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"La France aux Français!"
Displacing the Foreign Worker During the 1930s Depression

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Abstract

Unemployment in the 1930s was low in France by international standards, nevertheless there was a virulent drive to expel immigrant workers as a means of limiting domestic unemployment. This involved not only the repatriation of the foreign *chômeur*, but also legislation to displace the foreign worker from his workplace. This paper extends the current debate over the effectiveness of this strategy with the use of two archival datasets. The inability of the State to reach its immigrant employment targets is confirmed, but it is suggested that it was not that unemployed Frenchmen were not willing to take the unattractive jobs that immigrant held, but that employers were unwilling to substitute their foreign workers with their French unemployed equivalents that undermined this repatriation drive. One implication is that the repatriation of foreign workers that did take place compromised the economic recovery that would begin in 1936.

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> "We have committed ourselves to remedy a situation revealed by a comparison of two figures: 350,000 unemployed French workers on relief and 800,000 foreign workers with jobs"[1] (Edouard Herriot, Cabinet Committee for the Protection of French Labour)

The practice of blaming immigrants for unemployment is a common practice among politicians in times of economic (and political) difficulties, but rarely is it anything other than rhetoric. Governments seldom take any other action than to impose additional controls on the flow of immigration. But successive French governments in the 1930s, faced with unprecedented levels of unemployment, went further and 'attempted to flush immigrants out of the national economy no matter how long they had been working in France' (Cross, 1983, p.187).

Was this policy of exporting unemployment successful? Drawing on the most readily available source of information, the population censuses of 1931 and 1936, most commentators think not. Although the number of immigrants in employment fell by 400,000 between 1931 and 1936, it was, according to Singer-Kérel (1988, p.292) and Cross (1983, p.206), the unwillingness of Frenchmen to replace these immigrants in the harsh, unhealthy and badly-paid jobs that prevented this policy from being a solution to French unemployment.

This paper seeks to throw new light on this issue with the use of alternative and less aggregative datasets and to provide an alternative explanation for Herriot's failure to deliver on his 'commitment'. The two alternative sources of information are extracted from Ministry of the Interior files in the *Archives Nationales* in Paris. The first enables an employment series for foreign workers

[1] *Le Temps*, 21 November 1934.

to be constructed, which makes it possible to identify any contemporaneous link between the employment of immigrants and implementation of anti-immigrant government legislation. This cannot be identified within the quinquennial population censuses.

The second dataset provides information on the monthly employment levels of French and foreign workers within a sample of Parisian firms. While it cannot answer the crucial question of whether Frenchmen were being recruited to directly displace incumbent foreign workers, it can provide evidence on the extent to which Frenchmen were being hired at the same time that foreign workers were being dismissed at the level of the establishment. Evidence of opposing hiring/firing strategies for French and foreign workers can then be suggestive of industry's desire to support the government's measures to reduce immigrant employment and more specifically, Herriot's call for worker substitution.

It will be argued that the failure of the government's attempts to replace the foreign workers did not lie with the occupational snobbery of the unemployed Frenchmen, but with the preference that employers had for their existing foreign workers over the available French alternatives. To explain this further, the reasons for French industry's high dependency on foreign labour are explored in the next section. An outline of the anti-immigrant measures introduced in the interwar period is presented in section 2, while the main analysis of the effectiveness of the repatriation drive is contained in section 3. Concluding comments are offered in the final section.

1. The Post-War Need for Foreign Labour

The War was at its most destructive in Northeast France, the nation's industrial heartland. But

before the industrial base could be rebuilt, the lands had to be made habitable: over 1,000 towns had been completely destroyed and a further 3,500 war-damaged; in total 300,000 homes had to be rebuilt. The battlegrounds had to be cleared: over 200,000 miles of trenches had to be filled in and 230,000 miles of barbed wire had to be cut; the transport system also had to be re-established: 36,000 miles of roads, 600 miles of canals and 3,000 miles of railways lines were in need of repair (Mauco 1932, pp.89-90). With the introduction of the eight-hour day in 1919, the need for foreign labour became even more acute.

It was not only the industries of Northeast France that faced labour shortages. Oualid (1928, pp.1474-76) reports that in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais *départements* alone, 18,000 miners left the coal industry in 1919 for less "repellent" occupations.[2] With the industry already plagued by a shortage of French labour before the War, the only available source was foreign labour. The need for foreign labour was also evident to prevent the 'new' technology of the electrical and chemical industries becoming idle.

However, industry was not the only sector to suffer from the War. Indeed, agriculture suffered disproportionately: agricultural workers accounted for 51% of war losses, while accounting for only 45% of the working population; the respective figures for industrial workers are 20% of war losses as against 32% of the working population (Fontaine 1925, p.58). The labour shortage in the towns exacerbated this problem as the rural exodus accelerated in line with the rising urban-rural wage gap.[3]

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[2] Cross (1977, p.156) reports that these miners tended to flow into relatively high-paid jobs involved in the reconstruction of railroads and buildings in the war zones.

[3] The differential between the mean daily wage in industry and that in agricultural rose from 21% in 1911 to 32%

French post-war needs were not merely economic needs either. For a whole century prior to the First World War, France had been suffering demographically from a declining birth rate. Oualid (1928, p.1460) presents the following figures:

	1811-1820	1841-1850	1871-1880	1901-1910
Birth Rate (per 10,000 inhabitants)	318	274	254	206

The War merely accentuated this problem. From an average of 745,000 births per year in the period 1911-1914, this fell to an average of just 450,000 in the period 1915-1919 (Gide and Oualid 1931, p.98). The deficit (from trend) of 1.5 million births was on the same scale as the total number of French war losses.

The foreign labour that came to be introduced in the 1920s was therefore young.[4] The economic needs demanded prime age highly-productive workers for the arduous tasks of reconstruction[5] and

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in 1921. (*Bulletin du Ministère du Travail*, April-June 1922, p.177).

[4] From the 1921 population census, 55% of the foreign labour force was aged between 20 and 39 years; the respective percentage for the French labour force was only 44%.

