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Political Altruism and the Solidarity Movement

An Introduction

Florence Passy

> Altruism is not . . . an agreeable ornament to social life, but it will forever be its
> fundamental basis. How can we really dispense with it?
> —Emile Durkheim

Eva is dressing to get out in this windy winter night. Like every Wednesday, she is meeting with the other committee members of the Elisa Network. This meeting promises to go on for a long time. They must decide if they have enough resources to join other organizations that help refugees and asylum seekers in order to organize a common campaign against the new law on the status of refugees adopted by the Swiss government. They must discuss several difficult cases of deportation of asylum seekers, and one of these cases is under Eva's responsibility. Finally, they must elect a new directing committee of the organization for the coming year. Eva is worried. She has spent the whole week running from one government office to another, meeting many people to get advice, spending hours with the organization's lawyer in order to find a solution for Azis, a young Algerian who asked for political asylum in Switzerland. The federal office in charge of asylum has just denied giving him refugee status. Algeria is not deemed to be a dangerous country that violates human rights. Therefore, Azis cannot prove that he was a victim of violent aggression in his country, where a civil war has already killed thousands of people. Azis is not a journalist, nor a member of a human rights organization; he is simply a bricklayer who, one day, voiced too loudly his

opinion about his country, about violence, about repression. After numerous anonymous threats and a physical attack on his way home from work, he decided to run away and look for asylum in a European country. Once he arrived in Switzerland, one of his compatriots gave him the address of the Elisa Network in case he had troubles with the Swiss administration—which happened. Eva, a thirty-year-old high school teacher, is his only legal support. She is used to this type of situation. Since she decided to join the Elisa Network ten years ago, she has seen hundreds of such situations.

Eva is not the only one who is deeply involved in this political struggle; hundreds of activists are engaged in defending the interests, rights, and identities of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrant workers all over Europe. One of Germany's largest protest marches after the country's reunification in 1989 addressed this issue. In the late 1980s, Germany witnessed a worrisome wave of violent attacks against foreigners, with refugee centers burned out, Turkish and Afghan shops destroyed, and immigrants physically threatened. Hoyerswerda and Rostock were on the front page of newspapers, but many other German cities faced the same rise of racist attacks. In fall of 1992, 300,000 people went into the streets of Berlin to protest the rise of racism in the country. Some of them were similar to Eva; others were certainly less involved than she. But all shared the same outrage for what was going on.

Switzerland is not the only place in the world to host immigrants, of course, although with nearly one-fifth of the population being made up of foreigners, Switzerland has one of the world's highest shares of non-national citizens. Other countries are in a similar situation: France, for example, with the fight for the regularization of the *sans-papiers*; Italy, with the influx of illegal immigrants from Albania, Kosovo, and Turkey, who join the Italian coast through the Adriatic Sea along with those entering from the southern coast of the Mediterranean coming from Algeria and Tunisia; Austria, with particularly high levels of anti-immigrant sentiment; Belgium, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain—in short, virtually all European countries are faced with the "hot" issue of migration. While governments generally try to implement increasingly restrictive immigration laws, many European citizens feel threatened by these newcomers and are participating in a new wave of racism and xenophobia. Many other Europeans like Eva organize campaigns against such restrictions, fighting discrimination against immigrants in their host society, offering them legal as well as material support, and mobilizing to claim political, social, and cultural rights for foreigners.

Not all these people are politically engaged to defend the interests, rights, and identities of immigrants. Some are involved in human rights organizations that seek state protection for people whose fundamental rights are violated, while others are working on behalf of the populations of the so-called Third World, asking for education, health care, and more generally, a better human development of these populations. We all still have in mind the more than a decade-long international campaign against apartheid in South Africa;

the large mobilizations in support of new political regimes in Central America; the support given by many people and organizations to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, who were—and still are—looking for their daughters and sons who disappeared during the military regime; the public campaigns aimed to raise money for the victims of famines in sub-Saharan Africa; the wave of protest in many Western countries against the repression by the Chinese authorities of the student movement on Tienanmen Square; or the international campaign promoted by Third World organizations to stop the production of landmines. These are all well-known cases, but thousands of similar actions have been carried out all over Europe and North America.

Altruism takes on a political and collective form with the emergence of the *solidarity movement*. Individuals who are involved in this movement defend the interests, rights, and identities of others. We have given above some examples of those aided: asylum seekers, political refugees, immigrant workers, peoples whose human rights are being infringed, victims of racist acts or sentiments, and populations of Third World countries. The acts of political mobilization by those in the movement do not serve their own interests. These individuals do not stand to benefit directly from their participation in contentious collective action. These militants have been defined by McCarthy and Zald (1977) as "conscience constituents." In contrast, participants in labor, civil rights, gay, women's, ecology, and antinuclear movements—only to mention a few examples—obtain from their actions new collective goods or at least prevent new "collective bads," to the extent, of course, that mobilization is successful. Unlike these individuals, when Eva joins the Elisa Network committee on Wednesday, when she takes part in public demonstrations to protest restrictive immigration measures, when she collects money for a new campaign denouncing police violence against asylum seekers who are registering at the country's borders, she does not benefit from the substantial outcomes of her actions. In this sense, the solidarity movement may be seen as an instance of *political altruism*. But is it really so? Is this movement a genuine political expression of altruism? And, as a corollary, does the solidarity movement, which is potentially distinct from other types of contentious collective action, follow its own specific logic of mobilization? If this is the case, how is the solidarity movement distinct from other movements whose members received directly the benefits of their involvement? These are the central questions that lie at the heart of this book and that pervade all the following chapters.

