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**From Strike to Eurostrike:  
The Europeanization of Social Movements and the Development of a Euro-Polity**

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The Secretary General of the French Communist Party: "Maastricht is great!"

*Le Monde* April 5, 1997, p.1

## **Eurostrike!**

On February 27th, 1997, the President of the ailing Renault auto firm announced the imminent closure of the company's plant in Vilvoorde, Belgium. Louis Schweitzer, a former aide to Socialist prime minister Laurent Fabius in the mid-1980s, would soon have to announce massive financial losses and job cuts in France itself for Europe's sixth largest carmaker. Closing Vilvoorde was but a prelude to these politically more risky cuts, for Renault's largest shareholder is the French state.

Prelude it might be, but the mainly Flemish and heavily-unionized Vilvoorde workforce would not go quietly, nor would the outraged Belgian government, whose Prime Minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, has his political base in the Brussels suburb (Reuters, March 7, 1997). As local, federal and regional policymakers expressed their outrage (the city council of Vilvoorde called to a halt the use of French in the public market!), the Vilvoorde workers occupied the plant and began a series of public protests that would make Vilvoorde synonymous with a new term in the European political lexicon – “the Eurostrike”.<sup>1</sup>

Not only Dehaene – but also European Union officials – expressed outrage at the plant closure and its unexpected announcement. The EU's outrage was double:

First, it soon emerged that Renault was hoping to use EU structural funds to expand its plant in Valladolid, Spain, just as it was closing its Vilvoorde facility. European Competition Commissioner Karel Van Miert quickly announced that he

would soon submit a document proposing ways to stop companies from "aid shopping" from the EU (Reuters, March 7, 1997).<sup>2</sup>

Responding to Brussels' anger, and its own embarrassment at what seemed like an attempt to steal jobs from a fellow EU member state, the Spanish government quickly withdrew its plan to subsidize the Valladolid expansion.

Second, Renault had ignored EU regulations that it must inform and consult its workers -- presumably through its newly-formed European Works Council -- of a plant closure decision, and negotiate measures of "accompaniment and reconversion" for closed plants. Not only the Commission, but also the European Parliament expressed shock and outrage at this "anglo-saxon" restructuring. Echoing the concerns of trade unionists from Belgium, France, and Spain, the assembly urged the EU to penalize Renault for its failure to consult and inform its workers of the decision, as EU regulations require, and said the automaker had shown "arrogance and disdain for the most fundamental rules of social consultation" (Reuters, March 12, 1997; *Le Monde*, March 13, 1997, p. 14). Even European Commission President Jacques Santer said the French government should have intervened to prevent Renault from laying off some 3,100 workers (Reuters, March 9, 1997).

As for the French government, it was clearly embarrassed. Already reeling from a series of work disputes that began in the fall of 1995, most recently including a paralyzing trucker's strike, and in the midst of difficult contract negotiations with the medical unions, the last thing that President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppe needed was a 'brouille' with France's closest EU neighbor and trading partner, Belgium. While Chirac uttered inane criticisms of Schweitzer's lack of tact, and Juppe

called Schweitzer in for consultations, their apparent shock was neutralized by the news that the government knew of Renault's decision as early as January. Indeed, French Industry Minister Franck Borotra backed the company. "You talk about a strategy of job-cutting," he said. "The strategy at stake here is the strategy of survival for the company" (Reuters, March 11, 1997).

But other French politicians were less than happy. On television, CFDT general secretary Nicole Notat discarded her usual moderation to chide the company for failing to consult the workers, as required by EU regulations. In Parliament, deputies of both the majority and the opposition were up in arms about Renault's decision (Le Monde, March 9-10, 1997, p. 5), creating an information mission to keep track of the future of Renault and its workers (Le Monde, March 13, 1997, p. 14). Both Philippe Seguin and Charles Pasqua, Gaullist stalwarts who had clashed with Chirac before, used the Vilvoorde case to reinforce their skepticism about European Union.

But if government and EU officials were ruffled by Renault's move, their response was nothing compared to the reactions of the unions. Union actions took two complementary forms - "guerrilla actions" with a small number of participants intended for maximum media impact, and mass demonstrations designed to show the workers' power in numbers. Both forms of action took "European" forms.

On March 2nd, a small contingent of Vilvoorde workers crossed the French border to Warin, near Lille, where they occupied a parking lot filled with new Renault vehicles ready for shipment (Le Monde, March 2nd). On March 7th, strikes were called across the sprawling Renault empire, bringing out about half its workforce in France and between twenty and eighty percent in Spain.<sup>3</sup>

The stoppage was most complete in Vilvoorde, where the workers had been on strike since the announcement on Feb. 27. But it extended into Spain (in Seville, about two-thirds turned out (Renault, March 7, 1997); and into France (some 48 percent of workers in the Orleans facility participated (Le Monde, march 9, p. 24). Symbolically, the center of the action was in Brussels, where the Vilvoorde workers hurled a Renault chassis across police barricades in front of the French embassy (Reuters, March 9, 1997).

