The Ideological Basis of French Regionalism

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The word "regionalism" implies two different notions: on one hand, the history of the steps of regional decentralization taken on the government level within the framework of a given country; on the other, the history of the regionalist movement as it developed in a country on the level of ideas, ideology and political thought. In some particular cases, the thought of a writer or a movement has strongly influenced the measures a government takes toward decentralization, as, for example, in France, where the writings of Prevost-Paradol1 directly initiated the decisions of the first governments of the Third Republic with respect to local administration.2 Such too is the case of the influence of Maurras and the "Action Française" on the regionalist decisions of the Vichy regime.3

In most cases, however, there is a constant discrepancy between demands for decentralization and effective decisions. The former are both numerous and varied. They emanate from bodies and political units from all sectors of the political spectrum and they often anticipate by tens of years the administrative reforms themselves, if indeed they occur at all. In France, regional decentralization measures have been extremely rare and have occurred only recently: thus in their handbook on French public administration, Ridley and Blondel

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1 Born in 1829, a former student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, a journalist at Les Débats, Prevost-Paradol is considered one of the most brilliant minds of the Second Empire. Several months after having published The New France, he joined Napoleon III's regime and accepted the post of ambassador of France to Washington. He committed suicide shortly after his arrival in the United States, in July 1970.

2 The ideas of Prevost-Paradol inspired in particular the authors of the Municipal Law of April 5, 1884 (see below).

3 The Vichy Regime instituted, for the first time in France, by the Law of April 19, 1941, the "regional prefects". This framework was artificial, since it lacked moral character and financial means. But, it functioned, in practice, as a true intermediary level of administration.

state: "Up to the 1960s, little had in fact been achieved. The Vichy Government tried to establish administrative regions, and the fourth and fifth Republics followed suit. 4 However, there are many books which discuss the French governmental decisions on deconcentration or decentralization. 5 They deal in particular with the economic regionalism of the Third Republic, the regional "prefets" instituted by Peatin in 1940, the Commissaries of the Republic of the Libera-
tion, 6 the I.G.A.M.E.S. 7 and the reform of 1964. 8 In contrast to this, texts concerning "Doctrinal" regionalism are extremely rare. Only two fundamental articles deal precisely with the problem, 9 an obvious gap in a matter worthy of further study.

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the present, many political as well as literary writers and heads of regionalist or ethnic movements have written denouncing the celebrated French central-
ization and suggesting many diverse solutions of regional decentral-
ization. One of the most recent of these works is The Regional Power 10 by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, which owes its notoriety to the fact that its author became first Secretary General and then

4 P. Ridley and J. Blondel, Public Administration in France, 2nd ed., (London: Rout-
6 At the time of the liberation, the statute of January 10, 1944 gave extensive powers to the regional commissaries of the republic. These men, known for their republican ideas, were in charge of local administration which had been disorganized by the war, and had been severed from the capital. Their powers were first reduced in October 1945, and the institution disappeared in 1946.
7 In 1947, the seriousness of the strikes which paralyzed the country led the govern-
ment to decide that a strict coordination of the civil and military authorities was necessary to maintain order. For that purpose, they instituted the "General Inspectors of the Adminis-
tration in Extraordinary Mission" (I.G.A.M.E.S.), the authority of which spanned a zone of several departments (on the same model as the military regions).
8 The Decrees of March 14, 1964 instituted the position of the "Prefect of a Region" (a permanent administrative structure) and also the "Commission of Regional and Economic Development" (CODER). But this is only administrative deconcentration and not decentralization. The powers of the Prefect of a Region and of the CODER have been enlarged recently. On these institutions see: J. Hourticq, "La Vie administrative dans les Circonscrip-
9 S. Hoffman, "The Areal Division of Powers in the Writings of French Political
President of the Radical Party,11 and, because of this, his proposals represented the official position of one of the two central parties of France.12

We have tried to determine the main trends of French regionalist thought, and this article presents the results of that study.