[5] Oualid (1929, p.178) identifies that in September 1922, 57% of immigrants employed in the reconstruction industries were skilled workers. In many other industries also, immigrant workers were highly desirable to the employers. For the coalmining industry, Oualid (1929, p.180) summarises for the immigrants, and in particular the Poles, that 'after a period of adjustment…these workers quite reach the French standard as regards output. Certain mines in the South consider them superior [to the French], because they are more robust, methodological, and disciplined'. Georges (1924, p.396) went further and attributed the increased productivity in the mines to the intensive utilisation of foreign personnel. For wood-cutting, Letellier *et al* (1938, p.296) give the example of one year (not given) when the Italian government placed stringent controls on emigration. The result was that a great number of trees in the Savoie and Haute-Savoie *départements* were not cut down as it had proved impossible to find the French workers able to do the job. For the chemicals industry, Oualid (1929, p.183) describes the personal qualities of the Italians - sober, robust, and disciplined – as being ideal for the arduous type of work in this industry. Indeed, Armenjon and de Fonclare (1929, p.285) highlight the dependency of the industry upon the Italian labourers from Piedmont.

the demographic needs demanded prime age couples for their fecundity.[6]

2. Regulating the Foreign Worker

After the First World War there would be no return to the laissez-faire migration policies of the pre-war years when migration flows were principally from the border nations. The State would retain its wartime controls over immigration and use them whenever it deemed necessary. For example, Bunle (1943, pp.77-78) reports that in December 1918 the Ministry of the Interior repatriated *en masse* the 120,000 North African colonial workers introduced during the War.[7] This was only the first phase of a policy of selective immigration.

Three months later the government started a series of inter-ministerial conferences on foreign labour. Learning from the experiences during the War, they rejected further recruitment of colonised labour in favour of the European nationalities, or at least those that had been allied to France during the War. The result was a prioritising of the recruitment of foreign labour according to political considerations and professional aptitude. The Poles and the Italians were deemed the most desirable immigrants. Their collective recruitment would be organised by the State and the private organisation, the *Société Générale de l'Immigration.*

The organised recruitment of skilled workers and physically adept unskilled workers was to force

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[6] Compared to the French birth rate of 206 births per 10,000 inhabitants in 1901-1910, the Italian birth rate had been 299 per 10,000 and the Russian birth rate had been 409 per 10,000 (Oualid, 1928, p.1460). The higher birth rates of foreigners continued while they were residing in France: in mid-1920s, immigrants accounted for one-half of the net increase in the population (births over deaths), even though they comprised only one-fifteenth of the total population; in 1929, while there was a net increase in the foreign population, there was an even larger net *decrease* in the French population (Mauco, 1933, p.777).

[7] The Asian immigrants were also repatriated, though with less zealousness given the geographical distances

the government to react differently in times of economic slowdown as compared to the late nineteenth century. It was no longer sufficient to allow the free migration of border immigrants to counteract the pressures of the labour market, skilled workers had been obtained for reconstruction and it was imperative to keep them as long as there was a longer-term economic need. It would be the foreign worker who had entered France to work in agriculture, but had migrated to the towns,[8] who would bear the brunt of the administrative measures to control immigrant employment.[9]

However, during the economic contraction of 1927 the government went further than the customary practise of closing the border to workers attempting to enter without a valid permit and the re-placing of foreign workers in agriculture, they actively encouraged the unemployed foreigners to return to their home country. The railways companies were persuaded to offer half-price rail tickets for unemployed foreigners accepting repatriation. With the Ministry of Labour offering to pay the other half of the rail ticket, the practise of a free rail ride to the border had been set in motion. Recorded repatriations jumped by 85% in 1927.

The success of the organised recruitment of foreign workers and the limited measures adopted in the recessions of 1921 and 1927 yielded optimism among contemporary writers. "Immigration has brought to our labour market an exceptional flexibility" declared Mauco (1932, p.461). That flexibility was soon to be put under tremendous strain.

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involved: of the 100,000 introduced during the War, only 6,000 remained by January 1921.

[8] In 1927, there were 1,120,000 foreigners working in industry and 253,000 working in agriculture, but between 1918 and 1926 there had been 850,000 foreigners entering France to work in industry and 600,000 to work in agriculture (Bureau International du Travail, *Chronique Mensuelle des Migrations*, April 1928, pp.135-36).

[9] . By the law of 11 August 1926 'for the protection of National Labour', the employment of a foreign worker without a valid identity card was made illegal, as was the employment of a foreign worker in a profession other than that with which he obtained the identity card.

While the Depression had spread to most industrial countries by 1930, the first significant rise in unemployment was not to take place in France until the winter of 1931/32. Her relatively favourable employment situation thus encouraged many unemployed foreigners to cross the French border and seek employment. While only 21,500 foreigners had found jobs after irregular entry in 1928, this figure had risen to 44,000 in 1929 and to 70,000 in 1930 (Cross 1983, p.188).

The administrative measures of 1927 proved ineffective and the result was a second Law for the Protection of National Labour, adopted on 10 August 1932. It re-affirmed the Millerand Decrees of 1899 that set a quota of 10% on the amount of foreigners employed in the public sector, but it also extended the principle of the 10% quota to private industry. However, the quota would be set only if there was a petition from a labour or employer organisation calling for its introduction. Not surprisingly, very few employer organisations petitioned for quotas to be set. It was also the case that only a small number of unions petitioned for the introduction of quotas in their industries, and it is noticeable that no national union in heavy industry, where most of the foreign workers were concentrated, requested such a quota. The government was not ready to directly intervene in the employment practices of the private sector, so its impact was rather limited.

After a temporary economic upturn in 1933, unemployment rose strongly again from the winter of 1933/34. Political pressure mounted and with a more Right-wing government in office, foreigners were the obvious targets. In November 1934, the Cabinet Committee for the Protection of French Labour was established with the objectives of:

i) providing a closer surveillance of the borders;

ii) reducing, by a more rigorous application of the law of 10 August 1932, the number of immigrants employed in commerce, industry and agriculture.

This was a decisive break with the foreign worker policies of the past. Now the State was to directly intervene in the employment practices of the private sector. The Cabinet Committee for the Protection of French Labour decreed that all industries in which foreign workers comprised more than ten per cent of total employment had to submit a proposal for a quota. In comparison to the 72 quotas that had been set in the two years since the law of 10 August 1932, 170 quotas were introduced in the six months following November 1934 and 383 quotas were introduced in the next eighteen months (Bonnet 1976, p.303). The displacement of the foreign worker from his employment was initiated in a grand manner.

