

THE AGE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

THE AGE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

A Political History of Europe and America,
1760–1800

R. R. PALMER

With a new foreword by David Armitage

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The French Revolution had no territory of its own; indeed, its effect was to efface, in a way, all older frontiers. It brought men together, or divided them, in spite of laws, traditions, character and language, turning enemies sometimes into compatriots, and kinsmen into strangers; or rather, it formed, above all particular nationalities, an intellectual common country of which men of all nations might become citizens. . . .

When we look away from those accidental features which modified its appearance at different times and in various countries, and consider the Revolution only in itself, we see clearly that its effect was simply to abolish those political institutions which had prevailed for centuries among most European peoples . . . that it entirely destroyed, or is still destroying (for it still goes on) everything which in the old society arose from feudal and aristocratic institutions.

—ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

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FOREWORD

The late eighteenth century has long held a special place in narratives of the making of the modern world. Contemporaries from Bengal to Boston, and in Paris and Patna, were certain theirs was an age of revolutions. Empires collided and crumbled in the Americas and South Asia. A new order of the ages seemed to be rising from the wreckage of old regimes. And huge changes were afoot in commerce and manufactures, warfare and communications, government and finance. Whether these upheavals amounted to a single seismic shift was not so clear. Did the period's revolutions all point in the same direction? Or were they fundamentally distinct? The question of one revolution or many—an age of revolutions or a revolutionary age—would recur across the next two centuries.

R. R. Palmer's *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (1959–64) is the pivotal scholarly contribution to that debate, a monument of anglophone historical writing, and the most coherent argument for the essential unity of the revolutionary era. The work was garlanded and assailed, revered and ignored, but it has never been out of print. *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* has striking omissions and bears signs of its times, but it is more widely discussed, and arguably more relevant, now than at any time since it first appeared half a century ago.

Robert Roswell Palmer was born in 1909 and won a scholarship to the University of Chicago, where he studied with Louis Gottschalk, one of the earliest professional historians of the French Revolution in the United States. Gottschalk urged Palmer to go to Cornell for graduate work under his own mentor, Carl Becker, an intellectual historian of both the American and French Revolutions. From Gottschalk, Palmer had acquired his interests in the age of revolutions and in the shaping force of ideas in history; with Becker, he would develop his focus on exchanges across the Atlantic, a skeptical liberalism, and a commitment to history as a critical discipline aimed at a broad reading public. After taking up a lectureship at Princeton in 1936, Palmer earned his academic spurs with two accomplished monographs: *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (1939) and *Twelve Who Ruled: The Committee of Public Safety during the Terror* (1941). Poor eyesight kept him from active combat in the Second World War, and he worked in Washington, DC, as a historian in the Army Ground Forces Command, where he wrote most of two volumes on the recruitment and training of ground troops in the conflict. After

his return to civilian life and his professorship at Princeton, he published *A History of the Modern World* (1950), one of the best-selling textbooks of its time. Still barely forty, with his reputation secure, Palmer decided that “it seemed wise, all told, to become involved in a large-scale and long-term project, on which there need be no hurry.”¹ His magnum opus on the “democratic revolution”—Palmer took the term from the French revolutionary lawyer Antoine Barnave—would be the result.

Palmer’s masterpiece sprang from the conjunction of two revolutionary moments, past and present. The first was what he called the late eighteenth-century “Revolution of Western Civilization” in Europe and North America. The second was the great revolution of his own times in Asia, Africa, and Latin America: “Let us . . . use the revolutionary era to investigate what is most on our minds, to find out what a world is like that is divided by revolution and war.”² The two movements were continuous yet counterposed, because the revolution of the West had created the tools for the ongoing revolution *against* the West. Palmer argued that the goal of both was equality, a fundamental value that had first been widely elaborated between 1760 and 1800, with lasting legacies for succeeding centuries: “All revolutions since 1800, in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa,” he wrote at the very end of *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, “have learned from the eighteenth-century Revolution of Western Civilization.” That judgment might seem guilty of almost every current scholarly sin—Eurocentrism, essentialism, teleology, diffusionism—but it captured the essence of Palmer’s endeavor: to understand the present through the past with the perspective of the *longue durée*.

Most professional historians worship the archive, suspect synthesis, and shun presentism. Not so Palmer: he spent only a year in French collections when researching his first book, worked mostly from published sources, and was adamant that historians must use their knowledge to illuminate contemporary concerns. As he was embarking on his grand project, he told an interviewer: “Historians address themselves to the hard questions of policy as against what was narrative history. Today history is interpretative and critical.”³ This position was hardly the credo of the conservative cold warrior Palmer was sometimes taken to be: indeed, it reflected the prewar legacy of Carl Becker, the historian of broad themes who punctured the pieties of Right and Left alike and who believed firmly in the historian’s social mission. Throughout *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, Palmer jostled against Marxism, but he relied heavily on Eastern European historiography and used it to remind Americans that their own political culture, like that of the Communist bloc, had revolutionary roots. Palmer saved his real venom for “neo-conservative” American anti-Communists who stressed the gulf between past and present and between the American and French Revolutions. “It has been said that history is best written with a little spite,” he later wrote, “and I fear that I share this uncharitable opinion.”⁴

1 R. R. Palmer, “*The Age of the Democratic Revolution*,” in *The Historian’s Workshop: Original Essays by Sixteen Historians*, ed. L. P. Curtis, Jr. (New York: Knopf, 1970), 170.

2 R. R. Palmer, “The World Revolution of the West: 1763–1801,” *Political Science Quarterly* 69, 1 (1954): 14.

3 Harvey Breit, “Talk with R. R. Palmer,” *New York Times Book Review*, 30 July 1950, 10.

4 Palmer, “*The Age of the Democratic Revolution*,” 172.

Palmer also had little patience for methodological nationalism. *A History of the Modern World* had treated “the record of our troubled civilization” and subordinated national histories to the larger narratives of Eastern and Western “civilizations.”⁵ Soon after it appeared, Palmer collaborated with Jacques Godechot, a historian of the French Revolution, on a long paper comparing manifestations of a unified “Atlantic civilization” in the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries. Palmer and Godechot’s overarching vision of circulation and communication within a single inter-continental community was more antinationalist than it was self-consciously cosmopolitan. Palmer disagreed strongly with those historians who argued that the American and French Revolutions were each exceptional, politically opposed, and unconnected to any other political movements of the period. Moreover, he and Godechot noted that the world of the first revolutionary age was *more* integrated than that of their own time.⁶ His history was not an apology for burgeoning contemporary international institutions: it was more an elegy for a world that had been lost but whose promises were still in the process of being fulfilled.

The first volume of *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* focused on the American Revolution; the second, on the French Revolution and its aftermath. Two timely themes linked them: the Tocquevillian topic of ever-expanding equality and the more immediate questions of how revolution spread and how it was repelled. In volume 1, *The Challenge*, Palmer showed how the insurgent force of egalitarian “democracy” encountered the resurgent energy of entrenched “aristocracy” in legislative bodies around the Atlantic world. The American Revolution was the opening act of this revolutionary age, and the United States was the one successful beacon of “democracy” thereafter. In volume 2, *The Struggle*, he narrated the proliferation of revolutionary movements across Europe both before and alongside the French Revolution. Most were endogenous, and independent of French interference, but they accelerated the radicalization of the Revolution itself after 1792 and left Europe divided between the forces of revolution and counterrevolution. Even as late as 1799, it was unclear which would triumph, yet, within months, Napoleon’s victory at the Battle of Marengo tipped the balance: “Democracy in Europe had not exactly succeeded, but the great conservative and aristocratic counter-offensive had utterly failed.” Thomas Jefferson’s election that year as president in the “Revolution of 1800” pointed in the same direction: toward the short-lived victory for “democratic” forces.

The chronological and geographical division of Palmer’s two volumes determined their quite different receptions. *The Challenge* (1959) won an unusual accolade for a historian primarily known for his work on France: the Bancroft Prize, the most prestigious award for a work of American history. Five years later, *The Struggle* (1964) earned no prizes, was not widely reviewed, and was almost entirely overlooked in Europe. Palmer’s account of the American Revolution had flattered local sensibilities by arguing for its world-historical importance, even as it rebuffed the reigning Progressive view that the Revolution was relatively conservative, blood-

5 R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 1950), vii.

6 Jacques Godechot and R. R. Palmer, “Le Problème de l’Atlantique du XVIIIème au XXème siècle,” *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 5:198–99.

less, and consensual. *The Struggle* met more resistance because it seemed to belittle the significance of the French Revolution by placing it amid a congeries of other minor and mostly failed revolutions: Genevan, Polish, Dutch, Batavian, Irish, Neapolitan, and Swiss, among them. Why this diminished the French Revolution, Palmer was at a loss to imagine: the same theme, he noted, could be played in a flute solo or by a full orchestra, and it hardly minimized the orchestra if one listened to the flute.⁷

More controversial was Palmer's assimilation of the American and French Revolutions. Surely the American Revolution was less transformative, the French more genuinely radical and future-oriented? However, he argued, the similarities between the two great Atlantic revolutions were greater than the differences: indeed, the French borrowed political language from the Americans much as Americans adopted French ideas in "a grand intercontinental transvestism."⁸ Such judgments were guaranteed to upset nationalist historians of all stripes, and, for almost forty years, they condemned *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* to the status of a classic: a book more revered than read.

Trends in historical writing were turning against Palmer even as he completed his study. Constitutional history and the history of war were already embattled fields by 1964. In the gap between *The Challenge* and *The Struggle*, three works appeared that signposted alternative approaches to the age of revolutions. Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (1961) is still the strongest case for the radical separation of the American and French Revolutions, as, respectively, political and social, conservative and radical, successful and failed. Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* (1962) influentially proposed the "double crater" of England and France as the matrix of economic and political modernity, but entirely ignored the American Revolution and the larger Atlantic world. Meanwhile, E. P. Thompson's social history of the Industrial Revolution, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963)—published just in time to make the footnotes of *The Struggle*—inspired densely archival and intimately local narratives of reconstructed experiences, a history from below uninflected by such grand abstractions as "aristocracy" and "democracy," and more concerned with places like West Yorkshire than with the fortunes of Western civilization. To Palmer, that movement was ultimately a turn for the worse, away from civic engagement and "the effective management of public problems" into academic specialization and scholarly self-absorption.⁹ Nonetheless, it would become hegemonic and pushed oldfangled histories like Palmer's, which treated constitutions and wars, into the shadows for two generations.

The response to *The Struggle* bruised its author. After a brief spell in academic administration, Palmer returned in his later works to the French Revolution—spe-

7 R. R. Palmer, "La 'Révolution Atlantique'—Vingt ans après," in *Die Französische Revolution—zufälliges oder notwendiges Ereignis? Akten des internationalen Symposiums an der Universität Bamberg vom 4.–7. Juni 1979*, ed. Eberhard Schmitt and Rolf Reichardt, 3 vols. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983), 1:100–101.

8 R. R. Palmer, "The Great Inversion: America and Europe in the Eighteenth-Century Revolution," in *Ideas in History: Essays Presented to Louis Gottschalk by His Former Students*, ed. Richard Herr and Harold T. Parker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965), 8.

9 R. R. Palmer, "A Century of French History in America," *French Historical Studies* 14, 2 (1985): 174.

cifically, the history of education—and to studies of individual Frenchmen: the father and son historians of the Revolution, Hervé and Alexis de Tocqueville; the ex-Jacobin Marc-Antoine Jullien; the political economist Jean-Baptiste Say; and, in a last, unfinished work, the revolutionary abolitionist, Abbé Grégoire.¹⁰ He died in 2002 at the age of ninety-three, more than a decade after the collapse of Communism, which he saw through the lens of the first revolutionary age: “Perhaps the east Europeans, most of whom were Europeans for centuries, can now enjoy the benefits of the 18th-century democratic revolution in the west, in which so much violence and struggle were involved.”¹¹

Palmer did not live long enough to see his larger conception of historical writing vindicated. In his own lifetime, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* was little imitated, and no school of “the Atlantic Revolution” emerged. His use of “Western civilization” as an overarching framework led historians of the Left to tar him as an apologist for NATO, while his attacks on American conservatism put him out of favor with historians on the Right. His consistent association of democracy with modernity, and his presentation of the late eighteenth-century world as ideologically riven between revolution and counterrevolution, encouraged readings of *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* as subtle Cold War propaganda shaped by modernization theory. Its omission of the Haitian Revolution and of Iberian America—not to mention the absence of the enslaved, women, and much cultural history—implied that Palmer was afraid to acknowledge the truly radical elements of the age of revolution, that he was blind to its exclusions and complacent about its failed promises. The general flight of students of the French Revolution away from cosmopolitan contexts and political history into revisionism and cultural explanations also left Palmer as an outlier even in his own professional community: shockingly, there is still no French translation of his major work.

Fifty years on, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* looks like a dawn mistaken for a sunset. The recent rise of Atlantic history, which treats the peoples of Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Caribbean as members of a single dynamic oceanic “world,” has reinforced Palmer’s argument for integration. Both the American and the French Revolutions are increasingly seen as transnational, even global, events whose origins must be traced back to the crisis of empires after the Seven Years’ War, much as Palmer had described them. Historians now speak of a “Eurasian Revolution” or a “World Crisis” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and pinpoint the decades on either side of 1800 as the hinge of a “Great Divergence” in which the West began to pull ahead of Asia for the first time in centu-

10 *The School of the French Revolution: A Documentary History of the College of Louis-le-Grand and Its Director, Jean-François Champagne, 1762–1814*, ed. and trans. R. R. Palmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Palmer, *The Improvement of Humanity: Education and the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); *The Two Tocquevilles, Father and Son: Hervé and Alexis de Tocqueville on the Coming of the French Revolution*, ed. and trans. Palmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); *From Jacobin to Liberal: Marc-Antoine Jullien, 1775–1848*, ed. and trans. Palmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jean-Baptiste Say, *An Economist in Troubled Times: Writings*, ed. and trans. Palmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

11 R. R. Palmer, speech on the award of the Premio Feltrinelli (1990), quoted in Eduardo Torrarolo, “Eighteenth-Century Atlantic History Old and New,” *History of European Ideas* 34, 4 (2008): 374.

ries—a short-lived victory that has only recently gone into reverse. And it is becoming clearer that this was also the moment that inaugurated the Anthropocene, the geological era in which humanity has collectively affected the environment through the accelerating consumption of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases.

The Age of the Democratic Revolution appeared long before climate change became a headline issue, before China again became a global economic powerhouse, and before historians generally began to turn away from nation-based historiography. Inspired by Palmer's example, historians in the last decade have revived the age of revolutions—democratic and economic, nationalist and patriotic, imperial and anti-imperial—as a productive and ongoing paradigm for research, even on areas he did not consider: for example, the Caribbean, Scandinavia, Southern Europe, Mexico, the Portuguese empire, South Asia, and the worlds of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. In light of this work, Palmer's chronology seems as arbitrary as his geography. All books must end somewhere, but Palmer's cutoff date of 1800 raises more questions than it answers and now seems the weakest element of his work. No current account of the age of revolution would conclude any earlier than 1804 (with Haitian independence) or 1810–11 (and the first revolutions in Spanish America), or even the 1840s (with the Opium Wars or the European springtime of 1848). As Palmer expanded horizons in space, so now they need to be extended in time.

Almost as outmoded is Palmer's narrow definition of equality as the erasure of customary and inherited distinctions within a largely white, male political community. To be sure, this notion encompassed a great deal under a broad analytical umbrella: anticolonialism, antimonarchism, antinobility, religious toleration, freedom of the press, and support for public education, among other causes. But it also omitted struggles fundamental to the era. "For some few [equality] included greater equality between men and women. Equality for ex-slaves and between races was not overlooked": that is the sum of Palmer's account of perhaps the two most transformative legacies of the age, even though he clearly knew of work on slave resistance, most notably C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938). Indigenous insurrection—such as the Túpac Amaru rebellion in the Andes (1780–83), the most bloody uprising of the era before the Haitian Revolution—barely appears. And Palmer did not allow legacies of violence and inequality that scarred the Atlantic world, especially in the slave societies of the Americas, to cloud his progressivist narrative.

Yet he has not been alone in his blind spots. For example, there is still no history of how the movements against all the major heritable forms of domination and subordination—monarchy, aristocracy, slavery, and gender differences—intersected with or diverged from one another. There is no synoptic account of the late eighteenth century as the age of *antidemocratic counterrevolution*. And the conceptual history of equality remains almost entirely unwritten. Few historians have Palmer's command of languages or his narrative flair; fewer still share his commitment to history as a critical social science directed toward public enlightenment and political reform. Nonetheless, all can learn from his example of pursuing big themes across wide stretches of both time and space.

The prescience of *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* has only become clearer since 1989, and its relevance has increased since the Arab Spring and the explosion of popular protest across the world since 2011. Little of the energy of these movements has been directed toward kings and lords, of course, even if more than a seventh of the world's countries do retain some form of hereditary aristocracy or monarchy. Nor do they often focus on actually existing forms of slavery, despite the fact that as many as twenty-nine million people worldwide still live in some form of bondage. Much of the contemporary anger and desire for reform focuses instead on economic and social inequality, which has grown rapidly within most countries even as the inequalities between them have become less marked. The age of revolution is not over: its fruits are just unevenly distributed around the world.

In the closing pages of his book, Palmer approvingly quoted Tocqueville: "Inequalities of wealth and income . . . would be reduced by revolution or otherwise. Such has in fact proved to be the case." In a more chastened, more rapacious, and more economically turbulent era, we can see how mistaken that prediction turned out to be. Still, we can learn from such hopes and from the histories written to sustain them. *Pace* Palmer (and indeed Hegel, Marx, or Tocqueville), history itself has no purpose, whether freedom, democracy, equality, or any similar consummation. Yet the discipline of history does have a purpose: to call the present to account at the bar of the past. In light of Palmer's ambitious, enduring, and fertile effort to do just that, it would be hard to think of a more apt accolade for *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* than the one given by the great Italian historian of the revolutionary era, Franco Venturi: "a masterpiece about the revolutions of the past born of an inspiring debate with the revolutions of our own time."¹²

DAVID ARMITAGE
OCTOBER 2013

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12 Franco Venturi, citation for the award of the Premio Feltrinelli to R. R. Palmer (1990), quoted in Tortarolo, "Eighteenth-Century Atlantic History Old and New," 374.

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PART 1

THE CHALLENGE

PREFACE TO PART 1

There have long been a great many works on the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the beginnings of the parliamentary reform movement in Great Britain, and on Irish affairs, as also, though less known in the English-speaking world, on the several countries of continental Europe during this revolutionary era. This book attempts to bring all these national histories together. It rests heavily upon the work of others, for except in certain parts, notably Chapters I, IX, XIV, and XV, where I have been able to make use of researches of my own, it is built up from monographs, special studies, and collections of printed documents made by scholars in many countries over a long period of years. The book is therefore an example of what we have come to know as a historical synthesis, and I have accordingly thought it necessary to give detailed references, even at the cost of an unseemly parade of documentation, some of it in languages which I make no pretence of understanding and have been able to use only through the assistance of others. The book may be thought of also as an attempt at a comparative constitutional history of Western Civilization at the time of the French and American Revolutions; but "constitutional" is to be understood in a broad sense, without much emphasis on formal provisions, and in close connection with the political, social, and intellectual currents and the actual conflicts at the time. Much of the book deals with the nature of public authority and private rights, of law, sovereignty, and political representation—or with liberty and equality, and with "fraternity" also, if fraternity be taken to mean the sense of equal membership in the community.

Naturally in the preparation of such a work I have incurred more than the usual number of obligations. Colleagues at Princeton and elsewhere have lent their assistance, either by calling my attention to writings that I would otherwise have missed, or by reading and criticizing particular chapters. I have learned a good deal also from my students, from college seniors to authors of doctoral dissertations. Whether as students, or in some cases as research assistants, they have surveyed materials for me or made studies of their own from which I have appropriated useful items, and in more than one case they have saved me from outright errors. There are some eight persons to whom I am indebted for reading Scandinavian and East European languages. In particular I wish to thank my colleague, Professor W. F. Craven of Princeton, for his continuing help in the problems of the American Revolution; Professors Hans Rosenberg, Jerome Blum, C. G. Sellers,

and Peter Gay, and Mr. George Dangerfield, for reading and discussing various chapters with me; Professor P. Geyl of Utrecht, for his guidance in Dutch history; Professor Arne Odd Johnsen of Oslo for assistance in Norwegian and Danish; Professors D. W. Rustow and Stanley J. Stein and Mr. Andre Michalski of Princeton for assistance, respectively in Swedish, Portuguese, and Polish; Professor C. E. Black and Drs. R. H. McNeal and W. L. Blackwell for assistance in Russian; Dr. Peter F. Sugar for assistance in Hungarian; and my former students at Princeton, now widely dispersed, Messrs. Immo Stabreit, Demetrios Pentzopoulos, Thomas H. Kean, Elie Zilkha, and John W. Shy, and Drs. Stanley Mellon, Gordon M. Jensen, Donald Limoli, and David Gordon for various contributions whose ultimate usefulness to me they could not always foresee. I am indebted to Professor Stanley E. Howard for assistance with the proofs, and to Mr. Jeffry Kaplow for making the index. I have come to appreciate also the warm interest in the present venture shown by Mr. Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., Director of the Princeton University Press, and the careful work and exacting standards of Miss Miriam Brokaw, Managing Editor of the Press, in preparing it for publication. My debt to the Princeton University Library is very great.

To the Rockefeller Foundation, in its Division of Social Sciences, and to the Council of the Humanities of Princeton University, I wish to express thanks for financial support without which the book could not have been written, since it has been used to free me from teaching and other responsibilities for concentration on the present work. I have received smaller grants from the University Research Fund of Princeton University, mainly for the employment of occasional student assistants. I wish also to thank the editor of the *Political Science Quarterly* for permission to reprint the substance of certain articles which first appeared in its pages. No one except myself is responsible for any opinions, errors, or shortcomings in the book.

The project has grown beyond what I at first anticipated, and the present work is now seen as the first of two volumes, which together will survey the revolutionary period of the eighteenth century within the area of Western Civilization. The point of division between the two volumes is, in general, the beginning of the wars of the French Revolution. This first volume, entitled "The Challenge," will I hope be followed by a second, called "The Struggle." Further reading should make clear the full implication of these terms.

R. R. PALMER
PRINCETON, N.J.
DECEMBER 1, 1958

CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Two great parties are forming in all nations. . . . For one, there is a right of government, to be exercised by one or several persons over the mass of the people, of divine origin and to be supported by the church, which is protected by it. These principles are expressed in the formula, Church and State.

To this is opposed the new system, which admits no right of government except that arising from the free consent of those who submit to it, and which maintains that all persons who take part in government are accountable for their actions. These principles go under the formula, Sovereignty of the People, or Democracy.

—G. K. VAN HOGENDORP, ROTTERDAM, 1791

A young Philadelphian of good family, Thomas Shippen, in the course of a visit to Europe, where he cultivated the acquaintance of “titled men and ladies of birth,” bore a letter of introduction to Thomas Jefferson, the American Minister to France, who presented him at the court of Versailles. They arrived, one day in February 1788, “at 1/2 past 10 and were not done bowing until near 2.” Young Shippen chatted with the Papal Nuncio and the Russian Ambassador, who “was very polite,” and on meeting a woman and her two daughters who were all countesses he was introduced with all his “titles,” which he thought most people believed to be hereditary. He was then paired with a German princeling for presentation to the King, who mumbled a few words while hitching on his sword. It all made the young man very conscious of his American nationality. He was “revolted” at the King’s arrogance, but even more “mortified at the suppleness and base complaisance of his attendants.” Such oriental splendor he thought worth seeing—once. It set him to thinking, for, as he wrote to his father, he detected ennui and uneasiness on the faces at court, and was more convinced than ever that “*a certain degree of equality* is essential to human bliss.”

The underlining was Shippen’s own. He added that America was peculiarly fortunate, since it provided the degree of equality that made for happiness, “without

destroying the necessary subordination." No doubt his taste for equality had its limits. Descended on his mother's side from the Lees of Virginia, and on his father's from one of the founders of Pennsylvania, Thomas Shippen belonged socially to the groups that had provided many officers of government in America, and it was in fact on this ground, according to the etiquette at Versailles, that he was thought, as a mere republican, to have sufficient rank for presentation at court. On the other hand, Shippen's own father, a prominent doctor, had been a revolutionary of sorts, having acted as chief medical officer in the Continental Army. More generally, the point is that even Americans of aristocratic standing or pretensions looked on the Europe of 1788 with a certain disapproval.

This little scene at Versailles, revealed in the new edition of the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*,¹ may serve to introduce some of the themes of the following pages, bringing together, as it does, Europe and America, monarchy and republicanism, aristocracy and an emerging democracy, and reflecting certain predilections or biases which the author at the outset confesses to sharing, without, he hastens to add, writing from any such point of view in the social scale as that of the Shippens of Philadelphia.

Let us pass from the concrete image to the broadest of historical generalizations. The present work attempts to deal with Western Civilization as a whole, at a critical moment in its history, or with what has sometimes recently been called the Atlantic Civilization, a term probably closer to reality in the eighteenth century than in the twentieth.² It is argued that this whole civilization was swept in the last four decades of the eighteenth century by a single revolutionary movement, which manifested itself in different ways and with varying success in different countries, yet in all of them showed similar objectives and principles. It is held that this forty-year movement was essentially "democratic," and that these years are in fact the Age of the Democratic Revolution. "Democratic" is here to be understood in a general but clear enough sense. It was not primarily the sense of a later day in which universality of the suffrage became a chief criterion of democracy, nor yet that other and uncertain sense, also of a later day, in which both Soviet and Western-type states could call themselves democratic. In one way, it signified a new feeling for a kind of equality, or at least a discomfort with older forms of social stratification and formal rank, such as Thomas Shippen felt at Versailles, and which indeed had come to affect a good many of the habitués of Versailles also. Politically, the eighteenth-century movement was against the possession of government, or any public power, by any established, privileged, closed, or self-recruiting groups of men. It denied that any person could exercise coercive authority simply by his own right, or by right of his status, or by right of "history," either in the old-fashioned sense of custom and inheritance, or in any newer dialectical sense, unknown to the eighteenth century, in which "history" might be supposed to give some special elite or revolutionary vanguard a right to rule. The "democratic revolution" emphasized the delegation of authority and the removability of officials,

1 Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, 1950-), XII, 502-4.

2 See the paper prepared by Professor J. Godechot and myself for the international historical meeting at Rome in 1955: "Le problème de l'Atlantique du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle," in *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Roma 4-11 Settembre 1955) (Florence, 1955), V, 175-239.

precisely because, as we shall see, neither delegation nor removability were much recognized in actual institutions.

It is a corollary of these ideas that the American and the French Revolutions, the two chief actual revolutions of the period, with all due allowance for the great differences between them, nevertheless shared a good deal in common, and that what they shared was shared also at the same time by various people and movements in other countries, notably in England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy, but also in Germany, Hungary, and Poland, and by scattered individuals in places like Spain and Russia.

THE REVOLUTION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

To obtain the right perspective on the whole era it is necessary to begin by looking at its climax at the end. This came with the Wars of the French Revolution from 1792 to 1800 or 1801. To these years I hope some day to devote a sequel, and this volume takes the story only to about 1791; but the whole period can best be understood by remembering the unprecedented struggle in which it ended. This struggle had in it something universal; as Burke said, there had been nothing like it since the Protestant Reformation had thrown all Europe into a commotion that overran all political boundaries.³

Burke himself, when he died in 1797, was so afraid of invasion and revolution in England that he gave orders for his remains to be secretly buried, lest triumphant democrats dig them up for desecration. Revolution broke out in Ireland in 1798. Dutch historians speak of revolution in the Netherlands in 1795, when the Batavian Republic was founded, and of a more radical movement of 1798. The Swiss feel that they were revolutionized in the Helvetic Republic of 1798. Italian writers speak of revolution at Milan in 1796, at Rome in 1797, at Naples in 1798. The Cisalpine, Roman, and Parthenopean republics were the outcome. In the German Rhineland there were some who demanded annexation to France, or, that failing, the establishment of a revolutionary "Cisrhenane," or Rhineland Republic. Elsewhere in Germany the disturbance was largely ideological. The philosopher Fichte, an ardent revolutionary thinker, found it "evident" in 1799 that "only the French Republic can be considered by the just man as his true country." The city of Berlin was notably pro-French. In Poland, revolution reached a climax in 1794 with Kosciusko. In Hungary in the same year seventy-five members of a republican conspiracy were arrested. In Greece, in 1797, delegates from Athens, Crete, Macedonia, and other parts of the Greek world met at a secret conclave in Morea; they planned an uprising of all Greeks against the Ottoman Empire, if only the French would send weapons, ammunition, and a few units of the French army. A Russian found that the "charm of revolution" had penetrated "deep into Siberia."

3 The present section draws heavily on my two articles, "Reflections on the French Revolution," in *Political Science Quarterly*, LXVII (1952), 64-80, and "The World Revolution of the West, 1763-1801," *Ibid.*, LXIX (1954), 1-14. See also, for bibliography, my "Recent Interpretations of the Influence of the French Revolution," in *Journal of World History*, II (1954), 173-95.

And at the other extremity of Western Civilization, in the thinly settled American West, long after the Terror in France is supposed to have brought Americans to their senses, there was still so much lingering pro-French feeling, so much democratic and republican sentiment, so much inclination to break away from the allegedly aristocratic East, that the outgoing president, George Washington, in his Farewell Address, earnestly begged his Western countrymen to put their trust in the United States. In 1798 the popular hero, George Rogers Clark, holding a commission as brigadier-general in the army of the French Republic, attempted a secret recruiting of Kentuckians to invade and "revolutionize" Louisiana, which was then Spanish, and meant the whole territory west of the Mississippi. Blocked by an unsympathetic United States government, he fled to St. Louis, where, on the uttermost fringes of the civilized world, there was a society of French *sans-culottes* to receive him.

At Quebec in 1797 a man was hanged, drawn, and quartered as a dangerous revolutionary. At Quito, in what is now Ecuador, the first librarian of the public library was tortured and imprisoned for political agitation. A republican conspiracy was discovered at Bahia, in Brazil, in 1798. A Negro at Buenos Aires testified that Frenchmen in the city were plotting to liberate slaves in an uprising against the Spanish crown. In the High Andes, at the old silver town of Potosi, far from foreign influences on the coasts, the governor was horrified to discover men who toasted liberty and drank to France. The British government, in 1794, a year before occupying Cape Town, feared that there were too many "democrats," eager to welcome the French, among the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope.⁴

All of these agitations, upheavals, intrigues, and conspiracies were part of one great movement. It was not simply a question of the "spread" or "impact" or "influence" of the French Revolution. Not all revolutionary agitation since 1918 has been produced by the Kremlin, and not all such agitation in the 1790's was due to the machinations of revolutionary Paris. It is true, and not without contemporary significance, that persons of revolutionary persuasion were able to install revolutionary regimes only where they could receive help from the French republican army. But revolutionary aims and sympathies existed throughout Europe and America. They arose everywhere out of local, genuine, and specific causes; or, contrariwise, they reflected conditions that were universal throughout the Western

4 For the incident about Burke in the preceding paragraphs see T. W. Copeland, *Our Eminent Friend Edmund Burke: Six Essays* (New Haven, 1949), 90; for the quotation from Fichte, J. Droz, *L'Allemagne et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1949), 279; for other countries mentioned, P. F. Sugar, "The Influence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution in Eighteenth Century Hungary," in *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XVII (1958), 348–52; A. Dascalakis, *Rhigas Velestinlis: La Révolution française et les préludes de l'indépendance hellénique* (Pans, 1937), 15; M. M. Shtrange, *Russkoye Obshchestvo i Frantsuzskaya Revolyutsiya* (Russian Society and the French Revolution, 1789–1794) (Moscow, 1956), 61 (I am indebted to Mr. W. L. Blackwell for reading this work in Russian for me); A. P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question 1795–1803* (New York, 1934), 155; W. Kingsford, *History of Canada* (10 vols., London 1887–1898), VII, 440–51; E. Clavery, *Trois précurseurs de l'indépendance des démocraties sud-américaines: Miranda, Nariño, Espejo* (Pans, 1932); A. Ruy, *A primeira revolução social brasileira, 1798* (Rio de Janeiro, 1942); R. Caillet-Bois, *Ensayo sobre el Río de la Plata y la Revolución francesa* (Buenos Aires, 1929), 76–77, 106–7; and for the Cape of Good Hope, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Drogheda* (London, 1892–1927), II, 645.

world. They were not imported from one country to another. They were not imitated from the French, or at least not imitated blindly. There was one big revolutionary agitation, not simply a French revolution due to purely French causes, and foolishly favored by irresponsible people in other countries.

This universal agitation was clear enough to contemporaries, but has not been well presented by the historians. The old classic, Sorel's *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, of which the first volume appeared in 1885, is in the older tradition of diplomatic history and international relations. It can by its very title convey a false impression, if it suggests a struggle between the French Revolution and "Europe," since the struggle was primarily between a revolutionary French government and the conservative governments and governing classes of Europe, with many Frenchmen opposed to the revolution, and many other Europeans and Americans in favor of it. At a more specialized level, there has been much research and writing in many countries. There are, for example, excellent studies of the Jacobin clubs in France, of the democratic-republican societies in the United States and of the radical societies in Great Britain, and we know that there were similar political clubs, at the same time, in Amsterdam, Mainz, Milan, and elsewhere. But only very recently has Professor Godechot undertaken to study such clubs as a whole, comparing their membership, their methods, and their stated aims. In all countries it has been the national history that has mainly occupied attention. The literature on the French Revolution is enormous, but most of it is focused on France. Italians have published abundantly on their *triennio*, the three revolutionary years in Italy from 1796 to 1799. Swiss, Belgians, Dutch, Irish, and many others have provided a wealth of materials on their respective histories at the time. The years from 1763 to 1800 have always been a staple of American historiography. But the work has been carried on in national isolation, compartmentalized by barriers of language or the particular histories of governments and states. All acknowledge a wider reality, but few know much about it. This book, in a way, is simply a putting together of hundreds of excellent studies already in existence.

Recently, probably because we live in a period of world revolution ourselves, there has been more tendency to see an analogous phenomenon at the close of the eighteenth century. Alfred Cobban and David Thomson in England have spoken of a kind of Democratic International at that time, and Louis Gottschalk of Chicago has stressed the idea of a world revolution of which the American and French Revolutions were a part. Only certain French scholars in the last decade, Lefebvre, Fugier, Godechot, have undertaken to develop the idea in detail.⁵

Godechot's recently published two volumes are a remarkable work, built upon extensive and difficult researches, and analyzing the revolutionary social classes, organizations, clubs, methods, propaganda devices, ideas, objectives, and achievements with great care. They are largely confined, however, to the parts of Europe actually occupied by French armies during the Revolutionary Wars, and are limited in time to the decade from 1789 to 1799; and they seem to represent a com-

5 G. Lefebvre, *La Révolution française* (Paris, 1951) in the series *Peuples et civilisations*, XIII; A. Fugier, *La Révolution française et l'Empire napoléonien* (Paris, 1954) in the series edited by P. Renouvin, *Histoire des relations internationales*, IV; and especially J. Godechot, *La Grande nation: Expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde de 1789 à 1799* (Paris, 1956), 2 vols.

promise, in the author's mind, between the idea of expansion of a primarily French Revolution and the idea of a more widespread upheaval in which the French Revolution was the greatest single eruption. Planned as they are, they give proportionately little attention to the English-speaking world and to Germany and Eastern Europe; and the American Revolution, its effects in Europe, and the political problems and disturbances of various European countries before the war of 1792 appear only allusively as a background.

It may be said, and it is of course true, that even if there is a world revolution in the twentieth century, its existence is of not the slightest relevancy, one way or the other, as evidence of any comparable movement at the close of the eighteenth. There is in America, and always has been, a strong body of opinion holding that the American and French revolutions were phenomena of altogether different kinds. There have always been British and European observers who have maintained that the agitation for parliamentary reform in England or Ireland, or the political overturns of the Dutch, Swiss, or Italians, were not truly revolutionary in any meaningful or modern sense. It is admittedly the purpose of this book to persuade to a contrary opinion. It is not necessary, however, to reject such ideas as simply mistaken, or to insist upon similarities where none exist. All that is necessary, or even desirable, is to set up a larger framework, or conceptual structure, in which phenomena that are admittedly different, and even different in very significant ways, may yet be seen as related products of a common impulse, or different ways of achieving, under different circumstances and against different degrees of opposition, certain recognizably common goals.

Revolution, it must be admitted, has become a distasteful word in many quarters. Americans may feel a troubled sympathy for anticolonialist movements in Asia or Africa, and a more unanimous enthusiasm for such abortive revolutions as those attempted in Hungary or Poland in 1956; but the successful and threatening revolution of our own time, "the revolution" *par excellence*, is the one represented by communist parties, soviet republics, and, at least allegedly, the social doctrines of Karl Marx. To this revolution most readers of this book, as well as the author, feel a certain lack of cordiality. Some would dismiss all revolutions as dangerous and delusive, or even make of conservatism a kind of basic philosophy. In this case it becomes necessary—for Americans—to argue that the American Revolution was not really a revolution, but a conservative movement; I shall return to this problem. My own belief is that opposition to one revolution is no reason for rejecting all revolutions, that the value of conservatism depends on the value of what is to be conserved, that revolution must be appraised according to the ethical content and feasibility of its aims, and in terms of probable alternatives and real choices at the moment; and that the true matter for moral judgment, or for political decision, is not between the old and the new, or the conservative and the revolutionary, but the actual welfare of human beings as estimated by a reasonable calculation of possibilities in particular situations.

The parallels between the Russian and the French Revolutions, or between the twentieth-century and the eighteenth-century upheavals, are plainly apparent and cannot be honestly denied. In both there is the same story of collapse of the old system, seizure of power by new and unauthorized groups, extermination of the

old institutions; confiscation, emigration, terror; attack upon the church; consolidation of the new regime in a powerful country, with the setting up of dependent states in adjacent regions; agitation threatening all established governments, frontiers, interests, classes, and views of life; cleavage of opinion, and formation of loyalties and aversions, that overrun all political borders and divide all states within. We do not like this today, and we are embarrassed to find it happening in the name of Liberty and Equality in the decade of the 1790's. We are further embarrassed by taunts from the Left, of Marxists who say that the proletariat today is only trying to do what the bourgeois once did; or that the bourgeois today, for obvious reasons, is trying to deny his own revolutionary background and suppress even the memory of it, lest it set a bad example.

It is the weakest of all replies to hold that revolution under any conditions is a sad mistake. Perhaps we should not be too squeamish; perhaps we should admit that we "bourgeois" entered upon a revolutionary era some two centuries ago. We should admit that it resembles the revolutionary era of the twentieth century. We should then add that the resemblances are largely formal, more of pattern than of substance, and involving abstractions. All wars are alike in being wars, and there is even such a thing as military science; but not all wars, or all combatants, are alike in their effects upon mankind. All revolutions resemble one another as revolutions, and there is probably even a science or technique of revolution as such; but it does not follow that all revolutions have the same effects. It is permitted to believe that a better society, more humane, more open, more flexible, more susceptible to improvement, more favorable to physical welfare and to the pursuit of higher concerns, issued from the democratic revolution of the eighteenth century than from the communist revolution of the twentieth. It is not necessary to idealize either. It is enough to say that revolution is like war, occurring when all compromise breaks down, and representing a violent clash between two or more groups over the structure of the whole society to which each belongs. We may indeed write the history of a war, or a revolution, in which we constantly deprecate the resort to violence, regret the loss of individual liberties, comment on the bad feeling between the participants, and note how all other pursuits become subordinated to one single overwhelming end. We would not thereby much elucidate the war, or the revolution; we would only be saying that we preferred peace, or that in a better world neither war nor revolution would ever be necessary.

The exact relationship of the Russian to the French Revolution has in recent decades been the subject of much careful examination. Two tendencies may be perceived: the one to associate, the other to dissociate, the two revolutions. By an "associationist" view I would not mean such an attempt as Crane Brinton's in his *Anatomy of Revolution*, in which the author looks for a pattern of revolutionary process as such, by comparative study of the English, American, French, Russian, and other revolutions. I would mean rather a view in which the French Revolution is seen as a kind of origin, partial cause, or distant prefigurement of the Russian Revolution, which insists upon "Jacobinism" as the "communism" of the eighteenth century, or sees a kind of continuing linear process in which the Russian Revolution is in some way a consequence of the French, or presents a more highly developed stage of the same process. This was of course the view of Marx, Lenin, and

Trotsky, as it is of modern Soviet scholars; it is also the view of many warmly anti-Soviet and anticommunist writers, notably of Professor Talmon of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, who traces the "origins of totalitarian democracy," or Soviet communism, back to Robespierre and Rousseau.⁶ There are nowadays many others for whom Robespierre and Rousseau figure more as ancestors of totalitarianism than of democracy.

It is true that Marx and his followers were close students of the French Revolution, and learned a good deal from it; this is, if anything, a good reason for the rest of us to make an independent study of the subject. It is also true that the communist movement would never have taken form as it did except for the prior occurrence of the French Revolution—as of much else in the preceding history of Russia and of Europe. It is even true that the Jacobins were in some ways something like the communists; but, not to dwell on the difference in their actual principles, the fact that the Jacobin clubs were the products of the French Revolution rather than the producers of it, never had any international organization, lasted only five years, and were closed down by revolutionaries themselves, should give pause to those wishing to pursue this parallel beyond a certain point.

"Dissociation" of the French and Russian Revolutions, at a serious level, rests upon observations of the following kind: First, the subsequent cult of the Revolution was a different thing from the French Revolution itself. This was emphasized, for example, by the late Professor Griewank of Jena. Strongly inclined to Western democratic and humane values, Griewank believed that the French of the Revolution thought in relatively practical terms of rational politics and the needs of war; and that the ballooning up of the Revolution into a vast, fearsome, perpetual, gigantic, and all-consuming force was the work in part of counterrevolutionaries who wished to discredit the real aims of the French Revolution, in part of romantic philosophers, and in part of rebellious spirits in those countries, like Germany, where real revolution had had the least effect.⁷ It is apparently a fact that the modern or communist revolutions have been, so far, least successful precisely in those countries where the eighteenth-century or democratic revolution produced the most significant changes. Related to this is the thought of the American scholar T. H. von Laue, who has suggested a significant difference of kind between the Russian, Asian, and twentieth-century revolutions on the one hand, and the French, Western, and eighteenth-century revolutions on the other. Where the latter, he holds, arose as indigenous developments of their own culture, reflecting the growth of values, knowledge, and aspirations having deep native roots, the twentieth-century revolutions, whether in Russia or China, or formerly colonial areas, are alike in having been precipitated by contacts with an outside or foreign civilization, and by the stresses, maladjustments, feelings of backwardness, and other ambivalences ensuing thereupon.⁸ The French of 1789 might feel that in respect to government or personal rights they were less favored than the British or

6 J. L. Talmon, *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy* (Boston, 1952).

7 K. Griewank, *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff: Entstehung und Entwicklung* (Weimar, 1955).

8 T. H. von Laue, "Die Revolution von aussen als erste Phase der russischen Revolution," in *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas*, IV (1956), 138–58. Mr. von Laue is an American scholar writing in German.

the Americans. Like all peoples, they had been exposed to influences from outside. But the French Revolution grew directly out of earlier French history. The French were untroubled by any feeling of backwardness; they did not have to strain to keep up in a march of progress. The same is generally true of the Western world at the time. The eighteenth century saw the Revolution of the Western world; the twentieth century, the Revolution of the non-Western.

None of these ideas need command unqualified adherence. No more will be said explicitly of the twentieth century in the present book, which is a history of the eighteenth, and in which the French Revolution is associated not with modern communism but with other movements of its own time within the area of Western Civilization.

A "DEMOCRATIC" REVOLUTION: "DEMOCRAT" AND "ARISTOCRAT" IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

Even if there was a general revolutionary disturbance between about 1760 and about 1800, it does not follow, without further explanation, that "democratic" is the best word to describe it. It is well known that Thomas Jefferson did not much favor the use of the word; and we often read, at least in American books, that the term in the 1790's became an epithet or smear-word, by which persons were designated against their will, and usually falsely, like persons falsely called communists at a later day. The belief that the word had no willing acceptance in the eighteenth century actually plays into the hands of the modern Left; thus a Dutch scholar has argued, partly on the mistaken ground that "democracy" was little heard in Holland before 1800, that the modern "Eastern" use of the word, implying an economic rather than a political equality, and dating from the rise of social democracy in the 1880's, is historically more legitimate than the modern "Western" use.⁹ The fact seems to be that "democracy" and "democrat" enjoyed more currency before 1800 than is commonly supposed. It must be remembered that the words "liberal," "radical," and "progressive" did not exist. When moderates or conservatives wished to indicate the dangerous drift of the times, or when the more advanced spirits spoke of themselves, they might very well use the words "democrat" or "democracy." The reader may bear with a little evidence on this point, especially since, as the word occurs in many European languages, nothing else so vividly illustrates the international character of the movement.¹⁰

The word "democracy," like "aristocracy" and "monarchy," was of course as old as the Greeks or their translators, and the three terms had been in the common vocabulary of political thinkers continuously since the Middle Ages. There is some evidence that the most rural and innermost of the Swiss cantons, and some of the German free cities, thought of themselves as democratic in the eighteenth century.

9 J. van de Giessen, *De opkomst van het woord democratie als leuze in Nederland* (The Hague, 1948).

10 The present section reproduces parts of my article, "Notes on the Use of the Word 'Democracy,' 1789-1799," in *Political Science Quarterly*, LXVIII (1953), 203-26, to which the reader desiring documentation may refer, except for the quotations from Helvetius, Kollontay, and Wordsworth, for which references are given below.

Except for "monarchy," however, none of the three terms seems yet to have entered the common speech. They were political scientists' words, tools of analysis, closely defined, dry in connotation, and without emotional impact. It was generally agreed that "pure democracy" could not exist, except possibly in very small states with simple habits. This was Rousseau's view as expressed in the *Social Contract*. At the most, democracy was a principle, or element, which might profitably enter into a "mixed constitution," balanced by principles of monarchy and aristocracy, as was believed to be the case in England or the Venetian Republic. It is rare, even among the *philosophes* of France before the Revolution, to find anyone using the word "democracy" in a favorable sense in any practical connection.

Some, however, can be found. There was Helvetius, who, in his private notes in refutation of Montesquieu, observed: "When the governed cannot rid themselves of the oppression of those who govern badly, it is despotism. When they can, it is democracy."¹¹ There was the Marquis d'Argenson, who in the 1730's allowed to circulate secretly, in manuscript, his *Considerations on the Government of France*. D'Argenson here reviews French history. He finds that the growing power of the kings has favored equality and democracy as against nobility and aristocracy. He repeatedly uses the term "democracy." He emphatically does not want it mixed with aristocracy. He speaks of "that fortunate progress of Democracy which we admire in the reigns free from civil war." He expects and hopes that this progress of democracy will continue. He is surprisingly like Tocqueville a century later in his view of French history—except that he is more unreservedly in favor of democracy than Tocqueville. We may note, too, in d'Argenson, the tendency to think of democracy as equality rather than as self-government, opposing it to "aristocracy," rather than to "monarchy." Both Helvetius and d'Argenson have left behind the traditional idea that only small and virtuous societies could be democratic.

The two nouns, "democrat" and "aristocrat," were coinages of the period, unknown before the 1780's. No "democrats" fought in the American Revolution; and the Age of Aristocracy, as long as it was unchallenged, heard nothing of "aristocrats." Neither word was current in English before 1789; in France, *aristocrate* crops up in the reign of Louis XVI, *democrate* not until 1789. It may be that the words were first coined by the Dutch. It seems certain, in any case, that their first currency was in the Low Countries, in the Dutch revolution of 1784–1787 and the Belgian revolution of 1789–1791. We find *aristocraten* used by Dutch burghers as early as 1784. The Rotterdam patrician, van Hogendorp, writing in the French language in 1786, declares that his country is troubled by a cabal. "People say," he adds, "that this cabal is divided into aristocrats and democrats." "Aristocrat" entered into popular parlance among the Dutch in these years; but "democrat" remained rare, the popular party calling itself Patriot. In Belgium, however, that is, the Austrian Netherlands, in the revolt of 1789 against the emperor, the advanced party came to call itself Democrat. By January 1791 its leaders were speaking of *les braves Démocrates* and *les bons Démocrates*. One even wrote, "*Vive la Démocratie!*" The extreme frequency of "aristocrat" in France during the Revolution is well known, and it seems to us to have been applied indiscriminately, and in fact falsely,

11 See the note by Helvetius in Montesquieu, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1826), II, 137.

to a great many people. To us the word means a member of an aristocratic class; it does not mean one who is an adherent of, or believer in, an aristocratic society. There is no reason, however, why it should not have had these meanings when it was coined. The word "democrat," conversely to "aristocrat," does not mean a member of a democratic class; it does mean an adherent of, or believer in, a democratic society. It is possible, therefore, that "aristocrat" was used less loosely and irrationally than is supposed, since there were undoubtedly millions of "aristocrats" in France in the extended and now obsolete sense of the word.

"Democrat" was rarely used in France, despite its currency in Belgium in 1790 and 1791. It was probably coined, in France as in Holland or Belgium, in contradistinction to "aristocrat." Ferdinand Brunot, in his tremendous history of the French language, lists two hundred and six nouns and phrases designating political alignments during the Revolution. "Democrat" is in the list, but there are many more familiar terms, such as "patriots," "Jacobins," or "sansculottes." Dubois-Crance, the future regicide, used it in 1790 in speaking on the military policy suitable to the new France. He describes the citizen soldier—"a patriot, an honest democrat." In 1791 Brissot claimed to advocate "a popular monarchy, tending to the popular side. Such is my democracy." In 1793, when Louis XVI was executed, the drums rolled to smother the last sounds and the crowds shouted "*Vive la Republique!*" One young man heard, or at least reported, "Long live Democracy!" He was, however, a Greek, writing to a fellow countryman in the Greek language. It may be that "democracy" to him, not being a foreign word, could convey a feeling that it lacked for western Europeans; that he used it naturally as a translation for the Latin "republic," to express the ideals and passions that he sensed in revolutionary Paris.

With the advent of the Jacobins and the Terror, "democracy" became more frequent, though never common. It was occasionally used at the Jacobin Club, where Camille Desmoulins cried that "the English people must be exterminated from Europe, unless they democratize themselves!" Herault-Sechelles, submitting what is called the Jacobin constitution to the Convention for adoption, praised it as "representative and democratic." The constitution itself, though in fact democratic, allowing universal male suffrage and providing measures of initiative and referendum, does not use the word.

The *locus classicus* for the word "democracy" during the French Revolution is the speech of Robespierre in the Convention on February 5, 1794. This speech is often quoted. It is the one in which he defines Virtue and Terror. What is usually quoted is Robespierre's moral exhortations rather than his remarks on democracy, although one might suppose the latter to have at least equal historical significance. Not counting sporadic occurrences, he uses the word "democracy," while specifically on the subject, eleven times in the space of seven hundred words, or in about five minutes of speaking time. "Democracy," he said, "is a state in which the people, as sovereign, guided by laws of its own making, does for itself all that it can do well, and by its delegates what it cannot. . . . Democracy is the only form of state which all the individuals composing it can truly call their country. . . . The French are the first people in the world to establish a true democracy, by calling all men to enjoy equality and the fulness of civic rights; and that, in my opinion, is the real reason why all the tyrants allied against the Republic will be defeated."

Soon after this speech the really internecine phase of the Terror began, culminating in Robespierre's own death six months later. Thereupon there was general agreement, even by revolutionaries far to the left, to regard Robespierre's ambition, or his fanaticism, as the cause of the late troubles. The association of "democracy" with Robespierre, and hence with terror, naturally tended to discredit democracy itself.

There remained in France, under the Directory, amorphous democratic groups which looked back with favor on the Constitution of the Year I (1793) and the Committee of Public Safety. They were often quite respectable people, and represented no single social class. At Toulouse, for example, they included a few of the wealthiest citizens, and many businessmen and lawyers, as well as artisans, tradesmen, and mechanics. They even won a national election in 1798, to no avail, since they were put down by a *coup d'état*. How often they employed the word "democracy" is not clear. They were called "anarchists" by the dominant republicans of the Directory, as by the royalists.

In Holland after 1795 there was an important newspaper at Amsterdam called *De Democraten*. The Amsterdam political club said it wanted the *democratisch systeem*. Even the French Directory, which used the word sparingly, declared in instructions for its agent in Holland, in December 1797, that the Dutch people desired a "free and democratic constitution." About a third of the members of the Dutch constituent assembly signed a petition, in January 1798, in favor of "a democratic representative constitution." A constitutional committee, in February, affirmed to the French agent, Delacroix, that the Dutch were "capable of a greater measure of democracy than would be suitable for the French."

In parts of Germany, notably the Rhenish states, there were people whose ideas were in effect democratic, but they seem to have used the word less often than the Dutch. One clubroom, in 1792, is reported to have had a sign on its wall reading *Vive la Democratie. Au diable les aristocrates!*—in French! The journalist Lange, in an article comparing aristocracy and democracy, boldly declared for the latter, which, he said, offered more freedom to the real inequalities of human talent. Fichte defiantly accepted the word—or, at least, refrained from explicitly repudiating it—when he got into trouble, on the charge of atheism and radicalism, at the University of Jena. In Prussia, the minister Struensee remarked to a French diplomat in 1799: "The king is a democrat in his way. . . . In a few years there will be no more privileged classes in Prussia."

In Switzerland, the constitution of the Helvetic Republic, which was proclaimed by the French in 1798, declared in its Article II that "the form of government, whatever modifications it may undergo, shall at all times be a representative democracy." Of all the written constitutions promulgated in Europe and America, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, this is apparently the only one to call itself explicitly democratic. Its author was the Basel revolutionary, Peter Ochs, who spent a good deal of time in Paris. For the most part, in Switzerland in 1798, the favorable use of "democracy" in a modern sense appears to have been confined to the invading French. The Swiss, when they used the word favorably, generally referred to the small historic democracies of the rural cantons, which were in fact oligarchic in the eighteenth century.

It was in Italy that the word "democracy," in a favorable sense, was most commonly used in the years from 1796 to 1799. The most striking example comes from no less a person than Pius VII, two years before his elevation to the papacy. From 1785 to 1800 he was Bishop of Imola, a town in the northern part of the Papal States. Revolutionary disturbances broke out on every side when the French army, under Bonaparte, conquered Lombardy in 1796. Imola was absorbed into the Cisalpine Republic. On Christmas Eve 1797 the Bishop of Imola issued a Christmas homily to his diocese. It contains the word "democracy" eleven times within the space of a few hundred words. "The form of democratic government adopted among us, most beloved brethren," he said, "is not inconsistent with the Gospel."

The Milan popular club announces: *facciamo uno governo democratico*. "People shout: *La Democrazia o la Morte!*" Others wish to "democratize the People," to create "a democratic base." A newspaper declares that any republic in Italy must be "a democracy, one and indivisible." Pamphlets are entitled "Resurgence of oppressed democracy" and "Democratic education for the Italian people." At Venice there is talk of creating a democracy, and Democratic Fecundity is exhibited by an engaged couple marching in a procession. At Rome a man named Martelli speaks casually of what will happen after the "democratization" of Naples and Tuscany. A proclamation reads, "Form yourselves into a democracy, People of the Roman Republic." There is a theatrical production called "The Democratization of Heaven." There is a grand ball in honor of Bonaparte: no "ladies" and very few *seigneurs ro-mains* were present, but this is not surprising, because "the party was democratic." And with republican Rome facing attack in 1799 by the King of Naples, the leaders try, though in vain, to make it a war for "democracy."

Use of the words in the Scandinavian and East European languages is harder to trace. Newspapers as far north as Trondheim admonished "aristocrats" in 1794. Whether republicans in Hungary used the term "democrat" I do not know. The Polish revolutionary, Kollontay, in a book written after the failure of Kosciuszko's uprising, declared that the whole period since 1750 was like an "earthquake," which had given "a new aspect and a new importance to democracy."¹²

In England and Scotland the antidemocrats seem to have monopolized the word. Wordsworth did indeed say in a private letter in 1794: "I am of that odious class of men called democrats."¹³ But he said it with a note of defiance which eloquently suggests the disrepute of the word. Even Thomas Paine rarely employs it, but in the third chapter of *The Rights of Man*, Part Two, he does address himself to the meaning of "republic," "aristocracy," and "democracy." "Democracy" occurs eleven times within about five hundred words. He distinguishes it from direct or "simple" democracy. "Retaining, then, Democracy as the ground, and rejecting the corrupt systems of Monarchy and Aristocracy, the representative system naturally presents itself. . . . It is on this system that the American Government is founded. It is representation ingrafted upon Democracy." There are only three texts of the period, to my knowledge, where the author uses "democracy" in a favorable sense,

12 Quoted by B. Lesnodorski, "Le siècle des lumières en Pologne," in Académie polonaise des sciences, *La Pologne au X^e Congrès international des sciences historiques à Rome* (Warsaw, 1955), 180.

13 W. Knight, ed., *Letters of the Wordsworth Family from 1787 to 1855* (London, 1907), I, 66.

as often as eleven times within a few hundred words; and these three texts are those of Paine, Robespierre, and the man who became Pius VII.

In the United States, where the people were still in large measure culturally British, and in particular among those of the educated classes, there was undoubtedly some hesitation by democrats to adopt the word "democratic." The foreign origin of democracy was a favorite theme of Federalist polemics, and the justification for the Alien Act of 1798; and it seems to be true that democracy, as a word, though not the reality behind it, was brought into America by the European revolution. James Monroe, after reading the Anglo-Franco-American Paine's *Rights of Man*, remarks in a letter to Jefferson, in 1791, that he agrees with the author, and that "the bulk of the [American] people are for democracy." In the following years a great many political clubs, not unlike the radical societies of Britain and Continental Europe, began to appear in various parts of the United States. Forty-two can now be identified. The first was established by Pennsylvania Germans in March 1793. It called itself the German Republican Society. The third to be organized, and the first to adopt the name "democratic," was the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania. Its members at first planned to use the name Sons of Liberty; it was the French minister, Genet, who suggested the word "democratic" for this purpose. Sixteen others soon thereafter put "democratic" in their titles. In 1793 we find Aedanus Burke, of South Carolina, impatiently calling Jefferson a "half-way democrat" because of his stand, as Secretary of State, in favor of neutrality in the European war. The implication was that a whole-way democrat would be better. And among the countless toasts then offered at political banquets was one at Boston in 1795, which proposed for the contemplation of all lovers of liberty "one great democratic society comprehending the human race."

It is, therefore, no anachronism to apply the word "democratic" to the eighteenth-century revolution. It was the last decade of the century that brought the word out of the study and into actual politics.

A PREVIEW OF WHAT FOLLOWS

In Western Civilization, in the middle of the eighteenth century, there was no novelty in discussions of liberty, or human equality, or law, or limited government, or constitutional rights, or the sovereignty of the people. Greek and medieval philosophy, Roman law, Christian theology, and baronial rebellions had all made contributions to one such idea or another. A marked democratic movement had expressed itself in the English revolution during the 1640's, and the history of many European towns was full of clashes between populace and patricians. Such popular movements, however, had been local, sporadic, and unsuccessful; and of general ideas, such as ultimate human equality, or government with the consent of the governed, it is well known that the more general such ideas are the more variegated and contradictory may be the actual practices with which men learn to live. Actual practice, about 1750, was such that certain old ideas, or old words and phrases, took on a new application and a wider and more urgent meaning.

If we say that a revolutionary era began about 1760, it is not because any persons or any organizations intended or worked in advance for a revolution. The modern conception of a revolutionary movement is the result, not the cause, of the revolutionary era that we are discussing. "Revolution" was a familiar word, but it usually meant no more than the revolving fortunes of governments, without great impersonal causes or any long-run direction; one might speak of Chancellor Maupeou's "revolution" in France in 1770, or the King of Sweden's "revolution" of 1772. The situation that began to develop about 1760 was revolutionary in a deeper way.

By a revolutionary situation is here meant one in which confidence in the justice or reasonableness of existing authority is undermined; where old loyalties fade, obligations are felt as impositions, law seems arbitrary, and respect for superiors is felt as a form of humiliation; where existing sources of prestige seem undeserved, hitherto accepted forms of wealth and income seem ill-gained, and government is sensed as distant, apart from the governed and not really "representing" them. In such a situation the sense of community is lost, and the bond between social classes turns to jealousy and frustration. People of a kind formerly integrated begin to feel as outsiders, or those who have never been integrated begin to feel left out. As a group of Sheffield workmen demanded in 1794: "What is the constitution to us if we are nothing to it?"¹⁴ No community can flourish if such negative attitudes are widespread or long-lasting. The crisis is a crisis of community itself, political, economic, sociological, personal, psychological, and moral at the same time. Actual revolution need not follow, but it is in such situations that actual revolution does arise. Something must happen, if continuing deterioration is to be avoided; some new kind or basis of community must be formed.

What we shall see in the following chapters is a groping toward a new kind of community. With it went the struggles of opposed ideas and interests. It has often been said, on the authority of no less a person than Alexis de Tocqueville, that the French Revolution was over before it began, that it was the work of men's minds before they made it the work of their hands. This idea can be misleading, for with it one may miss the whole reality of struggle. The Revolution was not merely the attempt to realize in practice ideas which had already conquered in the realm of thought. No ideas had "conquered"; there was no "climate of opinion" of any specific social or political content. The Revolution was a conflict between incompatible conceptions of what the community ought to be, and it carried out with violence a conflict that had already come into being. There is no reason to suppose (if we put aside historical metaphysics) that one side in this conflict was moribund, the other abounding with vigor; one, old and doomed in any case to extinction, the other, new and already riding upon the wave of the future. It is sufficiently enlightening to see it simply as a conflict, in which either antagonist would prevail at the expense of the other. It is hoped that readers of this book, whichever way their own sympathies may lie, may at least agree, upon finishing it, on the reality of the conflict.

14 An address to the British Nation, printed with *Proceedings of a Public Meeting at Sheffield . . . 7 April 1794* (Sheffield, 1794), 41.

In the absence of better words, and not wishing to invent more colorless sociological terms, we think of the parties to this essential conflict, so far as they may be reduced simply to two sides, as the proponents of "aristocratic" and "democratic" forms of the community, emotionally overcharged or semantically ambiguous though these words may be. It is held that both democratic and aristocratic forces were gaining strength after about 1760, that revolution came because both were rising, and that they took the form of revolution and counterrevolution at the close of the century, and of democratically and conservatively oriented philosophies thereafter. It follows that conservatism and counterrevolution were no mere "reactions" against revolution, but eighteenth-century forces against which revolution was itself a reaction. This idea is not the invention of the present author: recent works on the American Revolution emphasize the growing conservatism in British Parliamentary circles before 1775; Professor Valjavec insists that conservatism in Germany antedated the agitation of the 1790's; French historians stress the "aristocratic resurgence" preceding the eruption of 1789.¹⁵

The next chapter sets up one of the guiding conceptions of the book, that of certain "constituted bodies," in Europe and America, most of them predominantly aristocratic in 1760, and including parliaments, councils, assemblies, and magistracies of various kinds. A continuing and universal theme of the period is the attempts of these constituted bodies to defend their corporate liberties and their independence, against either superior authorities on the one hand or popular pressures on the other. Resisting superior authorities, these bodies could be liberal and even revolutionary. The democratic revolutionary movement, however, came into play when persons systematically excluded from these bodies, and not content merely with the independence of these bodies as already constituted, attempted to open up their membership, change the basis of authority and representation, reconstitute the constituted bodies, or obtain a wholly new constitution of the state itself. The third chapter deals further with the philosophy and the problems which institutionalized aristocracy brought into existence. Chapter IV traces the conflicts of the aristocratic constituted bodies with kings in the 1760's and 1770's in France, Sweden, and the Hapsburg empire. Chapter V explores the clash of a similar body at the town of Geneva with its own citizens.

With Chapter VI begins the treatment of the English-speaking world, involving the structure of Parliament, the British constitution, and the American Revolution. Chapters VII and VIII consider the American Revolution, and the sense in which I believe it to have been truly revolutionary. It is shown in Chapter IX that the American Revolution, whatever its true nature, greatly added to the democratic and revolutionary spirit in Europe, to the desire, that is, for a reconstitution of government and society.

But while this spirit was rising, actual events followed the course of an aristocratic resurgence, traced in Chapters X to XIV. The parliamentary class in the 1780's in Britain and Ireland stopped the moves for democratization. Dutch, Bel-

15 Cf. C. R. Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (Norman, 1954); F. Valjavec, *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland, 1770-1815*; (Munich, 1951); and the writings of Mathiez, Lefebvre, J. Egret, and others on the French Revolution.

gian, and Swiss patricians put down the democrats in their respective countries. Whether an American upper class blocked the growth of democracy in the new United States federal constitution of 1787 is also considered. The privileged classes of the Hapsburg empire obstructed the equalizing reforms of the Hapsburg rulers. The Polish revolution failed. For a time it even seemed that the French Revolution might reinforce the privileged classes. But in the events of 1789, as explained in Chapter XV, the French revolutionaries laid down the principles of a more democratic form of state. The book closes with further comments on the relationship of the French and American revolutions. The story is brought, for all countries, to about the year 1791, to the eve of the great war in which all these national and social developments were to be gathered together into one tremendous struggle.

CHAPTER II

ARISTOCRACY ABOUT 1760: THE CONSTITUTED BODIES

In aristocracy, the sovereign power is in the hands of a certain number of persons. It is they who make the laws and see to their execution; and the rest of the people stand in relation to them as, in a monarchy, the subjects do to the monarch. . . . Monarchical government, by nature, is constituted by dependent and subordinate intermediate powers. The most natural such dependent intermediate power is that of the nobility. Nobility enters in a sense into the essence of monarchy, of which the fundamental maxim is: No monarch, no nobility; no nobility, no monarch. . . . Abolish in a monarchy the prerogatives of lords and clergy, nobility and towns, and soon you will have either a popular or a despotic state.

—MONTESQUIEU, 1748

Edmund Burke, after the American troubles began, thought that the Virginians were very much like the Poles. He would solve the American question by putting America on the same legal footing as Ireland. For Ireland he recommended the example of France, which he saw as a federal “empire,” where great provinces like Brittany raised their own taxes and otherwise enjoyed extensive autonomy. Gibbon cited England, France, Venice, and Genoa to show that liberty was preserved by a gradation of social ranks. Rousseau considered the citizens of Geneva and the nobles of Venice to be much alike. The abbé Morellet, mixing in an Anglo-French reforming circle which included Turgot, Condorcet, Lord Shelburne, Bentham, Priestley, and Price, made much the same criticisms of the parlements of France and the parliament of Great Britain. Kaunitz, commenting on difficulties between the Hapsburg government and the diet of Bohemia, was reminded of similar difficulties in Hungary and Belgium.

All saw a uniformity of institutions. All had in mind those “constituted bodies” which existed everywhere in the European world, west of Russia. The term is

meant to include the British and Irish parliaments, the American colonial assemblies and governors' councils, the parlements and provincial estates of France, the assemblies of estates in the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands and the princely states of the Holy Roman Empire, the diets of Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia, and the councils of the German free cities and the city-states of Switzerland and Italy. All were different, yet all were in some ways alike.

To obtain a comparative view of these bodies has been a recognized problem of European historical research in recent years. There is a permanent committee of the International Committee of the Historical Sciences devoted specifically to the subject. It is called the International Commission for the History of State Assemblies; scholars of many nationalities have worked under its inspiration, and many monographs have been published. Many of them have been sympathetic to corporatist political theory and correspondingly critical of the modern state and the individualist conception of legal rights. Most of this work has dealt with medieval and post-medieval times, and so is only indirectly relevant in the present context; but some of it has been directed to the European Old Regime before the French Revolution. The tendency in this case is to show the more favorable side of the Old Regime, its freedom from enforced uniformity, centralization, and all-embracing sovereign power.

According to this view, social groups with different interests or functions had rights and obligations realistically corresponding to their position. They constituted social "orders," and were represented in "estates." "In reality," says Professor Lousse, a leading exponent of the school, "there were no privileged orders in the sense that others were unprivileged, as one would be led to believe by a defective terminology created in France by the polemics of the eighteenth century. All were privileged"—but he admits that some were more privileged than others. "The domain of common law," he explains, was reduced, "but the domain of special law was much enlarged. . . . Each person's statute was adapted to his place in society, his social rank, and in a word to the function of general utility which he performed."¹ The nation was a body of cooperating groups each with appropriate obligations and rights. It was composed of "orders"—not necessarily the three "orders" made familiar by the history of the French Revolution, but orders in the sense of diverse levels in a harmonious hierarchy. "An order under the Old Regime," Professor Lousse assures us, "was not a caste but an association," not a *Geburtsstand*, or estate determined by birth, but a coming together of people with the same occupation, function, interest, or manner of life.² There were innumerable

1 E. Lousse, *La société d'ancien régime: organisation et représentation corporatives* (Louvain, 1943), constituting volume VI of *Etudes présentées à la Commission Internationale pour l'histoire des assemblées d'états*, 363 and 42.

2 *Ibid.*, 255; cf. Lousse's more recent article, "Les ordres d'ancien régime n'étaient pas des castes," in *Studies Presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions*, XI (Louvain, 1952). For comparative views of parliaments or estates, but not including the town councils or American assemblies treated in the following pages, see also R. H. Lord, "Parliaments of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period," in *Catholic Historical Review* (July 1930), 125-44; O. Hintze, "Typologie der standischen Verfassungen des Abendlandes," in *Historische Zeitschrift* (1929), 229-48; L. Konopczyński, *Le liberum veto: étude sur le développement du principe majoritaire* (Paris, 1930).

such orders: merchants and landowners, cobblers and lawyers, peers and gentry, canons and priests, professors and civil servants. They grouped themselves at various levels, local, municipal, provincial, national. For purposes of public representation they might come together, in some countries, into estates of the realm, in France as clergy, nobility, and Third Estate.

The constituted bodies did in fact often call themselves "orders" or "estates." Most of them had in fact originated in the Middle Ages. Persons did have rights as members of groups, not abstractly as "citizens," and all persons had some legal rights, which, however, approached the vanishing point for serfs in Eastern Europe and slaves in America. But whatever may have been true in the Middle Ages, a survey of the constituted bodies of the eighteenth century forces some emendation of Lousse's picture. It is true that something like a corporate society existed, but the most noticeable similarities in the constituted bodies are to be found in two other features. First, the concept of "order," as applied in practice in the eighteenth century, frequently meant that there were some orders of men whose function was to fill positions of governance, in state or church, as distinguished from other orders whose functions were different. Secondly, there was a strong tendency, about a century old in the 1760's, toward inheritance of position in this governing elite, either by law or in fact, a tendency for influence to accumulate in a few families, or, in more abstract terms, for the institution of the family to diffuse itself through the institutions of government, not to mention those of religion. The tendency in the constituted bodies was more toward the *Geburtsstand* than toward free association.

In short, the world had become more aristocratic. Aristocracy in the eighteenth century may even be thought of as a new and recent development, if it be distinguished from the older institution of nobility. In one way it was more exclusive than mere nobility. A king could create nobles, but, as the saying went, it took four generations to make a gentleman. In another way aristocracy was broader than nobility. Countries that had no nobles, like Switzerland or British America, or countries that had few nobles of importance, like the Dutch provinces, might have aristocracies that even nobles recognized as such. There were only two hundred actual nobles in England, but all Englishmen rich enough to travel seemed *milords anglais* on the Continent. Dutch regents, scorned as mere burghers at the Peace of Westphalia, were accepted as gentlemen a hundred years later. The grandfather of Albert Gallatin was a citizen of republican Geneva who owned land across the French frontier, and who sat with the French nobility in the Estates General of 1789. Gouverneur Morris, the New York patrician, found the drawing rooms of England and the Continent open to him without condescension.

Aristocracy was nobility civilized, polished by that "refinement of manners" of which people talked, enjoying not only superiority of birth but a superior mode of life. It was a way of life as pleasing as any that mankind has ever developed, and which the middle classes were to imitate as much and as long as they could, a way of life characterized by dignified homes and by gardens and well-kept lawns, by private tutors and grand tours and sojourns at watering places, by annual migration between town and country and an abundance of respectful and unobtrusive servants. Indeed the date 1760 seems to mark a period even in the history of domestic

service, at least for England. It appears that British servants were rowdy and insubordinate before this time, and terrorized house guests by their bold demand for tips; but about 1760 county meetings of the better families began to take the servant question seriously in hand, and "the transition to the more disciplined manservant of Victorian London began to take place."³

Aristocracy denoted also a concern for public business. The "aristocrat" (to borrow a term from eighteenth-century polemics) often had a public spirit, a desire to take part in organized government, hardly characteristic of the unruly noble of former times; or, perhaps, he only thought that governing others, being responsible for their welfare, in state or church, was the occupation most suited to a man of his standing whether or not he actually worked at this kind of occupation.

The following is a descriptive survey of the constituted bodies of the middle of the eighteenth century, with especial reference to their membership and recruitment. We move from east to west.

THE DIETS OF EASTERN EUROPE

The absence from Russia of bodies of the kind here described is only one of the signs that Russia, at the middle of the eighteenth century, did not belong to the region of Western Civilization. It was, however, moving in that direction. When the Empress Catherine, in 1767, called together a consultative assembly to sound out opinion in her domains, one of the proposals made by some noblemen was for the organization of the Russian nobility into a corporate body with corporate rights, somewhat as in Europe. Catherine, after a long delay, issued a Charter of the Nobility in 1785, as described in Chapter XII below, which by setting up provincial noble assemblies, with limited local powers, brought the Russian upper class, toward the end of our period, a little closer to the model of the European upper classes.

For most purposes Sweden (with Finland), Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary represented the eastern border of Europe.

In Sweden the years from 1719 to 1772 are known as the Age of Freedom, because at this time the Diet or Riksdag ruled without interference by the King. Indeed, these Swedish Whigs, after their revolution of 1719, had the works of John Locke translated into Swedish. The diet met in four houses, Nobles, Clergy, Burghers, and Peasants. Peasants could elect only peasants to represent them, and burghers only burghers, so that the classes or "orders" were kept apart. Nobles elected no one; every head of a noble family had the right to appear in person, but many were too poor or indifferent to do so, and added to their incomes by selling their proxies. Nobles were exempt from certain taxes, and claimed the exclusive right to high office. Government was in the hands of a council of nobles of which the King was only the chairman. During sessions of the diet executive power reverted to a secret committee of that body composed of 50 nobles, 25 churchmen, and 25 burghers (the peasants being left out as too unsuited for great affairs); the advan-

3 D. Marshall, "The Domestic Servants of the 18th Century," in *Economica*, IX (1929), 15-40.

tage to the nobility is apparent. The King was restricted in the creation of new nobles except at his coronation. It was thus assured that virtually all nobles should be born such. A law of 1762 further prescribed that no new families should be allowed to enter the chamber of nobles. The two parties, Hats and Caps, began in this decade to take on a certain class character, the Hats generally favoring the nobles, the Caps the three "unredeemed" estates, as they were called.⁴

In Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary the common feature of the diets, or assemblies of estates, was that landowners had come to monopolize them. In Poland, the towns had been excluded from the diet as long ago as 1505. In Bohemia about thirty towns had formerly been represented, but since they were largely Protestant, they were excluded during the Catholic and Hapsburg restoration in 1627; by 1755 Prague was the only town that normally sent delegates. In Hungary deputies from the towns sat in a lower house along with elected deputies of the lesser nobility or gentry, as in England; but so many townsmen were Germans that the Magyar nobility could not get along with them; all town deputies were required to vote as a body, and their vote was counted as only one vote, equal to that of a single squire, a rule reconfirmed in the turbulent Diet of 1764. Peasants in these eastern kingdoms were not represented at all; most of them were serfs. Ownership of rural land was confined to persons considered noble. In Poland and Hungary there were many small nobles, but in all three countries the great nobles or magnates were wealthy and influential. In Poland and Hungary these magnates sat by personal right, together with bishops, in an upper house of a two-chamber system, like the lords in England. In Bohemia the Hapsburgs had set up the Catholic clergy as a First Estate, but the predominance of wealthy nobles over the lesser ones was even greater than in the other two countries. In the 1780's, in Bohemia, 189 noble families owned land to the value of 600,000,000 florins; but, of these, the 15 families rated as "princely," such as the Schwarzenbergs, owned 465,000,000 florins' worth, having gained steadily throughout the century at the expense of the lesser nobles.

In Poland the diet was supreme, and the King very weak, as in Sweden until 1772. In Poland the noble landowners, great and little, prided themselves on their constitutional liberties, to the point of refusing even to be bound by majority rule, so that the diet, while supreme, could not govern, and the country in the 1760's faced partition by its monarchic neighbors. The kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary were parts of the Hapsburg empire. The landowners in their diets had to share power with a strong dynasty. Restrained by the central government at Vienna in the eighteenth century, they were to reassert themselves vigorously in a kind of aristocratic resurgence in the 1700's.⁵ In Prussia there was no diet for the kingdom as a whole. Provincial diets or *Landtage* continued to meet, but they had lost their political powers during the century of Hohenzollern consolidation before 1740. In Prussia as elsewhere, however, the middle of the eighteenth century saw a new

4 For Sweden see Svanstrom and Palmstierna, *History of Sweden* (Eng. trans., Oxford, 1934), 191-92, 245-51; B. J. Hovde, *The Scandinavian Countries, 1720-1865: The Rise of the Middle Classes* (Boston, 1943), I, 177-90.

5 R. H. Lord, *Second Partition of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915); R. J. Kerner, *Bohemia in the Eighteenth Century* (N.Y., 1932); Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Eng., 1910).

strengthening of aristocratic institutions. The most burgher-like of Prussian kings was Frederick William I, who ruled for twenty-seven years before 1740. During his reign there was considerable upward mobility for burgher subjects. Professor Hans Rosenberg assures us that the ratio of burghers to nobles in certain high positions, which he finds to have been seven to three in 1737, was thereafter never matched in Prussia until the Weimar Republic. Frederick II was personally a man of more aristocratic tastes than his father, and his Silesian wars made it necessary for him to please the Junker nobles who commanded his army. Nobles therefore benefited substantially from the reign of the great Frederick. The King strengthened their monopoly of rural landownership, ceased to absorb their estates into the crown domain, encouraged them to set up entails, allowed their local diets to meet, and took them by preference into his army and civil service. Many Junker families, including the Bismarcks, became Prussian patriots as late as the reign of Frederick II, won over by concessions he made to their ideas.

On the other hand the Prussian civil service, one of whose functions had originally been to watch over noblemen and rustic squires, became increasingly imbued with their spirit. Burghers in the civil service obtained semi-noble status, such as exemption from certain taxes and from the jurisdiction of the lower courts. The civil service even built up its independence against the technically absolute King, gaining control of its own personnel and promotion policies, setting its own standards of training and performance, recruiting only "congenial members," becoming essentially self-selecting, a "constituted body" in the sense meant in this chapter, with a strong caste spirit, and an elitist belief in the duty of governing others for their own good. Independent in practice both of the King and of the public, possessing a strong sense of group identity and of corporate rights which outsiders did not share, the civil service in Prussia became a new estate of the realm, and was recognized as such in the Prussian Law Code of 1791.⁶

COUNCILS AND ESTATES OF THE MIDDLE ZONE

Between the eastern monarchies and France there was a broad middle zone, a world of minuscule states, princely, ecclesiastical, and republican, into which Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands were divided. The old estates of Denmark-Norway, Bavaria, Piedmont, and Naples (like the Estates General of France and the estates of Aragon and Portugal) no longer had any meetings. Nevertheless, this middle zone had its social orders and constituted bodies, of which only a few can be noticed.

The Republic of Venice was one of the wonders of political science, famous for the ingenuity that had created an immortal frame of government, which was older than any royal house in Europe. Its citizens, that is, persons qualifying for public office, were called nobles, and nobility was strictly hereditary, determined by regis-

6 H. Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1660-1816* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 60-74; A. Goodwin, *European Nobility in the 18th Century* (London, 1953), 83-101; W. Dorn, "The Prussian Bureaucracy in the 18th Century," in *Political Science Quarterly*, XLVII (1932), 262-66.

tration in the Golden Book. So few had been admitted, over the centuries, that where in 1367 there had been 240 noble families, there were only 111 in 1796. When the last doge was elected, in 1789, some of the older patricians complained that he was an upstart whose family had bought its way into the Golden Book as recently as 1669. In 1796, the last year of the ancient republic, with a population at that time of 130,000, only 1,218 persons attended the meeting of the Great Council, the constituted body in which all citizen-nobles met in person. It may be added, to illustrate the trend toward aristocracy, that Venetian nobles now scorned the trade on which the wealth and fame of the city were founded, and usually lived at leisure on landed estates on the dependent mainland of Venetia.⁷

Milan, like Hungary and Bohemia, belonged to the Hapsburg empire, but was governed as a separate unit. The chief public body was the Council of Decurions, 60 in number. To qualify for this council or other civic office it was necessary to be a patrician of the city. There were 297 patrician families in 1769, in a population of about 130,000. Most of these families were of merchant ancestry several generations back, but in 1652 they had introduced the rank of *cavaliere patrizio*, a kind of knightly or noble patrician, and in 1716 they had passed a rule that, to qualify as a patrician, one must prove noble status and a hundred years' residence by one's family in the city. A family lost patrician status if none of its members held office for three generations, or if a member "derogated" by going into trade. Patricians of the city and landed nobles of the surrounding duchy mixed as equals in the eighteenth century. In fact, nobles sought the more desirable status of patrician, since patricians occupied the numerous complicated magistracies which defended Milanese liberties against Hapsburg encroachment.⁸

In the mountains above Milan lay the cantons of Switzerland, a heterogeneous federation of small communities, some sovereign, some subject to others, but including some of the most exclusive and some of the most popular states of the day. The rural canton of Uri, for example, was one of the most democratic. Every year the villages elected a Landammann. Even here, however, the tendency to inheritance of position is apparent. That it existed in Uri suggests that it was due not merely to the ambitions of individuals but to a general willingness of most people to let others undertake public business, and the fact that only a few, under conditions of the time, had the breadth of outlook or qualities of character needed even for simple office. At any rate, the thirty-seven persons who acted as Landammann of Uri from 1700 to 1798 represented only twelve family names. For sixty-five of the ninety-eight years the Landammann was named either Bessler, Püntner, or Schmid. Son often succeeded father.⁹

Bern, on the other hand, was highly aristocratic. No one was admitted to its citizenship between 1651 and 1790, which is to say that citizenship was purely hereditary. Noncitizens might reside permanently in the town by promising to continue in the same occupation and to train one son in it. Those among the citi-

7 A. Bozzola, "L'ultimo doge e la caduta della Serenissima," in *Nuova Rivista Storica*, XVIII (1934), 30-58.

8 F. Valsecchi, *L'Assolutismo illuminato in Austria e in Lombardia* (Bologna, 1934), II, 37-40; J. M. Roberts, "L'aristocrazia lombarda nel 18 secolo," in *Occidente*, VIII (1952), 305-25.

9 *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Suisse*, "Uri."

zens who qualified to sit in the governing councils were designated as "patricians" in 1651. Eighty families held the offices in 1651, sixty-eight in 1787. The town had only about 11,000 inhabitants; its importance, and the value of its offices, lay in the fact that the town governed the country, i.e., the rural parts of the canton of Bern, as well as various "subject districts" in other parts of Switzerland. Government is said to have been honest and efficient, but it could also be profitable; a young Bern patrician could make enough to live on for life in about six years through governing one of the subject districts, such as the Vaud, the region about Lausanne.¹⁰

Basel was more of a middle-class or merchant aristo-democracy. Trade did not derogate, as at Milan; nor did its upper class earn a living by government, as at Bern. Half its people were citizens, half non-citizens, or *Hintersässen*, but no one received citizenship between 1763 and 1781, and in 1781 it was decided to admit no new citizens until 1790. Since the middle of the seventeenth century power had come into the hands of a few families, including the Burckhardts, to which the famous nineteenth-century historian belonged. Government was through a council which chose the magistrates and filled vacancies in its own ranks; politics within this council were dominated by the trade guilds. Of all magistrates chosen between 1529 and 1798 almost half belonged to the guild of big merchants known as the Key.¹¹

Geneva, the city of Calvin and Rousseau, renowned among European intellectuals as the model republic, was an independent little place of 25,000 people, in most ways not yet really united with the Swiss confederation. The much-traveled William Coxe thought it halfway between the aristocratic and popular cantons. Five orders of persons lived under its laws; at the top, the "citizens," who had the legal right to hold office, and of whom Rousseau was one; next, the "burghers," who had the right to vote but not to hold office; next the *habitants*, who had certain rights to carry on trades in the city, but no political rights; then the *natifs*, born in the city but not of citizen or burgher parentage; and finally the *sujets*, the rural people outside the city, and governed by it. Government was by a Small Council (of twenty-five members) and a large Council of Two Hundred. The latter elected, or in fact confirmed in office from year to year, the members of the Small Council, which in turn designated the membership of the Two Hundred. By this system of mutual co-optation a few families had come to monopolize office, and so to create what was in effect a sixth order of patricians. The remaining citizens, who had the right to hold office but never did so, became indistinguishable in practice from the burghers. Burghers and citizens, some 1,500 in number, met in a kind of town-meeting along the lines of direct democracy in a General Council, and there proceeded to elect four syndics or executive officers of the city; but they elected from a slate proposed by the Small Council of twenty-five, which always put up its own members as candidates. Democracy was thus held in a tight leash at Geneva, but it never submitted entirely. As the Encyclopedia Britannica put it in 1797, "during

10 *Ibid.*, "Berne"; G. L. von Maurer, *Geschichte der Städteverfassung in Deutschland* (Erlangen, 1871), III, 760. Larger figures for the number of families qualified to hold office were given by a contemporary in 1785 (see below, p. 273); but the matter was uncertain at best, and "family" may of course mean either a household or a larger group of related persons.

11 *Dict. . . . de la Suisse*, "Bâle."

the whole of the last century the history of Geneva affords little more than an account of the struggles between the aristocratical and popular parties."

The most famous of all citizens of Geneva, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was of one of the lesser families whose members never held office. Albert Gallatin, Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, was born a Geneva patrician in 1761. We have observed how his grandfather mixed with the French nobility. Gallatin himself tells in his memoirs, as a good Jeffersonian democrat, how he chafed at the aristocratic surroundings of his boyhood, spurned his grandmother's offer to get him a commission in a Hessian regiment bound for America, and emigrated to the New World on his own initiative instead.¹²

The free cities of Germany, some fifty in number, were in some ways like the more urban of the Swiss cantons and are of interest for the light they throw on the German middle class. Like the Swiss towns, they varied. Nuremberg, for example, was highly aristocratic—"the very El Dorado of family rule right down to our own days," as a writer in the time of Bismarck said. Its governing council and higher offices were filled by members of twenty families. These patricians permitted no one but themselves to wear swords or hats with plumes. Their sons studied and traveled at public expense. Their daughters received dowries from the city treasury. Cologne was more democratic in that, as at Basel, the guilds had in principle a good deal of influence. The Cologne guilds elected the members of the town council. But here, too, the same tendency toward self-perpetuating magistracy was apparent. Resistance of the citizens to these usurpations, sporadic since 1680, began in earnest in 1774, and lasted until the arrival of the French armies in the war of the French Revolution. Similarly at Speier the guild rule of the fourteenth century became the rule of the Thirteen in the seventeenth century and of the Five in the eighteenth—and the French in 1792 were at first regarded by many as liberators.¹³

Frankfurt was a commercial and governmental city, with a population very mixed in religion. A proverb had it that at Frankfurt the Lutherans spent their time in government, the Catholics in prayer, and the Calvinists in making money. There was also a large Jewish community. The governing council chose its own members, who served for life. Any citizen, if a Lutheran and the son of a citizen, might legally be chosen, but in fact the usual family monopolies developed in the council and the offices, of which there were no less than 500 for a town of 30,000. The citizenry had a keen sense of group identity as contrasted to the *Beisassen*, or permanent non-citizen residents. Office-holding and the ownership of real estate were privileges of the citizens, who also enjoyed more freedom in their business or occupations than the *Beisassen*. Calvinists could not belong to guilds, and Catholics only under certain restrictions. Affluent merchants yearned for nobility, and thirty-four of them in the eighteenth century obtained it by patent from the Holy Roman Empire. The uncle of Goethe, the city's most famous son, even wrote a book in the 1740's recommending creation of a merchant nobility in which a man might enjoy noble status without having to withdraw from trade. An ordinance of 1731 divided

12 *Dict . . . de la Suisse*, "Genève"; G. Vallette, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau Genevois* (Geneva and Paris, 1911).

13 Von Maurer, *op. cit.*, IV, 146–47, 160.

the population into five estates, or *Stände*, each to be marked by the kind of clothing it was entitled to wear. The top category was reserved for hereditary nobles who had sat in the town council for at least a hundred years—as people said.¹⁴

Among the German princely states there were some, like the Mecklenburgs, where assemblies of serf-owning nobles in effect ruled with little interference from the duke, and others, notably Württemberg, where the middle class was strong. The diet of Württemberg consisted of a single house, attended by fourteen Lutheran prelates and the delegates of some sixty towns. No nobles came at all; they had withdrawn from the diet as long ago as 1514, setting up as independent imperial knights and recognizing no authority in the diet. Since the Lutheran prelates had little influence, the diet represented the interests of the towns only, or rather of their several local magistracies, for it was the various burgomasters and town councillors, or persons named by them, who sat in the diet. In a population of 600,000 there were perhaps 1,500 men who chose the deputies. Yet there was at times a fairly active parliamentary life. Württemberg was often compared to England, and Charles James Fox once said that they were the only two countries in Europe to enjoy constitutional government. The philosopher Hegel made his debut, in 1797, by attacking the oligarchic character of the Württemberg estates.¹⁵

Of the Dutch government more will be said later. Its complexities baffle brief description. The towns were little republics, which along with nobles sent deputies to estates of the seven provinces; deputies of the provinces constituted their High Mightinesses the Estates General of the United Provinces, which, together with the stadtholder, presumably ruled the country, or at least represented it in foreign affairs. Before 1748 there had been a period of almost half a century without a stadtholder, called the Age of Freedom or *ware vrijheid* (as in Sweden), during which the town oligarchies became thoroughly entrenched. “Everything tended to the domination of the few.”¹⁶ Ruling families, those holding office from generation to generation, were called regents. Each town had its regents, but those of Amsterdam were the most powerful, and had a general influence throughout the country. Their stronghold was the *vroedschap* or council of Amsterdam, a body of thirty-six men who sat for life. This council coopted its own members, chose the burgomasters of the city, and elected the deputies to the estates of Holland, which in turn preponderated in the Estates General of the union. “An alienation developed between rulers and ruled. The former became a class by itself, in which the admission of *homines novi* became very rare.”¹⁷ Government became a source of income for this upper class. The Amsterdam regents had no less than 3,600 offices at their disposal; one made 22,820 guilders by the sale of offices in seven years.

14 “Voelcker, ed., *Die Stadt Goethes: Frankfurt-am-Main im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1932), 83–101.

15 E. Holzle, *Das alte Recht und die Revolution: eine politische Geschichte Württembergs in der Revolutionszeit, 1789–1805* (Munich and Berlin, 1931); J. Droz, *L'Allemagne et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1949), 112, 125.

16 I. H. Gosses and N. Japikse, *Handboek tot die staatkundige geschiedenis van Nederland* (The Hague, 1947), 637.

17 *Ibid.*, 635. See also J. E. Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578–1795*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1905), and the histories of the Netherlands in English by Blok and Edmundson.

Between the fragmented republicanism of the small states just described, the magnificent monarchy of France, and the parliamentary regime of Great Britain there were obviously great differences, but the tendency to self-perpetuation in office was universal. It is illuminating to glance at the towns in England and France. They resembled those of the Netherlands and central Europe; each had its peculiar variations, but all showed their common origin in the great town-building era of the Middle Ages, from which each derived some sort of council or councils and some faint vestiges of a former popular organ of government. In both England and France, it appears, the town councils became increasingly closed organizations, and in that sense more aristocratic; but in both countries in the eighteenth century they lost out in real power, since both the Bourbon monarchy and the British Parliament, using the authority of central government that was missing in the European middle zone, created new statutory bodies for new tasks of municipal administration.

At Lyon, for example, since the time of Henry IV, the council was made up of only five members, a mayor or *prévôt des marchands*, and four aldermen or *échevins*. The mayor was designated by the King. He alone had to be a native of the city; to become alderman it was only necessary to have lived in the city for ten years, certain property qualifications also having to be met. This rule had been forced upon the city by the royal government; it contrasts with the regulations of Swiss or German towns where a century of residence was often required, and shows how central government advanced the social and geographical mobility of the urban upper class. The council lost power over the years, but its members could console themselves with privileges; they were noble by virtue of their office, exempted from certain taxes, enjoyed special costume and escort at city expense, and could engage in wholesale trade or banking "without derogation or being reputed common." The pleasures of office were thus sufficiently attractive to encourage family ambition, and in the eighteenth century "the municipal administration recruited itself within an oligarchy of increasingly narrow scope."¹⁸

In England some of the towns were close corporations, others more democratic. Norwich was one of the latter, but its democracy deteriorated in the eighteenth century through public apathy and private abuse. Perhaps half the householders in 1689 were freemen, who actually voted for members of the town council. But they sold or otherwise gave their votes for other than civic reasons, and in any case the growth of new trades brought newcomers to the city who seldom took the trouble, or went to the expense, of acquiring its citizenship. The council even tried to compel people to become citizens, but there "seems to have been no great desire to become Freeman of Norwich."¹⁹

Bristol was a close corporation. Its common council chose its own members and the public officials. It was disliked by some for its exclusiveness; on the other hand, wealthy merchants sometimes refused to accept membership in it, perhaps because they thought it too lordly, and even paid fines to avoid being included. Oligarchy

¹⁸ Kleinclausz, *Histoire de Lyon* (Paris, 1948), 11, 146.

¹⁹ S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government: Manor and Borough* (London, 1908), I, 539. See also I, 390; II, 445-70.

might prevail *malgré lui*, so to speak, from a mere want of public spirit, or lack of confidence in the significance of public institutions.

THE PROVINCIAL ESTATES AND PARLEMENTS OF FRANCE

In France there were two kinds of bodies of a public character that played an active role in political life, as distinct from the bureaucrats and functionaries of the king. They were the Provincial Estates and the Parlements. The former resembled the assemblies of estates, diets, or parliaments found in other parts of Europe. In most of the French provinces the estates had gradually ceased to meet. In the eighteenth century they still met only in Languedoc, Brittany, Burgundy, Artois, and Bearn; and only in the first two were the Provincial Estates of any importance. In Languedoc and Brittany they exercised a power of consent to taxation by making a "free gift" to the king. This consent was sometimes forced, but they enjoyed more real freedom in dividing the tax burden among the individual taxpayers. In general, they defended the constitutional liberties of their provinces, as incorporated in the old agreements, or "contracts," by which the provinces had come under the French crown in former times.

The Estates of Languedoc met once a year. The archbishop of Narbonne always presided. The First Estate consisted of the 23 bishops of the province. The Second Estate consisted of 23 "barons," not elected by the nobles of Languedoc but appointed by the King to represent them. The Third Estate consisted of 46 "votes"—the same as the other two houses combined. These 46 votes were exercised by 68 deputies, 2 from each diocesan city, and 1 or 2 from various other towns in turn by a system of rotation. Many of these towns were what came to be called rotten boroughs in England—places once notable enough to be chosen for representation, but since decayed. Usually it was the town magistrates who attended the estates. No one was elected to the Estates of Languedoc. Voting was not by chamber, but by head. With double representation for the Third Estate, and with voting by head, the Estates of Languedoc before the Revolution enjoyed the two formal advantages demanded by the Third Estate on a national scale for the Estates General of 1789. The burghers, however, who could muster as many votes as clergy and nobles combined, by no means dominated the assembly of Languedoc. Some of the mayors who sat for towns enjoyed noble status. Two-thirds of the burgher representatives came from diocesan cities, where the influence of the bishops was strong. It was the bishops who governed in Languedoc, in cooperation with the King's agent, the intendant, because the bishops alone sat by personal right, and hence year after year, and because bishops, being often appointed for administrative talents, were willing and able to carry on public business. It was the archbishop of Narbonne who presided at the estates, and the important committees that functioned between meetings of the estates, for such matters as roads and public works, had in each case a bishop for their chairman.

The Estates of Brittany met every two years, in three houses, with vote by house, not by head. The First Estate included both bishops and other churchmen, but was less influential than in Languedoc. Forty towns sent deputies to the Third Estate,

usually, as in Languedoc, the municipal mayors or councillors. To the Second or noble estate every "gentleman" of Brittany had the right to come, as in Sweden and in the subdistricts of Hungary and Poland. About 3,000 persons had the right to sit in this second chamber, and the number who actually attended never fell below 500 after 1746. Thus, though with vote by house the Third Estate possessed a veto on the two others, the estates of Brittany were dominated, or rather swamped, by nobles. Most of these were poor provincial gentry who hated taxes, viewed government and public works with suspicion, looked down on lawyers and tradespeople, and constantly disputed with the royal intendant.

The estates of Brittany and Languedoc were not declining in the eighteenth century. Both were becoming institutionally more mature. Government was becoming more complex, as taxation, conscription, road-building, postal communications, military housing, or poor relief grew more extensive. In both provinces the estates developed permanent committees and offices that remained at work between the meetings. Each province thus saw the rise of a provincial capital that was not merely the headquarters of royal officials. In Brittany after 1732 the estates almost always met at Rennes, and in Languedoc after 1736 they always met at Montpellier.²⁰

The French parlements were more important than the provincial estates. A *parlement* or *conseil souverain* was at work in every part of France, each a supreme court of law for the area under its jurisdiction. All the parlements, in addition to judicial functions, exercised an executive role, supervising the keeping of order and the enforcement of their legal decisions, and also enjoyed what was in effect a share in legislation, claiming that they must register or "verify" every royal ordinance before it could take effect.

Seats in the parlement were for the most part owned as personal property. Members were thus neither elected nor appointed, but sat by personal right, and they could not be removed even by the King. The institution of property in office, though known almost everywhere in Europe, had been most fully developed in France and had been growing for over two hundred years. Hence, in the eighteenth century far more seats in parlement were inherited than were purchased. The King no longer sold them; they could be bought only from owners or heirs, who most often bequeathed them to sons, nephews, or sons-in-law. The *parlementaires* by 1750 thus constituted a hereditary magistracy going back three or four generations. They were now also nobles, and freely mixed and intermarried with the *noblesse de race*, descendants of the formerly feudal nobility. Their income came mainly from land ownership, and was sustained by the usual noble tax exemptions. With their legal education, their better habits of work, their living as neighbors in cities, their daily participation in public issues, their channels of regular access to the King and his ministers, and their facilities for meeting privately as recognized bodies in their several courts, the parliamentary nobility by the middle of the eighteenth century had assumed a leadership over the French nobility as a whole, with which they now

20 For a convenient summary see E. Appolis, "Les états de Languedoc au 18^e siècle: comparaison avec les états de Bretagne," in *Organisation corporative du moyen âge à la fin de l'ancien régime: études présentées à la commission internationale pour l'histoire des assemblées d'états*, II (Louvain, 1937), 129-48.

generally made common cause. The older landed nobility at the same time obtained a kind of trained professional leadership that it had never had before.²¹

The Parlement of Paris was the most influential, with by far the largest territorial area. It consisted of 25 "presidents" and 165 councillors, who divided up as benches of judges to hear lawsuits, and came together to discuss and act upon political questions. In addition, the 49 peers of France belonged to the Parlement of Paris; they took no part in judicial business unless the case of a very high nobleman were involved, but sat with the others, at will, if greater political matters were at stake, such as resistance to measures taken by the King or his ministers. There will be much to say of the Parlement of Paris in later chapters.

The Parlement of Dauphiny, or Grenoble, is the one of which most is known from recent historical study. It consisted of 10 "presidents" and 54 councillors, plus 3 royal prosecuting attorneys; the bishop of Grenoble also had a right to sit, without a vote. In 1756 only 11 of the 67 were "new men," that is non-nobles or nobles of the first generation. In that year some people in the French government had the idea of a "commercial nobility," like the one dear to Goethe's uncle at Frankfurt, and such as existed in restricted form at Lyons and a few other mercantile centers—a nobility designed as an incentive to businessmen, by which they could become nobles while still remaining in business. "The very thought of a commercial nobility," announced the *parlementaires* of Grenoble, "has revolted one of the best constituted parlements of the kingdom." It was now as long ago as 1600 that most of them had had bourgeois among their progenitors. In 1762 the parlement, which like many other such councils in Europe enjoyed a free hand in determining its own membership, ruled that henceforth new members must have either parliamentary ancestry or four generations of nobility in the paternal line. Lawyers of the Grenoble bar, seeing a natural outlet for their ambitions thus blocked more than ever, protested. The parlement made a concession: it might accept a barrister on the same basis as a noble if his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had also been barristers and if his own "merit, fortune and marriage alliances" were sufficiently worthy. The Grenoble lawyers remained dissatisfied. "It is certainly not hard to find men with four generations of nobility to make magistrates of them," one of them wrote, "but it would be impossible to find a lawyer of merit who was the fourth generation of famous lawyers."²²

PARLIAMENTS AND ASSEMBLIES IN THE BRITISH ISLES AND AMERICA

The familiar picture of the British Parliament in the eighteenth century can be profitably looked at in the context of the other constituted bodies of Europe. It

21 See F. L. Ford, *Robe and Sword: The Regrouping of the French Aristocracy after Louis XIV* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 188–201; J. Egret, "L'aristocratie parlementaire française à la fin de l'ancien régime," in *Revue historique*, 208 (1952), 1–14; F. Bluche, *L'origine des magistrats du Parlement de Paris au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1956).

22 J. Egret, *Le Parlement de Dauphiné et les affaires publiques dans la deuxième moitié du 18^e siècle* (Grenoble and Paris, 1942), I, 21–24.

consisted of King, Lords, and Commons. As Blackstone put it, the King sat in Parliament with "the three estates of the realm," the higher clergy, nobility, and commons; they and the King constituted "the great corporation or body politic of the kingdom."²³ Parliament governed; it was sovereign. "Men are connected with each other," said Blackstone in speaking of Parliament, "as governors and governed; or, in other words, as magistrates and people." Parliament was not supposed to follow the wishes of voters or other influences "out of doors." Representation meant that certain people assembled from various parts of the country, as in Languedoc or Württemberg, but how they were selected was hardly a matter for Parliament to concern itself with. Hence the methods by which the House of Commons was recruited seemed less peculiar to contemporaries than to modern critics who see in the House an ancestor of democratic representation.

The King in Parliament was no legal fiction, as will be seen. The House of Lords in 1760 consisted of about 230 members. Twenty-six of these were the bishops of the Church of England. Like those of Languedoc they were mostly administrators rather than religious leaders, and spent their most constructive efforts on matters of state. Each of the 200 lay lords belonged to the House by personal right; most had inherited their seats, for the frequent creation of new peers began later with the younger Pitt, but the inheritance of most of them went back no further than the preceding century, so that their noble lineage was scarcely more ancient than that of French *parlementaires*.

The House of Commons consisted of 558 members, sent up from boroughs and counties. In every county all men possessing a freehold worth forty shillings a year appeared by personal right in a county assembly, where they chose two "knights of the shire" to represent them in Parliament. Copyhold, as a form of property in land considered inferior to the freehold, did not carry with it the right of suffrage. An attempt to give the vote to copyholders in the 1750's was defeated.

Four-fifths of the members of the House of Commons sat for the boroughs, but most "burgesses" in the eighteenth century were in fact country gentlemen. It has been estimated that three-fourths of all members of the House of Commons, from 1734 to 1832, drew their main income from landed rents. In some boroughs, notably Westminster, freemen in considerable numbers actually elected their burgesses; but in most, as is well known, other and diverse methods were used to designate the incumbents. No town had received the borough right since 1678.

Since about the year 1600 members paid their own expenses and received no remuneration, so that only men of independent income, or those patronized by the wealthy, could afford to sit in the House. An Act of 1710, by which the landed aristocracy tried to check the moneyed and business interest, held that to qualify as a knight of the shire one must own land of an annual rental value of £600, and that

23 W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, first published in 1765. Blackstone's views on Parliament are given in Chapter ii of Book I. Porritt, *Unreformed House of Commons* (Cambridge, Eng., 1903) is still standard. For most statistical data used here I am indebted to G. P. Judd, *Members of Parliament, 1734-1832* (New Haven, 1955). See also H. E. Witmer, *Property Qualifications of Members of Parliament* (N.Y., 1943). It will be evident to the alert reader that I do not share the revisionist admiration shown by L. B. Namier for the old House of Commons in his *Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929) and other writings.

even to qualify as a burgess one must own land of an annual rental value of £300. It was estimated in 1740 that there were only 2,800 men in all England with £600 a year from land, and hence able legally to sit for the English counties. The Act of 1710 was often evaded (though not fully repealed until 1858); landless men did sit in the eighteenth-century House, but only through the sponsorship or connivance of landowners.

The House of Commons was elected, in a sense, and thus differed from the more purely self-perpetuating and closed constituted bodies of the Continent. But Parliament as a whole may almost be said to have recruited its own members, especially when we consider that the King, through his ministers, was part of the Parliament, and remember that the Lords really named many members of the Commons. Many elections saw no contest at all. In seven general elections from 1760 to 1800 less than a tenth of the county seats were contested. Of the boroughs, some were purely inert in that their owners sold the seats or appointed the members without question; some seats were as much a property as seats in the French parlements. A few boroughs saw relatively democratic electoral contests; and in others small cliques and factions fought savagely, but without regard to public issues, to put their own men in the House. It may be added that Scotland sent forty-five members to the House of Commons. But the Scotch counties had fewer voters than the English, since the modern equivalent of forty fourteenth-century shillings was required in land. There were only 2,665 county voters in all Scotland, of whom 1,318 were what was frankly called "nominal and fictitious," that is, temporarily provided with land by some magnate in order to deliver a vote. The Scotch boroughs were generally "closed"; 25 men, with a quorum of 13, chose the members from Edinburgh.

The eighteenth-century House of Commons has lately been subjected to statistical analysis. It appears that over half of all persons who sat in it for the century from 1734 to 1832 had a close blood relative in the House before them; if more were known of more distant relationships the proportion would be higher. There were 21 Mannerses, 17 Townshends, and 13 Grenvilles. A Wyndham sat in every Parliament but three from the Restoration to 1800, and indeed in half of all Parliaments from 1439 to 1913. After 1790 the number who had had fathers, grandfathers or greatgrandfathers in the House of Commons perceptibly increased. The trend in the eighteenth century, that is, was toward more family rule. A quarter of all members were baronets or sons of peers at the time they sat (i.e., noble by Continental standards); almost half were peers, sons of peers, or baronets when they died. The trend was toward an increase in this direction. The House elected in 1796 had 220 knights, baronets, sons of peers, and actual peers (that is, Scotch and Irish peers not sitting in the House of Lords). There was also a rising proportion of men who had been to the English public schools and to Oxford and Cambridge, where they absorbed the group spirit of a governing class. More also tended to be career officers in the army or navy. In 1754 career officers in the House outnumbered those trained in the law. The House elected in 1790 had 85 professional military officers, almost a sixth of its membership. On the other hand—and the point is very significant—an increasing proportion of the members had commercial interests, either as their sole economic concern or in addition to their interest in the

land. Here the turning point came in the 1760's and gives weight to the old idea of an Industrial Revolution setting in at about that time. Before 1761 only 60 or 70 of the members had any financial interest in commerce, as had been true as far back as Elizabeth. By the 1780's the figure was 110, and it continued to rise.

The distinctive thing about the British Parliament, in contrast to similar bodies on the Continent, was, first, its very real power, since it governed the country, the King's ministers being part of it; and, second, the mixing of commercial and landed interests in it, even sons of peers sometimes having some activity in business, so that class lines were blurred, with gentry not altogether scorning the marts of trade, and the greater businessmen sometimes mixing with or even related to gentry. The easy exchangeability of landed and commercial property, and the attitude toward productivity and profit through rational management, shared by landowners and businessmen, gave a common ground of understanding. Nevertheless, the land and the aristocratic outlook continued to dominate.

Ireland was constitutionally a separate kingdom from Great Britain, having an autonomous though subordinate parliament of its own. "Everything was sweetly and harmoniously disposed through both islands," according to the somewhat visionary picture drawn by Edmund Burke, "for the conservation of English liberties." Hence, wishing well to the Americans, he could offer Ireland "as my model with regard to America." The Irish Parliament, like the English, had two Houses, Lords and Commons. The Lords consisted of 142 temporal peers and 22 Anglican bishops, though the population was of course mainly Catholic. The Commons consisted of 300 members from counties and boroughs, as in England; some of the boroughs were in even worse shape than those of England, that of Tulse being described as a cluster of mud huts. In the Commons of 1775 the Duke of Leinster owned 11 seats, Mr. John Ponsonby 22. About 100 persons, 50 peers and 50 commoners, controlled two-thirds of the seats in the Irish Commons. No Catholic could be elected, and after 1727 no Catholic could vote. In any case most of a lifetime might pass without an election, since an Irish parliament lasted (until 1768) for a whole reign without renewal. In the reigns of George I and II there were no general elections except at the accession of those sovereigns.²⁴

British America, and especially New England, as John Adams remarked in 1774, had "a hereditary apprehension of and aversion to lordships, temporal and spiritual."²⁵ There were no lords in the British, except occasional Englishmen visiting or stationed there; and no bishops. But there was a good deal of hereditary standing, with an apparent trend, as in Europe, toward its increase.

Each colony had a governor's council and an elected assembly. The councils were very important: they sat as supreme courts of law, they advised the governor, and they acted as upper chambers in legislation. Individual councillors often had great influence upon elections to the assemblies. Councillors, usually twelve in each colony, were appointed by governors; and the governors, normally Englishmen appointed in England and strange to the colony, naturally chose the leading local

24 W. Hunt, *The Irish Parliament: 1775* (London, 1907), vii-xii, 54. Burke, *Writings* (1901), II, 171 (Conciliation with America, 1775). Lecky, *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* (London, 1903), I, 78.

25 *Works* (Boston, 1851), IV, 54, "Novanglus."

men to help them govern. A list of all who served on the councils before the Revolution, according to the estimate of Professor Labaree, would include ninety per cent of the "first families," that is the socially prominent families, of the colonial period. By the 1760's in most colonies these families had repeatedly intermarried, until "their genealogical trees became veritable jungles of interwoven branches, the despair of the researcher but the pride of their descendants."²⁶

Visitors to the restored buildings at Colonial Williamsburg can call the scene to mind. The capitol of the royal province of Virginia stands at the end of Duke of Gloucester Street, as it stood before the American Revolution. Its floor plan is like the cross-section of a dumbbell. At one end is the room where the elected assembly, the House of Burgesses, sat on rows of benches. The other end of the building was used by the governor's council. At this end, on the second floor, is a room with twelve high-backed armchairs. Here the council sat as an upper legislative house. Directly below, on the ground floor, is a courtroom, with twelve more high-backed armchairs. Here the council sat as the supreme provincial court. The point is that the same 12 men occupied both sets of chairs. We can easily picture them gathering also, by threes and fours, in the adjoining committee rooms or at the palace half a mile away, to consult with the governor on executive business. The 12 were appointed by the governor, and while governors came and went the councillors sat, in most cases, until death or extreme old age. They were a close-knit group. Ten of them, in the year 1775, as they looked across at their assembled colleagues in the high-backed armchairs, upstairs or downstairs, saw the familiar countenances of their own relatives by blood or marriage. Ten of them knew that their own fathers or grandfathers had sat in these same seats. In the whole period from 1660 to 1774, 91 persons were appointed to the council. Nine surnames accounted for almost a third of them—Page, Byrd, Carter, Lee, and 5 others.

It was much the same in the other British American provinces. In Maryland, in 1753, 8 out of 11 sitting members had fathers or grandfathers on the council before them. In New York, 25 out of 28 councillors appointed from 1750 to 1776 bore the names of great Hudson Valley landowners. When John Wentworth, a native of the colony, became governor of New Hampshire in 1766, he had on his council his father, an uncle, two uncles by marriage, a first cousin, a first cousin once removed, a step-cousin and the husband of a cousin—8 out of 12. By 1773, after filling a number of vacancies in the interim, he had raised the number of his relatives on his council to 9. In Connecticut, the councillors were elected by the freemen. There was less of a clearly marked and intermarried governing group in this highly republican colony, but the freemen, like those of Uri in Switzerland, elected and reelected men of the same families year after year. "The holders of twenty-five surnames occupied two-thirds of all the places in the Connecticut magistracy. These figures coincide almost exactly with those for Virginia." A Pitkin was elected 98 times; an Allyn, 77; a Walcott, 63. Nor is it to be supposed that the whole number of persons with these names was especially large. It may be pertinent, and may satisfy those methodologists who urge the historian to divulge his own prepossessions, to remark that a few years later there were in all Connecticut

26 L. W. Labaree, *Conservatism in Early American History* (N.Y., 1948), 3.

only 27 families by the name of Pitkin, whereas there were 160 families by the name of Palmer, none of whose offspring seems ever to have enjoyed the slightest political importance.²⁷ In neighboring Rhode Island, erratic in this as in other respects, there was more turnover in governing personnel.

If the American councils, like comparable bodies in Europe, showed a strong tendency toward self-perpetuation and aristocracy, the same cannot be said with equal force for the elected assemblies. The assemblies had limited powers; each was only one part of its colonial government structure; the right to elect assemblymen was usually restricted to property owners, who, however, were often very numerous; and apathy, inconvenience, lack of time, or the badness of roads often meant that the right was not used. Representation by towns and counties, as in Britain and Europe, was very uneven. Nevertheless, in a comparative view, having in mind how the House of Commons, the Estates of Württemberg, or the Third Estate of Languedoc was recruited, remembering that in Holland or Switzerland there were few real elections at all, and recalling that the political zeal of Poles and Hungarians was possible for not more than a tenth of the population, it seems certain that the Anglo-American colonial assemblies, before the American Revolution, were the most nearly democratic bodies to be found in the world of European civilization. Practice varied from one colony to another, and more is known about some colonies than others. In New Jersey, for example, where the election of 1754 aroused enough public interest to draw out most of the voters, it is known that almost all the freeholders, or about half the adult white males, voted in Middlesex county.²⁸ In New England, where there were few slaves and indentured servants, and where ownership of small farms was very common, almost every adult male had the right to vote. Actual voting was sporadic, but over 90 per cent of all men over twenty-one years of age actually voted at Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1757; and over 80 per cent at Weston in 1773.²⁹

For completeness it is worth while to mention the *cabildos* or town councils of Spanish America. The *cabildo* was the one institution in the Spanish empire allowing a measure of public representation. Some of its members were appointed by royal authority, others owned or inherited their seats by property right, so that family groups infiltrated the councils here as elsewhere. In the eighteenth century, however, with the bureaucratic development under the Spanish Bourbons, the *cabildos* of America, like the *cortes* in Spain itself, no longer enjoyed their former activity and importance. They were not to revive until the eve of the wars of independence.³⁰

27 U.S. Bureau of the Census: *Heads of Families at the First Census . . . 1790: Connecticut* (Washington, 1908).

28 R. McCormick, *History of Voting in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, 1953), 63.

29 R. E. Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691-1780* (Ithaca, 1955), 46; F. B. Tolles, "The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement: A Re-evaluation," in *American Historical Review* (Oct. 1954), 1-12.

30 J. M. Ots Capdequí, "Interpretación institucional de la colonización española en América," in Pan American Institute of Geography and History, *Ensayos sobre la historia del nuevo mundo*, 304-7; see also the remarks of C. C. Griffin, 110-11. Ots Capdequí, *Nuevos aspectos del siglo XVIII español en América* (Bogotá, 1946), 22.

In summary, and here one may agree with Professor Lousse and the corporatist school already mentioned, nothing was more characteristic of the eighteenth century than constituted bodies of parliamentary or conciliar type. They existed everywhere west of Russia and Turkey. They were more universal than the institution of monarchy, more widespread than the famous middle class. All defended their liberties as they understood them; there was in many places a busy political life; discussion, protest, airing of grievances and refusal of taxes were very common. No one except a few disgruntled literary men supposed that he lived under a despotism. In defending their rights and justifying their pretensions, the constituted bodies elaborated a good deal of political theory. It was a political theory of a strongly historical kind, making much of the agreements, compacts, statutes, and charters of former times. It is not true that all eighteenth-century thought was unduly abstract or rationalistic; or, if some thinkers became belligerently rationalistic, it was because historical arguments were preempted by groups which made no secret of their exclusiveness. Nor did political thought arise merely from an emancipation of the mind, as a process of intellectual enlightenment, from the books of thinkers who defied the authorities of their time. It developed also in close connection with actual politics, and in disputes between organized powers already well established. The next chapter sketches the political philosophy that had come to characterize the constituted bodies of Europe by the middle of the eighteenth century, and some of the problems and paradoxes presented by the growth of aristocracy up to that time.

CHAPTER III

ARISTOCRACY ABOUT 1760: THEORY AND PRACTICE

To be bred in a place of estimation, to see nothing low and sordid from one's infancy; to be taught to respect oneself; to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye . . . ; to take a large view . . . in a large society; to have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse . . . ; to be habituated in armies to command and to obey; to be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honor and duty; to be led to a guarded and regulated conduct, from a sense that you are considered as an instructor of your fellow citizens in their highest concerns, and that you act as a reconciler between God and man; to be employed as an administrator of law and justice . . . ; to be a professor of high science . . . ; to be amongst rich traders, who from their success are presumed to have sharp and vigorous understandings . . . these are the circumstances of men that form what I should call a natural aristocracy, without which there is no nation.

—EDMUND BURKE, 1791

The thing is perfectly harmless in itself, but it marks a certain foppery in the human character, which degrades it. . . . It talks about its fine blue ribbon life a girl, and shows its new garter life a child. A certain writer, of some antiquity, says: "When I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

The punyism of a senseless word like Duke or Count or Earl has ceased to please. Even those who possessed them have disowned the gibberish, and as they outgrew the ricketts, have despised the rattle. . . .

Through all the vocabulary of Adam there is not such an animal as a Duke or a Count.

—THOMAS PAINE, 1791

"There is no more certain maxim of politics," observed Robert Walpole in 1719, "than that a monarchy must subsist either by an army or a nobility; the first makes it a despotic, the latter a free, government."¹ He was explaining his opposition to the Peerage Bill, then before Parliament, by which the earls of Stanhope and Sunderland and others of the Whig magnates intended to restrict the creation of new peers. By making the peerage more strictly hereditary, the great Whigs hoped to prevent control of the House of Lords by the King or his advisers. They wanted no repetition of what Queen Anne had done a few years before. She had simply added enough new men to the Lords to make that house agree with her on the ratification of the treaty of Utrecht. Walpole, as a commoner and country gentleman, had no desire to see the Lords put out of reach of influence by the crown, or by the crown's chief minister, as he soon became. But he did not doubt the utility of a strong body of nobles, to serve as "a balance against the democratic part of our constitution, without being formidable to the monarchy itself."

In the same year, 1719, the duke of Saint-Simon, peer of France, as haughty a nobleman as ever trod the halls of Versailles, was seriously alarmed. A plan was afoot to abolish the proprietary character of seats in the French parlements. The Regent, alarmed at the revival of the Parlement of Paris since the death of Louis XIV, was considering the creation of a new system of courts, in which property in office and hence hereditary position should have no place. The Regent wanted a parlement that would agree with him, and since it was the proprietary and hereditary nature of their seats that enabled the magistrates to resist, he proposed to buy back their offices from them. This was enough to arouse Saint-Simon. Normally the first to scorn such inferior nobles as owed their nobility to government service or outright purchase by their own grandfathers, Saint-Simon now rushed to the defense of the *parlementaires*. They were, he said, a useful "check" or "barrier" against the pretensions of the papacy and the usurpations of the King.²

The Peerage Bill failed to pass, and the power of creating new peers remained in the British crown. The Prince Regent's ideas for abolishing property in judicial office came to nothing, and the French parlements remained predominantly hereditary. But in both countries the same response had been aroused. A commonplace of eighteenth-century political thought had been stated: that nobility was a necessary bulwark of political freedom. Whether in the interest of a more open nobility, as with Walpole, or of a more closed and impenetrable nobility, as with Saint-Simon, the view was the same. Nobility as such, nobility as an institution, was necessary to the maintenance of a free constitution.

MONTESQUIEU, REAL DE CURBAN, BLACKSTONE, WARBURTON

Here, in the remarks of two practical observers, lay the germ of the thought of Montesquieu, a nobleman of the ancient stock who had inherited a seat in the

1 Walpole quoted by W. S. Holdsworth, "The House of Lords 1689-1783," in *Law Quarterly Review*, XLV (1929), 449.

2 Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, XXXVI, 308-9.

Parlement of Bordeaux, was active in that parlement in the days of the Regency, and announced his ideas in systematic form in *The Spirit of Laws* some thirty years later. The strength of Montesquieu's book, published in 1748, lay in its firmly weaving together many diverse strands, each strand representing the position taken by actually existing institutions or groups of men. He combined the arguments of the old feudal and the new parliamentary nobility in France. He put together England and France, showing that each in its way had the institutions necessary for political liberty, England through its balance of King, Lords, and Commons, France through the moderating influence of "intermediate bodies" upon the crown. He transcended a purely nobilitarian view because he included groups of all kinds among these intermediate bodies: not only the nobility, but the French parlements as associations of judges, the seigneurial and ecclesiastical courts as distinct from the royal power, the clergy and the innumerable smaller corporations within the church, the provinces and towns as corporate entities, the guilds and professional associations of all kinds. Each of these, according to Montesquieu (anticipating the views already quoted from Professor Lousse), had its own rights, legal powers, and privileges. These were no mere grants from either a sovereign people or a sovereign King. Such rights could not lawfully be curtailed; they balanced each other, and prevented the undue concentration of power. "Abolish in a monarchy," said Montesquieu, "the prerogatives of manorial lords (*seigneurs*), clergy, nobility and towns, and you will soon have either a popular or a despotic state."

But Montesquieu, in wishing to concede appropriate rights to all, thought it appropriate to allow more extended rights for the more powerful elements in society. His reading of French history, and indeed of world history as he knew it, taught him that if the "great" did not have a great share in government they would rebel against it. They were ungovernable except on their own terms; if their interests were not protected they would not be loyal. Here is what he says in his famous chapter on the British constitution:

"There are always in a state some people distinguished by birth, wealth or honors; but, if they are confounded with the rest of the people, if they have only one vote like others, the common liberty will be slavery for them, and they will have no interest in defending it. . . . Their share in legislation should therefore be proportionate to their other advantages in the state."³

It is hard to deny the wisdom of this observation, or the truth of the historical perceptions on which it rested: the whole interminable story of barons' wars and noble rebellions lay behind it. It may be contrasted, however, with the thought of Rousseau, when he maintained, in the *Social Contract*, that the very fact that the force of *things* tended to destroy equality was a reason why the force of *law* should be used to maintain it.

The important personages would have their proportionate share in legislation, Montesquieu went on to say, "if they form a body which has the right to check the enterprises of the people, as the people have the right to check theirs." So he recommends that the legislative power "be confided both to a body of nobles, and to

3 *Esprit des lois*, Book XI, chapter VI. See also Carcassonne, *Montesquieu et le problème de la constitution française au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1926), 76–77, 84–85.

a body chosen to represent the people, with the two bodies having separate assemblies and deliberations apart, and separate views and interests." And, he adds, since the judiciary is in a sense "null," it is the nobles who are especially suited to balance the executive and legislative powers. This telling passage suggests a number of elucidations. First, Montesquieu was no believer in one-class rule; he really thought that the "people," i.e., persons not noble, should have a role in the state.⁴ Second, he wanted to keep the classes distinct, with "separate views and interests." Third, by abstract analysis of the prerequisites of a free society, Montesquieu produces the Lords and Commons of England, with the *noblesse* and *roture* of France also present in his mind. Fourth, when he thinks of the separation or balance of powers in government, he is not thinking of the balance of executive, legislative, and judicial function, for the judicial power is in a sense "null"; he is thinking of the balance between King, nobility, and Commons, and nobility is the key element in this balance. If the French parlements serve as a balance, they are able to do so not because they are judges but because they are nobles—and hereditary nobles at that. Fifth, the later influence of Montesquieu in America should not be exaggerated. The idea of the judiciary as an equal third member in a system of government seems to have been developed by the Americans more than by Montesquieu, who saw no such staying-power in judicial office itself, unfortified by hereditary position or noble rank. Nor did all American partisans of an upper legislative chamber, during the formative years after the American Revolution, think that the role of a senate was to give proportionately greater political influence to men who already had a great share of social and economic power. Many did think so; but John Adams, at least, gave precisely the opposite reasons for creating an upper chamber, namely to prevent aristocracy by segregating the big people, "ostracizing" them to a separate chamber so that they could not infiltrate and pervert the popular house.⁵ Adams, too, had read the history of Europe, and had learned from it what Montesquieu had not learned, but what is now the commonplace of our textbooks and the view more congenial to the modern mind, namely, that a strong executive is necessary to defend the many against the few. Nothing could be more remote from the thinking of Montesquieu.

In Montesquieu's system it was "honor" that supported free monarchies, and "virtue" that supported republics, whereas despotism, the third of his three categories of states, was maintained by "fear." By "virtue" he meant civic spirit, a lack of personal ambition, a certain self-effacement when necessary for the public welfare. By "honor," on the other hand, he meant a kind of self-assertion, a consciousness

4 Not that Montesquieu was without an extreme class consciousness. Cf. the note he made in 1729 on arriving in London from Holland, on a journey made in company with the Earl of Chesterfield: "A Londres, liberté et égalité. La liberté de Londres est la liberté des honnêtes gens, en quoi elle diffère de celle de Venise, qui est la liberté de vivre obscurément avec des p----- et de les épouser: l'égalité de Londres est aussi l'égalité des honnêtes gens, en quoi elle diffère de la liberté de Hollande, qui est la liberté de la canaille." *Oeuvres* (1955), III, 284–85. It is hard to see what Montesquieu could have meant by his reference to the Dutch, except that he preferred the English aristocracy (*honnêtes gens*) to the Dutch patricians, whom he seems to have regarded as *canaille*. As for the reference to the Venetians, p----- means w-----s.

5 *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* (1786) in *Works* (1851), IV, 290–91. See also below, pp. 200–203.

of one's rank in society, a desire for recognition and public esteem, an enjoyment of external marks of high position, a sense of obligation imposed by one's standing or the known deeds of one's ancestors, a greater readiness to accept danger than to incur disgrace, a refusal to be humiliated even by a king. Because noblemen had such a sense of honor they could not succumb to the fear by which despots ruled. They would resist their own debasement, and so protect the liberties of all. There is doubtless more truth in this diagnosis than is palatable to popular equalitarians. Palatable or not, there is no disputing that for Montesquieu the preservation of political liberty presupposed a hierarchic form of society and an aristocratic code of personal honor.

The *Spirit of Laws* set forth, in an amplified and cogent form, what members of the constituted bodies of Europe had long been saying in more fragmentary ways; it was therefore immediately popular, and influential in the formulation of constitutional thought. It has often been said that Montesquieu misunderstood England; it has been alleged that the growth of cabinet government in England, and the increasing power of the House of Commons, had already put Montesquieu's emphasis on a balance between King, Lords, and Commons out of date. It seems likely, however, that Montesquieu interpreted eighteenth-century England more correctly than some later writers who sought to make England prematurely democratic. There is ground for believing that the Prime Minister was more dependent on the King than on either house of Parliament. To Holdsworth, the authority on English legal and constitutional history, it seemed that Montesquieu, and along with him Delolme, Vattel, Blackstone, and Burke, were quite right in holding the separation and balance of powers, between King, Lords, and Commons, to be the distinctive feature of the British eighteenth-century constitution, as, he says, it remained down to 1832.⁶

Montesquieu's book went through half a dozen French editions in three years. It was immediately translated into English, in which it reached its tenth edition by 1773. It was the best-known modern French book in America. It appeared in Dutch in 1771, in Italian in 1777, in German in 1789, in Russian in 1801, doubtless encouraged in Russia by the young patrician reformers about Alexander I. A traveler saw it in Hungary as early as 1751, translated into Latin, the official political language of the Magyars.

The extent of an influence is best seen when we find it in unexpected places, in the minds of men who are thinking of other subjects. Edward Gibbon offers an example. Gibbon of course knew France very well. In Paris in 1763, he found that intellectuals and men of high social standing mixed more easily in that country than in England; he was a little irked to be received in France as a writer only, instead of in the quality of "a man of rank for which I have such indisputable claims."⁷ Years later, as historian of the Roman Empire, he related how in A.D. 212 all subjects of the empire became Roman citizens. He found here one of the causes of subsequent despotism and degradation. He was moved to make a general

6 W. S. Holdsworth, "The Conventions of the 18th Century Constitution," in *Iowa Law Review*, XVIII, 2 (Jan. 1932), 161-80. See also below, Chapter VI.

7 Quoted by Elinor G. Barber, *The Bourgeoisie in 18th Century France* (Princeton, 1955), 133.

observation, using some of the very language of Montesquieu. "The distinction of ranks and persons," he says, "is the firmest basis of a mixed and limited government. In France the remains of liberty are kept alive by the spirit, the honors and even the prejudices of 50,000 nobles. Two hundred families supply, in lineal descent, the second branch of the English legislature, which maintains, between the king and the commons, the balance of the constitution. . . . The perfect equality of men is the point at which the extremes of democracy and despotism are confounded."⁸ So we are offered the choice, with nothing between: hereditary rank on the one hand, or "perfect equality" (and despotism) on the other.

Montesquieu was not a true conservative, because he was not satisfied with the way the Bourbon monarchy had developed and was developing in his time. Nor were the French parlements which after the mid-century drew so many arguments from Montesquieu by any means conservative, as will be seen. The Parlement of Paris in 1764 was already using the phrase, "the Sovereign, the Law and the Nation"—a forecast of "the King, the Law and the Nation" to which men took the oath of allegiance in the first years of the Revolution.⁹

A more purely conservative writer was Real de Curban, an old gentleman born in 1682, who compiled six volumes on the Science of Government in his later years. They were published after his death. He anticipated the conservatism of Burke and the nineteenth century far better than Montesquieu. He takes up, for example, the much discussed institution of private ownership of public office, especially the judgeships or magistracies of the parlements. "If it is an evil," he sighs, "it is an incurable one." He poses the question: is it better to continue with it as established, or to abolish it so that the King's subjects can rise by merit alone? "Since public prejudice favors the latter opinion, which I consider false, I have thought that I ought to refute it."

Then comes the practical and conservative argument. Of course, if we were founding a new state we would not make its offices a form of property. "But when a state is established, when imperfections have become habits, and disorder itself has a usefulness to the state, prudence forbids making changes." The prudent man will conform to custom and usage. Of course we would favor the abolition of property in office if it really led to the advantages promised by the reformers, but the real consequences would be different. If magistrates did not inherit their position, says Real, they would have to be appointed by the King, which is to say by his ministers, who, unable to know the merits of all cases in question, would in turn depend on court gossip and intrigue. Or mere intellectuals (people "with more Latin than property") would seek office, which would be undesirable; or businessmen would try to enter government service, which would also be unfortunate, since they are more useful to society in their business. In any case the present office-holders are not really so bad, since they regard their offices as investments or family occupations. Peculiar arrangements (*desordres*) "which have been introduced by public necessity and strengthened by reason of state should not and cannot be abruptly reformed. It is always dangerous for a government to pass from one ex-

8 *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. LXIV.

9 Flammermont, *Remonstrances du parlement de Paris au 18^e siècle*, II, 436.

treme to another. With difficulty could one today change the means of arriving in positions of government, without undermining the loyalty of those who now occupy these positions; and it is to be feared that they would arouse the people to revolt."¹⁰ The latter, it may be observed, is precisely what happened in France in the noble revolt of 1788 and in the counterrevolution after 1789.

Men are of course equal by nature, Real admits; but in civil society there must be subordination. Some must give orders, others follow them. Real cites various minor arguments, such as that variety makes the beauty of the world, that social order is willed by God, and that all is "marvelously" disposed in a great harmony; but he is willing to meet his adversaries on their own ground. "Degrees of dependence have been established only for common utility." (This is almost the language of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789.) "Why not confer this authority which must be respected upon merit rather than on external qualities?" No one would choose a ship captain for his birth; why, then, choose our governors in this way? Unfortunately, says Real, the critics of hereditary position would be right only if men were always reasonable and just. Given men as they are, there would be no agreement on merit; each would think himself or his own leader more meritorious than others; conflict and even civil war would follow. It is better to hold to some unmistakable even if arbitrary sign, such as birth. Moreover, if a man really rose by merit, his equals and competitors would take offense, for his success would be a constant and bitter reminder of their own failures. "But in making position (*la grandeur*) depend upon birth, we soothe the pride of inferiors and make high position much less difficult to accept. There is no shame in yielding when I may say: 'I owe this to my birth.' This argument convinces the mind, without injuring it by jealousy. . . ."¹¹ which is to say that a society which accepts hereditary position is free from the tension, frustration, disappointment, and bitterness of a society based on rivalry for "success."

One looks up from Real's book with a feeling that if the French had a revolution it was not because they were not forewarned, and that if modern society has developed psychological difficulties, it is not because these were not foreseen. But no attention was paid to Real at the time, nor was there much encouragement for anyone to hold conservative opinions, outside of religion. This is because, in France, the aristocratic school was not conservative. In France the aristocracy hoped for change. It became disaffected toward the monarchy long before the middle class.

Not so in England. Here those who took part in the chief constituted bodies, the Parliament and the established church, had won out in the preceding century both against the King and against uprisings from below. Their problem was to preserve the constitution as it was. It is worth a moment to glance at two representative thinkers who wrote just before the revolutionary disturbances began.

William Blackstone went to Oxford in 1758 to occupy the newly created Vinerian professorship of law. The lectures he gave there developed into his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. In his opening lecture he explained why English law could better be studied at Oxford than at the Inns of Court. It was because law

10 Réal de Curban, *La Science du gouvernement* (Aix-la-Chapelle, 1751–1764), VI, 73–77.

11 *Ibid.*, III, 227–30.

was a proper subject of study by gentlemen who must govern the country, because at Oxford "gentlemen may associate with gentlemen of their own rank and degree," and at Oxford were assembled the future peers, future members of the House of Commons, future justices of the peace, landowners, lawyers, and clergymen. At the Inns of Court the subject was approached in too technical and vocational a way. Properly considered, the study of law was a liberal subject, a "science which distinguishes the criterions of right and wrong." Blackstone therefore proposed to impart, in addition to a certain amount of purely legal lore, a philosophical comprehension of the subject.

The philosophical arguments of the book are somewhat as follows: English constitutional liberties are "the residuum of natural liberty." They are in a sense the rights of all mankind, but by an inscrutable dispensation have been debased elsewhere while they survive in England, being "in a peculiar and emphatical manner the rights of the people of England." They are mainly the rights of personal liberty, personal security, and private property, but include also, as secondary rights calculated to preserve the primary ones, certain political rights specifying the composition and powers of Parliament. By the Rights of Persons the people are divided into certain orders, clergy and laity, nobility and commonalty; about forty status levels, from duke to laborer, are described. Rank and honors, by offering an incentive to virtuous ambition, are useful in a well-ordered state. A "body of nobility" curbs and protects both crown and people. Parliament is an autonomous body; the lords sit in their own right, and the commons serve for the kingdom as a whole, with no such dependence on their constituents as obtains in the United Provinces. Locke was mistaken in believing that, if Parliament abused its trust, the people retained a supreme power to "remove or alter" it. "So long as the English constitution lasts, we may venture to affirm that the power of Parliament is absolute and without control."¹²

Blackstone was certainly conservative enough, even believing that no rights or wrongs existed in England except those actionable under English law. He thought that no power except Parliament itself could make changes in Parliament; certainly Parliament could not lawfully be influenced by pressures from outside. But Blackstone was not as conservative as conservatives were soon to become in the face of American and European developments. He could conceive of the possibility, in the 1750's and 1760's, of parliamentary reform. He thought it "a misfortune that deserted boroughs should continue to be summoned," and observed that "if any alteration were to be wished or suggested in the present frame of Parliament, it should be in favor of a more complete representation of the people."¹³

William Warburton, who rose to be the Bishop of Gloucester, published his *Alliance between Church and State* in 1736. He reissued it in various editions, including in the one of 1766 a lively rejoinder to Rousseau. His purpose was to justify the establishment of the Church of England, and of the Test Act designed to keep non-Anglicans out of important office. Could one sufficiently know the political

12 *Commentaries*, I (Philadelphia, 1860), 128, 140 ff., 144, 153, 157–60. The American editor, Sharswood, takes care to explain, in his notes, that in the United States the legislative body is not supreme, but exercises only powers delegated by the people.

13 *Ibid.*, 171–80.

writings of all languages it would doubtless be possible to find similar works from all countries in which there were religious minorities that had any recognized existence at all; for in virtually all states the holding of office was limited to persons of a preferred religion. Warburton's arguments could probably be found in Calvinist Geneva or Amsterdam, in Lutheran Württemberg or Sweden, and even in the Catholic states in the eighteenth century.

Church and state, he holds, are equals in a federal pact. It is "Hobbist" to suppose that religion was invented to facilitate government, and "papist," in his opinion, to believe that government exists to advance the cause of religion. Neither can be reduced to the other. But the church, having no power of compulsion, needs to be protected by the state. A particular religion is protected not because of its truth but because of its social utility. To argue the case for an establishment on the ground of religious truth leads to endless theological disputation. The whole "key" or "clue" to the question is to understand that a religion is established "not to provide for the true faith, but for civil utility." All religious beliefs should be tolerated, and Warburton prides himself, fairly enough, on being more indulgent than the French deists toward novel and absurd religious movements. But, he argues, it is well to single out one moderate religion for alliance with the state. The state thereby benefits because people are taught their duties, religious acrimony is minimized, and eccentric religious behavior is kept under control. The favored church benefits because its clergy are set up as an order in society, and by receiving a public endowment, in most countries in the form of tithes, become independent of voluntary contributions by the people. It is useful to have the bishops of this church sit in a parliament, where they can protect religion. It is also useful to have the bishops designated by the civil power, and to allow church assemblies only by the permission of magistrates, though of course in such matters the church should be consulted. Arguments of reason and utility, though really of universal application, show an "amazing agreement" with the existing institutions of England. Adversaries are baffled, because reason and the establishment "prove to be one and the same."¹⁴

Nevertheless, some will say, Warburton continues, "that every qualified subject having a right to the honors and profits in the disposal of the Magistrate, the debarring him from these advantages for matters of Opinion is a violation of the rights of the subject." Warburton grants that his other arguments may not convince such wholly unsympathetic opponents. He willingly therefore takes the argument on to higher ground. He simply denies that there is any *right* to public office at all. Or, rather, he asserts that the existing authorities may prescribe such qualifications for office as they think fit. "All places of honor and profit, in the Magistrate's disposal, are not there in the nature of a Trust, to be claimed and equally shared by the subject; but of the nature of prerogative, which he [the magistrate] may dispose of at pleasure, without being further accountable, than for having such places ably supplied. All right of claim then being absolutely at an end, and consequently all injustice, in excluding at pleasure, we may finish our

14 *Alliance of Church and State* (London, 1766), 66, 90, 115, 123, 187–205.

discourse, having taken from our adversaries the great palladium of their cause.”¹⁵ No one can complain of discrimination if he happens not to have the qualifications for a job.

