

Summaries of articles

The Present : the Crisis (I)

From a Historical Analysis to an Outlook for the Future

R. BOYER and J. MISTRAL

This article begins by examining the concepts and methods that can be used to analyze the present crisis in a long-term historical perspective. Concepts discussed here include the accumulation system, institutional structures, and regulation. The crucial question then arises : can the present stagflation be cured within existing structures (in which case we are dealing with a "minor crisis")? Or, on the contrary, does the reorganization of these very structures represent the challenge of the 1980's ?

Current difficulties are interpreted here as the result of the postwar mode of development having reached its limits. Thus the crisis cannot be solved by restoring this mode. Quite to the contrary, the remedy to a "major crisis" presupposes a total change in the patterns of state intervention, particularly as regards the interplay of modes of public organization and market forces. As for technology, whatever its importance in long-term development, it cannot act as the deus ex machina that it is all too often expected to be. The effects of current technological change will therefore be largely contingent on the institutional structures and regulatory mechanisms that will eventually emerge from the crisis.

The Masters of the Law : a Study of the Dogmatic Function in the Industrial System

P. LEGENDRE

This article reappraises the dogmatic function, a social function related to biological and cultural reproduction and consequently to the reproduction of the industrial system itself. On the borderline of anthropology and of the history of law—applied to the West—this study takes a new look at the questions raised by psychoanalysis concerning the role of law in modern human behavior.

Opposite Trends :

Movements of Prices in Eighteenth Century Potosí

E. TANDETER and N. WACHTEL

The records of expenses of the Franciscan convent of Potosí allow us to observe the movement of prices for about forty products from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth. These series reveal the overlapping of several trends (maritime, South-American, regional, and local), which correspond to different economies whose currents converge in the Potosí market. Each of these economies presents autonomous traits, but together they demonstrate a clear tendency towards depression, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century. Study of the tithes of the La Plata Archbishopric suggests a correlation between a thirty year downward movement of grain and tuber prices (1760-1790) and a period of agricultural growth, this last being correlated as well with a demographic surge.

The Peasant and the Law in Eighteenth Century France

O. H. HUFTON

In preindustrial societies the absence of effective law enforcement agencies left much of the business of settling disputes and punishing crime to community and industrial initiative. Going to court was for many reasons, including the cost and effort, kept in reserve to deal with specific types of civil and criminal activity. This short study examines, by references to differing regional practise, how and when the 18th century peasant used the official mechanism of the law and when he chose or was forced to ignore it as inadequate to secure redress of his grievances. Such an approach sheds lights on that most tantalisingly obscure of issues, the hidden face of crime.

The Power of Farmers in the Villages of Artois (1770-1848)

J.-P. JESSENNE

Artois, a province situated on the borders of the Paris basin and the plain of Flanders, witnessed, between 1770 and 1848, the establishment of a system of local government characterized by farmer hegemony.

Cast in the mould of feudalism under which they both were the tenants of the lands and served as bailiffs or lord lieutenants, the farmers appeared as the recognized leaders of communities through the polls held from 1789 to 1792, in which they were chosen by a majority of voters. The attempts made by the Convention and later by the Directory to create a system of local government by the people failed. The Consulate, mostly by appointing farmers to majorships established a "farmocracy". A hierarchical group of leaders, running medium sized or big farms, this farmocracy achieved continuity because its members not only lived at the center of the web of village relationships, but also held the position of preferential mediators between the rural communities and the authorities above them.

The organization of powers ensured the stability of a complex social structure associating farmers leaning towards capitalism and various types of small producers, more or less independent. The exercise of power in the villages of Artois also accounts for some peculiar aspects of the political commitment of the peasantry in the present period.

Mobility and Permanence in Vendômois around 1800

J. VASSORT

What are the main features of mobility and permanence in a provincial society at the very end of the 18th century? In order to answer that question, a systematic comprehensive study of marriage certificates registered in Vendômois between "an VII" (1798) and "an XII" (1804) has been carried out and the various data (places, occupations, education. . .) thoroughly cross-referenced with the help of a computer. The picture emerging from this analysis is, for the most part, that of a steady community. It also reveals, mainly among men, a mobility, chiefly urban and exclusive of peasantry whose map points to standard migration flows. Matrimonial integration among these migrants can vary considerably and is on the whole in reverse ratio to the social consistency of the different classes (for instance, vine-growers, when they make up the mass of a community tend to be imprevius to external influences). The preeminence of the notion of consistency as well as its characteristics is one of the outstanding discoveries of our research. It must be noted that when they choose an occupation, sons tend to find agriculture a little less attractive than their fathers did (most of them, however, don't take another choice). As a rule, the same slow evolution can be traced between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law. A few rare instances, however, indicate that marriage seems to maintain with peasantry the very links which tend to die away when a non-agricultural activity is chosen.