heady economic times in France, the beginning of the era known as “the glorious thirty,” a title bestowed by the French demographer Jean Fourastié. During this period the economy of France grew at a very fast pace, as fast any on the planet. Stimulated by the Marshall Plan, dramatic increases were seen in wages, consumption, and the purchasing power of the average worker. The standard of living for the country improved dramatically over the pre-war years, and became one of the world’s highest. During this period, French social welfare programs continued to expand.

Early in the war, in 1940, the French ministry of labor had proposed a significant change in the *caisse de compensation* model. With wartime efficiency in mind, the ministry suggested aggregation of all the independent employer funds nation-wide into one large “National Compensation Fund.” The logic was the same as that which earlier in the century had driven employers to combine their funds regionally and across industries. The goal was to share coverage and costs over a larger resource base, thus alleviating particularly harsh losses in any one area. The war had placed great pressure on the employers’ *caisse* model, with many unable to deal with increased costs due to wartime stress. As Dutton explained, “In effect, the new fund would be a state-run super *caisse* capable of equalizing the cost of family allowances between employers

nationwide.”<sup>108</sup> The proposal was a controversial one, supported by some financially stressed employers, opposed by others. In the end, the proposal came to naught, overwhelmed by more pressing issues of the occupation, but it was an idea that would be revisited in the post-war years.

French economic planners, members of the Free French *Section sociale*, resided in London during the occupation, and were influenced by the universalist Beveridge proposals then circulating in Britain. They made plans for rationalizing and expanding their multifaceted French welfare system after liberation. After the war, De Gaulle placed Pierre Laroque, a member of the London group, in charge of social welfare planning, and Laroque proceeded to implement the work of the London team as well as the earlier wartime proposal to aggregate employer family allowance funds under a single *Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale*. Again opposition among employers arose, but this time the reformers won the day thanks to strong support from unions, the socialist and communist parties, and the leaders of the mutual societies, which soon migrated into private, often non-profit, supplementary insurance companies. Beyond this move, Laroque courageously attempted an aggregation of all the various French welfare systems, but in the end the nation was still left with multiple systems for various purposes, e.g. pensions, healthcare, unemployment support, work accidents, etc. However fractured, the total of the complex social programs now placed France in the first rank of European welfare states and set the stage for the modern French welfare state.

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<sup>108</sup> Dutton, 185.

The growth of the economy during this period was breathtaking. In 1950, the average income in France was fifty-five percent of an American worker, by 1973, it had reached eighty percent. On average the gross domestic product grew at over five percent for the thirty year period, a faster rate of growth than ever in the nation's history. Labor productivity also grew dramatically, at a rate double that of pre-war years. A third measure, the rate of investment, went as high as twenty-five percent in the sixties, nearly double the pre-war rate, putting the country ahead of most industrialized countries.<sup>109</sup> At the same time a century of protectionist trade policy was brought to an end, allowing the nation's businesses to compete worldwide, and compete they did. The loss of colonial markets was replaced by increases in European and other international trade. Exports to European Economic Community (EEC) nations rose from fifteen to fifty percent, and the overall volume of exports expanded at an annual rate of twelve percent. These exports were not merely the agricultural products of pre-war years, but were diverse, from consumer products, to textiles and clothing to heavy industrial equipment. International investment, primarily American and European, mushroomed. "The entry of France into the global economy must rank as the most dramatic and fundamental shift in the nation's recent economic history," said Richard Kuisel.<sup>110</sup> The rural population shrank, while agricultural production output surged, with consolidation and industrialization, while urbanization increased dramatically—"the rate of migration from rural settings increased

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<sup>109</sup> Richard F. Kuisel, "French Post-war Economic Growth," in George Ross, Stanley Hoffman and Sylvia Malzacher, eds., *The Mitterrand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987), 19.

<sup>110</sup> Kuisel, 19.

from .5 percent in 1949 to 43% in the two subsequent decades,” Kuisel added.<sup>111</sup> Jobs shifted dramatically from rural farms to urban industries.

Economists generally credit the boom to a combination of liberalizing government policies (relaxation of traditional French government *dirigisme*), industrial investment, and entrepreneurial spirit unleashed by the war’s end. During this time of economic expansion, conservative parties ruled France for virtually the entire period. On the housing front there were also huge advancements.

By 1975 one family in two lived in recently constructed housing. In 1954 more than one-third of households lacked running water. Only 17.5 per cent had a bathroom or shower. By 1975 70 per cent possessed these facilities. Central heating also spread rapidly, with 19 per cent of households enjoying its benefits in 1962 and 67 per cent in 1982.<sup>112</sup>

Cars owned by individuals increased from five to fifteen million from 1960 to 1975. Telephones in private homes shot up from fifteen percent of homes in 1968 to seventy-four percent in 1982.<sup>113</sup> Kristin Ross summed it up. “Before the war, it seemed, no one had a refrigerator; after, it seemed, everyone did.”<sup>114</sup> France was in the process of becoming a modern consumerist nation.

Ironically, recent analysis by economic historian Robert Fogel shows that economists at the time were surprisingly pessimistic about the future, and of course, quite wrong. Concerns about largescale demobilization, reductions in defense industry

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Roger Price, *A Concise History of France* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), 330.

<sup>113</sup> Price, 331.

<sup>114</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 4.

workers and a late 1940s recession led to fears at the time of secular stagnation (low growth plus inflation), for Western Europe and the United States. Fogel's 2004 review of JSTOR articles published in the period shows a near fixation among the gloomy practitioners of the dismal science during the post-war years.

There was an explosion of articles on the topic (secular stagnation) from 1941 to 1960, most of which were written after the war or in anticipation of the imminent end of the war. That such a debate would erupt in anticipation of peace is not surprising [due to the fore mentioned factors] . . . secular stagnation was a heated topic throughout 1960 and was still lively in the 1970s.<sup>115</sup>

As we now know the pessimism proved far off the mark.

By the late 1950s the United States and other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries were well into the post World War II expansion, now called the Golden Age, with growth rates twice the long-term average . . . Measured by per capita income, the long-term average growth rate was about 1.9 percent per annum, and the growth rate during the Golden Age was, for Western Europe, about 3.8 percent.

France, well above the average, led Western European economies during this "Golden Age." Fogel's analysis shows that the plethora of negative JSTOR economic articles ironically declined significantly in the 1970s, just as the energy crisis occurred, causing worldwide recession and suggesting an inverse correlation between economists' predictive accuracy and actual outcomes. The historian concludes, "If you wanted to find

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<sup>115</sup> Robert W. Fogel, "Reconsidering Expectations of Economic Growth after World War II from the Perspective of 2004," IMF Staff Papers, vol. 52, IMF Conference in Honor of Michael Mussa (2005), *Palgrave Macmillan Journals*, on behalf of the International Monetary Fund, 7, accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30035980>.

accurate forecasts, don't look at . . . the economists. . . . you would come closer to an accurate forecast if you read the writers of science fiction.”<sup>116</sup>

Throughout this period there were extensions and enhancements to social security, unemployment benefits, the minimum wage, pensions, and increases to family allowances. Funded by taxation and employer and employee contributions, the programs effectively functioned as a redistribution and transfer mechanism from the wealthier to the poorer members of society. Though socialists and their allies successfully pushed for expansion of such social programs at every opportunity, it should be noted again that this period of large expansion of French social welfare programs, simultaneous with the economic boom of the *Trente Glorieuses*, took place under the administration of conservative administrations, first under De Gaulle, then other conservative presidencies. This is indicative of the historically bottoms up nature of French welfare state growth, with socialists, unions, women's organizations, religious groups, and others pressuring the assembly, as opposed to more top-down implementations in Britain and Germany. The net effect of this expansion was significant redistribution via social benefits and pensions. “[F]rom 1965 to 1975 . . . social benefits grew . . . from 22% to 27 percent . . . they grew 8.4 percent a year between 1959 and 1969 and 6.2 percent a year from 1969 to 1974.”<sup>117</sup> Such dramatic rates of increase were acceptable and even applauded by many during good economic times, but would prove problematic if the economy were to turn downward, and such a turn lay ahead.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>117</sup> Serge Bernstein and Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Pompidou Years, 1969-1974* (Paris: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 147.

## *Une époque de détresse*

The 1970s brought troubling times to the Western world, and especially to France. In retrospect, the final years of the sixties carried warnings. In the United States, after assassinations and a deeply contentious election, Richard Nixon was installed in the White House. In Prague, after high hopes for “socialism with a human face,” Russian tanks ruled the streets. In Paris, the student and worker rebellions of 1968 were followed by one last Gaullist election victory. Kristin Ross suggested that for France, the end of the sixties marked a “lurch into modernity.”

May '68 would be the new 1848, the confronting afterthought, the event that certified the massive social upheaval . . . of the decade that preceded it. With the largest strikes in French history, May '68 would bring all the problems and dissatisfactions surrounding the French lurch into modernity to the light of day. It was the event that marked the political end of that accelerated transition into Fordism.<sup>118</sup>

The seventies' lurch into modernity that Ross wrote of would be dramatically dissimilar to the years of the *Trente Glorieuses*. Her comparison to 1848 was an apt one. Following the end of the 1960s, there was a widespread sense of loss, disappointment, and dissension on the left, as had followed the failed 1848 revolutions. From the right, a strong reaction to the sixties began building, one that would bring a period of consolidated conservative power, similar to that of the latter half of the nineteenth

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<sup>118</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars*, 3.

century. This new reactionary era coincided with a dramatic increase in global trade and a period of industrial-capitalist hyper-growth, again, like the second half of the nineteenth century. However, in other ways the period would be unlike any before, and it was the tumultuous seventies that would usher in this new modern era, one with large social, economic and political implications for France.

On the left, the energy of the sixties coursed into multiple outlets. Assorted protest groups—feminists, blacks, gay rights advocates, third-world nationalists—all demanded change. It seemed violence could erupt anywhere, with outbursts in Europe from youthful radicals such as the Red Army Faction in Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, and in the East, the Japanese Red Army. On “Skyjack Sunday,” in September, 1970, Palestinian extremists hijacked four planes across Europe and held 300 passengers hostage. In 1971 the U.S. shocked the financial world by abandoning the century-old gold standard and allowing its currency to float, depreciating the price of oil and alienating its Mideast allies. In 1972, at the Munich Olympics, the Palestinian group Black September kidnapped and murdered eleven Israeli athletes. In 1973, in response to United States and European support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) unleashed a devastating embargo on oil exports to the United States and announced overall production cutbacks. Panic followed at American gas stations while European motorists experienced quadrupling oil prices. Further production cutbacks were to come. Inflation plus the oil situation helped bring on a worldwide stock market crash in 1973, beginning a serious, protracted worldwide recession.

As Ross suggests, the post-'68 years in France were an historic hinge, a pivot from the glorious years to an era of deeply troubling uncertainty. Marcel Ophuls' documentary film *The Sorrow and the Pity*, released at the end of the sixties—"a mirror presented by its author to its audiences"—triggered repressed French anxieties and civil discord around Vichy collaboration, resistance, and the national memory.<sup>119</sup> The De Gaulle era ended with the great man's passing in the first year of the new decade. In the seventies the overseas empire slipped away, and the nation was forced to adjust to a lesser international role. The American brands of Coca-Cola and McDonalds invaded and overran the country. Church attendance was plummeting, especially among the young. American rock and roll music, movies, and television programs were ubiquitous, English words sneaked into the vocabulary, and blue jeans were more likely to be seen on the street than the traditional beret. Confidence in the political elite eroded. Prime Minister Georges Pompidou "warned that 'our civilization is being questioned — not the government, not the institutions, not even France, but the materialistic and soulless modern society.'" He compared the chaos of the time to the "hopeless days of the fifteenth century, where the structures of the Middle Ages were collapsing."<sup>120</sup> The times were turbulent.

Exacerbating the widespread questioning of civilization, the French were now faced with an economic shock of unprecedented proportions. Unemployment had been

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<sup>119</sup> Stanley Hoffman, *Decline or Renewal: France Since the 1930's* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), 45.

<sup>120</sup> Bruce J. Schulman, "The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics" (Boston, Decapo Press, 2002), excerpted in *Books, The New York Times*, accessed August 27, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/books/first/s/schulman-01seventies.html>.

rising since the beginning of the decade, with over 300,000 jobless by 1973.<sup>121</sup> Inflation simultaneously accelerated and foreign trade weakened. Oil had replaced coal as the major source of energy, and dependence had grown commensurately. Energy imports had increased from forty-nine percent of total in 1963 to seventy-six percent by 1973, far surpassing that of either Britain or Germany, while “the implications of this dependence were masked by low petroleum prices until 1973.”<sup>122</sup>

The disorder continued. In a ten month period at mid-decade “Carlos the Jackal” attacked Israeli airplanes with shoulder rockets at Orly International, terrorist bombs were set off in the *Gare de l’Est*, the Palestine Liberation Army took hostages at the Iraqi Embassy in Paris, and Armenian militants murdered the Turkish ambassador in front of his embassy, spilling diplomatic blood on the capital streets. In the wake of the 1978-79 Iranian revolution, a second, and more serious oil crisis presented itself. Oil prices spiked further, unemployment jumped, inflation raged, and stagflation set in. By decade’s end a frightened and unhappy electorate was desperately seeking change. Thirty years of post-war center-right rule was about to end, but unfortunately for the opposition, the change would come at a particularly unpropitious moment. Though it was not yet clear to the political elites, the economic boom of the *les Trente Glorieuses* had ended, and the nation was entering a period of unexpected, lingering economic crisis. How would the French deal with the social, political, and economic challenges of this unexpectedly disruptive era? How would the traditional fabric of French identity evolve

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<sup>121</sup> Kuisel, *Mitterrand Experiment*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

as the nation entered the turbulent modern age? What sort of modern age was it to be, and what forces, if any, could return the nation to some level of stability?