Political Altruism: A Definition

Before we discuss these questions in more detail, it is worthwhile to better define the notion of political altruism. In fact, there hardly is a consensual definition of altruism. Authors from different fields define it differently. Nevertheless, definitions given by psychologists—which are as numerous as the authors who have written on this topic—emphasize two peculiarities of altruism that are relevant for our purpose: its intentional-oriented character and the actors' costs/benefits balance (Piliavin and Charng 1990). While the latter characteristic has gained a large consensus in the literature, the former characteristic has been emphasized by motivational approaches. Contrary to behaviorist approaches, which define altruism as "social behavior carried out to achieve positive outcomes for another rather than for the self" (Rushton 1980, 8)—that is, they stress what individuals do regardless of their motivations—motivational approaches define altruism as "a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare" (Baston and Shaw 1991, 108). This perspective brings important elements to the definition of altruism by viewing it as a rational behavior. Thus altruism becomes a motivated individual act which stems from intentions. In this tradition, Bar-Tal (1985-86) provides a definition of altruism based on five characteristics of this human behavior: "altruistic behavior (a) must benefit to other persons, (b) must be performed voluntarily, (c) must be performed intentionally, (d) the benefit must be the goal by itself, and (e) must be performed without expecting any external reward" (5). The acts of Eva may be described, at first glance, as altruistic. She is acting on behalf of other people; her actions are not performed under constraints; she is doing it voluntarily; she is well aware of the meaning of what she is doing; her actions are rational and have a clear aim; and finally, she is not expecting any material rewards from her engagement. In brief, Eva's behavior on behalf of asylum seekers and political refugees has two characteristics: it is performed intentionally, and entails costs for herself and benefits for others. From the *individual* point of view, Eva's acts have a clear altruistic aim. From the *collective* point of view, her actions, together with those of hundreds of other people mobilizing for the same political goals—i.e., claiming rights for immigrants, for Third World populations, for people whose fundamental rights have been infringed—can be seen as *political altruism*. More precisely, political altruism we define as all actions (a) performed collectively, (b) that have a political aim and (c) an altruistic orientation as defined by Bar-Tal above. Thus, political altruism is a form of behavior based on acts performed by a group or/and on behalf of a group, and not aimed to meet individual interests; it is directed at a political goal of social change or the redefinition of power relations; and individuals involved in this type of social change do not stand to benefit directly from the success deriving from the accomplishment of those goals. Following this definition, the actions performed by the solidarity movement can be characterized as

political altruism. Participants in the solidarity movement act collectively with a clear political aim, and their actions are pursued to the benefit of other people.

Is the contemporary solidarity movement the only example of political altruism within the Western world? Certainly not. In late nineteenth-century England, for example, there were strikes in support of African slaves working in the cotton fields in the American South. African slaves were fighting for freedom, facing a hostile social and economic order that seemed to be fixed forever. They engaged in a long and costly struggle to abolish slavery in the "country of freedom." They received political support from northern enlightened political elites, who understood that the slavery system was no longer humanly and economically viable, but also from English textile workers. Despite their hard living conditions, the latter went on strike to support the struggle of thousands of slaves in the United States. Another relevant example of political altruism took place during the Spanish civil war. Socialist activists from all over Europe enlisted in militias to fight against Franco's regime and in favor of socialism and freedom in this southern corner of Europe. Most of them were enrolled in their homeland by their comrades, as they used to call them, and traveled to Spain by bus, train, or foot to bolster their Spanish comrades, an extremely risky enterprise in which many lost their lives.

Less risky and more recent instances of altruism can observed in what Wuthnow (1991) calls "acts of compassion." According to this author, 45 percent of the adult population in the United States and almost as many in Europe are engaged in voluntary associations to help other people: drug addicts, battered women, handicapped persons, elderly, ill people, homeless, unemployed, and others.[1] The voluntary sector—i.e., the third sector, located between the market and the state, and made up of nonprofit associations—in Europe and North America is as varied as human troubles. Is supplying assistance to the disadvantaged a form of political altruism? This is less clear. Political altruism, as we define it, has three main features: actions pursued collectively, with a clear political goal of social change, and whose outcomes are to benefit others. The nonprofit sector displays the first and the last feature. Assistance to the disadvantaged is organized collectively, usually within formal organizations whose actions should benefit third parties. However, to have an explicit political aim is a necessary condition for characterizing collective action as political altruism. This does not mean that volunteering is an aimless enterprise, only that it generally does not have a political aim. Nor does it mean that the voluntary sector does not fulfill a political role in the modern society. As Tocqueville (1956) pointed out many years ago, voluntary associations are a key feature of a strong democracy.[2] Yet, they usually do not engage in political claim-making, nor in social change.[3] Nonprofit organizations provide social help to the disadvantaged, to the "underclass," a task that is not—or not sufficiently—fulfilled by the state, but they are not

striving collectively for political changes and are not endorsing a political issue. In other words, they are not involved in a political conflict.

   In his groundbreaking book on parties, Rokkan (1970) has shown how these political organizations have built upon preexisting cultural and social cleavages.[4] Once these cultural and social dividing lines are politically framed by collective actors such as parties, interest groups, and social movements, they become political cleavages (Bartolini and Mair 1990). Rokkan stresses five cleavages around which European political parties are structured. These cleavages provide collective actors with social and cultural resources upon which they anchor their claims. Political cleavages are distinct from one another; they have their own coherence and homogeneity (thus providing political actors who are mobilizing around these conflicting lines with a coherent ideological framework); and they are usually supported by specific social categories. The nonprofit sector does not have such underlying political cleavages. On the contrary, it is very heterogeneous and mobilizes a variety of social strata with no coherent ideological framework. Actions coming out of the voluntary sector are not built upon a political cleavage; they are "acts of compassion" which, most of the time, are a palliative to the lack of state intervention.

   By contrast, actions carried out by the solidarity movement can be characterized as political altruism: collective actions performed on behalf of other people and built upon a specific political cleavage. Next we turn to the principal features of the solidarity movement. A brief look at its historical, cultural, social, and political anchoring will allow us to unveil its peculiarities. At the same time, this will also highlight the political cleavage upon which its mobilization is based.

