
The Political Economy of Social Movement Sectors

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Cross national comparisons indicate that nations differ in the overall amount of social movement activity that is generated. It is often suggested that the United States provides more fertile soil for the growth of social movements than do other nations. Moreover, over time societies differ in the amount of social movement activity that they support. Cycles of mobilization for quite disparate causes seem to occur. This total amount of social movement activity is the social movement sector.

Our basic assumption is that to understand the course of social movements we have to understand them as a configuration and within a determining environment. Thus we must examine the totality of movements in a society, rather than isolated movements, and identify the elements of social structure that shape this totality of movements (the movement sector). What we are proposing is, first, a set of terms or conceptual tools for extending the analysis of social movements to the SM sector and, second, a set of propositions for explaining variations in the sector.

In Section I we define the social movement sector. Section II identifies major components, and in Section III we discuss determinants. Major determinants include the economic base, conjunctions of the business cycle and structural change, and the political and ideological system. Since the object of analysis is sectors within societies our methods must be comparative and historical.

I. Social Movements and The Movement Sector Defined

A most inclusive definition of a social movement is any sentiment and activity shared by two or more people oriented toward changes in social relations or the social system. This most inclusive definition would analytically encompass social movements at any level of social organization (small group, formal organization, community, nation). It would also include movements

aimed at changing social relations through changing individuals, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or proselytizing religious movements. It would treat as marginally related or as pre-social movements, sentiments and activities that express discontent with the social order but not oriented towards relatively specific or articulated change. Phenomena such as the "beats," the "Teddy boys," may express discontent with the social order and may be the ground out of which social movements grow, but they are peripheral to our analysis.

In this paper we are primarily interested in a sub-set of all social movement activity. First, our focus is upon social movement activity largely oriented towards change that is achieved in the differentiated political arena--changes in the system of political rule or in the specific policies, symbols, and distributional allocations of territorially based authorities. Social movements in groups or organizations that are not articulated with pressures on formal authorities are outside of our ken. Similarly, social movements largely aimed at change through recruiting and changing individuals are ignored, unless they articulate with politically oriented activity. Our concern is with political social movements.

Some definitions of social movements assume that they operate outside of institutionalized channels. For us, here, such an assumption is too limiting. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher are connected to conservative social movements. Some social movement sentiments and activities exist whenever authorities and their policies are sources of contention. Only if

a regime is very widely accepted (through either the elimination of dissent or through positive socialization, ideological hegemony, and widespread policy success), would a society with a differentiated polity have little or no social movement activity. While we are largely concerned with social movement activity outside of well institutionalized channels and forms, how it articulates with more institutionalized political action is part of our problem.

Given this inclusive approach to social movements, what is the social movement sector? The social movement sector is the configuration of social movements, the structure of antagonistic, competing and/or cooperating movements which in turn is part of a larger structure of action (political action, in a very broad sense) that may include parties, state bureaucracies, the media, pressure groups, churches, and a variety of other organizational actors in a society. Configuration refers both to the amount and structural relations of social movement activity and the orientation, or goals, of action.¹

In which societies can we identify a social movement sector? An SMS only appears in societies that have a distinct political system. Primitive societies rarely have social movements unless they have been integrated into the political or economic system of more developed societies; once such contact takes place, rebellions, millenarian cults and so on, occur frequently. Traditional societies with distinct political systems have sporadic movements - the rise of Islam is one such example. But often such movements remain unstable eruptions - a permanent sector does not emerge. Movements are especially

¹ McCarthy and Zald (1977) provide an alternative definition. They define the sector as the sum of all social movement industries in the society. A social movement industry is the set of movement organizations oriented toward a similar social change goal. Our definition of the sector is more inclusive and less "economistic" than McCarthy and Zald's, since it includes all action oriented to social movement goals, rather than the action generated by movement organizations. It is important to note that if there is only one social movement in a society, the sector would be coterminous with the movement and counter-movement.

weak in societies in which class relations are highly personalized. A social movement sector is most likely to become a permanent feature of the social system in capitalist societies. Distinctively, they have a separation of the state from civil society, they have a rational-legal bureaucratic authority, and they maintain a large sphere of private voluntary associations. The more societies are pervaded by rational legal forms, the more life focuses on formal organizations; the more people think in terms of state and economy, and the more they believe that human action constructs the social system - the more a movement sector becomes a permanent subsystem of the society.

II. Dimensions of Social Movement Sectors

A brief comparison of the social movement sectors of Italy and the United States may provide some illustrations that we can use to identify key dimensions of social movement sectors, dimensions that describe the structure of these sectors in most capitalist democracies.* In Italy, the entire sector is highly politicized and tightly tied to the party system and the state. Politicization has several dimensions: action takes place to alter, influence, and/or react to the Italian state; the state is defined as the element of the status quo and the main instrument of change; the movements of the sector and of parties (Barnes, 1977), are defined on a left/right basis; there are few - essentially no - religious movements or cults and only a limited number of lifestyle/personal identity movements.

*The first author, Garner, conducted research in Italy during 1978.

Banfield (1958) and Almond and Verba (1963) give quite a different picture of Italian society. They stress the passive and alienated features of Italian political culture. Ours is an alternative view: Italy is a society so highly mobilized by parties, unions, corporatist groups and the church, that there is relatively little space left for a differentiated movement sector. Of course, the two images are not really contradictory (corporatist mobilization may in fact be a cause of passivity). Moreover, Italy and particularly Northern Italy, is no longer the same society that it was when the earlier studies were done. In short, the non-political social movement sector appears relatively small and political social movements separate from well-established institutions are few; sector activity is encapsulated in party-related political forms; the number of unorganized currents is also relatively small; much of the sector overlaps the institutions of cultural life, universities and the media, probably because these are the institutions in which people are most weakly integrated into the organs of party and corporate life. The range of issues addressed by the SMS is largely secular and political.