**II.**  
**Neoliberalism, Mitterrand, and**  
*Le tournant vers la droite.*

*Perhaps we were dreaming in 1981.*  
– François Mitterrand

## *Le président et les hommes d'affaires*

In July of 1916, one year prior to United States entry into World War One, President Woodrow Wilson delivered a speech at the World's Salesmanship Congress in Detroit, Michigan. In the speech, now included in volume four of his presidential papers, Wilson spoke of the critical role of the "democracy of business . . . in the struggle for the peaceful conquest of the world." He described two ways that global business could be conducted. One was to "force the tastes . . . on the country in which markets were being sought." The other was "to study the tastes and needs of the countries where the markets were being sought and suit your goods to those tastes and needs. That was the American way." This "American way" would "keep pace with your knowledge, not of yourself and your manufacturing processes, but of them and of their commercial needs." In Wilson's view, statecraft and salesmanship were closely interrelated, and were sometimes entirely one and the same:

This, then, my friends, is the simple message that I bring you. Lift your eyes to the horizons of business . . . let your thoughts and your imagination run abroad throughout the whole world, and with the inspiration of the thought that you are Americans and are meant to carry liberty and justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go, go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Fighting is the Slow Way to Peace," address before the Salesmanship Congress, Detroit, Michigan, July 10, 1916, *The New Democracy*, vol. 4, *The Public Papers of Woodrow: Presidential Messages, Addresses and Other Papers, (1913-1917)*, eds. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), 230-33.

Wilson saw the businessman's battle for customers as one and the same with the statesman's battle for the hearts and minds of converts to American ideals. The United States, "a great imperium," had "the outlook of a great emporium."<sup>124</sup> Over the next century, American businessmen would heed Wilson's call, entering ports in every continent with the intent of achieving profits while simultaneously selling two entwined products, capitalism and consumerism. The global mass marketing seen today in France and elsewhere is the result of their successful labors.

With this effort, American leadership in mass consumer culture advanced alongside American global political hegemony. Europe was the first major testing ground for the concepts of the consumer culture that would later spread globally. None of the historical world leaders of commerce—Phoenicians, Venetians, Spanish, Dutch or British—ever dreamt of a position in global commerce such as the United States assumed after the two world wars. All these empires had their strengths, but none had that which American businessmen brought to the challenge, the knack for analyzing an audience, building products for that audience, and effectively marketing and selling them in a way that made them irresistible to the customer, and using, when needed, American diplomatic and military support to do so. The American way of doing business became the modern norm, the standard for how global commerce was to be conducted. Democracy was sold alongside the products, with individual choice held out as the means and goal in both commerce and politics. Peacefulness was a preferred, though not

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<sup>124</sup> Vicoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 3.

mandatory, aspect of the message, as no one, other than the reviled communists, would argue against a consumer's peaceful right to choose. Nor would anyone, other than those communists, argue against the peaceful right to vote.

This democratic, peaceful, consumer-oriented way of life became not only a standard European commercial practice, but a social, cultural, and political construct. To support the businessmen, factories built with government tax breaks and modeled after Henry Ford's Detroit system were required for levels of productivity that killed off smaller local efforts. Chain stores were needed to distribute goods from the new factories across Europe, eliminating smaller corner shops. Advertising was needed to market the goods to the customers. Good jobs were provided in the stores, paying well enough so the employees could afford to be shoppers. Supermarkets were needed to feed the growing wealthier populace, replacing street markets. Refrigerators, electric stoves, mixers, toasters, and washing machines became household necessities.

The seductive nature of the post-war consumerist culture was well represented in French women's magazines, whose circulation soared at the time. Social historian Rebecca J. Pulju noted;

The pages of *Vente et Publicité*, a national advertising journal, were lined with ads by women's magazines boasting of the size of their readership and its desire to spend. *Elle* . . . advertised itself as 'the magazine of women who buy,' and *La maison française* called its clientele "exceptionally receptive to advertising because it *wants to* and it *can* buy."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 82.

The magazines' content reflected interests that provide us a view into the era. "Articles about the home and full-time homemakers dominated in the 1950s. In the 1960s, fashion grew more prominent and articles on marital infidelity, the pill and the female body began to appear in women's journals."<sup>126</sup> After years of war and deprivation, French women, no less than French men, felt the pull of a more exciting, European, consumerist life nearly irresistible.

At the same time, many French felt ambivalent about the changes the nation was undergoing. Richard Kuisel wrote that the French felt their very identity, their very "Frenchness," was endangered by the rising tide of consumerism and American hegemony. Often, "believing that French national identity was at risk, they expressed their reaction most generally and abstractly as the defense of *civilization*."<sup>127</sup>

One reaction by the French assembly was to pass legislation regulating soft drinks, to fight back the "Coca-Cola invasion." Eventually the French courts threw out all the suits attempting to slow the American soft drink juggernaut, but the anti-Coke campaign revealed a deep uneasiness among the French. *Le Monde* suggested that despite American cars on French roads, American tractors on French farms and American nylons on the legs of French women, the battle over Coke was somehow different, more revealing. "What the French criticize is less Coca-Cola than its orchestration, less the

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>127</sup> Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1993), xi.

drink itself, than the civilization—or as they like to say, the life style—of which it is the symbol.”<sup>128</sup>

Other concerned French saw in the American organizational systems both a threat and an opportunity, even a path to the future. The prescient Jean-Jaques Servan-Scheiber believed it was both an existential challenge for Europeans but also a model for emulation. Starting from an analysis of American business investment in Europe, Servan-Scheiber found Europe business strategy woefully lacking in comparison, and warned of impending “historical bankruptcy” if Europe, and France in particular, did not change their ways quickly. Correctly predicting the massive transformation of the coming electronic information age, Servan-Scheiber wrote in 1968, “How much time do we have . . . It would be foolish to set a date. But we know . . . that there is a point of no return, and that it is not far away. There are only a few years left, and if we take electronics as a gauge, only a very few.”<sup>129</sup> The angst of the times that the French were experiencing was not difficult to see.

A recent work offers a unique explanation for the French attitude toward *l'américanisation*, attributing it to the loss of Algeria in the fifties. In *The Americanization of France*, historian Barnett Singer, crediting and building upon the work of Kuisel and Ross, suggests those historians would benefit from his methodology, the in-depth study of individuals. He delivers an examination of “French *people*—both famous and ordinary—showing how they stimulated and reflected, or reacted” to

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>129</sup> Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *The American Challenge* (New York: Athenum, 1968), 277.

Americanization. Singer is a proponent of the biographical school of historiography, with works on French generals (Weygand) and French movie stars (Bardot). In this work he used that toolset to assess in depth a French bureaucrat, a rock musician, a professional skier, and colonial soldier, among others, to build his case. His thesis is that the national depression due to the loss of Algeria led the French by the early sixties to embrace American consumerism with abandon, leading to an unprecedented “happiness revolution.” He writes of “this happiness revolution, this emphasis on a culture of ease and material good things, on the body and its beauty and pampering . . . leisure as an ideal in itself . . . vacations of increasing length and ever more hedonistic scope and complexity” and quotes the French pop singer Joe Dassin belting “‘La Amerique, l’Amérique’—‘I want to have it and I will.’”<sup>130</sup> But in the end, despite all the happiness, his verdict is that the Americanization was a negative for the nation, and “eroded what is typically French about the country, making it weaker . . . leaving it a “distinctly wounded place.”<sup>131</sup> At least one reviewer took issue with Singer’s judgment, stressing the European capability to accept global influences but still maintain national flavors; “every country in Europe has faced the same challenges . . . the many “*défis américains*. Europe has neither collapsed, nor surrendered nor become America. What makes the story

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<sup>130</sup> Barnett Singer, *The Americanization of France: Searching for Happiness After the Algerian War* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 137, 166.

<sup>131</sup> Singer, 169, 200.

interesting is how these nations adapt and survive — keeping some of their traditions and altering others.”<sup>132</sup>

Servan-Scheiber’s warnings notwithstanding, the American way of business swept across the west of the continent. However, there were limits to the American post-war munificence, and President Harry Truman drew a clear line when he eliminated Spain from the list of Marshall Plan countries. Truman, a Midwesterner of strong opinions about morality and government, ranked Spain among the worst in both. He shared his opinion at a 1950 Washington press conference. “There isn’t any difference between the totalitarian Russian government and the Hitler government and the Franco government in Spain. They are all alike. They are police state governments.”<sup>133</sup> The *New York Times*, reporting the president’s comments, added, “We are glad President Truman spoke out. Franco is not only a bad credit risk. He is a moral risk. . . . Attempts to soften our attitude toward Spain have not produced any other respectable argument, unless it is respectable to argue that if we lent Spain money Spain would buy American goods.”<sup>134</sup> To the *New York Times* and Harry Truman in the fifties, like Woodrow Wilson earlier, the morality of a government and its credit worthiness were two sides of a coin, just as were American statecraft and American commerce. The self-righteousness of the American post-war effort to build a modern European, consumerist, democratic,

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<sup>132</sup> Seth Armus, “Barnett Singer, The Americanization of France: Searching for Happiness After the Algerian War,” *H-France Review*, vol. 15, no. 131 (September 2015): 1, accessed October 24, 2015, <http://www.h-france.net/vol15reviews/vol15no131armus.pdf>.

<sup>133</sup> Harry S. Truman, press conference March 30, 1950, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1950*, vol. 6 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 234-35.

<sup>134</sup> “No Loan for Franco,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1949, 12.

society was never questioned by the Americans, and the pillars of Wilson and Truman's faith, belief in democracy, in consumerism, and capitalism all working together, would before long be codified into a new philosophy.

## *Néolibéralisme: tout a commencé en France*

American political, cultural and business values, interwoven with capitalism, consumerism, and democracy, swept across decimated post-war Western Europe as the United States rose to geopolitical global hegemony. Those values were not yet framed in a formal ideology, not yet contained in an all-inclusive philosophy, but soon just such a complete, holistic framework, to become known as neoliberalism, would appear and develop into the twentieth-century philosophical backdrop for the American way. Perhaps unexpectedly, the doctrine's early beginnings can be found in France.

The first formal gathering of adherents of the new philosophy occurred in pre-war France, where “in 1938, the *Colloque Walter Lippman*—an international congress held in Paris, consisting of twenty-six businessmen, top civil servants and economists from several countries—contributed to the rise of this intellectual agenda.”<sup>135</sup> The affair was organized by Louis Rogier, an anti-communist professor of philosophy at the University of Besançon, to honor Lippman, the American journalist, writer, and political commentator, who was traveling through Europe on a tour to support his recently published book, *The Good Society*. The work was and is a seminal text in the history of neoliberalism, as it represented a condemnation of totalitarianism, collectivism, and even New Deal liberal reformism, rejecting the concept of government interventionism as a

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<sup>135</sup> François Denord, “French Neoliberalism and its Divisions,” in *The Road from Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 45.

positive force in political life. Lippman writes of what he considers the ominous evil of central planning:

I have sought to examine this design of the future not only in its fascist and its communist embodiment but also in the gradual collectivism of democratic states, trying to determine whether a society can be planned and directed for the enjoyment of abundance in a state of peace. The question was not whether this would be desirable, but whether it was possible. . . . the vision when analyzed carefully turns out to be not merely difficult of administration but devoid of any meaning whatever; that it is as complete a delusion as perpetual motion. . . . I realized then that a prosperous and peaceable society must be free. If it is not free, it cannot be prosperous and peaceable.<sup>136</sup>

In Lippman's creed, freedom from government intervention in society, especially in what he called "the exchange economy," the commercial sphere, was a necessity for a good society. Any government violation of this principle resulted in an infringement on the freedom of its citizens. Attendees at the gathering enthusiastically receptive to Lippman's thinking included the Austrian economists Frederich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, both of whom would eventually move to the United States and become principal leaders in the international neoliberal movement.

Despite their common admiration for Lippman's book, there was much that the conference attendees disagreed about, including what their new doctrine should be called, as suggestions ranged from "individualism," to "positive liberalism." The label neoliberalism would not be agreed upon by the participants until after the meeting adjourned. However, the group did manage to reach a consensus on the set of ideas that would lay a foundation for what was to become the most influential economic and

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<sup>136</sup> Walter Lippman, *The Good Society* (Transaction Publishers: Piscataway, New Jersey, 1938), xlvi.

political movement of the second half of the century. These ideas included reliance on “the use of the price mechanism as the best way to obtain the maximal satisfaction of human experience” as well as “the responsibility of the state for instituting a juridical framework adjusted to the order defined by the market.”<sup>137</sup> These two principles, complete faith in the free market as the key to happiness, and belief that the role of the market included defining the state’s responsibilities, would remain foundational theses in the movement to this day.

Very soon however, World War II put an end to such theoretical exercises, and French post-war state interventionism, along with socialist and communist strength, both among politicians and in academia, marginalized the philosophy in France. In the immediate post-war years the ideas survived among anti-communist right parties, conservative businessmen, a few fringe academics, and the *Association de la libre entreprise* (ALE), an organization whose “objective was simple: ‘to highlight the misdeeds of state intervention . . . and to denounce it as the cancer of France.’”<sup>138</sup>

In 1947, Hayek, von Mises, the American economist Milton Friedman and a select group of scholars, mostly economists, but also philosophers, historians, and businessmen, met in Mont Pélerin, a small town in Switzerland, to form the Mont Pélerin Society, to re-establish and build upon the pre-war ideas discussed in Paris. However, the movement in France had dwindled in popularity such that few French academics were sympathetic, and businessmen largely made up that nation’s representation in the new society. The influential Jaques Léon Rueff, who taught economic policy at *Sciences Po*

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<sup>137</sup> Denord, 49-50.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

in Paris, disdained the new thinkers. “According to them, any intervention of the state in the economic life . . . would be likely to lead, and even would lead inevitably to a completely collectivist Society, Gestapo and gas chamber included.”<sup>139</sup> In fact, at this time the movement was at a serious low point, and attendees at the Mont P lerin meeting were in near despair. “The mood of this conference was somber; the participants, high in the Swiss Alps, were only too conscious that they were outnumbered and without apparent influence on policymakers in the Western world. All across Europe, planning and socialism seemed ascendant.”<sup>140</sup>

Later, neoliberal ideas would ascend in France with the Fifth Republic, especially during the presidencies of Georges Pompidou and Val ry Giscard d’Estaing, all the while contending with the strong traditions of *dirigisme* and social welfare firmly rooted in French society, as well as the increasingly difficult economic situation. The French neoliberals would have their day but that day was not yet near. Meanwhile, on the other side of the planet, fellow travelers of the new creed were soon at work on a very visible stage, setting in place a large-scale neoliberal experiment that would have momentous impact worldwide. That stage was located in a major South American country, and the results would in a few short years be felt all the way back to France.