The resources available to the police to remove these displaced foreign workers were increased. For example, to encourage the repatriation of unemployed East Europeans, the Ministry of the Interior hired a transportation company, the *Union des Agences de Voyage*, to ship them to the frontiers of their home countries, as opposed to the previous practise of leaving them at the French border. The Ministry also demanded that the Prefects were more rigorous in expelling undesirable foreigners, reminding them that they could expel any immigrant, even those who had not violated a law.

In 1935, the number of repatriations jumped by two-thirds, though this was still some way below the heights of 1931-1932. Similarly, the number of recorded entries to France fell by 21% to its lowest level in the whole of the interwar period - one-thirteenth of the level they had been in 1930.

The five-year spiral in the regulation of the foreign worker would end with the election of the Popular Front. The legislation to displace the foreign worker from his employment had made the French immigrant policy unique. No other country would use such a policy as a concerted means of controlling unemployment in the 1930s. Its success is the subject of the next Section.

3. A Remedy for Unemployment?

There are two levels at which the policy of 'exporting' unemployment can operate. On the one hand, it may merely involve the repatriation of unemployed foreigners, thereby reducing the stock of unemployment by x, the number of repatriated foreigners formerly unemployed. This was the policy adopted in 1927 and the early 1930s. Alternatively, it may involve the forced displacement of foreign worker from their jobs into unemployment, a condition in which they are repatriated. The vacancies that now ensue may be filled by y unemployed French workers (the foreigners being repatriated), so unemployment is reduced by $x + y$. This was the principle behind the 1932 Law for the Protection of National Labour and its zealous application from 1934 to 1936; it is labelled a 'displace and replace' policy. This Section looks at these two different strategies in turn.

3.1. Displacing the Foreign Worker

As the first step in determining whether employers viewed French and foreign workers as substitutes or complements, their employment strategies with respect to both groups is examined. It has already been discussed how large sections of French industry and agriculture had to resort to the organised recruitment of foreign labour to alleviate the shortages in the domestic supply of labour. The foreign labour was brought in not to substitute the French labour, but to complement it.

It is the hiring, not the firing, of workers that is more important for a repatriation policy, though. Were foreign workers discriminated against in the ordering of lay-offs? If so, there would have been a greater pool of unemployed foreign labour susceptible to repatriation. If not, the active displacement of foreigners from their jobs would have had to have been a more central tenet of the State's foreign worker policy.

There is evidence of discrimination against foreigners very early in the interwar period. In response to the rise in unemployment in the immediate aftermath of the War, the Minister of Industrial Reconstruction ordered the dismissal of all the foreign workers in the State armaments factories, with the requirement that any laying-off of French workers should take place only after all foreigners had departed.[10]

While such a drastic approach was not repeated in the rest of the interwar period, prioritising lay-offs was a common feature during economic downturns. In November 1920, for example, it was reported that "in order to avoid the unemployment of Frenchmen with families, the management [of the metallurgical firms of Jarville] has laid off first of all the Moroccans, the non-resident foreigners, and the unmarried Frenchmen who were recently hired."[11] The Prefect for the Isère *département* reported in early January 1927 that the industrialists were preparing to prioritise their lay-offs onto their foreign workers and those workers who had previously worked in agriculture.[12] It was later reported in the *Journal Officiel* that the recommendations for the containment of unemployment within the Ministry of Labour circulars of November 1926 and January 1927 had been adopted

[10] *Bulletin du Ministère du Travail*, Partie Officielle, January-March 1919, p.13,16.
[11] *Bulletin du Marché du Travail*, Le Marché du Travail en Divers Départements, Meurthe-et-Moselle, 22-27 November 1920.

widely in 1927. Among the proposals adopted were the placement of the unemployed on public works programmes and the reduction of hours of work to reduce the lay-offs of personnel, *especially the French* [my italics].[13]

The practise was all the more prevalent during the economic crisis of the 1930s. Again the *départemental* Prefects were instructed to request their local firms limit lay-offs by reducing hours of work and lay-off their foreign workers ahead of their French counterparts.[14] The reported ordering of the lay-offs in the industrial firms of the Meurthe-et-Moselle *département* was typical: first of all, single foreign workers were laid off, then the elderly French workers, followed by married foreign workers and finally married French workers.[15]

The laying-off of elderly workers ahead of married foreign workers had been advocated by the Ministry of Labour as they were eligible for assistance from the Social Insurance Laws and so were not counted as unemployed. The importance of the distinction between the single and the married foreign worker can be illustrated by the example of the Municipal Council of Hirson which, in its session of 31 January 1931, decided that its foreign workers should be laid-off before its French workers, but that there should be a 'difference of treatment between the workers residing permanently with their families in France, as is the case with many Belgians, and the workers who live in canteens and have no intention of staying in France'.[16]

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[12] A.N. F^7 13525. Report of the Prefect for Isère, 3 January 1927.
[13] J.O., 30 March 1928, p.3652.
[14] A.N. F^7 13535, Report of the Prefect for Gard, January 1931; A.N. F^7 13548, Report of the Prefect for Meurthe-et-Moselle, June 1932.
[15] A.N. F^7 13538, Report of the Prefect for Meurthe-et-Moselle, January 1931. Many examples of this ordering of lay-offs are contained in the Reports until 1934.
[16] A.N. F^7 13528, Report of the Prefect for Aisne, March 1931. Reid (1993, pp.248-50) cites the examples of the metallurgical industries in the Lorraine and mining companies in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais which constructed

Figures from the population censuses confirm the desirability of the more stable, married foreign labour force: the number of single foreign and naturalised workers in employment fell by 32% between 1931 and 1936, whereas the reduction in the married foreign and naturalised workforce was only 23%.[17] If we disaggregate by sex, the importance of the marital status becomes very clear for the continuing employment of foreign male workers: the number of single foreign and naturalised male workers in employment fell by 37% between 1931 and 1936, whereas the reduction in the married foreign and naturalised male workforce was only 25%. There was little difference according to marital status for the continuing employment of foreign female workers.