This statement repays careful examination. Warburton disarms his opponents not merely by denying the right to office; doubtless there is no such “right.” He disarms them by explicitly declaring that government is not accountable to those it governs, that it may appoint whom it pleases, and that office is not a trust but a privilege to be conferred by those who rule. Government, or “the magistrate,” in this case meant the Parliament, that sublime body whose power Blackstone did not hesitate to call absolute.

Even this is not enough. The bishop has “finished his discourse,” but still thinks of more to say, occupying ever higher ground of general principle—all to justify the Test Act. He enunciates the doctrine of prescription, soon to be made famous by Burke. He puts it forward as a check upon natural law. He declares that to require religious tests is not really contrary to natural law or natural right, but adds that, even if it were, religious tests would still be justified by the doctrine of prescription, which he says derives from the Roman law, and which holds that long continual possession over many years itself creates a right—often necessary to defend order and security against claims of “natural right” that may cause disturbance. Now at last, with the additional reminder that the whole question rests on the utility and not the truth of religion, he is content to close his book.¹⁶

Taken together, and with due regard for the differences between them, the four writers just summarized, all writing about or just before 1760, may be taken as spokesmen for the political classes of their day. The world of the constituted bodies—the parliaments, diets, assemblies of estates, councils and magistracies, each supporting and supported by the church established in its own country—would find much to agree with in Montesquieu, Real, Blackstone, or Warburton. There would be wide agreement on the virtues of liberty, and with the idea that nobility, or at least a system of inherited ranks and distinctions, was necessary to assure it. It would be agreed that parliaments or ruling councils were autonomous, self-empowered, or empowered by history, heredity, social utility, or God; that they were in an important sense irresponsible, free to oppose the King (where there was one), and certainly owing no accounting to the “people.” It would be agreed that the inequalities of position necessary to any organized society might as well be determined by inheritance, since the claims made for “merit” would be deceptive and confusing. It would certainly be agreed that there was no general right to office. It would probably be agreed, too, that what seemed unreasonable, what no one would invent if he were inventing society afresh, might still be reasonable, or at least socially useful, in a subtle or “amazing” way. And it might be agreed that prescription, long-continued practice, custom, and usage might justify or necessitate what to naive common sense seemed very peculiar, or to sensitive consciences actually unjust.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 298–300.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 321–23, 347.

USES AND ABUSES OF SOCIAL RANK

There were, however, certain problems and paradoxes created by the institution of nobility. The hierarchic character of society produced difficulties for aristocrats themselves, for those beneath them yet close enough to mix with them or aspire to join them, and for society as a whole considered as an association of human beings with practical needs to be met.

A distinction may be drawn between two kinds of rank. On the one hand there is (or was) a diffuse kind of rank, or social standing, generally derived by the individual from the family of his birth, built into his personality from childhood, conditioning his attitudes to other persons, above him, below him, or his equals; a rank or standing accompanying a person everywhere, showing in his bearing and in his clothing; in the street, in the shop, or in the drawing room; in public and in private; among his intimates and in the presence of strangers. The man of quality in the eighteenth century expected to be, and usually could be, promptly recognized as such. It was this kind of rank that Gibbon wished his French friends would see in him, when they received him merely as an accomplished man of letters. The other kind of rank may be called specific or functional. It is rank held for a particular purpose within a particular organization of limited scope, and without significance outside the organization; a rank, or position, conveying a certain authority and a certain responsibility for the achievement of certain ends, set above some ranks and below others, but only within a chain of command or a hierarchy set up for a particular purpose, and outside of which the individual is considered to be like others. A major-general in civilian clothing doing his Christmas shopping in a department store becomes merely a shopper; he takes his chances with others, and cannot expect any unusual deference. A bank president driving his car through city traffic becomes merely a driver; he takes or yields the right of way without consideration of social standing; he may grumble, but grumbling does him no good; basically he accepts, and must accept, the equality of all persons who are equally competent as drivers. Doubtless the two kinds of rank overlap, in that diffuse or social rank helps to determine occupation, and specific or functional or occupational rank carries over into personality and social standing. But the two are distinct enough. As Thomas Paine was to say later in a highly inflammatory work, if a man is called a judge or a general one may form some impression of what he is and what he does, but if he is called a duke or a count one can form no idea of what he is or does, or even whether he is a man or a baby.¹⁷

All societies require systems of specific rank. And a sort of diffuse rank will doubtless always exist. The peculiarity of eighteenth-century society was that specific rank was so largely determined by diffuse rank. It is probable, quite apart from the ethical merits of aristocratic and democratic institutions, that a complex and highly articulated society, moving toward what are called modernization or industrialization, will operate more efficiently, with less friction, complaint, or grievance, and with more effective discharge of its multifarious business, if specific ranks are filled with the least possible regard to diffuse rank, if generals are chosen purely for

¹⁷ *Rights of Man*, Everyman edition, 60.

military talents and their authority is confined to strictly military affairs, if people accept each other as generals, bank presidents, motorists, or shoppers, according to circumstances of the moment, having otherwise about the same regard for all.

Europe in the eighteenth century, and Western Europe more than Eastern Europe, was already a complicated society, with elaborate mechanisms operating in the fields of government, production, trade, finance, scientific research, church affairs, and education. The allocation of personnel to these enterprises on the basis of birth and social standing could not but hamper, and even pervert (one thinks of the established churches, some of the universities, and many branches of government), the achievement of the purposes for which such institutions were designed. The old feudal days were over. It was no longer enough for a lord to look locally after the needs of his people. The persistence and even the accentuation of an aristocratic outlook derived from earlier and simpler conditions presented problems for European society itself, as well as for the individuals and classes that made it up.

Nobility in the old sense had been corrupted, so to speak, or at least turned from its early character, by two new developments which now reached their height: its association with money and wealth, and its use by governments as an instrument of rule. Wealthy men, whose grandfathers had been bourgeois, and who still owned and managed their wealth in bourgeois manner, even when it was in land, now belonged to the nobility in France and elsewhere. In England men of the same kind, while they could rarely become peers because the peerage was so small, belonged in many cases to the higher levels of aristocracy. In Holland they were regents; in Milan and elsewhere, patricians. To the advantages of money were thus added the advantages of social rank, and the inheritance of property might carry with it the inheritance of nobility or its equivalent. Wealth, thus ennobled, could give preferential access to public office, a favored position in taxation, and membership in a select body, thought to be peculiarly necessary to the freedom of the state. "Another reason operates," Turgot once said, "to render privilege most unjust and at the same time less worthy of respect. Where nobility can be acquired by a payment of money, there is no rich man that does not speedily become a noble, so that the body of the nobles includes the body of the rich, and the cause of the privileged is no longer the cause of distinguished families against a common class, but the cause of the rich against the poor."¹⁸

In many countries it seems that the rich were becoming richer in large measure because of their rights of special access to government—because of their favored position in an aristocratically oriented society, whether or not they enjoyed the titles of nobles. Thus even in America the families that could get on to the governors' councils, and remain there from one generation to the next, made fortunes in the eighteenth century by receiving grants of western land from the crown. In England the landowners, because of their control of Parliament, were the more able to enlarge their estates through statutory enclosures. In Bohemia the princely families added to their properties while the lesser nobles lost. The patricians of Bern made an income by governing their subject districts, and the regents of Am-

18 Quoted by D. Dakin, *Turgot and the Ancient Regime* (London, 1939), 274.

sterdam profited from the 3,200 offices at their disposal. In France, in the eighteenth century the King no longer commonly sold offices, which were now inherited by their owners; but he could give pensions and gratifications to whom he pleased. There was nothing specifically French in this practice. In England, too, the government did not sell offices; it gave them away as a means of maintaining its influence in Parliament or, in general, of mollifying the aristocratic class. In England by 1700 "the majority of great old families were drawing large income from various sources—colonelcies in the army, pensions, ambassadorships, etc."—which for many families equalled their incomes from landed estates.¹⁹ The income from a mastership in chancery rose from £150 a year in 1620 to £6,000 in 1720. Shortly after 1800 the office of Chief Clerk of the King's Bench brought £6,200 a year to its owner, who paid £200 a year to a deputy to do the work.²⁰

Thus while it is true that in some ways men governed because they were rich, it is equally true, or more so, that men were rich because they governed. Either they were able to perform public duties because they had private means, like the justices of the peace in England, or army and navy officers of certain kinds and ranks in all countries, whose salaries were too small to support the necessary manner of life. Or government itself, or various emoluments incidental to government, formed a source of income for people who were in a position to obtain them. And the people in this position were not the small politicians and grafters on the fringes of respectable society who derive a somewhat similar kind of profit from operations of government today; they were definitely of the upper class, the very guardians of liberty and of the state, peculiarly sensitive to considerations of honor; and such income from government office, or from church benefices, was thought to be especially honorable for people of this kind.

The institution of nobility, or high hereditary social rank, had also become an object to be used and manipulated by governments as a means of rule. Nobles could be turned into courtiers, as at Versailles. Or a king could make use of their great social prestige to awe the populace or impress foreign rulers, and incidentally bind the nobles more closely to himself, by making them into ambassadors or lords lieutenant or military governors with a good many ceremonial functions in addition to the practical ones. They also made good army officers, since they grew up in the habit of command; there was the additional advantage, for the king, that a nobleman turned into an army officer came under a measure of discipline. There was an increasing tendency in the eighteenth century for royal governments, which had usually established their authority in former times by drawing on the middle class, to put nobles into important civilian office. Increasingly the French intendants were nobles. In Prussia, it was in the reign of Frederick the Great that the crown for the first time favored the nobility in high office, and this remained the general practice thereafter.

Kings also could raise commoners to the nobility, or promote lower nobles to higher grades. The Hapsburgs after the reconquest of Bohemia in the 1620's had created a new Bohemian nobility to help keep the country loyal. They did the same

19 Habakkuk, "English Landownership 1680–1740," in *Economic History Review*, X (1939), 11.

20 K. W. Swart, *Sale of Offices in the 17th Century* (The Hague, 1949), 55–57.

after the reconquest of central Hungary in 1699, where such families as the Esterhazys received princely status in the eighteenth century. The Irish peerage had been created by the British crown for much the same purpose; the union of Ireland with Great Britain in 1801 was made more acceptable to Irish magnates by the creation or promotion of new batches of Irish peers. Often governments created new nobles in order to weaken or dilute the old ones. Thus the French monarchy, especially before 1700, had sold patents of nobility not only to make money but also to reward its servants, to please the ambitious middle class, and to build strength against the older feudal nobility. In England the frequent creation of new peers began in the time of George III and especially under the younger Pitt. Here, too, one purpose was to combat the aristocracy already established by creating a new one. "Pitt swamped the Whig oligarchy in the House of Lords."²¹

In general there were two possible lines of development, toward segregation or toward assimilation. A nobility or a patriciate might become more exclusive, impenetrable and purely hereditary. Or it might from time to time assimilate newcomers from the next lower classes. Exclusiveness was most rigid in the aristocratic republics, such as Venice or Bern or Nuremberg or Holland, or in monarchical states at times when the King was weak, as chronically in Poland, or during the Freedom Era in Sweden, or in England during the Whiggish generations before 1760, during which very few new peers were created. The class line was also all but impassable in the small German princely states, which had as many nobles as they needed; in the larger ones, even Prussia, and in the Austrian empire, with their more complex governments, cases of commoners rising to nobility through government service were more frequent.

It had long been easiest, in all probability, to rise to the aristocracy in England and in France. Blackstone was able to quote a sixteenth-century writer, Sir Thomas Smith: "As for gentlemen, they be made good cheap in this kingdom: for whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, who studieth in universities, who professeth the liberal sciences, and, to be short, can live idly, and without manual labor, and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be called master, and taken for a gentleman."²² Much the same could be said for France, where, however, the way to nobility had lain more through government service or purchase of titles. And if in England anyone with the proper bearing could pass as a gentleman, so in France all kinds of plausible people gave themselves out to be noble.

There are signs, however, that passage from the mercantile to the aristocratic ranks was becoming less common in both countries about 1750. In England, as land ownership became more concentrated with the enclosure movement, it was the men who already owned land that were buying more land.²³ Unbreakable entails of landed estates, recognized in English law only since the Restoration, were now producing what amounted to family trusts in the third and fourth generation. There was less movement from city to country than in the Tudor period. City men

21 A. S. Turberville, "The Younger Pitt and the House of Lords," in *History* n. s. XXI (1937), 355.

22 Blackstone, *Commentaries* (Philadelphia, 1860), I, 406.

23 Habakkuk, *op. cit.*

who bought rural acreage often did so only to have a place of residence in the country, or meet the legal qualifications for election to Parliament; they did not become country gentry—the two classes remained distinct. “Gentlemen’s sons were less commonly apprenticed in towns. By 1760 the stratification was not like a system of caste, but it roughly blocked out the division of functions between different groups of the community.”²⁴ The justices of the peace, formerly appointed by the crown, were now appointed by the lord lieutenants of the counties, who were usually peers. “Hence by the end of the century we get a social exclusiveness amongst the justices which led them to object to anyone engaged in trade or manufacture.”²⁵ At the highest level, that of the peerage, there was a certain opening of the gates after the Whig oligarchy lost control. The House of Lords increased in size by about fifty per cent during the two administrations of the Younger Pitt. Pitt, however, used elevation to the peerage as a reward for eminent military or diplomatic service, or to gain the support of those who controlled parliamentary boroughs. Such new peers originated in the landed class, and their elevation signified promotion within the aristocracy rather than entrance of new peers into it. The idea that elevation of businessmen to the peerage began with Pitt seems to be a groundless historical cliché, for only one of Pitt’s creations was a banker and City of London man.²⁶ The social distance between landed and commercial classes had perhaps never been greater in England than in the days of Jane Austen and the eve of the First Reform Bill.

In France the *noblesse*, comprising tens of thousands of families, corresponded socially to what would be called gentility in England. The difference was that English gentility was a vague standing recognized by society, while French *noblesse* was a status recognized by law and defined or created by the royal power. The French noble also possessed tangible privileges such as tax advantages, which the English gentleman did not enjoy, at least not simply on any legal ground of being a gentleman. Nobility in France, however, was common enough to be the accepted symbol of prestige. Not to be noble, or nearly noble, might be almost as embarrassing in France as not to be considered of the gentlefolk in England. Many bourgeois repelled their names with a genteel or noble flourish: Robespierre as de Robespierre, Danton as d’Anton, Brissot as Brissot de Warville, Roland as Roland de la Platière. Carnot vainly tried to prove himself noble to impress the family of the girl he hoped vainly to marry.

Since the King could create nobles it was theoretically possible, in France, for the royal government to bestow the accepted prestige-symbol on successful men in all walks of life. The *élites*, as the French say, might have been assimilated to the *noblesse*, or nobility itself might have been transformed into a kind of legion of honor for men of notable achievement. Had this happened, there might have been riots and peasant uprisings, but no French Revolution.²⁷

24 G. N. Clark, *Wealth of England to 1760* (London, 1946), 161.

25 W. S. Holdsworth, “The House of Lords 1689–1783,” in *Law Quarterly Review*, XLV (1929), 438.

26 Turberville, *op. cit.*

27 M. Reinhard, “Elite et noblesse dans la seconde moitié du 18^e siècle,” in *Revue d’histoire mod-*

There were reformers in the French government who saw this possibility. In 1750 the government created a *noblesse militaire*. There were then about 4,000 bourgeois officers in the army, and the decree specified that all of them after thirty years' service should receive quasi-noble tax-exemptions, or nobility itself if theirs was the third generation of military service. The tendency of the government, that is, was still assimilationist rather than segregationist. But the tendency of the nobles, the "real" nobles, was more segregationist than assimilationist. The nobles by birth were often impecunious, and for economic as well as other reasons disliked bourgeois competition for military appointments. They obtained for themselves, in 1751, a new *école militaire*, in which poor boys of four generations of inherited nobility could receive education at public expense; and in 1781, just as the thirty-year period specified in the edict of 1750 came to an end, aristocratic pressure forced the government to issue the famous ordinance of that year, by which army commissions were in effect limited to men with four quarterings of nobility, that is, men whose noble status was duly inherited. Even at this late date, on the eve of the Revolution there appear to have been a number of generals in the French army who were not of noble birth, but these were older men who had entered the service many years before. The trend was toward aristocratic self-segregationism in the army.

If the true nobles, with their esteem for martial virtues, would not share their status with middle-class army officers there was little chance that the *élites* of civilian life could receive any such honors. The government did, at times, favor the ennoblement of businessmen. It projected a *noblesse commerçante* to correspond to the *noblesse militaire*, hoping to get nobles and their capital into business pursuits, and to make it possible for businessmen to become noble without abandoning business. A decree of 1767 allowed nobles to go into commerce without derogation. It set up procedures by which some of the *negociants*, the most well-to-do wholesale merchants, might receive certain honorific distinctions which, however, fell just short of nobility. The result was that the *negociants* were antagonized, being told in effect that they were not quite worthy of the desired rank. Such vacillation in the assimilating of businessmen to the nobility was due to many causes, to the resistance of older nobles, to the jealousy of *marchands* for *negociants*, to the difficulties of a financially hard-pressed government in granting a status that carried tax exemption, and, more generally, to the incongruousness between forms of prestige derived ultimately from land, war, or feudalism and forms of achievement arising from trade and the handling of money. The professions fared no better than business. Quite a few doctors and a few artists were ennobled, but in general no men of science, no writers and no lawyers, and only a few professional government workers. It may be pointed out that the deputies of the Third Estate who brought about the National Assembly in 1789 were almost all of them lawyers or government career men, and that they abolished nobility fairly early in the Revolution, in 1790.

erne et contemporaine, III (Jan.-Mar. 1956), 5-37; L. Tuetey, *Les officiers sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1908); E. Barber, *The Bourgeoisie in 18th Century France*, 60-62.

PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATION, RECRUITMENT, TAXATION, AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Either segregation or assimilation had its difficulties. So far as privileged and hereditary aristocracy was a problem, the use of homeopathic methods, the infusion of new doses of privileged and hereditary aristocrats to allay the obstinacy of the old ones, was obviously no permanent solution. It stored up more hereditary aristocracy for the future. It maintained the aristocratic scheme of values, the admiration for aristocratic status as the proper goal of ambition, as the animating spirit or incentive throughout all walks of life. To keep movement into the aristocracy relatively open had in a certain sense a democratizing effect upon the aristocracy and upon society at large. It had, also, and perhaps more so, an aristocratizing effect upon the middle class and upon all society, for the successful merchant or lawyer could not rest easy merely with a comfortable income or the satisfactions of occupational status and what I have called functional rank, but felt obliged also to acquire a general social recognition, which would become hereditary for his children, and enable him or his children to occupy a secure vantage point from which to look downward as well as up.

Many difficulties were thus created. One was the administrative inefficiency or embarrassment that followed, in complex civilian or military organizations, when social rank and functional rank failed to correspond. It was hard for a man of high functional rank to secure respect or obedience from a subordinate whose social rank surpassed his own. A serious study of the history of army rank, that is, of the ordering of generals, colonels, majors, captains, etc., might throw light upon this curious subject. Louis XIV had systematized such purely functional rank in the French army, and had favored promotion by seniority or merit rather than by social class. The indignant Duke of Saint-Simon (who had himself failed of promotion to general), complained that in this way all men in the service were thrown into "a complete equality," with *seigneurs* mixed "in a crowd of officers of every kind," and with a gradual "forgetting by everybody, and in everybody, of all difference of person or origin," so that everyone's career came to depend "on the minister or even on his clerks."²⁸ To the aristocratic political school, which held that hereditary nobility was the bulwark against despotism, it seemed that by such practices a king might turn army officers, and indeed all his subordinates, into his tools or creatures. But with the aristocratic resurgence after Louis XIV's death, it was the opposite problem that prevailed. The progressive discrimination against bourgeois officers caused discontent among the bourgeoisie, and probably also, by reducing the competition between noble and bourgeois, and narrowing the field from which commissioned ranks were recruited, led to a loss of professional competence.

The same problem existed in civilian branches of government. In some countries, notably in Prussia and Russia, civil servants were assigned an assimilated military rank, or put in a stated order of social precedence. Even Lenin, much later, it may be recalled, was the son of a middle-class inspector of schools, who enjoyed

²⁸ Quoted by E. Boutaric, *Institutions militaires de la France avant les armées permanentes* (Paris, 1863), 428.

the assimilated rank of major-general. In Germany in the eighteenth century many middle-class people were finding careers in officialdom, and facing the problem of associating with social superiors who were only their equals, or less, in official employment. The Prussian King ruled that his administrative boards should pay no attention to differences of class origin among their own members, all of whom, as civil servants, came to enjoy certain noble privileges. But the trend in other German states was the other way. In Hanover a ruling in force from 1670 to 1832 held that noble councillors should take precedence over non-noble members of the same councils; and a similar rule existed in the archbishopric of Cologne.²⁹

As to effect on professional competence of socially exclusive methods of recruitment, very little seems to be systematically known. Egret's recent work on the Parlement of Grenoble is illuminating. He makes it clear that, because the parlement insisted on recruiting itself from its own sons (or from the fourth generation of nobility), its standards inevitably and lamentably declined. A royal ordinance required a minimum age of twenty-five years for an ordinary councillor, and of forty for a president or presiding judge; but the pressure to establish young men of the right families was too strong to withstand; and in 1756 half the councillors and all the presidents had come to their positions with "dispensations" for age. Other ordinances forbade fathers, sons, and brothers to belong simultaneously to the parlement, but were automatically disregarded. Members were required to have a degree in law, but the universities gave the degree with absurd facility, even telling candidates the answers to examinations in advance. Men who had no interest in law and no vocation for it as a profession, or who led scandalous personal lives most unseemly in judges, or who rarely attended the sessions but simply lived idly on their country estates, nevertheless belonged to the Parlement of Grenoble; it was their "family occupation," an investment of capital, a badge of rank; such men could of course always turn up for a political meeting, to defend the privileges of their bench. It must be added in fairness that in serious cases, as when it unanimously condemned one of its own members to be executed for murder, the parlement tried to do what was right; but it is not the rectitude of individuals, but the effect of the system, that is in question.³⁰

It is hard not to believe that other oligarchies did not suffer from the same internal problems and produce similar disadvantages for the public. The British House of Commons, though far more broadly based than the Parlement of Dauphiny, is at least to be examined with this thought in mind. It has been argued, with a great assemblage of detailed evidence, that the system of controlled boroughs, however strange it may seem to modern eyes, did have the advantage of bringing the commercial as well as the landed interests into the House. It appears from statistical study, however, that most commercial men in the House were not the nominees of patrons but sat for the small number of open boroughs in which they were elected by actual voters. It is also argued, in favor of the eighteenth-century House of Commons, that the system allowed able young men to enter

29 F. Valjavec, *Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland, 1770–1815* (Munich, 1951), 79; H. Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 137–74.

30 Egret, *Parlement de Dauphinée*, I, 19–27.

politics at an early age. This advantage, if it was one, was by no means limited to England. It was clearly due to the influence of aristocratic family connections; and was probably as widespread as this influence. In England the average age of commercial men on entrance into the House of Commons was 40, that of country gentlemen 32; in Silesia the average age of commoners upon appointment to the governing boards was 42, that of noblemen 27. Over half the members of the Parlement of Paris immediately before the French Revolution were under 35. We have just seen that half the members of the Parlement of Grenoble took their seats before their twenty-fifth birthday. In England it was only a quarter of the Commons who first took their seats at age 25 or before; but members who had had fathers or grandfathers in the House entered at an age averaging nine years younger than for others. We often hear of the youth of the French revolutionaries; we may fail to realize that the governing aristocracies of the eighteenth century were composed to a large extent of young men also.³¹

Ability cannot be so readily measured. There was William Pitt, prime minister at twenty-four, and a man of great talents and understanding in certain fields. It is impossible to say how many other youthful magistrates or politicians were like him, in England or elsewhere. What one knows of eighteenth-century Oxford makes one hesitate to generalize on the side of optimism; the studies at Oxford were no more difficult, and no more enlightening, than those required of young men at Grenoble. And as for the practical wisdom not to be learned at school, even Holdsworth, while praising the old House of Commons as a working institution, allows that the way in which it lost America, and alienated Ireland, constitute grave exceptions to the story of its wisdom and its triumphs. Birth and upbringing in a governing class doubtless give advantages to young men of ability and serious habits; but governing classes also produce other young men for whom a place must be found.

Another difficulty lay in the field of taxation. Outside of England, kings had pacified their nobles by granting them tax exemptions, and the republican patriots allowed various tax advantages to themselves. It is commonplace to observe that France was a rich country with a chronically impoverished government, that the inability to tax the wealthy, who were largely noble (though not all nobles were wealthy), was the basic cause of the French budgetary crisis, the mounting debt, insolvency, and revolution. Similar problems, perhaps less acute, existed elsewhere. A Dutch writer observes that the eighteenth-century United Provinces were a rich country with a poor government, and ascribes their decline as an international power in part to that fact.³² In fact the Dutch debt was about fifteen times as heavy per capita as the French debt in the 1780's. An Austrian writer remarks that cer-

31 On the House of Commons see the works of Namier and Judd cited in note 23 of Chapter II. Holdsworth and Turberville also observe that the great Whigs hesitated to put into the cabinet, though not into Parliament, anyone who was not "one of themselves," and cite the fact that Edmund Burke never attained cabinet rank; see Holdsworth, *Law Quarterly Review*, XLV, 331. For Silesia see H. Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, 106; for France, J. Egret, "L'aristocratie parlementaire française à la fin de l'ancien régime," in *Revue historique*, 208 (1952), 1-14.

32 I. H. Gosse and N. Japikse, *Handboek tot de staatkundige Geschiedenis van Nederland* (The Hague, 1947), 639.

tain moneys asked by Maria Theresa of the diet of Hungary, and which the diet refused, could easily have been paid from the incomes of a few bishops and magnates.³³ No European state except Great Britain could develop its full strength under the taxation system then in use, and even the British government until about 1780 borrowed heavily from private Dutch sources. The inflexibility of the taxation system was due mainly to institutions associated with aristocracy. It might be due also in some cases to historic regional liberties, as in Brittany, Hungary, or the American colonies of Great Britain; but in Europe, if not in America, such provincial liberties gave more fiscal protection to the upper than to the lower classes.

A heightened class consciousness, with accompanying social and psychological tensions, may be listed as the last of the evils created by an increasingly aristocratic social system. It is not that the bourgeois, or persons next below the noble or patrician classes, were conscious of resentment or hostility to the aristocracy as such, though they might on occasion have unpleasant experiences with individuals. Apathy toward public affairs was very great in 1760 and even later; so far as middle-class people had no desire to participate in high position they could not resent the measures that debarred them. The most class-conscious class, or the class most sensitive to threats from other classes, real or imagined, seems to have been the aristocracy itself, with its everlasting striving for family perpetuation, its rules and ordinances requiring four quarters of nobility or a century of patrician status, its doctrine on the value of hereditary nobility for preservation of political freedom, or, in France, its theory that the older nobles were racially different, being of Frankish and Germanic origin, from the mass of the population. The bourgeois and lower classes accepted the class structure more passively as in the nature of things. Perhaps in England, among Dissenters, a sense of difference handed down from the days of the Puritan revolution kept alive a positive middle-class feeling against the Anglican and landowning aristocracy. Perhaps there was everywhere a feeling that some were born to govern, and some were not (which would correspond to the facts of the day); as long as there was acceptance of this situation we may speak of class consciousness, but not of class conflict. Bourgeois feeling was tepid on such matters. The bourgeois Voltaire had no objection to the nobility. Bourgeois radicalism, where it existed, turned rather against the church, or "ministerial despotism," or the inefficiencies or absurdities or chicaneries of government, or the ignorance and superstition believed to be inherited from the past. Such measures as were taken to cope with the essential class problem, to reduce the financial or other privileges of the nobility, or to draw middle-class people into government service or the army, were taken on the initiative of governments themselves, in the great monarchies, without bourgeois agitation and even without much bourgeois support.

The problem of the bourgeois was felt rather as a personal one. It had to do with private and family life, and with the satisfactions of prestige or recognition. The highest and most wealthy aristocracy aside, there was often little of importance, except rank itself, to distinguish two families of bourgeois and of noble status. Or, indeed, in particular cases, a bourgeois family might have more of all the world's

33 A. Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresas* (10 vols., Vienna, 1863–1876), VII, 112–13, 123.

goods, tangible and intangible, than a noble family—except rank. Mme. d’Epinay had a well-to-do acquaintance who “could not console herself at being nothing but a financier’s wife.”³⁴ Rank came to prey upon the mind. Goethe’s great-uncle, J. M. von Loen, was the rich descendant of a merchant family, who became a writer, traveler, and kind of German *philosophe*. He wrote, as already mentioned, a little tract proposing a merchant nobility. Impressed by the meaninglessness of existing social classifications (which, however, he had no desire to abolish), he observed:³⁵

I see at the fair in Frankfurt a fine-looking merchant’s wife sitting in her shop; she is superbly dressed, and gives orders to her servants like a princess; she knows how to greet persons of station, ordinary people and the vulgar each according to worth and condition; she judges reasonably, and brings up her children well. Her husband sits meanwhile in his office, makes decisions, disposes of thousands, and often deals with more people in an hour than others can manage to see in a day.

On the other hand I see honest noble folk in the country that have to subject themselves to menial tasks, where the lady of the house often goes into the stable herself, hurries from store-room to kitchen to cellar, brings in the lambs, pigs, hens, geese, or crops, so that in fact she is carrying on a small business yet does not derogate from her noble rank in the least. Her lord meanwhile goes about his fields scattering seed or moving dung, in the barn or the cellar, with his thrashers and hired men.

Who would really say that, between these two ways of life, the difference was so great that only the latter would be considered noble, the former not?

Von Loen’s solution was by no means to abolish nobility, but to admit suitable people to a share in the honors it conveyed.

It may be that the class problem, and in particular the problem of the bourgeois in an aristocratic society, had become most acute in France. If so (and it is by no means certain as of the years around 1760) it was because contact between bourgeois and noble was very common, because the bourgeois class had grown up in close conjunction with the state and the monarchy, because for generations it had expected social ascent through the holding of office, and because the French bourgeois, perhaps more than the German burgher, looked on the noble way of life as the norm of desirable living. In France the most important of the bourgeoisie were office-holders and lawyers, but even the merchants, busy, successful, enterprising, and affluent as they often were at the time, seem to have shared in the idea that commerce was a somewhat degrading occupation—thus differing from their self-satisfied counterparts in England or Holland. The French bourgeois “identified” with the aristocracy. He, too, took pride in his ancestry. For him, too, business was something to escape from and rise above. Even in the “bourgeois drama,” so popular about 1760, the speeches on the dignity of trade were usually given by charac-

34 E. Barber, *The Bourgeoisie in 18th Century France*, 57.

35 *Der Kaufmannsadel, Untersucht nach der Gewohnheit der heutigen Welt* (1745), quoted in H. Voelcker, *Die Stadt Goethes*, 101.

ters who were noblemen in disguise. A half-convinced audience, or half-convinced authors, found it more reassuring to hear middle-class life praised by their social betters. The hearty self-congratulation of Defoe in England did not exist in France.³⁶

The French bourgeois wanted nothing better than to become a noble, and there was no trace of revolutionary sentiment against the nobility in 1760, nor any feeling against the hierarchic organization of society. There was already much talk of "equality"; but coming from a bourgeois it was likely to mean that he wanted to be appreciated, or, from a noble, that he was willing to mix with, or even marry into, the more affluent or interesting strata of the bourgeoisie. There was no equalitarianism of thought or feeling. But precisely because bourgeois and nobleman did mingle there were psychological problems. Whether the magic circle seemed to close or to open, there were difficulties just the same. If it closed, as when the parlements or army became more exclusive, it recalled memories of days when access had been more easy. Consternation resulted for people who had no satisfying outlet within their own class. If the circle opened, it drew newcomers in at the cost of embarrassment and emotional insecurity. Adjustment was not easy at best; the lingering effects of certain bourgeois ideas, such as the belief in thrift, hard work, and marital fidelity, prevented the full enjoyment of the lavishness, leisure, and sexual license more characteristic of the upper class. Many bourgeois women married nobles, without coming to feel really accepted by their husbands' families or friends, or even by their husbands themselves. Sons of lawyers or merchants could still in individual cases enter the army; but they were never allowed to forget their inferior origins. And the same poison filtered downward. The bourgeois law students at Besançon rioted in 1772 because the son of a wigmaker had been admitted. The professors explained in vain that the universities were open to all; the youth was still taunted "for his disorderly hair and carelessness of dress."³⁷ At Poitiers, about the same time, the law students got into a general brawl with the younger officers of the garrison, who were nobles. Both groups had attended the same dance, where allegedly a student had given offense to a young lady of aristocratic birth by stepping on her feet. The police had to stop the ensuing disorders.³⁸ There was just enough separatism, and just enough mixing, to cause trouble.

36 Barber, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

37 F. Delbeke, *L'action politique et sociale des avocats au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1927), 112–13.

38 A. C. Thibaudau, *Biographie: Mémoires* (Paris, 1875), 61–62.

CHAPTER IV

CLASHES WITH MONARCHY

They are an assembly of republicans! Oh, well! Things as they are will last as long as I do!

—LOUIS XV ON THE PARLEMENT OF PARIS, 1753

The Monarch is always more a friend to Democracy which is obedient to him than to Aristocracy which stands in his way.

—THE MARQUIS D'ARGENSON, 1765

The constituted bodies faced a new situation at the close of the Seven Years' War. Fighting had gone on for a generation interrupted by a few years of truce; governments had accumulated great debts, which they had now to find means to carry or repay. The search by governments for new sources of income met with resistance from magistracies or assemblies in many countries. It therefore produced constitutional crises. "From the need for money, which put into motion the machinery of reforms, arose a great drama: the clash between autonomous entities and the central power, between local governing classes and foreign rule." These words, which might apply to the dispute between the British Parliament and the American colonies after 1763, actually refer to the conflict between the Hapsburg government and the duchy of Milan.¹ Since in Hungary and Bohemia the government at Vienna was often thought of as foreign, and even in France the more autonomous provinces often felt similarly toward that of Versailles, the same formula would hold generally for the Hapsburg and Bourbon systems.

Other events, unrelated to the late wars, contributed to a change in the political atmosphere. England received a new king in 1760, Russia a new empress in 1762. The pressure of Catherine the Great upon Turkey and Eastern Europe committed

1 F. Valsecchi, *L'assolutismo illuminato in Austria e in Lombardia* (Bologna, 1934), I, 194.

the Hapsburgs to continuing military expenditure, initiated the dissolution of Poland, and helped to end the Freedom Era in Sweden. Simultaneously, and independently, the internal struggle broke out anew at Geneva.

The present and the two following chapters trace the story to about the year 1774. There are two main themes. On the one hand, the constituted bodies got into trouble with the forces of monarchy, that is, with kings and their ministers. They complained of royal encroachment, but in general, by 1774, monarchy seemed to have prevailed. This happened in Sweden, Hungary, the Milanese, France, and even in a way in England. In France, indeed, in an important sense, the first French revolution, one in which the people had little part, now occurred. On the other hand, there also began to be an agitation against existing constituted bodies, on the part of private persons claiming that such bodies did not adequately represent them. These are the years in which the movement for parliamentary reform first appeared in England, where, however, it was to produce no institutional change for more than fifty years. The earliest effective manifestations of democratic revolution occurred in the Anglo-American colonies and at the town of Geneva.

In any case, the constituted bodies—parliaments, diets, estates, and councils, to a large extent hereditary in membership and avowedly aristocratic in political doctrine—began to face a war on two fronts, against the Monarch on the one hand and the Multitude on the other.

THE QUASI-REVOLUTION IN FRANCE, 1763–1774

Before we launch into a narrative of what happened in France it is well to make a few observations to set the story in perspective. It must be remembered that the reader of history is in a position to understand these events much better than contemporaries could. Or rather, contemporary observers were exposed to a one-sided presentation of the issues. The French parlements after the death of Louis XIV, and increasingly as the eighteenth century went on, adopted the practice of publishing their remonstrances, or formal protests, against actions taken by the royal government. These published remonstrances were of great importance in the formation of a public opinion. For the first time, the interested person could now obtain some kind of information on matters of current practical politics. He could see something of the conflict of interests behind decisions not yet made. The government, however, insisted on the maintenance of administrative privacy, or secrecy, in its affairs. Often it tried to silence the parlements, either by prohibiting publication of their remonstrances, or by temporarily “exiling” or rustivating their members. Such measures were never successfully carried through. The parlements and their allies always managed to express their views. But no one in authority within the government ever tried to explain its policies to the public. At most, certain officials in an indirect way might tolerate the printing of unorthodox opinions, as when Malesherbes in the 1750’s and 1760’s let the royal censorship go almost unenforced. Or other officials might engage pamphleteers to respond to tracts made public by the parlements. But at bottom the government supplied no information.

This was generally true of all countries. In England it was only in the 1760's that the substance of parliamentary debates came to be known "out of doors," or outside the two parliamentary houses; here, however, since the dominant group in Parliament was the governing group, led by the ministers themselves, the views and purposes of government came to be known. Thus in England a public opinion could take form around practical issues and concrete decisions, whereas in France, where public opinion was beginning to grow as it did everywhere in the Atlantic world, it took rather the form of what Tocqueville called literary politics. There was no public discussion by men in executive office or hoping to be so, or by writers associated with them and informed of their intentions. Discussion was carried on rather by intellectuals, *philosophes* and *hommes de lettres*, or by pamphleteers dependent on their sponsors. It tended either to be abstract on the one hand or to reflect mere intrigue on the other. Writers at their best under these conditions might be searching or even profound; at worst, they were merely voluble, polemical, or shallow; in either case they were uninformed.

Since the actual though unknown policies of the French government were often perfectly justifiable, and could have been made to appeal to important segments of the French population, it may be said that the main victim of the withholding of public information was the French monarchy itself, and that its failure was a failure of public relations. Or, in a more general sense, the unfortunate consequence was to favor ideology at the expense of realism in French political consciousness at an important stage in its early growth. The voice of opposition to government could be heard, but not that of government itself. The irresponsible talked, where the responsible kept silent.

Even within what must be called the government it was the most irresponsible parts that were the most public. The most visible aspects of the Bourbon monarchy were the worst. The kings had in fact devised a form of public relations aimed at impressing fellow monarchs, potent feudatories, and lesser people of an earlier day when they had been more naive. Versailles symbolized this program. The royal court at Versailles was a monument to everything grandiose, lavish, magnificent, and openly displayed. It seethed also with the trivial and the petty. It represented, in the highest degree, the influence upon government of the non-governmental, the private, the "social." Composed of the king, his wife, brothers, sisters, and relatives, his intimates and confidants and those aspiring to such position, high churchmen and princes of the blood, together with the households, retinues, and functionaries attendant upon such personages, reinforced by great noblemen and their clienteles, along with the mistresses, business agents, dependents, and servants of all and sundry, the court created an irresponsible and frothy environment in which the functioning officers of government had to work, when, indeed, they did not emanate from it in themselves. The Marquis d'Argenson, a firm upholder of monarchy against aristocracy, though inclined to be petulant after his own removal from office, described it very well, writing in 1750, privately in his diary:²

The court, the court, the court! There is the whole evil.

The court has become the only senate of the nation. The lowest lackey

² *Journal et mémoires* (Paris, 1864), VI, 321–22.

at Versailles is a senator, the chambermaids have a part in government. . . .

The court prevents every reform of finances . . .

The court corrupts the army and navy by promotions due to favoritism . . .

The court gives us ministers without merit, authority or permanence . . .

The court corrupts morals by teaching intrigue and venality to young men entering upon a career, instead of emulation by character and work. . . .

It must be noted, and probably d'Argenson would admit, that these evils were due not to the court alone, but to certain oligarchic and entrenched hereditary interests in French society, of which the parlements came to be the spokesmen. But the court at Versailles was easier to see.

With its most shameful parts thus paraded before the public, and its most creditable efforts studiously concealed, the French government was an easy target for all who had a mind to be critical. The charges against it, made with increasing openness from the middle of the century until the Revolution—that it was extravagant, wasteful, despotic, and arbitrary—were all true. The parlements enunciated many liberal principles in making these charges. It was also true that the government undertook many serious reforms, but of this part of the truth much less was heard, because it was the parlements, as much as the court, that brought these reforms down in failure. And public opinion, until late in 1788, generally supported the parlements. To the modern observer today nothing is clearer than that the Bourbon monarchy, in the generation before the Revolution, seriously attempted to solve the basic problem of French society, the existence of special privileges based on legal stratification or hierarchy; and nothing is more remarkable than that the French public, bourgeois and intellectuals, seldom saw this to be the issue, took so long to develop any sense of hostility to the nobility as a class, and so widely supported the Grand Whiggery of France, the noble-aristocratic-parliamentary opposition to despotism. The government was blamed by all classes for its faults, and received credit from none for its merits.

The Parlement of Paris, together with its sister magistracies in the provinces, had had numerous clashes with the royal government for half a century, when new royal enactments in 1763 opened the way to a quasi-revolution. It was the fate of the parlements that in launching a quasi-revolution in the 1760's they opened the way for the King, who crushed them in 1770 in order to drive through certain reforms, just as in launching a real revolution in 1787 the same parlements opened the way for persons acting in the name of the nation, and bent on a program of reforms not wholly unlike the King's in 1770. Between 1774 and 1787 a kind of parliamentary-aristocratic counterrevolution was at work, as again after 1789.

Before 1770, however, as again before 1789, the parlements contributed significantly to the political education of the French people. Their repeated resistance to the crown gave a respectable precedent for more flagrant disobedience. To force the recognition of a constitutional monarchy, they formed an unauthorized and extra-legal union—what Louis XV called an "association," a word that was to take on revolutionary implications in England and America also. They emphasized

“law” as the basis of authority, and they declared that certain fundamental laws, or a certain constitution by which the royal and other powers were defined, already existed in France. They forced a definition and justification of sovereign power. They brought such key words as “citizen,” “nation,” “country,” and “natural and imprescriptible rights” into the vocabulary of official debate. Increasingly they claimed, hereditary and closed bodies though they were, to “represent” the French people, and so raised the whole problem of the nature of political representation.

The royal enactments of 1763 were tax decrees.³ One called for an indefinite continuation of the *vingtième*, which had been expected to expire at the end of the war. The *vingtième* was the most recent and modern tax of the French monarchy, in principle a levy of a twentieth, or of one *sou* in the *livre*, of income, theoretically paid on income from all property, in practice on income from ownership of land. It was payable by nobles and commoners alike. The decree of 1763 also announced a reassessment to ascertain real income as opposed to valuations currently on the tax rolls. In France in the eighteenth century, as in the United States today, assessments tended to become frozen or stereotyped, the difference being that the mighty Bourbon monarchy lacked the flexibility in raising the rate that the smallest American municipality enjoys. Another decree laid a one per cent tax on *immeubles fictifs*, “fictitious real property,” a legal term which included property in office. The *parlementaires* held their seats by virtue of property in office; as landowners they benefited from low and obsolete assessments. The controller-general, Bertin, justified the tax on offices by observing (like George Grenville explaining the Stamp Act to the American colonies) that owing to the costs of the late war it was necessary “to make sources that had not yet participated contribute to the public burdens.”

The Parlements of Paris, Grenoble, Toulouse, and Rouen remonstrated strenuously. Paris insisted that the *vingtième* be levied “on the now existing rolls, without increase of valuation,” under penalty of prosecution by the courts.⁴ Besides urging the King to pay his debts without new taxes, and observing that half of what the taxpayer paid never reached the treasury because of faulty administration, the Parlement of Paris added a long disquisition on the French constitution. It claimed that in France there were fundamental laws, immutable by nature. By these laws the parlement had the right to “verify” legislation, i.e., authenticate it before it could take effect. By these same laws the King himself received his throne. To deny these laws, the parlement ominously declared, “would be to shake the solidity of the throne itself.” These “laws of the State” could not be violated without bringing in doubt the very “power and authority of the said Lord King.” May it please God

3 For the parliamentary crisis of the 1760's see E. Glasson, *Le Parlement de Paris: son rôle politique depuis le règne de Charles VII jusqu'à la Révolution* (Paris, 1901), 11, 264–347; R. Bickart, *Les parlements et la notion de souveraineté nationale au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1932); J. Flammermont, *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris au 18^e siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1898); J. Egret, *Le parlement de Dauphini et les affaires publiques* (Grenoble and Paris, 1942), 1, 93–121, 252–287. There is a considerable literature on the other provinces. Paul Beik, in *A Judgment of the Old Regime* (N.Y., 1944), a study of the Parlement of Provence in the 1760's, concentrates on their economic views (that the fiscal crisis was to be solved by improvement of administration and productivity instead of new taxes) rather than their political ideas or activities.

4 M. Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France* (Paris, 1923), 557.

that no one suppose "that the king is king by force, for such are the signs of robbers and pirates." The parlement took care to publish all this against the royal will.⁵

In the provinces matters went even further. The governors having received orders to force through the tax edicts, the Parlement of Toulouse put the governor of Languedoc, the duc de Fitz-James, under arrest, and the Parlement of Grenoble ordered the arrest of the lieutenant-general of Dauphiny, Dumesnil. Dumesnil, who managed to remain at large under the protection of his troops, was ostracized socially by the combined parliamentary and territorial nobility of the province; Mme. la marquise de Virieu, who was related to him, joined in the refusal to enter his house, announcing that she was "a citizen before a kinsman."⁶ Regicide scrawlings appeared on the walls of buildings.

The Parlement of Paris enflamed the general agitation, and set up a three-way dispute between itself, the King, and the Parlement of Toulouse, by asserting jurisdiction in the case of Fitz-James, on the ground that as a peer he could be tried only by the peers, and that the peers sat only in the Parlement of Paris, not in any parlement of the provinces. The Fitz-James case led the Paris bench to further sweeping constitutional affirmations: that if Fitz-James had *pensé en citoyen* he would realize that he had "contracted engagements with the Nation and the laws" (that is, was not responsible to the King alone); that the essence of government was to assure the "liberty, honor and rights" of its subjects; and that the parlement was "responsible for bringing these important truths before the sacred person of the king." The parlement drew a distinction between the royal sovereignty in external and internal affairs. (The reader may be reminded of attempts sometimes made by Americans, at this time, to distinguish between parliamentary sovereignty in the internal and external affairs of the colonies.) In foreign affairs, according to this remonstrance of January 1764, the King's authority is "without limits," and "blind obedience is a duty." "But civil government, while its fulness resides entirely in the hands of the sovereign, is regulated by entirely different principles. Its object being to maintain the citizens in the enjoyment of rights which the laws assure them, with respect either to the sovereign or to one another, it is the law that commands, or, more precisely, the sovereign commands by the law." The history of France was reviewed to support this proposition; and, it was added, anyone telling the King the contrary offended against "the sovereign, the law and the Nation."⁷

No King of France had ever admitted to being a despot, and before this barrage of argument, collective hostility, and outright arrest of his agents, the "despot" yielded. The controller-general, Bertin, and the three provincial administrators most offensive to the parlements, Fitz-James, Dumesnil, and Harcourt in Normandy, were all replaced. The project for a tax on offices was given up. The plan for reassessment remained, but came to nothing. The year 1764 saw a striking parliamentary victory.

Matters were soon complicated again. The Assembly of the Clergy, the quinquennial convocation of the French church, met in 1765. It denounced the rising

5 Flammermont, *Remontrances*, II, 342, June 24, 1763.

6 Quoted by Egret, *op. cit.*, I, 102.

7 Flammermont, *op. cit.*, II, 424-38, Jan. 18, 1764.

wave of anticlerical, antireligious, and general *philosophe* literature. It also, as often in the past, took action against Jansenism. The importance of Jansenism in France and Italy at this time has perhaps never been properly understood in the English-speaking world. Jansenists, as they were called by their orthodox enemies, were Catholics who inclined to a severe theology, and critized the opulence and worldliness of the upper clergy. They had come into conflict with Rome, and been declared heretics; hence they became critical of the centralization in Rome of power in the Catholic church. The French parlements for centuries had also opposed the growth of Roman jurisdiction in France; they were hence Jansenist in a popular or sloganizing sense. They were certainly anti-Jesuit, and in 1762 had won a great victory with the expulsion of the Jesuits from France.

The Assembly of the Clergy, in 1765, in its continuing attempt to suppress Jansenism, renewed its rule that no one might receive the sacraments unless he presented a certificate—the famous *billet de confession*—stating that he had been confessed by a priest in good standing with the church. The Parlement of Paris thereupon declared all the acts of the assembly null and void. The clergy ran to the King, and the King quashed the action of the parlement. Few incidents better illustrate the role of royal absolutism as arbiter between irreconcilables—or explain the continuing popularity of absolutism in many quarters. As Voltaire put it: “There were 50,000 madmen in Paris who did not know what country the Danube or Elbe was in, who believed the universe to be shaken at its foundations by certificates of confession.” For the King, he went on, to command his subjects to stop calling each other “innovators, Jansenists and semi-Pelagians was to command fools to be wise.”⁸ The matter is important, for Jansenism driven underground was to have an influence during the Revolution, and because the church, by the measures it used to repress it, lost the sympathy of many people who cared nothing for Jansenism.

In any case, the provincial parlements, which had been irked by the high-handedness of the Parlement of Paris in taking the Fitz-James case away from Toulouse, now all rallied to its support. All disliked clerical influence, and all objected to the abrupt annulment of an act of the Paris Parlement by the King.

Then came the *affaire de Bretagne*. Here as elsewhere the royal governor, the duc d’Aiguillon, had run afoul of the local constituted bodies. An active administrator, he had launched a great program to develop this still wild and backward province. He projected a great system of roads to join Brest and the interior of the peninsula to the main body of France. He therefore sought to conscript the peasants, who were more dependent on their local *seigneurs* in Brittany than in other parts of France, for labor in construction of roads and bridges. He wished to introduce the *corvée royale*, by which, in other parts of France, peasants were required to spend a certain number of days a year on the building or maintenance of highways. The Estates of Brittany considered road-building to be under their own jurisdiction, and were in any case dominated, as has been seen, by a swarm of ancient gentry with little interest in internal improvements. The Estates resisted d’Aiguillon, and

⁸ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* (1826), XXIX, 3, 6, *Siècle de Louis XV*, chap. 36; this chapter was first published in 1768.

were strongly supported by the Parlement of Rennes. Both vigorously affirmed the historic autonomy of the province. The Parlement of Rennes, instead of arresting the governor, like the parlements of Grenoble and Toulouse, declared a suspension of the courts of justice as a means of bringing pressure on the King. The King thereupon created a special tribunal to carry on judicial business at Rennes. The leader of the troublesome Breton parlement was La Chalotais. The King, to discipline La Chalotais and enforce royal authority in the province, arraigned La Chalotais and a few others before another special tribunal, set up for the purpose at Saint-Malo. The Parlement of Paris and all the other parlements of the country rushed to the defense of La Chalotais, and of the regular court system against such special administrative tribunals.

The Brittany affair thus brought to a head a movement that had gathered strength for several years. The parlements of Paris, Rennes, Grenoble, Rouen, Dijon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, and others (there were about a dozen with varying degrees of regional importance) had formed the habit of corresponding, exchanging documents, and supporting one another in altercations with the crown. They now claimed that they were parts of a general or super-parlement, a parlement of all France, of which the several actual parlements were simply subdivisions, or what they called "classes" in the older or Latin sense of the word. This parliament-in-general, they held, represented the "nation," by which they meant the people or the governed, whether of France as a whole or of Brittany and such sub-nations in particular. No law could be valid, or tax properly authorized, they asserted, without the consent of the nation as shown by its representative, the parlement.

This position assumed by the parlements was revolutionary in its implications, not only because the King rejected it, but because the law and constitutional practice of France gave it no support. Kings in the past had acknowledged the right of the several parlements to "register" legislation or remonstrate against it; but no King had ever agreed, nor parlement until recently claimed, that parlements had an actual share in the process of legislation. Nor was there any lawful ground for parliamentary unity. The several parlements had not arisen by devolution from the Parlement of Paris or from the King, as they now claimed. They were coordinate with the Parlement of Paris; that of Brittany, for example, was simply the modern form of the old high court of the duke of Brittany before the incorporation of Brittany into France. France had taken form by a gradual coming together of previously separate parts, not by delegation of authority to branch offices of an original central power. The claim of the parlements to be really one parlement was in line with historic development; it showed the growth of interests, contacts, communication, and joint action on the scale of France as a whole. But constitutionally, it was without foundation. The *union des classes* was as much the assertion of new and hitherto unknown power as the Continental Congress to which a dozen British-American provinces sent delegates in 1774.

That the parlements sought to turn themselves into a true national and representative body could be abundantly documented, but one quotation from a decree of the Parlement of Rouen may suffice: "By the fundamental laws of the Monarchy the Parlement of France, the one and only public, legal and necessary council of the Sovereign, is essentially ONE, like the Sovereign whose council and organ it

is, and like the political constitution of the State, of which it is the custodian and depository. . . . The Parlement is in each of its said classes [i.e., actual parlements] the plenary, universal, capital, metropolitan, and sovereign court of France."⁹ And in the name of this alleged national institution the various actual parlements persisted in telling the King that he owed his position to law, that he had taken an "oath to the Nation," that a true country, or *patrie*, was one where "Law, Sovereign and State formed an indissoluble whole," that the law existed only by consent of the Nation, that Parlement alone expressed the "cry of the Nation" to the King, and watched over, for the Nation, the maintenance of its rights, its interests, and its freedom. In short, the Nation and the Law were set up, not yet expressly in opposition to the King, but as his coequal.

After ten years of such legal harangues the indolent Louis XV was goaded by the Brittany affair into a rebuttal. Early in the morning of March 3, 1766, he rode at full speed with a few companies of soldiers from Versailles to Paris. Held up at the Pont Neuf, where he knelt in the street as the Holy Sacrament was carried by, he found himself in such a traffic congestion, it is said, that he simply walked the remaining steps to the Palais de Justice. While soldiers occupied the building, a few of the magistrates received him at the steps facing the Sainte-Chapelle. It was all too sudden to constitute a formal *lit de justice*. The King had not even brought his chancellor with him, but only a few gentlemen of his court. He sat in an ordinary armchair, in his ordinary attire; the hastily assembled members of the parlement wore their usual black robes. The royal speech was then read. The session is known in French annals as the *séance de la flagellation*.¹⁰

"I will not allow, [said Louis XV] an association to be formed in my kingdom that would pervert the natural ties of duty and obligation into a confederation of resistance, nor an imaginary body to be introduced into the Monarchy to disturb its harmony. The magistracy does not form a body, nor an order separate from the three orders of the kingdom. The magistrates are my officers, charged with the truly royal duty of rendering justice to my subjects . . ."

He flatly denied that: "all the parlements form a single body divided into classes; that this body, necessarily indivisible, is essential to the Monarchy and serves as its base; . . . that it is the protector and depository of the Nation's liberty, interests and rights . . . ; that it is responsible for the public good not only to the King, but to the Nation; that it is the judge between the King and his people; that it maintains the balance of government . . . ; that the parlements cooperate with the sovereign power in the establishment of the laws . . ."

He affirmed: "In my person only does the sovereign power rest, of which the distinctive character is the spirit of counsel, justice and reason. From me alone do my courts derive their existence and their authority, but the plenitude of this authority, which they exercise in my name, remains always in me. . . . To me alone belongs legislative power without dependence or division. . . . By my authority alone do the officers of my courts proceed, not to the formation of law, but to its

9 Bickart, *op. cit.*, 173. Bickart assembles numerous quotations from various parlements, under the topics of consent to law, national representation, and unity.

10 Flammermont, *op. cit.*, II, 554–60.

registration, publication and execution. . . . Public order in its entirety emanates from me, and the rights and interests of the Nation, which some dare to set up as a body distinct from the Monarch, are necessarily joined with mine, and rest only in my hands."

Respectful remonstrance, made privately and decently, he would continue to allow; but he would not allow the parlements to proclaim to all France that submission to his will was a crime, or that "the whole Nation is groaning to see its rights, liberty and security perish under a terrible power"; for in that direction lay anarchy and confusion, and he would use all the authority he had received from God to save his people from such a fate.

Never had a French King made so strong an official statement of absolutism. One might be excused for believing, in the enlightened France of 1766, that if any sovereign power existed so enormous as the King described it, and from which all law and lawful authorities derived their existence, it was too much to be located in a single man. On the other hand, one could agree with the King that the parlements, as they really were, did not represent the French people any better than he did, and that officers of justice must draw their authority from some source outside their own hereditary positions. As events were later to have it, it was the new "body," the Nation, so passively argued over by King and parlements in 1766, to which sovereign power and the source of lawful authority were to be imputed.

The parlements were not intimidated by the King's blast against them. They continued their protests, remonstrances, and obstruction. The Brittany affair dragged on; the parlements of Paris and Rennes, while both opposing the use of administrative or prerogative courts, and upholding "law" against "circumstance," disputed with each other for jurisdiction over the hapless La Chalotais. In 1768 the royal government, moving toward economic liberalism and freedom of the market, attempted to abolish regulations on the grain trade. The parlements of Grenoble, Aix, and Toulouse favored such free trade in grain, but those of Paris and Rouen declared against it. There was also the usual opposition to taxes. In 1768 the King reactivated the *Grand Conseil*, a kind of supreme court operating directly under the King, and empowered to decide cases arising from government, or those involving conflicts of jurisdiction between the parlements. The parlements, fearing the "evocation" or transfer of their own lawsuits to this council, naturally protested, and fortified their protests by again urging the rights of the usual judiciary against administrative and presumably unfree courts.

In 1770 Louis XV decided to make an end of parliamentary opposition. He put into office a reform administration composed of Maupeou as chancellor, with his aide the young lawyer, C. F. Lebrun, and the Abbé Terray as controller-general of finance.

Maupeou simply abolished the parlements, putting their members on permanent vacation, and set up a new system of law-courts in their place. He did away with property in judicial office. Judges no longer received fees from litigants for their decisions. The new judges, drawn in part from men experienced in the *Grand Conseil*, received a fixed salary, with assurances of secure tenure. They had no personal or proprietary right to their position. They were appointed by the crown, which, according to the edict, could now select men according to professional

qualifications, without regard to financial or family considerations. The overgrown area within which the Parlement of Paris had had jurisdiction, embracing most of the interior of France, was broken up among a number of high courts, so that less travel was necessary to obtain judicial settlements. At the same time overlapping jurisdictions among courts in the city of Paris, the source of infinite confusion, expense, and delay, were clarified and redefined. The new system answered to demands that had been made sporadically for generations, and anticipated the definitive reforms carried out a generation later.

With the old parlements and their obstructive tactics done away with, the Abbé Terray launched a systematic and carefully thought out fiscal reform, aimed at a more equitable distribution of the tax burden, without regard to social class, and levied in proportion to real income. He thus resumed the program of the tax decrees of 1763 which parliamentary resistance had rendered abortive. He made progress in getting modern and realistic valuations of landed income, and increased the yield of the *vingtième* by about one-half in those parts of the country where he could get reassessments made. He met with furious opposition, and though his private instructions to the intendants were full of wise and moderate counsels, he was denounced publicly all over France as a robber, an extortionist, and a minion of despotism. So great was the outburst from parliamentary pamphleteers, and later from outraged authors of memoirs (it was mostly the upper classes who wrote memoirs), that Terray has in fact enjoyed a rather poor historical press ever since, though he is a hero for M. Marion, the great authority on the financial history of France.¹¹

The reforming efforts of Louis XV, coming at the end of a long and unrespected reign, failed to capture the public imagination. The new courts were derisively called Maupeou parlements, and the tax reforms were considered no better than banditry. Not only were the few hundred families that had monopolized the old parlements now relegated, and hence disgruntled. The legal profession as a whole disapproved. It was hard to find men for the new positions. Public opinion, such as it was, opposed the change. It was in vain that a few writers, like the aging Voltaire, exposed the pretensions of the old parlements and heartily endorsed the new. It was in vain that a pamphleteer, perhaps hired by the government, declared that only despots or feudal lords combined judicial and legislative powers, which enlightened monarchs separated and balanced, and that if the old parlements were to triumph France would become a "republic" under "a monstrous hereditary aristocracy."¹²

The very limits of noble loyalty were strained. One excited aristocrat declared that France must be "de-Bourbonized."¹³ The self-interest of the nobility in the matter is apparent. Why the country as a whole should have agreed with the aristocracy is not so clear, yet is after all understandable. The old Louis XV had lost all prestige. He was even widely hated. The government simply was not trusted. And

11 M. Marion, *Histoire financière de la France* (Paris, 1914), I, 266-72; *id.*, *Dictionnaire*, 558.

12 *Réflexions d'un citoyen sur l'édit de 1770*, (n.p., 1770), 9. Voltaire wrote his *Histoire du Parlement de Paris* on this occasion. Egret, *op. cit.*, 272 ff., finds that in Dauphiny the old parlement had become so unpopular that there was much support for the Maupeou reforms.

13 Quoted by H. Carré, *La noblesse de France* (Paris, 1920), 233.

at best it had nothing better than enlightened despotism to offer—reform without consultation of anyone outside the bureaucracy, reform at the cost of the suppression of liberty.

When Louis XV died in 1774, Maupeou and Terray were dismissed. There had been a quasi-revolution in France, but only a quasi-revolution. The nobility, through the parlements and a lesser extent the Provincial Estates, had led an attack on the monarchy. The monarchy had replied with a counterattack on the aristocracy entrenched in these constituted bodies. The parlements had laid down a broad program of constitutional liberalism. The King and Maupeou had led an assault upon privilege. But no power had changed hands. The old parlements, restored by Louis XVI, led a kind of quasi-counterrevolution, an “aristocratic resurgence,” after 1774. But the last word was not spoken. Maupeou’s aide, the young Lebrun, who is said to have written Maupeou’s speeches to the Parlement of Paris, became a busy man in the committees of the Revolutionary assemblies, turned up as Third Consul in 1799, and was one of the chief reorganizers of France under Napoleon.

THE MONARCHIST COUP D’ETAT OF 1772 IN SWEDEN

Events in Sweden were not unrelated to those in France.¹⁴ The young Swedish crown prince, Gustavus, arrived on a visit to Paris in 1770, just as Louis XV and Maupeou were mounting their attack on the parlements. He had come, indeed, to seek political backing and advice. The Swedish and French crowns had long been allies, having similar interests against the German powers and Russia; and from his French mentors Gustavus heard a great deal about the advantages of asserting royal authority. He heard the same from Voltaire, whose acquaintance he sought out at Ferney. At the opera in Paris he received the news of the death of his father. He rushed immediately back to Sweden, with promises of support from France for restoration of the power of the Swedish throne. The count de Vergennes, who a few years later was to be the chief figure in the French government in assisting American republicans against Great Britain, was sent as ambassador to Stockholm to aid the new King Gustavus III in his monarchist designs.

For half a century affairs in Sweden had been conducted by the four-chamber diet, largely dominated by the nobility, which had made the King a nonentity.

14 For this account of Sweden I have drawn on B. J. Hovde, *The Scandinavian Countries, 1720–1865: The Rise of the Middle Classes*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1943), esp. I, 177–93; R. Svanstrom and C. F. Palmstierna, *A Short History of Sweden*, trans. from the Swedish (Oxford, 1934); D. Aimé, “La révolution suédoise de 1772,” in the periodical *La Revolution française*, 1937, 144–54; and R. Nisbet Bain, *Gustavus III and His Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London, 1894). There is a recent work by Per Erik Brolin, *Hattar och Mösser: I Borgarståndet 1760–1766* (Upsala, 1953), with a summary in English, 418–22. Brolin finds in Sweden at this time “a local manifestation of the popular forces and political ideas which made the great American and French revolutions” (422). He emphasizes the beginning of significant party politics in these years, and, as the basis of the Cap party, the dissatisfaction of merchants and craftsmen with the ruling magistracies and with “aristocracy,” and the resistance of the newly developed North to the commercial regulations favoring privileged staple towns in central and southern Sweden. I am indebted to Dr. Dankwart A. Rustow of Princeton for assistance in Swedish.

Conditions in Sweden had come to have a strong resemblance to those in Poland. In both countries parties within the diet looked to foreign aid. In both countries outside powers spent money freely to bribe members of the diet in their own interest; influential Swedes and Poles regarded such gratuities as normal income consequent upon their position. The French spent 1,648,000 livres on the Swedish diet in 1769, and 1,400,000 in 1770; the British, about £42,000 (1,000,000 livres) in 1769. The French favored the party known as Hats, which, being more aggressive and military, served the purposes of French diplomacy against the expansion of Prussia and Russia. These latter powers, along with Denmark and England, sponsored the opposite party of the Caps, conceiving it to be best for government in Sweden to be more passive in the foreign field. The King of Sweden, Gustavus' father, Adolf Fredrik, was a relative of a Russian tsarina, and had received his throne in 1742 through her influence, like the King of Poland who acceded in 1764. The Swedish Queen was the sister of the King of Prussia. Both Russia and Prussia harbored designs on the territory of Sweden, especially since this still included Finland and a small area on the Pomeranian coast. A secret treaty of 1764 between Catherine and Frederick mentioned Sweden along with Poland as likely for partition. It noted also the common interest of the two rulers in preservation of the "Swedish liberties," which gave opportunities for intervention.

If Poland was partitioned in 1773, whereas Sweden escaped this fate, the main reason was doubtless the greater accessibility of Poland to the armies of the two eastern powers. But there was another reason in the social difference between the two. In Poland only the nobility counted, and it brought the country to ruin. In Sweden, with its more varied social classes, there were people who could significantly object to the rule of nobility, and from whom Gustavus III could draw support.

In Sweden the peasantry, through their village assemblies, and through representation in their own chamber in the diet, had maintained a sort of political awareness which, however rudimentary, was wholly unknown to the mute peasantry of Poland. The Swedish peasantry had been passively royalist throughout the Freedom Era. In Sweden, too, more than in Poland, a native office-holding, professional, mercantile middle class had been growing up in the eighteenth century. For a time these people mixed satisfactorily with nobles, and felt no obstruction to their ambitions. On the other hand, the fact that year after year nobleman and burgher each went apart to sit in his own house in the diet kept alive more of a sense of difference than in Denmark-Norway, where diets no longer met, and class separation was made less conspicuous by the ascendancy of the King.

Noble-vs.-burgher tensions began to mount. In 1762, in keeping with the rise of aristocratic exclusiveness that we have noted in other parts of Europe, the Swedish nobility managed to block the access of burghers to high office through further limitations on their becoming ennobled. In Sweden, as in France, though in lesser degree, the army was becoming more of an aristocratic preserve. For the Swedish officer corps we have detailed statistics, and they show that where only a third of the officers were nobles in 1719, two-thirds were nobles in 1760. It is to be observed that the year 1719, toward the close of the Northern War, was a time of full mobilization, in which more than the usual number of burghers were drawn

into military service, and that the development of Swedish society during the eighteenth century created alternative civilian occupations for men of the middle class, so that the declining proportion of burgher officers cannot be wholly ascribed to the aristocratic revolution of 1719. More revealing in this connection is the changing composition of the higher military ranks, for those burghers who did adopt military careers found the higher positions more difficult to obtain. Of the higher officers in the Swedish army 26 per cent were burghers in 1719, 16 per cent in 1735, and only 11 per cent in 1760. And it was the highest nobility, not the nobility as a whole, who increasingly occupied the highest military positions.¹⁵

The Hat party in the mid-century became more of a noble party, while members of the other three chambers in the diet increasingly supported the Caps. There was also great dissatisfaction with the Hat policy of involvement in the Seven Years' War, in which the Hats had been induced by France to go to war with Prussia, with humiliating results. The Caps got control of the government in 1765, and introduced various liberal reforms, including great freedom for the press, relaxation of restraints on trade, and reduction of military expenditure. They relentlessly pursued their Hat rivals, and showed an alarming willingness to accept dependence on Russia. Hats then drove Caps from office in 1769, aided by French money; but the British, as noted, spent £42,000 to prevent the Hats from supporting royal plans for strengthening the state. The Freedom Era had thus eventuated in blind factionalism accentuated by class conflict, with the "Swedish liberties" upheld by foreign interests, when Gustavus III arrived upon the scene.

Gustavus met the Riksdag in February 1771. "Born and bred among you," he proudly declared, though in unfilial reference to both his parents, "I hold it the greatest honor to be the first citizen of a free people!"¹⁶ The parties continued to dispute. The Caps, now controlling the three "unredeemed" chambers, demanded admission to office on grounds of "merit only." But they showed little responsibility; they arraigned Hats for trial, and actually, in 1772, at the very moment when the Polish partition was being carried out, sought closer ties with Great Britain and Russia.

Gustavus III, pressed by France, and arranging for troops to come from Finland, which, however, proved to be needless, executed an amazingly easy *coup d'état*. He rode into the streets with a white armband, which thousands of citizens of Stockholm enthusiastically adopted. He read a speech to the diet, deploring factionalism, and alluding to the "insufferable aristocratic despotism" from which he meant to deliver the country.¹⁷ He proclaimed a new constitution which the diet accepted. This document, in fifty-seven paragraphs, though derived primarily from earlier Swedish sources, also showed the influences of Montesquieu. It was the first written and consciously modern constitution in an era that was to produce many such. It divided power over legislation and taxation between the King and the diet, and it forbade extraordinary courts, while abolishing judicial torture, and assuring

15 See the tables in S. Carlsson, *Ståndssambälle och Ståndspersoner 1700–1865* (Lund, 1949), 71, 101. As late as 1865 the proportion of nobles among army officers was higher than in 1719.

16 Quoted by Bain, *op. cit.*, I, 65.

17 *Ibid.*, 128. A French text of the Swedish constitution of 1772 is printed in L. Léouzon Le Duc, *Gustave III roi de Suede* (Paris, 1861), 347–66.

a moderate freedom of the press. A few years were to show that the Swedish nobility were not satisfied with the new arrangements. The next decade was to see an aristocratic resurgence in Sweden as elsewhere. Meanwhile, however, all seemed to pass by general acclamation. The Freedom Era was over. The country accepted its new royal leader with relief.

In France, there was quite a vogue for what they called the "revolution" in Sweden, soon eclipsed by more unbounded excitement over the revolution in the American colonies.

THE HAPSBURG EMPIRE

The monarchy of Vienna was a kind of vast holding company, under which a great many subsidiary corporate structures remained much alive. There were the estates of the several provinces of the Austrian Netherlands, the area of the modern Belgium-Luxembourg without Liège. They represented not only the clergy and the nobility of the provinces, but also certain gild interests and certain of the Belgian cities to the exclusion of others. There were the various overlapping magistracies of Milan monopolized by the Milanese patricians. And, to omit lesser organizations, there were the diets of Bohemia and of Hungary, where town interests had been silenced and the landowning nobility and gentry entirely prevailed. The Hapsburg government was in continual conflict with these bodies, though in the 1760's and 1770's no such acute crisis developed as in France or Sweden.

It is necessary to emphasize, since after the revolutionary era it became so different, that for half a century before 1790 the Hapsburg government was one of the most enlightened in Europe, as enlightenment was then understood. Martini and Sonnenfels, professors at the University of Vienna, had great influence in affairs of state. Theirs was the pure teaching of enlightened absolutism. "A prince is the creator of his State," wrote Sonnenfels; "he can establish and develop in it what he wants, if only he takes the right measures."¹⁸ Ministers and administrators under Maria Theresa were zealous reformers. They had to be, if the monarchy was to survive at all. In the Succession War half the Bohemian nobles had collaborated openly with the French, when the French, occupying Prague, had attempted to set up Bohemia as an independent kingdom. In 1749, therefore, after restoring her authority, Maria Theresa had annulled the Bohemian charter and greatly cut down the powers of the Bohemian diet. The Bohemian nobles, one of whose grievances was the attempt of the Hapsburg government to build up legal protection for the peasants against them, complained repeatedly of the loss of their local rights. Maria Theresa, strongly backed by Prince Kaunitz and her other advisers, refused concessions. Kaunitz wrote to her in 1763:¹⁹

"I am a Bohemian myself, and have lands in Moravia. If I considered only my own interests I would agree with those who wish to bring the nobility and the estates more to the forefront than they now are, or let them play a role in the central

18 Quoted by E. Denis, *La Bohème depuis la Montagne Blanche*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1903), I, 513.

19 Quoted by A. von Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresas*, VII, 30–31.

administration. . . . Other sovereigns seek increasingly to limit the nobility, because the true strength of the State lies in the greater numbers of the common man, who deserves the chief consideration and yet is oppressed more in Bohemia than elsewhere. . . . I need not recall the unpleasant memory of what happened in past years with the nobility and estates of Bohemia, but will only remind Your Majesty of the obstacles to desirable measures that we meet with from the nobility and estates of Hungary, Transylvania and the Netherlands.”

He might have added the patriciate of Milan.

In Bohemia, as in eastern Europe generally, the peasants were in effect serfs owing uncompensated labor service to their lords. The dispute between the Vienna government and the Bohemian diet was a battle for jurisdiction over the mass of the Bohemian population. The Vienna government drew up *urbaria*, written documents limiting and specifying the kind, the amount, and the timing of labor due to the lords. The lords preferred for all such matters to remain under their own discretion. The peasants themselves took a hand by unorganized and violent rebellion; fifteen thousand of them besieged Prague itself in 1775. The government suppressed them, but at the same time gave up all pretense of conciliation with the nobility and the diet. The *urbaria* in 1775 were officially declared to be the law. The Bohemian aristocracy remained disgruntled but silenced, since the diet was not allowed to meet for the next fifteen years.

The Hapsburg government, like others, was in need of money after the Seven Years' War. It sought, like others, to increase its revenues, in part by reaching untapped sources of taxation, in part by raising the productivity of its territories. To stimulate production it campaigned against guilds and guild restrictions, and sought to merge small local units into larger trading areas with freer internal circulation of labor, goods and investment. The tariff of 1775, for example, brought Austria, Bohemia, the Netherlands, and the Milanese—the whole monarchy except Hungary—into a single protected tariff union.

Resistance was of course met with everywhere. In the Austrian Netherlands in these years it was sporadic, though incidents were numerous, as when the estates of Luxembourg, in 1768, refused to make any accounting for their financial activities, fearing that certain hidden tax exemptions might be exposed.

At Milan certain younger members of the patrician class were beginning to feel the need of a change. Foremost among these was the economist, Pietro Verri. With a few others, including Beccaria, he founded the club called *Il Caffè* in 1761, which for a time published a journal of the same name. He was well acquainted with the French philosophers of the day. Indeed, a letter from the abbé Morellet to Beccaria, whose work on crimes and punishments Morellet translated into French—a letter in which Morellet described in highly unfavorable terms the politics of the Parlement of Paris in the 1760's—suggests the affinities between Milan and Paris, and the way in which reformers felt both their own efforts and the forces opposed to them to be of more than national scope.²⁰ Verri was to live to see, and accept, the Cisalpine Republic of 1797. At this time he pinned his hopes on the enlightened absolutism of Vienna. He entered into relations with Kaunitz

20 This letter of September 1766 is reprinted by Glasson, *Parlement de Paris*, II, 304–6.

and the young Joseph II, who became coregent with his mother, Maria Theresa, in 1765. "Whenever old disorders have been eradicated speedily and with success," wrote Verri, "it will be seen that it was the work of a single enlightened person against many private interests."²¹

The private interests at Milan were many-sided and complicated, though they all reflected a small number of people, the hereditary patriciate and its allies in the nobility and the church. They were entrenched in the Council of Sixty (or Decurions) of the city, in the Senate of the Duchy, and in other closed and self-perpetuating boards and councils. These bodies, and the local liberties that they represented, had been hitherto little affected by the annexation of Milan to the Austrian empire in 1714. Trouble began in the 1750's when Pompeo Neri attempted (like Louis XV's ministers in France) to introduce a census of all landed property with assessments in some correspondence to actual value. Verri, in addition, wished to get rid of the practice of tax-farming, which he thought very unfavorable in its effects on economic enterprise in the duchy. The tax-farm was in fact abolished in 1770. Such efforts of course ran up against powerfully entrenched interests. Plans for fiscal and tax reform therefore broadened out into plans for more general administrative and even constitutional change. The power of the entrenched councils was the more absolute because each council, within its own ill-defined and overlapping domain, enacted regulations, enforced them, and judged offenders in particular cases. The reformers, both Milanese and Viennese, therefore urged separation of judicial and executive functions. The power of magistracies was made more formidable by the use of torture. In 1774 Maria Theresa, pressed by Beccaria, Verri, Martini, and Sonnenfels, abolished torture in her hereditary domains of Austria-Bohemia. In the Milanese she could act only with the consent of the local bodies, and the Senate of the Duchy pronounced torture to be necessary to government. Not until the Senate itself was destroyed by Joseph II a few years later could torture be abolished in the city of Beccaria.

Hungarian writers say of their country—as Americans have said of the British colonies on the opposite frontier of Western civilization—that new ideas were brought into it by soldiers of the Seven Years' War.²² In 1761 Baron Orczy founded a society for the purification of the Hungarian language. The members were well aware of the contemporary French *philosophes*, and discussed political as well as linguistic matters. Montesquieu himself had spent a month in Hungary in 1728; his *Spirit of Laws* is said to have appeared in Latin, for Hungarian use, as early as 1751; and while I know of no proof of the existence of such a book, it is entirely possible that at least parts of it may have been so translated.²³ For Montesquieu's

21 Quoted by Donald Limoli in "Pietro Verri, a Lombard Reformer under Enlightened Despotism and the French Revolution," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XVIII (1958), 260. I am indebted in these paragraphs to Mr. Limoli and to Valsecchi, *Assolutismo*, II, 157–94.

22 For these paragraphs on Hungary I depend on Arneth, *op. cit.*, VII, 111–33, and on a seminar paper and research assistance by Mr. Peter F. Sugar, who has given me the content of S. Eckhardt, *A Francia Forradalom Eszmei Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1924), and other works.

23 Eckhardt, *op. cit.*, 20–28, speaks of a letter from the Englishman Calwell, in 1751, telling Montesquieu that he has seen the book in Latin at a bookstore at Pozsony (Bratislava); but I find no such letter in Montesquieu's published correspondence, and no Latin version of the *Spirit of Laws* in any of the great printed library catalogues.

doctrine was calculated to appeal to the Magyar nobles. The idea that "intermediate bodies" should check the power of a king, and that a nobility sensitive to its honor and installed in a diet or two-chamber parliament should assure the preservation of constitutional liberty, was exactly what the Hungarians already believed. Confirmation from a famous French political scientist was a great piece of good fortune.

The diet met in June 1764. The Queen, Maria Theresa, made two important proposals. First, to pay debts from the late war, and to maintain a regular army in peacetime, she asked for an increase of taxes of about 1,000,000 florins. The old "free gift," she declared, had never been enough. Secondly, she expressed the opinion that under modern military conditions the old Hungarian "insurrection," a kind of noble upsurge or militia, was inadequate. She asked that the Hungarians maintain 30,000 regular troops at their own expense, instead of the insurrection of 80,000; and since the insurrection was an obligation of nobles only, she thought it reasonable that in getting rid of this obligation the Hungarian nobles should pay the taxes which replaced it. She thus called into question the tax exemptions enjoyed by nobles and clergy.

The diet rejected both proposals. Tax exemption and the right or duty of insurrection were the marks of noble status in Hungary, privileges to which the nobility stubbornly clung. Some of the magnates were willing to consider their modification; it was the lesser gentry in the lower house that adhered most firmly to the old order. It may be recalled, to show the class character of this lower house, that this same diet of 1764 renewed the rule that all the cities represented in the chamber should exercise only a single vote, the equal of the most obscure county member. The Queen, to bring pressure, barred entrance into her Life Guard at Vienna to Hungarians. Since service for a few years in this guard had recently become a custom for young Hungarian nobles, by which they obtained some courtly and worldly experience at the metropolis (as well as being exposed to Western ideas and bound emotionally to the dynasty in their youth), the lower house grudgingly yielded, and granted 310,000 of the million asked, of which 100,000 was to maintain the purely noble Life Guard. Maria Theresa, as usual, compromised. The diet, while granting a portion of the increase asked, refused any redistribution of the tax burden. The Queen-Empress, in her final rescript, again urged that the tax burden be divided between nobles and non-nobles—in vain. The diet also antagonized her by refusing to grant the *indigenat* to certain high officials of the empire—office in Hungary was to be limited to Hungarians, who understood the Hungarian point of view. The Queen was very dissatisfied. "This diet has taught me to know people," she said. She thought she could rule better without it; no diet met again in Hungary for twenty-five years.

In summary, in the Hapsburg countries as in France and Sweden, by about the year 1774 or 1775, the various constituted bodies were under severe pressure from monarchs. The French King had crushed his parlements, the Swedish King had forced the Riksdag to accept his authority, the Hapsburg Queen-Empress was ignoring her diets of Hungary and Bohemia, and offending the corresponding bodies in Belgium and the Milanese. The diets, estates, parlements, and councils all stoutly defended liberty, and indeed stood for many genuine liberal ideas; but at

the same time they palpably insisted on the maintenance or enlargement of their own privileges. It was monarchy in these countries that pressed for modernization and the general welfare.

At the same time, however, the constituted bodies in other countries saw hostilities open on the other front. Persons who were neither members of an aristocracy nor servants of a king began to move on their own initiative. This happened, between 1763 and 1774, within the narrow but not insignificant limits of the city of Geneva, and on the broader stage of the Anglo-American world, where it led to the American Revolution.

CHAPTER V

A CLASH WITH DEMOCRACY: GENEVA AND JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

We shall probably not devote to the largest monarchies articles as long as this one; but in the eyes of the philosopher the republic [of Geneva] is no less interesting than the history of great empires. . . . If our religion prevents our thinking that the Genevese have worked effectively for their happiness in the other world, reason obliges us to believe that they are about as well off as men can be in this one.

—D’ALEMBERT ON GENEVA IN THE *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*, 1757

During the whole of the last century the history of Geneva affords little more than an account of the struggles between the aristocratical and popular parties.

—*ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA*, 1797

Post tenebras lux.

—MOTTO OF THE CITY OF GENEVA

Geneva in 1760 was a city of about 25,000 people, about the equal of Philadelphia in size, though not growing as rapidly. A man could walk across the town in fifteen minutes; the whole territory of the independent republic (which did not join the Swiss Confederation until 1814) comprised only seventy square miles. It was enclosed by the kingdoms of France and Sardinia, except for a few miles along the lake. From the Genevan point of view Sardinia was huge, and France almost infinite in extent. The city lived at the mercy of these two, or by the local balance of power between them; often enough, hostile soldiers had threatened its frontiers. A republic lying between two monarchies, a salient of Protestantism projecting into the Catholic world, its industrious people were forever on the alert, still manning

their citizen guards, nervously sensitive to the outside world yet conscious of isolation from it, and filled with a self-righteous, Calvinist, or Puritan sense of superiority over their neighbors.

The city was a nursery of talents, and its chief export was its own men. It was estimated that a fifth of those who held its citizenship were habitually absent. Though it was the home of the naturalists Charles Bonnet and J. A. de Luc, men of some note in eighteenth-century science, it produced most especially men who excelled in the two fields (not unrelated, perhaps especially for Calvinists) of public finance and the philosophy of public affairs. It was the birthplace of Jacques Necker, Minister of Finance under Louis XVI of France; of Etienne Clavière, Minister of Finance in the French Republic in 1792; and of Albert Gallatin who held a similar office in the United States under President Jefferson. Burlamaqui, the esteemed writer on constitutional law, was a Genevese; as were Delolme, the expositor of the British constitution; Etienne Dumont, the discoverer and translator of Bentham; and Sismondi, the historian and economist. There were also Mallet du Pan and Sir Francis D'Ivernois, who in their youth supported the revolutionary party at Geneva, and in their mature years, in refuge in England, became well known as opponents of the revolution in France. And there was Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Events at Geneva are of significance at various levels. Obviously nothing that happened in this tiny place could, in a crude or mechanical way, influence the world outside. But significance is not a matter of numbers only, as, indeed, had been proved by the Geneva of Calvin two centuries before. The first occasion, within the time span of this book, when a movement of modern democratic type made a positive impression on institutions of government was at Geneva in 1768. In the roles played by upper, middle, and lower classes, in the conflict between political and economic demands, and in the interplay between revolutionary and counterrevolutionary pressures, this "revolution" at Geneva even prefigured or symbolized the greater revolution that was to come in France. It was, moreover, a revolution precipitated by the presence in the neighborhood of Rousseau. It was here that the *Social Contract* produced its first explosion. Near at hand, at the same time, lived another worthy of more than local repute, namely Voltaire, on his estates at Ferney, on the French side of the Genevese frontier, but only four miles from Calvin's church. The embroilment of Rousseau and Voltaire in the politics of Geneva meant the blowing of two antithetical views of the world into a teapot tempest; or, rather, the agitations at Geneva, which in themselves were significant enough, were brought to the level of world history by the involvement of these two difficult geniuses.

ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, AND GENEVA TO 1762

Rousseau had been born at Geneva in 1712, but he never lived there after 1728, when, coming home one evening, he found the city gates locked, and took, at the age of sixteen, to what proved to be a wandering and unsettled life. His father was a journeyman watchmaker, in moderate circumstances, though a citizen by birth. Possibly Rousseau's Genevese boyhood helped to shape the works of his maturity; it has been persuasively shown that the republican, Protestant, and sometimes Pu-

ritan tone of his greatest writings, and even the attitude of ever watchful suspicion of the people around him, are the authentic accents of his native place.¹ What is certain, however, and necessary to an understanding of what followed, is that Rousseau could never adjust to life in any other country as he found it. How much of his trouble was of social or psychological origin, and how much it was due to his physical malady, a urological disturbance that caused him discomfort and embarrassment throughout his life, cannot be known.

He had tried to do what a young man making his way in the world was supposed to do. He had had various love affairs. He had given up his ancestral Protestantism and entered the Catholic Church. He had enjoyed the patronage of the high-born. He had used influence to be appointed secretary to the French embassy at Venice. He had written operas that were well received. He had been accepted by Diderot and other intellectual lights of Paris, where he had heard much strong talk to the effect that reason was about to dispel the fog of prejudice inherited from the ages of ignorance, that religion was a system invented by the crafty to dominate the credulous, that moral ideas were produced by social environment, and that the emancipation of the mind had caused and would cause astounding advances in the progress of civilization.

In all this Rousseau had taken part. His life, as he approached forty, was not a failure by worldly standards; yet it gave him no satisfaction. At bottom, he could accept none of it. He took nothing at face value. Even the friendly advances of his social superiors gave him a feeling of humiliation. He was afraid that acquaintances wished to patronize or exploit him. He thought the whole manner of life in France of his day artificial. Manners were too elaborate, taste too sophisticated, the conversation in the salons too clever, people of refinement too hypocritical, the theater too frivolous, religion too formal, unbelief too glib. He complained that he was never free to be himself. Even his own private life disgusted him; he lived for years with the faithful and simple (that is, uneducated) Therese Levasseur, secretly turning over to an orphanage the five infants that she gave him. Disturbed by his own awkwardness, social shortcomings, and moral derelictions, he felt a compulsion to publicize them to all the world, while at the same time insisting that he was not at fault, or was no worse than other men, and blaming society for his own unhappiness and that of others. Most differences of opinion about Rousseau take their departure from this point. Some, thinking him a rebel against all society and all restraint, have called him antisocial, misanthropic, anarchic, egotistical, irresponsible, and childishly evasive of all obligations. Others, holding that what he rebelled against was the specific society of his day as he knew it, have thought that this society was in fact artificial and shot through with false values, and so have found in him an authentic human protest against bad conditions. Both can be true; it is hard to imagine any society in which Jean-Jacques would have been at ease; but the only society he could rebel against was the one he knew. In any case no one denies that Rousseau was personally very uncomfortable.

He became the great revolutionary of a revolutionary age. Among contemporaries who boldly rewrote human history, arraigned kings, and exploded religion,

1 G. Vallette, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau Genevois* (Geneva and Paris, 1911).

among humane and ingenious authors who proposed this or that change in government, or the economy, or education, or the law, Rousseau alone went straight to the absolute foundation. He revolutionized the nature of authority itself. He denied the existence of authority apart from the individual over whom it was exercised. For him there were by rights no governors and governed, no rulers and no ruled. There was even no law except law willed by living men—this was his greatest heresy from many points of view, including the Christian; it was also his greatest affirmation in political theory. He was the revolutionary *par excellence* because it was a moral revolution that he called for, a revolution in the personality and in the inclination of the will. Man, according to Rousseau, should act not from custom nor rule nor command, divine or human; nor from laboriously learned principles of proper behavior; he should act freely and spontaneously according to his own better self, the divine spark within him, the virtue which might be suffocated by a bad form of society, but which a good form of society could nourish and keep alive.

It must be added that Rousseau, the great revolutionary, was revolutionary in a somewhat negative way.² He produced no blueprint and wrote no Utopia for the future; he pointed out what was missing in existing society. He joined no movements; indeed, when approached by certain Genevise intent on a small "revolution," he would not offer to aid them. He gave no practical advice; or when he did give it, as to the Poles, was notably conservative in some of his opinions. What he did, and it was revolutionary enough, was to undermine the faith of many people in the justice of the society in which they lived. In a neurotic and exaggerated way, because he felt it more keenly, he expressed the malaise that many people of the middle class came to feel in an aristocratically oriented world. But many men and women of the nobility also came to feel, in reading this eloquent and moving author, that inequalities and barriers and constrictions that they had hitherto accepted were absurd.

The great change in Rousseau's own life, his personal and internal revolution, or realization that he and humanity had been pursuing a wrong path, came in 1749 and 1750. "I began my reform," he later said, "by my articles of dress; I gave up gold lace and white stockings, took to wearing a round wig, and put aside my sword; I sold my watch, telling myself with an unbelievable joy: Thank heaven, I shall never have to know what time it is again." The simple life was made easier when one of Therese's brothers absconded with his twenty-two best shirts, a leftover from his days in the embassy at Venice.³

There were two things that he now idealized, the better to show the faults of existing society—"nature," and Geneva. In 1749 he wrote his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, propounding the "paradox," as it seemed to complacent contemporaries, that technical and scientific and purely intellectual achievement, with all the wonders and complexities of modern civilization, in and of themselves made men no better. To make his point he idealized the life of the *bon sauvage*, the state of

2 See the discussion by Peter Gay, and his valuable review of the literature on Rousseau as a political thinker, particularly p. 27, in his introduction to his translation of E. Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (N.Y., 1954), to which I am much indebted.

3 Cf. the chapter entitled "La 'Reforme' de Jean-Jacques" in J. Guehénno, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. II, *Roman et Vérité* (Paris, 1950); the quotation, from the *Confessions*, is on p. 21.

nature as it might conceivably have been prior to government and civilization; but such idealization was frankly conjectural on his part, was purely auxiliary to his real message, and was discarded in his later writings. In 1750, for much the same reasons, remembering with a warm glow the town he had left over twenty years before, he began to sign his name, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva. In 1753, when he wrote his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality among Men*, which included emphatic passages on the evils of property and the oppression of the poor by the rich, he actually dedicated this inflammatory work "To the Republic of Geneva."

Rousseau could not go back to nature, and did not wish to. He could go back to Geneva, and did so in 1754. He was received with mixed feelings, for the dedication was not relished; few at Geneva, and certainly not the ruling patriciate, entertained any such opinions on property and wealth as were set forth in Rousseau's discourse. But here was a native son who had become famous; and the flattered magistrates, as well as the Calvinist ministers, welcomed a prodigal who returned meekly confessing his errors. Having turned Catholic he had forfeited the citizenship which he now so proudly proclaimed. He announced his reconversion to the Reformed religion. The awful solemnities prescribed at Geneva to purge such renegades were relaxed to accommodate him. He became again a Protestant and a recognized Citizen. He stayed several months in the city, renewing or building up his acquaintance. The pure waters of the lake, the majestic and snow-capped mountains, the peace and contentment that he thought he saw in the people's faces, all symbolized for him the world as it ought to be. In the following years, particularly in his novel, the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, he used Switzerland as a setting for his moral message. Thus Switzerland became a symbol for the great world that read French writers. As Mme. d'Houdetot remarked years later, after the American Revolution, there were only two countries in which she would have chosen to be born. One was America; the other, Switzerland.

Soon after Rousseau left Geneva, Voltaire arrived.⁴ He craved asylum, calling himself an old man who had come there to die. He was sixty-one years old, with the most combative twenty-three years of his career yet before him. The citizens, embarrassed but flattered and charmed, as in the case of Rousseau, gave him leave to stay. The affluent and sophisticated Voltaire, who loved all civilized refinements, thereupon purchased two rural properties in nearby France, two town houses in neighboring Lausanne, and a large vacant tract (now within the city of Geneva) on which he built the chateau he called Les Deuces. He began to invite prominent Genevans to his entertainments, which usually included acting in, or watching productions of, his own plays. There was a law at Geneva against theatrical representations. When the magistrates intimated to Voltaire that the law applied to him as to others, he moved from Les Delices to Ferney. But the better sort of Geneva republicans, including many of the magistrates, then repaired to

4 P. Chapponnière, *Voltaire chez les Calvinistes*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1936). Chapponnière is a little partial to Voltaire, as Vallette is to Rousseau, in setting forth the disputes between their heroes; but both are fair-minded and well documented, and they agree in their estimate of the situation. See also B. Gagnebin, *Voltaire: Lettres inédites aux Tronchin*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1950).

Ferney to enjoy the giddy pleasures of the French neoclassic stage. A great controversy thereby began.

One of the distinguished visitors whom Voltaire's presence drew to Geneva was the philosopher d'Alembert, coeditor with Diderot of the *Encyclopedia* then in process of publication at Paris. Voltaire introduced him to the leading citizens and the leading ministers of the Reformed Church. D'Alembert was delighted at the rational and enlightened views that he found in these circles, and reciprocated by publishing a long article on Geneva in the *Encyclopedia*. It was obviously launched as a weapon against the Catholic Church. "Hell," remarked d'Alembert drily, "a principal article of belief with us, is not such today for many ministers at Geneva." He warmly praised the Protestant clergy at Geneva for their emancipation from superstition, their broad tolerance, their distaste for fanaticism, their stress on the humanity of Jesus, their attachment to natural virtue and reasonable religion. He also urged that so polished and enlightened a community should allow and even sponsor a theater.

The article caused great consternation by the shores of Lake Lemman, especially among the clergy. Of course they were enlightened men of their day; of course they thought that Calvin had been too extreme, and Servetus unjustly put to death; of course they believed that Jesus had been a good man, and that reason and nature taught the same mild and uplifting truths as revealed religion. But they did not thank d'Alembert for saying so in the *Encyclopedia*. They did not like his editorializing their private conversation. Throughout Protestant Europe, and especially in places less intellectual than Geneva, people might form the impression that the city of Calvin had been seduced into infidelity, that the old bastion of Protestantism was no longer safe. In such circumstances they could not now change the laws of Geneva to allow a theater in their midst. The Geneva ministers, or many of them, had been led by their very real intellectual curiosity and humane sympathies into an exciting contact with Voltaire. They now saw where such philosophical associations might lead them. They drew back, and on the question of the theater became stubborn.

Rousseau rushed to their defense. He published a *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, which at the same time consummated his break with the *philosophes* of the Voltairean and Encyclopedist schools. The theater (for which in former days he had written himself) now signified for Rousseau the aristocratic and artificial society which he spurned. It was a false and superficial thing, a mere show, of which a sound and simple citizenry had no need. Its introduction at Geneva would be a clear sign of corruption. The question was a moral one, involving the kind of morality that underlay public life; as Rousseau's Geneva friend, Moltou, enthusiastically wrote to him, the letter to d'Alembert was "the rallying signal for all good citizens, the reproach and terror of the bad."⁵

Rousseau in answering d'Alembert was defending his idealized image of Geneva, but at the same time he had entered into a very real and practical controversy. The theater at Geneva was in fact a class amusement, and hence became a class issue. Geneva, it must be remembered, was governed by a few families who coopted

⁵ Vallette, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

themselves as members of its two main constituted bodies, the Council of Twenty-five and the Council of Two Hundred. These were the people who went to Voltaire's parties to see or act in his plays, such people as the Tronchins, one of whom was Voltaire's doctor, one his banker, and a third the procurator-general of the republic. People of wealth and leisure, drawing their income from land or old investments, they were generally pro-French in their politics, and willing to adopt the French manners and diversions which were everywhere setting the style for an international upper class. The bulk of the citizens and burghers never saw the interior of Les Delices or Ferney. They disapproved of spectacles to which they were not invited; they were politically fearful of France; and they reflected a kind of nativist reaction against the cosmopolitanism of their own aristocracy, a nativist reaction which, at Geneva, meant a renewed consciousness of their own Puritan heritage. Rousseau became their hero, as Voltaire was the favorite of the patricians. In the one camp Rousseau was the friend of virtue and the common man; in the other, a voluntary barbarian and surly enemy of the arts. That the theater was in fact a class question was abundantly shown by subsequent events; one was built at Geneva a few years later, burned down during the democratic turbulence of 1768, and rebuilt only after the aristocratic restoration of 1782, after all democratic organs in the city had been destroyed, and the democratic leaders put to flight.

Meanwhile Rousseau was going further with his meditations. In 1762 he published both *Emile* and the *Social Contract*. The Parlement of Paris condemned *Emile*. The Republic of Geneva condemned them both. It was the only government in Europe to condemn the *Social Contract* at the moment of publication. Both books, branded as "temerarious, scandalous, impious, tending to destroy the Christian religion and all governments," were solemnly lacerated and burned before the Hotel de Ville at Geneva on June 19, 1762; and Rousseau was declared liable to arrest upon entrance into the city.

It was rare at Geneva at this time to use such rigorous censorship. It is clear that the Council condemned Rousseau's two books without having carefully read them; not enough time for study had intervened. It is probable that the Council wished to please the French government by this action. It is certain that they were annoyed at Rousseau for his role in the theater question, in which he had been hailed as a leader and spokesman by the discontented burghers of the city. It is probable, in view of the d'Alembert affair, that they wished to assure the world that Geneva had not fallen into unbelief. It is known that the Tronchin family spoke zealously against Rousseau in the Council; but whether Voltaire used his influence against him at this time is not clear.

At any rate the poor Jean-Jacques, who started for Switzerland after the condemnation of *Emile* in Paris, found the gates of his native city shut in his face, more purposely and more formidably than in his youth.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT, 1762

If one were to name the one book in which the revolutionary aspirations of the period from 1760 to 1800 were most compactly embodied, it would be the *Social*

Contract. Others of Rousseau's works probably had more direct and actual influence. His *Emile* presented the image, disconcerting for any professional clergy, of the reverent man who had no need for any church. His *Nouvelle Héloïse* estranged readers from their over-refined mode of life. His *Discourse on Inequality* offered passages on which social revolutionaries could seize to point out the evils of private property. Rousseau's influence on education, on literature, on pure philosophy, was conveyed by these and other works.

The *Social Contract* remains the great book of the political revolution. It appeared in no fewer than thirteen editions in the French language in 1762 and 1763. There were three editions in English and one in German in 1763 and 1764; it appeared also in Russian in 1763. Thereafter, except for a solitary French edition, it was not reissued until after the Revolution began in France. Perhaps the copies in existence were enough; perhaps, as has been argued, people did not much read it after its first publication. What is certain is that the greatest vogue of the book came after the fact of revolution. The book did not so much make revolution as it was made by it. Readers did not become revolutionary from reading it; but, if they found themselves in a revolutionary situation, they might read it to gain a sense of direction, or because propagandists put it before them. The *Social Contract* appeared in thirty-two French editions between 1789 and 1799. (There were none under Napoleon.) It was printed three times in English in 1791 and once in 1795—and thereafter not until 1905. There were two editions in Dutch in 1793–1796, four in German between 1795 and 1800, eight in Italian during the *triennio*, 1796–1799. A Latin translation circulated in manuscript copies in Hungary in the 1790's. Four editions appeared in Spanish between 1799 and 1801, and many more in Latin America after 1810. It first appeared in Hungarian in 1819, in Greek in 1828, in Polish in 1839, in Czech in 1871. There were four editions in Russian in 1906–1907, and one in Turkish in 1910. It may be observed that in most of these countries publication was preceded by revolution or attempted revolution.⁶

It is well, therefore, to analyze again this much-analyzed work. Or, at least, in the absence of strict theoretical analysis, it is useful to point out the main ideas in the *Social Contract* which appealed to men in a mood of rebellion.

The best way to understand the book is not to compare its propositions to later democratic practice, which owes little to it except on the most abstract and fundamental level; nor yet to view it as an anticipation of totalitarianism, as if free societies did not also have to issue commands; but to contrast its doctrine with the attitudes prevailing at the time it was written, of which one of the most fundamental was that some men must in the nature of things take care of others, that some had the right to govern and others the duty to obey. It was abhorrent to Rousseau to obey anything or anyone outside of and foreign to himself. Yet he was no anarchist; he accepted the need for authority and public order. "Public order in its entirety emanates from me," Louis XV declared in 1766. The constituted bodies

6 Senelier, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Paris, 1949). For the Latin manuscript see Eckhardt as cited in Chapter IV note 22 above. Parts of the *Social Contract* may have been included in selections of Rousseau's writings or in other anthologies in some languages, but hardly enough to change the tenor of the above paragraph, which refers only to publication of the work as a separate item under its own title.

of the day, where they were supreme, such as the Parliament in Great Britain, made somewhat the same claim to absolute sovereignty; or they argued from history and tradition, that what gave legal and compelling force to law was a legal tradition, with old charters and constitutions, inherited from the past. Rousseau, who once observed that if God wished to speak to Jean-Jacques he should not go through Moses, also thought that no free man could be expected to obey a law on the authority of another. He must comply of his free will. Even if he did what he did not wish to, paid taxes of which he did not personally approve, or fought in a war which he thought to be mistaken, he must yet in a sense be following his own inclination. Otherwise he would be only yielding to force; he would act only because of necessity; he would be justified in evading as much as he could, and free to rebel at pleasure, like the nobles of Poland.

The *Social Contract* was therefore a quest for rightful authority, for a form of state in which obedience would turn into duty, while all the while an ethical philosophy stressing individual liberty was preserved. Rousseau could find no place to locate this final authority except in the community itself. Those who obey must in the last analysis command. The subject must, in the end, be the sovereign—another of the famous “paradoxes” of Rousseau.

But what was the community? Before studying the act by which a people sets up a government, says Rousseau, “it would be well to examine the act by which a people is a people; for this act, being necessarily anterior to the other, is the true foundation of society.”⁷ This act or agreement, “by which a people is a people,” was in Rousseau’s thought the one act that must be unanimous. On other and lesser questions there would be a majority and a minority. But why should a minority be bound to accept majority rule? Later generations, fearful of the domination of minorities by majorities, have often missed the force of this question, which, however, was by no means academic in the real history of Europe, where the right of minorities to ignore government, or rebel against it, had more than once led to ruin. It is right and necessary, according to Rousseau, for a minority to accept majority ruling, so long as they both agree (are “unanimous”) that they constitute a people. If there is no such agreement there is no people, and no majority and minority, but only separate and hostile powers. To put it in another way, those who do not share in this agreement are not members of the people at all.

The “social contract” is this act by which a people is a people. It is an association “which protects the person and property of each associate by the common force, and in which each, uniting with all, obeys only himself and remains as free as he was before.”⁸ And Rousseau, amplifying this idea, conjures up some of the key words of the coming generation (the italics are his): “This public person, thus formed by the union of all, took in former times the name of *city*, and is now known as the *republic* or *body politic*, which is called by its members the *state* when it is passive, the *sovereign* when it is active, and a *power* when compared to others of its kind. As for the associates, they take collectively the name of *people*, and in-

7 *Contrat social*, Bk. I, Chap. V, ed. G. Beaulavon, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1914), 136.

8 Bk. I, Chap. VI, *Ibid.*, 138.

dividually are known as *citizens*, in that they share in the sovereign authority, and *subjects*, in that they are subject to the laws of the state.”⁹

The act of association produces a General Will, the will of the community as such, which includes the willingness of minorities to abide by majority decisions, and of individuals to accept actions of government that they do not personally favor. Any member may be obliged by the community to obey this General Will: “which is to say nothing else than that he will be forced to be free.”¹⁰ Here, too, it is easy to travesty or misrepresent Rousseau’s real meaning, which is perfectly consistent with a liberal and democratic practice: the existence of the community and the liberty of its members require all to respect its authority. It must be remembered that, for Rousseau, the General Will and the sovereignty of the community operate only at an abstract or distant level, as the framework or prerequisite within which more specific actions take place. Strictly speaking, he observes, the only act of sovereignty is the act of association itself. Sovereignty, though “wholly absolute, wholly sacred and wholly inviolable,” is limited to general agreements (*conventions générales*). To suggest an elucidation which he does not himself give: There may be two parties in a state, which to avoid all suggestion of ideology or partisanship we may call the Greens and the Blues. If the Greens, using legal channels, and having a majority at the moment, obtain passage of a law, it is not merely a Green law but a law of the state. The Blues have voted against it, but they accept it as law, and not as a mere act of force. They obey it as such, for it gains the force of law not by will of the Greens, nor even by will of a majority only, but from the underlying general will of both Greens and Blues, a general will which is the essence of the civil community, and is the only sovereign that men need obey. If there is no such will, or such sovereign, there is no community, and no law, but only, as Rousseau says, two separate and hostile powers.

All the argument about sovereignty is set up precisely to show that the government is *not* sovereign. No one in government, not even a king, holds power by personal right of his own; none has authority independent of the authority of the governed. Their position is simply an office, a revocable trust. The people can delegate specific powers; it can never delegate sovereignty. I have demonstrated, declares Rousseau, “that the depositories of the executive power are not the masters of the people, but its officers; that the people may establish or remove them as it pleases [the great democratic doctrine, and the contrary of all later totalitarianisms]; that for these officers there is no question of contracting, but only of obeying; that in undertaking the functions which the State imposes on them, they only fulfill their duty as citizens, with no right of any kind to dispute the terms.”¹¹ Even the form or constitution of government is not absolute; it, too, is derived. A people, for example, may institute a hereditary form of government, monarchical or aristocratic. It has the ultimate right, however, to change this form of government at will. The hereditary tenure of office, by kings, lords, councillors or magistrates, gives them no untouchable inherited right. Nor is it the inheritance of a constitu-

⁹ *Ibid.*, 141–42.

¹⁰ Bk. I, Chap. VII, *Ibid.*, 146.

¹¹ Bk. III, Chap. XVIII, *Ibid.*, 281.

tion that makes a constitution authoritative. The past cannot bind the present. Even the inheritance of legality is lawful because willed by the community in the eternal present—and only so long as it is so willed.

On particular forms of government Rousseau seems not to have felt very strongly. He observed that in a sense all legitimate government must be democratic: it must be willed by the sovereign people. But the people may will to have government of one kind or another. Any government of laws he would call a republic. He defines democracy as a state in which there are more citizens who are magistrates than ordinary citizens who are not magistrates; he finds this possible only in small communities, and so dismisses democracy as suited only for gods. Monarchy may be legitimate, but he has little of interest to say about it. He finds three kinds of aristocracy: natural aristocracy, or government by tribal elders; elective aristocracy, in which “wealth or power are preferred to age”; and hereditary aristocracy, in which those who inherit wealth and power also inherit governmental position. The last, says Rousseau, is the worst of all forms of government; it was also characteristic, as I have shown in preceding chapters, of almost all governments in his day. He declares that the best form of government is the second form of aristocracy, the elective. He seems to have meant a system in which the citizens elected persons to positions of government, and so to be talking about what later generations would call democracy. Nevertheless, by his own surprising definition, the persons so elected are elected for their “wealth or power.”¹²

What, then, of equality? What of the gap between wealth and destitution that he had so passionately denounced only a few years before? In the *Social Contract* inequality becomes a political problem, or a moral problem so far as it affects the maintenance of a free and lawful state. “By equality we must not understand that degrees of power and wealth should be absolutely the same.” Power should never be exercised except according to law. “As for wealth, no citizen should be rich enough to be able to buy another, and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself.”¹³ Here, as elsewhere, it is the liberty, self-respect, and self-determination of the individual that are most important. Inequality is bad when it suppresses these. It is so bad that it must be corrected. “It is precisely because the force of things always tends to destroy equality that the force of legislation should always tend to maintain it.”¹⁴ Here was a paradox, indeed, for those who held that the rich needed special representation because they were rich; but the general idea was not especially radical or anarchic—Prince Kaunitz said the same thing to Maria Theresa in

12 Bk. III, Chap, V, *Ibid.*, 231–32. Rousseau does also allow that election of officers will favor men of “probity, enlightenment and experience,” but his whole discussion here gives less attention to the problem of merit-vs.-inheritance than that of the conservative R  al de Curban, who in defending inheritance of office concedes that the belief that office should be held for “merit” is the “popular prejudice” (see Chapter III above); or of d’Argenson, who attacks venality of office because it obstructs “the progress of Democracy” (*Considerations* [1765] p. 151). It must be recalled that Rousseau was less in contact with the real bourgeoisie of France than with intellectuals, Bohemians, and people of fashion. The *Social Contract* was a theoretical work, written by a *d  racin  *, as critics hostile to Rousseau have often emphasized to their own satisfaction.

13 Bk. II, Chap. XI, *Ibid.*, 201.

14 *Ibid.*, 202.

1763, when he held that government should favor the common man against the Bohemian landlords.

It is in his discussion of representative institutions that Rousseau seems most absurd.¹⁵ Not that he is lacking here in realistic observation. His world was full of bodies allegedly representative and elective—the third chambers in the estates of Languedoc and Brittany, the House of Commons, the Dutch estates, certain houses in the east-European diets, the ruling councils at Geneva and other towns—which almost without exception had acquired strong features of cooption and self-perpetuation, and which claimed to exercise, not a delegated power, but a power of their own. When a people is willing thus to abdicate its own powers and responsibilities, says Rousseau, it is on the brink of ruin. The English people are free only at the moment of electing members of Parliament, after which they become enslaved; had he known more of elections in England he would scarcely have made even this concession. A people that turns over its military affairs to mercenaries, and its political affairs to a closed political class, the better to enjoy its own ease or pursue private business, cannot be free. In a good state men will have little private interest or private business; they will be constantly busy as citizens, attending assemblies, watching over officials, ratifying laws. They cannot delegate the lawmaking power, because this power is a power of sovereignty itself. He therefore denounces representative assemblies as a benighted invention of the feudal ages, and favors in effect a direct democracy of popular assemblies *en permanence*. This was to become an important idea in time of revolution. But there is no denying that the growth of an effective representative government has owed more to the aristocratic liberal than to the Rousseauist and popular democratic schools.

Much has been made of the theory of civil religion appended at the end of the *Social Contract*, and here again Rousseau can be easily misrepresented.¹⁶ It was precisely because he proposed to grant freedom of religion, precisely because he would not associate his state with any church membership or doctrine, and because he thought that a community must nevertheless agree upon something, that he suggested in his final chapter “a purely civil profession of faith,” a few simple “dogmas” of civil religion, having to do with the existence of God and the after-life, “without explanation or commentaries,” and including a declaration against religious intolerance. Anyone who accepted these doctrines, or rather attitudes, and then went against them, declares our author, “should be punished with death”—a “truth” which Robespierre was to observe should best be left in the writings of Rousseau. It does not seem that these ideas of Rousseau had as much influence as has been pretended; when Robespierre tried in 1794 to institutionalize something of the sort, his own colleagues laughed behind his back; and it seems exaggerated to look here, of all possible places, for the origins of later totalitarian regimentation of the mind.

Withal, the *Social Contract* is full of conservative admonitions. Like the American Declaration of Independence, it asserts that government should not be changed for light and transient causes. “Changes are always dangerous, and estab-

15 Bk. III, Chap. XVI.

16 Bk. IV, Chap. VIII, *Ibid.*, 240–41.

lished government must never be touched unless it has become incompatible with the public good; but this circumspection is a maxim of policy, not a rule of right.”¹⁷ Rousseau, while asserting the right, even doubts the possibility, as well as the prudence, of sweeping change. Old peoples, he says, are incorrigible; they have too many established customs and prejudices to be capable of renovation. The only possibility that he sees is in the analogy of disease. “Just as some diseases unhinge men’s minds and take away their memory of the past, so there may be epochs of violence in the life of States, when revolutions have the same effects upon peoples that certain crises have upon individuals, when horror of the past acts as forgetfulness, and when the State, consumed in the fires of civil war, is born again, so to speak, from its ashes.”¹⁸ This was not a prophecy, of course, and still less a call to revolt; but it was not a bad description of what happened in France in 1793.

Rousseau’s skepticism about the practicability of the ideas in the *Social Contract* was justified. It is not that these ideas were essentially visionary; most of them are better embodied in the United States today, where his influence has been slight, than in most states of Europe. They were impracticable, however, in direct proportion to the strength of those who refused to accept them. In proportion as a country lacked a real general will or sense of community, in proportion as it had a distinct ruling or privileged class insistent upon remaining so, the attempt to apply the ideas of the *Social Contract* might be self-defeating. The attempt to impose a general will where no general will existed, to create a nation in a country where influential persons preferred to remain an estate, to force people into a kind of community that they did not want, could lead only to dictatorial rule. Something of this kind happened in France during the Revolution. Revolution by its nature is a time when the general will has collapsed, the bonds of association have snapped, change by agreed upon and legal methods has become impossible. The attempt, or rather the necessity, to create a general will or solid front in France during the war with Europe after 1792 was often justified by citations of the *Social Contract*, and did in fact contribute to the quasi-totalitarianism of the Terror. But Rousseau was not, like Lenin, writing as a tactician of revolution. He did not pretend to tell how a people should go about becoming democratic. Indeed, he confused this whole issue by identifying legislative with sovereign power and by his negative attitude toward representative institutions. Primarily, he was writing a critique of the world as he knew it, of what came in due course to be called the Old Regime.

And what, in summary, was likely in his book to appeal to men in a mood of rebellion, and to be intolerable to those in positions of government, even at Geneva in 1762? First of all, the theory of the political community, of the people, or nation, was revolutionary in implication: it posited a community based on the will of the living, and the active sense of membership and voluntary participation, rather than on history, or kinship, or race, or past conquest, or common inheritance, or the chance of birth into an already existent political system. It denied sovereign powers to kings, to oligarchs, and to all governments. It said that any form of government could be changed. It held all public officers to be removable.

17 Bk. III, Chap. XVIII, *Ibid.*, 281.

18 Bk. II, Chap. VIII, *Ibid.*, 190.

It held that law could draw its force and its legality only from the community itself; as the French were to say in 1789, the will of “no body, and no individual” could be law. Not only monarchs, but also the constituted bodies of which I have said so much in preceding chapters, would be justified in believing that the *Social Contract* sapped their foundations.

THE GENEVESE REVOLUTION OF 1768

The Geneva that anxiously watched Rousseau’s approach from Paris in June 1762 was by no means the ideal city of his imagination. The confrontation that followed was to drive Rousseau to the verge of madness, and Geneva to the brink of revolution.

The old and sporadic disputes within the city had induced the governing groups, in the 1730’s, to appeal to outside powers for arbitration. These powers, the kingdom of France and the cantons of Bern and Zurich, had produced the Act of Mediation of 1738, which they enforced by armed intervention. They remained the Guarantors of the Act, available for further appeal should it come into question.¹⁹ Geneva, that is to say, like other small or weak states at the time—Sweden and Poland, or the Dutch and Venetian republics or the papal states, as will be seen—was with difficulty preserving the independent management of its own affairs.

The Act of 1738, clarifying certain older laws of the city, was in effect its constitution. It enumerated five “orders” in the state: the four Syndics; the Small Council, or Executive Council of Twenty-Five; the Council of Sixty (which was of no importance); the Council of Two Hundred; and the General Council. The General Council was a kind of town meeting. All citizens and burghers attended it. There were about 1,500 citizens and burghers, not counting those habitually absent from the city. With their families they represented about a quarter of the population. The remaining three-quarters were either *natifs*, native born, often of several generations, but without political rights; or *habitants*, who in principle were new arrivals to whom the right of residence had been granted. Between the bulk of the citizens and the burghers there was no real difference, and they may all be referred to as Burghers. Nor was there any substantial difference between *natifs* and *habitants*, who may all be called Natives.

By the Act of 1738 the General Council met once a year, and elected the four Syndics from a list of candidates containing double the necessary number of names, submitted to it by the Small Council. The Act of 1738 specified that all candidates for the office of Syndic must be members of the Small Council, whose members in turn had to belong to the Two Hundred. The Two Hundred, conversely, were named by the Small Council. In short, the Two Hundred (on which far fewer than two hundred families sat) were the ruling aristocracy at Geneva. The Small Council and the Syndics were their executive arm; the “people” had a choice

19 The Act was published as *Règlement de l’Illustre Médiation pour la pacification des troubles de la République de Genève* (Geneva, 1738).

of the Syndics, but only as between candidates who belonged to the governing group. The Burghers were also confirmed by the Act of 1738 in the right of making "representations" to the Syndics and Small Council; these were protests or remonstrances to be made by groups of interested Burghers, not by the General Council as such, when they judged "proper for the good of the State."

Within this constitutional framework great economic changes were taking place. It was at this time that Switzerland became famous for watch-making. Where there had been only 680 persons employed at watch-making at Geneva in 1686, the number rose to 6,000 in 1799; it may have been even higher a decade or two before, before the loss of markets in the Revolutionary wars. The watch-makers (of whom Rousseau's father had been one) were a skilled and alert group of men. The Act of 1738 allowed Natives to enter watch-making and a few other trades; but Natives were still debarred from most occupations above the artisan level. There was no absolute occupational difference between Burghers and Natives, but in general the growth of the industry, as watch-making was called (*la fabrique*), had enriched many of the Burghers through commercial and managerial operations in connection with watches, and turned many of the Natives into a trained, self-conscious, and self-respecting body of workers. "The rapid revolution which was taking place in commerce and the arts," wrote the Genevese d'Ivernois in 1782, "made it necessary for the different classes to have contacts with each other every day."²⁰ But the classes were unable to get together politically.

The Burghers were a politically conscious lot, who felt that Geneva had been more democratic in former days, sensing the monopolizing of office by the patricians, legalized in 1738, as a recent usurpation. In the 1730's groups of Burghers began to meet in cafés or in each other's homes in informal *cercles*, in which as the years passed the conversation became increasingly devoted to politics. There were twelve such "circles" in the 1760's. Geneva was not misgoverned by its patricians; and the grievances of the Burghers were of the liberal kind, concerning taxes or commercial policies or individual cases of injustice or police action or arrest. The Natives did not begin to take an interest in public questions until the 1760's. Their thinking was then not so much political as economic; they were not so much concerned with who governed or how, but complained of legal exclusion from the more remunerative or prestige-conveying occupations, for which they rightly blamed the Burghers as much as the patricians.

The Burghers adopted Rousseau as their hero when he resumed his citizenship in 1754, and when in 1758 he came to their defense against Voltaire, d'Alembert and the patricians in the dispute over the theater, which involved, as has been seen, contradictory ideas of what Geneva ought to be. Their leaders were indignant when the Small Council ordered *Emile* and the *Social Contract* to be lacerated and burned, and Rousseau himself under arrest should he enter the territory of the republic. But they did nothing.

20 F. d'Ivernois, *Tableau historique et politique des Révolutions de Genève* (Geneva, 1782), 163. The author, later knighted in England as Sir Francis D'Ivernois, was the son of the D'Ivernois who led the Burgher party and tried to work with Rousseau after 1762. This book is the main contemporary narrative.

Rousseau, fleeing from Paris, was kept from Geneva by the decree of arrest, and was also refused asylum in the neighboring Vaud, a subject district of Bern. He presently settled in Neuchâtel, not far from Geneva. Neuchâtel then belonged to the King of Prussia, who extended his royal protection to the harassed republican.

With alternating moods of enthusiasm and reluctance, tossed between concern for Geneva and a desire to be rid of it forever, in an ambivalent and deeply troubled state of mind, Rousseau now entered into a series of talks with Burgher leaders who came to see him in Neuchâtel. His dream had been shattered by his condemnation; he was confused and depressed; he was hurt that no one at Geneva had yet taken any public stand in his favor; he feared that none of his fellow-citizens really cared about him or understood him. Lonely, abandoned, disappointed, and baffled, craving sympathy, and wishing to call attention to his plight, he dramatically abdicated his title of Citizen of Geneva. He thus tormented himself by surrendering what had given him so much pride. He took an irrevocable action which he may soon have secretly regretted. Three weeks later, on June 18, 1763, d'Ivernois, de Luc, and forty other citizens and burghers submitted a "representation" to the Syndics.

This document declared that there had been a breach of legality in the condemnation by the Small Council of Rousseau's two books, and that therefore the case should be referred for review to the General Council, that is, to all Burghers in town meeting assembled. The Small Council, denying any breach of legality, refused to refer the representation to the General Council. The Small Council, in its official reply, conceded the right of Burghers to make representations, but held that nothing in the Act of 1738 obliged it to transmit such representations to the General Council, if, as in this case of Rousseau, members of the Small Council were undivided and felt no uncertainty in their own minds on the legality of their decision. The Small Council pointed out, too, that the Act of 1738 forbade any of the Orders to encroach on the rights of others—that, in short, the General Council must not interfere with the conduct of government by the Small. Many representations followed the first one, and many were vetoed. Thus was launched the constitutional crisis at Geneva. For want of better names, the Burgher party called itself the Representants, from the "representations" that they made; the party of the government were called Négatifs, because they claimed the right to negative, or veto, any Burgher representation by refusing to transmit it to the General Council.

The Small Council also deputed one of its members, J. R. Tronchin, to set forth its position more fully in a book. Tronchin did so in his *Lettres écrites de la campagne*. The friend of Voltaire, a declared enemy of Rousseau, Tronchin was a learned and accomplished man, courteous and equable in public debate, but crushing in the wealth of legal and constitutional arguments at his command. He was once called the Montesquieu of Geneva, and, like Montesquieu, put his case on a high plane. The *droit négatif* of the Small Council, he said, was like the royal veto in England, a necessary and salutary check upon the powers of the people, designed to maintain the balance in the state; it might prevent progress, but certainly prevented anarchy; it was a power that could not itself make law, but prevented capricious lawmaking by disaffected persons; hence it directly served "the great

aim of a political society, to conserve itself by conserving its constitution."²¹ He suggested in passing, also, that if the Burghers harked back to too many sixteenth-century precedents they might stir up the Natives. Since his more purely legal arguments seemed also to be irrefutable, the Burgher Representatives were pushed into a corner; they knew of no way to answer Tronchin, nor could they see what step they might next take. So de Luc, d'Ivernois, and other leaders went again to consult Rousseau.

Rousseau held himself apart. He was being psychologically difficult. He declared that he would never take back his citizenship even if it were offered. He was glad that some of the Burghers wished to help him, but sorry that they had acted so late. He advised them to drop the whole matter, said that he was not worthy, insisted that he would have nothing to do with it, and that he was through with Geneva. De Luc and d'Ivernois were distressed. Secretly, however, Rousseau proceeded to do the opposite. A year after the appearance of Tronchin's *Letters from the Country*, Rousseau surprised friends and enemies alike with another of his great manifestoes, the *Letters from the Mountain*. It was a rejoinder to Tronchin and the patricians. Where the *Social Contract* had been based on a reading of Hobbes and Grotius and Pufendorf and on reflections on abstract justice, the *Letters from the Mountain* were based on a close reading of the lawbooks and histories of Geneva, which Rousseau now for the first time digested in his Neuchâtel retreat. The new work included a more concrete presentation of democratic ideas than the *Social Contract*. One writer, thinking of Pascal, calls it the *Provinciales* of the democratic movement.²² Into that we cannot go; but on the specific question now raging at Geneva Rousseau offered a clear answer. Admitting that the Small Council had the legal right of veto if a proposal for new legislation were being made, he retorted that if the charge were violation of law (as in the representation of June 1763), then the Small Council accused of such violation, however clear its own conscience, could not refuse to lay the matter before the General Council, the sovereign assembly of citizens of the republic. The executive could not be a permanent final judge of its own actions.

Unfortunately for Rousseau the controversy did not remain limited to this high level. Suspecting Voltaire of having been instrumental in causing his difficulties at Geneva, he took occasion in the *Letters from the Mountain* to attack Voltaire, and announced to the world that Voltaire was the true author of one of the more venomous antireligious tracts then in circulation, the *Sermon des cinquante*. Voltaire had in fact written it, but did not wish to acknowledge it, especially because, at the moment, he was trying to enlist the French government in his crusade for the rehabilitation of Jean Calas. Voltaire was irritated into a counterattack on Rousseau. He hurled another anonymous pamphlet, *Le sentiment des citoyens*, into the battle of arguments at Geneva. Siding openly with the patrician Négatifs, he raked up everything he could think of to destroy the character of Rousseau: "a man who bears upon him the dreadful marks of his debaucheries, and who, disguised as a

21 Tronchin's book is quoted at length by Vallette, *J. J. Rousseau Genevois*, 285–87. See also on these matters John S. Spink, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et Genève* (Paris, 1934).

22 Vallette, *op. cit.*, p. 295; "les *Provinciales* de la démocratie politique et du libéralisme religieux."

mountebank, drags with him from village to village, and from mountain to mountain, the unfortunate woman whose mother he drove to death and whose children he exposed at the doors of an asylum.”²³ The hints of venereal disease and of implication in Therese’s mother’s death were untrue. It was true, however, that Rousseau, the teacher of moral revival and family virtue, had abandoned his own five children to the nuns. This was Rousseau’s great secret and hidden shame. He was later to talk about it fully enough in his *Confessions*, but in 1764 it was known only to a few. It contradicted everything he stood for and really believed; but he could not deny it, and could make no reply. To make matters worse, Voltaire had successfully mimicked the style of the Genevese pastor Vernes, whom Rousseau believed to be the author of this latest attack upon him.

Rousseau was disarmed in his dispute with the Geneva patriciate. For the Burghers he was now an embarrassing ally. It now seemed, or could be said (thanks to Voltaire), that anyone not believing literally in the Bible was really immoral. In the canton of Neuchâtel the people stoned him—a “lapidation” whose religious symbolism was not lost upon him. Believing himself misunderstood, betrayed, and crucified, he fled from Switzerland, as he had fled from Paris.

He went to England, then back to France. He now sometimes had positive hallucinations. He could not tell his enemies from his friends. He suspected them all, was convinced that a great web of conspiracy enmeshed him, that he was everywhere persecuted, that spies were watching him, that seeming friends wanted only to ridicule and undo him. Medical diagnosis of persons long since dead is absurd on the face of it, but it does seem that Rousseau was increasingly gripped by an actual neurosis. It was a neurosis which, in a personal way, foreshadowed the mass neurosis of the French Republic, when it too, proclaiming its own virtue in the face of aristocracies and churches, behaved very queerly in a world of enemies, some real, some imaginary, and some simply unknown.

At Geneva the crisis mounted. It had started with a protest against condemnation of the *Social Contract*. It may be supposed, therefore, that the leading Représentants had read the book. They were, however, sober men inclined to prefer legal and concrete historical arguments. In their official statements, designed to persuade the patricians, they never cited Rousseau, but argued from the Act of 1738 and earlier legislation at Geneva. It is important to see how some of these men were led by the actual situation into the assertion of ideas much like those of the *Social Contract*.

In January 1765 the Small Council had great difficulty in getting its candidates for Syndics elected. The slate, which included a Gallatin, obtained only about 700 votes from the 1,500 possible voters. At the end of 1765 the General Council seven times refused to elect any procurator-general and lieutenant-general at all. In this voters’ strike normal government could not go forward. On January 6, 1766, the Small Council, reflecting the wishes of the governing class, therefore called in the guarantors of the Act of 1738. A few days later the General Council three

23 Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (52 vols., Paris, 1883–1885), XXV, 312. See also Chapponnière, *Voltaire chez les Calvinistes*, 180.

times refused to elect any Syndics. That is, the Small Council repeatedly offered candidates, chosen from its own body as required by law, and the General Council refused them all. The main demand of the Représentants was no longer to have representations referred to the General Council. The main demand was now to elect only officials acceptable to the Burghers. The Act of 1738 prescribed that Syndics must come from the Small Council, but also that the General Council could “reject them, all or in part.”

The issue was thus fundamental, and clearcut. Patricians and Burghers flatly disagreed on the meaning of the constitution and laws of Geneva. The Négatifs insisted on the right to veto representations, and on the necessity that *some* members from the Small Council be chosen as Syndics. The Représentants affirmed that representations could not be vetoed, and that the General Council could reject candidates any number of times, “all or in part.”

It was thus necessary to define or change the law—the very essence of sovereign power. For this purpose the Genevan aristocracy appealed to outside powers—to Bern, Zurich, and France. The Burgher party declared that foreigners had nothing to do with it; that only the citizens of Geneva could be the last court of appeal on the interpretation of its law.

The Guarantor powers met. Bern and Zurich were inclined to listen to the Représentants; France was not. As Choiseul wrote to the “Magnificent Lords of Bern and Zurich,” the King of France could not stand by while the Représentants at Geneva overthrew “the orders in the State” and established an “absolute Democracy” under color of the will of the people.²⁴ When the Représentants tried to get a memorial explaining their position transmitted to the conference of the Guarantors, the Small Council refused to transmit it. It was hardly necessary to transmit it formally, came the reply, since the Représentants had published it anyway. And they must not antagonize France. The Guarantors soon ruled in favor of the Geneva patriciate.

What were the arguments that the Représentants wished to lay before the Guarantors? That they were not innovators or rebels. That the law and history of Geneva were on their side. That the Small Council at Geneva would be “sovereign” if it could reject representations at will; but that it was really not sovereign, but only an executive. That the right to have Syndics approved by the people was the supreme guarantee of their liberties. That if the Small Council prevailed, there would be “Masters and Subjects, but there would be no more Citizens.”²⁵

To their own governing magistrates the Représentants addressed other arguments also. That it was unwise to appeal to outsiders in domestic affairs. That magistrates would be the stronger if they relied on their own citizens instead of relying

24 A letter from Choiseul to the cantons of Bern and Zurich, dated February 20, 1767, has been copied in longhand into a volume of pamphlets on disputes at Geneva at this time; the volume, apparently once the property of a Genevan interested in these disputes, is now in the Princeton University Library, volume 16 of a series on Geneva.

25 *Adresse des citoyens et bourgeois représentants de Genève au Magnifique Conseil des Vingt-Cinq de ladite Ville, avec le mémoire qui l'accompagnait, remis aux Syndics le 19 Mai 1767 par les vingt-quatre Commissaires des Représentants et trois Députés de chacun des douze Cercles.* Quotation from p. 20.

on foreigners. "Let us pull down this wall of separation" between government and citizens; "this eternal rock on which our happiness has foundered!"²⁶

In reply the Small Council naturally insisted that the Burghers should accept the decision of the Guarantors, and advanced further constitutional arguments based on the Act of 1738. It blamed the impasse of government squarely on the Représentants, observing that the Small Council was constitutionally obliged to nominate its own members for Syndics, that it had conscientiously nominated every eligible member in turn, and that the General Council, by refusing all, was nullifying the constitution. If the General Council had the right of perpetual refusal, the argument continued, then it had the power to destroy the Syndics as an Order; but the Orders of the state were constitutionally bound not to infringe upon each other. Election of Syndics had nothing to do with "sovereignty"; it was a mere executive function which the constitution assigned to the General Council.

The Small Council had the best of the constitutional argument, so that there was no recourse for the Représentants but to assert a juridical revolution—to oppose Law and Constitution with Sovereignty of the People, from which a new constitution might be derived. This was done notably in an obscurely signed pamphlet of December 1767 actually written by a young man, soon to be famous, named Delolme.²⁷

"What, sir, is the Constitution? What is this unknown Being that assigns functions to the General Council, to the Sovereign of the Republic? Is it the nymph from whom Numa is said to have received his laws? . . .

"The Constitution is the totality of Laws, or Law in the collective sense. Law is the will of the Sovereign. The Sovereign in Geneva is the General Council." The General Council, as sovereign, assigns functions to others; it receives none from any higher source. It is not an Order, and cannot "infringe" on other Orders. It is the supreme lawmaker; the executive is its agent. It elects or refuses to elect whom it pleases. When it last refused election of syndics, it did so "not according to the Act of 1738, or the Edict of 1707, or of 1568, or any other edict whatsoever; it did so by the Will of the Sovereign, manifested on January 12, 1766, at four o'clock in the afternoon." Indeed, it is a more effective sovereign than any king, who is only a single man. It is both the representative and the represented. It "combines all the Orders; it contains all within itself; when it moves, all moves; all rights, powers and attributes of office emanate from it, and have it only for their object; and it is in all possible plenitude the Sovereign, the Nation, and the Law."²⁸

This may be compared to Louis XV's resounding declaration of sovereignty, made only the year before to the Parlement of Paris. Or it may be compared to the more similar doctrine of Rousseau and the *Social Contract*. It may also be com-

26 *Ibid.*, 6.

27 *Purification des trois points de droit souillés par un anonyme, ou Réponse à l'examen des trois points de droit traités dans les Mémoires des Représentants du 19 mai et 16 octobre, 1767*. See also E. Ruff, *Jean Louis DeLolme und sein Werk über die Verfassung Englands* (Berlin, 1934), 42–43. For Delolme's later admiration for the separation of powers in the British constitution, which was somewhat at variance with the Rousseauist views of this pamphlet, see the following chapter.

28 *Purification* . . . , 40–49.

pared to the Declaratory Act of 1766 in which the British Parliament affirmed its sovereignty over America. Or to the legally less explicit Declaration of Independence, by which the American colonies took sovereign power to themselves. Or to the theory of those Frenchmen who in June 1789 repudiated the three Estates and called the National Assembly into being: "the Nation, when assembled, cannot be given orders." Matters in many quarters were reaching the point where someone had to arrogate sovereignty. In the clash of claims and counterclaims, affirmations and denials, appeals to ancient statutes and enactments made in contrary directions by contending parties, there had to be some power to decide.

At Geneva, at this time, no decision came from France, which did uphold the ruling of the Guarantors by economic sanctions, but refused to follow them with military force. A quick visit from Necker, who left his banking business in Paris, purely in his private capacity as a Genevese citizen, failed like all other such attempts to bring the parties together.

January 1768 came; it was again time for the annual election of Syndics. The General Council again three times refused to elect any. Spokesmen for the General Council and for the Two Hundred came together desperately to seek a way out. During the very night of their conference the new theater burned down; how, is not known, but it could be made to look like a Burgher outrage. The Two Hundred refused the proposals for conciliation. Burghers began carrying arms. Half the circles declared themselves *en permanence*. It was beginning to look a little like a real revolution. At this point, J. R. Tronchin, whose conservative integrity was hardly open to question, prevailed on the more moderate in the Small Council and in the Two Hundred to agree to terms. The result was the compromise Edict of 1768. It went through because many Négatifs, unconvinced, abstained from voting; they called it the Edict of Pistols.

The Edict of 1768 granted the General Council certain rights in election of members of the Small. It prescribed that the General Council *must* elect Syndics, who, however, might come not from the Small Council of Twenty-five but from the larger Two Hundred if necessary. It added fifty members to the Two Hundred, and provided for election of new members to it by the General Council. It also made a limited and cautious provision by which a handful of Natives could be made Burghers—for a fat fee of four thousand florins, or a little less for Natives with several generations of residence. Natives were given a few trading rights, and declared admissible to the professions of doctor, surgeon, and apothecary. The whole quarrel was patched up with no mention of the case of Rousseau that had unleashed it. Considering the height to which political argument had risen, the Edict of 1768 was a compromise indeed.

But the Genevese revolution of 1768 was a bourgeois revolution in an unquestionable sense, carried through by men legally defined as *bourgeois* and *citoyens* of Geneva. These men were scarcely conscious of the class below them as a political force. Rousseau himself, in all the study he made of Geneva politics at Neuchâtel, showed no interest in the Natives. The Natives, however, the three-quarters of the population who were not Burghers, were also beginning to agitate. They too began to hold meetings and discuss programs of action about 1765. When they submitted a petition in 1766 the Small Council called it "criminal and seditious";

the Guarantors told them they were “in the State, but not of it,” since they did not constitute an Order.²⁹ Such language only confirmed the grievance that many Natives were beginning to feel, that they remained outsiders or second-class citizens, generation after generation. They objected, too, to the discrimination which kept them out of wholesale business and certain other trades and professions, for which they blamed the self-protectionism and economic jealousy of the Burghers. The Natives were therefore divided; some thought that they must first ally with the Burgher Représentants against the patriciate and the Small Council; others so distrusted the Burghers that they hoped to gain more by alliance with the patricians. Isaac Cornuaud, for example, a Native leader who was to favor annexation to France in 1798, and whose political career began thirty years before in these disputes of the 1760’s, thought very much like a Tronchin or a Burke that Rousseau was a fanciful and dangerous thinker, that the Small Council had acted rightly in banning his books, and that the Burgher Représentants were troublemakers, actuated by pride, whose new “pretensions” would if successful make the lot of the Natives worse. The Burghers, he said, wanted liberty only for themselves.³⁰

Thus a pattern already appeared that was to be repeated many times later in many countries, of a lower class more interested in its economic welfare than in constitutional forms, and likely to support either Liberal or Conservative, Whig or Tory, revolution or counterrevolution as might seem best. In 1768, most of the Natives favored the Représentants, so far as they took sides at all. They received, as noted, a few concessions in the Edict of 1768, one of which, however, merely enabled a few well-to-do *natifs* to pass into the *bourgeoisie*. They continued to agitate, meet in their own “circles,” publish pamphlets, and make various demands. One who refused to write *natif de Genève* after his name was banished for ten years. Some took to wearing swords, which at Geneva was a Burgher right. In 1770 a great demonstration of the Natives was put down by force, the Burghers camping in the streets to preserve order. The General Council—that is, the Sovereign People according to advanced Burgher doctrine—voted 1,182 to 99 that anyone seeking to alter the statute of the Natives might be punished even by capital punishment. The Native circles were dissolved as subversive. A number of Native leaders, including Cornuaud, fled from the city. Enough had happened to show that the Geneva middle class did not intend to share the fruits of its revolution, and that the lower class did not intend to accept it.