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<sup>139</sup> Roger Nathan and Paul Delouvrier, *Politique  conomique de la France*, quoted in Denord, 59.

<sup>140</sup> George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1976), 26.

## *Le socialiste, le général et les jeunes hommes de Chicago*

Nearly thirty years after the American's Marshall Plan, in 1973, as the oil crisis and its accompanying economic problems were beginning to rock France, a less benign example of American statecraft was initiated in its own backyard, in Santiago, Chile. Salvador Allende, the first socialist to be elected president in the Western hemisphere, was overthrown by a military junta, one supported by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Allende, a doctor, politician, and lifelong socialist, won election in 1970, and implemented a program of nationalization of major industries, a platform on which he had run and been elected, much to the consternation of the administration of Richard Nixon in Washington. From Allende's inauguration in February 1971, United States policy was to undermine him at every turn. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, set the tone in a 1970 White House meeting. "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its people."<sup>141</sup> A now declassified National Security Memorandum from the time declared economic war on the new socialist administration, with specific directions:

Exclude, to the extent possible, further financing assistance or guarantees for U.S. private investment in Chile. . . . Determine the extent to which existing guarantees and financing arrangements can be terminated or reduced. . . . Bring maximum

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<sup>141</sup> Anthony Lewis, "The Price of Secrets," *New York Times*, August 21, 1980, 28.

feasible influence to bear in international financial institutions to limit credit. . . .  
No new bilateral economic aid commitments be undertaken.<sup>142</sup>

Richard Helms, CIA Director, was told by Nixon and Kissinger to take steps toward Chile that will “Make the economy scream . . . not concerned [about] risks involved,” according to now declassified CIA records.<sup>143</sup> The economic interference continued until 1973, culminating in CIA financed transport strikes that caused dire economic conditions, and eventually, an outright coup, led by General Augusto Pinochet, who was to impose a cruel and despotic seventeen-year military dictatorship upon a country with a fifty-year democratic tradition. The attempt by the socialist Allende to play the democratic game by the rules, which he did and won, was sidelined, defeated by manipulated market forces bringing economic chaos. But the economic story had only begun.

Right-wing Chilean economists, trained at the University of Chicago under the neoliberal Milton Friedman, were chosen by Pinochet to lead the economic recovery for the regime. Nobel prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, compared twentieth-century economics to sixteenth-century Christianity, and suggested, “If Keynes was Luther, Friedman was Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. And like the Jesuits, Friedman’s followers have acted as a sort of disciplined army of the faithful,

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<sup>142</sup> “Policy toward Chile, National Security Decision Memorandum 93,” *Nixon Presidential Library and Museum*, accessed October 8, 2015, [http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm\\_093.pdf](http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_093.pdf).

<sup>143</sup> “CIA Activities in Chile,” *United States Central Intelligence Agency Library*, accessed October 8, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/chile/#2>.

spearheading a broad, but incomplete, rollback of Keynesian heresy.”<sup>144</sup> Friedman’s well disciplined Chilean economist-soldiers were to become known as the “Chicago Boys,” and in 1975, their mentor himself arrived in Santiago to inspire them with speeches and seminars on a new economic religion for their country. Friedman’s University of Chicago colleague, Arnold Harberger, a regular commuter in the following years, moved to Chile to oversee personally the economic transition, unselfconsciously labeled by Friedman “economic shock treatment.” It consisted of massive cuts in government welfare spending, elimination of protectionist trade policies, deregulation of the labor market and suppression of unions, large public sector layoffs, elimination of public housing assistance, privatization of social security and sales of government-owned assets to Pinochet allies at below market prices. The program was accompanied by a wave of political repression, torture, murder, and the disappearance of tens of thousands of dissidents. Worldwide condemnation followed. As the program drew international condemnation, Friedman, soon to be winner of a Nobel prize, took steps to distance himself: “I never supported Pinochet . . . I did make a trip, I did make talks in Chile . . . I did meet with Mr. Pinochet . . . [but] never got a penny from the Chilean government . . . [although] I am more than willing to share the credit for the extraordinary job that our students did down there.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Paul Krugman, “Who Was Milton Friedman?,” *New York Review of Books*, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2007/feb/15/who-was-milton-friedman/>.

<sup>145</sup> “Milton Friedman, Pinochet and Chile,” *YouTube*, accessed August 27, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzgMNLtLJ2k>.

The economic experiment that ran in Chile for the next seventeen years was watched closely by economists the world over, and though the results are still debated, there is no argument that the experiment was conducted against a background of horrific human rights violations, with widespread, extralegal jailing, beatings, disappearances, and murders. After seventeen years Chile returned to democracy, many of Pinochet's people were tried and convicted for their crimes, and the dictator himself died under a cloud of international accusation and condemnation. However, the economic experiment was declared a success by conservative economists, and a recipe for modern neoliberalism evolved from the Chilean experiment. That recipe consisted of firm government alignment with business interests, fiscal austerity, tight money, free trade, deregulation of markets, privatization of government assets, suppression of organized labor, and reduced education and social welfare spending. In 1989, a version of the formula was documented by an English economist, John Williamson, as the standard reform package promoted by the International Monetary Fund, the World bank, and the United States Treasury Department for financially stressed developing countries, and became known as the "Washington Consensus."<sup>146</sup> The economic warfare waged by President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and implemented by General Pinochet and the Chicago Boys had evolved into a standard formula, blessed by a Nobel laureate, one of the world's most renowned economists, and accepted as standard policy by the leading

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<sup>146</sup> John Williamson, "A Short History of the Washington Consensus," (Paper commissioned by *Fundación CIDOB* for the conference "From the Washington Consensus towards a New Global Governance," Barcelona, September 24–25, 2004), accessed October 8, 2015, <http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/williamson0904-2.pdf>.

worldwide economic organizations. The agenda for the modern neoliberal project was now in place.

The term “neoliberal,” finally agreed upon by those pre-war Paris colloquium attendees, had a tortured linguistic history. Originally, political liberalism arose in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe, in the writings of John Locke and the Baron de Montesquieu, and evolved through the Enlightenment, the American, and French Revolutions. The word *liberal* comes from the Latin *liber*, meaning “free,” and was used philosophically to describe the political rights of free men. Economists Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill extended the use of the word to include free trade practices and laissez faire government. This body of thought is referred to today as *classical liberalism*, and was the philosophy from which the ideas of the Paris colloquium attendees developed. In the United States the term *liberal* evolved differently, coming to refer to supporters of government intervention and social welfare programs such as those of the New Deal, whereas in Europe it maintained its classical meaning. In post-war Europe classical liberalism fell out of favor as governments extended social welfare programs in most countries. However, reacting to the totalitarian governments of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, some post-war economists of a generally conservative political and social bent, both in Europe and the United States—among them our Parisian colloquists—worked to revive and spread the classical liberal principles, applied them to the post-war world, and followed the lead of the Mount Pelerin group, those new, or neo-liberals.

This new doctrine would continue to grow in strength until, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it would become the globally dominant political and economic paradigm. The movement would soon present the new socialist government in France, a government intent on a revolution of a very different sort, with an unexpected, unprecedented and inescapable set of challenges. How that government, that group of socialists, and the citizens of France as a whole would deal with this set of challenges would go far in defining those socialists' identity as well as the nation's identity in the post-seventies modern era.

## *Le cowboy et la dame de fer*

By the end of the seventies, the nearly decade-long economic crisis had defeated the best efforts of European leaders, leaving their citizens mired in a lengthy, debilitating recession. Desire for political change was sweeping the continent. The crisis would soon bring down the ruling party in France, ending nearly forty years of center-right rule and placing a socialist government in power. Across the Channel change came from a different direction, and in 1979 a Conservative party victory enabled Margaret Thatcher to become the first woman prime minister of the United Kingdom. A year later, Ronald Reagan was elected president of the United States. These two leaders, conservative in social and cultural beliefs, held economic and political positions faithful to the principles of neoliberalism, and successfully implemented programs in their respective countries consistent with those principles. Together they are commonly thought of as the political torchbearers for the neoliberal movement in the modern era. Their ascent, and the emerging global dominance of their shared neoliberal doctrine, would soon place the new socialist government in France, with its historical, costly, social welfare traditions, in an extremely difficult position.

In the United States, Reagan's program, labeled by the press "Reagonomics," by his supporters "supply side economics," and by his critics "trickle down economics," dominated the political conversation. Milton Friedman advised Reagan to adopt "four simple principles: Lower marginal tax rates, less regulation, restrained government

spending, noninflationary monetary policy.”<sup>147</sup> Harvard professor Martin Feldstein joined the Reagan administration as chief economic advisor, bringing with him ideas, popular among neoliberal circles, of privatizing social security.<sup>148</sup> Those ideas went nowhere, at least not until George W. Bush revived them many years later, as lack of economic growth was the immediate problem facing the new administration. The United States, like France and other Western countries, was dealing with the aftermath of the oil crises of the seventies and a combination of high unemployment and inflation, a condition not foreseen by traditional Keynesian economists who had dominated the post-war years. The Reagan program, implemented in his first years, included severe cutbacks in social welfare spending, reduced federal income and capital gains taxes, and severe tightening of the money supply by Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve Board, to combat inflation. In the summer of his first year in office, Reagan broke a high profile strike by PATCO air traffic controllers, firing 11,000 professionals and replacing them with military personnel. It was an aggressively hostile message sent to organized labor. His administration cut program funds for Medicaid, food stamps, education, and the environment, and attempted to purge people with disabilities from the Social Security disability rolls. He made his position clear on big government with a famous phrase, first spoken in his inaugural address but repeated frequently both by him and his followers.

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<sup>147</sup> Milton Friedman, “The Real Free Lunch: Markets and Private Property,” *Cato Policy Report*, vol. 15, no. 4 (July/August 1993): 1, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/policy-report/1993/8/v15n4.pdf>.

<sup>148</sup> Martin Feldstein, ed., *Privatizing Social Security* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

"In this present [economic] crisis, government is not the solution to our problems; government is the problem."<sup>149</sup>

Reagan's cowboy image played well with the French, his conservative policies less so. *Le Monde* suggested "the French prefer Reagan to Reaganism," and "likened him to 'a grandfather of their dreams' who . . . offered order and stability in a rapidly changing world." The French "liked his rosy demeanor, and his message of 'morning in America.'" However, "they were far less enthusiastic about his domestic policies . . . Only one in four wanted France to imitate Reagan's social and economic policies," and they lamented his reductions in "care for the sick and elderly."<sup>150</sup>

In the United Kingdom "Thatcherism," claiming roots in classical liberalism, took a form similar to Reaganomics, if even more extreme in practice. Thatcher's primary economic advisors included Keith Joseph, who served in multiple cabinet positions, and Alan Walters, her Chief Economic Advisor. Joseph had essentially ended his own ambitious political career by revealing a bit too much of his true personal feelings in a 1974 speech which criticized the parental fitness as well as the intelligence of the British lower classes:

The balance of our population, our human stock is threatened. . . . a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world and bring them up. They are born to mothers who were first pregnant in adolescence . . . Many of these girls are unmarried, many are deserted or divorced or soon will be. Some are of low intelligence, most of low

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<sup>149</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Government Is Not the Solution to Our Problem, Government IS the Problem," accessed October 12, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ixNPplo-SU>.

<sup>150</sup> Richard Kuisel, *The French Way: How France Embraced and Rejected American Values and Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 19-20.

educational attainment. They are unlikely to be able to give children the stable emotional background, the consistent combination of love and firmness which are more important than riches. They are producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, sub-normal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters. Yet these mothers, the under-twenties in many cases, single parents, from classes 4 and 5, are now producing a third of all births. A high proportion of these births are a tragedy for the mother, the child and for us.<sup>151</sup>

Following widespread public criticism of the speech, as well as the certainty of losing the poor mothers' votes, Joseph withdrew from the race for party leadership and instead worked to support Thatcher's victory. Walters, a more diplomatic man, was an equally ardent supporter of the small government neoliberal policies of the Chicagoan Friedman. Thatcher and her team developed a program similar to Reagan's, with tax cuts for the wealthy, unquestioned faith in the free market, and reductions in government spending. Her administration privatized state-owned industries, gas, water and electric utilities, and public housing (council houses) while deregulating the London Stock Exchange.

In 1984, inspired by Reagan's PATCO strike-breaking heroics, Thatcher faced down the strongest union in Britain, the coal miners, when over 140,000 strikers walked out in protest of government mine closures. The strike ended with no concessions to the miners and continued advancement of the conservative industrial program. Following the strike, the political power of the union was broken, many mines were closed, and the remaining were privatized. As Secretary for Education in a prior cabinet, Thatcher had

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<sup>151</sup> Sir Keith Joseph, "1974 Oct 19, Speech at Edgbaston," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/101830>.

stopped the practice of giving free milk to school children, earning her the nickname, "Margaret Thatcher, Milk Snatcher." When she assumed the role of Prime Minister, further deep cuts in education led to her becoming the first Oxford-educated Prime Minister not to be awarded an honorary doctorate by that university, after a not-close vote of the governing board and strong student pressure.<sup>152</sup> Under Thatcher, "The City," London's finance center, was deregulated and became the world leader in financial services, dominating European banking. In her later years Thatcher publically supported the former Chilean dictator Pinochet when he was roundly condemned by nations worldwide for his human rights violations. When he was placed under house arrest by a Labor government during a visit to Britain, Thatcher was kind enough to visit the aged dictator at his London mansion, and with BBC cameras rolling, thanked him shamelessly for waging war on communism and "bringing democracy to Chile."<sup>153</sup>

Thatcher, along with Pinochet an admirer of the nineteenth-century liberal Herbert Spencer and the twentieth-century neoliberal Milton Friedman, was more of an abstract thinker than the American Reagan, and embraced many views of Spencer, a fellow hard-nosed thinker. Spencer was an early proponent of Social Darwinism, and authored the phrase "survival of the fittest," which he used admiringly to describe not only his interpretation of Darwin's theories but his own economic ideas. Often in her career, Thatcher would quote a favorite phrase of Spencer's on freedom of the individual,

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<sup>152</sup> "29 January 1985: Thatcher Snubbed by Oxford Dons," *On this day 1950–2005 (BBC)*, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/29/newsid\\_2506000/2506019.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/29/newsid_2506000/2506019.stm).