In comparison to Italy, the US SMS includes a large non-political sector, and the political sector is differentiated from the party system. There are a large number of groups that are organized around religious and life style issues, mobilized around issues that have little to do with the state; the vast majority of the 400 to 500 cults (comprising a couple million adults) are largely outside the political system in the usual sense of the term (Wuthnow, 1983). Even groups that have to deal with political organizations seem to do so only in a transitory or tactical way. The political component as a whole seems to correlate poorly with a right/left political dimension. The range of goals do not reflect

an easy left/right dimension, and action is aimed at many different levels in the system. Many of the movements are localistic and spontaneous, whether they are cults, lifestyle currents, or neighborhood movements.

So in one country there is a relatively structured, highly politicized SMS, that is tightly bound to the institutionalized political subsystem, in the other country, a sprawling and diverse SMS with a low degree of political action and often only the most tenuous ties to the state or to other political institutions. Our intent is to sharpen understanding of the determinants of these differences without elaborating many obvious dimensions (e.g., Italy is a more politicized society, the US is localistic and decentralized; in the US civil society is generally more important than the state, etc.), although we think these statements are probably true.

These two short sketches help us identify important dimensions of the SMS. Remember, we are trying to characterize features of social movement-action as a whole in a society. Some of these features are derivable from individual social movements, but others are global features, not reducible to characteristics of individual movements. The dimensions are (1) size, (2) degree of organization, (3) social location of support and of locus of action, (4) alignment with the left-right orientation (singular ideological polarization), (5) autonomy from other institutions, and finally (6) the character of change over time.

Size is measured in terms of the number of organizations and the number of participants in social movement activities of any kind. We are interested in size relative to other sectors of activity, the more institutionalized ones (political parties, churches, etc.) and in the size of the sector compared to its size in other countries and over time.

Degree of organization is roughly speaking the ratio of membership in formal organizations to all types of participation. In some societies, and

at some points in time social movements generate a great deal of participation in formal organization, in other cases they do not. Individual movements and the sector as a whole vary in their organization and the relation of organizations to protest and individual spontaneous behavior. This dimension is also important for understanding the difference between dissent and currents of opposition in the socialist states. What type of organizational form is taken on by those movements that do coalesce into organizations is also a characteristic of the movement sector as a whole, and not merely a characteristic of individual movements. The sector as a whole varies in whether it is dominated by professional movement organizations or other forms.

The social location of the sector refers to its social geography. There are obvious structural variables - class, region, ethnicity - which locate the groups that are most easily mobilized. Another way of charting social location is by the locus of action, institutions and settings in and around which social movements emerge. The SMS may focus on "weak link" institutions, institutions in which basic societal tensions or contradictions appear. A weak link institution is characterized by a destabilized, or destabilizable system of social control, a mobilizable population and a set of focal grievances at the center of contention between authorities and the relevant population. In the last few decades the universities and high schools have been a major institutional site. Burawoy (1976) has identified the contradictions that precipitate movement action in the university of a developing nation, Zambia, in an article that contributes to the concept of "weak link" institutions, Piven (1976), has identified the welfare system as a weak link institution, and Hirsch (1979) has commented on the shift from the workplace to the community as a "weak link" in advanced capitalism.

Social movement sectors also vary in their alignment with a left-right political spectrum (Barnes, 1977). This alignment is historically based on the amount of class conflict and the extent to which politics is heavily polarized along class lines. Such alignment is also related to the extent to which the movement sector is politicized at all. Note that one could have a highly politicized, strongly left-right aligned movement sector that did not "adhere" to the political institutions but to some other set of institutions (like the educational ones).

This last comment implies another dimension, the degree of SMS autonomy from other organizations and sectors (especially the political system), not only in terms of member overlap but also in terms of strategies and structural linkages. The SMS may heavily overlap institutions such as those of religion or education.

It is clear that some of these dimensions have more to do with the amount and organization of the sector (size, organization, autonomy) and others have more to do with the orientation of the sector, social location of support and left-right orientation. The sector may change over time in these characteristics in one country, but be more or less impervious to change in another society.

This suggests a final concern. An important aspect of the SMS is the character of its change over time. In some societies the SM sector's size, organizational structure and content (its issues and ideological foci) vary markedly over time and seem sensitive to economic changes and social control pressures. In others, even though action and movement organization may fluctuate, the sector maintains its integrity. This can most clearly be seen by comparing Italy and the US in the Cold War period of the 1950s. It was a period of relatively low activity in both countries but in Italy the traditions and sentiments underlying the SMS were not disrupted (although perhaps decreasing

organizational activity) while in the US they were. In other words, the Cold War and accompanying social control produced a deactivation of social movements in the US but not in Italy. In large measure, these differences were the result of the role of mass left wing parties in Italy which were and are absent in the US.

These several dimensions of the social movement sector are themselves quite complex phenomena, not easily adumbrated. Nevertheless, they give us purchase on seeing the sector whole. Now the question becomes what shapes or determines the range of sector performance on each of these dimensions.

III. Systemic Constraints

By systemic constraints we mean those characteristics of the environment of social movements that shape and limit the possibilities for social movements. At the most general level of analysis the politically oriented social movement sector is determined by the number and size of social categories with infra-structures of social relations, interpersonal networks, community structure and formal organization with mobilizable resources that develop actionable issues (Tilly, 1978). Actionable issues develop as authorities take action, as ideologies, values, and interests change, and as the political structures shape options.

The number of categories that are mobilizable into the bases of social movements are quite large and vary from society to society. But it is clear that the major categories which are turned into competing cleavages across modern societies are those related to economic structure, race and ethnicity, religion, regional cleavages, and to a lesser extent, sex and age. In a more complete treatment of the determinants of the orientation of the social movement sector we would take each cleavage-category and ask how and when

it turns into a major determinant of social movement sector orientation. For instance, it is apparent that class, and even ethnic, issues are sub-merged when groups unite to overthrow colonial domination. Nagel and Olzak (1982) have begun to synthesize a large number of historical cases to show how ethnicity emerges, reemerges, and reconstitutes itself as a social movement-political issue. Drawing on Barth (1969) and Hannan (1979), they argue that increased inter-dependence leads to increased competition for jobs and resources amongst previously segregated groups. Nagel and Olzak go beyond Barth and Hannan by considering how the changing structure of and policies of national and international governments provide political opportunities for mobilization and for resource support and advantages to be gained. It would be possible, then, to begin by asking how is the social movement sector shaped by ethnicity and ethnic change, treating economic and class relations in less detail. Instead, we begin by examining how the economic and class systems shape the social movement sector, treating ethnicity in passing.