From the Old to the New Solidarity Movement: Cultural Resources and Political Cleavages

The solidarity movement builds upon specific cultural and symbolic resources. Human rights violations form the main grievance that underlies its mobilization. As we know from the literature on social movements, grievances and structural social conflicts are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of contentious collective action. Resources are also needed.[5] Three sets of cultural and symbolic resources—three "master frames" (Snow and Benford 1992)—were available to help the political framing of the human rights grievance: the Christian cosmology, the humanist component of the Enlightenment, and the socialist tradition. The Christian world provides the movement with the idea of helping your neighbor, giving her/him love, assistance, protection, and care. From the humanist component of the Enlightenment, the solidarity movement draws a coherent discourse on

the respect for human rights and individual freedom. Finally, the early socialist movement put forth the ideal of a more just and egalitarian society.

These three cultural traditions provide the solidarity movement with crucial symbolic resources, but also with social, material, and human resources. The first organizations to mobilize in the name of human rights emerged within these three social networks, drawing from them material and human support. The first protests held to defend human rights came from religious organizations which pulled together Christians who were motivated by the idea of giving assistance to suffering men and women; by humanist clubs which mobilized intellectuals and libertarians who were nourished by the philosophy of the Enlightenment; and by socialist forums which gathered workers as well as several intellectuals who wanted to work politically for a new egalitarian society.

Thus, like the ecology, peace, and feminist movements, precursors of the contemporary movement are to be found in the late nineteenth century. One of the first organizations to act for the respect of human rights and against racism mobilized in France over the "Dreyfus Affair" in 1898. In that year a young Jewish officer was excluded from the army, officially because he was a traitor, but in fact because he was Jewish. The Ligue des droits de l'Homme was created to support Dreyfus and still exists today. More or less at the same time, in England humanist clubs opposed British colonialism and slavery. In the 1920s, a league against colonial oppression, whose first president was Albert Einstein, was set up in several European countries to criticize colonialism and bring to the fore its abuses.

The two world wars generated other types of human rights organizations. Several organizations were created with the mission of visiting war prisoners, giving them assistance and watching over prison conditions. Other organizations offered relief to war deportees, political refugees, immigrants, families in distress, and others. During that period, all these organizations which acted in favor of people whose human rights—broadly defined—were infringed, drew their resources from the three traditions discussed above and worked most of the time separately. They did not form a unified movement. They looked more like voluntary associations than social movement organizations. Their principal aim was to provide relief to the disadvantaged living in the colonies, to refugees, to immigrants, to war survivors and their families, to the victims of racist acts, as well as to others whose human rights were being violated. They offered relief to other people collectively, but not on the basis of a political conflict. They provided assistance, but in the absence of sustained political claim-making addressed to power holders. At that time, solidarity organizations resembled today's organizations of the third sector.

One had to wait until the late 1960s (in North America) and the 1970s (in Europe) for the emergence of a movement that articulated the human rights issue both politically and within a coherent framework. At that time, the organizations of the solidarity movement, like the early peace, ecology, and

feminist groups, underwent a deep transformation, following a not less radical transformation of society. After World War II, Western society went through a long process of change that generated new cultural and social conflicts. The increasingly complex and highly differentiated post-industrial society (Bell 1973; Luhmann 1982) gave birth to new social strains upon which new collective actors based their political claims (Brand 1982; Melucci 1989, 1996; Raschke 1985; Touraine 1978, 1984). According to Kriesi (1989, 1993), contemporary society entails two contradictions which were politicized by the new social movements: control and risks. On the one hand, in contemporary society the public sphere increasingly penetrates the private sphere (Habermas 1984). For example, education and health care, which in previous centuries were left to individuals and families, are now managed and controlled by the state by means of welfare-state policies. Moreover, this highly technocratic society develops more and more sophisticated means of control, supported by the development of computer engineering. The control by the state, as well as by private companies, over the life of individuals has never been as strong as today. On the other hand, the contemporary society becomes a risk society (Beck 1986). New technological advances have produced new risks unknown before. We now have the capability to destroy the planet and humankind by means of nuclear technology (Melucci 1996). Reacting to the increasing control exerted by the state over individual autonomy and pushed by the new technological risks, the new social movements became crucial collective actors on the Western political scene.

The solidarity movement participated fully in this renewal of the social movement sector. As a consequence, the organizations that have emerged since then are quite distinct from the old solidarity associations of the late nineteenth century. First of all, these organizations have a genuine political orientation. Behind their demands—for the respect of human rights, against racism, for helping the Third World, in defense of immigrant workers and political refugees—there is a quest for individual emancipation and a deep democratization both of Western and non-Western society. Second, as a consequence of their mobilization around the new cleavage produced by the contradictions of the contemporary society—that is, as a result of the politicization of their acts—the action repertoire of the solidarity movement has changed (Passy 1998). The old repertoire was dominated by acts of assistance and relief. The movement organizations gave the disadvantaged material and moral assistance, providing them with food, clothes, legal advice, and so forth. While most of the organizations of the new solidarity movement still provide this kind of assistance, now their actions also include political claim-making addressed to power holders. In other words, their traditional assistance-oriented praxis is now paralleled by a political praxis based on the same political cleavage in which the other new social movements are anchored. Third, the political potential of the solidarity movement has been transformed as well. While the old solidarity movement mobilized intellectu-

al, libertarian, and humanist elites, Christians, and workers nourished in the socialist tradition, the new movement has its social roots in the new middle class—more specifically, in one particular segment of the new middle class: the social-cultural specialists (Kriesi 1989).[6] Fourth, a decentralized and more democratic organizational structure has replaced a hierarchical and centralized structure. Finally, the various organizations of the solidarity movement are linked to each other independently of the issues they address. The new movement has a unity and a political coherence that it lacked before, as it mobilizes around the new lines of conflict in contemporary society and rides the political cleavage generated by post-industrial society. In this sense, it has become a genuine social movement. In addition, the solidarity movement has intensified its links to the other new social movements, which now become interconnected. They are all anchored in the same cleavage. This gives them unity and political coherence as a specific movement family.

To summarize, it is in the 1960s and 1970s (depending on the country) that the solidarity movement as we know it today emerged in the public sphere. While the sources of the struggle for human rights, like those pertaining to ecology, peace, and women's movements, date back to the nineteenth century, its anchoring in a political cleavage is more recent. The new lines of conflict, which stem from the transformation of contemporary society, have given birth to a new political actor.