<sup>153</sup> "General Pinochet and Baroness Thatcher," *YouTube*, accessed August 27, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CA-X1Z9NX8>.

taken from his 1851 treatise, *The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness*, and proclaim it triumphantly, “there is no alternative.” Among her team the phrase was reduced to the acronym TINA, and was quite popular, sometimes referring to freedom, sometimes to capitalism, and sometimes to Mrs. Thatcher herself. A linguist, and Thatcher critic, later wrote about the acronym:

This is the mantra chanted by 'dries' during the prime ministerial reign of Margaret Thatcher, by which they demonstrated their belief that free-market capitalism was the only possible economic theory. . . . The hard-right Thatcherites called themselves 'dries' to demonstrate their opposition to the 'wets', that is, the One-Nation Tories whom Thatcher despised. Wet was the public school nickname for any boy who showed any sign of caring for his fellow beings.<sup>154</sup>

Another foundational theme of Spencer’s, the primacy of the individual over society, was asserted by Thatcher in a 1987 British women’s magazine interview:

I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand "I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!" or "I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!" "I am homeless, the Government must house me!" and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour and life is a reciprocal business and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations.<sup>155</sup>

“The Iron Lady,” as her Russian adversaries appointed her, was a woman of strong principles who believed in neither the power of society nor of any collective, only

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<sup>154</sup> Gary Martin, “There Is No Alternative,” *The Phrase Finder*, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/376000.html>.

<sup>155</sup> "Interview for Woman's Own with Journalist Douglas Keay," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689>.

that of the individual. She had a few socially liberal moments, passing pro-abortion and homosexual rights laws during her administration, but she stands out in modern history as one of the staunchest and most effective leaders of the modern economic and political neoliberal movement. Across the channel, her contemporary, French Prime Minister François Mitterrand, not a fan, was reported to have said of her “she has the mouth of Marilyn (Monroe) and the eyes of Caligula,” while other reports substituted Stalin for the Roman.<sup>156</sup> Little did Mitterrand know that the movement she led would confront him with the most significant challenge of his political career. Thatcher was widely disdained among the socialists of France and especially so by the intellectual class. It would be they, the intellectuals of France, not the politicians, who would courageously step up to challenge her philosophical beliefs.

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<sup>156</sup> Sylvia Stead, “Thatcher, Caligula, Monroe . . . Wait, Did I Hear That Right? The Dangers of Misquoting,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 20, 2012, accessed February 14, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/community/inside-the-globe/thatcher-caligula-monroewait-did-i-hear-that-right-the-dangers-of-misquoting/article4101423/>.

## *La résistance des philosophes*

As the neoliberal project grew in strength, the European intellectual class was not passive in the face of the challenge. Michael Foucault, perhaps the most influential French philosopher of the late twentieth century, responded strongly to Thatcher and Reagan. He addressed the movement in a series of lectures oddly entitled *Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979*, (he eventually apologized for never getting around to the biopolitics).<sup>157</sup> An historian as well as a philosopher, Foucault began with an examination of the genealogy of neoliberalism, reviewing classical liberalism, and set the stage with a favorite quote of Sir Robert Walpole, the eighteenth-century first Prime Minister of Great Britain, on his preferred manner of government, which was the less of it the better. “*Quieta non movere*,” or “Let sleeping dogs lie,” or, as the 2004 Latin to French to English translation generated “Do not disturb what is at rest or settled.” The conservative Walpole and his class liked things the way they were and did not much believe in government changing that which was settled. Hopping the channel, Foucault recounts to similar effect the pithy conversation between Colbert and the French merchant, who when asked by the finance minister “What can I do for you?” replied, “What can you do? Leave us alone.” Again, the less government the better. Foucault uses both quotes to summarize “broadly what is called ‘liberalism,’

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<sup>157</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michael Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

. . . self-limitation of governmental reason . . . saying and telling government . . . all . . . should be left alone.”<sup>158</sup>

In subsequent lectures he reviewed in depth the German twentieth-century version of liberalism, *ordoliberalism*, categorizing it as a specific reaction to the chaos of Weimar and the extreme takeover of German civic life by National Socialism. Foucault pointed out the *ordoliberals'* faithfulness to the Austrian economist Frederich Hayek, who in his major work, *Road to Serfdom* (1944), expressed complete belief in the free market economy, arguing even minimal government intervention in any nation could lead that nation to totalitarianism, as it had with the German Nazi and Russian Bolshevik regimes afflicting Europe at the time. During the fragile German post-war reconstruction period, the *ordo* economists were influential at the head of government, and presented their ideas as a third way between Western capitalism and Eastern communism. Even the German socialists were swayed, and became convinced of the omniscience of the market. Foucault reasoned this predominant thinking resulted in “a sort of complete superimposition of market mechanisms, indexed to . . . governmental policy. Government must accompany the market economy from start to finish. . . . One must govern for the market, rather than because of the market.”<sup>159</sup> He argued that for the *ordoliberals*, government was no longer the overseer, but was now the servant of the market.

The Chicago version of American neoliberalism seemed to Foucault even more severe, ominous, and even voracious. Much more than a reaction to the immediate

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 20.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 121

economic crises of the seventies, it was a dramatic “mutation” of traditional liberal capitalism. “[Neo]Liberalism in America is a whole way of being and thinking.”<sup>160</sup> Foucault called it “anarcho-capitalism,” a final, ultimate evolution of classic liberal thought:

We should not be under any illusion that today’s neo-liberalism is, as is too often said, the resurgence or recurrence of old forms of liberal economics which were formulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and are now being reactivated by capitalism for a variety of reasons to do with its impotence and crises as well as with some more or less local and determinate political objectives. In actual fact, something much more important is at stake in modern neo-liberalism, whether this takes the German form . . . or the anarcho-liberal American form. What is at issue is whether a market economy can in fact serve as the principle, form, and model for a state . . . will liberalism in fact be able to bring about its real objective, that is to say, a general formalization of the powers of the state and the organization of society on the basis of the market economy? Can the market really have the power of formalization for both the state and society? This is the important, crucial problem of present-day liberalism and to that extent it represents an absolutely important mutation with regard to traditional liberal projects . . . It is a question of knowing how far the market economy’s powers of political and social information extend. This is the stake.<sup>161</sup>

Foucault hearkened back to the nineteenth-century critics of John Stuart Mill, who responded to the Englishman’s utilitarian “definition of man, as a being who inevitably does that by which he may obtain the greatest amount of necessities, conveniences, and luxuries, with the smallest quantity of labour and physical self-denial with which they can be obtained.”<sup>162</sup> Contemporary critics accused Mill of lowering humanity to the status of

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 218

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 117-18.

<sup>162</sup> Mill, John Stuart, "Essay V: On the Definition of Political Economy, and on the Method of Investigation Proper to It," *Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1874), V.46,

*homo economicus*, rational, self-interested, and labor-averse. Foucault took up and extended the criticism, accusing the Chicagoans of broadening *homo economicus* into the social realm, and accused them of utilizing their “economic analysis with any [and all] rational conduct.” Siding with Keynesians who believed *homo economicus* to be an inadequate, incomplete model of humanity, he accused the Chicagoans of eliminating all other aspects of humanity from the individual; as *homo economicus*, man became strictly “an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself,” and Foucault asserted this produced a “technology of the self.”

In comparison with the ambiguity if you like of German ordoliberalism, American neo-liberalism evidently appears much more radical or much more complete and exhaustive. . . . It involves generalizing it throughout the social body and including the whole of the social system not usually conducted through or sanctioned by monetary exchanges. . . . a principle of decipherment of social relationships and individual behavior . . . American neo-liberals apply, or at any rate try to apply economic analysis . . . to domains of behavior or conduct which were not market forms of behavior or conduct: they attempt to apply economic analysis to marriage, the education of children, and criminality. . . . the identification of their object of economic analysis with any rational conduct.<sup>163</sup>

Reagan and Thatcher claimed above all, a fundamental shared faith in freedom of the individual in the new neoliberal order. Foucault argued that by subscribing to such a neoliberal concept of freedom, they were actually surrendering their freedom to the chains of *homo economicus*, with their humanness reduced to mere economic utility.

This governmental-practice . . . is not satisfied with respecting this or that freedom, with guaranteeing this or that freedom. More profoundly, it is a

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*Library of Economics and Liberty*, accessed February 27, 2016, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Mill/mlUQP5.html>.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 243, 268-69.

consumer of freedom. . . . inasmuch as it can only function insofar as a number of freedoms actually exist: freedom of the market, freedom to buy and sell, the free exercise of property rights . . . The new governmental reason needs freedom . . . consumes freedom. . . . which means that it must produce it. . . . it must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the management of freedom, not in the sense of the imperative: ‘be free,’ with the immediate contradiction that this imperative may contain. The formula of liberalism is not ‘be free.’ [Neo] liberalism formulates simply the following: I am going to produce what you need to be free . . . not so much the imperative of freedom as the management and organization. . . . Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats.<sup>164</sup>

Foucault felt the adherents of the new order sacrificed their individual freedom at the altar of their movement, exchanging it for the freedom of the marketplace, for the freedom of buying and selling in that marketplace, and for the safeguarding of their private property ownership rights which they received at that marketplace. They gave up their independence and transformed themselves wholly into the species of *homo economicus*.

Scholarly reactions to the Foucault lectures varied sharply, sometimes even in the same journal. In one, reviews by the same authors ranged from derisively sarcastic, “state phobia, perhaps,”<sup>165</sup> to astutely perceptive, “great insights . . . critical link . . . between the governance of the self and government of the state.”<sup>166</sup> With his eloquent lectures the French historian-philosopher had developed an effective intellectual front in

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>165</sup> Michael A. Peters, and Tina Besley (A.C.), “Chapter 1: Introduction: Why Foucault? New Directions in Educational Research,” *Counterpoints*, vol. 292 (2007): 3, accessed February 16, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/42979088>.

<sup>166</sup> Tina Besley (A.C), and Michael A. Peters, “Chapter 7: Understanding the Neoliberal Paradigm of Education Policy,” *Counterpoints* vol. 303 (2007): 131, accessed February 16, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/42979446>.

the battle with the movement. However, he did not noticeably slow the juggernaut, and the neoliberal doctrine continued its global march, soon to receive a major stimulus from an historical watershed turn of events.

In 1991 the Soviet socialist empire fell, the last significant alternative to the dominant Western order. Francis Fukuyama, then a mid-level political science analyst at the RAND corporation, later to become distinguished Stanford professor, declared final victory for the West and announced “the end of history,” in a 1989 essay. He later expanded the essay into a book, underscoring “the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”<sup>167</sup> Though Fukuyama later walked back his brazen pronouncements in the face of contrary global events, at the time his work was popularly received and drew worldwide attention, particularly in the West. The concept and the book seemed to have the advantage of not only excellent timing but to all contemporary appearances, accuracy.

However, not all agreed with such a firm declaration of the demise of Marx. Jacques Derrida, compatriot of Foucault and equally prominent philosopher, was one who suggested the reports were greatly exaggerated, and indicative of nothing more than Western anxiety and aspiration. In a 1993 University of California conference titled “Whither Marxism?,” Derrida ruminated on the triumphant neoliberal paradigm and called forth the ghost of Marx to refute Fukuyama. In his lecture, Derrida analyzed the “specter” of neo-capitalism, and later expanded his thoughts into a book entitled *Specters*

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<sup>167</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989), 4.

of *Marxism*. He parodied Marx's opening line of the Communist Manifesto—"A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of communism"—and wrote;

In proposing this title, *Specters of Marxism*, I was initially thinking of all the forms of a certain haunting obsession that seems to me to organize the *dominant* influence on discourse today. At a time when a new world order is attempting to install its neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism, no disavowal has managed to rid itself of all of Marx's ghosts. . . . Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony.<sup>168</sup>

Derrida quoted Hamlet, "the time is out of joint," and suggested that a mad time, like that of the Dane's was upon us, "a disjointed now that always risks maintaining nothing together in the assured conjunction of some context whose border would still be determinable."<sup>169</sup> He railed against the "ten plagues" brought on by "the new world order,"—plagues of unemployment, homelessness, economic warfare, the arms industry, nuclear weapons. But he was not without hope, and referencing Marx's love of Shakespeare, he returned to Hamlet, noting the play "began with the expected return of the dead King." The philosopher warns Fukuyama of the return of Marx's spirit; "After the end of history, the spirit comes by *coming back* [revenant], it figures *both* a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again."<sup>170</sup>

Derrida raised high the flag of resistance and laid out a challenge to the worldwide disenfranchised, calling on them to join a "New International:"

The 'New International'. . . a link of affinity, suffering and hope, a still discreet, almost secret link, as it was around 1848, but more and more visible . . . an

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<sup>168</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 46-7.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

untimely link, without status, without title, and without name, barely public . . . without party, without contract . . . without common belonging to a class . . . inspired by at least one of the spirits of Marx . . . to ally themselves in a new, concrete way.<sup>171</sup>

Derrida was not alone, as the prominent German philosopher Jürgen Habermas also warned of the impact and the scale of triumph of the Reagan-Thatcher movement:

The form of capitalism reined in by the nation-states and by Keynesian economic policies—which after all conferred historically unprecedented levels of prosperity on the OECD countries—came to an end . . . with the oil crisis. The economic theory of the Chicago School acquired practical influence already under Reagan and Thatcher. This merely continued under Clinton and New Labour. . . . However, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a fatal triumphalism in the West. The feeling of being among the winners of world history is seductive. In this case it contributed to inflating a theory of economic policy into a worldview permeating all areas of life.<sup>172</sup>

Habermas saw direct and dire threats to Western freedom and democracy, threats clearly not of concern to Reagan or Thatcher. He feared that the rising economic order would destroy the public sphere, disenfranchise citizens of their democratic rights, and supplant the responsibilities of the political order, dangerously alienating the public from politics:

The worldwide success of neoliberal policies, which advocate the substitution of self-regulating markets for political regulation, tends to reinforce the impression that the displacement of domains of political regulation by self-regulating markets is restricting the scope of national governments. The perception that political elites are increasingly helpless may also nourish feelings of powerlessness, apathy, and futility among the broader public of citizens. . . . contribute to an

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 106-7.