Our discussion of economic systemic constraints is in two parts:

- 1) the patterning of productive activities and associated class relationships and processes that we refer to as the structure or base;
- 2) cyclical phenomena that overlap structural changes and produce a patterning we call conjunctural factors.

The shape of the sector is also heavily influenced by political structure and opportunity, thus after discussing economic constraints on the sector, we turn to political constraints.

The Structure of the Economy and Class Relations

A major determinant of the SMS is the base of productive activities and its corresponding social relationships. By this we mean the structure of the economy -- patterns of ownership, size and type of productive enterprises, relations between a public and a private sector, nature of work relations and management within enterprises, forms of the labor market, types of employment and occupation, wage scales and income distribution, and the political associations concerned with production. National economies exist within the global political economy, which cannot be ignored. We will also consider parts of the system of "reproduction of the relations of production," that is to say, the articulation of the family, community, and socialization process with the mode of production (Althusser, 1971).

Class Structure, Class Conflict and Contradictory Positions. A classic method of movement analysis is to identify the social base of a particular movement. More than that the system of class relations in a society shapes the configuration of social movements. The configuration of social movements changes as new classes appear and other classes decline or lose their positions of dominance.

There are many studies of the social base of single movements or related types of movements: for example, the working class has supported a variety of left wing movements (Hobsbawm, 1964; Abendroth); the declining traditional petty-bourgeoisie has given rise to a status group politics (Gusfield) and has supported fascist and authoritarian movements; smallholders (in certain respects, a special kind of petty-bourgeoisie) have been extensively involved in movements (Heberle, Stinchcombe, Hofstadter, Vann Woodward); the new stratum of employed technical and professional workers was associated with the New Left of the 1960s (Mallet, Gorz).

A change in the productive system is associated not just with one class and its accompanying movement but with a new set of classes and their inter-related movements. For example, the emergence of capitalist agriculture in the 20th century in the Po Valley generated both leftwing movements of agricultural laborers and the fascist movement supported by the agro-capitalists; the origins of Italian fascism were in paramilitary groups which attacked the organizations of the laborers in that region. A new organization of production generated a set of movements -- more precisely, movements and counter movements (Cardoza). Moreover, there is no simple relationship of a single class to a single political position; the political action of any given class is contingent on the class structure as a whole and the political action of other classes.

Aside from recognizing the system of class relations as a determinant of the SMS, it is important to recognize that class position is not unambiguous and that some positions may be particularly ambiguous and contradictory (Wright; Wright, et.al.). Middle strata are especially likely to be in contradictory positions and thus it is not surprising that these strata have shown a high level of volatility, movement action and often variable or even unpredictable political behavior. At the level of the individual, a contradictory class position (as defined by Wright) may mean high levels of cross pressure, or role strain. At the level of the class, movement action may be volatile. Ironically, it is precisely these stressed, volatile positions that contribute to the stability of the society as a whole, reducing its tendency to polarize into class blocks (Lipset: 1959: 77-78).

Contradictory class positions can be seen as a structural feature of a whole system. A society with a large number of contradictory class positions may be prone to movement volatility. Since advanced capitalism seems to generate large blocks of contradictory positions (like the employed petty-bourgeoisie mentioned earlier) its patterns of movement activity may be more

unstable and spasmodic than the movement activity of the late nineteenth century (which was characterized by what now seem the relatively predictable actions of the expanding proletariat and the declining traditional petty-bourgeoisie).

The Dual Economy and the SMS. The structure of class relations is of course shaped by the organization of the economy. One can just as easily begin analysis of the determinants of the social movement sector by examining the group structure and interests generated by the organization of the economy. How did the structure of the economy in the 1950s and 60s relate to SMS configuration?

Schematically, the economy had two private sectors: a monopoly sector of very large enterprises (some of which were actually monopolies, while others were oligopolies) and a competitive sector of small capital. In a number of Western European countries (England, France, Italy) the monopoly sector also depended on large amounts of state investment; in the United States it has been more substantially private. The monopoly, or concentrated, sector had strong unionization (although not all monopoly enterprises were unionized); the competitive sector has low wages and draws on the reserve army of the unemployed.²

This particular configuration of the economy in turn generated a particular configuration of social movements. The working class was divided into a stably employed unionized part and an un- and/or marginally-employed part, with objectively different interests. The privileged sector of the working class opted for continued corporatist union action at the workplace. As citizens and taxpayers, privileged workers took a somewhat dim view of the demands of the unprivileged sector for welfare, although they did support

² In 1983 it is apparent that oligopoly and monopoly must be seen in their international context. Many industries that looked protected from the winds of competition just a decade ago, now seem fragile. For a recent critique of dual economy theory see Hodson and Kaufman, 1982.

measures like the minimum wage. Adhering to union corporatism, the stable working class were relatively unlikely to engage in social movement activity. When they did support social movements, union leadership could use the social movement as part of inter-union turf building, as in the conflict of unions in support of Chavez's United Farmworkers, or they could transcend their members' commitments and interests (Wood, 1981).

The unprivileged sector of the working class behaved in a diametrically opposite way. It was prone to localistic, violent and weakly-organized actions, such as the ghetto riots of the 1960s or the clashes between groups of unemployed men in Naples in the spring of 1978. Since the marginal working class has weak links with the work place, many of its actions take place at other social sites, such as the neighborhoods or the high schools. The pattern is precisely the one described by Piven and Cloward -- spasmodic action, volatility, little stable organization, little national organization, often high levels of violence. (Unlike Piven and Cloward, we do not see these characteristics as virtues but as acts of desperation.)