It is significant also, in all these events, to trace the activities of Voltaire. The departure of Rousseau left the Lord of Ferney in philosophical domination of the scene. With Rousseau gone, Voltaire ceased to be an outright partisan of the Geneva patricians. He came to conclude, as their dispute with the Représentants matured, that the two governing councils at Geneva were mere closed and privileged bodies, like the Parlement of Paris, whose obstruction to royal reforms in France at this same time he was watching with a disapproving eye. If in these years Voltaire proved his attachment to enlightened monarchy by supporting Maupeou against

29 D'Ivernois, *Tableau*, 317.

30 *Mémoires de Isaac Cornuaud sur Genève et la Révolution de 1770 à 1795* (Geneva, 1912), 1–9.

the French parlements, he was also converted by events at Geneva to as nearly democratic an outlook as he ever attained. The very men who had supported Rousseau—d'Ivernois, de Luc, and the others—now that Rousseau had left, and with initial embarrassments and misgivings, accepted the aid offered by Voltaire. "The more I have come to know your citizens," Voltaire wrote to d'Ivernois, "the more I have come to like them."³¹ He wrote his *Idées républicaines* in praise of Geneva. The "republicanization" of Voltaire may be accounted another of the universal influences of the city by Lake Leman.

Voltaire went beyond Rousseau and the Geneva Burghers. The old mischief-maker and humanitarian actually took to befriending the Natives. He wrote a tragedy, *Les Scythes*, to exalt the virtues of a stalwart and unrefined people. He had Natives come to his house, advised them on their political tactics, and created a model village on his estates where they could pursue their watch-making and other trades when life became too difficult at Geneva. Indeed, one of the arguments of the Burghers, when they repressed the Natives in 1770, was that the whole Native question had simply been stirred up by their old enemy, Voltaire.

The Burgher revolution of 1768 at Geneva was "democratic" only in a certain sense, though an important one. It was democratic in that it was antiaristocratic, that it opposed self-perpetuation in government, that it held government officials to be only removable delegates, and countered the theory of the constituted bodies with the theory of the Sovereignty of the People. The Représentants never called their movement "democratic." But it looked like Absolute Democracy to Choiseul because it subverted the society based upon Orders. That the People need include everyone, that universal equal suffrage was the principal mark of democracy, was neither a significant theory nor an issue in practical politics at the time. Even the Geneva Natives did not clearly assert it.

The new regime was sufficiently democratic for the more vehement aristocrats not to accept it. They had not consented to it, but only abstained from voting. In 1782 there was a counterrevolution at Geneva. The Geneva aristocracy, again appealing to foreign aid, for the third time since 1738, and this time obtaining the military intervention of France, succeeded in annulling the Edict of 1768. They rebuilt their theater, and settled down to those civilized diversions of which the mad Rousseau had wanted to deprive them. Geneva, too, in the 1780's, was to have its aristocratic resurgence.

31 Chaponnière, *op. cit.*, 214. That Voltaire's *Idées républicaines* arose not from general ideas so much as from Voltaire's involvement in and knowledge of the situation at Geneva is shown in the forthcoming work of Peter J. Gay, *Voltaire's Politics: The Poet as Realist*, to be published in 1959 by the Princeton University Press.

CHAPTER VI

THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT BETWEEN KING AND PEOPLE

The power and jurisdiction of Parliament, says Sir Edward Coke, is so transcendent and absolute, that it cannot be confined, either for causes or persons, within any bounds. . . . It hath sovereign and uncontrollable authority. . . . It can change and create afresh even the constitution of the kingdom and of parliaments themselves. . . . True it is, that what the parliament doth, no authority upon earth can undo. So that it is a matter most essential to the liberties of this kingdom that such members be delegated to this important trust as are most eminent for their probity, their fortitude, and their knowledge; for it was a known apothegm of the great lord treasurer Burleigh, "that England could never be ruined but by a parliament."

—SIR WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, 1765

Of all those constituted bodies of Europe, largely aristocratic in composition, which in some countries came into conflict with kings in the decade before 1775, and which at Geneva had trouble with the citizens whom they governed, the most famous and the most powerful was the Parliament of Great Britain, whose misfortune it was to be challenged from both sides at once. Or, at least, the most ardent devotees of the Houses of Parliament found Parliamentary independence being undermined by the King, in the person of George III, while at the same time a growing number of dissatisfied persons, in America, in Ireland, and in England itself, expressed increasing doubts on the independence of Parliament, invoking a higher authority which they called the People. The champions of Parliament relished neither rival. "It is our business to act constitutionally, and to maintain the independency of Parliament," said the young Charles Fox in the Commons in 1771; "whether it is attacked by the people or by the crown is a matter of little consequence."¹

1 *Parliamentary History*, XVII, 149.

THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION

There is a curious irony in the situation. The dozen years preceding the American Revolution, the years when America was profoundly alienated, and which saw the beginning of the British movement for parliamentary reform, were also the years when awestruck wonder at the glories of the British constitution reached an almost ecstatic height. The very Stamp Act Congress announced its satisfaction at living under "the most perfect form of government." "The constitution of England," declared a British book reviewer in 1775, "is without doubt the most perfect form of government that ever was devised by human wisdom." To John Adams it was "this stupendous fabric of human invention," even after he and other Americans no longer lived under it. The Younger Pitt, when he introduced his bill to reform the representation of the House of Commons in 1783, prefaced his speech with a prolonged apologetic, expressing his unshaken faith in the unique advantages of English liberty, as if himself incredulous that such a constitution needed any reform at all.² In the disputes that arose between King George's subjects in Britain and America after 1763, and in those which continued to trouble Britain itself after American independence, scarcely anyone denied that the British constitution was the most remarkable constitution in the history of the world. There was, however, some difference of opinion on the precise content of this matchless frame of state—on the concrete questions of what particular rights it guaranteed to what people, and why.

There were good reasons why all Britons, including British colonials, should have felt such self-satisfaction, and why Europeans of other nationalities should have joined in the chorus of praise. There was, for one thing, an objective ground for it. In the slums of London, or among dispossessed agricultural laborers, or pauper children, or the Irish tenantry, there were people as wretched as any in Europe. Nevertheless, there was an air of freedom in the British world, a constructive liberty which, unlike the "liberties" so common in Europe, actually added to the power of the laws and of the state; a general tolerance between classes, a forbearance toward religious minorities, a wide latitude in the expression of opinion, a relatively uncontrolled press, with much public discussion; a good deal of personal security for most of the population, together with a high degree of wealth, industry, and prosperity, of which the fruits were as evenly distributed as in other large states of Europe, for while the rich in England were probably richer than elsewhere, the English poor, in a general way, may have been a little less poor than in most parts of the Continent. Probably contemporaries were not altogether mistaken in ascribing these blessings to the form of government; at any rate, the existence of such blessings added enormously to the repute, in England and in Europe, in which the form of government was held. The spectacular victory of the Seven Years' War had the same effect. The islanders had humbled the combined powers of Austria, France, and Spain; Hapsburgs and Bourbons

2 For the Stamp Act Congress see L. Gipson, *Coming of the Revolution* (N.Y., 1954), 100; for the reviewer, *Critical Review*, vol. 39 (1775), p. 345; for Adams, *Defense of the Constitutions* (1786), *Works* IV (1851), 358; for Pitt, *Parliamentary History*, XXIII, 827.

simultaneously bowed to them; they triumphed in America and in the East. Empire was on them bestowed; where Caesar's eagles never flew, as Cowper put it, none were as invincible as they. Surely the constitution of such a people must harbor the true secret by which freedom, wealth, power, and leadership might all be enjoyed at the same time.

Blackstone's *Commentaries* were published between 1765 and 1769. In the ten years from 1767 to 1777 appeared the *Rotuli parliamentorum*, the first substantial printed collection of medieval parliamentary acts. It was sponsored by the House of Lords, which was motivated both by a desire to set forth the historical evidence for its own important position in English life, and to open up, if not quite to create, the whole field of English constitutional history as a learned science. Meanwhile, the writings of Montesquieu were having their cumulative effect. Every two or three years a new edition of the *Spirit of Laws* appeared in English. Readers in England, as in the American colonies, could there find the assurance, on the authority of the great French expert on comparative government, that they lived under a constitution wholly devoted, through its ingenious separation of powers, to the preservation of liberty. Or at least they could find it if they looked for it hard enough, for Montesquieu actually gave only about a seventy-fifth part of his compendious treatise to the specific subject of the British constitution.³

The first book by a Continental European ever devoted wholly to that subject, and under that title, appeared at Amsterdam in French, as *La Constitution de l'Angleterre*, in 1771.⁴ There was a London edition in 1775, and over twenty different London and Dublin imprints of the *Constitution of England* can be counted for the ensuing half-century. The book figured as a British political Bible until after the First Reform Bill. It did more than Montesquieu to spread an understanding of the British constitution on the Continent. It is worthy of note, and is of course a consequence of the American Revolution, that a single New York edition seems to have satisfied the American demand.

The author of the *Constitution of England* was the Genevese Delolme, one of the advanced democratic party at Geneva in 1767. He had upheld there the Sovereignty of the People against the theory of Orders within the state. So firmly did he cling to this principle that he refused to accept the compromise made at Geneva in January 1768, and a few months later went into voluntary exile. He arrived in England a stubborn democrat. Within three years he had produced his book on England, which became the classic statement of the theory of a balance among King, Lords, and Commons. It thus seems that he changed his mind, and the few who have tried to look closely at Delolme, of whose career few evidences have survived, have seen in him a significant change in a "conservative" direction, from ideas resembling those of Rousseau to ideas resembling those of Montesquieu. It is very likely that he did change his mind, because he is known to have been mixing with some of the discontented Whigs in England at the time when Lord North took

3 On Blackstone and Montesquieu see Chapter III above; for the significance of the *Rotuli parliamentorum* see E. Lousse, *La société d'ancien régime: organisation et représentation corporatives* (Louvain, 1943), I, 2.

4 G. Bonno, *La constitution britannique devant l'opinion française de Montesquieu à Bonaparte* (Paris, 1932), 118–25; E. Ruff, *Jean Louis Delolme und sein Werk über die Verfassung Englands* (Berlin, 1934).

charge of the government. The first edition of the collected *Letters of Junius*, published in 1772, contains in its preface a quotation from Delolme's *Constitution of England*, using the exact wording of the translation not published until three years later. Delolme clearly had made Whig acquaintances in London; someone in 1772 was engaged in translating his work. Not much more is known of Delolme, except that he stayed in England until 1800.

Yet Delolme did not become wholly a Whig, nor did he wholly give up what he had believed at Geneva. There is a unifying thought in all his political writings, one incidentally which was to appeal strongly to John Adams. It was an intense dislike of government by oligarchy, coterie, or self-perpetuating aristocracy. Hence, in the politics of Geneva he was a democrat. In the politics of Sweden his sympathies were monarchist. In 1772, immediately after the *coup d'état* of Gustavus III, he published (it was his first work published in English) *A Parallel between the English Government and the Former Government of Sweden*. He expressed here his admiration for Gustavus III, and his antipathy to the Freedom Era in Sweden, during which, he said, the nobility monopolized public life to the disadvantage of everyone else. He thought that the difference between Sweden after 1719 and England after 1689 was that in England the King remained strong, so that England had not become an aristocracy in the manner of Sweden—or of Geneva.

Delolme in fact put great emphasis on the historic role of the English crown, in a way sufficient to distinguish him from Montesquieu, of whom he is often said to be merely the popularizer, or from most of the Anglo-American Whigs and even radicals, who usually saw liberty as something won by age-long struggle against royal tyrants, and placed its beginnings in primitive Saxon times. The English constitution, says Delolme in quite modern vein, really dates from the Norman Conquest. By the conquest the monarchy imposed a strong and centralized feudalism and built a unified kingdom, unlike France; later on there was only one Parliament for the King to resort to, unlike the many assemblies with which the King of France might deal. The great power of the King fortunately overshadowed the greatest nobles, so that, as the generations passed, nobles and commoners were obliged to join forces to maintain their freedom. Delolme was impressed by the continuing authority of the British King, whom he thought to be really stronger than the King of France. As he put it, thinking of events of his own day, the King of France took care upon approaching the Parlement of Paris to overawe it with a display of "military apparatus"; the King of England at a dissolution, simply spoke a few words, telling the Parliament they were no longer a Parliament, and they were not. Such was the magic of the force of law. The King enjoyed the confidence of the people as much as Parliament did. It was "from the Nation itself," said Delolme, that the Executive in England drew its authority—from the "affection," the "consent," and the "voluntary passions of those who are subject to it."⁵

Delolme's idea of the "balance of powers" in the British constitution was thus significantly different from Montesquieu's. For Montesquieu, as for Burke, in a proper balance the role of nobility as a check upon monarchy was to be empha-

⁵ *Constitution of England* (London, 1775), 409.

sized. For Delolme, as later for John Adams, the important thing was that a strong king (or executive in the case of Adams), served as a barrier against ambitions which when uncontrolled led to aristocracy. As for democracy, Delolme showed little alarm that it would turn into "anarchy." The real danger, he felt, with the experience of Geneva behind him, was that "pure democracy," or a system in which a body of citizenry supposedly governed itself, would turn into an aristocracy or oligarchy, since in popular assemblies a few ambitious individuals always got control and perpetuated their position. Against this eventuality, he thought, a strong king or executive was the best protection. England, said Delolme, was really the most nearly democratic state in Europe precisely because of its balance between King, Lords, and Commons.

According to Delolme the separation was quite distinct. The King exercised all executive power; he was the source of justice, he freely named his ministers, he appointed to all offices, he commanded the army and navy. He was wholly independent of Parliament except in one decisive respect; he depended on it for the grant of money. Parliament made the laws; it had the initiative in legislation, and was independent of the King, except that the King might interpose his veto. Parliament was wisely divided into two houses, Lords and Commons, not so much in order to give special representation to the nobility, as Montesquieu had said, as simply to provide a countercheck against ill-advised legislation. The Commons, according to Delolme, were the duly elected representatives of the people; he defends representative government against the aspersions of his countryman, Rousseau.

In the first French editions of his book, while insisting that the British government was the best in Europe, Delolme nevertheless observed that it suffered from a few imperfections. He mentioned Old Sarum by name, and held the continued representation of decayed boroughs to be a true constitutional defect. He thought Parliament should be elected more frequently, and that something should be done to stop the arbitrary impressment of sailors. He even said that such reforms were sought by "a numerous party in the present Parliament." He declared that one of the virtues of the British government, in comparison with others, was "its greater capacity for improvement."⁶

These comments disappeared from the first English edition of 1775. The Delolme whom people read for fifty years conveyed no such reservations. Since practically nothing is known of Delolme's life, it is hard to explain the shift. He may have changed his friends, or been influenced by his translator. It is also possible that he shared in the hardening of opinion in England, the increasing tendency in some circles to idealize the constitution exactly as it was, that took place in the course of disputes with the American colonies.

Various modern authorities agree that the separation of powers was in fact the chief characteristic of the British eighteenth-century constitution, as Delolme and

6 *Constitution de l'Angleterre* (Amsterdam, 1771), 263–65. This edition, the Amsterdam edition of 1774, and the first English edition of 1775 are all dedicated to the radical Earl of Abingdon, who had visited Geneva in the 1760's and been associated there with Delolme and the Genevese democrats. The later editions are dedicated to George III. On Abingdon see below, p. 136.

others maintained.⁷ Parliament after 1689 was no longer subordinate to the King; but neither, until after 1832, was it subordinate to an electorate; nor was the King, or were his ministers, subordinate to the Parliament. Given a real separation of equally indispensable elements, the problem of government was to make them act together. It was the King's responsibility to keep the government going; he could lawfully appoint any combination of men that he chose to carry his government on; the only restriction on him was a practical one, that the persons so appointed must not be sufficiently distasteful to a sufficient number of persons in the Lords and Commons to make those bodies refuse money or legislation. The House of Lords was usually more amenable to the wishes of government, for various reasons: the bishops were government appointees; a few peers might still feel gratitude for a recent elevation; others hoped for promotion in the peerage, and still others for appointment as gentlemen of the Bedchamber, which gave personal access to the court and to the King. The House of Commons was socially continuous so to speak, with the Lords. In the Parliament of 1761, that is, the first Parliament to have serious trouble with America, over half the members of the House of Commons were related to baronets or peers, and three-quarters had had ancestors in the House. Lord North was the son of a peer; George Grenville and Charles Townshend were brothers of peers; others were the close associates of peers, not to say dependents, like Edmund Burke, who over a period of fifteen years received some £30,000 from the Marquis of Rockingham. As a house, however, the Commons was perhaps a bit stronger than the Lords, not because it was more representative of the country, but because it had more control over the grant of funds, and because, since its members did not often aspire to earldoms or to the Bedchamber, it had less to lose by obstinacy or opposition.

There were no parties in any definite or inclusive sense. The terms Whig and Tory had ceased to have much meaning. Groups of individuals might profess to act together in politics as "friends," but they were easily dissolved. Most members of Parliament thought of themselves as belonging to no particular following, and disapproved of the efforts of "friends" to stand or fall together in bargaining with the King for office. Cabinets did not assume or leave office as a body; ministers came and went as individuals. There was no antithesis, real or formal, between Government and Opposition. Habitual opposition was frowned upon, as in most human organizations outside the stylized limits of the modern democratic state. Most members of Parliament thought it their normal duty to lend support to the administration.

On the other hand, they expected something in return. Government was a business of the political class; and, as Professor Pares has said, there were really two political classes, a small active class within a larger passive one. The larger and more passive class included those who wanted offices, pensions, honors, status, and in-

7 For the workings of British government at this time I follow W. S. Holdsworth, *History of English Law* (13 vols., London, 1922-1952), X; R. Pares, *King George III and the Politicians* (Oxford, 1953); G. H. Guttridge, *English Whiggism and the American Revolution: University of California Publications in History*, XXVIII (Berkeley, 1942); C. R. Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (Norman, 1954).

come, for themselves, their sons, their dependents, or their "friends," or men who had local influence in the counties, or who owned or controlled a few borough seats in return for which they expected favors. Emoluments of government, as Professor Pares puts it, played much the same part for these people as life insurance, retirement plans, or educating one's children for a profession in our own time; they were a means of securing family status. The smaller and active class, within the larger, consisted of men who had a real interest in the operation of government, who enjoyed the work, and made a career of dealing with real administrative and political problems. From this class came many ministers and most permanent public servants. For ministers, the problem was to be agreeable to the King while also satisfying a sufficient number of the passive political class. The King was the one man in the system who could not resign, or retire to his country estate. Obligated somehow always to carry on, he had to work through ministers acceptable to the two Houses, or provide them with means by which majorities in the two Houses could be obtained.

The methods by which King and ministry secured a Parliament that would work with them were summed up in the word "influence." It was this "influence" that made possible the effective functioning of government under a constitution characterized by separation of powers.⁸ Influence meant primarily patronage, the award of honors, titles, promotions, pensions, and sinecures, as well as functioning offices in the church, the armed forces, the colonial administration, and the home government. By the distribution of such favors among borough owners and others in a position to determine elections, the government was usually able to get a sufficiency of cooperative knights and burgesses sent up to the House of Commons. By promise of similar favors to sitting members of both Houses, or threat of their termination, the government was usually able to get the votes without which it could not proceed. Since the matter was essential, it was very systematically handled. There are, for example, in the papers of John Robinson, the political manager for Lord North and George III, certain lists drawn up in preparation for the election of 1774, showing all offices "tenable with seats in Lords and Commons."⁹ It is a curious array of appointments of all kinds, honorific and remunerative, nominal and real: thirteen lords and eleven grooms of the Bedchamber, the Master of the Jewel Office, the Clerk of the Venison Warrants, Admirals and Captains of the Navy, the Master of the Hanaper, three Secretaries of State, the Secretary at War, thirty-three Governors of garrisons, the Commander-in-Chief in Great Britain, the Attorney General, the Constable of the Tower, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Clerk of the Pells, and so on in great numbers. The exchange of their political influence, or of their votes, in return for these emoluments was, of course, entirely agreeable to the political class. Indeed, it was virtually the essence of political life, except when some overwhelming crisis within the state divided men on matters of policy. There was no such crisis sufficiently momentous until the trouble with

⁸ W. S. Holdsworth, "The Conventions of the 18th Century Constitution," in *Iowa Law Review*, XVIII, 2 (1932), 161–80.

⁹ W. T. Laprade, *Parliamentary Papers of John Robinson: Camden Society, 3rd series, vol. 33* (London, 1922). See also the lists of proposed appointments in J. Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George III* (London, 1927), I, 124–55.

America was far advanced. Even then, under the political conditions of the day, no clear alignment was possible.

The first two Georges had let matters get somewhat out of their own hands. Certain families and "connections," rallying around the great Whig dukes—Newcastle, Bedford, Devonshire, Portland, and others—had conducted the King's government and dispensed the royal favors pretty much in their own way. When the young George III became King in 1760, he was the first native-born male sovereign of England since the Revolution. Serious, virtuous, and methodical, he was resolved to do better than his grandfather and predecessors as King—to carry in reality the responsibilities of King of Great Britain which were imposed upon him by the law.

Of George III, as of many men, it must be said that he did not intend everything that he did. It is doubtful if he had a farseeing plan of action. In effect, however, he came into collision with the Whig magnates who had long had the management of affairs. As in other countries, it was the aristocracy that set itself most firmly against the personal exercise of royal power.

George at first gave his confidence to the Scottish Earl of Bute, making him virtually his chief minister, though Bute was a member of neither Lords nor Commons. Though not illegal, this naturally antagonized the parliamentary politicians. To free himself from tutelage to his grandfather's advisers he soon brought about the resignations of the Duke of Newcastle and William Pitt. Newcastle represented the Big Whig family system; Pitt, so far as he represented anything (he had first entered Parliament via Old Sarum, the inherited family seat) was a kind of heroic personality in which much national sentiment saw itself embodied. Since Newcastle stayed in office for a time after Pitt was forced out, they could subsequently feel no solidarity with each other; the differences between Pittite Whigs and Old Whigs (soon to be called Rockingham Whigs) were in the following years to become apparent many times. Meanwhile, George III and Bute made peace with France, on terms which many Whigs and patriots thought insufficiently advantageous to Great Britain. Thus various elements were disgruntled at the beginning of the reign.

In his clash with the Whig aristocracy, and laying low of the old parliamentary leadership, the King followed in a way the pattern of enlightened monarchy on the Continent. There is a resemblance between his activities and those of Louis XV, who at the same time was opposing the French parlements and their *union des classes*, or of Maria Theresa, who was resisting and even trying to dispense with the Hungarian and Bohemian diets, or of Gustavus III, who was soon to humble the nobility of Sweden. And, indeed, many of the policies personally favored by George III were "enlightened" enough. The Octennial Act of 1768 for Ireland, the India Regulating Act of 1773, the Quebec Act of 1774, the attempts begun in 1764 to get rid of abuses in the American customs revenue, even the Stamp Act, could be abundantly justified by principles of enlightened government of the day. But in reality George III was no enlightened despot. If (to suppose the unthinkable) he had sought to loosen the control of the universities by the Church of England, or if he had sought to modernize the land tax, still levied on the land values of 1692, he would have acted as many ministers of the continental mon-

archs were acting at the time. He had, of course, no such intention. He would try to take control from the magnates, but trouble with the church or the landowners was far from his thoughts.

For George III was himself a Whig. He, too, gloried in the Glorious Revolution. He, too, was awed by the British constitution; he would simply restore that balance of King, Lords, and Commons which all experts declared to be its essence. He, too, would uphold Parliament against all who questioned its rights. He would, however, himself supervise the use of that influence by which Parliament was kept in step with executive programs, and which the Duke of Newcastle had so adeptly managed before him. He antagonized important groups in the parliamentary leadership, and that was enough to produce a crisis. But he did not antagonize Parliament itself; the back-benchers mostly supported him, content to be called friends of the King rather than friends of this or that private leader. In the years that followed, the King had a parliamentary majority, nor was it due solely to influence. King and Parliament stood together. The consequences were not happy, for some of their policies provoked opposition, and the bond between them, the trading in pensions and offices, was open to serious reprehension. There were men in both Britain and America who came to distrust both King and Parliament.

THE FIRST AMERICAN CRISIS: THE STAMP ACT

The expense of the Seven Years' War, and heavy indebtedness which it created for the belligerent governments, led ministers in various countries to seek untapped sources of revenue. Old tax structures, favorable to the taxpayers, existed in many places, fortified by what amounted to class privileges, as in France, or by the autonomy and regional liberty of particular provinces. In the attempt to increase revenue governments were led to call such privileges and liberties into question. Financial pressure brought pressure for constitutional change. Louis XV abolished the French parlements, in part because they stood in the way of increased taxation; his ministers then proceeded to bring assessed land values up to date, and so to raise the yield of the *vingtième*. Maria Theresa began to restrain the autonomous bodies of Lombardy. Having come "to know people" in her financial disputes with the Hungarian diet of 1764, she went on to rule without summoning the diet at all.

The problem of the British government was not dissimilar. The national debt had risen from £75,000,000 to £147,000,000 because of the war. British subjects in America paid less in taxes than in Britain. They enjoyed regional or provincial privileges in this respect, confirmed by charters or by history or by custom, somewhat like Brittany and Hungary within the Bourbon and Hapsburg empires. It seemed reasonable to King George, to Parliament, and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Grenville, to distribute the tax burden by tapping sources of wealth hitherto largely exempted. There were some, like Governor Bernard of Massachusetts, who thought that a general governmental reorganization in America should precede the raising of direct taxes. Grenville decided to avoid so rash a course, and to levy a stamp tax at once; but in America as elsewhere fiscal innova-

tion led irresistibly to constitutional innovation. The British government, to put through its fiscal and accompanying policies, had increasingly to tamper with long-recognized American customs: to suspend an assembly in New York, to strengthen courts which were not courts of common law, and in 1774 to reconstruct the whole government of Massachusetts.

Since the outburst in America began as a movement to resist taxes, it is well to attempt a comparative view of tax burdens in the Western world at the time. Writers give the most diverse impressions on this subject. Some American historians, in the effort to be impartial, allow that the British were groaning under enormous levies. Others think the Americans already paid a good share (sometimes neglecting to observe that the British treasury reimbursed Americans for their outlays during the Seven Years' War); one says, not very convincingly, that the citizens of Boston, in 1760, were paying thirteen and a half shillings in the pound. Some English writers affirm that the land tax in the eighteenth century was very heavy; others, that landowners systematically evaded paying a fair share. Contemporaries in all countries uniformly averred that they could pay no more.

It is hazardous to offer figures. High per-capita rates of taxation may reflect entirely opposite situations: either that a people is oppressively taxed, or that it is more wealthy than others. Low taxes, contrariwise, suggest either that a people is fortunate, or that it is poor. To compare the currencies of different countries is always uncertain, though perhaps less so for the eighteenth century than for the twentieth. For some countries in the eighteenth century the size of the population is so debatable as to introduce an important variable into per-capita computations. Available figures are usually for the income of central governments; one never knows what costs of local government the taxpayer paid in addition, or what other costs of government, in the form of fees or licenses, may be omitted. It may be remarked, however, that the income of central governments went mostly to pay for war and the debts due to war; and, as it dwarfed all civil expenses of central government, it probably dwarfed the expenses of local government also, much of which was carried on by unpaid officials. With due regard for all difficulties, I offer the following view of the probable tax burden per head in English shillings, in various countries about the time of the American Revolution. Figures are included for component parts of the British, French, and Hapsburg political systems, the difference of rates suggesting in part regional differences of wealth, and in part the effects of regional privilege.

It will be seen that in the three great political systems it was the peripheral provinces, those most recently or loosely attached, and enjoying corporate liberties of their own, that paid the lowest rates. Belgians and Lombards were financially privileged within the Austrian system; Hungary and Bohemia paid less than Austria. Brittany, the Free County of Burgundy, Alsace, and Roussillon, all of which had strong provincial identity, and of which the first two possessed active Provincial Estates, were likewise favored in France. The American colonies paid no direct taxes, and not much in the way of customs duties, to the central government. The figures for America refer to money raised and spent within the several provinces. The British Americans enjoyed a lighter tax burden than any people of the Western world except the Poles—and one knows what happened to Poland.

APPROXIMATE ANNUAL TAX BURDEN PER HEAD
IN ENGLISH SHILLINGS

	About 1765	About 1785
United Provinces		35
Great Britain	26	34
Ireland	6s 8d	10
Massachusetts	1	18
Connecticut	7d	
New York	8d	
Pennsylvania	1	
Maryland	1	
Virginia	5d	10
France		21
Highest Generalities		
Paris		56
Rouen		31
Lyon		25
Lowest Generalities		
Strasbourg		12
Besançon		12
Perpignan		12
Rennes		10
Austrian Monarchy		12
Austria proper		21
Bohemia-Moravia		14
Hungary proper		12
Transylvania		7
Lombardy		5
Austrian Netherlands		3s 6d

The British Americans were already a mature people in many respects. They gave birth to men of urbanity and polish, and even of great intellectual range. The sea-board cities were not without elegance, though scarcely as sophisticated as even secondary cities in Europe, such as Dublin or Lyons. The population in 1760 was probably more than a quarter of that of Great Britain, or more than the ratio of Canada to Great Britain in population today. The economy was not primitive; it is said that British America produced more iron than Great Britain, and thirty per cent of all ships in British commerce in 1775 were built in America. There was much political life in town meetings of New England and county courthouses of

APPROXIMATE ANNUAL TAX BURDEN PER HEAD IN ENGLISH SHILLINGS (CONT.)

	About 1765	About 1785
Spain		10
Sweden		9
Russia		6
Prussia		6
Poland		1

Note: The figures for 1785 are derived from E. A. W. Zimmermann, *Political Survey of the Present State of Europe in Sixteen Tables* (Dublin, 1788), except that the figures for France are from J. Necker, *De l'administration des finances*, 1784, 1, 306, and that those for Massachusetts and Virginia are computed from M. Jensen, *The New Nation: a History of the United States during the Confederation, 1781–1789* (N.Y., 1950), 305 and 308. For Great Britain P. Pebrer, *Taxation, Revenue, Expenditure, Power, Statistics and Debt of the Whole British Empire* (London, 1833), 153, gives a revenue of £9,300,000 for 1765 and £14,870,000 for 1785; this has been divided by an estimated population of seven millions in 1765 and nine millions in 1785 for England, Wales, and Scotland; the resulting figure for 1785 corresponds to that given by Zimmermann. For Ireland about 1765 see G. O'Brien, *Economic History of Ireland in the 18th Century* (Dublin, 1918), 313. For the American provinces in the 1760's, see L. Gipson, *Coming of the Revolution*, 134, 136, 146; the estimates of Adam Smith given by W. G. Sumner, *The Financier and Finances of the American Revolution* (N.Y., 1892), 25, which are close to the estimates of T. Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies* (ed. 1774), I, 162–64; see also C. J. Bullock, *Finances of the United States from 1775 to 1789* (Madison, 1895), 152. In the 1780's the federal government of the United States seems to have received somewhat less than one shilling per head of the population; see Bullock, op. cit., 162–64. The British government before the Revolution, according to an estimate of R. H. Lee in 1774, received £80,000 from the American colonies in customs revenues, or about 8 d. per head of population; Sumner, op. cit., 15. The increased tax burden within the American states between 1765 and 1785 was due to the war and the debt.

the south, and in the governors' councils and the colonial assemblies. The generation that carried out the Revolution and adopted the constitution of 1787 obviously possessed great political skill. Yet it must be admitted that the Americans had much to learn. In their habit of depending on Britain they were truly provincial. They had little notion of providing for their own defense; they recognized no problems of international relations with which it was incumbent on them to deal. In the matter of taxes they were, indeed, in the state of nature; as late as 1778 the Continental Congress wrote to Franklin, then in Paris, that since the Americans had never been much taxed before the Revolution it would be madness to tax them now, so that the

war with Britain made it urgent to obtain a loan from France. One suspects that "no taxation without representation" meant no taxation with representation, either; even Thomas Paine, in 1780, thought the Americans should pay more taxes.

As for the British, they paid, along with the Dutch, the highest taxes in proportion to population of all the peoples of Europe. The high rates signify the greater wealth of England and Holland; no comparative estimates of the proportion of public revenues to national income can be formed. The main direct tax in Britain was the land tax. Like the French *vingtième*, which it somewhat resembled, it had originated in the wars between Britain and Louis XIV, and had at first been intended as a tax on all forms of income, but had become a tax on rental from land. It was reckoned in terms of shillings per pound of income, and was levied at a rate of two or three shillings in peacetime, or four shillings in time of war. Income from land was substantially rising in this age of improving landlords, but the strength of the landed class in Parliament was strong enough to prevent any disclosure of actual income, so that landed income was assumed to be the same as in 1692. This arrangement, made soon after the Revolution, marked "the final surrender of the seventeenth-century attempt at an equitably distributed direct tax."¹⁰ The attempt still made in the continental monarchies to bring land valuations up to date, an attempt which French parlements and other such bodies always resisted, was no longer made in England. Each shilling of land tax simply meant a flat sum of about £500,000 for the government. It was estimated in the mid-century that reassessment would have doubled the yield; that a landowner paying a four-shilling tax, and hence nominally a fifth of his income, actually paid a tenth or a twelfth. The land tax at the close of the Seven Years' War produced between a fifth and a quarter of the government's revenue. The remainder came from the customs, the excise, and the stamp tax. The stamp tax was relatively light, producing £281,914 in 1765, or about three per cent of government income. It was readily expansible, however; by 1790 its yield rose to £1,214,969, or almost eight per cent of government income. The trend was toward greater dependence on stamps and indirect taxes. By 1790 the four-shilling land tax was yielding only an eighth of the public revenues, though it must be noted that new taxes on windows, servants, and luxuries were aimed mainly at the well-to-do.¹¹

George Grenville, sponsored by Bute and the King, becoming chief minister in April 1763, set to work to solve the problems left by the war. He devised a plan for orderly occupation of the American West, newly conquered from France, and where Pontiac's rebellion was at that very moment showing the magnitude of the Indian problem. That the colonial governments did next to nothing about this Indian uprising, which was suppressed by the British army, only emphasized the

10 William Kennedy, *English Taxation, 1640-1799* (London, 1913), 46. See also W. R. Ward, *The English Land Tax in the 18th Century* (London, 1953), and S. Dowell, *A History of Taxation and Taxes in England from the Earliest Times* (London, 1888), III, 81-86. For the *vingtième* see the article under that heading in M. Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux 17^e et 18^e siècles* (Paris, 1923), which condenses Marion's larger writings on the subject. It is a curious fact that in 1789 the two *vingtièmes* produced 11 per cent of French government revenues; the land tax, at four shillings, about 12 per cent of British government revenues.

11 For varying amounts of the stamp tax, excise, etc., from year to year see Pebrer, *op. cit.*, 152.

need for general and long-range planning. Grenville proposed to keep British regular troops permanently in America, to prohibit westward movement of settlers until further notice, and to acquire land titles from the Indians by peaceable and gradual negotiations. For these purposes he thought that the necessary funds might be raised in America, and so obtained enactment of the Revenue Act of 1764, and decided also to apply in America the stamp tax already familiar in England. He hoped that it would yield about £100,000, all proceeds to be spent in the colonies. It would amount to about one shilling per person per year of taxation, which seemed little enough in England, but which, the reader can see, would more than double the tax load then borne by the bucolic Americans.

Grenville spent over a year in cautious enquiries before the passage of the Stamp Act. He consulted with the colonial agents in London, and asked them to propose alternative means of raising revenue in America. He had, however, little faith that the colonial assemblies would ever provide a dependable and steady revenue for such purposes on their own initiative; he undoubtedly preferred to keep the whole matter under parliamentary control. He was assured by Chief Justice Mansfield that parliamentary taxation of British subjects in America was unquestionably legal. Enough time passed in these preparations for warnings and protests to pour across the Atlantic. Grenville decided to disregard them, considering them, not unreasonably, to be the usual complaints made by all people against new taxation. In fact, the American resistance to the Revenue Act of 1764 was already irking the British. There was already in England, even before the Stamp Act, a growing feeling that the colonists were an irresponsible people who must be brought under effectual government—that they must be made to realize the existence of central authority in the empire.¹²

The Stamp Act passed in March 1765. There was no opposition to it in Parliament. None of the later Whig friends of America spoke against it. It was assumed to be an equitable measure, which the Americans would get used to in time.

The fury of the American reaction suggests that at bottom more than money or taxation was involved. The British had entirely underestimated the strength of American feeling. They had exaggerated the degree of Anglo-American unity felt in America. From the beginning the real issue in the eyes of Americans was not the tax—granted that they disliked all taxes—but the authority by which the tax was levied. “A Parliament of Great Britain,” declared John Adams in 1765, “can have no more right to tax the colonies than a Parliament of Paris.”¹³

Since the Restoration, and since the Revolution of 1689, England and its colonies, particularly those in New England, had diverged more widely than they seem to have realized. Not that the colonists of English descent denied being English; they took pride in their origins. But they felt no particular sympathy for the forces that had triumphed in English life since 1660, notably the aristocratic and Angli-

12 The growth of conservatism in Britain before and during the American Revolution, and in answer to the American demands, is one of the main themes of C. R. Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (Norman, 1954); the belief that the American and British positions of 1775–1776 were already taken in 1765 is one of the main themes of E. S. and H. M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 1953).

13 Quoted by Morgan, *op. cit.*, 140.

can governing class; nor did what they knew of the realities of parliamentary politics inspire them with much confidence. On one point the truculent young John Adams and the moderate Virginia gentleman, Richard Bland, were agreed: that they enjoyed the English constitution in greater purity in America than did the English in England. And if so, asked Adams, whose fault was it?¹⁴

Already, in the minds of some, a sense of American distinctiveness was well developed. This was most especially true of New England, which was more acutely conscious of its own history than the other colonies, and where there was a kind of folk memory of having fled from England long ago, the better to establish a good life in a new world. This now seemed to be threatened. "Will they never let us rest in peace? . . . Is it not enough that they persecuted us out of the old world? . . . What other world remains as a sanctuary? . . ."¹⁵ The words were written in 1763 on a different subject, but they suggest the emotions on which the Stamp Act grated. John Adams' *Dissertation on the Feudal and Canon Law*, written in 1765, just before the Stamp Act, contains a theory of the meaning of America already fully worked out: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design of Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth." In Virginia the feeling was less exalted. Important Virginians did not think of their forefathers as humble or impoverished fugitives, destined to save the world; they saw them rather as gentlemen of means who had emigrated voluntarily at their own expense, but who, on setting up in America, brought all English liberties with them, including an assembly which in its own sphere was the equal of Parliament. According to a recent study of this elusive subject, during the arguments over the Stamp Act the peculiarly New England view of American origins spread to the colonies as a whole, entering deeply into the formation of American nationality. Forced to reflect upon themselves, the Americans developed a "legend of the Founding Fathers," or belief that from the very beginning America had been the refuge of political liberty. But enough such feeling already existed, in 1765, to produce an immediate, concerted, and excited resistance to the Stamp Act.

At any event, most politically conscious Americans, in all the colonies, from the moment the implications were clearly presented to them, agreed in seeing no authority in England above them except the King himself; and if Americans were still stoutly loyal in a legal sense, it may be strongly suspected (since the same was true of England in the early Hanoverian era) that they were lacking in true royalist warmth. All the arguments aimed at the British—that Parliament could levy external but not internal taxes in America, that it could levy external taxes for trade regulation, but not for revenue, etc.—were in the nature of rationalizations; the Americans really did not wish to be actually governed by the British Parliament at

14 J. Adams, *Novanglus*, 1774, in *Works* (1851), IV, 117; R. Bland, *Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies*, 1766, quoted by C. Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (N.Y., 1953), 273–74.

15 Quoted by W. F. Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers* (N.Y., 1956), 22, to which I am indebted for this whole paragraph. See also C. Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (N.Y., 1953).

all, though they naturally were a little slow in saying so plainly.¹⁶ On this there may have been more unanimity in 1765 than on any subsequent question, including independence when it came, by which time much violence had occurred, and conservatism had had a chance to form.

Resistance to the Stamp Act began in Virginia, where the house of burgesses forwarded a protest to England in May 1765, and at Boston, where in June the house of representatives, by a circular letter to the other colonial assemblies, invited them to send some of their members to a general meeting at New York, at which a common front might be presented to Parliament. During the summer staid Boston saw unedifying scenes, which were in fact revolutionary in character. A group of men of the shopkeeping and artisan class, calling themselves first the Loyal Nine and then the Sons of Liberty, and maintaining a discreet contact with prominent merchants and with a few members of the assembly (including John Adams on at least one occasion) served as intermediaries between upper and lower classes in the city. They persuaded certain rougher elements, which had staged a kind of gang warfare on the preceding Guy Fawkes day, that the Stamp Act was a threat to their liberties, and that their physical energies might find a worthier and more patriotic outlet. Someone made an effigy of Andrew Oliver, who was to be distributor of stamps under the Act, and hung it on a tree. A mob seized the effigy, paraded it about, and beheaded it. Another mob broke into the vice-admiralty court, one of the courts involved in Grenville's general reorganization, and authorized to enforce the Stamp Act. The court records were destroyed. When Thomas Hutchinson, a Bostonian of old family, who was Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor, tried to stop these depredations, the mobs attacked his house, a new mansion in the Georgian style, systematically wrecked it, broke up the furniture, cut down the trees, and stole £900 in cash. In the face of these disturbances, and lesser ones elsewhere, the stamp distributors throughout the colonies were intimidated into resigning. The Stamp Act Congress met in New York, in more or less open defiance of the colonial governors, with these commotions ringing in their ears. Nine colonies had sent delegates, of whom the most vehement were the most influential. "It's to be feared," reported General Gage, "that the Spirit of Democracy is strong amongst them."¹⁷ By this he meant the inclination to question the governing authority of Parliament, and not merely its wisdom.

The Congress drew up a declaration. It professed "all due subordination" to Parliament. It claimed as a right of Englishmen to be taxed only by their own representatives, but observed that the colonies could not possibly be represented in the House of Commons. For the "people of Great Britain" (that is, Parliament) to vote away the property of the colonists violated the "Spirit of the British constitution." The Congress, therefore, petitioned for repeal of the Stamp Act, and for removal of the vice-admiralty courts.

16 The Morgans, *op. cit.*, 114–15, "A Note on Internal and External Taxes," argue that the Americans never made any such distinction in the admissibility of taxes levied by Parliament.

17 Morgan, *op. cit.*, 105. The Resolution of the Stamp Act Congress is printed here.

Preparations were soon made to reinforce words with action. Local meetings in many places issued local manifestoes, but the first move toward concerted physical resistance took place at New London, Connecticut. There the town meeting had already furbished up the philosophy needed to undercut positive law. It asserted that a people had a right to set limits to government, and, when necessary, "to reassume their natural Rights and the Authority the Laws of Nature and of God have vested them with." On Christmas 1765 two delegates of the New York Sons of Liberty met with the Connecticut Sons of Liberty in a New London tavern. They bound themselves "to march with the utmost dispatch," if either group were endangered, and to bring about a "like association with all the colonies on the continent." The movement spread; "there can be no doubt that the colonists were getting ready to fight the British Army."¹⁸ And the British government, having heard of the Boston riots, instructed the American governors to apply for military aid if necessary to enforce the Act.

Revolution seemed imminent in America. Force was assembling, and the doctrines had been declared. So far, to use the language of preceding chapters, it seemed a conflict between constituted bodies—between the legislative assemblies in America and the Parliament of Great Britain. Governor Bernard defined the issue as early as November 1765: "In Britain," he wrote to Lord Barrington, the Secretary for War, "the American governments are considered as Corporations empowered to make by-laws, existing only during the pleasure of Parliament. . . . In America they claim . . . to be perfect States, not otherwise dependent on Great Britain than by having the same King."¹⁹ This remained the constitutional issue for the next eleven years.

The home government, with the Stamp Act nullified, its authority flouted, and its stamp distributors terrorized into resignation, now faced difficulties in England also. The Americans were reducing their commercial orders, and postponing payment of debts to British merchants, so that a trade crisis developed. The King replaced Grenville with the Marquis of Rockingham as chief minister. Rockingham led the "old" or formerly Newcastle Whigs, the most aristocratic of the Whig factions. Pitt refused to take office with Rockingham, whose government was therefore weak, depending on the "King's friends" for majorities in Parliament. The Rockingham group had seen nothing improper in the Stamp Act. They even called the Virginia resolutions "a daring attack on the constitution of this country."²⁰ As events unfolded, however, they were willing enough to use the American crisis to discredit the previous administration. In any case they had to take action. The choice finally coming to lie between military enforcement and repeal, the Rockingham group decided for repeal, purely on grounds of expediency, with no concession on the constitutional issue. Since the King and his friends were not yet persuaded that capitulation was wise, and since Pitt, and the friends of Pitt, already thought the Parliament should not even claim the right to levy an internal tax in America, the Rockingham group, though constituting the government, had only

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 201–3.

¹⁹ Ritcheson, *op. cit.*, 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

feeble support in the two houses. It therefore took the bold step of going “out of doors” to solicit expressions of public opinion. Rockingham’s spokesmen talked with merchants all over the country. Soon petitions from merchants in Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds, and other towns flowed in. On the one hand Rockingham’s new secretary, Edmund Burke, in his maiden speech in Parliament, upheld the supremacy of Parliament in all matters over all British subjects. On the other, the merchants, the marquis, and Burke himself held that Parliament should repeal the Stamp Act purely as a matter of practical politics. The King finally instructed those who considered themselves his friends to vote for repeal, and the Stamp Act was repealed in March 1766.

At the same time, to prevent misunderstanding in America, and to satisfy those in England who predicted dire consequences from such softness in the face of rebellion, the Rockingham Whigs and King and his friends were in entire agreement on a further statement of law. It took the form of the Declaratory Act, modelled on the Declaratory Act enunciated for Ireland in 1719.²¹ It may be compared also to the announcement of the King of France in the *séance de la flagellation* in Paris. The French King emphatically affirmed his sovereignty over the Parliament of Paris on March 3, 1766. The Declaratory Act, two weeks later, affirmed the sovereignty of the King-in-Parliament over the people and the assemblies of the American colonies.

The act announced that “the King’s Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and of the Commons, had, hath and of Right ought to have full power and authority to make Laws and Statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.”

TRIBULATIONS OF PARLIAMENT, 1766–1774

The trouble with America turned on the question of the authority of Parliament. Anything in England, therefore, that brought the authority of Parliament under critical examination, or which cast discredit upon it, added strength to the American opposition. Contrariwise, Parliament laid itself more open to criticism in England by becoming embroiled with America.

There were beginning to be people in England who thought that Parliament did not really represent them. At the same time, George III’s increasing personal influence—what was called “corruption,” though the King was only doing for himself what the politicians had formerly done in his name—tended to dim the lustre of the great Areopagus. “The public does think we are a corrupt body,” as Burke told the House of Commons in 1771.²² Moreover, there were stirrings in Ireland, which also had its grievances against the British Parliament. Ireland was often cited in

21 For the American Declaratory Act see the statutes 6 George III c. 12; for the Irish, 6 George I c. 65.

22 “Speech on the Motion Made in the House of Commons, February 7, 1771, Relative to the Middlesex Election,” *Writings* (Boston, 1901), VII, 62.

discussion of the American problem. Irish developments had a more than Irish significance.

When one speaks of Ireland at this time it is the Anglo-Irish who are meant.²³ They were colonists in a way, Protestant descendants of the English and Scotch who had occupied Ireland in the seventeenth century, and who now constituted about a fifth of the population. Although in 1756 there was formed a Catholic Committee which later became important, the notable thing about the Catholic and native Irish in the mid-century was their silence. The Anglo-Irish in part governed and in part ignored the indigenous population. They enjoyed a certain autonomy with respect to Great Britain, so that in a formal constitutional sense Anglo-Ireland offered a model which many in England, after the repeal of the Stamp Act, thought might be suitable for America. The Irish Parliament has been briefly described in Chapter II. It was scarcely representative even of the Anglo-Irish. But it levied the Irish taxes, and it passed laws for Ireland, subject to control by the government at Westminster. It maintained 12,000 soldiers of the British army in Ireland at Irish expense; there were also certain pensions and sinecures defrayed from the Irish revenue, but available for enjoyment in England. Ireland recognized the right of the British Parliament to regulate external trade. Anglo-Irish discontent matured slowly, and flared up only when encouraged by the American Revolution. In some ways, however, it preceded that of either England or America. In Charles Lucas the Irish had "a Wilkes before Wilkes." In Molyneux they had a writer who as long ago as 1698 had contended for the equality of the Irish Parliament with the British, as Americans in the 1760's came to do for their own assemblies. They had had their Declaratory Act in 1719. By mid-century they were beginning to chafe at the trade regulations, which were, for Ireland, very severe. Designed to protect English manufacturers, the regulations permitted the export of Irish linens, but forbade any export of woolens, glass, and a number of other items from Ireland, or the levy of import taxes on English goods.

An Anglo-Irish "colonial nationalism," as Irish historians call it, thus accompanied the rise of an American colonial nationalism in the 1760's. As in America, the defeat of the French brought it to the surface. After 1763 the Anglo-Irish no longer had to fear French invasion, or the mass rising of the native Irish in collaboration with French invaders. Anglo-Irish demands for reform were increasingly heard. Anglo-Irish and Americans were conscious of common interests; the Americans read Molyneux and Lucas, and Irishmen told one another in their Parliament that the "cause of America is yours." With thousands of Presbyterian Irish emigrating to America every year, a larger proportion of the Protestant Irish than of the English had friends and relatives in America at this time.

The Lord Lieutenant sent over in 1767, Viscount Townshend (brother of the Townshend of the "Townshend Acts"), was the first viceroy permanently to reside, or to be instructed by the British government to make concessions to reformers. Townshend, aided by Lucas and the reformers, put the Octennial Act through the

23 For Ireland at this time see R. B. McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion, 1750-1800* (London, 1943), 9-51; M. Kraus, "America and the Irish Revolutionary Movement in the 18th Century," in R. B. Morris, ed., *The Era of the American Revolution* (N.Y., 1939); G. O'Brien, *Economic History of Ireland in the 18th Century* (Dublin and London, 1918); E. Curtis, *History of Ireland* (London, 1936).

Irish Parliament. It was a blow at the entrenched Anglo-Irish oligarchy, since it required election of the Irish Commons every eight years instead of only at the death of the sovereign. In return, Townshend got the size of the British army maintained by Ireland raised to 15,000 men, a measure to which the Irish reformers consented reluctantly, since it was provided that 3,000 of these might be freely sent out of Ireland, presumably, in 1767, for use in America. Further reforms, for the next few years, met with obstruction. A proposal to tax the properties of absentee landlords, of whom there were about a hundred in England, came to nothing. One of the chief Irish absentees was the Marquis of Rockingham, who like others of the higher aristocracy owned land in both islands. Burke advised against the proposal; he thought it a good thing for Ireland that its magnates, who understood Ireland and its needs, should reside abroad and have seats in the Parliament at Westminster.

Many Irish were of the opinion, in 1775 and 1776, that if the British subdued and taxed America they would begin to tax Ireland also. On the other hand, the example of Ireland does not suggest that, if the Americans had not resisted, their future under a triumphant British imperial system would have been very inspiring.

In England dissatisfaction was confused, because shared in by men with different aims. There were Whigs who, in their dislike for the King's way of doing things, meant to preserve the autonomy of Lords and Commons. And there were emerging "radicals," who believed that the House of Commons should be more dependent on the voters. By "radicals," a term not used until coined by the Benthamites much later, are meant those who thought Parliament should afford a more accurate representation of the people. They were "radical" because their basic theory of representation differed from that enshrined in the constitution, or said to be enshrined in it by conservatives. It is doubtful whether men of the thirteenth century would have agreed with all that conservatives said on the subject five hundred years later. Still, there was a difference between the surviving medieval and the emerging modern ideas of who or what should be represented; the older theory went in terms of estates or communities or corporate groups; the newer, in terms of individual subjects or persons.

Discontent centered about the figure of John Wilkes. A man of unsavory private habits, author of an "Essay on Woman" generally regarded as indecent, at least until recent times, Wilkes was able, like Mirabeau, to build his public personality on the espousal of liberal principles. He was no adventurer, but a member of Parliament in touch with Pitt and other Whigs displaced from office after the accession of George III. He founded a paper in 1762, the *North Briton*, to carry on a verbal assault on the new government. The arguments were sometimes not on a high level. Wilkes made good use of the fact that the Earl of Bute's family name was Stuart. In the *North Briton* No. 45, in April 1763, he denounced "ministerial despotism," "prostitution of the crown," and vague lurking dangers of Stuart restoration.²⁴ George III, personally offended, spurred on his willing ministers to suppress the *North Briton*. A general warrant, that is, one not specifying anyone by

24 See G. Nobbe, *The North Briton: a Study in Political Propaganda* (N.Y., 1939), 172-83, 202-24.

name, was issued for the arrest of the publishers. The courts in 1769 declared general warrants illegal, and awarded damages to Wilkes, thus demonstrating that the law did allow more freedom of political expression in England than in most parts of Europe. Wilkes meanwhile, expelled by the House of Commons, fled to France. He was hailed there as a defender of liberty by the Parlement of Paris in its struggle against the "ministerial despotism" of Louis XV. Handkerchiefs *à la Wilkes* were for a time *à la mode* in French parliamentary circles.²⁵

Returning to England in 1768, he was elected to the Commons by the county of Middlesex, the environs of the city of London. The Commons expelled him again. He was again elected by Middlesex; the Commons not only declared him disqualified, but gave the seat to his opponent, who had received fewer votes. Thus in this case the Commons assumed the power to determine its own membership. A man repudiated by the county of Middlesex sat for it in the Parliament.

Wilkes' followers in 1769 founded the society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights, the earliest in a long series of societies organized to demand parliamentary reform. They also toured the country in a new kind of popular political campaign. Public meetings protested against the quashing of the will of the people of Middlesex. Some 60,000 signatures were gathered for petitions. It was a large number at a time when Arthur Young judged the entire electorate of all Britain to be no more than 250,000, and when Richard Price estimated that 5,723 persons chose half the members of the House of Commons.²⁶ Some constituencies sent instructions on the Middlesex affair to their members of Parliament, a procedure not yet thought to be quite constitutional. "Such is the levelling principle that has gone forth," cried one member of the House, "that the people imagine they themselves should be judges over us."²⁷ Or as one of Wilkes' more judicious biographers puts it, the principle was now widely publicized, "perhaps for the first time, that the sovereign power was vested, not in Parliament, but in the 'great public'"²⁸

Wilkes became the hero of London, and not of the rabble only. Great merchants warmly supported him, including William Beckford, with his £100,000 a year. In 1774 Wilkes was chosen for the by no means popular office of Lord Mayor. He and his followers won the right to have debates in Parliament published in the London newspapers. It is from about this time that we can really know what was said in the two chambers. From a kind of board of directors, meeting in private to manage the affairs of the country, Parliament thus took another step toward a more modern form, in which the "great public" could keep watch on it as on a body of deputies. Elected again to the Commons, and this time admitted, Wilkes in 1776 introduced the first reform bill in that body, the Duke of Richmond introducing one also in the Lords. It had no success. Ten years before,

25 For the handkerchiefs see F. Acomb, *Anglophobia in France, 1763-89* (Durham, 1950), 32-33. They were linen handkerchiefs imported from England with a letter from Wilkes to his Middlesex constituents printed on them.

26 Young's estimate is in his *Political Essays*, 1772, 34; Price's, in his *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (London, 1776), 11.

27 Quoted in Pares, *George III and the Politicians*, 49.

28 H. Bleackley, *Life of John Wilkes* (London, 1917), 409. See also R. Postgate, *That Devil Wilkes* (N.Y., 1929).

even the conservative Blackstone had thought that some decayed boroughs might be abolished. Delolme had said so in French in 1774, but not in English in 1775. In the face of a popular movement against Parliamentary supremacy, both at home and in America, and which in America in 1775 reached the point of armed defiance, the forces of conservative opposition gathered strength.

It could be argued that the only thing the matter with Parliament was that it was too much influenced by the King. There were more who would reform its integrity than its representativeness. There were more who would free it from the insidious influence of ministers, and of the King, than who wanted to bring it under the influence of a body of voters. Hence demands were frequently heard for a Place Bill, or legislation to reduce the number of offices which members of Parliament might hold. There was discussion of a Triennial Act, to make it necessary to reelect the Commons every three years instead of every seven. Radicals even talked of annual parliaments. There were proposals to increase the number of county members, who were thought to be more independent, that is, less susceptible to "influence," than those of the boroughs, by whom they were outnumbered four to one.

Critics of Parliament in England made common cause with the leaders of American discontent. And in America, while the repeal of the Stamp Act allayed the crisis, it brought no peace. The Americans in their optimism underestimated the Declaratory Act as a mere statement of legal fiction. If anything, they seemed to gloat at having forced Parliament to back down. In England the country gentlemen wished to reduce the land-tax, which had never remained at four shillings in time of peace. The King himself did not favor a reduction (in this respect showing sentiments like his contemporaries, the "enlightened despots"), nor have modern students of taxation thought the four-shilling rate oppressive, given the difference between real and nominal landed income.²⁹ However this may be, to the consternation of the King and his new minister, Charles Townshend, the House of Commons demonstrated its vaunted independence, and, in a surprise vote, cut the tax to three shillings, thus depriving the government of some £500,000 of revenue. Whigs joined with the King's friends in this reduction of the land-tax. Townshend, having been given to understand that the Americans would accept "external" taxes from Parliament, thereupon readily obtained enactment of his famous tariff, which levied customs duties in America on importations of paint, glass, lead, and tea. The proceeds were to be spent in America, not primarily for military protection against the Indians, as in the the plan for the Stamp Act, but rather to pay the salaries of the colonial governors, judges, and a corps of royal officials. Since the Americans had until now voted money to pay the governors in their own assemblies, the leaders of discontent feared the loss of all means of pressure upon the colonial executives, if salaries were to come from duties automatically collected. The use made of appointive office in England and Ireland to influence members of legislatures was also known in America.

Again, the main disturbance was in Boston. The Boston town meeting began to put pressure on the provincial assembly. It even called a "convention" of all

29 *Correspondence of George III*, I, 454; Dowell, *History Of Taxation*, III, 86.

the Massachusetts towns, which the governor disbanded as an illegal body. The Massachusetts assembly issued a circular, as in 1765, this time drafted by Samuel Adams, inviting the assemblies of the other provinces to take joint action—a move denounced in England as favoring “unwarrantable combinations.” Non-importation agreements were made up and down the coast, to force British merchants, as in 1765, to demand repeal of the new taxes. Duties could not be collected on goods not imported. The Townshend duties were in effect nullified, as the Stamp Act had been.

In 1770 the King made Lord North his Prime Minister. North repealed the duties, except the one on tea. The tea duty remained as a kind of second declaratory act, asserting the rights of Parliament over all subjects of the British crown.

The new outburst in America coincided with the agitation over the Middlesex election. John Wilkes was warmly admired in America, and there was a cordial exchange of letters between him and the Boston leaders. Others of the emerging group of radicals in England, that is, men who did not believe in the structure of the Commons as it then existed, men like Major John Cartwright and Richard Price, were equally American in their sympathies. They felt, as did the Americans, that Parliament did not represent them, or indeed did not represent anyone but itself.

But the zealots of the House of Commons, as Professor Pares has remarked, being uneasily aware of the peculiarities of the electoral system, were mortally afraid of any “association” that might claim to represent anyone better than they did.³⁰ Any concerted manifestation of public opinion, any assembly of persons claiming the power to speak for others, contained the threat of an “anti-Parliament.” According to their reading of the British constitution the House of Commons represented the people; the people neither had nor needed any other voice or representation; and meetings that claimed any representative function, or identified themselves with the “people,” were to be viewed with deep suspicion. Of such unseemly pretensions were the Stamp Act Congress, the convention of Massachusetts towns, the “unwarrantable combinations” of the colonial assemblies, and the public meetings in England that supported Wilkes in the Middlesex election. Such were soon to be the American committees of correspondence, the Continental Congress, the Irish Volunteers, and the Yorkshire Association. And the same haunting fear of an anti-Parliament was to be aroused, in the time of the French Revolution, by the London Corresponding Society and the Edinburgh Convention.

Of these zealots of Parliament the principal ones were Edmund Burke and the Rockingham Whigs. A great interest attaches to their attitude in these controversies. It is understandable that George III and the majority in Parliament should have tried to govern America, and in particular to have tried to distribute the tax burden between American and British subjects. It is understandable that the Americans should have resisted. One can see why Ireland became restless, and why Englishmen wished to reform the House of Commons. It was only the Whigs, however, who were in a position to offer any alternative to the policies pursued by George III. Unfortunately, they had no alternative to offer. Parliamentary suprem-

³⁰ Pares, *op. cit.*, 52.

acy was their distinctive doctrine, the dogma handed down from 1689, the buckler of liberty, and the barrier against despotism. The Americans in claiming to be under the King but not under Parliament were in fact a species of Tories, certainly more "Tory" than George III. Only the emerging handful of radicals in England, and the handful of followers of Pitt, who was beginning in some ways to agree with the radicals, believed that Parliament should not even claim the right to tax the Americans. The formula of the Rockingham Whigs for the Americans was that Parliament should make clear its power to tax them, but, from expediency, refrain from using it. After North repealed the Townshend duties, this was pretty much the formula of North and the King.

Burke's famous *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, written in 1770, was the classic statement of Old Whiggery at the moment. There was, according to Burke, a profound discontent abroad in the land, nor was it caused by a "few puny libellers." It was a true groundswell of opposition. "When popular discontents have been very prevalent, it may well be affirmed and supported that there has been something found amiss in the constitution or in the conduct of government." And he added, like Rousseau: "The people have no interest in disorder. When they do wrong, it is their error, not their crime." The error to which the people were liable was in failing to see that the trouble lay with the King. It was not that the King threatened Parliament itself, like the Stuarts in times gone by, but that he threatened parliamentary independence. "The power of the crown, almost dead and rotten as Prerogative, has grown up anew under the name of Influence." It was a popular error, too, to favor structural changes in the Parliament. To have more voters, or more frequent elections, said Burke, would make matters worse by creating new opportunities for corruption. Our government, remarked Burke, is in any case too complicated for us to know how to reform it. Parliament should remain as it is. But it should resist the crown and its ministers.

Burke presented the issue as a clash between a kind of equalitarian despotism on the one hand and a responsible and vigorous aristocracy on the other. The court faction, he declared, wished to get rid of all "intermediate and independent importance" (one is reminded of Montesquieu), to teach "a total indifference to the persons, rank, influence, abilities, connections and character of the ministers of the crown" (one is reminded of Saint-Simon). "Points of honor and precedence were no more to be regarded . . . than in a Turkish army. It was to be avowed, as a constitutional maxim, that the King might appoint one of his footmen, or one of your footmen, for minister." This was Burke's way of saying that George III would not call the great Whig peers into the government.

The true remedy, according to Burke, must be found in Parliament itself. It lay in a good, strong legitimate sense of party—that is, of party within parliamentary circles, and in particular the party of the Rockingham Whigs. If the people would feel confidence in these natural leaders, and if the Lords and Commons would cease to give their votes passively to the ministers, whoever they might be and whatever they might do, and instead would frankly form a party to criticize the actions of government, then the dignity and independence of Parliament would be preserved. Burke's doctrine of party was to be praised by later generations. At the time, his eloquence failed to move his colleagues in Parliament, most of whom

continued to see in the Rockingham Whigs only a group of malcontents out of office, and to give their votes to Lord North and the King.

The Whigs of the Burke and Rockingham persuasion, aristocratic though they were in their principles, and inclined to keep all political discussion within the bounds of Parliament itself, did greatly contribute to the awakening of extra-parliamentary or public opinion. Unheeded within the two houses, they went out of doors, and offered themselves as the leaders of an indignant people, hoping that the "people" were indignant at the same mischief as the Whigs were. At bottom, they could agree neither with the British reformers nor with the Americans. But they had invited merchants to protest against the Stamp Act. They defended Wilkes in the affair of the Middlesex elections. They fanned the discontent in America; Burke himself acted as agent for New York, and had a long correspondence with the New York assembly, in which he gave them his expert advice on how and when to resist the government in Great Britain. By their harping on the sinister designs of the King, by their hints of a kind of ministerial conspiracy to pervert Parliament, they did more than any other group in England to inculcate in America a hatred for British practices of government, and to undermine in America that respect for Parliament which it was the great Whig principle to uphold. When the Whigs said that Parliament was the proper seat of sovereignty for the whole empire, the Americans paid little attention. When they said that Parliament was corrupt, the Americans took them at their word.³¹

THE SECOND AMERICAN CRISIS: THE COERCIVE ACTS AND THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

It must be admitted that the British government had many interests to consider, which the Americans significantly dismissed as foreign. The British government, in its own way, tried to do something for the West India sugar planters, the American Indians, the French Canadians, and the British taxpayers. Its policies in America were in part shaped by these needs. The Americans recognized no such needs as proper determinants of policy in America. There had ceased to be, in Rousseau's phrase, any general will for the empire as a whole, by which the Americans would accept sacrifices in the interests of others with whom they felt common ties. In 1773 the government at Westminster decided to do something for the East India Company, which had been brought to the verge of bankruptcy by its political expansion in India, and whose activities the government was now trying to subordinate to parliamentary control. The company, having an excess supply of tea, was authorized to sell 10,000,000 pounds of it in America. Since the Americans, to nullify the Townshend tea duty, had to a large extent been using smuggled tea, or

31 The views of Pares, Guttridge, and Ritcheson coincide in this estimate of the Old Whig attitude to America, and of Burke as a spokesman for the British aristocracy; this estimate is, indeed, a well-established one, from which only "new conservatives" and other neo-Burkeans in the United States seem to diverge.

none at all, they regarded this measure as a new device to impose taxation, and hence a revival of the dispute that had lain dormant for three years.

When the Boston men dumped the company's tea in the harbor the British government lost all patience. This new outrage seemed the latest act in almost ten years of political rowdiness. For years the firebrands at Boston had raised up mobs, mocked the courts and the governor, taken the lead in convening illegal assemblies. They had now gone too far. "All men seem now to feel," wrote the King, "that the fatal compliance in 1766 has encouraged the Americans annually to increase in their pretensions."³² Never had King George been more in agreement with his people. Even British merchants now felt little sympathy for the Americans. They resented the losses due to American non-importation agreements, but had made them good by increase of sales to Europe. There was a widespread feeling in Britain that British policy had been proved mistaken since the repeal of the Stamp Act, that the time had come to show the Americans their place.

Boston was in truth in a disturbed state, and it was in truth a real problem to set up a government there in which law would be respected. One way would have been to refashion the government so as to obtain the support of politically important or vociferous elements. This might, indeed, have led far afield; when Governor Hutchinson observed, before the Tea Party, that he saw no middle ground between parliamentary supremacy and colonial independence, the Massachusetts House of Representatives had intimated its preference for independence, as between the two. The way chosen by the British government was in part temporary coercion, and in part to reform the government of Massachusetts without further consultation of the inhabitants.

The Boston Port Act closed the harbor of Boston until the town paid damages to the East India Company. It passed the Commons without a division. The other "coercive acts," including the Massachusetts Government Act, though the Whigs objected to them in debate, went through by majorities of four to one. "The die is now cast," said the King; "the colonies must now submit or triumph." And when General Gage wrote a few months later from Boston that perhaps the Coercive Acts should be suspended, George III thought it absurd to coddle the Americans any further. "We must either master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens."³³

The die was cast, indeed. It was cast when the British Parliament attempted to alter the structure of government in Massachusetts. This attempt presented the issue of parliamentary authority over the colonies in the plainest terms. The act unified Massachusetts behind the Boston insurgents, and it rallied the other colonies behind Massachusetts. It led directly to the First Continental Congress and the Revolution. There was also another and in a way larger issue raised by the Massachusetts Government Act, for the nature of the British constitution itself was brought into question. I have already said that everyone thought the British constitution to be a good thing. But the arguments following upon the Act in both

32 *Corr. Geo. III*, III, 59.

33 *Ibid.*, III, 131, 154.

Britain and America showed some significant differences of interpretation, and it is these arguments that I should like to emphasize.

The Act for Better Regulating the Government of Massachusetts Bay was in legal form an amendment to the Massachusetts charter of 1691.³⁴ In effect it was a new constitution, meant to be permanent. On the one hand, it reduced the powers of the various constituted bodies of Massachusetts. The governor's council, which as in other colonies acted both as an upper legislative house and as an advisory board to the governor, was in Massachusetts, by the charter of 1691, elected by the lower house. The lower house, or house of representatives, asserting itself ever more forcefully after the repeal of the Stamp Act, had refused to elect the governor's nominees to the council, so that the council, like the lower house, came to reflect the discontents at Boston. The Massachusetts Government Act of 1774 transformed the council by giving the governor the power to appoint its members; and it weakened the council by taking from it the power to ratify, and hence to veto, the governor's appointment of sheriffs. The Act weakened the lower house by taking from it the power to elect the council. It weakened the towns, whose recent habit of discussing matters of "general concern" and passing "unwarrantable resolves" it disapprovingly noted, by taking from them the right to elect panels of jurymen, and to hold meetings unless summoned by the governor, except for the one annual town meeting for the choice of local officers. On the other hand, the Act strengthened the executive power, giving the governor the right, in the King's name, to appoint his council (as in the other royal provinces), to prevent town meetings except for the annual ones, to appoint or remove at his own discretion the sheriffs, judges, attorney general, and marshals of the province, and to have fair juries drawn by lot from lists of eligibles assembled by the sheriffs.

The Massachusetts Government Act, though repealed in 1778 in connection with attempts at reconciliation, represented a continuing trend in British constitutional thought on colonial government. Governor Bernard of Massachusetts, since before the Stamp Act, had stressed the need of strengthening the office of governor, and of creating a more independent council on the analogy of the Lords in England. America, Bernard thought, was not yet ready for hereditary nobility (an institution which to him signified an advanced state of civilization), but meanwhile "a *Nobility* appointed by the King, for Life, and made independent, would probably give strength and stability to the American government, as effectually as an hereditary Nobility does to that of Great Britain." Years later a correspondent of Edmund Burke, in a plan of 1782 to make peace with America while keeping it in the empire, a plan intended to be liberal since it would even abolish the Navigation System, set up a "model charter" for each of the colonies—a model in which government should be in three parts: first, a governor appointed from Britain; second, an upper house of a hundred persons having real estate worth over £600 a year, sitting and voting *jure possessionum*, or elected by persons with the same qualifications, if there were more than a hundred in the province; third, a lower house elected by town freemen and county freeholders. In this plan

34 14 Geo. III, c. 45.

the upper house was clearly thought of as an estate, sitting in its own right, and dependent neither on royal appointment nor on election except by its own body. The Canada Act of 1791 carried the same ideas further. For each of the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada it created a council whose members sat for life. The act empowered His Majesty to confer on these councillors the hereditary right to be summoned, and even to grant them hereditary titles; the purpose was to build up a kind of nobility among the descendants of the first councillors; and though nothing came of the idea, through lack of enthusiasm for nobility in Canada, the terms of the Canada Act yet show the preponderance of thought on the subject among the British governing class in 1791. It was the characteristic eighteenth-century idea, expressed by Walpole in 1719, that nobility was necessary to free government.³⁵

The Massachusetts Government Act of 1774 made the appointment of councillors run at the King's pleasure, that is, for indefinite terms. It said nothing of hereditary councillors, nor even of councillors for life. Its aim was to strengthen the executive, not to build the equivalent of a native nobility. Yet, John Adams was not wholly mistaken when, in his *Novanglus* of 1774, he sniffed the dangers of hereditary lordship in every breeze from Britain. For the truth is that Lord North and others who sponsored the Massachusetts Government Act seem honestly to have believed that they were about to purge the Massachusetts government of its "crudities," as North called them, and endow the province with the more highly developed advantages of the British constitution, of which the essence was agreed to be the balance between King, Lords, and Commons, or between the monarchic, aristocratic, and democratic principles in the state.

The trouble with Massachusetts, said North in the Commons, explaining the need for amending its government, was that the "democratic part" of its constitution was too strong. "There is something radically wrong in that constitution in which no magistrate for such a number of years has ever done his duty in such a manner as to enforce obedience to the laws." Hence the King's well-disposed subjects (and it was true) had been at the mercy of the turbulent and the lawless. The governor simply lacked the means to maintain law and order; he could not act without the consent of a majority of his council, which depended on election by the "democratic part"; he had no normal military force except the *posse comitatus*, the very people by whom the laws were disobeyed. The purpose of the new act, said North, was to "take the executive power from the democratic part of the government." Lord George Germain was more blunt. "I would not have men of a mercantile cast every day collecting themselves together and debating on political matters." He would frankly make the council more like the Lords, and he would have the corporate powers of towns exercised by a few individuals, as in England. "I would wish to bring the constitution of America as similar to our own as possible."³⁶

35 For Bernard's views, see Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 7–21; for Burke's correspondent, see the letter from Dr. John Gray, April 6, 1782 (to which there is no record of a reply) in the Wentworth-Woodhouse manuscripts at the Sheffield Central Library; for the Canada Act, see 31 George III c. 31 and the accompanying debates in Parliament. On Walpole see Chapter III above.

36 *Parliamentary History*, XVII, 1192–95.

Many of the Rockingham Whigs spoke against the bill. "The Americans have flourished for nearly fourscore years under that democratic charter," declared Dowdeswell, meaning the Massachusetts charter of 1691; he thought it best to leave well enough alone.³⁷ But the bill passed four to one.

The Whigs continued to oppose the government's program for America, their memorable spokesman at this juncture being Edmund Burke. His sympathy for the Americans even led him into statements very close to those of the radicals; he agreed that America was not even "virtually" represented in Parliament, and that to tell them they were represented as Manchester was represented, or "virtually" represented while electing no members, was to "turn to them the shameful parts of our constitution," to offer them "the slavery which we are not able to work off."³⁸ Burke could stomach such "slavery" for England; but since Parliament did not represent America in the same way that it was supposed to represent Great Britain, he would maintain the authority of Parliament over America at the highest and most ultimate level only, to preserve the unity of the empire, and let the Americans govern themselves in their ordinary business. The great problem, as he said in his speech on Conciliation with the Colonies in 1775, was "to admit the Americans to an interest in the constitution." He would therefore promise not to tax the Americans, while avoiding the question of right as a "Serbonian bog"; but he would keep parliamentary control over trade and navigation, since Britain drew from this control more profit than it could ever draw from taxation. As for constitutional relationships with Britain, he offered his parallel of Ireland, where the separate parliament had powers of taxation, legislation, and the maintenance of armed forces, but recognized the imperial trade controls. Burke had a vision of a great federal empire, composed of free and autonomous members presided over by a wise and superintending Parliament. Yet it is doubtful whether, in its attempt to limit the matter in dispute to the practical issue of taxation, and in its sustained refusal to dwell on the question of right, Burke's plan of 1775 offered any real basis for agreement with those who had now assumed the power to speak for America. It hardly gave them that "interest in the constitution" which Burke himself thought vital.

Burke had in fact been refuted in advance by John Adams, whose *Novanglus* appeared in 1774. Adams roundly rejected the parallel of Ireland, a conquered country, as he put it, where the Irish themselves (or Anglo-Irish) objected to their legal position. The colonies, he declared, were no part of the British Empire because there was no British Empire in any legal sense—the term was a mere journalistic expression. The colonies were not under Parliament; they recognized only the King; and George III was King of Massachusetts, or King of New York, just as he was Elector of Hanover, holding all in personal union, but with no parliamentary connection among these various domains. Of course the Americans lived under the British constitution, in the sense that each colony under the King possessed the British constitution entire within itself; but if the Americans were under

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1198.

³⁸ "Speech on American Taxation" (April 19, 1774), *Writings* (Boston, 1901), II, 74.

the King, Lords, and Commons of Great Britain they were under a remote oligarchy with which they had no connection; or they would be like the Dutch (for Adams knew something of Europe) where the Estates of Holland had formerly been elected, but were now an oligarchy that filled its own vacancies. Parliament, he said, could not assert authority in America except by the *ultima ratio* of Louis XIV; he might have said "Louis XV" if the Boston newspapers had carried more news of France, where the claim of the French Parlements to represent the French people was in fact being currently suppressed by the French King. And if Britain persisted, said Adams prophetically, all Europe would call her a tyrant.

In England it was the radicals who were most willing to grant what the Americans really demanded, because they had no reason to be sticklers for the powers of Parliament. It was the British radicals, not the British Whigs, who corresponded to what were called Whigs in America. Thus Major John Cartwright, "father of English reform," who began a half a century of agitation for the democratizing of Parliament with his pamphlet *Take Your Choice* in 1776, published anonymously in 1774 another tract called *American Independence the Interest and Glory of Great Britain*.³⁹ It outlined a scheme by which the American legislatures should be really the equals of Parliament, joined in voluntary alliance under the Crown, and so anticipated better than the proposals of Burke what came later to be called dominion status. Another radical, Home Tooke, was fined and imprisoned after having made himself conspicuous in the efforts of the Constitutional Society to raise £100 for the widows and children of Americans killed at Lexington and Concord. Richard Price's *Observations on Civil Liberty*, in 1776, demanded better representation of the people in the Commons, denied the omnipotence of Parliament, and defended the American rebels. John Wilkes, when he stood for Parliament in Middlesex in 1774, offered a program both of Parliamentary reform and of restoration of American rights; and when he introduced his reform bill in the Commons in 1776 he declared that the unrepresentativeness of the Parliament was a main cause of a needless American war. It was in fact a favorite idea of radicals and reformers, and long remained so (though one may question the truth of it), that if Parliament had really represented the British people America would never have been estranged.⁴⁰

39 Cartwright's views on Parliament may be judged from the full title of his well-known pamphlet, *Take Your Choice! Representation and Respect; Imposition and Contempt. Annual Parliaments and Liberty, Long Parliaments and Slavery*. Postgate remarks of Wilkes that he left no name as a Parliamentarian because he "despised" the House of Commons; *That Devil Wilkes*, 207. Another work is worthy of comment in a book devoted to the international context, since it was written by Jean-Paul Marat, then a fashionable doctor in Soho, who brought it out anonymously in an expensive format in 1774. Since the *Critical Review*, XXXVII (1774), 366–70, called it "useful," "laudable," and "intelligent," and hoped that readers would take its advice, it seems worthwhile to convey the atmosphere of the day by giving Marat's title at length: *The Chains of Slavery, a work wherein the clandestine and villainous attempts of princes to ruin liberty are pointed out and the dreadful scenes of despotism disclosed, to which is prefixed an address to the electors of Great Britain in order to draw their timely attention to the choice of proper representatives in the next Parliament* (London, 1774).

40 Guttridge, *Whiggism*, 63, 87; Dora M. Clark, *British Opinion and the American Revolution* (New Haven, 1930), 180.

And when Burke in 1777 again pleaded for conciliation, but blamed the war with the Americans on the mere folly of ministers (and implicitly on the stupidity of the King), still refusing to recognize the conflict of principle, and insisting that Parliament must be supreme, he provoked a retort from a radical of high station, Willoughby Bertie, the fourth Earl of Abingdon. Abingdon had spent several years in the 1760's at Geneva, where he had known Delolme and taken part in the democratic movement. His reply to Burke went through five editions. A strong friend of the Americans, and thinking that government should be representative of the governed, he simply did not believe that Parliament was supreme in Britain any more than in America. "Where is the difference," he asked Burke (and it was the question that all radicals put to all Whigs), "between the despotism of the King of France and the despotism of the Parliament of England? And what is this but to erect an aristocratic tyranny in the state?"⁴¹

The British radicals had to live under Parliament, and had no course except to hope to reform it. The Americans did not have to live under Parliament, and refused to do so. Most Englishmen alive in 1776 were dead before Parliament gave an inch of ground. The Americans, three thousand miles away, had more freedom of action. They set up what amounted to anti-parliaments.

In Virginia, upon the news of the Boston Port Act, Thomas Jefferson drafted a resolution in support of Boston; the house of burgesses adopted it, and was thereupon dissolved by the governor. The house met illegally as an "association," denounced the Act, and summoned a "convention" of the Virginia counties. Similar conventions of counties or other self-authorized gatherings met in the other provinces. They sent delegates to an assembly that called itself the Continental Congress. The Congress issued a Declaration of Rights, and took steps to force all Americans into a concerted boycott of Great Britain.

At this First Continental Congress the delegates found that they differed on a theoretically important question. It was a question that remained alive long after American independence, and on which historians of the American Revolution have inclined to differ to this day. There were those who thought America internally unchanged by the repudiation of British authority. They justified their rebellion by appealing to their historic rights as Englishmen, or rights under the British constitution, which, they said, they wished merely to defend. As John Jay said in the Congress, they saw no need "to frame a new constitution." Others preferred to stand not on the rights of Englishmen but on the rights of man, and not on the laws in the lawbooks, but on the laws of nature. They were more willing to believe that a new era was at hand. As Patrick Henry said in the Congress: "Government is dissolved. . . . We are in a state of nature."⁴²

The Congress, significantly, simply put the two together. In America, in contrast to most of Europe, nature and history were not felt to be opposites. The Americans, fundamentally, were satisfied with their own past. They thought that their rights under the British constitution were much the same as their rights as human

41 Burke, "Letter to . . . the Sheriffs of the City of Bristol on the Affairs of America" (1777) in *Writings* (Boston, 1901), II, 187, 245; Abingdon, *Thoughts on Mr. Burke's Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the Affairs of America* (1777), quoted by Guttridge, *op. cit.*, 94.

42 E. C. Burnett, *The Continental Congress* (N.Y., 1941), 37.

beings under natural law. The Continental Congress, in its Declaration of Rights of 1774, appealed simultaneously to “the immutable laws of nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters and compacts.”⁴³ On this potentially ambiguous note the American Revolution began.

43 *Ibid.*, 53.

CHAPTER VII

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: THE FORCES IN CONFLICT

I know that for such sentiments I am called a rebel, and that such sentiments are not fashionable among the folks you see.

—GOUVERNEUR MORRIS TO HIS MOTHER IN NEW YORK,
1778

Hear thy indictment, Washington, at large; Attend and listen to the solemn charge:
Thou hast supported an atrocious cause, Against thy king, thy country and the laws.

—LOYALIST POEM, BY JONATHAN ODELL, 1779

To me it will appear miraculous, if our affairs can maintain themselves much longer in their present train. If either the temper or the resources of the country will not admit of an alteration, we may expect soon to be reduced to the humiliating condition of seeing the cause of America, in America, upheld by foreign arms. . . .

It is true that our enemies as well as ourselves are struggling with embarrassments of a singular and complicated nature . . . but considering the complexion of the British nation for some time past, it is more probable these appearances will terminate in a partial reform of abuses, than in any revolution favorable to the interests of America. . . .

The general disposition of Europe is such as we could wish; but we have no security that it will remain so.

—GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON TO THE
PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS, 1780

It is a main thesis of this book that the American Revolution was a great event for the whole Eur-American world. In the Age of the Democratic Revolution the

American Revolution was, after the disturbance at Geneva already recounted, the earliest successful assertion of the principle that public power must arise from those over whom it is exercised. It was the most important revolution of the eighteenth century, except for the French. Its effect on the area of Western Civilization came in part from the inspiration of its message (which in time passed beyond the area of Western Civilization), and in part from the involvement of the American Revolution in the European War of American Independence, which aggravated the financial or political difficulties of England, Ireland, Holland, and France. The climax and failure of the early movement for parliamentary reform in England, the disturbances in Ireland leading to "Grattan's Parliament" in 1782, the *Patriotentijd* and revolution of 1784–1787 among the Dutch, the reform programs of Necker and Calonne and beginnings of revolution in France, and a marked enlivening of political consciousness through the rest of Europe—all described in the following chapters—were all, in part, a consequence of the American Revolution.

THE REVOLUTION: WAS THERE ANY?

It is paradoxical, therefore, to have to begin by asking whether there was any American Revolution at all. There may have been only a war of independence against Great Britain. The British lid may have been removed from the American box, with the contents of the box remaining as before. Or there may have been a mechanical separation from England, without chemical change in America itself. Perhaps it was all a conservative and defensive movement, to secure liberties that America had long enjoyed, a revolt of America against Great Britain, carried through without fundamental conflict among Americans, by an "American consensus," in the words of Clinton Rossiter, or, as George Bancroft said a century ago, a revolution "achieved with such benign tranquillity that even conservatism hesitated to censure."¹

A populous country, much given to historical studies, has produced an enormous literature on the circumstances of its independence. Occupied more with European than with American history, I have been able only to sample this literature. It is apparent, however, that there is no agreement on what the American Revolution was. Differences reflect a different understanding of historical fact, a difference of attitude toward the concept of revolution, or a difference of feeling on the uniqueness, if it be unique, of the United States.

The old patriotic historians, like Bancroft, who fumed against British tyranny, had no doubt that there had been a real revolution in America, even if "benignly tranquil." Writers of a liberal orientation in a twentieth-century sense, admitting that all revolutions are carried through by minorities and by violence, have said that the American Revolution was no exception. Some have seen a kind of bourgeois revolution in America, in which merchants and planters made a few concessions to the lower classes, but then, at the Philadelphia convention of 1787, rallied

1 C. Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic: the Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (New York, 1953), 352–56; G. Bancroft, *History of the United States* (Boston, 1879), III, 10–11.

to the defense of property in a kind of Thermidor. Still others, of conservative temperament, sympathizing with the American loyalists, have found the ruthlessness of a true revolution in the American upheaval. It must be admitted that, for the purposes of the present book, it would be convenient to present the American part of the story in this way, on the analogy of revolutions in Europe.

But there is the contrary school that minimizes the revolutionary character of the American Revolution. Some in this school hold that there was no "democratic revolution" in America because America was already democratic in the colonial period. Thus, it has recently been shown that, contrary to a common impression, as many as ninety-five per cent of adult males had the right to vote in many parts of colonial Massachusetts. Others find the Revolution not very revolutionary because the country was still far from democratic when it became independent. They point to the maintenance of property qualifications for voting and office-holding, or the fact that estates confiscated from loyalists found their way into the hands of speculators or well-to-do people, not of poor farmers. Those who discount the revolutionary character of the American Revolution seem to be gaining ground. For example, thirty years ago, J. F. Jameson in his little book, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement*, suggested a variety of social changes that he said took place, in landholding and land law, in the disestablishment of churches and the democratizing tendencies in an aristocratic society. The book won followers and inspired research. F. B. Tolles described the aristocratic *ancien régime* of colonial Philadelphia, dominated by Quaker grandees whose social ascendancy, he said, came to an end in the American Revolution. But in 1954 the same Professor Tolles, reviewing the Jameson thesis and summarizing the research of recent decades, concluded that, while Jameson's ideas were important and fruitful, the degree of internal or social or revolutionary change within America, during the break with Britain, should not be unduly stressed.²

Whether one thinks there was really a revolution in America depends on what one thinks a revolution is. It depends, that is to say, not so much on specialized knowledge or on factual discovery, or even on hard thinking about a particular time and place, as on the use made of an abstract concept. "Revolution" is a concept whose connotation and overtones change with changing events. It conveyed a different feeling in the 1790's from the 1770's, and in the 1950's from the 1930's.

No one in 1776, whether for it or against it, doubted that a revolution was being attempted in America. A little later the French Revolution gave a new dimension to the concept of revolution. It was the French Revolution that caused some to argue that the American Revolution had been no revolution at all. In 1800 Friedrich Gentz, in his *Historisches Journal* published at Berlin, wrote an essay comparing the French and American revolutions. He was an acute observer, whose account of the French Revolution did not suit all conservatives of the time, and would not suit them today; still, he made his living by writing against the French Revolution, and later became secretary to Metternich. He considered the French Revolution a bad thing, all the worse when compared to the American. He thought

2 F. B. Tolles, "The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement: a Reevaluation" in *American Historical Review*, LX (October, 1954), 1-12.

the American Revolution only a conservative defense of established rights against British encroachment. John Quincy Adams, then in Berlin, read Gentz's essay, liked it, translated it, and published it in Philadelphia in 1800. It served as a piece of high-toned campaign literature in the presidential election of that year, in which the elder Adams and the Federalist party were challenged by Jefferson and the somewhat Francophile democrats. The merit of Gentz's essay, said the younger Adams in his preface, was that "it rescues that revolution [the American] from the disgraceful imputation of having proceeded from the same principles as the French." In 1955 Adams' translation of Gentz was reprinted in America as a paper-back for mass distribution, with a foreword by Russell Kirk, known as a publicist of the "new conservatism." There was something in the atmosphere of 1955, as of 1800, which made it important, for some, to dissociate the American Revolution from other revolutions by which other peoples have been afflicted.

My own view is that there was a real revolution in America, and that it was a painful conflict, in which many were injured. I would suggest two quantitative and objective measures: how many refugees were there from the American Revolution, and how much property did they lose, in comparison to the French Revolution? It is possible to obtain rough but enlightening answers to these questions. The number of émigré loyalists who went to Canada or England during the American Revolution is set as high as 100,000; let us say only 60,000. The number of émigrés from the French Revolution is quite accurately known; it was 129,000, of whom 25,000 were clergy, deportees rather than fugitives, but let us take the whole figure, 129,000. There were about 2,500,000 people in America in 1776, of whom a fifth were slaves; let us count the whole 2,500,000. There were about 25,000,000 people in France at the time of the French Revolution. There were, therefore, 24 émigrés per thousand of population in the American Revolution, and only 5 émigrés per thousand of population in the French Revolution.

In both cases the revolutionary governments confiscated the property of counterrevolutionaries who emigrated. Its value cannot be known, but the sums paid in compensation lend themselves to tentative comparison. The British government granted £3,300,000 to loyalists as indemnity for property lost in the United States. The French émigrés, or their heirs, received a "billion franc indemnity" in 1825 during the Bourbon restoration. A sum of £3,300,000 is the equivalent of 82,000,000 francs. Revolutionary France, ten times as large as revolutionary America, confiscated only twelve times as much property from its émigrés, as measured by subsequent compensations, which in each case fell short of actual losses. The difference, even allowing for margins of error, is less great than is commonly supposed. The French, to be sure, confiscated properties of the church and other public bodies in addition; but the present comparison suggests the losses of private persons.

It is my belief also, John Quincy Adams notwithstanding, that the American and the French revolutions "proceeded from the same principles." The difference is that these principles were much more deeply rooted in America, and that contrary or competing principles, monarchist or aristocratic or feudal or ecclesiastical, though not absent from America, were, in comparison to Europe, very weak. Assertion of the same principles therefore provoked less conflict in America than in

France. It was, in truth, less revolutionary. The American Revolution was, indeed, a movement to conserve what already existed. It was hardly, however, a "conservative" movement, and it can give limited comfort to the theorists of conservatism, for it was the weakness of conservative forces in eighteenth-century America, not their strength, that made the American Revolution as moderate as it was. John Adams was not much like Edmund Burke, even after he became alarmed by the French Revolution; and Alexander Hamilton never hoped to perpetuate an existing state of society, or to change it by gradual, cautious, and piously respectful methods. America was different from Europe, but it was not unique. The difference lay in the fact that certain ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, found on both sides of the Atlantic—ideas of constitutionalism, individual liberty, or legal equality—were more fully incorporated and less disputed in America than in Europe. There was enough of a common civilization to make America very pointedly significant to Europeans. For a century after the American Revolution, as is well known, partisans of the revolutionary or liberal movements in Europe looked upon the United States generally with approval, and European conservatives viewed it with hostility or downright contempt.

It must always be remembered, also, that an important nucleus of conservatism was permanently lost to the United States. The French émigrés returned to France. The émigrés from the American Revolution did not return; they peopled the Canadian wilderness; only individuals, without political influence, drifted back to the United States. Anyone who knows the significance for France of the return of the émigrés will ponder the importance, for the United States, of this fact which is so easily overlooked, because negative and invisible except in a comparative view. Americans have really forgotten the loyalists. Princeton University, for example, which invokes the memory of John Witherspoon and James Madison on all possible occasions, has been chided for burying in oblivion the name of Jonathan Odell, of the class of 1759, prominent as a physician, clergyman, and loyalist satirical writer during the Revolution, who died in New Brunswick, Canada, in 1818.³ The sense in which there was no conflict in the American Revolution is the sense in which the loyalists are forgotten. The "American consensus" rests in some degree on the elimination from the national consciousness, as well as from the country, of a once important and relatively numerous element of dissent.

ANGLO-AMERICA BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

The American Revolution may be seen as a conflict of forces some of which were old, others brought into being by the event itself.

The oldest of these forces was a tradition of liberty, which went back to the first settlement of the colonies. It is true that half of all immigrants into the colonies south of New England, and two-thirds of those settling in Pennsylvania, arrived as indentured servants; but indentured servitude was not a permanent status, still less

3 M. C. Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (New York, 1897), II, p. 99, n. 3.

a hereditary one; the indentures expired after a few years, and all white persons soon merged into a free population.

Politically, the oldest colonies had originated in a kind of *de facto* independence from the British government. Even after the British made their colonial system more systematic, toward the close of the seventeenth century, the colonies continued to enjoy much local self-determination. Only five per cent of the laws passed by colonial assemblies were disallowed in Great Britain, and, while these often concerned the most important subjects, the infrequency of the British veto was enough to make it the exception. The elected assemblies, as already noted, were the most democratically recruited of all such constituted bodies in the Western World. In general, it was necessary to own land in order to have the right to vote for a member of the assembly, but small owner-farmers were numerous, most of all in New England; and recent studies all tend to raise the estimates of the proportion of those enjoying the franchise before the Revolution. It seems to have been above eighty per cent of adult white males in Massachusetts, half or more in New Jersey, perhaps a little under half in Virginia.⁴ Many who had the right to vote did not often use it, and this was in part because the procedure of elections was not made convenient for the ordinary hard-working man; but non-voting also suggests an absence of grievances, or perhaps only that the common man neither expected much nor feared much from government. The elected assemblies enjoyed what in Europe would be thought a dangerously popular mandate. By 1760, decades of rivalry for power between the assemblies and the governors had been resolved, in most of the colonies, in favor of the assemblies. The idea of government by consent was for Americans a mere statement of fact, not a bold doctrine to be flung in the teeth of government, as in Europe. Contrariwise, the growing assertiveness of the assemblies made many in England, and some in America, on the eve of the Revolution, believe that the time had come to stop this drift toward democracy—or, as they would say, restore the balance of the constitution. In sum, an old sense of liberty in America was the obstacle on which the first British empire met its doom. Here the most sophisticated latest researches seem to return to the old-fashioned American patriotic historical school.

From the beginnings of British America there had also been a certain rough kind of equality. Except for slaves, the poor were less poor than in Europe, and the rich were not so wealthy. Almost a quarter of the population of England were classified as paupers in 1688; almost a tenth in 1801. There was no pauperism in America, accepted and institutionalized as such; anyone not hopelessly shiftless, or the victim of personal misfortune, could make a living. At the other extreme, on the eve of the Revolution, there were men who owned hundreds of thousands of acres, mostly vacant, the main values being speculative and in the future. It is hard to say how wealthy a wealthy colonial was. A fortune of £30,000 was thought very large in Massachusetts; Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania was said to possess

4 R. E. Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691–1780* (Ithaca, 1955), 50; R. McCormick, *History of Voting in New Jersey . . . 1664–1911* (New Brunswick, 1953), 63; C. S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (Williamsburg, 1952), 32, 143, appears to think that about ten per cent of the white population was qualified to vote, but this would be about half the adult males.

£70,000. In England in 1801 there were probably 10,000 families with an average income of £1,500 a year or more, of which the capital value would be about £30,000. There is ground for believing that in England at this time, as in the United States in 1929, five per cent of the population received over thirty-five per cent of the income. The distribution of wealth in colonial America was far more equal.⁵

There were recognized inequalities of social rank. But rank somehow lacked the magic it enjoyed in Europe. In the migration from England and Europe, the well-situated and the high-born had been notably absent. There were Americans of aristocratic pretensions, but the most ambitious genealogy led only to some middling English gentleman's manor house; most Americans were conscious of no lineage at all, American genealogy being largely a nineteenth-century science. No American could truthfully trace his ancestry to the mists of time or the ages of chivalry—nor, indeed, could many British peers or French noblemen. It was the complaint of Lord Stirling, as the New Jersey revolutionary, William Alexander, was called, that he was *not* recognized as a lord in England. A Swedish clergyman arriving in New Jersey in 1770, to take over the old Swedish congregation on the Delaware, found that well-to-do farmers were like lesser gentry in Sweden, in their use of fine linen and fondness for good horses. The significant thing for America was that people of this style of life did not, as in Sweden, consider themselves nobles. Everyone worked, and to the Swedish newcomer it seemed that “all people are generally thought equally good.”⁶

Whether religion acted as a force in the conflict of the American Revolution is disputed. Since the Worship of Reason at Notre-Dame de Paris in November 1793, there have always been those who have stressed the religious principles of the founders of the United States. It is a way of showing how different they were from Jacobins or Communists. The truth is that the age was not notably religious, and that the sentiments that burst out violently in Paris in 1793 were, as sentiments, not uncommon. We read, for example, of an Anglican rector in England who, about 1777, so admired the writings of Catherine Macaulay that “he actually placed her statue, adorned as the Goddess of Liberty, within the altar railing” of his parish church.⁷ “It will never be pretended,” wrote John Adams in 1786, that the men who set up the new governments in America “had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the inspiration of Heaven, more than those at work on ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived by reason and the senses, as Copley painted Chatham . . . [or] as Paine exposed the mistakes of Raynal. . . .”⁸ John Adams, while differing with him in detail, had not yet broken with Thomas Paine.

⁵ These statements about wealth and pauperism are derived from the tables in P. Colquhoun, *A Treatise on Indigence* (London, 1806), 22, where the estimates of Gregory King for 1688 are also reproduced.

⁶ Quoted by L. Lundin, *Cockpit of the Revolution: the War for Independence in New Jersey* (Princeton, 1940), 33.

⁷ E. Sitwell, *Bath* (London, 1932), 223.

⁸ *Works* (1851), IV, 292–93.

Aggressive anti-Christianity did not develop in America, to the great good fortune of the future United States. It failed to develop, however, not because American revolutionary leaders were warmly religious, but because no religious body seriously stood in their way. Here again it was the weakness of conservative forces, not their strength, that made the Revolution "conservative." No church seriously opposed the political aims of the Revolution. No church figured as a first estate in colonial America, none had its dignitaries sitting in the highest councils of government, and none lost vast tracts of material property, since none possessed any.⁹ The Anglican clergy generally opposed the Revolution, because of their close connection with British authority. Revolutionaries drove them out of their churches, for the same reason; worse would have happened to them had they not been so easily dislodged. In any case, even where the Anglican church was established, in New York and the South, Anglicans were not a majority of the population. At the opposite end of the religious spectrum the Quakers, because of their doctrine of non-resistance to established authority, were in effect a force to be reckoned on the British side. But they were unimportant politically outside of Pennsylvania. Over half the colonial Americans, and probably ninety per cent of New Englanders, were, vaguely or exactly, some species of Calvinists. No allegation was more common, from the British or the American loyalists, than that the whole Revolution had been stirred up by old Presbyterian disaffection. It is true that New England Congregationalists and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians did not admire some of the contemporary institutions of England, and that their ministers, when the time came, generally supported the Revolution. They probably infused, in a way hard to define, a certain religious atmosphere into the American patriot program.

A great many Americans, however, before and during the Revolution, belonged to no church at all. In conditions of constant movement, uprooting, settlement, and resettlement, probably a larger proportion of Americans were unchurched than in any European country. What aroused horror, when violently pursued as dechristianization in France a few years later, had gone pretty far, without violence, in America. As for the leaders of the American Revolution, it should be unnecessary to demonstrate that most of them were deists. They were strongly on the side of the best human virtues, or at least of those which were not ascetic; but they saw no connection between such virtues and religious practice. Like Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, they appealed to the laws of Nature's God. They seem not to have felt, however, like Burke, that these laws placed serious limits upon their freedom of political action.

The simplicities in which British America had originated gave way to more complex forms of society in the eighteenth century. A liberty almost like that of

9 The nearest thing in America to the recognition of higher clergy as lords spiritual, or as a first estate, was the fact that the commissary of the Bishop of London, at such times as such a functionary was in America, had a seat in certain governors' councils. Confiscation of church property went farthest in Virginia, where, not during the heat of revolution, but as late as 1799 and 1802, all real and movable property possessed by the Episcopal church before 1776, including church buildings themselves, was confiscated by the state. The state of Virginia persisted in this policy despite the fact that the United States Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional in 1815. See G. M. Brydon, "The Anti-Ecclesiastical Laws in Virginia," in *Virginia Magazine of History*, LXIV (1956), 259-60.

the "state of nature," a liberty defined by the remoteness of government, gradually changed, especially after the British revolution of 1688, into the more organized and channelized liberty of British subjects under the British constitution. There was a bias toward equality in the foundations. The superstructure, as it was raised, exhibited palpable inequalities. As America became more civilized it began to have, like all civilized countries, a differentiation of social classes. Even the once unmanageable Quakers took on new social refinements. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1722 officially declared its "decent respect" for "ranks and dignities of men," and called for honor and obedience "from subjects to their princes, inferiors to superiors, from children to parents, and servants to masters."¹⁰ Increasingly there was a kind of native American aristocracy. No question was of more importance for the future than the way in which this new aristocracy would develop.

The colonial aristocracy, as it took form in the eighteenth century, owed a good deal to close association with government. From New Hampshire to the far South, as has been seen in Chapter II, there were intermarried families which monopolized seats in the governors' councils, in some cases, now, to the third and fourth generation. There were Americans, close to the British authorities, who regarded themselves as the natural rulers of the country. Sometimes, like Englishmen of the class to which they would compare themselves, they expected to draw a living from public offices, to which they need devote only part of their time. This practice has been most closely studied for Maryland, where there were a number of offices in which a man could live like a gentleman, with a good deal of leisure, for £150 a year.¹¹

More generally, the wealth of the growing American upper class came from early land grants, or from inheritance of land in a country where land values were always rising, or from mercantile wealth in the half-dozen seaboard cities, all of which except Charleston lay from Philadelphia to the North, or from the ownership of plantations and Negro slaves in the South. New York and the Southern provinces, because of their systems of landholding, were the most favorable to the growth of aristocratic institutions, but an upper class existed everywhere in the settled regions. In places where landed and mercantile wealth came together, as at New York and Charleston, people mixed easily with mutual regard; there was no standoffishness between "trade" and "gentry."

Without the rise of such a colonial aristocracy there could have been no successful movement against England. There had to be small groups of people who knew each other, who could trust each other in hazardous undertakings, who had some power and influence of their own, who could win attention and rally followers, and who, from an enlarged point of view, felt a concern for the welfare of the provinces as a whole. "While there are no noble or great and ancient families . . . they cannot rebel," as an observer of New England remarked in 1732.¹² A generation later such "great" families, if not noble or very ancient, could be found everywhere in the colonies.

10 F. B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: the Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia* (Williamsburg, 1948), 111-12.

11 D. M. Owings, *His Lordship's Patronage: Offices of Profit in Colonial Maryland* (Baltimore, 1953).

12 Quoted by Rossiter, *op.cit.*, 109.

On the other hand, the rise of such an aristocracy brought class friction and internal tension. "In many a colony in 1764," according to Professor Rossiter (whose view of an "American consensus" I do not wish to misrepresent), "civil war seemed more likely than war with Britain."¹³ There was everlasting bickering over land titles, quit-rents, debts, and paper money. There was complaint, in the western part of several provinces, at under-representation in the elected assemblies, or at the long distances it was necessary to go to cast a vote or to be present in a court of law. Rich and poor were not so far apart as in Europe, but they were far enough apart to cause trouble. Western Massachusetts, suspicious of Boston, was not hostile to Britain until 1774. There was a great rent riot in the Hudson valley in 1766, directed against the manorial system on which the Van Rensselaers and the Livingstons grew wealthy. A thousand angry western Pennsylvania farmers marched on Philadelphia in 1764, enraged that the over-represented East, and its opulent and pacifistic Quaker aristocracy, begrudged them military protection at the time of Pontiac's Indian war. The best example was afforded by the Regulators of North Carolina.

This province, though scarcely a century old, had developed a fine system of decayed boroughs on the British model. The five oldest coastal counties, thinly inhabited, enjoyed a dozen times as much representation in the assembly, per capita, as the newer uplands, so that the bulk of the people, while having the vote, could get little accomplished. Political life was most active at the county level, and in each county a few families named the judges and sheriffs, who are estimated to have embezzled over half the public funds. The governing elite, if one may so term it, unabashedly made a living off the legal business that small farmers could not avoid. A group of these farmers founded an "association" for "regulating public grievances," and these Regulators began to refuse to pay taxes. The governor finally called out the militia against them, chiefly a mounted troop of Gentlemen Volunteer Light Dragoons, in which 8 "generals" and 14 "colonels" led less than 1,300 enlisted men. The Regulators were routed in the Battle of Alamance in 1771. Seven of them were hanged. Later, when the gentry led the province into the Revolution, the British found many loyalist strongholds in the back country of Carolina.

Conflicting forces were therefore at work in America, when the Stamp Act added the conflict between America and Great Britain. Americans all but universally opposed the Stamp Act. Most of those who eventually became loyalists disapproved of British policy in the ten years before the Revolution. The doctrine of parliamentary supremacy was an innovation, accepted in England itself only since the revolution of 1689; the trend toward centralization of the empire under parliamentary authority, with attendant plans for reordering the colonial governments, was a modern development, a new force, much less old than the American liberties. On this Americans could agree. They began to disagree on the means used to uphold the American position. It was one thing to sit in meetings or submit petitions to Parliament; it was another to persist stubbornly in defiance, to insult or intimidate the King's officers, stop the proceedings of law courts, and condone the

13 *Ibid.*, 115.

violence of mobs. Whether the British constitution really assured no taxation without representation was, after all, uncertain. It was far more certain that the British constitution secured a man against physical violence, against his having his house plundered and wrecked by political adversaries, or against being tarred and feathered for refusing to join a non-import agreement decided on by some unauthorized assembly which had no right to use force. As events unfolded, men took sides, and Americans found themselves disputing with each other on a new subject, the attitude to be taken to British law.

What happened to Plymouth Rock offers a parable. The stone on which the Pilgrims of 1620 had supposedly first set foot already enjoyed a local fame, as a symbol of what was most ancient and natively American in the New World. In 1774 a party of patriots decided to use it as the base for a liberty pole. They tried to haul it, with twenty oxen, from the shore to the town square. Under the strain, it broke in two.¹⁴

THE REVOLUTION: DEMOCRACY AND ARISTOCRACY

Fighting between the King's troops and the people of Massachusetts began at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. In the following December the British government put the insurgent colonists outside the protection of the British crown. The Americans were now in what they would call a state of nature, and what was in fact a condition of anarchy. Lawful authority melted away. Governors, unable to control their assemblies, undertook to disband them, only to see most of the members continue to meet as unauthorized congresses or associations; or conventions of counties, unknown to the law, chose delegates to such congresses for provinces as a whole; or local people forcibly prevented the sitting of law courts, or the enforcement of legal judgments by the sheriffs. Violence spread, militias formed, and the Continental Congress called into existence a Continental army, placing General George Washington in command.

In whose name were these armed men to act? To what civilian authority were they to be subordinated? How could the courts be kept open, or normal court decisions and police protection be carried out? If American ships, breaking the old navigation system, should enter the ports of Europe, in whose name should they appear? If diplomatic agents were sent to Versailles or the Hague, whom were they to say that they represented? If aid was to be sought from France, would the French give it for any purpose except to break up the British empire, and undo the British victory of 1763? These practical needs, together with the inflaming of feeling against England by war and bloodshed, and the extraordinary success of Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, induced the Congress, more than a year after the battle of Lexington, to announce the arrival of the United States of America "among the powers of the earth," able to do "all acts and things which independent states may of right do."

14 For this curious episode see W. F. Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers* (N.Y., 1956), 32.

With the Declaration of Independence, and the new constitutions which most of the states gave themselves in 1776 and 1777, the revolutionary colonials began to emerge from the anarchy that followed the collapse or withdrawal of British power. They sought liberty, it need hardly be said; but they also sought authority, or a new basis of order. A revolution, it has been wisely observed, is an unlawful change in the conditions of lawfulness.¹⁵ It repudiates the old definitions of rightful authority, and drives away the men who have exercised it; but it creates new definitions of the authority which it is a duty to obey, and puts new men in a position to issue legitimate commands. The new lawfulness in America was embodied in the new constitutions, which will be considered shortly. Meanwhile, what happened in America was against the law.

The Revolution could be carried out, against British and loyal American opposition, only by the use of force. Its success "was impossible without a revolutionary government which could enforce its will."¹⁶ Let us look simply at the case of New Jersey. Late in 1776 the danger to the patriots became very pressing, as the British pursued Washington's army across the state. One of the New Jersey signers of the Declaration of Independence was forced to recant; the man who had presided over the convention which had proclaimed independence of the state went over to the British. The state was full of open and hidden enemies of the new regime. Taxes were neither levied nor collected with any regularity; the paper money which financed the Revolution flooded the state, swollen by counterfeits that poured from loyalist presses in New York. Prices soared; price controls were imposed, but were generally ineffective. The new government had no means of enforcing its authority except the thirteen county courts carried over from colonial times. These proved ineffectual under conditions of civil war. Revolutionary leaders thereupon created a Council of Safety as a temporary executive. Its twelve members were chosen by the state legislature. They toured the state to arouse local patriots and speed up action of the courts. They took the law into their own hands wherever they wished, hunted out suspects, ordered arrests, exacted oaths of allegiance, punished evasion of militia service, and instituted proceedings to confiscate the property of those who openly joined the British. One member of this Council of Safety was William Paterson, born in Ireland, son of a storekeeper. His career had been made by the Revolution, during which he became attorney-general to the state. He became a heated revolutionary, detesting more than all others, as he once said, that "pernicious class of men called moderates." His position allowed him to buy confiscated lands on advantageous terms; he became a well-to-do man. He lived to be a justice of the United States Supreme Court, and a terror to democrats in the days of the Alien and Sedition laws.

15 For a philosophical discussion, see P. Schrecker, *Work and History: an Essay on the Structure of Civilization* (Princeton, 1948), 206: "In the political province, a revolution may accordingly be defined as an unlawful change of the constitution, and since the constitution represents the established conditions of lawfulness, the revolutionary event appears as an unlawful change of the very conditions of lawfulness."

16 R. C. Haskett, "Prosecuting the Revolution," in *American Historical Review*, LIX (April 1954), 578. In addition, for this paragraph, see Lundin, *op. cit.*, and the unpublished doctoral dissertation on William Paterson, by Mr. Haskett, in the Princeton University Library; also J. C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom: the Alien and Sedition Acts* (Boston, 1951), 108, 125.

Revolutionary government as a step toward constitutional government, committees of public safety, representatives on mission to carry revolution to the local authorities, paper money, false paper money, price controls, oaths, detention, confiscation, aversion to “moderatism,” and Jacobins who wind up as sober guardians of the law—how much it all suggests what was to happen in France a few years later! With allowance for differences of scale and intensity, there was foreshadowed in the America of 1776 something of the *gouvernement révolutionnaire* and even the Terror of France in 1793—except for the death sentences and the horrors that went with them, and except for the fact that the victims of these arbitrary proceedings never returned to political life as an organized force, to keep alive for all time an inveterate hatred of the Revolution.¹⁷

It is not easy to say why some Americans warmly embraced the Revolution, or why others opposed it, or how many there were on each side. Independence made it in principle necessary to choose between loyalty and rebellion. But there were many who by isolation managed to avoid commitment, or whose inclinations swayed with the course of battle, or who, torn in their beliefs, prepared passively to accept whichever authority in the end should establish itself. Numbers therefore cannot be given. It has often been repeated, as a remark of John Adams, that a third of the American people were patriot, a third loyalist, and a third neutral; but this neat summary has gone into the attic of historical fallacies; what Adams meant, when he offered it in 1815, was that a third of the Americans in the 1790's had favored the *French* Revolution, a third had opposed it, and a third had not cared.¹⁸ The bulk of American opinion, after July 1776, seems to have been actively or potentially for independence. Positive and committed loyalists were a minority, but not therefore unimportant. They had the strength of the British empire on their side, and much also in the American tradition to support them. They believed in liberties for the colonies, and in old and historic rights under the British constitution, which, however, they felt to be less threatened by Parliament than by unruly new forces in America itself.

It is not possible to explain the division between patriot and loyalist by other or supposedly more fundamental divisions. The line coincided only locally or occasionally with the lines of conflict that had appeared before the war. Families divided, brothers often went different ways. Doubtless many a man marked himself for a lifetime by the impulsive decision of a moment. Economic and class motivations are unclear. The most firmly established merchants and lawyers tended to loyalism, but there were respected merchants and lawyers who embraced the revolution. New York and Virginia were both full of great landowners, but New York was the most loyalist province, Virginia one of the most revolutionary. Ironmasters, who had reason to object to British controls on the American iron industry,

17 What the United States has missed by having no returned émigrés, or real counterrevolution within its own borders, may be seen in the work of the Canadian Arthur Johnston, dedicated to the loyalists, the “true heroes of the Revolution,” and breathing not academic revisionism but intense loathing of that event: *Myths and Facts of the American Revolution: a Commentary on United States History as it is Written* (Toronto, 1908).

18 J. R. Alden, *The American Revolution* (N.Y., 1954), 87, and the general discussion of loyalism in these pages.

wound up in both camps. Debtors had reason to object to British attempts, over the previous half century, to limit paper money in America and stop inflation; but people do not always act from reason, and indebtedness in any case was scarcely a class phenomenon, since it was characteristic of the free-spending southern aristocracy, the businessmen in the towns, and farmers whose land was mortgaged, as well as of such actually poor people as may have been able to borrow any money. Religion of the Calvinist type was a force working against England, but the Presbyterians of the Carolina frontier, not eager to be governed by their own gentry, supplied many soldiers to the King. National origin had no general influence, for the Middle Colonies, the least English in origin, were stronger centers of loyalism than New England or the South. The young men, if we may judge by the infinitesimal proportion who were in the colleges, were ardently patriot. The colleges, from Harvard to William and Mary, were denounced by loyalists as hotbeds of sedition.

An obvious explanation, quite on the surface, is as good as any: that the patriots were those who saw an enlargement of opportunity in the break with Britain, and the loyalists were in large measure those who had benefited from the British connection, or who had organized their careers, and their sense of duty and usefulness, around service to the King and empire. These would include the American-born governors, Thomas Hutchinson in Massachusetts and William Franklin in New Jersey. There were also the families that customarily sat on the governors' councils or held honorific or lucrative offices under the crown. There were some in the rising American upper class who admired the way of life of the aristocracy in England, and who would imitate it as best they could.¹⁹ Such was surely their right as British subjects, but it might alienate them from Americans generally, even many of the upper class, who were willing to have social distinctions in America develop in a new way.

It is estimated that from half to two-thirds of those who had sat on the governors' councils became loyalists.²⁰ For New Jersey we know exactly what happened. Of the twelve members of the provincial council in 1775, five became active and zealous loyalists, two became cautious or neutral loyalists, one went into retirement for age, and four became revolutionaries, one of whom made his peace with the British when he thought they were going to win.²¹ Massachusetts had as few loyalists as any province, but when the British troops evacuated Boston in 1776 they took over 1,100 civilians with them. Of these, 102 had been councillors or officials and 18 were clergymen, mainly Anglican; but 382 were farmers, 213 were merchants "and others," and 105 came from country towns.²² The rest were probably women and children. Like the émigrés from the French Revolution, the émigrés from America came from all classes. But those connected with the English government or English church, and identifying themselves with English society and

19 See, for example, C. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (N.Y., 1955), 348-52.

20 L. W. Labaree, *Conservatism in Early American History* (N.Y., 1948), 147.

21 Lundin, *op. cit.*, 76-91.

22 L. Sabine, *American Loyalists, or Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown...* (Boston, 1847), 13.

the values of the British governing class, were more numerous among loyalists than in the general population. On the other hand, lest any one thesis be carried too far, it should be pointed out that Virginia, a very English province in some ways, was so solidly patriotic that only thirteen natives of the Old Dominion ever applied to Britain for compensation for loyalist losses.²³

The war itself polarized the issues. Each side needed strength, and the revolutionary leaders looked for it in the mass of the population, the loyalists among the ruling circles of Great Britain. In legal form, the struggle was between the sovereignty of the former colonies and the sovereignty of the British King-in-Parliament. Rebelious leaders, however, clothed themselves in the sovereignty of the "people," both in form and to a large degree in content. The social content of Parliament in the eighteenth century needs no further elaboration. The struggle, whatever men said, and whatever has been said since, was inseparable from a struggle between democratic and aristocratic forces. If the rebellion was successful, democracy in America would be favored. If it failed, if Parliament and the loyal Americans had their way, development in America would move in an aristocratic direction. In this respect the American Revolution resembled the revolutions in Europe.

That the war favored democracy in America is apparent in many ways. In some places, notably Massachusetts, the suffrage was nearly universal before the Revolution; in others, notably Virginia, the Revolution did not extend it. But in Pennsylvania the pro-British leanings of the Quaker patriciate brought them into disrepute after hostilities began; and their aversion to military solutions, at a time when any solution was bound to be military, threw power into the hands of the western farmers, who by becoming soldiers made themselves indispensable to the infant state, so that Pennsylvania developed the most democratically organized government in the new union.²⁴ In New Jersey the provincial congress, enjoying no legality and in rebellion against the legal authorities, sought to broaden its mandate by extending the voting franchise. In fact, petitions streamed into the Congress, urging that all householders or taxpayers should have the vote, the better to oppose enemies of the "American cause." The provincial congress in February 1776, five months before independence, granted the vote to all males at least twenty-one years old, resident in the state a year, and possessing goods worth £50 "proclamation money." With wartime depreciation of proclamation money, virtual universal manhood suffrage ensued. Voters also, after July 1776, were required to take an oath abjuring allegiance to George III, and some purists, pained by revolutionary illiberalism, have deprecated such restriction of political rights, as if the only feasible alternative would have been more democratic, and as if oaths did not exist in Britain itself, where men could still be obliged to abjure the House of Stuart.²⁵

23 Alden, *op.cit.*, 89.

24 E. P. Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats: The Struggle for Equal Political Rights and Majority Rule during the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1955), 251-52.

25 R. McCormick, *Experiment in Independence: New Jersey in the Critical Period* (New Brunswick, 1950), 35; and an unpublished doctoral dissertation in the Princeton University Library by J. R. Pole, "Reform of the Suffrage and Representation in New Jersey, 1744-1844." See also, below, 159-68. In Massachusetts the suffrage was if anything slightly restricted by the Revolution, but Massachusetts remained one of the states where the largest proportion of the population had the right to vote.

An experience of Colonel Thomas Randolph of Virginia well illustrates the same spread of democracy. Randolph, one of the many Virginia aristocrats who fought for the Revolution, was entertaining a captured British officer in his home. Three farmers came in, sat down, took off their boots, did a little spitting, and talked business with the colonel. After they left, Randolph commented to his guest on how "the spirit of independency was converted into equality, and everyone who bore arms esteemed himself on a footing with his neighbor." He added, with distaste: "No doubt, each of these men conceives himself, in every respect, my equal."²⁶ War, and a citizen army, had somewhat the same effects as in France after 1792. Leaders who did not fight for equality accepted it in order to win.

On the other hand, the American loyalists, who were in any case the Americans most inclined to favor hierarchic ideas, were made more so by the necessities of their position. William Eddis of Maryland, as early as 1770, thought that noblemen and bishops should be established in America as soon as possible. The commonest of all loyalist ideas was that the democratic branch, under the mixed British constitution in America, had gotten out of control. Their commonest allegation, during the war, was that the Revolution was the work of their social inferiors—"mechanics and country clowns," who had no right to dispute "what Kings, Lords, and Commons had done," as a South Carolina clergyman expressed it. He was driven out by his congregation.²⁷

The loyalists fully expected the British army to put down the rebellion very soon. They believed that the whole disturbance had been caused by a few trouble-makers, from whom the bulk of the people in America were patiently awaiting liberation. Hence, they had plans ready for the government of America after the restoration of order. These plans paralleled some of the British ideas mentioned in the last chapter. Like them, they called for the setting up in the colonies of something like a nobility. They expressed the idea that I have tried to show was so common in the eighteenth century, the idea of Blackstone and Gibbon and Montesquieu and the French parlements and many others, that some sort of nobility was a prerequisite to political liberty. There must be, in this view, an intermediate order of men having the personal right to take part in government, neither elected and hence under the influence of constituents, nor yet too amenable to influence by a king, so that they should be hereditary if possible, and at least hold office for life.

Loyal Americans congregated in New York, which was occupied by the British during most of the war. Here, as they talked over the sad state of their country, they found much on which they could agree. David Ogden of New Jersey was typical. He had served for twenty-one years on the New Jersey governor's council. After he fled to New York in January 1777, the revolutionary government in New Jersey confiscated from him twenty-three pieces of real estate, which he himself later valued at £15,231. He was one of the more prominent of the fugitives in New York, becoming a member of the Board of Refugees established there in 1779. He proposed that, after suppression of the rebellion, an American parliament be set up for all the colonies, subordinate to that of Great Britain, to consist

26 Labaree, *op.cit.*, 117.

27 *Ibid.*, 114, 135-36.

of three branches, as in Britain: namely, a lord lieutenant, certain "barons" created for the purpose, and a house of commons chosen by the several colonial assemblies. The new parliament, incidentally, was to supervise the colleges, those "grand nurseries of the late rebellion."²⁸

The case of Joseph Galloway is more fully known.²⁹ In 1774 he had tried to restrain the First Continental Congress by submitting a plan of American union, which that body had rejected as too favorable to parliamentary claims. During the war, after spending some time in New York, where he convinced himself that all Americans of any standing agreed with him, Galloway proceeded in 1778 to England, where for ten years he submitted a series of plans on colonial government to various persons in authority in London. These plans built on the plan of 1774, retaining its proposal for an autonomous inter-colonial parliament subordinate to the Parliament of Great Britain; but they added new ideas of structural reform.

The revolutionary states in America, according to Galloway, would be dissolved by the coming British victory, and the old forms of government would be forfeited by rebellion. There would therefore be a "state of nature without a civil constitution," or what he also called a *Chart Blanche*, "a perfect blank upon which a new policy shall be established." Opportunity would thus be afforded for certain long-needed changes. Temporarily, because of the war, there were two parties in America, the party of independence, "actuated by views of ambition and private interest," and the party favoring perpetual union with Great Britain. The former was "a mere republican party firmly attached to democratical government"; it had "vested the powers of all their new states originally and ultimately in the People." The other party, favoring union with England, preferred a "mixed form of government," to guard against abuse of power by either the sovereign or the people. Most Americans, Galloway was persuaded, were tired of being pushed about by revolutionary cliques. Most of the colonists, and certainly most men of property, would therefore welcome his plan of reorganization.

In this reorganization, the old governments of the charter provinces (Connecticut and Rhode Island) and of the proprietary provinces (Pennsylvania and Maryland) were to be abolished, and all the provinces made to conform to the same model, the balanced government of the British constitution. If Britain and America were to remain long together, it was imperative that they should have "the same customs, manners, prejudices and habits." These would then give "the same spirit to the laws." There should be an American union with a lord lieutenant or governor general representing the crown, an upper house appointed for life and with "some degree of rank or dignity above the Commons," and a lower house chosen by the various colonial assemblies. The "weight and influence" of the crown would be assured by making all offices, "civil and military, honorable and lucrative," depend on royal appointment. Thus a group of Americans would be built up, hostile to pure democracy and with an interest in mixed government and the British connection. The Americans also, declared Galloway, recurring to the almost forgotten

²⁸ Sabine, *op.cit.*, 487.

²⁹ J. P. Boyd, *Anglo-American Union: Joseph Galloway's Plans to Preserve the British Empire, 1774-1788* (Philadelphia, 1941).

origin of the whole controversy, would willingly pay an agreed-upon share toward military and imperial expenses, by taxing themselves through such a parliament as he outlined.

As among Americans themselves, it is clear that the Revolution involved a contest between men committed either to a more popular or a more aristocratic trend in government and society. Had the loyalists returned, received back their property, and resumed the positions of prestige and public influence which many of them had once enjoyed, it seems unlikely that the subsequent history of the United States would have been like the history that we know.

THE REVOLUTION: BRITAIN AND EUROPE

As between Britain and America, however, the question of internal change in America was less explicit. The British government never took official cognizance of loyalist plans. Some influence of loyalist thinking, and of British ideas resembling those of the loyalists, can be seen in the Canadian provinces, where most of the loyalists settled. But Britain had no such plans for the thirteen colonies that rebelled. Indeed, it had no plans at all, beyond the suppression of rebellion.

When hostilities began, there was a good deal of unity in England for a forcible disciplining of the Americans. Many shared the sentiments of Henry Dundas, who felt "his pride hurt, his spirit roused, his rage kindled" by the very hint that England could not "support her pretensions to empire."³⁰ As the war dragged on, and especially after the intervention of France, these martial enthusiasms began to subside. A war that began with wide national backing, to which only a few Whigs and a few radicals took exception, turned by 1780 into a war which everyone wanted to be rid of, with only George III persisting in his original policy, and even Lord North plaintively trying to resign.

The effects of the American Revolution in Britain and in Europe are described later. Here it need only be said, to place that Revolution more fully in its larger setting, that, just as some Americans upheld British authority and sympathized with the aristocratic order of Europe, so there were some Europeans, and some even in the British governing class, who favored American independence, and who sympathized with the more democratic order of which the United States was already the symbol. The duke of Richmond, the first peer ever to move a parliamentary reform bill in the House of Lords, and who in fact favored universal suffrage for the House of Commons, also moved in the Lords, in April 1778, recognition of the independence of the United States.

The British government was in fact seriously handicapped, in its conflict with the colonies, by a number of embarrassments both domestic and international. France gave secret military aid to the insurgents from the beginning. Open French participation, and French attack upon Ireland, had to be considered. In December 1777, shortly before the signing of the Franco-American alliance, Lord North forwarded to George III a secret report from Paris. It affirmed that a French army

30 *Parliamentary History*, XIX, 1088, April 10, 1778.

was to invade Ireland, under the American flag, with promises of Irish independence. North thought the danger very considerable, since, he said, the Irish Presbyterians were pro-American "to a man," the Catholics apathetic or likely to side with the French, and the British army in Ireland too small to defend the island.³¹ "America was starved for reinforcements for fear of invasion at home."³² The need to keep troops in the home islands, at a time when military conscription was undreamed of in England, led to the employment of foreign forces. Proposals to hire as many as 50,000 Russians for use in America came to nothing. George III, as Elector of Hanover, personally disapproved of the use of German mercenaries. He even said that the German constitution forbade it. Nevertheless, the Hessians were hired; British policy and social organization required it. The use of the Hessians did more than anything else to turn American feelings toward England into hatred. It also aroused European opinion against England.

After the American victory at Saratoga, France recognized the United States, and proceeded to join it in the war against Great Britain. Lord North's government now offered a belated and untimely compromise. It repealed the Massachusetts Government Act of 1774. It repealed that old irritant, the tea duty, and put through Parliament a bill renouncing parliamentary taxation of the colonies. It despatched a peace commission to America. The commissioners were authorized to deal with the Congress "as if it were a legal body," and to yield everything that the Americans had officially asked before 1775. The Declaratory Act of 1766 was to stand, but Parliament would confine itself to the regulation of trade. The Americans would raise their own revenues and maintain their own army. They might even retain their Continental Congress, under the sovereignty of Parliament, if they wished to keep such an inter-colonial organization. There would be an amnesty for all involved in rebellion; on the other hand, loyalist estates would be returned, and the loyalists themselves reintegrated into American society. As for the Declaration of Independence, it would simply be superseded by a new agreement between Congress and Great Britain.³³

It was a generous offer, though absurdly inopportune. Coming when it did, it seemed to be extorted only by force. The Americans had just won a great victory, they were securing allies in Europe, and their new states were already two years old. Leaders of the revolution in America were committed to the maintenance of the United States. Congress refused even to receive the peace commissioners, who retired in dismay to England, annoyed at the British military in America for not supporting them properly, and greatly irritated at the Americans also: William Eden wanted to harry America by fire and sword, and General Johnstone reported that two-thirds of the people in America looked longingly to England to deliver them from the tyranny of General Washington.

The government was discredited by its failures in America, and by involvement in a war with France for which it had made no adequate preparation. The reform movement in England gathered strength. Even Whigs, who saw no need of re-

31 J. Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George III* (London, 1928), III, 530.

32 K. Feiling, *The Second Tory Party, 1714-1832* (London, 1938), 131.

33 C. R. Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (Norman, 1954), 258-83.

forming Parliament, won adherents for their program of cutting down the nefarious influence of the crown. Radicalism, that is, the desire to change the composition of the Commons, grew by leaps and bounds, especially in Yorkshire and the neighborhood of London. A reforming committee at Westminster, a year before Yorktown, drew up a report that went beyond any of the new American state constitutions in its democratic theory of representation. The report, drafted by John Jebb, demanded universal manhood suffrage, the use of the ballot rather than oral voting, the annual election of Parliament, representation of voters in proportion to numbers in equal electoral districts, payment of wages to elected representatives, and removal of all property qualifications for election to the Commons.³⁴ Here were all six points of the People's Charter to be famous in England over fifty years later.

The Whig group in Parliament, which at first hoped to make common cause with the American insurgents against George III, came to believe, after Saratoga and the Franco-American alliance, that it might after all be best for Britain if the Americans were left outside the empire. They feared that reconciliation would now bring credit upon the North ministry, or that the American Congress, if within the empire, must now be accepted as the equal of Parliament under the King. For the Whigs, it was better to recognize American independence, which would at least allow them to go on blaming the King's friends for ruining the empire. As for the radicals—not that they had any political influence—many of them believed that the British people had no quarrel with America anyway, and that the unrepresentativeness of Parliament had been a cause of the American revolt. Contrariwise, the American successes, and the perverse tendency of some people in England to applaud them, had the effect also of fortifying British conservatism. More firmness in 1765, it was argued, would have prevented the whole trouble. Concession to malcontents was a losing game; the British constitution must be upheld.

A divided Britain fought a divided America. And here a large question arises. Could the revolutionary leadership in America, divided as America was, have accomplished its purpose of independence with the resources of America alone? Was the outcome of the American War of Independence only an event in American history taking place on American soil? What would have happened if the British government had had behind it a united England and a reliable Ireland? Or if Lafayette, Kosciusko, Pulaski, de Kalb, and von Steuben had not brought their military and technical experience to the United States? Or if France had not furnished the muskets that won the battle of Saratoga, and supplied the army of Rochambeau, and fleet of de Grasse, which with Washington formed the winning combination at Yorktown?

Some writers of American history seem to feel that Britain in any case could never have suppressed the American rebellion. This may well be true. The Americans, without foreign aid, might for a long time have carried on a guerrilla resistance. They might have made the exercise of British authority impossible. The British, while long remaining in some of the seaports, might eventually have withdrawn from a country that they could not govern. To admit this much is not to

34 Printed in S. Maccoby, *The English Radical Tradition, 1763–1914* (London, 1952), 37–39.

answer the question. A country gaining independence in this way would not have been the country that emerged in 1783. The winners of the American war were not guerrilla chieftains. They were not obscure and hunted men out of contact with civilization. They not only made government impossible for the British; they established governments of their own. They did not represent the triumph of anarchy. America was divided, but it was not altogether, as Burke said in 1779, in a "state of dreadful confusion."³⁵ The Americans made a clean break with England. They came into the circle of nations as a recognized power. And they presented to the view of Europe a set of organized republican states, constituted and fashioned in a new way, of enormous interest to Europe.

The intervention of France, it may therefore appear, was one of the indispensable elements in the founding of the United States. In this sense, too, as well as in its ideological repercussions, the American Revolution was an event within an Atlantic civilization as a whole. And the Bourbon monarchy, when it helped to call the American republic into being, added another force to the forces of change in Europe.

35 Letter of June 12, 1779 to Dr. John Erskine, in the Wentworth-Woodhouse manuscripts at the Sheffield Central Library.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: THE PEOPLE AS CONSTITUENT POWER

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it. . . .

—THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 1776

It is a general maxim in every government, there must exist, somewhere, a supreme, sovereign, absolute and uncontrollable power; but this power resides always in the body of the people; and it never was, or can be delegated to one man, or a few.

—THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS, 1776

. . . those deluded People.

—KING GEORGE III, 1775

If it be asked what the American Revolution distinctively contributed to the world's stock of ideas, the answer might go somewhat along these lines. It did not contribute primarily a social doctrine—for although a certain skepticism toward social rank was an old American attitude, and possibly even a gift to mankind, it long antedated the Revolution, which did not so much cut down, as prevent the growth of, an aristocracy of European type. It did not especially contribute economic ideas—for the Revolution had nothing to teach on the production or distri-

bution of goods, and the most advanced parties objected to private wealth only when it became too closely associated with government. They aimed at a separation of economic and political spheres, by which men of wealth, while free to get rich, should not have a disproportionate influence on government, and, on the other hand, government and public emoluments should not be used as a means of livelihood for an otherwise impecunious and unproductive upper class.

The American Revolution was a political movement, concerned with liberty, and with power. Most of the ideas involved were by no means distinctively American. There was nothing peculiarly American in the concepts, purely as concepts, of natural liberty and equality. They were admitted by conservatives, and were taught in the theological faculty at the Sorbonne.¹ Nor could Americans claim any exclusive understanding of the ideas of government by contract or consent, or the sovereignty of the people, or political representation, or the desirability of independence from foreign rule, or natural rights, or the difference between natural law and positive law, or between certain fundamental laws and ordinary legislation, or the separation of powers, or the federal union of separate states. All these ideas were perfectly familiar in Europe, and that is why the American Revolution was of such interest to Europeans.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEAS

The most distinctive work of the Revolution was in finding a method, and furnishing a model, for putting these ideas into practical effect. It was in the implementation of similar ideas that Americans were more successful than Europeans. "In the last fifty years," wrote General Bonaparte to Citizen Talleyrand in 1797, "there is only one thing that I can see that we have really defined, and that is the sovereignty of the people. But we have had no more success in determining what is constitutional, than in allocating the different powers of government." And he said more peremptorily, on becoming Emperor in 1804, that the time had come "to constitute the Nation." He added: "I am the constituent power."²

The problem throughout much of America and Europe, for half a century, was to "constitute" new government, and in a measure new societies. The problem was to find a constituent power. Napoleon offered himself to Europe in this guise. The Americans solved the problem by the device of the constitutional convention,

1 See on R  al de Curban Chapter III above, and my *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth Century France* (Princeton, 1939), 126, quoting L. J. Hooke, *Religionis naturalis et moralis philosophiae principia, methodo scholastica digesta* (Paris, 1752–1754), I, 623–24: "Status is a permanent condition of man, involving various rights and a long series of obligations. It is either *natural*, constituted by nature itself, or *adventitious*, arising from some human act or institution. . . . By the *status of nature* we understand that in which men would be who were subject to no government but joined only by similarity of nature or by private pacts. . . . In the status of nature all men are equal and enjoy the same rights. For in that state they are distinguished only by the gifts of mind or body by which some excel others." Italics are the Abb   Hooke's.

2 *Correspondance de Napoleon I*, III (Paris, 1859), 314; R. M. Johnston, *The Corsican* (N.Y., 1910), 182.

which, revolutionary in origin, soon became institutionalized in the public law of the United States.³

The constitutional convention in theory embodied the sovereignty of the people. The people chose it for a specific purpose, not to govern, but to set up institutions of government. The convention, acting as the sovereign people, proceeded to draft a constitution and a declaration of rights. Certain "natural" or "inalienable" rights of the citizen were thus laid down at the same time as the powers of government. It was the constitution that created the powers of government, defined their scope, gave them legality, and balanced them one against another. The constitution was written and comprised in a single document. The constitution and accompanying declaration, drafted by the convention, must, in the developed theory, be ratified by the people. The convention thereupon disbanded and disappeared, lest its members have a vested interest in the offices they created. The constituent power went into abeyance, leaving the work of government to the authorities now constituted. The people, having exercised sovereignty, now came under government. Having made law, they came under law. They put themselves voluntarily under restraint. At the same time, they put restraint upon government. All government was limited government; all public authority must keep within the bounds of the constitution and of the declared rights. There were two levels of law, a higher law or constitution that only the people could make or amend, through constitutional conventions or bodies similarly empowered; and a statutory law, to be made and unmade, within the assigned limits, by legislators to whom the constitution gave this function.

Such was the theory, and it was a distinctively American one. European thinkers, in all their discussion of a political or social contract, of government by consent and of sovereignty of the people, had not clearly imagined the people as actually contriving a constitution and creating the organs of government. They lacked the idea of the people as a constituent power. Even in the French Revolution the idea developed slowly; members of the French National Assembly, long after the Tennis Court oath, continued to feel that the constitution which they were writing, to be valid, had to be accepted by the King as a kind of equal with whom the nation had to negotiate. Nor, indeed, would the King tolerate any other view. On the other hand, we have seen how at Geneva in 1767 the democrats advanced an extreme version of citizen sovereignty, holding that the people created the constitution and the public offices by an act of will; but they failed to get beyond a simple direct democracy; they had no idea of two levels of law, or of limited government, or of a delegated and representative legislative authority, or of a sovereign people which, after acting as a god from the machine in a constituent convention, retired to the more modest status of an electorate, and let its theoretical sovereignty become inactive.

The difficulty with the theory was that the conditions under which it could work were seldom present. No people really starts *de novo*; some political institutions always already exist; there is never a *tabula rasa*, or state of nature, or Chart Blanche as Galloway posited for conservative purposes. Also, it is difficult for a

³ See, for example, J. A. Jameson, *The Constitutional Convention: Its History, Powers and Modes of Proceeding* (N.Y., 1867); H. C. Hockett, *The Constitutional History of the United States, 1776-1826* (N.Y., 1939).

convention engaged in writing a constitution not to be embroiled in daily politics and problems of government. And it is hard to live voluntarily under restraint. In complex societies, or in times of crisis, either government or people or some part of the people may feel obliged to go beyond the limits that a constitution has laid down.