<sup>172</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Europe: The Faltering Project* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 188.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 179.

alienation of the citizens from politics, and thus to the spread of privatism and of the mood of anti-politics.<sup>173</sup>

Such European philosophers as Foucault, Derrida and Habermas proved stalwart intellectual foes of the new world order and stimulated much dialogue in academia, at conferences, and in scholarly journals, as they attempted to create a viable, oppositional public discourse. However, perhaps not unexpectedly, there is little evidence they had any significant impact on mainstream thinking. Neither Reagan, Thatcher nor the government heads who followed them paid much heed to their criticism. Western leaders voicing a faith in individual freedom, the free market and the congruence of government and business interests maintained power in most western countries. Major components of the neoliberal formula were broadly implemented in the last twenty years of the twentieth century in the United States and Britain, including tight money policies, lower taxes, smaller government, limits on welfare, suppression of organized labor, and privatization of government assets. The impact was long-term as the ideas of Reagan and Thatcher lasted well after their departure, as in both cases, the changes they put in place were accepted and at times even furthered, by the subsequent center-left governments of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, neither of which offered a significant alternative.

Many of Reagan's economic advisors, such as Friedman and Feldstein, returned to academia and helped ensure the emerging neoliberal domination of American universities, training the next generation of economists. Typical was Glen Hubbard, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Reagan. Hubbard, who also served as

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chairman of George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisors, was named Dean of Columbia Business School in 2004, and was an economic advisor to Republican candidate Mitt Romney in 2012. His not unexpected advice to Romney was "reduce federal spending, cut marginal income tax rates by 20 percent across the board and gradually reduce the growth in Social Security and Medicare benefits . . . repeal the Dodd-Frank financial legislation and the Affordable Care Act."<sup>174</sup> The neoliberal economists hewed to their winning formula with dogged, effective, consistency. Today Hubbard's introductory economics text, *Microeconomics*, (New York: Pearson, 2014), now in its fifth edition, is widely used by entry level students in American universities.

The economic movement that began in Chile entered into the mainstream of global political and economic thinking and in a remarkably short period of time became the dominant Western order. Even far from the Western, capitalist world, in the People's Republic of China, the movement showed its power. China historian Maurice Meisner pointed out that the new post-Mao Chinese premier, Deng Xiaoping, seeking economic reforms that could be accommodated within his authoritarian state, determined that Western market mechanisms fit the needs, "at a time when the worldwide neo-liberalist celebration of the 'magic of the market' was reaching a crescendo."<sup>175</sup> If one were a world leader anywhere at this time, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, not to

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<sup>174</sup> David Segal, "Romney's Go-To Economist," *New York Times*, October 13, 2012, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/business/glenn-hubbard-is-romneys-go-to-economist.html>.

<sup>175</sup> Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999) 451.

be heavily influenced by the new force, this new market magic, as Meisner called it, even if one were at some distance, such as in France, at the *Palais de l'Élysée*, and even if one was the firmest of socialists, which François Mitterrand, newly elected socialist President of France, was not.

## *La Florentine*

By the time Reagan and Thatcher had departed from their respective offices, in France another revolution of a sort had erupted and been put down, with neoliberal counter-revolutionary forces once again on top. This happened under the leadership of François Mitterrand, the first socialist President of France under the Fifth Republic, and longest serving French president, with terms totaling fourteen years. Mitterrand had many nicknames in his time, but one that stuck was ‘the Florentine,’ implying a certain slickness, craftiness, and chameleon-like ability to succeed despite changing circumstances, not unlike that most famous of Florentines, Machiavelli. During World War II, Mitterrand was a quite visible member of the Pétain Vichy government, and as unlikely as it seemed, concurrently, a leading member of the Resistance. Serving in both roles was no mean trick, but while some would say he was playing both sides, seeking an ultimate winner, others would justify the behavior as part of a dangerous double game played by many wartime French. A photo of the time, well known in France, shows Marshall Pétain speaking as Mitterrand, in the audience, appears to listen rapturously. The Marshall awarded Mitterrand the *francisque*, Vichy’s highest award for his performance in support of the regime. Such evidence created uncertainty regarding Mitterrand’s integrity.

More uncertainty resulted from an alleged assassination attempt on Mitterrand’s life in the early sixties. Driving home late one night on *l’avenue de l’Observatoire* in

Paris, Mitterrand claimed an assassin took several shots at him, whereupon he abandoned his car and hid behind a hedge in front of the Observatory. His political popularity surged immediately after, until the alleged assassin went public, claiming Mitterrand had staged the incident to boost his public image. Charges flew back and forth in what became known as *l'affaire de l'Observatoire*. Despite the affair, he remained a popular politician, and in a closer than expected 1965 presidential election, as a candidate of a loose left coalition, Mitterrand lost to De Gaulle. During the campaign, his inconsistent positioning on leftist issues added to already existing doubts about the firmness of his beliefs. Born into a conservative, Catholic, politically right family, he participated in rightist protest demonstrations as a youth, and became an admirer and subordinate of Petain. After the war, he developed into a committed anti-Gaullist, likely due more to personal dislike of the general than political belief, and found a home with the left opposition. His true principles, whatever they might be, would be questioned throughout his career. A journalist of the left once remarked, "When he happened in the 1970s to talk about 'the exploitation of man by man,' I used to look fixedly at the tips of my shoes."<sup>176</sup> However, by 1969, Mitterrand had helped turn the loose coalition of 1965 into a new party, the *Parti socialiste*, commonly known as the PS. In 1972, prior to the first oil shock, with the economy still strong, the new party published a manifesto with a traditional left-wing agenda for leading France, the "Common Program." Mitterrand received the party's presidential nomination for the campaign of 1974, and again ran a

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<sup>176</sup> Julius W. Friend, *Seven Years in France: François Mitterrand and the Unintended Revolution, 1981-1988* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 28.

strong but losing race. Now, with two reasonably close election losses, he headed a united left party with a well-known program, in what still appeared to be a strong economy. With several years to build the base of his party, he and his new party were positioned perfectly for the 1981 election and an electorate looking for change.

The conservative right parties had ruled France throughout the Fifth Republic. In the election of 1980, a combination of Mitterrand's industrious party-building, plus a fractured right, resulted in his advancement to the second round. Mitterrand had master-minded and manipulated a decade-long, on-again, off-again socialist alliance with the French Communist Party (PCF) which allowed him to pull votes from their rank and file, and despite the uncertain economy, he ran on the largely unaltered left-wing Common Program of the seventies. During the run-up to the campaign, he decried the "crisis of the capitalist world," and was specific about his plans to move the country to the left:

We all agree on the need for economic and social measures to be taken by a government of the left, both to ensure the revival of production and widespread consumption, and to correct the most severe social injustice; the minimum wage will be raised, the family allowances and pensions increased; working hours and the age of retirement reduced. . . . We need tax reform, the elimination of fraud, taxation of large fortunes, deletion of exemptions and unjustifiable advantages . . . elimination of inequalities. . . . We must extend the control of workers and bring democracy to companies with worker self-management . . . nationalization of the banking sector and the nine major industrial groups . . . to reduce the exorbitant power exercised in national life by a privileged minority, and meet the aspirations of workers for better living conditions.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> "M. Mitterrand: aucune de nos divergences ne me paraît irréductible," *Le Monde*, September 16, 1977, accessed October 19, 2015, [http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1977/09/16/m-mitterrand-aucune-de-nos-divergences-ne-me-parait-irreductible\\_2870993\\_1819218.html?xtmc=mitterrand\\_1980&xtcr=2094](http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1977/09/16/m-mitterrand-aucune-de-nos-divergences-ne-me-parait-irreductible_2870993_1819218.html?xtmc=mitterrand_1980&xtcr=2094).

In the second round, Mitterrand surprised all with slightly over fifty-one percent of the vote, and defeated incumbent President Giscard d'Estaing. For the first time, a socialist President had been elected in the Fifth Republic, with the radical platform of “breaking with capitalism.” It was a result unthinkable to the conservatives, who, after twenty-three years in power, felt ruling the Republic was nearly their birthright, and the victory was nearly as unexpected to the left. On election night, Mitterrand had not prepared a victory speech and writing one delayed his acceptance appearance on television. “[T]here occurred a huge *fête populaire* at the Bastille. Tens of thousands of joyful people turned out to celebrate and mingle, convinced that their country, at long last, had renewed its revolutionary heritage. Others, less joyful, watching on television, were afraid that this might be true.”<sup>178</sup>

On his first day as president, Mitterrand, with solemnity and symbolism, placed a rose at the Pantheon tomb of Jean Jaurès. In his first week as president, capitalizing quickly on the victory, he used his presidential prerogative to dissolve parliament, and called for parliamentary elections within weeks, in which again, socialist expectations were surpassed. The communists and conservatives each lost over half their seats, and the socialists won a stunning overall majority, a completely unprecedented state of affairs for the country and the socialists. The socialists interpreted the double victory as a strong mandate for change, and this was reflected in the political agenda the administration put forward, a program intended to completely transform French society. The left, so long out of power, now that its time had come, seized the day, with fervor, and standing on

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<sup>178</sup> George Ross, “Introduction,” Ross, et al., *Mitterrand Experiment*, 3.

their manifesto, fully intended the revolutionary break with capitalism that they had promised. As historian Georges Lavau wrote, “The catchword in the Metz congress in 1979 was ‘breaking with capitalism.’ The preamble of the Socialist Party’s Constitution states that ‘because Socialists are consistent democrats, they believe no genuine democracy can exist in a capitalist society. In that sense, the PS is a revolutionary party.’” Deeply held ideological beliefs such as those held by the socialists would “provide a tested course of action in coping with upsetting and unforeseen circumstances.”<sup>179</sup> The revolutionaries were prepared and ready to move forward, as they felt their time had finally come.

Unfortunately for them, little did these French revolutionaries of 1981 realize the completely unforeseen circumstances that were in store for them, nor did they have any premonition that the end result of their socialist revolution would be so bitterly disappointing. The long-term ramifications of the coming years would change their political world dramatically, affecting the tradition of socialism in France, in fact redefining the very meaning of socialism in France, threatening their social welfare traditions, reaching to completely unexpected areas of French society, even to the meaning and sanctity of the workers’ day of rest. The socialist party of François Mitterrand would be transformed into one that Jean Jaurès and Léon Blum might not even recognize as socialist. This transformed party would live on well past Mitterrand, its banner eventually carried forward by such pronounced non-revolutionaries as François

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<sup>179</sup> Georges Lavau, “The Left and Power,” Ross, et al., *Mitterrand Experiment*, 117.

Hollande and Emmanuel Macron, socialists in name still, but socialists of an entirely different type than the revolutionaries of 1981.

***Attention: Baignade dangereuse, courants violents***

The global economic situation had not improved during the run up to the socialist victory, and the leftists, focused domestically for the election, were soon to be surprised by the very rough international waters in which they now found themselves. Throughout the West, simultaneous increases in inflation and unemployment had created an unprecedented condition that came to be known as “stagflation.” Western governments, led by Reagan and Thatcher, turned away from traditional post-World War II Keynesian interventionist policies, and implemented neoliberal, tight-money, deflationary policies as advocated by the rising economic guru Friedman. Not so the new French socialist administration in France. Determined to go its revolutionary way, the government announced a stimulative, interventionist program of “reflation,” to respond to the economic challenge, providing that bold “break with capitalism” and a dramatic “change of course” for the country. The program was redistributive, anti-business, and pro-labor, with increased social spending, new taxes on industry, and nationalization of banks and manufacturers. It included an immediate ten percent increase in the minimum wage, a new “solidarity tax” for wealthy individuals, and an increase in the family child allowance. Old age pensions were increased, and health insurance benefits were extended to the unemployed and part-time employed. Funding for housing programs for

the poor were increased by 250 million francs in 1981 and 3.1 billion more in 1982.<sup>180</sup> In the budgets of 1981 and 1982 over 30,000 teacher positions were created at the primary and university levels. In further hopes of stimulating demand, the minimum wage was increased repeatedly, totaling a thirty-eight percent increase from June of 1981 till March of 1983.<sup>181</sup> The retirement pension was increased by sixty-two percent in the same period, and the work week lowered to thirty-nine hours while the amount of annual paid holiday time was increased to five weeks.<sup>182</sup> The intent was to use Keynesian stimulus to boost demand and grow economic activity, but the expected positive results failed to materialize. Instead the result was an increase in the price of French exports, resulting in a significant decrease in exports, and increased spending on imports, causing an already negative trade imbalance to deteriorate further. Economists still debate the issues surrounding the failure of Keynesian economics in the seventies. However, there is general agreement that by the eighties, with France the only Western country still following a Keynesian strategy, such policies contributed to the country's growing trade balance deficit.<sup>183</sup> Inflation and unemployment continued rising tenaciously, and the government was forced to devalue the franc three times in an eighteen month period. Taxes were increased on businesses to help pay for the stimulus program, but with

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<sup>180</sup> Pierre-Alain Muet and Alain Fonteneau, *Reflation and Austerity: Economic Policy under Mitterrand*, trans. Malcolm Slater (New York, Berg Publishers Ltd., 1990), 85.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>183</sup> Edmond Malinvaud, "Reviewed Work: Reflation and Austerity: Economic Policy Under Mitterrand," *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 31, no. 3 (Sept., 1993): 1452, accessed 10/13/15, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2728258>.

depressed business activity, income fell short of increased expenses. Meanwhile, an aggressive nationalization program was implemented, targeting financial institutions, steel corporations, aeronautics and electronics manufacturers, intended to coordinate national economic strategy while maintaining employment and avoiding layoffs.

Business leaders were appalled by these actions, business confidence was dramatically impacted, and a serious flight of capital out of the country began. An expected worldwide recovery was not materializing, and the continued downturn increased the 1982 French deficit to forty-four billion francs.