This was no one-shot protest action. If nothing else, the Belgian workers were unwilling to let their colleagues in other countries off the hook. When it was announced that Schweitzer would meet with the European Works Council at the firm's Paris headquarters on March 11, a convoy of 80 buses left Vilvoorde before dawn to transport 3,000 workers in their red and green union jackets to Paris, and called for solidarity strikes to support the protest (Reuters, March 11, 1997; Le Monde, March 13, 1997, p. 14). At the EWC meeting, French unionists backed the Belgian unions' call to reverse the Vilvoorde closure and demanded a start to reduction of working hours throughout the company to prevent further job losses (Reuters, March 11, 1997; Le Monde, March 12, 1997, p. 21).

Schweitzer refused to budge on both counts, and the Vilvoorde workers followed up with a surprise "commando action" on the 13th across the border at the Renault plant in Douai. As they marched through the factory, they were joined by about 600 French workers, and production ground slowly to a halt (Le Monde, March 15, 1997, p. 19) . But these actions were small potatoes compared what came next on Sunday, March 16th.

For several months, European unionists and leftwing groups had been planning a "European march against unemployment" (Le Monde, Feb. @, 1997, p. @). Beginning with a planning conference in Brussels in February, the "march" was to be mounted by stages in every EU country on different dates and would culminate in a European Union wide demonstration in Amsterdam on June 14 (The Dutch hold the current Presidency of the European Council of Ministers). The Vilvoorde crisis led the Belgian unions to move up the date of their demonstration by two months, and to call for participation from across the EU (Le Monde, March 16-17, 1997, p. 13).

Given the politically charged atmosphere around the Renault case, and the growing tension over the "Euro" and its consequences for jobs and social benefits, the turnout in Brussels on March 16th was extraordinary. Despite the rapidity with which the march was scheduled, and in the face of the absence of the Italians, who were planning their own massive demonstration the following weekend, and the absence of large German delegations (Turner 1996; Le Monde, March 18, 1997, p. 18), between 70,000 and 100,000 workers turned up in Brussels to march from the Gare du Nord to the Gare du Midi (; Le Monde, March 18, 1997: 18.). While only 60 Spanish unionists made the long trip, and the British and Dutch unions were lightly represented, the French left and its leaders were massively and visibly present -- from CFDT leader Nicole Notat to CGT Secretary Louis Viannet, and from Communist General Secretary Robert Hue to Socialist leader Lionel Jospin and SOS-Racisme founder Harlem Desir (Le Monde, March 18, 1997, p. 18). As Schweitzer was hung in effigy, and a giant wickerwork figure carried by demonstrators made nazi salutes, the Vilvoorde workers dumped a yellow car body in front of the Brussels Bourse before moving on. "This is a

signal of anger and indignation," Belgium's Christian Democratic union leader, Willy Peirens, told the crowd "A signal of solidarity against brutality" (Reuters, March 17, 1997). Michel Nollet, head of Belgium's Communist FGTB union, called attention to the transnational character of the protest: "Today's demonstration is not the end...Together united we will continue our struggle for a social Europe, for a Europe of solidarity" (Reuters, March 16, 1997).

The joint pressure on the French government from the union demonstrations, from the EU, and from the Belgian government was too much for Prime Minister Juppe; on March 20th, he appeared on French television to announce that 800,000 francs per worker would be disbursed for the measures of reconversion and accompaniment (Le Monde, March 26, p. 18). These figures turned out to combine both "social measures" and the loss of value due to the abandonment of Renault's investment in the plant, but Juppe's tactic was enough to disarm the unionists, "If a minority wants to struggle to the end," Le Monde observed, "the silent majority of the workers -- "illusioned" by the sum of money pronounced by Alain Juppe, are pushing for negotiations" (Le Monde, March 26, p. 18).

As we write in late April, the first round of the Renault crisis appears to have come to an uneasy conclusion. After the EU Trade Confederation demanded that Renault restart its negotiations with labor, workers ended their five week occupation of the Vilvoorde plant and released the billions of francs in finished cars they had held as ransom (Reuters April 14, 1997). By the middle of the month, work had resumed in Vilvoorde, though only part of the workforce returned, and production was reported to be well below normal (Reuters April 14, 1997).



A court decision is currently pending on the complaint lodged by the European Work's Council against Renault's failure to follow EWC directives (Reuters March 27, 1997). In Brussels, the courts have taken the necessary first steps to bring Renault before the European Court of Justice. And in a resolution adopted during their March plenary session, the European Parliament pronounced Renault's actions unacceptable (by a vote of 358-36).

Still, Renault remains defiant, claiming that financial need justifies their actions. In the words of a Renault spokesperson, "the economic reality is what it is and cannot be compromised by decisions bearing on procedural issues" (Reuters April 3, 1997).