When reading the literature concerning regional decentralization, it is very difficult to find a clear distinction between the different trends. First, they do not differ in their criticism of centralization. As is noted by the former minister E. Pisaní: “Everything which concerns the administrative mechanisms appears to them (the French) extraordinarily complicated, and they do not understand the continued functioning of a system, within which are retained the most obvious defects: the concentration of power in Paris, the inordinate weight of Paris in the smallest decision, and the cumber-someness of an administrative apparatus daily more oppressive.”13

We may summarize in four points the criticism of centralization presented by all regionalists: (1) Paris totally dominates the provinces, which must turn to the capital for advice in every even minimally important decision; (2) the administrative divisions (departments, cantons and “arrondissements”14 do not correspond to any sociological reality; (3) these districts themselves lack any efficient autonomous institutions; (4) there is no intermediate regional unit between the department and the state.

If French regionalists, whether traditional, liberal or socialist, do not differ in their appraisal of centralization, neither do they differ in their terminological approach: centralized France is “Jacobin.”15 The word is penned by rightists, for example, when Maurras writes: “Great provincial councils, under the ultimate but distant control of the state, will collaborate in the reawakening and renewal of the whole body of the nation now shriveled by the Jacobin policy of

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14 On these various administrative division, see, for example, B. Chapman, *The Prefects and Provincial France* (London: George Allemand Unwin, 1955), pp. 74-75.
centralization." Similarly the liberals, who are bound to Tocqueville, expose the defects of Jacobinism and the positive aspects of Girondist doctrines during the French Revolution. For the former, Jacobinism is synonymous with revolution; for the latter it is only the winner in a conflict of ideas, but the terminology is identical. Rare are those who, such as E. Pisani, question it: "The time of the quarrel between Jacobins and Girondists is over. To choose today between the two camps is to reason in 1969 with arguments worked out in the revolutionary assemblies, to be carried back almost two centuries to a time when there was no State. The old Regime was dead, and Jacobins and Girondists were divided as to the role they wished to entrust to the new State." 17

Finally, the regionalists cannot be distinguished by the nature of their proposals. Sufficient emphasis has not been placed on the fact that the difference between ethnic or cultural regionalists (who base their views on the various cultural communities of France) and economic regionalists18 (who desire a rational territorial division around poles of growth) was more a technical than a political difference. No doubt Mistral 19 regionalism and the Félibrige20 movement were intimately bound to the development of the conservative right. But the Occitan (R. Lafont) and Basque renaissances have found, especially in recent years, as many partisans in the socialist left. Similarly, the economic school is extremely varied on the ideological level. The aim of this study, therefore, has been to seek other criteria of differentiation which would permit the incorporation of all the regionalist writings into one of the traditions under consideration. In order to carry out this research, we have chosen a number of texts in which regionalism is implicit {The Old Regime and French Revolution, The Declaration to the French people by the 1871 Commune, and Barres' Those Uprooted, 21 for example) or explicit (such as The

17E. Pisani, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
19Frederic Mistral was a French poet who wrote in the Provencal language (1830-1914). He is the author of Mireille, Calendal, The Isles of Gold, and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1904.
20The "Félibrige" movement was a literary school founded in 1854 by a group of writers who wanted to restore the Provencal language to its status of a literary language.
The Ideological Basis of French Regionalism

New France, 22 The Social Reform, 23 A Study of Monarchy, 24 The Regional Power, etc.), and, by comparing these texts, have tried to establish three basic criteria. First, each of these books defines a philosophy of man and his relationships with society, and defines its regionalist perspective according to this bond of man—society. For example, Tocqueville writes:

Freedom and freedom alone can extirpate these vices which, indeed, are innate in communities of this order; it alone can call a halt to their pernicious influence. For only freedom can deliver the members of a community from that isolation which is the lot of the individual left to his own devices and, compelling them to get in touch with each other, promote an active sense of fellowship. In a community of free citizens every man is daily reminded of the need of meeting his fellow men, of hearing what they have to say, of exchanging ideas, and coming to an agreement as to the conduct of their common interests. 25

The terminology of this passage, like that of many others in The Old Regime, is extremely precise. By nature, man is isolated, and it is only by the use of his individual freedom that he is able to approach others (creating an intermediate defensive structure). His natural condition is independence, and it is this freedom that creates interdependence. In other words, man is not obliged to join others, he chooses to join them.