Meanwhile, international economic circumstances were not working in France's favor. The effects of the seventies' oil shocks still had not been fully absorbed, and the global recession worsened throughout 1982. Interest rates spiked to unprecedented levels. Deflationary policies followed by other Western powers worked against France's demand-side solutions. Currency speculators, leveraging the strength of the dollar and the competitive position of the deutschmark, put pressure on the franc, helping push the administration to the devaluations. During this period, globalization was surging, stimulated by deregulation of financial services, providing French businesses incentive to seek untaxed profits internationally to replace those lost domestically. This confronted the government with new, additional and complex challenges of oversight for international trade. In essence, France was attempting a go-it-alone reflationary, Keynesian approach with a traditional socialist program, in a rapidly globalizing world where deflationary, pro-capitalist economic policy was now the rule. Furthermore, Mitterrand, a strong supporter of the European project, was implementing a strategy 180

degrees in opposition to the economic planners of other European countries, placing him in a difficult political position. He was essentially attempting a policy of “socialism in one country,” while participating in a European Economic Community whose members were moving in a neoliberal direction. In the best of times, this would be politically challenging, but the difficult economic climate increased the likelihood his nonconforming policy would fail.

In addition, there was a very real concern in Mitterrand’s mind regarding the hostile intentions of the United States. In 1971 Mitterrand had visited with Salvador Allende, and publically expressed admiration for the socialist revolution underway there. The Chilean situation of course ended in disaster for Allende. According to one biographer, “Off and on, Mitterrand wondered whether he would become the French Allende, a victim of ‘American imperialism’ he believed was responsible for Allende’s destruction.”<sup>184</sup> Mitterrand was well aware the United States had waged economic destabilization against Allende in the seventies, and now in the eighties, the Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker, was conducting a strong dollar, high interest-rate program that was similarly damaging to the French economy. In the year after his election in 1981, Mitterrand was visited in Paris first by U.S. Vice President George H. Bush, and then by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, both of whom questioned his intentions. They regarded with suspicion the communists the French president had placed in his cabinet as payback for communist votes. All these international conditions placed Mitterrand under a significant amount of pressure as his nation’s economy

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<sup>184</sup> Ronald Tiersky, *François Mitterrand: A Very French President* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 110.

continued to founder. Domestically, an indignant right wing, out of power for the first time in nearly a quarter of a century, appalled by what they perceived as out-of-control social welfare spending and foolish, irrational, government anti-business policies, lashed out at every opportunity in the nation's media. "In the words of one, "The trouble-makers of 1968 have taken power."<sup>185</sup> Mitterrand and his fellow socialists were in an extremely difficult bind. His advisors presented two alternatives. The first, withdrawal from international arrangements, such as the European Monetary System, while remaining in the EEC, or even complete withdrawal from the latter, implementation of protectionist tariff barriers to reduce imports, and an even more radical devaluation of the Franc. By any measure, this was a high risk path. The second avenue was capitulation to the neoliberal policies of deflation and movement toward a pro-business, austerity-focused position. A man of more steadfast principle might have hesitated. Mitterrand did not. The moment of concession and compromise with the neoliberal behemoth was at hand. The consequences to his party and to his nation would be transformational, affecting long-held traditions of both.

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<sup>185</sup> Friend, *Seven Years*, 55.

## *Le tournant vers la droite*

Prime Minister Léon Blum's *Front populaire* of the thirties was the last French socialist government before Mitterrand's. Blum's era was even more tumultuous. He, like Mitterrand, came to power with high hopes of implementing socialist policies in one country, but came to the same conclusion as Mitterrand— *c'est impossible*. Blum came to realize, and later wrote;

A national economy open to the laws of competition and engaging in trade is subject, for as long as it is a market and in need of outlets, to the equilibrium of the surroundings in which it is steeped — the world economy. It is subject to a common law and a common practice, and if it too rashly disregards this universal code, every breach leaves it open to harsh sanctions in the commercial and monetary fields, and as a consequence of this, in the political field. . . . To avoid this the nation which wants to do things differently either cuts off communication with the outside . . . or else it agrees to become part of a larger whole and to incorporate its own activities in activity of a universal character.<sup>186</sup>

Mitterrand, less of a doctrinal socialist than Blum, and certainly not one to relish the thought of exposing himself to the “harsh sanctions” Blum warned of, chose discretion as the better part of valor, and followed Blum's advice. In June of 1982, faced with economic challenges on all fronts, Mitterrand called a halt to the socialist effort, with ramifications that endure to this day. The government announced a policy of *rigueur*, with a freeze on wages and prices. Public spending was cut by twenty billion

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<sup>186</sup> Léon Blum, *A l'échelle humaine*, 1941, quoted in Muet, frontispiece.

francs while taxes were increased on alcohol and cigarettes and rates bumped up for electricity usage, telephone calls, and railway tickets. Mitterrand declared “I do not make socialism my bible,” without articulating what if any new scripture he was now following.<sup>187</sup> Pro-business measures followed; employer contributions to social security and family allowances were slashed, business taxes were reduced by ten percent, accelerated depreciation schedules were issued, and businesses were exempted from value added taxes.<sup>188</sup> In March 1983, further measures were introduced. Public spending was cut further, by another twenty-four billion francs, and middle class taxes increased. Fifteen of twenty-two million middle class taxpayers were required to make a compulsory loan to the government of ten percent of their taxes for the next three years.<sup>189</sup> The prime minister, Pierre Mauroy, faced with austerity policies with which he did not agree, chose resignation, declaring “I do not know how to drive on icy roads.”<sup>190</sup> He was replaced by a more flexible socialist, Laurent Fabius. The national budgets of 1985 and 1986 continued the trend of reductions in business taxes and public spending. Mitterrand, looking back later, felt he simply had no choice:

The first accusation against a Socialist is that he won't know how to manage things, that he'll cause a collapse in the value of the franc, because the franc is not his strong point. And if a Socialist did create a currency collapse, then the poorest worker, the fellow who doesn't even have wool socks, would never forgive him. Many have emphasized the turning-point in the choice I made in 1983. But how

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<sup>187</sup> Julius W. Friend, *The Long Presidency: France in the Mitterrand Years, 1981-1995* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 45.

<sup>188</sup> Peter A. Hall, “The Evolution of Economic Policy under Mitterrand,” Ross, et al., *Mitterrand Experiment*, 57.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Friend, *Long Presidency*, 42.

could I have done otherwise, once I knew I didn't want France to be isolated, that instead she be even more linked to the other European countries?<sup>191</sup>

Despite some short term indicators of improvement in the economy, by the time of the 1986 parliamentary elections, the fellows without wool socks voted in large numbers to throw the socialists-turned-austerians out of office. Mitterrand, whose presidential term continued, from this point forward governed from the center, with a conservative Prime Minister, in a state of cohabitation. The 1981 socialist revolution was over that quickly, and with it, the hundred year plus tradition of socialism in France, from Proudhon to Jaurès to Blum to the *Parti Socialiste*, ended. “Perhaps” said the president, “we were dreaming in 1981.”<sup>192</sup>

Mitterrand's legacy as a socialist is debated till this day. A scholar of French politics and biographer recently addressed the question under the chapter heading “The Enigma of François Mitterrand:”

The issue of whether Mitterrand's socialism was genuine or not is a matter of interpretation. . . . There certainly appeared on the surface to be an element of opportunism . . . yet it is rather unsatisfactory to reduce Mitterrand's movements purely to tactical switches . . . [his] sense of political justice had been prevalent long before he proclaimed himself to be a socialist . . . [his] socialism . . . could be understood as the product of a strong sense of morality ultimately derived from Catholicism, grafted upon an unshakeable reference to the French republican tradition . . . Taken at this level Mitterrand's socialism, however anodyne for some, appeared sincere. It represented the optimistic spirit of the age.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Tiersky, 152.

<sup>192</sup> Friend, *Long Presidency*, 45.

<sup>193</sup> Alistair Cole, *François Mitterrand: A Study in Political Leadership* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 58.

Though Mitterrand's socialist beliefs may be an enigma to historians, there was no riddle about the direction of French politics after the 1986 election, and it was not in the direction of more socialism. The election was marked by the loss of the socialist majority in the assembly, and commensurate with the disappointing performance of the socialists among the working class, a previously obscure party rose to fill the gap, *le Front national*. The Mitterrand era had long term impact for France, as his concessions to the forces of neoliberalism, at least on the surface, seemed complete. The turn to the right taken by the Florentine would change his nation, his party, the traditions of socialism in France, and would even lead his political heirs to put the meaning of Sunday up for debate. Those heirs of Mitterrand, the modern socialists Msrs. Hollande and Macron, would prove not only much less revolutionary than those of 1981, but also delighted to follow Mitterrand's path and make even further concessions toward neoliberalism, willing even to suffer accusations they were sacrificing the traditions of socialism, the rights of workers, and the sanctity of Sunday, all at the altar of neoliberal commercialism.

***“Il n’y a pas de socialistes du Parti socialiste”<sup>194</sup>***

With the turn to the right, Mitterrand and the socialists, with little fanfare or even public explanation, minimal opposition, and shallow public slogans such as “a third way,” and “united France,” began to shift publically in the direction of modern neoliberalism. In 1984, the government privatized previously nationalized companies, and labor cost reductions were encouraged at public and private companies. The largest engineering company in France, Creusot-Loire, was allowed to go bankrupt, leaving 300,000 workers unemployed. Seventeen thousand workers were laid off at Renault. Capacity targets were lifted in coal, steel, and shipbuilding, encouraging layoffs. In Lorraine alone, 20,000 steel workers lost their jobs. The Single European Act of 1986 eliminated all barriers to flows of capital and goods. Income of wage earners stagnated, while the value of property and capital began a decade-long growth. At long last, inflation dropped to five percent in 1985, though unemployment stayed at ten percent throughout the decade. The communists immediately left the cabinet with the announced turn to the right, and true-believing socialists began departing also, as the party started its painful transition from pure socialism to a French version of social democracy, making peace with the neoliberal standards of the modern world, not unlike the center-left parties of the Nordic countries. Expectations of a radical break from capitalism faded into the

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<sup>194</sup> Clément Desrumaux, in lecture, “French Politics and Institutions,” *Sci Po*, Lille, September, 2014.

past, and after the dissolution of the socialist project in eastern Europe and Russia, soon the dreams of generations of socialists entered the dustbin of history. In 2014, a *Sciences Po* professor announced to students that today, in the Socialist Party of France, there remained few if any true socialists.

However, if French socialism was ended, if Mitterrand had been forced to come to terms with the neoliberal demands of the Western economies, it was done in a creative, compromised way, and certainly without sacrificing the valued French welfare state. In fact the facts of the case suggest just the opposite, for in this period, surprisingly, the French welfare state continued growing. Early in the Mitterrand administration the socialists had high hopes once again of improving the overall efficiency of the myriad French social protection systems through a large scale rationalization, moving the nation toward a more universalist arrangement, and to this end a Ministry of National Solidarity was created. This most recent rationalization effort was again largely unsuccessful, but many of the socialists' reforms and much of the expansion of the various separate welfare systems remained on the books. The new conservative cabinet of 1986 did not dare attempt a rollback of the popular thirty-nine hour work week, and in fact in 2000 it was reduced further to thirty-five. Under Mitterrand, a Ministry of Women's Rights and a Secretary of State for the Elderly were created and remain in place today, with programs expanded beyond the original scope. Mitterrand appointed Édith Cresson the nation's first woman Prime Minister, a step forward, though she lasted but a short time. Under Mitterrand, the official retirement age was lowered from 65 to 60, though raised to 62 by the Sarkozy government in 2010, with a failed 2012 attempt by Hollande to lower it back.

Early on, Mitterrand eliminated the death penalty via the gruesome guillotine, as well as oppressive stop and search laws. An Immigrants Council was established in 1984, and for the first time migrants were permitted the vote in municipal elections. Though this privilege was later modified, the Council was expanded, and remains in place today. The number of positions for teachers was dramatically expanded at all levels under the socialists. Most of the early increases for family allowances, pensions, healthcare insurance, and the minimum wage, remained in place, as did the new programs for women, the elderly, and migrants; social spending overall continued to increase as a percent of GDP throughout the eighties. All in all, despite the economic crisis and the accompanying austerity, the Mitterrand years unquestionably expanded the French welfare state.

Within the constraints, the government made serious attempts to fulfill its election pledges. The changes . . . sometimes small-scale but together they add up to an active programme of social reform. The attempt to incorporate migrant groups more fully, to help women overcome disadvantages at work, to use selective increases in social security benefits and in family allowances to improve the position of the worst-off, to involve the elderly in social policy . . . all steps toward the just and unified society of which the Socialists had spoken. . . . show strong continuity with previous reform . . . demonstrate a traditional picture of incremental change.<sup>195</sup>

In 1980, prior to Mitterrand, total welfare spending in France was at 20.6 percent of GDP, already in the top tier of social spending by European countries. By 1990, the

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<sup>195</sup> Doreen Collins, "A More Equal Society? Social Policy under the Socialists," *Mitterrand's France*, eds. Sonia Mazey and Michael Newman (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 101.

end of the Mitterrand era, it was at 24.9 percent.<sup>196</sup> Despite some temporary setbacks, the upward trend in social spending would continue to the present day. In 2014 the OECD listed France at the top of all Western countries with a social spend to GDP percent of 31.9.<sup>197</sup> No matter what some might fear, and what the future Rothschild banker-cum-socialist economy minister Macron might have liked to see, the overall trend of social welfare spending was not downward, neither after Mitterrand's turn to the right, nor today. The infamous turn to the right was real, with numerous neoliberal concessions, but it did not turn France away from its long held tradition of social welfare. In fact, as in the Blum years, one might argue that it was reinforced by survival in tempestuous times and against severe external challenges. Never again would a socialist candidate campaign for president of the republic while even hinting at traditional Marxist doctrine such as seizing the means of production in the name of the people. Never again would the French socialists campaign for the highest office promising to nationalize banks and factories. However, by maintaining, and protecting, and even growing the social welfare system, the socialists of the Mitterrand era, while compromising and conceding when they must, still maintained a state best described as somewhere between modern neoliberal and traditional socialist. Concessions had been made. However, complete capitulation had not occurred. A new normal was emerging.