#### **The Lessons of Renault:**

The Renault affair may represent a new reality for social movements in Europe as they respond to the processes of integration. As Renault suggests, social movements may become transnational in their *sources*, *processes*, and *outcomes*.<sup>4</sup>

The sources of contentious politics: Contentious politics can be Euro-centered when domestic actors are stimulated to take action – in any form or locale – as a result of decisions taken by transnational actors. Transnational actors can include regimes and governing bodies such as the European Union, or they can take the form of multinational agents and corporations such as Renault. As they respond to the European sources of their grievances, domestic actors level their sights on a variety of targets, including other private groups; against their own governments; against other foreign nationals; or they may take action directly at the transnational level – such as the EU.

The processes of contentious politics: Contentious politics may also take transnational form in cross-border cooperation between contentious actors, or even more dramatically in multinational social movement events which draw participants from across the continent. Transnational social movement events remain infrequent occurrences.

Outcomes of contentious politics: Finally, contentious actions become Europeanized where they are brought before international bodies such as the EU or European Court for resolution. In time, we can imagine a more involved process of Europeanized outcomes in which inter-European conflicts or issues will lead to the development of trans-European social movement organizations. With few exceptions, this long-term structural change remains much in the future.

In the Renault affair we find examples of each of these aspects of the process of Europeanization of movements. In terms of the *sources* of the conflict, at one and the same time, the actions of Renault – a major multi-national presence across the continent – were decried as violating European directives concerning both proper notification of workers and appropriate steps toward reconversion; and at the same time, these same moves were facilitated by pan-European initiatives designed to encourage industries to locate in poorer and, coincidentally, labor-cheap regions.

As it developed, the Renault affair also presented a range of the possible ways in which contentious events can be European in their *processes*. At one level, national governments were quick to respond to the automaker's attempted move – out of Belgium and toward Spain – with indignation, launching a flurry of formal protests and meetings with both company executives and trade unions in an effort to resolve the

dispute. First onto the scene, Belgian announced its intention to take the corporation to court in the name of justice. The Flemish regional government, home of jeopardized Vilvoorde plant, and home constituency of the Prime Minister, has also taken center stage in demanding Renault be brought to justice.

The French government also claims to have been caught off guard (though this has been contested by both the national and international press), and has slapped Renault on the wrist for not consulting the unions. At the same time, as the majority shareholder in Renault, the government appears to share responsibility for the decision to close the Belgian plant rather than seek cost savings which might have labor market ramifications closer to home. The Spanish government also weighed in on the Renault action. Bowing to international pressure, the Spaniards have announced that they will freeze plans to support the expansion of the Spanish plant in Valladolid.

As these events suggest, the relationship between the nation-state and the social movement is changing. Set against a history of engagement where states and domestic social movements are locked in contention, the Renault events may illustrate a new role for the state. In this emerging scenario, the state functions as an intermediary between domestic actors and the transnational, European, realm of decision making. To the extent this pattern proves lasting, it is decidedly different from the traditional role of the state.

For their part, the response of labor across the continent presents the most examples of Europeanized processes of contention. Yet the repertoire of labor in this case is best described as encompassing both traditional, local, and focused actions as well as making appeals and taking action on the European state.

The most vocal outcry in the Renault affair came from workers soon to be sacked – who seized the imperiled factory – as well as from their compatriots in organized labor across Europe – who launched a series of sympathy actions. While the plant workers seized and occupied the threatened plant for more than five weeks, the main Belgian union confederations (Socialist, Christian and Liberal) all came out in sympathy with the Vilvoorde workers.

Intriguingly, the three French union confederations also made clear their support of the Belgians – suggesting both the possibility of a growing international brotherhood of organized labor and, closer to home, the threat of more layoffs both in France and abroad. International support from labor also came from Spanish and Slovenian Renault workers.

In a number of ways, the trade unions have responded to the opportunities for political and economic redress presented by the European Union. Their actions at the transnational level include: calling for punishment of Renault by the EU; demanding representation at the European Worker's Council; and facilitating a number of coordinated contentious political events. These included the cross-border action at Warin, the coordinated actions by French and Belgian workers on March 13<sup>th</sup> at Douai and, most notably, the series of coordinated strikes across the continent against Renault-Europe.

Between organized labor and the state, most of the Belgian parties and the French parties of the left also announced their support for the workers and opposition to Renault (although the French Socialists have been more quiet in their opposition,

since Schweitzer is a Socialist and took control of Renault while the Socialists were in power).

Renault also offers evidence of the ways in which contentious political events may become Europeanized in their *outcomes*. There is little doubt that the Renault affair will ultimately require, and gain, the intervention of several European agencies. Already, the carmaker has been the target of strong criticism by members of both the Commission and Parliament, who have vowed to stop corporate “aid shopping”, and have scolded the French government for failing to intervene. Additionally, the EU Trade Confederation successfully demanded that Renault reopen negotiations with labor. Still pending are the Belgian court cases which are likely to be a preamble to a hearing before the European Court of Justice.