Foreign workers were thus the first and the main casualties of the Depression. This was particularly true in the larger firms. Fridenson (1972, p.207) reports that of the 30% reduction in personnel in the Renault factories from May 1930 to February 1931, "the largest reduction had been carried out on the foreigners". Similarly, for the Pont-à-Mousson company in the Lorraine, Baudant (1980) reports that the proportion of foreigners on the payroll was reduced from 53% in 1930 to 34% in 1935.[18]

Information regarding the relative employment levels of foreign and French workers would be important in identifying the discrimination practised against the foreign worker. Apart from the

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housing, encouraging family immigration. The intention was to create a more stable labour force.

[17] The calculation is made on the foreign and naturalised workforce as families were more likely to apply to be naturalised rather than return to their original country in times of recession. Looking at the diminution of the foreign workforce only would have overestimated the degree to which immigrant families left France.

[18] Renault was by far the largest enterprise in France with over 30,000 employees in 1929, while the Pont-à-Mousson pipe manufacturers were in the next grouping of large employers with over 8,000 employees at its peak (Vinen, 1991, p.16).

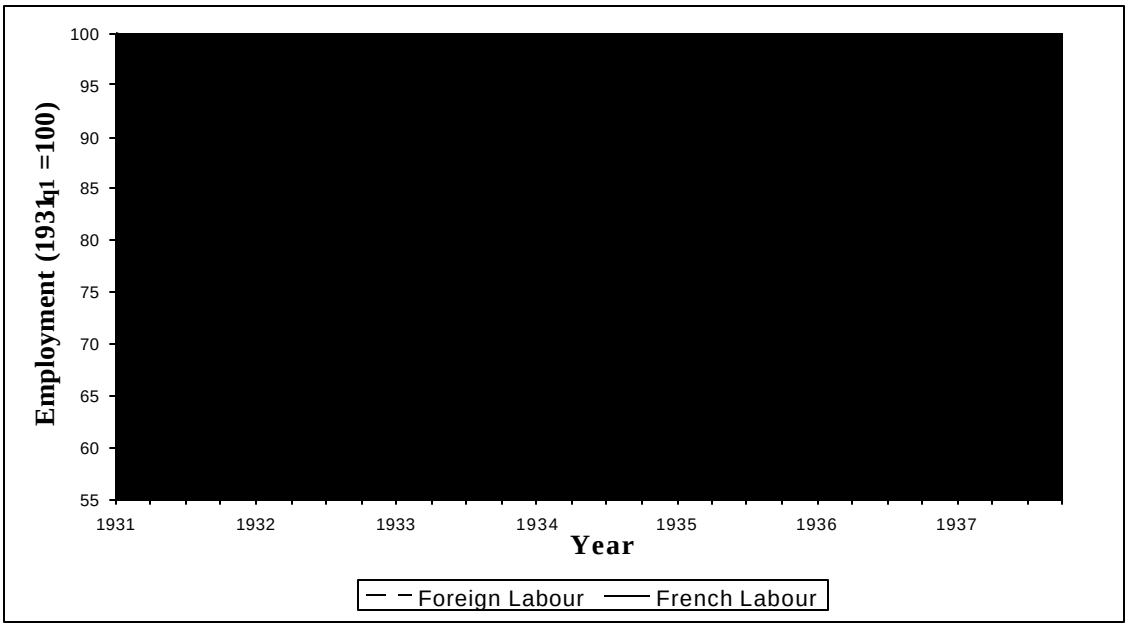
population census figures, no official statistics exist to satisfy this demand, but a partial answer can be found elsewhere. The requirement of the Prefects to record the number of employed foreign workers in their *département* in their monthly reports to the Ministry of the Interior enables us to construct an employment series for foreigners for the years that the reports are still available, 1931 to 1937.[19] With construction of the employment series for French workers possible by using the Labour Inspectors' monthly employment series for large firms (greater than 100 employees) to interpolate between the population census observations,[20] comparison can be made between the movements in employment of French and foreign workers. The two series are presented in Figure 1.

[19] Not all Prefects submitted their reports each month to the Ministry, so interpolation is necessary. However, using the series to predict the 1936 census figure from the 1931 census starting point provides a very accurate prediction - it underpredicts the actual value by just one per cent. It would appear to be a good indicator of the aggregate level of foreign worker employment in the 1930s. As such, any initial concern that the series would be biased as Prefects would under-record the number of foreign workers in their *département* to exaggerate the success of their anti-immigrant actions does not appear to be warranted.

[20] The Labour Inspectors' series is first applied to the 1931 census observation for total employment to gain a measure of the movement in total employment. Unfortunately, the employment pattern of the large firms was unrepresentative of the whole economy - the Labour Inspectors' series predicts a 21% reduction in employment between the two census dates when in fact in was only 10%. To adjust the series upwards accordingly it is assumed that the deviation between the two followed a linear trend. For the period after the 1936 census, if the linear trend in bias of the Labor Inspectors' series is continued, the calculated aggregate series strongly overestimates the growth in (annual) employment. The closest approximation to the 'true' growth in employment from 1936-1939 is achieved by applying the same linear trend growth post-March 1936, but in *reducing* the bias of the Labor Inspectors' series. In other words, the reduction in employment in the large firms was well above the economy-average during the depression, but by the same token their increase in employment outstripped that of the rest of the economy once the recovery began in 1936.

The description of the above calculation has sought to highlight the difficulties involved in blindly accepting the Labour Inspectors' series as representative of employment variation in the 1930s. Despite the use of an arbitrary assumption about the difference in the variations in employment of the large firms and of the economy as a whole, the above series is considered to be a far superior indicator of aggregate employment in the 1930s than that of the Labour Inspectors. Once this correction to the aggregate employment series is made, the series already obtained for foreigners is subtracted to yield the employment series for French workers.

Figure 1. Employment Levels of French and Foreign Workers, 1931-1937[21]



Sources: A.N. F[7] 13529-65; A.N. F[22] 668-675; *Bulletin du Marché du Travail*, 1931-1938.

It is clear that although foreigners may have been the first to be displaced within the workplaces, their French counterparts were not far behind. Indeed, a major deviance between the two series is not evident until the fourth quarter of 1931 when unemployment was beginning to rise very rapidly. Over the course of the whole decade, the employment levels of French and foreign workers appear to move together, so there is no direct evidence from Figure 1 that the reduction in the number of foreign workers did lead to an increase in employment of French workers. However, it is clear that the rate of discrimination – the ratio of the decline of foreign worker employment to that of the French worker – did rise continually during the course of the employment contraction.