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<sup>196</sup> "OECD.stat," *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*, accessed August 27, 2015, [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SOCX\\_AGG](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SOCX_AGG).

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

## *Le projet Européen*

Under the strictures of a government of cohabitation with a conservative cabinet, François Mitterrand widened his horizons in the second half of his reign, shifting to what might be called Mitterrand phase two. Limited in his ability to change France domestically, he moved to focus on its place in Europe, and did so at a propitious time, when major issues faced the European community, such as German reunification, and not so long after, the decisive Maastricht Treaty. He built a strong relationship with Helmut Kohl, the primary force behind unification, and despite his own ambivalence, ultimately supported the German's plan. An aide to Kohl wrote of the French president, "It's clear that two spirits are fighting in Mitterrand's breast . . . he does not want to stand in the way . . . of German unification . . . On the other hand, he is always talking about major hurdles.<sup>198</sup> Similar ambivalence extended to the great step forward for European integration, the Maastricht Treaty, which would lay the path for the European Monetary System and eventually the single currency. Mitterrand's support for the treaty, although mixed, assured ratification of Maastricht in France by a slim margin, despite the majority of his constituency, the French socialists, voting against. Mitterrand's involvement in both German unification and the treaty issues reflected his position as an influential, if ambivalent, European leader, while the antipathy of the French socialists to Maastricht

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<sup>198</sup> Friend, *Long Presidency*, 215.

reflected a serious concern about the European Community that goes to the heart of the project's problems today.

Since its beginning with the European Steel and Coal Community of 1951, the European integration effort had two sometimes conflicting drivers. First was a most honorable desire to overcome a half century of devastating wars, a desire for lasting peace on the continent through “ever closer union.” The second, a means to the first, was to increase commerce among the participant states, first in the domain of coal and steel, and eventually across all products and services. The two goals were closely related, reflecting the traditional thinking of those economists who believed that increased trade and mutual economic dependency led to increased likelihood of peace with less chance of conflict. However, while one goal pushed for political, cultural, and social progress through “ever closer union,” the other drove economic competition by individual member states, stimulating old tribal nationalism. The two were sometimes not in sync, at times even in conflict. Generally speaking, the United Kingdom has never been a strong adherent to the concept of “ever closer,” but as an international leader in commerce, has generally been a strong believer in the economic potential of the community. The Germans, supportive of both goals, strongly influenced the economic and political structure of the community toward their *ordoliberal* beliefs, and their support for the concept of “closer union,” some argued, was merely a means to their desire for European economic hegemony. On the verge of World War II, the Austrian neoliberal Hayek, a close cousin of the German *ordoliberals*, had speculated on potential trade benefits of a federation of Europe, and anticipated the modern German vision for Europe:

There seems to be little possible doubt that the scope of regulation of economic life will be much narrower for the central government of a federation than for national states. And since . . . the power of the states that comprise the federation will be yet more limited, much of the interference with economic life to which we have become accustomed will be altogether impractical under a federal organization.<sup>199</sup>

Hayek's desired outcome of such a European federation, increased trade with less regulation, proved prophetic, and the Union's development of free trade policies was led by the German *ordoliberals*. Thus, decades of strong German, uncertain French, and vacillating British leadership produced a commercially successful, open-borders trade group, dominated by conservative national government representatives on the European Commission, with limited democratic representation in the weaker European Parliament, and complete lack of clarity regarding the path to "ever closer union." John Feffer, Washington-based think tank director and foreign policy expert, described the transition of the community from the first to the second goal in *Le Monde diplomatique*:

The Cold War was an era of alternatives. The United States offered its version of freewheeling capitalism, while the Soviet Union peddled its brand of centralized planning. In the middle, continental Europe offered the compromise of a social market: capitalism with a touch of planning and a deepening concern for the welfare of all members of society.

Feffer notes that cooperation among nations was the foundation of the union, but questions how long such cooperation would continue in the face of the alternative American model: "Cooperation, not competition, was the byword of the European

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<sup>199</sup> Friedrich August von Hayek, "The Economic Conditions of Interstate Federalism," *Individualism and Economic Order* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), accessed August 27, 2015, <http://eutopiamagazine.eu/en/thomas-biebricher/columns/evolution-neoliberal-europe>.

alternative. Americans could have their dog-eat-dog, frontier capitalism. Europeans would instead stress greater coordination between labor and management.” When the neoliberal ideology engulfed the project, spurred on by the wave of globalization, freeing the nations’ markets became a solution to every problem. Hayek’s dreams became reality:

Then, at a point in the 1980s . . . along came TINA. . . . Thatcher summed up this brave new world . . . the planet no longer had any alternative to globalized market democracy. . . . European integration shifted its focus toward removing barriers to the flow of capital . . . the new “neoliberal” spirit of capitalism now animated its headquarters in Brussels where the order of the day had become: cut government, unleash the market.<sup>200</sup>

The socialist capitulation of Mitterrand, the demise of a Soviet ideological alternative, and the growing European and worldwide neoliberalism all contributed to a perplexing state of affairs for the European left. Jürgen Habermas focused on revision of the European Union political structure to find the way forward. He complained that, “the gap between citizens and policy has never been wider. The European Parliament was envisioned as a way to bridge the gap, ‘but that bridge is almost devoid of traffic.’ . . . Euroscepticism is the only perspective uniting European citizens today.” The philosopher argued that closer political union was not the problem, but the solution, and German leadership was the necessary, missing component. “Germany has the keys to the fate of the European Union in its hands. If there is one government among the member states capable of taking the initiative . . . then it is the German government.” However, he warned, this meant a “Germany *in* Europe’ rather than a ‘German Europe:”

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<sup>200</sup> John Feffer, “The Collapse of Europe?” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://mondediplo.com/openpage/the-collapse-of-europe>.

The question Habermas poses is not whether Germany should take the initiative to reform the treaties, but *why*. Germany must have an interest that goes beyond the shared interest of all member states. Habermas' philosophical and political answer: solidarity. Habermas emphasises that solidarity is a political act and is in no way a form of moral selflessness. It is an attractive concept because it pays off in the long term. Habermas likens the concept to one's ethical obligation to family: If a distant relative calls to ask for a favour, you will agree to help only if you can count on that relative to do the same for you in a similar situation. In other words, solidarity works according to the principle of "predictable reciprocity". This, according to Habermas, can be extended to political communities bound by shared goals.<sup>201</sup>

"Social solidarity," like that of a family, was the philosopher's solution to Europe's troubles, a pragmatic one, that would benefit Germany as much as the Union. Habermas referred to it in his call for a European constitution, hearkening back to the European "political tradition of the workers' movement, the salience of Christian social doctrines and even a certain normative core of social liberalism [that] still provide a formative background for social solidarity. . . . the unique European combination of public collectivism and private individualism." He quoted the Cambridge sociologist Göran Therborn; "the European road to and through modernity has also left a certain legacy of social norms, reflecting European experiences of class and gender . . . Collective bargaining, trade unions, public social services, the rights of women and

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<sup>201</sup> Sarah Somers and Jack McMartin, "Jürgen Habermas: "Germany Holds the Key to the Fate of the European Union," *Ku Leuven Newsroom*, accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.kuleuven.be/english/news/2013/habermas>.

children are all held more legitimate in Europe than in the rest of the contemporary world.”<sup>202</sup>

Elsewhere Habermas returned to a favorite theme, denouncing the lack of popular democratic representation in the Union and the “neo-liberal disempowerment” of the European peoples, charging “decision-making power by ‘the markets’ . . . with the result that the population have [sic] been reduced to wards of the reigning financial regime.”<sup>203</sup>

Habermas, whom the Guardian called “the intellectual figurehead of European integration,” suggested “this technocratic hollowing out of democracy is the result of a neoliberal pattern of market-deregulation policies. The balance between politics and the market has got out of sync, at the cost of the welfare state.”<sup>204</sup> As we have seen in the evidence from France, the actual funding level for social welfare was not in decline at this time, but Habermas referred less to a matter of funding and more to the lack of a spiritual and democratic vision for the Union, a vision sacrificed at the altar of the unregulated market economy. It is notable that Habermas looked to Germany, not to France, to provide leadership in the current state of affairs, as the French nation at the time was preoccupied with large forces.

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<sup>202</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Why Europe Needs a Constitution,” *New Left Review*, 11, September-October 2001, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://newleftreview.org/II/11/jurgen-habermas-why-europe-needs-a-constitution>.

<sup>203</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Lure of Technocracy* (Palo Alto: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 87.

<sup>204</sup> Phillip Olterman, “Merkel 'Gambling Away' Germany's Reputation over Greece, Says Habermas,” *The Guardian*, July 16, 2015, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jul/16/merkel-gambling-away-germanys-reputation-over-greece-says-habermas>.

## *La mondialisation*

On top of all the many other challenges that the socialist government of François Mitterrand was confronting, there was at the time a dramatic increase in worldwide commercial connectedness, bringing with it numerous unexpected difficulties and pressures. Globalization, the “transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities,” was not a new phenomena to France or Europe.<sup>205</sup> The overland “silk road” from China through the Levant to Europe is only one ancient example. The French and British empires of the nineteenth century stimulated an earlier surge in globalization, and French empire trade flowed from Haiti and Indochina to the metropole. However, the nature of the intensified globalization that began in the latter part of the twentieth century was new. Massive advancements in air, rail, and road transport allowed unprecedented movement of products and peoples. Modern telecommunication networks, eventually including mobile phones and the internet, ubiquitously connected thousands of businesses and billions of people. Deregulation of trade, led by the Western countries but pushed upon all, led to an increase in worldwide financial services. Multinational companies became in some ways more influential than nation states. In

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<sup>205</sup> Nayef Al-Rodhan, and Gérard Stoudmann, *Definitions of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview and a Proposed Definition*, accessed 13 November 2014, [http://www.wh.agh.edu.pl/other/materialy/678\\_2015\\_04\\_21\\_22\\_04\\_13\\_Definitions%20of%20Globalization\\_A%20Comprehensive%20Overview%20and%20a%20Proposed%20Definition.pdf](http://www.wh.agh.edu.pl/other/materialy/678_2015_04_21_22_04_13_Definitions%20of%20Globalization_A%20Comprehensive%20Overview%20and%20a%20Proposed%20Definition.pdf).

particular in the 1980s, the Mitterrand government, astride an ailing domestic economy and already under significant pressure from domestic business interests, felt that the massive spike in global trade and accompanying increased multinational business interaction and interconnectedness, all largely unregulated, added even more pressure for a turn to the right.

Among the French public there was mixed reaction to the economic, political, and cultural force of *mondialisation*. The big French multi-nationals—Airbus, Michelin, Total—employed tens of thousands of French citizens worldwide. Due to increased global movement of funds resulting from reduced financial barriers, available foreign investment capital increased dramatically, certainly a positive input.<sup>206</sup> However, creeping Americanization, in the language, the culture, and even the commercial landscape, was often seen by the French as the face of globalization, and offended cultural sensitivity.

Globalization was also deeply resented to the degree it detracted from the nation's ability to protect the welfare of its citizens, as when the socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin famously declared, in the face of large 1999 Michelin layoffs, “the French cannot expect everything from the state . . . [it is] no longer the state's duty to administer the economy.”<sup>207</sup> Jospin's widely unpopular comment marked one more step in the socialists' move away from their traditional position as protector of the workers, and one

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<sup>206</sup> Sophie Meunier, *Globalization and Europeanization: A Challenge to French Politics*, 132, accessed 13 November 2014. [https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/globalizationeuropeanizationfrenchpolitics\\_0.pdf](https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/globalizationeuropeanizationfrenchpolitics_0.pdf)

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

more concession toward acceptance of the realities of the modern neoliberal age. Of course, at the same time the path Jospin followed was far from straight. Demonstrating that not all his socialist tradition was lost, it was during his administration that the French socialists shocked the Western world with the introduction of the thirty-five hour work week, as well as a “Tobin Tax,” a levy on financial transactions, while the same government “accelerated the privatization of state enterprises, significantly cut France’s historically high rate of taxation, and made France home to the world’s second highest volume of executive stock options.”<sup>208</sup> It was not surprising that the French, even Jospin’s socialist supporters, were confused by his seemingly contradictory policies, and unfortunately for him, such unpopular comments and blatant inconsistency did not play well with the electorate, and his government fell at the next election.

The 2003 “Alstom affair” was yet one more example of the changing times, demonstrating continued, on going concessions made by the French government to the market economy and the forces of globalization:

Alstom, a French engineering company employing 118,000 workers worldwide, faced impending financial collapse. In order to save the company, the French government planned to inject 300 million euros into Alstom by taking a stake in the company, and to lend the company an additional 300 million euros. But the competition arm of the EU Commission, which oversees the rules on state aid, forbade the French government to do so, leading to a watered-down rescue compromise. This well-publicized power struggle has reinforced the impression that the era of *dirigisme* is well over and that the central state has become powerless in the face of market logic and the diktats of Brussels.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 130.

Ironically, it was the conservative Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of Finance at the time, who engineered the attempted bailout of Alstom. Sarkozy “proclaimed in his first press conference as finance minister, that the state has not only the right but also the “duty” to help industry and create national champions.”<sup>210</sup> The era of French *dirigisme* was over, and it did not seem to matter if the government was of the left or the right.

Given the inability of government politicians to deal with the forces of globalization, it was not surprising that individual citizens felt compelled to take up the fight. In August 1999, José Bové, a French sheep farmer from the Midi-Pyrénées region instantly became a national hero when he led a group of fellow farmers to destroy a McDonalds restaurant in southern France. Following a short jail sentence from a sympathetic French court, Bové became an international celebrity, a spokesperson for anti-neoliberalism, and soon after, a bestselling author. Crediting libertarian-anarchist thinkers as his mentors—Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon—Bové was a direct product of the disillusioning Mitterrand capitulation. “We thought this [socialist victory] would change things, but nothing has changed.’ . . . [They were] years of commercialization, of individual solutions, when cash was king.”<sup>211</sup> The *Guardian* called Bové’s book “one of the bibles of the anti-capitalist movement.”<sup>212</sup>

In 2002, almost fifty percent of the entire French electorate voted for overtly anti-globalization candidates. At best, the French people were of mixed feelings about *la*

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<sup>210</sup> “The Alstom Affair,” *The Economist*, May 6, 2004, accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/2652944>.