As the Renault story illustrates, the potential for a Europeanization of social movements is multi-leveled and rapidly emerging. As we write, workers from across the continent are caught up in the implications of the major socio-economic shift as EU member states move toward monetary union. The upheaval this restructuring has caused leads us to suspect that the processes of Europeanization will follow a pattern of development outlined by David Snyder and Charles Tilly (1972). Snyder and Tilly suggest that patterns of social unrest strongly correlate with critical political events such as electoral opportunities or changes in regimes, rather than follow a linear path. In part, any interpretation of these events must concede that the current period of integration is both unusually turbulent and constraining as countries move toward monetary union.

### **An Emerging Realm of Euro-Protest?**

Given the episodic nature of the Renault affair, and the particular turbulence of the current wave of Euro-integration, we are left to wonder at how far we want to generalize about a new level of Euro-protest based on this story. Does this series of moves and countermoves by a multi-national corporation, workers from across the continent, and their national governments, describe a new and increasingly evident of political interaction?

At the anecdotal level, the journalistic evidence of the development of a new realm of transnational movement activity extends far beyond the aggrieved auto workers. Across the continent, workers and other social actors are increasingly engaged in contentious politics. In the last few months, German Miners have taken to the streets, carrying crosses emblazoned with the names of mines which have fallen victim to German austerity measures (New York Times, April 10, 1997); Greek Cotton Farmers seized almost 100 road junctions around Greece for two weeks in protest of reduced EU subsidies (Financial Times, December 11, 1996). French truckers paralyzed their nation's highways and borders with a month long series of strikes; Italian milk producers staged a campaign against the "starvation" subsidy arrangement their government negotiated with the EU (Reuters EC Report, January 27, 1997); and Belgian foundry workers took to the barricades in response to announcements of some 1,500 layoffs in their industry (New York Times, April 10, 1997).

Both the Renault incident and the protests of these other groups can be read as episodic responses to the structural upheaval wrought by the current – and painful –

round of Euro-integration. But these contentious events may represent more than an episodic response to structural change. Their emergence, shared objectives, and *transnational* tenor, may suggest a new reality for social movements in Western Europe.

Do the contentious events described by the Renault affair represent a new era in the Europeanization of political movements? There are several reasons to suspect that this is the case:

*First*, there is mounting evidence that Europe increasingly is becoming a social movement society. The waves of contentious action which have swept the continent of late are simply the most recent waves of protest. Since the 1960s, levels of participation in contentious politics across the continent, as well as the range of actors taking part in such activity - from farmers and student groups to anti-nuclear protesters, the unemployed, and right-wing skin-heads - have been on the rise (@Dalton 1996; Crozat and Tarrow 1996; Duyvendak 1994; Kriesi et al 1995).

*Second*, the growth in contentious political action across Europe has accompanied the structural changes wrought by the process of integration into the European Union. As Euro-regulation encroaches on national legislation, and as individual states work to align their national policies with emerging Euro-guidelines, citizens groups have been shaken out of their complacency, scrambling to address new issues and respond to new opportunities (Imig and Tarrow 1996: 6).

*Third*, there is ample evidence that the process of integration has led to the development of new, transnational forms of citizen political engagement. We see this increase not only in the number of interest groups formed to take action at the

transnational level, but also in the increasing frequency of their approaches to the EU. This process of development suggests one form of active public response to the openings for political approach and policy access presented by the Union.<sup>5</sup>

### **Three Cautions About the Transnational Movement Thesis**

Before rushing to herald a new era of transnational social movements in Europe, a few cautionary notes need to be sounded. The first concerns the historical development and dynamics of the social movement. The second has to do with the nature of the political opportunity structures available at the transnational level. Our third concern involves the type of evidence which has been used to make the case for the emergence of a realm of transnational mobilization.

*Caution One; Movement Development and Networks:* Among the strongest reasons to remain cautious before predictions of a rapidly developing transnational movement sector in Western Europe follows from the nature of social movements, which find their advantage in a context largely delimited by state-imposed boundaries and opportunities. In this sense, social movements may indeed be "prisoners of the state," in that they may require the presence of a state antagonist in order to have meaning to their citizens and to organize.<sup>6</sup> By extension, movements may have a difficult time seizing hold of the non-state character of transnational governing institutions.

Additionally, one of the most consistent lessons of social movement studies of the last twenty years is that social and institutional networks are necessary to organize and sustain



contentious politics (McAdam 1982; Gould 1995). This includes previously-organized networks of social actors within occupational, neighborhood and demographic identities. It is extremely difficult for ethnically, linguistically and geographically separated actors to recognize their collective identity and grievances, let alone act upon them, as they would be called upon to do in a truly transnational movement. Some have pointed to the internet as a possible medium for international movement linkages (Ganley 1992, Wellman and Gulia 1995). But the inherently disconnected nature of electronic communication is a far cry from the interpersonal and immediate linkages which bind the members of social movements together.

*Caution Two; The Limitations of Opportunity Structure:* A second difficulty that movements face at the transnational level concerns the largely "hollow" nature of the institutions and policies of international organizations. Where visible and targetable transnational antagonists can be identified, they are generally geographically distant and their policy effects are mediated through national states. It is far easier for disgruntled citizens to engage in collective action on the steps of their local government offices than to make the trek to centers of transnational or supranational decision making. Transnational mobilization is made more difficult still by the logistics of coordinating cross-national collective action on the part of citizens from different countries.