This first characteristic has a special impact on the regional level. A region is a chosen structure, like any other association. On the other hand, Maurras speaks of a restoration of the Natural Order, and the Paris Commune links autonomy with the respect of social position and to the identification of its members with the working class.

Is region the product of man's choice or an unavoidable situation generated by society? This is our first question, which differentiates liberal from conservative and socialist regionalists.

The second criterion, authority or power, is supplied by a quotation from Stanley Hoffman:

The traditional style of authority has recently, and almost for the first time since Tocqueville, come under scrutiny and attack. This is an indication both of change and of continuity. There is no question that the

22Prevost-Paradol, La France Nouvelle (Paris: Michel Levy Presses, 1868).
familiar pattern is beginning to show signs of wear and tear. The authority of the parents in the family is weaker and the other members become more self-reliant. Centralization, though not reversed, has been affected by the creation of regional expansion committees, by the state-supported policy of industrial decentralization, by the procedures of consultation and cooperation which the Planning Commission follows and by the revival of some provincial universities.

In this passage, as well as in others from *In Search of France*, Hoffman very explicitly correlates the decline of family and parental authority with the process of regional decentralization. Not only does he relate all the crises of authority in France, but he presents decentralization as a criticism of the traditional style of authority. Le Play would certainly not have established this link—on the contrary—and, likewise, neither Maurras nor Mistral, nor any of those who considered regional decentralization as a necessary complement of the restoration of authority and of the institution of the family.

Our second criterion, therefore, is as follows: Is regionalism a way of limiting power, a criticism of the idea of power, a divorce from the concept of authority, or, on the contrary, does it strengthen the power of government by establishing the principle of authority. It is clear that for Proudhon and the French socialists the first alternative is valid, while for the royalists, region and power are intrinsically linked by positive bonds. When we say that regionalism in France borders on federalism and provincialism, we imply that it can be claimed by both disciples of Proudhon and of absolute monarchy, that it is actualized in a different manner according to its relation to the concept of authority.

Finally, a third criterion may be used to distinguish liberal and socialist from rightist regionalism by an investigation into the foundations or motivations of regional reform: should we create regions and found autonomous territorial frameworks because it is a way of raising the cultural, political or intellectual level of the citizen, or because it is the way to restore morality and virtue? One group of French regionalists, among whom we can include Tocqueville, Prevost-Paradol and the Proudhonians, emphasizes the role of the regional framework as a school of public life, as an apprenticeship to

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responsibility and as a form of civic education. The region is not a natural framework. Let us again refer to Tocqueville’s statement: “Freedom and freedom alone can extirpate these vices which, indeed, are innate in communities of this order.” Local administration is an educative method and this may explain in part the infatuation of the first assemblies of the Third Republic, for whom education was a fundamental problem, with communal and departmental reform. On the other hand, Le Play, Mistral and Vichy viewed regional reform as an indispensable component of the reestablishment of the corrupted natural order and of Christian morality. The region, or rather the province, existed in the past. Morality and well-being require its reinstatement. The educative element has disappeared or is of secondary importance, or it appears in connection with the idea of virtue.

The application of these three criteria permits the definition of three traditions, three different trends of French regionalism: a liberal trend, a socialist trend, and a rightist, anti-revolutionary trend. This division does not necessarily coincide with political structures, but locates each of the regionalist works in relation to these three parameters.