A Multi-Level Movement: Areas and Levels of Intervention

In addition to drawing its resources from three distinct cultural cosmologies and mobilizing around a specific political cleavage, two other features of the solidarity movement must be stressed: it is active in different areas and on different levels. The old movement comprised only human rights organizations active on the various forefronts of human rights violations: slavery, colonial oppression, immigration, mass deportations, and so forth. The new movement, after its transformation in the 1960s and 1970s, underwent a process of differentiation. Its organizations now specialize in specific domains and are spread over four branches, that is, four *areas of intervention*: human rights, development aid, immigration/asylum, and antiracism.

A first specialization occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, when development aid organizations (for Third World countries) emerged. Within this branch, we find committees looking at particular countries (antiapartheid committees, Nicaragua committees, Eritrea committees, etc.) as well as organizations working more broadly on development aid issues (Terre des Hommes, Caritas, etc.). While the former support specific political regimes and provide these populations with material help, the latter are involved in a more general fashion in the field of development aid. Approximately during the 1980s in

Europe, and earlier in North America, the increasing salience of immigration and political asylum issues brought to the fore a third branch of the solidarity movement, mobilizing massively on behalf of immigrants, asylum seekers, and political refugees. The whole twentieth century witnessed important waves of migrations, generally as a consequence of wars. Yet, for a long time, this issue was not framed politically. Human rights organizations intervened to help migrants with material assistance, but did not politically articulate the issue—until the 1980s. Several human rights organizations remain active in this field (e.g., Amnesty International and the Ligue des droits de l'Homme), but they are not the leading actors. About the same time in certain countries and later in others, a further differentiation occurred within the movement with the emergence of a fourth branch: antiracism. This branch is intimately linked to the immigration/asylum area of intervention. It mobilizes to combat racist attacks against foreigners and the rise of the extreme right. The development of this branch of the solidarity movement is specific to Europe, with no counterpart in North America.

Beside its four branches, the contemporary solidarity movement also has different *levels of intervention*. Generally, social movement organizations are active at the local and/or national level. The prevailing level of intervention is to some extent determined by the structure of the state (Kriesi et al. 1995). For example, in France, a highly centralized state, social movements target mostly the national government. In contrast, in federal countries like Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, they often address local authorities. The solidarity movement is no exception to this rule, but here we can identify a fourth level: the international level. The solidarity movement is transnational in scope. Many organizations in the movement are present in various countries, that is, they are transnational social movement organizations (Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997). Amnesty International, Terre des Hommes, the Ligue des droits de l'Homme, and the Ligue contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme are only some examples. The fact that the movement often mobilizes on behalf of populations in other countries has facilitated its expansion to the international arena. In addition, such expansion has been pushed further by the existence of supranational political structures, such as the United Nations, which provide the movement with opportunities for acting at that level.

As Tilly (1986a) has shown convincingly, contentious politics parallels transformations in the sources and distribution of power. The modern social movement emerged in the nineteenth century following a long period of construction of the national state. Since World War II, new power centers have been created at the supranational level (e.g., the United Nations and the European Community) although they have not replaced the national ones.[7] In other words, we are not witnessing a shift from the national to transnational level comparable to that which brought the main focus of contentious politics from the local to the national level. Nevertheless, supranational structures

offer social movements new political opportunities to address their claims (Passy 1999). In spite of its weakness, the United Nations is a particularly relevant political power center. With the creation of the Human Rights Commission and the possibility for social movement organizations to be granted consultative status—formal acceptance within this supranational political structure—the United Nations offers the solidarity movement real opportunities to address its claims, especially for its human rights and development aid branches, less for its immigration/asylum and antiracism branches. Because immigration policy is still a prerogative of national states and most racist attacks target immigrants in given countries, the two latter branches of the movement continue to focus on the national level. However, it is likely that, if the development of the European Community continues and this power center will be able to frame a coherent and effective immigration policy for its member states (as recent developments would suggest), protests regarding these issues could also shift to the transnational level (Soysal 1994), leading, at least in part, to a Europeanization of social movements (Imig and Tarrow 1999).

Thus, the contemporary solidarity movement is involved in a multi-level game (Marks and McAdam 1996). It mostly targets national authorities, as well as local authorities (particularly in decentralized countries), but it also seizes the political opportunities provided by the United Nations. In doing so, it is comparable to the ecology movement, whose claim-making is also embedded in a multi-level game which comprises the local, national, and—in particular since the 1992 Rio environmental summit—transnational levels.

Patterns of Mobilization: A Brief Overview

Western society values individual freedom, personal success, and self-interest so highly that political altruism should be a marginal form of collective action. Yet, the mobilization by the solidarity movement attests to the opposite. To give a brief overview its mobilization, I draw from the comparative study by Kriesi and others (1995) on new social movements in four European countries: France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.[8] But, as we turn to the patterns of mobilization of the solidarity movement, we must raise two theoretical points that have been raised by the political process approach to the study of social movements. Contentious collective action varies in its extent and forms according to the political context and to the salience of political cleavages. More specifically, Kriesi and his colleagues stress the formal structure of the state (i.e., the degree of functional separation of powers, the degree of territorial centralization of the state, the coherence of the public administration, and the presence of direct democratic procedures) and the informal strategies of the authorities towards social movements (i.e., inclusive and facilitating strategies or exclusive and repressive strategies).

The latter display more or less disruptive forms of action. For example, there is a striking difference between France and Switzerland as to the movements' action repertoires: in highly centralized France they tend to be more disruptive than in extremely fragmented Switzerland (Giugni and Passy 1993).

In addition to this combination of formal and informal political opportunities, Kriesi and colleagues stress the impact of the configuration of power and the structure of alliances to explain the development of protest over time. In this respect, they argue that the presence of a socialist party—the main ally of the new social movements—in the government lead to the demobilization of these movements. In contrast, when the socialists are in opposition they are facilitated by a powerful ally, particularly so if the socialists are engaged in a struggle for the hegemony within the Left against an important Communist party and use the movements in this struggle.