<sup>211</sup> José Bové, François Dufour, *The World Is Not for Sale: Farmers Against Junk Food* (London: Verso, 2002), 197.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, publisher’s notes, dust jacket flap copy.

*mondialisation*. Mitterrand, Bové, and Jospin, all one sort or another “men of the left,” each in their way were well aware that the modern wave of globalization had brought with it unprecedented change. Each of them knew that the left, France, and the world would never be as it once was. But though much had changed, much still remained the same.

### *En conclusion, une nouvelle normalité*

From the ancient Babylonians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans, Europe inherited a special meaning of Sunday. Christians adapted the Jewish Sabbath to their Sunday practices, and Church councils throughout the Middle Ages defined a formula for the day of worship, rest, and minimal work. How much and what kind of work should be allowed would be continually debated, even into our time. At the beginning of the modern era, growing secularization and a rising middle class placed more emphasis on the leisure aspects of Sunday and less on the religious. However, Proudhon still spoke of the sacredness of Sunday and the moral value of the day for citizens, and Comte acknowledged the status of the day with Sunday festivals.

By *la belle époque*, with urbanization, industrialization and the rise of the working class, the Sunday promenade became a symbol of the growing leisurely nature of the day in nineteenth-century France. A product of the era was Jean Jaurès, perhaps the most influential of French socialists. He and his fellow socialists regarded the day as one of freedom from oppression, of escape from the chains of capitalism. Jaurès was a reformer, not a radical revolutionary, influenced by the Bernstein branch of Marxism, which established working within the system as an alternative to revolution. Such was the path taken by French socialism, and the way the French social protection system developed. Both the social protection system and Sunday practices evolved under the pressures of secularization, urbanization, and industrialization. In the nineteenth century

the Sunday practices remained, and the welfare system became an established element in the social fabric of the nation.

When the conservative Sarkozy threatened Sunday with liberalized shopping legislation in 2009, albeit with much milder intent than François Hollande five years later, Sarkozy's own party condemned him for "destroying the fabric of French society and family life by killing the sacrosanct weekend."<sup>213</sup> By 2014 though, economic pressures overrode tradition, and the socialist government of Hollande, in the person of a former Rothschild banker Minister of the Economy, once again proposed loosened shopping regulations for the day, this time with much more vigor. Great public controversy arose, and triggered a near existential moment for the nation. That this was driven by a self-styled socialist, over loud and emotional left-wing opposition, only intensified the controversy. One socialist deputy labeled it "socially abhorrent and economic nonsense," begging the question, why exactly was it these socialists who were protesting so loudly?<sup>214</sup>

Both the evolution of Sunday as a day of rest, and the development of the French welfare system were the results of conflict, concessions, and compromise. The ideal of Sunday worship was repeatedly compromised by redefinition of "necessary work," and the conflicting actions of kings, nobles, and Church councils. The welfare system was compromised by the conflicting goals of a diverse and divided French population.

Catholic social thinkers, socialists, unions, and employers struggled and compromised,

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<sup>213</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "France Eases Sunday Shop Ban," *The Guardian*, July 15, 2009, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/15/france-sunday-shopping>.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

resulting in a disparate collection of separate programs covering healthcare, unemployment, pensions, working hours, and retirement age. Along the way the right fought to uphold Church tradition and family values, while the left demanded and defended the rights and welfare of workers. Each made concessions when necessary, and the collective compromises provided a *mélange* of programs that attempted to meet the nation's diverse social needs. Starting with Bismarckian, largely employer-controlled beginnings, the French welfare system evolved toward, though never achieved, Beveridge-like universalism. In the years between the wars, as European leaders stumbled from one challenge to the next, despite all the turmoil, the advancements of the French social welfare systems became even more integrated into the fabric of the national identity. Their justification was never fundamentally challenged, and growth in the systems continued in the post-war *Trente Glorieuses*, even while serious economic troubles appeared on the horizon. Meanwhile across Europe Sunday shopping rules varied, ranging from the United Kingdom which followed the United States in eliminating nearly all commercial restrictions, to Germany where age-old traditional shop closings remained the rule.

The 1981 Mitterrand election seemed a revolution to his socialist supporters, one feared by their opponents. A traditional socialist program of nationalization, redistribution, and anti-business legislation of the first eighteen months confirmed both the hopes and fears of each side. The fact that the policies were implemented not in a vacuum but in the midst of an international political and economic shift to the right, a foundational period for modern neoliberalism, did not dampen the revolutionary

enthusiasm of the French revolutionaries. However, after early exuberance melted away and economic realities became undeniable, a dramatic turn to the right, a turn to *rigueur*, was accepted by most French citizens with little protest, and the grand experiment came to an ignoble close. Traditional Marxist socialism died in the France of the eighties without a bang and barely a whimper, and a more pragmatic version, still labeled socialism, but minus some traditional ideas, took its place. Following the turn, Mitterrand, successful political chameleon and longest reigning French president, turned outward, to Europe, where his careful, hesitant leadership style provided background to rising German hegemony, a democratically deficient European integration project, and a continental triumph of neoliberal forces.

Modern neoliberalism consists of belief in the market economy and free trade, alignment of government and business interests, deregulation, privatization, fiscal austerity, and reduced educational and social welfare spending. Developed in the harsh conditions of the Chilean laboratory, not all implementations proved as rigid and undemocratic. The Mitterrand capitulation was not total. Reversal of previous nationalizations took place, but not all government holdings were sold off. Pro-business tax reductions and deregulation occurred, but not without qualifications and limits. European Community free trade agreements were approved, but only with rich stipends for French farmers. There were cutbacks in government spending, and reductions in social funding, but these were not sufficient to negate the redistributive advances of the early years of the administration. In net, as we have seen, French spending on social welfare as a percent of GDP continued to increase in the Mitterrand years. Over time

there were pauses in the growth of the welfare state, such as with Juppé in 1995, which saw the largest protests since the rebellion of 1968. However, social spending in France continued upward till the present day. In 2015, Laurence Rossignol, radical youth communist and now *Parti Socialiste* minister for the family, older people and adult care, demonstrated the attitude typical of the French as she differentiated her country from Britain in a *Guardian* interview:

France is still a welfare state; we are more at ease with public spending in these areas. . . . France hasn't entered the age of austerity . . . We have made the choice to reduce our public expenditure and to encourage growth while at the same time maintaining solidarity and the welfare state. Social spending has not decreased in France. We are reducing other spending but we are not cutting spending on sickness, ageing or education. It is a choice.<sup>215</sup>

It is a choice from which the French are not likely to retreat. The *système de protection* is a result of many historical conflicts and compromises, but the ideal is irrevocable, an integral component of the national fabric.

Margaret Thatcher boasted “there is no alternative” to neoliberal capitalism, and with the Mitterrand turn, the French accepted the inevitable, but did so with some concessions. The land of *la révolution*, of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* never accepted the neoliberal modernity in total. France determined a path of its own, and created a new normal, leaving the traditional socialism of Proudhon, Jaurès, and Blum behind, but not embracing the extreme capitalism of Thatcher and Reagan either. The hesitant, social

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<sup>215</sup> Kate Murray, “*Vive la différence*: French Minister Explains Why France Is Still a Welfare State,” *The Guardian*, March 4, 2015, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/mar/04/france-older-people-care-welfare-state-spending-priority>.

democrat-like, middle path of Mitterrand, lacking the grandeur of De Gaulle, still found an acceptable, unique compromise between modern neoliberalism and the nation's socialist past. This new normal, in total, seemed quite acceptable to the nation. France today is somewhat globalized, Americanized, and neoliberal-ized. But it is still quite French, still unique, while its citizens remain as diverse and divided as ever. Some are still religious and conservative, some still socialist, some communist, even a few still monarchist, but now they are all somewhat neoliberal too, because, as Thatcher declared, there is no other way to be in the modern world. With all its compromises, France still remains a leader, if an ambivalent one, in the European Union, and retains a position in the top tier of world economic powers, with a standard of living and economic performance still well above that of many of its neighbors. However, the system of social protection, the famous French welfare state, is still in place and an integral part of the national identity. France, as divided and diverse as ever, has embraced a new normal, still maintaining a strong social welfare position, where Sunday for some is still religious, a day for worship, for others a day of promenades, for more a day for family and rest, but also for some a day of work, while for others a day for shopping. To answer the question posed by Mme. Aubry, the French have chosen the kind of society they want, with diverse uses for their Sundays, and one of those choices is commerce. The use of the day is reflective of a diverse citizenry in the modern era of France.

The intellectuals of Europe, including the Frenchmen Foucault and Derrida, courageously stood resistant to the neoliberal wave, with limited effect. But they never surrendered. In the nineties, the journalist Jean-François Kahn followed in their path,

attempting to open another front, rebelling against *la dictature de la pensée unique*. Kahn found the idea of “no alternative” intolerable for the French, and called for an approach of “revolutionary centrism.”<sup>216</sup> He broadly attacked not just the neoliberal project but all “group thinking,” of Western society, the press, and most particularly the political class, and furthered the debate. Jürgen Habermas continued to argue that the growing global capitalist dominance was directly linked to the democratic deficit of the European project and would lead to a dangerous downward cycle. More recently, in 2013, the French economist Thomas Piketty documented one result of the neoliberal era, widespread inequality, with publication of his magnum opus, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Tellingly, his work showed that France suffered less from inequality than the centers of neoliberalism, the United States and Britain, suggesting that perhaps the manner of the French adaptation resulted in a lessened impact.<sup>217</sup> Piketty’s work received worldwide attention, and stimulated even more research on the consequences of neoliberal economics, while shining a bright light on the growing issue of worldwide wealth and income inequality.

The anti-elitist Pope Francis joined the debate, and in 2013 publically attacked the failings of global capitalism in his apostolic exhortation to bishops, clergy, and lay faithful worldwide:

Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in

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<sup>216</sup> Jean-François Kahn, *L'Alternative. Oui, c'est possible!* (Fayard, 2009), preface.

<sup>217</sup> Facundo Alvaredo, Anthony B. Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez, "The Top 1 Percent in International and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 27 no. 3 (Summer 2013): 320.

bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. . . . Meanwhile the excluded are still waiting.

His criticism of the “dictatorship of an impersonal economy” was scathing;

The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. *Ex 32:1-35*) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.<sup>218</sup>

Francis called for “the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings.” The pontiff pulled no punches, declaring “the socioeconomic system is unjust at its root . . . economically advanced but ethically debilitated,” and carried forth Piketty’s theme with vigor, writing “say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.”

Francis and Piketty are very much of our time, but the argument is an ancient one. Aristotle reflected the debate in his discussion of the value of the private and the common, of self-interest versus selfishness, and the excesses of the miserly;

It is clearly better that property should be private, but the use of it common . . . how immeasurably greater is the pleasure, when a man feels a thing to be his own . . . although selfishness is rightly censured . . . not the mere love of self, but the

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<sup>218</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gardum of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons, and Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World* (Vatican: Vatican Press, 2013), accessed October 25, 2015, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations.index.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations.index.html).

love of self in excess, like the miser's love of money.<sup>219</sup>

Armed with such support from popes and ancients, modern European intellectuals continue their uphill struggle with the neoliberal wave, even if with questionable results. The movement still dominates, though public awareness grows and the debate spreads, rearing its head as far afield as the current American presidential political campaigns.

However, the passionate national debate around Sunday shopping in France finally came to an end, and the new law was implemented, with its limited expansion of Sunday shopping. After all the uproar, the new legislation allowed only an increase from five to twelve open shop Sundays per year, and those only when local authorities approved. The local discretion seemed to quell most of the clamor. Tourist areas were the main beneficiaries of the changes, and those were among the businesses who had pushed the hardest for liberalization. Stores such as IKEA that stayed open and paid fines before the law, now stayed open and paid no fines. Malls in some towns opened an extra few days, while others did not. Those that opened on additional Sundays did so only on seven more per year. Most stores saved their extra open Sundays for the Christmas season, to the relief of holiday shoppers, and those persons working Sundays so far do not seem terribly troubled and are happy for their bonus pay. Most smaller shops that were closed on Sundays prior to the legislation still remain closed today.

Controversy dissipated quickly after passage of the law. Perhaps the decision itself mattered less than the controversy, the public display of passion and the debate. What was portrayed in the winter of 2014-15 as a potential capitulation to extreme

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<sup>219</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Benjamin Jowett, trans., H. W. C. Davis, ed. (New York: Cosimo, Inc. 2008), 62.

capitalism seemed in retrospect only a small concession, less a capitulation to modernity and more a small convenience for shoppers. After all was said and done, the French seemed to accept with equanimity a society that allowed a bit more shopping. Perhaps the controversy was a requirement when such a question of ideals arose in the French public sphere. In retrospect, the dispute over the Macron Law seemed less an existential moment than an opportunity for open debate, followed by a compromise and acceptance of a new normal condition.

The historical pattern of conflict, concession and compromise seen in the evolution of Sunday was also seen with the nation's acceptance of the requirements of neoliberalism, in Mitterrand's turn to the right. The French accepted that which they must, while fashioning compromises as they were able, as with the *ystème de protection*. The nation forged a unique path, defining a new normal between the globally dominant neoliberal model and French socialist tradition. One can predict that this is how France will likely deal with other major issues of our times, be they German hegemony, Piketty's inequality, or the siren call of Europe for "ever closer union." The discourse in the public sphere will likely be divisive, emotional, and contentious, some concessions will be required, and some compromise will eventually be accepted and woven into the national fabric. The concession to modernity that the Sunday shopping laws represented was eventually acknowledged by the French as a necessary evolutionary step, but one determined on their terms, a small price paid with a large amount of controversy. Such passion, idealism, and heartfelt public discourse, followed by a grudging compromise of

ideals, will likely continue to characterize the nation's ongoing response to questions of twenty-first-century modernity.

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