We will now try briefly to present these three currents. It has rightly been observed that Tocqueville, who was the greatest liberal French writer of the nineteenth century, does not represent a broad trend of thought. His works, *Democracy in America* as well as *The Old Regime and French Revolution*, and the result of the reflections, usually solitary, of a man who did not found any school, any group, nor any theoretical circle. Tocqueville was first and foremost a Girondist, the proprietor of the Tocqueville lands in Cotentin. He

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27 See Provost-Paradol, *op. cit.*, p. 84: "The principal aims of these reforms would be to change the commune, the canton, and the department into practical schools of public life (….), to interest a large number of citizens in the good administration of the State, and to propagate by practice and by example the wholesome habits of free discussion and of personal responsibility down to the humblest ranks of the nation."

was a provincial, who was alienated, troubled and sometimes frightened by Paris. Historians have seldom sufficiently emphasized this aspect of the writer. If Tocqueville founded what may be referred to as “liberal regionalism,” one is immediately confronted with a problem of political definition: from the end of the reign of Louis Philippe until the twentieth century, liberalism becomes a fluctuating notion around which gravitates a constellation of diverse doctrines, which share an individualistic conception of human relations. Liberalism becomes the common denominator between the supporters of the Revolution against the royalists right and the supporters of order against socialism and anarchy.

This is why we propose to consider that Tocqueville’s posterity, with regard to local and regional decentralization, consists of those writers who have assigned to a decentralized territorial structure the following three goals: to ensure the freedom of the individual against the domination of society, to curb the despotism of the State, and to promote the political and civic education of the citizen.

The comparison between Prevost-Paradol and Tocqueville is no doubt exaggerated. But it is true that the former was literally nurtured on *The Old Regime and French Revolution*, and the influence of Tocqueville’s ideas upon *The New France* was considerable: animosity towards authoritative regimes, faith in the parliamentary system, admiration for the United States, the role of decentralized structures as factors in civic education, reformism, the dread of disorder—such are the main themes of Prevost-Paradol’s work. In *The New France*, appearing as it did twelve years after *The Old Regime*, the writer nevertheless devotes a single, very short chapter to the question of decentralization. He states that all the regimes which succeeded each other since the beginning of the nineteenth century have maintained the “Napoleonic” administrative structure. Prevost-Paradol is indignant:

Citizens really free to choose their representatives and to entrust them with the full right to conduct national affairs, whereas their communal and departmental affairs are entirely dependent upon the administrative authority, and they themselves, unable to take a step nor to open their mouths without the previous authorization of officials taken from their

See the passages of Tocqueville’s “Souvenirs” in which he shows his relief upon returning to his native Normandy after the events in Paris of February 1848: “Property, for all those who possessed it, became then a kind of fraternity,” quoted by J. Touchard, ed., *op.cit.*, p. 528.
On the regional level, where nothing existed in 1868, Prevost-Paradol proposes the creation of a Regional Council. As a good reformist, he embarks from present realities: he believes that certain problems, which deal with economic matters or with the functioning of public services, are common to neighboring departments; the writer therefore recommends periodic meetings of several General Councils (or their delegates) in order to constitute a "Regional Council". However, he immediately proposes to restrict the discussions of the Regional Council to its "legitimate business", in order not to reduce "the supreme authority of the national parliament." Like Tocqueville, Prevost-Paradol gives a chiefly educative role to the local administration. The impact of ideas developed in *The New France* will be considerable, but only after the passing of several years: the difference between the 1871 departmental law and the 1884 municipal law is remarkable in this respect. The 1884 law is much more decentralized in character than that of 1871. It is true that in the interim the 1875 laws had established the Senate which accorded an enormous amount of influence to rural and provincial notables who had read and been enthusiastic about *The New France*. Moreover, the "arrondissement" balloting system adopted by the Third Republic strongly marked the deputy's ties to his province and to his land. However, neither the 1871 "Decentralization Commission" nor the 1884 legislators went as far as Prevost-Pardol. None of them discovered the regional level.

Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, on the fringe of political circles, a second wave of liberal regionalism arose, based upon the three criteria: freedom, criticism of power, and education. It bases itself on Reason, on the concrete realities of the country, and is made up essentially of scientists, geographers, historians, lawyers, etc. This second wave, too, may be located within the posterity of Tocqueville. Two significant examples are Foncin and Haurion.

