Part Four

Results of the Historical Comparison
For neither of the two national developments investigated here is it possible to explain the historical rise of the bourgeois state in terms of the functional requirements of economic development. Besides, neither the point in time at which the societies of the ‘ancien-régime’ structural type studied here were revolutionised, nor the political form in which this took place, was determined by the degree of capitalisation of the relations of production. The most important structural preconditions for the crisis of personal rule rather resulted from the manner in which the members of the privileged estates acquired, maintained and defended their ruling status.

The emergence of personal rule and the change in its practice was a process in which everyone was involved, from the king, through the nobles, down to peasants, soldiers, beggar-men – even women who are left out of such nursery rhymes. Their respective actions naturally had varying prospects of success. Of the many different preconditions that were present in generalised social practice in the epoch of the ancien régime, one in particular needs special emphasis: the distribution of rule-holding among the lords. If this was not completely contingent in relation to the social organisation of production, it was indeed largely so. It created quite specific conditions, moreover, for the development of the nobility and along with this the handling of crises of rule. To avoid misunderstanding: this chapter will