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ABSTRACT

A factory occupation is recorded in collective memory only in hindsight. A unique factory in a small village in the east of France closed down in 1981. Based on an ethnographic and socio-historical survey conducted in the 1990s, the author examines the apparent lapse of memory related to the long occupation of the factory (eight months) by its employees. In particular, he shows how militants from the CGT trade-union took over the factory buildings during that time. Placed within the context of its history and community, and the partial return to work beyond this, the event marked the abrupt demise of a particular type of village trade-unionism as well as the more gradual extinction of the close relationship between an industry and a locality.
Keywords: Event, occupation, worker's militancy, industry, rural world

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"And when it closed in 1981, you, you were . . ."
(Interrupts) "Um, from Ribot to FL [Fonderies Lyonnaises] (in 1972), there was no unemployment. But then, in . . . now when was it?"
"In '81."
"Yes, well, in '81, they hadn't been there for long. . . . There was about six months of unemployment. We must have got going again in '82, little by little . . ."
"But there was less of a recovery wasn't there?"
"Ah, yes, well. . . . But at Foulange there are lots of jobs. You watch out now. Now, how many are we? Um . . . there are seventy of us at SMF [Société Métallurgique Foulangeoise]. That's clear. All in all, at Foulange out of a population of six hundred plus, there are three hundred jobs. Oh yes!"

A welder in a rural SME which has been making kitchen stoves for about twenty years, Gabriel vaguely remembers events between 1972 and 1981, events which marked his professional career at the same time as the history of the small industrial site in Foulange. The voluntary liquidation of the old kitchen-stove factory owned by a wealthy bourgeois family, took place first of all. It had acquired the foundries in this small village in the east of France after the Revolution.[1] From its inception as a cast-iron business, the Ribot enterprise began gradually, over the course of the nineteenth century, to specialize in the manufacture of kitchen equipment, employing increasing numbers of day laborers from the locality. From the beginning of the twentieth century up until the Second World War, the paternalistic managerial practices (the construction of workers' housing developments, patronage of the Catholic Church, municipal control . . . the many practices conducive to the partial settlement of migrants from rural areas, both near and far) exercised by the descendants of the owners of the Ribot forge accompanied the "rationalization *à la française*" (Dewerpe 1996, 140–148) of this industry. The factory continued to develop up until the 1960s when it reached an optimum number of four hundred salaried

employees. With it remained the power that the Ribot family had built up in terms of interaction with "its" workforce, the paternalistic policy aiming to "realize a perfect harmony between life in the factory and the ordinary lives of the workers and their families" (Castel 1995, 262).

Faced with competition in terms of cheap kitchen stoves which were flooding the French market at the time, the products made by the Ribot family were selling less and less well. In 1972, "the family could no longer maintain the business," the last heir to the entrepreneurial dynasty told me. The business was sold for a song to Fonderies Lyonnaises (FL), specialists in electrical goods. The Ribot family received assurances from FL that the take-over would be completed without incurring job losses. The factory was therefore kept going beyond its break with the paternalistic bond which had been built up since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The protection of FL only lasted nine years, however. In 1977, FL merged with the industrial group Ferodo (rechristened Valeo in 1981), which launched a restructuring process, going into receivership in 1981. According to a national newspaper, Foulange became "the village of total unemployment;"[2] three-quarters out of the 230 workers who had been laid off were residents of the village. Action on the part of the government and the Comité central d'entreprise (CCE) [Joint Consultative Committee] resulted, eight months after the collective redundancy, in the creation of Société Métallurgique Foulangeoise, a small business enterprise which took on forty of the unemployed from the village. A second SME was created two years later, and unemployment was gradually reduced. Largely owing to massive emigration, by 1990 the town had lost a third of the 950 residents registered in the 1975 census.

Research into the closure and occupation of the factory twenty years after the collective redundancy thus boils down to interviews with the workers who had remained in the village, who had been reinstated as employees in the new SMEs and were trying to get work for their children there. There were many who, as they had less of a legitimate social claim on the locality and could not hope for a new job, soon left the area with their families. With the research monograph including only the testimony of the indigenous population, this "event" may appear to be of minor importance, indicative merely of a few months of unemployment, as it was for Gabriel, the worker who could no longer remember the exact year of the FL factory closure. In fact, what remains of this period of crisis in the collective memories of those who had been made redundant is not the collective redundancy, the rallying of the unemployed, the occupation of the factory, but the fact that employment once again became secure. In other words: "It is the consequences rather than the event, which become imprinted on the memories of the population that has experienced them, and only from the moment of fulfillment" (Halbwachs 1997, 162). However, two months after François Mitterrand had come to power, the announcement of the collective redundancy of 1981 received considerable publicity, giving rise to numerous strikes, the occupation of the factory by the CGT [Confédération générale du travail; General Confederation of Labor] militants for eight months, national media coverage of the conflict, and a unified rallying of the authorities. In order to understand the reasons for the indistinct memory of events associated with the closure, we must place them in their local historical context: what era did they close (Bensa and Fassin, 2002)? What conflicts did they herald? How was it that the future of the site prevented the occupation from being the focal point of memory?

■ "Antagonistic" Social Classes and the Village Community

The "juxtaposition" of working and wealthy bourgeois families within the same village community implied the organization by the Ribot employers of a body of distancing measures. They were, first of all, residential. There were the "people from the castle" and the "people from the village," the terms for domination being registered spatially. These measures were asserted by passing via the hierarchical *mise-en-scène* to the very core of neighborhood relationships; outside of the factory, therefore. This coresidence (which might have put the management of the workforce at a disadvantage) was used, on the contrary, as a vehicle for the "dramatization of the employer's remoteness" (Leite Lopes and Alvim, 1993).