*Caution Three; The Anecdotal Nature of the Evidence:* Our third reason for voicing caution about the development of a transnational movement realm follows from the limitations of the evidence documenting such a development. Most of our understanding of social movements' responses to the processes of globalization comes from spectacular journalistic

reports or single case-study analyses. While the case-study is a useful tool for interpreting particular movements' histories or arenas of action, it offers little of the longitudinal and comparative information needed to assess whether transnational action is progressively increasing or how domestic actors respond to transnational issues.

This is especially true of the literature on European integration, which often includes the assumption -- sometimes stated as a finding -- that collective actors are increasingly directing their demands at Brussels. Yet such assertions remain highly speculative. Claims of large-scale mobilizations toward Brussels have usually been backed up with stories about organized business, sometimes with data about environmental groups,<sup>7</sup> and almost never with systematic information about contentious politics or social movements in general.<sup>8</sup>

### **Likely Directions in the Europeanization of Social Movements**

Drawing from the emerging evidence concerning social movements, we hypothesize three alternative routes for domestic claimants responding to the policy initiatives posed by the European Union:

*First*, what we call “transnationalization”, in which domestic actors shift the focus of both their demands and their targets to respond to EU policy making. In the process they develop a new repertoire of tactical forms appropriate to political engagement at the transnational level. As Jackie Smith and Ron Pagnucco suggest:

contemporary social movements are really more like fugitives of the state than its prisoners: they create transnational alliances and organizational structures to formalize and routinize transnational cooperation as a means of waging a kind of diplomatic guerrilla warfare on the state (1995: 1).

The development of international institutions and regimes – and the increasing policy making authority of these entities – may create new and expanded political opportunities for social movements to mobilize transnational resources and attempt an “end run around the state”.

*Second*, “polarization”, in which domestic actors divide between those with privileged access to transnational institutions (for example, internationally-oriented business organizations), and those – like labor – which remain trapped in national opportunity structures (Tilly 1994). *Turner*

*Third*, what we call “domestication”, in which social actors employ their access to national powerholders to mobilize their support against the decisions of transnational institutions.

### **Contextualizing Renault: Taking Stock of the Process of Europeanization**

On its own, the anecdotal evidence gathered from Renault and similar campaigns is difficult to interpret. We may simply be too early in the process of integration to know whether Renault is best understood as a deviation from the historically domestic and national character of the social movement or is instead an indication of the shape of contentious politics to come. To more fully explore this question, we need to extend our analysis beyond anecdotal case studies. This paper represents a stage in a larger project which is designed to provide longitudinal and cross-national evidence of the processes of Europeanization.

### *a. Contentious Event Analysis*

Arising out of the quantitative study of the 1960s ghetto riots and of strike behavior in the 1970s, the analysis of contentious events has recently gained ground in comparative politics and sociology.<sup>9</sup> As Mark Beissinger puts it, "events data are explicitly temporal, and therefore give us some understanding of how forms of collective behavior relate to key developments within the polity" (1995: 3). Provided they are based on similar sources and methods, events data are also cross-nationally comparable, which allows us to compare the rates of change and the diffusion of collective action across space.

In keeping with the logic of contentious event analysis, we base the core of our work upon the extensive record of European political events established by media coverage. Yet events data ideally suited to our purposes are elusive. In addition to all the well-known methodological problems involved in the use of media data (Danzer 1975; Franzosi 1987; McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1994; Snyder and Kelly 1977), we faced the additional difficulty of finding a source that would provide comparable data both cross-nationally and over time, allowing us to reliably study variations in contentious politics historically and across Western European states as the European Union developed. In addition to each of these concerns, we faced a seemingly crippling problem given the thickness of European political and economic transactions and the volume of information produced by even a single news source – making the mechanical work of collecting and coding events data a daunting problem.

Responding to these concerns, we set aside the tried-and-true methods of manual coding of "hard" or microfilm sources such as those used to study American ethnic conflict (Olzak 1992) or the Italian protest cycle of the 1960s (Tarrow 1989), and began to experiment with a recent advance in computerized data collection and coding of electronic data sources.

Specifically, for this research project we employ an automated coding software protocol called PANDA (The Protocol for the Assessment of Nonviolent Direct Action). PANDA is essentially a computerized code-book which establishes a set of decision-rules to guide a sentence parsing software program (named KEDS, for the Kansas Events Data System) which – in turn – “reads ” and codes reports of political interactions from on-line news reports.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, we intend to download and filter on-line news reports from the Nexus news service, and then code them using the PANDA protocol and the KEDS coding system.

Using the PANDA automated coding system, we are constructing a dataset which, as of this writing, has drawn from Reuters' World News Service media accounts of 19,330 discrete Western European contentious events between October, 1983 and March, 1995. By hand-checking the machine-coded data against the original news accounts, we are increasingly confident that the system is turning up real and reliable variations in collective action. Within this set of events, we have found a small percentage (791 events, or 4.1% of the total) which involved interactions between domestic social actors and the EU. This small percentage suggests that over the period of integration that we are investigating, the vast majority of contentious politics events recorded across Western Europe remained domestic rather than transnational.