These actions (when they are not purely destructive lashing out, little distinguishable from crime) frequently function like those of the pre-industrial urban mob, that is, they signal to the state that it must carry out some type of short term remedial program (Hobsbawm, 1965). Thus they raise the costs of the state and the taxpayers and may give rise to reactionary sentiments and movements.

There is considerable national variation within this overall pattern. One source of variation is the overlap of the dual economy with major lines of cleavage, such as race, ethnicity, age and sex. In many Northern European countries the lower half of the working class is substantially composed of foreign workers; thus unemployment can be "exported" to the home countries of these workers -- as John Berger remarks, unemployment is one of Switzerland's

most valuable exports. There is correspondingly little social movement activity within the country. When guest workers are absorbed into the monopoly sector, in German auto plants, they have been relatively well integrated into the union structure and have not constituted an independent movement base.

The dual economy may overlap regional disparities, so that one geographical area has a disproportionate share of the lower working class. In Italy, the south; within Yugoslavia, Serbia and Macedonia. The overlap of race/ethnicity and the dual economy creates a split labor market. The split labor market leads to a variety of ethnic movements - exclusionary movements by the dominant group, separatist and inclusion movements of the dominated (Bonacich).

The Embedding of National Structures in the Global Political Economy.

The orientation of the sector is also shaped by the global political economy. In many cases, military and paramilitary intervention supplement economic pressures. In the vicissitudes of national liberation movements in Africa or the problems of the left in Latin America, we do not need to look for an invisible hand of structural constraint; the hands of the large powers are all too visible. Or, to take another example, the strategy of the PCI in Italy was largely set by the decisions made at Teheran and Yalta and on the battlefields: Once Italy was clearly in the Western sphere of influence, the PCI was under great pressure to take the Via Italiana to socialism, the "Italian way" of participation within the framework of bourgeois democracy.

Social movement analysis by sociologists has usually focused upon mobilization within a single nation state. But it is important to emphasize that the leading issues of the sector may be defined across national borders, and that resources may flow across national borders. Social movement activity

in one nation provides a template, a possibility for change to relevant groups in other nations. Not only the idea or model of change, but a flow of personnel, weapons, and resources may flow across national borders. It was true in the American revolution, in Allende's Chile, in the rash of movements of 1968, and in the "Green" movement of the 1980s.

Reproduction of the Relations of Production. A system for reproducing and perpetuating the relations of production accompanies the economic system. In part, this system consists of a political and ideological superstructure (which we will examine later) but in part also of institutions such as the community, the family, consumption, behavior, and the school. The system of reproduction of the relations of production (RRP) interpenetrates the social movement sector through its effects on life style choices, community structure, and "weak-link" institutions.

Life style choice and community networks. The RRP can be very closely linked to the system of production. For example, in the company town or in the cities of early industrial capitalism (like Manchester or the New England mill towns) the conditions of community and family life are set directly by the conditions of production. Housing, schooling, consumption, even procreation and recreation, are tailored, shaped to industrialists' need for a labor force.

An important feature of advanced capitalism is the relatively high degree of autonomy of production from RRP. It reaches its greatest degree of autonomy in the consumer society in which "the customer is king"; the possibility of a free play of taste, whim, impulse and choice has become a major legitimating formula for advanced capitalism. The ideology of "everyone can be a small businessman" -- i.e., realize himself in the sphere of production -- no longer holds; it has been replaced by the promise of choice of richly varied life styles.

This large gap between production and the RRP is manifested in the large number of available consumer goods, relatively large amounts of leisure time, physical separation of the workplace and other spheres of life, high rates of migration, and a high degree of free choice in life styles (including patterns of family life). Thus life style, consumption, family life (in a broad sense of "family"), and community life not only take up a large part of each individual's time, but also become psychologically weighty areas of choice.

This gap between production and RRP means that there is a large space for movements that deal with community problems, with life style choices, and with self-definition. This gap has been particularly characteristic of American capitalism and has permitted the florid development of identity, life style, moralistic and community movements. These movements (from theosophy to Gay Liberation) are movements that appear to lack an economic base, but are in fact made possible by the loose articulation between production and RRP. In this sense, they are a product of the structure of advanced capitalism.

"Weak-link" institutions. As noted earlier, "weak link" institutions are those where conflicts or contradictions appear. Stable systems of social control break down, a mobilizable population with grievances is at hand. A third element of the articulation of production with RRP is that conflicts in the productive system may be shifted to institutions of the RRP.

In the late nineteenth century, the system of production itself was still clearly a socially weak link in capitalism. The workplace was often the site of disorder -- strikes, riots, etc. Class conflict could be clearly seen as class conflict because it took place at the point of production. By World War II, a series of social inventions (e.g., scientific management,

assembly lines and other technological innovations, corporatist unions), had reduced or veiled conflict at the point of production. Even if disputes over working conditions and wages evidence themselves in recurring strikes, the conflict is contained as part of a legitimated bargaining negotiation. System stress shifted to other points, particularly to the state and to certain institutions in the RRP -- especially the schools, as the sites of selection or labeling for class position (Coleman, Stinchcombe, Cicourel and Kitsuse, Bowles and Gintis, etc.). The schools have had to bear the burden of multiple contradictory functions: selection as a process must go on while at the same time the school has to perpetuate an ideology of upward mobility for many, if not for all; the school also has to cope with the problems of adolescence and in recent years has become more and more of a "parking lot" in which people are kept out of the overcrowded labor market. Under conditions of mass youth unemployment (especially in Italy and England) even the selection function has broken down. Thus, the school is typically a weak link institution and many social movements start there or are acted out there: the lunch counter sit-ins, the anti-war movement, May '68 in France, the destructively anti-authoritarian actions of the Italian "autonomi," etc.

Summary: The Structure of the Economy and Class Relations.

A large number of propositions are embedded in the discussion. Let us summarize some of the main points.

1. The more the economic base takes the form of a dual economy, the more:
 - a. poor people's movements become distinct phenomena,
 - b. the harder it is to build unified movements of all the subordinate classes and strata,
 - c. many movements take on the form of corporatist interest groups with the upper working class organized into defensive trade unions

and the lower working class organized into ethnic pressure groups and/or "poor people's" uprisings.