P. Foncin, an historian and a geographer of the end of the nineteenth century, published a book in 1898 entitled *The Pays of France, A Project of Administrative Federalism*. He essentially develops the theme of "administrative federalism", very ambiguous

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30Prevost-Paradol, op. cit., p. 78.
31Id., Ibid., p. 82.
on the legal level. His intention in this was to differentiate it from “constitutional federalism”. Referring to the British example, Foncin looks toward the existence of “autonomous administrative units”. He uses precisely the word “federalism” because he considers freedom to be “the essence of federalism”. At this point, he suggests a complete revamping of the administrative map of France: according to Foncin, the departments are inadequate division, too small, too weak, and corresponding to neither physical geography, history, nor economy. The solution which he recommends to substitute in its place is original: it is based upon the development of two divisions—the “pays” and the “region”. The local units of France would be only those natural regions which have preserved the explicit designation of “pays”. The administrative division which, according to Foncin, are most closely related to the “pays” are the present 362 “arrondissements”. However, this natural division is too small in modern France. Foncin then declares himself a supporter of the regional institution, which clearly depends on the free, sovereign choice of the individual. He states that the conditions these regions must fulfill are the following: they should be homogeneous, and should number approximately 50; their economic elements should play a part in their design; they should be of approximately the same size; and, the old divisions should be safeguarded as far as possible.

The second example, in many ways similar to that of Foncin, is the example of Haurion, a lawyer, whose arguments in favor of regionalism are summarized in the article “Decentralization” in Volume IX of Becquet’s Repertory. Haurion supports regional decentralization on the basis of liberal principles extremely close to Tocqueville’s ideas: he defines it as a point of balance, a kind of golden mean to be attained. Its political results are to provide the individuals with more strength of resistance and to introduce a division of power into local administration. But, starting from such positive principles, Haurion then falls victim, like most of the liberal regionalists, to proposals each more impractical than the next.

This second wave of liberal regionalism which appears between 1890 and 1920 is succeeded by a long period during which this trend is absent: the period between the two World Wars. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a rightist regionalism along the lines of the ideas of Maurras develops, and liberalism on the contrary defines

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itself as the faithful supporter of the revolutionary movement, in
opposition to any return to the past. In fact, the only force which
might have laid claim to Tocqueville's heritage was the Center. But
this group, and particularly the Radical Party, ceases to be an oppos-
ing force. The party whose doctrine was based upon the hostility to
power held this power until World War II. 34

In a certain sense, the birth of a "new wave" of liberal regionalism
was related to the revival of the Center, and especially of the Radical
Party. This is the totally unexpected phenomenon which we have
witnessed in recent years, thanks to Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber.
In 1967, as manager of l'Express, he published a book which met
with huge success in France. He wrote:

What the crisis in the hospitals and the telephone service reveals is the
failure of a system based on the presumption that government employees
and customers are incapable of behaving reasonably. It is enough to read
the decrees that appear in the Journal Officiel and look at the methods of
decision-making to understand that in such a system the principal of a
primary school is presumed incapable of buying pencils, the president of
the government-owned railways of making an important investment or
firing a colleague, a city government of planning its own urban renewal.
The presumption of incompetence spreads in concentric circles.35

There follows an appeal for an authentic decentralization. Following
the events of May, 1968, he considerably intensifies his arguments
concerning the region, and publishes a number of texts developing
the idea that the region preserves freedom, limits the central power,
and is a school of competence. He primarily makes a strong attack
against the power of Paris which swallows and sterilizes everything.
Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber has four theses:

1. France must immediately provide herself with sufficiently
large regions on the geographic and demographic level, in order to
insure that they have the force to deal usefully with the national
authorities.

2. Each region is to be administered by an assembly elected by a
universal direct vote. This assembly is to elect the President of the
region.

34 On the Radical Party see especially Peter J. Larmour's thesis, The French Radical
261-262.
3. Each is to enjoy its own financial resources (taxes, loans, etc.), allowing it to undertake essential duties, particularly in matters of equipment and economic, social, and cultural development, as well as education.