In reality, the idea of the people as a constituent power, with its corollaries, developed unclearly, gradually, and sporadically during the American Revolution. It was adumbrated in the Declaration of Independence: the people may "institute new government." Jefferson, among the leaders, perhaps conceived the idea most clearly. It is of especial interest, however, to see how the "people" themselves, that is, certain lesser and unknown or poorer or unsatisfied persons, contributed to these distinctive American ideas by their opposition to the Revolutionary elite.

There were naturally many Americans who felt that no change was needed except expulsion of the British. With the disappearance of the British governors, and collapse of the old governor's councils, the kind of men who had been active in the colonial assemblies, and who now sat as provincial congresses or other *de facto* revolutionary bodies, were easily inclined to think that they should keep the management of affairs in their own hands. Some parallel can be seen with what happened in Europe. There was a revolution, or protest, of constituted bodies against authorities set above them, and a more popular form of revolution, or protest, which aimed at changing the character or membership of these constituted bodies themselves. As at Geneva the General Council rebelled against the patriciate, without wishing to admit new citizens to the General Council; as in Britain the Whigs asserted the powers of Parliament against the King, without wishing to change the composition of Parliament; as in Belgium, in 1789, the Estates party declared independence from the Emperor, while maintaining the preexisting estates; as in France, also in 1789, the nobility insisted that the King govern through the Estates-General, but objected to the transformation of the three estates into a new kind of national body; as in the Dutch provinces in 1795 the Estates-General, after expelling the Prince of Orange, tried to remain itself unchanged, and resisted the election of a "convention"; so, in America in 1776, the assemblies that drove out the officers of the King, and governed their respective states under revolutionary conditions, sought to keep control of affairs in their own hands, and to avoid reconstitution at the hands of the "people."

Ten states gave themselves new constitutions in 1776 and 1777. In nine of these states, however, it was the ordinary assembly, that is, the revolutionary government of the day, that drafted and proclaimed the constitution. In the tenth, Pennsylvania, a constituent convention met, but it soon had to take on the burden of daily government in addition. In Connecticut and Rhode Island the colonial charters remained in force, and the authorities constituted in colonial times (when governors and councils had already been elected) remained unchanged in principle for half a century. In Massachusetts the colonial charter remained in effect until 1780.

Thus in no state, when independence was declared, did a true constituent convention meet, and, as it were, calmly and rationally devise government out of a state of nature. There was already, however, some recognition of the principle that constitutions cannot be made merely by governments, that a more fundamental

power is needed to produce a constitution than to pass ordinary laws or carry on ordinary executive duties. Thus, in New Hampshire, New York, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, and Georgia, the assemblies drew up constitutions only after soliciting authority for that purpose from the voters. In Maryland and North Carolina there was a measure of popular ratification.

CONSTITUTION-MAKING IN NORTH CAROLINA, PENNSYLVANIA, AND MASSACHUSETTS

The popular pressures that helped to form American political doctrine are best illustrated from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.⁴

In North Carolina class lines had been sharply drawn by the Regulator movement and its suppression. The people of the back-country even inclined to be loyalist, not eager for an independence that might only throw them into the hands of the county gentry. In the turbulent election of October 1776 the voters knew that the assembly which they elected would draft a state constitution. There was no demand for a convention to act exclusively and temporarily as a constituent power. But several counties drew up instructions for the deputies, in which the emerging doctrine was set forth clearly.

Orange and Mecklenburg counties used identical language. This is a sign, as in the case of identical phrasing in the French *cabiers* of 1789, where the matter has been carefully studied, that some person of influence and education, and not some poor farmer ruminating in his cabin, had probably written out a draft. Still, the public meetings of both counties found it to their taste. "Political power," they said, "is of two kinds, one principal and superior, the other derived and inferior. . . . The principal supreme power is possessed only by the people at large. . . . The derived and inferior power by the servants which they employ. . . . The rules by which the inferior power is exercised are to be constituted by the principal supreme power. . . ." ⁵ In other words, government was not a form of guardianship. Office was to be no longer a perquisite of the gentry, or "an aristocracy of power in the hands of the rich," to use their own language, but a form of employment by the people, whom they did not hesitate to call "the poor." Mecklenburg favored a unicameral legislature, Orange a bicameral one, but both called for a separation of powers. It was not that any organ of government should enjoy independence from the electorate (the essence of balance-of-power theory in the European, British, and loyalist view), but rather that the various functions of government should be defined and distributed among different men, to prevent what had happened in colonial times. The fact that before 1776 the council had possessed executive, legislative, and judicial functions, and that members of the assembly had served as justices of the peace, or had their relatives appointed judges and sheriffs, was the basis on which North Carolina had been dominated by small groups of gentry. It

4 Here I am indebted, without sharing all his conclusions, to E. P. Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats: the Struggle for Equal Political Rights and Majority Rule during the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1955).

5 *Ibid.*, 126.

was popular objection to this situation, probably more than a reading of European books, that made the separation of powers a principal American doctrine.

The North Carolina constitution, as written and adopted, enlarged the electorate by granting all taxpayers the right to vote for members of the lower house. It equalized the representation by giving more deputies to the western counties. It required a freehold of 100 acres for members of the lower house, and of 300 acres for those of the upper house, who were to be elected only by voters possessing 50 acres. The governor, elected by the two houses, had to have a freehold worth £1,000. The constitution was a compromise between populace and landed gentry. It lasted until the Civil War.⁶

The situation in Pennsylvania was complex. The Quaker colony, idealized by European intellectuals as the haven of innocent equality and idyllic peace, had long been plagued by some of the most acrimonious politics in America. Quaker bigwigs had long clashed with the non-Quaker lesser orders of Philadelphia and the West. In the spring of 1776 Pennsylvania was the only colony in which the assembly was still legal under the old law. It still showed a desire for reconciliation with England, and, with it, maintenance of the old social and political system. This persistence of conservatism in high places made a great many people all the more radical. A year of open war with Britain had aroused the determination for independence, and in May 1776 a mass meeting of 4,000 people in Philadelphia demanded the calling of a constitutional convention. Various local committees got to work, and a convention was elected by irregular methods. Where the three eastern counties had formerly been heavily over-represented, the situation was now not equalized, but reversed. The West, with the same population as the three eastern counties, had 64 delegates in the convention to only 24 for the East. "The Convention in Pennsylvania was a political expedient, and not, as in Massachusetts, the cornerstone of constitutional government."⁷ Its real function was to promote the Revolution, and assure independence from England, by circumventing the assembly and all other opposition. Like the more famous French Convention elected in 1792, it rested on a kind of popular mandate which did not reflect an actual majority of the population; like it, it became the government of the country during war and revolution; like it, it behaved dictatorially. The constitutions drafted in Pennsylvania in 1776, and in France in 1793, were, in their formal provisions, by far the most democratic of any produced in the eighteenth century. The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, unlike the French constitution of the Year I, was never submitted even to the formalities of popular ratification. But the two constitutions became a symbol of what democrats meant by democracy.

The Pennsylvania constitution vested legislative power in a single house. For the executive it avoided the name and office of governor, entrusting executive power to a council and "president," a word which then meant no more than chairman. All male taxpayers twenty-one years of age had the vote, and were eligible for any office. To sit in the assembly, however, it was necessary publicly to acknowledge the

6 For the text of the constitutions, see F. N. Thorpe, *Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and Other Organic Laws of the . . . United States of America* (Washington, 7 vols., 1909).

7 Douglass, *op.cit.*, 260.

divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments. Voters elected the legislators, the executive councillors, sheriffs, coroners, tax-assessors, and justices of the peace. Voting was by ballot. The president was chosen by the legislature and the executive council; he had no veto or appointive powers, and what powers he did have he could exercise only in agreement with his council. All officers were elected for one year, except that councillors served for three. Rotation of office was provided for; legislators, councillors, president, and sheriffs could be reelected only a certain number of times. Doors of the legislative assembly must always be open to the public. There was a kind of referendum, in that no bill passed by the assembly, short of emergency, became law until submitted for public consideration and enacted in the assembly of the following year, if there was no public objection. Officeholders received pay, but if revenues of any office became too large the assembly could reduce them. All officers and judges could be impeached by the assembly. Judges of the Supreme Court could be removed by the assembly for "misbehavior." There was an elected council of censors, or board of review, which every seven years ascertained whether the constitution had been preserved inviolate, and called a convention if amendment seemed necessary.

The Pennsylvania constitution represented the doctrine of a single party, namely the democrats, people of the kind who had formerly had little to do with government, and whose main principle was that government should never become a separate or vested interest within the state. This was indeed an understandable principle, at a time when government, in all countries in varying degree, had in fact become the entrenched interest of a largely hereditary governing class. The Pennsylvania constitution substituted almost a direct democracy, in which no one in government could carry any responsibility or pursue any sustained program of his own. Many people in Pennsylvania objected to it from the beginning. It must be remembered that the democratic constitution did not signify that Pennsylvania was really more democratic than some of the other states; it signified, rather, that Pennsylvania was more divided, and that conservatism was stronger, certain upper-class and politically experienced elements, which elsewhere took a leading part in the Revolution, being in Pennsylvania tainted with Anglophilism. Whether the constitution of 1776 was workable or not, these people soon put an end to it. It lasted only until 1790.⁸

The most interesting case is that of Massachusetts. Here the great political thinker was John Adams, who became the main author of the Massachusetts constitution of 1780, which in turn had an influence on the Constitution of the United States. In his own time Adams was denounced as an Anglomaniac and a Monocrat. In our own time some sympathizers with the eighteenth-century democrats have considered him very conservative, while on the other hand theorists of the "new conservatism" would persuade us that John Adams was in truth the American Edmund Burke. I confess that I see very little in any of these allegations.

Adams in January 1776 published some *Thoughts on Government*, for the guidance of those in the various colonies who were soon to declare independence and

8 *Ibid.*, 214–86; J. P. Selsam, *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776: a Study in Revolutionary Democracy* (Philadelphia, 1936).

begin to govern themselves. This was in some ways a conservative tract. Adams thought it best, during the war, for the new states simply to keep the forms of government that they had. He obviously approved the arrangement under the Massachusetts charter of 1691, by which the popular assembly elected an upper house or council. In other ways he was not very conservative. He declared, like Jefferson, that the aim of government is welfare or happiness, that republican institutions must rest on "virtue," and that the people should support a universal system of public schools. He wanted one-year terms for governors and officials (the alternative would be "slavery"), and he favored rotation of office. He quite agreed that someday the state governors and councillors might be popularly elected, as they were in Connecticut already. He gave six reasons for having a bicameral legislature, but in none of these six reasons did he show any fear of the people, or belief that, with a unicameral legislature, the people would plunder property or degenerate into anarchy. He was afraid of the one-house legislature itself. He never committed the folly of identifying the deputies with the deputizers. He was afraid that a single house would be arbitrary or capricious, or make itself perpetual, or "make laws for their own interest, and adjudge all controversies in their own favor."⁹ He himself cited the cases of Holland and the Long Parliament. The fear of a self-perpetuating political body, gathering privileges to itself, was certainly better grounded in common observation than vague alarms about anarchy or pillage.

The *Thoughts* of 1776 were conservative in another way, if conservatism be the word. Adams had not yet conceived the idea of a constitutional convention. He lacked the notion of the people as constituent power. He had in mind that existing assemblies would draft the new constitutions, when and if any were drafted. Adams was familiar with all the high-level political theory of England and Europe. But the idea of the people as the constituent power arose locally, from the grass roots.

The revolutionary leadership in Massachusetts, including both Adamsses, was quite satisfied to be rid of the British, and otherwise to keep the Bay State as it had always been. They therefore "resumed" the charter of 1691. They simply undid the Massachusetts Government Act of 1774. Some of the commonalty of Boston, and farmers of Concord and the western towns, envisaged further changes. It is hard to say what they wanted, except that they wanted a new constitution. Experts in Massachusetts history contradict each other flatly; some say that debtors, poor men, and Baptists were dissatisfied; others that all kinds of diverse people naturally owed money anyway, that practically no one was too poor to vote, and that Baptists were an infinitesimal splinter group in a solidly Congregationalist population. It may be that the trouble was basically psychological; that many people of fairly low station, even though they had long had the right to vote, had never until the Revolution participated in politics, were aroused by the Revolution, the war, and excitement of soldiering, and, feeling that affairs had always been managed by people socially above them, wanted now to act politically on their own.

Demands were heard for a new constitution. It was said that the charter of 1691 was of no force, since the royal power that had issued it was no longer valid. It was

9 *Works* (1851), IV, 196.

said that no one could be governed without his consent, and that no living person had really consented to this charter. Some Berkshire towns even hinted that they did not belong to Massachusetts at all until they shared in constituting the new commonwealth. They talked of "setting themselves apart," or being welcomed by a neighboring state. Echoes of the social contract floated through the western air. "The law to bind all must be assented to by all," declared the farmers of Sutton. "The Great Secret of Government is governing all by all," said those of Spencer.¹⁰ It began to seem that a constitution was necessary not only to secure liberty but to establish authority not only to protect the individual but to found the state.

The house of representatives proposed that it and the council, that is, the two houses of legislation sitting together, should be authorized by the people to draw up a constitution. All adult males were to vote on the granting of this authorization, not merely those possessing the customary property qualification. In a sense, this was to recognize Rousseau's principle that there must be "unanimity at least once": that everyone must consent to the law under which he was to live, even if later, when constitutional arrangements were made, a qualification was required for ordinary voting. The council objected to a plan whereby it would lose its identity by merging with the house. A little dispute occurred, not unlike that in France in 1789 between "vote by head" and "vote by order." The plan nevertheless went through. The two houses, sitting as one, and authorized by the people, produced a constitution in 1778. It was submitted for popular ratification. The voters repudiated it. Apparently both democrats and conservatives were dissatisfied. This is precisely what happened in Holland in 1797, when the first constitution of the Dutch revolution was rejected by a coalition of opposite-minded voters.

A special election was therefore held, in which all towns chose delegates to a state convention, "for the sole purpose of forming a new Constitution." John Adams, delegate from Braintree, was put on the drafting committee. He wrote a draft, which the convention modified only in detail. The resulting document reflected many influences. It is worth while to suggest a few.

There is a modern fashion for believing that Rousseau had little influence in America, particularly on such sensible characters as John Adams. I do not think that he had very much. Adams, however, had read the *Social Contract* as early as 1765, and ultimately had four copies of it in his library. I suspect that, like others, he found much of it unintelligible or fantastic, and some of it a brilliant expression of his own beliefs. He himself said of the Massachusetts constitution: "It is Locke, Sidney, Rousseau, and de Mably reduced to practice."¹¹

Adams wrote in the preamble: "The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals. It is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good."¹² The thought here, and the use of the word "covenant," go back to the Mayflower compact. But whence comes the

¹⁰ Douglass, *op.cit.*, 178.

¹¹ *Works* (1851), IV, 216. Adams also, in 1787, cited Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* and *Considerations on Poland* with approval, recommending the former for its picture of the evil in civilized men, the latter for its view that Poland was dominated exclusively by nobles. *Works*, IV, 409 and 367.

¹² *Ibid.*, 219; Thorpe, *op.cit.*, III, 1889.

"social" in *social* compact? And whence comes the word "citizen"? There were no "citizens" under the British constitution, except in the sense of freemen of the few towns known as cities. In the English language the word "citizen" in its modern sense is an Americanism, dating from the American Revolution.¹³ It is entirely possible that Jean-Jacques Rousseau had deposited these terms in Adams' mind. The whole passage suggests Chapter vi, Book I, of the *Social Contract*. The convention adopted this part of Adams' preamble without change.

In the enacting clause of the preamble Adams wrote: "We, therefore, the delegates of the people of Massachusetts . . . agree upon the following . . . Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." The convention made a significant emendation: "We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts . . . agree upon, ordain and establish . . ." The formula, *We the people ordain and establish*, expressing the developed theory of the people as constituent power, was used for the first time in the Massachusetts constitution of 1780, whence it passed into the preamble of the United States constitution of 1787 and the new Pennsylvania of 1790, after which it became common in the constitutions of the new states, and in new constitutions of the old states. Adams did not invent the formula. He was content with the matter-of-fact or purely empirical statement that the "delegates" had "agreed." It was the popularly elected convention that rose to more abstract heights. Providing in advance for popular ratification, it imputed the creation of government to the people.

Adams wrote, as the first article of the Declaration of Rights: "All men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, essential and unalienable rights," which included defense of their lives, liberties, and property, and the seeking of "safety and happiness." The Virginia Declaration of Rights, drafted by George Mason in June 1776, was almost identical, and Adams certainly had it in mind. The Massachusetts convention made only one change in this sentence. It declared: "All men are born free and equal." The convention, obviously, was thinking of the Declaration of Independence, that is, Jefferson's more incisive rewording of Mason's Virginia declaration.

The convention had been elected by a true universal male suffrage, but it adopted, following Adams' draft, a restriction on the franchise. To vote, under the constitution, it was necessary to own real estate worth £3 a year, or real and personal property of a value of £60. The charter of 1691 had specified only £2 and £40 respectively. The state constitution was thus in this respect more conservative than the charter. How much more conservative? Here we run into the difference between experts already mentioned.¹⁴ A whole school of thought, pointing to a 50 per cent increase in the voting qualification, has seen a reaction of property-owners against dangers from below. Closer examination of the values of money reveals

13 This may be readily confirmed from the Oxford Dictionary, or by comparison of definitions of "citizen" in British and American dictionaries, or by tracing the article "citizen" through successive editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, where the modern meaning does not appear until the eleventh edition in 1910.

14 For emphasis on the conservative or reactionary character of the Massachusetts constitution, see Douglass, *op.cit.*, 189–213, and more specialized writers cited there; for the opposite view, which I follow in part, see R. E. Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691–1780* (Ithaca, 1955), 384–400.

that the £3 and £60 of 1780 represent an increase of only one-eighth over the figures of 1691. Even if half the people of Boston were unfranchised, all Boston then had only a twentieth of the population of the state. In the rural areas, where farm ownership was usual, it was mainly grown sons living for a few years with their parents who lacked the vote. There seems to have been only sporadic objection to the suffrage provision.

Adams put into the constitution, and the convention retained it, that ghost of King, Lords, and Commons that now assumed the form of governor, senate, and house of representatives. Partisans of the British system, in England or America, would surely find this ghost highly attenuated. The point about King and Lords, in the British system, was precisely that they were not elected by anyone, that they were immune to popular pressure, or any pressure, through their enjoyment of life tenure and hereditary personal rights to political position. Governor and senators in Massachusetts, like representatives, both in Adams' draft and in the final document, were all elected, all by the same electorate, and all for one-year terms. To Adams (as, for example, to Delolme), it was of the utmost importance to prevent the executive from becoming the mere creature of the legislature. He even wished the governor to have an absolute veto, which the convention changed to a veto that could be overridden by a two-thirds majority of both houses. Adams continued to prefer a final veto. Jeffersonians and their numerous progeny found this highly undemocratic. In all states south of New York, at the end of the Revolution, governors were elected by the legislative houses, and none had any veto. Adams justified the veto as a means "to preserve the independence of the executive and judicial departments."¹⁵ And since governors could no longer be appointed by the crown, an obvious way to prevent their dependence on legislatures was to have them issue, like legislators, from the new sovereign, the people. It was legislative oligarchy that Adams thought the most imminent danger. As he wrote to Jefferson in 1787: "You are afraid of the one—I, of the few."¹⁶

As for the phantom "lords," or senators, though they were directly elected by the ordinary voters for one-year terms, they were in a way supposed to represent property rather than numbers. They were apportioned among the counties of Massachusetts not according to population but according to taxes paid, that is, according to assessed value of taxable wealth. Suffolk County, which included Boston, thus received 6 senators out of 40, where on a purely numerical basis it would have received only four. The Maine districts, Cape Cod, and the western counties were numerically somewhat underrepresented. The three central and western counties received 11 senators, where a representation in proportion to numbers would have given them 12 or 13. Inequalities in wealth in Massachusetts, as between individuals or as between city and country, were not yet great enough to make a senate apportioned according to "property" (which included the small man's property as well as the rich man's) very different from a senate apportioned according to numbers.¹⁷

¹⁵ Adams, *Works* (1851), IV, 231 and 232 note.

¹⁶ *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, XII (Princeton, 1955), 396.

¹⁷ Compare the apportionment of senators in the Massachusetts constitution with the population of counties in the census of 1790. The fact that the senate represented property rather than num-

The Massachusetts constitution prescribed certain qualifications for eligibility. The governor was required to have a freehold worth at least £1,000, senators a freehold of £300 or £600 total estate, representatives a freehold of £100 or £200 total estate. (British law at this time required £300 or £600 *annual income* from land to qualify for the House of Commons.) These Massachusetts requirements resembled those in North Carolina, where the governor had to have a £1,000 freehold, and members of the upper and lower houses freeholds of 300 or 100 acres respectively. In the absence of comparative statistics on land values and distribution of land ownership in the two states, it is impossible to compare the real impact of these legal qualifications for office. In Massachusetts, however, whatever may have been true in North Carolina, the average 100-acre one-family farm was worth well over £300, and there were a great many such farms, so that the ordinary successful farmer could qualify for either house of the legislature, and a few well-to-do ones in almost every village might if they chose have aspired to the office of governor.¹⁸ The requirements in Massachusetts, as set forth by John Adams, were, if anything, Jeffersonian or agrarian in their tendency, since they favored the farm population, and made it even harder for middle-class townspeople, who might own no land, to occupy public office. The aim was clearly to limit office to the substantial segment of the population, but the substantial segment was broadly defined. Still, there were people who by this definition were not "substantial," and some of them objected to these provisions, though not many would in any case have ventured to run for office or been elected if they did, in the Massachusetts of 1780.

It was Article III of the Declaration of Rights, both in Adams' draft and in the finished constitution, that caused most debate in the convention and most disagreement among the voters during ratification. This article, declaring religion to be the foundation of morality and of the state, authorized the legislature to "enjoin" people to go to church, and required the use of public funds to maintain the churches, while allowing any "subject" to have his own contribution paid to the denomination of his choice. While it received a large majority of the popular vote, 8,885 to 6,225, it was the one article which most clearly failed to obtain a two-thirds majority, and the one which may have never been legally ratified, though declared so by the convention. Those voting against it expressed a desire to separate church and state. These, in turn, included perhaps a few Baptists who favored such separation on religious principle, a great many Protestants who feared that the article might legalize Roman Catholicism, and an unknown number of people, one suspects, who were no longer very regular in attending any church at all.

The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 was adopted by a two-thirds majority in a popular referendum from which no free adult male was excluded. The vote was light, for opinion on the matter seems not to have been excited.¹⁹ It was six years

bers is stressed by those who see the Massachusetts constitution of 1780 as a very conservative or reactionary document. I confess to sharing the impatience of Professor Brown at academic theories which dissolve under a little grade-school computation.

18 Brown, *op. cit.*, 18, 394.

19 About 23 per cent of adult males voted on ratification of the constitution of 1780, a figure which may be compared with 30 per cent of adult males voting on ratification of the French constitution of 1793, with the difference that in the France of 1793 only those voting "yes" took the trouble to

since the rebellion against King George, and four years since the British army had left Massachusetts; doubtless many people wished to be bothered no longer. The action of the people as constituent power is, after all, a legal concept, or even a necessary legal fiction where the sovereignty of any concrete person or government is denied. It does not signify that everyone is actually engrossed in the fabrication of constitutions. On the other hand, it does not seem necessary to believe that the convention, when it declared the constitution ratified, put something over on an innocent or apathetic or reluctant people. The people of Massachusetts had rejected the constitution proposed in 1778. They could have rejected the one proposed in 1780. It was adopted, not because it was thought perfect or final by everyone, but because it offered a frame of government, or basis of agreement, within which people could still lawfully disagree. It has lasted, with many amendments, until the present day.

A WORD ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

The idea that sovereignty lay with the people, and not with states or their governments, made possible in America a new kind of federal structure unknown in Europe. The Dutch and Swiss federations were unions of component parts, close permanent alliances between disparate corporate members. For them no other structure was possible, because there was as yet no Dutch or Swiss people except in a cultural sense. It was in the Dutch revolution of 1795 and the Swiss revolution of 1798 that these two bundles of provinces or cantons were first proclaimed as political nations. In America it was easier to make the transition from a league of states, set up during the Revolution, to a more integral union set up in the United States constitution of 1787. The new idea was that, instead of the central government drawing its powers from the states, both central and state governments should draw their powers from the same source; the question was the limit between these two sets of derived powers. The citizen, contrariwise, was simultaneously a citizen both of the United States and of his own state. He was the sovereign, not they. He chose to live under two constitutions, two sets of laws, two sets of courts and officials; theoretically, he had created them all, reserving to himself, under each set, certain liberties specified in declarations of rights.

It has been widely believed, since the publication in 1913 of Charles A. Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, that the federal constitution of 1787 marked a reaction against democratic impulses of the Revolution, and was a device by which men of property, particularly those holding securities of the state or continental governments, sought to protect themselves and their financial holdings

vote at all (1,801,918 "ayes" to 11,610 "no's" with some 4,300,000 abstentions). It is a question whether a vote by 23 per cent of the population should be considered "light." This percentage may have been a good measure of the politically interested population; in the annual elections of the governor the ratio of persons actually casting a vote to the total of adult white males ranged between 9 per cent and 28 per cent until it began to rise with the election of 1800. See J. R. Pole, "Suffrage and Representation in Massachusetts: A Statistical Note," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, XIV (October 1957), 590-92, and J. Godechot, *Les institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire* (Paris, 1951), 252.

against the dangers of popular rule. The Philadelphia convention has been represented as an almost clandestine body, which exceeded its powers, and which managed (as has also been said of the Massachusetts convention of 1780) to impose a conservative constitution on a confused or apathetic people. Recently the flimsiness of the evidence for this famous thesis has been shown by Professor Robert Brown.²⁰ The thesis takes its place in the history of historical writing, as a product of that Progressive and post-Progressive era in which the common man could be viewed as the dupe or plaything of private interests.

It seems likely enough that there was a conservative reaction after the American Revolution, and even a movement among the upper class (minus the old loyalists) not wholly unlike the "aristocratic resurgence" which I shall soon describe in the Europe of the 1780's. The difference is that these neo-aristocrats of America were less obstinate and less caste-conscious than in Europe. They did not agree with each other, and they knew they could not rule alone. The men at Philadelphia in 1787 were too accomplished as politicians to be motivated by anything so impractical as ideology or mere self-interest. They hoped, while solving concrete problems, to arouse as little opposition as possible. They lacked also the European sense of the permanency of class status. Thinking of an upper class as something that individuals might move into or out of, they allowed for social mobility both upward and downward. The wealthy Virginian, George Mason, at the Philadelphia convention, on urging that the upper class should take care to give adequate representation to the lower, offered it as one of his reasons that, however affluent they might be now, "the course of a few years not only might, but certainly would, distribute their posterity through the lowest classes of society."²¹ No one seems to have disputed this prognostication. Such acceptance of future downward mobility for one's own grandchildren, if by no means universal in America, was far more common than in Europe. Without such downward mobility there could not long remain much room for newcomers at the top, or much assurance of a fluid society. With it, there could not be a permanent aristocracy in the European sense.

It was the state legislatures that chose the delegates to the Philadelphia convention, in answer to a widely expressed demand for strengthening the federal government under the Articles of Confederation. The Philadelphia convention proceeded, not to amend the Articles, but to ignore and discard them. It repudiated the union which the thirteen states had made. Beard in 1913 found it satisfying to call this operation a revolution, a revolution from above to be sure, which he compared to a *coup d'état* of Napoleon. His critic, Professor Brown, in 1956, found it satisfying and important to deny any revolutionary action in what happened.

What did really happen? The men at Philadelphia did circumvent the state governments, and in a sense they betrayed those who sent them. They did so by adopting the revolutionary principle of the American Revolution, which had already become less purely revolutionary and more institutionalized as an accepted rou-

20 R. E. Brown, *Charles Beard and the Constitution: a Critical Analysis of "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution"* (Princeton, 1956). The critique of Beard is carried even further in a more recent work, Forrest McDonald, *We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago, 1958).

21 *Writings of James Madison*, 9 vols. (N.Y., 1902-1910), III, 47.

tine, as shown in the Massachusetts convention of 1780, which had been followed by a New Hampshire convention, and new constitution for New Hampshire in 1784. The Philadelphia convention went beyond the existing constituted bodies, that is, the state governments and the Congress under the Articles, by appealing for support directly to the people, who in each state elected, for this purpose only, conventions to discuss, ratify, or refuse to ratify the document proposed by the convention at Philadelphia. The authors of the proposed federal constitution needed a principle of authority; they conceived that "the people were the fountain of all power," and that if popularly chosen conventions ratified their work "all disputes and doubts concerning [its] legitimacy" would be removed.²² In each state, in voting for ratifying conventions, the voters voted according to the franchise as given by their state constitutions. No use was made of the more truly revolutionary idea, still alive in Massachusetts in 1780, that on the acceptance of a government *every* man should have a vote. In some states the authorized voters were a great majority; in none were they a small minority. The actual vote for the ratifying conventions was light, despite protracted public discussion, because most people lost interest, or never had any, in abstract debates concerning governmental structure at the distant federal level. Eleven states ratified within a few months, and the constitution went into effect for the people of those eleven states. The remaining two states came in within three years. The whole procedure was revolutionary in a sense, but revolution had already become domesticated in America. The idea of the people as the constituent power, acting through special conventions, was so generally accepted and understood that a mere mention of the word "convention," in the final article of the proposed constitution, was thought sufficient explanation of the process of popular endorsement.

Nevertheless, men of popular principles, those who would soon be called democrats, and who preferred the arrangements of the Pennsylvania constitution, with its single-house legislature to which the executive was subordinated, found much in the new federal constitution not to their liking, at least at first sight. The new instrument reproduced the main features of the Massachusetts constitution of 1780: the strong president, the senate, the house of representatives, the partial executive veto, the independent judiciary, the separation and balance of powers. In fact, the longer tenure of offices—four years for the president, six for senators, two for representatives, in place of the annual terms for corresponding functionaries in Massachusetts—shows a reaction away from revolutionary democracy and toward the giving of more adequate authority to those entrusted with public power. The president was not popularly elected, like the governor in Massachusetts; but neither was he designated by the legislative assembly, like the president in Pennsylvania and governors in the Southern states. He was elected by an electoral college, with each state free to determine how its own share of these electors should be chosen. Although as early as 1788 almost half the states provided for popular election of presidential electors, it was not until 1828 that this became the general and permanent rule. In the federal constitution the unique feature, and key to the main compromise, was the senate. Not only did large and small states have the same

22 Quoted by Brown, *op.cit.*, 140.

number of senators, but it was the state legislatures that chose them. Since it was the state legislatures that conservative or hard-money men mainly feared in the 1780's, this provision can hardly have been introduced in the hope of assuring economic conservatism. It was introduced to mollify the states as states. In the senate the new union was a league of preexisting corporate entities. In the house of representatives it rested more directly on the people. Anyone who had the right to vote in his state could vote for a member of the lower house of Congress. In one respect the federal constitution, by its silence, was more democratic in a modern sense than any of the state constitutions. No pecuniary or religious qualification was specified for any office.

The new constitution was a compromise, but that it produced a less popular federal government, less close to the people, than that of the Articles of Confederation, seems actually contrary to the facts. It created a national arena for political controversy. There were now, for the first time, national elections in which voters could dispute over national issues. One result was the rise, on a national scale, of the Jeffersonian democratic movement in the 1790's.

AMBIVALENCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

In conclusion, the American Revolution was really a revolution, in that certain Americans subverted their legitimate government, ousted the contrary-minded and confiscated their property, and set the example of a revolutionary program, through mechanisms by which the people was deemed to act as the constituent power. This much being said, it must be admitted that the Americans, when they constituted their new states, tended to reconstitute much of what they already had. They were as fortunate and satisfied a people as any the world has known. They thus offered both the best and the worst example, the most successful and the least pertinent precedent, for less fortunate or more dissatisfied peoples who in other parts of the world might hope to realize the same principles.

Pennsylvania and Georgia gave themselves one-chamber legislatures, but both had had one-chamber legislatures before the Revolution. All states set up weak governors; they had been undermining the authority of royal governors for generations. South Carolina remained a planter oligarchy before and after independence, but even in South Carolina fifty-acre freeholders had a vote. New York set up one of the most conservative of the state constitutions, but this was the first constitution under which Jews received equality of civil rights—not a very revolutionary departure, since Jews had been prospering in New York since 1654.²³ The Anglican Church was disestablished, but it had had few roots in the colonies anyway. In New England the sects obtained a little more recognition, but Congregationalism remained favored by law. The American revolutionaries made no change in the laws of indentured servitude. They deplored, but avoided, the matter of Negro slavery. Quitrents were generally abolished, but they had been nominal anyway, and a kind of manorial system remained long after the Revolution in New York. Laws

23 J. R. Marcus, *Early American Jewry* (Philadelphia, 1953), II, 530.

favoring primogeniture and entail were done away with, but apparently they had been little used by landowners in any case. No general or statistical estimate is yet possible on the disposition of loyalist property. Some of the confiscated estates went to strengthen a new propertied class, some passed through the hands of speculators, and some either immediately or eventually came into the possession of small owners. There was enough change of ownership to create a material interest in the Revolution, but obviously no such upheaval in property relations as in France after 1789.

Even the apparently simple question of how many people received the right to vote because of the Revolution cannot be satisfactorily answered. There was some extension of democracy in this sense, but the more we examine colonial voting practices the smaller the change appears. The Virginia constitution of 1776 simply gave the vote to those "at present" qualified. By one estimate the number of persons voting in Virginia actually declined from 1741 to 1843, and those casting a vote in the 1780's were about a quarter of the free male population over twenty-one years of age.²⁴ The advance of political democracy, at the time of the Revolution, was most evident in the range of officers for whom voters could vote. In the South the voters generally voted only for members of the state legislatures; in Pennsylvania and New England they voted also for local officials, and in New England for governors as well.

In 1796, at the time of the revolution in Europe, and when the movement of Jeffersonian democracy was gathering strength in America, seven of the sixteen states then in the union had no property qualification for voters in the choice of the lower legislative house, and half of them provided for popular election of governors, only the seaboard South, and New Jersey, persisting in legislative designation of the executive.²⁵ The best European historians underestimate the extent of political democracy in America at this time. They stress the restrictions on voting rights in America, as in the French constitution of 1791.²⁶ They do so because they have read the best American historians on the subject and have in particular followed the school of Charles Beard and others. The truth seems to be that America was a good deal more democratic than Europe in the 1790's. It had been so, within limits, long before the revolutionary era began.

Nor in broad political philosophy did the American Revolution require a violent break with customary ideas. For Englishmen it was impossible to maintain, in the eighteenth century or after, that the British constitution placed any limits on the powers of Parliament. Not so for Americans; they constantly appealed, to block the authority of Parliament or other agencies of the British government, to their rights as Englishmen under the British constitution. The idea of limited govern-

24 C. S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political practices in Washington's Virginia* (Williamsburg, 1952), 138–39, 143.

25 W. L. Smith, *A Comparative View of the Several States with Each Other . . .* (Philadelphia, 1796). There are six tables showing comparisons.

26 See, for example, G. Lefebvre, *La Révolution française* (Paris, 1951), 99, and *Coming of the French Revolution*, Eng. trans. (Princeton, 1947), 180–81; P. Sagnac, *La fin de l'ancien régime et la Révolution américaine 1763–1789* (Paris, 1947), 386–93, where the Beard view of issues involved in the writing and ratification of the federal constitution is clearly expounded.

ment, the habit of thinking in terms of two levels of law, of an ordinary law checked by a higher constitutional law, thus came out of the realities of colonial experience. The colonial Americans believed also, like Blackstone for that matter, that the rights of Englishmen were somehow the rights of all mankind. When the highest English authorities disagreed on what Americans claimed as English rights, and when the Americans ceased to be English by abjuring their King, they were obliged to find another and less ethnocentric or merely historical principle of justification. They now called their rights the rights of man. Apart from abstract assertions of natural liberty and equality, which were not so much new and alarming as conceptual statements as in the use to which they were applied, the rights claimed by Americans were the old rights of Englishmen—trial by jury, *habeas corpus*, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of elections, no taxation without representation. The content of rights was broadened, but the content changed less than the form, for the form now became universal.²⁷ Rights were demanded for human beings as such. It was not necessary to be English, or even American, to have an ethical claim to them. The form also became more concrete, less speculative and metaphysical, more positive and merely legal. Natural rights were numbered, listed, written down, and embodied in or annexed to constitutions, in the foundations of the state itself.

So the American Revolution remains ambivalent. If it was conservative, it was also revolutionary, and vice versa. It was conservative because colonial Americans had long been radical by general standards of Western Civilization. It was, or appeared, conservative because the deepest conservatives, those most attached to King and empire, conveniently left the scene. It was conservative because the colonies had never known oppression, excepting always for slavery—because, as human institutions go, America had always been free. It was revolutionary because the colonists took the risks of rebellion, because they could not avoid a conflict among themselves, and because they checkmated those Americans who, as the country developed, most admired the aristocratic society of England and Europe. Henceforth the United States, in Louis Hartz's phrase, would be the land of the frustrated aristocrat, not of the frustrated democrat; for to be an aristocrat it is not enough to think of oneself as such, it is necessary to be thought so by others; and never again would deference for social rank be a characteristic American attitude. Elites, for better or for worse, would henceforth be on the defensive against popular values. Moreover the Americans in the 1770's, not content merely to throw off an outside authority, insisted on transmuting the theory of their political institutions. Their revolution was revolutionary because it showed how certain abstract doctrines, such as the rights of man and the sovereignty of the people, could be "reduced to practice," as Adams put it, by assemblages of fairly levelheaded gentlemen exercising constituent power in the name of the people. And, quite apart from its more distant repercussions, it was certainly revolutionary in its impact on the contemporary world across the Atlantic.

27 For a European view, see O. Vossler, "Studien zur Erklärung der Menschenrechte," *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 142 (1930), 536–39.

CHAPTER IX

EUROPE AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Ce vaste Continent, qu'environnent les mers,
Va tout-à-coup changer l'Europe et l'Univers.
Il s'élève pour nous, aux champs del'Amérique
De nouveaux intérêts, une autre politique.

—M. J. CHÉNIER, CHARLES IX, 1789

La tempesta fremente,
Che a noi salvezza e libertade apporta.

—VITTORIO ALFIERI, L'AMERICA LIBERA, 1783

O Land dem Sänger teurer als Vaterland!

—ANON., DIE FREIHEIT AMERIKAS, 1783

Mijn vrienden! ieder uwer ziet
Het heil van deezen Staat uit de Amerijksche vrijheid.

—A. LOOSJES, DE VRIJ-VERKLARING
VAN NOORD-AMERIKA, 1782

K tebe dusha moia vspalena,
K tebe, slovutaia strana
Stremitsia . . .
Primer tvoi metu obnazhil.

—A. RADISHCHEV, VOL'NOST': ODA, 1782
(FOR TRANSLATIONS SEE APPENDIX II)

THE SENSE OF A NEW ERA

The first and greatest effect of the American Revolution in Europe was to make Europeans believe, or rather feel, often in a highly emotional way, that they lived in a rare era of momentous change. They saw a kind of drama of the continents. This was the generation that read Raynal's *Philosophical History of European Establishments in the Two Indies*, a huge work published in Paris in 1770, which went through fifty-five editions in five or six languages within thirty years. It was a long humanitarian recital of the evils brought upon the world by European greed and colonialism. Seen against this background, the successful War of American Independence presented itself as a great act of retribution on a cosmic stage. There were many Europeans who said that America would someday, in its turn, predominate over Europe. Nor was this the view of enthusiasts only. No reports were more coldly analytical than those sent home by the Venetian ambassadors. The Venetian Ambassador in Paris observed in 1783, in a report written in secrecy and with no intention to be pompous: "If only the union of the Provinces is preserved, it is reasonable to expect that, with the favorable effects of time, and of European arts and sciences, it will become the most formidable power in the world."¹

More than power was involved, and more than the grandiose conceptions of an embryonic geopolitics. The American Revolution coincided with the climax of the Age of Enlightenment. It was itself, in some degree, the product of this age. There were many in Europe, as there were in America, who saw in the American Revolution a lesson and an encouragement for mankind. It proved that the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment might be put into practice. It showed, or was assumed to show, that ideas of the rights of man and the social contract, of liberty and equality, of responsible citizenship and popular sovereignty, of religious freedom, freedom of thought and speech, separation of powers and deliberately contrived written constitutions, need not remain in the realm of speculation, among the writers of books, but could be made the actual fabric of public life among real people, in this world, now.

Thus was created an American myth, or mirage, or dream, "the first of those great movements of secular mysticism," to quote a recent author, "which modern man has been experimenting with for the last two hundred years." It was "essentially the belief that certain key doctrines were achieving their first realization in the United States."² The first realization was not to be the last. Hence came an expectancy of change, a sense of great events already begun, a consciousness of a new era, a receptivity to that attempt at world renewal soon to be made in France. And if anyone thinks that Americans had nothing to do with launching this *mystique* of world revolution, let him examine the Great Seal of the United States, conveniently printed on the back of the dollar bill, with its penetrating eye, its everlasting pyramid dated 1776, and its Latin motto: *Novus Ordo Saeclorum*.

1 A. Bernardy, "La missione di Beniamino Franklin a Parigi nei dispaacci degli ambasciatori Veneziani in Francia, 1776-1786," in *Archivio storico italiano* (1920), 252.

2 D. Echeverria, *Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (Princeton, 1956), 116, 140. This is the latest and best study of the subject for France.

The influence of the American Revolution in Europe has been thoroughly studied only for France. It is possible, however, by putting together sporadic pieces of evidence, some of them of uncertain significance, to present an impression of what Europe as a whole thought and felt about the events in America; and such is the purpose of this chapter. Only the immediate reaction of the years before 1789 is considered, since the French Revolution and events flowing from it had the effect of eclipsing the American Revolution in the European consciousness, and even of distorting or transfiguring it, causing some to believe in a great international or world revolution common to Europe and America both, and others to distinguish, like Gentz and J. Q. Adams, between an undesirable revolution in Europe and a revolution in America that had been no revolution at all.

There were great differences, country by country, in the way in which Europeans reacted. At one extreme, there were three countries in which admirers of the American Revolution enjoyed, or seized, the opportunity for political action in their own affairs. These three were England, Ireland, and the United Provinces. In England those who most warmly sympathized with America were kept busy attending meetings, forming associations, drafting plans, and conducting propaganda for parliamentary reform. In Ireland and in the Dutch provinces they formed militia companies, wore uniforms, attended drills, and built up an actual revolutionary pressure which produced real results. As one of the Dutch leaders said, to follow the example of America meant that all should be ready, "every man with his musket."³ Where action of such positive kind was possible there was less need to vent one's feelings in poems, orations, pamphlets and treatises on distant lands.

At the other extreme, south of the Alps and Pyrenees, the American Revolution seems in these years to have produced little commotion. Carli's *Lettere americane* of 1780 proves to be about the Lost Atlantis. It was with Latin America that these countries had their contacts, and the important works of two American-born Jesuits, in refuge in Italy after the dissolution of the Jesuit order—Molina on Chile and Clavigero on Mexico—were written in Italy during the American Revolution, on which, however, they gave no information. Knowledge of British America had long been scarce in southern Europe, and the governments there had no desire for their subjects to learn about it now. Probably beneath the political censorship there were stirrings of interest that cannot now be traced. A few pamphlets of Benjamin Franklin's appeared in Italian, but excitement in Italy over Franklin, and over the United States, was apparently greater after 1796, that is, after the Italian revolutions which accompanied the French irruption, and which freed the press and opened the way to political experimentation. I know of only one work of Italian authorship, and one of Spanish, specifically on the subject of English-speaking America, between the American and the Franco-European revolutions: Castiglioni's travels published at Milan in 1790, which showed a realistic approach to American politics, and a work published at Madrid in 1778 by Don Francisco Alvarez.

Don Francisco's is a curious production, which may give evidence of an actual curiosity about the American Revolution held down by the censorship of an ap-

3 Quoted from J. D. van der Capellen van de Poll by H. L. Fairchild, *Francis Adrian van der Kemp* (N.Y., 1903), 56.

prehensive government, for although Spain joined in the American War of Independence, it naturally feared the spread of rebellion to its own American dominions. Alvarez, in his preface, declares that all eyes are on the Anglo-Americans, that the newspapers are full of their affairs, and that Spaniards have recently shown a commendable new interest in serious books. He proposes to give information, but he gives none. He declares that New England (probably meaning British America) is divided into eleven provinces and four counties, and that the Anglican Church is established in all of them; he says virtually nothing on the Revolution; and he drifts off into commercial topics, Indian affairs, and a miscellany of fanciful anecdotes.⁴

Between the two extremes, in the middle zone of France and Germany, there was a far more lively interest in the American Revolution than in the south, together with a more highly developed press and a wider penetration of the liberalism of the Enlightenment, while on the other hand there was no chance for private persons to do anything in the way of practical politics, as in Holland and the British Isles. The result was an incredible outburst of discussion, speculation, rhapsody, and argument, a veritable intoxication with the *rêve américain*. It is mostly with France and Germany that the following pages deal. But the theme can be set by two Swiss from Basel, Peter Ochs, the future Director of the Helvetic Republic, and his mentor, Isaac Iselin, the Swiss *philosophe* and physiocrat.

"What do you think of the success of the Americans?" wrote Ochs to Iselin in 1777. "Might it perhaps be from the side of the other continent that we shall see the realization of what you have taught about the history of mankind?"

"I am tempted to believe," replied Iselin, "that North America is the country where reason and humanity will develop more rapidly than anywhere else."⁵

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Europeans were made conscious of the American Revolution in many ways, through the press, through discussions in reading clubs or Masonic lodges, through the reports of returned soldiers, and through the deliberate propaganda of Americans and others. All worked upon a basic receptivity in Europe, since the revolution in America gave the opportunity for discussion, in a colorful and dramatic context, of those general ideas about government and politics which had come to occupy the European mind.

It was in the last third of the eighteenth century that a public opinion, as such, took form, and, indeed, the very expression, "public opinion," dates in several languages from this time. It consisted in groups of people habitually interested in public events, subscribing as individuals or in clubs to newspapers and magazines, incipiently political in their outlook, not at first in the sense that they expected to take any action in politics themselves, but in the sense that they were aware of

⁴ F. Alvarez, *Noticia del establecimiento y poblacion de la colonias inglesas en la America septentrional* (Madrid, 1778).

⁵ G. Steiner, ed., *Korrespondenz des Peter Ochs* (Basel, 1927), I, 102, 104.

the importance of government and political institutions, and believed that there was something called the public welfare, which depended on the policies of governments and on the enlightened behavior of citizens. Such people were conscious of more than local or private problems, and of the existence of similar people, and similar problems, in distant places. This growth of communication was obviously one of the fundamental preconditions to the whole revolutionary era. It had enabled the Thirteen Colonies to stage a collective resistance to England, it now made America and Europe feel together, and it undermined, in Europe, the whole idea of government as a kind of private occupation of limited governmental circles.

The advent of public opinion was signalized by a phenomenal growth of the press, both of books and of newspapers and magazines. Books had never before been so numerous, and for the newly developing reading public America was a welcome subject, satisfying a popular taste for the exotic, or a philosophical attraction to worldwide views. The press also was less narrowly national than it later became; French was an international language for the educated, many books in French were printed in Holland and Germany, and translation soon carried many works across language frontiers. A little investigation discloses no less than twenty-six works on America that appeared in at least three languages, wholly or in large part, in the years roughly from 1760 to 1790. Fifteen of these appeared in at least four languages, most commonly in the combination of English, French, German, and Dutch, which together formed a solid zone well into eastern Europe. They are listed for reference in the accompanying table.

For the periodical press it is possible to form a quantitative impression of the growth taking place. In England it appears that 66 new magazines and newspapers were launched in the 1770's, 96 in the 1780's, and 151 in the 1790's. In Germany, because of the dispersion among many small capitals and university towns, the number of newly established periodicals (often short-lived) was astounding: 410 in the 1760's, 718 in the 1770's, 1,225 in the 1780's. Many of these were heavily erudite, but many also were addressed to the public or devoted to the public welfare. For example, there were 29 newspapers and magazines in Germany before 1790 that called themselves *Der Patriot*, such as the *Hessischer Patriot*, the *Musikalischer Patriot*, etc. The number of periodicals published in France was smaller than in Germany, because of the greater centralization in Paris, and because the French depended heavily on French-language journals edited under freer conditions in Holland or at Liège. Only 40 new ones have been counted for the eight years preceding 1789, whereas 1,350 are known to have been launched in Paris alone from 1789 to 1800.⁶

With this growth of the press went the formation of reading clubs, in which friends or fellow-townsmen pooled their funds to buy books, magazines, and

6 The *Times*, London, *Tercentenary handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers, Magazines, and Reviews* (London, 1920); J. Kirchner, *Die Grundlagen des deutschen Zeitschriftenwesens mit einer gesamt-bibliographie der deutschen Zeitschriften bis zum Jahre 1790*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1928); E. Hatin, *Bibliographie historique et critique de la presse périodique française* (Paris, 1866). Since Kirchner was very complete, and Hatin admitted a certain ignorance of the provincial press, the difference between Germany and France is exaggerated to an unknown extent in the above figures.

WRITINGS ON AMERICA APPEARING IN THREE OR MORE LANGUAGES
MAINLY BETWEEN 1760 AND 1790

Language or Nationality of Original:		
Author and Short Title	English	French
American		
Benezet, <i>Quakers</i>	1780	1783
<i>Constitutions and Other Documents</i>	1776ff.	1778
Crevecoeur, <i>American Farmer</i>	1782	1784
Franklin, <i>On Emigration</i> , etc.	1784	1784
Filson, <i>Kentucky</i>	1784	1785
Jefferson, <i>Notes on Virginia</i>	1787	1786
Paine, <i>Common Sense</i>	1776	1776
Ramsey, <i>Revolution in S. Carolina</i>	1785	1787
British		
Burke, <i>Settlements in America</i>	1757	1767
Carver, <i>Travels in America</i>	1778	1784
Price, <i>Civil Liberty</i>	1776	1776
Price, <i>American Revolution</i>	1784	1784
Robertson, <i>History of America</i>	1777	1777
French		
Brissot, <i>Travels in U.S.</i>	1792	1791
Chastellux, <i>Travels in America</i>	1787	1785
Mably, <i>Government of U.S.</i>	1784	1784
Mirabeau, <i>Cincinnatus</i> , etc.	1785	1784
Raynal, <i>Two Indies</i>	1776	1770
Raynal, <i>Revolution of America</i>	1781	1781
Robin, <i>Travels in America</i>	1783	1782
German		
Campe, <i>Discovery of America</i>	1799	1782
Italian		
Carli, <i>American Letters</i>		1788
Clavigero, <i>Mexico</i>	1787	
Molina, <i>Chile</i>	1808	1789
Dutch		
De Pauw, <i>On the Americans</i>	1789	1768
Swedish		
Kalm, <i>Travels in America</i>	1771	
In Swedish, 1753		

German	Dutch	Italian	Spanish
1783			
	1787		
1784	1784		
1786		1785	
1790			
1789			
1794			
1794	1792		
1775	(n.d. after 1775)	1763	
1780	1796		
1777	1776		
1787	1785		
1777	1778	1777	1827
1782	n.d.		
1785			
	1785		
1787	1785		
1774	1775	1778	1784
1782	1781		
1783	1782		
1780	1782		1803
1785		1780	1821
1789		1780	
1786		1782	1788
1769	1771		
1754	1772		

newspapers, and hired a room or met in a tavern to read and discuss them. It is for France that most is known about these clubs. There is even a theory, somewhat anti-revolutionary in overtones, that attributes the French Revolution, in a measure, to frequentation of these clubs by disgruntled middle-class people who naïvely supposed that they knew what was good for the country. There were, however, many such clubs in other countries; it is true that most of them turned pro-revolutionary when revolution came. Meanwhile, before 1789, the American Revolution was undoubtedly the topic of many eager discussions.

The Masonic lodges played a similar role, and their membership reached into higher social and political circles. Various branches of Masonry had spread throughout Europe and British America in the eighteenth century. The fact that Washington and other American leaders were Masons made European Masons feel akin to them, and one of the first things done by Franklin, to propagandize for America when he arrived in Paris in 1777, was to join the Lodge of the Nine Sisters. The network of Masonry, with its mysterious rituals and its select membership, which, however, was recruited without regard to social class, created an international and interclass sense of fellowship among men fired by ideas of liberty, progress, and reform. At Budapest the Masons called themselves the American Lodge. A Swiss Mason enlisted the Italo-Virginian, Philip Mazzei, in the service of Poland.

Another channel bringing an image of America to Europe was that of the returned soldiers, of whom the most memorable was the Marquis de Lafayette. The influence of America on Lafayette is well known through the researches of Professor Gottschalk. Lafayette, according to Gottschalk, was not inspired to volunteer in the American army by any idealized love of liberty already formed in France. Rather, it was his experience in America that gave him an idealized love of liberty, and made him return to France with a strong predilection toward what were called republican sentiments. He was an impressionable young man, eager for action in his military career, and the liberty that he rushed off to fight for was the "freedom of the seas," that is, a chance to strike a blow against England. He met and was closely associated with Washington, feeling toward him almost as a son; through his admiration for Washington, his wanting to think and act and speak like him, he even became a little like Washington himself.⁷

There were hundreds of other French officers who saw service with Rochambeau in 1780. For most of them the effects of their experience can only be conjectured. Some, like the Count de Ségur, were clearly inspired by what they saw of liberty and equality in America. Of Rochambeau himself, it can at least be said that he lived to accept the French Revolution; the Count de Custine, French quartermaster-general in America in 1780, commanded an army of the French Republic in 1792—and died on the guillotine. Others were unmoved in their aristocratic predilections; the Swedish Count Axel de Fersen, aide-de-camp to Rochambeau, is chiefly famous as the admirer of Marie-Antoinette and emissary of counterrevolution in 1791.

⁷ See especially the fourth volume of L. R. Gottschalk's life of Lafayette, *Lafayette between the American and the French Revolution, 1783–1789* (Chicago, 1950), 1–11.

Of the Poles who fought in America, Pulaski was killed there, but Kosciuszko survived to lead an attempted Polish revolution in 1794, in which national independence, and even emancipation of the serfs, were unsuccessfully asserted against the Russian and Prussian armies. British officers naturally brought home unfavorable impressions of the rebels, but it must be remembered that some pro-American British officers, like Major Cartwright, the parliamentary reformer, had refused to serve in America at all. The German auxiliaries to the British probably remained largely neutral in spirit, but General von Riedesel, the commander of the Brunswick contingent, was favorably enough impressed by the advantages of America to recommend that his soldiers simply stay there at the end of the war, and a young officer named Gneisenau saw a military value in patriotically inspired militia, and tried thirty years later to introduce certain features of a democratic kind into the Prussian army.

It would be interesting to know more of the experience of enlisted men who fought in America—French, British, and German—since in this way we could trace an American influence among the lower social classes of which the enlisted ranks were then composed. An interesting attempt has recently been made in this direction.⁸ It has been shown that a high proportion of the 7,000 soldiers in Rochambeau's army came from those parts of France in which agrarian insurrection and peasant revolution were most in evidence nine years later, in 1789. From this geographical coincidence it is argued that French peasants, as soldiers in America, saw how well off American farmers were, through ownership of their farms without manorial or feudal restraints; and that therefore, back in their native villages, they took a lead in stirring up revolt when the Revolution came in France. This thesis would be important if it could be more fully proved, as evidence of an actual link between common people of the two countries. It seems equally likely, however, that the geographical coincidence may be due to a third factor; that certain regions, because of bad conditions in agriculture, might both send more than an average number of men into the army, and revolt when revolt became possible. As for the 30,000 German troops who went to America, some 12,000 remained to settle there. We can only guess what was said by those who got back to Germany. Neighbors very likely heard a great deal about America from German soldiers, as well as from British and French. This may be one of the early firsthand sources of the generally favorable view of America that long characterized the working people of Europe.

A good deal of deliberate propaganda was also in the air. The British government and its sympathizers scored various successes, particularly in Holland and parts of Germany. The Dutch publicist, Isaac de Pinto, who drew part of his income from British connections, stirred up a small international controversy by two pamphlets of 1776 in which he justified the British policy toward the colonies. Since the Orange family and its adherents were as warmly partisan to England as their adversaries were to America, the American Revolution had a seriously divisive effect in the Netherlands. In Germany the British view was most fully set

8 F. McDonald, "The Relation of French Peasant Veterans of the American Revolution to the Fall of Feudalism in France," in *Agricultural History*, XXV (1951), 151–61.

forth in Hanover, where the dynastic connection with England had brought about many intellectual contacts. The University of Göttingen, and especially its eminent professor, the journalist Schlözer, became the main center in Germany of anti-American feeling.⁹ Echoes of the same thing in France may be heard in the words of Mallet du Pan, who remarked that in the American war "the dregs of America had fought the dregs of Europe."¹⁰ Since Mallet du Pan and Schlözer were soon to become leading conservative writers against the French Revolution, their lack of enthusiasm for the American Revolution is worth more than passing notice. It is evidence that the two revolutions looked alike to many conservatives, and that counterrevolutionary attitudes were growing even before the French Revolution.

Many people first came to sympathize with the Americans because of dislike of England. They more readily believed that the Americans were fighting for liberty because they thought the British were tyrants. The British had become so wealthy and powerful, especially in the spectacular victories of the Seven Years' War, and they had so often taken measures to stifle the ocean-borne trade of Continental Europe, that a strong body of feeling in Europe looked on England with aversion as the modern Carthage, the ruthless monopolist of the sea, the perfidious Albion that made continental allies only to exploit them. This feeling was to be of use to Napoleon thirty years later. It was now of use to the Americans. Frederick the Great, for example, was no lover of rebellious subjects, but he was sufficiently annoyed with England to allow all sorts of pro-American sentiments to be published at Berlin.

The French government acted basically in the same way.¹¹ Choiseul had foreseen the American Revolution as early as 1765, and looked forward to it as a main hope for redressing the balance between France and England. The Count de Vergennes returned from Sweden in 1774, shortly after the monarchist revolution which he had helped to initiate there, to take charge of the French foreign office at the accession of Louis XVI. Within a year, in 1775, Vergennes foresaw the possibility of involvement in the American crisis. He sponsored the dramatist, Beaumarchais, in rigging up a commercial company to convey French aid to the rebels. He allowed or encouraged anti-British and pro-American agitation in the press. The French government, no more addicted to republicanism than Frederick the Great, favored the appearance of a new journal called the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*. Beginning as early as 1776, two years before French official recognition of the United States, this journal published reports on the war, writings of American leaders, the Declaration of Independence, and various other documents, including several of the state constitutions.

Of all propagandists the most adroit was Benjamin Franklin. It was, in fact, a master stroke of self-advertisement for the Continental Congress to choose him as

9 For information on Germany I am mainly indebted to H. P. Gallinger, *Die Haltung der deutsche Publizistik zu dem amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskriege* (Leipzig, 1900), and to the work of my former assistant, Dr. Gordon M. Jensen.

10 Quoted by Echeverria, *op.cit.*, 128.

11 For what follows on France I am indebted to Echeverria, *op.cit.*, but have also used other studies, including some of my own, of my colleague Dr. H. C. Rice of the Princeton University Library, and, it need hardly be added, of Professor Gilbert Chinard.

its representative at Versailles, for Franklin was the only American whose name was known in Europe at the beginning of the American Revolution. He was, however, very well known, and favorably known, for his electrical and other scientific experiments and for his defense of the colonies in England at the time of the Stamp Act. He had been a member of the French Academy of Sciences since 1772. As one who, in a famous epigram, had wrested the lightning from heaven and the scepter from tyrants, he was the perfect embodiment of what *philosophes* meant by a philosopher; self-taught, but profoundly schooled in the laws of nature; a patriot who had given years to the public service; the author, it was believed, of the constitution of Pennsylvania (he had in fact presided at the Pennsylvania convention); gallant with the ladies, yet above the foolishness of an artificial society; a plain man, the sage of Philadelphia, with an aura of Quakerism about him, who mixed with a natural equality in all social circles, and preserved his dignity, and his simple costume, when presented at Versailles to the King of France.

Franklin slipped into Paris in the last days of 1776, the unavowed agent of unrecognized revolutionaries. He left it in 1785, after nine years of adulation. A generation of Frenchmen that had worn handkerchiefs in honor of John Wilkes outdid itself to welcome Franklin, not only with handkerchiefs but with prints and engravings or anything else that might display his features: medallions and snuff-boxes, hats and canes, clocks, chinaware, watches and rings. Poetic tributes came not only from poets but from ladies and statesmen; it was Turgot who coined the line *Eripuit caelo fulmen sceptrumque tyrannis*, and the fashionable Countess d'Houdetot, in an elaborate garden party in his honor, saluted him as *Legislateur d'un monde, et bienfaiteur de deux*. At the salon of Mme. Helvetius he met Turgot, Condorcet, Volney, and Cabanis. At the Lodge of the Nine Sisters he met Voltaire, and also Brissot and Dr. Guillotin. At the Academy of Sciences, he mixed with French scientists, and was appointed to a committee, along with Lavoisier, to investigate the claims of Mesmerism. He was elected to learned societies in Lyons, Orleans, Madrid, Turin, Padua, and Rotterdam. His embrace with Voltaire at the Academy of Sciences in 1778 was the high point in all this extraordinary furor. Coming a few weeks after the signing of the Franco-American treaty, and a few months before the death of the octogenarian Voltaire, it was taken to symbolize the union of two worlds, the enlightenment of the Old joining with the liberation of the New.

Franklin in all this uproar not only performed his mission by negotiating the treaty, but publicized the United States in every way possible. He exploited his own personality, or rather the preconceptions of it that he found in France, with the serene effectiveness of a man free from personal vanity. He wrote articles for the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*. He saw to the translation of his Poor Richard and other writings. He put atrocity stories about the British and Indians into the press, and wrote a hoax on the Sale of the Hessians. He arranged with the Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt to have the American constitutions translated into French, and he instigated Mirabeau to write against the Order of the Cincinnati, of which more will shortly be said. He wrote letters of introduction for Frenchmen going to America, and he obtained the election of several to the American Philosophical Society. He listened politely to the numerous well-

intentioned philosophers who came to him with plans for governing the United States. He introduced John Adams, Jefferson, Paine, and other Americans, as they one by one followed him to Europe, to the varied and important acquaintance that he had so carefully built up.

Jefferson followed Franklin as American Minister to France, and though less of a sensation than Franklin, whose triumph could never be duplicated, he carried on the same task of publicizing the United States. He was more of an intellectual than Franklin, and less Gallic in temperament; the need of strictly war propaganda was over, though French enthusiasm for America remained unbounded; so that much of Jefferson's work was in the correction of misconceptions. He published his *Notes on Virginia*, which appeared in French a year before publication in English. He worked carefully with J. N. Demeunier, who was preparing a series of articles on America for the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, carefully going over Demeunier's drafts and discussing them with him, only to conclude in the end, when they were published, that Demeunier still could not rid his mind of errors. When Jefferson's Italian friend from Virginia, Philip Mazzei, came to France, Jefferson encouraged him to write a book on America. The result was Mazzei's *Recherches historiques et politiques sur les Etats Unis*, published at Paris in 1788, in which Mazzei tried to disabuse the French public of the more farfetched ideas of Mably and Raynal. Jefferson also in these years worked closely with Lafayette, who was conducting a busy propaganda campaign of his own in favor of the United States. In 1789, at the time of the fall of the Bastille, and shortly before going home, Jefferson assisted Lafayette on the draft of a French Declaration of the Rights of Man.

During the war John Adams played a similar role in Holland, where he arrived in 1780.¹² His task was more delicate than Franklin's in France, in that the Stadtholder's government was anti-American, it being the merchants and bankers of Amsterdam who were willing, in opposition to the Prince of Orange, to lend aid to America. Adams therefore fell in with the party of incipient revolution, which included the nobleman, Van der Capellen van de Poll, the Mennonite pastor, Van der Kemp, the professor at Leiden and editor of the internationally influential *Gazette de Leide*, John Luzac, and the wealthy young cloth merchant, Peter Vreede, a future Director of the Batavian Republic of 1798. Adams in fact wrote rather huffily to Van der Capellen, soon after arriving, that the Dutch should reduce the power of the Stadtholder in their republic, and do something to separate the houses of Hanover and of Orange. It was more of a subversive remark than any that those discreet democrats, Franklin and Jefferson, ever allowed themselves to make in Bourbon France. Adams, whose main aim was to borrow money, found that no one would lend to America except those willing to brave British and Orange reprisals. In 1780 Capellen, Luzac, and a few others offered a few thousand guilders of their private funds. In 1782, as the anti-Orange movement mounted toward revolution, Adams' Patriot friends got a majority in the Estates General to

12 For Adams' role in Holland, and the Dutch reaction, see Adams' own correspondence; H. L. Fairchild, *Francis Adrian van der Kemp* (N.Y., 1903); and W. H. de Beaufort, ed., *Brieven van en aan Joan Derck van der Capellen van de Poll* (Utrecht, 1879). Many of the letters to and from Capellen are in English or French.

vote recognition of the United States, after which half a dozen Amsterdam bankers produced a loan of five millions.

Meanwhile Adams and his Dutch allies carried on a literary propaganda. Van der Kemp published a collection of American public documents, which included the Massachusetts constitution of 1780, doubtless furnished by Adams. Adams' own *History of the Dispute with America*, which he had written in 1774, also appeared in Dutch. Adriaan Loosjes wrote a poem on American independence, in which Adams figured as one of the heroes. And, like Franklin in Paris, Adams received the suggestions of well-wishers who thought that the simple Americans would appreciate the advice of enlightened Europe on how to govern the United States. An *Americansche Bybel*, containing recommendations on the management of republics, was dedicated to him in 1781.¹³

Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams, along with men like Lafayette and Kosciusko, were only the most eminent among thousands who served, in their own persons, as channels of communication between America and Europe. There was the circle that gathered about the Earl of Shelburne at Bowood, and which included Bentham, Priestley, Price, and the French abbé Morellet. There was the French literary group that lionized St. John de Crevecoeur; it included Mme. d'Houdetot and Lacretelle, and they persuaded him to turn the French translation of his famous *American Farmer* into a long sentimental idyl suited to the prevailing taste in France. There were others on the outer rim of historical visibility, such as a Dutch merchant in America named Erkalens, who as early as 1776 brought about a correspondence between Capellen van de Poll and Governors Trumbull of Connecticut and Livingston of New Jersey, so that when Adams arrived in 1780 he found Dutch-American relations already well established. There was another Erkelens who won a gold crown at Leiden in 1790 for a poem on Washington. One guesses at a connection with the merchant, despite a slight difference in spelling of the names.

We can even see dimly the beginnings of a group of international subversives, or at least of the belief in their existence. British officials suspected in 1784 that the Irish were "wrought upon by French or American emissaries." Dutch officials in 1787 were sure that certain obscure Frenchmen, who were supposed to have brought on the revolution in America, had now moved to Amsterdam to sow disaffection there. There was of course no centrally directed subversive organization of the kind with which later generations were to become familiar. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the French government might discreetly sponsor revolution in other countries, as it had done in America; or that American citizens, such as merchants, sailors, students, or other transients, if only by bragging about American liberty, might have an unsettling effect in Dublin, Amsterdam, or a hundred other cities of Europe.¹⁴

13 Full titles and data for works on America mentioned here and elsewhere may usually be found in J. Sabin, *A Dictionary of Books Relating to America*, 29 volumes. (N.Y., 1868-1936); or John Carter Brown Library, *Bibliotheca americana*, Part III, vol. 2 (Providence, 1871).

14 *Correspondence between William Pitt and the Duke of Rutland* (London, 1890), 24; G. W. Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel en zijne tijdgenooten 1737-1800* (Middelburg, 1876), III, 191; A. Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents: the Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at the Hague* (London, 1954), 105.

A few more words are due to Philip Mazzei, already mentioned. An Italian who settled in Virginia in 1773, he became active in the revolution there, and was sent to Europe in 1779 to borrow money for the state of Virginia. He returned with this mission to his native Tuscany and had many conferences with the Grand Duke, Leopold. The Grand Duke like all other informed people was very curious about the American war, but as a Hapsburg he was too skeptical of the Bourbons to assist their American protégés. Mazzei, his mission unaccomplished, then went to Paris, met Jefferson again, and wrote his *Recherches* against Mably and Raynal. He then took service with the King of Poland. In Poland, too, a kind of revolution began in 1788, and Mazzei, remaining in Paris, undertook to publicize the benefits of this revolution as he had done for the American. King Stanislas, who at first supposed political wisdom to be embodied in the British Constitution, was persuaded by his advisers to see virtue also in the new American constitutional doctrines, and to put a bust of George Washington in his study.¹⁵

THE DEPTHS OF FEELING

America was a screen on which Europe projected its own visions. Europe was divided and restless within itself, with both aristocratic and middle-class ways of life making increasing claims to recognition. It set value both on personal merit and on inherited family status. A growing demand for equality went along with a more troubled class consciousness; and a belief that affairs should be conducted by an elite, either of bureaucratic officials or of constituted bodies that had become largely hereditary, conflicted with a vague and widespread desire, among people hitherto outside the political scene, to take part in affairs, to do good for society, to play the patriot, to act the citizen. Views of America were of every kind, from the enthusiastic to the disgusted, from the revolutionary to the conservative, from the mystical and the moralizing to the sharply political, and from the highly unreal to the concretely realistic. I shall move in the following pages from the unpolitical to the political, and, though they are by no means the same, from the unreal to the more realistic.

The unreality of some of the writing on America must be seen to be believed, and I offer a few exhibits. Their main quality is an indifference to fact, a stylizing of the picture to suit the author's feelings.

Sometimes it is *à la* Watteau, a kind of embarkation for Cythera: "They say that in Virginia the members chosen to establish the new government assembled in a peaceful wood, removed from the sight of the people, in an enclosure prepared by nature with banks of grass; and that in this sylvan spot they deliberated on who should preside over them."¹⁶

15 Mazzei's autobiography has been translated by H. R. Marraro, *Memoirs of the Life and Peregrinations of the Florentine Philip Mazzei, 1730-1816* (N.Y., 1942). On Mazzei and Grand Duke Leopold see below, p. 290. On Mazzei and King Stanislas see below, pp. 423-24.

16 M. R. Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Essais historiques et politiques sur les Anglo-Américains* (Brussels, 1782), II, 119-20.

Sometimes it is à la David, teaching the theme of civic self-sacrifice, as in David's painting, *The Oath of the Horatii*, which caused a great stir at the Paris salon in 1785: "Already the cry of 'Our Country' makes itself heard, already the citizen has taken for a device this maxim, *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*; already his blood is ready to flow for the welfare and safety of his native land. . . . Every colonist is another Curtius, ready to leap into the gulf to save his country. . . . His blood belongs to her. . . . To shed it without reserve is the duty of a true Republican, to whom the prize of liberty makes hateful every yoke but that of the Laws and of the Deity."¹⁷

Sometimes it more directly echoes Plutarch and the noble Romans: "The day when Washington resigned his command in the Hall of Congress, a Crown set with jewels had been placed on the Book of the Constitutions. Suddenly Washington seized the crown, broke it, and threw it in pieces before the assembled people. How petty does the ambitious Caeasar seem before this Hero of America!"¹⁸

Or again the inspiration is from the classical epic, as in *L'Amérique délivrée*, which though written in French was published in Holland and dedicated to John Adams. Here in seven hundred pages of rimed hexameters, Pride, Rumor, Perfidy, and Discord bestride the stage with Minerva, Hercules, Theseus, and the Continental Congress. The author addresses the latter:

Vénérable Congrès, d'un peuple libre et bon
 Vous avez cimenté la gloire et l'union;
 Vous avez délivré l'Amérique et ses ondes
 Des fougueux Leopards [the British],

du tiran des deux mondes:
 De nos vains préjugés habiles scrutateurs
 Vous êtes descendus jusqu'au fond de

nos cœurs:
 Vous y faites plonger un torrent de lumière,
 Qui porte la clarté dans ce triste hémisphère,
 En frappe les tyrans, et de leur joug honteux
 Nous invite à briser les détestables noeuds.¹⁹

A footnote here declares: "This may happen sooner than we think." In other notes the author explains at length that his purpose is to combat Anglomania in Holland, and to persuade the Dutch against emigration, since they may enjoy as much liberty, equality and comfort in the Netherlands as in New York.

And indeed, beneath the literary artifice and rhetorical effusiveness that they derived from their education, we may see a kind of spiritual emigration. We can

17 *Coup d'oeil sur la Grande Bretagne* (London, 1776), 86–87.

18 J. B. Mailhe, *Discours qui a remporté le prix à l'Académie des Jeux Floraux en 1784, sur la grandeur et l'importance de la révolution qui vient de s'opérer dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Toulouse, 1784).

19 Chavanne de la Giraudière, *L'Amérique délivrée* (Amsterdam, 1783), 716. For translation of metrical passages see Appendix II.

sense the psychological discomfort felt by people outside the aristocratic world, the yearning to live in a better country where solid merit would receive due recognition, the voluntary absenteeism or moral rejection of existing European society that was the ultimate cause of the coming revolution in Europe. In Europe, we are told, talent may be a sad and futile gift; it is not so in America. America is the land

Où sans distinction de naissance et de rang,
L'homme le plus honnête et le plus respectable,
Le plus utile enfin, soit toujours le plus grand.²⁰

The author of these verses was a *secrétaire-interprète* at the French Foreign Office, and no doubt had in mind actual barriers in the way of his own advancement. Mme. Roland, the future Girondist, had similar feelings about her husband, one of the government inspectors of manufactures. Meditating in 1782 on his difficulties as a public servant with men of more influence than he had, she had this to say to him: "I abhor from the depths of my soul a State, or the social manners, in which a virtuous man may be obliged to measure himself with a vile creature often unworthy of his anger. What a frightful government which leaves such unequal things in balance! M. Lanthenas [a friend of the family] is quite justified in my eyes in fleeing to Pennsylvania. I wish I were with you in the wilderness."²¹

Much the same feeling of frustration can be detected in Germany. A professor at Giessen, in a journal which he edited at Frankfurt, observed in 1776 that the Americans were "the most fortunate people of the whole earth . . . at least among the civilized nations. They do not even know the names of many burdens borne by subjects in Europe."²² And he thought it a wonder that half Europe had not already emigrated there. Even Sprengel, one of the Göttingen circle who at first defended England, remarked after the war that most of the American states had become more democratic in becoming independent, that no distinctions of class or privilege existed, and that any man by his own talents could obtain any position. Another professor—a class of people more in the forefront of ideas in Germany than in France or England at this time—anonously published a poem called "Die Freiheit Amerikas" in the *Berliner Monatschrift* in 1783, on the occasion of the treaty recognizing American independence. It is tempting to see in it a symbol of Germany itself, for the author, after appealing to Europe to rejoice and to free itself, after vaguely threatening princes and calling nobles the plague of Europe, and after pathetically asking America to take him to its bosom to allay his sorrows, is reminded that he is a German, hears the clank of his chains, sees the vision fade, and, in political helplessness, simply weeps.

Frei bist du! (sag's im höheren Siegeston,
Entzücktes Lied!) frei, frei nun, Amerika!

20 L. G. Bourdon, *Voyage d'Amérique: dialogue en vers entre l'auteur et l'abbé* (Paris, 1786), 23.

21 *Lettres de Mme. Roland* (Paris, 1900), I, 182.

22 H. M. G. Koster in *Neuste Staatsbegebenheiten* (Frankfurt, 1775–1779), quoted in Gallinger, *Deutsche Publicistik*, 21–22.

Dein Beispiel ruft laut den Nationen:
 "Frei ist, wer's sein will, und wert zu sein ist!" . . .

O Land, dem Sänger teurer als Vaterland!
 Der Sprössling deiner Freiheit steigt schnell empor
 Zum Baum. . . .

The hireling soldier in America is astounded; he "turns citizen and embraces as a brother," *wird Bürger und Küsst als Bruder*. For America is the "better hemisphere,"

Wo süsse Gleichheit wohnt, und Adelbrut,
 Europens Pest, die Sitte der Einfalt nicht
 Befleckt, verdienstlos bessern Menschen
 Trotz . . .

And he concludes:

O, nehmt, Geliebte! nehmet den Fremdling auf,
 Den müden Fremdling; lasst mich an eurer Brust

Geheimer Leiden bittre Schmerzen,

Langsam verzehrenden Kummern lindern.

Was säum' ich?—Doch die eiserne Fessel klirrt
 Und mahnt mich Armen, dass ich ein Deutscher bin.

Euch seh'ich, holde Szenen, schwinden,
 Sinke zurück in den Schacht, und weine.²³

There was a similar vein in Goethe, if we may take the sentiments he ascribes to Wilhelm Meister as his own. Goethe's secret sorrows were not inflamed by any nagging sense of social inferiority; yet he, too, saw a vision of America as a land better off than old Europe, only to conclude that such ideas were a dream, and that the world of the here-and-now was the best to be hoped for—*Hier oder nirgends ist America*. Goethe's other famous lines on America—*Amerika, du hast es besser Als unser Continent, das Alte*—were not written until his extreme old age, in 1827.²⁴

Moral indignation passed into metaphysics, frustration into boundless hope, and the strength of feeling alone, without much need of argument, produced a kind of philosophy of history, a belief that the American Revolution marked an

23 *Berliner Monatschrift* (1783), quoted in Gallinger, 65.

24 See P. C. Weber, *America in Imaginative German Literature of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (N.Y., 1926), 32; H. Gräaf, *Goethe über seine Dichtungen: Die lyrische Dichtungen* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1914), II, 702.

enormous turning point in the entire history of the human race. This was that sense of a new era already mentioned. Even conservatives, or dispassionate observers like the Venetian ambassador to Paris, sensed that something tremendous had happened. The young Rotterdam patrician, Van Hogendorp, made a trip to America in 1782, at the age of twenty, to enlarge his knowledge of the world. He met and was chilled by George Washington; he did not believe the American union would last; he denied that the Americans, a people of farmers, should be admired or imitated in Europe. But he stated as a fact that the example of "man restored to his rights" had had wide repercussions: "In Ireland a revolution is going on without civil war and even without causing astonishment. In France, I am assured, there is much agitation. The Germans bear the yoke of an arrogant nobility with impatience. In the United Provinces power is taken from the hands to which it was entrusted. A British vessel, stopping on the way back from India at the Comoro Islands in the Mozambique Channel, finds the native inhabitants in revolt against their Arab masters; and when they ask why they have taken arms, are told: 'America is free. Could not we be?'"²⁵ It is curious to hear of native Africans appealing to the American Revolution a century before the European supremacy.

Learned bodies in the 1780's, in the fashion of the time, set contests for the best paper on the effects of the discovery of America upon the world. Many such papers were written in France; at least two are known at the University of Copenhagen, and one at the University of Upsala.²⁶ "In a little while," wrote one French enthusiast, commenting on America, "there will be nothing to which man cannot attain."²⁷ Another envied those who would see the close of the wonderful eighteenth century, of whose glories the American Revolution had given only an intimation. A German poem on *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert* began by intoning,

Und der Mensch war wieder nun Mensch, der Edlen
Viele pflanzten emsig den Keim der Wahrheit,
Fern an Philadelphias Ufer glühte
Milderer Frühroth.²⁸

That America was the hope of the humanity, the asylum of liberty, the beacon for all ages to come, was the common talk among the more fervid in France. The Swiss Iselin apparently agreed with a letter that he published in his journal, to the effect that anyone favoring oppression of the Americans sinned against mankind. In Germany when Schlözer criticized the Americans as rebels he was answered by Jakob Mauvillon, who, defending the principle of the sovereignty of the people, found "a secret bond . . . which links the cause of the Colonies with the welfare and

25 A memorandum, "Considérations sur la Révolution de l'Amérique," written at Breda, 1784, in G. K. van Hogendorp, *Brieven en Gedenkschriften* (The Hague, 1866), I, 407.

26 N. C. Claussøn, *Vndersøgelse om Amerikas Opdagelse har mere stædet end garnet del meenestellige Kion* (Copenhagen, 1785); J. Svedelius, *De effectu detectae Americae in Europam* (Upsala, 1802); Weber, *op.cit.*, 66.

27 Mailhe, *op.cit.*, 29.

28 H. S. King, *Echoes of the American Revolution in German Literature*, in *Univ. of California Publications in Modern Philology*, XIV, 2 (Berkeley, 1929), 157.

uplifting of the human race.”²⁹ The Italian, Castiglioni, who was not actually much impressed by what he saw across the Atlantic, allowed nevertheless that in time the American Revolution would have momentous consequences for Europe. It would be tedious to repeat examples.

There were many who stood apart from, and even opposed, the idealization of America, nor did they include only those who, like Schlözer and the other Hanoverians, more or less deliberately publicized a British view. In Germany the warmest enthusiasts for America were generally unknown and obscure people. There was an unformulated popular sentiment in favor of America. There was in some circles a literary republicanism, but in others there was a conservatism that already used conservative language. Thus Wekhrlin, who along with Schlözer was one of the founders of modern German journalism, thought of the Americans as a rabble in arms, ridiculed those in Germany who “only learned about men in a dream world or in Masonic lodges,” and held that “the great words Freedom, Constitution, Country, turn the head of some people.”³⁰ The professional men of learning, who already heavily predominated in the expression of German opinion, tended to disapprove of rebellion, or at the most to preserve a kind of neutrality, to avoid discussion of the rights of the question, to give factual narratives of events in America, and to maintain a scholarly view by publishing the arguments and the documents from both British and American sources. Germany was full of professors of political or historical or cameralist or statistical science, and these men, along with Iselin at Basel, were mainly interested in the practical consequences of American independence, particularly the stimulus to trade now that the North Americans were free to trade directly with Europe. Yet even this view had its wider implications. Even Christian Dohm, who represented this practical view very fully (and who was to become one of the chief reorganizers of Germany under Napoleon), observed in Wieland’s *Deutscher Merkur* in 1777 that an American victory would give “greater scope to the Enlightenment, new keenness to the thinking of peoples and new life to the spirit of liberty.”³¹

In France the war against England, by making zeal for America coincide with French patriotism, removed the restraints both of conservatism and of mere objective study. Where many Germans saw the American war simply as an important dispute, the French saw it as a crusade. Yet even in France there were doubters. Linguet, a kind of anti-*philosophe*, attributed the American Revolution to an overdose of eighteenth-century philosophy. This was in 1777, long before Burke and others offered the same explanation of the revolution in France. Another laughed at pro-American myth-makers—those “orators, poets, panegyrists of romantic virtues and legislators of societies that will never exist.”³² Some who did in fact strongly sympathize with the Americans tried nevertheless to combat, as did Jefferson himself, the more absurd ideas that were current in France. One of these

29 *Aufsätzen über Gegenstände aus der Staatskunst* (Leipzig, 1776–1777), quoted by Gallinger, *op. cit.*, 34.

30 Gallinger, *op. cit.*, 60.

31 *Ibid.*, 19.

32 *Discours composé en 1788 . . . sur la question: Quelle a été l’influence de la découverte de l’Amérique sur l’Europe* (Paris, 1792), 72.

was the Marquis de Chastellux, who had been a major-general in Rochambeau's army, and who, having written a little tract *De la félicité publique*, was no enemy of the human race.

But in France, unlike Germany, the American Dream could not be kept down. There were too many who preferred dreams to reality. Brissot affords an excellent example. The French Revolution was to make him famous; he was to be the virtual head of the French government in 1792, and the man who more than anyone else took France into war with Europe. Before 1789 he was one of the not very numerous people in France who were already true revolutionaries. He was outraged at Chastellux' attempt to moderate the excitement over America. "You wish, sir, to destroy this enchantment!" he cried. "Cruel man! Even if it were an illusion would you still dissipate it? It would be dear to us, it would be useful in consoling the man of virtue. . . ." ³³

Brissot was a man with whom recent generations have been unable to feel very much sympathy, since he appeals neither to liberal constitutionalists, nor to conservatives, nor to modern revolutionaries who think him a petty bourgeois, nor to those who credit the Jacobins of the Terror with at least trying to save France from the consequences of Girondist folly. He was, if there be such a thing, a pure and natural radical. "You have a poor idea of my judgment," he wrote in 1780 to a friend who urged that change must build on existing practice, "if you think I would prefer to accept present-day practice, which I know too well. However monstrous the new theories may be, they will never equal practice in absurdity and atrocity."³⁴ And he thought the good fortune of America to be that drastic change could occur there: "O hundred times happy America where this reform can be executed to the foundations in every part!"

He lived in the shadowy world of political hacks and hired pamphleteers in which he had connections with the somewhat disreputable Mirabeau; but after Philip Mazzei met him, and incidentally found him living in two rooms with his children in rags, he was warned by Marmontel that Brissot "was someone to stay away from." Brissot took up all sorts of causes, not necessarily consistent. He founded the first French antislavery society. He has been called an early pre-socialist, and credited with the idea that property is theft; but he was also involved in speculation in Ohio River lands, and with this in mind made a trip to the United States, where he was glad to conclude that American debts would probably be paid in hard money. He still loved American virtue, but found the bosoms of ladies in New York surprisingly bare, and the custom of cigar-smoking revolting. As early as 1787 he sketched out a kind of plan of revolution, which he hoped to carry into effect through connections with the duke of Orleans. The plan was to organize a strong party—the trouble with revolutionary parties in Holland and Belgium, said Brissot, was that they did not know what they wanted—and then to exploit the dissensions between the Parlement of Paris and the King's government, to make loud demands for the Estates-General, and hold out the idea of a constitution as a rallying point. It would then be possible to "free the people and immortalize

33 J. B. Brissot de Warville, *Examen critique des Voyages de M. de Chastellux* (London, 1786), 19.

34 J. B. Brissot, *Correspondance et papiers* (Paris, 1912), 18.

oneself."³⁵ The incredible triviality of the last two words was unfortunately not limited to Brissot.

Nevertheless Brissot is an exceptionally good example of the American influence. His Gallo-American Society of 1787 was a little comical. He founded it with three others, Bergasse, the Genevese Clavière, and the Americanized St. John de Crevecoeur. The first meeting, however, revealed an ideological difficulty, for Clavière found the aim of the society too narrow, since he had "devoted all his thoughts . . . to truths useful and beneficial for all men in general, without distinction of nation."³⁶ The society never had much success, influence, or membership; but we can already see the Girondist crusade of all peoples against all kings—Clavière, too, like Brissot, was a minister of state in 1792.

Soon after this attempt to found a Gallo-American Society Brissot went to the United States, and spent several months in that country during the debates over ratification of the federal constitution. He quickly grasped the essential new doctrine of the American Revolution, as I have described it in the last chapter—the idea of the people as a constituent power, creating, delimiting, and granting authority to organs of government, through the mechanism of a convention chosen for that purpose only. He returned to France in the fall of 1788, during the preparations for the Estates-General. He published, early in 1789, a "Plan of Conduct" for the deputies who were about to meet.

Here he clearly applied the American doctrine. A constitution, he declared, was "the act of apportioning the legislative, executive, and judicial powers." These grants of power could come from the people alone; for Brissot was in revolt against all constituted bodies. None of the powers thus constituted by the people had authority to change the constitution. Only a constitutional convention could do that; hence the Estates-General could not draw up a constitution for France. And whence came this device of a constituting convention? "We owe its discovery to the Free Americans, and the convention which has just formed the plan for a federal system has infinitely perfected it." Moreover, "this device or method of the Free Americans can perhaps be very easily adapted to the circumstances in which France now finds itself."³⁷

The great problem (and it was a real problem) was to prevent the powers thus constituted from usurping more authority than they had been granted. According to one school, the several constituted powers of government, by watching and balancing and checking one another, were to prevent such usurpation. According to another school, which regarded the first school as undemocratic or mistrustful of the people, the people itself must maintain a constant vigilance and restraint upon the powers of government. There were partisans of both schools on both sides of the Atlantic. Brissot belonged emphatically to the second school. The Constituent Power, or People, he said, must keep a perpetual watch over government. He thought the amending process provided in the new American federal constitution

35 *Ibid.*, 150–60.

36 *Ibid.*, 108. See also L. A. Vigneras, "La Société gallo-américaine de 1787," in *Bulletin de l'Institut français de Washington*, December 1952.

37 Brissot, *Plan de conduite des députés du peuple aux Etats-Généraux de 1789* (Paris, 1789), 240–42.

to be very defective, since it left the people with no initiative to meet, to punish officials, or to effect constitutional changes. Brissot thus favored a kind of direct democracy, a continuing and detailed popular pressure upon the officers of government. This pressure, in the next few years in France, was to come from political clubs, from the press, from municipal governments or communes, and from mass demonstrations. Brissot favored it, as did Robespierre, until he was in office himself and threatened by it; both then turned against it. It was a mechanism for revolution, of no use in stabilization. Brissot saw one side of the American constitutional doctrine, that the people should ordain government. He did not see the other side, that the people having ordained government should allow themselves to be governed by it, or that having set limits they should abide by the limits, and, short of the most extreme provocation, be content with the occasional and strictly legalized power to vote unwanted officials out of office. Even the democrats in America came to accept this somewhat routinized constitutionalism. In France they did not, partly for doctrinaire and ideological reasons, partly because more than purely political forms was at stake in the French Revolution, and partly because the provocation against democratic ideas did remain very extreme. The method of the Free Americans was not, after all, altogether suited to circumstances in France.

THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONS: AN INTERNATIONAL ARGUMENT

It is only in France that a detailed discussion of American government seems to have taken place. Specifically political ideas about America may be traced in France, as in the case of Brissot, until they lose themselves in the conflicts of the French Revolution itself. The American state constitutions were published in France on at least five different occasions between 1776 and 1786. They were also published in Dutch, during the crisis of the Patriot movement in 1787. One cannot generalize negatively about the vast periodical literature in German, but no book containing the American constitutions seems to have appeared in Germany. It is significant that large parts of Mazzei's *Recherches historiques et politiques* appeared at Leipzig under the more feeble title of *Amerikanische Anekdoten*, and that in this work, while the new American federal constitution was included, it was translated from the French, not from the English original. Outside of France political discussion of America seldom went beyond political generalities.

The British, Irish, and Dutch were occupied by their own political activities. In Britain the parliamentary reformers were sympathetic to the Americans, and Richard Price published a short book in 1785 on how the American Revolution could become a benefit to the world. Expressing strongly the sense of a new era, he observed that the American example had already emancipated one country (by which in 1785 he must have meant Holland, or possibly Ireland) and would soon emancipate others. He gave detailed advice to the Americans on the avoidance of debt, inequalities of wealth, political corruption, and foreign trade. But he offered no critique of the American constitutions. The British reform movement ante-

dated the American Revolution, to which it was collaterally rather than lineally related. British reformers did not have to learn from America; the Westminster group, as already noted, with a program anticipating the Chartism of the 1830's, went beyond the Americans in their theory of democratic representation. The King's party was unaware that the rebellion had any constitutional significance at all. Even Whigs, who had defended the American cause so long as it was an issue of British politics, lost interest after the Americans left the empire. In all the copious disquisitions of Edmund Burke on political questions, published and unpublished, until his death in 1796 (and I have searched them with this in mind), there is apparently not the slightest reference to the American constitutions.³⁸

There was certainly an American influence in Belgium.³⁹ The people of these Austrian Netherlands produced few books, but they had an active periodical literature, in which lively interest and contrary opinions on America were expressed. The Abbé Feller, a founder of Belgian political journalism, and soon to be the best-known enemy of the French Revolution among Belgian writers, took an equally disapproving view of the American, and even refused to publish the Massachusetts constitution of 1780. The American constitutions and state papers nevertheless became widely known, and echoes of them can be found in the Belgian revolution of 1789. The declaration of independence of Flanders (each province announced its independence from the Hapsburg emperor separately) reproduced certain phrases of the American Declaration of Independence. The democratic party which briefly existed in Belgium in 1790 pointed to some of the American state constitutions for examples of what it wanted. The act of union of the United Belgian States resembled the American Articles of Confederation in its provisions and even occasionally in language. These new United States of Belgium even called their central body a Congress.

In Switzerland it is not clear whether many people had more than the general though vivid impressions of Peter Ochs and Isaac Iselin. None of the hundreds of writings published at Geneva in these years seems to have dealt with America, and the emigration of Albert Gallatin in 1780 was an act of youthful adventure without much political significance. The Genevese, like the Dutch, were preoccupied by their own continuing political crises. On the other hand, the Swiss doubtless read French and German works on America, and a modern authority on Swiss constitutional history emphasizes "the continuing importance" of the fact that, with the American Revolution, "the formal establishment of a written constitution as the basis of public law and political organization made its appearance for the first time."⁴⁰

38 Burke did specifically refer to the American constitutions in the debates in the Commons on the Canada Act in April 1791. He observed that the Americans, while lacking the materials for monarchy or aristocracy, never "set up the absurdity that the nation should govern the nation; that prince prettyman should govern prince prettyman, but formed their government, as nearly as they could, according to the model of the British constitution." It was, however, a "bare imitation"; and the English-speaking Canadians, having just fled from the American Revolution, wanted no bare imitation but the real thing. *Parliamentary History*, XXIX, 365.

39 T. K. Gorman, *America and Belgium: a Study of the Influence of the United States upon the Belgian Revolution of 1789-1790* (London, 1925), 125-27, 157, 207-44.

40 E. His, *Geschichte des neuern schweizerischen Staatsrechts* (Basel, 1920), I, 14.

In Germany there was little incentive to detailed examination of American government. Some Germans, following the Anglo-Hanoverian school, thought of the American Revolution as anarchy, or set forth a historical-realistic theory of jurisprudence against the natural-rights theory or non-political "republicanism" which other Germans espoused. Nevertheless, events arising from the American war stirred up political commentary in Germany, especially in connection with the supplying of German troops to Great Britain, which many Germans disapproved. The city of Kassel, in the heart of Hesse, was in fact a main center of pro-Americanism. "For the first time in history," says a recent German writer, speaking of the sale of Hessian mercenaries, "there was a positive criticism by burghers and educated circles of the actions of the small absolutist state. We cannot doubt that these events aroused political criticism of existing conditions."⁴¹ Reformists in Germany, however, generally hoped for improvement either through enlightened monarchy as in the Prussia of Frederick the Great, or through the operation of diets and estates, privileged and historically constituted bodies, like the diet of Württemberg. The American constitutions had nothing to suggest along either of these lines. The idea that the "people," that is, the governed, should take part in the formation or conduct of government was unfamiliar. Only in a stray work, like Schmohl's *Nordamerikfi und Democratic*, do we find a summons to the reader, and still an indefinite one, "to rise to a realization of the dignity of a free man, who feels himself to be part of the law-making power."⁴² Poor Schmohl emigrated to America, but died at sea.

Probably in other countries discussion of the American governments and constitutions was even more sporadic than in Germany. We know that the gazettes of Moscow and St. Petersburg printed sympathetic reports of the American Revolution. Alexander Radishchev, in his *Voyage from Petersburg to Moscow* (for which he was exiled to Siberia) not only reprinted his *Ode to Liberty*, inspired by the American Revolution, but cited several of the American state constitutions, chiefly as an argument for liberty of the press. Radishchev, according to Catherine II, was worse than Pugachev, because he quoted Benjamin Franklin.⁴³

The French, however, spurred on by certain Americans in their midst, engaged in a kind of full-dress debate on the American constitutions and American governments, examining and criticizing their features in detail.

What most impressed the French was the very act of constitution-making itself, the constituting or reconstituting of government through the principle of the people as constituent power. What they learned from America was the possibility of having a constituent assembly or a convention. The very word "convention" in this sense, which the French were to make memorable in their own way in 1792, came

41 F. Valjavec, *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland, 1770–1815* (Munich, 1951), 109; Gallinger, *op.cit.*, 33.

42 J. C. Schmohl, *Nordamerika und Demokratie* (Copenhagen, 1782). Apparently really published at Königsberg. Quoted by Gallinger, *op.cit.*, 69; see also King, *op.cit.*, 176 and P. Merlan, "Parva Hamanniana II: Hamann and Schmohl," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1949), X, 567–74.

43 Max Laserson, *The American Impact on Russia* (New York, 1950), 53–71; M. M. Shtrange, *Russkoye Obshchestvo i Frantsuzskaya Revolyutsiya* (Russian Society and the French Revolution 1789–1794) (Moscow, 1956), 43–45. I am indebted to Mr. W. L. Blackwell for reading this Russian work.

into the French language through translation of the American state constitutions. For the subjects of government to repudiate and dismantle their government, revert to a "state of nature," and then by deliberate planning to constitute government anew, to invent and delimit new offices and authorities and endow them with written grants of power, was at least in a juridical sense the very essence of revolution, the practical acting out of the social contract, and the assertion of the sovereignty of the people. It is hard to believe that the French Revolution would have been very different even if the American Revolution had never happened. It is easy to show that the Americans attempted no such substantial break with their past as did the French. Nevertheless, in constitutional theory, in the belief that a people must will its own government by a kind of act of special creation, the two revolutions were much alike.

Over the specific and detailed content of the American constitutions the French discussion roamed very freely. One problem, however, preoccupied all of the French and all of the Americans in this international argument. It was the problem of how best to prevent the growth of hereditary aristocracy. French and Americans were agreed that there was one thing they did not want, though some would tolerate it as a necessary evil—"aristocracy" in the sense of legal privilege, or estates and ranks of society, or nobilities, patriciates or hereditary magistracies, or a self-selecting, exclusive, and perennial governing class, in short the "constituted bodies" as I have described them in earlier chapters. There was no agreement on how this unwanted phenomenon was to be prevented. But the disputes over the separation of powers in the American constitutions, and the furor over the Society of the Cincinnati, can best be understood against this background of aversion to the hierarchic class structure of Europe.

The argument may be said to have begun when Benjamin Franklin gave Turgot a copy of Price's *Observations on Civil Liberty*. Turgot wrote a letter of appreciation to Price, in the course of which he made some strictures on the American constitutions, which in turn prompted John Adams to write his *Défense of the Constitutions of the United States*. Adams meanwhile had been close to the Abbé Mably, who also wrote a book on the American constitutions, which seems to have annoyed Jefferson and certainly annoyed Condorcet. Jefferson's friend Mazzei, supported by Condorcet, refuted Mably. A New Jersey gentleman then demolished Adams' *Défense*, or purported to do so. His pamphlet, coming to Jefferson in Paris, was translated there with long notes by Condorcet and Dupont de Nemours, the intellectual successors to Turgot. This pamphlet was said by Morellet and Mounier, whose judgment commands respect, to have had a great influence in France during the critical months of August and September 1789. Meanwhile, and very significantly, while the French disputed over bicameral and unicameral legislatures, and over the amount of power to be granted to the executive, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the future Federalist and the future Democratic Republican, do not seem really to have disagreed.

To bring this somewhat doctrinaire argument into perspective, it is necessary to point out that Turgot had been Louis XVI's principal minister from 1774 to 1776, that he had designed a great reform program to equalize the tax burden and reduce the privileges of nobility, and that he had been forced out of office by the Par-

lement of Paris. These events are related in a later chapter. They were a continuation of that conflict between the monarchy and the constituted bodies of which the crisis of the 1760's has already been described. In any case Turgot, from his own experience, was convinced that special bodies, orders, or classes having rights or interests peculiar to themselves were very bad, and that good government and good policy must represent the nation as a whole in an undifferentiated way. Franklin may have told him the same thing, and certainly a reading of Price would strengthen his belief that the British Parliament in no sense represented the British nation.

Turgot, therefore, in his letter to Price, written in March 1778, declared himself disappointed by the new American constitutions because they carried over too many English ideas. "Instead of bringing all the authorities into one, that of the nation," he observed, "they have established different bodies, a house of representatives, a council, a governor, because England has a house of commons, a house of lords, and a king."⁴⁴ The word "bodies," it must be understood, suggested those corporate and privileged intermediate powers lauded by Montesquieu in the preceding generation, but which Turgot and other reformers found invariably opposed to change. The word "nation," in the language of the day, signified a political community considered without regard to bodies, ranks, or classes.

Turgot vehemently disapproved of the separation of powers, or balance of "bodies," in the American governments. He was so afraid of creating a special group consciousness that he even objected to the exclusion of clergymen from American legislatures; a group of men thus singled out, he feared, would develop separate interests as a "body." He believed that each American state should have a one-chamber legislature, no upper house, and a carefully restrained executive. In short, he preferred in certain respects the constitution of Pennsylvania, of which his friend Franklin was supposed to be the author. It is not that Turgot was much of a democrat; he criticized the constitutions for not sufficiently attending to the only "natural" distinction among men, the difference between those who owned and did not own land. He also thought, as a physiocrat, that the constitutions should have denied the right of government to regulate commerce, and in general should have clearly restricted the role of government to a bare minimum.

After Turgot's death Dr. Price published his letter, in 1785. John Adams immediately refuted it in three volumes. He had already made his influence felt in another way. In 1782, during the peace negotiations, he had met the Abbé Mably in Paris. He found him "polite, good-humored, and sensible," and when he was president years later he still affectionately remembered him as his old friend.⁴⁵ Mably in 1782 was an elderly philosopher who had been writing on political questions for over forty years. He now published, as his last book, some observations on

44 John Adams, *Works*, IV, 279. Turgot's letter may also be found in his *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1912-1923), and in its place of first publication, at the end of R. Price, *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of Making It a Benefit to the World* (London, 1785).

45 For Adams' favorable opinion of Mably, which lasted throughout his life, see his *Works*, I, 350 (1782); I, 354 and 360 (1783); VIII, 554 (1797). Adams' polite request to Mably in 1782 to have his views on the American Revolution produced a rumor in France that Mably was desired by the United States to act as a kind of official expert or consultant on government; see Adams, *Works*, V, 491-96.

the government of the United States, in the form of four letters addressed to Adams.

Mably took the opposite line from Turgot.⁴⁶ He heartily approved of the separation and balance of powers in the American constitutions, and after surveying them all, and commenting unfavorably on that of Pennsylvania, announced his preference for the constitution of Massachusetts, which of course his friend Adams had mainly written. He preferred that of Massachusetts, he said, because it placed more limits upon democracy than the others. He thus launched the notion that the one American constitution written during the war that provided for direct popular election of governor, senators, and representatives by a wide franchise was peculiarly undemocratic. Mably was denounced as an aristocrat in both France and America. He is said to have been burned in effigy in the United States. This is the same Mably who is also regarded as an early prophet of socialism, and who had remarked to Adams (and Adams agreed) that people who are hungry cannot be punctilious about virtue.

Mably was no "aristocrat"; he did not like aristocracy, he only feared that something of the sort was inevitable. He was painfully aware of inequalities of wealth. He thought that the rich and poor had different interests. Hence, unlike Turgot, he believed that American governments should have powers of regulation to prevent the accumulation of excessive fortunes. He felt that "germs" of aristocracy already existed in America because of the old connection with England, and that even in America, as in Europe, there were too many "prejudices" to make pure democracy feasible without civil strife. The problem, as he saw it, was on the one hand to prevent the growth of aristocracy by suitable legislation, and on the other hand to give incipient aristocracy, or men of wealth, enough of a place in the commonwealth to make them accept the government peaceably. Mably did not believe in Adams' popularly elected executive (nor did any Frenchman, or Jefferson either), but he did firmly believe in a two-chamber system with a strong senate, by which "aristocracy and democracy are held in equilibrium."

Mably wrote these comments late in 1783. At that very time, in America, the worst fears of friends of America seemed to be confirmed. The officers of the Continental Army, on disbanding, founded the Society of the Cincinnati. The Society was to be composed of former American and French officers of the War of Independence; it was to have permanent funds, periodic assemblies, and distinctive emblems and badges; and membership was to be inherited by descendants. Europeans and Americans in Europe immediately sensed the everlasting menace of hereditary social rank. Franklin in Paris, on first hearing of the Cincinnati, scoffed at them as "hereditary knights"; Adams in Holland sarcastically called the idea a "French blessing," defacing "the beauty of our temple of liberty."⁴⁷ Franklin gave a pamphlet against the Cincinnati by Aedanus Burke of South Carolina to the Count de Mirabeau to translate into French. Mirabeau, the future leader of the French Revolution, adapted and amplified it into a pamphlet of his own, *Consi-*

46 G. B. de Mably, *Observations sur le gouvernement et les lois des Etats-Unis d'Amérique* (Amsterdam, 1784).

47 Franklin, *Works*, X, 273-81, 421; Adams, *Works*, VIII, 187; IX, 524; V, 488.

dérations sur l'ordre de Cincinnatus. With it he included a translation of Price's reflections on the American Revolution, and of Turgot's letter to Price, now published in French for the first time.

Mirabeau's pamphlet against the Cincinnati was a diatribe against aristocracy. Monarchies, said Mirabeau, needed special "bodies" of men; in republics all men belonged to one "body" and enjoyed the same rank. The Cincinnati, he declared, echoing Franklin and Adams, violated the American constitutions and bills of rights which asserted the equality of all citizens. They would introduce into America "an eternal race of Aristocrats, who may soon usurp those insulting titles by which the European nobility crush the simple citizens, their equals and brothers."⁴⁸

For the next two or three years, though the Society had meanwhile modified its statutes, the Cincinnati commanded a degree of attention in France that now seems out of all proportion to their true importance. Jefferson, who also disapproved of the society, tried to calm his French friends by explaining that the officers had meant no harm, and that they had had no intention of setting up an aristocratic order. But for a time no French book about America was complete without an extended and often heated treatment of this question. Perhaps the French were right; a kind of publicly honored, solemnly paraded, and rigidly hereditary Sons of the American Revolution is not nowadays to be contemplated with equanimity. In any case the French excitement reflected a profound dissatisfaction with the social order in Europe.

Meanwhile Adams, now Minister to England, was methodically compiling his *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* against the "attack" of Turgot. It was a long survey of all republics on which Adams could find any information, ancient, medieval, and modern; democratic, aristocratic, and "regal" (England and Poland were his modern "regal republics")—an interminable setting forth of scores of examples hurriedly thrown together in a huge patchwork of long-unacknowledged quotations, connected by paragraphs of his own composition in which he gave his own thoughts on the matter. With all its defects as a piece of literary art, and with the exception of the constitutions themselves and other official American documents, the *Defense* was the most important work of American political theory before the Federalist papers. It falls neatly into place in the present book also, since it gives a comparative survey of the constituted bodies of Europe as they had come to be in the eighteenth century, finds in them a universal trend toward hereditary self-entrenchment in office, idealizes the British constitution in the manner of Delolme, expresses some basic ideas of the American Revolution, was written in Europe in an international controversy, and was designed as a polemic against aristocratical government. Adams succeeded in making himself thoroughly misunderstood. He was even called an aristocrat; but it seems hardly possible that anyone could actually read the *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* without seeing that aristocracy was Adams' principal bugaboo.

Adams started out with the eternal American protest against the attentions of European intellectuals: "The writer has long seen with anxiety the facility with which philosophers of greatest name have undertaken to write of American affairs,

48 H. G. R. de Mirabeau, *Considérations sur l'ordre de Cincinnatus, ou imitation d'un pamphlet Anglo-Américain* (London, 1784). Quotation from p. 50 of 1785 edition.

without knowing anything of them, and have echoed and re-echoed each other's visionary language."⁴⁹ He suspected that Turgot's ideas were shared by Franklin, and he feared that other Americans might be similarly misled. There were two points in Turgot's letter to Price that especially irritated him: the idea that a single elected assembly should control the whole government, and the idea that imitation of the British constitution was something for which the Americans should be blamed.

It was by obstinately insisting that his own ideas were really those of the British constitution, which he called in the *Defense* a "stupendous fabric of human invention," that Adams made himself misunderstood both by his own contemporaries and by democrats and conservatives, to denounce or to praise, in later times. This perverse New Englander, whose dislike of the England of his own day was really very intense, considered himself as English as the English, and had even boasted, in 1774, that America enjoyed the British constitution in greater purity than Britain itself. The idea of a British constitution more pure than the actual constitution of Britain was a somewhat theoretical concept, reinforced in Adams' mind by the reading of Delolme, whom he greatly admired. Delolme, it will be recalled, was by origin a Genevise democrat, an enemy of the patriciate there, whose theory of the separation of powers in England, in subtle contrast to that of Montesquieu and the English Whigs, emphasized the importance of the crown as a balance against the nobility, not the role of the nobility as a balance against the crown.

Adams' own ideas had significantly changed during the American Revolution. In his *Thoughts* of 1776 he had favored election of an upper house by the popularly elected assembly, and selection of a governor by the two houses together. In his draft of the Massachusetts constitution made in 1779 he had provided for election of all three by the whole body of voters. His purpose had been to assure the independence of the three from each other, and, by emancipating the governor from the two houses, to protect the integrity of the executive and judicial powers. His emphasis on the value of a strong executive was more explicit than Delolme's, and was in fact his most distinctive political idea.

The fact that Adams' European experience was mainly in Holland, where the executive was weak and hereditary oligarchy solidly established, may have confirmed him in these ideas. At any rate, his reading of European history taught him, what it never taught most democrats, Jeffersonians or Whigs, that monarchy over the centuries had often protected the people against the nobles. "What is the whole history of the wars of the barons but one demonstration of this truth? What are the standing armies of Europe but another? These were all given to kings by the people, to defend them against aristocracies."⁵⁰ Or again, the executive "is the natural friend of the people, and the only defense which they or their representatives can have against the avarice and ambition of the rich and distinguished citizens." And it is the usual practice "of a few illustrious and wealthy

49 *Defense of the constitutions of government of the United States of America, against the attack of M. Turgot . . .*, 3 vols. (London, 1787-1788). Reprinted in *Works*, IV and V. The quotation here is from *Works*, IV, 294.

50 *Works*, IV, 355.

citizens to excite clamors and uneasiness" against the executive, which is the essence of government.⁵¹

These wealthy and illustrious citizens, according to Adams, would reduce the executive to a nullity if they could. They would also nullify popular influence in the legislature if the legislature met as a single house. "The rich, the well-born and the able," he declared in a phrase often quoted out of context, "acquire an influence among the people that will soon be too much for simple honesty and plain sense, in a house of representatives. The most illustrious of them must, therefore, be separated from the mass, and placed by themselves in a senate; this is, to all honest and useful intents, an ostracism."⁵² In short, the rich should be made to sit apart in a house of their own, not to protect their own interests, and not because in a popular one-chamber system the people would despoil them, but for the opposite reason, because if the rich sat in a one-chamber house they would corrupt the popular representation, and despoil the people. It is possible to think that Adams was mistaken in believing an upper house would have the effects he expected; but it is hardly possible, since hypocrisy is one fault of which he has never been accused, to mistake the drift of his thought. It was, quite as much as Turgot's, antiaristocratic.

Adams shared with Mably a sense of the less agreeable traits of human nature. He did not expect much from the unaided virtue and enlightenment of either common or uncommon men—it was his one trait of conservatism. Americans, he repeatedly said, were no different from and no better than Europeans. "There is no special Providence for Americans, and their nature is the same as that of others."⁵³ Toward the end of his work, as with inexhaustible patience he analyzed the minuscule medieval republic of Montepulciano, he went into a digression on the American Cincinnati, whose fancy for hereditary honors and titles seemed to him to show the beginning of the very process which he had now traced in Europe and in antiquity dozens of times. In America, too, he thought, people easily fell into the habit of accepting the leadership of a few families; in the simplest New England town meetings, he observed, men of the same families were elected to office for four and five generations. In America, too, there were "aristocratical passions," insatiable like all passions—pride, vanity and ambition, the love of gold, the love of praise, the love of domination, the love of position. There were tendencies to lead and to follow, to dominate and to submit; there was a love of equality, but also a love of inequality, a desire to possess or to excel. Since these traits could not be eradicated, the problem was to combine, adapt, utilize, and restrain them for the public good.

The burden of Adams' *Defense* was therefore to show that if America followed Turgot's advice it would end up like most of Europe. As soon as all power was in

51 *Works*, IV, 585.

52 *Works*, IV, 290. Adams expressed the same views in correspondence with Jefferson in later life: "Your *aristoi* are the most difficult animals to manage in the whole theory and practice of government. They will not suffer themselves to be governed." He rejected Jefferson's distinction between natural and pseudo- (or good and bad) aristocracies, regarding all forms of superiority, leadership, excellence, or talent as liable to much the same dangers of abuse. He lacked Jefferson's belief in the virtues of an elite. See his letters to Jefferson of July 9 and November 15, 1813, in P. Wiltach, *Correspondence of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson* (Indianapolis, 1925).

53 *Works*, IV, 401.

one assembly, a few individuals would appropriate it for themselves. It was from faulty arrangement of government, from ignorance of the doctrine of separation of powers, from failure to provide an independent executive and to divide the legislature into two houses, that Geneva, Venice, Holland, Poland, and many others had fallen under self-perpetuating oligarchic rule. He particularly invited Americans to study the experience of the people of Geneva, "as enlightened as any," who, however, had supinely given up their freedom, because they had never learned that the people should combine with the syndics, and the syndics with the people, against patrician encroachments. At Geneva, he warned, a mere dual balance between an aristocratic and a democratic assembly had been proved to be futile; it was necessary to have a third power, an independent executive. Likewise to have a single chamber balanced by an independent executive would be only to have two armies drawn up in battle. There must be a third element, a senate, to provide a balance.

Adams, like Delolme, arguing that the British constitution was the best in Europe, because it balanced the crown, the aristocracy, and the people, was obliged by the necessities of his theory to believe the people were really represented in the eighteenth-century House of Commons. He was aware that the House needed reform if it was to be representative in any meaningful sense, as Delolme himself had been in 1771; but he had no such strong feelings on the matter as Turgot and Price and many others. To think that the Commons had become socially akin to the Lords, or that the lower house was influenced, infiltrated, or "corrupted" by the upper, would be to surrender his whole argument. In this one respect Adams, too, was a doctrinaire, and what he could not assimilate was a particular set of facts. His adversaries had reason to think him unreasonably Anglophile. Yet his doctrine is still clear, whether or not it corresponded to the facts of British public life. The doctrine was that an upper house and an independent executive would prevent aristocratic domination.

Adams further perplexed his readers by his careless use of the word "orders." This was a fighting word for reformers. It signified corporate bodies and legal stratification. Adams sometimes made himself clear enough. "In America," he said, "there are different orders of *offices*, but none of *men*."⁵⁴ But he liked to refer to the executive, senate, and popular assembly as "orders" of government, and to insist that good government must be a "balance of three orders," so that, though he was neither a monarchist nor an aristocrat, and thought it best for executive and senate to be popularly elected, his readers may be excused if they thought him an apologist for King, Lords, and Commons. His book was really too long even for contemporaries; his ideas were smothered by the profusion of exotic examples, most of which did deal with real aristocracies and real kings.

Adams sent a copy of the *Defense* to Jefferson in Paris, who pronounced it a useful and illuminating work, and tried to get it translated.⁵⁵ In this he failed; it was not translated into French until 1792. Its length would deter a translator; it is possible also that Frenchmen of the kind interested in translation of American books, such as Morellet, Condorcet, Dupont, or Brissot, were repelled by its doctrine, or

⁵⁴ *Works*, IV, 380.

⁵⁵ Jefferson, *Papers* XI (Princeton, 1955), 177.

apparent doctrine, of the necessity for three “orders.” Many of the French with whom Jefferson mixed were partisans of Turgot. They admired neither the British constitution, nor aristocracy, nor “orders,” nor the balance of powers within government. It is possible that Jefferson’s own experience with his *Notes on the State of Virginia* is of some relevancy here.

Jefferson had written these *Notes* before leaving America, and had had two hundred copies printed for private circulation. His aim in part, like that of Adams in the *Defense*, was to correct the vagaries of European savants on America, notably the views made current by de Pauw and Buffon, to the effect that America was an unfavorable habitat for living things, that the animals were more puny and the human beings less vigorous than in Europe, and that human culture in America showed a tendency to deteriorate. Jefferson also commented on the constitution of Virginia. He listed certain defects in it, in particular the domination over executive and judiciary by the legislative assembly, in which Jefferson saw the danger of “elective despotism”—a term which for Jefferson seems to have meant what Adams called “aristocracy.” Jefferson also included, in the *Notes*, a draft constitution for Virginia which he had made in 1783, when it was thought that a state constitutional convention would soon assemble. In this draft he provided for a clear separation of powers. He strengthened the position of governor by proposing a five-year term. He provided for senators to be elected by the voters, though indirectly by way of electors. Though he wished to broaden the franchise, and to reduce the overrepresentation of tidewater counties, Jefferson’s draft constitution of 1783 for Virginia was in important respects less democratic than Adams’ draft of 1779 for Massachusetts, since neither the governor nor the senate was to be directly elected by voters. Also, it never went into effect; Virginia had no new constitution until 1830. But in wishing to strengthen the executive, separate the three powers, and widen the franchise Jefferson’s thought moved in the same direction as Adams’.

One of the privately printed copies of *Notes on Virginia* came into the hands of the Abbé Morellet, who began to translate it, without Jefferson’s approval, for publication in France. Morellet took various liberties with the text. For one thing, he did not include, in his translation, Jefferson’s draft constitution of 1783. It is certain that Jefferson would want this draft to appear, for Demeunier, working under his guidance, published it in the *Encyclopédie*, and the London edition of the *Notes*, published the following year under Jefferson’s supervision, also included it.⁵⁶

Why did Morellet omit Jefferson’s proposed constitution from his *Observations sur la Virginie*? We may never know the answer to this question. He may have tired of his task of translation, or thought the draft unimportant. Or he may have found it awkward for his own purposes. Morellet was associated with the followers of Turgot in France, and with parliamentary reform groups in England. For these partisans of the American Revolution, who despite criticisms yet believed that the American constitutions were an epoch-making contribution to political science, it was inconvenient to find the eminent Jefferson, the former governor, proposing a

⁵⁶ Jefferson, *Observations sur la Virginie* (Paris, 1786); *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London, 1787); critical edition of the same edited by William Peden (Williamsburg, 1955); *Encyclopédie Méthodique: Economie Politique*, article “Virginie.”

new constitution for his own state. Nor did it suit their requirements to find Jefferson demanding a more independent executive and such “British” ideas as a separation and balance of powers.

Adams’ book remaining unknown in France, and the more jarring ideas of Jefferson being brushed aside, the counterattack of the Turgot school fell upon the now deceased Abbé Mably. Philip Mazzei arrived in Paris, mixed with Morellet, Condorcet, and others, and with Jefferson’s blessing wrote his four-volume work to correct French misconceptions of the United States. The whole second volume was a refutation of Mably. Mazzei also included in his book two tracts by Condorcet, one on the influence of the American Revolution on Europe, the other on “the uselessness of separating the legislative power among several bodies.”

Mazzei’s complaint against Mably—except as he thought that Mably shared in a general wrong-headedness about America—was that Mably was a kind of crypto-aristocrat, pessimistically harping on the “prejudices” that Americans shared with Europe, and dissatisfied with everything in the American constitutions except the restraints that they placed on democracy. He ridiculed Mably’s idea that the constitution of Massachusetts would, in contrast to that of Pennsylvania, allow the inevitable transition to aristocracy to occur peaceably. It was one of Mably’s delusions, said this friend of Jefferson, to suppose that the constitution of Massachusetts was really less democratic than that of other states.⁵⁷

More interest attaches to the views of Condorcet, the friend and biographer of Turgot, the intellectual luminary of the revolution soon to come in France. Like Turgot, he wanted a single assembly to represent simply the nation as such. Like Turgot and many others, in all countries, including England, he was aware of the realities in British public life: “Inequality of representation may render it illusory, as in England.”⁵⁸ Like Brissot, with whom he was to be closely associated in the politics of the Revolution, he would prevent the usurpation of power by making the single assembly dependent on frequent election, by providing for referendums and initiative on the part of the voters, and by detailed declarations of rights. Like the physiocrats, he would give almost unlimited economic freedom. And, like the mathematician that he was, his ideas were alarmingly self-evident, abstract, absolute, and simple.

Recognition of natural rights in America, he declared, “teaches that these rights are everywhere the same,” and that all men in all countries should enjoy all of them with one exception—the right to vote, which “the virtuous citizen must know how to renounce in some constitutions.”⁵⁹ In fact, though the Revolution was to make him accept a manhood suffrage, Condorcet in 1788 would give a full vote only to persons (men or women, for he was an early sponsor of women’s rights, and Mme. Condorcet was an upper-class Mme. Roland) who possessed enough landed property to live on the income without working. To smaller land-owners he would give corresponding fractional votes. Precautions against the abuse of power were the less necessary, he asserted, in proportion as the declaration of rights was more spe-

57 P. Mazzei, *Recherches historiques et politiques sur les Etats-Unis*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1788), II, 75–77.

58 *Ibid.*, I, 287.

59 *Ibid.*, IV, 248.

cific and extended. This declaration must forbid hereditary distinctions, make all offices elective, prohibit regulation of commerce, occupation, or religion, and abolish all taxes except the tax on the product of land. Any piece of legislation affecting the people's rights must be ratified by the people itself, "because either the solution of questions is self-evident and agreed upon, or cannot be legitimately found except by the people as a whole."⁶⁰ The people, as just noted, meant the proprietors of land. And America proved all this:⁶¹ "In observing how the Americans have founded their peace and happiness on a few maxims that seem the naive expression of what common sense could have dictated to all men, we shall cease to vaunt those complex machines . . . where so many counter-weights are supposed to produce a balance. . . . We shall see the danger . . . of those systems in which the law, and hence truth, reason and justice, its immutable base, are forced to change according to temperature, to bend before usages consecrated by prejudice, or the absurdities adopted by each people." Or, as Brissot said at this time, "Should the thermometer determine human rights?" Or as Dupont de Nemours wrote to Jefferson, "there is a perfect government, the *beau idéal* of government," better than even the Americans yet have, but which the nations will enjoy some day because of the *perfectibilité de l'esprit humain*.⁶² Nothing could be further from Mably, or from Adams, or even from Jefferson, all of whom preferred to trust in institutional arrangements rather than in human nature or mere declared rights, to prevent the usurpation of power.

A climax to the argument here narrated came with a pamphlet published in America as a rebuttal to Adams and Delolme, and translated into French under a different title, *Examen du gouvernement de l'Angleterre*, with long anonymous notes by Condorcet, Dupont de Nemours, and Philip Mazzei. It is illuminating to comment on the role of this same pamphlet in the two countries.⁶³

Its author was believed to be Governor Livingston of New Jersey, but was actually John Stevens. Stevens was of what passed in America as the upper class. His father had sat for thirteen years on the New Jersey governor's council before the Revolution, but had turned patriot during the war; he himself had acquired a mile-square loyalist estate, for £18,340, overlooking the Hudson, the present site of Stevens Institute, a pleasant tract which he was then laying out in parks and drive-ways on the English model. Stevens was later to achieve fame, and greater wealth, as the inventor of the screw propeller and builder of steamboats and railroads.⁶⁴

60 *Ibid.*, I, 331.

61 *Ibid.*, IV, 254.

62 *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* XII (Princeton, 1955), 326.

63 John Stevens, *Observations on government, including some animadversions on Mr. Adams' Defense of the Constitutions . . . and on Mr. Delolme's Constitution of England*. By a Farmer of New Jersey (N.Y., 1787). The French version was *Examen du gouvernement de l'Angleterre comparé aux constitutions des Etats-Unis* (Paris, 1789). This pamphlet, published anonymously, was long attributed to William Livingston. See A. D. Turnbull, *John Stevens: An American Record* (N.Y., 1928). For the French version see R. Ciampini, *Lettere di Filippo Mazzei alla corte di Polonia* (Bologna, 1937), 121.

64 At about the time when John Stevens, under the anonymity of a farmer of New Jersey, wrote his critique of John Adams, his father, John Stevens, Sr., described by Forrest McDonald as a "wealthy capitalist" and investor "in both real and personal property," sat in the New Jersey state convention to ratify the federal constitution. The elder Stevens then owned land valued at £62,500, and had interests

John Stevens was persuaded that John Adams was trying to foist aristocracy upon the United States. We Americans, declared Stevens, enjoy "perfect equality" as a nation of small farmers; there has never been and is not now a trace of aristocracy among us; we have no orders, ranks, or nobility. Our governments are nearly perfect democracies because our governors are our agents; it is a fallacy to suppose that all men must have the right to vote in a democratic system. A balance of orders may be necessary in Europe, but America is different, and Adams and Delolme will never convince us that we need any such "orders" here, any "independent and self-existing powers," or any "interest separate from that of the community at large." Nevertheless, says Stevens, it is of course wise to have a second chamber of legislation, and to give the executive and the judiciary a power of restraining the legislature.

The interest of this pamphlet, in America, lies in the fact that this affluent landed gentleman supposes himself to be a democrat, more so than Adams, and that, even in refuting Adams, he still favors a constitutional separation of powers. His dispute with Adams arose from a misunderstanding, whether willful or not; for Adams had never said that there should be hereditary ranks and orders of men in America. Fundamentally Adams and Stevens agreed on what was desirable. Those who disagreed had been silenced or left the country.

In France the same pamphlet had a different significance. It appeared in French in the early weeks of 1789, on the eve of the elections to the Estates General. There was a general belief that France would soon receive a new constitution, and Condorcet and Dupont, in adapting this American pamphlet, and spurred on by Mazzei and possibly by Jefferson, intended to clear the ground for a French constitution by discrediting the British constitution as a model. That the American Stevens actually favored a threefold separation of powers was confusing; but then Stevens himself had been unclear, for he did roundly denounce the government of England and the society of ranks and orders. In any case the notes to the translation, furnished by Condorcet and Dupont, and longer than the translation itself, could straighten out the matter. In these notes the annotators either elaborated or contradicted their author as best suited their purpose. They gained the prestige of American precedent for their attack on England and on aristocratic society. They disagreed on the matter of constitutional powers; they declared, unlike Stevens, that an upper chamber, and an executive equipped with a veto, were useless imitations of the discredited British constitution. There need be only a single omnicompetent assembly, checked by frequent election, by direct intervention of the people, and by declaration of rights.

The *Examen du gouvernement de l'Angleterre*, thus originating as an American reply to Adams, did have an effect in France in the crucial year 1789. The Abbé

in small manufacturing enterprises. Since the New Jersey convention voted unanimously to ratify the federal constitution, it would appear that the elder Stevens approved of it, though it embodied pretty much the views of John Adams which the younger Stevens was simultaneously attacking. The younger Stevens in 1787 was a heavy holder of continental paper (to the extent of \$28,000); he was the sort of man, and of the sort of family, which, according to Beard's form of economic interpretation, should have agreed with John Adams instead of attacking him. But this "farmer of New Jersey" talked like a pre-Jeffersonian democrat. On the two Stevenses see F. McDonald, *We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago, 1958), 127.

Sieyès added a note on it in the third edition of his famous tract on the Third Estate. He hailed it as a useful work showing the need of a single representative body. It was referred to repeatedly in the constitutional debates in the Assembly later in the year. Mounier, the leader in these debates of the group desiring a strong executive and a bicameral legislature, thought that this refutation of Adams had done much to undermine his own views. The Abbé Morellet, more conservative in 1789 than in 1787, was of the same opinion. Both of them wrote pamphlets in reply to "Governor Livingston" and his French annotators.

The French Constituent Assembly, in the decisions made in September 1789, provided no upper chamber of legislation, and the burden of thought was against a strong and independent executive. For six years France was in effect to be ruled by a single assembly, subject to the pressures of a direct democracy and sporadic popular intervention.

Obviously no pamphlet or war of pamphlets determined the constitutional decisions made in France in 1789. The situation in France was very different from that in America. In France an upper chamber would mean a chamber composed largely of the higher nobility, and the executive was bound to mean King Louis XVI, who by June 1789 had got himself into the position of supporting the nobility against the Third Estate. There were really two meanings in the doctrine of the separation of powers, which the Americans could keep separate and which the French could not. There was the idea of separation of social classes, the old idea of Montesquieu, expressible in the formula of King, Lords, and Commons. There was the idea of separation between functions of government, expressible in the formula of executive, senate, and assembly. The French were not free to have the latter without the former. For them a "senate" must mean a body of nobles; the executive must mean the King, hereditary and unelected, or ministers who, as they in fact still were in England, would be primarily agents of the King. In America the senators were not lords, nor were the governors kings; they were temporary occupants of office, with no personal right to the exercise of public authority. In all the mud-dle of arguments all Americans since the defeat of the loyalists agreed upon this—John Adams, John Stevens, Jefferson, and Franklin alike. In France the essence of the revolution of 1789 was the revolt of the Third Estate against the nobility. With a hostile nobility to overcome, and a king sympathetic with the nobility to contend with, the creation of an upper house and a strong independent executive was simply not among the possible choices for men interested in furthering the French Revolution.

The effects in Europe of the War of American Independence will become apparent in the next chapters. The effects of the American Revolution, as a revolution, were imponderable but very great. It inspired the sense of a new era. It added a new content to the conception of progress. It gave a whole new dimension to ideas of liberty and equality made familiar by the Enlightenment. It got people into the habit of thinking more concretely about political questions, and made them more readily critical of their own governments and society. It dethroned England, and set up America, as a model for those seeking a better world. It brought written constitutions, declarations of rights, and constituent conventions into the realm of the possible. The apparition on the other side of the Atlantic of certain

ideas already familiar in Europe made such ideas seem more truly universal, and confirmed the habit of thinking in terms of humanity at large. Whether fantastically idealized or seen in a factual way, whether as mirage or as reality, America made Europe seem unsatisfactory to many people of the middle and lower classes, and to those of the upper classes who wished them well. It made a good many Europeans feel sorry for themselves, and induced a kind of spiritual flight from the Old Régime.

CHAPTER X

TWO PARLIAMENTS ESCAPE REFORM

Parliamentary reform, I am still sure, must sooner or later be carried in both countries. If it is well done, the sooner the better. . . . For God's sake, do not persuade yourself, in the meantime that the measure . . . is inconsistent with either the dignity or the tranquillity and facility of government. On the contrary, I believe they ultimately depend upon it.

—WILLIAM PITT, PRIME MINISTER OF GREAT BRITAIN,
TO THE DUKE OF RUTLAND, LORD
LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND, 1784

The great object of most of these reformers is to prepare the destruction of the Constitution by disgracing and discrediting the House of Commons.

—EDMUND BURKE, MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT FOR MALTON, 1784

As we now, after long considering the American Revolution and its influence, return to pick up the trail of events in a dozen European countries, it is well to look back upon some of the main points staked out since the beginning of this volume. The makings of a great conflict were accumulating in Europe, a conflict that was to reach its height during the last years of the century and that may be called the Great Democratic Revolution, in that it was primarily a revolt against aristocracy in its numerous manifestations. Aristocracy was entrenched in a multitude of constituted bodies—estates, diets, councils, and parliaments, and in the established churches in view of the social origins of the higher ecclesiastical personnel. The simultaneous growth of both aristocratic and middle-class ideals and ambitions produced stresses of many kinds. By 1774, or the eve of the American Revolution, the constituted bodies were yielding before contrary pressures. On the one hand, enlightened monarchy, in its own way, worked toward a greater equality as among

the subjects of government: the Maupeou administration overcame the parlements in France, Gustav III ended the noble hegemony in Sweden, Maria Theresa sought to circumvent the various diets and councils of her composite realms. On the other hand, at Geneva, a kind of democratic or burgher party had asserted itself against the patricians with some success. In England the parliamentary patriciate saw its independence endangered both by King George III, who was determined to subdue the Whig magnates, and by the beginnings of a democratic agitation which held that the House of Commons should be really elected by, and reflect the wishes of, the people whom it was deemed to represent. The American Revolution broke with both Parliament and King. It put into effect many of the ideas of the Enlightenment, and offered the example, through its written constitutions and its constitutional conventions, of the people acting as a constituent power.

In the years between 1774 and 1789, or between the beginnings of the American and of the French Revolutions, the stresses and conflicts grew more acute. Events in America aroused the sense of a new era in Europe, encouraged a negative attitude in Europe toward European institutions, and induced a belief in the possibility of change in the directions desired by persons hitherto excluded from political life. The influence of America, and of much indigenous European development, operated in general in a democratic direction. But real events in Europe, as distinguished from the stirring up of ideas, seemed to be going the opposite way.

It has become commonplace among writers of French history to think of an "aristocratic resurgence" in France before the Revolution. It is illuminating to apply the same concept to a wider area. In the fifteen years before the French Revolution the British and Irish parliaments escaped even a moderate reform, the Dutch Patriots rose and were suppressed, the Genevese patriciate drove out the democrats, the Swedish nobility chafed against Gustav III (who was assassinated by a nobleman in 1792), the Maupeou program collapsed in France, the Belgian and Hungarian estates revolted against the Hapsburg monarchy, the Russian nobility received a charter from Catherine II, the Polish nobility began to build a gentry republic, and the lawyers of Prussia labored to codify the *Ständestaat* in the *Freussisches Allgemeine Landrecht*, which was promulgated in 1791, and stands as an instructive counterpart to the first French revolutionary constitution issued in that year. A philosophy of what was to be called conservatism began to appear. In the circumstances of the day, it was in effect a defense of the existing constituted bodies, hence heavily historical, and aristocratic. Edmund Burke first gave a full expression to his major ideas, not in writing against the French Revolution of 1789, but in opposing the reform of Parliament in 1784.

There was, in short, a widespread aristocratic resurgence, or perhaps only a "surge," a rising bid for power and recognition, or successful offensive against anti-aristocratic forces, whether monarchic or democratic, at the very time when other developments, one of which was the impact of the American Revolution, made a great many people less willing than ever to accept any such drift of affairs. The great disturbance of the 1790's can be understood only against the background of these conflicting trends.

We begin with what happened in the British Isles.

THE ARMING OF IRELAND: "GRATTAN'S PARLIAMENT"

In both islands, during the later years of the American war, an organized force of public opinion developed outside of Parliament and against it, a kind of anti-Parliament, claiming to represent the people of the country better than Parliament itself and thus to bring a rightful pressure upon it. Since the constitutional doctrine of the day recognized no power above or outside of Parliament (except possibly God and his laws), the claims of any such pressure groups were thought to be, and in fact were, more or less extra-legal and more or less revolutionary in implication. In Ireland (as in Holland) this extra-legal organization took to arms. In England it remained purely civilian. But the arming of Ireland was hailed as a great advantage by many English reformers.¹

There were two levels of conflict in Ireland: first, the desire of the Irish Parliament for emancipation from the British Parliament, and, second, the desire of many people in Ireland to reform the Irish Parliament itself. It will come as no surprise to readers of political history to learn that the Irish Parliament welcomed extra-parliamentary or popular support in its struggle against Westminster, and that, once emancipated from the Parliament of Great Britain, it tended to believe that such extra-parliamentary activity was unnecessary and improper.

Ireland in the 1770's had about 4,500,000 people, or over half as many as England. More than 3,000,000 were Catholics, who, somewhat like the "natives" of Geneva, were legally debarred from political life, even from the vote, and from most of the desirable or remunerative occupations. Somewhat under a million were Presbyterians, most heavily concentrated in Ulster and laboring under the same political disabilities as in England. They could vote, if they had the required qualifications. They were legally debarred by religion from no occupation except higher government service. Most of them were farmers on easily terminable leases. Many also worked as linen weavers in their cottages. The remaining 450,000 were Anglicans, concentrated in the east but found all over the island. Anglicans owned five-sixths of the land, but there were a few Catholic peers, and a number of Catholic gentry, for though the purchase of land by a Catholic had been forbidden, its inheritance under certain restrictions was allowed. Few Presbyterians were upper class; like the English Dissenters, they were thought to be susceptible to "republicanism." Educated Catholics and Protestants had begun to get along with each other peaceably, but such broad-mindedness had not yet spread very far through society. Dublin was a cosmopolitan city, the administrative, commercial, legal, educational, and fashionable capital of the island, its articulate citizens mainly Anglican, graced by new parks and fine Georgian buildings, and rapidly growing, claiming, with 150,000 people, to be the fifth largest city of Europe. Belfast was still a small provincial town.

¹ For Ireland at this time see R. B. McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750-1800* (London, 1943); G. O'Brien, *Economic History of Ireland in the 18th Century* (Dublin and London, 1918); B. Inglis, *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland 1784-1841* (London, 1954); E. Curtis, *History of Ireland* (London, 1936). Also, for connections between Irish and English reform movements, H. Butterfield, *George III, Lord North and the People* (London, 1949).

The Irish Parliament, as already explained, represented the Anglican or Anglo-Irish community, though in the peculiar fashion of the time, for where in England it was estimated that 5,723 persons controlled half the seats in the House of Commons, only about a hundred controlled two-thirds of those in the Commons of Ireland. Many of these oligarchs worked habitually with the Castle—Dublin Castle, the seat of the Lord Lieutenant and the British authorities—so that the crown was normally able, as in England, to “influence” Parliament in the desired direction. In any case, by the famous Poynings’ Law, enacted as long ago as 1494 to control the Anglo-Irish magnates, no bill could be introduced in the Irish Parliament without the previous consent of the English Privy Council, through its agent the Lord Lieutenant. This law was the symbol of the subordination of the Irish Parliament, which, however, did legislate pretty freely on internal matters. Most of the legislation against Catholics was the work of the Irish Parliament, not the British. After the mid-century the British government usually showed more indulgence toward Irish Catholics than did the Irish government in Ireland.

The Anglo-Irish, like the Americans, were well satisfied with their English culture. They were aware, too, that their position as against the native Catholics depended ultimately on British protection. Nevertheless, they often defended Irish interests against the English. Though Ireland was not taxed by the British Parliament, and maintained its own army, administration, and debt, it was subject to trade controls enacted in Britain for the protection of British merchants. These controls forbade Ireland to export woolens and other goods that might compete, or to levy tariffs against England, or in general to trade with Europe or the British colonies except through intermediaries in England. Ireland lived by the export of beef, pork, butter, and linens. There was always a balance-of-trade problem, since landowners and pensioners resident in England took out almost £1,000,000 a year. Despite all disadvantages, there was a considerable business growth in Ireland after the mid-century. The Irish Parliament wished to get rid of the trade regulations enacted in England.

The impact of the troubles with America was very direct. American non-importation agreements, followed after the outbreak of hostilities by British embargoes, caused a sudden and ruinous decline in the export of linens and provisions. All classes felt the blow: landlords could not collect rents, nor farmers pay them; weavers were thrown out of work; and merchants saw their stocks pile up unsold in Dublin, Cork, and the depots of London. The proverbial poverty of the Irish poor was worse than ever.