2. The more relative autonomy there is in the RRP from the relations of production (via suburbanization, marketing, and a consumer ideology):

- a. the more identity and life-style movements will emerge (e.g., gay liberation, "pro-choice" and "Right to Life," feminism, the Moral Majority, etc.),
- b. the more movements will be residence or life-style based, rather than workplace based, a development that coincides with those discussed in #1 above (Hirsch),
- c. the weaker reinforcing overlapping social networks will become, coinciding with the disintegration of traditional working class culture (Hirsch, Linenwebber),
- d. the more the "weak-link" institutions, the points at which conflict occurs, shift from the workplace to the institutions of the RRP. The educational system bears special stress because it is increasingly a selection site in which assignment to different strata occurs, including assignment to one or another part of the dual labor market.

3. The more contradictory class positions there are in the society the larger the number of movements, the less clear their class bases, and the more volatile the sector as a whole.

4. The structure of the social movement sector is not a product of class support bases that are independent of each other, but of a structure of inter-related classes. For example a polarized social movement sector emerges when there is open class conflict and few intermediate strata or contradictory class positions. Under these circumstances, the two antagonistic classes draw such strata into major class blocks. Late nineteenth century Europe, Russia in 1917, and some of the Central American nations today, represent such polarized cases.

Phases of Capitalism and the Business Cycle.

In the previous section we linked the shape of the social movement sector to the structure of the economic system. However, attention to change in the orientation and structure of the sector as a function of change in the economic system was treated but in passing. Moreover, in the broad view, the transformation of the sector is simultaneously responsive to the transformation of politics, the growth and spread of national political systems, the elaboration of government and the incorporation of groups into the polity (see Tilly, et al., 1975; Gamson, 1975). Thus, the task is herculean. Let us suggest how phases of capitalism and swings in the business cycle relate to the transformation of the social movement sector.

In the phase of early industrial capitalism (1780-1830), only the beginnings of working class movements can be discerned among the British working class. The concerns of the bourgeoisie are still conflicts with landed interests. Petty-bourgeois radicalism in its Jacobinist and Jeffersonian manifestations is strong. Working class movements shift from the anti-mechanization movements of artisans and agricultural workers to more political and nationally-organized forms like Chartism.

Industrial capitalism is consolidated by a series of upheavals from 1848 to 1870. The emancipation of slaves and serfs, the formation of modern nation states in central and southern Europe, and the extension of voting rights are among the accomplishments of these "last bourgeois revolutions" in a phase of economic expansion.

The triumph of the bourgeoisie sets the stage for severe conflicts and a high level of movement activity between 1870 and 1914. This is the period of "labor wars" in the emerging monopoly industries in developed nations (such as railroads, steel, and mining). It is the period of movements of farmers against railroads and other monopoly industries. Coalitions

of workers and petty-bourgeois succeed in further extending voting rights and other elements of democracy (Therborn, 1977). The mass based socialist parties of Europe are organized and grow rapidly. In the periphery, millenarian movements take place in response to colonial expansion.

During the interwar period working class movements grow but take on more institutionalized forms: labor unions, mass socialist parties, and the Communist parties associated with the Comintern appear. As a response to both capitalist crisis and working class political power, fascist movements with a petty-bourgeois base appear to try to deal with both the long-term decline of the petty-bourgeoisie, its short-term crises, and the threat of proletarian organization. The movements in the periphery shift from millenarian visions to more political forms, usually nationalist and sometimes socialist. In the most prosperous of the advanced industrial countries, like the United States, lifestyle movements appear on a mass scale, spurred by affluence and the rising media industries.

In the phase of post-war developed capitalism (1945-1980), working class movements are contained, both repressed in the Cold War atmosphere and co-opted in a long wave of economic prosperity, but excluded groups, blacks and women, mount campaigns for greater inclusion. Life style movements expand in consumer societies. In the periphery many, though not all, nationalist groups, gain de jure control of territory and resources (if not always de facto), setting the stage for a new focus of conflicts on a global scale. Vietnam, Angola, Cuba, Iran, the rise of OPEC, and so on, represent the transformation of nationalist movements into international conflict.

We have read from the historical record the relation of phases of capitalism to the size and shape of the social movement sector. Major movement forms appear linked to the transformation of the political economy. And crises of the political economy are tied to major swings in the business cycle, to rampant inflation, to large depressions which feed the demands for change. Is it possible to argue that the business cycle has systematic linkages to the leftward or rightward shift of the social movement sector? Is there a short term as well as long term relation of the sector to the economy?

For the early part of this century, we would probably have argued that upswings in the United States were associated with conservative revivals, and downswings with increased unemployment, with left-oriented movements. Yet the issue is more complex than this. Some of the relevant items that need to be considered can be drawn from studies of strike behavior and industrial conflict and from the relation of political choice and election results to the state of the economy.

Recent research shows that for Western countries the volume of strike behavior increases as employment rises. With slightly less certainty we know that as real wages decline (in the face of inflation) strike rates increase (Hibbs, 1976, 1978; Cronin, Edwards). Since World War II strike rates have systematically declined, but only in those countries where labor is well incorporated in a stable and dominant political coalition (Hibbs). However, strike rates do not necessarily relate to social movement activities. Yes, unions feel they can demand less, and actually win less in recessions. Yes, corporations can drive harder bargains. But that does not necessarily drive political and social movement surges left or right.

Tufte (1978) has shown how negative events in the economy affect voting in the United States. The "ins" lose, as the economy sours and parallel illustrations can be found in other countries. For example, the Portuguese economy acted as a limit for the leftward shift and the upsurge of left movements following the revolution of 1974. The economic limit was the high rate of inflation that followed the successes of left movements; it translated into political action on the one hand by the voting behavior of middle strata and the Northern small-peasant proprietors and on the other hand by International Monetary Fund pressures for austerity.

