



Review of The Transition to Capitalism in modern France

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The Transition to Capitalism in modern France

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Xavier Lafrance is a professor of political science at Université du Québec à Montréal. In addition, Stephen Miller is professor of history at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. In their book, Lafrance and Miller examine the fact that prior to 1960, the French economy did not do as well as the economies of some other European countries. Lafrance and Miller counter some other economic historians who maintain the French economy was as strong as other European countries.

The transition to capitalism in France started in 1860s (p. 14). In the feudal era in France, agriculture was on a non-capitalist path (p. 17). Only in the last part of the nineteenth century, did France have capitalist development (p. 90). Lafrance and Miller maintain that France developed capitalism later than some other European countries. Through the time period of the 1920s, in France, economic development accelerated through the transformation was “patchy and incomplete” (p. 123). There is conclusive evidence that French agriculture did not undergo any great transformation until in the late 1950s (p. 126). During the beginning of the 1950s, household farms and villages across France produced “grains and livestock for local needs” (p. 141). Latter agricultural production provided crops and livestock provided goods to places beyond the household farms and villages. This was achieved by technicians who oversaw “the flows of capital” (p. 141). The year 1931 is the first year when the urban population in France exceeded the rural population (p. 150). Germany had urbanized sooner (P. 150).

After World War II, a plan, implemented by the United States, provided assistance to some European countries, including France. Conditions necessary for U.S. aid to France were

conditional “strict accountability” (p. 170). This and the Marshall Plan were key to economic development of France after World War II (p. 170).

A major event prior to the end of World War II, was the French Revolution (p. 189). The French Revolution entrenched artisan customs and peasant property (p. 189). In present times, workers have the ability to band together and voice some support towards more socialism (p. 195).

One measurement of the impact of France becoming a more capitalist country is by GDP measured in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Recently, where does the French economy place in term of comparisons to other European nations? The French economy’s size, places is third behind the German economy and United Kingdom economy.

To strengthen the reader’s understanding certain points, the authors sometimes employ a useful method. Facts are presented for a particular issue in different ways. Sometimes they use detailed statistics to emphasize a particular point, for France to develop capitalism. Comparison to Germany and the United Kingdom are developed throughout the book.

This book has a large amount of citations. Thus, it can greatly help scholars of French economic history. This book is essential to any scholar’s understanding of how capitalism evolved in France.