Together with patronage associations (Gymnastics Society, brass bands . . .), this domestic detachment involved the Catholic faith. Up until the end of the 1960s, religious ceremonies were used to symbolize the relationships of dominance, with Mme. Ribot handing out hymnbooks during Holy Communion and organizing children's parties in the garden of the castle. Hubert Bressan, who was born in 1922 and came to Foulange at the age of six when his father was hired at the factory, recalls:

> It was "happy hour" when we took Communion. When I took Communion, well, we had our hymnbook and candle paid for by the Ribots. They looked after us (they were our godparents when we were confirmed). They took us to their place to eat a few snacks, some cakes. We went into the garden. They were fundamentally quite nice. . . . But we

had to go to Mass. Because it was always a family thing . . . know what I mean? Quite "corruptible," don't you think? Even for a worker. . . . Anyone who didn't go to mass, well, he often . . . he had troubles. They didn't bother much about him. . . . A Communist, you see, progress. But we . . . we were attached [to the boss], my parents and everything, a bit because of that.

All through this conversation, Hubert proved to be profoundly aware of the village social structure in place up until the 1960s. While describing himself as "left-wing" and claiming to have been a member of the CGT while he was employed at the factory, Hubert placed his relatives among the families who were "deeply rooted" within the system (as a child, Hubert was a chorister and a member of the brass band and one of his older brothers married a governess at the castle). His awareness did not detract from his consciousness of belonging to a dominated working class. He described the Ribot family as "proud," pointing out the class barrier. However, by visiting them, Hubert learnt to be content with his social position, seeking to adapt himself to the best of his ability to his relationship with his employers. It was enough to "please them with the old ways . . . and allow them to see that they were in a position of power." Through religious practices in particular, it was a question of constantly creating a sense of "osmosis" between the lord of the manor and the villagers, of establishing a lesser degree of separation between public and private domains, between work and family. In the factory, as in the village community, a direct hierarchical encounter between the boss and employees in the workshops was always avoided, at least by Antoine Ribot, director between 1946 and 1972. All the interviews with the workers during this period emphasized the fact that "we never saw M. Ribot in the workshop." The position of technical director was thus entrusted in 1946 to M. Lecas, an engineer from Paris, the epitome of an active factory manager, who bore the brunt of all the grievances against the management during the Ribot era. The responsibility for the fact that the factory went bust in 1972 was therefore laid at his door, while for Jean Dupuis, a worker and member of the CGT during the full extent of his forty-four years of employment at the Ribot, then the FL, factories, "Tony [Antoine Ribot], well he was such a nice guy. He wasn't able to say no . . ." A dichotomy between the lord of the manor bosses and the factory managers is apparent, even among the most active militants during the strikes. Thus, Denis Barbe, the "ringleader" of the factory occupation in 1981 and committee member of the Foulange section of the CGT since 1959, always prefaced the name of Ribot with a deferential "Monsieur," although the name of Lecas inspired in him nothing but mistrust. In this context, what was the significance of the massive affiliation of workers with the CGT trade union?

■ "The CGT? We Were All Members"

Research on the history of trade-unionism during the Ribot era has proved to be difficult. The informal nature of the establishment of the CGT (it was recognized between 1936 and 1981, however) meant that the tracks left by the trade union were only rarely written down. In the absence of formal archives, recourse to interviews

The Archives from the Ribot Business Enterprise: Lost but Significant

The "disappearance" of the archives belonging to the company is an apt demonstration of the relations between the business executives and a management on the way out, at the time of the closure of the Ribot factory. The search for the archives by the Valeo management and the government services proved fruitless. When I confided this failure to a deputy of the mayor of Foulange, I learnt that, at the time of the collapse of the firm in 1972, the personnel registers had been given by Antoine Ribot to some of the business executives in Foulange (the personnel manager, the chief accountant, etc.), as had all the archive material, thus being dispersed among the descendants of these persons, for the most part now deceased. This type of gift reflects the nature of the connections which had been established within management circles during the Ribot era. The reasoning behind the personal gift of the archive material to the members in the highest echelons of the business hierarchy indicates the solidarity with which Antoine Ribot was bound to his executives. If we are to base it on the three obligations of gift exchange distinguished by Marcel Mauss (1950) (giving, receiving, and reciprocating), the interpretation of this gift enables the significance to be appreciated. The boss *gives* to certain of his executives as *personnel* the registers of his salaried employees containing the connection with the business of each one of them. Here, we depart from the structure of strictly professional relationships to embark on a relationship between individuals where residential relationships come into play. Beyond this material gift, Antoine Ribot symbolically confides the responsibility for the personnel to his management executives who, unlike the rest of his salaried employees as well as the potential buyers of the factory, *receive* the present, implicitly promising to watch over *his* company personnel. It is here that "*reciprocation*"—the undefined term of the gift exchange—comes in. It explains the insistence on the part of Antoine Ribot that the factory is being sold "as is," so that his responsibility as a paternalistic entrepreneur is guaranteed after him by his executives. Even running counter to the rationale of government archives—which follows on from a subservience to the national order—is that of community relationships where personnel registers are given away to the best executives when the business closes.

with erstwhile militants was necessary, a method which brought with it the risk of exaggerating the influence of the trade union. However, encounters with certain nonmilitant members—such as Hubert Bressan—cast light on the trade-union presence within the paternalistic industry.