Another source that may be able to address this issue is the population censuses of March 1931 and

[21] The series are indexed to simplify the figure. The starting values are 10,938,270 French workers and 1,230,160

March 1936. While these have the disadvantage of providing only snapshots in (relatively distant) time, the two dates are conveniently significant for this particular question: the first date coincides with the State's first tightening of the administrative regulations concerning immigration, while the latter date coincides with the pre-Popular Front peak of constriction of the immigrant. They thus provide a valid source of information on a before-and-after (the economic crisis) basis.

The change in the employment of French and foreign workers from 1931 to 1936 is shown in Table 1.[22] There is also a new measure: the replacement rate, which is defined as the ratio of the change in employment of foreign workers to the (negative) change in employment of foreign workers. It is a measure of the effectiveness of the second stage of the government's repatriation policy, the 'displacement and replacement' of foreign workers, where the discrimination rate applies only to the 'displacement' element.

The figures in Table 1 support those of Figure 1. The employment of foreigners and French nationals appears to have been positively correlated. There may have been a large degree of discrimination in employment of the foreign worker, but by March 1936 there is no indication he had not been replaced by his French counterpart.

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foreign workers in employment (census figures). The minimum values are 9,352,550 French workers 1935 (q1) and 738,096 foreign workers in 1934 (q3,q4).

[22] The figures in Table 1 are directly comparable to Table 25 in the much-cited "Immigrant Workers in Industrial France" by Gary Cross. However, there is one difference: Cross does not consider the white-collar worker to be within his definition of the 'Immigrant Worker'. True, only one immigrant wage-earner in eight was white-collar, but economically-speaking they were immigrant *workers* and so should be included in the analysis. In fact, the employment discrimination against white-collar foreign workers was higher than for their blue-collar counterparts: while the employment of white-collar French workers fell by just 0.7% between 1931 and 1936, the employment of white-collar foreign workers fell by 18%. As a result, Cross underestimates quite considerably the degree of discrimination of foreign labour: instead of a discrimination rate of 182% (a typographical error reports it as 87%),

It is noticeable that the degree of discrimination, and the size of the reduction in foreign employment, appears to be positively correlated with the share of foreigners within the industry's workforce. That is, the greater the foreign worker share of total industry employment in 1931, the greater the reduction of foreign personnel in the five years thereafter. This finding is consistent with the enforcement of the law of 10 August 1932 which introduced quotas on industries in which more than 10% of the workforce were foreigners. By the same token though, it is not possible to confirm that the lay-offs were particularly discriminatory in 1934-1935 when the quotas proliferated.[23] The need for disaggregated quarterly or monthly data is something to which we will return.

Table 1 estimates it to be 252%.

[23] Though with respect to miners, Reid (1985) and Escudier (1992) cite examples of the forced reductions in the employment of foreigners in 1934-1935 in the wake of the law of 10 August 1932.

Table 1. Change in Employment of French and Foreign Workers by Industry, 1931-1936

	Change French (%)	Change Foreign (%)	Discrimination Rate (%)	Replacement Rate (%)	Foreigner Share (1931)
Forestry, agriculture	-13	4		-34	7.1%
Mining, quarrying	-15	-39	162		38.3%
Foods	2	-29		6	8.9%
Chemicals	-7	-44	530		15.0%
Rubber, paper	-14	-44	210		11.0%
Printing	-8	-31	279		4.4%
Textiles	-24	-44	86		8.2%
Clothing	-15	-24	60		6.5%
Leather goods	-20	-36	78		9.2%
Glass, ceramics	-28	-55	99		22.2%
Metallurgy, metal work	-15	-53	243		14.5%
Construction	-25	-53	110		20.6%
Transport, goods handling	-13	-21	57		3.0%
Commerce, finance	-8	-23	191		4.7%
Domestic service	-7	-9	32		7.7%
TOTAL	-10	-34	252		10.1%

Sources: France, *Résultats Statistiques du Recensement de la Population*, vol.1, no.4, pp.63-65 (1931); vol.1, no.5, pp.116-23 (1931); vol.1, no.4, pp.65-67 (1936); vol.1, no.5, pp.116-23 (1936).

The other noticeable result from Table 1 is the substitution of French agricultural workers with foreign workers. The increased foreign agricultural labour force is consistent with the implementation of the government measures outlined earlier to return former agricultural workers to the land or face repatriation. It was through the increasing use of the identity card that such checks on the former agricultural workers could be made.

But what of the reduction in the number of French agricultural workers? This was not the rural exodus that had contributed to the chronic labour shortages in agriculture after the War, but rather an unwillingness to return. When the Ministry of Labour offered half-price transport for unemployment French persons wishing to return to their place of origin to take up a job in

agriculture, only 39 people took up the offer in the Seine *département* in 1935-1936 (Letellier *et al* 1938, p.317). Of those that did try agricultural work as an alternative to unemployment, many found that they could not adapt to the type of work and soon returned to the towns.[24]

With regard to the central question of the substitution of foreign labour by French labour, the only evidence is of a *negative* substitution in agriculture.[25] There is plenty of evidence of the excessive displacement of foreign workers, but as to the role that government measures played in achieving this, there is no concrete evidence, only inferences. The need for monthly disaggregated data is paramount to an appraisal of the repatriation policy.

One source that could meet these requirements is the reports of the Prefect of Police for the Seine *département* to the Minister of the Interior. In each monthly report, the Prefect included the results of a survey of the levels of employment and the hours of work in a number of Parisian firms. The results of these surveys, which began in February 1931, provide a final data source to be considered.

From January 1932 until the last of the reports in September 1937, the data on the number of workers employed in these firms was split into two categories: French and foreign workers. It can therefore provide a very useful insight into the relative movements of employment at the level of the

[24] The placement of the unemployed in agriculture was a policy strongly promoted in the Somme *département* at the start of the economic crisis. However, it was found to be no more than a very temporary solution as the unemployed did not stay very long on the farms. Of those placed in agriculture in the last four months of 1931, one-half had already been previously placed on the farms in the same way only to return to the towns, 'not knowing how to adapt to work on the farm.' (A.N. F[7] 13542, Report of the Prefect for Somme, September-December 1931).