4. Parallel to the establishment of the regions, all the other decentralized collectivities (townships, departments) are to be “decolonized”. 36

These ideas were given a remarkable amount of attention between 1969 and 1972, after which Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber himself became increasingly controversial. On the other hand, he had concluded a political agreement with the Democratic Center of Jean Lecanvet, which was much less regionalist than the official program of the Radical Party. 37

A second regionalist trend, as strong as the previous one, though having been developed during completely different times, has adopted a point of view completely opposite to that of the liberals as regards our three distinguishing criteria. According to its supporters, the basis of the administrative set-up is not man, but the social body to which he belongs. Man is the product of his milieu, and what is to be attacked is the “Rousseauist” conception of nation which jumbles the French into an amorphous, homogeneous and unorganized crowd. 38 The difference between this view and that of the liberals is significant in that here the problem is not to “compose” but to “recompose” the various kinds of hierarchy in accordance with a natural order, as Count Montlosier stated. 39 The region, or more correctly the “province” (the word indicates in French an immediate ideological difference), existed “before”, that, during the time of the monarchy. It is not for man himself, but for this natural corporate order (divine, according to some of these writers) that the provinces must be reinstated.

The same is true of our second criterion: contrary to those who consider regionalism a criticism or a limitation of the principle of authority, the province is presented by the counter-revolution as an

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39 Id., Ibid. p. 84.
intrinsic component of the latter, providing it refers to the authority of the Prince. After Maurras, the decentralized region will even become one of the foundations of the ideologies favoring absolute power and dictatorship (which is, in fact, quite different from the ideas of the nineteenth century royalists, who presented the relationship regions—the power in a much more ambiguous manner).

Finally, this trend defines a goal radically opposed to that of Tocqueville's posterity, the decentralized regional trend: they consider it a moral restoration, a return to peasant virtuousness, and not an act of civic elevation or a school of participation in public affairs. These three types of respect: respect of the social body, of the principle of authority, and of morality, determine rightist regionalism, which began at the end of the Second Empire, triumphed on the ideological level during the Third Republic, and found its application under the Vichy regime.

The interesting trait of our three criteria is that they enable us to correlate writers of varied origins and political opinions with those of this regionalist trend.

The regionalist royalists of the Second Empire and of the beginning of the Third Republic were relatively moderate in their retrospective assessment of the absolute monarchy. They had read Tocqueville's *The Old Regime* and had accepted, at least in part, his criticism of the process of centralization which had preceded the revolutionary explosion.

According to Frederic Le Play, the main aim of regionalism is to rebuild the social structure of the country, while facilitating the observation of ancestral morality. Religion and regionalism are intimately bound. The words "Moral Order", which appear for the first time in the works of Le Play, are used by Maurras and the "Action Francaise" as their main slogan, and are adopted in 1940 by the Vichy Regime. According to this political tradition, the essential means by which moral restoration can be achieved is by restoring the family structure as the foundation of the social and political order. For example, Le Play distinguishes three types of families: the patriarchal family which belonged to a sort of Golden Age and which remains the criterion of perfection; the dispersed family which is the unpropitious result of the process of urbanization and of life in the industrial centers; and finally, what Le Play defines as the "stock-

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family" in which the children no longer live at home as in the patriarchal family, but remain bound to the family by ties of interest, affection, and respect. It is within the family that they take refuge in times of difficulty or misfortune. According to Le Play, whom Maurras quotes as one of his masters, it is highly desirable that the "stock-family" be the basis of the social structure of the country. France must be rebuilt through a return to peasant life, to the earth, and to family values. He presents an extremely clear picture of what the local and regional administration should be: at the top, the Monarch, who represents the principle of authority, and at the lowest level, the notables, leaders of the stock families. In the center of the picture, Le Play proposes to establish thirteen provinces, the governors of which are to be counseled by an assembly of the notables. It is the supreme duty of the great landowners to assume the role of governors. According to the author of The Social Reform, the wealth of the landowners imposes a duty upon them: to protect the interests of the community as good "family fathers". Le Play goes very far in this direction, proposing to return police powers to the landowners (while at that very time, these same powers were being taken away from them in Prussia, one of the most conservative states in Europe). In conclusion, we find in the works of Le Play the clearest exposition of our three criteria: 1) the natural mesh of structures in which man has a part, although not that of a participant with the right to exercise his liberty—family, village, province, and state—which represents a biological more than a chosen order; 2) a chain of natural authorities—family-fathers, notables, governors, and monarch—which complement and rely upon each other; and 3) the aim of restoring a previous Golden Age and not of the education of the citizens.