Then, in April 1778, John Paul Jones, in the United States warship *Ranger*, sailed unopposed into Belfast harbor. Troops had been withdrawn for the American war; there were never enough, in any case, to guarantee security in wartime against a French invasion with which it was expected that the Catholic population would collaborate. The French did have plans for invasion, and soon financed John Paul Jones’s small American flotilla. In Ireland people of the middling and upper ranks rushed to defend themselves, organized neighborhood companies, procured arms, assembled for drills, and adopted “neat and elegant” uniforms. These companies were at first exclusively Protestant. Such leading men as the Duke of Leinster and the Earl of Charlemont accepted positions of command. The British govern-

ment, on the advice of the Lord Lieutenant, countenanced them and even supplied weapons, though with some misgiving, under the fear of invasion.

Thus originated the Irish Volunteers. They were entirely different from the White boys, Steel boys, Peep-of-Day boys, or Defenders who throughout this whole period carried on an underground violence among the depressed agricultural masses. It was the difference between Pugachev and Radishchev, as Catherine II might say; the Irish Volunteers read Benjamin Franklin. They were overwhelmingly sympathetic to the American rebellion and well informed of its progress. It was not against John Paul Jones that they meant to defend themselves, but against the French and agrarian insurrection. Nor indeed was the movement merely defensive; the Volunteers seized the opportunity of the American rebellion and the French war to bring pressure on England, to demand for Ireland the "liberty" for which others were fighting in America. There were 40,000 volunteers in arms by the end of 1779, organized, officially approved, and perfectly in the open. Their drills and musters brought them together for the exchange of ideas and adoption of programs. Delegates from the companies, meeting in regional assemblies, further spread political consciousness and communication throughout the island.

The Volunteers represented the Protestant and middle-class "nation in arms," but commanded as they were by dukes and earls, with sponsors like Henry Grattan and other reformers in the Irish Parliament, and with no hostility from the Catholics, they represented also, in 1779 and 1780, before the more cautious spirits took alarm, a degree of unity in Irish opinion such as had never existed before and was never to exist again. The awakening of the newspaper press, the outburst of political pamphlets, the formation of non-importation associations against England, the resolutions passed by normal civilian bodies, such as grand juries and county meetings, all added to the agitation. The broadest basis for agreement was the demand for a relaxing of the trade controls to relieve the economic crisis. There was a great desire for legislative autonomy for the Irish Parliament. Many wanted parliamentary reform; and a few dreamers undoubtedly, with the American example before them, were already beginning to think of total separation from England.

The government of Lord North, enmeshed in the American difficulties, trapped in a war with France for which it had optimistically made no preparation, and bedeviled by British merchants who wanted no competition from Ireland, especially after losing American markets, was unable to act speedily or decisively on the Irish demands. It is not that the British were immovable. The Irish Octennial Act of 1768, described above, has been called the first piece of parliamentary reform in the history of the two islands; and concessions to the Catholics, allowing them to take leases on land, had begun in the 1770's, probably to prevent their lending support to Protestant malcontents. But the British delayed on the trade concessions. There was meanwhile no force in the country capable of disarming the Volunteers. The Irish Parliament, sensing the quasi-military backing of the Volunteers, took the unprecedented step of refusing to vote money supplies except for a period of six months. Before pressure of this kind, and the continuing boycott of British goods, which the Volunteers made the more effective by their organization and

publicity, the British yielded. The first real concessions came in 1780. The British Parliament amended the trade controls to allow export of Irish woollens and glasswares and trade with the colonies. But these concessions came so late, so grudgingly, and so obviously under pressure of armed defiance, that they inspired no confidence and won no credit for the British. And it was thought that what Parliament gave it could take away.

Agitation therefore continued. A Volunteer convention, with delegates from 143 companies, met at Dungannon in Ulster. It was presided over by the Earl of Charlemont and the two leading reformers in the Irish Parliament, Henry Flood and Henry Grattan. Flood was a reformer of more drastic type, who had even tried to tax absentee landlords. Grattan was a kind of Whig, primarily interested in Irish parliamentary liberties. The convention passed resolutions repudiating the power "of any other than the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland to make laws to bind this kingdom." Meanwhile Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown. The British ministry was helpless and its policies wholly discredited. In England, too, a vociferous reform movement had arisen, of which Fox was now the chief spokesman within the parliamentary governing class. The English reformers looked on those of Ireland as allies against the same evils.

In 1782 the British gave the Irish what they seemed to want, and what the Americans had seemed to want in 1775, namely, freedom from the Parliament of Great Britain, and a coordinate status for their own Parliament under the crown. Poynings' Law and the Declaratory Act of 1719 were rescinded. The Irish Parliament was now "free," and the two kingdoms were supposedly equal. For a moment there was great joy in Ireland. It was indeed a momentous hour. Never had England so relaxed its hold on the lesser island. An applauding Parliament at Dublin, expressing the real enthusiasm of the country, voted a national award of £50,000 to the patriot hero, Henry Grattan.

England had yielded before the armed strength of the Volunteers, whose numbers rose to 80,000 by 1782. It must be noted, however, that the Volunteer companies, spirited as they were, were never put to the test. The way in which the very similar Dutch free companies melted away before a few Prussian regiments in 1787 suggests what might have happened if a few Hessian regiments had landed at Dublin. The English, who might conceivably have shifted troops after the surrender at Yorktown, must be given credit for not making the experiment. As it turned out it was the Americans who were put to the test, and by surviving it secured concessions for Ireland. Many Irish, in their American sympathies, gladly admitted as much. "It was on the plains of America," wrote one in 1782, "that Ireland obtained her freedom."²

"Grattan's Parliament," as the independent Irish Parliament has always been called, lasted from 1782 until the Act of Union with Great Britain in 1801. It represented the apogee of the "Protestant nation," which is to say of the Anglican nation, for Catholics still had no political rights, and although Presbyterians were relieved from the Test Act in 1780 very few of them, in the real circumstances of

2 McDowell, *op.cit.*, 40; see also M. Kraus, "America and the Irish Revolutionary Movement in the 18th Century," in *Era of the American Revolution* (N.Y., 1939), 332-48.

Anglican monopoly, had anything to do with the government. It was a time of prosperity for the manufacturing, trading, and landowning classes. The slow process of integrating the Catholics into the community went gradually on. Catholics were permitted to buy land in 1782. The strictly penal code against them was finally liquidated, though still with hesitation; for example, the movement to allow a Catholic college in Ireland was defeated, and Catholics desiring higher education for their children continued to send them to France or Belgium. Nor could any Catholic vote for a member of Parliament until England was again at war, in 1793.

The era of Grattan's Parliament was in fact one of increasing frustration. Even the Irish Whigs found parliamentary autonomy disappointing. The Lord Lieutenant, an Englishman, still reigned as viceroy at the Castle. He received his instructions from London, and his job, as before, was to get the Irish Parliament to conform to policies set in Great Britain. He had the same means of influence at his disposal. There was less of cabinet responsibility in Ireland than even in England, where it was embryonic; the doctrine of King, Lords, and Commons, of separate and equal status of executive and legislative, applied to Ireland with full force. Nor did abolition of the trade controls bring satisfaction, for Britain continued in the old habit of considering Ireland strategically joined to it but economically foreign. With really foreign countries the Irish now could trade without impediment from Britain, and they now had commercial access to the British colonies, but these included only the establishments in America and West Africa. That inescapable Mother of Parliaments, sitting at Westminster, continued to forbid Irish trade in the area of the East India Company charter, the whole region from the Cape of Good Hope eastward to the Strait of Magellan, and it also imposed high import duties on Irish goods coming into Great Britain. Irish printed linens entering Britain paid a 65 per cent duty; British printed linens entering Ireland paid only 10 per cent. The same disparities applied to many other products. Demands for an Irish protective tariff collapsed under the fear of British retaliation. Demands for an equalization of duties, which Pitt supported when he became Minister, were abandoned under the agonized outcries of British manufacturers. Manchester, just launching into its famous industrial revolution, and not yet converted to free trade, sent in a petition with 55,000 signatures against any tariff concessions to the Irish.³

Nor did Grattan's Parliament satisfy anyone slightly tinged with democracy. It was the same old Irish Parliament, more independent than ever. It is not necessary to take an Irish nationalist view of the matter. So moderate an observer as the diplomat Harold Nicolson, in his life of his great-great-grandfather, the United Irishman, Hamilton Rowan, observes that Grattan's Parliament was nothing but the Anglo-Irish vested interest more or less emancipated from higher control.⁴ It was the ascendancy governing the natives and the dissenters.

The Volunteers refused to disband. They persisted in their armed deliberations, now urging reform of the electoral machinery of the Irish Commons. There were henceforth two discernible currents in the program of electoral reform. One pro-

³ The petition was printed in the *Annual Register, 1784–1785*, 362–64. See also O'Brien, *op.cit.*

⁴ H. Nicolson, *The Desire to Please: a Story of Hamilton Rowan and the United Irishmen* (London and New York), 1943, 66.

posed, while leaving all else unchanged, to grant the vote to those few property-owning and substantial Catholics who could qualify under the existing system. This plan, which simply looked to the removal of Catholicism as a disability, was favored by Grattan, and by Burke in England, himself of Irish birth by a Catholic mother. Given the tepidity of religious feeling among educated persons in the eighteenth century, and considering that the Irish Catholic bishops (without consulting the pope) had formally denied that the pope had any civil or temporal power in Ireland, the idea of granting the franchise to the substantial Catholics was not a very bold or alarming step, though in Ireland it raised many well-grounded apprehensions. The other plan, favored by the Volunteers, looked to a renovation of decayed boroughs, abolition of borough-mongering, and allowing of real freedom and actual elective powers to the electorate. It was a popular plan, and enjoyed wide support; but its sponsors were weakened by disagreement on giving the vote to the Catholics. There were those who predicted, and the next hundred years were to vindicate their predictions, that political power in the hands of the Catholics would subvert all Ireland as then known, undo all the effects of the seventeenth-century conquests, overturn property, dissolve the established church, and even bring English civilization into question.

The Irish reform movement reached a climax in 1783 and 1784. It was closely related to the corresponding movement in England, to which we can now turn before taking up the reform bills in the Parliaments of the two countries.

THE "ASSOCIATION" MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

In England the new political movement centered about the idea of "association," in which Professor Herbert Butterfield has seen not merely a passing disturbance but one of the grand dates of all English history. "Our French Revolution," he has written, "is in fact that of 1780—the revolution that we escaped."⁵ He insists that the movement was quasi-revolutionary, because it affirmed that assemblies of private persons, forming spontaneously throughout the country, were more representative than Parliament itself, both in being truer spokesmen of the people's wishes, and in having the power to take binding action in their name. It must again be recalled that by the accepted ideas Parliament was supposed to be "absolute," according to Blackstone, or so independent that it must resist pressure from either King or people, as Fox had said in 1771.

At the same time, and somewhat inconsistently with the doctrine of parliamentary absolutism, it was held that members of the House of Commons, being sent up by constituencies in boroughs and counties, could not themselves change these constituencies, much less destroy them by outright abolition of decayed boroughs. Blackstone himself was too logical to believe this; he even held that Parliament could make and remake the constitution, and thought it regrettable that depopu-

⁵ H. Butterfield, *George III, Lord North and the People, 1779–1780* (London, 1949), VI. For this whole section I am mainly indebted to this important work. See also G. S. Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1913); S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1762–1785* (London, 1955).

lated boroughs should continue to have members in Parliament. But it was an argument much favored by opponents of electoral reform; it is found even in the highly Whiggish *Letters of Junius*. It had a convincing sound—how could Parliament destroy its own makers?—and it led to rethinking on the ultimate sources of lawful power. If it was true that Parliament could not change the constituencies of the House of Commons, then there must be some other power that could do so, some really final and technically absolute power. In England this could not be the King; what then could it be but the People? Here again we may note how the idea of the sovereignty of the people, far from being the product of abstract speculation, arose in the needs of debate against claims to inviolability made by constituted bodies.

The reform movement that reached its height in the Wilkes agitations subsided during the 1770's. It had set many precedents in its use of public meetings, its organization of opinion outside Parliament, its instruction of members, and its view of them as deputies answerable to their electors. It had won publication of parliamentary debates, and produced the first reform bill in 1776. The bill of course failed to pass, and nothing more happened. Wilkes sat in the Commons from 1774 to 1790, but he had no further role of importance.

The American war was at first popular in England, but as it proved more difficult to conduct, and broadened into a war with France, a good deal of British opinion turned against it, and blamed it on the stupidity, misgovernment, or despotism of the King. The rising taxes made necessary by the war gave offense to many of all classes, who, being dissatisfied with the government and its policies, attributed their financial troubles to "corruption," that is, the award of pensions, sinecures, or other expensive gratifications to the toadies, favorites, or political minions of the crown. Such practices were no greater or more expensive than ever, but they made a good target for discontent.

Demands for a change thus revived about 1778, among larger segments of the population than in the days of Wilkes and Liberty ten years before. There were two main centers of disaffection, which spread, merged, and fell apart. One was among the landowners of Yorkshire, led by Christopher Wyvil. The other carried on the radicalism of London, which now centered more in the adjoining city of Westminster. Two distinct programs of reform were in the air: an "economical reform" to reduce pensions, sinecures, and ornamental offices, and so save the taxpayers' money and abate the royal power to "corrupt" or influence Parliament; and a political or electoral reform to alter the composition of the Commons. The first was one that good Whigs could heartily endorse, and its high moral tone and promise of lower taxes gave it a wide appeal. The second was more radical; and though some, like Wyvil, concluding that a corrupted Parliament would not abolish the means of its own corruption, moved on to political reform as the necessary goal, others, like Burke and many Whigs, in order to avert electoral change, increasingly made a crusade of economical reform itself.

Wyvil brought about a county meeting at York, in December 1779, representing in principle all the freeholders and gentry of Yorkshire. Six hundred attended, including five dukes and earls and the Marquis of Rockingham. They claimed to represent landed wealth within the county worth £800,000 a year. They passed resolutions on the deplorable trend of public events, warned against the growing

influence of the crown, and urged the need of economical reform. They declared that a degenerate government would do nothing except under organized public pressure, and to illustrate their meaning they pointed with approval to what was happening in Ireland. They set up a committee of correspondence to establish contact with similar meetings elsewhere. Wyvil, moderating his own desire for electoral reform, let them emphasize economical reform as offering a broader basis of agreement.

News of the Yorkshire meeting was hailed with enthusiasm in London, to which Wyvil repaired, and which became the main center of the whole movement. "Join as the Irish do!" cried one London newspaper. "It is not by speaking or voting in the House of Commons, Sir, that this country is to be saved," said another. "The Associations in America," declared a third, meaning the non-importation and other pre-revolutionary associations in the colonies, "have set an example. . . . This example has been followed in Ireland."⁶

Throughout England, in towns and counties, meetings on the model of the Yorkshire meeting assembled, and after a few resolutions, appointed committees, in which a few leading spirits took on the management of affairs. In February 1780, the London and Westminster committees sent a circular to all the others, inviting them to send deputies to an assembly in London, "to consider a Plan of Association." Only twelve counties and four towns responded, apparently because of shortage of time, but these in turn resolved to form a General Association, or what Sir George Savile proposed to call a National Assembly. This association was to examine the public accounts, and to work for parliamentary reform, that is, for annually elected Parliaments, for "tests" by which candidates must promise to adhere to programs demanded by their constituents, and for the addition of one hundred county members. It may be recalled that four-fifths of the members of the House of Commons sat for boroughs, and that though most burgesses were country gentlemen the rural population was thus underrepresented; the point, however, was that the boroughs were highly susceptible to manipulation, so that an increase of county members was a commonly proposed means to assure a freer and purer House.

Meanwhile, certain of the Parliament Whigs, including Charles James Fox, had become active in the town and county meetings. Fox had now become a reformer, and even a tribune of the people, delivering eloquent speeches in the Westminster meeting, praising the American rebels (with whom England was still at war), and loudly applauding the Irish Volunteers. The Whigs, indeed, at this time, in Butterfield's phrase, adopted a doctrine of "near revolution."⁷ To their old fondness for the Revolution of 1688 they added a taste for the conveniently distant revolution in America, for the revolutionary ferment in Ireland, and for appeals to the majesty of the people of England, compounding all into a terrible medicine to be inflicted on Lord North and King George III. Fox declared that the Irish Volunteers were a good thing even if they were illegal, and he even endorsed the radical idea that members of Parliament were only "delegates" of the people. Scion of a

⁶ Quotations from Butterfield, *op.cit.*, 210.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 172-73.

wealthy Whig family (he and his brothers had to be bailed out of £140,000 in gambling debts in 1774), Fox was a man of warm and generous nature, who came to sponsor all manner of liberal causes and was courageously to oppose the war with Revolutionary France; but in his sympathy for parliamentary reform, he seemed sometimes to lack a steadiness of cold conviction, and be less of a reformer than either of the two Pitts or their friend, the Earl of Shelburne. In any case, Shelburne (the elder Pitt being dead, the younger not yet in Parliament) also now entered into the tumult of meetings and committees. With Fox and Shelburne, the Rockinghamite and the Pittite Whigs, joining forces with a great national upsurge of extra-parliamentary opinion, it seemed for a moment, in 1780, as if their combined forces might both put an end to George III's experiments with personal rule, and bring about some measure of democratization of the House of Commons. There were thoughts of a less baronial Magna Carta, a "second Runnymede."

Wyvil and the reformers, however, in their distrust of Parliament, regarded the appearance of Fox and other members of Parliament in their midst as an infiltration. To a Parliament that had claimed independence of the people, they responded by proposing an association independent of Parliament, an extra-parliamentary but representative body that should act upon Parliament and reform it. Within the various county and town meetings there thus took place a struggle for leadership, between reformers who were members of Parliament and reformers who, from the outside, did not believe that Parliament ever would or could really reform itself.

The call for a General Association, a veritable anti-Parliament, threw the reformers into disarray. The Rockingham Whigs (Shelburne showed more inclination to radicalism) now took alarm. They declared—rightly enough from a legal point of view—that the deputies at London had no real representative character, and no real representative powers. Meetings throughout the country were dubious and divided. Gentry and freeholders were annoyed at corruption, taxes, extravagance, and parliamentary subservience to the crown, but they could not bring themselves to impugn the grandeur of the British constitution, or to believe that Parliament should be dictated to by unauthorized persons like themselves. At the Wiltshire meeting, to which both Fox and Shelburne belonged, the committee cautiously decided that if any association ever met it should demand no more than economical reform, and the full meeting would agree to no association at all. Nottingham, in county meeting, feared "self-created assemblies." Sussex warned against "General Associations apparently tending to overrule the legislature," and Hertfordshire did not want the legislature "overawed" by committees of correspondence. America and Ireland, observed the *Annual Register*, had made the very words "association" and "committee" sound suspicious. And even in Yorkshire, where the movement to "overawe" Parliament had first gathered strength among men boasting, £800,000 of income, there were sobering second thoughts. Yorkshire, under the nominal four-shilling land tax, really paid only one shilling in the pound of actual rents. Conservatives were quick to hint at the probable consequences of reform.⁸

⁸ *Ibid.*, 246–51; W. R. Ward, *English Land Tax in the 18th Century* (London, 1953), 125.

Whigs everywhere disputed with radicals, as the Whigs everywhere fled from the association idea, and even refused to submit to electoral tests. Most meetings would go no further than to ask for economical reform. Parliamentary reformers divided. Wyvil and his followers concluded that parliamentary reform could come only with the support of the landed class, and advocated only a more uniform and effective representation of property owners. The popular reformers became more self-conscious in identifying their opponents and in formulating their own aims. One of them burst out in the Essex meeting: "I have never yet heard of an aristocracy [and he meant the Rockingham Whigs and the Parliament] from ancient Rome to modern Venice that was not the universal tyrant and inquisitor of the species."⁹ It was at this time, in May 1780, that the Westminster meeting, as already noted in connection with the American Revolution, drafted its far-reaching proposals for parliamentary reform, which went beyond the American constitutions in their theory of representation, and anticipated the six points of the People's Charter, including universal suffrage for all adult males.¹⁰

Then in June 1780 came the Gordon riots, an irrelevant episode, unconnected with projects of association or of reform, but which crippled and discredited the democratic movement by exposing the violence endemic at the bottom of society. A mild act of Catholic relief, passed by Parliament in 1778, had aroused ancestral terrors of popery, particularly among the lower classes, which, in Britain as in Ireland, did not yet share that religious magnanimity that educated persons had come to feel. Lord George Gordon, a Scotsman, and an eccentric of the kind admired by the British when harmless (he died a converted Jew), became the leader of the no-popery forces in London. The misery of the poor, and the absence of effective police, made mobs a chronic danger in all great cities. On June 2 Lord George entered the House of Commons (of which he was a member, being the son of a duke), to present a petition against legislation in favor of Catholics. Large crowds accompanied him, wearing the blue cockade originated by Wilkes, who, however, opposed the present demonstration. They "overawed" Parliament in an actual sense, pulling the wigs off two lords, and chasing a bishop across the adjoining roofs. The next day a full-grown riot took possession of London, and held it for a week. Whole Catholic neighborhoods were burned, as were the houses of judges and lawyers. The Fleet, Newgate, and King's Bench prisons went up in flames, and two thousand prisoners wandered free. On one night thirty-six separate fires were visible. Probably there was less physical destruction in Paris during the whole French Revolution, if we except the demolition of the Bastille.

The mob was put down mainly by John Wilkes, who headed a body of volunteers before the arrival of military reinforcements. Several were killed, hundreds wounded. Wilkes, long known to some as an agitator, was now a traitor in the eyes of the populace. The democratic branch of the reformers was silenced. Henceforth any notion of giving a vote to all adult males had a great resistance to overcome.

No General Association ever met. There was no second Runnymede. No National Assembly ever convened in England. The difficulty of holding any such as-

9 Butterfield, *op.cit.*, 295.

10 See above, p. 157, and Maccoby, *op.cit.*, 320.

sembly that did not start from some legally accepted base, such as the colonial legislatures in America or the French Estates General of 1789, was made abundantly clear. The association idea evaporated, leaving for a while a vaguely subversive aura about the word, and slowly passing, in the long run, into the idea of the modern political party, as a private and unofficial, but at the same time public and organized, body, apart from government, yet using government and bringing pressure upon it.

Yet the meetings and murmurs throughout the country had their effect. Streams of petitions, while deferentially law-abiding, still showed a widespread dissatisfaction with royal and ministerial influence. The opposition in Parliament, the two great Whig factions, were temporarily able to capture a majority from Lord North. The result was the Dunning resolution adopted in April 1780 by the Commons: that "the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." The next logical step would be to reduce this influence by abolishing some of the offices and pensions through which it was exercised, but this step the Whigs were for a while unable to take—because, it is seriously alleged, at the critical moment the young blades of the Rockingham party made off for the Newmarket races. The Dunning resolution itself, however, though nothing but a resolution, gave some indication that Parliament was not inevitably controlled by the King, that it could at times respond to public opinion, that it might, after all, be capable of some measure of self-reform. It thus temporarily quieted the political agitation, as did the Gordon riots that shortly followed.

Lord North recaptured his majority, but in 1782 was finally allowed to resign by the King, who at last in desperation, with America lost, Ireland rebellious, and England much disgruntled, called his enemies the Whigs into office, and put Rockingham, Fox, and Shelburne into the cabinet. The Whigs opened negotiations with the United States, and conceded parliamentary independence to Ireland.

The Whigs also in 1782 obtained the enactment of Burke's bill for Economical Reform, or as Burke had called it in 1780, a "Plan for the better security of the independency of Parliament." The beauty of economic reform was that, by saving the taxpayer's money through the reduction of offices, it seemed simultaneously to relieve Parliament from the wrath of the public, and to reduce the means of influence brought to bear by the King. Burke's plan had many merits, and did contribute to the modernization of government. It abolished the clusters of idle but lucrative offices that clung to the Principality of Wales, the Duchy of Lancaster, the County of Chester, and other survivals of former times, "principalities," as Burke called them, which retained "the apparatus of a kingdom for the jurisdiction over a few private estates." It abolished also certain honorific appointments in the royal household, with considerable difficulty, "because the King's turnspit in the King's kitchen was a member of Parliament." It turned over the King's table, wardrobe, and kennels to appropriate contractors or employees: "It is not proper that great noblemen should be the keepers of dogs." It introduced more order into public accounting. Burke himself, as Paymaster of the Forces in the short-lived Rockingham government, an office in which his predecessors had often enriched themselves by the flexible handling of large sums of money, introduced the novel

practice of depositing the funds in the Bank of England, and put himself on a salary. I cannot resist the observation that the salary fixed upon was £4,000, five times more than Alexander Hamilton received as Secretary of the Treasury in 1789. Burke explained that, while cutting out sinecures, he meant to have the really important offices of state handsomely paid, so as to attract the right kind of men, and keep up the necessary "representation."¹¹

Actually, the Economical Reform of 1782 saved less than £50,000 a year.¹² In an annual budget of £12,500,000 this was imperceptible to the taxpayer. Nor, as it turned out, was it enough to emancipate Parliament from the King. The King could win any election; his problem was to find someone able and willing to head up his government. George III, buffeted and discomfited, obliged finally to part with North, and even to bring in the Whigs, was not really beaten. He survived quite well the "near revolution" of 1780, and even Rockingham's three months in office. He found the man he needed in young William Pitt.

Entering Parliament at the age of twenty-two, enjoying high office with Shelburne the following year, and himself Prime Minister the year after that, Pitt dissolved Parliament in 1784. Older and more edifying histories declare that he sensed an aroused country in his favor, and swept into power as the nation's candidate against an embarrassed monarch. The truth is that Pitt was the King's man, and that, before his dissolution of Parliament, he had the expert advice of John Robinson, the King's manager, who, after exhaustive calculations, assured him that the crown controlled enough boroughs to give him a victory.¹³

Pitt did not basically agree with George III. Pitt had his principles, which were usually good ones, but he also respected the principles of the royal master. He held office for almost two decades by respecting the King's wishes when he could not change them. Here again, as in the days of the Stamp Act, there was a remote and ludicrous English analogy to the enlightened despotism of the Continent, which the Whiggish traditions of English history have perhaps concealed. With Pitt in office the aristocracy was kept at a distance. As Lady Holland, the great Whig hostess, was to remark in the days of the French Revolution, Pitt really had no more regard for the aristocracy than any member of the London Corresponding Society. And Pitt did accomplish a good deal of fiscal and administrative reconstruction by making himself useful to the crown. But, as with reforming ministers in other countries, there were important sacrifices that he had to make. In England as elsewhere, in the 1780's, the aristocracy was not dislodged.

The young Pitt, among his other qualities, was a serious believer in the need for parliamentary reform. He carried over, in his younger days, some of the popular ideas of Shelburne and his father. He himself introduced three reform bills. They came at the same time as the reform bill in Ireland, and the two kingdoms can be considered together.

11 Quotations in this paragraph are from Burke's speech on economical reform.

12 J. Sinclair, *History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire* (London, 1803), II, 85.

13 W. T. Laprade, *Parliamentary Papers of John Robinson 1774-1784* (London, 1922) in *Camden Society Third Series*, vol. 33. That Pitt took and retained office as the King's man, and not by a popular, parliamentary, or liberal triumph over George III, is the thesis of D. G. Barnes, *George III and William Pitt, 1783-1806* (London, 1939). It is shared by Pares, Butterfield, Feiling, and other British writers.

THE REFORM BILLS AND THEIR FAILURE

The extra-parliamentary pressure, quasi-military in Ireland, civilian in England, built up to force action upon the two Parliaments, was "revolutionary" only in a certain sense. Only insofar as the Parliaments were constitutionally independent, and clamor out of doors, or even orderly public opinion, was a phenomenon on which Parliament was free to act, or not to act, according to its own unforced judgment of the national interests, can outside pressures be described by so strong a word. In another sense the most advanced ideas of reformers were not revolutionary in the least. None went beyond the idea of a more equal representation in the House of Commons. None attacked the Lords or the crown in any basic way, and none anticipated the actual workings of cabinet government, which was a conception, rather, promoted by the parliamentary Rockingham Whigs. Reformers dwelt on the majesty of the people. But the British and Irish reformers never really took up the theory developed in the American Revolution, the theory of the people as constituent power. None thought that any General Association, or what Sir George Savile called a "National Assembly," should actually *create* government. All venerated the British constitution, properly understood, and free from "abuses"; none thought of replacing the existing constitution by another or a newly authorized one. None demanded a written document drafted by a constituent convention. At most, reformers wanted the people to "constitute" the Commons, that is, to make it up by their free votes and turn it into a body of delegates. There was no idea that the people should explicitly "constitute" the whole apparatus of government.

These observations may be kept in mind as we survey the reform bills and the conservative arguments against them.

In Ireland, after the winning of legislative independence, the Volunteers not only refused to disband, but rapidly grew in numbers, even admitting and arming Catholics as recruits. Grattan and the Irish Whigs, who had so recently praised them as armed patriots willing to fight for their country, now regarded them as an anarchic menace to lawful authority. The Volunteers, who for some time had met in regional conventions, decided to hold a Grand National Convention at Dublin in November 1783. It was the first body calling itself a national convention in a world that was to know many such in the next fifteen years. Uniformed and armed delegates from all parts of the island marched through Dublin amid the cheers of the population. They deliberated under the chairmanship of the Earl of Charlemont, who had consented to come in the hope of moderating the proceedings. There was much disagreement on the enfranchisement of Catholics, which was finally decided against, so that the proposals automatically excluded two-thirds of the population. The reform program resolved upon has been thought moderate enough by later historians. It demanded that Parliament be elected every three years, that no life pensioners be allowed to sit unless specifically reelected, that all Protestant freeholders and holders of long leases of at least £10 a year be given the vote, if actually resident, and that decayed constituencies, having less than two hundred voters, should no longer be represented in the House of Commons.¹⁴

14 There is a narrative account of the convention in T. Wright, *History of Ireland* (London and New York, n.d.), II, 469–74. For other details, including the resolutions of the convention and provisions of

Henry Flood, an officer of the Volunteers, proceeded the short distance through the Dublin streets from the session of the convention to the Parliament building, where he forthwith introduced these proposals as a bill. He appeared in uniform, with a few other members, and so gave a welcome opening to the opponents of reform, since he did in fact raise the question of the propriety of a parliamentary body yielding to men in arms. After long speeches, the bill was voted down, 150 to 60. The year 1784 saw even more hectic agitation. Catholics were increasingly admitted to the Volunteer companies. The beginnings of the United Irishmen could already be seen. The *Volunteer Journal* and other radical newspapers grew more excited, demanding a protective tariff for starving workers, pointing enthusiastically to America, printing cartoons in which gibbets for traitors were featured, or various notables were tarred and feathered. The Dublin reformers called together a new national body, which this time they called a "congress." This American word aroused unbounded hopes and wild apprehensions. The Congress assembled through more or less legal channels, by the summons of sheriffs for election of delegates in their counties. Most sheriffs refused to comply, but several did, including the sheriff of Dublin. The Attorney General arrested him, and also suppressed the radical newspapers, so that the freedom of the press enjoyed for the past several years in Ireland was now permanently restrained. The Congress met behind closed doors, but did nothing except to pass resolutions, and faded away early in 1785.

It is clear that the Irish reform movement, though its most advanced leaders were already very radical, commanded a wide support throughout the country. All three members of the Stewart family then in the Irish Commons, including the father of the future Lord Castlereagh, voted for the bill brought from the Convention by Henry Flood in 1783. Even the Congress of 1784 could boast of a peer and four baronets. A moderate writer estimates that the upper and middle classes of Ireland, except for those profiting or hoping to profit from the existing system (who were indeed numerous), favored a reform of Parliament at this time, though not at the cost of civil struggle, and, for many, not at the dictation of uniformed men in the House of Commons.¹⁵

It is the arguments of the antireformers that are most interesting, since those of the reformers are familiar enough, and those of conservatives, who were the successful party, were soon to spread throughout Europe. The grand debate in the Irish Parliament took place at the time of the National Convention and Flood's bill at the end of 1783. Some of the speeches resemble those of Edmund Burke, who was in habitual correspondence with Ireland, but whether Burke influenced Irishmen like Sir Hercules Langrishe, or was influenced by them, is impossible to say.

The first crushing oration was delivered by Yelverton, who turned the whole discussion from the merits of reform to the merits of the convention from which Flood had unwisely brought the bill. The truth seems to be that the Irish government and Parliament did not really fear the convention. Both General Burgoyne,

its reform bill, see *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Henry Grattan by his Son* (London, 1849), III, 143–46.

15 McDowell, *op.cit.*, 110.

now commanding the army in Ireland, and the Lord Lieutenant wrote to London that there was nothing to worry about. They reassured Charles Fox, who had declared in 1780 that he approved the Volunteers even though illegal, and who now, in 1783, being in responsible office, was adjuring them to suppress the convention and pay no attention whatsoever to its petitions. There was nothing to be afraid of, reported the Lord Lieutenant, because the convention was hopelessly divided on the Catholic question. He had himself, as Lord Lieutenant, through friends who belonged to it, taken steps to divide and confuse it on the religious issue.¹⁶

The Irish conservatives, relieved of real fears, launched the more easily into broad statements of principle. The question, said Yelverton, was "whether this house or the convention are the representatives of the people." It was whether "we are here to register the edicts of another assembly, or receive propositions at the point of the bayonet." It was whether Ireland, now a "free state," should squander its "inheritance" and its "blessings under our happy constitution." Mr. George Ponsonby warned against the secret machinations of English radicals, and against "all the system-mongers in Europe," no two of whom, he alleged, ever agreed on any plan of reform. (His father owned twenty-two seats in the Irish House.) Sir Hercules Langrishe thought the bill "subversive of the constitution," of a constitution that was "the admiration and envy of all nations and all ages." In Ireland they were privileged to enjoy "ancient charters that had taken root in the constitution and are the growth of so many centuries." One must dread the "perplexities, the dangers, the difficulties presented by these sages of reform. Good God, is the mind of man never to be satisfied!"¹⁷

It must be admitted that the Anglo-Irish lost little time in appreciating their "inheritance."

In England, though the ardors of the Association movement were somewhat abated, the Whigs allowed the young Pitt, newly in Parliament, to introduce a reform bill as early as May 1782. It failed by a vote of 161 to 141 in a House of 558. Shelburne and the old Chathamite Whigs generally supported it, as did Fox, Sheridan, and the Duke of Richmond, but the bulk of the Rockingham Whigs, including Burke, satisfied that Parliament would regain its freedom through economic reform, voted against it. Pitt tried another bill in 1783, with the same lack of success. In 1784 Alderman Sawbridge, a leader of the London reformers, introduced another reform bill, against the advice of Pitt, who thought it inopportune, but who spoke in its favor. In 1785 Pitt introduced still another bill, making it one of his major proposals as head of the ministry. That is to say, parliamentary reform was no longer a mere agitation carried on a wave of public opinion. It was a serious measure offered in due parliamentary fashion by the government.

Pitt made his bill of 1785 as moderate as he thought possible in order to overcome the opposition, such as that expressed by Burke. He proposed to abolish only thirty-two of the most depopulated boroughs (in which the voters, if there were any, would henceforth vote as residents of their counties), and to transfer the seats thus made available either to the more populous counties or to the growing towns

16 Grattan, *op.cit.*, III, 131.

17 Speeches are quoted at length in Wright, *op.cit.*, II, 474-81.

such as Manchester. Since copyhold, over the centuries, had in effect become a form of ownership of land, he would add the 40-shilling copyholders to the 40-shilling freeholders as voters in the counties. He would also enfranchise certain long leaseholders. Since in a few boroughs there were propertyless persons who had the voting right, and who, paradoxically, would lose it by reform (as they did in 1832), Pitt proposed to indemnify these "potwallopers" to the extent of £1,000,000. Their vote was regarded as a property right.

Pitt was weakened, however, not only by the resistance of those who opposed any alteration of Parliament in principle, but by the failure of the new industrialists, in the unrepresented Midland towns, to lend him enough support. Pitt at this same time was working to equalize the tariff duties between England and Ireland. He was therefore unpopular in Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield, which abstained from petitioning for passage of his reform bill. This was significant, at a time when Manchester got up a petition with 55,000 signatures against tariff concessions to Ireland. Pitt then gave up his tariff plans. It thus seemed that Burke was right when he said that places sending no members to Parliament were nevertheless "represented," and had their interests carefully watched over. Manchester, with no members in Parliament, could sway the tariff policy of England and profoundly influence its relations with Ireland, just as Yorkshire, which had few members, and where no election was contested between 1760 and 1800, continued to enjoy a favored position under the land tax.

Pitt's reform bill of 1785 may thus be thought of, somewhat like the Maupeou reforms in France, as the project of an enlightened government acting in the long-run interests of the country, rather than as a measure demanded by powerful forces in society at large. Like its predecessors, it failed to pass, by 248 against 174.

Pitt in 1785 was repudiated on the two measures on which he set most store, the reform of Parliament and the reform of commercial relations with Ireland. He could at this point either resign, or seek a coalition with Fox or North, or remain in office by depending on the King. There was no constitutional requirement that he resign, and he had a kind of personal feud with Fox. He remained Prime Minister by cooperating with the King. He never again brought up the subject of parliamentary reform, and remained content with such fiscal or administrative improvements as he could persuade the King to accept.

George III thus won out in the long constitutional crisis that had been going on for twenty years. If he did not rule personally, he ruled through Pitt, letting him have his high principles and ideas, and persuading him when necessary to defer or modify their application. Constitutional change came to a standstill until 1832. King and Parliament remained "separated" and "balanced," and in effect made to work together by "influence." The aristocracy continued to hold forth in Parliament, and to accept the favors of the crown. As for the "people," some cared more for other things than the vote, like the industrialists of the Midlands, or the perverfervid anti-Catholics of London. Others continued to hold meetings, form societies, and write pamphlets on reform of the representation. They were soon to be stirred up again during the French Revolution.

Here, as in Ireland, an especial interest attaches to the conservative arguments against the reform bills, because it was at this time that Edmund Burke codified

his chief ideas. Burke's philosophy was ultimately to be of such importance that, like that of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, it demands attention in a section by itself.

THE CONSERVATISM OF EDMUND BURKE

The best way to show that Burke's philosophy of conservatism was not a critique of the French Revolution, and was not directed against the more doctrinaire or purely rationalistic aspects of the Enlightenment, is to show how fully its principles were formed before the French Revolution, and that it was directed against practical proposals made in England, by Englishmen, for England.

He was Anglo-Irish, born in Dublin in 1729, the son of an Anglican attorney and a Catholic mother. He became an eloquent writer, a man of feeling, and an expatriate, in many ways surprisingly like Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He accepted the English aristocracy in a way that Rousseau never accepted the French; he was in turn accepted as an able follower and a friend by the Whig dukes and the Marquis of Rockingham, but they did not exactly regard him as one of themselves, and when they came briefly into office in 1782 they made him Paymaster of the Forces but would not give him cabinet rank. Together with his brother and cousin, at the beginning of his parliamentary career, he bought a country house in Buckinghamshire for £20,000, a price which he was wholly unable to afford, so that he was under constant strain for many years to keep up his style of living. When Rockingham died in 1782 he cancelled a debt of £30,000 owed him by Burke. Burke's career was a series of disappointments, for the Rockingham Whigs were out of office from 1766 to 1782, and in 1782 their term of office was cut short by Rockingham's death, so that Burke lost his lucrative position as paymaster almost immediately on receiving it, and did not even obtain a pension until 1795.¹⁸

Burke warmly identified himself with anything and anyone in which he believed. When rumors, which were in fact true, began to circulate about the dubious financial practices of the brother and cousin with whom he lived, he refused to believe them. He considered such talk as a persecution of himself. Of his own honesty there is no doubt, but he did benefit from his relatives' income, some of which helped to pay for the grand house and landed property that they occupied jointly. Somewhat similarly, he could believe no evil of the British constitution, and accept no criticism, if at all basic, of the House of Commons. Nor would he admit that he personally benefited from the political habits of the day, or see the proponents of parliamentary change as anything but wrongheaded men. It is in fact in his adulation of Parliament that we may see the unifying force behind the various political positions that he took. His carefully qualified attitude on American questions, his opposition to George III, his framing of the doctrines of party responsibility for the Rockingham Whigs, his sponsoring of economic reform, his opposition to electoral reform, and, in later years, his fear of the corruption of Par-

18 For Burke's personality, see the illuminating essays by T. W. Copeland, *Our Eminent Friend, Edmund Burke* (New Haven, 1949); for the finances of the Burke brothers and their cousin see D. Wecter, *Edmund Burke and His Kinsmen* (Boulder, 1939) in *University of Colorado Studies*, I.

liament by East Indian nabobs, can all be explained as a warm defense of parliamentary dignity and independence. It is possible that he idealized Parliament all the more because he was not natively English, having spent his youth in the Anglo-Irish outpost of Dublin. One thinks of Herder idealizing German culture from outposts on the Baltic.

Beginning about 1780 or 1782, however, the House showed an unwillingness to listen to him. Members would bait him to make him angry, or noisily walk out when he rose to speak. For one so dedicated to the greatness of Parliament such cutting insults were a painful blow. He felt irritated, frustrated, unappreciated, surrounded by enemies, wounded in the depths—like Rousseau. The notion of Burke as a judicious observer of a turbulent revolutionary age is entirely a later concoction. His contemporaries were dismayed by his outbursts of unstable emotionalism.

"They represent him as actually mad," said Boswell to Johnson. "Sir," answered the doctor, who was, indeed, no Whig, "if a man will appear extravagant as he does, and cry, can he wonder that he is represented as mad?"¹⁹

Burke was capable of a good deal of hard work, and of amassing exact knowledge on large and complex subjects, such as the history of trade with the American colonies, or the jungle of emoluments at the King's disposal, or the details of the case of Warren Hastings. He has been praised, indeed, and contrasted with French *philosophes* and British radicals, for his avoidance of metaphysical abstractions, and for his insistence on taking account of reality, facts, consequences, real choices, and possible actions. The contrary could as well be argued—that his gift lay on the plane of general statement, and his weakness in the perception and diagnosis of real events. Sir Ernest Barker has declared that Burke violated his own principles in his critique of the French Revolution, that in denouncing political "metaphysics" he became himself metaphysical, and failed altogether to see what the French Revolution was really about.²⁰ He could understand only that with which he could sympathize. He could understand the Irish Catholics but not the Irish reformers. He could understand the Americans as long as he thought them Whigs irritated at royal misgovernment; but in his insistence on parliamentary trade controls over the colonies, his offering them Ireland as a model, his belief in 1777 that America might return under "the paternal care and nurture" of Parliament, and his utter indifference to the new American constitutions that were exciting all Europe, he showed little comprehension of what really happened to the American people in his lifetime.

He was capable, too, of liberal and humane ideas. Many of his wisest apothegms could be quoted by reformers. In one of his earliest writings he ridiculed the lawyers' idea that the constitution was changeless.²¹ Defending the Wilkesite agitation in 1770, he denied that it was stirred up by "a few puny libelers." "When popular discontents have been very prevalent," he said on this occasion, "it may well be af-

19 Copeland, *op.cit.*, 70.

20 E. Barker, "Edmund Burke et la Révolution française," in *Revue philosophique*, Sept.-Dec, 1939, 129-60.

21 *Writings* (Boston, 1901), VII, 476. "An essay towards an abridgement of the English history," 1758.

firmed and supported that there has been generally something found amiss in the constitution or the conduct of government."²² He never said as much of any later discontents, however "prevalent," in England or elsewhere, in which his own sympathies or party loyalties were not aroused. He could call the non-representation of Manchester one of "the shameful parts of our constitution"—when he was defending the Americans against Lord North in 1774.²³ He saw nothing disconcerting in it on other occasions. He could coin the very formula of the impatient progressive: "There is a time when men will not suffer bad things because their ancestors have suffered worse."²⁴ He made this remark in arguing for his Economic Reform. What we miss is the ability to perceive, in an objective way, the relevancy of such maxims to the ideas of other men.

There was one context in which he was willing to argue from an elevated position, to appeal to that "great rule of equality, which is grounded upon our common nature," that natural law or "substance of original justice" of which all human laws were only declaratory.²⁵ There was one context in which he could freely affirm that no one should be excluded from the commonwealth, that if excluded they might turn revolutionary or subversive, that without some degree of equality men could not be fellow citizens, that the whole empire should have "one common bottom of equality and justice."²⁶ Such phases might apply to the whole reforming and revolutionary movement of his day, to the whole dissatisfaction with self-enclosed governing bodies, and to the whole principle of the democratic state as it developed in later times. He applied them in the context of Irish Catholic disabilities.

Burke was never conservative abstractly or obstinately or dogmatically, from a mere principle of conservatism as a value in itself. Even in the *Reflections on the French Revolution* he allowed for a right of revolution; his objection to the French was that they needed no revolution, that they had made "an unforced choice, a fond election of evil."²⁷ This objection rested in turn on the judgment, or feeling, that French government and society before 1789 were, on balance, good. His approval of France before 1789 is apparent in many of his speeches and writings, as when he offered the federalism of the French provinces as a model for the British empire, or again, in 1780, pointed to the current reforms of Necker as an example of the economic reform that he desired in England.

22 *Ibid.*, I, 439, 441. "Thoughts on the cause of the present discontents," 1770.

23 *Ibid.*, II, 74. "Speech on American taxation," 1774.

24 *Ibid.*, II, 279. "Speech on a plan for better security of the independence of Parliament," 1780.

25 *Ibid.*, VII, 326. "Fragments of a tract relative to the laws against popery in Ireland," about 1765.

26 Letter to Dermott, Aug. 17, 1779, in Burke correspondence, I, 813, in Wentworth-Woodhouse manuscripts at Sheffield; *Writings*, IV, 220, "Letter to a peer of Ireland on the penal laws against Catholics," 1782; and various utterances in the 1790's, *Ibid.*, IV, 292, VII, 369, 379, 398, 423, where he now rejects natural right as a ground for granting the franchise to otherwise qualified Catholics and argues that they must be given a share in the constitution and a sense of participation and citizenship lest they turn Jacobin, i.e., revolutionary.

27 On the right of revolution, *Ibid.*, III, 410. "Reflections," 1790: "I do admit that too critical an inquiry might not be advisable into the means of freeing the world. . . . The tenderest minds, confounded with the dreadful exigence in which morality submits to the suspension of its own rules in favor of its own principles, might turn aside whilst fraud and violence were accomplishing the destruction of a pretended nobility. . . ." The Jacobins would not have put it otherwise.

Burke's conservative sentiments, like his liberal ones, arose in a concrete and human way from strong emotions. As he was powerfully held by the vision of a great British empire, or by the plight of the Irish Catholics, so he had a profound feeling for English society and for the British constitution and Parliament. And the same disproportion between far-reaching generalizations and the specific issues to which they applied, a disproportion that we have just observed in his liberal sentiments, is to be found in even greater measure in his conservative ones. He could call up the image of a great and just commonwealth of equal citizens to obtain the vote for a handful of Irish Catholic freeholders. He could invoke pictures of wholesale desolation in arguing against very limited proposals for change. It is a disproportion that suggests an emotional origin, but also, in all candor, a taste for rhetoric in the grand manner, the habits of a highly articulate man of letters in politics.

A few examples:

It is proposed (in 1769) to enlarge the electorate. But if people get the idea that "our constitution is not so perfect as it ought to be" the authority of Parliament is undermined, and ruin follows.²⁸ It is proposed to relieve certain Anglican clergymen of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles. This must not be done. Why not? Because the Anglican clergy must accept the doctrines made legal by Parliament, "because dissent, not satisfied with toleration, is not conscience, but ambition," and because "no legislature was ever so absurd as to tax its people to support men for teaching and acting as they please."²⁹ Infidels are bad. Why? Because they are "out-laws of the constitution of the human race."³⁰ Taxation of Irish absentee landowners would be bad. Why? Because it would subvert the principle of common citizenship in the empire.³¹ He calls up a dreadful vision of lawsuits, litigations, prosecutions, frenzy, of "society dissolved, industry interrupted, ruined—of those personal hatreds that will never be suffered to soften, those animosities and feuds which will be rendered immortal, those quarrels which are never to be appeased—morals vitiated and gangrened in the vitals."³² What has occasioned this horrifying prognostication? Is it the Reign of Terror in France? No, it is a proposal that Parliament be elected every three years instead of every seven. Similarly, as a landowner of Buckinghamshire, he wrote to his county meeting, at the time of the Association movement, that the plan to add a hundred county members to the Commons would alter the "constitution of Parliament itself."³³

When electoral reform became an issue of practical politics, sponsored four times in close succession by men in responsible office, Burke prepared a speech in which he assembled his arguments against it. This speech was never delivered, for the good reason that no one would listen to it. At the time of Pitt's reform bill of 1783 Burke rose to speak, but declined to do so because so many members were walking out. In the following year, at the time of Sawbridge's bill, Burke got into

28 *Ibid.*, I, 371. "Observations on a late publication . . .," 1769.

29 *Ibid.*, VII, 11, 13. "Speech on the Acts of Uniformity," 1772.

30 *Ibid.*, VII, 36. "Speech on a bill for the relief of Protestant Dissenters," 1773.

31 *Ibid.*, VII, 121–34. "A letter . . . on the Irish absentee tax," 1773.

32 *Ibid.*, VII, 80. "Speech on a bill for shortening the duration of Parliaments," 1780.

33 *Ibid.*, VII, 293. "Letter to the chairman of the Buckinghamshire meeting," 1780.

an altercation on the floor of the House with Pitt. Pitt declared that the American war had been due to defective representation in Parliament. Burke hotly denied this, and a general hubbub followed, with "some of the young members vociferating so loudly as to prevent Mr. Burke from being distinctly heard." Burke tried repeatedly to launch into a connected discourse, saying that he had "something to say which he conceived to be well worth their hearing," but finally gave up under the clamor that he said "oppressed" him. An undelivered speech, found at his death among his papers, is probably what he conceived to be worth the members' hearing on June 16, 1784. Had they listened, they would have heard no discussion of the terms of any particular reform bill, but a beautifully compact statement of what was to become philosophical conservatism.³⁴

Burke, in this speech to which no one would listen, attributed the demand for electoral reform to a theory—the false theory of "the supposed rights of man." "They lay it down that every man ought to govern himself, and that where he cannot go, himself, he must send his representative; that all other government is usurpation. . . . Nine tenths of the reformers argue thus—that is, on the natural right." (He had himself justified the claims of Irish Catholics by natural right.) But, he now said, the British constitution did not derive its authority from any such source as natural right, nor did the Commons represent men as men, "as a collection of individuals." The constitution rested on prescription. (I have shown how Bishop Warburton had appealed to prescription, as a barrier to natural right, in defending the Test Act.) "Our constitution is a prescriptive constitution; it is a constitution whose sole authority is, that it has existed time out of mind." Prescription was a better source of rightful authority than election, because prescription showed the real "choice of the nation." This, he said, anticipating a famous passage in the *Reflections on the French Revolution*, where society was called a contract between the dead, the living and the yet unborn, was because "a nation is not an idea only of local extent and individual momentary aggregation. . . . [The nation's choice, as shown by prescription,] is a deliberate choice of ages and generations; it is a constitution made by what is ten thousand times better than choice; it is made by peculiar circumstances, occasions, tempers, dispositions, and moral, civil and social habitudes of the people, which disclose themselves only in a long space of time."

Here the question was how the real will of a political community could be ascertained. For Rousseau, as for Genevese democrats, or the authors of the American constitutions, this will must be felt and exercised by living persons in the present. For Burke the real will could be observed at work only over a long period of

34 *Parliamentary History*, XXIV, 1,001. The refusal to give Burke a hearing was not due to pressure of time, since twelve speeches by others followed. Burke, *Writings*, VII, 89–104, "Speech on a motion . . . to inquire into the state of the representation of the Commons in Parliament." Some of Burke's editors, including the editor of the Boston edition of 1901, here cited, attribute this speech, or intended speech, to May 17, 1782, others to June 16, 1784. I have chosen the latter date because of the incident reported in the parliamentary history for that day, and because it seems likely that Burke would have codified his opposition to reform on the occasion of the third recently attempted reform bill rather than of that of 1782. It would be worth while to attempt an exact dating of this speech from Burke's unpublished papers. If written in 1784, this important statement of Burke's position would be influenced by events in Ireland also, and perhaps by speeches in the Irish Parliament in 1783, quoted above, since Burke was in close correspondence with Ireland.

time. The two views were not necessarily contradictory, nor should either be dismissed as false, but they would coincide only in a relatively unchanging society, or in one not conscious or desirous of political change. One view was calculated to justify change and assert liberty. Burke's view was designed to resist change, and to confine liberty within the limits of such liberties, if any, as might be inherited. Burke's view represented also a distrust of the reason of consciously reasoning, living men. "The individual is foolish, the multitude is foolish, but the species is wise."

As for the House of Commons, he went on, it too existed prescriptively. It had always been the same, composed of knights, citizens, and burgesses, representing not persons or individuals, but the corporate units of shires, cities, and boroughs without regard to population. No change was necessary in the recruitment of the House, and certainly no conversion to a radically new system of personal representation, because, on a practical ground, no change could be expected to do anyone any good. England had long been free, happy, and prosperous with its Parliament. Indeed, rightly understood, England already enjoyed equal representation. "You have an equal representation because you have men equally interested in the prosperity of the whole." If thirty-six sat for Cornwall, and only six for Lancashire, it made no difference. The truth that may be found in this particular allegation is that the thirty-six Cornish members certainly did not represent Cornwall, and that the Manchester industrialists, or Yorkshire landowners, as I have said, did not, or did not yet, feel much material disadvantage from political underrepresentation.

With that disproportion already noted, Burke proceeded to identify a few proposed changes in the electoral system with violation of the order of nature, or of God's plan for the government of the world. "There is an order that keeps things fast in their place: it is made to us, and we are made to it. Why not ask another wife, other children, another body, another mind?" (Or as Sir Hercules said in Ireland: "Good God! Is the mind of man never to be satisfied!") And he proceeded to identify electoral changes with total subversion: "The great object of most of these reformers is to prepare the destruction of the Constitution by disgracing and discrediting the House of Commons." And to declare that only what existed was possible, and that to criticize government was to invite anarchy. "For to discredit the only form of government which we either possess or can project, what is this but to destroy all government? And this is anarchy." And to conclude with an arresting image: he would never abuse the constitution of his country, he would never "cut it in pieces, and put it in the kettle of any magician, in order to boil it, with the puddle of their compounds, into youth and vigor."³⁵

Much could be said on the philosophical implications of this speech, as, for example, that the offering of no alternative except stark chaos made him a kind of Hobbesian of the unreformed Parliament, or that the identification of the real, the right, the rational, and the possible made him a kind of predecessor to Hegel.

35 All quotations in the preceding three paragraphs may be found within the fifteen pages of the speech cited. On Burke's "order that keeps things fast in their place," compare the Parlement of Paris in 1776, appealing, to oppose Turgot's reform of the *corvée*, to an order that "takes its source in divine institutions . . . a law of the Universe which despite efforts of the human mind . . . etc." See below, pp. 334–35.

Much has been said in these later times, at least in America, on the religion of Edmund Burke. It is true that he disliked declared infidels, sympathized with all hierarchical churches, and was much in favor of the Church of England, but his religion, so far as I can see, consisted in a kind of attribution of the social order to the will of God, and in a kind of humility which was by no means a personal humility, but a belief, or expressed belief, in the limitations of the human mind, and a distrust of reason (though “the species is wise”) which really meant a distrust of the reason of those persons who did not agree with him. As for the realism of his approach to practical issues, his idealization of the England of his day seems scarcely closer to fact than the roseate optimism, with respect to the future, of a Dupont de Nemours or a Condorcet. As for the wisdom of some of his great utterances, there are many of them that I would not question for a moment in the abstract. I would only question their relevancy to the circumstances that elicited them. This is to question his common sense—as his contemporaries did.

The point to be emphasized in the present connection is that Burke’s conservatism was well formed long before the French Revolution. It was not shaped, in 1784, by the spectacle of real revolution, nor by dislike of public disorder, nor by resistance to illegal leadership or to law-breaking, nor by opposition to mobs, none of which accompanied the reform bills brought up in the British Parliament between 1782 and 1785. It was directed against the Enlightenment only insofar as the Enlightenment was a habit of mind, not only of French *philosophes*, but of various Americans, British, and Europeans whose number included William Pitt. Burke’s conservatism was really directed against the democratization of government even by peaceful means—not even against universal suffrage or annual Parliaments, which Pitt was far from endorsing, but against the ideas of personal representation, or of political change at the will of the living, or of the right to abolish institutions for which there was little reason except history on the one hand or narrow vested interest on the other.

In any case, Burke’s conservatism had as yet little influence, because no one would pay attention long enough to find out what it was. Even men intending to vote as he wished walked out when he rose to speak—they did not need such elegant arguments. The reform of Parliament in the 1780’s failed in both England and Ireland. The parliamentary oligarchies triumphed over the reformers.

THE “APPELLATION OF CITIZEN” VS. THE TEST ACT

A word must be added on a related matter, the attempt of English Protestant Dissenters to obtain equality of civil rights. This reached its height between 1787 and 1790, and has been called, like the Association movement, “England’s unsuccessful Revolution.”³⁶

The Dissenters were Protestants who would not take communion in the Church of England, or subscribe to its Thirty-Nine Articles. They were divided in the

36 A. Lincoln, *Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent, 1763–1800* (Cambridge, Eng., 1938), 2 and 183. The following section is drawn largely from this book.

eighteenth-century among Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists. About a sixth of all English clergymen were Dissenters, but the Dissenters were a much smaller proportion of the whole population. They were most numerous in the towns and among merchants and business people, though many of the latter were Anglican. Rare among the Anglican gentry, and with few followers among the poor, whose inclinations to Methodism were still held within the established church, the Dissenters as a group were self-consciously and self-righteously middle-class. They had been tolerated since 1689, in that their belief and worship were not interfered with. They were also free to vote for members of Parliament, and to sit in the Commons, though few did.

Dissenters, however, by the Test Act, could lawfully hold no office by appointment of the crown in the civil government or in the army and navy. They could not, by the Corporation Act, belong to any municipal corporation in the boroughs or hold even the lowest of town offices. Hence they played little part in local politics, and were unlikely to be sent to Parliament by boroughs in which the Anglican corporation named the members. No admitted Dissenter could take a degree from either of the two universities. Though predominantly a business group, Dissenters were forbidden, by extensions of the Test Act, to occupy positions of management in the Bank of England, or in the East India, South Sea, and Russia Companies. The rigors of the law were softened by the easygoing attitudes of the time, for in fact a certain number of Dissenters held forbidden posts, either by occasional and purely formal communion in the Anglican church, or because the authorities paid no attention. Though subject in such cases to the dangers of denunciation and punishment, they seem not to have lived in fear. Nor, as a prospering group, did they have much strictly economic grievance. It seems likely that they came to feel a sense of indignity—to object to discrimination.

The same legal disabilities applied even more effectively to the Catholics. There were both Dissenting and Catholic leaders who, by the 1780's, conceived of a civil state in which all of them, along with Jews, might enjoy the same rights without regard to religion. They could not, however, lead their followers in this direction. Most Dissenters still felt the old horror of popery, and usually thought, in urging recognition for themselves, that they strengthened their case by dissociating it clearly from the Catholics. The inability of the Dissenters to combine with Catholics, or even to stay combined with each other, together with the lack of heavy material grievance, naturally weakened the assault on entrenched Anglicanism.

There still clung to the Dissenters, in the majority view, an unpleasant odor of the old Puritanism and the king-killing of 1649. They were felt not to have the right attitude toward the national institutions, to harbor a sour-faced disaffection in church and state. Actually, like the French Protestants, who lived under even worse disabilities until the Revolution, the Dissenters were patriotic and loyal. About 1760, however, they began to exhibit a new political consciousness. In 1771 a group of Cambridge undergraduates petitioned for relief from the Thirty-Nine Articles; they were refused. Dissenters were prominent among English sympathizers with the American Revolution, and especially with Puritan New England. Few except Dissenters expressed any interest in the new American constitutions, with their separation of political rights from religious affiliation. The role of Presbyteri-

ans in the Irish disturbances was well known. In the Association movement of 1780 the Dissenters were very active; 2,000 of them signed the Yorkshire petition, and they had a majority in the county meetings of Cambridgeshire and Kent. In conservative eyes they were susceptible to all kinds of dubious causes; they seemed antimonarchical and "republican," until, as their historian puts it, "the progress of events made 'Jacobin' a more modish form of vituperation."³⁷

The abatement of true religious conflict, the sense of the enlightenment of the age, the promulgation of American principles, the relief of Irish Presbyterians from the Test Act, and the growing wealth and importance of the Dissenting community, a byproduct of growth of the commercial classes throughout Western Europe, all contributed to a mood of optimism among the Dissenters, who, at a great meeting of deputies of the three denominations in January 1787, decided to attack the barriers against them directly, by petitioning Parliament for repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Three bills to this effect were introduced, in 1787, 1789, and 1790.

The interesting thing, in the broad view, is that the English Dissenters, who had originated for the most part as Calvinists a few generations before, had now come, by the needs of their situation as they saw them, to use the language and conceptions of the European revolution. They thought of themselves as "unprivileged." As their sponsor (an Anglican) in the House of Commons put it on May 8, 1789, they asked only "the usual privileges and general benefits of citizenship." They wished access to public office and honors, like the French Third Estate which met at Versailles in that same week. They insisted that they bore no grudge toward the Establishment, and declared that some established religion was good for society, again like the French in 1789, but what they wanted was a secular state, in which religious belief, or lack of it, should have nothing to do with one's role in the political order. The deepest human community should be political, not religious. The descendants of men who, a century and a half ago, as Calvinists, had thought that the State should be under the guidance of a true church, now held that the church or churches should be within and in a way under the state, a state which conferred equal citizenship on its people, and derived its authority from their collective sovereignty. The English Dissenters, or their leaders, had traveled the path of the Genevise Rousseau. They wished to be "children of the State" though not of the Church—to forget religious difference, and "bury every name of distinction in the common appellation of citizen."³⁸

The years 1789 and 1790 saw heated controversy. Never had Dissenters of the great towns, Leicester, Nottingham, and others, been so active in support of those of London. The methods of the Associations of 1780 were revived; there was a plan for a national convention of Dissenters, which never materialized, but continued to alarm the defenders of Anglicanism. In March 1790 the bill to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts was defeated for the third time, 294 to 105.

Conservatism hardened, and it hardened in defense of the Test Act and the existing arrangements to protect the Church of England. The beauties of the British

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 255.

constitution were again set up to public wonder. To the Dissenters' argument that the two acts were only pieces of legislation, obsolete measures which, at most, might have been justified a century and more ago, it was replied that the acts were of the very fabric of "our excellent constitution." When the Dissenters pointed to religious freedom in America, Pitt answered, "The American constitution resembles ours neither in church nor state."³⁹ When the Dissenters appealed to natural rights, Burke found their position too abstract, and offered a preview in the House of Commons of his forthcoming *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Most of all, the defenders of the existing arrangements used the arguments of Warburton, of which a survey was given earlier in this book: it was not an affair of religious belief; anyone remained free to believe as he wished and would be willingly tolerated; it was only a matter of "civil convenience," for in England an establishment of religion was found to be socially useful, and it was only reasonable for persons not well affected toward such an establishment to be kept from the public power by which it might be injured. Warburton's argument of prescription was also brought forward; the acts were over a century old, they had grown into the body of English public life. They represented the wisdom of ancestors. And likewise employed was his view of the terms of political office. "It was in the power of every government," said Lord North in the debate of May 1789, "to prescribe the persons to fill the offices of power."⁴⁰ No one could complain if Parliament, the sovereign body, made communion in the national church, or any other qualification, a prerequisite to official position.

The agitation raised by the Dissenters' petition, as by the movement for parliamentary reform, and by the American Revolution, had forced men to commit themselves to conflicting theories of public authority and of individual rights. The British Isles were to exhibit little solidarity toward the issues of the French Revolution, or in the war that followed.

³⁹ *Parliamentary History*, XXVIII, 413.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 18.

CHAPTER XI

DEMOCRATS AND ARISTOCRATS— DUTCH, BELGIAN, AND SWISS

Do we see in the Austrian Netherlands, or in the United Netherlands . . . that confidence in one another, and in the common people, which enabled the United States to go through a revolution?

—JOHN ADAMS, LONDON, 1787

It is unfortunate that the affairs of the smaller European peoples do not enter more fully into our general histories, for their experience has been illuminating. The very words “democrat” and “aristocrat,” as observed above in the first chapter, were coined in the Dutch and Belgian troubles of the decade from 1780 to 1790. In both countries the common pattern of the time was especially evident. Constituted bodies—in this case town councils and estate-assemblies—determining their own membership within a closed system, claimed to represent the country and to rule in their own right. Both asserted their powers and liberties against a “prince”—the Prince of Orange in the case of the Dutch, the Austrian Emperor in that of the Belgians—and both, after 1780, found a new popular party fighting at their side. The new party, which was neither exactly popular nor yet a party in a more modern sense, at first felt no difference of purpose from its allies. As the controversies developed, however, the new party began to brand its allies, or erstwhile allies, as “aristocrats,” and to favor an actual reconstitution of the old constituted bodies, so that these bodies would become representative in a new kind of way, either by actual choice at the hands of voters outside their own ranks, or through a broadening of membership to reflect wider segments of the population.

The United Netherlands comprised the seven Dutch provinces, Holland, Utrecht, Zeeland, Overijssel, Gelderland, Friesland, and Groningen, which together ruled over Drenthe and northern Brabant, The Austrian Netherlands, of which Brabant and Flanders were the most important, were the ten provinces which had remained under the Spanish crown in the sixteenth-century wars, and

had passed to Austria in 1714. They were loosely attached to the Hapsburg system, and in firm possession of local liberties, until the reign of Joseph II. Political interest, both Dutch and Belgian, was highly particularistic, provincial, and even municipal, especially for the town magistrates and the members of provincial estates. It was the "democrats" in both countries who, having less concern for the old vested bodies, developed a somewhat more national all-Dutch or all-Belgian feeling. Both countries were wealthy, the Dutch extraordinarily so. Beyond that, the parallel ceases. The Dutch had long been independent, the Belgians long dependent on a foreign crown. The Dutch government was a republic, the Belgians belonged to an international monarchy. The Dutch Estates General, their High Mightinesses, were deemed to be sovereign, and the Prince of Orange was a semi-royal official, "stadt-holder" in each of the provinces, and captain-general of the union. The Belgian Estates General, like the French, no longer really existed; it assembled under revolutionary conditions in January 1790. The chief executive in Belgium was the Governor-General, an Austrian.

THE DUTCH PATRIOT MOVEMENT

The United Provinces was a small country, much of which could be seen from the top of Utrecht cathedral, at least according to a traveling Englishman who claimed to distinguish fifty-one towns from that elevated point. With fewer than two million people it had less than half the population of Ireland. Its interests and importance, however, were universal. Dutch shipping and trade were on every sea. There were Dutch colonies in the West Indies, at the Cape of Good Hope, in Ceylon, and in Java, and Dutch merchants were the only Europeans allowed to trade in Japan. The Dutch were the great international capitalists. In 1777 they owned forty per cent of the British national debt, and by 1796 the entire foreign-held national debt of the United States was in their hands.

Dutch affairs had become closely entwined with those of England. Both the political successes and the commercial growth of Great Britain in the eighteenth-century were heavily financed by Dutch investors. In international politics the Dutch had followed the British lead since the days of William III. William V, stadtholder from 1751 to 1795, was himself married to a Prussian princess, but his mother was English, and in fact William II, William III, and William IV had all married the daughters of English kings. The House of Orange was the next thing to royalty, and the unfortunate William V, whose stadtholderate was to be terminated by revolution in 1795, bore a dismaying resemblance to Louis XVI. He was quite unable to make a decision, cope with events, or undertake any new line of policy. "I wish I were dead," he wrote in 1781, "that my father had never been stadtholder. . . . I feel I have no ability to be at the head of so many affairs." To the painter's eye of Sir Joshua Reynolds he looked "very like King George, but not so handsome; he has a heavy look . . . with somewhat a round belly."¹

1 P. Geyl, *De Patriottenbeweging* (Amsterdam, 1947), 47; letter of Sir J. Reynolds to Edmund Burke, August 14, 1781, in the Wentworth-Woodhouse collection at the Central Library, Sheffield.

It was the American war that precipitated the abortive revolution known as the Patriot movement.² There had been the usual intellectual preparation. Dutch writers had played little role in the European Enlightenment; the Amsterdam regents, like those of Geneva, had suppressed Rousseau's *Social Contract* when it appeared; and there was no legalized freedom of the press before 1795. But in fact the Dutch press had long been active, and many books and magazines in the international language, French, had their place of publication in Holland. Nowhere was the periodical press older or better established, yet Dutch historians, like others, attribute the first appearance of specifically political journals to about the year 1770. Here as elsewhere a public opinion, or an opinion on matters of public concern outside the circles of government, was beginning to form.

An early spokesman of the new ideas was J. D. van der Capellen tot de Pol, who was also one of the first of the Dutch who openly favored the American rebels.³ He was a nobleman of Overijssel, one of the "land provinces" which long remained apart from the financial and maritime interests of Holland. He was thus uninvolved with the influential magnates of Amsterdam.

Capellen first called attention to himself in 1775. There was in the Dutch service a certain Scotch Brigade, which the British government expressed a desire to borrow for use in America against the insurgents. The stadtholder, William V, asked for favorable action on this request in the several provincial estates. In the Estates of Overijssel, van der Capellen eloquently opposed the despatch of the Scotch Brigade, and succeeded in blocking it. He also broke all precedent by violating the secrecy of discussion in the estates, and making known his opinions to the public. On another occasion he took the lead in persuading the Estates of Overijssel to abolish certain *corvées*, by which peasants had owed two days of labor service a year. He was in touch with parliamentary reformers in England, translated Richard Price's *Essay on Civil Liberty* in 1776, and corresponded with the revolutionary governors of Connecticut and New Jersey. He lent 20,000 French *litres*' worth of his own money to the Americans as early as 1778. Well informed on American, British, and Dutch affairs, he was one of the first international figures of the incipient democratic revolution.

Around Capellen there gathered a circle of men, pro-American and dissatisfied with Dutch conditions, who were later to lead the democratic wing of the Patriots. These were for the most part well-to-do burghers, many of them bankers, merchants, owners of manufacturing establishments, printers and publishers, or professors at Utrecht or Leiden. They were upper middle-class, but so were most

2 On the Patriot movement, see P. Geyl, *op.cit.*, I. Vijlbrief, "De Patriottencris, 1780-1787" in *Algemeene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, VIII, 128-69 (Utrecht, 1955); I. H. Gosses and N. Japikse, *Handboek tot de staatkundige Geschiedenis van Nederland* (The Hague, 1947), 674-717; P. J. Blok, *History of the People of the Netherlands*, Eng. trans., V, 172-272 (London and New York, 1912); Helen L. Fairchild, *Francis Adrian van der Kemp: an autobiography with extracts from his correspondence* (N.Y., 1903); C. M. Davies, *Memorials and Times of Peter Philip Jurian Quint Ondaatje* (Utrecht, 1870) in *Werken uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht*, new series, no. 13.

3 On Van der Capellen see the above and W. H. de Beaufort, *Brieven van en aan Joan Derk Van der Capellen van de Poll* (Utrecht, 1879), which is no. 27 in the series of the Utrecht Historical Society just cited. Many of Van der Capellen's letters and papers, as of other Dutch figures of the period, are in French or English.

people of any consequence in the country. Their class standing could not really be defined economically. It was more readily defined by the permanent exclusion from state affairs of persons like themselves, including their fathers and presumably their children, either because they did not belong to the families that controlled the town councils, or because they were not members of the Dutch Reformed Church. In the United Provinces, as in England, despite liberal toleration and economic prosperity for dissenters, only members of the official church could take part in government, military command, or the Bank of Amsterdam and the East India Company. More were excluded than in England on this ground, since a third of the population was Catholic, and another ten per cent either Jews or Protestant sectaries. Capellen's group included the Mennonite pastor Van der Kemp, J. Luzac, editor of the famous French-language *Gazette de Leide*; and P. Paulus, P. Vreede, R. Schimmelpenninck, and others who were to be prominent in the Patriot movement, and again in the revolutionary Batavian Republic after 1795. These, too, were the men with whom John Adams most easily associated on reaching Holland in 1780, and from whom he was first able to borrow money for the American Congress.

The American war also aroused many of the old in-group, who were called the "regents," in distinction from ordinary "burghers" or mere "inhabitants." The regent families filled the town councils, such as the council of thirty-six which governed Amsterdam; and these town oligarchies in turn, working with the stadtholder or against him, controlled the provincial estates and the Estates General. The Estates of Holland, for example, consisted of eighteen votes for eighteen towns, plus one member, with one vote, for all the nobility of the province. The Dutch regents were a hereditary aristocracy, but an unusual one in that they drew their large incomes from finance and trade.⁴ For two hundred years a strong party within the regents had quarreled with the House of Orange, and had twice dispensed with it altogether, in a kind of perpetual opposition which the Dutch called *Loevestein*, a sort of Whiggery in which the people had no concern. The old anti-Orangism became again acute during the War of American Independence, because William V remained firmly committed to England, while many of the regents sought to break their connections with, and dependency on, the British economic and naval power.

The Orange party of William V, in the complex disputes that followed, drew its strength from the Prince's court and retainers, from men who owed their offices and position to him, from the church-minded people of the Reformed Church, and indirectly from the mass of the people, who had no political interest or organization, cared little for the problems of their social superiors, and by a kind of popular royalist predilection looked on the Prince of Orange as if he really were their King. In the showdown, the Orange party was rebuilt by Great Britain.

4 J. E. Elias, *Geschiedenis van het amsterdamsche Regentenpatriciaat* (The Hague, 1923), a work written with an Orangist animus against the old regents, found (p. 238) that all 37 Amsterdam burgomasters from 1752 to 1795 had commercial connections, in contrast to only 2 out of 24 for the period 1718-1748. In the stadtholderless period before 1748 the regents seem to have lived rather from the income of office and government. Virtually all known leaders of the Patriot movement, says Elias, had traded "illicitly" with France and America after 1775.

The Americans, on declaring their independence, threw off the British trade regulations and invited direct commerce with the Continent of Europe. Commercial men of Amsterdam, both those who were regents and those who were not, hastened to engage in this lucrative new traffic. The city of Amsterdam, which is to say its regents, even made a secret treaty in 1778 with a representative of the United States. An enthusiasm for the American Revolution swept over the great commercial metropolis. When eight United States ships docked there in 1779, they found that a Dutch lady had composed a song, in English, in ten stanzas, in their honor.⁵

That Amsterdam could thus determine its own foreign policy, to say the least, revealed the particularism, the internal division, and the unworkable confusion of uncentralized powers in the republic as set up long ago by the Union of Utrecht. Amsterdam was naturally supported in its course by the French, who wished to bring its merchant marine and its capital into the war, and denounced by the British and by the Orange party. In 1780 Great Britain declared war on the United Provinces, and began to assail the Dutch shipping and colonies.

It must be remembered that British colonial and commercial primacy was widely felt to be of recent growth, quite possibly soon to end. American and French military successes persuaded many Dutch capitalists that the British empire had already passed its zenith, and even that British securities were no longer a good investment. In 1780, on the eve of war with the Dutch, the British government was able to borrow, with difficulty, only about a million guilders in Holland. Two years later the French government borrowed 5,000,000 guilders in a single day. A sum of the same size was loaned in that year to the United States of America, and Dutch capital also flowed into private American land and canal companies. On the eve of the French Revolution, French credit remained strong in Holland, so far were practical men from supposing the French monarchy to be tottering. In 1782 Dutch investments in Britain stood at 280,000,000 guilders, as against only 25,000,000 in France. Comparable figures are not available for the following years, but, in 1786, Dutch income from French securities almost equalled that from British. In the absence of other means of satisfactory measurement, this flight of Dutch capital suggests the substantial character and the strength of the Patriot movement.⁶

In broadest terms, the Patriot party, at the outset, was an unstable compound of regent and popular elements, anti-Orange and anti-British, produced by the crisis of the Fourth English War, as the Dutch call the War of American Independence. The Dutch, outside the Orange party, saw the war as a defense of their shipping, their navy, and their colonies from the depredations of the British fleet.

5 F. Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (Baltimore, 1911), is diplomatic history of the narrowest kind. The Dutch lady's song is printed in A. Loosjes, *Gedenkzuil ter gelegenheid der Vrij-verklaaring van Noord-Amerika* (Amsterdam, 1782).

6 For these details on Dutch capital see C. H. Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance in the 18th Century* (Cambridge, Eng., 1941), 189–204; J. P. Manger, *Recherches sur les relations économiques entre la France et la Hollande pendant la Révolution française, 1785–1795* (Paris, 1923), 17; E. Baasch, *Hollandische Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Jena, 1927), 205–6.

The Prince and his supporters, less sensitive on these matters, accused the Amsterdam merchants of stirring up a needless war with England to satisfy their own greed. The Patriots, rallying to the defense of Amsterdam, accused the Orange party of subverting Dutch national interests through a ruinous partiality for Great Britain.

Two pamphlets of 1781 drew the issues. One, *A Political Remonstrance against the True System of Amsterdam*, by the Orangist R. M. van Goens, denounced the antistadtholderian machinations of that city back to 1581, with especial emphasis on its recent disgraceful involvement with the American rebels. It was followed by *An Address to the Netherlands People*, written anonymously by Van der Capellen tot de Pol. Copies were found in the streets of the Dutch cities, scattered at night by men secretly organized by the pastor Van der Kemp. The pamphlet caused an uproar. "The press cannot be restrained," wrote the delighted Adams, who was there. The Estates of Holland condemned it as subversive, forbade people to read it, and offered a reward to anyone revealing its author's identity, which nevertheless remained unknown for many years. The historian Pieter Geyl calls *An Address to the Netherlands People* the first piece of writing in which anyone ever addressed the Dutch people as a national unit. The author of this inflammatory tract, writes another, was no Loevesteiner—*hij was democraat!*⁷

Capellen's pamphlet was a long tirade against the House of Orange, which, he said, had conspired to become a monarchy for two hundred years, had always despised the merchants of Amsterdam, ingratiated itself with England and embroiled the country with France, preferring to build up an army for its own purposes, while neglecting the navy, and surrounding itself with a fawning lot of grandees. Capellen likewise assaulted the regent oligarchs, whom he also accused of entrenching themselves since the sixteenth century. It was time for the Dutch people to recover their rights. A nation, he said, was like a commercial concern in that its magistrates were only employees; the Dutch people owned the "Society of the United Netherlands," just as shareholders owned the East India Company. He pointed also to America, which now had a good government because its officers were elected. He denounced William V for getting his own sycophantic admirers into the town councils, the Provincial Estates, the Estates General, and the administrative departments of the union. Only determination and a show of force would make them responsible to the country.

Assemble in your towns and villages. Meet peaceably, and elect from among yourselves a moderate number of courageous, virtuous and pious men; choose good Patriots that you can trust. Send these as your deputies to the places of assembly of your several provincial estates, and order them in the name and by the authority of this nation, to make an inquiry, by and with the estates of the other provinces, into the reasons for the extraordinary inertia with which the arming of the country against a formidable and active enemy is being handled. Order them also . . . to choose a council for His Highness . . .

7 Geyl, 53; Vijlbrief, 136.

Provide for the freedom of the press, the one support of your national liberty. . . .

Arm yourselves, elect those who must command you . . . and in all things proceed like the people of America, with modesty and composure.⁸

The unknown author was indeed a *democraat*, and even a revolutionary in a way. He urged a popular arming, as in Ireland and America, and the formation of self-authorized citizen groups, which, like the Irish convention and the American committees, or like the associations in England, should claim to represent the country better than any organ of government, and to bring upon the existing constituted bodies a pressure not recognized as legitimate in the history or constitution of the country. He did not propose to abolish anything, beyond a few "abuses." Nor did he clearly envisage the creation of anything new. He was far from the American theory of a constituent power. He had in mind, rather, a public inspection or scrutiny over the multitude of councils, estates, boards, colleges, and magistracies of the historic republic. He made little appeal to the "philosophy" of the day. He did not argue from the enlightenment of the age, or nature and reason, or the social contract, or human rights, or liberty and equality in the abstract. He was aroused by the unreliability of his own government in a time of war. Pointing to common-sense analogies, like stock ownership in a business enterprise, or the American rebellion (still before Yorktown), he arrived at an affirmation of popular sovereignty. He did so for an immediate purpose, to displace a small governing group which could not otherwise be opened up or removed. He looked backwards as well as forwards, as did many like him in Britain and America, and his arguments were historical in their character if not in the accuracy of their content. He hoped to return to a freer regime which he believed to have existed before hereditary oligarchy had closed in. Even three years later, when Capellen's circle produced the nearest thing to a constitutional project, they called it the *Grondwettige Herstelling*, or constitutional "restoration." They here declared, with due precaution against influence of the real lower classes or populace, that the Dutch constitution, when rightly understood, was and properly always had been, "democratic."⁹ It was the failure of such arguments to accomplish anything in the 1780's that forced men into the more radical positions of the 1790's. In Holland, as in England, even the first stirrings in a democratic direction brought on a systematic conservative reply. The learned Adrian Kluit, one of the founders of historical jurisprudence in the Netherlands, was so irritated by the *Grondwettige Herstelling* that he answered it with a pamphlet, in 1785, *The sovereignty of the Estates of Holland defended against*

8 Van der Capellen tot de Pol, *Aan het Volk. van Nederland*, as quoted by P. Geyl, *Patriotten beweging*, 53–54. This pamphlet was translated into English as *An address to the People of the Netherlands* (London, 1782).

9 The Dutch Patriots seem to have used the words "democracy" and "democrat" infrequently in application to themselves. J. van de Giessen, *De ophomst van het woord democratie als leuze in Nederland* (The Hague, 1948), finds that the use of "democracy" as a catchword began with social democracy in the 1880's, and that the "Eastern" use of the term, emphasizing equality of income and opportunity, is historically more accurate than the "Western." While this seems at best only partly true, the author's claim that self-accepted use of the term was more common among the Patriots of the 1780's than among the Batavians after 1795 is undoubtedly mistaken.

the modern doctrine of people's government (*Volksregering*, the word then mainly used for "democracy"). The issue lay between the alleged sovereignty of constituted bodies and the alleged sovereignty of the people.¹⁰

Regent and popular Patriots were able for a time to cooperate. It had become the custom, since 1748, for the Prince to place his own appointees in the self-coopting councils, or the estate assemblies, or in offices to which these bodies had the right to elect, by the practice of sending in the names of men who were acceptable to him, and who were thereupon elected. Van der Capellen called this practice *insluipsel*, an insidious "slipping in"; and the Orangist Van Goens, explaining Dutch affairs to the Duke of Portland, called it a prerogative not exactly legal, but one which gave the Prince "an influence in the assemblies and magistracies without which he would be a phantom." It will be seen that this *insluipsel* was somewhat like that "influence" which enabled the British crown and ministry to govern through the aristocracy in the Parliament. It is likely that without some such "influence" there could be no effective direction of government, given the extraordinary dispersion and separation of powers among independent bodies that characterized the Dutch republic. What was needed was either less, or more, than resistance to *insluipsel*. But on reduction of the Prince's authority all Patriots could agree. In 1782 and 1783 many towns declared his power of recommending for office abolished.¹¹

Amsterdam became the center of regent opposition, while the discontents of those outside the regent families were seen most clearly at Utrecht. Burghers began to arm, as urged by Van der Capellen. They organized Free Corps in the various towns, adopted uniforms, drilled, listened to speeches, and sent delegates to national meetings. They armed against vaguely sensed dangers of "violence from without and within," against the menace of the small standing army and the ancient militia commanded by Orangist officers, against invasion by the British, or a little later by Austrians from the side of Belgium; against the obstinacy of the Prince; and, finally, against the "aristocrats." Among early democrats no principle was more common than that free citizens must serve as soldiers, and the Estates of Holland, in 1785, even decreed a small-scale anticipation of the famous French *levée en masse*. The Free Corps opened their ranks to Protestant sectaries and to

10 A. Kluit, *De souvereiniteit der Staaten van Holland, verdedigt tegen de bededaggsche leere der volksregering* . . . (Groningen, 1785). Kluit also in 1782 published a work in Latin significantly entitled *De potestate ordinum*, "On the power of the [socio-legal] orders," and one called *De rechten van den mensch in Frankrijk geen gewaande rechten in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1793), "The rights of man in France no so-called rights in the Netherlands." On Kluit see E. Lousse, *La société d'ancien régime: organisation et représentation corporatives* (Louvain, 1943), 1, 13, and *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, III, 696–98. There is little ground for agreeing with Lousse's remark that Dutch democrats like Van der Capellen were *gagnés aux idées de J. J. Rousseau*. For Rousseau on the sovereignty of the people see above pp. 91–92. For the argument of the present book, that the idea of the sovereignty of the people, which was indeed the essential revolutionary idea of the period, arose from the needs of political debate against claims to sovereignty made by constituted bodies see above pp. 96–97 (Geneva), 161–62, 167 (America), 110–11, 236 (England).

11 On *insluipsel* see Vijlbrief, 144; on *une influence dans les assemblées*, etc., *Brieven aan R. M. van Goens en onuitgegeven stukken hem betreffende* (3 vols., Utrecht, 1886), III, 208; on the role of "influence" in the eighteenth-century British constitution, Holdsworth and others as cited in Chapter VI above.

Catholics. Van der Kemp, the Mennonite pastor, once delivered a sermon in uniform. They were mainly middle class, for the citizen soldiers usually though not always had to furnish their own weapons and uniforms; nor did they wish to stir up the multitude, which in any case showed little inclination to join. Nevertheless, it was in these Free Corps that the democratic wing of the Patriots came to have an organized existence. With the first meeting of a National Assembly of Free Corps, held at Utrecht in December 1784, Dutch burghers outside the regent class met and discussed political action for the first time.¹²

The situation at Utrecht, though complicated, is worth special attention, as a concrete example of the kind of questions at stake, throughout the United Provinces and indeed throughout Europe, and to illustrate the groping and *ad hoc* way in which a democratic doctrine was formulated. The province had originated as a medieval bishopric in the Holy Roman Empire, though there had been no bishop in residence since the Reformation. Its highest body was the assembly of three orders or estates—technically the clergy, the nobility, and the Third. Certain lay appointees of the stadtholder now functioned as the “clergy.” The stadtholder influenced the second estate, the nobility, by his power to increase the number of its deputies at will. The third estate consisted of deputies from the city of Utrecht and four other towns; actually, by his “influence,” the stadtholder had the town councils depute the men he named. The city of Utrecht was governed by its council and burgomasters. It was the custom for the council, on filling vacancies in its own body or selecting the burgomasters, to select men, within the regent group, whose names were notified to it by the Prince.

During the disturbances of 1783 a petition of 700 burghers urged the council to fill a recent vacancy without recourse to the Prince’s recommendation. The councillors agreed, and made their own appointment. William V protested. The council, to gain support against William V and his partisans, invited the burghers to make a further statement of their desires. The Free Corps of the city, led by a student at the University named Ondaatje, thereupon proposed that the Prince’s power to name members of the provincial estates be done away with. This also coincided with the wishes of a majority of the council. But the Free Corps and the burghers made further proposals. They wished to elect spokesmen to sit with the council, discuss taxation and appointments along with the regents, and share in defense of the liberties of Utrecht against the Prince. By an act signed with 1,215 names, 24 *geconstitueerden*, “constituted persons,” were elected, 2 from each company in the municipal Free Corps plus 8 burghers. The names of the 1,215 have been preserved. They were of the middling ranks of a small eighteenth-century city: shopkeepers, carpenters, master shoemakers, and the like. Since there were less than 30,000 inhabitants in the city, 1,215 adult males would in effect be about a fifth of the population. The council, with mounting reluctance, accepted the existence of these “constituted persons” at its side. More was to come, for Ondaatje and the Free Corps, recalling how burgomasters had been chosen by guilds in the Middle

12 For the Free Corps see the works cited in note 2 above, and in particular Mrs. Davies, *Ondaatje*, for a concrete picture of the Free Corps of Utrecht; for the *levée en masse* in Holland, see the *Gazette de Leyde*, November 1784 to January 1785.

Ages, now demanded that the burghers take part in election of these officials. The council demurred, observing that there had been no such popular choice of burgo-masters since the days of the Emperor Charles V—long before the independence of Utrecht or the formation of the federal republic.

The Patriot coalition now began to fall apart. The regents of Utrecht, secure hitherto in the town council, had not intended, in liberating themselves from the Prince of Orange, to fall into the hands of burghers of the city. Like the upholders in England of the House of Commons, they believed the public good to require their “independence.” The town council, backed by the Provincial Estates, where the fear of democracy also pushed aside the fear of Orange, decided to put Ondaatje under arrest, though to do so would be an affront to the 1,215 who had signed the burgher electoral act, plus several hundred more in the Free Corps, and so constitute a declaration of war on virtually the entire politically conscious population of the city. At this time the first meeting of the National Assembly of Free Corps from all the United Provinces took place in Utrecht. The delegates were loud in Ondaatje’s defense. They denounced the “aristocratic cabal.” Ondaatje received honors in all parts of the country, including a doctorate at the University of Leiden. He made a bold speech to the Utrecht council. “Have we, in making you independent of the stadtholder, made you also independent of ourselves? . . . Is the council house yours, or ours?”¹³

Two years of confusion followed, in Utrecht and elsewhere. While many initially anti-Orange regents backed away, the Patriot movement nevertheless gathered strength. The educated, the professional people, the large religious minorities, wished it well. The French government promised it support, seeing it as anti-British. The fact that the spring of 1785 was the period of heaviest selling of British securities, and hence of Dutch investment in France and America, suggests that there were a good many men of means in the movement, that it was no flurry among the young, the impressionable, and the idealistic. There was something with which William V could have allied against the regent oligarchs. He could, in principle (had he been a different man), have raised the standard of an Orange democracy, and begun to lay foundations for a more broadly based political state in the Netherlands. Perhaps this lost chance has always seemed more real to historians than it did to contemporaries.¹⁴ Yet there were some who saw it then, including the young G. K. van Hogendorp, who years later, in 1814, was to become a national hero by his role in restoring the House of Orange as a true national monarchy, with a relatively liberal constitution. Hogendorp was no democrat. He did not believe that people could govern themselves. Just returned from America, he thought of the Americans as rustics from whom nothing in politics could be learned. He was of a Rotterdam regent family whose social position gave him the ear of William V. A young and self-confident patrician, he observed that the times were times of widespread disturbance, unlike anything since the Reformation, that

13 For these events at Utrecht see Davies, *Ondaatje*, 1–89; Geyl, *Patriottenbeweging*, 101–12; Vijlbrief, 150. There is a longer study by Vijlbrief, with an all too short summary in English: *Van Anti-Aristocratie tot Democratie: Een bijdrage tot de politieke en sociale Geschiedenis der Stad Utrecht* (Amsterdam, 1950).

14 On William V’s “lost chance,” Geyl, 115–17; Vijlbrief, 132.

people all over Europe were going to obtain representative institutions, that the role of the chief of state should everywhere be to hold the balance between *le peuple et les grands*, and that the House of Orange, in the present troubles, "should incline more to the democrats than to the aristocrats, since the former at least claim to represent the good of the people."¹⁵

William V could take no such advice. Like Louis XVI a few years later, he could not disown his privileged classes, though these privileged classes had long been the main source of embarrassment to his family. He could not bring himself to seem to abandon his church, or to ally with new men tossed up from what appeared to him to be the depths of society. "No democracy" became his watchword—not even any Orange democracy. He became the rallying point for all antidemocratic forces in the country, in which Orange stalwarts were increasingly joined by rebellious regents in flight from popular rule.

There were, of course, some of the regents who persisted in opposition to the Prince and his policies, some from an inveterate anti-Orangism, others with a more progressive idea that the time had come to broaden the terms of participation in public life. These formed the Assembly of Patriot Regents, and in 1786 they even gained control in three of the provinces, Holland, Groningen, and Overijssel. The Estates of Holland deposed the Prince from his offices of stadtholder and captain-general. The embattled Patriot Regents had to give ear to the Free Corps, and the demands of these excited groups of armed and uniformed burghers became ever more clearly "democratic." "Freedom is an inalienable right belonging to all citizens (*aan alle de burghers*) of the Netherlands confederation," declared the Provincial Assembly of the Armed Corps of Holland, meeting at Leiden. "This liberty would be a deceptive shadow if representatives were to be independent of those whom they represent; and their appointment by the people, by a firmly settled plan, is the most appropriate way to prevent this independence."¹⁶ In 1786 the Utrecht burghers finally put an end to their old council and chose a new one by general election—"a true revolution," says Professor Geyl.

The National Assembly of Free Corps, again meeting in Utrecht, despatched Van der Kemp to confer with the Assembly of Patriot Regents sitting at Amsterdam. The two organizations published a joint declaration in the newspapers (though many Patriot Regents hesitated to sign), which may stand as the most advanced official statement of the abortive Dutch revolution. It declared for "the true republican form of government in our commonwealth, namely a government by representation of the people . . . with a stadtholdership subordinate thereto." And it repudiated "a government by one man, or any system of independent family rule . . . that chokes off the reasonable and respectful voice of the people."¹⁷

To oppose one-man government and family-rule simultaneously, remarks Professor Geyl, was hopeless. Henceforth the Prince and the oligarchs knew that they stood or fell together. Even so, they had little strength. Disarrayed, frightened, at odds with themselves, and with no program, they could not agree on which way to

15 G. K. van Hogendorp, *Brieven en Gedenkschriften* (The Hague, 1866–1903), I, 411, 437, 443; II, 55–61.

16 Geyl, *Patriottenbeweging*, 124–25.

17 *Ibid.*, 139–40.

turn. "Our salvation can come only from foreign powers," the Orangist Van Goens had prophetically observed to the Duke of Portland in 1783.¹⁸ In 1787 his prophecy came to pass.

From the beginning the French government had favored the Patriots, and lent them a secret assistance which was willingly accepted. A Patriot victory in Dutch internal affairs might result in a more or less permanent Franco-Dutch alliance; and the combination of French and Dutch maritime and economic strength was a contingency that British policy must at all costs seek to avoid. The British, however, had a good deal of anti-British feeling in the Netherlands to contend with. It was the Fourth English War that had touched off the Patriot explosion; and when the British not only captured 80,000,000 guilders' worth of Dutch shipping during the war, but insisted at the peace table on keeping the Dutch post at Negapatam in India, and on obtaining certain rights in the East Indian archipelago, they did not further endear themselves in Dutch commercial circles. Frederick the Great advised his niece, the Princess of Orange, to avoid dependency on the "pirates of the channel." His advice was no more heeded than that of Leopold II to his sister, Marie Antoinette, a few years later. The Princess of Orange, and the Orange party in general, continued to believe that true Dutch interests were the same as those of Great Britain. They urged the British to use financial inducements with anti-Orange regents (£100,000 might win over the province of Friesland); and there were some in Zeeland who even proposed, rather than submit to the Patriots, to withdraw the province from the Dutch union, put it under British protection, give the British fleet a base at Flushing, and annex the Zeeland share in the Dutch East India Company to that of England. National feeling was not yet highly developed, and especially not among the cosmopolitan upper classes. The Princess of Orange, however, and her followers, aware that an open association of the Prince with the British would only damage him still further in Dutch opinion, strongly advised that the British work behind the scenes.¹⁹

This is precisely what began to happen when Sir James Harris arrived as British minister at the Hague in December 1784. There ensued a long series of intrigues and counterintrigues between Harris and the French agents, each backing and backed by their partisans among the Dutch, as recently recounted in detail by Professor Alfred Cobban of the University of London. In 1787 the Free Corps came to open blows with the Prince's troops, and civil war began in the Netherlands. The French government, now in serious financial and even revolutionary difficulties itself, seems to have spent 115,000 guilders to arm the Free Corps. How much Harris distributed on the Orange side is not clear, but it was at least £70,000 or over 800,000 guilders.²⁰

18 *Brieven aan R. M. van Goens* . . . , III, 220.

19 On British captures and demands, Manger, *Recherches*, 17; Van Goens, *Brieven*, III, 209, 230, 234. Frederick II's letter to the Princess of Orange is printed by H. T. Colenbrander, *De Pairiottentijd*, Bijlage V. On secession of Zeeland, Colenbrander, *op.cit.*, Bijlage VII; Geyl, 133; A. Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents: the Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at the Hague* (London, 1954), 82-83. On the Orangist desire for the British to intervene, while keeping their activity as invisible as possible, see Van Goens, 212, 239, 241, and the memorandum of the Princess of Orange published by Colenbrander, Bijlage XIII.

20 Cobban, *op.cit.*, 133-35, 177.

The Princess of Orange, as the crisis grew, seizing the initiative from her flabby husband, started on a dramatic journey, with two companions, from Nimwegen to the Hague, there to rally and inspire the bewildered followers of the Prince. She declared that no one would dare to stop her; she was in fact stopped by the Free Corps. She was obliged to go back to Nimwegen, her mission unaccomplished. This affair caused a great sensation. A handful of armed burghers had interfered with a great lady's freedom of movement. The Princess' brother was now King of Prussia, and he declared that his sister must receive satisfaction for the indignity she had suffered. The Patriots offering only to send delegates to a conference, and otherwise refusing to humble themselves, the King despatched 20,000 Prussian troops into the Netherlands. Harris' diplomacy, the opportune involvement of Austrian and Russian forces in a Turkish war, and the known fact that France was disabled from intervention by mounting troubles at home, all persuaded the Prussian King to spare so sizable a portion of his army. The Prussians were commanded by the Duke of Brunswick, the same who was to command them in the invasion of France five years later. In 1787, as in 1792, he issued a "Brunswick Manifesto." This one was milder than the one against revolutionary Paris; it only announced that no one allowing the Prussians to pass would be harmed. The Prussians in short order occupied Utrecht and Amsterdam. Few shots were fired; the Free Corps dissolved; the citizen-soldiers disappeared before the regular Prussian forces. Patriots everywhere changed or concealed their opinions, or fled from the country. The House of Orange was restored to its former position. "I could not keep my eyes from watering," remarked Sir James Harris, at the gratitude of the Prince and "of those who compose the uppermost class of the people."²¹

It was a great diplomatic triumph for Great Britain to hold the United Provinces outside the orbit of France. The balance of power was "maintained," according to Cobban; actually, it would seem that, with the weakening of France, the phenomenal increase of British and Prussian power since the Seven Years' War had been carried further. Sir James Harris became Baron Malmesbury (later Earl), it being ascertained that his income of £4,000 a year was enough to support the honor; and he was permitted, by a singular favor of the Prince whom he had rescued, to write *je maintiendrai*, the motto of the House of Orange, against an orange background on his crest. Fox, Pitt, Burke, were enthusiastic. It all reminded him of an old romance, said Burke: "a chivalrous king, hearing that a princess had been affronted, takes his lance, assembles his knights and determines to do her justice." One sees already his "delightful vision" of Marie Antoinette in the French Revolution, and the ten thousand swords flashing from their scabbards in her defense. Nor was Burke much inclined to be troubled by scruples: "It was not necessary for us to trouble ourselves with definitions of the legality of the government of this or that country, or the strict construction of the constitution; but it was enough if we saw an opportunity of restoring that party to power, which was most likely to prove a valuable friend of Great Britain." The King of Prussia, for his part in this mixture of knight errantry and *Realpolitik*, carried off five tons of

21 *Ibid.*, 188. Cobban, Vijlbrief, and Geyl agree that it was mainly Harris who restored the Prince, though their feelings toward the fact are very different.

gold, or half a million guilders, as a "free gift" from the rejoicing city of Amsterdam. It must be admitted that the French charged much more in 1795 for saving the democrats.²²

Sir James Harris continued to be very active during the first months of the restored government. It was with his advice that various offices were filled with reliable men; and, since Dutch bankers would not lend to the Orange regime, he distributed more money, in the form of British loans to the federal and local bodies, than he had previously done to bring the restoration about. The Princess of Orange demanded a good many arrests, so that a "rod of terror," as Harris said, should threaten "the heads of factious leaders."²³ The press was put under severe restraint, and an oath was required of regents, councillors, gildsmen, clergymen, and militia, in which they swore to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Estates and the hereditary stadtholdership of the Prince of Orange. The beginning of legal investigations frightened thousands of Patriots, with their families, into exile.²⁴ Van der Kemp emigrated to the United States, where he lived until 1829. Van der Capellen had died. Thousands, including Ondaatje, took refuge in France, where the King granted them a small subsidy and allowed them to congregate at St. Omer. Other thousands crossed into the Austrian Netherlands, where they soon became involved in the Belgian revolution. Most of these émigrés returned only in 1795, in the wake of the French republican army.

The Orange regime had made enemies of the most vital elements of its population. It represented the Prince's own followers, the more hardshelled people of the Reformed Church, and the amorphous populace who would still shout *Oranje boven*, "up Orange," in the streets. The chief federal executive from 1787 to 1795, the Zeelander Van de Spiegel, was the man who had offered Zeeland to the British. Able enough, he saw the need for modernization in the ancient fabric of the republic; but he could accomplish nothing, since the Prince and his favorites really

22 *Ibid.*, 200–5. Cobban's book is a detailed and almost purely diplomatic history in which he gives little attention to internal Dutch affairs; but he concludes, or at least states at the close of the book, that the Dutch Patriot movement was "part of an international current of democracy which had already manifested itself in England, America, and Geneva. . . . It exhibited for the first time the strength of a revolutionary democracy possessed of organization, leadership and an ideology." He speaks also of "the uncompromising nature of the new ideology." Dutch writers on whom I have depended all judge the Orangists to have been far more uncompromising than the democrats. They would agree also, I think, with my own view that the Patriot movement was characterized by its lack of a developed "ideology"; it did not formulate its demands in terms of any universal ethical affirmations or any theory of world history. It will be obvious to the reader that I consider the Patriot movement to have been part of "an international current of democracy," but I would think the American Revolution to have had a far more effective "organization, leadership and ideology." Professor Cobban, in apparently turning against *all* revolution, seems like others to wish to spare the Americans from this "disgraceful imputation," as J. Q. Adams put it. On the other hand, even Thomas Jefferson, then in Paris, thought the Dutch democrats too extreme. See my article "The Dubious Democrat: Thomas Jefferson in Bourbon France," in *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXII (Sept. 1957), 388–404. John Adams, in London, while admiring the Patriots and regretting their failure, thought that it had been their weakness "to be too inattentive to the sense of the common people of their own country" and too willing to rely on France. *Works*, VIII, 462.

23 Blok, *History*, V, 253; Harris, *Diaries and Correspondence* (London, 1845), II, 357.

24 Blok, V, 254. The traditional figure of 40,000 Patriot émigrés, given by Blok and others, is thought by later writers to be exaggerated.

wanted no more to happen. The republic drifted. It went to war with France in 1793, with something less than enthusiasm on the part of its people.²⁵ Secretly, in every town, there were men who had been Patriots, who had drilled in the Free Corps and stood by to let the Prussian regiments pass in 1787, men now in communication with émigrés beyond the frontier, and who believed, from their own bitter experience, that there could be no democratic revolution in the Dutch provinces except in alliance with the French army.

The Orange regime was guaranteed in 1788 by Great Britain and Prussia. "The once so mighty Republic of the United Netherlands had, thanks to the Orange victory, put itself under foreign care."²⁶ The Dutch Republic first lost its independence, not to the "Jacobins" in 1795, but to the already well developed forces of the European counterrevolution in 1787.

THE BELGIAN REVOLUTION

"Governed by their own laws, secure in their property and their personal liberty, paying only moderate taxes which they lay upon themselves, the Belgians enjoy the finest gifts of a free constitution."²⁷ So it seemed to an English traveller in the Austrian Netherlands. Nor was he mistaken, though there was much in the laws, the property, and the liberty that came in time to provoke discontent. Satisfaction with their constitution was as characteristic of the Belgian provinces as of England. Not even English Whigs or American colonials dwelt so fervidly upon rights and liberties set forth in documents of long ago. Each province had a kind of historic charter. That of Brabant, the most important, was called the Joyous Entry, from the guarantees issued by the Duke of Brabant in 1355. The tax burden was also gratifyingly low, perhaps a tenth of that of neighboring Holland and England. It may even have been the lowest in the world of European civilization, except for the disorganized Poles and the fortunate Americans.²⁸ In short, although

25 In February 1793, says Geyl, "stand bij ons Willem V met zijn aanhang van oligarchen en predikanten los van die natie"—William V stood apart from the nation with his following of oligarchs and preachers. It is doubtful that Geyl would accept Cobban's conclusion that Sir James Harris, by putting back the Orange party, made possible the Orange restoration in 1814. After all, even the Bourbons were restored then, in Spain and Naples as in France. The strength of the modern House of Orange derives from the very different policies of William V's son.

26 Vijlbrief, 168.

27 T. Juste, *Histoire des Etats-generaux des Pays Bas, 1465-1790*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1864), II, 122. For the most part, however, the present section depends on the admirable study by Suzanne Tassier, *Les démocrates belges de 1789: étude sur le Vonckisme et la Révolution brabançonne* (Brussels, 1930), in *Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des lettres*, 2nd series, vol. XXVIII; and on P. von Mitrofanov, *Joseph II: seine politische und kulturelle Tätigkeit, aus dem russischen ins deutsch übersetzt* (Vienna, 1910), where events in Belgium are seen in comparison with those in other parts of the Hapsburg empire. See also J. Gilissen, *Le régime représentatif avant 1790 en Belgique* (Brussels, 1952). For local case histories see for example V. Fris, *Histoire de Gand* (Ghent, 1930) (favorable to Joseph II and to Vonck), and J. Lefevre, "Le gouvernement du comté de Hainaut au XVIII^e siècle," in *Anciens pays et assemblés d'états*, V (Louvain, 1953), 23-47 (more favorable to the old order). The literature is very large.

28 See estimates in the Table in Chapter VI above.

Belgium belonged to the Austrian monarchy, it was hardly affected by that fact before 1780.

Belgium was a museum of late-medieval corporate liberties. To begin with, it was a bundle of provinces. There were ten of them known as the Austrian Netherlands, here called Belgium, which comprised the territory of modern Belgium and Luxemburg, excluding, however, the bishopric of Liège, which, running from the Dutch to the French frontiers, cut the Austrian provinces in two. The only government common to the ten provinces was supplied by the Austrian Emperor. Practically all his officials, under the level of his viceroy, were native Belgians.

Since the sixteenth century the country had been immunized against change. The struggle against Calvinism had left the people solidly and devotedly Catholic. Half the land belonged to great abbeys and other ecclesiastical bodies. The clergy, high and low, were sober men with little of the frivolity or indifference that had crept into the churches of France or England. The nobility were old-fashioned; some were well to do, but they lived without ostentation, and they invested their savings in land and mortgages, considering commercial enterprises too undignified or too risky. The peasantry, as in France, were legally free, but subject to the dues and payments of the manorial system. The load borne by the peasants was the lighter, however, in that the upper classes had acquired so few habits of modern extravagance, and because the Austrian government raised little money and few troops in its Belgian possessions. Business and financial development had been arrested. The Dutch, in winning their independence, had obtained the closing of the Scheldt river to seagoing ships. This closure of the Scheldt, written into many international treaties, was in the eighteenth century also strongly insisted on by Great Britain. The intent, and the result, was to destroy the port of Antwerp. The population of Antwerp dropped from 100,000 to 50,000 between the sixteenth century and the eighteenth, while Amsterdam and London more than quadrupled in size. Town life and burgher interests in Belgium, like the habits and outlook of clergy and nobles, remained those of a bygone day.

Belgium was in short an intermediate country, in a state of suspended animation between old and new. The Dutch Patriots who flocked across its frontier in 1787 found it backward, superstitious, priest-ridden, and oligarchic.²⁹ To the French it was the desert of culture. Seen from farther east, as from the imperial capital at Vienna, it was a far more lively place, the wealthiest of Hapsburg possessions, and distinguished among all parts of the Hapsburg empire (along with Milan) by its free rural population and its great number of busy towns.

Towns, nobles, clergy all had their historic liberties and their privileges. All were represented in the several assemblies of Provincial Estates—except that in Flanders, urbanized since the Middle Ages, the nobility were excluded. There could be, in Belgium, no sharp antagonism between an unprivileged Third Estate and two higher privileged orders. All three orders had an interest in preserving their liberties. On the other hand, the corporate liberties, or rights of the “orders,” were by no means equally favorable to all persons within the respective orders or estates.

29 See P. Geyl, “Noord-Nederlandse patriottenbeweging en Brabantse Revolutie,” in *Nieuw Vlaams Tijdschrift*, No. 6, 1953, 3–20.

The Estates of Brabant, for example, met at the Hotel de Ville in Brussels. Though they voted as three houses, they met in a single room. Clergy and nobles sat in upholstered armchairs, while the Third Estate perched on benches, almost out of sight in the embrasures of the windows. Certain great abbots sat *ex officio* as the First Estate; neither bishops nor parish priests had anything to do with the assembly. As for the nobles, only those with four quarters of nobility and 4,000 florins a year could take part. In the Third Estate only the three *chefs-villes* of Brabant were represented—Brussels, Louvain, and Antwerp. What the Third Estate represented was actually the *corporations des métiers*, or guilds of these three towns. The guilds were trade associations of small employers, who resisted economic modernization. Each guild, in each town, characteristically required that apprenticeship be performed in the town itself; that no guild member employ more than a certain number of workmen; that no “foreigner,” or non-townsmen, engage in the trade within the town or the surrounding country; and that no new masterpieces or guild memberships be created. The guild memberships, thus fixed in number, had become mainly hereditary. Sons, nephews, or sons-in-law followed their elders in a known routine. The guilds stood firmly against economic expansion, new markets, or new methods, at a time when a quarter of the population of Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges was on poor relief.³⁰

The power of the guilds was enormously magnified through the procedures used at the Brabant assembly. Unanimity of the three orders was necessary to the approval of any measure. The Third Estate thus had a veto. It voted only after obtaining the views of its constituents, the guilds of the *chefs-villes*. Hence any guild, in any of the three towns, could prevent action. Despite the modesty of the seating arrangements, and the custom of humbly voting last, the Third Estate of Brabant, that is the *doyens des métiers*, were persons of consequence whose desires were heeded, and opinions sought, by prelates and noblemen. “It is characteristic,” according to one authority, “that in August 1787,” at the beginning of the Belgian revolution, “not the Duke of Arenberg or the Count of Merode was sent to Vienna as spokesman for the Estates, but Monsieur Petit.”³¹

The other provinces had arrangements much as in Brabant. No Estates General of all provinces met from 1634 to 1790.

The politically active or privileged elements, under the Joyous Entry and other such provincial constitutions, were in short the great landowning abbeys, certain of the nobles, and the gildmasters of certain towns. The agricultural population had no voice, but was well off and without sense of grievance. The urban poor were silent. The unrepresented towns did not care. The secular clergy were content. The most eminent lawyers handled the business of the great landed convents and nobles, with whom they were closely allied. There were lawyers with more modest clients, and also, among those excluded from political life, a few men of modern economic interests, even under the unfavorable conditions obtaining in Belgium: bankers who wished a wider field for profitable investment; organizers of manu-

30 On the central problem of the guilds see, in addition to Tassier and Mitrofanov, R. Ledoux, *La suppression du régime corporatif dans les Pays Bas autrichiens* (Brussels, 1912), in *Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 2nd series, vol. X.

31 Mitrofanov, *Joseph II*, 626.

factures, eager to break the gild regulations, hire an enlarged work force, or set up domestic industries in rural districts; merchants willing to expand beyond the town market, open the Scheldt, and even acquire an island in the West Indies. Such men, however, were fewer and less powerful than in neighboring countries. The wealthiest banker in Belgium, for example, the viscount Edouard de Walckiers, had an income of 140,000 francs a year, not much when compared to the revenues of the great Amsterdam houses, or the French banker Laborde, or the £100,000 a year (2,400,000 francs) of William Beckford of London.

It remains true that the dominant sentiment in Belgium was satisfaction with things as they were. Revolution came from outside. Placid Belgium, the Boeotia of Europe, was excited by the energetic emperor, Joseph II, by the sight of American independence, and, finally, by the revolution in France.

Native stirrings created a susceptibility to these outside forces. Belgians contributed no books to the European Enlightenment, but they read them. Political journalism began in 1772 with the *Esprit des journaux français et étrangers*. There were half-a-dozen such periodicals by 1785. Forbidden to discuss domestic political questions, they enabled their readers to take part vicariously in the politics of other countries. Debates in the House of Commons were printed in Belgian papers as soon as it became legal to print them in London, in the early 1770's. The Belgian press followed the American Revolution with interest, and published the texts of the American state constitutions.³² It gave long accounts of the Dutch Patriot agitation. Even the conservative journals contributed to the habit of discussion. The abbé Feller praised Blackstone and Burke, criticized Gibbon and Adam Smith, and refused to publish the constitution of Massachusetts, but he set people to thinking about them. And he reported, though with disgust, the *vraie fureur* created by the presentation of the *Mariage de Figaro* at Frankfurt on the Main, where people came from fifteen leagues around to relish its equalitarian sentiments.

It was nevertheless the Emperor Joseph II who threw Belgium into commotion. Joseph II, and his brother and successor Leopold II, carried on the program of reform from above, or enlightened despotism, that we have already seen to be characteristic of the Hapsburg monarchy at the time, and which had already brought it, and was to bring it again, into serious conflict with the estates of Bohemia and Hungary. Belgium so far had been only sporadically affected, but when Joseph became sole ruler in 1780, on his mother's death, he launched on a program of forcible modernization in all parts of the empire, Belgium included. In Belgium, as the most advanced of his dominions, he expected to find sympathetic support. He thought that in Belgium, with its large burgher class, his antinoble policies would be welcomed. He was doomed to disappointment. The most profound of his reforms, the abolition of serfdom, had no application to Belgium, where there were no serfs. It thus created no sympathy for the emperor among the peasantry, as it did elsewhere. On the other hand, the restrictions he placed on municipal independence caused him no trouble in his eastern lands, where towns were weak, but the same curbing of town autonomy drove the privileged towns of Belgium to re-

32 Mlle. Tassier lays great emphasis on the effects of the American Revolution: *Démocrates belges*, 5, 84, 87, etc.

volt. He tried to free the port of Antwerp, and sent a loaded cargo vessel down the Scheldt, only to have it fired on and driven back by the Dutch; but this action favored only those Belgians who were thinking of the world market, and had no appeal for the economic interests that had political influence in the estates. Towns, nobles, and clergy combined against Joseph II, and no Belgian except a few who worked for the government spoke in his favor. Later, to be sure, by 1790, those Belgians who had become “democrats” looked on the Hapsburg monarchy with more sympathy.³³

Joseph began by abolishing torture, decreeing toleration for Protestants, forbidding burial in churches, censoring sermons to prevent political opposition, and launching an investigation of the University of Louvain, where it was found that the curriculum had not changed since 1617. To reduce idleness, and increase productivity, he suppressed a few monastic establishments that he regarded as superfluous, prohibited group pilgrimages, and ordered all kermesses or popular festivals throughout the country to be celebrated on the same day. He tried to relax the trade monopolies of the gilds, and ruled that masters might employ as many workmen as they pleased. Each of these measures antagonized someone.

Belgians began to fear for their constitutional liberties, the more so since in the thought of the day the “constitutional” was ill defined. There was no sense of two levels of law, no distinction between the constitutional and the merely statutory, such as was coming to be felt in America. As in England the Test Act, and even the game laws, could be defended as essential parts of the constitution, so in Belgium the admission of non-Catholics to public office (few as they were), or the forcing of reform on the University of Louvain, were regarded as unconstitutional measures, breaches of the social contract, violations of the Joyous Entry. The abbé Feller quoted Montesquieu to prove it.

In any case the determined Joseph II, to make the country more amenable to his rational government, did in 1787 embark on constitutional change, in the sense of change in the foundation and distribution of public power. He reorganized, unilaterally by his own will, the whole administrative and judicial system. Courts dependent on manorial lordships, estate assemblies, and town councils were abolished. Judicial and administrative power, blended in the old courts, were now separated, as recommended by philosophers of the Enlightenment. A new General Council was set up for executive functions, with intendencies throughout the country. Law courts were uniformly organized into higher courts and courts of first instance. The reform, like Maupeou’s reforms of 1770 in France, anticipated the progressive developments of the century to come. But the old courts were basic instruments of government for the older governing class. And they involved not only the concept of the constitution but the concept of property, which also was not as strictly defined as it was to be later. Property included property in office, or inherited private rights in the exercise of public authority.

“Our right to judge is our property, Lord Emperor,” pleaded the nobles of Alost. “We do not hold it by grace, but have received it from our fathers [hence it was constitutional] and bought it with blood and gold. It should not be taken from us

33 Mitrofanov, *Joseph II*, 587, 659–63.

against our will." Church bodies and town corporations, because they also owned manors, could have said the same. The numerous lawyers bred by the old system of courts (there were 260 at Mons alone) also protested. "Many of us," declared the Brussels lawyers, "have sacrificed all our means to obtain a post costing 700 florins; from our youth we have labored to acquire the needed knowledge, and we hope thereby to support our wives and children, since our rights rest on the sacred and inviolable Joyous Entry."³⁴

The issue was clear. It was between social change and constitutional liberty. Reform would come at the cost of arbitrary government overriding the articulate will and historic institutions of the country. Or liberty would be preserved at the cost of perpetuating archaic systems of privilege, property, special rights, class structure, and ecclesiastical participation in the state. The Belgian Revolution was in its origin conservative. It was a revolution against the innovations of a modernizing government—in a sense, a revolution against the Enlightenment. It was not in this respect untypical of the time. The American Revolution had also been conservative in a way, a defense of historic liberties against a modernizing government in Great Britain, which was by no means unenlightened, at least in its colonial policy. The difference lay in the content of conservatism, and the meaning of liberty, as between the American colonies and the Belgian provinces. Nor was the Belgian Revolution essentially different in its origins from the French, as is often asserted. The French Revolution really began in this same year, 1787, with the resistance of nobles and prelates to the modernizing program of Calonne. In all cases, American, French, and Belgian, upper-class people took the lead in the first marshalling of discontent, and in all these cases a democratic movement soon emerged. The same was true to a degree in the Dutch Patriot movement, and in the parliamentary reform movements in Ireland and England, though no one had to resist forcible enlightenment at the hands of William V or George III.³⁵

At the end of 1788 the Estates of Brabant and of Hainaut refused the grant of subsidies to the Emperor. Joseph II thereupon declared himself absolved from the Joyous Entry. Revolutionary manifestations occurred in the early months of 1789. A brewer of Brussels painted the door of his house with the colors of Brabant: red, yellow, and black. It was the first tricolor.³⁶

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 574–75.

³⁵ Professor Geyl, in the article cited in note 29 above, draws a sharp distinction between the Dutch Patriot movement, sharing in the general Franco-Anglo-American Enlightenment, and the conservatism of the Belgian Revolution, since in Belgium it was the government that was "enlightened." But the matter was complicated, because of ultimate ambiguities in liberty and equality themselves.

³⁶ Tassier, *Démocrates belges*, 89. The French tricolor appeared in July 1789; the Italian tricolor—red, green, and white—in May 1795; the Dutch tricolor—red, white, and blue in horizontal stripes—in September 1795; a Swiss tricolor—red, black, and yellow—in 1798. After vicissitudes, these are the national colors of these countries today, except that Switzerland in 1840 adopted the white cross on a red field. The present Irish, Yugoslav, Rumanian, Syrian, South African, Mexican, and other Latin American tricolors betray the same inspiration. I do not know whether the Irish tricolor has any connection with the rebellion of 1798. Certain Germans wishing a Rhineland Republic in 1797 raised a standard of red, blue, and green; but I know of no anticipation in this period of the later German republican colors, the present German tricolor, red, black, and gold.

Resistance to the Austrians concentrated about two men, H. Van der Noot and J. F. Vonck. Both were lawyers of the Brussels bar, but Van der Noot was wealthy and related to the nobility; Vonck was the son of a farmer in easy circumstances. Van der Noot preferred dramatic action, and looked to the large stage of international affairs. Vonck, who was always in poor health, preferred to work behind the scenes. In 1788 Van der Noot, after publishing a ringing pamphlet, escaped the Austrian authorities by leaving the country. Vonck at the same time, after an illness, returned to his home in Brussels. Two very different lines of political action were thus initiated.

Van der Noot, setting up at Breda across the Dutch frontier, began overtures with the restored Orange government and with Great Britain and Prussia. He counted on the intervention of one or all of these powers to support the Belgians against the Emperor. We have the record of his secret conversations with the Dutch Van de Spiegel. He told Van de Spiegel that he represented "important men" in the Austrian Netherlands, that their aim was to set up an independent republic like that of the Dutch, and that they would favor having the second son of the Prince of Orange as a stadtholder, to which the difference of religion need be no bar. We know, too, that Van de Spiegel, the Princess of Orange, and the Amsterdam merchants were all cool to this idea. The Princess wanted no such rickety establishment for her Calvinist son, and Amsterdam wanted no union or affiliation with Belgium, no opening of the Scheldt, and no Antwerp or Ostend merchants turning up in the Indian Ocean. The Dutch wanted Belgium to remain as it had been—and the French to keep out. British interests were the same. Van der Noot's program was in fact hopeless, though he continued to pursue it.³⁷

Vonck meanwhile, from February 1789, was holding secret meetings in his house in Brussels, at first among his friends. He knew of Van der Noot's plan, since the two were working in the same cause, but he had no faith in it, in view of what had happened in the Dutch Netherlands, and of the roles of Britain and Prussia in suppressing the Dutch Patriots, of whom there were at one time thought to be 17,000 in Antwerp alone. Vonck's group therefore counted on action by the Belgians themselves. Their plan, since the Austrians were still in power, was to have a certain number of young men cross the frontier, form military units, arm, and drill; and meanwhile to create a clandestine organization in the Belgian villages and towns, so that return of the armed companies would coincide with an uprising throughout the country, and the Austrians thereby be driven out. Vonck thus created the society *Pro Aris et Focis*—for Hearth and Altar—a name which had already been used by some of the Dutch Free Corps. It was a secret society, using false names, invisible ink, cyphers, double talk, and a system by which each member knew the identity only of the member who had enrolled him. The Belgian Revolution was the only one of the period brought about by conspiratorial methods. These methods, however, revealed a serious weakness. When the uprising came, even the members of Vonck's own society did not know of his part in it.

37 Van de Spiegel's notes and other documents in H. T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840, I* (The Hague, 1905), 137–49.

Most of them thought that the main leader of the Belgian Revolution was Van der Noot, operating in patriotic limelight across the border.

It should be added that people of all groups and classes at first joined in *Pro Aris et Focis*. Van der Noot's own brother rejected his plan, and favored Vonck's. The great Abbot of Tongerlo, other abbots, and the bankers of Brussels financed the sojourn and the arming of patriots across the frontier. One of Vonck's most persistent followers, even after Vonck became a democratic leader in 1790, was the Duke of Arenberg, who had 732,000 florins a year. But most of Vonck's partisans were middle-class townspeople outside the gilds.

On June 18, 1789, Joseph II, who could see that Van der Noot was at Breda, and surmise that secret internal preparations were being made, suppressed the Estates of Brabant and annulled the Joyous Entry. It was the very moment when the French were afraid that Louis XVI would dissolve the Estates General. The very day before, on June 17, the French Third Estate had proclaimed the National Assembly, in which segregation of the three orders was abolished. News of this event had a great repercussion in Belgium. On August 18 revolution broke out in Liège.³⁸ This too immediately affected the Austrian Netherlands. The Orange regime did not favor the rally of armed Belgian subversives within its borders. The Liège revolutionaries enthusiastically welcomed them. By October there were over 2,000 arming and drilling in the territories of Liège. They were mostly very young men of the burgher class. Vonck found a professional army officer, the Flemish Colonel Van der Mersch, to command them. The colonel said that with 3,000 such men, a third in uniform, supported by a general rising, he stood a good chance of driving out the Austrians without foreign aid.

And so it happened. The Austrian authorities remained to the end, if anything, too unperturbed. The agents of the enlightened Joseph II could hardly be charged with counterrevolutionary hysteria. Trautmannsdorf, reporting the assembly of 2,800 men in Liège, expressed no concern; from such burgher youths nothing was to be feared. It was only of the aristocracy that eighteenth-century governments were really afraid. The Austrians, by remitting taxes in 1789, and propagating the idea that discontent was instigated by fanatical priests in favor of oligarchic estates, managed to keep many of the peasantry loyal.

Nevertheless, the Austrian regime collapsed abruptly at the end of 1789. The armed companies streamed in, riots and demonstrations broke out in the towns; there were few Austrian troops present, many being engaged in the war with Turkey. Each province separately declared its independence, Flanders appropriating a few words from the American Declaration of 1776.

Now, with independence, two distinct parties began to form. One favored keeping everything in Belgium as it had been. It had fought only for independence. Van der Noot became its leader. He had never believed in stirring up the lower

38 Neither space nor the requirements of clarity allow development here of the complex and interesting phenomena of the Liège revolution. See P. Harsin, *La Révolution liégeoise de 1789* (Brussels, 1953). The philosophical views of its prince-bishop allowed Liège to become an important center, after 1750, for the publication of books and periodicals of the Enlightenment. See G. de Froicourt, *François-Charles comte de Velbrück, prince-évêque de Liège, franc-maçon* (Liège, 1936), and U. Capitaine, *Recherches historiques et bibliographiques sur les journaux et les écrits périodiques liégeois* (Liège, 1850).

classes anyway; he would have favored a respectable diplomatic intervention by foreign powers. Those of the other party “were called Vonckists by their enemies, democrats by themselves.”³⁹ They wanted internal changes, now that change seemed to be possible.

In the brief turmoil of ejecting the Austrians the insurrectionary committees prepared by Vonck came to life. Their members—at Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, Mons, Namur, and elsewhere—were often men who had hitherto had no role and no interest in politics—“merchants, small landowners, lawyers, who desired to take part in public life, to interest themselves directly in public affairs.”⁴⁰ Their methods, according to one conservative report, were very different from those of the sixteenth-century revolution against Philip II. Then, it had been magistracies and estate-assemblies that acted. Now “individuals” (significant word) “in each province sit with provincial bodies, in which persons of all classes are placed. . . . The people renew their magistrates, and assume an active authority to oversee all operations.”⁴¹ At Menin, where no mayor had been really elected since 1578, one was elected on December 12, 1789. Town revolutionary committees began to exchange delegates, to form provincial congresses, and to think of a National Assembly. A really revolutionary way of talking began to be heard. The Belgians, according to one pamphlet, were now “precisely as at the moment of issuing from the hands of the Creator.”⁴² The state of nature was in effect; the nation was sovereign, and it should summon a national convention to bring a new state into being. Old provincial constitutions should disappear.

Such ideas came from France, or indeed from America, or, rather, from the application by Belgians, in their own struggle and to solve their own problems, of observations that they had made on developments in America or France. The French Revolution, however, had also the contrary effect. Those with an interest in the old order were alarmed. The French, on the preceding August 4, had repudiated all forms of provincial, ecclesiastical, class, gild, and corporate privilege. In November they nationalized the property of the Church. It was not for this that Van der Noot and other higher-ups in the Belgian Revolution had rebelled against Joseph II. They turned to conservative arguments. When democrats urged equal representation for all persons as citizens, the Abbot of Tongerloogave the classic reply: virtual representation, and the constitution. “The abbots as a group represent the secular and regular clergy, and indeed they represent the whole rural country as well, being the largest landowners; and, finally, usage has always been this way, and should remain so, since it is constitutional and the Constitution cannot be changed.”⁴³

The Estates of Brabant, suppressed in June, reconvened in December. The abbots, the noblemen, and the bigwigs of the *chefs-villes*, to forestall the democratic agitation, announced themselves as the true and only sovereign in Brabant. They

39 Suzanne Tassier, “Les Belges et la Révolution française, 1789–1793,” in *Revue de Université de Bruxelles*, XXXIX (1934), 453. For Belgian use of the word democrat see Chapter I above.

40 Tassier, *Démocrates belges*, 198.

41 *Ibid.*, 199.

42 *Ibid.*, 208, quoting a pamphlet by Doutrepont, *Qu'allons-nous devenir?*

43 *Ibid.*, 190.

invited the estates of other provinces to send delegates to a conference. The conference met and pronounced itself to be the Estates General of the [Belgian] Netherlands, defunct since 1634. It adopted an Act of Union which created the United States of Belgium. The Act was closely modeled on the American Articles of Confederation, which in places it textually followed. It set up a Congress as the federal government (Congress and Estates General both existing for a while), whose powers were carefully limited to foreign policy and defense. As in America before 1789, the member states remained sovereign. Van der Noot became chief minister to the new Congress.⁴⁴

It is worth noting that the framework of the American Articles of Confederation, which according to one view was more "democratic" than the United States federal constitution of 1787, was perfectly suited to the perpetuation of oligarchy in Belgium. The framework, in both countries, was designed to guard the position of men whose importance lay in local assemblies; it was also conservative, reflecting resistance to new ideas. In Belgium, however, as generally in Europe, the emphasis on local assemblies and on customary sentiments expressed the privileges of lord, burgher, and cleric. In America, to recur to the ambivalence of the American Revolution, the customary and the ancient were already radical by European standards; and in any case the American states, before adopting the Articles of Confederation, had undergone internal revolution, some more than others.

The Belgian democrats objected to the assumption of sovereignty by the Estates of Brabant, and to a union which was only a confederation of such estates. Such a regime, they said, was in fact more aristocratic than what had existed before. The "intermediate powers" were now sovereign; the doctrines of Montesquieu were violated. Who would now watch out, as the Emperor had done, for the interests of persons who had no voice in the estates—the bankers, the greater merchants, the investors of capital, the emerging industrialists, and even the common people?⁴⁵

The American state constitutions were also brought into the argument by the democrats, to justify reorganization of representative and electoral machinery within the particular provinces. The Estates party, as it came to be called, replied that the American Revolution had been primarily only a war of independence. Few Belgians denied the appropriateness of American precedent. They differed only on the nature of the American Revolution.

The democrats could do little except write pamphlets and organize political clubs. There was no lower-class upheaval, in town or country. From lists of persons later imprisoned for "Vonckism" we can form an impression of who the democrats were. One list gives the names of seven lawyers, a notary, two doctors, a surgeon, an apothecary, an architect, three merchants, three who called themselves only *rent-iers*, three wig-makers, three coffee-shop proprietors, two printers, and three priests.⁴⁶ The banker Walckiers was an important member of the party, and so was

44 On Belgian use of United States constitutional models see T. K. Gorman, *America and Belgium: a Study of the Influence of the United States upon the Belgian Revolution of 1789–1790* (London, 1925), in which a great many quotations are gathered to establish the fact of "influence," but without critical observation.

45 Tassier, *Démocrates belges*, 215–17.

46 *Ibid.*, 381–83.

the wealthy Duke of Arenberg. As a group the democrats were not anti-Catholic, nor even anticlerical; there were priests in good standing among them, though the weight of the clergy was thrown against them. Men who followed Vonck in their youth founded the Belgian Catholic liberal party in their middle age.⁴⁷

Vonck, always cautious, drew up a detailed plan for broadening the representation in the Brabant estates. He intended to allay the fears aroused by the more radical among his associates. As Pitt in his reform bill of 1785 tried to anticipate the opposition of Burke, so Vonck tried to make room for the privileged interests in the existing Brabant assembly. His plan, like Pitt's, was compromising and complicated, and hence not easy to appreciate or to explain. It became, however, the official program of the Brabant democrats.⁴⁸

Vonck objected to the claim of full sovereignty made by the estates, but he did not expound the alternative doctrine of the sovereignty of the people. He demanded no National Assembly. Far from repudiating the estates, he proposed that there be four of them instead of three. He would have the abbots continue to sit in their own right, but would add elected deputies of parish and chapter clergy to the First Estate. He would have deputies of the Second Estate elected by all nobles. He would divide the Third Estate into two chambers: one for the three *chefs-villes*, but with more citizens in these towns taking part in election of delegates; and a new chamber for the small towns and for country people who were neither nobles nor clerics. He would have these four chambers deliberate and vote apart, and possess all legislative power, the executive to be given to a council to which each estate elected a member. He argued for this plan, not by appealing to natural right, but by insisting that it was historically entirely compatible with the Joyous Entry.

The Estates party would have none of it. The abbots and the *doyens des métiers* had the most to lose by such an absorption of new deputies into the chambers, and they stood firm against any concession. The abbé Feller, their great spokesman and journalist, found the democratic principles too rationalistic and abstract.

Moderation was expressed also in an opposite quarter by Leopold II, who succeeded Joseph as Emperor in February 1790. Leopold was one of the most reasonable men ever to occupy a European throne. A few years before, as Grand Duke of Tuscany, after study of the American state constitutions, he had devised a constitution for that duchy. He accepted the role of ruler as defined by the enlightened philosophy. In January he wrote to his sister, Marie Christine, the ousted regent of the Austrian Netherlands, in the very words of a "philosopher": "The sovereign, even a hereditary one, is only a delegate employed by the people. In each country there should be a fundamental law to serve as a treaty between the subjects and the

47 Tassier insists that the democrats were not anti-Catholic, except for a handful of Josephists like the Doutrepont mentioned in note 42 above. This is confirmed from a different direction by H. Haag, *Origines du catholicisme libéral en Belgique (1789–1839)*, (Louvain, 1950), 82. Haag holds that such anticlericalism as developed in Belgium, beginning in 1790, was the direct consequence of the incredible vindictiveness and terrorism of certain churchmen in the estates party. Haag maintains that the views of the abbé Feller, important in Belgium as a founder of traditionalist philosophy, were not derived from St. Augustine or Bossuet, as has been said, but from Bellarmine and Edmund Burke. Feller was one of the many former Jesuits active after the dissolution of the order in 1774.

48 Tassier, *Démocrates belges*, 233–44, for a long analysis of Vonck's *Considérations impartiales sur la position actuelle de Brabant*, published on January 29, 1790.

monarch and limit the rights and authority of the latter. The sovereign who does not respect this contract thereby loses the position that has been given him only on this condition."⁴⁹ Their late brother Joseph, he gave his sister to understand, had in fact violated the liberties of the Belgians, who therefore had reason for their rebellion. In March he offered a basis of reconciliation to the Belgian estates. Explicitly repudiating Joseph's policies, he offered autonomy to Belgium under the revived Estates General, to which he would grant full powers in legislation, taxation, and appointment to office. Some Belgian writers express astonishment that the Estates of Brabant never even replied to Leopold's offer of compromise.⁵⁰ We need be less surprised, in view of the attitude of the American Congress to similar British proposals in 1778. The Belgian estates were committed to independence.

It was to be an independence, however, from both crown and people. Neither a moderate democratization nor a modern constitutional monarchy was desired, especially by the Estates of Brabant—for those of Flanders, Hainaut, Tournai, and Malines showed more disposition to reconsider "ancient laws." In the circumstances, the democrats were more inclined than the Estates party to listen to Leopold and to put faith in the known liberalism of his ideas. The democratic wing of the Belgian revolutionaries could therefore be suspected of royalism and reaction. On the other hand, the Estates party charged them with sympathy for the French Revolution. The Belgian democrats, in this view, were mere doctrinaires determined to force a foreign ideology upon their country. They were accused of desiring a National Assembly in place of the Three Orders, and of intending to destroy the Catholic and Christian church. These charges were in part fabricated for political purposes, against the known public statements of Vonck and his chief followers, and in part they reflected the genuine fears already aroused by the neighboring revolution in France, the belief that moderates were the dupes of extremists, and the feeling that an inch of concession would become the ten thousand miles of total revolution.

In March 1790 the Estates party won out, after various scuffles and disorderly episodes. Van der Mersch was imprisoned at Antwerp. Vonck, Walckiers, and hundreds of others fled to France. The democrats were hounded, arrested, silenced, or driven into exile. A true terror broke out, conducted mainly by regular clergy, who were faithful to their great abbots. Vonckists and Royalists were damned to the third generation, said one monk in a sermon. Anyone meeting a Vonckist, said another, should simply kill him on sight. A Brussels watchmaker was struck a dozen times with a sword for a few words in criticism of the Estates. There were innumerable such cases. Forms of justice need not be observed, said Feller in his journal. "They are respectable, no doubt . . . but when they lead the country to ruin . . . they are detestable."⁵¹ For the first time in this Belgian revolution there was a genuine mass upheaval, reminiscent of the Great Fear among the French peasantry the year before. It was, however, of opposite political tendency, being religious and deeply conservative. Every day throughout June 1790 thousands of the country

49 *Ibid.*, 315. This often quoted letter was first published in A. Wolff, *Leopold II und Marie Christine: ihr Briefwechsel* (Vienna, 1867), 85–86.

50 Tassier, *Démocrates belges*, 313–14.

51 *Ibid.*, 387.

people, led by their priests, poured into Brussels from the villages of Brabant. Some 20,000 arrived from a dozen villages on June 8 alone; 12,000 on June 21. They carried with them symbols or apparatus for the intimidation of democrats. One band brought a hangman's scaffold; another, a noose; in a third, women carried cutlasses; and the crucifix was much in view.⁵² Nothing but religious excitement could have aroused so many people. The outraged prelates of Brabant thus made exhibition of their strength. The democratic movement—in the sense of a desire for broader participation in public life, or modernization and liberalizing of legal and constitutional structures—did not, in Belgium or in various other countries, arise by demand of the populace, least of all at the wish of virtuous and simple agrarians.

The democrats in refuge in France established contact with agents of Leopold II.⁵³ They had every reason to expect consideration from him. The Austrian government, if only out of dislike for the obstructionist estates, and memories of resistance to its own reforming program, was actually inclined to look on the democrats with favor. In December 1790 the Austrian authority in the Belgian provinces was in fact restored, against the selfish, quarrelsome, and self-defeating rule of the momentarily victorious estates. For the democrats the return of the Austrian troops was “almost a deliverance”⁵⁴—in contrast to the effects of the Prussian army on the Dutch Patriots. The Belgian democrats were allowed by the Austrians to return home, and even to form political clubs.

The irony and tragedy of the great Revolution now became very apparent. The Belgian democrats returned to Belgium more radical than they had left it. Most of them were positively anticlerical, convinced that there could be no desirable change except by getting the church out of politics. More were convinced that compromising and halfway measures were a waste of time. There was more willingness to admire and imitate France, and even to look to revolutionary France for moral support or political intervention. There was a sense of a Europe-wide or “world” revolution of which Belgian affairs were but a part. The grounds for these sentiments lay in Belgium, not in France.