Hubert, who joined the factory in 1936 just before there was a weeklong strike, remembers having "spent the week horsing around" (having fun) with his mates. At fourteen, he seems to have been unaware of the reasons for the strike. When I asked a militant worker older than Hubert if he was already a member of the CGT during the time of the Popular Front, he replied: "Oh yes . . . well, we all were. But we weren't violent; we were just like everyone else. It was during the Blum era, so . . ." For Hubert, being a member of the CGT, when he thought back over it during his retirement, seemed like a step towards imitating older union members, as a sign of belonging to the working class. It was the same for Jean Dupuis: "Ah, as for me, the day I arrived at the factory, Marcel T. approached me to unionize me! I've been a member of the CGT for forty-four years. I've never left; I've always been the same . . ." Listening to the pleasure he took in talking about his forty-four years of commitment to earning a wage *and* his membership of the union, you can see the genuine logic behind local trade-unionism: the logic of belonging, of establishing a group, especially as the CGT had a virtual monopoly over union activities in the factory.[3]

For all this, this logic did not aim to reverse class relationships through conflict. The Ribots were never opposed head-on, since it was obvious that permanent employment in the factory depended on the maintenance of their position. However, a sense of belonging to the controlling trade union meant that it was possible both to confirm and to guarantee membership of the working class. Consequently, it was a matter of affiliating the employees from Foulange with a wider movement, that of the creation of a working class. The text in the statutes belonging to the CGT section and filed in 1959 is a good illustration of this desire (cf. box below). "Education," "statistics," "library," "conferences," "congress at work:" the goals of the union were apparently entirely focused on the learning process relating to the action of the workers and the affirmation of class solidarity aiming to defend workers' rights.

Building up a sense of class consciousness and creating working-class solidarity locally were carried out by drawing on a national model of trade-union discourse. However, beyond an adherence to the CGT as a sign of an affiliation with the working class, what were the resources for trade-union militancy? What were the elements of kinship which made a lasting membership of the CGT possible within the area of local employment?

CGT militants were easily identifiable. The trade-union statutes of 1959 refer to four local officials. When one of them, Denis Barbe, explained what became of them in the union to me, his remarks were unequivocal: "He was sacked. He got himself reinstated: they made him the boss." The only ones remaining are Denis and Robert Ryon, an electromechanical engineer on the maintenance team, who happened to be Denis's brother-in-law. Within the village community, the reputation of the Barbe relatives is clearly associated with the trade union. Denis's father, descended from peasant laborers from the immediate vicinity of Foulange, who gradually looked to industry for employment, was one of the first militants in the section of the CGT which was founded in 1936 (cf. diagram in the Appendix). This militancy appears more generally "modeled on local social networks" (Mischi 2003), since, for an equally long time, this man was the warden of the town hunting association, founded in 1927, involving lesser indigenous notables (artisans, agricultural workers, qualified factory workers).[4] The members of the association hunted in the woods nearby and, so as to ensure the integrity of the hunting grounds, they exchanged a part with the private forests belonging to the Ribot family, the male members of which hunted with hounds. Denis's father, thus, carved out a privileged position for himself within

Extract from the Statutes of the CGT Metal Workers' Union Filed at the City Hall in 1959.

"Article 4. The goals of the trade union are:

a) To study jointly all questions relating to the action of the workers from a professional, social, moral, national, and international point of view, as well as solutions which can be brought to it. To assemble all the elements and documents relating to education and statistics to this effect, and to maintain consistent relations with all similar organizations.

b) To create a library, courses, and conferences in order to disseminate the necessary knowledge to every worker to enable him to exercise his profession and for the defense of his rights.

c) To participate in the work of regional, national, and international congresses.

d) To show solidarity in all circumstances."

Source: Municipal archives, unclassified.

the village community. The fact that he was responsible for the maintenance of the communal hunting grounds meant that he played a key role in the process of the practical and symbolic appropriation of the territory by the popular village notables, a process which took place between the two World Wars with the tacit agreement of the industrial elite. By extending his connections with a family of indigenous workers, he made for himself "indigenous social capital" (Bozon and Chamboredon 1980; Retière 2003), building up a legitimacy which he transmitted to his descendants.[5] When he was twenty, Denis joined the factory as a welder (after an apprenticeship in town, a first job, and military service), taking up the torch of militant worker by taking part in the remodeling of the CGT union (his two younger brothers, also members of the CGT, became fishing wardens in the locality). In 1981, Denis was forty-four. Three years earlier, his two daughters joined the workshops aged sixteen and seventeen just before the brakes were put on recruitment in 1979. The transmission of roles among workers seems, therefore, still to have been effective, although since the time of the take-over by FL, the industrial setup has changed profoundly.

■ The 1970s or "Off-Site" Factory Management

Christmas, 1971: The Ribot establishment announces the liquidation of the business. The mayor of the town (without affiliations), the mayor of the district administrative center (FGDS [Fédération de la gauche démocrate et socialiste; Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left), as well as county councilor and the deputy of the district (UDR [*Union des démocrates pour la République*; Union of the Democrats for the Republic] look for a solution to the collapse of the Ribot enterprise. While the deputy intercedes with the prime minister, the two mayors are, respectively, chairman and honorary chairman of a welfare committee in place by early January (of which M. Ribot is a member). When, at the beginning of January, the compulsory liquidation of the enterprise within two months is announced, a call is made to an industrial and financial research department in Lyon, the director of which will take on the responsibility of searching for a buyer. He requests solidarity from all concerned and gets it: for two months, the employees will continue to work, despite the fact that they have no employer. The research department temporarily oversees the management of the business and the trade unions do not call a strike, only requiring the workers to down tools for a day's demonstration. The headlines of a regional daily the next day: "The population of Foulange and its many allies demonstrated in the sorrow of a touching silence." The bankruptcy of the paternalistic factory and the shared fear of the demise of industrial activity were thus seen as an opportunity for the temporary unity required by a sense of territorial belonging above and beyond class divisions, trade unions, and political parties.