Turning more closely to the subset of 791 Euro-centered contentious events, we find evidence in the distribution of these events over the twelve-year period of an increasing level of engagement between domestic social actors and EU policy making. Specifically, we find an increasing ratio of contentious Euro-centered events to the larger set of all contentious events enumerated in Western Europe, a finding which speaks directly to our hypotheses concerning a growing Europeanization of contentious politics.

## Figure One About Here

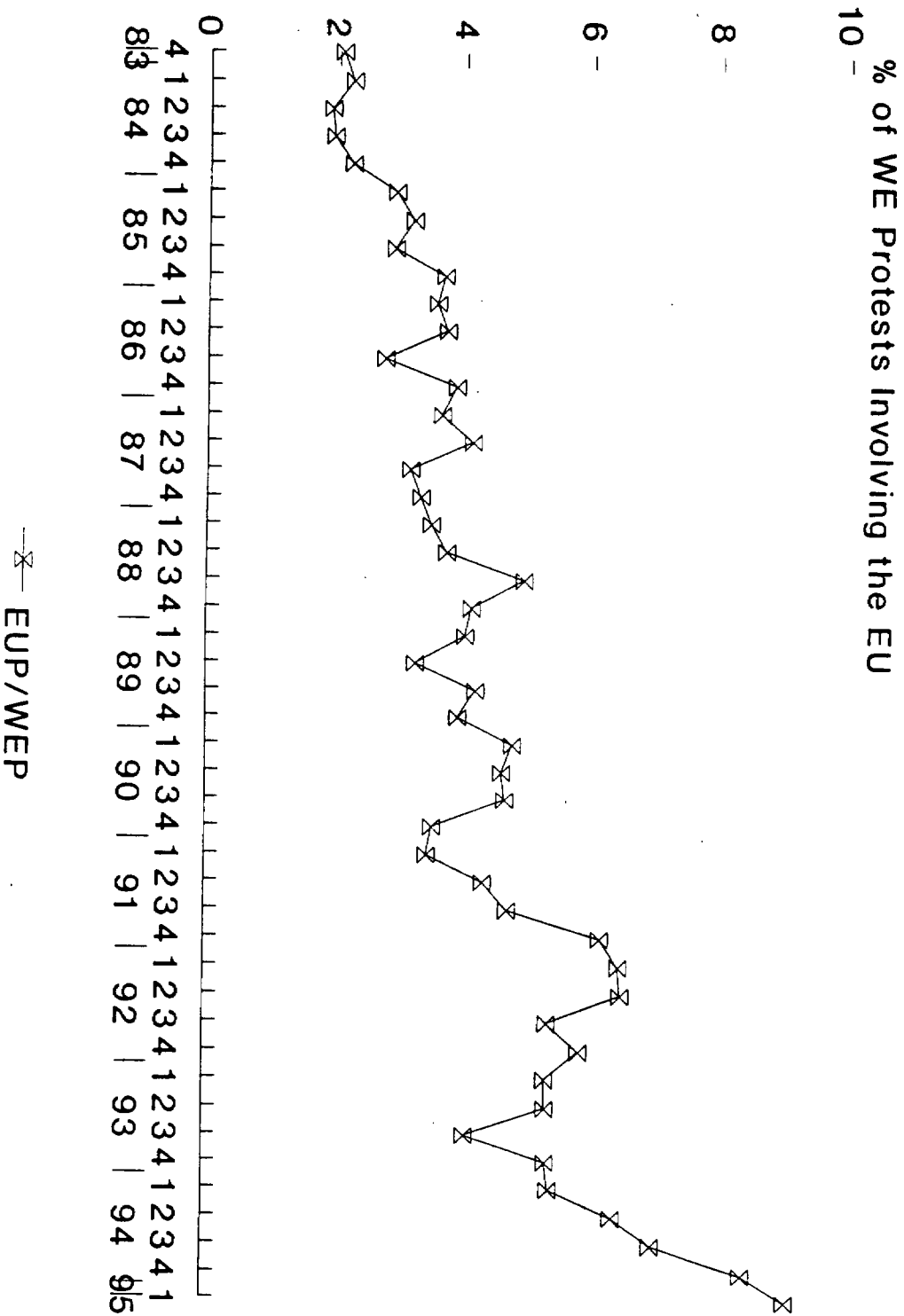
As Figure One shows, the ratio of contentious events involving the EU to the total number of all such Western European events drawn from the Reuters' press-releases has increased four-fold since the mid-1980s. If the inflections indicated in the figure are to be believed, they suggest that the European Union is increasingly recognized by domestic social actors as both an antagonist and as a likely target for contentious collective action.

Within this set of contentious political events, we have found not only actions launched directly against the institutions of the European Union, but also actions targeting other -- usually domestic -- actors or institutions, but which were motivated by claims against EU proposals and policies. These results are highly preliminary, but they indicate evidence of both the first (eg. the transnationalization of movements) and the third (eg. domestication of transnational issues) models of Euro-centered collective action proposed above.