On the other hand, the very Austrians who could see the point of view of the democrats were afraid of them—because of the French Revolution. Marie Christine observed to her brother, Leopold, that the Belgian democrats were “the most

52 *Ibid.*, 390–93. Mlle. Tassier remarks that at the moment when all France was on the move in the Fête de la Fédération to found the new commonwealth, Belgians trudged the roads in a way recalling phenomena of the Crusades.

53 Vonck in France in April 1790 refused an offer of 2,000,000 florins by the Austrians for his assistance toward an Austrian restoration. The offer was made through the Belgian-born Brussels banker, Proli. This Proli later went to Paris, joined the Jacobin club, and was executed at the wish of Robespierre as a member of the “foreign conspiracy” in which Robespierre believed. The historian Albert Mathiez, like Robespierre, regarded Proli as an Austrian spy, and cited Proli's case as a piece of evidence for the reality of a conspiracy in the sense meant by Robespierre. It seems reasonable to agree with Mlle. Tassier that Proli was more likely a progressive Belgian, favorable both to the democrats and to the reforming Hapsburgs, and mediating between them in good faith in 1790, out of opposition to the old regime. The incident suggests how a comparative view, which Mathiez never attained, throws light on the French Revolution itself. *Démocrates belges*, 363, n. 3.

54 *Ibid.*, 412.

enlightened men in the country.”⁵⁵ But she thought he should not trust them. Immediately after the Austrian restoration there arrived in Brussels, in January 1791, as temporary governor-general, the Austrian diplomat Mercy-Argenteau, better known to general history as the counsellor to Marie Antoinette during all her years at Versailles. Mercy-Argenteau favored the Belgian democrats, as a means of weakening the Estates party. He even received suggestions for reform from their spokesmen. He reported to Vienna that their number was growing in important circles. But he was afraid of them. It was clear to him that their views were in the long run incompatible with Hapsburg rule. And he feared the French Revolution.

“The Estates,” wrote Mercy, “no doubt are not very deserving; but there is a danger in leaning too easily and too precipitately toward the opposite party, considering the example of the misfortunes of France, and the French emissaries who are here, and of whom I am apprehensive.”⁵⁶ In short, by 1791, even the enlightened monarchy of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Leopold II, and even Leopold II as a man, unique in a world peopled by Louis XVI, George III, and William V in the lengths he might go to conciliate democratic reformers, were thrown by fear of the French Revolution into a position of supporting constituted bodies, privileged classes and entrenched aristocracies.

The restored Austrian regime did not last long. In April 1792 France and Austria went to war, and in the following November the French republican army poured into the Austrian Netherlands. When General Dumouriez won the battle of Jemappes, there were Belgians who welcomed him, but this touches on a later part of the story.

A VIEW OF SWITZERLAND

There was no monarchy in Switzerland, not even the shadow monarchy of the House of Orange. There was no nobility, not even the subdued nobility of the Dutch provinces or the well-behaved nobility of Belgium. There was no foreign rule to generate movements of independence. That the Swiss cantons nevertheless suffered from the same problems as were common elsewhere only reveals more clearly the basic issues. As Peter Ochs observed, in an amusing description of all the kinds of people in his own town of Basel who resisted change, the most respected and influential voices, without king, nobility, or Catholic Church, were “aristocratic.”

There was no Swiss state. There was only the *Eidgenossenschaft*, the oath-fellowship of thirteen sovereign cantons, perpetually leagued together for external defense. Except for a few cantons that were mountainous, rural, and Catholic, these “oath-fellows” were essentially certain German-speaking and Protestant towns, notably Bern, Zurich, and Basel. French-speaking Vaud, Valais, Neuchatel, and Geneva were not cantons, and Geneva did not even belong to the league. Town oligarchies, in Switzerland as elsewhere, ruled over townspeople and coun-

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 400.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 436.

tryside. More will be said when the time comes to consider the Helvetic Republic of 1798. It is enough here to observe, as a sign of the complexity of lordships and jurisdictions, that Switzerland until 1798 had a hundred different tariff zones.

The little democratic revolution at Geneva in the 1760's has been recounted in Chapter V. The party of the Burghers and Citizens, who may have composed a quarter of the population, had clashed with the governing Small Council and Council of Two Hundred. The Burghers, calling themselves *Représentants*, had asserted the right of the town meeting or General Council to elect, at its own free choice, the men to sit in the Small Council or executive government. Partisans of the Small Council were called *Négatifs*, from the right which they claimed to negative, or veto, the remonstrances of Burghers or actions of the General Council. A dilemma had ensued under the "constitution" of 1738, which was "guaranteed" by France, Zurich, and Bern. To obtain the necessary changes or clarifications in the constitution, the *Négatifs* had appealed to the guarantor powers, and the *Représentants* had asserted, more from the logic of their situation than from the logic of Rousseau, the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people. By the "people" they meant those who already enjoyed Burgher rights, assembled in the General Council. There had been a compromise in 1768, a compromise which the young democrat Delolme refused to accept, but which allowed the government to be carried on.

In 1782 this compromise broke down.⁵⁷ The intervening years had not been quiet. Burghers continued to meet in their "circles," the neighborhood discussion groups which had become the instruments of political action. For the first time also the Natives entered significantly into politics, demanding the political rights from which they were excluded, but having mainly in mind an occupational and economic equality from which the laws debarred them. Since it was the Burgher *Représentants*, as much as the conservative *Négatifs*, who wished to keep Natives out of profitable or prestige-conveying lines of work, the Natives were divided in their political tactics, some favoring alliance with *Représentants* against *Négatifs*, others the reverse. Most Natives inclined to the Burgher or *Représentant* party.

The Burgher party became somewhat more liberalized in the seventies. Their ideas evolved from burgherdom to citizenship. It may be recalled that in 1770 the Burghers suppressed a Native protest with menacing determination. Whether from the passage of time, the spread of "enlightenment," the ideas made so public by the American Revolution, the growing strength of the Natives, or the need of allies against the obstinate *Négatifs*, the Burghers adopted a broader position. After another Native uprising in 1781, the General Council voted to admit Natives of the third generation in Geneva to Burgher rights. About 460 Natives would thus become Burghers, thereby considerably enlarging the General Council, which hitherto had rarely mustered as many as 1,200 voters. If naturalization after three generations seems little enough, it nevertheless fundamentally altered the old constitution of Geneva.

The Small Council refused to recognize this wholesale conversion of Natives into Burghers. Thus the question of authority, or sovereignty, as between the Small

⁵⁷ For the following paragraphs see E. Chapuisat, *La prise d'armes de 1782 à Genève* (Geneva, 1932).

and General Councils, was again raised, as in 1766. The Small Council and the *Négatifs* again appealed to the guarantors, France, Zurich, and Bern. And again the arguments raised in this miniscule affair took to high and general levels. One might suppose all civilization and all humanity to be involved. The Geneva troublemakers, said a Bern official, were "sectaries of J. J. Rousseau and other false philosophers of the day." There was a premonition of the Holy Alliance and the Protocol of Troppau when one of the Geneva Small Council, Micheli du Crest, writing to the French foreign office, and expatiating on "the atrocious and unprovoked horrors of sedition," urged collective intervention "in the cause of all legitimate governments and of all sovereigns." On the other hand, a Geneva democrat, a painter then in Paris named Bourrit, was able to get personally to Vergennes and use language like that of Vergennes' own protégés, the Americans. Bourrit, like the Americans, brought in various purely historical arguments, but also became more abstract: the sovereign at Geneva was the General Council, the Small Council was only the government—"if the government is abusive, and instead of being the guardian of the laws becomes their violator, the sovereign has the right to change it."⁵⁸

France, Zurich, and Bern intervened with troops. Vergennes, willing enough to sponsor democratic revolution in America or in Holland to undermine the British empire, saw no such advantage in Geneva at his very doors. French and Swiss soldiers besieged the city for three weeks. Patrols circulated inside; various Small Councillors were held as hostages; St. Peter's church, Calvin's own church, became a storehouse for gunpowder, and the banker, Etienne Clavière, a Burgher leader, mounted guard with a thousand or so others. Brissot was in the city, forming his ideas on revolution, and so was the future conservative Mallet du Pan, making observations of contrary tendency on the same subject. A proposal for reconciliation, urging the *Négatifs* to give up their *politique aristocratique*, was signed by 1,020 Burghers. Nothing came of it, and the troops forced their way into the city.

The guarantor powers, consulting with the *Négatifs*, drew up an Edict of Pacification. This was submitted to the General Council for its approval. Only half the authorized voters appeared, and of these 113 voted against it. One syndic, several patricians, and most of the Reformed clergy were in this number; that is, they supported the Burghers against restoration of the old system by foreign arms. The new statute, accepted by the General Council, 411 to 113, was soon denounced as the Black Code.

The Pacification, or *code noir*, undid the actions not only of 1782 but of 1768. The General Council lost the right of deliberation. Syndics were to be declared elected if they obtained one-quarter of the votes cast in the General Council. The "circles" were abolished and replaced by public cafés, and militia exercises were forbidden. Three hundred of the 460 Natives recently admitted to Burgher rights now lost them. Fifteen persons were banished for ten years. Others went into a technically voluntary exile. In addition, as if to add insult to injury, and with implications that readers of Chapter V will perceive, the restored patricians insisted against manifest opposition on building a theater. Even Mallet du Pan thought this unwise.

58 *Ibid.*, 52-53, 76, 80.

Aristocracy was resurgent at Geneva after 1782, but its enjoyments were to be brief, for there was more trouble in 1789, followed in 1794 by a terrible retribution, when Genevese Burghers put to the guillotine certain fellow townsmen who had brought in the French twelve years before.

Meanwhile Etienne Clavière lived in France (as other Genevese, Dutch, and Belgian refugees were to do), became allied with Brissot, joined his Gallo-American society, collaborated with him on a book on America, and plunged with him into the politics of the French Revolution, becoming French financial minister in 1792. Their friend of that time, Mme. Roland, was given new cause to lament the ordeals of virtue. "Virtue and liberty," she wrote in 1782, "have no more asylum except in a few honest hearts."⁵⁹ But the best way to conclude on the affairs of Geneva, as they stood on the eve of the great European struggle, is with the words of another Genevese exile, Francis d'Ivernois. In 1789 he published a book on the recent history of Geneva. From it one should learn, he said, that "whenever there exists in a State a numerous class rejected by the constitution, and which is conscious of this fact and complains of it, either this class must be made associates in the constitution, or the constitution will be in danger of being smothered by the very ardor with which the excluded class tries to embrace it."⁶⁰

Of the rest of Switzerland, or Switzerland proper, since Geneva did not belong to the confederation, there is nothing to report in the way of spectacular events in these years, and it would be necessary in any case, and prohibitively repetitious and lengthy, to follow the story canton by canton. Political ideas were taking shape here as elsewhere. The number and the circulation of periodicals increased, and reading and discussion clubs formed in various towns. Pestalozzi, the famous educational theorist, belonged to such a group of young men in Zurich, and as early as 1766 opposed the use of Zurich troops at Geneva, getting into a scrape for which he spent three days under house arrest. Isaac Iselin at Basel heralded the progress of civilization and Johannes von Miiller was moved to add six hundred new facts to his history.

The correspondence of Peter Ochs, recently published, allows us to see clearly into this fermentation of ideas.⁶¹ A member of one of the ruling families at Basel, whose great moment was to come in the revolution of 1798, Ochs came of age about 1770. Completely bilingual, writing in his younger days a once-famous history of Basel in German, and conducting all his correspondence in French, and with a sister who married an Alsatian, he had a wide acquaintance in the Swiss cantons, Germany, the Low Countries, and France. At the University of Basel, Iselin was one of his teachers, and another professor there was later tutor to the son of the Prince of Orange. He remained in contact with these men also.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶⁰ F. d'Ivernois, *Tableau historique et politique des dernières révolutions à Geneve* (London, 1789), I, viii-ix.

⁶¹ "Recently" for the slow-moving science of history. The Ochs correspondence was published as long ago as 1927-1937, but I know of no work in English that has made any use of it. G. Steiner, ed., *Korrespondenz des Peter Ochs*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1927-1937). On the very great importance of these documents see the review by Guggenbühl in *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Geschichte* (1936), 339-41. For political institutions at Basel and in Switzerland see Chapter II above.

Early in his life he came to share in the generous and humanitarian sentiments of his time. His doctoral dissertation at Basel, dated June 4, 1776, began with an introduction on the dignity and the rights of man, in the course of which he regretted that Negroes in the West Indies should wet the earth with their tears to give Europeans a better breakfast.⁶² With Iselin and his other friends he hailed the American Revolution for its promise of a new era.⁶³ It seems significant that, while we have his letters from 1770, it is not until the American Revolution that we find him taking any political attitudes, that is, thinking in terms of action to bring about expected change.

His political development was slow, and natural for a man in his position. He was no literary sentimentalist, no combative doctrinaire, and no rebel. Being what he was, he entered the governing council at Basel in his twenties, and was presently elected *Oberzunftmeister*, or Uppergildmaster, which amounted to a kind of associate mayor. He knew and said that Basel was a tight little aristocracy, with a sovereign council that chose its own membership from a narrow circle, "democratic" only in that commercial employments did not "derogate." Yet he did not propose to do anything about it. "I adore my wife and idolize my son, now four months old," he wrote to a friend in 1781; "I like my garden, my birds, my rabbits and my chickens far more than things that are so avidly striven for in the great capitals. All I ask is to go on with my present existence in peace until my son is grown up, and then die."⁶⁴

In 1785 he received a long letter from a man named Bonstetten, one of a dissatisfied group at Bern. They were trying at Bern, said Bonstetten, to build up a network of correspondents throughout Switzerland to exchange political ideas and factual information. For example, where at Bern in 1680 there had been 500 *regimentsfähigen* families, or families qualifying to hold office, there were in 1780 only 230; and of 200 men now in the Bern council 57 were childless and 90 had only one son. What were the facts in the other Swiss republics? Bonstetten said that they needed men of the standing of Ochs, "a man of position, rich, well regarded," to give them leadership and to attract coworkers. Remember, he concluded, that we are all Swiss.⁶⁵

Ochs replied with a sympathetic exchange of letters, which, however, soon died (temporarily) "for want of interesting events." He and some others organized a reading club at Basel. It had two rooms, one for reading and one for conversation, open every day from one to eight o'clock, with magazines, newspapers, maps, and pamphlets. In 1787 there were 75 subscribers, and the chief magistrates of the town and all the professors at the University belonged.⁶⁶

Basel adjoined Alsace, where Ochs' sister and brother-in-law lived, and he was excited by the French Revolution, by "representative democracy" (as distinguished from direct democracy and aristocracy), and by the "sublime" proclamation of the

62 *Korrespondenz*, I, 93 n. 2. "Hominis dignitas, jura eius, mediaque illa servandi, haec sunt obiecta, quibus meditandis pauca incumbunt."

63 See above, Chapter IX, p. 180.

64 *Korrespondenz*, I, 123-24.

65 *Ibid.*, 157-61, 167, 173.

66 *Ibid.*, 195.

rights of man. Here at Basel, he said, our basic statute starts out by talking about the office of burgomaster, and says nothing of any rights of citizens, peasants or men as such. His work in the Basel council began to disgust him. "Would you believe it? The secret council at Bern has begged our secret council to prohibit any newspaper from writing in favor of abolition of the tithe or legal proceedings without cost." As early as October 1789 he saw a chance of war between France and Europe, thought France would win, and revolution spread; but as a prudent Swiss he decided to reduce his French investments.⁶⁷

Ochs' brother-in-law, Jean Dietrich, was elected in 1790 to be the first mayor of Strasbourg under the new regime. A frequent visitor, Ochs was in Strasbourg in June 1790, and witnessed the *fête de la fédération* there, as William Wordsworth did at the same time at Calais. He even wrote a poem about it, which, if it fell short of Wordsworth's recollections in the *Prelude*, still expressed his opinions:

Que les temps ont changé! Qui l'eût jamais pu croire?
L'égalité civile ennoblit les Français . . .⁶⁸

The next year found him in Paris on the business of Basel, to collect the compensation money due for the loss to Basel citizens that followed abolition of tithes in Alsace. In Paris he saw the sequel to the episode of Varennes, and observed the growth of republicanism, which is to say the discrediting of the French King and Queen. Ordinary people speak of them without ceremony, he reported, "as Mr. and Mrs. Louis XVI."⁶⁹

His feelings mounted as the international crisis became more acute. With the approach of war he was back in Basel. "The revolutions of America, France, and Poland obviously belong in a chain of events that will regenerate the world."⁷⁰

The war came, and a few days later, at his sister's house in Strasbourg, a captain of engineers named Rouget de Lisle composed the Marseillaise. We were having some people in, she explained to her brother, and, as you know, it is always necessary to invent something to do; so we began to make up a song; it is like Gluck, only more lively; I myself arranged the parts for the various instruments, and "my husband, a good tenor, sang the passage that is so stirring and has a certain originality."⁷¹

Such, in brief, is the story of how a Swiss patrician, between 1776 and 1792, turned from the author of a Latin dissertation on human dignity into a collaborator with the Revolution in France.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FOREGOING

We have now surveyed the course of events, roughly between the American and the French Revolutions, in the Dutch Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland, and

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 212–20, 227, 244.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 239, 469.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 353.

in England and Ireland in the preceding chapter. I have tried to hold the story, so far, short of the time when the French Revolution could have had any determining influence, though with difficulty in the case of Belgium. The events traced, in each country, are events that had native causes and reflected internal conditions. What pattern or comparative generalizations do they make it possible to reach?

In each of the five countries just named there had been, by 1790, a substantial democratic movement, which among the Dutch and Belgians and at Geneva had reached the point of revolution, and which, according to various British writers, had amounted to "near" or "missed" revolution in England. The democratic movement had identified its opponent as "aristocracy." Aristocracy meant the rule of certain constituted bodies, which claimed sovereignty for themselves, were self-perpetuating in a limited number of families, and denied the right of outside persons, or excluded classes, to have any influence on their policies or their personnel. The democratic movement, in one way or another, whether through William Pitt, or the student Ondaatje, or the lawyer Vonck, or the banker Clavière, sought to broaden the basis of participation in political life, and to make the government accountable to some kind of a public. Actual proposals were moderate and even empirical: to reassign borough rights, and give a vote to long leaseholders in England and Ireland; to set up *geconstitueerden* at Utrecht, and a fourth chamber at Brussels; to grant burgher rights to third-generation Natives at Geneva. Historical arguments were as common as those postulating natural right. The most common historical idea—except in Ireland, where it could not be used—was the belief in a trend to hereditary monopolizing, generally since the sixteenth century, of public bodies which had been more fully representative in their medieval origins. If this idea was not wholly true, it lay closer to the pole of truth than to that of downright error.

No one demanded universal suffrage, except the Westminster Committee in England, and it appears that in all these countries the mass of the population, perhaps the bottom three-quarters of society, was politically apathetic, disinclined to change, and attached to their customary superiors. The "people" in the new doctrine did not mean everyone. It meant a political community outside the government and in some sense above it. It is here argued that the theory of the sovereignty of the people, in each country, as in the revolutionary American colonies, had arisen in the needs of an actual political situation, or in answer to the actual arguments of adversaries, more than from any special predilection for rationalistic philosophy. The democrats and the democratically oriented reformers were not "sectaries of J. J. Rousseau," though it is true that Rousseau, in the *Social Contract*, had laid the deepest moral foundation for a democratic theory of the state. The point is that, at this time, and for many reasons, men of various types and in numerous countries converged in their principles. In none of the countries here considered, however, had the idea of the sovereignty of the people led on, as it had in America, to the more truly revolutionary idea of the people as a constituent power, which the French were again to invoke in 1789. There was much talk, in Ireland, England, Holland, and Belgium, of associations, assemblies, congresses, and conventions. What was meant was a kind of public scrutiny or inspection of government, or more freedom to elect a few representatives to existing bodies. No one

expected to create a new system of government to supersede that of the past. No one supposed that government must be constructed and authorized by a single act, in a constitutional document written by a constituent convention deemed to speak with the authority of the people itself.

The democratic movement in each of these cases failed. The parliamentary classes in the two British islands prevented any broadening of the representation, and the Anglican interest in England prevented the equalization of political rights for Dissenters. Orange and aristocratic partisans in the United Provinces put down the Dutch democrats; by the same operation, the Dutch Reformed Church prevented the admission of Catholics and of minority Protestants to public affairs. In Belgium the estates party crushed the democrats before being itself overthrown by the Austrian restoration. At Geneva the patricians of the governing councils staged a triumphant counterrevolution. The general conception of an "aristocratic resurgence," which we shall soon apply to events in eastern Europe and France, can reasonably be applied to England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, and Geneva in the 1780's.

Whether it should also be applied to America is a question. Condorcet and others in France detected a kind of aristocratic resurgence in the American federal constitution of 1787. Strongly disapproving of this constitution, Condorcet wrote to Franklin in July 1788 (and Franklin may have agreed) that "an aristocratic spirit seeks to introduce itself among you."⁷² When the famous Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 came to an end in 1790 this belief was reinforced. Various American schools of historians have in effect agreed with Condorcet. My own view is that, while a new upper class was undoubtedly growing up in the United States, it was clearly more dynamic, more oriented to the future, more receptive to change, and less hostile to popular representation than the governing classes in Europe, even, or perhaps one should say especially, those in European republics. What I have said on the United States constitution, or the political ideas of John Adams, or the use by Belgian conservatives of the American Articles of Confederation, is enough to suggest doubt that what happened in America, with the adoption of the new constitution, reflected any aristocratic resurgence significantly comparable to that of Europe.⁷³ The Philadelphia convention, in the boldness of its actions and principles, outdistanced not only the European conservatives but even the European democrats, if by the latter one means Henry Flood, Alderman Sawbridge, Ondaatje, Vonck, or the Genevese Burghers, or even the French Constituent Assembly of 1789–1791, which of course could make no provision for an elected executive, and surrounded the popular choice of deputies with many intricate safeguards.

The aristocratic party, except in England, showed a strong tendency to depend on foreign aid. The Geneva patricians three times during the century, and for the last time in 1782, called on the guarantor powers, over democratic protest, to settle internal Genevese problems. In Holland the Orange party depended wholly on England and Prussia. The Dutch in 1787 even had their Flight to Varennes and

72 *Works of Benjamin Franklin* (N.Y., 1904), XI, 434–35.

73 See above, 171–74, 205–7, 265.

their Brunswick Manifesto. The Belgian Van der Noot, rather than stir up the Belgian people, worked for intervention by Holland, Prussia, and Britain. The Irish magnates, though often restless under government from Westminster, began to see their ultimate dependency on the British connection. Even in America the old aristocracy of the colonial era, the true conservatives that Americans have forgotten, those who ended up in the ranks of the Loyalist émigrés, depended on the British connection to sustain their position. But although aristocratic interests in America, Ireland, Holland, and Belgium showed this dependence on Britain, it would be unfair to single out Britain as unique in this regard. At Geneva the aristocracy willingly depended on France. Events were to show that some in Poland would rather bring in the Russians than accept a new constitution. It was perfectly rational for the French to believe, as early as July 1789—whether to hope or to fear—that a foreign intervention, at the urging of French nobles and émigrés, might be brought to bear against the Revolution.

On the other hand, even before 1789 or 1792, the leaders of democratization showed an affinity for France. It was to France that American insurgents and Dutch Patriots looked for help, from France that emerging Irish radicals expected encouragement, and in France that democratic refugees found a haven. France before 1789 was full of Dutch, Belgian, Swiss, Irish, and even English political expatriates. It was these men, as much as or more than the French themselves, who were to preach world revolution. No one doubts that the French monarchy patronized foreign revolutionaries more for political advantage than from ideological sympathy. The same is probably true of the French republic, even in 1792, despite all we have been told of world-salvationism in the psychology of the French Revolution.

The democratic movement failed everywhere, before 1789, except in America. Not merely did it not transform the world or introduce a heavenly city, which it hardly intended. Moderate though it was, or seems in retrospect, it failed to obtain any concessions at all. In Ireland the Test Act was repealed for Protestants, and at Geneva a hundred and fifty Natives remained Burghers after 1782. But in general it is true to say, and must be emphasized, that all the efforts of English and Irish parliamentary reformers, and of Dutch, Belgian, and Genevese democrats, had come to absolutely nothing. Indeed, matters were if anything worse, for the fear and the vindictiveness of threatened oligarchies had been aroused.

The democratic movement had failed for various reasons, in some places because the forces of the old order had successfully called upon foreign aid, and in all cases because the democratic interests, though important and enlightened, were a numerical minority in the community as a whole. They had no mass following. The "mass," outside London, Paris, or Amsterdam, really meant the rural population. Country people at lower income levels, in the countries now being considered, were politically unaroused or not much aware of having any serious grievances. So far as the ruling aristocracies drew their incomes from land, or their influence from the good will of their tenantry, they had little to fear from disaffected lawyers or impudent pamphleteers; the one thing that would undermine them was wholesale defection on their own estates. This did not happen until it happened in France in the summer of 1789.

If these events prove anything, it is perhaps that no purely middle-class or "bourgeois" revolution could succeed. Lawyers, bankers, merchants, shopkeepers, students, and professors could not alone unseat the holders of political power. They had done their best: they and their sons had armed and drilled; they had formed armed companies or national guards in Ireland, Holland, Belgium, and Geneva. They had gone down, in Holland and at Geneva, before a regular or foreign army. One reason was the lack of experience of the burgher class in military service and military command. In the latter the aristocracy still had all the advantages. The Dutch Patriots had called on a French army officer to take command against the Prussians—with unfortunate results. The Americans had learned a good deal from French and European professional officers. Another reason for the democratic failure, applying at least to Holland, Belgium, and Geneva, was that these countries had the misfortune to be small, and hence easy objects for intervention. The attempt of conservative Europe to intervene in France in 1792 was to have a very different outcome.

"The French Revolution," Albert Schweitzer once observed, "is a snowstorm falling on trees in blossom."⁷⁴ The eminent humanitarian echoed in these words a common idea, evoking the picture of a humane, tolerant, open-minded, moderate, increasingly liberal, and satisfactorily progressing Age of Enlightenment, unfortunately cut short by violent and sanguinary popular revolt. The corollary is that an inflexible conservatism appeared after, and in reaction to, the French Revolution. Readers of the preceding chapters, if they at all agree with the author, will find it hard to see the trees in blossom, and may be prepared to think, as the following chapters will to some extent show, that revolution was itself a reaction against an immovable conservatism already formed.

The two sides were taking shape before 1789. Aristocrats and democrats, known by these names, had already been at each other's throats. Revolutions had been attempted, and counterrevolutionary doctrine was already in the making. Democrats, though moderate in their actual proposals, did speak of the Majesty of the Nation and the Sovereignty of the People. They questioned the legitimacy of the Orders, and of church membership as a qualification for political rights. Such ideas did in fact undermine the constitutions of all European countries as they then existed. Conservatives were not mistaken in making this diagnosis. What they may more reasonably be blamed for is that they provided no means of lawful readjustment, insisted on the immutability of the existing arrangements, and failed to see what they later blamed radicals for failing to see, the wisdom or desirability of evolutionary change.

The artillery soon to be directed against the French Revolution had already been perfected in lesser engagements. The American Revolution was the work of "mechanics and country clowns"—it was a South Carolina Anglican clergyman who said so. America was "in a state of dreadful confusion," according to Burke in 1779. It suffered, said the American Galloway, from its own "Wickedness and Folly" under a regime that was "Tyrannical and oppressive." The authors of the Irish Reform Bill were "system mongers." Those of the English reform bill really wanted to

⁷⁴ *Philosophy of Civilization* (N.Y., 1949), 176.

destroy the English constitution, said Burke, whose whole conservative philosophy was mapped out in 1784. The Geneva Burghers of 1782 were the victims of "false philosophers of the age." "The cause of all legitimate governments" was at stake. Whether the American revolutionaries had employed "terror" is a question of what one chooses to mean by terror. The French revolutionaries used a kind of terror as early as 1789. But terror—meaning forced oaths, legal proceedings against political offenders, repression of the press and the right of assembly, imprisonment, banishment, exile—had been employed for more conservative purposes, in the little terror at Geneva at the end of 1782, the "rod of terror" that Harris advised for the Dutch in 1787, the very real terror against the Belgian democrats in 1790. The point is not to justify or impugn or recriminate, but only to make clear the division and the struggle, not wholly latent, that already existed at the end of what is called the Age of Enlightenment.

CHAPTER XII

THE LIMITATIONS OF ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM

Every subject should expect security and protection from his Sovereign, while the Prince is expected to determine and clearly delineate the rights of his subjects, to guide their actions in a way more consistent with the public and private good.

—EMPEROR JOSEPH II, 1786

The forces of aristocracy, which in some countries in the 1780's prevailed over democratic movements, prevailed in others over monarchy itself. This chapter takes up a thread left hanging at the close of Chapter IV. It was shown there that, by the middle 1770's, or just before the American Revolution, the Kings of France and of Sweden, and the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia (to which titles the Hapsburg monarchy owed most of its stature), had asserted royal authority and put the constituted bodies of their several realms under restraint. In France, Chancellor Maupeou abolished the old parlements, in Sweden the Freedom Era came to an end, in Hungary no central diet met after 1764, and in Bohemia none met after 1775. Victory at the moment went to enlightened despotism. Rulers forced through programs of reconstruction by suppressing institutions that had or claimed a representative character. Maupeou and Terray initiated important reforms in tax assessment and judicial organization, while Maria Theresa labored persistently at the alleviation of serfdom.

The following fifteen years made clear the limits beyond which enlightened despotism could not go. However held down, the constituted bodies—estates, diets, parlements, and the like—had strong powers of survival and resurgence. In France, a resistance to government begun by the two higher orders soon developed a more democratic phase. The result was the French Revolution. In Eastern Europe, though demands of a democratic character within the definitions used in this book were by no means wholly absent, the serf-owning aristocracy was the only really

important political class, and to this class royal governments had to make concessions. The result was a reaction against the Enlightenment, or a new understanding between throne and nobility, which was in general to last until the beginning of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe.

The present chapter deals mainly with the Hapsburg monarchy under Joseph II and Leopold II, with observations, since not everything can be told, on Prussia, Sweden, and Russia. No attempt is made to discuss enlightened despotism in Spain, Naples, or Denmark. After a chapter on the special case of Poland we shall turn to France, examine the conflict which developed there between a reforming monarchy and a resurgent aristocracy, and trace the beginnings of the French Revolution. Events in these countries will be followed to the eve of the war of 1792.¹

JOSEPH II: THE ATTEMPTED REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE

What happened at Pressburg in Hungary on April 13, 1784, or at least is reported to have happened, may serve as a parable on the reign of Joseph II. The Emperor had ordered the crown of St. Stephen removed to Vienna. Four officers of the Hungarian Noble Bodyguard arrived to escort the venerable object with appropriate honor and ceremony. When the climactic moment came, all four declared themselves ill, to avoid having to execute so horrifying a command. The keepers of the crown bolted the doors to the strong room and hid the key, so that a locksmith had to be brought to let the Emperor's agents in. A weeping throng surrounded the castle. As the crown was at last borne through the gates, a perfectly clear sky gave out three loud claps of thunder. They were an omen of punishment, people said, for this profanation of the religion and the freedom of Hungary.

The crown of St. Stephen, first worn by that king who had brought the rude Magyars into the Christian and Roman church, was the supreme emblem of Hungarian nationality and independence. It was regarded with profound awe; when it was safe, Hungary was thought to be safe. In its troubled history, it had once been held by the Turks. After 1945 it was for some years in the custody of the United States, to the great annoyance of Hungarian communists, not otherwise given to royalist imagery or historic forms of superstition. Joseph II, on taking it to Vienna, demonstrated his obstinacy, showed what he meant by centralization of the empire, and paraded his contempt for the national, constitutional, and religious sentiments that rose up against him. And he provoked the thunders in which his reign came to an end.

¹ The two following sections depend mainly on P. von Mitrofanov, *Joseph II: seine politische und kulturelle Tätigkeit, aus dem russischen übersetzt* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1910); F. Valsecchi, *L'assolutismo illuminato in Austria e in Lombardia*, 2 vols. (Bologna, 1931); R. J. Kerner, *Bohemia in the 18th Century: a Study in Political, Economic and Social History with Special Reference to the Reign of Leopold II, 1790-92* (N.Y., 1932); H. Marczali, *Hungary in the 18th Century* (Cambridge, Eng., 1910) (translated from the Hungarian); and on articles by two of my former students, Donald A. Limoli, "Pietro Verri: A Lombard Reformer under Enlightened Absolutism and the French Revolution," *Journal of Central European Affairs* XVIII (1958), 254-80, and Peter F. Sugar, "The Influence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution in 18th Century Hungary," *Ibid.*, XVII (1958), 331-55.

The name of Joseph II, “the revolutionary Emperor,” has become a byword for colossal failure. He was not inexperienced in affairs, having been coruler with his mother for fifteen years before her death; nor did he labor quite alone, for many devoted public servants, of all the Hapsburg nationalities, worked with him for the modernization of the empire. They were and are called Freemasons and Jansenists, but this is only to say that many believers in the Enlightenment joined Masonic lodges, and that “Jansenists” were Catholics who thought the church too wealthy, too much estranged from the true Christian religion, and too much dominated by Rome. Joseph disliked the French *philosophes* and the philosopher king, Frederick of Prussia, regarding them as smart-aleck *littérateurs*, but he was a philosopher himself in the sense then current, a philosopher in a position of power, the very type of the enlightened and educable prince to whom reformers looked to put through legislation that they wanted. He was also a democrat in a way, “a democrat from head to foot,” as his biographer puts it,² in the sense that he had no respect for the established aristocracy whatsoever. He even had religious feelings, along somewhat modern lines of social concern. A child’s parents give him only his body, he once said; his mind and soul he draws from God alone, and the development of this mind and soul depends on environment. A profound humanitarian, Joseph II believed that his various peoples could be helped by government action. He hated the past, the organized nobility, and the organized church as mere impediments in the way of reforms which without them would be easy.

He had the outlook of the true revolutionary, far more so than most of the democratic radicals so far considered in this book. He thought in terms of society as a whole: there was a right form of society, knowable to science or reason, and which the course of history was to bring about. The state—a just, strong, efficient, and modern state, operated by men who knew what was right—was the instrument to be used for social change. It would reorder society itself, emancipate the small man from dependence on the great, enrich, educate, enlighten, and elevate the people. To try to govern by agreement was a delusion, to seek acceptance of policies in advance was a waste of time, for most people did not know what they really wanted, and those who did wanted selfish ends. Joseph was a good deal like Robespierre, cold in personal relations yet with a genuine sympathy for what common people had to endure, inflexible in his principles, and distrustful and suspicious, easily ascribing the worst motives to those who opposed him. He saw no need to compromise with those whom he regarded as merely selfish, backward, or wrong-headed. And he saw no need to wait. He had waited long enough, he would say; and his views were indeed the product of experience as well as of temperament and enlightened philosophy. For fifteen years, as coruler, he had watched his mother’s tactics of compromise. She had said that she “got to know people” from the Hungarian diet of 1764, and Joseph, when he became sole ruler in 1780, at last free from his mother, had formed a low opinion of the uppermost classes of his empire.

A quick review of his decrees (most of them too short-lived to be called reforms) may begin with the struggle for the mind, which involved a contest with

2 Mitrofanov, 582.

the Catholic Church. Joseph in these actions was typical of the day, when the prestige of Rome was at a low ebb among Catholics, with Jansenism a significant force in France, Italy, and even Spain, and Febronianism favored by archbishops in Germany. Much of Joseph's program was in fact reminiscent of sixteenth-century Protestantism (as Catholic writers, more than Protestants, take pleasure in pointing out), a negative Protestantism, to be sure, without positive religious message, but full of the old objections to the Roman church. Candidates in theology were required to favor the religion of Jesus over "jeune scholastics."³ Latin gave way to popular languages in the liturgy. The use of music and incense was restricted, and pilgrimages were forbidden. Contemplative religious orders were abolished as merely idle, and some 700 monastic houses (almost two-thirds) were suppressed, over 80,000,000 florins' worth of church property being confiscated. The state took on the responsibility of poor relief and care of the sick. Magic, apostasy, and marriage with non-Christians disappeared as crimes from the penal code. Protestants were freely tolerated, and the rights of Jews, as to place of residence and taxation, were extended. Marriage was recognized as a civil contract, and the validity of contested marriages was put under jurisdiction of civil courts. Husbands were allowed to keep illegitimate children in the home even against the wife's disapproval. And, as if to anticipate the French Revolution in laughable detail, illegitimate children received the right to the legal proceedings which the French called *recherche de la paternité*.

Parish priests were required to put civil above canon law in giving burial to Protestants, atheists, and suicides. They were also instructed to preach good citizenship in their sermons, including the acceptance of military conscription. Regular clergy were forbidden to recognize religious superiors outside the empire. Bishops were obliged to take an oath to the Emperor, and to obtain approval from the civil authorities before issuing pastoral letters to their dioceses. Boundaries of dioceses were redrawn, to correspond with administrative divisions of the civil government. Bishops and parish clergy received salaries payable by the state. As a beginning of democratization of the hierarchy, Joseph appointed a non-noble to be bishop of Olmütz, over the unanimous objection of the cathedral chapter. The canons were afraid, according to one observer, that Joseph would find too many "mere energetic common men" willing to accept bishoprics at only 12,000 florins a year.⁴

Joseph maintained the censorship of the press, but he used it to silence clerical opposition, and to favor all kinds of spokesmen of Jansenism and the Enlightenment. Never since the days of Luther had there been such an inundation of anti-Catholic writings. Clerics were travestied on the stage. Training schools for Catholic clergy were set up under government auspices. The universities were opened to Protestants. Their role, for Joseph, was the preparation of enlightened government officials; their textbooks were controlled, with a view to instilling love of country and usefulness to society.

3 Valsecchi, I, 108. F. Maass, *Der Josephinismus*, in *Fontes rerum austriacarum*, vols. 71 and 72 (Vienna, 1951–1953), is a collection of documents on church affairs.

4 Mitrofanov, 684 n. 2.

The pope, dismayed, and fearing a complete schism, made a trip to Vienna. He obtained next to nothing from Joseph, and Prince Kaunitz greeted the Holy Father with no more than a civil handshake. The clergy itself, in the various Hapsburg dominions, with the exception of Belgium, offered little effective resistance. They had long been used to a certain subordination to the dynasty, and it was characteristic, in most Catholic countries before the French Revolution, for Catholic clergy to shy away from any exercise of authority on the part of Rome.

The Emperor also attacked the nobility, from a combination of humanitarian, military, and fiscal motives. In the elegant Vienna of Mozart, he subjected noblemen convicted of crimes to the same humiliating penalties that were inflicted on lesser people. He gave free rein to burghers in his civil service, and he put Jews in the army, and even made a few of them into nobles, as indeed his mother had done.

"Feudalism" was more a reality in Eastern than in Western Europe, for the ordinary country person was legally the subject of his lord rather than of the Emperor. "Subjection" or "hereditary subjection," *Untertänigkeit* or *Erbuntertänigkeit*, were the accepted legal terms for the relation of lord and peasant, the more extreme word for serfdom, *Leibeigenschaft* or "body property," being usually avoided. The agrarian regime bore a resemblance to the system in parts of America. The landowner, in return for granting precarious and often revocable tenures, might receive payments in cash or kind, but he might also, as on American plantations, receive uncompensated and compulsory labor from his "subjects." He adjudicated disputes with them in his own court, which was usually a sitting room in his own house; he exercised police powers over them, and decided which of the young men should be taken from agricultural labor and taught skilled trades and crafts. None of his people might leave except with the lord's permission; if they left, they could be legally apprehended as fugitives. Nor could they marry off the premises without the lord's consent. Free neither to move nor to change occupation, they remained a labor force that went with the land itself. The landed property or dominion carried with it a local government over the local inhabitants. Great landowners with many estates, such as the magnates in Hungary or the higher nobility in Bohemia, thus enjoyed little subordinate monarchies of their own.

Joseph's aim, in effect, in his agrarian program, though radical, was far from Utopian; it was to convert the peasantry of his empire to the status of the peasantry in France or Western Germany before the French Revolution. Or, at least, the condition of the most fortunate West European peasant was his model. The peasant was to be a direct subject of the crown, something of a "citizen," an economic enterpriser, a taxpayer, and a potential soldier in his own right. While still having a "lord," he would pay what he owed to this lord not in forced labor but in money; and he would enjoy secure tenure of a piece of land, a tenure which could be inherited, sold, or mortgaged, and which would give ownership of the crop, in such a way as to approach private property in the modern sense. There is no doubt that this was what many peasants in the Hapsburg empire wanted for themselves. When in 1786 an agrarian revolt broke out on the Moravian border against Prince Liechtenstein, the rebels announced that they wished to be the emperor's not the prince's subjects. And such a development filled the landed nobility with alarm.

"The peasant as a property-owner," declared one of the estate-assemblies, "will take an even more puffed up attitude toward his lord than he does already."⁵

Joseph II never abolished serfdom in the absolute and abrupt way in which slavery was later abolished in the United States. He proceeded by stages, though they were rapid; and he intended, to the end, that the lords should continue to draw substantial incomes from peasant labor. It is desirable to look closely at his agrarian program, for the better appraisal both of its revolutionary character and of the opposition that it aroused.

His first step was to abolish that personal dependency which reformers denounced as *Leibeigenschaft*. Maria Theresa had already abolished it on lands where she had sufficient control, that is, those that belonged to the crown. Joseph declared it abolished on lands of the church and aristocracy also. By decrees beginning in 1781 peasants gained the legal freedom to depart at will from landed estates, to take up new trades on the estates or elsewhere, and to marry without permission. The peasant was authorized to appeal from his lord's court to the emperor's district chief, though only after protest and notice given orally to the lord. This might be embarrassing to the peasant, who was required in many places to kiss hands and bow to the ground on approaching the lord or the lord's agents. Joseph tried for years to do away with this custom, in which he saw a badge of servility; doubtless to others it seemed the natural etiquette of interclass relations. The decrees, however, stated emphatically that the peasants, while now personally free, still owed, so long as they remained as agricultural workers on the estates, the same obedience and labor services as before; and they provided that recalcitrant workers might be chained, imprisoned on bread and water, or subjected to corporal punishment. Excessive punishment was forbidden; and the law prohibited certain new machines invented to facilitate the administration of floggings.

It became apparent to Joseph and his advisers that the peasant would never become an independent producer, or reliable taxpayer, so long as the lord had control of his time through exaction of labor services. Maria Theresa had attempted to limit these labor services, or robot, to three days a week. Joseph in 1783 made provision for optional conversion of robot to money payments by agreement of lord and peasant in individual cases; but since the lords preferred to keep control of their labor force very few such agreements were made. The problem of forced labor became part of the problem of the great estates or latifundia, and so part of the problem of taxation.

The great noble estates, though not tax-exempt, were seldom appraised for tax purposes in correspondence to their real income. We have seen how in England land was valued for tax purposes at its valuation in 1692, and how in France repeated attempts were made to obtain realistic assessments. The problem was universal, and it was one of Joseph's main objectives to draw up a modern cadaster, or official register of true land values. He hoped thus to equalize the tax burden both among social classes and among regions of the empire. It was Joseph's belief, as it was that of Turgot and the French economists, that a direct tax on land, in proportion to income, might replace a complex array of indirect taxes that interfered with

5 *Ibid.*, 600, 649.

economic development. Such a tax, he observed in 1783, with “no difference between the possessions of men, to whatever estate or order they might belong,” with no difference “between the property of noble and peasant, or of state and church,” would allow all internal tolls and tariffs to be abolished, “and a free trade among twenty million people to emerge.”⁶ To enlarge the source of such a land tax, as well as to give incentive for production, Joseph offered crown lands and lands confiscated from the church for sale to private owners, though with some difficulty because of the lack of private capital in his dominions. The new civil code, published in 1786, also favored the multiplication of individual properties, by prescribing equal division of inheritance in place of primogeniture, and restricting entails.

Several years passed in the preparation of the new cadaster. Valuations were based on actual income for the previous ten years. Owners had to make declarations of income, and surveyors, appraisers, and agricultural experts went to work. The result was the decree of February 10, 1789, in many ways the climax and turning point of Joseph’s reign.

The decree again announced the principle of taxation in proportion to income from land regardless of social order. All landowners, in all provinces, were to pay twelve per cent of annual revenue, except that in Galicia they would for a time pay only eight per cent. Under the new system Bohemia, Austria, Styria, and Carinthia would pay less than in the past; Hungary, Moravia, Silesia, Gorizia, Carniola, and Galicia would pay more. (Belgium and Lombardy were not included.) The same decree, explaining that the state desired the peasant to be a property-owner, and able to pay his taxes, set forth a solution to the problem of forced labor. “The subject,” announced the decree, meaning the peasant who was to have a secure and hereditary tenure of land, “shall retain 70 gulden in a hundred of his gross income for his own needs, and only the remaining 30 shall be used for payments due to the nobleman and to the state.”⁷ Optional conversion of forced labor into money payments having led nowhere, conversion was now required. The law was not, however, inflexible. Money was rare in the villages, and peasants and lords were allowed, if they wished, by agreements in each case, to convert the money payments into payments in kind; but no such agreement could run for over three years (that is, they must not become perpetual); and all such agreements must be approved by the Emperor’s district chief. In any case, the peasant, while free from forced labor, still owed payments to his lord as well as to the state. And in any case the lord, whether he received money or produce, would lose the forced labor. The government was to send special lawyers into the villages to counsel the peasants and assist them with legal papers. It may be surmised that their arrival was not anticipated by the gentry with much satisfaction.

The difficulty in Joseph’s position was that it expressed no general or public demand, no groups of interested parties with formulated ideas and habits of working together. There was no one to whom he could appeal. His important followers were his own bureaucrats and officials. In the Hapsburg empire—the empire proper, without Belgium and Lombardy—property, position, education, breadth of

6 *Ibid.*, 418.

7 *Ibid.*, 617.

awareness, and attention to public affairs were in large measure to be found, outside the government, only among the nobility. Significant middle-class people were those who worked for the state. State and nobility were the two big political forces, the church being successfully subdued. Only between the state and the nobility could there be a resounding quarrel. And the state represented only itself, drawing on no strength but its own. There was no large economically rooted middle class, pursuing affairs of importance and enjoying a certain independence. In the Hapsburg empire the extreme case was offered by Hungary, where the aggregate population of all towns was about equal to the number of the nobility—and not over a tenth of townsmen could be thought of as bourgeoisie. Nor was there sustained action toward realizable goals. There were numerous agrarian rebellions, and these might be useful to the government as an embarrassment to the nobles; but no one could manage or direct them; and they might easily turn against the government itself. The peasants were neither lawyers nor politicians, and understood nothing of needs other than their own. Freed to move, they objected to the labor services that remained. Freed of the labor services, they objected to the money payments that replaced them. Insurrections broke out after the decree of February 1789, especially as it became clear that landlords would resist its enforcement. Peasants refused to work, refused to pay, plundered manor houses, and committed atrocities against the landlords—as in France in the same year, and, at least locally, with even more violence. There was no upper stratum of the Third Estate, as in France, to make common cause for the time being with the rural masses. On the contrary, the peasant violence, by threatening actual anarchy, gave new arguments to the landlords, who could say with some truth, though hardly as the whole truth, that Joseph II had brought the country to ruin.

The only organized centers of opinion or action, outside the government, were the estate-assemblies or diets. These, it will be recalled, were conventions of landlords: Prague was the only city represented in the diet of Bohemia, all Hungarian cities had one vote in the diet of Hungary, thirty-one towns had one vote in the diet of Styria. It was the precise opposite of burgher Holland, where there was one vote for all nobles, and one for each city. The fact that the towns of Bohemia and Hungary were so largely German, even Budapest in the eighteenth century still being a German cultural colony, kept them apart from the surrounding life, separated the classes, and inhibited the growth of effective public opinion.

Joseph, who if not a mere doctrinaire was certainly a revolutionary, simply did not believe that the diets had any just or really legitimate powers. He regarded them merely as vested and special interests, and his propagandists kept repeating that the vaunted Hungarian constitution existed for only 300,000 persons. He saw nothing wrong if the Hungarian and other diets never met. And when the Hungarian county assemblies, in which the political strength of the country lay even more than in the diet, protested against conscription, against the cadaster, against peasant emancipation, and against almost everything else, he tried to suppress these assemblies also.

He could therefore put through his program only by "despotism," that is, by perfecting and enlarging his corps of administrators, inspectors, experts, and officials. They were indeed numerous, and were generally the most enlightened class in

the empire; but they were not numerous enough, nor did they enjoy popular acceptance. There was a general repugnance toward men sent out from the capital. "It is inconceivable," said the estates of Lower Austria, "how such important matters [as agrarian reform] could be taken from the gentry [the *Adelsherren*] and turned over to a district chief who does not understand the local situation."

Many of the officials were nobles, if only because there were not enough university graduates or other trained persons from the middle class for the purpose. Nobly born officials often disapproved or sabotaged the imperial orders. In Hungary they resigned in droves. Joseph tried exchange of officials throughout the empire, sending Germans to Hungary, or Hungarians to Bohemia, or the Italian Martini to Belgium. He also created a political police, to watch over opposition and make confidential reports on the work of officials. Indeed, police work of this kind, in its modern form, seems to have begun with Joseph's attempted revolution. The word "police," at this time, it may be said, still retaining connotations of "polish," referred to the promotion of civil order in the sense of civilization itself.

Joseph also decided that, outside Belgium and Lombardy, there should be only one language for official business, and that this should be German. Educated Czechs already used German, and the Magyars used not Magyar but Latin as their political language, so that the decision to employ German was less of an outrage than later nationalist writers have sometimes made it seem; but as a sign of unwanted centralization, with connotations of German superiority, it aroused a good deal of opposition, and in fact the Czech and Magyar renaissances of the following generation were part of the reaction against Joseph II.

Lombardy was affected by Joseph's reign only in certain ways. There was no nobility with seigneurial powers, and no serfdom, so that the most fundamental difficulties did not arise. The Italians took their Catholicism more lightly than the Belgians, with ecclesiastics less potent and Jansenists more numerous than in Brabant; so that the Emperor's church policies caused no excessive consternation. Nevertheless, the reign of Joseph followed the same pattern in Lombardy as elsewhere. Attempts at reform in taxation, fiscal and economic matters, and legal and judicial organization ran up against the usual resistance, in this case that of urban magistracies and patriciates. It has been observed in Chapter IV, for example, that although Beccaria had written in Milan a famous book against torture, and the city was full of liberal thinkers, and although Maria Theresa had ended judicial torture in her German-Bohemian states, torture could not be ended in Milan because the Milanese magistrates believed it necessary to public security.⁸ Joseph, here as elsewhere, ended up by crushing the local constituted bodies. He began to replace them with new courts and a new and more modern administrative system, manned by his own appointees and taking instructions from Vienna. His revolution reached its high point, in Lombardy, with the suppression, in 1786, of the Council of Sixty and of the Senate, the chief indigenous bodies of the city and the duchy respectively.

The reign of Joseph II thus presented for the whole empire the same dilemma as in Belgium: reform with despotism, or constitutional liberty with firm resistance to

8 Above, p. 79.

innovation. On the one hand there was the crown, with a program of centralization, looking toward a kind of equal though entirely passive citizenship for all persons as individuals. On the other hand were the historic and constituted bodies, committed to a society of stratified orders, to local autonomy, regional liberties, states rights, or estates rights in which local and class privileges were inseparable. The dilemma, abstractly considered, was not peculiar to the Hapsburg empire. Something like it had occurred in America in 1774, when the British government, in the interests of equalization within the empire, had annulled the charter of Massachusetts. Something like it occurred in France in 1788, when Brienne suppressed the Parlement of Paris. The dilemma as between despotism and purely historic liberty was broken in France and America by revolution. Neither horn was accepted. The subjects of the Hapsburg empire were tossed from one horn to the other.

LEOPOLD II: THE ARISTOCRATIC COUNTERATTACK

Joseph II died in February 1790, before his forty-ninth birthday. During his last illness the empire was in an uproar. Belgium had asserted its independence, and there were revolutionary manifestations in Hungary, where some of the leaders solicited foreign intervention, in this case Prussian, in support of independence, as Van der Noot was doing in Belgium. By the time of Joseph's death there was also general excitement over the French Revolution, from which various classes drew contradictory inspiration. To some, the French Revolution, as seen in 1790, meant above all the assembly of the Estates General and the ending of royal despotism after almost two hundred years. This view could fire the enthusiasm of men interested in the Hungarian and Bohemian diets, for whom other aspects of the French Revolution were excesses. Burghers and peasants saw French events in a different light. The former, few as they were, began to talk of the *droits de l'homme* in the various languages of the empire. The peasants were in enough touch with the world to hear of French peasant rebellions and of the abolition of feudalism. The news from France, however, only inflamed a situation already agitated by internal causes. It was their emancipation by Joseph II, not an imaginary future emancipation by French example, that the peasants of the Hapsburg empire fought to preserve. And it was the control over their peasants, and other political liberties, of which Joseph II had deprived them, that the upper classes wished to regain.

Leopold, on succeeding Joseph, did not differ much from him in the substance of his ideas. His private opinion of nobility and clergy, and his hopes for a modernized Hapsburg empire, were much the same. Where Joseph, however, was willing to rely on himself and his own subordinates, and had only contempt for opposition, Leopold preferred to enlist support as widely as possible, if only, as Valsecchi has said, to divide up the responsibility. Leopold was something of a constitutionalist. I have already quoted the letter he wrote to Marie Christine at his accession, called forth by the revolution in Belgium, but expressing his actual principles, and applying to the disturbed condition of the whole empire as he found it. Here he stated, somewhat *en philosophe*, his idea of the social contract:

that the sovereign drew authority from his people or peoples, that he had only such rightful powers as they had agreed to assign him, and that if he exceeded these powers they were absolved from obedience. Such ideas might seem subversive to the advisers of kings, but they were by no means novel; neither Locke nor Montesquieu had exactly invented them, for they came out of the Middle Ages and out of traditions of elective monarchy which still had vitality in eastern Europe. They were the common stock of political argument from the Transylvanian Alps to the Pennsylvanian Alleghenies.

Leopold, before becoming emperor, had been Grand Duke of Tuscany for twenty-five years, and had there carried out a remarkable series of reforms, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, in taxes, tariffs, land valuations, the gild regime, town government, and church affairs. He had even worked out a project for a Tuscan constitution, to which a certain interest attaches in the context of the present book.

During the American war Leopold received a visit from the Tuscan-born Philip Mazzei, who hoped to borrow money from him for the State of Virginia. They naturally discussed American issues, and the newspapers at Florence, as elsewhere, gave attention to the American rebellion and the American constitutions. Leopold worked on his constitutional project from 1779 to 1782, during which it is clear, from the use of certain phrases, that he had the constitution of Virginia on his desk. The idea of proclaiming a constitution was probably suggested to him by events in America, but he drew its content from the European Enlightenment as a whole, and from his immediate practical needs in the politics of the grand duchy. What he needed was support against the nobility and the church, and he provided, therefore, for a representative assembly to be elected by taxpayers as taxpayers, not by members of the existing status groups. He hoped thereby to awaken the propertied middle class to political life as his own allies, and believed that his government, and in principle any government, would be the stronger if it rested explicitly on public approval and a measure of public participation. It was not that he expected his own authority to be reduced; on the contrary he expected it to be greater, for the assembly was to be consultative only, to learn what the ruler intended, and supply him with information: the first servant of the state, as enlightened princes now called themselves, would lead an interested people against "feudalism" and "clerocracy." Leopold's project never went into effect, because his own Italian advisers advised against it, insisting, probably rightly in 1782, that the people were not as interested as Leopold thought, and that if anyone was to clash with feudalism and clerocracy they much preferred that the Grand Duke do it himself.⁹

At any rate, when Leopold II in 1790 became Archduke of Austria and King of Hungary and Bohemia he probably thought that Virginia had a better constitution than any of his own numerous domains. On the other hand, he did not believe it possible, as Joseph did, to govern in outright defiance of all constituted bodies in the empire. He began to pacify his irate subjects by promising them their old con-

9 C. Francovich, "La rivoluzione americana e il progetto di costituzione de granduca Pietro Leopoldo," in *Atti del XXXII Congresso di storia del Risorgimento italiano* (Rome, 1954), 201-7; F. Valsecchi, *Le riforme dell' assolutismo illuminato negli stati italiani, 1748-1789* (Milan, 1955), 217-22. Valsecchi discusses the constitutional project without reference to American influence.

stitutional liberties. He offered reconciliation to the estates of Belgium. He invited the Milanese to inform him of their desires. And on May 1, 1790, during his journey from Florence to Vienna, he summoned the estates of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, and the Tyrol, each to meet in its usual provincial capital, and to bring in each case, according to the ancient custom, its lists of gravamina, complaints, grievances, and proposals, as the French Estates General had brought their *cahiers de doléances* to Versailles a year before. He prepared himself to hear from the diets of Hungary and of Transylvania, to whose meeting Joseph had been forced to consent shortly before his death. He made peace with Turkey, and reached enough of an agreement with Prussia to restrain the Hungarians.

The year 1790 may therefore be thought of as a time of active parliamentary life throughout much of the Western world. Not only was the French National Assembly busily at work, and of course the Parliament of Great Britain (as we have seen in discussing the Test Act), but the Congress of the United Belgian States was enjoying its brief year of life, the First Congress of the United States of America was assembled, and the great Four Years' Diet was sitting in Poland. And in every part of the miscellaneous Hapsburg empire indignant deputies were convening to uphold their rights.

What rights did these deputies wish to uphold? This question is fundamental to an understanding of the European counterrevolution of the 1790's. It is also readily answerable, for the *cahiers de doléances* of the Hapsburg empire, though very unlike those of France in 1789, were equally explicit.

All the diets made broad statements of constitutional principle. A constitution, declared the Estates of Bohemia, was "a treaty or agreement between the sovereign and the nation which . . . must bind both parties equally." There must be an "indestructible constitution," with government by "consent" and security for "the persons and property of inhabitants of the kingdom."¹⁰ The Bohemian diet drew on Montesquieu's doctrine of intermediate powers: "There can be no simple abstract idea of the State as consisting only of the monarch and a single class of subjects. . . . Between the two there must be unrestricted intermediate orders, each of whose individual members governs a portion of the people. In the kingdom of Bohemia these are the estate-owners, who, through their influence over their dependents, form a vigorous instrument of the Ruler's executive power."¹¹ In short, each seigneur should govern his own peasants. Above the local level, the estates interpreted the separation of powers to mean that the diet possessed legislative powers; the ruler, executive.

Hungary, which had retained far more of its autonomy than Bohemia, was even more constitutionally minded. The Hungarians were fond of comparing themselves to England in the matter of parliamentary liberties; a hundred copies of Delolme's *Constitution of England* were sold in one day on October 14, 1791. The Hungarians insisted that their diet or parliament was the legislature, the King the executive. They claimed, however, more than Delolme would have ever conceded,

10 Kerner, *Bohemia*, 130-32.

11 Mitrofanov, 628.

namely, the right to make a new contract with each King at the time of his coronation. Since Joseph II had refused to be properly crowned as King of Hungary, and had even removed the crown physically from the kingdom, the Hungarians took the position that they owed him no allegiance. Coronation, announced the county assembly of Bihar, was no empty or superstitious ceremony, but the sign "that the Nation confers power on the King it crowns," and that "he can become King only by our consent and by the force of the laws." Or as the county of Pest affirmed, in the language of the day: "By the social contract which creates the state, sovereignty lies in the hands of the people; Mother Nature has written this maxim in all hearts, and no right minded Ruler could bring it into doubt."¹²

Even the Tyrol said it should crown its ruler in return for a confirmation of liberties, and little Upper Austria insisted on the distinctiveness of its own constitution and privileges.

Leopold was not personally inclined to doubt the social contract in principle. He retorted, to justify absolutism in the empire, and echoing his late brother, that none of the diets really represented its "nation." In Bohemia, with almost 3,000,000 people (excluding Moravia), there were only 174 noble family names, most of them not even Czech, but a medley of O'Kelleys, Desfours, Schwarzenbergs, Trautmannsdorfs, Vrtnas, and Haugwitzes, deposited in that country by the Hapsburgs after the revolt of 1618. Only these nobles, with a few clergy, sat in the diet, the peasants and cities (except Prague) having no representation of their own. The Magyar nobility was more numerous, running from great magnates to small county gentry. If, as said, there were 300,000 of them, in a country of 7,000,000 (without Transylvania), they constituted over 4 per cent of the population. In this case they were over twice as numerous proportionately as the French *noblesse*, and more numerous than the more genteel classes in England.¹³ They were still, as Leopold said, hardly identical with the nation. Nor were the Magyars as a whole identical with Hungary. One of the worst features of the peasant revolts of 1789 was the ethnic hatreds they revealed. When the Vlach peasants rebelled in Transylvania they spared Rumanian or German landlords but turned ferociously against those who were Magyars.

In Belgium, when the estates revolted against the Emperor, a recognizably democratic party soon took form, which wished an enlargement of representation in the estates as well as mere liberation of existing estates from the central power. We have seen the rise of these Belgian democrats, and their annihilation by the estates party. It has been explained, also, how Leopold and his advisers in Belgium, though sympathetic in a way to the democrats, were unwilling to give them any support, partly from an alarm caused by the French Revolution. Something of the same development was evident, though less marked, in the other Hapsburg lands.

¹² *Ibid.*, 300-1.

¹³ Kerner, *Bohemia*, 70-71; Marczali, *Hungary*, 104, 164. The highest estimate for the French nobility is 400,000 in a population of 25,000,000. Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on Indigence* (London, 1806), in his careful tabulation of social strata, put 314,000 people in the classes down through "gentlemen and ladies," higher civil servants, the law and "eminent clergymen," but excluding all merchants, out of a total estimated English population of 9,344,000. It may be that relatively more had a role in political life in Hungary than in England.

At Milan, for example, Leopold restored the Senate and the Council of Sixty which Joseph had abolished. These were exclusive bodies of oligarchic patricians. Reformists at Milan, men like P. Verri, Melzi d'Eril, and F. Visconti, men who for years had favored the Austrian absolutism as the means of carrying through reforms, and who had turned against it only in 1786 when Joseph destroyed Milan's ancient political bodies, now favored the restoration of the Senate and Council which they had long criticized as obstructions to progress. These liberals had turned from absolutists to constitutionalists after 1786. They did not stand fast, however, merely on the existing constitution. They wished the magistracies of the city and duchy to be somewhat broadened and opened up. Verri, when Leopold solicited Milanese opinion in 1790, asked for a fixed constitution, with inviolable laws and security of property, but he also went further by asking for some sort of elected representative body. He and his friends called for more freedom of discussion for the Council within itself, with full participation by all sixty of its statutory members, not merely by the inner coterie. The dominant patricians refused all such demands. Leopold took their side, choosing to work with men who had actual power rather than those who had mere ideas. The Lombard liberals, disillusioned with the Austrian absolutism in 1786, and with their own aristocracy in the years that followed, looked with increased sympathy on the French Revolution, and collaborated with Bonaparte on his arrival in 1796.

In the empire proper the towns had long since been reduced to political nullities, and little was to be feared from the urban middle class. The estates, being so largely agrarian, objected that individual burgher non-nobles had sometimes risen to high office under Joseph. The Bohemian diet asked for an end to this practice, "since a whole series of occupations is open to burghers, whereas nobles can look forward only to a few civil and military employments, which in justice should therefore be reserved to them."¹⁴ When it seemed that Leopold, to please the Hungarian diet, might restrict public office to nobles, he drew sporadic protests from lesser Magyars, some of whom reasoned suspiciously like the Abbé Sieyès: "Nature itself has made men equal. It is surely nothing to reproach us with, if we think ourselves a necessary estate in the country. We are workers who supply all necessities; craftsmen who furnish comforts; merchants and manufacturers who bring foreign products into the land; teachers and writers who form hearts and minds; in a word, we are the estate that teaches, protects, and supports—*der lehrt, wehrt und ernährt*."¹⁵

Even the peasants made efforts to obtain political recognition. Indeed it was only from the peasants that the estates had much to fear. In Bohemia, early in 1792, by some concerted action that seems not well understood, peasants in many districts took it into their heads to send uninvited delegates to the diet, and a good many actually started for Prague. The police and army, alerted throughout the country, turned back or arrested various rustics on the roads. Self-styled deputies

14 E. Denis, *La Bohême depuis la Montagne Blanche*, 619.

15 Mitrofanov, 660. Compare the sarcastic Latin of an *Oratio pro Leopoldo II* at the time of the diet of 1790: "Populus in hac sanctione sunt praelati, barones, magnates et nobiles; exiguus hic hominum numerus superbia . . . inflata sese super humanitatem extollit." *Ibid.*, n. 2.

from two districts actually reached the city, where of course they could accomplish nothing.

In Transylvania, the eastern part of the kingdom of Hungary, the same basic problem presented itself with national complications. The Transylvanians did not attend the Hungarian diet; their estates met at Klausenburg, or Cluj. The Transylvanian constitution put heavy emphasis on Protestant liberties and on the rights of the three Transylvanian "nations"—the Magyars, the Székelys, who were like Magyars, and the Germans, who were called Saxons. The mass of the population, however, and hence of the agricultural workers, was of a kind of Rumanian then called Vlach. With the help of two bishops they submitted a petition called the *Suppler Libellus Valachorum*, requesting equality with the three dominant Transylvanian nations, and hence representation in the diet. Leopold referred the petition to the diet itself, where it caused a sensation, of which the outcome could be predicted. The diet concluded that, though a few Vlachs were nobles, they were generally not a landowning class and so had no basis on which to claim political rights, and that they were in any case too crude and uneducated to be given a share in public business. No more was heard of the Vlach petition.¹⁶

It was Hungary, of all Hapsburg lands except Belgium, that came closest to revolution in 1789 and 1790. In their counties and in the two houses of their parliament the Hungarians were used to a good deal of political action. County assemblies formed committees of correspondence, and extorted the summoning of the estates from the dying Joseph, with much exclamation over the French Revolution, and much talk of the Belgian Revolution as an uprising of fellow Hapsburg subjects; nor was the "convention of Philadelphia" overlooked in the search for analogies. The meeting of the diet at Pest instead of Pressburg was itself a revolutionary departure. Spectators, including women, were admitted to the galleries, and people wore cockades to demonstrate their zeal.

It had long been the custom, at the accession of each King, to issue an agreement between the King and the diet, called a Diploma, usually adapted from the Diplomas of preceding reigns. Now, however, the radical group in the diet maintained that an entirely new social contract was necessary before Leopold could reign. They held that, since Joseph had never been crowned, no monarchy really existed in Hungary at all, and that Hungary was at the moment in a state of natural liberty, free to contrive an entirely new Diploma in which new and different institutions of government should be set up. The Hungarians thus acted out both their own constitutional principles and the little stage play of European political theorists, by which man in a state of nature sat down to bargain with his future ruler.

Meanwhile, offstage, quite apart from parliamentary life, the peasant insurrection raged, the worst in Hungary since 1514. Though the first disturbances were among the Rumanian peasants to the east, they soon spread to the Magyar-speaking peasants of the central plain. Class barriers were greater than language

16 See N. Iorga, *Études roumaines: Idées et formes littéraires françaises dans le Sud-est de l'Europe* (Paris, 1924), 57; E. Pascu, "Mémoires et protestations des Roumains de Transylvanie et de Hongrie de 1791 à 1892," in *Revue de Transylvanie* (1939), 330–36; H. Marczali, *Magyarország Története III Károlytól a bécsi Congressusig* (History of Hungary from Charles III to the Congress of Vienna) (Budapest, 1898), 541 ff., for knowledge of whose contents I am indebted to Mr. Peter F. Sugar.

barriers, and class sympathies stronger than national sympathies, among the lower classes as among the upper. The Magyar peasant looked across an unbridgeable gulf to the Magyar noble who spoke the same language, particularly detesting the numerous lesser nobles, landless or nearly landless, who lived from the work of two or three serfs or from the income of some county office. Only in the sense ascribed to Joseph II were these peasants "democratic": they disliked the nobility, they had no faith or interest in diets or parliaments, and they willingly accepted government absolutism as favorable to themselves. In fact, the lawyers stationed in the villages by Joseph II to befriend the rural population now helped to give expression to the unrest. A Decretum of the Peasants, of unknown authorship, was distributed through several counties of central Hungary in May 1790. Since it well reveals the violent tenor of life in this land of servile labor, and has not, I think, been hitherto published in English—the whole agrarian radicalism of Eastern Europe that coincided in time with the French Revolution having probably been underestimated further west—it is worth extended quotation.

The Decretum began by complaining that peasants were yoked by the landlords like oxen, "six days out of the week." (Six days of robot was contrary to the laws of Maria Theresa.) The lords, it was said,

want to consider our blood like that of dogs and pigs so as to mistreat, beat and kill us as they please. They say they have bought us out of their pockets, like pigs, and can therefore kill us as pigs. They want to force the king to yield them this power over us. . . .

Are we pigs? Do we not have human blood, too? . . . Are the armies that faithfully serve the king not composed of our sons? . . . Do we not deserve for all this that each of us should own a small piece of the country's soil?

Let us advance . . . raise up our sticks, pitchforks and axes against the cruel, parasitic, time stealing, country ruining, king robbing lords.

There followed seven numbered demands, of which the first was that no comma be changed in Joseph's edicts—"holy, useful and just as if God had dictated them." Male servants should abandon their lords within one week; otherwise the lord's household would be murdered. Should a village stand by its lord, even the peasant children would be killed. County officers should go away; those who stayed would be hung up by the legs and have their flesh torn with pincers. Taxes should be paid to the King alone. "We elect as king the man against whom they have rebelled because of Joseph's justice . . . the brother of our dear Joseph, Peter Leopold II." A wooden column should be built in each village in honor of Joseph, until a stone one could be provided.

Why should we have a diet? We need none, since we have a king. If there is nevertheless to be one we had better be informed; otherwise we will arrange for a diet the like of which was never seen.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, with thanks again to Mr. Sugar for translation of the Decretum. On the Hungarian diet of 1790–1791 there is a two-volume work by Marczali which I have not been able to use: *Az 1790–91-es Országgyűlés* (Budapest, 1907).

The spirit shown in this document and in others, more the spirit of a Mau Mau rebellion than of the French peasant revolts of 1789, naturally spread terror in Hungary. Where in France, in August 1789, the Assembly pacified the peasants, and avoided appeal to the army, by enacting the August decrees for the "abolition of feudalism," no such concessions, or any concessions, came from the diet at Budapest in 1790. Given the composition of the diet, concession to dangerously enraged serfs was scarcely possible. At war with its own people, the diet was in a weak position against the king. An army of peasant soldiers would be poor defenders of the famous Hungarian constitution. Class struggle made impossible any successful revolution in Hungary.

The internal or purely parliamentary politics of the diet, though significant, was therefore somewhat unrealistic. Since the nobles were numerous and divided, the small gentry being opposed to the magnates, and since the towns sent deputies who could speak, though restricted in voting, and since Hungarians were by no means unacquainted with ideas of the European Enlightenment, two parties or groupings formed in the preparation of the new Diploma to be presented to Leopold before his coronation. One group wanted things as they always had been. Another, accused of susceptibility to French ideas, wanted diets in the future to meet in a single house only, the King to have only a suspensive veto for three diets, a civic oath by all persons including clergy to uphold the constitution, a national army, and a national guard. These ideas were in fact inspired by the example of France, as were some of the arguments. It was to have "one country, one law, one public good" that an upper chamber of higher nobles and prelates was to be abolished. The contrary argument was ancient long before the French Revolution: that "without a nobility we shall all be brothers and Quakers."¹⁸

Then on August 15, 1790, Budapest learned that Leopold was moving eleven regiments of Austrian soldiers into Hungary. His aim was to impress the diet and to quell the peasants. It was one of the steps (followed by the sending of troops to Belgium the next December) by which he restored his authority in his shattered empire. On the news of the troop movement, the two factions in the diet came to a speedy compromise. They submitted a Diploma to Leopold, which he refused to accept. He offered, and they accepted, the Diploma which Maria Theresa had negotiated in 1740, favorable to the Hungarian political classes and abrogating most of Joseph's edicts, but with a few modifications, as will be seen, in favor of the peasants.

The peasant problem, the problem of serfdom, of the relation between the lord and his labor in the remotest villages, or, conversely, the relation of government with its subjects, was the fundamental issue underlying constitutional and political argument throughout the empire. The diets advanced an array of reasons for the necessity of forced labor and personal subjection. Their view of the qualities of European white men five or six generations ago will remind Americans of views heard nearer home in other connections. The picture they drew was probably not wholly mistaken, given the unfortunate history of the East European peasantry for three centuries before 1790; but they did not propose anything that would improve it.

¹⁸ From a seminar paper prepared by Mr. Sugar.

The agricultural worker was said to be so lacking in self-respect, honor, civilized sentiments, foresight, industry, self-control, responsibility, and general motivation that only the fear of corporal punishment kept him in the fields. "The vulgar spirit of the Bohemian peasant," according to the diet of Bohemia, "was not affected by any injured feeling of honor," so that it was useless to put him under arrest.¹⁹ Jail, as provided in Joseph's penal code, was illusory as a means of correcting laziness because the health officials had closed the landlords' jails, according to the Bohemian estates, or because jail was more comfortable than the peasant's home, according to those of Galicia.²⁰ In fact, abolition of *Leibeigenschaft* was bad even for the peasants, declared the Galician diet, since peasants would starve without a friendly master's aid in time of famine. The people, said the Hungarians, were beginning to lose the feelings of "gratitude, obedience, loyalty and respectfulness which they had so gladly shown so long as the old laws lasted." The lower classes did not know how to use freedom, and if left alone would sit idly in taverns. On the other hand, one need not feel too sorry for them, since they were accustomed to hard work. They were so desperately poor and so ignorant, lacking animals, tools, and knowledge, that they could never carry on cultivation by themselves. They were too childish to respond to monetary incentives. "The harvest," said the Galicians, "will depend on the caprice of the peasants, who cannot be made to work even for wages. . . . They would only lounge and drink all the more, and not pay a Kreutzer to the landlord or the state."²¹ We hope Your Majesty does not suppose that we wish to oppress anyone, pleaded the assembly of the Hungarian county of Pest; "we only wish to curb a licentiousness that is harmful to the common people themselves and may have unfortunate consequences for the general welfare." Scripture allows the *subjectio servorum*, said the county of Szabolcs. Of course all men are equal *ante societatem*, but in society there must be ranks. We realize that all human beings desire to be free (this from the county of Hont), but Providence has made men kings, nobles, and servants; and toward our servants we shall always show Christian mercy. The people are still so far from a desirable state of civilization (*a desiderata civilisatione*, in the Hungarian Latin of another county) that "they would fall into sad extremes if they were freed from the wholesome effects of corporal pains."²² Direct physical punishment by estate managers is necessary, announced the Diet of Moravia, "since it is certain that all classes of men and the brutal masses of peasants in particular cannot always be brought to obedience by good treatment, since it is also known that the extreme insubordination of the rural populations is provoked by the numerous formalities nowadays required [such as Joseph's provision for corporal punishment only with knowledge of the district chief], and since in a word a few blows inflicted on the spot have more effect than severer penalties that may be too delayed."²³ The whole peasant trouble,

19 Kerner, 292.

20 *Ibid.*, and Mitrofanov, 629–37.

21 *Ibid.*, 635–36, 645; Denis, *Bohème*, 619. The Bohemian Estates warmly favored the *nexus subditelae* (Mitrofanov, 631 n. 2), rather than the "cash nexus" contemplated by Joseph and deplored by Carlyle and other nineteenth-century antiliberals.

22 Mitrofanov, 636.

23 Denis, 619; Kerner, 292.

said the Moravian count Poteani, was stirred up by agitators and outsiders. It was outrageous for revolutionary scribblers to refer to compulsory labor as slavery.

At one time, in the Bohemian diet, the remarks on the vulgar and slovenly Bohemian character became so extreme that a few members, mainly nobles who were Czechs themselves, took offense that "part of the nation" should be so insulted. Most of the diet was puzzled to hear peasants called part of the nation. The episode was significant, for the truth is that in Bohemia and Hungary, as in Galicia and the part of Poland that was still independent, the "nation" did mean the political nation of nobles and gentry. It should be added that men who worked for the imperial government, from Joseph and Leopold down through the central administration, consistently denied that the peasants were as bad as they were said to be by their own lords.

Leopold II, in the two years of his reign, managed at least to hold the Hapsburg empire together. Most of Joseph's reforms he was obliged to repeal. He yielded on all fronts to the aristocratic demand for constitutional liberties. Only in detail could he maintain parts of the reforms in which he really believed. On the peasant question the most that he could obtain was a compromise. The estates accepted Joseph's abolition of *Leibeigenschaft* in 1781, and the peasant remained free in law to change his place of residence or his occupation. But Joseph's decree of February 1789 was rescinded. Peasants who stayed on the land, as most of them did until the industrial era, remained subject to forced labor and corporal punishment until the revolution of 1848. The compromise greatly favored the landlords. Enlightened despotism in the Austrian empire was over. Aristocracy, estates rights, states rights, traditional constitutions, and constituted bodies had prevailed.

This outcome has often been ascribed to fear of the French Revolution, and presented as one phase of a European reaction to that event. In this view the violence of the French Revolution is seen as a cause, or even a justification, for a conservative resurgence throughout Europe. It seems more likely that, while the revolution in France heightened feeling on all sides, causes native to the Hapsburg empire are enough to explain the failure of Joseph II. Had Joseph lived, he could have done only as Leopold did. Effects of the French Revolution became more evident a little later, after the war began and the French monarchy was overthrown. Meanwhile the course of revolution in France was affected by the state of the Hapsburg empire. The disaffection of peasant soldiers did not strengthen the Hapsburg armies in the War of the First Coalition, and the eleven regiments that were kept in Hungary were unavailable for use against France. The warlike Magyars, like the peaceful Dutch, lacked enthusiasm for the monarchist crusade of 1792; not until 1797 did Hungarian volunteer forces appear in the field against the French Republic.

It is said also, in what may be called the school of the history of ideas, that Joseph was a pure rationalist engaged in a vain attempt to change the realities of the world. His reign, says Professor Valsecchi, was a war of reason against history, and it was the *vendetta della storia*, the revenge of history, that destroyed his work. To me it seems that something tougher than history was against him.²⁴

24 If we are wary of the philosophical conservatism in Valsecchi's view, *Assolutismo*, I, 138, which sees Joseph in terms of *il regno della ragione* and the *vendetta della storia*, we can derive even less satis-

THREE CHARTERS OF THE NORTH

The problem in this book is not to give equal attention to the separate histories of all countries, but to indicate trends on the eve of the Wars of the French Revolution, and in particular, in the present chapter, to show the point at which disputes between crown and nobility had then arrived. It is to set forth also the limitations of enlightened despotism, or disadvantages or unacceptable choices inherent in that form of polity: namely, either that the monarchy prevailed over nobility and other kinds of privilege, at the cost of arbitrary power, as in the case of Joseph II; or that the monarchy, in order to govern at all, and to assure itself of necessary support, granted concessions, as in the case of Leopold II, to the very feudal or aristocratic interests that enlightened despotism made it a principle to oppose.

Little has been said of Spain in the present pages. It is not that Spain was unaffected by currents of the time. On the contrary, a good many Spaniards were alive to some of the main ideas of the European Enlightenment; but what mainly concerned them was to reverse the long deterioration in Spain itself, to revive Spanish commerce, to improve mining technology, to make administration more efficient, and stress the practical arts and the ideal of social utility as against the older religious outlook of the country. In Charles III Spain possessed one of the most celebrated and successful of the "enlightened despots." Compared to France or the Hapsburg empire, however, it was a non-political kind of "despotism"; there was less conflict between the monarchy and constituted or corporate bodies representing the nobility or other privileged interests. Nor does any acute class consciousness between bourgeoisie and aristocracy seem to have developed. Even so, according to a recent study, the effect of the French Revolution, in Spain as elsewhere, was to throw doubt on enlightened despotism as a means of social progress.²⁵

The limitations of enlightened despotism, the lengths beyond which it could not go in the reconciling of social classes, may be seen in Sweden, Prussia, and Russia. They become particularly evident in connection with three important documents contemporaneous with the French Revolution: the Charter of the Nobility in Russia in 1785, the Swedish Act of Union and Security of 1789, and the Prussian General Code of 1791. Since apparently none of these is available in English, though all were of lasting significance in their respective countries, they are printed as an appendix at the end of this book, together, for contrast, with the preamble to the revolutionary French constitution of 1791.

It has been told in preceding pages how the young Gustavus III, in 1772, put an end to the Freedom Era in Sweden, supplanting a half-century of noble domi-

faction from recent Hungarian Marxist studies, which blame the Hapsburgs for "arresting our bourgeois national evolution," find their "so-called enlightened absolutism" designed to preserve feudalism, and assert as a dogmatic principle that "absolute monarchy is the highest stage of feudal society." See *Études des délégués Hongrois au X^e Congrès international des sciences historiques à Rome* (Budapest, 1955), 18, 19, 73. For these writers the Hapsburgs were colonialist exploiters, and it was the broad masses, not the aristocracy, that represented the desire for national independence. There is more evidence for Mitrofanov's repeated statement that the peasants in all parts of the empire remained *Kaiser-treu*. Maria Theresa, Joseph, and Leopold represented the highest stage of "feudalism" in that feudalism was precisely what they did not want—but could not wholly get rid of.

25 R. Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton, 1958).

nation with an enlightened absolutism which was more favorable to the non-noble classes, and which won the praises even of the Genevese democrat turned constitutionalist, J. L. Delolme.²⁶ Gustavus proved, however, to be a fantastic monarch. Much enamored of France, both of the court life and the men of letters whom he had seen there in his youth, he spent large sums to adorn his nothern Versailles, wrote poems and dramas, sponsored the arts, and indulged in an array of extravagant pleasures, which included an unnatural predilection for the numerous page boys in his entourage. He also entertained military ambitions, laying plans to conquer Norway from Denmark, and avenge Sweden on Russia. Members of the nobility continued to resist him, looking back with regret on their era of freedom, and now aroused by the spectacle of America. Sixty-four Swedish officers had served in America in the French forces, of whom the most famous was Axel de Fersen, Marie Antoinette's admirer. In Finland, which belonged to the Swedish crown, and where the nobility were Swedish, there were noblemen who dreamed of a war of independence in which one of them would be the George Washington. At the diet of 1786 the King asked for a modern army, to be paid for from taxes, in place of the levies of peasants supplied locally by the lords. Led by the nobility, all four estates in the diet—nobles, clergy, townsmen, and peasants—expressed opposition to this project. The King, nevertheless, when Russia became involved in a war with Turkey, seized the opportunity to launch an attack on St. Petersburg.

Some of the nobles in both Sweden and Finland, disapproving of this adventure, and regarding Gustavus III as their main adversary, made collusive arrangements with the Russians. To Gustavus this was of course treason in wartime. It revealed the old habit of disunion, by which parties within Sweden had long brought in rival foreign powers against each other; and it threatened Sweden with the fate of Poland, from which Gustavus claimed to have saved it in 1772. In fact a group of Swedish officers and noblemen appealed to the tsarina to make peace, and signed an agreement with each other in 1788 at Anjala near the border, very much like one of the "confederations" of Polish nobles, and in particular the confederation of Targovica of 1792, which led to the second partition of Poland.

The Swedish diet met again in February 1789. Like the French Estates General of that year, it fell into a schism between the nobility and the other orders. The difference is that Gustavus III did what some have wished Louis XVI had done. He took the side of the commons against the nobles—and confirmed the nobles in their inveterate hostility to himself. Ordering the nobles out of the hall, he carried on the proceedings without them—"a strange sight," said an observer, "a king with nothing but commoners around him . . . but not an unpleasant one." He put nineteen noblemen under arrest, including Axel de Fersen's father. In a speech to the three non-noble orders he called for unity against foreigners and equality of rights

26 See above, pp. 76–78 and 109; for the present paragraphs R. Svanstrom and C. F. Palmstierna, *Short History of Sweden* (Oxford, 1934), 264–94; R. N. Bain, *Gustavus III and His Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London, 1894); B. J. Hovde, *The Scandinavian Countries, 1720–1865: the Rise of the Middle Classes*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1943), I, 191–94, 207–19; *Sveriges historia till våra dagar, Vol. X. Den Gustavianska Tiden 1722–1809*, by Ludvig Stavenow (Stockholm, 1925), 207–39, for knowledge of whose contents I am indebted to Professor Arne Odd Johnsen of Oslo.

among citizens, and he then read his Act of Union and Security, which the three “unredeemed” orders enthusiastically accepted. A week later the nobility met to consider the act and flatly rejected it; the King, taking the chair in person, declared it passed.²⁷

The Act of Union, while restating the constitution of 1772, actually put greater powers in the hands of the King, while also assuring more civil equality for the population in general. “All subjects enjoy the same rights,” it declared, six months before the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen; and all were to be judged in the same courts. There must, however, be both noble and non-noble judges in these courts. “All orders of the state have the same right to possess or acquire land.” Offices “shall be accessible to all subjects of whatever rank or condition,” except that the very highest offices and the court dignities were reserved for nobles. The diet had the right to consent to taxation, but in other matters to deliberate only on proposals which the King put before it. All future kings of Sweden were to be required to accept the act.

The Act of Union was as successful an example as we may find of enlightened despotism providing civil equality and even a measure of public participation in government. It gave general satisfaction, so much so that Swedish burghers and peasants, though interested, watched the subsequent revolutionary events in Europe with a feeling of detachment. The act carried with it, however, two troublesome corollaries: it left the King free to pursue projects dangerous to the country, and it left the nobility a dissatisfied and potentially revolutionary class.

Gustavus extricated himself from the Russian war by a lucky victory at sea; developed a vague aspiration to become King of Poland, putting himself and his court into Polish costume; and, as the last of his fantastic projects, offered to lead the European powers in a crusade against the French Revolution. With his high ideas of kingship, he had even less use for popular than for aristocratic rebellion. Kept at a distance by his brother monarchs, who could not agree on a policy toward France, and who in any case thought Gustavus’ volunteering to lead their forces eccentric, he became involved in plans to rescue the French King and Queen. To this end he worked with Axel de Fersen, whose father he had arrested two years before. He had a notion that after landing with 16,000 Swedes and 8,000 Russians in Normandy he could cut through to Paris, while French troops presumably loyal to their King and Queen marched on Paris from the east, after which the French King, restored to independence, would convene the old provincial parlements or estates, pronounce the National Assembly illegal, and undo its work. Nothing came of this grand design. He therefore concocted another, and on June 16, 1791, arrived with fanfare at Aachen in the Rhineland, intending to use that city as a dramatic meeting place with Louis XVI on the latter’s escape from France. This plan failed, too, as is well known, because the coach in which Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were riding, driven by Axel de Fersen, was stopped on June 21 at Varennes.²⁸

27 Svanström and Palmstierna, 283; for the Act of Union see Appendix III, item 3, below; the King’s speech was printed in the British *Annual Register* for 1789 (London, 1792), 334–36.

28 For details of Gustavus’ “crusade” against the French Revolution see Bain, *op.cit.*, II, 103–52.

Meanwhile, a kind of revolutionary sentiment spread among the irritated nobility of Sweden, many of whom, like nobles in Hungary, understood revolution to mean the downfall of kings, and admired the French Revolution as the nemesis of tyrants. A handful of them resorted to direct action. Gustavus III was assassinated at the opera in Stockholm on March 16, 1792. It was only a month before the war between France and Austria. All those involved in the death of the monarchist crusader were noblemen. There is an illuminating postlude with the same ironic message. When another king of Sweden died in 1810, it was again popularly suspected (though falsely) that he had been done to death by a conspiracy of nobles. Count Axel de Fersen, celebrated in French royalist annals as the paladin of monarchy, was murdered in the streets of Stockholm, in 1810, by a mob which believed him to be guilty of poisoning the king of Sweden.

Mr. Liston, the British Minister at Stockholm, reported at the time of Gustavus' death that members of the conspiracy could not agree on what they wanted. The "elder part," he said, "desired the ancient form of the Swedish government [before 1772], or to imitate that of England; while the younger men were eager to adopt the greatest part of the modern ideas of France."²⁹ In fact the government remained unchanged in 1792, since the dead King's supporters were not dislodged. An enlightened absolutism remained in effect. It assured advantages to the non-noble classes; but its weakness was that the nobility remained very unmanageable, and the King himself not even personally safe.

More concessions were made to aristocratic principles in Russia and in Prussia. These were both very different countries from Sweden. In Sweden all four estates had long enjoyed rights of one kind or another, and the diet in which they met had a lively tradition. In both Russia and Prussia (most of Prussia then lay east of the Elbe) the country people were mostly serfs, the towns were small, sparse, few, and feeble, and the important class was the serf-owning landlords. Nothing like a European assembly of estates had ever developed in Russia, and those of the component regions of the Prussian monarchy had mostly fallen into decay.

Of the Russian empire in the eighteenth century it may be said that no one had any lawful rights on whose continuing enjoyment he could rely. This was as true of the upper classes as of the lower. Indeed, European commentators noticed a lack of class structure as they understood it. There were big men and little men, there were rich and poor, and those higher or lower on the ladder of government service, and some who made a boast of their ancestry. There was not, however, the respect for birth and station that were common in Europe. High rank gave no assurance of independence, nor of that "honor" said by Montesquieu to be necessary to free monarchy, nor even any security from physical punishment or public humiliation. The Empress Anna, on one occasion, annoyed at Prince Golytsin, made him squat in the corner pretending to be a hen, clucking and cackling on a pile of straw as if laying an egg. "A gentleman is nothing here," reported the German Schlözer in 1781. "Birth here gives but little claim to preference or consideration," said an Englishman; "both are regulated by the degree of rank

29 Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892-1927), V, 518.

acquired by service."³⁰ Service meant the state service which had become an obligation for all classes.

With the Empress Catherine II there began to be significant changes. The horrors of Pugachev's rebellion, the worst servile uprising in generations, made her realize her dependency on the landlords for the effective government of the empire, and her expansionist foreign policy made it necessary for her to have a reliable officer corps. She had reason also to know, more than a king of Sweden, the actual dangers of assassination if noblemen became too disaffected. On the other hand the nobility, or what corresponded to nobility in Russia, were the only people who could effectively make their wishes heard. Catherine's short-lived husband, Peter III, had freed them from punishment by the knout in 1762, and at the Legislative Commission which she assembled in 1767 there were nobles who asked for recognition as an "order," with corporate privileges and corporate guarantees. As the nobility became more Westernized, and more familiar with the meaning of noble status in Europe, they became more aware of their own disadvantages.

Catherine's needs, and noble wishes, came together in the Charter of Nobility which she issued in 1785. What this amounted to was an attempt, in an enormous agrarian empire that rested on unfree labor and on military force, to map out an area of personal status, liberty, and security for those persons without whom the empire could not carry on. In effect, if not by design, the charter introduced nobility on the Western model into Russia. It is an instructive contrast between two rulers often lumped together as enlightened despots, that at the very time when Joseph II tried to turn the serfs of his empire into something like West European peasants, Catherine II, called the "Great," largely to hold down the serfs, moved to convert her landlords into something like Western aristocrats.³¹

The Charter of 1785 began by defining noble estate or status, which it said was a superiority of rank, or of good birth, originating in service to the state, and transmissible to descendants. The word used most commonly in the charter was *blagorodnyi*, "high born" or "honorable." It was to people thus born that the charter gave guarantees. They could not lose their status, honor, property or life without judicial proceedings, and could be judged only by judges of equal birth with themselves. They were exempted from corporal punishment. Highborn persons in lower military ranks were to be liable only to such punishments as were prescribed for the higher. They received permission to leave state service at will, to take service with foreign governments, and to travel outside the country. They were given the right to sign their names (like European nobles) with territorial titles. They were reconfirmed in their right to "buy villages" (that is serfs), and to engage in wholesale or overseas trade in the agricultural or industrial products of their workers. Nobles, as defined in the charter, were also exempted from personal taxes. In general, by Article 17: "We guarantee independence and liberty to the Russian nobility for all time by inheritance in future generations."

30 A. Leroy-Beaulieu, *The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians*, 3 vols. (London and New York, 1893), I, 391; Bruckner, *Katharina die Zweite* (Berlin, 1883), 473; W. Tooke, *View of the Russian Empire* (London, 1799), 308. See also A. Goodwin, ed., *The European Nobility in the 18th Century* (London, 1953), 172-89 for an account of the Russian nobility by Max Beloff.

31 For the charter, see Appendix III below.

The charter, besides promising such individual and family guarantees, set up the nobility as an organized and corporate estate. The nobles in each province were to meet in an assembly, elect a marshal, have the right of collective petition, exercise police powers, and name local officials, while enjoying, as an assembly, immunity from molestation or arrest. According to one writer, Catherine hoped to create bodies like the Provincial Estates of France. These rights the Russian nobility continued to enjoy throughout the nineteenth century.

Catherine also issued a charter of the cities, organizing them on paper like European towns of the old regime, with various levels of inhabitants enjoying various levels of burgher rights. Townsmen of merchant status, for example, were freed from forced government service, and those of the first two merchant categories, or higher, were exempted from corporal punishment. The towns, however, were of very little importance in the empire. Growth of a Russian burgher class was held down by the importance of foreign merchants on the one hand, and, on the other, by the business activity of many landed nobles using servile labor.

Under Catherine, in short, whose reputation for enlightenment was due mainly to Western intellectuals, the tsardom reached a great compromise with those whom it recognized as nobles; indeed, in a sense, it created an aristocracy, the better to govern, or rather to dominate, the mass of the people. For some to have a sphere of rights due to special birth or rank was doubtless better than for no one to have any assured rights at all. For some to have a certain independence in the face of power was better than autocracy unmixed. Catherine doubtless believed, like many Europeans (she was herself of German birth), that a stratified society in general, and a hereditary and respected noble class in particular, were signs of an advanced state of civilization. Governor Bernard argued as much in Massachusetts. But she systematized the institutions of hereditary nobility, and of peasant subjection, at the very time when these were being questioned in Europe. While the Austrian monarchs, and even the Prussian, emancipated the serfs on crown estates, she not only did not do so but gave away state domains, peasants and all, to her lovers and favorites. It is estimated that she thus simply handed over almost a million "souls" to nobles.³²

Serfdom reached its low point in her reign.

The Kingdom of Prussia, a showpiece of enlightened despotism, was in the eighteenth century a country of very marked aristocratic resurgence. This took two forms: an actual come-back of the old landed nobility after 1740, and the development of the newer civil service into a self-conscious governing group with an aristocratic code of values. In Prussia, as in the Russia of Catherine, and in the Hapsburg empire of Leopold, the monarchy made concessions to the groups that were indispensable to its rule.³³

32 "Almost a million human beings were robbed of all personal rights by this princely generosity of the Semiramis of the North," V. Gittermann, *Geschichte Russlands*, 2 vols. (Zurich, 1945), II, 244.

33 Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1660-1816* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 57-108, 175-201. My treatment of Prussia at this point draws heavily on Professor Rosenberg. See also A. Goodwin on the Prussian nobility in *European Nobility in the 18th Century*, 83-101.

The limitations of enlightened despotism are well seen in the famous Prussian General Code, first promulgated in 1791. Its purpose was to provide a territorially uniform, orderly, known, and predictable body of laws and procedures for all the heterogeneous parts of the monarchy. The code was celebrated in its time as one of the great legal accomplishments for the age, and it gave Prussians a proud sense of living in a *Rechtstaat*, or under a government of laws where arbitrary power had no place. Many Prussians, indeed, after 1789, were inclined to take an indulgent view of the French Revolution, believing, erroneously, that the French were trying only to obtain what the more fortunate Prussians already enjoyed. Even Napoleon regarded the Prussian code as a precedent when he superintended the codification of French law in 1804. But where the Code Napoleon came after a great revolution, and codified the equality of rights, the Code of Frederick the Great—under whom work on it began, though it was completed under his successor—was a codification of the aristocratic society, the *Ständestaat*. It may be taken to represent the farthest point that enlightened absolutism could reach in a society of legally differentiated orders.

The Prussian code began with certain general statements, which lend themselves to comparison with the almost simultaneous French Declaration of Rights.³⁴ Neither liberty, nor equality, nor the rights of man were absent from the Prussian code; but they were quite otherwise defined than in the French declaration.

On natural liberty the Prussian code observed: "The laws and ordinances of the state should no further restrict the natural liberty and rights of citizens than the public welfare demands." In the abstract, this was not very different from the French declaration. The code acknowledged the rights of man, but with a special angle: "The rights of man arise from his birth and from his estate. . . . The particular rights of a state-member rest upon the personal relationships in which each one stands toward others or toward the state." As for equality, the code called for an equality of obedience: "The laws bind all members of the state without difference of estate, rank or family." By equality it also meant an equality among social equals: "Persons to whom, by their birth, destination in life or principal occupation, equal rights are ascribed in civil society, make up an estate within the state, *einen Stand des Staats*. Members of each estate have, as such, certain rights and duties." The theory of the state was corporatist: "Civil society consists of many small societies and estates, connected to each other by nature or law or by both together." Rights accrued to the individual according to the estate to which he belonged. There were many such estates, and hundreds of pages of the code were devoted to the particular rights and duties of each. There were 20 pages on rights and duties of *Herrschaft und Gesinde*, that is, of manorial lordship and certain forms of compulsory labor. There were 50 pages on the Peasant Estate, 100 on the Burgher Estate, only 10 on the Noble Estate (whose rights were specified elsewhere), 20 on civil servants, 150 on the clergy, 20 on institutions of learning.

34 *Allgemeines Gesetzbuch für die preussischen Staaten*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1791). The clauses quoted above appeared in the *Landrecht* of 1794 unchanged with one exception: the clause on restriction of natural liberty was omitted. See Appendix III below.

The Prussian code thus fell well short of any general conception of citizenship. The Prussian monarchy remained very much a monarchy of the old regime, that is, a conglomeration of separate kinds of people held together by nothing more than higher authority. The ideal was rigidly hierarchic. Everyone had some rights, but some people had much better rights than others. The code systematized the segregation of classes that had become a main policy of the kingdom. Land and property were classified as people were; nobles, burghers, and peasants could not acquire land out of their class, lest the operations of a common market bring a burgher admixture into the martial and agrarian virtues of Junker squires. The landed nobility and the government service were the two favored classes. They tended to merge, or to feel akin in their values and attitudes, in what Professor Rosenberg calls an "aristobureaucracy," which maintained itself into the twentieth century.

Always with a view toward showing what the international revolutionary disturbance at the end of the eighteenth century was about, I have argued, in preceding chapters, that before the revolution of 1789 in France, or before the war of 1792 by which the revolution was intensified and extended, the position of governing or politically privileged classes was if anything growing stronger. The distinctive thing about these classes—since all societies have upper classes and governing groups—was the high degree to which they were hereditary, self-perpetuating, or self-recruiting, their claim to hold their positions in their own right, and their insistence on maintaining an independence, as Charles Fox said in the Commons in England, against the pressure of either King or people. These "aristocrats," to use the term created by the revolutionary movement itself, were by no means in retreat, and the turmoil of democratic revolution did not merely carry forward a long evolutionary process which might more peacefully have accomplished the same end. The great generalization of Alexis de Tocqueville, that history exhibits a centuries-long movement toward a greater equality of conditions, seems true to me only if it includes the thought, as a subordinate generalization, that men have at times fought for this increase of equality against contrary tendencies and against very positive opposition. At the risk of excessive schematism, but in the attempt to draw a picture of Western Civilization as a whole, evidence has been assembled to persuade the reader that everywhere, except in the United States, the problem of taking wider classes of people into the community was either not recognized as a problem, or was plainly denied to be a problem, or was unsolved. Aristocracies had defeated democratic movements in England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, and Geneva. They had won concessions from monarchs in the Hapsburg countries, Prussia and Russia; and on failing to win similar concessions in Sweden, they endangered the viability of the monarchy itself. We turn now to the two countries which along with America were then the most famous for revolution—Poland and France. These two were obviously very unlike, yet they have a resemblance under the schematism that has been set up. Both the Polish and the French revolutions began with a kind of aristocratic resurgence, the former against anarchy, the latter against royal absolutism. And in both the revolution reached a life-and-death crisis in the war of 1792.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LESSONS OF POLAND

What is the subject of any country? It makes no difference, slave black or white, he is a man, in no way unlike us. In Europe and in any part of the world, he is our equal, a citizen of the earth.

—HUGO KOLLONTAY, 1790

Yet we must be fair. Considering where the people of Poland began, they have made relatively as great a leap toward liberty as we have.

—CAMILLE DESMOULINS, 1791

It has been the fate of Poland, more than of most countries, that outsiders have been mainly concerned to see in it a spectacular object lesson, hurrying on from interest in the Poles themselves to find evidence for general truths of wider application. Very much this same treatment will be accorded to Poland in this chapter, which is a compressed account of the Four Years' Diet of 1788–1792 and its background; but it may be said, as an apology to the Poles, that in this book the affairs of all other countries are presented in the same way, so as to fit them into a story of political disturbance in the Western World as a whole. Poland will first be exhibited as a land of aristocracy triumphant. The question will then be asked, as it was asked of the American Revolution in Chapter VII, whether the Polish Revolution of 1791 was a revolution at all, and if so in what sense; and what observers in other countries—such as Burke in England, the revolutionaries in France, and the rulers of Prussia and Russia—thought that they learned from it.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau drew lessons from Poland in 1771. With the country dissolving in civil war, subverted by Russia, and sinking into the First Partition, the author of the *Social Contract*, at the request of certain Polish patriots, offered his diagnosis of their situation. The conservatism of his advice has often been pointed out. “Don’t shake the machine too abruptly,” he said; don’t multiply en-

emies within the state by sudden changes; don't in your attempts at reform lose the liberties that you have.¹ His diagnosis nevertheless went to the root of the matter. The trouble with Poland, he thought, was that it had no *consistance*, no staying power to resist pressure and infiltration from outside. What it needed was character, a character of its own, resting on the collective consciousness or will of its people—"national institutions which form the genius, the character, the tastes, and the customs of the people, which make them what they are and not something else, and inspire that warm love of country founded on habits impossible to uproot."² He deplored the appalling class divisions in Poland, by which burghers were "nothing," and peasants "less than nothing," and he favored a gradual emancipation and a humanizing of the serfs. The inequalities of wealth between rich nobles and poor nobles seemed to him altogether too great. In practice, he addressed himself only to the nobles, the one political class in the country, but to them he tried to impart a fundamental message: that if only they would form a general will and acquire certain civic and moral virtues, including respect for each other as equals and a willingness to support each other and their state as the vehicle of their freedom, Poland might yet be saved.

John Adams also drew a lesson. In London in 1787, writing his *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States*, and surveying all known republics, ancient, medieval, and modern, he came to the "regal republic" of Poland, and he found in it abundant confirmation of his principal doctrines. He was horrified to learn that in Poland a "gentleman" was fined only fifteen livres for killing a peasant. Poland, with its feeble monarchy, proved to Adams that the welfare of the people required a strong king, "meaning by the word king a first magistrate possessed exclusively of the executive power." A government without three independent branches, he insisted, would degenerate either into absolute monarchy or into aristocracy, as in Poland, and in an aristocracy the "nobility will annihilate the people, and attended with their horses, hounds and vassals, will run down the king as they would hunt a deer."³

A country ruined by having no spiritual solidarity or common basis of loyalty—thus Rousseau. A country ruined by one-class rule and by having no executive government—thus Adams. Most historians have agreed with them.

THE GENTRY REPUBLIC

Poland in 1788, like the Dutch Republic, lived under a constitution "guaranteed" by outside powers. In both cases the guarantee was designed to preserve the historic liberties and the existing upper classes of the country. The Polish constitution, guaranteed by Russia in 1773 after the First Partition, was essentially the old Polish constitution as it had developed over the past two centuries. Except in age, in aristocratic complexion, and in dependence on foreign support, the Polish and

1 *Considérations sur le gouvernement de la Pologne*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1827), X, 146, 15.

2 *Ibid.*, 23.

3 *Works* (1851), IV, 371.

Dutch arrangements were diametrical opposites, for, in the United Netherlands even the patricians were burghers, while in Poland they were exclusively agrarian landlords, the Dutch being the most commercial people of Western Civilization, the Poles nearly the least so.

The Republic of Poland, whose titular head was an elected king, comprised two parts: the "kingdom of Poland," or Poland proper, and the grand duchy of Lithuania to the east.⁴ The two parts, in the 1780's, had somewhat over 8,000,000 people, or about the population of England. Population density was only a third of that of England or France. About 725,000 persons were of families somewhat misleadingly translated into French and English as "noble." About 500,000 persons were of the town classes, not counting the 900,000 Jews, who were mostly scattered in very small businesses in the smallest towns and in the open country. Though the tendency of recent Polish historians is to emphasize the Polish nationality of the burgher class, it is agreed that a significant number of them spoke German and felt as transplanted Germans, while a certain number were Greeks or Armenians, and since the Jews spoke Yiddish, lived apart, or were concentrated in ghettos, the classes corresponding to the townspeople of Western Europe were prevented by language and religion from developing any feeling of unity. Warsaw was rapidly growing, leaping in size from 30,000 to 120,000 people between 1764 and 1791, but most other places were small, and all the people in the fifty largest towns taken together—of whom few could be called "bourgeoisie"—were only a little over half as numerous as the nobles.

Three-quarters of the population were peasants, most of them serfs, as in the Hapsburg empire, Prussia, and Russia. As in these countries, and indeed more so, the mass of the country population were subjects of their lords, not of the King. "The nobility," according to a Polish lawbook of 1742, "has the right of life and death over its subjects attached to the soil (*glebae adscriptos*), not otherwise than as slaves were considered to be among the Romans."⁵ Though such information is hard to come by, it may be assumed that there was in Poland very little of the intermarriage and family relationship between townspeople and peasantry that were so common in France, since in Poland the countryman, as a serf, was not free to move, and might even speak a different language. The sharp separation between town and country, the inability of burghers and agricultural people to enter into each other's interests and points of view, characteristic also of Germany in lesser degree, was one of the fundamental differences between Eastern Europe on the one hand, and Western Europe and North America on the other—always with the

4 For conditions in Poland before the Four Years' Diet see R. H. Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915); J. Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des lumières* (Paris, 1952); R. N. Bain, *The Last King of Poland and His Contemporaries* (London, 1909); the special number of *Przegląd historyczny* (Historical Review), XLII, 1951, devoted to Poland in this period, containing articles with French summaries by C. Bobinska, A. Korta, J. Kott, W. Kuła, B. Lesnodorski, J. Michalski, and E. Rostworowski; B. Lesnodorski, "Les facteurs intellectuels de la formation de la société polonaise moderne au Siècle des lumières," in *La Pologne au X^e Congrès international des sciences historiques à Rome* (Warsaw, 1955); *Polish Encyclopedia* (Geneva, 1921), II, 104–21.

5 Quoted from Zalaszwowski, *Jus regni Poloniae* (1742), I, 39, by P. Mitrofanov, *Joseph II* (Vienna, 1910), 592.

reminder that race differences and slavery gave parts of America a resemblance to Eastern Europe.

Persons counting as nobles were exceedingly numerous in Poland, making up over eight per cent of the population. They were more numerous even than in Hungary, where, as seen in the last chapter, the nobility was larger proportionately than the *noblesse* of France or the gentry and aristocracy of England. Since one person in twelve was noble, and the nobles outnumbered the burghers, and in all societies the mass of the people remains somewhat anonymous, it has been possible for some writers to compare the lesser gentry to a yeomanry, and to see a kind of agrarian democracy in the old Poland. The trouble in this view is that the 725,000 nobles were themselves very mixed.

The biggest and richest were the twenty-odd families of magnates, such as the Potockis, the Czartoryskis, the Radziwills, and the Branickis. Their main strength lay in the eastern and southeastern part of the country, in White Russia and the western Ukraine, which remained under Polish control even after the First Partition. Here the landlords, Polish in origin or in culture, descendants of men who had conquered the land from Russians, Tartars, or Turks, held vast latifundia worked by the White Russian or Ukrainian peasantry. Felix Potocki, for example, possessed estates of over 6,500 square miles, larger than Connecticut, or half as large as the Dutch Republic. He kept a court of 400 persons, and had an annual income of 3,000,000 Polish florins. This was a third as large as the income of the Polish crown. A few such magnates together could raise as much money, and as many armed men, as the King himself. They lived like princes, built palaces, gave lavish entertainments, sponsored the arts, spoke French, went on grand tours, and felt it natural for men in their position to maintain their own foreign policy, being often seen at the courts of St. Petersburg, Berlin, or other great capitals.

Half the nobles, however, were landless or nearly so. Some, possessing a few acres and a horse, made a shabby living by doing the farm labor themselves. Travelers saw them going into the fields wearing their swords, which they hung on trees as they went about their plowing or their digging. Others, having no property, income, skills, or settled occupation, might be called a proletariat except for a sense of class superiority that they maintained, by which they set a high value on birth, physical courage, political liberty, and riding horseback (they were the "equestrian order"), and a low value on work, routine, and the orderly payment of debts. Some Polish noblemen were admirable products of European civilization; one thinks of Adam Czartoryski in the next generation, or the poet and patriot Niemcewicz, who lived for years in New Jersey after the failure of Kosciuszko's rebellion. The bulk of the Polish nobility, however, were rude, slovenly, uneducated, and provincial, equally unaware of what French philosophers or a Russian tsarina might be thinking; out of touch with the world, their horizons bounded by the narrow limits of their own way of life; unaccustomed to dealing on equal terms with people unlike themselves; naïvely unpolitical, but inclined to political oratory, and more than willing to join the following of some chieftain. Poor nobles lived as retainers to the great. The great nobleman, the princely magnate, counted his importance by the number of his dependents, the thousands of subjects or unfree peasants who labored on his estates, and the swarms of freemen or nobles, who might also number

thousands, that flocked in to do him honor and eat dinner in his country house, and might be rallied as a political force in times of public disturbance.

"Your *aristoi*," Adams wrote to Jefferson in their old age, "are the most difficult animals to manage of anything in the whole theory and practice of government. They will not suffer themselves to be governed."⁶ Adams was speaking in general; but his remark puts the political history of Poland for two hundred years before 1788 in a nutshell.

At the close of the Middle Ages Poland had had flourishing towns, and a peasantry as free and as well-off as in most parts of Western Europe. The landed nobility had extorted increasing privileges from the King, who found insufficient strength in the burgher class to resist the neo-feudal demands; and the nobles gradually deprived the King of his powers, and other classes of their rights. The peasantry, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, fell into bondage. Burghers were thrust aside; when the central diet was definitively constituted in 1505 no city except Cracow received a clear right of representation, and such occasional participation as a few towns enjoyed was finally ended by a law of 1768, with exceptions for Danzig and Thorn. Ceasing to exist as an estate of the realm, the burghers lost their rights of municipal self-government also, and were helpless before the legislative predilections of an agrarian gentry, as when in 1565 the Diet forbade native merchants to engage in foreign trade, and in 1643 it limited their profits to seven per cent, or three per cent in the case of Jews. The Polish towns became very dilapidated.

The landowners, great and small, met in about fifty local assemblies, one for each palatinate or province in the country; and these local assemblies, after 1500, gathered to themselves the power to authorize and to collect taxes, and to maintain armed forces. The country became a loose federation of half a hundred little noble republics. Each sent deputies to the lower house of a central or national diet, where they were bound by imperative mandates of their constituents. The upper house consisted of prelates and great officers of the crown. The nobles elected the King, convening for this purpose in a grand special assemblage, a kind of enormous town meeting which every gentleman in Poland had the right to attend, and where as many as a hundred thousand might actually appear. It was the magnates who financed and directed these turbulent encampments, which always imposed on the King whom they elected certain articles of agreement, called the *pacta conventa*, by which the liberties of Poland were secured. The aristocracy thus prevented the accumulation of powers in the crown from one generation to the next; each generation remained "free," uncommitted by the past, in an odd variation on the doctrine of Jefferson or Thomas Paine.

The gentry and magnates were as reluctant to see power vested in their national diet as in a king. They developed, therefore, a procedure for nullification, the famous *Liberum Veto*, which came into habitual use in 1652. By this procedure any deputy in the central diet, acting as the representative of his home assembly (and in practice carrying out the will of some magnate) could arise in the diet and by pronouncing the formula, *sic nolo, sic veto*, not merely block the legislation in ques-

6 *Works* (1851), X, 51.

tion, but force the dissolution of the diet itself. Forty-eight of fifty-five diets held between 1652 and 1764 were thus arbitrarily dissolved by minority or indeed individual interests. There was a general atrophy of institutions of government.

The Polish scholar, Konopczynski, in his study of the *Liberum Veto*, has made some observations so enlightening for constitutional theory, and for the history of self-government, that even in a condensed account it seems well to make room for them. The free veto meant the principle of unanimity, or the denial of majority rule in deliberative bodies. Acceptance of majority rule, Konopczynski reminds us (and it is easy to forget it) is in fact a difficult, artificial, and acquired habit of mind. It depends on several prerequisites: first, that votes be counted, not evaluated in importance according to the identity of the voter; that is, all votes must be considered equal. In the order of business discussion must be distinctly followed by voting, lest nothing emerge but a vague sense of the meeting, or apparent unanimity in which responsibilities are indefinite and differences of opinion are temporarily covered up, only to break out later. There must be a party of some kind, personal, political, religious, or economic, willing to work for years to carry out a decision, and to resist its reversal. It is well to have a settled and fixed population, for if dissidents can simply go away, or retire so far into the depths of the country as to be forgotten, they never learn to submit to majority wishes, nor does the majority learn to govern. A strong executive is useful, for there can be no majority rule unless minorities are obliged to accept decisions once made. Lastly, persons who in their own right are the masters of men, sovereigns on estates with subjects of their own, submit with reluctance to a majority even of their own equals; majority rule has always seemed more reasonable to middle classes than to seigneurs.⁷

Few of these conditions obtained in Poland. The Polish nobleman bowed to no one. Liberty reigned, the *aurea libertas* of Polish annals. So did equality and fraternity, in a way, for in law all nobles were equals and supposed to address one another as "brother." The Poles looked down on the slavish monarchies that surrounded them. They were forever on guard against "despotism," and they watched with zeal over their "contracts," the *pacta conventa*. They boasted like Englishmen of the virtues of their ancestors and the wisdom of their constitution. They liked to compare their Republic to the best times of Greece and Rome. A deputy exercising the *Liberum Veto* became in this view a bold tribune of the people; and Polish liberty, if it rested on slaves, was all the more Athenian in its character.

Actually there was less ground for gratification. The result of Golden Liberty "was the omnipotence of a single caste carried to a point unparalleled in any other European country."⁸ It was usual enough in the eighteenth century for the landed aristocrats to enjoy superior privileges. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe they ruled over serfs under monarchical auspices. In England and for a time in Sweden they even governed. In Poland, having monopolized all organs of state, they could neither govern nor suffer themselves to be governed. Central authority became a shadow. The Polish army in the mid-eighteenth century consisted of 24,000 men,

7 L. Konopczynski, *Le Liberum veto: etude sur le développement du principemajoritaire* (Paris, 1930), 19–23.

8 Lord, *Second Partition*, 15.

almost all cavalry. Few taxes were raised. The revenues of the Republic in 1750 are said to have been one thirteenth those of Russia and one seventy-fifth those of France. In the 1780's after reforms, they amounted to about 12,000,000 French *livres*, compared to 140,000,000 for Russia and 430,000,000 for France.

As in Sweden during the Freedom Era, so in Poland the great noblemen readily called on foreign aid in their rivalries with each other. Some magnates favored Russia, others Turkey, Sweden, or France. Foreign powers paid money to obtain votes in the diet, and important Poles considered such income as their normal due. The diet became an international meddling place, and many a *Liberum Veto* was initiated by a foreign bribe, but the meetings at which the nobles elected a king were the most notorious for this kind of intervention. As Russia entered into European politics with Peter the Great, it became the most influential of the powers in Poland. In 1764 the diet elected a Polish nobleman, Stanislas Poniatowski, as king, carefully checking him, as in all such elections, with all sorts of guarantees of the national liberties. King Stanislas, a former lover of Catherine of Russia, was still her protégé and became King of Poland by her will. He was a philosopher-king and a patriot, who understood the cause of his country's troubles, and favored many projects of reform; but he was well aware, from having lived there, of the massive might of Imperial Russia, and he understood the difficulty of getting the magnates to make any changes in a system of which they were the main beneficiaries. All three partitions of Poland occurred in his reign. The First Partition, effected in 1772, of which no more will be said here, was a natural consequence of the weakness of Poland confronted by aggressiveness of Prussia and Russia. The Second and Third Partitions were to be less simple.

The shock of the First Partition speeded up the development of a new kind of political consciousness that had come into evidence since the middle of the eighteenth century. It is hard to form an accurate impression of the social changes or emerging interests that motivated the new ideas. Polish historians in recent years have devoted a good deal of thought and research to this period. Their work seems to me, by the usual Western standards, to be the best that has been done in any of the countries where a Marxist frame of history is officially prescribed.

In Marxism, not much can happen in history without a "bourgeoisie," and the new writers therefore point to a bourgeois development. They note, for example, how Warsaw quadrupled in size in the thirty years after 1764. This does not necessarily prove much in the way of economic progress in the eighteenth century, when Palermo was larger than Lyons, and Dublin twice as big as Manchester; still, the number of Polish burghers, of a certain level of wealth, was undoubtedly increasing. The new school emphasizes, however, that it was usually the landed nobles who functioned as "bourgeois." In Poland it was the nobles who controlled the means of production. Using their rights of lordship and their unfree labor, they undertook to enter more profitably into a market economy, either by intensifying their agriculture, or by exploiting the mineral and forest wealth on their estates. There was no strong separate productive or manufacturing interest, distinct from the nobles; and since the nobles, even the economically enterprising ones, used their incomes mainly for consumption, to obtain the amenities of civilized living from the West, or to keep up their political followings, capital accumulation was

very slow. Nevertheless, some nobles came more often into association with merchants, bankers, and other burghers, and were even prepared for legal changes in which burghers would have the right to buy and own land, since the value and flexibility of landed assets would thus be heightened. Town capitalists, on the other hand (such as existed in Poland), that is, burghers desiring to develop new industries, behaved somewhat like nobles in their reliance on servile labor. The new Polish school finds also that serf rebellions were more common than bourgeois historiography has allowed for. The same argument exists in American historiography, on the alleged degree of contentment or rebelliousness of Negro slaves before 1861, and, all things considered, it seems likely enough that sporadic serf uprisings were common, or more common than one would gather from the works of many historians. There was not, however, in Poland, even in 1794, any such mass upheaval as in Russia under Pugachev in 1773, or in France during the revolution of 1789, or in Hungary or even in Bohemia at the same time. That burghers offered no leadership to peasants, that burghers and peasants felt no common ties, that burghers in eighteenth-century Poland were not vehemently antiaristocratic, that some nobles were beginning to operate as capitalist entrepreneurs, that capitalism in Poland developed in conjunction with a kind of feudalism and carried over attitudes toward labor inherited from the days of serfdom, and that all this was decisive for the history of Poland and Eastern Europe, and of capitalism and socialism, into the twentieth century—seem to be propositions that historians under no obligations to Marxism can share with the new Polish school.

Poland, too, had its intellectual Enlightenment, which as in all countries in varying degree was both native and imported. The papal dissolution of the Society of Jesus was followed, as in other Catholic countries, notably France, by important educational reforms. The Educational Commission set up in Poland in 1773 has been called the first national ministry of education. It introduced new programs into the schools vacated by the Jesuits, and the aim in these programs, made more urgent by the lesson of the First Partition, was to offer a new training in citizenship and the arts of state, in place of the older literary and rhetorical emphasis. The University of Cracow was modernized by Hugo Kollontay, who observed that “we want no colonies of Plato’s republic,” and sought to give a practical training in public responsibilities.⁹ The Jesuits, in their system of teaching, had provided for a kind of Oxford Union, or mock parliament, in which young men learned how to conduct themselves in the diet, and, in particular, how to execute a *Liberum Veto* with *éclat*. Reformers now saw the *Liberum Veto* as a main source of Poland’s ills, and in the new schools, as in the *Collegium Nobilium* of the Piarist fathers at Warsaw, where many leaders of the revolutionary generation received their schooling, the *Liberum Veto* was dropped from the academic exercises of the youth.¹⁰

By the 1780’s the works of Beccaria and Filangieri, of Adam Smith, Locke, and Blackstone, of Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Mably, and Condillac were all known in Polish translation. The organization of Freemasonry also pro-

⁹ Lesnodorski, in *Pologne au X^e Congrès*, 187.

¹⁰ B. Lesnodorski, *Dzielo sejmni czteroletniego* (The Work of the Four Years’ Diet) (Wrocław, 1951), 87. I am indebted to Mr. Andre Michalski for examining this and other works in Polish for me.

vided international contacts, and various of King Stanislas' reforming advisers, like the Swiss Glayre and the Italian Piattoli, were Masons. These foreign associations, and the reading of foreign books, give evidence of a fermentation of political and intellectual interests, but the idea that the Polish revolution was caused by Masons and *philosophes*, though it has been alleged, is hard to sustain. Experience was to show that no foreign Masons were to support the Polish revolution, and the influence of Rousseau operated in contrary directions. For example, the patriot Wielhorski, the man who had induced Rousseau to write his tract on Poland, had two sons, one of whom supported the constitution of 1791, while the other fought against it, both loudly declaring that they were carrying on their father's and Rousseau's true ideas.¹¹ Montesquieu's doctrine of the balance of powers was appealed to both by the old-fashioned party that sensed despotism in any strengthening of the King, and by the reforming party that desired a more independent executive. Elsewhere in Europe, Montesquieu was generally the favorite of the aristocratic upholders of the constituted bodies—of the Hungarian diet, the French parlements, or the English House of Commons. It seems that in Poland Montesquieu was an oracle for the monarchists also, for the party that is, that sought to achieve reforms by counterbalancing the aristocracy in the diet.¹²

The first Polish periodical appeared in 1763, and by 1789 there were about a dozen of them, mostly in Polish, but some in German for German-speaking burghers, and some in French for the Warsaw diplomatic community and for more cosmopolitan Poles. The first public theater was established at Warsaw in 1765, so that the stage ceased to be the exclusively private pleasure of aristocratic houses. Efforts were made to modernize the Polish language, and increase its use in place of Latin, German, and French; thus a book of 1782 set forth a vocabulary of Polish terms for the iron industry. The twenty years following 1772 saw the appearance of 109 books devoted to agriculture, in which such far-reaching questions as the free market in land, and emancipation of rural labor, were sometimes raised. By the 1780's, books and pamphlets on political questions were fairly common. A few reforms, of incidental kind, were enacted before 1788: the lord lost the right of capital punishment over his serf, and judicial torture and the crime of witchcraft were abolished. There had come to be, in place of the old speechifying of rustic assemblies, a public opinion of more modern kind on modern questions.

The two leading spokesmen of this Polish enlightenment were Stanislas Staszic and Hugo Kollontay. Staszic, a burgher, in a book of 1785 that was widely read, called for a hereditary instead of an elective monarchy, abolition of the *Liberum Veto*, higher taxes, a larger army, industrial development, and emancipation of the serfs. Kollontay, born into the lesser nobility and trained for the church, and already known as the reformer of the University of Cracow, was to be the chief luminary of the "bourgeois" or Western-type revolution in Poland, active both in the Four Years' Diet and in the ensuing rebellion under Kosciuszko. In 1788, just before the opening of the Four Years' Diet, he began to publish his influential *Anonymous*

11 On Masonry and the influence of Rousseau, see Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste*, 501, 656–57.

12 On the uses made of Montesquieu in Poland see Lesnodorski, *Dzielo*, 112–13, and W. Smolenski, *Monteskiusz w Polsce w 18 w* (Warsaw, 1927), for knowledge of whose contents I am indebted to Mr. Michalski.

Letters, in which he demanded much the same radical changes as Staszic. On the basic requirements of a reviving Poland the most active-minded nobles and burghers were agreed, and together they formed the patriot party; but for reasons that should now be clear, most of the reformers were in fact nobles.

THE POLISH REVOLUTION: THE CONSTITUTION OF 1791

Neither Russia nor Prussia desired a strong or independent Poland on its borders, and Catherine II in particular, enjoying a paramount influence throughout the whole country after the First Partition, wished for matters in Poland to remain just as they were. Since she now expected to dominate Poland through the Polish government itself, she did force the diet, in 1773, to create a few new executive organs, notably a Permanent Commission of thirty-six members, who subdivided into special branches which functioned as ministries. She also kept Russian troops in occupation of the country. Otherwise she was an eloquent partisan of the "Polish liberties" under the old constitution. It was this constitution, with its elective monarchy, its *Liberum Veto*, and its fifty regional assemblies, modified only by the addition of the Permanent Commission, that she guaranteed in 1773. European monarchs, as Rousseau told the Poles, were fond of liberty for their neighbors because they believed that liberty made men weak. Nor can this cynical opinion be called mistaken, so far as liberty meant the *aurea libertas* of Poland, or the Swedish liberties of the Freedom Era, or the *ware vrijheid* of the Dutch, or the liberties of the ancient Holy Roman Empire or of new American states under the Articles of Confederation.

The reform party therefore had two adversaries to contend with: on the one hand, a strong group among the Polish magnates, and, on the other, Russia.¹³ Among magnates partial to the old ways, the most important were the Branicki and Felix Potocki, whose holdings in the Ukraine have been described. They saw in the Russian influence a protection for liberty and for serfdom. Prominent in the reform party was King Stanislas himself, restless in the satellite position to which Catherine had consigned him, surrounding himself with Polish and West European liberals, wishing well to all his people, even the Jews—for he had met Amsterdam Jews in his youth, and seems to have been the only Polish reformer to take an interest in the Jews of Poland, and in the problem which they presented. Eagerly receptive to all kinds of new ideas, Stanislas in 1788 hired Jefferson's friend, Philip Mazzei, as his agent in Paris, to report on events there, and to plant the picture of a new and reviving Poland in the press of France and Holland. The reforming group was led also by certain of the magnates, notably Ignace Potocki, the

13 On the Polish Revolution, 1788–1792, see the works cited in notes 4 and 10 above; C. Dany, *Les idées politiques et l'esprit publique en Pologne à la fin du 18^e siècle: La constitution du 3 mai 1791* (Paris, 1901); J. Klotz, *L'oeuvre législative de la Diète de Quatre Ans* (Paris, 1913). The chief account by participants available in a Western language is that published anonymously in 1793, in two volumes in German translation, by Kollontay (Kollataj) and others: *Vom Entstehung und Untergang der polnischen Konstitution vom 3 may 1791*. I shall deal later with the more fully revolutionary effort of Kosciusko's rebellion of 1794.

Radziwills, and the Czartoryskis; and it shaded off, as an incipient national party, into the ranks of the middling gentry and of those burghers who were emerging from the timidity of second-class citizenship, and beginning to have opinions on political subjects.

The patriots awaited the momentary embarrassment of Russia to begin action on their program. The opportunity came in 1788, when Russia became involved in the Turkish war. A diet, to be called the Four Years' Diet, met at Warsaw in October 1788. It soon "confederated" itself, that is, took an action which freed it from the *Liberum Veto* in matters of taxation and the army. In the Diet three parties soon appeared. One called itself Republican; these were the conservative magnates, with their hordes of *glota*, the barefoot gentry who were their retainers. Nostalgic for the old-time freedom, quick to sniff out despotism in the plans of their opponents, they were also pro-Russian. In the middle was the party of the King, humane and benevolent, brought by Mazzei and others to share the ideas of the American Revolution, yet deterred and frustrated by the belief, which was realistic enough, that any effective reform in Poland would awaken the displeasure of Russia. Bolder than the King's party were the Patriots, a mixed group which ranged from those who wanted only a few constitutional changes, such as a stronger executive, through those who felt a need for economic legislation to stimulate production, on to true radicals like Kollontay, who hoped, in addition, for emancipation of the serfs. The Patriots accepted the friendly approaches of Prussia, which, for its own purposes, to offset the Russian influence, and in the hope of obtaining Danzig and Thorn in exchange, decided in 1788 to support the party of reform. The Patriots allowed themselves to make the most inflammatory anti-Russian speeches. They succeeded in getting rid of the Permanent Commission, which they detested as a Russian device, and even in inducing Catherine to withdraw the Russian soldiers. With Russian pressure thus relieved, the way seemed clear for an integral reconstruction. For a long time nothing much happened except more harangues in the Diet. *Oratoribus periit Graecia*, the King wrote to Mazzei, for he was keenly aware of the passage of time, and was afraid that after all the insult and provocation to Russia, when the Turkish war ended, as it soon would, the Russian hold would be clamped more firmly upon the country.

Outside the Diet not much happened, at least in Poland itself. There was no unusual violence, no popular upheaval bringing pressure on the Diet from outside. The Polish revolution remained, as it were, within parliamentary channels—for which in some quarters it was later much praised. It may be that in this Polish revolution the greatest event was the revolution in France. Mazzei, in Paris, denounced the obstructionism of French aristocracy in his bulletins to Warsaw.¹⁴ News of the fall of the Bastille created a sensation. Conscious of a revolution in their own midst, learning excitedly of the one in Paris, and remembering the one in America at the opposite extremity of Western Civilization, where Kosciusko and Pulaski and a dozen

14 On Mazzei's service to Poland see Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste*, 507–22 and *passim*; R. Ciampini, ed., *Lettere di Filippo Mazzei alia corte di Polonia* (Bologna, 1937). There seems to be no special study of any influence of the American Revolution in Poland, but M. Haiman, *Poland and the American Revolutionary War* (Chicago, 1932), gives details on over a dozen Poles in America during the Revolution.

others had fought, the Poles formed an impression of revolution on a worldwide scale. The abbé Switkowski, a former Jesuit, and now editor of the chief Polish language journal in Warsaw, published the American and French Declarations of Rights. "In 1789," he wrote in February 1790, "the world was shaken by convulsions and a new era began for the human race in Europe. . . . There has been nothing like it since the crusades. . . . As men then fought for the Holy Land it is now for Holy Liberty that they fight. The desire to be free has become a madness at Paris, and has spread East, West and South." Switkowski favored this "madness"; he even approved the French Civil Constitution of the Clergy.¹⁵

The great event in Poland in 1789 occurred in November. Over a year had now passed since the diet met, and nothing positive had been done, when on November 24, urged on by Kollontay, spokesmen for 141 towns signed an Act of Union at Warsaw. It seems very likely that the level of their expectations had been raised by news of events in France. The act, submitted as a petition to the King, modestly requested a few burgher rights, including representation in the diet itself.

In the diet the general feeling was one of shock. Some members were so incensed that they threatened to leave the assembly if burghers were admitted. All members were gentry and noble, and even the patriots among them had hardly imagined that anyone else should take part in saving the country. There was something subversive about 141 towns banding together. The effects of the French Revolution cut both ways. However moderate the real intent of a Polish reformer might be, if he spoke with favor of the French Revolution, or of the Americans, or alluded to the revolutionary character of the age, or saw in it a sign of the direction in which Poland should be moving, he aroused alarm and consternation, and called up visions, even in 1790, the mildest year of the French Revolution, of aristocrats humiliated by lawyers and country gentlemen insulted by peasants gotten out of hand. Another year passed in the Polish diet with much talk and no action. In the end what happened was a good deal of a compromise.

Late in 1790 the diet adopted the first of three measures for which it is remembered. It excluded landless nobles from attendance at the regional assemblies. This move was a blow against the magnates, and constituted a victory for the reform party, or for the middling nobles who sought to "democratize" Poland by curbing the great lords with their troops of personal followers. This accomplished, the reformers again took up the plea of the towns. There was still much opposition; there were many who thought it outrageous, after disfranchising almost half the nobles, to consider the grant of political powers to the burgher class. At the same time there was a sense of crisis. The designs of Prussia on Danzig and Thorn were known, and Russia, concluding its Turkish war, could be expected soon to make its will felt in Poland. The high point in the debate on the towns was a speech by Niemcewicz. It expressed one of the revolutionary ideas of this revolutionary era, soon to be demonstrated also in France: that liberty, and the extension of rights, far from making a country weak, as the old doctrine held, actually might contribute to its power and its capacity for survival.

15 J. Grossbart, "La presse polonaise et la Révolution française," in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, vol. XIV, 1937, 139. Lesnodorski, *Dzielo*, 84.

"The nobility by itself," said Niemcewicz, "is incapable of defending the country against the ambitious designs of its enemies. Only by a joining of all estates can the Republic increase its strength and its powers of resistance. No one knows to whom Washington owes his birth, and no one knows who Franklin's ancestors were. Yet it is to these two famous men that America owes its liberty and independence." We need the burghers, declared the noble Niemcewicz, and it is in our interest for them to be prosperous and productive. Let us offer liberty and property rights, "and we shall see swarms of immigrants from foreign regions come and settle under our government."¹⁶

A few days later, on April 18, 1791, the diet enacted the Statute of the Cities, the second of its principal acts. So great, however, was the conflict in these debates, so acute was the mounting danger from neighboring powers felt to be, and so much time had been lost since October 1788, that the reform party despaired of obtaining a new constitution by deliberation and agreement. Prince Radziwill, Ignace Potocki, Hugo Kollontay, and others held a series of secret meetings with King Stanislas, who produced a paper that he called "Thoughts of an Elderly Citizen," and which his patriot coworkers seized upon as a very acceptable draft constitution. By prearrangement, at a meeting of the diet from which a good many of the conservatives were absent, the King made a speech on the national emergency and the need for instant action, and he produced his draft, which a tumultuous diet forthwith adopted "by acclamation." Thus arose the famous Constitution of the Third of May. It explicitly incorporated the Statute of Cities, and the two together may be regarded as the Polish constitution of 1791.¹⁷

The monarchy was made hereditary in the house of Saxony. The executive was made stronger and more independent, its weakness in the past being called the main source of Poland's troubles. Separate articles, in the manner of the United States constitution of 1787, but inspired more directly by Montesquieu and the theory of the British constitution, provided for executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The *Liberum Veto* was declared abolished, and decision by plurality vote was required. Roman Catholicism was announced to be the national religion, with toleration promised to others. Landed nobles were confirmed in historic rights. Nothing was done for the peasants, except for a specious clause assuring government protection for voluntary bilateral agreements between master and serf. The opening phrase, that Stanislas was King by grace of God and "the nation," was more likely to annoy his fellow monarchs than to strengthen Poland.

It is the new relationship between burghers and nobles that is of most interest. There was nothing like the new principle of national citizenship currently laid down in France. Indeed, one of the concessions made by the Patriots to the conservatives, during the debates, was to avoid the very words "citizen" and "nation" in

16 Klotz, 357–58; Dany, 189–90.

17 The text of the Constitution of May 3 is printed in French by Klotz, and was printed in French at the time in the Paris *Moniteur* of May 24, 1791. For the text of the equally important Statute of Cities, persons not knowing Polish must apparently resort to the old K. H. L. Politz, *Die europäischen Verfassungen seit dem Jahre 1789* (Leipzig, 1832–33), III, 4–8. For the constitution see also Appendix III, item 4, below.

the drafting of the new law.¹⁸ Rights for burghers were to be burgher rights, and to depend on affiliation with a particular town, but modern principles of the state were admitted in one way, in that all burghers were to enjoy the same rights. A burgher moving from one recognized town to another was to possess the same rights in the new town as in the old. No town could refuse the burgher right to any qualified person who applied for it. Even this much, as readers of this book will perceive, would appear “revolutionary” in Nuremberg or Geneva. The towns lost some of the old privileges and autonomies of medieval type. Lvov, for example, lost the old staple right which had required all goods passing through the city to be stopped and resold for the benefit of Lvov merchants.

It was only to Royal Cities that the Statute of April 18 applied, cities, that is, which held or might receive charters from the King. Populated centers having “the form of a city,” if on royal lands, would receive charters on request. Populated centers on lands belonging to nobles, if inhabited by freemen or by peasants that the lord was willing to free, might be set up as cities by the lord if he so wished, and upon petition by the lord to the King they might receive a royal charter.

Every resident of such a town, if a freeman (not a serf), and a Christian (not a Jew), was to have himself enrolled as a burgher in the Burgher Book. Nobles might enroll as burghers if they wished; those owning property or doing business in a town were required to enroll, and to come under burgher law, without prejudice to their noble status. Towns were to enjoy local self-government, and all property-owning burghers were to elect, and be eligible to, the town offices. Burghers were allowed to buy and enjoy full property rights in “noble” land, that is, rural estates. They received access to public office, to higher appointments in the church, and to commissions in the army, except the cavalry. To them was granted the historic right of the nobles, *neminem captivabimus nisi prius victus*; that is, the King would not imprison them unless they were first convicted in a court of law.

A compromise was reached on burgher representation in the diet. Twenty-one towns were to send representatives, but since the opinion prevailed that only nobles sent by the provincial diets could be “deputies,” the town representatives were called “plenipotentiaries,” as if the spokesmen of a somewhat alien power. These town delegates were to sit on the tax and police commissions of the diet. They could not be refused the right to speak, but could cast a vote only on commercial matters or other matters affecting the cities. The idea persisted that burghers were unsuited to affairs of state, and a law subsequent to May 3 prescribed that cabinet ministers must be men of inherited noble rank.

It was made easy, however, for burghers to be promoted to the nobility. This provision, among all constitutions of the period, was peculiar to the constitution of

18 Lesnodorski, *Dzielo*, 156. Lesnodorski contrasts the petition of the towns and the projects drafted by Kollontay and Ignace Potocky with the final enactments of the diet. He believes that the diet made the burgher rights purposely complicated in order to befuddle the issue and grant less in reality than in appearance; and he quotes a remark of Ignace Potocky to the King, that it was necessary to “flatter” peasants and burghers, but that it would later be possible “gradually to remove all that which is excessive.” See p. 155. He attributes, however, the disinclination to grant rights to burghers, or more executive power to the King, not so much to the magnates as to the agrarian republicanism, with corresponding patriotic and literary traditions, of the gentry as a whole. Here again I am indebted to Mr. Michalski.

Poland, and it reveals, on the one hand, how remote from its authors' minds was the idea of abolishing legal status, and, on the other, how the Polish nobility was less jealously exclusive, less preoccupied with pedigree, more conscious of being simply a general upper class, even in a vague sense more "democratic," than most of the aristocracies in the West. By the statute, any burgher who bought an "entire village," on which he paid at least 200 guilders in taxes, could become a noble. Burghers serving two years as town delegates in the diet, and those reaching the rank of captain in the army, were also to be nobles. In addition, each diet was to ennoble thirty burghers who had obtained distinction in the army, the government service, as factory owners, or as merchants selling native products. In short, burghers of notable achievement, or those especially useful to the country, were to be absorbed, or drained off, year by year, into the noble class.