This sense of belonging was, at the same time, "changed into a social image" (Avanza and Laferté 2005) by the media coverage of the local tragedy. The process of identification of the small industrial site was thus under way. A certain unanimity was soon engendered and an angry press release from the Force Ouvrière trade union [FO] is particularly illustrative of the image given to Foulange and its workers by these engineers of public opinion. "The reactionary side of paternalism has been correctly depicted by certain journalists. There has been no exaggeration. FO trade-unionists need to be told: 'This is not possible, they are fifty years behind the times!'" The word "paternalism" was out of the bag. It made it possible to condemn the management of a workforce judged to be reactionary and an industry "which did not know how to acquire a sufficient stature," but above all workers who were considered to be ill-adapted to recent industrial change. If the newspapers distributed in Foulange softened this portrait slightly by referring to "very significant human resources" or to a "brave, hardworking team," this was not the case concerning articles aimed at a wider public beyond Foulange and its environs. When the two months left for the purpose by the administrative tribunal had elapsed and a buyer in the shape of FL had been found, a weekly paper from the regional capital referred to a Foulange which was "no longer left behind in a remote corner of Morvan," while the newspaper, *Progrès de Lyon*, delighted in the fact that, thanks to FL, "five hundred low-income families escaped unemployment."

As far as FL was concerned, the plans relating to the industrial site at Foulange swung from one extreme to the other between 1972 and 1981. In 1973, it was suggested that the factory at Foulange should specialize in kitchen stoves (the Lyon site focusing on the production of car parts). An increase in the number of employees from three to eight hundred between 1973 and 1977[6] was envisaged as part of the site development project. However, although the municipality continued to invest in an infrastructure which would have enabled a development of this kind, enthusiasm for the project was short lived. Difficulties experienced by the Lyon group led to a reduction in terms of objectives, and it was bought out by Ferodo/Valeo in 1977, a firm which was structurally speaking multinational. When the closure of some of the FL branches was decided, Foulange was no longer the small industry saved by the big one as it had

been in 1972. The village had become an industrial site within an extensive group. The all too apparent bonds of dependency had been broken with the sale of workers' housing developments to their tenants between 1975 and 1978. From 1979 onwards, retirement no longer meant new recruitment, and the last unmarried immigrants had left the village. By the time the factory closed in September, 1981, the buyers of 1972 had reduced their employees by a third.

As far as the employees at that time were concerned, the period in which the factory was managed by FL is not memorable. Thus, for Jean Dupuis, who worked in sheet-metal manufacture for a little longer before joining the maintenance department, "It wasn't the same thing anymore because . . . I think it was more of a muddle than under Ribot. It didn't have to be the same metal, bits were broken. . . . The metal was definitely cheaper." The chief accountant ended up leaving the business because he was required to go and live in Lyon. One of his daughters told me later:

> They [the FL management] told my father, who was then responsible for the accounts department: "So, you must come to Lyon for one week every month." Yes, I remember that time [she was twenty in 1977]. I can't tell you how bad it was. . . . I know it was a turmoil in his life, especially after they told him: "You have to come for three weeks every month." He went for three weeks every month. And at that point he started to look for work elsewhere, because he didn't want to end up in Lyon for good. . . . He had spent his whole life in Foulange. He was attached to the village, and especially to life in the country. And that was a tough blow for my parents.

It seems obvious: the metamorphosis from a small to a big industry was not working. It was the era when industrial groups were specializing, with Valeo losing interest in the electromechanical sector in favor of concentrating its efforts on car parts. From the point of view of the workers at Foulange, lack of comprehension and mistrust concerning this remote style of management predominated. Employment in the village was based on a long history of intimacy and the "personalization of dominance" (Sigaud 1996). The purchase of homes on factory estates was thus perceived as an obligation rather than as access to property. It contributed to sowing the seeds of anxiety and ensuring that factory militants turned to the departmental union of the CGT. Its general secretary took on the struggle the very day after the announcement of the compulsory liquidation of FL, alongside Denis Barbe.

■ The Occupation

July 22, 1981: FL, a subsidiary of Valeo, went into compulsory liquidation with a "partial continuation of activities." In other words, it is only the Lyon factory that was allowed to continue production, with all the other sites belonging to the group having to close within two months. The following Monday, in response to a call from the CGT, all the FL personnel in Foulange went on an indefinite strike (the employees who wanted to continue to work for the two remaining months were prevented from doing so by a picket line at the factory entrance.) Mobilization was large-scale and unified: press cuttings from that time report three demonstrations in the village in one week, one of which commandeered the highway. During the days which followed, about twenty militants blocked off the factory entirely, confirming the halt in production two months before the 230 redundancies were announced. What was referred to as their "campus" was installed in the forecourt (tents, caravans, camping equipment) so as to "stand guard" and prevent the stock of fifteen thousand kitchen stoves ("our war booty") from being handed over or evacuated by FL. The manager's office—he no longer had access to the factory—became their "HQ." The occupation lasted for a total of eight months. Politicians and potential buyers had access to the workshops only if they were escorted by the militants. It was, thus, a total appropriation of the site, as the huge banner put up in front of the entrance demonstrated: "Our jobs and our factory remain in Foulange." The occupants withstood repeated attacks by court bailiffs (photos 1 and 2). They made sure that the machinery, which they claimed was ready to start up "overnight," was maintained. An exhibition of kitchen stoves was improvised in front of a flood of reporters, showcasing local expertise (photo 3). In the face of a breakdown in management and in order to give meaning to the expression "global solution," aiming to retain the business and the jobs at Foulange, the trade union promoted a market-oriented image at the same time as the skills of the working man.