In subsequent stages of the analysis, we will compare the incidence of each of these forms of engagement both over time and with respect to different social actors. For example, it is plausible that transnationalization will be more effectively used by movements representing actors in the export economic sector, while domestication will be the recourse of groups with a largely internal market or clientele. We also hope to examine evidence for whether the varying rate of integration of different European countries into the EU, as indicated by Eurobarometer polls as well as by their governments' policies, is structuring the patterns of collective action in the events we hope to study (Rucht 1996).

It is appropriate that we sound a cautionary note about the shortcomings of machine coding of events data and regarding the limitations of the data source from which we currently draw (Reuters' news service). Both of these facets of the current stage of the project

Figure One: The Ratio of Euro-Centered Contentious Political Action to All Contentious Political Action (October 1983 - March 1995)



Source: Analysis of Reuter's Data

underscore the need for a more complete investigation, for developing complementary methods, and for a professional evaluation of the results.

*1. Limitations of Machine Coding:* One of our primary concerns is with the limitations of machine coding. We have preliminary inter-coder reliability statistics which suggest that the automated coding system (PANDA) is comparable in terms of reliability with human coders, and that this method of compiling data compares favorably with the banks of human coders used on previous events data projects (Bond, Jenkins, Schock, Taylor 1996). But we find echoes of our concern in one of the few published comparative assessments of machine coded events data: As its authors note; "What the PANDA approach gains in breadth, it loses in precision in any specific geographic area...We believe that the best events data collections will...focus on narrowly and explicitly defined conceptual domains but are as geographically inclusive as possible" (Huxtable and Pevehouse 1996: 15). While we are reasonably confident that the system generates few false positives, we have no way of knowing how many reports it fails to include, potentially leaving us with an under-counting of the actual number of such events. In response to this issue, we intend to triangulate between several coding systems. Ideally, this will include a test of PANDA against other automated coders (e.g: the Concordance System) as well as against the yield from human coders in selected sectors of activity.

*2. Data Source Limitations.* We are also concerned that the data source (Reuters') used in our study may systematically under-report extra-institutional political activity such as contentious political events. Our ideal dataset would provide comparable, consistent, and inclusive information on the full range of political actions undertaken in each nation included in



the investigation. Our preliminary assessment of the dataset we have constructed from Reuters' suggests that it is highly comparable and fairly consistent, but suspect in its inclusiveness. This limitation points to one of the first areas where we will need to undertake comparative assessment of alternative and multiple sources of data.

Ultimately, an answer to these methodological questions will be found by comparing the mappings provided by different media sources; by single versus multiple media bases; by different levels of media (e.g.: local, regional, and national news in one country); and between media and non-media sources (e.g.: from Cultural Survival or Amnesty International on-ground observers, FIBIS reports, etc.). The current work of John McCarthy, Clark McPhail and their team in Washington D.C. may provide a strategy for combining different forms of information and for correcting for the biases of press agency coverage (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1994). We also intend to commission a small number of case studies in particular policy areas in which Euro-collective action is well documented to test the inclusiveness of our sources.

In addition, we intend to interpret our findings by juxtaposing quantitative, longitudinal information with the qualitative, on-ground case studies we hope to commission. First, through a controlled comparison of the changing strategies of regional ethnic movements in Spain and elsewhere, we wish to examine the impact of the EU Committee on the Regions on the platforms and programs of regional ethnic movements. And second, we hope to commission sectoral case studies on the women's, farmers', and environmental movements to check our findings against others'. Both these facets of the research will help us to interpret the trends evident in our quantitative data.

## **Preliminary Conclusions Concerning the Development of a European Civil Society**

As the Renault campaign illustrates, the emergence of a transnational realm of European government presents a series of new opportunities and constraints for domestic social actors. In this new transnational realm of engagement, autoworkers not only undertake traditional and domestic forms of contentious action, but at the same time they also are linked in cross-border actions with compatriots from across the continent and are joined in massive international demonstrations and rallies by busloads of fellow laborers. In this emerging political space, threatened workers draw upon the cross-national linkages and negotiating resources of labor unions which increasingly seek international identities. Meanwhile, workers and their intermediaries directly press claims, as they always have, before both regional and national governments. But now they also press claims directly before the European Union and the ECJ. In all of these ways, Renault's autoworkers demonstrate the emerging possibilities which integration presents for a full range of citizen representatives, including not only organized interest groups and business representatives, but also social movements.

Set against the rapid development of new political opportunities at the transnational level remain the consistently high barriers to launching contentious action in the transnational realm. At the level of individual participants, most citizens continue to have difficulty in ascribing the sources of their grievances to the EU. At the group level, significant transaction costs confront efforts to coordinate collective action

across national boundaries. At the institutional level, national governments continue to play a primary role in policy-making before the EU.