What the limiting effect of the economy means for movements is that the realistic alternatives that they can propose and pursue (if they come to power) may not correspond to the position of their larger support base and/or their own militants. The more general proposition is that the short-run oscillation of the economy will affect the left-right dynamics of the social movement sector, depending upon who is in power and who is blamed for the current state of the economy. Moreover, business-cycle related oscillation in movements and in political behavior is likely to be especially sharp in societies that are not politically polarized into two class blocks, i.e., societies with intermediate strata (the "vacillating petit-bourgeois elements" of orthodox rhetoric).

Several other relations of the SMS to business cycle action should be noted. First, we suspect that large downswings in the business cycle crowd out non-economic oriented social movements. Conversely, prolonged upswings may encourage a proliferation of other kinds of social movements both because more discretionary resources come available for social movement usage, and because non-economic issues - matters of life-style, personal taste, general ideology - can occupy the public arena. Second, the major phases of capitalism and the smaller phases of business cycle can join together and their resolution and polity choices lead to structural change which sets the ground for the next phase and shape of the social movement sector. Finally, although

crises of capitalism and extreme problems created by business cycles fuel social movement mobilization, the direction and breadth of movement goals depends upon ideological and organizational factors and regime response as much as upon economic conditions per se.

The Political and Ideological System

In the long haul of the transformation of modern society, social movement mobilization has been reactive to the attempts of authorities and the state to intrude upon local and traditional arrangements, and, at later stages, proactive in making demands upon the state and seizing opportunities provided by the state. Thus, understanding how the political system determines and constrains the social movement sector is a fundamental problem. (Tilly, et. al.)

The term "political system" is used in a more or less commonsensical way. In advanced capitalism the political system has some degree of autonomy from the economy (a relative autonomy, compared to feudalism, for example). There is no sharp boundary between "social movements" and other political action; political systems differ in the extent to which political action is organized into social movements, into parties, and into organizations of the state apparatus. One of the contributions of resource mobilization theory has been to strike down the distinction between social movements ("bizarre, irrational, marginal, and separate") and other forms of political organization, like parties, government agencies, or pressure groups ("rational, institutionalized"); RM theory has shown us that the patterns of strategy and organization are quite similar and that in fact movements are only one type of organizational action. Here, however, we treat some parts of the political system as external constraints on social movements. The nature of the political system viewed as an

external constraint can be used to explain the amount of mobilization the degree of formal organization of social movements and the predominant forms of such organization (Przeworski, 1980). The political system also presents constraints on movement strategy and tactics. Beyond the issue of strategy and form lies the fact that the state is the major instrument of coercion in the society. In so far as many social movements seek to impose a vision on a whole society, on a population that cannot always be persuaded as individuals, social movements must use the state.

Centralization and Decentralization. The extent to which a political system is centralized or decentralized shapes social movements by presenting different targets for social movement activities. Centralization has a spatial dimension (i.e., local to national), and a functional dimension (i.e., relative autonomy and role of executive, legislative and judicial institutions).

In a highly centralized system local movements can win few victories. As long as budgets are set nationally, prefects are centrally appointed, laws are applied nationally, and parties operate as disciplined national organizations rather than as collections of local notables -- there is little point in purely local movements. France is a case in point. On the other hand, in the federal system of the United States, laws and regulations are set at the state and local level, local units have rather large fiscal and regulatory power, party policy is made by negotiation between local powerholders; thus local movements can win victories. "Grassrooting the system (Perlman) is a possibility in the United States but would make little sense in France.

Italy represents an interesting intermediate case, although closer to the

French than the American situation. The abortion movement in Italy illustrates the complexity of the situation. The decision to allow abortion was made nationally, in parliament, along party lines; unlike the United States no local or regional laws were made, nor was there a breach of party stands by individual legislators. Thus, the movement to liberalize abortion had to be a national one. However, the new legislation has to be implemented locally, in hospitals; there is already evidence that there will be considerable variation within Italy with poor women in conservative regions virtually denied while the better-off and those in more modernized areas will be able to obtain them. Thus, we can expect more local movement activity around this issue in the future.

The ideological apparatus may also be centralized. For example, TV, radio, and educational institutions may be directly controlled by the regime. Where they are centralized they are a possible target for national movements -- especially movements constituted as parties. For instance, in Italy the left (especially the PCI and PSI) won a victory when it gained control of Channel 2, a "left" government channel distinct from the more right DC-oriented Channel 1. Similarly, movements or parties may attempt to capture or influence the ministry of education in societies in which the educational apparatus is centralized. These national targets are not available to movements in the United States.

Centralization and decentralization may also be understood functionally in terms of the powers of particular political institutions. For example, specific acts of legislation may make courts more or less available as avenues for social movement action (Handler). Nelkin and Pollak (1980) show that the anti-nuclear power movement was much more successful in Germany than in France

because the relevant legislation allowed the courts in Germany, but not in France, to intervene in substantive matters.

Legal Constraints on Social Movements: Civil Liberties and Social Control

Obviously, a constraining feature of the political system is the extent to which the state permits the existence of social movements and limits their actions, their right to recruit and organize publicly, their right to organize as parties or factions within parties, their right to launch media of opinion, and their right to use a variety of tactics.

It is more useful to think of a range or spectrum of civil liberties than of a simple dichotomy: liberal-totalitarian. For example, within the clearly repressive end of the range, Fascist Italy was nevertheless much "looser" than Nazi Germany. In the latter, every type of opposition party or movement was crushed, while in the former, some opposition organization continued to exist. For instance, in the spring of 1943, widespread strikes against piecework rates were organized by the PCI and the spontaneous efforts of workers throughout Northern Italy -- unthinkable in Germany.

Not only does the nature or efficacy of political sanctions vary but also their target, thus shifting the weight of social movements to the left or the right. For example, Germany's berufsverbot (the denial of government jobs to people of vaguely subversive leanings) is in practice applied far more vigorously against the left (Communist party members but also pacifists and even left wing socialists) than against the right. On the other hand, in Italy, the reconstitution of a fascist party is specifically illegal, although in practice these laws have not been very vigorously applied. Still, the Scelba law and its more recent variants dampen fascist movements and shrink the "space" available to the far right.