However, the generation of Le Play and of Taine has its own identity, which remains distinct from that of Maurras. Not only were these royalists of the Second Empire lucid enough to criticize absolute monarchy, but they also allowed themselves, on the basis of "experience", to accept the revolutionary department as a definitive territorial structure (even if they wanted to include it in the great province).

The generation of Maurras and Barres represents a second wave of the same trend. According to it, France is to be rebuilt by opposing the real "pays" to the legal one. The departments are nothing. How could man choose freely the town or the village to which he wants to be bound? Man is the product of a tradition. If he leaves his land, his "pays", and his habits, he goes against Nature. The theme of the Father, or of the Mother who nourishes her children, is constantly present. It is, for example, the central theme of *Those Uprooted* of M. Barres in which we find this passage:

Unfortunate Lorraine! Fertile home whose force and variety we have only just seen! Does she deserve that her residents too should leave en masse? . . . What an inordinate effort is demanded of her if she must create in these towns and villages a new group of interesting individuals after her own children, whom she successfully brought up, are leaving, as always, to strengthen lucky Paris!

Invariably, we find in the works of Maurras, as in the works of Le Play, the biological theme which is our first criterion (the absence of liberty). But while the first generation, during the Second Empire, emphasized the third criterion (morality or nature versus reason), the school of Maurras lays the stress on the second criterion, on the principle of authority. Maurras insists constantly on the fact that the right of decentralization is a natural right of the monarchy, of the Supreme Authority. Decentralization is a phenomenon of authority. In his *A Study of Monarchy*, the author describes the structure of the royalist system as a kind of triangle, the three sides of which are the heredity and force of the central power, the destruction of the parliamentary system, and regional decentralization.

Finally, just before the Second World War and parallel to the rise of fascism, particularly to the corporatist example of the Mussolini regime, this regionalist trend reaches beyond theory to become a theme of the extreme-right. J.J. Chevalier wrote about this third wave: "It is a movement of neo-royalism, of counter-revolutionary monarchy. But even more than that, it is an anti-Republican, anti-Democratic movement." This ideology was supported all over the country by groups of individuals who better concealed their poverty than their bitterness towards modern life and industrialization. This "third generation" thought in 1940 that history had vindicated them. We find in the Vichy Regime our three themes: man determined by his work (corporatism), his family and his fatherland; the respect of the authority of Pétain (father, military leader and sover-
eign); and the importance of peasant morality (Pétain talked of the "eternal order of the fields").

A third regionalist trend should be distinguished from the first two: this trend sees the regional institution in the broad sense as a limitation of the central power, and as a political school for the citizens, but is to be sharply distinguished from Tocquevillian liberalism by its estimation of man as bound by a class structure. For the socialist left, the insistence upon regional liberty is an element of the class conflict.

In fact, the regionalist demand was only at very rare periods a part of the political program of the French workers' movement. We can even suggest that it was explicitly so only at two precise moments, and then in the wake of a crisis situation: at the time of the Paris Commune in 1871 and during the events of May-June 1968. The ideology of the Commune was entirely Proudhonian. Almost all its leaders were inspired by the thoughts of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who saw the state as a federation of various groups, each with a different nature, object and purpose. Among the texts of the Commune, we can quote the famous Declaration to the French People which was proclaimed on April 20, 1871. According to it, "the absolute autonomy of the Commune is to be extended to all other French localities, each of them having rights completely equal to those of the others." That same Declaration correlates in a concrete and immediate manner communal freedom and the guarantee to every man of the full exercise of his rights as man, as citizen and as worker. A little further, we find the suggestion, directly inspired by Proudhon, that the different communities be members of a contract of association, the aim of which will be to preserve French unity. Finally, the Declaration exposes the aim of this entire structure, which is the educational aim: the Commune will encourage the permanent participation of all citizens in public affairs by giving them the possibility freely to express their opinions and defend their interests.