The occupation of the factory from July, 1981 until March, 1982 represents a symbolic reversal. The trade-unionists wanted to prove that the factory belonged to them by taking over the manager's office, preventing orders from being issued and by maintaining machinery which would cease to function for almost a year. Even if it was no longer the property of the local lords of the manor, it still belonged to the workers in the village. Even if management, which would henceforth become impersonal, decided to abandon the site, the office of its local representative would become the general headquarters of the striking workers. This reversal was purely symbolic, however. The struggles of LIP, which began

in 1972 (Besançon is a little over a hundred kilometers from Foulange), and their short-lived experience of self-management seems to have been in the minds of some. A banner with the slogan, "Live and work in Foulange," appeared at all the marches. But the relatively small size of this rural industry, the reduced number of its workers, the strong interconnections between the factory and the local community (which accorded the representatives an important place in the conflict), the political context—the start of the Mauroy government (most of the negotiations took place in Dijon, between the newly appointed prefect, the young deputy of the PS [Parti socialiste; Socialist Party], and the departmental secretaries from the PC [Parti communiste; Communist Party]and the CGT; the party representatives were present at all the meetings; see photo 4)—and the significant influence of the management of the Valeo group (which was hoping to recover the stock of kitchen stoves,

SIGNIFICATION D'ORDONNANCE

S. C. P.

SOMMATION DE DÉGUERPIR

HUISSIERS DE JUSTICE ASSOCIÉS
8, Av. du 8 Septembre
21202 BEAUNE
Tél. 22.12.92 et 22.06.44
B.P. 72
CCP Dijon 810-84 V

L'an mil neuf cent quatre vingt un

A : 1/ Monsieur M
en son nom personnel et en sa qualité de Secrétaire Général de l'union départementale C.G.T. [illegible] Bourse du Travail [illegible] DIJON
Bourse du Travail - 17 Rue du Transvaal - 21000 DIJON
où étant et parlant à la personne

2/ Monsieur B
en son nom personnel et en sa qualité de représentant syndical de la C.G.T. et de délégué du personnel.
à :

COPIE

SOCIÉTÉ CIVILE PROFESSIONNELLE
Gérard LIAUZU - Francois MINES
HUISSIERS DE JUSTICE ASSOCIÉS
3, rue du Petit-Potet
B.P. 1093 - 21020 DIJON CEDEX
Tél. (80) 30.16.47 - (80) 30.10.71
C.C.P. DIJON 7999.03 W

Par acte séparé.

3/ Monsieur B
en son nom personnel et en sa qualité de membre du Comité d'Etablissement
à :

Par acte séparé.

4/ Monsieur B
en son nom personnel et en sa qualité de membre du Comité d'Etablissement
à

Par acte séparé.

5/ Monsieur L
H.L.M. -

Par acte séparé.

6/ Monsieur J.

Par acte séparé.

7/ Monsieur L

Par acte séparé.

8/ Monsieur L

Par acte séparé.

A LA DEMANDE DE la SOCIETE S.A.
inscrite au Registre du Commerce de LYON sous le numéro 8.9
dont le siège social est à LYON (69) possédant des
établissements secondaires à registre du commerce de BEAUNE
73 92, , registre du commerce de GRAY 73 B 9, et
(Hauts de Seine), registre du commerce de NANTERRE 81 B 279
représentée par son Président Directeur Général en exercice, et
assistée de Maître S. demeurant à LYON, syndic à son règlement
judiciaire,

Elisant domicile en notre étude

La Société Civile Professionnelle "[illegible] Huissiers de Justice Associés", titulaire d'un Office d'Huissier de Justice près le Tribunal de Grande Instance de DIJON, dont le siège est 3, rue du [illegible] à DIJON, agissant par l'un d'eux soussigné.

1. "Notice to Quit," December 1981 (author's own document).

had put a lot into an "individualized follow-up" of those who had been made redundant, and was nurturing certain potential buyers behind the scenes) were so many elements which left little room for the striking factory occupants. In consequence, the latter steeled themselves to protect their "booty." They had not taken over the manager's headquarters for itself, but because it signified their refusal to see it remain empty. Up until the end of the winter, the militants steadfastly confronted the multinational company, Valeo, in order to secure a reversal of its decision and a means of re-engaging all those who had been made redundant. The union adopted a hard-line stance, which gradually led to the political isolation of its management, as well as to fragmentation among its adherents.

Nous vous SIGNIFIONS, en vous en remettant ci-joint copie :

- une ORDONNANCE rendue en matière de référé, par le Président du TRIBUNAL DE GRANDE INSTANCE DE DIJON, en date du 26 OCTOBRE 1981.

Nous vous recommandons de lire avec soin cette décision.

ET, EN VERTU DE CETTE ORDONNANCE, A MEME REQUETE ET ELECTION DE DOMICILE QUE DESSUS :

Nous vous SOMMONS D'AVOIR, dans le délai de VINGT QUATRE HEURES à compter de la date indiquée en tête des présentes,

A LIBERER de votre personne et de celle de tout occupant de votre chef, les lieux que vous occupez indûment, soit l'usine de la société requérante, sise à

TRES IMPORTANT

Vous pouvez interjeter APPEL de l'ordonnance de référé qui vous est signifiée, dans le délai de QUINZE JOURS à compter de la date indiquée en tête des présentes, par ministère d'avoué près la COUR D'APPEL de DIJON, qui devra accomplir les formalités nécessaires avant l'expiration dudit délai, QUI EST DE RIGUEUR.

Vous pouvez consulter sur ce point un Avocat et lui demander de vous assister devant la Cour.