Finally, Kriesi and his co-authors point to the salience of political cleavages to account for the relative strength of new social movements. They maintain that the new social movements—which mobilized on a new cleavage, as we have seen—are stronger where the traditional cleavages (the class, religious, center/periphery, and urban/rural cleavages) have been pacified. In contrast, in countries where these cleavages still mobilize important social and political forces, the opportunities available for the mobilization of new collective actors are limited. Of the four countries included in the study, only France still has largely salient traditional cleavages, in particular the class and center/periphery cleavages. This, to a large extent, explains the weakness of new social movements in that country.

The emergence and development of the solidarity movement in Europe is much influenced by all these aspects of the political opportunity structure. To begin with, as table 1.1 shows, not only is the whole new social movement family the main force of contention (at least during the 1975-89 period examined by Kriesi et al.), except in France, where traditional cleavages are still dominant. Furthermore, the solidarity movement displays high levels of mobilization in Germany and Switzerland, and the highest overall in the Netherlands. Confirming the cleavages salience hypothesis, France is once again an exception, for the solidarity movement has only weakly mobilized during the period under study. Thus, contrary to expectations that may be drawn from the individualistic orientation of contemporary society, political altruism is far from being a marginal form of contentious collective action. But how did the solidarity movement develop over time in these four European countries?

TABLE 1.1
Distribution of Unconventional Protest Events by Movement
in Four Countries, 1975-1989

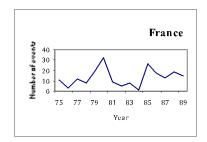|	France	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
Solidarity movement	9.2	15.0	17.7	16.0
Antinuclear movement (both energy and weapons)	13.2	24.4	16.9	7.9
Ecology movement	4.4	11.3	8.0	10.6
Peace movement	4.0	7.1	5.1	5.3
Squatters' and other countercultural movements	3.0	13.4	14.1	18.4
Women's movement	1.5	1.7	1.6	2.1
Gay rights movement	0.8	0.3	2.0	0.7
Total new social movements	**36.1**	**73.2**	**65.4**	**61.0**
Total other movements	**63.9**	**26.8**	**34.6**	**39.0**
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	2132	2343	1319	1215

Source: Kriesi et al. (1995, 20)

While the pacification of traditional cleavages is a key factor in understanding its relative strength, the configuration of power allows us to account for fluctuations in the level of mobilization. Figure 1.1 shows the number of protest events produced yearly by the solidarity movement between 1975 and 1989. Two findings are worth mentioning. First, perhaps with the exception of France, the general trend shows a growth in the four countries, for the number of events has increased during the period under study. Second, the movement displays important ebbs and flows which differ from one country to the other. The contrasting development of mobilization is particularly striking if we compare the German and French movements; while the former displays an upsurge of activity after 1980, the latter has experienced a sharp decline that lasted until 1984.
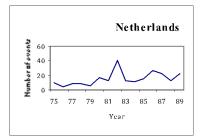
The fluctuations in the level of mobilization of the solidarity movement can be explained by the fortunes of the socialist parties. In Germany, we observe an abrupt increase in mobilization starting in 1980, leading to a peak in 1983. Here the movement became part of a larger cycle of protest that involved other movements as well, above all the peace movement. The nuclear weapons issue was at the heart of this protest cycle. At the same time, this strong mobilization was facilitated by the exit of the social-democratic party from the government in 1982. Being in the opposition, the latter could serve as a powerful ally for all new social movements. Previously, it was very difficult for the social-democrats to support the movements, which therefore were lacking a crucial political ally. Thus, the presence of the social-democrats in the opposition facilitated the German solidarity movement in the 1980s. A
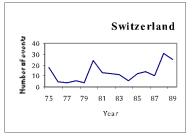
FIGURE 1.1

**Number of Unconventional Protest Events of the Solidarity Movement
in Four Countries, 1975-1989**

Source: Calculations based on data by Kriesi et al. (1995)

similar trajectory was followed by its Dutch counterpart. As in Germany, in the Netherlands the solidarity movement was caught in the protest wave against application of the "double-track" decision by NATO to deploy nuclear missiles in Europe while continuing negotiations for a scaling down of the atomic arsenal. The peak of the movement's mobilization was reached in 1982. At the same time, the center-left coalition stepped down from governmental power, and this bolstered the actions of the whole new social movement family. In contrast, the French solidarity movement declined precisely when in the other countries mobilization reached its peak. When President Mitterrand seized power in 1981, the movement lost its principal ally, the Socialist party. Moreover, like the other new social movements, the actors participating in the solidarity movement hoped that the socialists would promote important reforms that would take into account their claims. This discouraged them from mobilizing. However, the movement was revived in 1985, even though the socialists were still in power. In fact, for reasons to which we shall return below, the French Left largely facilitated the movement's antiracist branch. In Switzerland, the development of the solidarity movement cannot be explained by a change in the composition of the national government, as it has remained unchanged since 1959. In a highly decen-

tralized political system such as Switzerland's, the local or regional configuration of power may be more important to fluctuations in the mobilization by social movement than the national one. Much of the fluctuation in the development of the Swiss solidarity movement is due to the issue of political asylum. As in Switzerland asylum policy is implemented by the local powers, the ebbs and flows we observe in Switzerland might largely be explained by changes at the local level.

To summarize, the solidarity movement is an important extra-parliamentary political actor in several European countries. However, as table 1.2 illustrates, the activity of the movements' four areas of intervention is unequal. Generally speaking, antiracism and development aid are the most active branches. Antiracism is particularly strong in France and Germany. More than half of the mobilization of the whole movement in these two countries occurs in this area, whereas in the Netherlands and Switzerland development aid is the most frequently raised issue. How can we explain these differences, which seem to separate the two large countries from the two smaller ones? Since the beginning of the 1980s, France and Germany have witnessed a revival of extreme-right activism which has fostered politicization of the immigration issue. In France, the Front National has framed its discourse around this issue. The German extreme right, mostly organized as an extra-parliamentary actor, did the same. In these two countries, immigration politics was marked by worrisome waves of racist attacks against asylum seekers and immigrant workers. This offered the solidarity movement an opportunity to mobilize, and hence provoked strong countermobilization organized mainly by leftist parties and by the movement. In addition, in France the Socialist party continued to support the antiracism branch of the movement even while in government. The socialists used antiracist groups—particularly, SOS-Racisme—to destabilize the right-wing parties and counteract the spectacular rise of the Front National (Duyvendak 1995). While their support was guided by strategic reasons, it provided these organizations useful political opportunities.