A GAME OF IDEOLOGICAL FOOTBALL

News of the Polish Revolution was at first received with satisfaction throughout the Western World. Persons of the most contrary opinions found something in it to approve, but precisely in the universality of these praises there lay a danger, for by 1791 the world of Atlantic Civilization, if the term be permitted, had become aware of deep ideological cleavages, and it aroused the suspicion of each party to hear Poland so loudly eulogized by the other. As always, observers used Poland to draw a lesson or read a lecture. Poland was caught in the cross-fire of argument over the French Revolution. It was kicked about in a game of ideological football.

"A great and important Revolution in favor of the rights of man . . . happily begun without violence or tumult . . . a most wonderful revolution. . . ." So said the *Gazette of the United States*, published at Philadelphia. It put to shame, according to these Americans, the constitution given to Canada at the same time by the British. Toasts "to the King of Poland" were drunk at Philadelphia and at Richmond. Poets warmed to the subject:

Waked by the vernal breeze, see Poland, France
With youth renew'd and vig'rous health advance.

Thomas Paine considered applying for Polish citizenship, and Joel Barlow, also in Europe and caught up in the international revolutionary spirit, wrote a long and enthusiastic letter to the Polish King.¹⁹

In Holland, the *Leiden Gazette* thought that "if there are any miracles in this century, one has happened in Poland." The London *Critical Review*, surveying the new Polish, French, and United States federal constitutions together, found that the Polish had "caught its spirit" from the American. Peter Ochs, at Basel, saw in the Polish revolution, as in the French and American, a sign of world renewal.²⁰

19 M. Haiman, *The Fall of Poland in Contemporary American Opinion* (Chicago, 1935), 38–62.

20 *Gazette de Leyde*, numbers 37, 39 and 40 of 1791; *Critical Review*, Sept.–Dec. 1791, 443; on Ochs, above, 269.

In France the revolutionaries, who had now been remaking France for two years, at first hailed the Polish revolution with delight. The sections of the revolutionary Paris municipality sent their congratulations. Lyons did likewise, and little Marenne and Neuf-Brisach and Valognes and many others. The first reports of the Warsaw correspondent of the *Moniteur* were enthusiastic.²¹ In France, in May 1791 (a month before Varennes), there was a growing fear of a conspiracy of kings, including Louis XVI, against the Revolution. The journalists of Paris therefore brandished the virtuous King of Poland in the face of his royal brothers. The monarchs of Europe, declared Prudhomme in his *Révolutions de Paris*, had better make haste to issue a constitution to their peoples, like the King of Poland, before their peoples rebelled against them as in France.²² Camille Desmoulins took a less elated but still menacing tone. In 1789 he had founded a newspaper called the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, which in April 1791 he significantly reentitled the *Revolutions of France and other Kingdoms which by demanding a National Assembly . . . will deserve a place in the annals of Liberty*. He observed scornfully that the new Polish constitution confirmed the nobles in their old privileges, and that in the admission of burghers to the army an exception was made for the cavalry, "the horse being so noble an animal that it can be constitutionally mounted only by a gentleman." "Still," he concluded, "we must be fair. Considering where the people of Poland began, they have made as great a leap toward liberty as we have. Doubtless they will come closer to the Declaration of Rights, for *il n'y a quelle premier pas qui coûte*."²³

Such praises from the revolutionary direction, such intimations that events in Poland were a mere first step, had many disturbing repercussions. They were embarrassing to King Stanislas and the Polish reformers. They proved, so to speak, the worst that the Russian tsarina and the unreconstructed Polish magnates could say about Jacobinism in Poland. And they induced other admirers of the Polish Revolution (as, indeed, of the American) to dismiss any such association with France with a shudder, and to argue that in reality, and strictly speaking, there had been no revolution in Poland at all, or at least to dwell with approval on its great moderation. The purpose in this line of argument was to discredit the French Revolution.

The editor of a German-language paper at Warsaw, the *Warschauer Wochenschrift*, found the new Polish arrangements far more to his taste than the French. "In both countries the burgher estate feels more fortunate, but how different the way in which it has become so! There, the burgher drives the noble out of the temple. Here, the noble offers the burgher his hand. There, discord, women and democrats. Here, friends, men, substance."²⁴ Mallet du Pan and others of conservative disposition throughout Europe amplified essentially this same simple message. Most notable among them was Edmund Burke. In the words of a modern French scholar, Burke assumed a "philosophical protectorate over the Polish revolution."²⁵ He had

21 Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste*, 526–30; *Moniteur*, May 7, 1791.

22 *Révolutions de Paris*, May 14–21, 1791, VIII, 274.

23 *Révolutions de France . . .*, number 79 (April, 1791), 33–37.

24 Grossbart, as in note 15 above, 190.

25 Fabre, 527.

lately published his *Reflections* on the Revolution in France. He now took the occasion to show what he meant by a revolution that was good and constructive.

There is, or was, in the archives at Warsaw a series of letters from Burke to King Stanislas, in which he expressed his enthusiasm.²⁶ For the English, he expressed it in his *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*.

Anarchy and servitude at once removed . . . ten millions of men in a way of being freed gradually. . . . Everything kept in its place and order; but in that place and order everything bettered. . . . Unheard of conjunction of wisdom and fortune. . . . Not one drop of blood spilled. . . . No studied insults on religion, morals, or manners. . . . True and genuine, rights and interests of men. . . . Regular progress . . . towards the stable excellence of a British Constitution.²⁷

Burke, of course, like everyone else, was using Poland as a stick with which to beat his own enemies, particularly the French Revolution and those New Whigs who felt a certain sympathy toward it. Poland proved that the French Revolution was entirely unnecessary. Why did these New Whigs, he asked, these people like Fox and Sheridan and Mackintosh, persist in their partiality to the French Revolution, and show such embarrassed reservation in their praises of the Polish, unless it was that they wished to undermine the constitution in England? And he reviewed the history of the era and of his own opinions, to refute the charge that he had contradicted himself: he had favored the American Revolution because it made no demand for new liberties, but was purely defensive, the only issue being novel Parliamentary taxation; and it was perfectly consistent for him, as a warm friend of true liberty, to oppose the instruction of members and the so-called reform of Parliament, to prevent the introduction of French principles into the Canada Act, to view with alarm the sprouting of English political clubs, and to see no merit in the French Revolution (and he might have added the Dutch), while calling attention to events in Poland as a model of orderly liberation.

In France, the revolutionaries soon perceived that the success of the Polish Revolution, or its alleged success (which was to be brief), was being used against them. It was being exploited to represent the French as wildly visionary and wantonly violent. Prudhomme, of the *Révolutions de Paris*, changed his tune in one week. Our enemies harp on Poland to discredit us. "The monarchs, our neighbors, to escape the great revolution that menaces them in their own countries, are going to provoke little ones themselves. They will reach understandings with their subjects. To prevent imitation of us, they will take care to exaggerate our losses and to minimize our gains, and will glory like Stanislas in their moderation."²⁸ The truth is, he said, that the Polish revolution is a fraud. There has really been none. The serfs remain where they were, and the burghers have been thrown crumbs from the noble table. The same view was taken by a then well-known revolutionary militant, Mehée de la Touche, who early in 1792 published his *Histoire de la prétendue révolution de Pologne*. He poured contempt on Poland and the Poles. He observed that

26 For these letters of Burke's see Fabre, 679, notes 118–20.

27 Burke, *Writings* (1901), IV, 195–97.

28 *Révolutions de Paris*, May 21–28, 1791, VIII, 311–16.

neither serfs nor Jews had obtained any rights. "I suppose that no one," he said, "can seriously argue that the ennoblement of a few bourgeois is a good thing for the bourgeoisie."²⁹ It became the settled opinion, in France, to scoff at the Polish Revolution as a mere agitation among aristocrats. Meanwhile, however, the praises at first received from revolutionaries and radicals in the West—from the Paris sections, the London clubs, Joel Barlow, Condorcet, Sieyès and others—had put King Stanislas into a difficult situation. He felt obliged to dissociate himself from charges of Jacobinism. By parading his own moderation he hoped to ward off intervention by Russia or Prussia, and to win the support of gentry and nobles for the new order.

"Our law of May 3, and everything that has come out of it since," said King Stanislas in April 1792, as Europe was going to war, "are almost the opposite of the French Revolution and keep us very far from democracy, and hence all the more from the Jacobins." He insisted, to gain confidence in his leadership, that he had himself suppressed peasant rebellions by force, and dissolved the artisan associations that might have grown into political clubs. "The Polish bourgeoisie," he averred, "far from affecting a tone of equality with the nobles, has always evinced the greatest respect for its superiors, whom it rightly regards as its benefactors."³⁰

By the first part of the year 1792, in short, there was general agreement that nothing had happened in Poland that was at all like the French Revolution. Western Conservatives and revolutionaries, and the Polish King himself and some other makers of the Third of May, each took this position, each for his own reasons.

Yet there had been, it seems to me, as it seems to Professor Lesnodorski and other modern Polish writers, a significant and even a dangerous revolution in Poland, or would be if the new constitution could be maintained.³¹ This revolution ignited a center of conflagration in Eastern Europe secondary only to the one in France. The comparison and the contrast to the French Revolution were after all in large measure irrelevant. By the French standard, in either action or principle, the Polish Revolution was a tame affair. It was not so tame for Poland, or for Eastern Europe. In Poland, the constitution of May 3 threatened to end the oligarchy of the magnates. The middling landed nobles who were the chief gainers, reinforced by less numerous burghers, were not wholly negligible in numbers; if there were 400,000 of them in a population of 8,000,000 they constituted over a twentieth of the population, probably not very different from the proportion that voted for Parliament in Great Britain.

Eastern Europe, except for Poland, at this time meant the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian monarchies. In none of them, with exceptions for Hungary, was there any elected parliamentary body with powers like those now contemplated for the Polish diet. All of them were lands of peasant serfdom, and while the Polish constitution did nothing to emancipate the peasants, it was in part the work of men, like Kollontay, whose thoughts moved in this direction. In none of the three monarchies did towns enjoy such self-government as was envisaged for Poland. Even in the West,

29 Pp. 2, 143; see also *Moniteur*, January 7, 1792.

30 Fabre, 531.

31 Lesnodorski on p. 211, Jablonski on p. 256 of *La Pologne au X Congrès international*; but they see the uprising of 1794 as far more truly revolutionary.

even in England, there were few towns where each property-owner could actually cast a vote for councilman or mayor. In neither Russia, Prussia, nor the Hapsburg empire were burghers as free to acquire rural land as under the new Polish laws. Nor could they so readily rise into the gentry. It was easy for French democrats to laugh at the Statute of Cities, or for conservatives of all Western nationalities to praise its realistic correspondence to the facts of Polish life. It was nevertheless disturbing for Eastern Europe. There is evidence, indeed, that East Europeans saw it as such, and agreed with Niemcewicz that it might threaten neighboring powers by attracting immigrants into Poland. The Austrian minister at Warsaw, on April 27, 1791, was of this opinion, "Would it not be prudent," he inquired of Vienna on reporting the terms of the new Statute, "to take the necessary measures to prevent emigration of our Galician burghers?"³² The monarchs and the hier-archs of Eastern Europe were by no means mistaken in detecting in the Polish constitution a disconcerting odor of Jacobinism. Leopold II of Austria, characteristically enough, was the only one who said anything in its favor, and he soon died.³³

Neither its touted moderation, nor the hearty approval of Edmund Burke, was enough to save the Polish constitution from extinction. Moderation was not at bottom the true issue. Nor was it the bloodshed and the "excesses" of the French Revolution that caused the most resentment. Modern principles of the state, or ideas with a democratic tinge, even when moderately stated, as by Dutch Patriots, Belgian democrats, Genevese Représentants, English and Irish parliamentary reformers, or William Pitt himself, had for ten years met with nothing but repression or failure. The same happened in Poland. Disgruntled magnates, led by Felix Potocki and the Branicki, formed the Confederation of Targowica. Raising up their followers they declared war on the new regime. They accepted Russian intervention to crush it. "I shall fight Jacobinism, and beat it in Poland," the Empress Catherine wrote to Grimm in 1792.³⁴ This she did, with aid from the King of Prussia. The Polish constitution of 1791 survived only a year, and Poland itself was cut up by the Second Partition. But we encroach here on the story of the international counterrevolution, which I shall develop at length in a later place.

There was another country too big to be bullied, then the most populous state in the world of Western Civilization, still at the height of its cultural leadership, in the forefront of science, engineering, and the military arts, busy and wealthy, full of peasants who were not serfs, of aristocrats who were not cowboys, and bulging with bourgeois, the most brilliant and the most dangerous of all the peoples of Europe, as it seemed to Tocqueville. It is time, after the involved narrative of preceding chapters, to turn to the French Revolution.

32 Dany, *Idées politiques*, 195–96.

33 On reaction of the East European courts see the French summary of the Polish work of S. Smolka, "L'Europe et la constitution du 3 mai 1791," in *Bulletin international de l'Académie des sciences de Cracovie*, 1891.

34 *La Pologne au X^e Congrès international*, 216. John Adams remarked, in a note added to his *Défense* at some time not before 1797, that a constitution may fail because of "circumstances having nothing to do with its intrinsic excellence," and that if the United States were in the geographical position of Poland, given the controversies that existed in America, it was "at least an open question" whether troubles as bad as those of Poland might not have developed under the constitution of the United States. *Works* (1851), IV, 374 n.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: THE ARISTOCRATIC RESURGENCE

The Monarchy might become an aristocracy of magistrates, as contrary to the rights and interests of the nation as to those of the sovereign power.

—LOUIS XVI TO THE PARLEMENT OF PARIS, 1788

No, Sire, no aristocracy in France, but no despotism either.

—THE PARLEMENT OF PARIS IN REPLY

That the French Revolution had points of resemblance to movements of the time in other countries is the central theme of this book. Like them, it arose out of circumstances characteristic of Western Civilization, and it was to merge with them, especially with the war that began in 1792, into a great struggle that no political borders could contain. From the beginning, however, there was much that was unique about the revolution in France.

The very size of France was enough to make its Revolution a special case. Fifty French cities in 1789 were larger than the Boston of the Tea Party. Paris, except for London, was by far the greatest city of Europe, having, with over 600,000 people, three times the population of Amsterdam or Vienna. Twenty-six million Frenchmen outnumbered the British and the Spanish by more than two to one. Only small and divided German and Italian states lay along France's eastern border. The French outnumbered the subjects of the Russian Empire until after the partitions of Poland; and if they were not much more numerous than those of the Hapsburg dominions, they greatly excelled them in wealth, in national unity, and in complexity of social structure. The actual revenues of the Bourbon monarchy, whose inadequacy brought on the Revolution of 1789, nevertheless approached 500,000,000 livres a year, and were larger than those of Great Britain, twice as large as those of

the Hapsburg monarchy, over three times those of Russia, Prussia, Spain, or the Dutch Republic, and twenty-five times those of the United States federal government in the 1790's. France in 1794 was to put almost a million men into uniform, a feat accomplished nowhere else until much later.

This huge country was no monolith. It was extremely diversified, and different conditions obtained from one province to another. A few generalizations may yet be made. The nobility, at the highest estimate, numbered 400,000 persons of all ages and both sexes, so that, though numerous, it made up less than two per cent of the population, in contrast to the four to eight per cent in Hungary and Poland. There were not over 100,000 priests, monks, and nuns, a surprisingly low figure for a Catholic country, for the proportion of clergy in Protestant England seems to have been much greater. Clergy and nobility, as is well known, were legally the two higher "orders." No one knows the number of bourgeois, the word itself being hard to define; but the aggregate population of the fifty largest towns was about 2,200,000. Where in Poland all the people in the fifty largest towns were less numerous than the nobles, they were over five times as numerous as the nobles in France. Only a fraction of townsmen could be called "bourgeois," but on the other hand, in France, a good many "bourgeois" lived in small villages or in the country. The interpenetration of town and country was in fact one of the distinctive features of French society. Lawyers, government employees, innkeepers, a few doctors, retired soldiers, people drawing income from property, lived among the agricultural population. Often there were family ties between townsmen and countrymen. The latter might have matters of business that took them into town. The peasants lived within a kind of manorial system, but there was little that recalled personal serfdom. Peasants could be landowners, as landed property was defined in the manorial context; and although most peasants owned either none or not enough, there were a good many that owned enough land, and raised enough of a crop, to be an embryonic rural bourgeoisie. There were wide variations from region to region, but on a rough average for the whole country it is thought that peasants owned over thirty per cent of the land, the nobles considerably less, the bourgeoisie about twenty per cent, the clergy ten or less, and the crown the remainder. The mighty barriers of Central and Eastern Europe between town and country, or class and class, were worn down in France to fences that could be seen across and even climbed. It was possible for ideas to circulate throughout rural France with remarkable speed, and enough common ground existed for town and country to react alike, and together, to an economic or political or psychological stimulus. Causes of class conflict existed, but when France is compared with the rest of Europe it is the extent of community that seems most important.

Large and complex, France enjoyed a qualitative preeminence also. It was the most active center of the European Enlightenment. Its language was the most international of all modern tongues. The French thought it natural to be imitated by others; they had been imitated in the age of the Gothic cathedrals, and again in the age of Louis XIV, and in the eighteenth century the upper classes of courts and salons, and the intellectuals of academies and reading clubs, commonly looked to France as a country from which much might be learned. The French Revolution occurred in one of the most advanced centers of civilization. The same country

which had had irresistible attractions for the upper classes offered after 1789 attractions equally irresistible to the lower. This fact made the French Revolution more shocking and unintelligible to beneficiaries of the old order everywhere. It distinguishes it also from the Russian and other twentieth-century revolutions, whose resemblance to the French, of which much has been made, would be the greater if Marx's revolution had first come about, as he and Lenin expected, in an advanced capitalist country such as England or Germany.

The French Revolution went beyond all others of the period in its scope. It remained primarily political, like other movements of the time, on the supposition that all spheres of life were to be transformed by reorganization of the state, along with introduction of new laws or abolition of old ones. But in its effects on society and social and moral attitudes it went far beyond the merely political, more so than the American Revolution, and much more so than anything contemplated by the Polish, Dutch, Belgian, Genevese, English, or Irish reformers or revolutionaries described in the preceding pages. The French Revolution changed the very nature and definition of property, and to some extent its distribution; it transformed, or attempted to transform, the church, the army, the educational system, institutions of public relief, the legal system, the market economy, and the relationship of employers and employees. It introduced new crucial values, new status strivings, new levels of expectation. It changed the essence of the community and of the individual's sense of his membership in it and his relationship to fellow citizens and fellow men. It even changed the feeling for history, or the idea of what could or ought to happen in history and in the world. Leopold von Ranke once remarked that the growth of historical studies in the nineteenth century was a form of reaction against the Napoleonic empire. As much might be said for the French Revolution and the European Revolution of which it was the largest part. A whole system of civilization seemed to have fallen, and a new one to be struggling to be born; and men of all shades of opinion, whether to further such a change or to oppose it, took a new view of the possibilities, the hopes, the delusions, and the dangers in the evolution of the human race itself.

THE PROBLEM OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

For so vast an upheaval vast explanations have usually been found. It has been the habit of historians and political commentators to set the Revolution in a long context of centuries, finding for it distant origins and underlying causes. Thus for Hegel the Revolution represented the emancipation of Mind, the point in history at which Mind, becoming fully conscious, set about determining the conditions of its further existence in the world. For Hegel, for liberals and for democrats, the Revolution was one of a very few great events, such as the introduction of Christianity and the Protestant Reformation, by which the slow growth of freedom had been attained. For Tocqueville it was a climax in the age-long movement toward equality of conditions and growth of central power and public authority. For Marx it signalized the victory of the bourgeois over the feudal order. For Carlyle and for

Michelet it was brought on by centuries of misery and oppression of the common people. Others, contrariwise, both Marxists and non-Marxists, have seen it as the outcome of the growing prosperity, wealth, education, ambition, and self-confidence of the French middle classes. Talleyrand attributed it in the last analysis to human vanity, of which he thought the French had more than their share. For Burke the actions of the French in 1789 were "an unforced choice, a fond election of evil," having no more compelling cause than human perversity itself, a vast enough cause, to be sure. For Pope Pius VI, a contemporary, the Revolution was another outbreak, which he compared to Jansenism and Calvinism, in the long history of menaces to true religious faith. Other Catholics, including Pius VII, have been less negative toward it. Various modern writers, usually seizing upon some of the insights of Tocqueville, or agreeing with Taine that the Revolution arose from a fanatical commitment to abstract ideas, have seen in it an anticipation of the totalitarian state.

Recently in France there has been much interest in demographic studies, and the Revolution has been attributed to the rapid increase of population in the eighteenth century, which raised the pressure of people on the land, under existing conditions of agriculture and alternative employments, and produced a population with a very high proportion in the younger, bolder, and more restless age-groups. The population of France did increase from eighteen or nineteen to twenty-five or twenty-six millions between 1700 and 1789, and growth in England, Italy, and other countries was in the same ratio. Professor Godechot of Toulouse, who favors this explanation, half humorously attributes the Revolution of the Western World to the discovery of America, finding a certain elegance in relating these two "capital steps in the history of mankind."¹ His argument is as follows: Population increased because improvements in nutrition, through the growing use of foods originating mainly in America, such as sugar, potatoes and Indian corn (the latter used to fatten poultry and livestock) allowed greater numbers to survive, especially among the poor; but though they survived they did not live well, many remaining underemployed, while meanwhile new discoveries of gold in Brazil, and improvements in silver mining in Spanish America, by increasing the European money supply drove up the price level at a time when wages lagged. The long trend of rising prices, with low wages, contributed to the prosperity of the bourgeoisie and the more substantial farmers, and the bourgeoisie was further benefited by the growth of foreign and colonial trade; but the swelling numbers of landless or nearly landless peasants, of unskilled and unemployed workers, and of paupers and vagrants, built up the mass discontent of which the revolutionary leaders were to make successful use.

Of all these explanations it may be said that they explain too little and too much. Some characterize the course of modern history as a whole. Others make it understandable that there should have been a great disturbance or convulsion at

1 J. Godechot, *La Grande Nation: l'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956), I, 32-37. For more detailed analysis of effects of price and wage movements see C. Labrousse, *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1944).

the end of the eighteenth century. They do not explain the form which this disturbance took. They explain everything except the Revolution itself. The Revolution was not simply a chaotic upheaval, but a purposeful political movement accentuating certain recognizable if not always very definite concepts—"feudalism," "aristocracy," "constitution," "citizen," "sovereignty of the people," "nation," "law," "liberty," "equality," "nature," and "natural rights."

These words have the value at least of suggesting what the men of the French Revolution thought they were doing. We come, therefore, to the role of "ideas" in the Revolution, and to "psychological" explanations of its origin and course. The importance of ideas as a cause has long been stressed on all sides of the question. From a point of view favorable to the Revolution, from the profundities of Hegel to the quick assumptions of those engaged in the struggle itself, it has been supposed that men carried out a revolution because they had lived through the Enlightenment, or desired to realize liberty because they had formulated the idea of it in their minds. The argument that ideas cause revolutionary troubles has always, however, been especially congenial to persons less favorable to revolution, or even to change, always with the corollary that ideas, or the ideas in question, are impractical in character, unrelated to actual problems, Utopian, visionary, or millennial (sometimes they are compared to a religion), and at any rate are the notions of mere intellectuals (*philosophes* before 1789) without experience of real human nature or real affairs. The effect is to reduce revolution to nonsense, or to the realm of the impossible, though it is of course the very possibility of revolution, or fear that it may be possible, that motivates this line of argument. It is an old and yet ever-living theory. In 1783 Mr. George Ponsonby dismissed the proposal for Irish parliamentary reform as "system mongering," and Burke used the same argument against parliamentary reform in England before applying it to the Revolution in France; and in 1957, in the learned *Political Science Quarterly*, an American historian called Robespierre's idea of the good society a "syllogistic paradise."

If we know anything of human psychology, however, we know that men's behavior is not fully explained by their ideas, in the sense of their concepts, and that we must look not only to the manifest but to the latent content of their minds. What really lay behind the magic words—"liberty," "equality," "nation," "sovereignty," and the others? Bourgeois interests, according to one widely diffused school of thought. Nationalism, according to another. Incipient totalitarianism and fateful trust in the omnipotent state, according to a third. Vanity, according to Talleyrand. A desire for better government appointments on the part of frustrated lesser officials (*ôtez-vous de là que je m'y mette*) according to Metternich—to which Professor Alfred Cobban in one mood seems to subscribe. Fanaticism, according to J. F. La Harpe. Error and confusion, according to F. L. C. Montjoie, who in 1797 published a discussion of twenty-one terms, including *liberté*, *égalité*, *volonté générale*, and *pouvoir constituant*, the misunderstanding of which he thought had unfortunately brought about the French Revolution. Nothing at all lay behind these expressions, according to still another observer—not a sophisticated twentieth-century logical positivist, but an angry counterrevolutionary of 1792—who wrote in an early semantic treatise: "*Aristocrat*: arrangement of syllables which produces strange effects on the animal

called *democrat*. . . . What has this revolution produced? What do the words *aristocrat*, *liberty*, *equality* have to offer except arrangements of syllables?"²

Many "psychological" interpretations of the French Revolution have in fact sounded somewhat like counterrevolutionary polemics. When Gustave Le Bon, a founder of social psychology, wrote a book on the French Revolution, the result was hardly distinguishable from the work of Taine. To expose the irrationality of the revolutionaries, the disparity between word and deed, the conjunction of idealism with ruthlessness, or of sentimentality with self-interest, to dwell on supposed contradictions (such as "forcing men to be free"), to convert one thing into another, and to reduce a desire to transform the community into compulsions of an unbalanced mind, as if revolutionaries were only unadjusted individuals, or victims of some public mania or craze, have generally appealed both to persons with a certain interest in psychology, and to those who for political reasons dislike the French Revolution, or revolutions in general. The common feature, in these interpretations, is to deny or minimize the need or reason for the behavior or the opinions that are being examined.

Yet a serious psychology need not lead to this pitfall. A study made by three social psychologists in the 1950's is relevant to the present connection. It is a study of the origin of political ideas, and of their relation to inner conditions of personality. The opinions of fifty selected adult male Americans on the subject of Soviet Russia were used as the medium for this investigation. The men chosen were of various psychological types, and their opinions on Russia were very diverse. The authors concluded that opinion is the inseparable result of three factors: "reality demands, social demands and inner psychological demands."³

This finding of social psychology may be constructively applied to the problem of the French Revolution. An extraordinary number of people at that time developed very pronounced opinions on liberty, equality, the rights of the people, national sovereignty, the constitution, the royal veto, the aristocracy, the "aristocratic conspiracy," the "foreign conspiracy," and much else. They showed strange mixtures of suspiciousness, aggressiveness, naïveté, and simple faith. It might be shown, though with difficulty, how these attitudes reflected "inner psychological demands," such as frustrations, anxieties, hostilities, and daydreams derived from childhood or other private experience. It might be shown how they reflected "social demands," for many people who shouted "aristocrat" or cried *vive la nation* did so because of social pressure, because so many others were doing the same, or because not to show enthusiasm might be dangerous. It could also be shown how these ideas met "reality demands." Burke notwithstanding, it seems likely that they grew out of actual circumstances, and had a direct relevancy to problems which

2 See A. Cobban, *The Myth of the French Revolution: An Inaugural Lecture* (London, 1955); J. F. La Harpe, *Du fanatisme dans la langue révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1797); F. L. C. Montjoie, *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1797); *Nouveau dictionnaire pour servir à l'intelligence des termes mis en vogue par la Révolution* (Paris, 1792); F. Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900*, 12 vols. (Paris, 1905-1953), IX, 652 and *passim*.

3 M. Brewster Smith, J. S. Bruner, and R. M. White, *Opinions and Personality* (New York, 1956), 275.

really existed. The key words of the Revolution were not always misunderstood by the revolutionaries, nor were they mere arrangements of syllables. Robespierre did not really work for a paradise, nor expect the new France to be syllogistic. The ideas of the Revolution, even when most exaggerated or fantastic, had an actual base.

The real problem of the French Revolution is to explain why it was so radical at the very beginning. In a way the first leaders, those of June and July 1789, were moderate enough. Intending no violence, and with no expectation of mass upheaval, they would have preferred to work harmoniously with Louis XVI at the task of national reorganization, and most of them would have been satisfied to obtain, in 1789, about what Louis XVIII was to concede in 1814. The rush of events was soon to make them realize how moderate they really were, for much was to happen that the original leaders could not accept. Nevertheless, it can be misleading to think of a "moderate" revolution of 1789 which took more extreme forms in 1792 and 1793. The contrary could as well be maintained: that it was the alleged moderates of 1789 who in a few rapid strokes destroyed the existing order, leaving what Taine disapprovingly called a spontaneous anarchy, and the half-million little men of the Jacobin clubs of 1793, who in an enormous wave of citizen self-help, having ousted their former rulers or been deserted by them, and with no new institutions yet accepted and effectively functioning, undertook to consolidate the revolutionary program, maintain a government, and carry on an international war in the face of military invasion.

Edmund Burke, in his *Reflections* written in 1790, was right enough in perceiving the radicalism of the Revolution at its outset. By "radicalism" I mean a deep estrangement from the existing order, an insistence upon values incompatible with those embodied in actual institutions, a refusal to entertain projects of compromise, a mood of impatience, suspicion, and exasperation, an embittered class consciousness reaching the point of hatred, a determination to destroy and to create, and a belief that both destruction and creation would be relatively easy. In such a mood the men of 1789 took steps which never could be retracted. The Oath of the Tennis Court, the decrees of August, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the repudiation of legal class, the relegation of the King to the position of a first magistrate, the expropriation of the church, all accomplished or at least proclaimed before the end of 1789, were a series of such irrevocable commitments. They left no room for maneuver, for tactical retreat, for gaining time, for gradualism, for conciliation, or for convenient silence on general principles. They publicized and they maximized an absolute difference of principle between the old regime and the new. What followed flowed as a consequence from this initial work. It has been said, notably by Aulard, that the rest of the Revolution was mainly "defensive," and this is offered in justification of the unpleasantness that followed; but if defensive, it was defense of the advanced position taken in 1789, and one that was tenable only with difficulty because of the opposition that it aroused.

Nor was this radicalism of 1789 to be found only in the assembly which sat from May to October at Versailles and thereafter at Paris. The real revolution erupted throughout the country as a whole, in the agrarian rebellions of the summer, and in the municipal revolutions of Paris and the hundreds of towns, great and small, throughout the length and breadth of the provinces, where new men

turned local oligarchs out of office. These events were so uniform and so nearly simultaneous as to raise the suspicion, then and since, of conspiratorial methods. Actually, it is hard to find anything more conspiratorial than the committees of correspondence of the American Revolution. Though such judgments can only be impressionistic, there seems to have been a more nearly universal rising in France in 1789 than in America in 1775.

So much being said for the uniqueness of the French Revolution, the pattern used in foregoing chapters will be applied to it in the following pages. Reforms favored by the government, along the lines of enlightened despotism, were opposed by the upper classes, which played a political role in certain constituted bodies, notably the parlements and the Provincial Estates. These classes were in fact enjoying an "aristocratic resurgence," for the French aristocracy was by no means decadent, and many of its members desired more active positions in public life. The constituted bodies defended what they called the historic constitution of the kingdom, and favored a form of constitutional monarchy, in which, however, their own powers and privileges would be preserved or extended, and a society of ranks and orders would be maintained. They obtained the convening of the Estates General, with representation by "order," but the bulk of the country refused to embody itself according to these older forms. Demand arose for representation of persons, not of status, and for an entirely new constitution for France. The idea of the people as a constituent power, able to make or unmake all political institutions, and to issue grants of authority, was applied in France, as nowhere else except in America up to this time. The sovereignty claimed for the people meant that no one else, neither hereditary magistrate, nor manorial seigneur, nor even the King, could hold public authority by virtue of his own right or status. There should be no irremovable persons in government, with delicate reservations for the King himself. There should be no self-recruiting public powers. The law should know no classes or orders. All persons should be citizens, with equality of rights. Constitutionally at least, this was the essence of the Revolution of 1789.

MINISTERS AND PARLEMENTS, 1774–1788

If the Revolution seemed to begin in 1789 with astonishing violence, it was because it had not really begun in 1789 at all. In a way it had begun a quarter of a century before, with the propaganda campaign of the *philosophes*, and especially with the quarrels between the royal government and the parlements, whose climax in the 1760's has been described in Chapter IV.

The French parlements, as has been explained, were corporate bodies, or benches of judicial magistrates, each acting as a supreme court of law for its part of the country, and asserting the power to "verify" laws or taxes proposed by the crown, which in effect meant to consent to them before enforcing them in the courts. These magistrates, who numbered about eleven hundred in all the parlements combined, were mostly nobles, often of several generations of noble descent; and they owned their seats as a form of property, acquired them usually by inheritance, and occupied them irremovably and for life. They were by no means

councils of grave old men, for since most of them owed their position to family the average age was surprisingly low, as in the House of Commons. In 1789 over half the members of the Parlement of Paris were under thirty-five. Some were very wealthy; Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau (who in truth became a Jacobin, and friend of Robespierre) had 500,000 livres a year; and First President d'Aligre was rumored to have an annual income of 700,000 and a nest-egg of five million in the Bank of England.⁴

In what I have called the quasi-revolution of the 1760's the parlements had had a grand conflict with the King's ministers. Protesting against modernization of property assessments, they had banded together in an *union des classes*, or a super-parlement claiming to be representative of the whole kingdom. On the one hand, a royalist pamphleteer denounced the parlements as a "monstrous hereditary aristocracy." On the other hand, the parlements, as early as the 1760's, put a good deal of incipient revolutionary language into wide circulation—*citoyen, loi, patrie, constitution, nation, droit de la nation*, and *cri de la nation*. It seems likely that the parlements had more positive influence than the *philosophes*, especially among lawyers and other makers of public opinion, to whom they spoke out as weighty and reputable bodies in Paris and a dozen provincial capitals. Louis XV had tried to silence them in 1766, in the *séance de la flagellation*, then in 1771 had simply abolished them by a monarchical *coup d'état*. Louis XVI, however, at his accession in 1774, restored the old parlements in their historic form.

Twenty-two years after the *séance de la flagellation*, Louis XVI was at odds with his parlements as much as his predecessor had been, and was even, in his turn, declaring that if they had their way they would become "an aristocracy of magistrates," harmful to "the rights and interests of the nation." This accusation the Parlement of Paris indignantly rejected. The danger to France, it warned on May 4, 1788, came not from aristocracy but from despotism. "The right of freely verifying the laws does not make the parlements an aristocracy of magistrates. If it had happened that your parlement had refused to accept useful laws, we should have to pity humanity but still not make the king a despot, destroy the constitution, or establish servitude. . . . But is it true that your parlement need reproach itself with such refusals?"⁵ The parlement thus invited an examination of its record.

The record shows that the parlement took a strong stand for important liberal principles, that it helped to school the country on the evils of unchecked government power, that it long enjoyed the support of public opinion, that non-nobles were slow in turning against it, but finally did so abruptly and with devastating effect, since the parlement associated its liberalism with palpable class interest.

The young Louis XVI in 1774 wished above all else to be a good king, no "despot," and to act as differently as possible from his discredited grandfather. Hence he restored the parlements. He also appointed the reformer Turgot as his chief minister. These two steps soon proved to be incompatible. Turgot was a tenth-generation noble, but he was also a physiocrat and an experienced government

4 On age, see J. Egret, "L'aristocratie parlementaire française à la fin de l'ancien régime," in *Revue historique*, CCVIII (1952), 12–13; on wealth, H. Carré, *La fin des parlements* (Paris, 1912), 2ff.

5 *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris . . . présentées au roi le 4 mai 1788*, pp. 2, 10, 12.

servant, who had in mind a general reconstruction of the French government and economy. He wished, for example, to temper the royal absolutism by associating the administration with the country, through provincial assemblies in which property-ownership, not legal class, should be the basis of representation. He also desired the toleration of Protestants, and their admission to all offices and occupations. On these larger matters of church and state he kept discreetly silent. His troubles arose over points of detail, designed mainly to loosen up the French economic system so as to increase national income and so raise government revenues. In particular, he proposed certain incidental tax reforms, internal freedom of the grain trade, abolition of craft guilds, and conversion of the *corvée royale*, the labor services of peasants on the royal highways, into a money tax to be paid by land-owners of all classes alike. He drafted Six Edicts, which the Parlement of Paris refused to accept.

Of all these proposals, that concerning the *corvée royale* should have been the most innocuous. The *corvée* was performed only a few days in the year, and only by peasants who lived near the royal highways. It was by no means vital to the social structure of the country, and was in fact only fifty years old. The Parlement of Paris nevertheless not only refused to countenance its abolition, but drew up a sweeping remonstrance, which it took care to publish. Issued in 1776, four months before the American Declaration of Independence, it was a kind of declaration of independence of the French noble order. Indeed, in the same year, as if to show that anyone could use such language, the Estates of Brittany also insisted on their "inprescriptible and inalienable rights."

"The first rule of justice," according to the Parlement of Paris in this declaration of 1776, "is to preserve for everyone what is due him, a fundamental rule of natural right and of civil government, and one which consists not only in upholding rights of property but in safeguarding rights attached to the person and born of prerogatives of birth and estate." It was very dangerous, "under an appearance of humanity," to establish among men "an equality of duties," to destroy social distinctions, "to overturn civil society, whose harmony rests only on that gradation of powers, authorities, preeminences and distinctions which holds each man in his place and guarantees all stations against confusion.

"This order . . . takes its source in divine institutions; infinite and immutable wisdom in the plan of the Universe has made an unequal dispensation of powers and genius. . . . It is this law of the Universe which, despite efforts of the human mind, maintains itself in every empire and supports the order by which it subsists.

"What dangers then there are in a project produced by an inadmissible system of equality, whose first effect would be to confound all orders in the state by imposing on them the uniform burden of a land tax!

"The French monarchy, by its constitution, is composed of several distinct and separate estates. This distinction of conditions and persons originated with the Nation; it was born with our customs and way of life."⁶

6 *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris contre les édits . . . présentées en mars, 1776* (Amsterdam, 1776). Reprinted in J. Flammermont, *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1898), III, 278-79, 287.

Such appeals to an historic constitution should remind the reader of the protests in the Hapsburg empire against the reforms of Joseph II. The appeals to harmony, order, place, and the divine government of the world, reinforced by warnings against efforts of the human mind, may remind him also of Edmund Burke. I have already, in discussing Burke, pointed to the extraordinary lack of proportion that he could show. Small matters sent him into soaring outbursts on the nature of human society and of man's position under God. It may be doubted whether this was either very good religion or very good conservatism. The same may be said of the Parlement of Paris. It equated a week of peasant labor on the roads with the very essence of the French monarchy, the constitution, the prerogatives of birth, the Three Orders, and divine justice.

The parlement likewise defended the craft guilds and trade associations against Turgot's efforts to suppress them. Some of its arguments sound strangely modern, or rather express that resistance to modernity still found in twentieth-century France: to abolish these protective associations "would put the small businessman, the most likely to be crushed by competition, between two equally extreme and ruinous alternatives, either to abandon at a loss a business he can no longer carry on, or to run the risk of bankruptcy if he remains in it."⁷ Of more immediate importance was the fact that the parlement, in defending the guilds, did so by defending the whole hierarchic and corporate structure of French society. The cause of the guilds became the cause of the Three Orders; the rights of the commoner became the rights of the noble. When the government proposed to open a military school at Auxerre for noble and non-noble youths alike, the parlement objected to this also. Since noble and non-noble had in fact for centuries attended the same civilian schools, the argument had to be carefully qualified; and what the parlement professed to fear was that for young men of the commercial class to receive a specifically military training, designed for the nobility, would confound the three orders. "Each estate has its own occupations, ideas, duties, genius and manner of life, which should not be adulterated or confused by education."⁸

Neither in the royal *corvée*, nor in the guilds, nor in the school at Auxerre did members of the parlement have any material, direct, or personal interest. Upkeep of the principal roads from tax funds would not perceptibly increase their taxes, nor did the guilds directly concern them, nor was there any novelty in army officers of bourgeois birth. What concerned them was the principle of the thing, or the drift of events that they perceived in every specific proposal. They had developed a defensive, even an obsessive, frame of mind on the matter of rank and order. It was too early, in 1776, for the American Revolution to have had any influence in France, but the whole literature of the *philosophes* and *économistes*, the attempts made by the royal government itself for a generation, and the actual abolition of the parlements in 1771, had made them hypersensitive on every concrete issue. They were aware that Turgot's real ideas went far beyond the proposals that he submitted. They were not mistaken if they thought that the essence of French law and society might come into question. Thus pressed, they assumed an offensive or

7 *Ibid.*, 371.

8 *Ibid.*, 392.

counteroffensive, in which they acted as spokesmen for the nobility as a whole, for nobility as an institution necessary to society itself.

Indeed, if everything was abolished together in 1789 it was because everything had been defended together at least as early as 1776. If the special rights of class, province, town, and gild went up in a common conflagration in the night of August 4, it was because the defenders of these rights had long been throwing them into a common pile. If revolutionaries had a "system," so did their opponents. If small things in 1789 could make a man cry "aristocrat," small things in the past had made the parlements cry "prerogatives of birth and estate." The years after 1776 saw a hardening of this kind of rigidity.

Turgot was dismissed in 1776. The party favoring intervention in the American troubles, led by Vergennes, was against him, since for financial reasons he opposed embroilment with England. Courtiers and tax farmers regarded him as a menace, but it was the Parlement of Paris that mainly put an end to him and to his program. He left office convinced of the pernicious influence of special *corps* within the state, organized corporate "bodies" having interests different from those of the "nation." We have already noted his letter of 1778 to Richard Price on the new American constitutions, and the ensuing constitutional discussion in France in the 1780's, in which followers of Turgot expressed their repugnance to balances and counterchecks, and their preference for a single assembly acting with the sovereign authority of the nation considered as a homogeneous whole.

Turgot was followed by Necker, who tried to finance the American war mainly by loans, as Pitt was to finance the French war of 1793. Too discreet to risk new taxes, Necker attempted to increase the yield of those already existing, and hence undertook, like many of his predecessors, and like ministers of other Continental monarchies, to get new tax rolls in which the appraisal of land for taxation should be brought more nearly up to true values. The Parlement of Paris strenuously objected. It even declared, in 1778, that existing valuations must stand so long as taxes were not authorized by taxpayers in some kind of parliamentary body.⁹ It may be again observed that in England, under parliamentary rule, taxable land values had not changed since 1692, and that though Parliament might occasionally raise the rate of the land tax, most British revenue came from indirect taxes paid by the general population.

Necker accomplished very little, and was followed by Calonne.¹⁰ Up to now no one had ever had a clear idea of French government finances. Accounting methods were sporadic; numerous unrelated estimates of expense had been made, but not combined in a budget, nor projected in terms of a year or any set period of time. It was Calonne who really discovered the deficit. He concluded that it was annual and recurring, and that it had existed all through the century, but had been greatly increased by the American war. It had apparently risen from about 37,000,000 livres a year in 1776 to about 110,000,000 a year in 1786. The debt had risen to over four billions.

9 *Ibid.*, 395–413.

10 On Calonne see A. Goodwin, "Calonne, the Assembly of Notables and the Origins of the *Révolution Nobiliaire*," *English Historical Review* (1946), 202–34, 329–77; P. Jolly, *Calonne* (Paris, 1949); G. Lefebvre, *Coming of the French Revolution* (Eng. trans., Princeton, 1947), 21–37.

Calonne, alarmed, drew up a comprehensive set of measures. His ideas were essentially those of Turgot, but he meant to introduce them in less piecemeal and guarded fashion. He was the first and last minister before 1789 to propose a general plan of structural reorganization. He was the first also to appeal to public opinion.

He was convinced, as most historians have been, that France was a wealthy enough country to support the expenditures of its government. Half the expenditures went for debt service, a quarter for the armed forces, about nineteen per cent for civilian objectives; and the upkeep of Versailles and the whole royal establishment absorbed only six per cent. Distribution of public expenditure in England was much the same. The trouble with the French budget was on the side of income. And if revenue was chronically insufficient, it was in part because wealthy people paid so little in taxes. Nobles were exempt from the *taille* on principle, and many bourgeois by special arrangement. Nobles and bourgeois alike evaded the *vingtième* by false declarations of income. A mass of provincial liberties, special immunities, privileges, deals, bargains, commutations, and *abonnements* spared taxpayers of many kinds from the full impact of the fisc. Calonne thought that by abolition of such exemptions and evasions the financial crises could be surmounted.

Briefly, his plan was threefold: he would obtain the cooperation and understanding of the country through new provincial assemblies, to be elected by taxpayers without regard to the three orders. He would replace the *vingtième* with a new tax on landed income payable by all landowners equally, whether clergy, noble, or commoner, and he would equalize the tax burden as between provinces by abolishing the exemptions that some of them enjoyed. And he would stimulate production by getting rid of the royal *corvée*, internal tariffs, excises on certain manufactures, and restrictions on the grain trade.

In France, more than in Eastern Europe, and more than in England, land ownership was widely spread among all classes. Some nobles, some bourgeois, and even some peasants were substantial proprietors. A plan for all landowners to be taxed alike, without privilege of social position, and to be represented simply as landowners in elected public bodies, without reference to legal status or corporate grouping, struck at the foundation of the society of estates. And since Calonne intended to have anyone owning land worth 600 livres a year (about £25) take part in his elected assemblies, he undercut the social structure at a point pretty far down in the pyramid.

Calonne won the King's support for his program, but knew that the parlements would never accept it. He considered calling the Estates General, which had not met since 1615, but decided that such a course would be too uncertain and too slow, and would in any case favor the organized nobility and clergy. He decided therefore to lay his plan before a selected group of important persons, an Assembly of Notables, an ancient device last used in 1626. He hoped that endorsement of his plan by a body of such commanding prestige would oblige the parlements to accept it also. The Notables met in February 1787. Designated by the King, they were mainly prelates and great noblemen, with a few members appointed to repre-

sent the Third Estate, and they included over forty of the very *parlementaires* that Calonne was trying to outflank.

The meetings of the Notables were highly acrimonious. Calonne informed them of the deficit. They were incredulous, as well they might be, for no one supposed the grandest monarchy in Europe to be so deplorably embarrassed—it may be remembered that Dutch bankers, no mean judges, had for several years been shifting investments from England into France. Calonne insisted on the urgent need of more revenue. The Assembly replied that economy would serve the purpose better. Calonne denounced “privilege.” The Assembly countered with allegations of “despotism.” Persuaded finally of the reality of the crisis, the Notables announced their acceptance in principle of equal liability to taxation. They refused, however, to endorse the tax proposed by Calonne, or to agree to elected assemblies in which the difference between noble and commoner should have no place. Such assemblies, they warned, would become “democratic or despotic.” They declared that they had no powers to bind anyone to any program. Their aim was to throw the whole matter back into the hands of the parlements. Some, including Lafayette, even talked of the Estates General.

I have observed on an earlier page that the failure of the Bourbon monarchy was in part a failure of public relations, that it had shrouded its most justifiable policies in an administrative secrecy, and exhibited its most objectionable features to the world. Calonne now broke the tradition of government secrecy. He appealed to the public, inundating the country with free copies of an *Avertissement* in which his case was stated. He told the country that its fiscal system was unjust. He said that it favored the rich against the poor. He openly denounced privilege, and it was in fact Calonne, speaking in the King’s name, who more than anyone gave this word its revolutionary significance. He also broke the tradition of absolutism, or of absolutist methods of reform, by offering to consult with the country, or at least with the taxpayers, through the experiment of elected assemblies. He was not trusted. The government could not so easily live down its reputation for being arbitrary, devious, and extravagant. The court at Versailles was widely detested, by nobles and non-nobles alike. Its worst features were dramatized by the Queen, Marie Antoinette, who was regarded as frivolous, petty, unthinking, capricious, intriguing, and outrageously wasteful. The affair of the Diamond Necklace in 1785 seemed to prove the worst that could be believed. The best churchmen, the soundest provincial nobility, the parlements, and the enlightened bourgeoisie all suspected any minister or program that emanated from the court.

Calonne was driven from office, and was replaced by the Archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, who attempted to carry Calonne’s program in a modified form through the parlements. Brienne battled the magistrates for a year, using all the weapons at the King’s disposal, *exil*, *lettres de cachet*, *lits de justice*. The parlements became the upholders of political liberty. They denounced arbitrary taxation and arbitrary arrest; they laid down as fundamental to the laws of France the principle of consent to taxation, the liberties of the provinces, and the *inamovibilité des magistrats*, that is their own inalienable right to office. The Frenchman, they said, loves his King, “but what he pays to the King he really owes only to the State.” The

King is only a national treasurer, and "what is not used for the common good belongs to the citizens." This was a "principle founded on the rights of man and confirmed by reason." "Man is born free." "The nature of man is to unite with his equals (*ses semblables*) and to live in society subject to some general conventions, that is, laws." To Thomas Jefferson, then in France, these utterances of the Parlement of Paris all seemed reassuringly Anglo-Saxon. France, he thought in 1787, would soon have a "revolution" like that of England against the Stuarts, but without the bloodshed.¹¹

It is one of the puzzles of the Revolution that class animosity, or antagonism between noble and non-noble, should have been so little in evidence in 1787 and much of 1788. The Parlement of Paris, despite all that could be known of it from its own published remonstrances, enjoyed a wide popularity with both Third Estate and nobility at this time. There were of course exceptions: Condorcet, Dupont, Morellet (the school of Turgot) suspected the Parlement of Paris as Voltaire had suspected it twenty years before. That it nevertheless enjoyed wide support can be explained only on the ground that most politically conscious persons at the moment were concerned mainly with absolutism, and would admire any group of men that stood up against arbitrary and non-responsible government.

The parlement in 1787 proved a little more flexible than in the past. It accepted, for example, the abolition of the *corvée* which it had refused to Turgot. It declined, however, to "verify" any new taxes. New taxes, it now openly maintained, could be authorized only by a meeting of the Estates General, the national gathering of the three orders, whose complete dormancy for over a century had seldom been regretted except by a few nobles. Meanwhile the fiscal crisis grew worse, so that it appeared that the government could not carry on. Louis XVI (it was now that he called the parlements an "aristocracy of magistrates") came to the same conclusion as Louis XV. In May 1788 he in effect abrogated the parlements by reducing them to mere judicial organizations.

The May Edicts deprived the parlements of their political power, their right to verify taxes and legislation. This power was vested in a new body, a Plenary Court, which was to sit in Paris and serve for the whole country. The provincial parlements thus sustained a great reduction of stature, losing a political power which, though regional, had made them equals to the Parlement of Paris. They felt victimized by centralization. All parlements, those of Paris and the provinces alike, at the same time had their jurisdiction confined to legal cases involving more than 20,000 francs. Smaller cases were assigned to lesser, more decentralized and more accessible courts. The parlements thus lost out in income, in volume of business, and in general importance in the world of lawyers.

The outcry against these May Edicts was universal. Pamphlets poured from the presses in all parts of the country. Opinion was more freely expressed in them than in regular periodicals that were more subject to censorship, so that the pamphlets offer the best, though an imperfect, indication of public opinion. A recent attempt at statistical analysis shows over five hundred published in the four months follow-

11 Flammermont, *Remonstrances*, III, 671, 714-15; my article, "The Dubious Democrat: Thomas Jefferson in Bourbon France," in *Political Science Quarterly* (1957), 388-404.

ing May 8, 1788.¹² By far the greatest number appeared in provincial towns, now roused to a high degree of political agitation. It seems that roughly half may have come from the Third Estate, half from the nobility. The most common theme of these writings was the May Edicts. And in this outburst of pamphlets, widely representative of classes and regions, only a pitiful tenth of them supported the government. Nine-tenths attacked the royal policy, which is to say that both nobles and non-nobles rallied to the parlements against the crown. The parlements were idealized as defenders of liberty. The new Plenary Court was denounced as a drumhead body, a group of royal appointees set up to give obsequious approval to government measures. The country rejected the Plenary Court as in any way representing it, and accused the government of crushing the bodies that had ventured upon opposition.

THE ARISTOCRATIC REVOLT

If revolution means the concerted defiance of government, the French Revolution began in the summer of 1788. It then took the form of a great stirring of the constituted or corporate bodies against the king. A German historian, Martin Göhring, has called this phenomenon of 1788 the *Triumph der ständischen Idee*, a triumph of the moment only, followed in 1789 by the "breakthrough to the modern state."¹³ The French call these events of 1788 the *révolte nobiliaire*.

The nobility seized the initiative, while the Third Estate, unused to politics, lacking channels of joint action, and still feeling the timidity of a middle class, was willing enough, for the time being, to let the authorities be defied by persons of greater consideration. Even of America it had been said that there could be no revolution without leading families. France now saw a demonstration of Montesquieu's principle, or of the eighteenth-century truism, that nobility served as a check upon despotism, or, in broader terms, that an absolutist regime could best be resisted if there were some kind of *grande*s outside the machinery of the state itself.

The French aristocracy had been strengthening its position since the death of Louis XIV. We saw, as long ago as Chapter III, the wavering between segregation and assimilation in the relations of nobility to bourgeoisie. There had been a good deal of assimilation in France, more so than anywhere east of the Rhine. Hence in France some nobles and some bourgeois saw a good deal of each other socially, especially in Paris. Hence, also, there were nobles who were not yet aristocrats—*anoblis*, nobles for life only, nobles of *noblesse inachevée*—so that the nobility was by no means a solid class. On the whole, however, aristocratic self-segregation had prevailed, along with a mounting aristocratic class-consciousness. Parlements had adopted regulations to assure the social purity of their membership. After 1783 every one of the 135 French bishops was a nobleman. Of the seventy-five minis-

12 R. W. Greenlaw, "Pamphlet Literature in France during the Period of the Aristocratic Revolt," in *Journal of Modern History* (1957), 349–54.

13 These are chapter headings in M. Göhring, *Weg una Sieg der modernen Staatsidee in Frankreich* (Tübingen, 1947).

ters in office from 1718 to 1789 only three were not nobly born; of these, Dubois was a cardinal, Sartine a nonentity, and Necker a foreigner. Half these ministers were of six or more generations of noble blood. Noble also, in the time of Louis XVI, were all the intendants, who might have been called provincial governors were that term not reserved for an honorary office even more aristocratic. Failure had followed the attempts of royal officials to use noble status as a kind of legion of honor for meritorious persons in business and the professions. The attempt to confer noble status on bourgeois army officers had also been blocked by spokesmen for true or hereditary nobility.¹⁴

The army ordinance of 1781 has remained famous as a symbol of this aristocratic resurgence. It prescribed that officer candidates, in the future (with a significant exception for men rising directly from the ranks) must have no less than four generations of noble descent. The young man on joining a regiment had to submit to his colonel a certificate obtained from the royal genealogist, and to obtain this certificate he had to assemble a huge dossier of papers, including the marriage contracts of his grandfather and great-grandfather, old deeds, wills, extracts from tax rolls and much else. This absurd perversion of bureaucracy occurred in a war office that was in many respects already highly modernized, and in an army where a fifth of the officers, including a number of generals, were not nobly born.¹⁵

It must be remembered that in France at the time, as in some other countries since, positions in the army, the church, and the government were of the greater significance, since the private professions were undeveloped, and important salaried employments outside the government were very rare.

Since the death of Louis XIV, and never more effectively than under Louis XVI, the parlements had enlarged their political role, and had upheld, in public and private, noble ideas of good government and society. The successes of the Assembly of Notables against Calonne marked another bid by the nobility for a positive voice in the determination of policy. The way in which Calonne's provincial assemblies worked out showed the same trend. He had intended them to be classless, in the sense then relevant; but Brienne had yielded to noble objections, and the assemblies which actually met in 1787 represented the three orders, and each had to have a member of the clergy or the nobility as its presiding official.

14 See Chapter III above.

15 Estimates of the number of non-noble officers, as repeated by recent writers, seem to go back to L. Hartmann, *Les officiers de l'armée royale et la Révolution* (Paris, 1910). Hartmann probably exaggerated the number of non-noble officers in the 1780's, since he assumed that among officers receiving commissions before the ordinance of 1781 the proportion of non-nobles remained the same as during wartime conditions of the Seven Years' War. If, however, we disregard the thousands of honorary officers, and those of the royal bodyguard (whose officers were all noble); if we consider only the 9,578 officers assigned to troops in 1789 (infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers); if we include as officers the 1,100 *officiers de fortune*, commissioned from the ranks and used mainly for routine duties at the company level; if we assume that all *officiers de fortune* were of non-noble birth; and if we reduce by as much as one-half Hartmann's estimate of the number of non-noble officers other than *officiers de fortune*; then it still seems likely that about 2,000 of the 9,578 officers assigned to troops in 1789 were not of noble birth. That a few officers of non-noble origin were still being promoted to the rank of general in the 1780's is apparent from the chapter on general officers in L. Tuéty, *Les officiers sous l'ancien régime: nobles et roturiers* (Paris, 1908). Tuéty concluded that it was harder for a *roturier* to get into the officer corps at the bottom than to be promoted once he was in it.

These short-lived provincial assemblies, an experiment that led nowhere, at least advanced the political education of a great many people. In the assembly of Orléanais the clergy and Third Estate, finding that the Duke of Luxembourg paid no taxes at all, engaged in protracted arguments with the nobility. The plebeian Abbé Sieyès learned a good deal as a member of this body. The assembly of Auvergne, of which Lafayette was a member, set itself firmly against new taxation, ignored the King's explicit charge of tax evasion by wealthy landlords, urged respect for provincial liberties, and asked for the revival of the old Estates of Auvergne, which had not met since 1651. The ancient Estates, more than the new provincial assembly, would give a prominent role to the organized nobles and the upper clergy.¹⁶

Before 1787, only in Brittany and Languedoc were the Provincial Estates of importance. Elsewhere they had died out by the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1787 demands were heard for revival of Provincial Estates in various parts of the country. It was a long-delayed reaction against Richelieu and Louis XIV, a demand to make France a constitutional monarchy, not on the English model, but on the model of a France that had long since passed away. It would be a France in which the King ruled over a confederation of provinces, each guarding its own liberties and exemptions in taxes and administration, and each carrying on its own affairs through its own churchmen, its own nobles and gentry, and its own opulent dignitaries of the King's good towns.

In Provence, for example, no estates had met since 1639. The province, by its liberties, enjoyed certain advantages in taxation. It was one of those outlying parts of France where the law distinguished "noble" from "common" land, somewhat as in Eastern Europe, with the all-important difference that the distinction had become fictitious, since it was estimated in Provence that six times as many commoners as nobles owned land of this noble type. Noble land was free of certain onerous taxes. Alarmed by Calonne's attack on tax exemptions in 1787, and aroused by the humbling in 1788 of the Parlement of Aix, certain leaders brought about the revival of the Estates of Provence. By the precedents of 1639 only fief-owning nobles sat for the nobility, and only mayors and other oligarchs sat for the twenty-six privileged towns. In 1787 there were a great many nobles who owned no fiefs, and a great many bourgeois who did not feel themselves properly represented by the mayors. A lively political struggle developed at this local or provincial level, significant in illustrating the complexity of the issues. It was no simple dispute between noble and bourgeois, but one more accurately described as a clash between privileged and nonprivileged persons, the former comprising fief-owning nobles, *parlementaires*, mayors, owners of noble land, and others who benefited from the old provincial constitution; the latter consisting of nobles who owned no fiefs, numerous bourgeois, and others who had no advantage to gain by the maintenance or revival of historic liberties of Provence. From this lively scene Mirabeau was elected in 1789 to the Estates General.¹⁷

16 An account of the Orléanais assembly may be found in P. Bastid, *Sieyès et sa pensée* (Paris, 1939), 42–45; of that of Auvergne in L. R. Gottschalk, *Lafayette between the American and the French Revolution* (Chicago, 1950), 331–63.

17 J. Egret, "La pré-Révolution en Provence, 1787–89," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* (1954), 97–126.

North of Provence, in Dauphiny, much the same happened, with significant differences. The Parlement of Grenoble, to defend itself against the May Edicts, took the lead in organizing the nobility of the province, along with various lawyers and notables of the bourgeois class, in a revival of the Provincial Estates. These met at Vizille, where they showed themselves more open to new ideas than those of Provence, in that they organized with double representation for the Third Estate, and vote by head, not by order. The Vizille assembly was thus something like a modern parliamentary body, and it set a precedent that was to be of great importance at the national level in 1789. Nevertheless, the insurgents in Dauphiny had in mind certain of their own privileges also, hoping to preserve tax advantages for noble land that resembled those of Provence, or at least not to lose them without compensation. The leading representative of Dauphiny in the Estates General of 1789 was to be J. J. Mounier, of whom more will be said.¹⁸

Brittany was an old irritant to the monarchy, and now became a hotbed of class conflict and incipient revolution. Its parlement was the most exclusively noble in all France. In its estates, which were very active, some 3,000 seigneurs and gentry enjoyed the personal right to sit in the noble chamber, and hundreds came to every meeting. In the inaccessible interior of the peninsula, these gentry retained more of an ascendancy over the peasants than was now found in most parts of France. At Rennes, much of the population lived by service to the parliamentary and noble families who congregated there on public business. On the other hand, in the port towns, such as Saint-Malo and Nantes, an important commercial bourgeoisie had grown up, less wedded to the historic liberties and established authorities of the province.

After the May Edicts, the Breton parlement and estates rushed anew to the defense of provincial liberties against the central power. They warmly upheld the old Breton constitution, by which they enjoyed a good deal of autonomy, and the lowest per capita tax burden of all France, less than half that of neighboring Normandy and Touraine. The nobles, as elsewhere, sought the support of the bourgeoisie against the crown, but were less successful in obtaining it. Provincial liberties were by no means of equal advantage to all persons within the province; as in Hungary, they favored the existing upper class. The merchants of Nantes, and other bourgeois of modern views, while not opposed to provincial liberties as such, complained that the Provincial Estates levied the taxes inequitably as between individuals, and that they were not really represented by the comfortable municipal mandarins that sat *ex officio* for the Third Estate at Rennes. Inspired by the movement in Dauphiny, they demanded a reorganization of the Provincial Estates on the model of the Vizille assembly. The nobles of Brittany refused what those of Dauphiny had conceded. Class struggle broke out; there was a pitched battle at Rennes between university students and young gentlemen reinforced by their footmen, porters, and assorted retainers. Both sides developed an organization of correspondence committees and exchanges of delegations. The Breton deputies sent

18 J. Egret, *La Révolution des Notables: Mounier et les Monarchiens, 1789* (Paris, 1950); 7-50; and see the same author's "La Révolution aristocratique en Franche-Comté et son échec, 1788-89," in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 1 (1954), pp. 245-71.

to Versailles in 1789 were to transfer these methods to the national stage, and contribute to the formation of the famous Jacobin club of Paris.¹⁹

The church also, or its governing hierarchy, who were all nobles, lost no time in protesting against the May Edicts, the humiliation of the parlements, and the royal program of taxation. The Assembly of the Clergy met in June 1788. It passed resolutions against the May Edicts. It rejected the principle of taxability of its properties, which amounted to between five and ten per cent of all the landed property in the country. As a tax-exempt body, the French Church had long been in the habit of making a "free gift" to the royal government. The two grants of 1780 and 1782, intended to help pay for the American war, had amounted to 46,000,000 livres, and another 18,000,000 had been granted in 1785. The Assembly of 1788 granted only 1,800,000. It was the lowest free gift in many generations. The prelates intended, like their noble cousins, to use the financial crisis of the monarchy to preserve their own liberties, and for the advantage of the church and the country as they understood it. The truth is that the church itself was in an incipiently revolutionary condition, with a good many priests and lesser clergy dissatisfied with the way in which the prelates managed its affairs and handled its wealth. But in 1788 the great bishops and abbots spoke for the church. What they wanted was a constitutional monarchy in the manner of Montesquieu, in which despotism was prevented by the influence of intermediate powers, one of which was the church.²⁰

"Despotism" again yielded, as so often in the past. The combined outburst of parlements, provincial estates, and the church, the outcry of the aristocracy for the most part supported by the bourgeoisie in a massive wave of national indignation, were too much for the benign Louis XVI to withstand. In September 1788 he withdrew the May Edicts. As in 1774, he again reinstated the Parlement of Paris and the provincial parlements with their former powers. By this action he also convinced the country that he was in earnest in what he had promised in the preceding July, the summoning of the national Estates General, which was set for the following May.

Victory in September thus went against the royal absolutism. It lay with a movement of constitutional resistance that was primarily noble in its inspiration, or at least represented the interests of those who stood to gain by existing privileges of class and province. The question was whether, with despotism overthrown, aristocracy would succeed it.

Leaders of opinion, noble and bourgeois, now agreed that France should have constitutional government, taxation by consent, and payment of taxes by persons of all classes alike. They agreed that there should be freedom from arbitrary arrest, and a "legitimate" freedom of press and opinion. They agreed that the country

19 J. Egret, "Les origines de la Révolution en Bretagne," *Revue historique*, CCXIII (1955), 189–215; H. Freville, *L'intendance de Bretagne*, 3 vols. (Rennes, 1953).

20 For the amounts of *dons gratuits* see M. Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France au 17^e et au 18^e siècles* (Paris, 1923), 105. For its political views see the remonstrances printed without date or place by the Assembly of the Clergy: *Remontrances du clergé présentées au roi le dimanche 15 juin 1788*, upholding the parlements; *Remontrances du clergé . . . sur ses droits, franchises et immunités*, on tax exemption of church property. The Assembly also protested against the grant of civil rights to Protestants by the royal government in 1787: *Remontrances du clergé de France assemblé en 1788, au roi, sur l'édit . . . concernant les non-Catholiques* (Paris, 1788).

should take part in the operations of government. They did not agree on how this was to be done. Were existing constituted bodies—clergy, nobles, Third Estate; parlements, provinces with corporate liberties—to be the units of political participation? Was France really made up, or “constituted,” of these? Or should such bodies, and France itself, be “reconstituted”? Should the old elements be transmuted into a “nation,” a community made up of individual persons, or at least of proprietors and taxpayers without legalized special status?

The Parlement of Paris, no sooner restored, gave its answer to these questions, an answer that should have surprised no one familiar with its record, but which aroused the ire of a bourgeoisie now heated to a high degree of political consciousness. The coming Estates General, the parlement announced as its considered legal opinion, should be organized in 1789 as at their last meeting, in 1614–1615. That is, they should be a convocation of the Three Orders. They should remain so for all future time.

A second Assembly of Notables, dominated like the first by princes and great noblemen, published similar opinions in December 1788. The problem before the country, declared one of its most eminent spokesmen, was “to distinguish the three constitutional orders of the State, whose essence is to act separately in their deliberations in the Estates General.” But even in this august body there was a dissenting view, hinted at by the Provost of the Merchants of Paris, who was no plebeian. The true problem, he said, was “for all orders to be united and merged in the Order of Citizen, the primitive Order of nature, reason and duty.”²¹

The issue was joined at the end of 1788. The Third Estate knew what it wanted, as will be seen in the next chapter. But opposition to it was also forming, and before the year 1788 was out there were hints of a program that was to characterize the counterrevolution for the next dozen years. The princes of the blood published a statement at the close of the second Assembly of Notables. If the Third Estate, they warned, demanded too much in the coming Estates General, the upper two orders might repudiate the Estates, secede from them, and deny their legality. The higher orders would turn instead to the parlements as the only bodies able to define the law. They would urge the people to refuse taxes. They would disseminate the idea that no action of these illegal Estates General could be accepted as the national will.²²

This princely pronouncement infuriated the Third Estate. “Are we Russian slaves or Polish serfs?” one of them demanded. We know that France was very different from Poland.

21 *Discours prononcés à la cloture de l'Assemblée des Notables* (n.p.n.d. [1788]), 9, 15.

22 See H. Carré, *La fin des parlements, 1788–90* (Paris 1912), 63–64.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: THE EXPLOSION OF 1789

You will see that these are materials for a superb edifice.

—THOMAS JEFFERSON TO THOMAS PAINE,
PARIS, JULY 1789

We shall return in three months.

—THE COUNT OF ARTOIS TO COUNT
ESTERHAZY, VALENCIENNES, JULY 1789

The figure of Philip Mazzei has been seen from time to time in these pages. A cosmopolitan Italian, he had settled in 1773 in Virginia, where he was almost immediately caught up in the movement against England. He had then returned to Europe to solicit loans for the new state, talked at Florence with the future Emperor Leopold about the American constitutions, gone to Paris, written a book to correct French misunderstandings of the United States, and while remaining in Paris had become a kind of news agent for King Stanislas of Poland. In Paris, late in 1788, he belonged to a group that included Jefferson, Lafayette, Condorcet, Morellet, Dupont de Nemours, and the Duke of La Rochefoucauld. They often met at one another's houses, and naturally had a good deal to say about the American Revolution as a precedent to the crisis in France.

In this group, at this moment, at the height of what historians call the Aristocratic Revolt, it was the American Jefferson who was the most conservative in his ideas of what should be done. In his eyes, despotism was the main issue. In all the careful and detailed reports he sent home on events in France, he had not yet even used the word "privilege" or "privileged classes." He thought the coming Estates General should go slowly: "if they do not aim at too much they may begin a good

constitution," he wrote to Madison in November.¹ He was having discussions with Lafayette about a French declaration of rights, but such ideas were now by no means unusual in Paris. The Americanized Mazzei was less cautious than Jefferson, but far more so than Dupont or Condorcet. The Americanized Lafayette was already being called an "aristocrat," still in a friendly way, by Condorcet, Mirabeau, and the Abbé Sieyès.

The devil himself is now posing as an American, said Condorcet to Mazzei; "the devil of aristocracy," disguised as a wise and prudent citizen of the New World, was tempting the French with his plausible arguments. Actually, as always, the devil was false. You wise Americans, Condorcet told Mazzei, never had any respect for old abuses such as ours. "You had no ambitious, hypocritical and immensely wealthy clergy calling itself an order in the state," no nobility as a second order, no insidious tax exempt interests, no self-perpetuating tribunals executing an absurd jurisprudence and holding a veto over the lawmaking power, no vicious system of tax collection "tied to the pretensions of your orders and your bodies of magistrates."

You moderate Americans, said Condorcet, would not have tolerated such conditions any more than we will. Mazzei agreed in principle, but sagely observed that it was not possible to destroy everything at once.

"Who ever talked of destroying everything at once?" retorted Condorcet. What the French wanted, he said, was to avoid giving a new lease of life, a new formal sanction, to the old institutions. "And this is what the aristocratic spirit that is dominant today will bring about." If the aristocratic spirit prevailed, he thought, even gradual abolition of the old evils would never be possible.²

In this chapter, instead of attempting the hopeless task of a full and rounded account of the French Revolution, for which there is no room and probably no need, I shall select a few points for more detailed treatment: how the year 1789 opened with a fully developed revolutionary psychology, what the Revolution essentially consisted in, and why the French Revolution, though inspired by much the same principles as the American, adopted different constitutional forms and took on a magnitude unknown to the upheavals of Western Civilization since the time of the Protestant Reformation.

THE FORMATION OF A REVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Great revolutions are not made by professional revolutionists, nor are they manifestations of abnormal psychology in any ordinary meaning of the word. Later on, when the revolution is under way, both professionals and abnormal types (which need not be the same) may seize positions of power. But the revolution occurs, in the first place, when men who are ordinarily unexcited by politics, generally moderate, and engaged in their own private affairs, are drawn into revolution as a

1 *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, XIV (Princeton, 1958), 188; my article, "The Dubious Democrat: Thomas Jefferson in Bourbon France," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXII (1957), 388-404.

2 R. Ciampini, *Lettere di Filippo Mazzei alla corte di Polonia* (Bologna, 1937), 17, 53-56.

course to which no acceptable alternative seems to exist. If their behavior becomes abnormal, it is because such behavior represents the reaction of normal minds to extraordinary conditions. It would be hard to explain otherwise how whole peoples turn revolutionary.

Rousseau is rightly considered the father of the Revolution, at least in the sense of those who like to single out ancestors among a multitude of actual forebears. He had expressed the main idea: that individual human beings, as free and equal citizens, make up the community and the law by the unforced action of their own moral will. He had also been deeply alienated from society, which he thought hardly worth preserving, believed himself to be virtuous and others bad and dishonest, thought himself surrounded by enemies, felt himself to be misunderstood, disliked, conspired against, and betrayed. His sentiments make a certain sense when seen against the social environment in which he lived; yet it is undoubtedly true that, by later standards of mental health, Rousseau would have been a candidate for psychiatric treatment. He was entirely non-political. In France there was no chance for him to take any political action, but even at Geneva, when explicitly asked, he had refused to join the group that made the little Geneva revolution of 1768. We have seen also the combination of insight and moderation in his recommendations for Poland.

Maximilien Robespierre developed many of the traits of Rousseau, and some of these are disagreeable to well-balanced people under favorable conditions, but it is doubtful that Robespierre had any need for psychiatric attention. Thirty-one years old in 1789, a reasonably successful self-made man in the American phrase, Robespierre, unlike Rousseau, was a lawyer coping adequately with the problems of life at Arras in northern France. The province of Artois was one of the few in which Provincial Estates had continued to meet. Robespierre believed that the Estates did not represent the inhabitants. This belief was shared by many others, including parish priests who did not sit in the First Estate, or elect those who did, and *nobles non-entrants* who did not sit in or vote for the Second. He believed (and it was true) that the Third Estate was represented *ex officio* by officeholders who bought or inherited their posts and were in some cases of noble status. The Estates of Artois, like those elsewhere, took advantage of the royal embarrassment to advance their own claims. Robespierre suspected an aristocratic maneuver. He began his revolutionary career in January 1789 with a pamphlet, *A la nation artésienne*, in which he called the Provincial Estates "a league of a few citizens" against the people. In March, during the elections for the Estates General, he gave legal assistance to the shoemakers' guild, thus already identifying himself with the common people. When the town dignitaries, some of them noble, tried to control the elections of the Third Estate in Arras, he published a second pamphlet with the ominous title, *Les ennemis de la patrie démasqués*. Elected to the electoral assembly of the province, where the clergy and nobility offered to give up certain privileges, to the applause of the Third Estate, Robespierre refused to take part in the vote of thanks. No thanks were due, he said, for the surrender of abuses which had always been indefensible. In June, at the Estates General at Versailles, he quite unfairly denounced the clergy as "subversive." In August, when the assembly was discussing consent to taxation, Robespierre rose to insist (nor was he mistaken according to

the modern theory of the democratic state) that the country did not, strictly speaking, “consent” to taxation; it authorized and raised the taxes by its own agents and its own name.³

Robespierre had developed the class hatred, the intolerance, the self-righteousness, and the quarrelsome habit of seeing great principles in passing incidents that may be said to characterize a revolutionary psychology.

There were endless other evidences of the same state of mind. There was Brissot’s feeling that no theory could be more “atrocious” than existing reality. There was Mirabeau’s execration of “the eternal race of aristocrats.” There was repudiation of ordinary social bonds: “since you degrade the Third Estate by your scorn, it owes you nothing.”⁴ There was utopianism, as in Dupont’s faith in a “perfect society,” a *beau idéal*, even better than that of the Americans. There was the habit of seeing questions of policy as plain clashes between truth and error: the function of lawmaking bodies is to legislate “the truth,” according to Condorcet. And always there was the sense of outrage, of burning injustice, of true merit humiliated by a false system of values. “What a society,” cried Sieyès, “in which work is said to *derogate*; where it is honorable to consume, but humiliating to produce, where the laborious occupations are called vile, as if anything were vile except vice, or as if the classes that work were the most vicious!”⁵

Nevertheless, if the French people—or a good many of them—were in a radical mood at the beginning of 1789, they had been brought to it by their own hitherto accepted superiors. The King himself, and Calonne, had hurled the words “abuse,” “privilege,” “aristocracy.” The parlements had flung back the epithet “despotism.” Each had undermined confidence in the good faith of the other. Both had raised up great expectations. The King had spoken of the need for equalization of taxes, and for elected assemblies based on equal representation of landowners. The parlements had publicized the need for a constitution, for public participation in government, and for security of individual rights. Both had given the impression that something was radically wrong with the country, that great evils existed, and that these must and soon could be corrected.

This belief was in harmony with the whole philosophy of the century, and had been powerfully reinforced by the American Revolution. In the drama of the continents the cause of liberty and equality appeared as a world-wide movement, and it seemed that a new era had already dawned.

Repeatedly, however, expectations had been disappointed, and hopes had been raised only to be let down. The first Assembly of Notables had come to nothing. The new provincial assemblies had ended up too often in bickering between the orders. The country had come to the defense of the Parlement of Paris against the May Edicts, and during this controversy the King’s promise of the Estates General, as demanded by the Parlement, had aroused a sense of imminent national renewal. There was therefore a sense of betrayal, or a feeling that a veil had been torn

3 *Oeuvres de Maximilien Robespierre* (Paris, 1950), VI, 6–9, 19, 30–31, 66–67.

4 *Le dernier mot du Tiers Etat à la noblesse de France* (n.p. n.d., January, 1789), 6. For the references here to Brissot, Mirabeau and Dupont, see above pp. 196, 203–4, 210–11.

5 Condorcet, *Lettre à M. le comte de Montmorency* (Paris, 1789), 14; E. Sieyès, *Quest-ce que le Tiers Etat?* (3rd ed., 1789), 83–84.

aside, when the Parlement of Paris, on its reinstatement, made it a first order of business to declare that the coming Estates must meet as in 1614, and hence presumably in three houses, with one vote for each order.

This action of the Paris Parlement opened the breach of a sharp class antagonism between Third Estate and nobility. It was an action by no means necessitated by a tenderness for constitutional law, since even in 1614 there had been no fixed form of assembly for the Estates General, and more pertinent modern precedents could be found, in Dauphiny and Languedoc, for the joint session of the three orders. The ruling of the Parlement seemed purely political, and leaders of the Third, who in supporting the Parlement had supposed that they shared in a national protest against ministerial despotism, now concluded that they had only played the Parlement's game. We begin now to hear sarcastic references to the *all noble Parlement*, and to find phrases where aristocracy and despotism are coupled together as a common evil, as that "aristocracy is despotism at retail." Nor did the Parlement hold the good will of the Third Estate when, immediately after declaring for a "legitimate" freedom of the press, it lacerated and burned one of Sieyès' pamphlets at the steps of the Palais de Justice on December 17, 1788, and condemned one of Mirabeau's tracts in the following February.⁶

The French bourgeoisie, the leaders of the Third Estate—lawyers, government officers, merchants, emerging industrialists, doctors, writers, printers and publishers, owners of what might be called government bonds, "bourgeois" living on landed rents—had no economic grievances at all commensurate with the anger that they now felt. It was the lower classes that had the economic troubles. The upper stratum of the Third Estate had prosperity; it wanted status, or a better status than the existing status-system afforded it. Its members believed, as did the minority of liberal nobles, that the old "orders" no longer described the real character of the French people. It seemed absurd for men otherwise so much alike to be segregated only by law. If the Revolution was not the work of vanity, as Talleyrand held, it was the work of a deeply wounded self-respect. For generations the French bourgeois had accepted the social system. He had accepted the scale of values which made his own position inferior. In relations between noble and bourgeois there had been class consciousness, but not much class conflict. Embarrassment, resentment, frustration, envy, humiliation, hostility, if felt, had somehow been suppressed as useless or unworthy or part of life's ordinary course. Now, at the end of

6 *Arrêt de la cour du Parlement, rendu les chambres assemblées, les pairs y étant, qui condamne un imprimé ayant pour titre Délibération à prendre par le Tiers Etat dans toutes les municipalités du Royaume de France à être lacéré et brûlé par l'exécuteur de la Haute Justice* (December 17, 1788). It seems likely that this refers to the *Délibérations à prendre . . .* drafted by Sieyès in conjunction with the group about the Duke of Orléans and published with *Instructions données par S.A.S. Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans à ses représentants dans les bailliages* (n.p., 1789). See also P. Bastid, *Sieyès et sa pensée* (Paris, 1939), 50–51. This *arrêt*, together with the *arrêt* of December 5, gives an excellent statement of the conservatism or aristocratic reformism of the Parlement as of the end of 1788, as Sieyès does of the radicalism of the Third Estate. The Parlement expresses dismay that, at a time when the upper orders have agreed to a surrender of tax privileges, this *Délibération . . .* should be found in the ordinary mails in great numbers, circulated by a concerted movement, and breathing *un esprit de système qui cherche à préparer sourdement une révolution dans les principes du gouvernement*. The Parlement condemned Mirabeau's *Histoire secrète de la cour de Berlin* in February 1789, on the eve of the elections to the Estates General.

1788, these things seem to have come to the surface. The class issue was politicized; it seemed possible to do something about it. Inequalities were condemned by the government itself, by the Americans, by the course of history, and the enlightenment of the age. What had been accepted and lived with now met with hot rejection.

But the situation was not visibly improving at the end of 1788. If the Estates General were to assemble in 1789 with a sharp emphasis on the orders, and if France should be governed in the future through such Estates, there would be an accentuation (a "new sanction" in Condorcet's phrase) of legal differences that had been easier to put out of mind so long as no Estates General ever met at all. Shoals of pamphlets protested against the ruling of the Parlement of Paris. The King called another Assembly of Notables to adjudicate the matter. Another disappointment, or even insult: the Assembly agreed with the Parlement, and even threatened to boycott the coming Estates if the difference of orders were not observed. The government had long shown an inclination to side with the Third, and Necker (recalled to office in September) now announced that the Third Estate should have double representation; that is, it should send to Versailles as many deputies as the two other orders combined. This was encouraging to the Third, but also disappointing, and in the circumstances seriously inadequate and evasive. Necker and the King, alarmed and confused by the rising spirit of protest, and warned against concession by various persons at the court, remained noncommittal on procedures to be used after the Estates assembled. If the Estates were to sit, deliberate, and vote as three separate chambers, it would obviously make no difference how many deputies any one chamber might contain. A few tens of thousands of noble families would have an equal voice with the rest of twenty-six million people. Two plus two would make five, as Sieyès said.

The King's government again contributed to the revolutionary education of the country by the procedures that it instituted for the choice of deputies to the Estates General. For one thing, the government called for actual elections. Elections themselves were a new and exciting experience for the world of the day, for even where Provincial Estates had been active in France, as in Brittany and Languedoc and Artois, the deputies of all three orders sat in them either by personal right, or *ex officio*, or by appointment; the same was true of the Belgian and Dutch estate-assemblies, nor was actual election of members the most characteristic feature of the British or Irish House of Commons. The royal electoral ordinance of January 1789 prescribed that all deputies to the Estates General should be elected: nobles by nobles, clergy by clergy, Third Estate by Third Estate.

The elections took place in March and April. There was no individual voting in the privacy of a polling booth. Elections occurred in open meetings, somewhat as in America at the time, or in the English counties and open boroughs, or in the General Council at Geneva. Each meeting, in addition to choosing its deputies, and in accordance with the royal ordinance and the now revived ancient usage, drew up a statement for the deputies to take with them, a *cahier des doléances* or memorandum of grievances in which all kinds of ideas on local and national affairs might be expressed. The electoral meetings thus became deliberative assemblies, in which speeches were made, and people had the chance to express and compare

their ideas and discover how many others there were who agreed with them. Each meeting was a little school of political education, and there were forty thousand such meetings.

The royal government authorized a nearly universal manhood suffrage, and more people actually participated in the election of 1789 than in any election in France for many decades to come. Louis XVI, by his electoral ordinance, aroused the whole country down to the remotest village to a high pitch of political expectation. He invited all his subjects to reflect upon their troubles and formally state their complaints. The sense of a new era took on a more definite and practical tone; everywhere there was a feeling that changes of great magnitude were actually going to be made. But in this heightened state of political consciousness the legal difference in order was at the same time reinforced.

It was not easy, in the absence of any established machinery, for so large a country to choose a few hundred delegates to go to Versailles, and to choose them in such a way that they would have any real representative authority when they got there. Electoral assemblies were therefore arranged at various levels. At the top were about two hundred principal district assemblies, the *bailliages*, at which the men who were to go to the Estates General were actually chosen. Below the principal districts were various subdistricts and subassemblies. In the incidence of these subdistricts the difference between the legal orders was very great.

For example, in any one of a hundred towns a nobleman, a priest, and a lawyer might live as neighbors and acquaintances in the same street. For the election, each went his separate way to a different assembly. The nobleman proceeded directly to the principal district assembly, where he met with other noblemen of the whole district, all noblemen (with the usual disputes over cases of marginal status) having the right to appear personally in the noble assembly at this level. The priest likewise went directly to the principal district assembly, where he met with the bishop or bishops of the district (if any), with all the other parish priests in person, and with a few delegates sent by monastic houses and cathedral clergy. The lawyer, however, simply went to a meeting with other lawyers in his own town. For the Third Estate, in the towns, the lowest assemblies were meetings of the guilds and other occupational associations, to which another meeting was added for *non-corporés* who belonged to no such guild or association. Each of these various bodies—like the shoemakers at Arras whom Robespierre befriended—deliberated, drafted a *cabier*, and sent deputies to an assembly of the town as a whole, which in turn deliberated, drafted a *cabier* and sent deputies to the principal district assembly (there might even be another intermediate step), where they met with other deputies from other towns of the district, and with the deputies sent by the peasants. The peasants, meanwhile, met in their villages, where all men twenty-five years old and listed on the tax rolls were admitted to the assembly, and where they too deliberated, drafted a *cabier*, and sent deputies to meet with those of the towns at the principal district assembly. Here, where townsmen and especially lawyers gained an easy ascendancy over deputies of the peasants, if only by greater fluency in public speaking and knowledge of public affairs, another *cabier* was drafted for the whole Third Estate of the district, and deputies were chosen to represent the Third Estate at Versailles. Many of these electoral assemblies, their business done,

appointed permanent committees of correspondence to remain in touch with the deputies. Electoral organization in some places developed into revolutionary organization. In Paris and other cities, in the summer of 1789, it was the electors who took over the city government in the municipal revolutions.

The complexities in the electoral process are worth noting for several reasons. They illustrate the corporatist legal framework which the principle of uniform national citizenship was so soon to demolish. They show how the whole country could be suddenly aroused to political action without previous habit or experience. And they explain why the Estates General, when they met in May, exhibited the characteristics that they did. The noble suffrage, at the district level, had favored the numerous country nobility who had the longest lineage and the least modern ideas. The three hundred noble deputies at the Estates General were usually bound, as Lafayette was, by mandates from their constituents which forbade any merger of the three orders. For the clergy, on the other hand, the electoral system favored the parish priests, who were close to the people, at the expense of monastic and cathedral clergy, who were likely to be more aristocratic, or withdrawn from the world, or both. The three hundred clerical deputies at Versailles were predominantly *curés*, with a sprinkling of liberal bishops (since it was liberals among the bishops that the *curés* at the district level most willingly elected), so that the clergy, in the Estates General, was to a large degree in a mood for very extensive renovation in both church and state. For the Third Estate, the sifting through successive assemblies had favored the most active, articulate, persistent, and politically interested kinds of men. Well over half the 648 deputies of the Third at the Estates General were lawyers. As many as 278 held some kind of government office, 166 were lawyers in private practice from prominent barristers in Paris to small country notaries, 85 were merchants or business men, 67 lived by the income or management of their own property, usually land, and 31 were of various professions, mainly doctors.⁷

It is in fact hard to identify a single peasant or workingman among these 648 deputies of the Third. Their absence is of course not remarkable, at a time when the lower income groups were barely literate, if at all, and would scarcely even be worthy of comment, were there not whole schools of modern historians who make an issue of the bourgeois and undemocratic character of the leadership in the revolution of 1789. It cannot be demonstrated, because it probably is not true, that more general popular participation would have favored a more equal, free, liberal, progressive, productive, open, tolerant, or dynamic form of society. The lowest classes were the most faithfully attached to customary superiors. The year 1789 in France, among its other surprises, was to produce a peasant rebellion, but it was nevertheless the smaller kinds of tenants and agricultural laborers, along with the hordes of

7 For these figures and their significance see A. Cobban, *The Myth of the French Revolution: an Inaugural Lecture* (London, 1955), with the reply to it by G. Lefebvre, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* (Oct.-Dec, 1956), 337-45. For the elections to the Estates General see B. Hyslop, *Guide to the General Cahiers of 1789* (N.Y., 1936), pp. 3-31; G. Lefebvre, *Coming of the French Revolution* (Eng. trans., Princeton, 1947); pp. 62-75, and the more recent J. Cadart, *Le régime électoral des Etats-Généaux de 1789* (Paris, 1952), a law school work with a doubtful thesis, in which the author, by stressing the nearly universal suffrage and almost ignoring the difference of orders, argues that Louis XVI's "royal democracy" was more democratic than the constitution of 1791.

domestic servants and other dependents, who most willingly accepted the preeminence of the nobility. It was not the conservatives that feared mass support. The Parlements of Paris and of Grenoble both urged a fully universal male suffrage, wider than the King granted, and there were many proposals that peasant deputies should be themselves peasants. The purpose was to weaken the upper stratum of the Third Estate. Had the Third, at Versailles in May and June 1789, had a great admixture of peasants and artisans it would have in all probability been more docile. "In France, in Holland and elsewhere," said Sieyès in January, probably thinking of the brawls at Rennes and the Orange party in Holland, "we have terrible examples of the coalition between the last class of society and the privileged orders. Let us tell the truth: in every country in the world the R belongs to the Aristocracy." By R (which he wrote C, for *canaille*) he meant the rabble; it was already necessary not to say such things too bluntly.⁸

THE OVERTURN: MAY TO AUGUST 1789

The Estates General met at Versailles on May 4, 1789.⁹ It was a tremendous event, the climax of the earnest labors of forty thousand lesser assemblies. Again there was disappointment. The ancient etiquette was absurdly incongruous and politically explosive. Nothing could have more flagrantly asserted the differing dignity of the orders. In the ceremonial opening procession the six hundred deputies of the Third Estate marched first, meekly clad for the day in black "bourgeois" costume, and followed by the noble order alive with color, then by the dark mass of priests who preceded the magnificent bishops, with the King and the royal family at the end. The opening session fell very flat. The country had looked forward to it for months, as to a salvation in time of trial; but none of the speakers rose to the occasion, and Necker's address was lengthy, technical, and monotonous. Neither Louis XVI nor Necker had made any decisions; they had no proposals for which they sought backing or which they were prepared to enforce. They left matters in the hands of the deputies, expressing the hope that everyone would prove reasonable and cooperative. This was a good deal to ask of men who for the most part had never seen each other before, who had no organization or accepted basis of leadership, and among whom each one had only the vaguest ideas of what his colleagues from other parts of France might be thinking or how far they were prepared to go.

It is not easy to do justice to all parties in the deadlock that followed. The great immediate issue, and what the Third Estate desired, was that all three orders should merge and sit as a single house, in which decisions would be made by a majority of the twelve hundred members, considered as individuals, so that the nobility and the clergy would cease to exist as separate chambers and could on occasion be outvoted. Such a merger, however, was obviously intended only as a step toward further changes. The nobility firmly resisted. The Third Estate, supported

⁸ *Tiers Etat*, 41n.

⁹ The present section mainly follows Lefebvre, *Coming of the French Revolution* (Eng. trans., Princeton, 1947).

by a few noblemen and a good many priests, was obviously in a revolutionary frame of mind. The King was indeed irresolute, but he had an impossible choice: whether he sided with a now revolutionary Third Estate, or with an equally aroused nobility, he would by choosing one make an enemy of the other; and it would take power as well as good will to mediate between them. The noble order was indeed obstinate, but any nobleman might be excused if after reading Sieyès on the *Tiers Etat*, or Mirabeau on the Order of the Cincinnati, he thought that concessions would endanger the fundamentals of his way of life. And it was Sieyès and Mirabeau who were now emerging as leaders of the Third, if only because in a group of men who did not yet know one another the authorship of a famous pamphlet was enough to make a man known.

For six weeks the Three Estates engaged in parliamentary maneuvers. The Third refused to consider itself as an estate at all. It urged the others to join with it, as a few of the clergy did, whereupon the Third, again calling on the others to unite, proclaimed itself the National Assembly, the only true representative of the French people. It even had the audacity to "authorize" existing taxes, implying that such authorization might be withdrawn, and taxpayers invited to withhold payment if the government proved obdurate. To this revolutionary arrogation of power the King replied by locking the deputies out. They met in the Tennis Court and took their famous oath: that wherever they might meet the National Assembly would be in being, and that they would not dissolve before writing a constitution.

The King now at last offered a program on which he asked for agreement. There would be equality of taxation, assurance of individual liberties, freedom of the press, numerous reforms of detail, and consent to legislation and taxation in periodic future meetings of the Estates General. But the estates should remain as estates. There should be constitutional monarchy, but "the ancient distinction of the three orders" was to be "conserved in its entirety as essential to the constitution of the realm." Provincial Estates were to be introduced in all parts of the country. In each of them, half the members would be Third Estate elected by Third Estate; three tenths, nobles elected by nobles; two tenths clergy elected by clergy, with a certain number of those elected required to be bishops.¹⁰

The King's program of June 1789 was less than he had supported in Calonne's time two years before. It was about what the parlements and the provincial estates had wanted in 1788. The King's rallying to such a program represented the high point of the aristocratic resurgence, and the same ideas of a France governed through parlements and estates were to remain for ten years one of the orthodoxies of the counterrevolution. What had happened was that the King of France, forced to choose, had chosen to side with the nobles, probably neither quite willingly nor quite knowingly, perhaps with an obscure feeling that, if force must be used, it would be easier and more fitting to force the Third Estate than to force the nobility. In any case, monarchy and aristocracy were now allied in a way quite new in French history, in an alliance which in time was to prove fatal to them both. Even the most moderate of deputies of the Third, in June 1789, men like Malouet, a

10 The King's speech of June 23 may be found in *Archives parlementaires*. The King favored joint meeting of the three orders "for the present session of the estates only."

high official in the naval administration, refused to accept the royal peace offering, and insisted on pursuing the plan for a new constitution according to the oath in the Tennis Court.

The King now began to assemble troops around Versailles and Paris. The only reasonable supposition was that he intended to disperse the recalcitrant assembly and perhaps start over with new estates more carefully selected. A few soldiers could easily have put the leaders under arrest and sent the others fleeing for home or into exile. This was prevented by the violent mass upheaval which now took place.

Until July 1789 the revolution had been mainly an orderly process, an affair largely of lawyers and writers, taking place in assemblies convened by the King himself. It now became a popular movement, and the popular revolution, by infecting the army, disarming the government, and disabling the nobility in the ultimate strongholds of their own landed estates, made it possible for the National Assembly to remain in existence, while at the same time forcing it in some ways to go beyond what its boldest members had intended.

It is here that economic and demographic conditions must be brought into the explanation of what occurred. Peasants had long objected to high taxes, to tithes, to payments due to the owners of manors. Those who owned land wished to get rid of encumbrances upon what they considered to be their own property. The landless demanded the chance to work land on terms that would enable them to live. Prices of agricultural products had been declining for more than a decade, so that the burden of rents, dues, tithes, and taxes was heavier on the peasants; and by the phenomenon known to French historians as the "feudal reaction," the owners of manorial rights—who might be nobles, church bodies, bourgeois, or even well-to-do peasants—were attempting to maintain or enlarge their incomes by a more exact collection of dues that had sometimes fallen into disuse. Conditions in the mid-century had been more favorable to the bulk of the agricultural population, so that unrest in the 1780's was due not merely to poverty but to a sense of pauperization. In addition, all western Europe in 1789 was in the grip of an economic depression; trade was bad, so that there was much unemployment, not only in the towns but also in the country, where many peasants gained part of their living by industrial occupations. The harvest of 1788 had been disastrously bad, so that bread was scarce. In the limited diet of the lower classes bread was a principal item, and by the purely short-run fluctuation, due to shortage, its price was momentarily higher than in almost a hundred years. Unemployment, poverty, restlessness, desperation, all were made abnormally explosive by the political situation. Poor as well as rich had been stirred by the summoning of the Estates General, by the town and village assemblies of March and April, by the news of the meeting of the Estates in May and June. If the lower classes had no interest in a constitution, and cared little for the disputes between nobility and bourgeoisie, they did expect the Estates General to do something to relieve their own misery. Here again there was an air of universal expectancy. It was easy to believe that good King Louis was surrounded by evil advisers.

The whole Third Estate began to feel itself plotted against and betrayed. The idea of an aristocratic conspiracy, as Professor Lefebvre has said, is a necessary key to the understanding of the whole Revolution, not only in the days of the Terror

but in 1789. There was not yet in any literal sense any conspiracy of aristocrats in the summer of 1789, but there was much in the recent past that gave a certain credibility to the idea: the action of the parlement in the preceding September, the threats of the Notables in December, the vacillation and hesitancy of a government that had at times clearly favored the Third Estate, the speeches and pamphlets of noblemen, the delaying action of the nobility in the Estates General, the King's locking out the Third Estate on June 20, his ambiguous proposals, and now his unaccustomed summoning of regiments of the regular army to Paris. On July 11, by dismissing Necker, the King gave further evidence that he planned to use force to disband the Assembly. It was known that Joseph II had dissolved the Estates of Brabant three weeks before.

In Paris people of all kinds, from bankers to shopkeepers and young café orators like Camille Desmoulins, combined in the agitation that led to the fall of the Bastille. There were a few cases of popular lynch-law, and heads were cut from corpses and impaled on pikes, but since governments themselves commonly exposed the heads of defunct malefactors to public view, it is not wholly germane to harp on atrocities of this kind. The bourgeoisie of Paris, acting through the "electors" elected in the preceding March, took over the government of the city, and organized a national guard to preserve life and property. The king proved unwilling or unable to use his army to put down this disturbance. He came to Paris, recognized the Parisian revolution, and accepted the existence of the National Assembly at Versailles.

Agrarian insurrection raged throughout the country. Peasants refused taxes, tithes, and manorial payments. They invaded chateaux and burned the legal papers on which their obligations rested. What they intended was no less than a social revolution, in that they meant by their own action to destroy the manorial or "feudal" system and the forms of property and income that this system represented. In places they were seized for a while by the panic called the Great Fear, believing that their fields and villages were about to be assaulted by brigands in the pay of aristocrats.

Although Louis XVI, under these pressures, recognized the National Assembly and seemed to accept the Revolution, his brother, the Count of Artois, along with the Prince of Condé and others, left the country during the latter part of July. Thus began the emigration. It was known that these émigrés would seek foreign aid, and it was already rumored that the British were about to land in support of the aristocrats, and that the King of Sardinia had the same intention. These rumors were wholly groundless, but they were by no means wholly absurd in a world where revolutions in Holland, Geneva, and Poland had been suppressed by foreign intervention. Such thoughts inflamed the idea of an aristocratic conspiracy, and the belief in such a conspiracy already produced anticipations of what would one day be the Terror. Barnave, commenting on the street murders, had already let fall the dreadful query, *Ce sang était-il donc si pur?* There was talk of committees of investigation and of special courts to try crimes against the state. The great lawyer Target, the small lawyer Robespierre, the Protestant lawyer Barnave, the nobleman Gouy d'Arsy, all agreed that drastic measures were justified in what amounted to civil war; and a month before the Declaration of Rights, it was said that civil liberties could be suspended in time of dire public emergency.

The Assembly had no means of pacifying the peasants. It could not ask the King to restore order by use of the army, which, if it could be used successfully against the peasants, might be turned against the Assembly itself. The peasant intransigence was embarrassing, because men of various classes were owners of manorial property. On the whole, however, the peasants in destroying the manorial system were destroying the economic foundations of the nobility. Peasant and bourgeois were at war with the same enemy, and this is what made possible the French Revolution.

The Assembly decreed what it could not prevent. It "abolished feudalism" on the famous night of the 4th of August. This extraordinary session was in part a parliamentary stratagem, contrived by a radical minority group, and in part the work of men overstimulated by the rush of events of the past few weeks, baffled by peasant rebellion, and worn out by years of debate on the complexities and eccentricities of intermeshing masses of special laws and privileges of all kinds, in which the peculiar rights and advantages of persons, orders, estates, guilds, corporate bodies, provinces, certain property owners, and certain taxpayers were incomprehensibly intermixed.

What was abolished, in this famous abolition of feudalism, was "feudalism" in its eighteenth-century meaning: the seigneurial relationship between landlord and tenant, the manorial forms of income and property, the differences between nobles and commoners in taxation and in the penalties inflicted by law for the same offenses, the immunities and liberties of provinces, and the confusion between public authority and private position represented in varying ways by the guilds, the seigneurial courts, and the institution of property in office.

All peasant obligations thought to have arisen from domination or lordship were abolished outright. These included the vestiges of serfdom, such labor services as remained, hunting rights or game laws favorable to the seigneurs, and the seigneurial or manorial courts. Obligations thought to represent a historic form of property were abolished with compensation. These included most of the payments in money or kind that the peasant proprietors had actually made. In practice it proved impossible to distinguish between the two kinds of "feudal dues," and in any case, as the Revolution continued, all compensation for such dues was abolished in 1792 and 1793. On equality of taxation, in August 1789, there was no longer any disagreement whatever. Provincial privileges were defended, for the sense of regionalism was still strong, but Brittany, in many ways the most privileged province, took the lead in the surrender of all provincial liberties. This was because, as a result of the political troubles in Brittany, the delegation from that province was composed of advanced revolutionaries of the Third Estate, and no delegation of the Breton nobles had come to the Estates General at all. On the guilds, which the Parlement of Paris had defended against Turgot, the Assembly decreed that they should be thoroughly reformed if not suppressed. In putting an end to property in office, the Assembly took on a huge addition to the public debt, for the value of the eleven hundred abolished seats in the parlements, not to mention other proprietary offices, was later set at half a billion *livres*. Since so much has already been said of the parlements, it may be remarked here that somewhat over 400 of the *parlementaires* eventually received compensation, which they generally converted from paper money into land; that about 140 received no compensation because condemned to death in later years of the Revolution; and that about 400

refused compensation because, having emigrated, they worked instead for reinstatement in their old positions through a victory of the counterrevolution.¹¹

The same session of August 4 decreed the abolition of tithes, pluralism in church appointments, and the annates paid to the court of Rome. A revolution was thereby initiated in the financial substructure of the church, and was carried much further in the following November, when all property of the church was confiscated, on the ground that it was not really private property anyway, and that, if it was sold off to new owners, the proceeds could be used to pay the royal, or now public, debt. Naturally some churchmen who had accepted merger of the orders in June, and so contributed to the Revolution, were repelled by these high-handed developments, but the loss of property and income was never the basic issue in the conflict of church and state during the Revolution, and even in 1791 there were still ninety priests in the Assembly considered to be on the Left. The "irreligion" of the first two years of the Revolution was more apparent to its political enemies, French and foreign, than to the French Catholic clergy as a whole.

The resolutions of the night of the 4th were worked out in detail in a series of August decrees of the ensuing weeks. The King showed great hesitancy in accepting these August decrees, but meanwhile, in a sense, they wiped clean the slate on which the outlines of a new France might be drawn. The way seemed open for the great work of regeneration so fervently expected. That there would be a new constitution was now certain. The Assembly prefixed it, on August 26, 1789, after a month of discussion, with a Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

Most of the arguments since levied against this famous document were heard in the Assembly that enacted it: that the concept of natural rights was dubious anyway, that men should be reminded also of their duties, that a ringing declaration would arouse expectations that could not be fulfilled, that the constitution, when it came, would seem drab and disappointing in comparison with the promises of this initial announcement. The Assembly overruled all such objections. Doubtless many were carried away by political excitement, but there were practical considerations also. The Declaration, far from being the work merely of a debating society, was a political act of the first magnitude. Its purpose was to raise a highly visible standard, to hold and rally a country aroused by the uprisings of preceding weeks, to keep alive the sense of struggle toward a goal, pending the long and disputatious process of constitutional and institutional change. The Declaration was no law book, but rather, in Lefebvre's phrase, a direction of intention, advertising to the country and to the world the shape that the new laws were to have. It was primarily an ethical affirmation, denying the moral foundation of the old order, vindicating the forcible overthrow of authority that had already occurred, and justifying in advance what was yet to come. If it was the death certificate of the Old Regime, in the words of Lefebvre and Aulard, it was also a birth certificate for the new.

It is probable that the idea of listing rights, in a numbered series, in a document distinct from the constitution itself, was suggested to the French by what they knew, which was a good deal, of the American bills of rights.¹² There was in fact a

11 H. Carré, *La fin des parlements* (Paris, 1912), 260.

12 See for example O. Vossler, "Studien zur Erklärung der Menschenrechte," in *Historische*

remarkable parallelism between the French Declaration and the Virginia Declaration of 1776. This parallelism can be readily explained by the presence of Jefferson in Paris and the activity of his friend Lafayette in the preparation of the French document; but this explanation is hardly necessary, since the wording of the first three articles, the principal articles of the French Declaration, was devised not by Lafayette but by Mounier, who, though familiar with American bills of rights, was not in much contact with Jefferson. The content of the French declaration was indigenous to France, and resemblances to American declarations are evidence of the community of ideas, and of basic problems as felt and identified on the two sides of the Atlantic. The French declaration, in comparison to the American ones, was more condensed, systematic, and abstract as a statement of public law. It gave a sharper definition to the conception of citizenship, individual liberty, and rightful public authority.

It is hard to comment on the Declaration without quoting it *in extenso* and verbatim. "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," according to the first article, whose intent, of course, was to repudiate all legal and hereditary differences of rank or order. There may be "social distinctions," if based on "common utility." The natural rights, for whose preservation the state is to exist, are said to be "liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression." The liberty of each man is bounded by the rights of others; its limits can be determined only by law. There must be liberty to consent to laws and taxes, to communicate thought and opinion, to have equal access to all public office according only to "virtues and talents," to be free from arbitrary arrest, unduly severe punishment, or molestation for religious belief.

Half the Declaration is concerned with the nature of law and authority. "The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation. No body, and no individual, may exercise authority which does not emanate from the nation expressly." No man, or set of men, in other words, may hold public power by virtue of status, rank, family, inheritance or group membership, or by divine right, special training, special expertness, elite status, or other leadership principle of any kind. Royal absolutism, dynastic right, parlements, seigneurial jurisdiction, church courts possessed no coercive authority of their own. Men may be compelled only by law; law must express the general will; arbitrary use of power is a crime; but true law must be obeyed "instantly." The law must be the same for all. Armed forces must exist, but they exist for the benefit of the public, not of those who command them. Public expenditures must be publicly authorized. Public officers are accountable to the public for their conduct in office. Public need may require the condemnation of private property, but only by legal process, and only with fair compensation.

Zeitschrift, vol. 142 (1930), 516–45, which will lead back to the older studies by Jellinek and Marcaggi. The textual comparison of the French and Virginia declarations, presented in Appendix IV below, should help to clarify this ancient subject of scholarly polemics. Professor Gilbert Chinard has analyzed a French publication of 1791 giving textual comparison of the French and American declarations and thus anticipating the whole historical discussion; see his "Notes on the American origins of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 98, No. 6 (December 23, 1954). See also Crane Brinton in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, art., "Declaration of the Rights of Man."

The Declaration, in short, simultaneously derived both liberty and authority from the same principles, while relating both to legal equality. Defending the individual against the state, it set up powers for the state as well. The rights it declared were not those of "man" only, and still less those of man in a state of nature, but of man as "citizen," a member of an organized civil community, in which each citizen was considered to share in the sovereignty and in the formation of that law which alone had any rightful power of coercion. It is in this respect, for example, that the Declaration of 1789 differs from the Declaration of the Rights of Man published by the United Nations in 1948. A "citizen" possesses power as well as rights.

The Declaration of 1789, by laying down the principles of the modern democratic state, remains the chief single document of the Revolution of the Western World. Printed, often on a single page, in hundreds of thousands of copies, it was publicly posted in all parts of France. Translated into a dozen languages, it was soon read and known in other countries, though in most of them, to be sure, it would be audacious if not actually dangerous in 1789 to post it in public.

THE CONSTITUTION: MOURNIER AND SIEYÈS

The Assembly now proceeded in August and September to make its main decisions on the constitution. These had already been prefigured in the discussion of the American constitutions, related in Chapter IX, in which Turgot, Mably, and Condorcet had played leading parts. The main disagreement was between those who favored a two-house legislature with a strong independent executive and those who preferred, like the late Turgot, a single assembly in which the national sovereignty should be concentrated.

The two chief constitutional thinkers were J. J. Mounier and the Abbé Sieyès. Mounier had always been one of the least known of the Revolutionary leaders outside of France. His writings and speeches show that he was fully familiar with the United States, which he thought had the best government in history up to that time; and he alluded often to recent events in Britain, Holland, Sweden, and Poland, in favoring a balance of powers in government, and in a certain realism of mind, Mounier was a kind of French John Adams, with much of Jefferson in him also. The Abbé Sieyès, more abstractly dogmatic, has always been well known as the great theorist of the Revolution of 1789. It was he, in his *Tiers Etat*, who translated the ideas of the *Contrat social* into the language of 1789. To judge by his writings, Sieyès had no more than a slight interest in America. Yet it was Sieyès, more clearly than anyone else, who expressed in France what I have called the essential revolutionary idea of the American Revolution: the idea of the people as a constituent power, working through a special convention conceived as outside and prior to government, and creating, by its sovereign action, the organs of state to which it grants a delegated authority.¹³

13 See J. Egret, *La Révolution des Notables: Mounier et les Monarchiens, 178a* (Paris, 1950); P. Bastid, *Sieyès*; P. Duclos, *La notion de constitution dans l'oeuvre de l'Assemblée constituante de 1789* (Paris, 1932).

Mounier, with his balanced government, and Sieyès, with his constituent power, each stood for ideas that had their parallel in America. A comparison of the two, showing how Sieyès prevailed over Mounier, should not only explain much in France but illuminate the relationship between the French and American revolutions, which remains one of the principal problems of the period.

Mounier was the son of a cloth merchant of Grenoble, where he was befriended in his younger days by the grandfather of Stendhal. He became a lawyer, and in 1782 had been able to purchase a minor judicial office, and so had acquired a "personal" or non-hereditary noble status which still kept him in the Third Estate. He was a moving spirit in the revolution of 1788 in Dauphiny which led to the Vizille assembly. More than anyone else, he had brought the nobles and bourgeois of Dauphiny together, with double representation for the Third and vote by head in the revived provincial estates, and so had taken the first step in what his fellow Dauphinois, Barnave, called the "democratic revolution." Elected to the Estates General, Mounier hoped for the same voluntary merger of the orders that he had seen happen in Dauphiny. This failing, he joined with the most aggressive spirits in the Third, and became a main author of the Oath of the Tennis Court. After the three orders were fused in the National Assembly, Mounier was elected to the first committee on the constitution. Skeptical of abstract declarations of rights, convinced that if there were to be such a declaration it should not be published until the constitution was completed, Mounier nevertheless went along with the majority and composed a draft of his own. In fact, the first three articles of the Declaration officially adopted on August 26, the most famous affirmations in the whole document, were in Mounier's language and represented his conceptions.¹⁴

Sieyès also originated in the lesser bourgeoisie, his father having held positions in the financial and postal administrations of the royal government. He had been trained for the church, because it offered careers to men like himself, and had in fact had considerable experience in ecclesiastical administration. Spending several years in Brittany, he had sat with the clergy in its Provincial Estates, where he had formed a low opinion of the hordes of nobility in that body. Transferred to Chartres, he had been an aide to the bishop there, and in this capacity had sat in the Orléanais provincial assembly of 1787. Here the Abbé Sieyès, his bishop (the liberal Lubersac), the eminent scientist, Lavoisier, and the Count de Rochambeau who had commanded in America, all vainly urged the nobility to give up some of their privileges. Where Mounier in Dauphiny found a basis of agreement for nobles and bourgeois, Sieyès in Brittany and the Orléanais had had the opposite experience. It was from his own participation in real affairs that he acquired some of the cold and contemptuous hatred of the nobility that made him famous. In the

14 On Mounier and the Declaration, see Egret, *Mounier*, 114–17, and *Archives parlementaires* (première série, 209 vols., Paris, 1867–1913), VIII, 289 and 463. Mounier submitted his draft to the Assembly on July 27. On August 20, late at night, after a fatiguing discussion on the phrasing of the first three articles, Mounier proposed the language which the Assembly thereupon adopted, and which closely echoed his own draft of July 27. It is rarely pointed out, especially by the more unfriendly and conservative critics of the Declaration, that its opening articles were devised by a man of relatively conservative disposition, who was well aware of the inadequacy, in Burke's phrase, of something written on a piece of paper about the rights of man.

last days of 1788 he penned his *Qu'est ce que le Tiers Etat?* which soon went through several editions, and of which the drift was that the nobility was utterly useless, and that the Third Estate could better form a complete nation without it. Sieyès, made famous by his pamphlets, became one of only three clerics elected by the Third Estate to the Estates General. His very rigidity made him a leader of the Third at Versailles in the face of the noble resistance. Where Mounier hoped for voluntary integration of the three orders, Sieyès preferred that the upper two be peremptorily summoned. It was Sieyès, against Mounier's more cautious judgment, who persuaded the Third to adopt the term National Assembly, on the ground that the nation was assembled whether the privileged orders were present or not. Sieyès, like Mounier, was elected by the Assembly to its constitutional committee in July.

Mounier and Sieyès, though they came to stand for opposite views, actually agreed on a good deal. Both detested the society of orders and estates. "Aristocracy is the worst form of government," said Mounier; "it degrades the public character."¹⁵ Sieyès could have said no more in so few words. Both were alarmed by popular disturbances; both went along with the August decrees because they felt obliged to; both were concerned for property, law, and order; both wanted a fixed and firm constitution which would be durable, and under which no organ of government would exceed the limits assigned to it. Both saw the need of obtaining in government a true and authoritative representation of the people, one that should not only truly reflect the national will, but have power to commit its constituents and have its policies properly enforced. Both, as men of the eighteenth century, like Adams or Jefferson, saw as one of the dangers in government a tendency for elected personages to become self-perpetuating or even hereditary, to serve their own interests, to cease to be truly representative, and yet become very difficult to control or to remove. It was in means and procedures, more than in ends, that Sieyès and Mounier differed. To explain why Sieyès prevailed in every case is to explain a good deal of the Revolution.

To begin with, there was an important question of principle. Did the National Assembly have to *negotiate* a constitution with the King? Were the Assembly and the King independent legal authorities whose agreement was necessary for every clause? Could the Assembly put into the constitution only what the King would willingly approve? No American constitutional convention had ever faced these questions.

Mounier was inclined to avoid such questions as a little too theoretical, to take a common sense view, arguing that the King already existed as a reality, that the country deeply respected the royal authority, that the Assembly enjoyed prestige because the King had convoked it, and that the King in any case would be responsible for enforcing the new constitution, so that it was only reasonable to seek his genuine agreement on its terms. France, said Mounier, was not a *tabula rasa*, nor in a state of nature, nor just "emerged from the forest"; nor in his opinion was the Assembly a true *convention nationale*. It is significant that this term, which was to

15 *Considérations sur les gouvernements et principalement sur celui qui convient à la France* (August, 1789), 14.

take on its full meaning in 1792, was already in use in August 1789, to signify a body outside of all government, sprung directly from the people, and authorized to create institutions, as it were, *de novo*. The Americans, according to Mounier, may have been in such a juridical condition in 1776, because they had repudiated their King; but the same was not true of France, where the King still existed, and where in fact no one dreamed of doing without him.¹⁶

Sieyès took a sour satisfaction in preferring principles to common sense. He was also less inclined than Mounier to overlook the King's recent partisanship for the nobility. Moreover, the King was refusing his approval to the Declaration of Rights and to the August decrees, which, if not wholly desirable to Sieyès, were necessary to keep harmony between the Assembly and the country. To Sieyès it was clear that the Assembly should not have to seek the King's permission on constitutional matters, that the Assembly alone possessed the full *pouvoir constituant*, that the King must be under the constitution and not a coauthor of it, and that Louis XVI, like everyone else, should have only such lawful powers as the constitution might confer upon him. If Louis XVI was antagonized, it made no difference to Sieyès.

The Assembly would have preferred, like Mounier, to avoid an open clash with the King on such topics, but it was drawn on increasingly to agree with Sieyès, because it really had no alternative. Mounier's own position was contradictory: he could not both get rid of aristocracy and let the King share in making the constitution. Given Louis XVI as he was, and given a revolution against royal absolutism and the society of estates, it was impossible to escape the principles so loftily handed down by the chilly wisdom of the Abbé Sieyès.

On the content of the constitution, as distinguished from its origin, Mounier at first had a majority in the constitutional committee, and it was his ideas that were laid before the Assembly at the end of August. He and his followers were dubbed Monarchicals or Anglomaniacs by their opponents. Actually, it was at least as much to American as to British examples that they pointed.

Mounier's committee proposed a threefold organization of government: The King, even supposing that for the constitution itself his consent was not necessary, was to have, as the national executive, once the constitution was in operation, a power of veto over legislation. The upper house, for which they used the American term "senate," was to be composed of men of property and standing; the committee did not specify the qualifications or mode of selection, but made it clear that the new senate would not be hereditary, nor composed only of nobles, so that, in its view, there was no danger of "aristocracy." For the lower house, often called a house of representatives in the debates, there was to be a very wide popular suffrage, but with property qualifications for the members. Mounier and his friends repeatedly cited the new United States federal constitution and the state constitutions, including the new one about to be adopted in Pennsylvania (in place of the famous democratic constitution of 1776), to justify the executive veto, bicameralism, and property qualifications for house and senate. "One must have a bold philosophy, indeed," he plaintively remarked, "to be more free of prejudice than the Americans."¹⁷

16 *Ibid.*, 37–38.

17 *Ibid.*, 15.

He insisted that his views were shared by Jefferson, still in Paris as American Minister; nor is there any reason to doubt it. Like everyone else, he selected his arguments, not noting, for example, that there were no property qualification in the new United States federal constitution, and that the qualifications he had in mind were considerably higher than in most American states. In any case, it was the executive veto and the upper house that were in dispute.

The Assembly debated these proposals for ten days. Feeling ran very high, and was confused by popular agitation from the militants of Paris, who were now enraged by the very words Veto and Aristocracy. Mounier and his friends were even threatened with physical violence. There was no privacy in the chamber; the galleries hooted and applauded as they chose. Nevertheless the debate took a fairly high level, and in all the hubbub it represented a conflict of actual arguments.

As one analyzes these arguments, it becomes clear that what all agreed on was the need of keeping government within lawful limits. All opposed royal absolutism. All admitted that elected assemblies might "err." All feared that a body of men originally elected might become oligarchic and self-perpetuating. How was this to be prevented? How were deputies to be kept responsive to those who deputized them, and made to stay within the powers assigned to them by the nation? How could the constitution be made to stick? All agreed that insurrection and revolutionary defiance, though justifiable in rare circumstances, were not appropriate constitutional methods to prevent the abuse of power.

Mounier and his friends talked much like John Adams. All men love power and domination, said Lally-Tollendal, and a *pouvoir unique*, as in an unchecked single assembly, "will end up by devouring all."¹⁸ There must be two houses, and a strong independent executive. The King, said Mounier, Mirabeau, Malouet, and others, represents the people as much as the deputies do. There is more to be feared from aristocracy than from monarchy: "never has the throne lost authority except to give place to the degrading yoke of aristocracy . . . to defend the independence of the crown is to defend the liberty of the people."¹⁹ The King must have a veto. He may represent the true will and interest of the country more than the deputies do; and even the new President of the United States has an "absolute veto" unless two thirds of both houses are against him.

Arguments in favor of the royal veto often took on a popular or democratic cast, which the prejudices of the time and the clichés of historians have obscured, but which is not really surprising in view of the long association of royalism and anti-aristocratism in France. The Abbé Maury, for example, a leading conservative, favored an "absolute veto," and cited the case of Holland, where, he observed, the assemblies, unchecked by any veto, had turned into a *noblesse* and a *monstrueuse aristocratie*. Others thought of the veto as a form of *appel au peuple*. There was a good deal of opinion in favor of executive dissolution of the assembly—a doctrine, as is well known, never favored in French parliamentary circles. If the King insisted on vetoing an action of the assembly, said Mirabeau, he should immediately

¹⁸ *Archives parlementaires*, VIII, 515.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 559. This speech of Mounier's was separately printed as *Motifs présentés au nom du Comité de constitution sur divers articles du Plan du Corps législatif, et principalement sur la nécessité de la sanction royale*.

dissolve it and call for new elections. He should have, in the public interest, this power to confront the deputies with their constituents. Mounier, La Rochefoucauld, Lameth, and Rabaut Saint-Etienne also favored this "absolute veto" with immediate dissolution and immediate new elections. Others, preferring only a "suspensive veto," thought of it as an "appeal to the people" at the ensuing periodic election, where voters would choose between the policies of the King and those of the deputies. Very few seem to have thought that a king should simply block an assembly without more ado.

On the other side, against the veto and the upper house, there were obscure deputies who got up and said that nothing could rightly interfere with the rights of man and the sovereignty of the nation. Someone said there should be no veto because there was none in the constitution of Virginia. Most arguments were more concrete. Deputies of all shades of opinion, and both nobles and non-nobles, objected that an upper house would lead back to the "orders" and to monstrous aristocracy. Condorcet now repeated what he had said in criticism of the American constitutions: that the way to control government was to have a single assembly subject to frequent election and to clear declarations of popular rights. John Stevens' rebuttal of John Adams, in the French version mentioned in Chapter IX, with its notes by Condorcet, Dupont, Mazzei, and others, was praised and rejected by various speakers. At least two deputies, the Marquis de Sillery and Dr. Salle from Lorraine, pointed to a fundamental problem, and one that sharply distinguished the French and American revolutions. In France, they said, there was so much that required change that years must pass in basic reconstruction; there was no means of clearly separating ordinary from fundamental laws, or of mapping out a constitutional from a merely legislative sphere; it would long be uncertain whether a piece of legislation was constitutional or not; and meanwhile there must be no royal veto or upper house. They offered as an example the decrees of August 4, which the King had not yet accepted.

Sieyès delivered a great speech against Mounier's proposals. As always, he set up high principles and strict deductions.²⁰ There must be equality of voting power, he said; one man, one vote, counting men as individuals; anything else would be a throwback to the "distinction of orders." Hence there could be only one house of legislation; if a senate of fifty men could stop an assembly of five hundred, what was this but that inequality of orders repudiated in the preceding June? The King was one man. He was also hereditary and irremovable. His advice would always be sought, and his influence respected. But his *will*, or vote, could count only as one. Hence he could have no veto over the majority in the Assembly. The authority of the National Assembly must be unquestioned. Its will must be accepted as the will of the nation. Hence, not only must it be free from interference from a second chamber, or from a royal veto; it must be free from that appeal to the people with which the veto was associated. No possibility must exist for the King or anyone else to appeal over the Assembly's head. There would be thousands of subordinate assemblies in the new France (and everyone had in mind the actual electoral assemblies of the preceding spring); if there were ever any doubt as to which of these

20 *Archives parlementaires*, VIII, 592–601.

assemblies the will of the nation really lay in, the country would fall into anarchy and dissolution. The National Assembly must bind its constituents, not be bound by them. Most men were busy with their own affairs; they were in fact "work machines." Since they had to obey the laws they had the right to consent to them; but this meant only that they might choose representatives without dictating what these representatives should be obliged to do. There could be no "democracy" in France (that is "direct democracy"), with thousands of little assemblies each pursuing its own program or forcing its will on the national government.²¹ There should be *gouvernement représentatif*, in which representatives were put into or taken out of power by the voters, but, while in power, governed according to their own judgment under orders from no one. As to those who urged a second chamber merely to prevent hasty and ill-considered action, Sieyès had a favorite proposal to make to them: the single National Assembly could subdivide into small groups for leisurely deliberation, then combine again for voting, by numerical majority, to express its authoritative decision.

Sieyès' logic was hard and even repellent, but it is not easy to dismiss it as mistaken. It was perfectly true that the Assembly, if it was to hold to the advanced position taken in the Declaration of Rights and the August decrees, would be threatened from two directions: both from the side of the King and of those who surrounded him in the use of a veto, and from the side of a people already aroused to habits of direct action by the experience of revolution. The coming years were to be characterized by a kind of absolutism in the national representative body, tempered by the King's pursuit of his own designs, and by appeals of malcontents, both radical and conservative, to various regional and local assemblies against the government in Paris. This is only to say that during the Revolution France was deeply divided, with no authority widely enough accepted to make civil peace.

The vote in the Assembly proved to be a disaster for Mounier. The bicameral principle was defeated almost ten to one, with 849 votes for a single house, 89 for two houses, and 122 abstaining.²² Where Mounier had insisted on the absolute veto,

21 At the beginning of 1789, on the eve of elections to the Estates General, Sieyès had been of a contrary opinion on the referral of important decisions to subordinate assemblies. He then said that the coming National Assembly (a term he already used) should confine itself to a few basic constitutional changes, and should consult with provincial, district, and parish assemblies before legislating on other matters. (See *Instructions données par S. A. S. Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans à ses représentants dans les bailliages* [n.p., 1789], *passim*.) For Sieyès' change of mind, and later distrust of such habitual referenda, various historians have found it an adequate explanation to call him a bourgeois, alarmed by the violence, the popular tumult, and the threats to property of the summer of 1789. Sieyès was indeed a bourgeois, with 13,000 francs a year from various church benefices in 1789. Robespierre went through a comparable evolution, from appeals to the *assemblées primaires* when he was out of the government, to attempts to control them when he was in the government, in 1793 and 1794; he, too, has been explained as a bourgeois. But there is, after all, a problem of government itself.

22 On this elementary yet highly significant point there still seems to be confusion after more than a century and a half of intensive work on the French Revolution. One often obtains the impression that partisans of aristocracy voted for an upper chamber, with the implication that bicameralism was an aristocratic and unicameralism a more democratic belief. The *Moniteur* (issue of September 8–12, 1789) gives only 499 as the number of those voting for a single house; it is followed by the *Archives parlementaires* and by Buchez and Roux. The *Moniteur* is not a true source, however, for dates before November 24, 1789, and it seems likely that this figure is a typographical error, since the *Journal des débats* for September 10, 1789, gives the figure 849, which is adopted by Egret, *Révolution de Notables*,

the Assembly adopted a suspensive veto by 673 to 325. The King himself made it known, through Necker, that he did not want Mounier's absolute veto, believing it politically too dangerous ever to use in practice. The suspensive veto was soon defined to mean that a measure passed against the King's veto by two successive biennial legislatures, in addition to the one in which the measure originated, would become law without his approval. The King thus received a power to delay, for as long as six years, a program repeatedly endorsed by the legislature and presumably by the electorate. This was surely a dangerous kind of *appel au peuple*. In any government such institutionalized confrontation or stalemate would have been impolitic; in time of revolution and war it might be fatal, and in 1792 it was to prove ruinous to the constitution and to the King, "Monsieur Veto," himself.

It is clear that the materials did not exist in France for a constitution on the American model, with "balanced government" in the manner of John Adams. In fact, it seems that Adams himself would have voted against Mounier in 1789. Stoutly defending his principles, Adams nevertheless thought that temporarily a single house might be best for France, because a senate would "be formed, most probably, of princes of the blood, cardinals, archbishops, dukes and marquises; and all these together would have obstructed the progress of the reformation in religion and government, and procured an abortion to the regeneration of France."²³ This was precisely the view of the Left, as it was already called, in the French Assembly. Patriots feared that even an elected upper house would be dominated by the nobility, or turn in some way into a special "body" or "order" like the old parlements or estates. But even the French Right in 1789 would not vote for an upper house. What the truly conservative aristocrat desired, the little nobleman from the country, was the old-fashioned "order" in which he had been born, to which he owed his status, and which had been dissolved in the Estates General against his will. He did not want an English House of Lords or an elective senate on the American model, for such a body would be filled by wealthy and prominent nobles or bourgeois, and the ordinary nobleman or gentleman of the provinces, if he went into politics, would have to enter a lower house by soliciting votes from the common people.

There was wisdom in the arguments of Mounier and Mirabeau for a strong executive independent of the elected assembly. But the strong governor created in 1780 by the constitution of Massachusetts was an elected officer of limited term, as was the strong President created at the Philadelphia convention for the United States. In an appeal to the people he could be voted out. The French King, as Sieyès observed, was hereditary and irremovable. He was also a carryover from former times, not really in sympathy with the new. The King could not be wholly trusted

p. 152, as also by Mathiez. All sources that give figures at all give only 89 as the number voting for two houses. Some authorities (Egret, Lanzac de Laborie, Lacretelle) accuse the Right of following a *politique du pire*, that is, of voting for a single house in order to produce an unworkable constitution. Lacretelle says that he remembers many having said, *tout ne va pas encore assez mal* (*Histoire de l'Assemblée constituante*, Paris, 1821, 1, 202); and Lanzac de Laborie attributes to Maury the cynical remark that *si vous établissiez deux chambres votre constitution pourrait se maintenir*. I do not know on what contemporary evidence such allegations may rest. I follow Egret in his conclusion on why Right and Left combined to swamp Mounier by favoring a single house.

23 *Discourses on Davila* (1790) in *Works* (1851), VI, 274.

even by moderate partisans of the new order. Yet his very existence made it impossible for the French to create a new executive office as the Americans had done. Never during the Revolution, if indeed after it, were the French quite to solve the problem of the relation of the executive to the national representation.

Mounier and his followers immediately resigned from the constitutional committee. There followed the October Days, when rioters invaded Versailles and obliged the King and the Assembly to remove to Paris. Disgusted by such violence, believing that the Assembly was now at the mercy of city mobs, and being actually in some danger of his own life, Mounier returned to Dauphiny. Here he found opinion divided, some favoring the National Assembly, the August decrees, the Declaration, the steps taken toward a new constitution—and some opposed. The former gathered in a popular club to uphold the Assembly—a future Jacobin club of the provinces. The latter Mounier tried to rally in the Provincial Estates, which he himself had helped to bring into being at Vizille the year before. The Provincial Estates became the organized center for opposition to the National Assembly, even threatening civil war. The National Assembly thereupon prohibited the meeting of all Provincial Estates and all “assemblies by Orders” throughout France. Thus another line was drawn between Revolution and Counterrevolution, and another step taken toward concentration of sovereignty in the Assembly at Paris. Mounier then went abroad. Two years later, from his place of exile, in a book explaining why the French had failed to “become free,” he was denouncing the new France as impossibly “democratic,” and urging royal dictatorship as the only solution for France’s troubles.²⁴

It is important, most especially perhaps for American readers, to explain how J. J. Mounier, the merchant’s son, the enemy of noble privilege, the hero of the Tennis Court, the coauthor of the great Declaration, the moderate revolutionary of 1789 whose ideas were in so many ways close to those of Americans, passed as early as the end of 1789 into the Counterrevolution. For I believe that Mounier was tragically mistaken. His position was untenable. The existence of monarchy and aristocracy in France, as they really were, made his system unworkable and unacceptable. It was not even desired by the King and nobility. If the French were to carry out the principles that they shared with Americans and with men elsewhere in Europe, as described in preceding chapters—principles set forth notably in the Declaration—they would have to do so by concentrating sovereign power, the power to destroy and to create, in a single assembly somewhat as outlined by the Abbé Sieyès—and which wielded, in principle, that awful “supreme, sovereign, absolute and uncontrollable power” ascribed in 1776 by the General Court of Massachusetts to the people. They would have to take account of the wishes of peasants and workers; the Revolution could not succeed if “bourgeois” alone. It could not, as Mounier preferred, be only a revolution of respectable men. Lawyers, businessmen, lesser officeholders, writers, and humanitarians could not, by themselves, defeat the interests of monarchy and aristocracy which were now allied. Moderate revolution was eminently desirable, but it was not one of the possible

24 *Recherches sur les causes qui ont empêché les Français de devenir libres, et sur les moyens qui leur restent pour acquérir la liberté* (2 vols., Geneva, 1792), II, 203.

choices. Moderation in Belgium, Holland, Geneva, Milan, England, Ireland, and Poland had accomplished nothing.

After the October Days of 1789, which led to the transfer of its sittings to Paris, the Assembly remained at work for two years, applying in all directions, and not merely to government, the revolutionary principle of the people as constituent power. The old France which had fallen to pieces was put back together according to a new pattern. National sovereignty, equality of rights, and universality of free citizenship were the most prominent features of the new design. The formerly sovereign King became an officer under the constitution. Nobility and all its titles were abolished. The old constituted bodies, as they have been called in preceding pages, the thirteen parlements and the various Provincial Estates, disappeared. All other "bodies," corporate groups, and special interests faced a similar liquidation. Trade and professional guilds, employers' associations and workingmen's unions were proscribed as contrary to individual liberty and equality. The right of free access to any private occupation or any public office for all qualified persons was proclaimed, with the understanding that qualifications should depend only on the nature of the task to be performed. The church was reorganized, and its bishops and parish clergy were made elective. Protestants and Jews received the same rights as Catholics; or rather, religious affiliation was made irrelevant to citizenship, or to membership in the civil community called the nation. Property, like government, was freed from the lingering idea of lordship; this was the essential meaning of the abolition of feudalism. In the redefinition of property, there could be no property in public office or manorial forms of income; these were abolished with compensation. The Assembly assumed the old royal debt as a public or national obligation, which no government of the Revolution ever expressly repudiated. To pay it off, the property of the church was confiscated, on the ground that it had always been held in trust for the public anyway. The state took on the responsibility for the costs of religious worship, as for social services and education. Taxes, law courts, army, schools, scientific and literary academies were all revolutionized.

The abolition of the provinces and of regional liberties made the same rights and obligations prevail uniformly throughout the country. The basis of representation and the liability to taxes became geographically homogeneous. Various local administrations and officials were made locally elective. The constitution gave the vote to over half the adult male population; or to more than two-thirds of those over the required age of twenty-five. Voters, as such, voted only for electors, who in turn chose the national deputies and the lesser elected officials; but those who might qualify as electors were very numerous, certainly more numerous than those who could read a newspaper or compose a written message, probably being half the men of twenty-five or older. When "equality" was talked of in the eighteenth century, universal suffrage was one of the last things it called to mind; but even if democracy be anachronistically identified with the number of persons entitled to vote, the government set up in France by the constitution of 1791 was incomparably more democratic than any other in the Western World at the time, with the sole exception of certain states in the American Union.²⁵ Under revolutionary con-

25 See Appendix V.

ditions, however, in which people of all classes had been politically aroused, the exclusion of a considerable segment from the vote led to disturbance, especially with the beginning of war and the raising of a popular army in 1792. The Constituent Assembly, on finishing its work in 1791, did not submit the new constitution to any form of popular ratification, such as had occurred for the federal and some of the state constitutions in America. Here again, not without reason, the Assembly was afraid of lesser assemblies throughout the country, many of which might not agree with it, and some of which, even those influenced by "aristocrats," would claim to represent the people more than the National Assembly itself. As Sieyès said, the authority of the National Assembly must be upheld, and no authentic national will could be known except as expressed by it.

After the fall of the Bastille, Camille Desmoulins began to publish a political paper in which he liked to emphasize the international character of the Revolution. He called it the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, and in December 1789 he added *etc.* to "Brabant." He put in news items from all kinds of places: there were "fermentations" at Rome, "murmurs" in Hungary, troubles in Denmark, Spain, and Poland, and at Geneva, Liège, and London. In March 1790 he took note of the French émigrés, among whom such incongruous personages as Mounier and the Count of Artois were now included, and of the agitation of the émigrés for intervention in France by foreign powers. Against intervention he made the counter-threat of international subversion. "I would not advise their Sardinian, Bohemian, Spanish, Neapolitan, and Prussian Majesties to get mixed up in our affairs. Four or five million armed men would fight for liberty and *pro aris et focis* against mercenaries at four sous a day." And he said that the American Revolution proved that citizen soldiers could stand against regular armies. And that foreign troops would be subverted by "our cockades and our decrees."

The new French constitution went into effect in September 1791. "The Revolution is over," said Robespierre, in a phrase often quoted. What he said was that the Revolution was over if the constitution was firmly established, if all concerned would live under it peaceably, if it had no dangerous enemies either inside France or beyond its borders. These conditions did not obtain. The Revolution, was therefore by no means over. Only a challenge had been issued to the old order; the real struggle was yet to come.

PART 2

THE STRUGGLE

PREFACE TO PART 2

This book describes the confrontation that took place in Europe and America at the time of the French Revolution and the wars that accompanied it. Though it can be read independently, the book is a sequel to one published in 1959 under the same title, but subtitled "The Challenge," as the present one is subtitled "The Struggle." The connecting thought is that in the years from about 1760 to 1791 or 1792, the period of the earlier volume, revolutionary movements against aristocratic forms of society made themselves evident in many countries, but that except in America they were either crushed or, as in France and Poland in 1791, were of very doubtful success, so that a "challenge" had been issued which awaited resolution by further "struggle." The present volume traces the fortunes of both revolution and counter-revolution to about the year 1800. By that time, it is argued, although counter-revolutionary or aristocratic forces had prevailed in some countries, the new or democratic view had established itself, in a way less than ideal, against attempts of its adversaries to put it down.

The reader can judge whether "democratic revolution" is an appropriate term for the transformations here recounted. Reasons for using it are given at the outset of the earlier volume, and will be apparent at many places in the present one. I have tried to take note of criticisms raised against the plan of the work after publication of the first volume. Some have thought that my interpretations are too purely political, and give inadequate attention to social or economic realities. Others, doubting the feasibility of a comparative view of so many countries, have stressed the distinctive peculiarity of the situation in England, France, or America. Many have questioned whether there was any real revolution except the actual French Revolution, which, they fear, is minimized when seen as part of a wider revolutionary disturbance. Here also it is for the reader to judge; but I do not think I have slighted the national peculiarity of any country, and I do not see how anyone, upon reading the present volume, can think the importance of the French Revolution to be understated.

It has been difficult or impossible to find, in English, any account of certain areas of Europe at this time, and notably of the Batavian, Cisalpine, and Helvetic Republics. I have therefore adopted a regional arrangement, hoping to give a concrete picture of each of these revolutionary states in turn, as well as of Britain and Ireland, Poland and Eastern Europe, Germany and America—and of course

France. At the same time I have tried to avoid a merely country-by-country treatment, and to set forth a chronological narrative of events on the wider stage of Western Civilization. It is hoped that this broader view will be apparent, not only in Chapters XVI, XXVI, and XXXII, where it is most explicitly aimed at, but also in the way in which more geographically localized chapters are put into relation to each other.