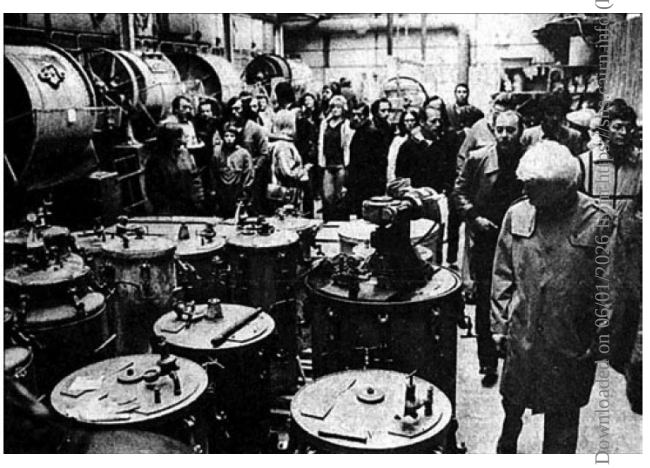
Nous vous rappelons cependant que l'auteur d'un recours abusif ou dilatoire peut être condamné à une amende civile et au paiement d'une indemnité à l'autre partie.

Si vous ne quittez pas les lieux dans le délai qui vous a été ci-dessus indiqué, vous pourrez y être contraints par tous les moyens prévus par la loi, et notamment par votre expulsion effective, avec assistance de la force publique si besoin est.

Le présent acte signifié, sauf le cas de "parlant à sa personne", sous enveloppe fermée ne portant au recto et verso que les mentions légales, suscription et cachet sur la fermeture du pli, par clerc assermenté dont les mentions seront visées sur minute conformément à la loi.
COUT : SAUF AUTRES DUS

S.C.P. G. LAUZU... Huissiers de Justice Associés

2. "The Bailiffs at Christmas Eve Supper," as the newspaper's headline ran on December 26, 1981 (photo P. Couturier, BP-LD).



3. October 1981: Factory visit after a meeting of trade unions and left-wing parties (photo: L. Rouet, BP-LD).

4. October 1981: The mayor speaking at a rally in the village square attended by the government parties (photo: D. Mandritch, *Le Progrès*).

As the months went by the occupation appeared progressively less legitimate. For certain nonmilitant workers, the support of the departmental section of the CGT was bad news: as the struggle was stepped up, it was externalized. Many abandoned the movement, finding fault with the presence in the local community of the outside trade unions responsible, who "know nothing about our situation," and yet "mastermind the strike from Dijon."[7] Apart from the weakening of the community bound together by the long months of the occupation,[8] the search for jobs became more and more individual (one of the militants of Portuguese origin actively involved on the "campus" finally decided to return home with his family in February). A project involving a partial resumption of activities began in February of 1982. Valeo and the authorities accompanied it with an individualized follow-up of each person who had been made redundant, including retraining and professional courses. Many sought employment by drawing on their contacts or by accepting offers from firms in the region selected by representatives. In addition, Valeo suggested a certain amount of retraining in its French factories.[9]

At the end of February, a referendum was organized in the town hall. Those who had been made redundant had to vote in favor of, or against, a project involving the creation of a business enterprise developed by SNF, a former Lyon branch of FL. In a final display of the power of the CGT, ninety-four out of the 153 voters followed the instructions put out by the trade union and voted against the project, which would only guarantee the employment of forty of those who had been made redundant. However, in the absence of other offers—and without doubt because of new instructions from urban branches of the CGT—eight days later the militants ended up by signing an agreement to approve the project.[10] The occupation ceased. SMF came into being in April, installed in one of the workshops belonging to the old factory. The swift installation in another disused workshop of a second SME supported by Valeo and employing thirty-five persons was also envisaged in the agreement (it would indeed be created in 1984, employing about twenty of the workers who had been made redundant in 1981).

■ Epilogue: Unavoidable Amnesia

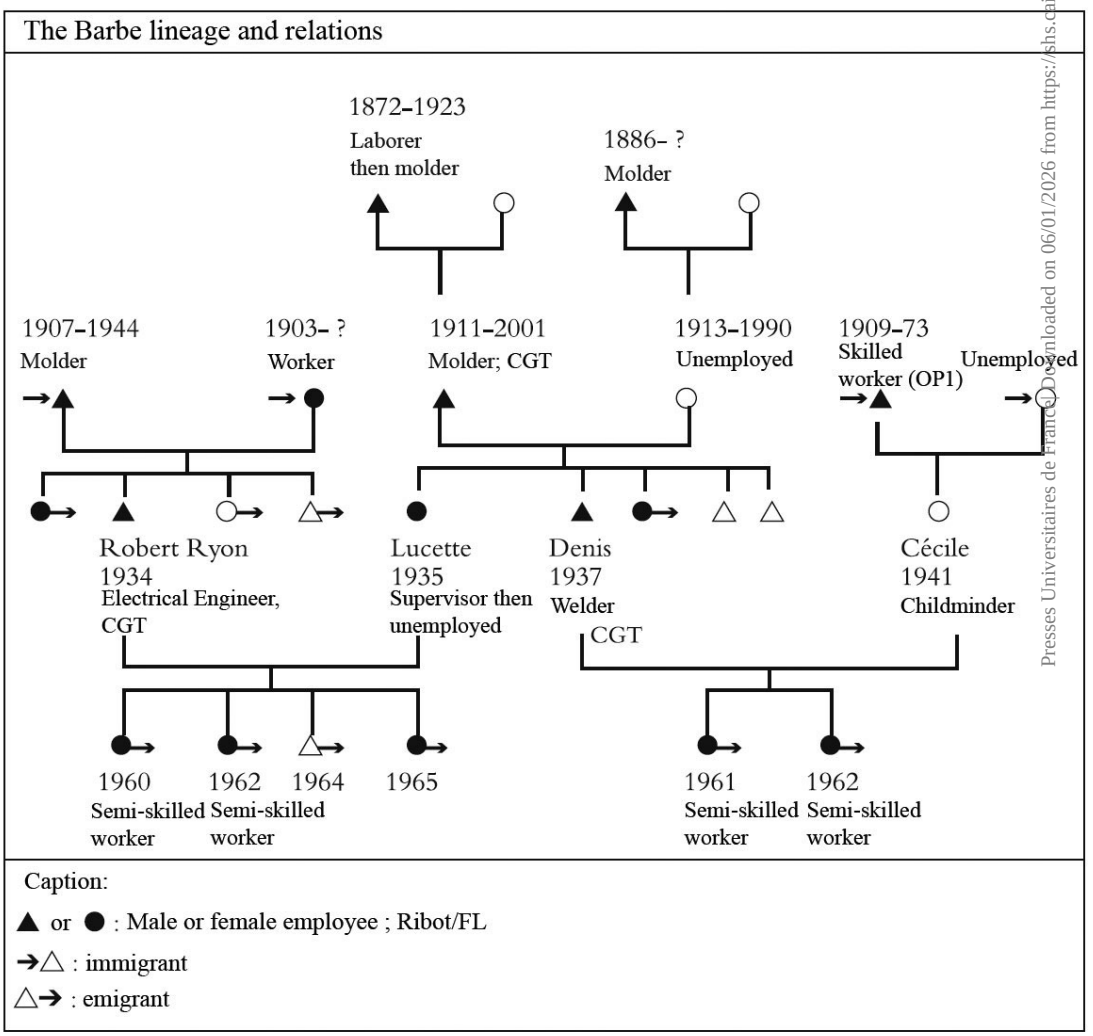
The director of SMF thus employed forty of the workers from FL who had been made redundant. Supervised by representatives from the personnel management department at Valeo, employment was conducted through individual interviews. Only Robert Ryon was taken on from