Perhaps the difficulties of launching transnational social movement activity account for another of our findings. Both in the case of the Renault workers and in the larger sample of Euro-centered contentious events, workers account for the preponderance of the contentious events we identify. We find a vigorous range of contentious actions launched by farmers, fishermen, construction workers and miners, for example. These groups all have confronted the painful realities of integration first hand: reductions in agricultural subsidies, shifting trade restrictions, limitations on net sizes and fishing territories, and massive layoffs in the name of fiscal austerity and monetary union.

But the widespread activism of commodity groups also highlights the much more tentative presence of many other social actors, to date, in the international arena. While we find some dramatic cases of contentious action on the part of the environmental, student, anti-nuclear, animal rights, and anti-racist movements in Europe (Imig and Tarrow 1996), our most recent evidence (e.g.: for the first few months of 1997) highlights the preponderance of contentious events involving labor groups. The mobilization of these groups directly follows the economic retrenchments of the current round of integration, retrenchments which come as the clear result of EU actions. The immediacy of this link suggests an additional caution in assuming the Renault affair will become a model for a wide-ranging transnationalization of social movements. Whether or not other European social actors will be as directly affected by the EU remains to be seen. Groups are not immediately affected by decisions made

at the Euro-level – or instances where grievances can not be linked so clearly to the EU – would be much less willing to shoulder the costs and difficulties of transnational action.

As a consequence of the combination of opportunities and constraints identified, we suspect that rather than see an immediate and direct displacement of contentious politics from the national to the supranational levels, we are more likely to see a range of types of social movement approaches to the European level of governance. Many domestic claimants will continue to exert pressure domestically to demand that national governments take action on behalf of aggrieved citizens' groups in the European community. This process would likely lead to a partial transformation of national states from autonomous centers of sovereign decision-making to the European representatives of domestic collective actors who cannot themselves reach the European level but maintain considerable domestic political clout. If true, this would be a portentous change, but a very different one than the formation of transnational social movements, the short-circuiting of national governments and the *direct* targeting of the European Union. It is a result that would be more compatible with the notion of a "multi-level political system" (Sbragia 1992), than with that of a single European polity.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Just who coined the term "Eurostrike" remains to be investigated. In our present state of knowledge, it first appears in the French newspaper, *Le Monde*, on March 10th ("L'Eurogreve a mobilise les salaries de Renault contre la fermeture du site de Vilvoorde" (p. 24). The term does not appear in Reuters' dispatches, but on March 11, Reuter's quotes a French union spokesman who called the demonstration that day a "pan-European demonstration."

<sup>2</sup> Nearly \$8 million would have come from the European Regional Development Fund, in effect, help Renault to move jobs from one member state to another, according to a spokeswoman for Regional Policy Commissioner Monika Wulf-Mathies.

<sup>3</sup> As usual, the figures released by the unions and management varied widely. For the range of figures in the three countries, see the report in *Le Monde*, March 9-10, 1997, p. 24.)

<sup>4</sup> With Charles Tilly, we define the social movement as a sustained collective challenge to powerholders in the name of populations whose interlocutors represent them as wronged by powerholders or their allies (Tilly 1995; Tarrow 1994; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 1996).

<sup>5</sup> See Justin Greenwood, Jurgen R. Grote and Karsten Ronit (eds.), *Organized Interests and the European Community*; Sonia Mazey and Jeremy Richardson, "Environmental Groups and the EC: Challenges and Opportunities, in David Judge (ed.), *A Green Dimension for the European Community*; Mazey and Richardson, *Lobbying in the European Community*; and Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streek, "From National Corporatism to Transnational Pluralism: Organized Interests in the Single European Market," *Politics and Society* 19(1991): 133-64.

<sup>6</sup> This can be seen in the trajectory of the so-called "new" social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, which proclaimed the obsolescence of the old, state-oriented politics before beginning a "long march through the institutions," and ending up, in many cases, as parties and interest groups. Compare Offe 1985 and 1990 for this development.

<sup>7</sup> The environmental sector is one in which strong evidence for Europeanization exists, but the environmental groups involved have largely adopted interest group tactics -- and foregone contentious politics -- as the best study of the subject, Dalton's *Green Rainbow*, demonstrates.

<sup>8</sup> Even the European Union itself appears to be uncertain of the level of attention which its institutions and actions are attracting from movement actors. For example, while the EU world wide web clipping and news service (CORDIS) regularly posts and catalogues media articles on the Union and its policies, it contains no subject category for social protest, and includes few articles on this important facet of the Union's institutional and democratic development.

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<sup>9</sup> For representative studies, see Kriesi et al. 1995, Rucht 1996, Tarrow 1989, Tilly 1995 and White 1996.

<sup>10</sup> The search and coding engine used in this study is the Kansas Events Data System (KEDS). (For information, contact Philip A. Schrodt, Department of Political Science, University of Kansas, Lawrence KS 66045). The coding protocol used is the Protocol for the Assessment of Nonviolent Direct Action (PANDA). For information on PANDA, contact Doug Bond, Program on Nonviolent Sanctions and Cultural Survival, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge MA 02138.

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