The extreme right was also active in the Netherlands and Switzerland, but to a lesser extent, which might explain the weaker antiracist mobilization. In these two countries, the solidarity movement mobilized mainly on development aid issues. Why is it so? A possible explanation lies in the impact of institutional facilitation. In the Netherlands and Switzerland the prevailing strategies of the authorities towards social movements are inclusive, hence facilitating their mobilization. However, even states that follow inclusive prevailing strategies do so only—or at least mostly—toward the movements' moderate sectors. In the case of the solidarity movement, the development aid branch and the human rights branch comprise the most moderate sector. In Switzerland, its moderation has even contributed to the elaboration of strategies of cooperation between the movement and the state (Giugni and Passy

TABLE 1.2
Distribution of Unconventional Protest Events of the Four Branches
of the Solidarity Movement in Four Countries, 1975-1989

	France	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
Human rights	9.1	10.1	15.3	17.0
Development aid	13.7	28.7	47.0	50.0
Immigration/asylum	16.4	11.9	13.7	29.7
Antiracism	60.7	49.2	24.0	3.4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	219	494	313	296

Source: Calculations based on data by Kriesi et al. (1995)

1998). Thus, the facilitating strategies of the authorities in the Netherlands and Switzerland towards the moderate development aid organizations led this branch of the movement to a high level of mobilization.

Finally, we observe the relatively weak mobilization of the human rights branch, the movement's oldest area of intervention. This is partly due to the fact that its claims are spread over the other branches. But, above all, human rights organizations, as mentioned above, find important political opportunities at the international level. While, overall, this is certainly the less active branch of the movement, it is also probably less active at the national level than at the international one.

Political Altruism:
Paradoxes and Theoretical Challenges

As we have seen, the solidarity movement displays certain features: it is (apparently) altruistic-oriented; it mobilizes based upon a specific political cleavage; it is embedded in a specific social environment that gives it cultural and symbolic resources; it operates in different areas of intervention; and acts at different levels of intervention (especially at the international level). Among all these characteristics, the altruistic orientation is, at least at first glance, the one that sets it decidedly apart from other movements. But this feature raises two paradoxes: the first could be defined as a cultural paradox, while the second is of a theoretical nature. These paradoxes are worth briefly discussing here.

The first paradox was hinted at in the discussion above. The solidarity movement has emerged in Western society, which puts individualism, individual freedom, self-interest, and personal success high in the hierarchy of social values. In this society, however, thousands of people join the solidarity movement with the aim of providing other persons with material and moral support. How can we make sense of such altruistic political behavior in a

society that is mainly concerned with enhancing the value of the self? This paradox has been framed by Wuthnow (1991) in his study of the voluntary sector in the United States. He faces exactly the same dilemma raised by the solidarity movement: while the dominant myths of the American society value individualism, more than half of the adult population volunteers on a regular basis, that is, they act on behalf of other people. Wuthnow shows that, in the end, this paradox does not exist, for "acts of compassion" are in fact a channel of self-expression. They help people to "feel better" and are a way to convey caring feelings. Volunteering is, according to Wuthnow, a way to express one's own individuality. If this conclusion proves correct, it should have two main implications. First, "acts of compassion" are not inconsistent with Western society's dominant value of individualism. Second, we can wonder about the altruistic bases of the kind of behavior studied by Wuthnow. According to Bar-Tal's (1985-86) definition, one of the four characteristics of altruism is to perform a deed without expecting any reward. "Feeling better" would be one such reward. Therefore, those who perform "acts of compassion" do get rewards. Here we could start a broader discussion about internal and external rewards, but this would take us too far from the present purpose. Suffice it to say that Bar-Tal speaks of external rewards, while those received by the people interviewed by Wuthnow are internal ones. Their rewards do not come from the individuals' external environment, but rather from within the individuals themselves. Thus, following Bar-Tal's definition, the "acts of compassion" investigated by Wuthnow are altruistic. But if we adopt a more restrictive definition of altruism and exclude any rewards, be they external or internal, then these acts are not altruistic.

Concerning the solidarity movement, the question is whether involvement in this form of political altruism is also a way to express one's own individuality. Is helping populations in Third World countries, giving immigrants support, mobilizing on behalf of other people whose fundamental rights are being violated a way to "feel better," to find personal fulfillment? Is participation in the solidarity movement consistent with the Western society's dominant cultural values of individual freedom, personal success, and self-interest? Or, on the contrary, does this type of political engagement raise a *cultural paradox*? A related set of questions, furthermore, asks whether participation in the solidarity movement is a genuine expression of political altruism. Do activists involved in this movement receive any rewards at all? Which motivations push people like Eva, our activist in favor of asylum-seeker rights, to invest time and effort on behalf of other people? Do they "feel better" after such "acts of compassion"?

The second paradox raised by the solidarity movement relates to the theory of collective action, and brings us to Olson's well-known *Logic of Collective Action* (1965). Olson maintains that it is irrational for individuals to do something for the production of collective goods. The peculiarity of such goods is that they are to be shared by all individuals in a community, that is, all indi-

viduals in that community will benefit from them, regardless of their participation in its production. Therefore, individuals would have no reason to pay the costs of obtaining goods from which they would benefit anyway. Moreover, the action of a single individual is so marginal that it would not affect the likelihood that the public goods be produced. This paradox, also emphasized by Downs (1957) in relation to voting behavior, is all the more relevant and problematic in the case of altruism: people will get the fruits of mobilization whether or not they participate in the movement, for the outcome of mobilization is addressed to others.