In the absence of all or most civil liberties, movements may take the form of currents of opinion that are hardly movements except in a very abstract or intellectual sense. Such has been the case with "dissent" in Eastern Europe and the beginnings of the women's movement in pre-1974 Portugal, exemplified by the "three Marias." Such movements of dissent then tend to be confined to a small cultural elite and have little ability to communicate with the large mass. Of course, authoritarian regimes cannot always maintain their iron hand, party controls may become ineffective, and semi-autonomous institutions such as the church may shelter nascent movements.

Private and Public Sectors and the SMS: Co-optation, Clientalism, and

"Manageable Movements" Movements are strongly constrained by the extensiveness of the public and private sectors, although there are no simple formulae to spell out the effects. On the one hand, in societies in which there is an extensive public sector, there is also more legitimacy for subjecting institutions to political scrutiny and action. (Gundelach). Society tends to be more politicized. Italy is a good example of such a situation. The major TV and radio stations are government-run (although private stations have increased in recent years) and thus are assumed to represent particular political positions. There is a large amount of state investment (about 60%) and thus investment policies are a matter of political discussion.

On the other hand, in society with a smaller public sector, such as the United States, matters like media policy or investment patterns are difficult to make part of public discussion. Desires to alter them have difficulty operating directly through the political system. Instead, either they have to

act as private pressure groups directed at the networks or corporations, or they have to engage in a prior action of legitimating government intervention in the private sector. For example, in Italy, TV programming for the government channels is a possible topic of public political debate; in the United States it is a matter either of purely private voluntary group action or it can be politically influenced only after an extension or more stringent application of government regulatory powers. Thus the tactics and the legitimating formula for action in the two systems have to be different.

The extensiveness of the state sector is also expressed in the state's propensity to launch quasi-movements and counter movements. Some capitalist states (like the Nazi and Fascist states) were highly activist, creating a large structure of youth groups and corporatist groups. Even where independent movements, parties or unions are not restricted or banned, these state-sponsored structures may drain resources from them.

The state may make the decision to support particular movements, entering into relations of clientalism or co-optation with them. For example, in the 1960's the American government was ready to aid a variety of poor people's movements and groups (Jenkins and Perrow) and even to create its own co-optive quasi-movements (Helfgott). The result is frequently to create movements with relatively narrow ends.

Moreover, state action may reshape group boundaries. Nagel finds that coalitions among native American tribes is largely a response to changes in federal policy, who can make claims, how the government will entertain proposals.

Italian politics involves a very elaborate structure of such clientalistic groups, many of them created or nurtured by the Christian Democracy (DC).

When the Christian Democrats are in power, this corporatist structure is largely passive and clientalistic, receiving favors. When the DC is out of power locally, this structure is activated like a dead man switch to fight for its old handouts, undermining efforts at reforms for a more universalistic and progressive system of services that the left (PCI or coalitions of Communists, Socialists and smaller left groups) tries to launch. The PCI has responded by building up its own structure of groups, with a support base in the stable working class -- and in its Red Belt strongholds, also among petty-bourgeois. It has been less eager and able to organize among the "emarginati," the poor.

Left movements tend to press for extension of the public sector (more regulation of industry, more public services, etc.) but such expansion within the framework of capitalism often does not result in the transitional reforms sought by the left (Garner and Garner). Rather, the result is either a stream lining of the operations of capital (Garner, Kolko) and/or an extension of a structure of corporatist clientalism, including the generation of manageable quasi-movements, which become an important element in the social movement sector.

Party Structure Party structure is probably the single most important variable for understanding the pattern of social movements. Movements can only be understood as one part of a range of options that also includes political parties. Movements compete with parties. Movements infiltrate parties. Parties spin off movements, either deliberately or in the process of factionalizing. Movements appear within parties. Movements become parties. Both are organizational forms for pursuing political ends, so it is not surprising that they are so closely intertwined.

The difference lies in the use of "party" to mean an organization that has a routinized method of gaining some degree of power over the state apparatus while "movements" seem more oriented toward civil society. (But even this distinction is problematical -- the Armed Forces Movement of Portugal in 1974 appeared in the heart of the state coercive apparatus itself (see Bandiera, 1976). We generally will use "party" to mean an organization that competes in elections, realizing that there are organizations called parties that are solely revolutionary and parties that control a state apparatus. We might almost say -- party:movement :: church : sect. The former (party, church) are more institutionalized. There are many ways in which party structure affects movements.

1) Ease of starting parties. Where launching a new party is relatively difficult for constitutional reasons -- e.g., the number of signatures required to get on a ballot, the single member districts that effectively rule out minority parties, illegality, etc. -- movements are less likely to become parties (Duverger). A good illustrative contrast is provided by the United States where movements rarely become parties and 4th Republic France with a proliferation of parties, many of which were movement-like. Even where legal constraints on minority parties do not exist, tradition and/or patronage may close off "space" for parties outside of the major established ones.

Rephrased into resource mobilization terms -- there is no point in pursuing an electoral strategy if the payoffs are not worth the difficulties of becoming a party and mounting a campaign.

When movements become parties their structure often changes. For example, as the PCI became increasingly oriented to electoral politics in the late 1950's, it shifted from a cell structure, to the typical structure of Italian electoral parties.

Organization of parties. The nature of the existing parties impinges on movements. Where, as in the United States, the parties are largely congeries of interest groups with little national discipline or a party line, it makes good sense for a movement to expend effort on becoming an interest group within a party. This strategy may allow it to have some influence on party stands and ultimately on the national policy in "its area of specialization" without making too many compromises. This situation tends to induce many movements organized to act on intra-party interest groups each with limited specialized (and thus usually corporatist) goals. Movements may even become lobbylike with staffs of movement-professionals and large peripheries of mailing-list supporters who are occasionally mobilized.