[25] The growth of French employment in the food industry is considered too small to be significant.

firm and how they may have been affected by the legislation in force.

The sample to be used covers 54 firms in ten industries for the period January 1932 to September 1937.[26] Observations on a greater number of firms were available, but they were rejected for only covering part of the sample. Unfortunately, the sample itself is not complete - no records were found for the surveys of January-October 1935 and March-June 1936. There remain fifty-four time-series observations per firm.

To gauge the level of employment discrimination against foreign workers, the analysis is on the monthly turnover of personnel of each firm.[27] Ignoring the months in which there was no change in employment, the labour turnovers can be classified according to the schema below:

		Foreign Workers		
	Employment:	**Increase**	**No Change**	**Decrease**
French Workers	**Increase**	Neutral	Positive Discriminatory	Positive Displace and Replace
	No Change	Negative Discriminatory	x	Positive Discriminatory
	Decrease	Negative Displace and Replace	Negative Discriminatory	Neutral

[26] There were only nine designated industries in the surveys, but with the importance of the automobile industry in the Seine *département*, it is treated separately from the engineering industry within which it was originally presented. This is an important distinction to make as the five automobile firms represented nearly one-half of the total number of workers in this sample.

[27] For the analysis of this data source, labour turnover is measured by the difference between the level of employment in any given month and the level of employment in the previous month. It is therefore not a true measure of labour turnover as it is based on the stocks of employment, when turnover is a flow. As a result the term 'labour turnover' is applied in its most general sense.

If the Ministry of the Interior guidelines for limiting domestic unemployment by first laying-off the foreign workers were to be followed, a discriminatory labour turnover strategy would have been prevalent within industry. If the higher aims of the 10 August 1932 were to be further realised, a 'displace and replace' labour turnover strategy would have been the custom. Both strategies are labelled 'positive' as they are in line with the directives of government policy. Where the recorded turnover of labour is found to be contrary to that sought by the government, it is labelled as 'negative' to the government's policy.

The relative usage of each of the labour strategies by the industries concerned is presented in Table 2 for the period 1932-1937. The figures reject out of hand any suggestion that Parisian industry heeded the advice of the government and replaced even part of its foreign workforce with French workers. Even if the industry average figure of 11% of employment changes being of the requested 'displace and replace' nature is considered supportive, the fact that 7% of employment changes reversed this practise is proof that there was no organised drive to replace foreign workers with the unemployed French.

Table 2. Discrimination and Employment Turnover in Parisian Industry, 1932-1937

	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	
	'Displace and Replace'		Discriminatory		Neutral
Foods	16	6	23	24	32
Furniture	10	4	30	23	33
Construction	9	6	20	17	49
Leather Goods	7	6	30	34	23
Clothing	8	7	29	34	21
Paper, Printing	6	3	32	30	29
Automobiles	12	9	20	14	44
Mech. Engineering	9	6	34	21	30
Chemicals	18	10	25	24	22
Glass, Ceramics	15	16	18	23	28
All Industries	11	7	26	24	31

Note: The figures in the table above are percentages.
Sources: A.N. F^{7} 13550, 13557, 13562; A.N. F^{22} 671-675.

There is very little industry variation in turnover strategies either. However there is some consistency with the results of Table 1. The industries that display the largest *net* discrimination in labour turnover (columns 1 and 3 minus columns 2 and 4) - foods, furniture (included under the construction industry grouping), engineering in general and chemicals - displayed the largest discrimination rates in employment. The representativeness of the Parisian sample is supported by this parallel result, as is the similar finding that the degree of industry discrimination in employment turnover did correspond positively with industry unemployment differentials between foreigners and Frenchmen. In fact, for the clothing and leather goods industries, the *net* discrimination of labour turnovers is actually negative.

The results relate to labour turnover for the whole of the period 1932-1937 so it may be countered

that the discriminatory employment reductions of foreigners would have been strongest at the start of the economic crisis in 1931. The reports of the other Prefects to the Ministry of the Interior support this. "The foreign workers, having come to the end of their contract, have returned home by their own means" was commonly written in the reports of 1931.[28] Other workers were more forcibly repatriated at the end of their contracts.[29] But if the bulk of the foreign labour force susceptible to being 'displaced and replaced' had been displaced in 1931, the law of 21 June 1932 came at least a year too late, if it was needed at all. If the foreign labour force was approaching a state of 'incompressible mass' by the time the law had been passed, the results it would have achieved may have been at the expense of the industries themselves.[30]

To gauge whether the state of incompressible mass had been attained by 1932, the quarterly movement of labour turnovers, for all industries, is presented in Figure 2.[31] The labour turnovers deemed 'negative' and 'neutral' to the government's foreign worker policy are not displayed, only the 'positive' labour turnovers and the sum of their parts, the total share of discriminatory labour turnovers.

The practise of replacing foreign workers with French workers appears to have been declining throughout the 1930s, with the exception of the period from mid-1934 to late-1935. This would

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[28] See for example the reports of the Prefects for the Meurthe-et-Moselle and Rhône *départements* in 1931 (A.N. F^7 13538, 13541).

[29] See the Ministry of the Interior document *La Crise Économique et le Chômage* (5 February 1931) that surveys the initial results from the Prefects' reports or the later reports of the Prefects for the Meuse (3 December 1931) and Oise (30 October 1931) *départements* (A.N. F^7 13529, 13539, 13540).