Regionalism as a demand of the socialist left was rare, since it occurred only during revolutionary or quasi-revolutionary periods, when it was proposed only as part of a general program of self-government. The same is true of the events of May 1968. These

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The Ideological Basis of French Regionalism

events gave a strong impetus to the leftist or extreme-leftist regionalist trend. We can cite particularly the books of Robert Lafont, a militant of the Occitan renaissance, and the appearance of various local ethnic movements in Brittany, in the Basque country, etc. These movements are today more or less affiliated with the leftist parties or with the federalist movements. In 1968-1969, the regionalist demand suddenly became extremely popular. (It was the basis of the unsuccessful referendum of De Gaulle in April 1969.) This regionalist trend provided the occasion for a gathering of regionalists and federalists favoring socialization. At the end of 1969, there was a meeting of the Liaison Committee for Federalist Action which succeeded in publishing a federalist manifesto. This committee gathered together leftist intellectuals (Alfred Kastler, Morvau-Lebesque, Guy Michaud), members of the Socialist and the Socialist Unified Party, regionalists, etc. It was the direct result of May 1968 and denounced the “monopolization of power by the sovereign states, which oppress the regions.”

Basing itself on the experience of Yugoslavian self-government and on the ideas of the “Prague Spring”, this Declaration demanded “a total rebuilding of France in accordance with the principles of autonomy, self-government, federalism and control by the base.” As for the forces upon which this group wanted to base itself, these were the students, the workers who favored self-government, the regionalist and autonomist movements, etc.

If we exclude these two very short crises, neither of them having had any lasting consequences, it must be recognized that regionalism has never been a part of the program of French socialism, at least explicitly. This phenomenon is the result, on one hand, of the victory of Marxist and centralizing principles upon Proudhonian ideas within the SFIO, and of the victory of the communist trend, favorable to the dictatorship of the proletariat, over the social-democratic trend. Regionalism has therefore never “culminated” the criteria of belonging to a class, the criticism of authority, and the political education of the citizen, except during very short periods. However, it may be recognized in an implicit form in certain groups (the revolutionary syndicalists, for instance) and in certain phases in the evolution of the labor movement. (It is possible in this way to find

numerous tendencies towards regionalism in the organization of the General Confederation of Workers as it ensued from the Amiens Congress in 1906. 48)

French regionalism therefore presents obvious political points of view. No doubt, to say today that the movements in favor of administrative reform are all generally "political" is not new. 49 But there are differences, for instance, among the various European countries and there are many where the practical preoccupations with "good administration" are still primordial. In France, regionalism is primarily the complement of an ideological program. It fulfills either a leftist, centrist, or rightist function. And that is probably its weakness: French regionalism is a part of the program of the opposition, particularly of its electoral program. The government, with very rare exceptions, has not favored decentralization. But, contrary to the left-right gap which dates back to the revolutionary years, the three criteria of French regionalism were forged later, during the Second Empire. It is interesting to note that the three texts which we consider primordial, The Old Regime and French Revolution (1856), The Federative Principle (1863), and The Social Reform (1864) were written within a period of less than ten years, at the precise time when these three problems—individuals-society, power and counterweight, and morality-civic education—were the major current philosophical problems. Today, these problems remain, though with different formulations and can in all cases be used as instruments for the analysis of regionalist works and of their authors. 50

50 One of the conclusions of our present research is just the fact that each of the great ideological French trends has included in its political program a scheme of regional decentralization. However, it is obvious that, while it concerns an important point of the liberal and conservative programs, it only represents one of the minor cares of the socialist trend, or more generally of the left.