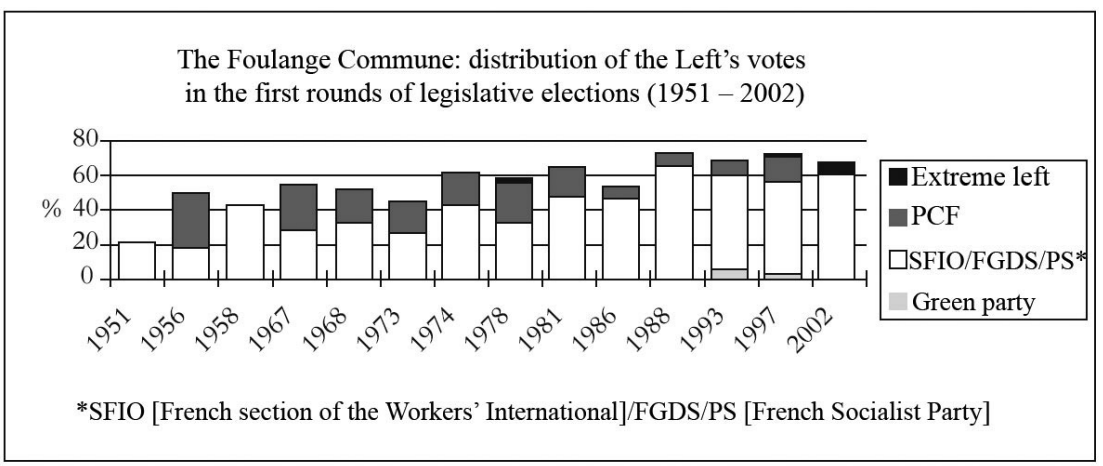
among the CGT militant occupiers of the "campus." His qualifications meant that he was the only one able to operate some of the machines. Moreover, during the factory occupation, it was he who had escorted the mediators of the conflict and potential buyers to the workshops (his brother-in-law, Denis, dealt with the media). However, according to the village doctor himself (a notable who had worked his way into the network of local dignitaries), the principal rubric implicit during the interviews was that "trade-unionists and alcoholics are excluded." The regulations were bent in the case of the employment of Robert Ryon, among other things to create an alibi concerning reneging on the agreement signed with the CGT, which stipulated that "that there would be no discrimination against personnel who had taken part in the occupation of the factory."

The end of the occupation spelt the demise of trade-unionist representation in village industry, since no trade-union section would be installed during the years which followed.[11] The means of mobilization used by the militants in 1981 did not have favorable results, but, more importantly, it ultimately put across an image of the village which the "survivors" of the employment crisis did not want for themselves. Recruited on the basis of skills associated with the use of a specific, "localized" tool, the workers who were re-employed, renewed their links with an intimate style of management, one which was familiar with every employee and his or her family problems and which would, in turn, look with a favorable eye on the employment of his or her children. As with the paternalistic Ribot era, the personalized nature of power relations underpins work relationships once more (Renahy 2001). In this sense, critics of the FL style of management during the seventies are at one with those who condemn the trade union "controlled" by its departmental section, adhering to a logic of social classes, which stand in opposition to one another, and preserve their anonymity. By chance, the militants from the "campus" positioned themselves against the logic of the indigenous population. The disappearance of the CGT stood in the way of the creation of any future memory of the occupation of 1981–1982. Through the factory occupation which it had led, the trade union became, in spite of itself, the institution which represented unemployment, symbolized by Denis Barbe who refused the training in the Paris region offered him by Valeo, remaining an unemployed worker from the former factory up until his retirement.