Thus, the question is: How can we make sense of political altruism with the theoretical tools offered by Olson's analysis of collective action and, more generally, following a rational choice model? In his groundbreaking book, Olson has little to say about this type of contentious collective action, arguing that individuals who work on behalf of other people are irrational. He suggests, therefore, that we use other heuristic tools to explain this kind of behavior, namely those developed by psychology. In other words, he suggests that we go back to psychological models put forward in the early twentieth century and later elaborated by collective behavior theorists. Yet, in the light of fundamental criticisms addressed by resource mobilization and political process approaches to collective behavior models (e.g., McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978; Tilly et al. 1975), this does not seem to be a promising path. According to resource mobilization and political process theorists, collective action is a rational effort to obtain certain goals rather than, as proponents of the collective behavior perspective maintain, the product of psychological reactions to the social stress stemming from macro-structural changes in society.

As Olson's suggestion to refer to psychological models in order to explain political altruism cannot reasonably be taken into account without denying the intention-oriented nature of this type of political behavior, how can we then grasp the logic of political altruism? Does it follow a logic of mobilization different from that of self-oriented actions? Do the patterns of individual participation in the solidarity movement differ substantially from those in other movements? Is the process of mobilization influenced by the movement's orientation? In brief, is political altruism governed by a distinct logic of mobilization? Furthermore, we can wonder whether the two paradoxes mentioned above, which refer to the micro level of analysis, have some repercussions on the macro level as well. Do the organizations of the solidarity movement use different forms of actions in order to mobilize people on behalf of others? Does political altruism have its own action repertoire? By the same token, do actors involved in the solidarity movement use distinct discursive strategies? Specifically, do they need to link altruistic claims to particularistic interests in order to facilitate individual participation in the movement? It is in these and related questions that lies the theoretical challenge posed by the solidarity movement and political altruism.

The paradox raised by Olson in the 1960s leads us to a broad reflection on the heuristic tools that social scientists can use to study political altruism. In order to examine this matter in a more systematic fashion, we propose to discuss three dominant paradigms in social science and see what they can bring to the study of political altruism. Table 1.3, which is largely inspired by a recent assessment of the study of comparative politics by Lichbach (1997), tries to sort out the respective features of these paradigms and to assess their major strengths and weaknesses for the study of political altruism. The three major research schools in social science—rationalist, culturalist, and structuralist (e.g., Lichbach 1997)—rely on different ontological perspectives based on their different perceptions of the social world. We shall review the ontological basis of each of these research traditions, then study the specific focus of their analyses by putting them in the context of the study of political altruism, and, finally assess their strengths and weaknesses in relation to an understanding of political altruism.

The rationalist paradigm sees the world from an individual angle. Collectivities have no specific status; they are understood by means of individuals' behaviors. Rationalists interpret individual action from its motivation. In other words, they put individual intentions at the center of their theories. Individual desires and beliefs motivate action. On the micro level, rationalists focus on the actors' decision; on the macro level, on collective choices and strategies. Thus, rationalist theorists stress individual motivations, desires, beliefs, and rewards to understand participation in altruistic collective action. In addition, they emphasize the collective choices of forms of action as well as discursive strategies that lead individuals to join altruistic collective action. The major strength of the rationalist paradigm lies in the view of political altruism as motivated human behavior. In fact, rationalists have two ways to examine political altruism: either they judge, as Olson did, a priori that altruistic actions are not rational, and then they must study them with other heuristic tools; or they look at intentions that bring individuals to commit themselves to political altruism. In the latter option, the rationalist paradigm can offer social scientists an important avenue of research into individual motivations, political goals, group strategies, and the like. This perspective lends itself to the study of people who engage in altruistic collective action and of strategies by political groups that benefit directly from their actions, as in the case of the solidarity movement. While individual motivations are crucial to a better understanding of political altruism, this approach has its weaknesses. Rationalists' studies have often been criticized on various grounds (e.g., Green and Shapiro 1994). Without getting into the details of these criticisms, we can say that one of the major difficulties in this approach stems   from   its

TABLE 1.3
Three Paradigms for the Study of Political Altruism

	Rationalist	*Culturalist*	*Structuralist*
Onthology	• Rational actors • Intentional explanation • Methodological individualism	• Rules among actors • Intersubjectivity • Common knowledge and values • Social constructivism	• Relations among actors • Institutional frame • Structural realism
Focus of the analysis			
Micro level	• Actors' decision to participate	• Individual values and beliefs • Identity formation • Identification processes	• Social constraints • Location of actors in the social system and social networks
Macro level	• Collective choice of forms of actions and discursive strategies	• Value system • Cultural framings	• Mobilizing structures • Political opportunity structures
Explanatory power			
Strengths	• Political altruism as rational, intentional, and goal-oriented behavior	• Political altruism as meaningful action • Social construction embedded in a cultural context • Space/time variations	• Political altruism as not merely voluntaristic behavior or the product of cultural conditioning • Impact of institutional context • Space/time-varying process
Weaknesses	• Instrumental rationality • Mechanical view of social action	• Tautology • Voluntarism absent	• Deterministic view • Voluntarism absent

narrow view of the human being. Rationalists perceive individuals as being interest-oriented and hence behaving to meet or maximize their private interests. The role of the larger social environment, which impinges upon individual interests, is neglected. This leads rationalist theorists to have a "mechanical-behavioral view of subjectivity and adopt a particularly anemic or thin version of intentionality, rationality, and interests" (256). In this perspective, the study of political altruism is reduced to an analysis of rewards. Yet, in the study of collective action, rationalists have tended to go beyond such a thin version of intentionality by taking into account the role of the social environment and the social construction of subjectivity (e.g., Gould 1993; Marwell and Oliver 1993). The study of political altruism should learn from this lesson.