On the other hand, where parties are strongly centralized, national organizations with party discipline and a party line (like the PCI and the PCF), movements are less likely to enter the party as interest groups. The movements find the parties impermeable. In these situations the relationship even becomes reversed: instead of the parties being composed of movements and interest groups, the parties deliberately create quasi-movements to attract particular constituencies. Instead of the constituencies creating movements to exert pressure on the parties, the parties create interest groups to woo constituencies -- for instance the youth groups of the PCI and PCF.

Particular mechanisms of party organization shape the relationship of parties to movements. For example, the existence of primaries tends to weaken party discipline. A strong hold on patronage jobs, even in the absence of ideological discipline, strengthens party unity and makes a party less open to movements (Wilson).

The undisciplined nature of American parties makes them hospitable to social movements. Lacking a decisive and comprehensive ideological vision of the world (such as is approximated even by the more pragmatic of the Euro-communist parties or by Mrs. Thatcher's Conservatives), they can absorb and lend support to single issue movements, and promote these goals once the party is in power. A good example is the success that the Right to Life movement has achieved in getting Republicans to support its cause.

The more disciplined parties may however spin off movements, factions that rebel against the party line (Zald and Ash, 1966); again the analogy to the church/sect is suggestive. Parts of the French and Italian left are in fact spin-offs from the Communist parties.

The thrust of our argument here needs reiteration. The politically oriented social movement sector is a continuation of politics by other means. Both its size and shape are affected by sanctions and rewards used by the state to channel political behavior. The number of movements, their organizational form, and their tactics are responsive to state structure and action.

IV. Epilogue: The American and Italian Social Movement Sectors Reappraised

We return to the comparative material to illustrate our discussion of systemic constraints: A comparison of the Italian and American social movement sectors will show how the determining factors produce different outcomes.*

The United States is characterized by a dual economy in which there is a strong super-imposition of ethnicity and labor market position. The reproduction of the relations of production is rather "distant" from the system of production, with a high degree of suburbanization, a long period of emphasis on consumption, a geographical dispersion of working class

*For another interpretation of Italian trends, see Melucci, 1981a and b

communities, and a general weakness of working class cultural institutions. The political system is decentralized and focused on two major parties neither of which is unambiguously class-based.

Italy is likewise characterized by a dual economy but one organized along regional (and to some degree age lines) rather than ethnic lines. The economic and cultural trends that distance the system of reproduction of the relations of production from production itself have been underway for a shorter time period than in the United States; at the same time, the industrial working class has not only been ethnically homogeneous but also has a long standing cultural tradition. The political system is still centralized and characterized by nearly thirty-five years of national domination by a single center-right party (the DC), an equally long period of governmental exclusion of the other major party (the PCI), and a fairly large number of smaller parties which can only exercise leverage as "swing parties" and coalition partners.

What are the outcomes for social movements? In the United States we find a multiplicity of movements many of them concerned with "lifestyle" (i.e., RRP) issues, operating either outside of the political system or acting as pressure groups within the major parties. Movements do not strongly define themselves with respect to class base and are only haphazardly left-right aligned.

In Italy, on the other hand, we find a smaller number of movements (partly because movements can more easily turn into parties, partly because the diversity of life style concerns has emerged later). They are more clearly aligned along a left-right axis and are more integrally tied to definable class bases. The political system is far more clearly the tactical

focus of the movements and they are more likely to be nationally organized than American movements.

This type of analysis suggests some predictions for the future. The most likely outcome is convergence of the characteristics of the U.S. and Italian social movement sectors. Why?

First, the current crisis -- the shared conjunctural economic situation -- creates similar pressures in both. More specifically, we can expect more movements in the United States to define the situation as one of the economic problems (i.e., to move at least slightly toward a class model of problems), to identify Washington as the source of problems (i.e., to take a more secularized, political and national view of problems), and to develop more politically-oriented tactics. The strong right-wing political thrust of the Moral Majority is an example of this potential shift. "Social issue" movements (i.e., movements generated by cultural dislocations and conflicts) have had to focus on public policy. In this respect, we can expect a "Europeanization" of American social movement behavior, but with more popularly-based right wing movements and a continued interest in life style issues.

On the other hand, short of a complete economic collapse, we can expect the distancing of the RRP from the system of production to continue in Italy as changing consumer and media habits generate a degree of Americanization. Shifts in concern from clearly class issues to life-style issues are most strongly heralded by the Radical Party with its emphasis not only on civil liberties but also on demands for decriminalization of all abortions (defeated in a referendum in May, 1981), abolition of hunting, and similar "American-style" questions; these demands have been accompanied by "American-style" tactics like mass petition drives and the attempts to hold referenda.

The emergence in recent years of a small but intense Catholic revitalization movement, located in the Northern urban middle strata in Italy also

supports the hypothesis of trends toward American-style movements, centered on issues of the inner life and religious communalism. At the same time this phenomenon reinforces our view of the middle strata as volatile in the contents and direction of their movements.

Another pressure towards "Americanization" is the growing overlap of youth and a weak labor market position: this feature of the Italian economy has helped to create volatile and violent youth movements, increasingly detached from a working class base (that had still been connected to them in the "hot autumn" of 1969).

Our remarks about the directions of the SMS in Italy and the United States should not obscure the larger message of this paper. The Social Movement sector differs between nations in both its size, organization, and orientation. As the mode of production changes, as the global political economy refocuses, so too does the orientation and composition of the social movement sector. In every society the mode of production is a major determinant of the nature of political action and of the social movement sector; the special features of the advanced capitalist mode of production--the loose articulation of production and RRP, the diffusion of welfare state policies into civil society, the existence of many contradictory and intermediate positions, the internationalization of the political economy, and the high-tech potential of the forces of production--themselves create a new form of the social movement sector: internationalized, concerned with the impact of technology, targeted on the state, only indirectly connected to class relationships at the workplace. In this vein, in recent years two "new" movements have surfaced, the anti-nuke movement and the environmental movement. In some countries and at some points in time they are separate, in other cases they are joined. The linkage of resource mobilization theory and political economy analysis (as attempted here) helps explain the pattern in cross-national variation, as social movement action is channeled by the prevailing national political opportunities.

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