More than twenty years after these events, industrial employment in the town has more or less reached the same level as before the closure of 1981, thanks to the activities of the two SMEs which were installed on the site of the former FL factory. However, at SMF (a hundred employees), as in the auto-electrical business installed in 1984 (130 employees), the recruitment of village children is a minor occurrence, since the gradual resumption of employment was not accompanied by a demographic revival in the town. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, 20 percent of employees in the industry at Foulange live in towns in the locality (at a distance of at least twenty-five kilometers), and taken as a whole, two thirds do not live in the village[12] and do not frequent it outside of working hours. The settlement of the workforce characteristic of paternalistic industrial practices belongs to a remote and bygone past. More progressive times concerning the realignment of work relationships has succeeded the harsh times of the event described here. "Live and work in the locality" no longer makes sense today. Denis Barbe, whose two daughters moved to the Paris region for good after the occupation, is only too aware of this. However, if anyone enquires, he sticks to his own particular version of the truth: "Everyone thinks that it is the politicians who brought back the work, but it was us! If we hadn't occupied the factory, there wouldn't have been any." ■

Appendix





Notes

1. The names of the places, people, and institutions have been modified (with the exception of the Valeo Group, a company which is widespread enough throughout France to ensure that the use of its name does not enable the identification of the individuals whose story forms part of this article). The material used comes from a socioethnographic study carried out in this village from 1992 (with varying degrees of intensity), combining classic ethnographic methods (participant observations and interviews), sociohistorical methods (archives and oral history), and quantitative research (Renahy et al. 2003). As a result, a sociological thesis directed by Christian Topalov was realized (Renahy 1999).

2. *L'Express*, October 1981.

3. Jean Dupuis: "Afterwards there was the FO [Force Ouvrière; Workers' Force]. Then possibly the CFDT [Confédération française démocratique du travail; French Democratic Confederation of Labor], I'm not sure . . ." The establishment of these two unions have left few traces, oral or written. Although we came across former members of the CFDT, this was not the case for the FO. A press release from 1972 belonging to the latter makes its minority character very clear. In it, the FO condemns the "monopoly offered primarily to a trade-union organization overseen by persons of note." However, there is no archive material which is able to measure the levels of unionization among the factory employees.

4. When this paper was finished, number 171–172 of the journal *Études Rurales* [*Rural Studies*], entitled "Les 'petites Russies' des campagnes françaises" ["The 'little Russias' of the French Countryside], edited by Rose-Marie Lagrave, appeared in bookshops. It touches on similar questions, which are particularly relevant to the link between Communist militancy and rural notables. The analyses might have been included here, but, instead, we are taking the liberty of referring the reader to this impressive publication.

5. This reasoning concerning the transmission of family-based militancy is found also in the domain of politics. The village PCF [Parti communiste français; French Communist Party] cell, which was active up until the 1980s, had as its headquarters the home of a retired factory caster (also a hunter), on a different housing development from that inhabited by the Barbe family. Several of the ten children belonging to this retired worker were active members of this cell, while one son, who became a teacher in a neighboring school, is currently mayor of his municipality and regional councilor to the PCF. Unlike the "CGT relations," the "PCF relations" experienced some degree of social mobility (an exit from employment as manual workers for the majority of the siblings). Above and beyond the differences between party and trade union, they were both identified as being from the (rare) "red families" in the locality.

6. Source: minutes from the meeting of April 5, 1973 concerning the development of the company FL, municipal archives, unclassified.

7. Interview with a former assembly-line inspector, who joined the factory at seventeen and was forty-seven at the time of the closure. He was one of the first to be taken on again in 1982.

8. The handwritten notes of a trade-union departmental head confirm the "weariness," the "difficulties connected with '*libations*' (disputes and desertion of members of the picket line): how to occupy them?" and to the "rupture with the rest of the personnel" (source: Archives held by the Bourse de travail [Labor Exchange], Dijon, Foulange file). The CGT was in a progressive state of isolation as pamphlets distributed in January of 1982 demonstrate. In one, there is a call to "come and boost the defense of our factory," while another appeals to the recollection of the movement: "The occupation which we decided on together is an indispensable action to enable the factory to start up again with its entire staff."

9. In February 1982, twenty-one of the 169 who were registered as unemployed in the town in September, 1981, failed to sign on at the ANPE [Agence nationale pour l'emploi; National Employment Agency]. Three of these were unemployed workers close to retirement age and were no longer obliged to sign on and the others had found work which in general meant moving away from the village. Twenty-five other unemployed workers would leave the village during the remainder of 1982. Source: List of persons registered at the ANPE in the town of Foulange, town hall.

10. The agreement was signed by the representative of FL, the director of SMF, Denis Barbe and Robert Ryon on behalf of the CGT, the representative of the Ministry of Industry, and local politicians (mayor, deputy, and county councilor). It planned for a progressive increase in recruitment by SMF, envisaging thirty-five new employees with the creation of a second SME, "probably in the last quarter of 1982," as well as plans for the training of those who had been made redundant and were still unemployed. It engaged the signatories in a commitment to ensure "that there would be no discrimination against personnel who had taken part in the occupation of the factory" and that "retraining would result in stable employment." FL finally agreed to "bring technical assistance to the firms at their outset," while there is also a mention of financial aid provided by the authorities. With an occasional delay, all the points of the agreement would be respected with the exception of the lack of discrimination in terms of the employment of the militants who had occupied the factory and the promise of stable employment for all those who had been made redundant and had undergone training.

11. The swift and widespread demise of membership of the CGT may be discerned through the results relating to the trade union at the French industrial tribunal elections (the association of employees in industry). The trade union obtained 54 percent of the votes in 1982 (fifty-three votes among 103 voters and 124 registered voters) and 38 percent in 1987 (twenty-nine votes out of eighty-nine and 135 registered voters). As for abstention, it more than doubled (20 to 44 percent). Regarding the town, a look at the distribution of left-wing votes in the first round of legislative elections indicates that the Socialist vote was consistently in the majority in the town from 1958. This tendency was cemented after 1981 with the PCF [Communist Party] obtaining 25.5 percent of the vote in 1978 as opposed to 15 percent in 1981 and less than 8 percent in 1986 and 1988 (see diagram in the appendices).

12. In fact, it was exactly the opposite of a situation which was familiar up until the 1970s (two-thirds of the employees in the Ribot business lived in Foulange in 1971, with only 2 percent living further away than twenty kilometers). Source: industrial tribunal elections, town hall, Foulange. The consequences of this process are treated in detail in Renahy (2005).

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