   The culturalist paradigm looks at society through the lens of norms and intersubjectivity. In contrast to the rationalist approach, individuals have no existence outside their communities, which are at the center of their analyses. Culture forms the intersubjective link between individuals. Individuals belonging to the same community share common knowledge, understandings, beliefs, values, cognitions, and identities. Thus culture is seen as a social construction. Culturalist theorists focus basically on the construction of values and beliefs, the formation of individual and collective identities, and the identification of value systems and collective frames. Due to their different view of social reality, culturalists highlight other sides of political altruism. They define the role of cultural factors leading to political altruism—either at the micro level, by stressing the specific values, beliefs, and identities that facilitate participation in this type of collective action and by stressing the processes of socialization and identity formation that allow one to participate; or at the macro level, by understanding the cultural frames and narratives that give shape to altruistic behaviors. One of the strengths of the culturalist approach lies in its view of political altruism as a meaningful action and as a construction, in contrast to rationalists, who do not study where interests come from and how they emerge. The process of formation of individual interests are at the core of culturalists' analyses. A further strength of this paradigm is that it allows explanation of variations in the forms of political altruism from one society to the other, from one country to the other. Rationality varies among cultures. It is likely that certain cultural settings or repertoires facilitate political altruism by offering a language for its emergence. As Wolfe (1998) has put it: "Because [altruism] is not latent in human genes, it has to be activated, and the degree of activation varies across time and space. Some historical periods manifest more altruistic behavior than others, and some countries tend to be more altruistic than others" (41).[9] Indeed, in our brief overview of patterns of mobilization of the solidarity movement, we have seen that, depending on the salience of cultural cleavages, it is stronger in certain countries and weaker in others. On the other hand, the tendency of culturalist theorists to neglect the role of individuals is a major weakness of

this approach. While, as Lichbach (1997) has put it, "rationalists sacrifice the subject and surrender the self, undoing the community and unmaking the collectivity" (257), the culturalists do exactly the opposite and tend to deny all forms of individual voluntarism. A further weakness of this paradigm lies in its problematic capacity of hypothesis falsification (Lichbach 1997). Culturalists are put in an uncomfortable position to explain the link between norms, or cultural standards, and action, thus running the risk of tautology.

The ontological basis of the structuralist paradigm lies chiefly in the institutional frames and the interactions among the various parts of a system. At the micro level, the main focus of the analysis is on social interactions and on the location of actors in the social system and in social networks. At the macro level, structuralists stress mobilizing structures and political institutions, which provide both constraints and opportunities for the emergence of political altruism. The major strength of the structuralist approach is its attention to the institutional and relational contexts as structural conditions for the emergence of political altruism. At the same time, it allows for comparisons across time and sector for this type of collective action. Once again, our discussion of the patterns of mobilization of the solidarity movement has highlighted the role played by institutional factors. As in the case of the other two paradigms, the structuralist approach has a number of weaknesses, particularly in the study of political altruism. Structuralists and culturalists share the same weakness with regard to their conception of the human being. Actors are absent from their view of the social world. To use Lichbach's (1997) apt phrase, "[s]tructuralists thus produce a bloodless social science: People are the victims of and silent witnesses to history" (258). In other words, individuals belonging to the same system, to the same category or to the same network play the same game; their intentions are missed in structural explanations. Similarly, structuralists are prisoners of a deterministic view of society, in the sense that specific structural or relational settings are bound to provoke a specific type of outcomes.

To summarize, in spite of inevitable problems and weaknesses, each of the three paradigms for the study of political altruism reveals specific aspects of the social phenomenon at hand. The rationalist paradigm emphasizes the *motivations* that lead to political altruism. This perspective allows us to ascertain whether actions defined a priori as political altruism, such as those of the solidarity movement, are genuine "acts of compassion." Moreover, the rationalist paradigm reveals the collective strategies of groups acting on behalf of others. The culturalist paradigm stresses the *cultural repertoires* that make the activation of political altruism possible. This can be done at the individual level, by examining their role in the formation of individuals beliefs and cognitions, and at the collective level, by looking at discursive repertoires, narratives, and cultural frames of political altruism. The structuralist paradigm focuses on *structural constraints and opportunities* which yield individual or collective conditions that facilitate political altruism.

As we have noted, each tradition has substantial limitation in explaining political altruism in its complexity and multifaced aspects. While in the past, social scientists have tended to lock themselves in one theoretical tradition, today many authors turn to more eclectic explanations of social and political phenomena (e.g., Alexander and Giesen 1987; Archer 1995; Berger and Luckmann 1989; Bourdieu 1977; Coleman 1990; Giddens 1984; Habermas 1984; Lichbach 1997). As Wolfe (1998) has emphasized in his discussion of the various theories that have contributed to the study of altruism, we need to grasp the complexity and multiplicity of human behaviors, and go beyond monocausal explanations. We still have too little systematic research on political altruism for excluding one of those traditions in favor of the other two. At this stage of our knowledge of this subject matter, we will be better off if we take into accounts the strengths and promises of all three perspectives. We will surely benefit from their different approaches to gain a better understanding of political altruism.

Notes

1.   For a cross-national comparison of voluntary associations, see Salamon and Anheier (1998).
2.   See also Barber (1984), Putnam (1993), and Wuthnow (1991, 1995).
3.   For definitions of claim-making and social movements, see Tilly (1978, 1995a) and Tarrow (1998).
4.   See also Lipset and Rokkan (1967).
5.   This is one of the main contributions of resource mobilization theory (e.g., Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977). This approach stresses the role of resources for the emergence of social movements, thus criticizing "breakdown theories" (Tilly et al. 1975) such as the theory of collective behavior (e.g., Smelser 1962; Turner and Killian 1957).
6.   This argument has received strong empirical support (Cotgrove and Duff 1980; Inglehart 1990; Kriesi 1989, 1993; Passy 1998).
7.   This is particularly true for the United Nations, which remains a weak aggregate of states rather than a genuine and powerful supranational political entity.
8.   The method they used is protest event analysis. For details on this method, see the appendix in Kriesi et al. (1995) as well as Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhardt (1998).
9.   For instance, Jegstrup (1985-86) has shown that the rescue of Jews during World War II in Denmark was inspired by cultural reasons.