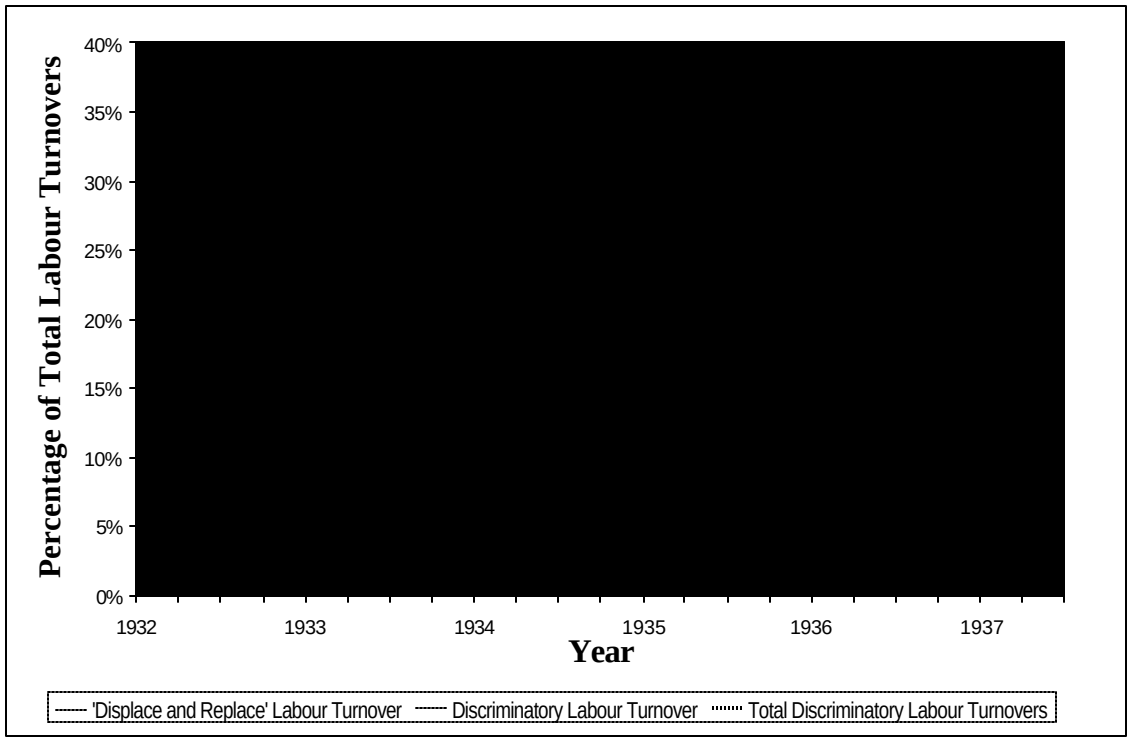
[30] With respect to mining in Decazeville, Reid (1985) reports the difficulties management faced in laying-off large numbers of foreign workers, "further layoffs of immigrant workers would have forced the dismissal of Frenchmen employed aboveground" (p.163).

[31] The use of quarterly, rather than monthly, observations reduces the problem of outliers and makes the trend movements in discriminatory labour turnovers easier to identify.

correspond well with the parliamentary moves towards the extension of the quota system from November 1934 onwards and a certain eagerness of the Prefect to pre-empt them. But the maximum of 16 per cent of all labour turnovers being of a 'displace and replace' nature is not particularly large, especially given the co-existence of compensating employment changes.

The practise of laying-off foreign workers without replacement seems to continue until 1933, so maybe the 'incompressible mass' had not already been achieved. It would appear that the prevalence of the two types of discriminatory labour turnover were moving in opposite directions in the pre-Popular Front era. The total proportion of employment changes that were of a discriminatory nature was thus reasonably constant (at about one-third of total employment changes) until 1936. This reasonably low percentage of total discriminatory labour turnovers supports the evidence from Table 1 that the *net* employment discrimination in practise in Parisian industry was rather small, and further, that it disappeared along with the conservative government in May 1936.

Figure 2. Discrimination in Labour Turnover in Parisian Industry, 1932-1937



Note: For ease of interpretation, rather than splicing the graph, a simple linear trend is fitted for the missing observations - this is represented by a dotted line within each of the series.
Sources: A.N. F^{7} 13550, 13557, 13562; A.N. F^{22} 671-675.

The evidence from the Parisian industry of the 1930s therefore rejects the notion that government legislation had much effect in private industry. It may have been successful in stopping the foreigner from entering France, but it was not successful in overriding the wishes of employers to retain their foreign workers. We shall return to this issue later, but it remains to see if the government was successful in repatriating the most economically vulnerable section of society, the unemployed foreigner.

3.2. A 1930s Export Drive: the Unemployed

If there had only been limited dismissal of foreign workers for the purposes of replacing them with French workers, it is still important to assess the degree to which those foreign workers laid-off

during the normal course of the Depression were removed from French territory and thus from the unemployment register.

It has already been noted that the recorded level of repatriations was twice as high in 1931 and 1932 as in normal years, and that a smaller but significant jump in the number of repatriations took place in 1935. The 1930s were therefore not a period of sustained repatriations. Again, the question of an incompressible mass is important and is something to be discussed again later.

Given the dates of the repatriation drives in the 1930s, the population censuses appear ideally suited to another 'before-and-after' analysis. In March 1931, the number of foreigners in employment was 1,230,160. In March 1936, that figure had fallen to 813,044, a reduction of one-third of the original workforce, though the number of unemployed foreigner increased by only 39,742. If we now look at the monthly government statistics for the net outflow of controlled foreign labour between these two dates, we find that 261,616 of these displaced workers were repatriated, thus leaving a shortfall of 115,758 workers. Part of this residual can be explained by the increase in naturalised foreigners: the employment of naturalised foreigners increased by 40,786 between 1931 and 1936. The remaining 74,972 former workers, assuming that entries and exits from employment due to demographic factors cancelled each other out, were foreigners who returned to their original country by their own means.

Therefore, of the foreign workers who had lost their job by March 1936, over sixty percent were officially repatriated and one-sixth returned unofficially to their home country to try to find employment there. Of those foreigners working in March 1931, but not in March 1936, only one in

five remained in France and over half of these did so because they gained French citizenship.

Would it be correct to view the figure of 261,616 repatriated foreign ex-workers as an indicator of the effectiveness of the government's attempts to export the unemployed? It is not so simple, of those that had been made unemployed a significant proportion of them would have left the labour market anyway - the discouraged worker effect, but with an international dimension. Instead of returning to their homeland by their own means, they may have taken up the offer of a free train ticket, particularly as the convoys began in the 1930s to travel to the country of origin rather than just the French border.

If the rise in the number of foreigners unemployed in the 1936 census accounted for only 9.5% of the fall in employment of foreign workers between the 1931 and 1936 censuses, the figure was far from one hundred per cent for French workers: 35.3%. Hence almost two-thirds of the French workers who were no longer in employment in March 1936 had left the labour market. This is a fact to which Scot (1988) has drawn attention, in particular the significant withdrawal of women from the labour market. If we were to hypothesise that a similar percentage of the foreign labour force would have left the (French) labour market via this 'discouraged' worker effect; the State repatriation of the unemployed foreigners would only have reduced unemployment by 25.8% (35.3%-9.5%) of those foreigners no longer in employment. Hence, an extra 107,404 foreign workers would have been unemployed in France in March 1936 had they not been repatriated. This figure is considerably less than half the number actually repatriated and would suggest that the five-year

programme of repatriation was a particularly expensive means of achieving such a small result.[32]

With regard to the proportion of foreign workers remaining in the labour market it may be expected to be higher than the 35.3% assumed given the difficulties and costs involved in migration; alternatively it may be expected to be lower given that most foreign workers were on one- or two-year work contracts and so there was always an expectancy to return home at some stage, plus there was the alternative labour market available for the unemployed foreigner, something that was not so readily available to the unemployed French worker. But the exact value of an arbitrary 'discouraged worker rate' is unimportant as the above calculations are not intended to give a definitive estimate of the level of unemployment in the counterfactual of no repatriation drive, they merely serve to highlight the limited effect of the repatriations upon unemployment.

4. A Longer-Term View

The majority of this paper has dealt with French attempts to regulate and repatriate the foreign worker in the 1930s. In the sphere of migration flows there is no doubting the ability of the government to strongly curtail the number of entries to France when necessary and this was done in the 1920s and the 1930s. The significance of the policies of the 1930s lies with the organised repatriation of foreign workers and the legislative attempts to affect the employment of foreigners in private industry. The 1930s have therefore commanded the greater attention.

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[32] The inefficiencies and the expense of removing foreigners from French territory is also highlighted by Mauco (1936, pp.191-92). He cites the example of the Marseilles court of summary jurisdiction which in 1931 'inflicted on aliens a total of 140 years imprisonment, the costs of which was estimated to be at about 500,000 francs. An Italian and a Bulgarian had already each cost the State 28,000 francs; one of them had been convicted 29 times for refusal to obey an expulsion order and had been condemned to a total of 10 years' imprisonment for this office.'

It has been shown that a very high proportion of the unemployed immigrant workers left the French labour market and very probably France as well. The effectiveness of the continued attempts to repatriate these workers has been questioned. Officially over a quarter of a million people were repatriated, though many more did leave by their own resources. It is open to question what proportion of this quarter of a million would have left the country anyway.

However, it was not on the question of the effectiveness of repatriation that the foreign worker policy came into difficulties. Admittedly, the application of the legislative measures was rather liberal and the period of actual constriction of the foreign worker by the public authorities lasted less than two years. But the Prefects had been instructed to request firms to discriminate against foreign workers from the beginning of the economic crisis and the existence of the law of 10 August 1932 enabled the most zealous local Prefects to carry out their purges of foreign workers. As a result the employment of foreigners fell by more than fifty per cent between the two censuses in a number of *départements* without any significant effect upon unemployment. But in the main, after the initial mass shedding of labour at the start of the economic crisis, employers held onto their foreign workers.

The reasons for this lie not just in the skill levels of the foreign workers but also their aptitude for heavy work. As highlighted in Syme (1997, pp.61-87) and by Mauco (1936, pp.187-88), the European immigrants largely formed an indispensable and very productive section of the workforce even if they were technically unskilled workers.[33] The reduction of this section of the workforce

[33] The National Economic Council also differentiated between the Europeans and the North Africans in their prescriptions for a 'partial remedy for unemployment'. The Europeans were to be encouraged to remain and to work in agriculture, but there was no such accommodating attitude to the North Africans, 'who had brought

would have had negative effects on the employment of other dependent workers.

This is all the more true if the foreign workers were skilled. Escudier (1992, p.202) reports that in the mines, 55% of foreign workers were skilled as against only 35% of French workers. As outlined in Syme (1997, pp.73, 85-86), the construction industry was also particularly dependent upon skilled foreign workers. The importance of foreign workers to the employer is illustrated by Letellier *et al*'s (1941, pp.260-65) finding that for the unemployed foreign worker, he had had longer job tenure and a higher wage than the corresponding unemployed French worker.[34]

It should not be surprising therefore to find that employers were reluctant to replace their foreign workforce with the less-skilled French unemployed. Without the active support of the employers, the policy of repatriation of foreign workers as a cure for domestic unemployment could never be anything more than only a partial success.

The long-term effect of the discriminatory laying-off of foreign workers and their return to their country of origin was to impose a supply constraint on the French economy when the recovery began, the very same supply constraint that had necessitated the influx of two million foreign workers

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upon themselves through their living conditions, not only grave dangers to their hygiene, but through the spread of tuberculosis, dangers to the hygiene of the local population and to their families when they returned.' (J.O. Doc. Admin., 26 February 1931, pp.149-58. Conseil National Économique, *Mesures Susceptibles de Parer Eventuellement à la Crise de Chômage*).

[34] As Oualid (1929, p.180) and Mauco (1933, p.782) outline, the recruitment of foreign labour involved an initial period of re-training to the specific tasks of work in French industry, which may have been different to those in their home country. This period was also one in which attempts were made to reduce the language barrier. Given these high initial firm-specific costs of employment, any labour economics textbook would state that the employer would seek to hold onto that labour as long as possible in order to regain those initial costs of employment.

in the 1920s.[35] The demographic problem had not been overcome,[36] and the 1.5 million births that had been lost during the First World War had become 1.5 million workers that had been lost for the recovery of the economy in 1936/1937.

Demographically, the substitutes for the repatriated foreign workers did not exist. Economically, the skills of the unemployed French workers were no match for those of many of the foreign workers repatriated or for those required by industry. In short, the short run gains of the repatriation policy were limited, but the long-term effects were not.

[35] Wolfe (1969, p.172) also argues that the elimination of foreigners from French territory would have produced an additional brake on recovery: the shrinking of aggregate demand.

[36] The number of births fell from 816,000 in 1920 to 587,000 in 1938 (Tapinos, 1991, p.99). This was no doubt also a consequence of the collapse in the birth rate during the War.

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