My obligations are numerous. I am indebted to younger colleagues, who, as assistants, have read for me in languages that I do not know: Messrs. Jeffry Kaplow and William Blackwell in Russian, Peter Kenez in Hungarian, Andre Michalski in Polish, and H. A. Barton in Swedish. I wish I had been able to make better use, in a fuller treatment of Latin America, of the help given me by my friends, Professor and Mrs. Stanley J. Stein, in Spanish and Portuguese. For permission to reproduce, with adaptations, the contents of three articles of which I am the author, I am indebted to the editors of the *Journal of Modern History*, *French Historical Studies*, and the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. Mrs. Louis Gantz of Princeton has done most of the typing, Professor Stanley E. Howard of Princeton has assisted with the proofs, and Mrs. Leon Gottfried of St. Louis has prepared the index.

For the freedom given in the use of my own time I should like to thank the Rockefeller Foundation, which has generously supported this volume as it did its predecessor. Without the Princeton University Library, in which most of the research was done, the book would probably never have been written. As so often in the past, I am under a great obligation to the officers and staff of the Princeton University Press, and notably to its Director, Mr. Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., and its Managing Editor, Miss Miriam Brokaw. Most of all, most lastingly and most deeply, I am indebted to Princeton University itself, which over a period of many years made possible the conditions for the writing of this and other books. In particular, I must gladly acknowledge the aid received from the Council of the Humanities at Princeton, and from the Benjamin D. Shreve Fellowship awarded by the Department of History there.

For all such help I express my thanks, the more feelingly since I am no longer at Princeton, and have now completed a work that has occupied me, with interruptions, for fourteen years. *Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit!*

R. R. PALMER
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
ST. LOUIS, MO.
MAY 1964

CHAPTER XVI

THE ISSUES AND THE ADVERSARIES

Every European is today part of this last struggle of civilization. . . . The Revolution being cosmopolitan, so to speak, ceases to belong exclusively to the French.

—J. MALLET DU PAN, BRUSSELS, AUGUST 1793

“What had *liberty* and the *rights of man* to do with this second revolution?” Noah Webster posed the question in a tract on the French Revolution published in New York at the height of the Reign of Terror. By the second revolution he meant the events in France in the summer of 1792. Later historians have also used the term “second revolution” for these events—the popular upheaval in Paris which led to the attack on the Tuileries on August 10, the dethronement, humiliation, and subsequent death of Louis XVI, the collapse of the first constitution of the Revolution, the deportation of priests, the September Massacres, the mounting violence, the streaming of French armies across the frontiers into neighboring countries, and the famous decree of November by which the French Republic offered “aid and fraternity to all peoples wishing to recover their liberty.”

A methodical man, author of children's spelling books, eventually to be famous as a maker of dictionaries, Webster admitted that he had welcomed the French Revolution of 1789. He had seen in it the same objectives as the Americans had sought in 1776. But the developments since 1792 went beyond anything he could approve. They showed a “wild enthusiasm,” a “political insanity.” In American politics he had become rather conservative; at least he was now a staunch Federalist. He could hardly share the enthusiasm for France which American democrats continued to feel. But he was far from taking part in the unqualified denunciation that was the stock in trade of Federalist polemics. He was willing to admit, as news of the guillotining was brought by successive vessels into American seaports, that not all the relevant facts might be known. The French, he thought, were excited because foreign powers had tried to intervene in their affairs. “Perhaps other cir-

cumstances, not known in this country, may serve to palliate the apparent cruelty of the ruling faction." Like a Jeffersonian republican, Webster remarked that the French were at war with "a vile league of tyrants." Personally, he hoped and believed that they would be victorious.¹

Noah Webster never did understand the French Revolution of 1792, or the relation of the ensuing violence to "liberty" and the "rights of man." It is a question that will always be open to discussion. But he put his finger on part of the answer when he pointed to the war. In April 1792 France had declared war on the "King of Hungary and Bohemia," that is the House of Austria or Hapsburg, which, since it possessed most of Belgium, was the most important of the powers that adjoined the French frontiers. By the following summer the French were also at war with the kingdoms of Prussia and Sardinia, and by 1793 with Great Britain, the Dutch Republic, and the Bourbon Monarchy of Spain.

The war revolutionized the Revolution, in the words of Professor Marcel Reinhard of the Sorbonne, making it more drastic at home and more powerful in its effects abroad. With the war, a specifically French Revolution was merged into a more general Revolution of Western Civilization.²

In an earlier volume I have tried to explain how revolution or serious political protest had broken out in many countries—in preceding years—at Geneva in Switzerland in 1768, in the American Revolution in the 1770's, in the discontents of Ireland, in the reform movement in Britain, among the Dutch and the Belgians in the 1780's, in Poland and to an extent in Hungary between 1788 and 1791, and not least in France in 1789. It was argued in that volume that except in America these movements had not succeeded. By the year 1791 the established interests had triumphantly prevailed in Britain, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Hungary, and Geneva; the Polish revolution was in process of liquidation; and in France the Constitution of 1791 was by no means generally accepted, nor had the dispossessed interests by any means admitted defeat or even the necessity of compromise. Everywhere a "democratic" revolution had challenged the aristocracies, patriciates, oligarchies, and privileged orders. But nothing was settled. "Only a challenge had been issued to the old order; the real struggle was yet to come." With these closing words of the earlier book the present one may open.³

The struggle worked itself out in conjunction with the war. The forces that had opposed democratizing changes in their own countries for twenty years now opposed the France of the Revolution. Those who for a generation had hoped to open up their own societies looked with more favor on developments in France. The war that began in April 1792, and that lasted essentially, though with intermissions and shifts of alliances, until the second exile of Napoleon in 1815, was not simply a war between "France" and "Europe." "France" had its friends in all countries, and "Europe" its well-wishers within the boundaries of France. Despite occasional appearances, or stated war aims, the war became an ideological conflict

1 Noah Webster, *The Revolution in France Considered in Its Progress and Effects* (New York, 1794), 3–4, 38, 70.

2 See Jacques Godechot, *La grande nation: l'expansion révolutionnaire de la France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956).

3 See pages 274–79 and 372, above.

between new and old—between “democratic” and “aristocratic” forms of society in the sense explained in the preceding volume.

It is a complex story, in which not everything can be told. Something must be said of a dozen European countries and of America. In the following pages the method will vary from the expository to the impressionistic. Let us begin with a tale of two cities, involving ceremonial events in Frankfurt and Paris on July 14, 1792. It was, of course, Bastille Day, but it was also the date of the imperial coronation of Francis II, a young man of twenty-four who proved to be the last Holy Roman Emperor.

BASTILLE DAY, 1792

“Those concerned seem to attach importance to the appropriateness of the day, in crowning the Emperor on the very day of the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, that is in choosing for the destruction of the Revolution in France the very day on which it began.” It was the Abbé Maury, cardinal designate, papal nuncio at Frankfurt, who thus reported to the Curia a few days before the coronation. Or, as the correspondent of the *Leyden Gazette* remarked, writing from Frankfurt, “The date of this solemnity did not pass unnoticed, being the very day of another at Paris with the honors inverted.”⁴

The free city of Frankfurt had for centuries been the site of the imperial coronation. Most of the old city was destroyed by bombing in 1944. Into its now vanished hive of crooked streets, churches, and public buildings, in July 1792, there converged a variety of great or important persons in whom the Old Order was ostentatiously represented.

There were the young Emperor Francis and his wife. There was the brother of the French king, the Count of Artois, leader of the most irreconcilable of the French émigrés, expecting to return momentarily to France now that the Allied armies were about to invade it. With him were three generations of the princely house of Condé, and Marshals de Broglie and de Castries. Calonne, Louis XVI’s reforming minister of 1786, was in close attendance; as “prime minister of the emigration” he expected to be prime minister of the new government which the Allied victory would make possible in France.

The three ecclesiastical Electors of the Holy Roman Empire were present for the coronation in person. So was Prince Esterhazy, the great Hungarian magnate. The Swedish count Axel de Fersen was there, the secret correspondent and personal devotee of Marie Antoinette, whom he had tried and failed to spirit out of France a year before. He had just received another note from her, in cypher, telling how Lafayette and other French generals meant to get the king out of Paris within the next few days. The Swiss Mallet du Pan was among those present; he had lived for years in Paris, and brought secret messages from Louis XVI himself. He made little impression, since he was lacking in rank for the circles now assembled in

4 J. S. Maury, *Correspondance diplomatique et Mémoires inédits*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1891), 1, 68; *Gazette de Leyde* for July 27, 1792.

Frankfurt, and his political opinions, like those that he conveyed from Louis XVI, were brushed aside as too conciliatory toward the Revolution. The Abbé Maury represented the Pope. He had sat for two years in the Constituent Assembly, where he had been one of the chief spokesmen against the early phase of the Revolution. He now anticipated an early restoration of the French church and clergy.

Representing the younger generation, apart from the Emperor himself, were Prince Augustus Frederick, the sixth son of King George III of England, who had come down from his studies at Göttingen, and the young Klemens von Metternich, who had recently, as a student at Strasbourg, had a chance to see something of the French Revolution at first hand. His father, newly appointed imperial minister for the Belgian provinces, was grappling with the problem of bringing the Belgian revolutionaries of 1789 under control. It was at Frankfurt in 1792 that Francis II and the younger Metternich first met. They were to know each other well in later years, cooperating at the interminable task of putting down revolution, a task which in Metternich's case would last until 1848.

The city was full of excitement. Prussian troops kept passing through on the way to France. Three regiments marched through the streets, pausing stiffly before the Emperor's lodgings, during the days of the celebration. It was uncertain whether they could arrive in time. The Emperor expressed concern that harm might befall his aunt, Marie Antoinette, during the Bastille Day demonstrations in Paris. The date provoked apprehension for Frankfurt also, since the city was full of newspapers and pamphlets brought in from Strasbourg, written in German and extolling the new order in France. It was possible that there might be manifestations of sympathy for France among the townspeople. Internal security was turned over to the Austrian General Brentano, who used reliable troops, and took care to close the city gates on July 14. It was reassuring to learn at this moment that the Erfurt Academy of Sciences was offering a prize of one hundred thalers, to be given for "the best popular writing in which the German people are instructed in the advantages of the Constitution of their own country, and warned against the evils to which exaggerated ideas of unlimited liberty and idealistic equality may lead."⁵

The Emperor arrived on July 11, incognito, but with a train of forty carriages, already chosen by the imperial electors, as a Hamburg paper expressed it, "to the supreme headship of the German empire, the first of the human race . . . to celebrate the thousandth year of the Roman emperorship, and in another eight short years to begin a new millennium of the Roman-German empire."⁶

The coronation was staged in keeping with the Golden Bull of 1356, but with more than the usual solemnity in view of the seriousness of the times. Maury told the Pope that he wept with emotion, and that the Archbishop of Mainz had employed the Roman pontifical service. Francis took the oath in a firm voice. The gorgeous procession then left the cathedral in the rain, amid cheers of undampened enthusiasm, to the discharge of cannon and peal of bells, with the Emperor wear-

⁵ *Hamburgische unparteiische Correspondent* for July 20, 1792.

⁶ *Politisches Journal* (Hamburg, 1792), II, 767. Details on July 14 at Frankfurt are taken from reports in these two Hamburg periodicals, from the memoirs of Maury, studies of Metternich, Calonne, Mallet du Pan, and Fersen; and from I. Kracauer, "Frankfurt und die französische Revolution, 1789-92," in *Archiv für Frankfurts Geschichte und Kunst*, 3rd ser. IX (1907), 211-97.

ing the six-pound crown, and bearing the orb and scepter. Goldpieces were thrown to the multitude, and red and white wine flowed from certain fountains.

That night Prince Esterhazy gave a ball. Young Metternich opened the dance with the Princess of Mecklenburg, the future Queen Louise of Prussia. Nineteen years old, he had been designated for the coronation as Master of Ceremonies of the Catholic Westphalian Imperial Princely Bench. At this ball Esterhazy spent ten thousand guilders on the illuminations alone. A few years later Gouverneur Morris was told in Vienna that Esterhazy had spent eighty thousand English pounds in six weeks at Frankfurt in 1792, so that, although the wealthiest subject in Europe, his estate was in the hands of its creditors. The American Morris took this as a sign of the "feudal system" in its decline.⁷

The Prussian troops continued to pass through the city, and the Emperor and his advisors, Maury, the French émigrés, and various others moved on to Mainz, there to take counsel with the King of Prussia on their joint policies toward France. They considered a manifesto to the city of Paris, of which more will be said.

In Paris the proceedings of July 14 showed "the honors inverted." Since 1790 the anniversary of the Bastille had been the day of the *fédération*, on which patriotic delegations from various communities met together regionally, and also at a national level in Paris, to "federate" with each other, that is to pledge themselves to each other and to the new constitution in support of the new order in France. Organized by the political clubs which had sprung up everywhere, these exchanges of delegates were a means by which men who had had no chance for political experience before 1789 acquired a sense of political awareness and participation, felt themselves to constitute a "nation" by the use of their own free will, or to act collectively, as they saw it, as a free and sovereign people. The federation of 1792 was the first since the beginning of the war. The war had gone badly, the Prussians were approaching, the king was distrusted, and the émigrés announced with loud menaces their imminent return. The Assembly had passed a decree of national emergency, *la patrie en danger*. Bells clanged in Paris as in Frankfurt, but they were bells of alarm, the tocsin.

The men who converged on Paris to celebrate July 14 were therefore very different from those who converged upon Frankfurt for the same day. They were the patriots and superpatriots sent in from the provinces, or rather by the authorities of the new "departments" into which the provinces had been reorganized. By half-dozens or by hundreds they dribbled into the capital, where they joined with one another and with the Parisians in a great surge of national and revolutionary feeling, to defend the Revolution against all who might threaten it—the foreign powers, the émigrés, the aristocrats, the French king and queen—against all who might be suspected of treachery, or who merely by moderation might open the way to the enemy. Some of the congregating provincials arrived too late for the actual day. Among these were several hundred from Marseilles, who on July 14 were somewhere in central France on a twenty-seven-day walk from Marseilles to Paris. As they trudged through the countryside they chanted Rouget de Lisle's new war

⁷ Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris, 2 vols. (New York, 1888), II, 248.

song, since known as the Marseillaise. Its refrain leaped from town to town: *Aux armes, citoyens, Formez vos bataillons!*

The observance in Paris took place at the Champ de Mars, the open area now graced by the Eiffel Tower, then lying on the outskirts of the city. The Ecole Militaire was there then, as today; from one of its balconies Marie Antoinette and the court looked down upon the proceedings. Sixty or a hundred thousand people filled the space, some in the uniforms of the National Guard and keeping casual military formations, others in the ordinary clothing of the various social classes of Paris, individuals, families, children in holiday mood to see a bit of pageantry and public festivity. Along the edge of the crowd was a series of tents, one for each of the eighty-three departments, each with its name in a tricolor decoration. Near the Seine, about where the Eiffel Tower now stands, was a temporary structure put up for the occasion, some twenty feet high, with a curved flight of steps and adorned with classical urns, and at the top an oblong block on which a copy of the constitution rested. This was the Altar of the Country, *l'autel de la patrie*. Near it stood a "genealogical tree," a sapling already felled and placed here for the day, with a pile of kindling at its base. From its branches hung escutcheons, coats of arms, and coronets of various descriptions, the apparatus of "counts and barons, but not of kings," as one Paris newspaper reported, "blue ribbons, gold chains, ermine mantles, parchment titles and all the baubles of the former nobility."⁸

The much buffeted Louis XVI still occupied his shaken throne, and he led the procession, consisting of his own guard, and of members of the Assembly and various civic magistrates, from the Ecole Militaire the length of the Champ de Mars, through the crowds and through the massed pikes and bayonets of the citizens in arms, to the Altar of the Country at the other end. Here he mounted the steps and renewed his oath to the constitution, which he was of course known to have repudiated at the time of the flight to Varennes. The genealogical tree was then ignited. The emblems of aristocracy went up in smoke. The French people thus published their counter-threat to the French émigrés, and their defiance to Europe.

In Paris as in Frankfurt there were a good many foreigners on July 14, though except for occasional appearances at the Jacobin club, or at the bar of the Assembly, they played no public role. Some were individual travelers, sympathizers with the Revolution, such as James Watt, Jr., son of the inventor of the steam engine, who was there partly out of curiosity and partly as a salesman for his father's industrial products. Others were political exiles, émigrés of an opposite character to those who attended Prince Esterhazy's ball—refugees from the counterrevolution at Geneva, Belgian "democrats" who had fled from the Austrian restoration of 1790, and, above all, the Dutch refugees from the Orange restoration of 1787, of whom thousands had come to France and an unknown number were in Paris. Each of these groups hoped to advance its own cause by the war. As the Count of Artois hoped to re-enter France in the wake of the Prussians and Austrians, so these émigrés in Paris hoped that with French victories they might return to re-

⁸ *Révolutions de Paris*, Nos. 157 and 158, pp. 81–82, 97–106. Details on July 14 at Paris are taken from this journal, and from A. Mathiez, *Le Dix-Aout* (Paris, 1931) and *La Révolution et les étrangers* (Paris, 1918).

sume their interrupted efforts in their own countries. As the Prince of Condé formed a military unit of French émigrés, “Condé’s army,” to serve alongside the Austrians, so these other émigrés worked to form auxiliary units of their own nationalities to fight alongside the French. Thus arose Belgian, Dutch, and other “legions,” of which more is said in the next chapter.

IDEOLOGICAL WAR

The war was an ideological war, but anyone who tried to see it as a straight clash between Revolution and Counter-Revolution would soon become confused. Partisans of the Revolution differed violently with each other, as did their opponents. For contemporaries, as for historians, the Revolution might refer to specific events, like the capture of the Bastille, or to a vast personified force, or to an abstract cause for which the French or others might be fighting. It could mean taking titles away from dukes, or giving bread to the poor. It could mean the teachings of Jesus, or of Voltaire. It could be for constitutional kings or no kings, for nations or for mankind. There were not two sides, but a dozen, or a hundred.

“The war of democracy is giving way to the war of intrigue,” reported Maury to Rome in August.⁹ He meant that when the war had begun, in April, the French had launched it as a crusade, a holy war of liberty against tyrants, in the cause of all peoples against all kings, but that now that the French were worsted, and initiative was passing to the two chief Allies, the various interests that hoped to profit from a French defeat were mainly engrossed in trying to outwit each other. The French émigrés, led by Artois and Calonne, meant to use the Allies to recover their own lost position in France, their manorial estates, and their former perquisites of nobility. Fersen was genuinely concerned for Marie Antoinette, but the émigrés cared little for Louis XVI, whom they regarded as a dupe of the Revolution. Louis XVI had an equally low opinion of the émigrés. Maury hoped to use the Allies to put the French Catholic Church back on its old foundation, and to regain Avignon for the Pope, who had lost it when it was merged into France without his consent, by a plebiscite in 1791. The rulers of Austria and Prussia cared nothing about restoring the French émigrés. If they hoped to assure the personal safety of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and to uphold the dignity of royalty in a general way, they had no program for the internal rearrangement of France, and preferred if anything that the French monarchy should remain weakened by insoluble problems. They cared nothing about the state of the Catholic Church in France—the Prussians were Protestants, and the Austrian government had been anti-Catholic and anti-papal for a decade. It was of no concern to the Powers whether the Pope got back his territory of Avignon, except insofar as by the return of Avignon France might be weakened, and other territorial cessions facilitated. The French émigrés likewise were not noted for churchly devotion; a few became more seriously religious in adversity, but as the Abbé Leflon has remarked, a historian at the Catholic Institute in Paris, the émigrés used religion to beautify their more worldly aims.

⁹ *Mémoires*, I, 89.

Pope Pius VI, and the best of the French émigré bishops, did not confuse political or material restitution to the émigrés with the requirements of religion.

The Allies of 1792 were not, by policy or intent, conducting a war for religion or Christianity or the French émigrés, or Louis XVI, or restoration of the Old Regime. As hostilities proceeded, the Austrians developed certain territorial ambitions, hoping to make gains at French expense in Alsace or along the Belgian border. The miniature King of Sardinia had entered the war with similar aims. The Prussians wondered why they were in this queer war at all, since Austria rather than France had been the chief Prussian enemy for generations. For many of the King of Prussia's advisers, and for some in Austria, the whole French adventure was a diversion if not an error, and the important front lay in Poland, where it was expedient to make a quick end to the Polish revolution. Either a successful Polish revival leading to a lasting and independent Polish state, or a collapse in which Poland should be absorbed or dominated by Russia, would be equally distasteful to the courts of Berlin and Vienna. The two German powers therefore held many of their best troops for use on their eastern borders, believing in any case that no full-scale military effort would be necessary against a France weakened by internal anarchy. As for the powers still neutral in 1792, they hoped and expected to remain so. Neither the British nor the Dutch government had any intention of going to war to effect counter-revolution in France. Catherine II, the Russian tsarina, sent money to the French émigrés, and urged on the Prussians and Austrians against the French Jacobins. She refrained from taking part herself. She said that she would "fight Jacobinism, and beat it in Poland."

As for the French, though they talked of the *guerre universelle* of all peoples against all tyrants, they had really gone to war for less cosmopolitan purposes, less to liberate humanity than to serve certain purposes of their own domestic politics. An intense war spirit had arisen in the six months before April 1792. It had been fomented by threats of foreign intervention. In August 1791, by his Declaration of Pillnitz, the then Emperor, Leopold II, had announced that under certain conditions the European powers might collectively take military action against the Revolution in France. The Declaration was qualified and Leopold did not yet think collective intervention likely. He had issued his statement to quiet the importunities of the French émigrés, and in a vague hope of doing something useful for the French king and queen. The émigrés seized on the declaration to intimidate the Revolutionary leaders in Paris. However interpreted, the Declaration naturally caused alarm and indignation in France.

Various groups in France, as the year 1791 passed into 1792, came to feel that a short decisive foreign war would advance their own domestic interests. Each hoped by war to get rid of its adversaries. For the firebrands of the Jacobin Club, a war would make it possible for traitors to the Revolution to be exposed, it would sort out the true and the false patriots, and under conditions of military emergency would allow the use of strong measures by which the Revolution could be carried further. For the liberal or constitutional monarchists, called the Feuillants, the moderates of this stage of the Revolution, a war would consolidate opinion throughout the country, reduce internal dissension, make it possible to suppress radicalism, add to the stature of the executive, and oblige the Assembly to accept

the lead of the king and his ministers. For the extreme right, those opposed even to moderate revolution, who had always believed or had come to believe that everything since 1789 was a mistake, a short and sharp war would reveal the chaos and incompetence of the new government, and after a victory by one or more foreign powers, which in these circumstances could not be regarded as enemies of France, the Jacobins and Feuillants and all involved since 1789 in the Revolution would be swept aside, and the true France, the historic France, would be put back together.

Leopold died in March 1792. During the winter he had become more positively inclined toward intervention. In any case his son Francis was closer than his father to those conservative forces in the Hapsburg empire which had opposed the reforming spirit of both Leopold and his predecessor Joseph. These were the people most eager for war with France, which would have the advantage of destroying the center of Revolution, from which certain citizens of Vienna, and everywhere else, were getting dangerous ideas.

In Paris, both the Jacobin Club and the Legislative Assembly resounded with speeches demanding war. Only Robespierre and a handful of others spoke against it almost to the end. Robespierre, at the Jacobins, scoffed at the rhapsodies of Brissot, who said that war would produce a kind of world revolution, in which the peoples everywhere would rise against their governments in sympathy for France and for the cause of freedom. To Robespierre such talk was extravagant ("No one loves armed missionaries") and dangerous for the future of liberty in France: "To want to give liberty to others before conquering it ourselves is to assure our own enslavement and that of the whole world."¹⁰

The vote on war came in the Assembly on April 20, with only one recorded speech against it, by an obscure deputy named Bequet, a political moderate, who insisted that the war was not inevitable, that Austria did not wish to fight, being mainly concerned with Poland and more afraid of Russia than of France. Bequet predicted much of what was to follow, saying that if the French entered Belgium to fight the Austrians, and if they threatened Holland, the British would come in and France would face a coalition of all Europe. He was answered by an array of Jacobin luminaries and spellbinders, Brissot, Condorcet, Vergniaud, Bazire, Guadet (the "Girondins" of later historians) who insisted that the war was necessary and right, that it was not a war of "nation against nation," and added the theory (which came to be the "democratic" theory of war) that they had no quarrel with any people, but only with kings and their henchmen. With seven negative votes, war was declared on the King of Hungary and Bohemia.

It was not the purpose of the French to revolutionize other countries by the war, nor of the Allies to bring about counter-revolution in France. It was not in this sense of war-aims that the war was ideological. It became an ideological war, and remained so, because the war came upon a world already divided by serious cleavages. These were the cleavages, of varying depth in different countries but found almost everywhere, described in Volume I.

10 Bouloiseau, Lefebvre, and Soboul, eds., *Oeuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, VIII (1953), 81–82, speech at Jacobin Club, Jan. 2, 1792.

Given the fact of war, each of the belligerents looked for sympathizers within its enemy's territory. Thus each expected to weaken its adversary. The Allies found their natural friends in France among the more intense royalists and political Catholics. The French enjoyed the favor of persons already discontented with conditions in their own countries. Sometimes these internally alienated groups actively collaborated with the enemies of their governments, as when royalists in France conspired with foreign agents for the invasion of France, or when Dutch democrats, before 1795, entered into understandings with the French for the invasion of Holland. More often it was not by such "treason" (a term always relative to accepted legality) that these internal divisions made themselves felt, so much as by apathy or uncooperativeness with the demands of governments. The war against France was not popular among the burghers of Berlin. Many middle-class people in Vienna, as in Paris, disliked the Emperor's Declaration of Pillnitz in 1791, and showed no enthusiasm for the war in 1792. When Britain and Holland became involved in the war in 1793, the anti-war feeling in both countries was very strong. In France, so far as the war was expected really to defeat the enemy, the royalists, clericals, and other conservatives had the least interest in its vigorous prosecution.

Hence, again given the war as a fact, and independently of original wish or intention, each government made ringing appeals to those of its own subjects who were already inclined to support it. Each government indeed became more dependent than ever on those classes of the population to which it owed its strength. The class complexion of the regime in each country was accentuated. Each government touted and publicized the advantages of the constitution and way of life which it presumably defended. The Hapsburg government, to carry on the war, had increasingly to agree with the landlord and noble interests which it had itself so stoutly resisted in the days of Joseph II. In Germany, the Academy of Erfurt, as already mentioned, hoped to teach the people the peculiar advantages of the *Vaterländische Verfassung*, or "national constitution"; even though no one quite knew what it was, it must be worth fighting for when one was fighting the French. In England the spokesmen of government, to justify the war and recruit support, became more emphatic than ever in praise of the glories of the British Constitution, by which the existing peculiarities of Lords and Commons were principally to be understood. In liberal language, "reform" became impossible; it had, of course, been equally impossible before the war.

This self-praise in each country of its own institutions is not to be taken as a sign of national solidarity. It is evidence rather of internal division and an attempt at persuasion. The secure and the confident do not need such reminders of their own worth. In France, under stress of war, the government, or groups of men who in the turmoil of revolution were attempting to function as a government, tried to appeal to the mass of the population to sustain the military effort. Former nobles, aristocrats, Rome-minded clergy, and people of inherited wealth or position being in these circumstances the least reliable, the government made concession after concession to the more numerous and popular ranks who must man its armies. The leaders of Revolution became dependent on the most committed, most intense, and most activist revolutionaries. They had also to persuade the masses that the Revolution was to their advantage. In this sense, as will be seen in more detail,

while the war made other countries more aristocratic in official doctrine, it made the French Revolution more democratic than intended in 1789. Somewhat the same, on a smaller scale, had happened in America in 1775 and 1776, when the members of colonial assemblies, facing war with Britain and needing soldiers, had extended the suffrage or taken other steps toward "equality," and introduced into American political life a habit of praising the virtues of the common man.

If the war became ideological because each party expected its enemy to be handicapped by internal dissension, and because each made itself agreeable to those classes within its own borders from which it could expect the most enthusiastic support, it became ideological in a third sense also, having to do with revolutionary expansion. Neither France nor Britain or the Coalition entered the war for the purpose of spreading its own ideas. Such, however, was one of the earliest consequences. Each belligerent, when in the course of hostilities it found itself in occupation of enemy territory, like the French in Belgium at the end of 1792, or at Milan in 1796, or like the Austrians in French Flanders in 1793, or the British in Corsica in 1794, naturally favored its own supporters among the local population, and proceeded to organize public authority according to its own principles and through the medium of its own adherents. The British, with certain Corsicans, set up a "Kingdom of Corsica" in 1794, supposedly modelled on Great Britain. But after 1794 the fortunes of war favored the French. The result was a revolution in political geography signified by the contrast between the two maps on pages 389 and 390. By 1799 there existed a cordon of sister-republics, brought into being by collaboration between native revolutionaries and the French government or armies—the Dutch or Batavian Republic of 1795, the Cisalpine and Ligurian Republics set up in Italy in 1796–1797, the Helvetic Republic in Switzerland in 1798, the Roman and Neapolitan Republics in Italy in 1798–1799. There were Irishmen in France and Ireland who would have been delighted to create a Hibernian Republic, independent of Britain, if the French had been able to land and maintain themselves in that island.

THE ADVERSARIES

It is necessary and possible to generalize on the matter of who favored, and who opposed, in various countries, a more or less successful preservation of the Revolution in France. The Revolution itself could be variously understood. There were not two "sides." The interests of monarchy, nobility, social classes, churches, religious minorities, national groups, internal factiousness, inter-state rivalries, boundary questions, coalition politics, and much else were too conflicting to produce a simple duality. Yet the war introduced a kind of two-sidedness. It polarized the issues. Some expected to gain, others to lose, by a French victory. Which were which? In such matters much depended on personal temperaments, and much on the play of events and circumstances in which an individual might be caught up. We find no absolute or one-to-one correlations between sympathy for the French Revolution and any social or political category of persons. Any kind of *person might* have "Jacobin" inclinations. Any kind *might* detest the Revolution and all its works. Prince

Henry of Prussia, Frederick the Great's brother, was a "Jacobin." So were several members of the English House of Lords. Cardinal Maury was a shoemaker's son, and an extreme conservative. In America the notable anti-Jacobin, Fisher Ames, was offset by his brother Dr. Nathaniel Ames, one of the most convinced "Jacobins" in Massachusetts. But though an individual could be anything, certain statistical correlations are evident.

In simple and obvious terms, those who enjoyed high status under the old or existing order were mainly anti-French. These included the nobilities and patriciates and social elites of various countries. Governing elites, everywhere closely allied to social elites, were generally in the same category: the parliamentary class in Great Britain, the regent class in the Dutch Netherlands, members of governing councils in Geneva or Bern, men who before 1789 had held seats in the French parlements, those in general who belonged to the "constituted bodies" as described in the earlier volume were overwhelmingly hostile to the principles of the Revolution. Those on the other hand who had served government in the role of experts, or as career officials, or as ministers to "enlightened monarchs" with reforming programs that clashed with feudal or ecclesiastical or localistic urban interests, were more likely to turn up as revolutionary sympathizers in the 1790's; there were many such cases in the Italian states, and some in the Austrian empire. Town notables such as burgomasters and councillors in various countries, given the municipal arrangements of Europe before the revolutionary era, enjoyed high and usually inherited status, and were generally anti-French. Persons deriving status or material and psychological satisfaction from historic craft and mercantile guilds were conservative. Those living from forms of property-right that the Revolution threatened were naturally opposed to it; these were mostly the European landowners possessing manorial estates, receiving manorial or seignieurlial rents, with a perpetual family interest protected by various equivalents of primogeniture and entail. Those drawing income and prestige from various public emoluments, the rich sinecures of England and the numerous "offices" available in the Dutch, Swiss, and other systems, looked with suspicion on administrative reforms. Churchmen of established churches disliked the Revolution, which seems to have done more than the Enlightenment to create a fellow feeling among Protestant and Catholic ecclesiastics. There were exceptions, notably in France itself, where there seems to have been more liberalism of mind among the higher clergy, and even among the *émigré* bishops, than in corresponding levels of the Church of England or among leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church established in the United Provinces.

Those of low status, or no status, or those who were politically too unawakened to have any expectation of favorable change, generally remained indifferent or preferred to support their customary social superiors. Except in France itself, and in the United States, where the social situation was very different, the day laborers of town and country, and the farm populations in general, were hard to arouse or to keep aroused for any length of time in favor of the new ideas. In France the peasantry had been genuinely revolutionary in 1789, and the Revolution had been made possible by the mutual and simultaneous action of peasantry and middle class, confirmed by the subsequent confiscation and re-sale of church-owned lands, from which both peasantry and middle class substantially benefited. But it was one

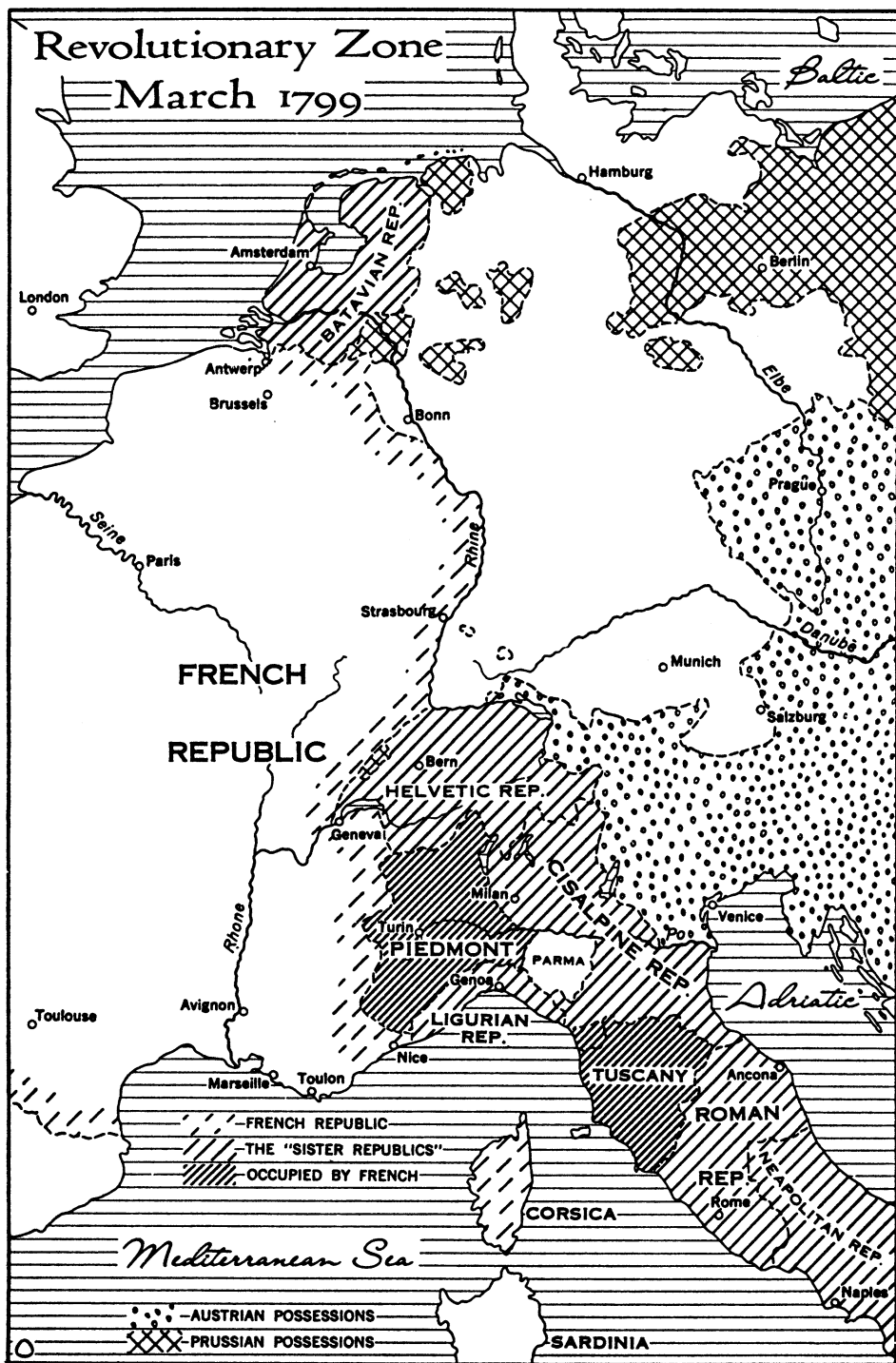
Revolutionary Zone

Early 1789



Revolutionary Zone

March 1799



of the most far-reaching and immediate effects of the Revolution, as Georges Lefebvre pointed out, to divide the French peasantry, to break up the old communal and village life, to make the rural population more differentiated or heterogeneous, turning some into landowners of a modern kind with an interest in "bourgeois" institutions, and others into rural laborers, dependent on a daily wage and on the vestiges of communal practices such as gleanage and pasture rights. The latter soon lost interest in the Revolution; the former were slow to take any initiative or make any sacrifices in its behalf. Both resented interference by city people, whether these acted in the name of the Revolution, national emergency, the war effort, or reason. As for the unskilled working class of the towns in France, they played a political role from 1792 to 1795, but even during these radical years they followed the lead of their own small employers or neighborhood shopkeepers, the next classes above them, who brought them into action in political mobs or demonstrations.

In other European countries the wage-earning and farming populations were less active. Their apathy must not be exaggerated. It seems evident, from recent research, that the peasants, or rather the serfs, of Bohemia and Hungary knew and talked a good deal more of the French Revolution than historians have generally supposed. They had their own grievances, and their own frustrations when the reforms of Joseph II were blocked by the serf-owning landlords. Elsewhere the weight of the peasantry, on balance, turned against the Revolution. Sometimes, as in Belgium, the Catholicism of the farm population was outraged. Sometimes, as in southern Italy, what seemed to be a religious movement, an outburst of rural fanaticism or superstition, carried with it a well-grounded and accurate social protest, in the belief that the revolutionary intellectuals of the south-Italian cities neither knew nor cared about the real needs of the rural masses. In any case, sympathy for the new order everywhere varied in direct proportion to communications, to the contact between town and country, the state of the roads, the reading of newspapers, the frequency of inns and of travelers, the habit of small farmers selling their own produce in a market. Rural communities that had the least contact with the outside world were least interested in a new legal or political order.

The most depressed workers in the cities could usually be counted on for support by the existing governments and established upper classes. Among the Dutch, the populace was more uncritically loyal to the House of Orange than the middle classes. In England, the most dependent workers, those below the level of the skilled trades or self-employment, could be rallied by the squires and gentry in defense of church and king. They could become as nervous over Unitarianism as over Catholicism. They produced the mass following in the wholesale Birmingham riots of 1791, in which Joseph Priestley's home and scientific instruments were destroyed.

It was among persons of intermediate status, or whose status was indeterminate or changing within the categories of the older society, that most Revolutionary leaders or sympathizers with the Revolution were to be found. Lawyers were divided, largely according to the nature of their clients and habitual practice. Lawyers whose cases came mainly from church bodies or great landowners were conservative. So were those schooled in the intricacies of "feudal" law, or those in

countries, like England, where legal doctrines put heavy emphasis on the inheritance of a complex legal tradition. Lawyers who served small clients or new forms of business enterprise, or those who thought that rationality and justice in the law should prevail over its customary or mysterious aspects, were more receptive to the Revolutionary message. Persons with some legal education, but with no practice or settled careers, were of course among the first to plunge into revolutionary and reformist movements.

In the other professions there was much sympathy with the Revolution. Attitudes of reform-minded career servants of enlightened monarchy have been already noted. Doctors were also susceptible. Probably because medicine was as closely related as any profession to science, and touched also on the humanitarianism of the Enlightenment, its practitioners were impatient of much in the old order of society and ideas. It was not surprising that Dr. Nathaniel Ames should be the "Jacobin" of his family, while Fisher Ames became the High Federalist. The guillotine itself had been promoted by a leading French medical man, Dr. Guillotin, who favored it as a scientific and humanitarian innovation, preferable on these grounds to the older techniques of execution. Men with an interest in science, engineering, mining, road building, and other such modern undertakings were also amenable to new ideas. Teaching was undeveloped as a profession. Individual cases could be cited; Fouché, for example, was a physics teacher in a secondary school before the Revolution. In the English universities, which were Church of England institutions, and in the French universities which the Revolution abolished, there were not many incumbents against whom revolutionary sympathies could be charged. But in the universities of Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, and Italy professors of "Jacobin" inclinations could readily be found.

Student radicalism was no more than embryonic. There was unrest among students at the University of Jena when Fichte was professor there; and at Princeton, New Jersey, when the college burned in 1802, the president attributed the disaster to years of "Jacobinical" agitation among the students. The young William Wordsworth, planning to edit a political journal in 1794, observed to his collaborator that he wanted no misunderstanding of his ideas: he was "of that odious class of men called democrats"; he disapproved of "hereditary distinctions and privileged orders of every species"; he was therefore "not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution." They would naturally, in their proposed review, he said, deplore the current atrocities in France, but would often speak favorably of the Revolution. They could expect to find no friendly readers among partisans of the war, but might attract a few Dissenters and students at Oxford and Cambridge.¹¹ The experiment was never tried.

In all European countries, before the 1790's, there was an established or officially recognized church, in which membership was necessary for the enjoyment of full political rights. Persons outside such a church, or those of its own members who strongly desired to reform it, were more than ordinarily liable to the appeal of the Revolution. In Italy there were many Catholics who thought the Church unnecessarily wealthy, too little truly Christian, and too much influenced by Rome;

11 W. Knight, *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, 3 vols. (London, 1907), I, 66, 70, 75.

they were called "Jansenists," and when revolution came to Italy in 1796 the Italian Jansenists were among its sponsors. Jansenism, Gallicanism, anti-papalism, and church-reformism had also been important in France in bringing on the first ecclesiastical legislation of the Revolution. French Protestants divided after 1789 into many camps, and did not noticeably differ from Catholics of similar social condition in their political behavior; but the Protestants owed full equality of rights to the Revolution, and there were few absolute or total counterrevolutionaries among French Protestants. In the Dutch Republic the large Roman Catholic minority, and the Protestant sectaries, who though tolerated remained in an inferior social status with a second-class citizenship, furnished many recruits to the Batavian revolution. In England there was a high correlation between Dissent and a proclivity to "French ideas." In Ireland both the Presbyterians and the Catholics remained outside the Anglican establishment; the Catholic authorities tended to be cautious, knowing the vulnerability of their flocks; the Presbyterians were active in protest movements, and notably pro-French. Jews also found the promise of the equality of rights in the program of the Revolution. Jewish communities as such, where they existed in strength, as at Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Venice, and Rome, played a passive role; but individual Jews who had grown away from institutional Jewry, and become active in trade or letters or social life, were highly receptive to the new forms of state and society. In Poland an organized Jewish battalion defended the revolution at Warsaw in 1794.

In an occupational analysis, the rank and file of support for the new order, or for "French" ideas, came from the levels above the lowest class, and below the well-to-do and the prominent, from the pre-industrial world of the self-respecting and more or less literate workingmen, those in the skilled trades, the retail shops, or the kind of manufacturing establishments in which an employer worked alongside a dozen men whom he knew personally and in whose work he shared. These were the people who, in an actual revolution, furnished the bulk of the insurrectionary crowds in the cities of France or Holland. People of similar social station made up most of the membership of the London Corresponding Society and the political clubs of the English Midlands and of Scotland. Often they received direction from "intellectuals," or lawyers not too fully employed, or persons who for one reason or another did not have to work for a living, *fils de famille*, strays from the aristocracy, or sometimes men of actual means. Thus in Paris the wealthy brewer Santerre, the lawyer Danton, the doctor Marat, became in various ways spokesmen, or attempted to be such, for a revolutionary following made up of the working class.

The working class world, at its upper levels, through the owners of middle-sized manufacturing enterprises, touched on the world of merchants and large-scale commercial entrepreneurs, the "middle class" properly so called. The business or commercial class enjoyed an intermediate status; its members might be wealthy, economically powerful, and respected as useful and important members of the community, while remaining on the fringes of political life, and either not received at all in the choicest society, or received with a certain condescension. Many of the business groups were also outside the officially preferred churches, Dissenters in England, or Protestant but not Dutch Reformed in the Netherlands, or Protestant in some of the French provincial towns, or occasionally Jews. The business classes

took a great variety of attitudes to the Revolution. At the most radical moment, in France in 1793 and 1794, business men in general came under suspicion, and those of all countries disapproved of the Terror. Even in 1794, however, much depended on political circumstance: of two Dutch financial men then in Paris, one, Kock, became involved in French politics and was executed; the other Abbema, accepted and worked for the Revolutionary government. He was questioned during the Terror, but was acquitted and came through unscathed.

On the whole, the European business class produced a large number of sympathizers for the Revolution, though not for its most radical aspects. Even in England, where the government had long favored commercial interests, many of the business leaders viewed the French Revolution with tolerance and hoped for a Parliamentary Reform in which commercial wealth would be represented, and Dissenters should obtain fuller recognition. At Manchester, where the textile manufacture was being industrialized, and the population had risen to 70,000, the chief "radical" was the civic and business leader, Thomas Walker. The *Manchester Herald* excused the September Massacres in Paris, and denounced the rising cry for a war with France. Both partners in the famous firm of Boulton and Watt, the makers of steam-engines, favored "democratic" ideas, though Watt sometimes thought his son in Paris went too far. Men of this kind regarded the English aristocracy as idlers. They were shocked and disgusted by the Birmingham riots, in which persons with new ideas had been set upon by ignorant ruffians with the collusion of the justices of the peace and the gentry. Watt wrote to the eminent chemist, Joseph Black, that Birmingham was divided between "aristocrates" and "democrates" (since the words were new in English he used the French spelling); the "aristocrates" relied on the mob, the "democrates" really wanted orderly and reasonable government, and would not object to a real aristocracy of which they might be members.¹²

In Holland the regent families were largely business men themselves, and the conflict at its upper levels was in part between politically privileged and unprivileged commercial interests. The ties with England, and fear of competition from a Belgium under French influence, deterred many from sympathy with change. Nevertheless, important mercantile and banking houses supported the Dutch Revolution of 1795, and at the most radical moment of the Batavian Republic, the spring of 1798, various millionaires were at the head of its affairs. In Belgium it was the most forward-looking business interests that favored the opening of the Scheldt river and annexation to France, in which they saw a widening of their markets and operations. In northern Italy the business classes generally favored the Cisalpine and Ligurian republics, and even showed an interest in a more comprehensive unification of Italy in which their trading area could be enlarged.

12 For the Watts and Boultons, fathers and sons, see Eric Robinson, "An English Jacobin: James Watt, Jr.," in *Cambridge Historical Journal* XI (1955), 349–55; for Manchester, Leon S. Marshall, *Development of Public Opinion in Manchester, 1780–1820* (Syracuse, 1946); for continental business men, J. Godechot, "The Business Classes and the Revolution outside France," in *American Historical Review*, LXIV (1958), 1–13. Much detail on financial men of various nationalities in Paris during the Revolution, including those whose names occur in the present pages, such as Walckiers, Abbema, Kock, and Clavière, can be found in J. Bouchary, *Les manieurs d'argent à Paris à la fin du dix-huitième siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1939–1943).

Seldom did business men take any initiative in bringing on revolution. Very commonly they accepted it, benefited from it, and supported it once it was an accomplished fact. The Revolutionary changes, in France and in the sister-republics, as later under the Napoleonic empire, had much to offer the most active commercial interests. The dissolution of guilds, while damaging to small or traditional or purely local activities, favored the manufacturers of new products and those seeking to operate in a market of national or international scope. It was useful to get rid of provincial tariffs, and river and road tolls, and to replace the endless archaic peculiarities of boroughs and towns with a more uniform plan of municipal government. It was useful to have uniform and easily calculable weights and measures, and a sound decimal currency which after 1796 was free from paper inflation. Law courts, legal definitions, and legal proceedings had advantages for business over those of former regimes. Former church lands could be, and were, bought up by business men, in Belgium and northern Italy as in France. Land thus acquired could be used to raise capital for productive investment through new laws of mortgage loans. In the eyes of the law, commercial men of variant religion were no longer social deviates, and well-to-do merchants or bankers were in theory the social equals of former aristocrats. In addition, many merchants, contractors, and bankers profited from the immediate situation, through services of supply to the French armies during the war.

In the United States, thanks to peculiarities of its history, the division of opinion on the French Revolution, while very heated, followed somewhat different lines. The United States was a new country, only a few generations removed from the original settlement. It had no real problem of feudal survivals or of ecclesiastical power. Its people had never been brought, like those of various European countries, to accept subordination to a central or national government. It already had more "equality," and more "liberty," than any part of Europe. Though not backward, it was economically undeveloped, compared to England or Holland or many parts of France. Towns were very small compared to those of Europe. Most people lived in the country. Landownership was widespread, and there was only one kind of landed property. Some owned more, some less, and some none; but such differences were quantitative, not qualitative: there were no lords, manors, or seigneurial encumbrances on the plain farmer's land, except to a certain degree in New York.

On the whole, therefore, and allowing for qualifications and anomalies, a paradoxical situation existed when comparison is made to Europe. The most outspokenly pro-French, or democratically minded persons, were to be found among Southern landed gentry and the more remote farmers living toward the Western frontier, the very kinds of people who in Europe were the least attracted to the Revolution. The most outspokenly anti-French, and least cordial to self-consciously democratic movements, were likely to be found among the business interests of the seaboard towns, or the settled New England farmers living relatively close to the main channels of trade, the very kinds of people who in Europe were likely to regard the Revolution with favor, or to be involved in it themselves.

The truth seems to be that the "democrats" in America were conservative in terms of the American scene, however responsive to the revolutionary movement in Europe, wanting to preserve the simpler equalities of an earlier day, the agrarian self-

sufficiency, and the liberty which meant the virtual absence of centralized government; and that the opposite party, the Federalists, were the party of change in terms of the American scene, however much they sympathized with conservatism in Europe, because they wanted to develop banking, credit, reliable currency, commercial investment, and domestic and foreign trade, and also to build up a more powerful and centralized national government, all of which were newer in America than in Western Europe. In Europe, in France, Switzerland, Holland, and Italy, the democratic movement always sought a unitary, homogeneous, and juridically centralized republic. This was because in Europe the aristocratic interests were strongly rooted in the historic localisms of manor and town. In America the democratic movement was suspicious of centralized, homogeneous, or unitary government, and strongly insistent on local liberties and state rights. This was because a democratic outlook in America had been rooted locally from the beginning among yeoman farmers, and those larger Southern farmers and slaveowners who functioned as gentry. In Europe a democratic movement required a strong central government to overcome adversaries. In America a democratic movement could be content to leave well enough alone. In Europe the term "federalism," which became current in several countries in the 1790's, signified decentralization and fragmentation of power. It was viewed by democrats as a cloak for social reaction, behind which local privileged interest might take refuge. In America Federalism meant the concentration and unification of public power; democrats feared that it might be despotic, but it was certainly less reactionary than "federalism" in Europe.

The paradoxes in the American relation to Europe will be among the topics pursued in the following pages.

SHADES OF DOCTRINE

By 1792 there were five recognizable shades in the spectrum of opinion generated by the Revolution. They had an existence of their own apart from the categories of people who might adopt them. The same person during the decade might change his hue.

At the extreme Right was the idea that the good society was what had existed before 1789. In this view everything that had happened since June of that year should be undone. It was positively desirable to have a society of legal estates, with an acknowledged hierarchy of unequal or dissimilar rights, an honoring of the aristocratic virtues, corporate and concrete liberties (or privileges) for particular groups, a monarch surrounded by worthy advisers but not responsible to them, and a form of government and authority closely related to one specific church. French members of the school have been recently described in a work by Paul Beik.¹³ The Savoyard Joseph de Maistre was one of the principal theorists. Edmund Burke was the most eloquent philosopher of this school; he had developed his ideas in op-

13 Paul Beik, *The French Revolution Seen from the Right. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new ser. XLVI, Part 1 (Philadelphia, 1956).

position to Parliamentary Reform in England some years before, and elaborated them as a critique of the French Revolution, on which he wrote his *Reflections* in 1790.¹⁴ In general, in this view, any deliberate, planned, or rational and conscious remaking of institutions was difficult, impossible or delusive; societies must change if at all by an imperceptible organic growth; custom, tradition, and habit must determine the content of law. Each country in this respect must follow its own peculiarity or national spirit. "Reason" was not to be trusted. There were no "rights of man" but only rights of Englishmen or other such actual communities. The French Revolution, according to this doctrine, was really un-French, inhuman, and contrary to the structure of the universe and the will of God. The extreme French émigrés, so far as they had any philosophy, agreed with this one. The future Louis XVIII, who became claimant to the French throne in 1795, was also of this school in the 1790's, though not in 1814.

Next came a more conciliatory form of conservatism, favored by men who had taken part in the Revolution of 1789, but who had by 1792 joined the emigration. In this group was J. J. Mounier, who had sponsored the Tennis Court Oath and the Declaration of Rights, and favored, in 1789, a constitution in which the king should have an absolute veto and the assembly be in two houses. In the same group were the Swiss Mallet du Pan, P. V. Malouet, who had been intendant of the navy before the Revolution, and a number of others who formed a colony of liberal émigrés in London in the later 1790's. They were in touch also with the more liberal of the émigré clergy, especially Boisgelin, Fontanges, and Champion de Cicé, the archbishops respectively of Aix, Toulouse, and Bordeaux. As these men saw it, the Old Regime required modernization. Total restoration was neither possible nor desirable. They accepted the replacement in France of the Three Orders—clergy, nobles, and Third Estate—by a more modern representative system of which individual citizenship and property should be the basis. They favored a clearly ordered constitutional monarchy. To them the most unmanageable obstacle was the Extreme Right, whose obstinacy, they felt, by alarming the French people, threw France upon the mercy of the Left. They believed that political action and forms of government could be and must be rationally directed. They were too much interested in practical politics, and in intelligent action, to accept a kind of vegetable theory of merely organic social development. These constitutionalist or liberal émigrés, or conservatives as distinguished from outright reactionaries, anticipated better than any other group the actual settlement of 1814. As political analysts, since they were detached from the excited ideologies of Right or Left, they probably would have a strong appeal to many twentieth-century American readers, to whom, however, they remain almost unknown. Their trouble was that, however intelligent, they had no following.

Next, and in the middle of the present spectrum, came those constitutionalists, or moderate revolutionaries, who remained active in France at the beginning of

14 On Burke see p. 492. Malouet (see below) remarked in late 1792, that "M. Burke avait toutes les idées d'un aristocrate français," and that "les Anglais en général, sont disposés à croire que le commerce du monde et la liberté sont deux choses qui leur appartiennent exclusivement." P. V. Malouet, *Mémoires*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1874), 11, 260–61.

1792. They were called *Feuillants* in the party language of the day. Afraid of popular radicalism, they were concerned for order and property, and willing to cling to the person, symbol, and authority of Louis XVI, however much his attachment to the Revolution might be questioned, lest the country slide into republicanism. Mirabeau might have been of this group had he lived. By the middle of 1792 they had the cooperation of Lafayette, who in June left his war-time command in the field and returned to Paris, hoping to suppress Jacobin radicalism, and to remove Louis XVI from the city, so that, from a point in the provinces, the somewhat patrician forces of orderly revolution could take a stand. In opinion, this group was not very different from the liberal *émigrés*, but its members remained involved in French politics; some perished in the Terror, but others emerged among the leaders of the Directory, when a constitutional republic was set up on a constitutional monarchist model.

To the left of this constitutionalism stood the ideas of the Jacobins, by far the best known and most famous of all elements in the Revolution. Found everywhere in France, the Jacobins took their name from the Jacobin Club of Paris, as it was commonly called, its actual name before 1792 being the Society of Friends of the Constitution, and after 1792 the Society of Friends of Liberty and Equality. There was nothing secret or conspiratorial or even very well organized about the Jacobin Club, or the thousands of provincial clubs with which it exchanged correspondence and delegations. They publicized themselves as much as possible. They generally said what they thought and believed what they said, being naive rather than devious. They gloried in the name of "Jacobin," until the club was closed late in 1794; but the use of the term by conservatives, both in and out of France, and the equating of the Revolution itself with "Jacobinism," was usually highly inaccurate and intended to be disparaging. The Jacobins were overwhelmingly Frenchmen of the middle class, men of some schooling or professional standing or assured income or moderate property-holding before the Revolution, aroused by the ideas of the Enlightenment, acrimoniously hostile to the nobility, dubious of the church, intolerant of opposition, believers in the close imminence of a better and freer world, and absolutely dedicated to the great principles of the Revolution, in whose defense they could be ruthless. Distrust of the upper classes, in the conditions of 1791 and 1792, converted the Jacobins to republicanism. They also had come to accept political democracy in the sense of universal suffrage, which a few like Robespierre had urged from the beginning. Though great talkers, they were also men of action. They lacked patience for the hesitant, the moderate, the procrastinating, and the indecisive. Such qualities aroused their suspicions. They were combative personalities, more than willing to knock down and drag out the upholders of royal courts and ornamental nobilities. They welcomed war in 1792. Though middle-class, they were not above working with mobs, and could rally the common people against common enemies by promises and concessions. Their club was the Mother Society, and they regarded themselves as the orthodox of the Revolution; the *Feuillants* had originated in a split in the club in 1791, and after Brissot and his followers left the club in October 1792 the *Brissotins*, or *Girondists*, were at a great political disadvantage. But

Gironde, Mountain, Brissotins, Robespierrists, and Dantonists were really all Jacobins.¹⁵

At the extreme Left was the popular revolutionism so brilliantly described in a recent book by Albert Soboul.¹⁶ It was most especially voiced by the *sans-culottes* of Paris between 1792 and 1794. The *sans-culottes*, who took this name in derision for the knee-breeches or *culottes* of the middle and upper classes, which they neither wore nor owned, were the activists and militants among the really plain people of Paris. More will be said of them shortly. They were small people unavoidably engrossed in immediate matters. They, and their wives and children, were the ones that went hungry if bread was unobtainable or too highly priced. No Jacobin, in the strict sense, was ever really uncertain about his next meal. The *sans-culottes* lived with this elemental problem. They rioted for bread. For them, the Revolution would miscarry if it did not alleviate the economic and social condition of the common man. Constitutions and legislative debates seemed to them remote and unrealistic. They believed in direct action, and in direct democracy. They met locally, face to face, in neighborhood clubs, with like-minded acquaintances who lived in the same streets. By the sovereignty of the people they meant what they could do themselves. They distrusted representative and parliamentary institutions. No mere delegate could long retain their confidence. To them it seemed that all persons in the upper classes had to be closely watched, and among the "upper" classes they included the gentlemen who paid dues to the Jacobin Club.

It was the self-assertion of these *sans-culottes* that made the "second" revolution of 1792.

Meanwhile the Prussians continued their march toward the French frontiers. The letters of Malouet to Mallet du Pan in June and July of 1792 had a prophetic ring. It will be remembered that they were both conservatively liberal émigrés. Of course, remarked Malouet, the Powers have no plan or intention of counter-revolution. But when the Count of Artois and his retinue return, "they will make the king do what suits them." There is talk of a threatening manifesto to the city of Paris. What madness! And Malouet gave a kind of answer to Noah Webster's question: "Do these people suppose that they can easily wipe out, like an idle fable, that Declaration of Rights by which the French are so intoxicated?"¹⁷

15 See Crane Brinton, *The Jacobins: an Essay in the New History* (New York, 1930), which stresses their middle-class and radically ideological qualities.

16 See below, pp. 548–53.

17 *Mémoires*, II, 341–42, 354–55.

CHAPTER XVII

THE REVOLUTIONIZING OF THE REVOLUTION

The arms of the French are all the more dangerous since the poison of their maxims is diffused everywhere, and by preceding their armies contributes to their success. The people imagine that their poverty will be relieved by such doctrines. . . . It is above all worthy of remark, how even the lowest class of the people . . . now turn their attention to the present war, and reason in their own way about the motives that have brought it on. . . . The French Revolution is gradually bringing another equally dangerous revolution in the universal way of thinking.

—DANIEL DOLFIN, VENETIAN AMBASSADOR
AT VIENNA, REPORTING TO THE
GOVERNMENT OF VENICE, 1793

In 1792 the Revolution became a thing in itself, an uncontrollable force that might eventually spend itself but which no one could direct or guide. The governments set up in Paris in the following years—the Convention, the Committee of Public Safety, the Thermidorians, the Directory, however they might differ, whether “Jacobin” or “anti-Jacobin” in their composition—all alike faced the problem of holding together against forces more revolutionary than themselves. Two such forces may be distinguished for analytical purposes. There was a popular upheaval, an upsurge from below, *sans-culottisme*. This occurred only in France; there were revolutions outside of France, but they were not *sans-culotte* revolutions. Secondly, there was the “international” revolutionary agitation, which was not international in any strict sense, but only concurrent within the boundaries of various states as then organized. From the French point of view these were the “foreign” revolutionaries or sympathizers. The most radical of the “foreign” revolutionaries, whether we think of those who congregated in Paris or those who in greater numbers remained in their own countries, were seldom more than advanced political democrats.

Repeatedly, however, from 1792 to 1799, these two forces tended to converge into one force of *révolution à outrance*. Between the French popular revolutionism and international revolutionism there was an affinity. In France, the vanguard in 1792 meant the Jacobins; in 1794 it meant what Robespierre called the Ultras; in the following years it was what the Thermidorians and the Directory called the "anarchists," among whom the Babouvists of 1796 may be especially distinguished, though few in number; in 1799 it was the neo-Jacobins or "true republicans." In each case there was some kind of sympathetic relationship between French extremists and non-French revolutionary leaders. *Révolution à outrance* had two meanings: destruction of the Old Regime anywhere and everywhere, and, in France, attack on a merely, middle- or upper-class revolution.

The two repeatedly came together in common opposition to the French government of the moment, because every group among the French revolutionary leadership, as soon as it felt itself to be established in a position of government, resisted the more vehement demands both for popular revolution and for international revolution. Or, at the most, in certain conjunctures, as in the latter part of 1792, or at times in later years, the men trying to govern France might use the language of social or international revolutionism as a means to an end, to protect themselves and the specifically French Revolution, as they understood it, at moments when Counter-Revolution seemed the more imminent danger.

THE "SECOND" FRENCH REVOLUTION

How we judge the "second" revolution in France depends entirely on our judgment of the strength and chances, in 1792, of a Counter-Revolution aiming at integral restoration, with accompanying repression and punishment of those implicated in subversion of the Old Order. Since the event did not happen, historians must remain as uncertain as contemporaries were on its likelihood. It is a fact, however, that the Counter-Revolutionary leaders expected an early success in the summer of 1792.

At Mainz, a few days after the coronation at Frankfurt, there was a grand confabulation on the political steps with which the military intervention should be accompanied. No significant resistance was anticipated. The two crowned heads of Prussia and Austria, the various French princes, the Fersens, the Esterhazys, the Metternichs, and the Maurys were in a mood of confidence. France, in their opinion, was in the hands of a few adventurers from whom all decent people wished to be liberated. It was decided to issue a manifesto. Mallet du Pan, expressing the preference of Louis XVI, submitted the draft of a relatively moderate text. It was rejected. Another was adopted; coming by way of an intermediary named Limon, and Count Axel de Fersen, it expressed the views of Marie Antoinette. The queen, increasingly desperate in Paris, wounded and frightened by a series of popular insults, too proud to let herself be "saved" by Lafayette (he was too "revolutionary"), and at her wits' end when both blandishments and actual bribery of Revolutionary leaders produced no results, had concluded that the only salvation for herself, her

family, her husband, and the world lay in a resounding ultimatum that might restrain the fury of the Parisians until help arrived.

At Mainz therefore a menacing announcement was drawn up. The two rulers decided not to issue it in their own names, but to have it signed by their military commander, the Duke of Brunswick. Readers of the preceding volume may recall, as more than a historical curiosity, that this same Duke of Brunswick had issued a manifesto to the city of Amsterdam five years before. At that time the Prussian forces had pushed through to Amsterdam without difficulty, and the Dutch Patriot revolution had been stamped out.

The Brunswick Manifesto was addressed to the city of Paris—just as Counter-Revolutionary Russian troops were entering the city of Warsaw. It invited all good Frenchmen to return to their “former fidelity,” and required “the city of Paris and all its inhabitants, without distinction . . . to submit at once and without delay to the king.” “If any force or insult is used against the Palace of the Tuileries, if the least violence or the least outrage is done to Their Majesties . . .” the Allied Powers would “exact an exemplary and forever memorable vengeance by delivering the city of Paris to military execution and total subversion, and the rebels who are guilty of such outrages to the punishments they will have deserved.” No one knew exactly what “military execution and total subversion” might mean, but the words had an ominous sound. Thousands of copies of the Manifesto were printed and circulated in all directions. Switzerland was “inundated with copies,” according to a report from the French minister early in August, and on August 3 the text was published in the Paris *Moniteur*.¹

Paris still had newspapers of every political stripe, and those hostile to the Revolution expressed hearty joy. One predicted the return of the émigrés within the month. Another announced that patriots would soon be chained in pairs to sweep the streets, under German overseers being trained for the purpose. Marie Antoinette received word to prepare rooms at the Tuileries for the Duke of Brunswick, and to be thinking about a list of suitable cabinet ministers for her husband under the new conditions. Calonne, as “prime minister of the emigration,” began to arrange the collection of taxes in France to support a restored royal regime. Members of the former parlements who had emigrated prepared to annul the actions of the Revolutionary assemblies. The abbé Maury rejoiced that “armed force will decide. . . . The problem will soon be resolved.”²

The Paris thus ordered into submissiveness by an international ultimatum, a royalist and aristocratic pronouncement largely inspired by the French queen, was the city that had just celebrated the Federation of July 14. It was full of *fédérés*, or high-pressure patriots sent in from the departments. Parading about the streets, falling into tavern brawls with aristocrats, sitting in at meetings of the patriotic

1 For the text of the Manifesto see the *Moniteur*, August 3. The role of Fersen and Marie Antoinette, though generally known, is clarified and emphasized in a doctoral dissertation at Princeton University by H. A. Barton, “Count Axel von Fersen: a Political Biography to 1800.” See also Delbeke, “Le Manifeste de Brunswick,” in *La franc-maçonnerie et la Révolution française et autres essais sur le dix-huitième siècle* (Antwerp, 1938), 97–136. For circulation in Switzerland see J. B. Kaulek, *Papiers de Barthélemy, ambassadeur français en Suisse 1792–97*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1886–1910), I, 233.

2 A. Mathiez, *Le Dix-août* (Paris, 1931), 68–69; Maury, *Mémoires*, I, 93.

clubs, the *fédérés* gave the Parisians the sense that throughout all France these were men who were on their side. They were, in the words of Albert Mathiez, the yeast in the revolutionary dough of the summer of 1792, though the substance of this dough was furnished by ordinary inhabitants of the city. The agitation of the *fédérés* made the upheaval seem more national and less purely Parisian than that of the first Bastille Day in 1789.

The effect of the manifesto was precisely the opposite of its purpose. It led within a week to the attack on the Tuileries which it so explicitly forbade. With the usual aid of organizers hard to identify, the insurrection was generated at the popular level of the "sections" of the city, the forty-eight neighborhood subdivisions of the municipality as set up in 1790. During the summer of 1792 these sections underwent small internal revolutions. Since 1790, and by the constitution of 1789–1791, it was the "active" citizens who had the right to attend the section assemblies, where votes were taken and public business discussed. Now a great many "passive" citizens began to take part in these neighborhood meetings also, especially in the populous quarters where the "active" citizens were themselves men of small means, shopkeepers, master-craftsmen, and the like, who, alarmed by the political and military crisis, welcomed or solicited the influx of neighbors and employees only slightly below them on the socio-economic scale.

The militant *sectionnaires* of the less fashionable parts of the city had lost all confidence in the various constituted authorities. The king and queen were suspected, correctly, of collusion with the invaders. In the army, the enlisted ranks were full of enthusiasm but weakened by revolutionary disorganization; most of the officers were ex-nobles; and the troops were in retreat. Lafayette, commanding on the frontier, had left his post on a political errand to Paris, intending to take the king and queen under his protection and to rally the constitutionalists against radicalism. The *sectionnaires* replied with charges of military dictatorship. The Legislative Assembly was paralyzed; its Feuillant and Jacobin members feared and detested each other; it could take no action, but only called for calm and legality, and by a vote of 406 to 224 it absolved Lafayette of any misconduct. The enraged *sectionnaires* called the Assembly "corrupt."

The sections began to act as little independent republics. There was no armed force in the city to hold them down. Apart from the Swiss Guard at the palace, the only armed force consisted of the National Guard of the sections themselves, each of which had a battalion formed of its own residents. The National Guardsmen of the popular quarters greatly outnumbered those of the upper-class quarters which were more favorable to the king.

Various of the sections demanded the dethronement of Louis XVI, "as the first link in the chain of Counter-Revolution."³ On July 31 the Monconseil section announced that it no longer recognized him. Plans for insurrection went ahead without attempt at concealment. The red flag made a brief first appearance as a Revolutionary symbol during these preparations, originating as a grim political joke. By an earlier provision of the Revolution, a large red flag was used as a sign of martial law, displayed by the authorities as a warning that they were about to fire

3 Mathiez, *op.cit.*, 75, quoting a section petition of August 3.

on civilians. It had been so employed a year before, when, in the "Massacre of the Champ de Mars," the authorities had broken up a republican demonstration. In July 1792 the Jacobin journalist Carra, turning the tables, procured a red flag on which he had sewn in black letters: "Martial Law of the Sovereign People against Rebellion by the Executive Power."⁴

This political theory of insurrection was elaborated by Robespierre. As a former Constituent, ineligible at the time of the election, he was not a member of the Legislative Assembly. He was thus in a better position to yield to the demand for its replacement, and to formulate a program and offer a leadership for the section pressures. He did so in a series of speeches at the Paris Jacobin Club. To the negative insistence upon dethronement he added two positive aims: There should be a National Convention, and in election of deputies the suffrage should be universal for all adult males.

Thus the second French Revolution adopted for its justification the essential revolutionary theory of the whole revolutionary era. Against a constitution that proved to be an embarrassment the revolutionaries of 1792, like those in America in the 1770's, offered the doctrine of the people as a constituent power. They undercut existing authorities with the claim of popular sovereignty. The authorities now undercut were those which the Revolution of 1789 and the constitution of 1789–1791 had created: Louis XVI in his legal role as constitutional monarch, and the Legislative Assembly as the elected body of deputies. Both, in the circumstances brought on by war, were easy for radicals to discredit, and difficult for moderates convincingly to defend. Both could be accused of helplessness if not downright collusion in the face of invasion. Against Counter-Revolution both seemed a frail defense. As Robespierre put it, since the executive and the legislature were equally rotten, both should be regenerated by the people. They were legally washed away by the appeal to a new Convention.

This new Convention, far more than the first Constituent Assembly, would have that fullness of constituent power which the abbé Sieyès had described in 1789. It could, in principle, create organs of government freely. It would not have to accept a ready-made king as its executive as in 1789. It would be a true image of the people of France. Where half the members of the first Constituent had come originally from the nobility and the clergy, the Convention would suffer from no such distortion. Even the vestiges of the former estates now disappeared. Events of 1792 had discredited the upper classes in the eyes of the lower. Leadership structures were in ruins, habits of deference had been broken. Universal suffrage in election of the Convention was the result. Some demanded it as a thing good in itself, or in the belief that the less favored classes of society would benefit. Others accepted it as a necessity or an expedient, to placate the popular agitators, or in the belief that all should vote because no particular group could be trusted.

In terms of social identity, the first revolution had put into power, or left in it, persons who before the revolution had been of some importance: Louis XVI himself, carried over as constitutional ruler and chief executive, important members of the nobility such as Lafayette and Talleyrand, and well-to-do or otherwise

4 *Ibid.*, 61.

prominent members of the bourgeoisie, from whom some of the first Jacobins had been recruited. The Revolution of 1792 rose from deeper depths in the population. With it, classes hitherto not heard from in European politics, except episodically on days of riot or insurrection, made their influence felt as a continuing source of power. They were not the "dregs," as they seemed to some more highly placed. They were the small people in plain occupations, the *menu peuple*, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker together with those Jacobins who would work with them.

Men of this kind attacked the Tuileries Palace on August 10, with cries of "Down with the fat-head!" (*le gros cochon*), by which they meant Louis XVI. The palace was defended only by the Swiss Guard and a few gentlemen in waiting. The king and queen fled to the Legislative Assembly, which gave them refuge in the stenographer's box and continued in session, listening to irrelevant speeches, waiting with inert dignity to see how events would turn out. After several hours the king ordered his defenders to cease fire. No one knows how many were killed, since there never was any official inquiry. There were some six hundred casualties among the defenders, mostly killed, some massacred after the end of the fighting. The attackers had over three hundred killed and wounded, among whom there were men from forty-two of the forty-eight Paris sections and from nineteen of the eighty-three departments. The *fédérés* from Marseilles alone lost twenty-four killed. Parts of the palace caught fire, and Marie-Antoinette's books were thrown out the window, but there was little actual pillage; a few thieves were put to death on the spot, and patriotic prowlers who came upon jewelry or other valuables ceremoniously deposited them at the bar of the Assembly. It was a purely political riot.

Delegates from the sections, who had formed an association of their own some days before to prepare the insurrection, now took over from the municipal authorities as the government of the city. Thus originated the revolutionary Commune of Paris, which became a rival power to the Convention, while remaining highly responsive to the radicalism welling up from the sections.

The Commune imprisoned Louis XVI and his family in the Temple, a grim building dating back to the medieval Templars. Lafayette tried to lead his army to Paris to interfere, but his men would not follow him. To the radicals he was now clearly a "traitor." He gave himself up to the Austrians, who shut him up in a Silesian castle as a prisoner of war and dangerous revolutionary.

The Legislative Assembly meekly accepted the accomplished fact. It declared the king dethroned, set up a provisional executive council, and authorized elections for a convention. While thus preparing for its own liquidation, it meanwhile enacted a number of significant measures, in which the nature of this "second" revolution was made more manifest. The Revolution was reaching the point where its most zealous supporters were to be found in the lesser ranks of society. It was necessary to make a popular appeal, to get the bulk of the country to accept the new order in Paris and to recruit strength for the war. Universal suffrage was one such step. It was now also, after August 10, that "feudalism" was at last "abolished." In 1789 the abolition of the most important seigneurial dues had been made subject to compensation. The compensation was now done away with, and the peasant landowner was now fully free from the manorial lord. The significance of this de-

velopment, brought on by the violent eruption of 1792, is more evident when we remember that elsewhere in Europe, as the agrarian problem came to be dealt with in the following century, the former lords received compensation and so remained economically stronger than in France. After August 10 the landed property of émigrés, which had been confiscated during the preceding months against the king's resistance, was put on public sale in small lots so that peasants and other small purchasers might obtain it, in twenty-year installments without interest if they chose.

Priests were associated in the minds of patriots with the Counter-Revolution, both rightly and wrongly in individual cases. On August 11 the Assembly closed the remaining monasteries. It forbade priests to wear clerical costume in public, required them to accept the new laws of civil marriage and divorce, and imposed upon them, as upon others, a new oath of fidelity "to liberty and equality." Though the Pope never officially forbade this oath, many clergy refused to take it. Shoals of priests were ordered deported.

On August 30 Paris learned of the surrender of Longwy and the siege of Verdun, so that the Prussians were known to be within the frontiers. The city was in turmoil, with authority in collapse. To political excitement and anger were added the fears and hatreds induced by military emergency. There were over two thousand persons in the Paris prisons, most of them for ordinary crimes or offenses, but including several hundred "politicals." Word circulated in the heated atmosphere of the city that the prisoners were in secret contact with the enemy and the émigrés. It was said that the worst enemies were not at the border but in Paris itself. A few activists took matters into their own hands, with no attempt on the part of the Commune to prevent them. For several days, in an orgy of what in America would be called lynchings, and with the callous brutality and atrociousness that later characterized American lynch mobs, these bands of marauders, for whom violence was now a patriotic act, burst into the prisons and put to death some 1,300 inmates after pretended trials in the streets. These September Massacres were an indiscriminate butchery; over two hundred priests and aristocrats perished, but most of the victims were ordinary prisoners of the kind that any prison in any city might contain. Respectable people, however pained, thought it wise at the moment not to be too critical. It might be dangerous not to condone them. And it was no time to complain about excessive zeal.

The same atmosphere that produced and excused the September Massacres surrounded the elections. Voters assembled locally in thousands of primary assemblies to choose electors who convened at regional levels to designate members of the Convention. There seem to be no good estimates of the proportion of adult men who participated. There is no reason to suppose it to have been especially small. The country was aroused by the invasion, and politicized by three years of revolution. Provincials might dislike Paris, but they hardly depended on it for their ideas. There was more indigenous vitality in the provinces than in later times, under different conditions of transport and communication. Every town—and there were over seventy of them with populations of over 10,000—had its own revolution, its own newspapers and journalists, its own political club, its own factions and quarrels. Even small villages were involved. Everywhere there were farm people and

townspeople who were committed to the Revolution, and who could not take the risk of seeing it undone. They were men who had either accepted local or municipal office under it, or talked rather volubly in public, or given offense to cleric or noble, or spent their money to purchase land or buildings that had formerly belonged to the church. The local political clubs, following the lead of the Paris Jacobins, saw to it that the primary assemblies were filled by as many good patriots as possible, while taking steps to keep "uncivic" persons away. Since these steps involved actual danger to those excluded, the election was no model of democratic propriety. The Convention when elected, was "democratic" in principle, but not in practice. It represented the revolutionary element in the population, not France as a whole. By its later actions it alienated much of the support with which it began.

The French republican historian, Aulard, writing in the 1890's, thought that the Convention well represented the France of 1792. Opponents of the Revolution, in France and elsewhere, then and since, have seen in it the representative only of a Jacobin minority. In recent times it has been called a minority government also by writers of the Left, who relish the idea that vigorous elites are the real authors of revolutions. Actually the question seems irrelevant. Majorities and minorities exist only where men can be counted, pro or con, on specific questions or candidates. To be for or against so vast and undefinable a thing as the Revolution was highly unspecific. There was no majority and minority on such a question. All sorts of people who favored something in the Revolution probably put in an appearance in the voting assemblies. The convention was as representative as any conceivable assembly in France in 1792 could have been. Any assembly in which all the divisions in the country were exactly reflected could never have functioned as a parliamentary body at all. The Convention did not function well, but it did function, too effectively indeed for the taste of those who most despised it.

It first met on September 20, 1792. Avoiding a direct proclamation, it resolved two days later that September 22, 1792, was the first day of French Republic.

At the same time the French met the Prussians at Valmy, fifty miles within the French frontier, and after a brief engagement the Duke of Brunswick retreated. Elation on one side was matched by consternation on the other.

POPULAR REVOLUTIONISM

The Revolution was revolutionized in 1792, as already remarked, by the infusion of popular and international revolutionism. Let us look more closely at each of these in turn.

Popular revolutionism is taken to mean the rebelliousness and state of mind of persons who, in occupational or income levels and hence in their mode of life, stood below the professional, business and property-owning classes. The French language distinguished them as *peuple* as opposed to *bourgeoisie*. Class analysis has often been attempted with categories derived from Marxism. But the best recent Marxist historians, in France and elsewhere, insist that the popular elements in the French Revolution were not proletarians in a Marxist sense. Class and class-consciousness were nevertheless very important.

If we wish a "model" as an aid in seeing the class conflicts, none is more appropriate, or more readily understandable, than that of a large transatlantic ocean liner of the twentieth century, with its distinction of passengers into First, Cabin, and Third or Tourist Class. The model reminds us, first of all, of a truth relevant to the eighteenth century, that the classes lived in considerable ignorance of each other. To the First Class passenger on the sun-deck or in spacious lounges, the daily shipboard life and the exact differences between Cabin and Tourist may be rather hazy. In the Cabin or "middle" class there may be people who would prefer to travel First if they could afford it, others who think the First stuffy, pretentious, and over-privileged in the amount of space it enjoys on the ship. The Tourist or "popular" class is made up of people of more limited means, with a sprinkling of college professors and "intellectuals" who are there by necessity or by choice. The people in Tourist Class are not the rabble, nor paupers, nor idlers, nor chronically unemployed, nor afflicted with any higher proportion than other classes of the criminally inclined. They have a general idea of the boat as a whole, and they have a destination in view. The more intimate details of the rest of the ship, however, remain something of a mystery to them. They know that it is very commodious, but have seen nothing of it except possibly a few public rooms. Normally they accept their cramped quarters as in the ordinary scheme of things.

Comes a revolution; the command of the ship breaks down. The Tourist Class swarm over the ship; this is the Revolution of 1792. The First are appalled, crying "mob rule"; some take to the life-boats (emigrate), others try to sit inconspicuously in their staterooms, some resist, and a small handful pitch in with the insurgents. The Cabin Class is torn both ways; some join with the First, but a good many during the *melée* join forces with the Tourist. The Tourist insurgents cannot themselves manage the boat, nor bring it to the destination to which they themselves wish to go. Problems of management and destination are not especially on their minds. They do not wish to eat in the First Class dining salon, where they would only be ill at ease. But they have the idea that dining facilities and other amenities might be apportioned somewhat more equally.

The popular element in the French Revolution did not do very much writing, so that in the absence of documents it has not been seen very distinctly by historians. Some years ago, in a book by an American, the mood of Paris in 1789 was reconstructed through popular songs, sung in the streets, market-places, and cafés. It showed a genuine surge of political feeling among an array of people from engravers to fishwives.⁵ The Revolution, among its other innovations, saw the beginnings of a popular journalism. But the papers directed to a mass audience, such as those of Hébert or Marat, were written by men originating in the middle class, who had aims of their own, and who sometimes adopted an air of exaggerated vulgarity. Recently a number of studies, based on sources such as police records and the surviving papers of the sections of Paris, have been made in France, England, and East Germany. It is at last possible to draw a picture of the *menu peuple* in the French Revolution, those who drove through the Revolution of 1792, and continued to press upon French governments thereafter. The

⁵ Cornwell Rogers, *The Spirit of Revolution in 1789* (Princeton, 1949).

most important of these writers is Albert Soboul of Paris, from whom the following description is mainly drawn.⁶

In the years from 1792 to 1795 the more aggressive and class-conscious of these small people proudly called themselves *sans-culottes*, spurning the knee-breeches of their social superiors; and the term *sans-culottisme* can be understood to mean the aroused and politically active state of these people during the two or three years that it lasted.

These *sans-culottes* were in effect popular democrats. In the crisis and breakdown of 1792 they represented an enormous wave of citizen self-help. They applied the great concepts of liberty, equality, and the sovereignty of the people to themselves and to the concrete circumstances with which they were personally familiar. They believed that they themselves were sovereign, in face-to-face contact in their section meetings; and that distant elected persons were only their delegates, often not to be trusted. They favored what a later generation in America would know as the referendum and recall. "Consent of the people" meant their consent in their own assemblies. The right to bear arms meant that they should carry pikes in their own streets. The judgment of the people meant that they should denounce their own neighbors for suspicious behavior or unsuitable sentiments, and that their own committees should put them under arrest. They resisted attempts at control of their activities by the Convention and its Committee of Public Safety in 1793.

If they thus presumed to exercise sovereignty, they accepted the corresponding responsibilities; they were ready to give their time, to act and to fight. The younger ones were gradually absorbed into the army. They spent long hours at meetings, and in the work of committees, or on the exposure of suspects, or on errands and missions and patrols about the city, or in exchange of delegations with sister groups, or in semi-military formations in which men from the city went into rural areas to procure food from the peasants, or bring patriotic pressure to bear in other communities.

Shopkeepers, retail merchants, traders, artisans, small manufacturers, hired laborers, porters, water-carriers, waiters in cafés, janitors in buildings, barbers, wig-makers, stonemasons, and makers of ladies' hats, they were the people of Paris without the frosting—and generally without the dregs, since the vagrant, the shiftless, and the delinquent did not become true *sans-culottes*. Some lived by a daily wage, some by the sale of articles of their own production, some by the proceeds of retail shopkeeping, and a few indeed by the income of their capital. Among men arrested in 1795 as dangerous *sans-culottes* were a dyer with a fortune of 21,600 livres, and others owning workshops that employed sixty men. No less than 1,311 individual *sectionnaires* of the height of the Terror have been

6 A. Soboul, *Les sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II* (Paris, 1958). See also R. C. Cobb, "Quelques aspects de la mentalité révolutionnaire, avril 1793-Thermidor an II," in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, VI (1959), 81-120. Both these works refer to a period slightly later than the one discussed here, but apply in general to late 1792. See my article discussing these and other writings, "Popular Democracy in the French Revolution," in *French Historical Studies*, I (1960), 445-69. Cobb's full work has also now appeared: *Les armées révolutionnaires: instrument de la Terreur dans les départements, avril 1793-floréal an II*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1963).

identified and socially classified by Soboul. Of those in the section committees, that is the leaders, over half were shopkeepers, another tenth were of liberal professions, and still another tenth lived from property or small incomes of their own. Of ordinary *sectionnaires*, not members of committees, over half were shopkeepers, and a fifth were wage-employees.

They burned with a new sense of equality, which Soboul finds to be their main characteristic. They wanted respect and recognition. They "no longer accepted a subordinate position in social relations." On holidays they flocked to the fashionable boulevards which in the past they had avoided. "Citizens of poor outward appearance," in the words of an approving contemporary, "who in former times would not have dared to show themselves in these places reserved for more elegant company, were going for walks along with the rich, and holding their heads as high."⁷

They could not bear arrogance and disdain. Irony and elaborate speech aroused their hostility. All above their own level they came to regard as "aristocrats." "Gentlemen" (*les honnêtes gens*) became a term to be used with sarcasm. A certain goldsmith said he wished people with lace cuffs and hair-powder were dead. They made a virtue of their long trousers, and a vice of breeches, and at the height of excitement they advertised a few other peculiarities of dress, such as the red or "Phrygian" cap. Since the difference between *vous* and *tu* was a genteel affectation, used to connote class relations, they favored honest *tutoiement* by all persons—like the Quakers in the use of English a century before. Their mood was one of tense expectation of better things. The world would be better after the war, if the enemy were defeated. The Revolution opened a new era for the common man. The imminent possibility of this new era made strenuous exertion urgently necessary and worth while. Those who opposed it were selfish and evil. Their tricks must be exposed. The hour for the vengeance of ages had arrived. In the popular outlook there was much that was naive and credulously suspicious. It was easy to believe in any plot or in prison conspiracies, or that the common people might be betrayed by seeming friends among politicians. It was easy to be sarcastic about religion, or rough with priests, especially those who became nervous at the thought of equality, or refused civic oaths, or talked too much about social order and rewards in an afterlife.

These popular democrats had no developed economic ideas, but they took a negative attitude toward the wealthy, and while not objecting to private property believed that a more equal division of it was desirable. It is notable also, and more new, that Soboul finds in the documents repeated demands for public schools, more education for all, and vocational training. In general, in economic ideas, the popular democrats looked backward rather than forward. They came to demand more "equality of enjoyments," but never thought in terms of higher production or rising material standard of living. Though perhaps as much as half the Paris working class were wage-earners, attitudes were shaped by the artisan-shopkeeping outlook. The *sans-culottes* favored small property, small business, small employers, small workshops. They objected to business men, big merchants, financiers, commercial capital, and stock companies. They wished to preserve an older economic system against new forces by which they felt threatened.

⁷ Soboul, *op.cit.*, 408, 660.

Unprogressive in economic ideas, they were opposed to the actual course of economic development, whether it be called bourgeois capitalism, industrialism, or modernization. An American is bound to feel that these French popular democrats had something in common with their contemporaries the Jeffersonian democrats, and with the later Jacksonians, except that the French popular democrats were typically not agrarians, and were prepared to see power in the hands of the state. Their ideal was "a community of independent producers among whom the State, by its laws, should assure an approximate equality."⁸

Such were the attitudes and ideals, and the popular democrats were highly political, as shown notably on August 10, 1792. More often, however, it was hunger and the fear of hunger that aroused them to take part in demonstrations and make demands on the public authorities. The price of bread, even in normal times, in the amount needed for a man with a wife and three children, was half as much as the daily wage of common labor. A rise in its price brought disaster. At times, from 1793 to 1795, there was positive scarcity, to the point where bread and other food-stuffs became unobtainable at any price. The effects became grimmer as one descended the income scale. The fear of hunger colored all sans-culotte politics. It motivated their demands on the Convention to obtain price controls, or repression of hoarding and profiteering; it made the popular democrats favor the bourgeois leaders who were willing at least temporarily to agree with them, and force the expulsion of those who did not; it made them hate the "rich" and the "aristocrats" because they ate better, or abhor and fear them, in the belief that the rich might use popular starvation for their own political advantage. The economic class issue was not at all between labor and capital, but between those who in times of scarcity either did or did not face the possibility of actual hunger for themselves and their children.

Violence, which has seemed to some an essential characteristic of the Paris populace during the Revolution, seems to Soboul a natural byproduct of real events. Violence, *exaltation terroriste*, *buveurs de sang* there were. The *Septembriseurs* were drawn from sans-culotte ranks. But overwhelmingly the sans-culottes were not violent men—or women. They were "often rough men, without education, their souls inflamed by poverty."⁹ Their violence was rarely wanton. It had an understandable aim. It was directed against the use of force by the counter-revolution. There was fear, but it was well-grounded fear. The idea of an aristocratic conspiracy was not baseless. There was the crisis of war and civil war, betrayal and secret conspiracy and the fear of the unknown. The guillotine in 1793 was welcomed and idealized; it was the "popular ax," the "scythe of equality," and it was believed to promote the supply of bread.

In the face of this uncouth manifestation of true popular revolution the Jacobins divided. The Jacobins, in the strict sense of those who belonged to the Jacobin Club, were, it must be repeated, almost all drawn from the middle class, and had at least had enough education to make a speech in public, or even refer to the progress of humanity, the Greeks and Romans, and the famous authors of the Enlight-

8 *Ibid.*, 473.

9 *Ibid.*, 577.

ement. Some could not manage to adjust to dealing with irate tradespeople, or worse. They in turn came to be detested by the sans-culottes. This was the group of Jacobins who came to be called Girondins—Brissot, Cordercet, Vergniaud, the Rolands, and others—for whom the Revolution of 1792 was the beginning of the end. Others made the adjustment with more success, including men like Danton, a bit plebeian himself, or like Robespierre, who managed to go along with the popular upsurge without sacrifice of his own meticulous habits. These were the kinds of Jacobins known in 1793 and 1794 as the Mountain.

But the Jacobins of the Mountain were never free agents. With many sans-culotte ideas, for a time at least, they genuinely agreed. They had little alternative, if they were to try to govern. They worked under enormous popular pressure. It was their dilemma that they had to yield to and use this popular zeal, but also to bring it under control.

INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONISM

The French popular democrats, or sans-culottes, were usually friendly to foreigners whom they saw personally, even to prisoners of war interned in French villages, but they knew little of foreign countries, which they believed to differ from France in being peopled mostly by slaves. They were suspicious of foreigners in the abstract. French popular revolutionism and international revolutionism were entirely distinct.

Agitation within the several countries will be described in succeeding chapters. At present, the problem is to see international revolutionism as it presented itself in France in 1792. Three preliminary observations may be made.

First, French historians, including those most sympathetic to the Revolution, have generally set a low estimate on the degree of genuine Revolutionary activity in the 1790's outside of France itself. For Albert Mathiez the presence of foreign zealots in Paris was a kind of illegitimate interference with the French Revolution, one of the many nuisances with which Robespierre had to deal.¹⁰ Few Frenchmen have been attracted to the subject. Not until the work of Professor Godechot of Toulouse, published in 1956, had a French scholar given a full account of international revolutionism as a whole in the 1790's.¹¹ In countries with a stable history in the past century, such as England and Holland, there has been little incentive to study, still less to emphasize, their native "Jacobins" of that time.

Secondly, it is true that these radicals or revolutionaries in other countries accomplished nothing except in conjunction with the French armies. Revolutions failed where they were attempted without French military support, as in Poland and Ireland. They succeeded where, and as long as, they could make use of French power, as in the Netherlands and Italy. This fact has lent weight to the line of

10 A. Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers* (Paris, 1918).

11 J. Godechot, *La Grande Nation: L'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde, 1789–99*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956). There have been, however, some excellent French studies of single foreign countries at the time of the Revolution, such as Droz on Germany, Fabre on Poland, or Dufourcq on Rome, cited in relevant chapters below.

thought under the first point, suggesting that the non-French revolutionaries were insignificant or ephemeral groups, mere immediate by-products of French invasion. It was the purpose of the preceding volume, by describing conditions in Europe for a generation before 1792, to prepare the reader of the present volume for a rejection of this idea.

Thirdly, the reader must put out of mind a good deal that will be suggested to him by twentieth-century international communism. There was never any concerted international organization directed from Paris or anywhere else. There was not even a French propaganda office trying to reach sympathizers in other countries. We find, indeed, as early as June 1790, counter-revolutionary allegations that such a "propaganda" existed. The word itself was then new, and usually found in the French form, *propagande*; it was used almost exclusively by conservatives, and what it meant was not the publicity or the open promotion of ideas that the word now suggests, but secret conspiracy and subversion. A letter written on July 31, 1790, from Turin, where the Count of Artois and other émigrés were assembled, mentioned a society called the *De propaganda Libertate*, a term obviously modeled on the *De propaganda Fide* of the Catholic Church.¹² About the same time, both from Turin and from Coblenz, another émigré center, the Emperor Leopold II heard that "a democratic party" in Paris had set up a clandestine *club de propagande* to bring about revolution in other countries.¹³ The conservative Hamburg *Politisches Journal* and Girtanner's *Historische Nachrichten* gave further currency to the story and to the word.¹⁴ Count Axel de Fersen, in March 1791, told the King of Sweden of "the Propaganda, that infernal abyss of secret agents everywhere."¹⁵ Where the Turin report had attributed the "propaganda" in part to French Protestants, Fersen now also included the "Jew Ephraim." Later, on July 15, he recorded in his diary a report that the Propaganda had burned the Arsenal at Amsterdam. "If this should not be true," he added, "it would at least be useful to spread the story."¹⁶ Meanwhile the British envoy at the Hague, Lord Auckland, sent Lord Grenville a paper obtained "on good authority" describing the "Society of the Propagande," whose aim was to produce revolution not only in France and Holland but in the "whole world." The society was now said, in May 1791, to consist of 5,000 members who paid dues of four louis a year, and 50,000 who paid nothing but were organized "in every country to spread this so-called philosophical enlightenment."¹⁷ The idea found favor among opponents of the French Revolution: at Philadelphia, in 1796, William Cobbett talked of "the Propagande at Paris," and the Scottish Robison, in a book of 1797 of which more will be said, believed that the "propaganda" had

12 Pia Onnis Rosa, "Filippo Buonarroti nel Risorgimento italiano," in *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, XLIX (1962), 31, notes 1 and 2.

13 E. Wangermann, *From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials: Government Policy and Public Opinion in the Habsburg Dominions in the Period of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1959), 62.

14 *Politisches Journal*, Hamburg, Aug. 1790, 833-40; Sept., 963-65; Oct., 1,087-91; *Historische Nachrichten*, Hanover, III, 3.

15 R. Klinckowstrom, *Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1877), I, 87.

16 Fersen's *Dagbok*, 4 vols. (Stockholm, 1925), under date of July 15, 1791. I am indebted for this item to the dissertation by H. A. Barton mentioned above in note 1.

17 Great Britain: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892-1927), II, 69-70, 117, 342, 358.

been secretly at work since 1790.¹⁸ What historians have somewhat uncritically called the two Propaganda Decrees of 1792 became for Robison a kind of climax and main argument of his book.

Nevertheless, there was no such Society of the Propaganda. Not only was there no such organization, but the whole thing was an invention of the counter-revolution, going back to a document fabricated by the Comte d'Antraigues, and designed to persuade the European governments to intervene in France against the Revolution.¹⁹

The "foreign" revolutionaries, in short, were not at all the victims or targets of any secret propaganda conducted by the French government, or by any organized association operating with its knowledge or its official or financial support. Their problem, on the contrary, was to get the French government to take them seriously. At most, there were *ad hoc* or temporary arrangements: thus Dumouriez, when foreign minister in 1792, had a secret fund for use in Belgium after the war began, or generals in the field might have talks with local collaborators, or the French government might send out a spy on a special mission, as it sent William Jackson to Ireland in 1794.

On the other hand, the "international" revolutionaries could readily share in many "French" ideas. They could count on a certain cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century. Social and class relationships, and problems of church and state, had a certain resemblance throughout much of Europe. In many places, as in Belgium and Italy, governments rested on no basis of national loyalty or cohesion, and in other places, such as the Rhineland, Central Europe, and even the Dutch provinces, national loyalty as a political sentiment was unformed. French was the international language. Its literature had long been internationally read. The journalists of the French Revolution had a ready-made international audience among educated people. The relatively staid *Moniteur*, with its reports of debates in the French assembly or Jacobin Club, had an international circulation, despite attempts to keep it out. The radical journalist Carra, a very secondary figure in the French Revolution, became a name dreaded in Russia and South America when copies of his paper were discovered in those countries.

The Masonic lodges also provided a kind of international network of like-minded people. Their existence facilitated the circulation of ideas. But the lodges took no orders from any headquarters, their members never acted as a group, and

18 W. Cobbett, *History of the American Jacobins Commonly Denominated Democrats* (Philadelphia, 1796), 7; J. Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and Reading Societies* (Edinburgh, 1797), but see the New York edition, 1798, 317–23.

19 J. Feldmann, "Le 'discours de Duport' et la propagande révolutionnaire en Suisse," in *AHRF*, No. 138 (1955), 55–58; and *id.*, *Propaganda und Diplomatie, eine Studie über die Beziehungen Frankreichs zu den eidgenössischen Orten vom Beginn der fr. Rev. bis zum sturz der Girondisten* (Zurich, 1957). To the statement that the word "propaganda" was used exclusively by conservatives I know at present of only one exception, the ultra-revolutionary "Propaganda" suppressed by Saint-Just in Alsace in 1794. (See my *Twelve Who Ruled: the Committee of Public Safety in the French Revolution* [Princeton, 1941], 187–190.) It would not be unreasonable as a hypothesis to suppose that this ultra-revolutionary "propaganda" was somehow related in its origin to counter-revolutionary activity, somewhat in the manner suspected by Robespierre; see below, pp. 420–21.

their very taste for elaborate mystification made them innocuous if not ridiculous in real political life. Probably the reading clubs which sprang up in many European cities after about 1770, for the joint purchase and discussion of newspapers and books, were more important than Freemasonry as nurseries of pro-Revolutionary feeling. Nothing more conspiratorial than the Freemasons has ever been discovered. Belief in a concerted, secret, underground international revolutionary movement, as developed by the French Barruel and the Scotch Robison, and advanced in America by Jedidiah Morse, is an item not in the history of fact but in the history of counter-revolutionary polemics.²⁰

The French Jacobins of 1792, among whom a few individuals like Robespierre were the exception, developed a psychology of world-revolution because they felt so insecure at home. They demanded war at a time when they considered their own king a traitor, when the Assembly was mortally divided, the generals unpredictable, and the country struggling to live under new laws on which the ink was scarcely dry. Brissot argued, before war was declared, that it would be short and easy because peoples everywhere would rise in a massive sympathy with France. Many believed, or said they believed, that that other land of liberty, the United States of America, in memory of French aid fifteen years before, and in common opposition to tyrants, would rush immediately into the struggle. On April 20, the very day on which the Assembly passed the declaration of war, an enthusiast at the Jacobin Club jumped up to cry to a screaming audience, "Washington is at Sea!"²¹

On August 26, 1792, the Assembly took one of the more extraordinary steps of the Revolution, decreeing honorary French citizenship for seventeen foreigners of varying eminence, as "men who in various countries have brought reason to its present maturity."²² Coming at this moment it can be understood as a gesture of defiance. With the Prussians approaching, bringing the émigrés in their train, with Louis XVI unseated, and Paris quaking beneath them, with the Assembly itself now marked for an early disappearance, the harassed legislators made common cause with a wide assortment of benefactors of the human race. If on nothing else, they could agree on a list of notable foreigners. The list itself is a subject of curiosity. The poet, M. J. Chénier, first proposed fourteen names, of which the Assembly adopted eight: Thomas Paine, James Madison, Joseph Priestley, James Mackintosh (known for his reply to Burke), William Wilberforce (the anti-slavery leader), the Italian economist Gorani, and the German and Swiss educators, Campe and Pestalozzi. To these, after discussion, the Assembly added Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Clarkson (another anti-slavery Englishman), David Williams (a minor British "radical"), Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Klopstock the German poet, George Washing-

20 The literature on Freemasonry is large and disputatious. See Gaston Martin, *La franc-maçonnerie française et la préparation de la Révolution* (Paris, 1926); B. Fay, *Revolution and Freemasonry 1680-1800* (Boston, 1935), translated from the French; with a new edition (Paris, 1961). For the "plot" theory of international revolution as advanced by Barruel, see Chapter XXIII below; by Robison, Chapters II and XXX; by Morse, Chapter XXXI. The plot theory was refuted by J. J. Mounier, *De l'influence attribuée aux philosophes et aux illuminés sur la Révolution de France* (Tübingen, 1801).

21 A. Aulard, *Société des Jacobins*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1889-1897), III, for April 20, 1792. See also Lucy M. Gidney, *L'influence des Etats-Unis d'Amérique sur Brissot, Condorcet et Mme. Roland* (Paris, 1930).

22 See the debates in the *Moniteur*; I am also indebted to a seminar paper by my student, Mr. J. E. Seigel, "The Honorary Citizens of France: August 26, 1792."

ton, Alexander Hamilton, the Dutch Cornelius de Pauw and his nephew J. B. Cloots, called Anacharsis Cloots, a rich baron from the duchy of Cleves, near the Dutch frontier, who had been in Paris for several years, gathering a circle of miscellaneous foreign radicals about him. The American Joel Barlow, in addition, was given honorary citizenship in the following February.

It may seem a mystery how the name of Alexander Hamilton ever got on this list, and even more of a mystery why Thomas Jefferson was omitted, since he was better known in Paris than almost anyone whose name was adopted, having spent five years in France before September 1789. On reflection, there is perhaps no mystery at all. Perhaps the Assembly, less erratic than it seems, understood the qualifications of Hamilton and Jefferson for honorary French citizenship, as of 1792, better than modern Americans who look back through various veils of illusion. If the deputies knew that Hamilton mixed in banking and commercial circles they need not have been deterred; after all, the Belgian banker Walkiers, and the Dutch bankers Abbema and Kock, were at this very moment, as refugees from their own countries, pleading with the French to assist them in revolutions in Belgium and Holland. As for Jefferson, when in France he had been close to Lafayette; and Lafayette, unable to reverse the events in Paris, had only a week before surrendered voluntarily to the Austrians. It made sense for the French in August 1792 to suppose that Hamilton might be better disposed than Jefferson to the Revolution. Events in the United States had not yet gone far enough to teach them the contrary. In any case, it was chiefly as authors of the *Federalist*, recently translated into French, that Hamilton and Madison were included.

Priestley, Paine, and Cloots, since they now enjoyed citizenship, were elected in several departments to be members of the coming Convention. Priestley declined, prudently emigrating to the United States instead. Paine and Cloots both sat in the convention. Paine found his political friends among people like Condorcet and Brissot, with whom he shared the idea of universal revolution. Cloots continued to associate with the Dutch and other revolutionary exiles, and with radical journalists like Hébert, who held no national office, and who continued to demand war upon tyrants wherever found. Both the Brissot group and the Hébert group, the two spearheads in French politics of international revolutionism, were eventually outmaneuvered by Robespierre, who had Paine imprisoned and Cloots executed in 1793–1794.

The “legions” of various national groups, organized in 1792, allow another insight into the international revolutionary spirit. Refugees from abroad asked to form military units to fight alongside the French. Hardly had the war begun, in April, when the French Assembly, foreseeing an advance into the Austrian Netherlands, authorized a Belgian-Liègeois Legion, to which it granted six million livres. Two such legions were formed. They both fought with Dumouriez, and accompanied him on his entry into Brussels in November 1792. A Dutch or Batavian legion was authorized in July. Within the next few weeks, under similar pressure of foreign revolutionaries in Paris, other similar “legions” were organized: an Allobrogian Legion for Savoyards and Swiss, and a Germanic Legion which had a thousand men by the end of 1792. There was even a shadowy English Legion, raised by John Oswald, who was killed in the Vendée in 1793. A proposal by an

Italian named l'Aurora to set up an Italian Legion was rejected by the Convention in February 1793.²³

At the same time, on the remote borders of civilization, in Kentucky, "at the falls of the Ohio" (i.e., Louisville), George Rogers Clark penned an unsolicited letter to the French minister at Philadelphia.²⁴ He asserted that if the French gave a little secret assistance, he could raise a party of some 1,500 men to liberate Louisiana and New Mexico from the rule of tyrants. When Edmond Genet arrived as French minister shortly thereafter, he set about forming "legions" in America, and commissioned Clark as a brigadier-general in the French Republican army.

It is important to realize that in this formation of legions, the demands of foreign revolutionaries and French military requirements were at least as important as a Jacobin crusade to overturn the world. Once the war began, the French Assembly had no difficulty in recognizing a Belgian Legion, because Belgium was a Hapsburg country, in which military operations were to be conducted. The Allobrogian Legion was intended mainly for Savoyards after the king of Sardinia, to whom Savoy belonged, became a belligerent. Genet's legions on the American frontier were obviously of a different kind; they were not intended to revolutionize the United States, nor were they composed of revolutionaries in exile. They were intended, by operations in Florida, Louisiana, or Canada, to cause trouble to the powers in possession of these regions, namely Spain and Britain, after France was at war with them also.

More difficulties attended the formation of the Batavian Legion. Of the various revolutionary agitations in Europe before the French upheaval, the Dutch Patriot movement had been the strongest. The provinces of Holland and Utrecht especially were full of former Patriots who looked forward to the return of their friends among the Dutch exiles. These exiles saw in the war between France and Austria a chance to advance the Dutch Revolution. They found it hard to persuade the French Jacobins, who, for all their crusading mentality, did not wish the Dutch and British governments to be drawn into the war. Dumouriez, when still foreign minister, wrote the French minister at the Hague, five days after the declaration of war against Austria, that it was in France's interest to have as few enemies as possible, and for the Dutch government to remain neutral. Since, however, the Dutch government was very hostile to the French Revolution (which was true), he, de Maulde at the Hague, should keep up secret contact with Dutch Patriots; if the Dutch government departed from neutrality, then de Maulde should come out more openly, "to accelerate a change in the Form of Government for which [Dutch] opinion seems to be entirely prepared." Mean-

23 On the "legions" see A. Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers*, pp. 65–68, who however sees them from a French point of view, and does not mention the Italian proposal, or Genet's activities in America. On the idea of an Italian Legion there is some reference in R. Soriga, *L'idea nazionale italiana del secolo XVIII all'unificazione* (Modena, 1941), 166. More will be found on the Belgian Legion in S. Tassier, *Histoire de la Belgique sous l'occupation française en 1792 et 1793* (Brussels, 1934), 42, 52–53; on the Batavian Legion in H. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland, I. Nederland en de Revolutie, 1789–95*, I, 35–41, 74, 79, etc. There was also a Polish Legion in 1796–1799; see below, pp. 572, 653.

24 *Report of the American Historical Association for 1896*, "Correspondence of Clark and Genet," 967–71.

while it was Brissot, the most voluble of the French world-revolutionaries, who thought Dumouriez went too far. The Dutch exiles in Paris complained of opposition to them at the Jacobin Club. Late in July, the French Assembly at last authorized a Dutch Legion, at first calling it the Free Foreign Legion to prevent trouble with the Dutch government. The Dutch exiles called it the Batavian Legion, after the Latin name for Holland. Not until October were its officers really named. It was then organized on a basis of 2,822 men, 500 horse, and two companies of artillery, under an administrative committee of the Dutch exiles. The Batavian Legion fought with Dumouriez in Belgium, and was naturally impatient to push on into the United Provinces.²⁵

The early weeks of the National Convention saw a remarkable upturn in the military fortunes of the newborn Republic. The hopes of the Counter-Revolution, so confidently expressed at Frankfurt on July 14, were completely crushed for the time being; indeed the French general Custine occupied Frankfurt itself in October. Other columns entered Savoy, where many of the French-speaking population favored annexation. The turning point came with the battle of Jemappes, near Mons in Belgium, where the Austrians retreated before Dumouriez' army of 40,000 ragged republicans. Poorly clothed, poorly supplied, spontaneous and undisciplined, a true revolutionary horde, spurning all military proprieties, they overwhelmed the enemy by sheer numbers, while bellowing the Marseillaise. The French spread throughout Belgium. The Belgian and Dutch revolutionaries were delighted. Success breeds enthusiasm, and in England the sympathy for the French Revolution among the popular classes, undeterred by the dethronement of Louis XVI or the September Massacres, reached a new height of excitement. English political clubs sent congratulations to the French Convention. In the English militia companies, not only the soldiers but even some of the officers contributed sums of money to buy muskets and shoes for the triumphant sans-culottes. There was a banquet on November 18 of the English-speaking residents of Paris, presided over by Harford Stone, an English business man who owned an ammonia plant in France, and attended by various English and Irish, including Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur Dillon, the latter a general in the French army. They drafted a statement to the French Convention, which received one from the London Constitutional Society on the same day.

The French government and army had an international coloring. They were dominated at the moment by the Brissot group. Brissot, having traveled in the United States in former years, and having been at Geneva during the troubles of 1782, considered himself well informed on international revolution. Clavière, the finance minister, was an exile from the Geneva counter-revolution. Lebrun, the foreign minister, had spent years as an editor in Liège, and was closely involved with the Belgians. Dumouriez was the friend and patron of Lebrun. His second-in-command in Belgium was the Venezuelan, Miranda, who already had plans for revolution in South America. Other generals in Dumouriez' army were the New Yorker, John Eustace, the Swiss A. E. La Harpe, exiled by the Bern authorities on

25 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, I, 38-45.

the charge of revolutionary activity at Lausanne, and a number of officers of Irish birth or connections.

In Savoy, in the county of Nice, at the city of Mainz and in the towns of the Austrian Netherlands, as the French arrived, local patriots came forward to ask for French protection. They declared that they lived in fear of counter-revolutionary reprisals. Their case came before the Convention, where hesitation at premature action was expressed, but which enacted as a temporary measure, pending further review of the question of occupied territories during the war, the famous decree of November 19, 1792, "according aid and fraternity to all peoples wishing to recover their liberty." Lebrun, as foreign minister, tried to explain in England and Switzerland that the decree had no application to neutrals. But conservatives took the decree as a challenge, and to French sympathizers in all countries it brought a thrill.

The idea of the sovereignty of the people, used in August to sweep out the government in France itself, was now used abroad for a similar purpose. Juridically, it was the essence of the Revolution, since it denied the claims of governments over their own populations. It also set up a new principle of international law. The idea was that peoples could no longer be transferred by arrangements of governments as set forth in treaties, or be subject to any government except by their own consent. A year before, at Avignon, in defiance of the existing ruler, the Pope, the population had been joined to France after a plebiscite. The same was now done in Savoy, and was soon done in Belgium.

As always, however, the simple explanation of ideology, or revolutionary enthusiasm, or political theory must be kept in perspective and received with some reservation. The Convention debated the annexation of Savoy on November 27. The debate was perfectly rational. The Abbé Grégoire, who led it, reviewed the arguments, pro and con, remarking that not all peoples were equally suited for freedom or were developing at the same historical pace. He concluded, however, that in time of war, if the French found a sentiment for union among an adjoining people of their own language and kindred they could not well ignore them, or leave them as a source of strength for an enemy king who wished the ruin of France. He added that Savoy had enough resources in its own wealth, population, and church lands that might be resold, to finance its own share in the French war-effort against the Counter-Revolution. The Convention then admitted Savoy as an eighty-fourth department, Mont Blanc—the present French departments of Savoie and Haute Savoie.

There were some enthusiasts, to be sure, for whom no Revolutionary emancipation seemed too far-fetched—notably Brissot, for whose long career as a pre-Revolutionary intellectual the present moment came as a supreme climax. Locked as we are, he said on November 26, in a death struggle with the "Germanic colossus," we "cannot be at ease until Europe, and all Europe, is in flames." He demanded the Rhine frontier, and hoped through Miranda, and a Spaniard named Marchena, to drive the Bourbons out of Spain. He had the idea also that Spanish America could be liberated, if Miranda recruited some 6,000 mulattoes in Haiti (to whom the Revolution had given civil rights) and reinforced them with volun-

teers from the United States. He rejoiced in "upheavals of the globe, these great revolutions that we are called upon to make."²⁶

The American Joel Barlow was another. Lately in London he had written his *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, which the British government found only slightly less subversive than Paine's *Rights of Man*. He had come to Paris as one of the delegates bringing greetings from the London Society for Constitutional Information. After the annexation of Savoy, when the Abbé Grégoire went on a tour to the new eighty-fourth department he took the Connecticut Yankee with him. Barlow was led to believe that Savoy might elect him as one of its deputies to the Convention. He was not elected; he was not yet a French citizen. In the Alpine majesty of Savoy his thoughts turned to plain little Connecticut. He wrote his mock-epic on corn-meal mush, *Hasty Pudding*, at an inn in Chambéry. He also wrote on a more pressing topic, *A Letter addressed to the People of Piedmont*, published in French at Grenoble, in Italian at Nice. The latter edition was so thoroughly suppressed by the King of Sardinia that no known copy is in existence. Barlow advised the Italians to join in the general revolution. "Italy must be free . . . Italy is destined to form one great republic."²⁷

Condorcet meanwhile penned his *Avis aux Bataves*, urging the Dutch to revolt. The Dutch exile, Kock, translated it. He and others, after Jemappes, had set up a kind of government in exile, the Batavian Revolutionary Committee. Word came from Amsterdam that the patriots were ready to rise, but would do so only after the arrival of the French army, not before. Even Brissot hesitated to invade the Dutch provinces after the victory in Belgium, knowing that invasion would bring both the Dutch and British governments into the war. A group of Dutch revolutionaries appeared at the Jacobin Club in December. They met with considerable skepticism from Robespierre and others.²⁸

"Why don't the Batavian patriots make their own revolution," someone asked at the Jacobin Club, "since they have the money and means of their own? Or why don't they offer a hundred millions to the French nation to enable us to do it?"²⁹

This picture should be kept in mind, since it was to be reproduced many times in the following years, in connection with Italy as well as Holland. It is a picture in which revolutionaries from other countries importune the French, and the French are themselves divided, some urging the "foreign" revolutionaries to revolt, some favoring positive French assistance, others expressing contempt for these ineffectual malcontents or unwillingness to spend French blood and treasure for their liberation.

These various points of view came momentarily together when the Convention, on December 15, issued its famous decree on policy to be pursued in occupied countries during the war. This decree represented the definitive action foreseen in the decree of November 19. The two together have been commonly called the

26 J. P. Brissot, *Correspondance et papiers* (Paris, 1912), 304, 313–16.

27 J. Woodress, *A Yankee's Odyssey: the Life of Joel Barlow* (Philadelphia and New York, 1958), 134–35.

28 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, I, 79–84, 92–96, 196.

29 *Ibid.*, 81 n. Colenbrander gives no source, and the sentences are not in Aulard's *Jacobins*, but are characteristic of what was then being said in other speeches printed by Aulard.

Propaganda Decrees, though mere propaganda was hardly their purpose. More will be said of the decree of December 15 in the next chapter. Its most immediate purpose was to arrange for supply of the French armies in Belgium. French generals in the field were therefore directed to seize the revenues of enemies of the Republic, that is to say, of the enemy governments, the noble and feudal classes, and the church. The decree was explained in the Convention by Cambon, who was no ideological hothead, but simply a revolutionary of the workhorse or practical type. "We must," he said, "declare ourselves to represent revolutionary power in the countries we enter." After a careful exposition of the practical circumstances he launched the phrase in which international revolution and popular revolution, at least in appearance, seemed to be joined: *Guerre aux châteaux, paix aux chaumières!*—war on the castles and manor houses, peace to the cottages and cabins. The enemies of the Revolution were to pay for its triumph.

Whatever the intent, the war had in fact become ideological, with partisans on each side urging an international effort to destroy the other. Within a week the Abbé Grégoire and the Count de Fersen used the same word to explain what their side must do—*étouffer*, or smother, its opponent. "When my neighbor keeps a nest of vipers," said the mild and humanitarian priest on November 27, "I have the right to smother them lest I become their victim." And the sensitive and refined Swedish count, writing at Aachen on November 19, and observing that the German Rhineland re-echoed with praise of French liberty and equality, observed that unless the European powers banded together "to stop the evil by smothering it, they would all be its victims." He added that "there will then be no more kings or nobility, and all countries will experience the horrors of which France is now the victim, and to preserve an existence and a livelihood, we shall all have to turn into Jacobins."³⁰

Of this atmosphere of world upheaval, at the close of 1792, there is another piece of evidence in which American readers should take a particular interest: the career of Edmond Genet, always called Citizen Genet in American history, since he so shocked the Federalists and pleased the democrats as French minister to the United States for a few months in 1793.

It was in Russia that Genet first acted as an international firebrand, but the earliest influence of this kind upon him had come rather from the American Revolution. Of noble family, a brother of Mme. de Campan, one of Marie Antoinette's ladies in waiting, he had worked during the American war in the French Foreign Office under his father, who was chief of the interpreters' bureau. He knew six languages at the age of fifteen. He assisted his father and Benjamin Franklin in obtaining favorable publicity for the United States. As a youth he met such other notables as John Adams, Joseph Priestley, James Watt, and Matthew Boulton. In 1788 he was sent to the French embassy at St. Petersburg. Here he strongly favored the French Revolution of 1789 and the new constitutional monarchy, as did his superior the ambassador, the Count de Ségur. They both boldly defended events in France from the aspersions of émigrés who turned up in Russia. In 1790

30 Gregoire in the *Moniteur*, November 27, 1792 (*réimpression*, XIV, 587); R. Klinckowström, II, 392.

Ségur went home, and Genet became chargé. He thought he saw signs in Russia that the liberating new modern spirit would soon be felt. The court nobles seemed to be full of it; they were fascinated when Ségur showed them his American Order of Cincinnatus, and expressed great interest in France. The two Grand Dukes, Alexander and Constantine, were considered to be sympathetic. They were still under the care of their Swiss tutor, F. C. La Harpe, who was instilling in them the ideas of the Western Enlightenment, and whose first cousin was a general in the French army. The great Russian landowner Stroganov, said to own 10,000 serfs, when in Paris with his French tutor, had even been a registered member of the Jacobin Club. Genet expected something to happen in Russia, without knowing what: a palace revolution, a guards' revolt, a move patronized by the Grand Dukes, a serf uprising, or a Cossack rebellion.

After the interception of Louis XVI at Varennes in 1791, Catherine II forbade Genet to appear at her court and imposed censorship on news from France. Genet continued to justify the French Revolution in an increasingly hostile environment. More determined than ever he took to hiring spies, and on July 19, 1792, was ordered out of Russia.³¹

Returning to France in October, he mixed with people like Condorcet, Brissot, Paine, the Rolands, Dumouriez and Lebrun. He was almost immediately appointed minister to the Hague, to which however he never went. The Dutch exiles, preparing their plans for revolution, were told by Lebrun to maintain secret contact with Genet in Paris. Genet therefore spent several weeks in close touch with real revolutionaries who expected at any moment to return to Holland. On October 28, meeting with the Batavian Revolutionary Committee, he expressed "entire approval" of its plans and organization. He was then sent on a brief mission to the republic of Geneva, where the old conflict between democratic and patrician parties was brought to a crisis by the operation of French armies in neighboring Savoy. At Geneva Genet was thought very conciliatory. Late in November he was appointed minister to the United States.³²

When he arrived in America, in April 1793, he therefore brought with him a sense of the supra-national conflict of 1792, at a time when in Paris itself it was already abating. For Genet it was not new to be hailed by foreign democrats as their champion, or to have them request French sponsorship for special military formations. He thought he understood, from experience, the real significance of the emerging Federalists and Republicans in America; and he had reason to believe that governments hostile to the French Revolution did not really represent their own peoples.

Let us summarize this chapter, and venture one new thought. The French Revolution was revolutionized in 1792 by the war, through the simultaneous eruption of

31 For Genet in Russia I am indebted to my former student, Mr. W. L. Blackwell, who has examined Russian as well as French sources.

32 For Genet and the Dutch, see Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, I, 44, 184–91; at Geneva, H. Fazy, *Genève de 1788 à 1792: la fin d'un régime* (Geneva, 1917), 478–81; in Russia, Chapter XX below; in the United States, Chapter XXXI.

popular and of international revolutionism. Some of the constructive efforts of the Revolution of 1789, notably the constitutional monarchy, were swept aside. In this crisis of invasion and imminent counter-revolution, the “people” took over in default of everyone else. Given the fact of war, the leaders of the Revolution in France made concessions to more popular elements. And given the fact of war, the potential revolutionaries of other countries hoped for French aid. The French Revolution could no longer be a mainly middle-class or an exclusively French affair.

The Jacobins in France—that is, the predominantly middle-class revolutionaries who had some capacity for leadership and for government—reacted to popular and to international revolutionism in various ways. The idea of world revolution was no mere “Girondist” crusade or propagandistic dream. People of all kinds, as someone said in 1793, wanted to strangle the last king in the entrails of the last priest. But there is some evidence to suggest that some Jacobins saw popular and international revolutionism as alternatives. Those who could work most effectively with popular revolution in France, those who could go along with the lower classes of their own country, were the least inclined to befriend the revolutionists from foreign parts. These included men like Robespierre, who were to govern France during the Terror. Those Jacobins, on the other hand, who saw in popular revolutionism an outburst of anarchy, who shrank from involvement with the lower classes of France and Paris, were more likely to lend a sympathetic ear to revolutionaries from Belgium or Holland, who were after all middle-class persons like themselves, and usually spoke excellent French. As Brissot wrote to Dumouriez in November: it is your glorious destiny to plant the tree of liberty everywhere, carrying pamphlets in German on your bayonets, while we languish at home watching the anarchists by whom we are surrounded.³³ And Dumouriez, the victor of Jemappes, the hero of the international revolution, reached the point where he meant to use his prestige and his power, won in Belgium, to bring the “anarchists” in France under control. This is one of the themes of the next chapter.

33 Brissot, *Correspondance*, 314.

CHAPTER XVIII

LIBERATION AND ANNEXATION: 1792–1793

Sir: The democratic government of France is said to have invented a new system of foreign politics, under the names of proselytism and fraternization. My present letter . . . will show that an internal interference with foreign states, and the annexation of dominion to dominion for purposes of aggrandizement are among the most inveterate and predominant principles of long established governments. These principles, therefore, only appear novel and odious in France because novel and despised persons there openly adopted them.

—BENJAMIN VAUGHAN TO THE EDITOR OF THE
MORNING CHRONICLE, LONDON, MAY 16, 1793

The year 1793 was one of great successes for the Counter-Revolution, especially in Belgium and Poland, the two theaters in which the forces of a democratic revolution most conspicuously failed to maintain themselves. For a while it seemed that the same would be true in France.

In 1792 the French army occupied Belgium, and the Russian army, closely followed by the Prussian, occupied Poland. In both cases the entering powers announced themselves as liberators, and were welcomed as such by certain elements in the population. The French in Belgium within a few weeks passed to a policy of annexation. The Russians and Prussians had annexationist designs on Poland from the beginning. The French were soon driven out, but returned in 1794, so that Belgium remained incorporated into France for twenty years. The Russian and Prussian monarchies never gave up what they took of Poland in 1793, except that for a few years the Prussian segment belonged to Napoleon's Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Only with the destruction of the Russian and Prussian monarchies themselves, in 1918, were the annexations of 1793 undone, and then only in part. The

territory taken by Catherine II in this “second” partition of Poland, involving White Russia and the Ukraine, has remained in the Soviet Union.

It is the purpose of this chapter, under the formal parallel of liberation and annexation, to trace the realities which these terms represented in 1792–1793—that is, to show who was liberated from what, or how and why annexed—and to indicate also the impact of these events on the further radicalizing of the Revolution in France itself.

THE STORM IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

The contacts of French and Belgians in the winter of 1792–1793 form a prelude in which many themes of later years are already sounded. Problems later raised in the “sister republics” were already prefigured. With allowance for differences, there is still a distinguishable pattern. Populations greet the arrival of the French with enthusiasm, set about introducing liberty and equality, and hope to enjoy an independent republic. They want the French to protect them against their own old regimes, but are unwilling or unable to share in the war effort against the Coalition, and object to French exploitation of their resources for this purpose. They become disillusioned with the French, who in turn become contemptuous of them. Some become more dependent on the French, even subservient, than they originally meant to be. Others of those who originally hailed the invaders, or were at least willing to accept them, begin to regret the disappearance of the old order, while still others remain revolutionary in spirit while turning anti-French. There was also for the French government the problem of control over military command, the fear that a successful French general in the field, enjoying the prestige of sensational victory, and building a base for himself in an occupied country, through keeping control of its resources in his own hands, and directing the loyalties of local sympathizers to himself, might become independent of the government in Paris that he was supposed to serve, overshadow his own civilian superiors, and emerge as a military dictator over the Revolution. This was what General Bonaparte did in Italy a few years later. It was what General Dumouriez dreamed of doing in Belgium.

It was only in a rough geographical sense that the French invaded “Belgium.”¹ There was strictly speaking no such country, but only ten provinces belonging to the Austrian monarchy (of which Brabant, Flanders, Hainault, Namur, and Lux-

1 For the following account of Belgium, and of the views of the French and of Dumouriez with respect to it, I follow the thoroughly documented and admirably thought out work of Suzanne Tassier [Mme. G. Charlier], *Histoire de la Belgique sous l'occupation française en 1792 et 1793* (Brussels, 1934). There are also about a hundred relevant pages in the first volume of [Baron] Paul Verhaegen, *La Belgique sous la domination française, 1792–1814*, 5 vols. (Brussels, 1922–1935), and other older works. Verhaegen's book, actually written before the First World War, has a definite nineteenth-century tone. That is, it simply assumes that the revolutionaries of the 1790's were mistaken (Rousseau was a “dreamer,” etc.), and its author closely identifies himself with the Belgian Statists, in whom he sees the true embodiment of Belgian character, nationality, and interests. Except upon episodic facts, Tassier and Verhaegen profoundly disagree, but Miss Tassier's work is so good, and coincides so fully with all

embourg were the most important), virtually cut in two by the large Bishopric of Liège, an independent member-state of the Holy Roman Empire. There had been no national government or institutions embracing these provinces as a whole, except what the Hapsburg monarchy had supplied as a superstructure, until the Belgian revolution of 1789, in which the United Belgian States had asserted their independence from Austria. The anti-Austrian movement was made up of two groups with diametrically opposed intentions. One, the Estates party, consisted of those who objected to Austrian reforms in the 1780's, and wished to preserve the historic identity of the several provinces unimpaired. This meant preserving the position of the great abbots, who led the regular clergy and controlled much of the land, of the nobility with its seignieural and political rights, and of certain burgesses of old-fashioned type, gildmasters, burgomasters, and councillors in those towns which enjoyed representation in provincial bodies. Few groups in Europe were more conservative and even traditionalistic than the Belgian Statists, whose "revolution" was entirely exhausted in revolt against the Austrian crown. The men of the other party called themselves Democrats, and were termed Vonckists by their opponents. They wished in the Revolution of 1789, while getting rid of the Austrian overlordship, to introduce internal changes also, by which the special political role of great prelates and nobles should be reduced, and more of a place marked out for middle-class people, beyond the sphere of town and gild localism as inherited from the Middle Ages.

It is a disputed question whether there was any Belgian nationality at this time. Both parties were anti-foreign and anti-Austrian. The Estates party felt a kind of cultural nationalism, setting a high value on the rich heritage of town and province in the old Low Countries. The Democrats moved more toward the modern conception of a political nation, with a degree of equality of rights and opportunity for participation in public life for all residents of the area. The two were too divided to create any workable government. Provincial, town, and class barriers were stronger than all-Belgian national ties. The two parties together drove out the Austrians in 1789; the Statists then in 1790 suppressed and drove out the Democrats, of whom thousands fled to France; the Austrians then at the end of 1790 put down the Statists, many of whom fled to England or Holland. The years 1791 and 1792 are known in Belgian history as the first Austrian restoration.

A shaky regime confronted Revolutionary France when war began. The Austrian officials enjoyed little useful support. The native Belgian leaders were in exile, and those who remained at home were disaffected, and secretly in touch with one or the other of the two opposing émigré camps. The Antwerp bankers refused the war loan of 1792. There were anti-Austrian demonstrations in various towns, and some young men went off to join the Belgian Legion in France. Paine's *Rights of Man* circulated in French and Flemish. The populace, as in most countries of Western Europe outside France, tended to uphold their existing superiors. But in Belgium, more than in most countries, the rural and urban masses were amenable to direction by monks and abbots, and the great abbots strongly disliked the secu-

that I have been able to learn, that I have made no attempt to split the difference, but have simply agreed with Miss Tassier. For an account of the Belgian revolution of 1789–1790, see 424–34.

larist and reforming governments of Joseph II and Leopold II, against which they had in fact led the Statist party in the Revolution of 1789. The situation was so confused, and the dislike of Austrian church policy so intense, that some of the Belgian upper clergy, even after the September Massacres and the expulsion of priests from France, expressed a preference for the French over the Austrians. There were cases in which ignorant peasants believed that the French were coming to avenge true religion.

Where the Estates party adhered to the Old Regime, the Democrats stood for the New Order. They were clearly a middle-class group, drawing their strength from financial and commercial men of the newer type, who could not operate within the old town and guild limits, and they were reinforced by the younger generation in general, by lawyers of various kinds, by a few individual noblemen, and by doctors, intellectuals, and journalists who were impressed by the ideas of the Enlightenment. The spectacle of the French Revolution made the Statists more wedded than ever to ancestral ways. The Democrats, on the other hand, thanks to their treatment in 1790 at the hands of the Statists, and to disillusionment at the Austrian restoration, and in some cases to inspiration from the French Revolution, were less inclined in 1792 than in 1789 to be content with moderate counsels. The sight of foppish French émigrés congregating in Brussels—"powdered abbés flitting about with lorgnettes"—made many Belgians into Democrats.² Others were converted to enlightened ideas by a criminal case at Antwerp in the summer of 1792, when a young man was put to the torture four times, against the protests of his mother, until he admitted that he worshipped the devil. The Belgians live in fear of "hunger and hell," wrote a disdainful Frenchman.³ The Dutch also thought them backward. The Belgian Democrats hoped to rectify this situation.

Many Belgians, of both parties, therefore saw in the war another chance—their second chance, the first having failed in 1790—to set up an independent Belgian republic. Events of 1790 had shown that the Belgians could not live politically with each other. As the Poles could only live under a king who was not one of themselves, so the Belgians (it is the Belgian historian, Suzanne Tassier, who says so) needed a dominant personality from outside. They needed someone identified with neither party, and whom both could accept. This outside personality was furnished by Dumouriez. They took hope also in the fact that after the August revolution the French foreign minister was practically a Belgian, Lebrun, who though of French birth had lived for years in Liège, and was in fact a refugee from the Liège revolution of 1789. Events in the Bishopric of Liège in 1789 had been if anything more turbulent than in the Austrian provinces; the rebels, wishing to be rid of the rule of the bishop, favored a merger in a Belgian national state, and so agreed with the Democrats of Brabant, Flanders, Luxembourg, and the other Austrian territories. Lebrun, a young man, was very much under the influence of Dumouriez, who had befriended him upon his arrival in Paris. Dumouriez, over fifty, was a thorough product of the Old Regime, and is more appreciated by Belgian historians than by the French, who see him either as the adventurer of 1792 or the

2 Tassier, *op.cit.*, 78, 73 n.

3 *Ibid.*, 61.

traitor of 1793.⁴ An age that saw one French general become king of Sweden might have seen another end up as a prince of Belgium.

Dumouriez defeated the Austrians at Jemappes on November 6, and entered Brussels soon thereafter, with the Belgian legions riding at his side, amid the cheers of those who came out to welcome him. At this moment the French had no plan of annexation. Brissot, Condorcet, Lebrun, Robespierre, and Dumouriez himself, in both public and private statements, expressed a preference for an independent republic. Dumouriez had already matured a private policy of his own. He hoped, after the war and revolution were over, to retire as a kind of stadtholder or protector of a Belgian republic, which should serve as a barrier between France and the German states, and be guaranteed by international treaties (as in fact happened in the 1830's) in the status of a neutral country which foreign armies might not invade or cross.

As the French occupied Belgium, Dumouriez therefore tried to make himself agreeable both to the Statists and to the Democrats. It was his idea that the Belgians should create a government and an army of their own, to carry through the liberation from Austria. The Paris authorities shared this idea at first. Within a few days of Jemappes, local elections were held throughout Belgium, conducted largely by returning exiles, that is by the most advanced and indeed vengeful of the Belgian Democrats expelled by the Statists in 1790. The electoral assemblies received guidance from political clubs, which now sprang up everywhere, called, like the French Jacobins, the Friends of Liberty and Equality. At Namur the members were mainly the larger merchants called *négociants*. At Bruges a lively club developed out of the old literary society. At Louvain, a Catholic center, the members were mainly French soldiers. There were large clubs at Ghent and Liège. The one at Brussels began in November with five hundred members—lawyers, doctors, business men, and Belgian military officers—but its numbers fell off very rapidly. The clubs and assemblies together chose “provisional representatives” whose duty was to work locally with the French military authorities.

As the Democrats thus began to dominate the new political organization rising in Belgium, Dumouriez tried to hold them in check, knowing that an exclusively Democratic victory would antagonize the Statists, and counting on support from both parties to further his own plans. The Belgian Democrats, to win mass support, made public promises to abolish manorial dues and tithes, and shift the tax burden from ordinary consumers' goods on to the incomes of the well-to-do. Meanwhile some of Dumouriez' own subordinate generals, to supply their troops, began confiscations and direct requisitions on their own authority upon the inhabitants. To all these developments Dumouriez objected.

It was his plan, in structural matters, to wait for the assembling of a Belgian Convention, which should not represent the Three Estates as such, but be chosen by universal suffrage in which men of all parties could cast a vote. Such a Convention would have, as in France, the power to write a constitution, to decide upon forms of government and reforms, and to raise a Belgian army. Meanwhile, in the supply of his troops, he tried to shield the Belgians from the direct impact of

4 *Ibid.*, 34.

French or revolutionary demands. For the purchase of food, fuel, bedding, horses, hay, and other requirements, he thought it best to deal with Belgian business men himself, and to pay them in hard currency, not the paper money which the Revolution had brought into circulation in France. In this way the Belgian business classes might be attached to the new regime. To pay the contractors, he hoped to obtain a loan of several millions from the Belgian clergy, who controlled a large share of the wealth of the country, and would presumably be willing to pay for liberation from Austria. If they were to make such a loan, however, they must be assured in the possession of their incomes from tithes and manorial dues. They expected protection, also, against the rampant anti-clericalism brought in by French soldiers and Belgian exiles. Dumouriez, in having to protect the church, if only for financial reasons, departed widely from the views of the men now in power in Paris.

He showed signs also, like Bonaparte in Italy in 1796, of developing a foreign policy of his own. Dutch as well as Belgian exiles were with him on the campaign.⁵ The Batavian Legion soon reached the Dutch frontier, which it was eager to cross. Schemes were in the air for a combined Dutch-Belgian republic, of all seventeen Netherlands provinces, an idea that Dumouriez toyed with for a while, though he soon gave it up. He did propose, however, the invasion of the United Provinces, not to liberate the Dutch, but rather with the thought that these provinces could be returned to the House of Orange at a peace conference in return for international recognition of a Belgian republic. (Here Bonaparte's treatment of Venice will suggest itself.) The Convention forbade Dumouriez to enter Dutch territory. It ordered him to pursue the Austrians into Germany instead. He refused, saying his troops were tired. The Convention became suspicious. The Dutch patriots also were alarmed. They feared that France, Austria, and Britain might agree to an independent Belgium, and the war be over, before their own aims were achieved.

In Belgium, Dumouriez' program met with difficulties from the start. While affronting the Democrats, it reckoned also without the actual Statist aspirations. Immediately after Jemappes the Belgian émigrés in England were heard from. Their leader there was Van der Noot, the anti-Austrian hero of 1789. Van der Noot now proposed to Dumouriez and the French, while thanking them for the liberation of Belgium, that an independent federal republic be set up, to be composed of the ten provinces each with its historic constitution (clergy, nobles, and privileged towns), with a kind of stadtholder or president to be chosen from the ruling family of England, Holland, or Prussia. Neither Dumouriez, nor the French, nor the Belgian Democrats could of course tolerate such a solution, which would not only leave Belgium in the hands of their class enemies, but probably make it a protectorate of Great Britain.

Lebrun, in reply, took a step that proved to be a turning point in the war. He persuaded a not very reluctant Convention to declare the river Scheldt open to international navigation. The significance of this move was far-reaching. For well over a century the Scheldt had been closed by international treaties. Attempts in the past to open it by international negotiation had always failed. The decay of

5 For Dumouriez and the Dutch during the Belgian campaign see H. T. Colenbrander, *Gedenk-stukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland*, I, 34-124, 176-295.

Antwerp, and suppression of long-distance commerce in Belgium, were considered by the Dutch and the English to be essential to their own commercial superiority. The British and Dutch would always oppose the opening of the Scheldt. To the prelates, nobles, and gildmasters of the Statist party it made no difference. It was the enterprising and modern-minded among the Belgian business interests that wanted Antwerp opened to the world. These men included many who tended to sympathize with the Democrats and the French. Lebrun opened the Scheldt in order to hold them to the side of France. He did it also to embarrass the Belgian exiles in England, who if they accepted the opening of the Scheldt would embroil themselves with the British government, and if they rejected it might be exposed to the Belgians as British tools.

By English historians, the opening of the Scheldt is generally attributed to French ambitions, and given as a main cause driving England into the war. By French historians it is given as a sign either of French Revolutionary crusading or of French economic expansionism. Lebrun, however, who was a former Belgian revolutionary himself, seems to have been actuated mainly by the need of favoring revolution in Belgium.⁶ It is a case in which the international revolution reacted violently upon the French Revolution proper, for with the opening of the Scheldt, in November 1792, both the Dutch and British governments began to think war with France unavoidable. It was only a matter of timing, wrote Van de Spiegel on December 1.

Dumouriez' original plans soon proved unworkable. The Democrats strained at the leash. The Statists were unreconciled. The clergy, though some made the attempt, produced no adequate loan. Dumouriez had no money, and was unable even to begin to raise a Belgian army. Disorder reigned in the French army, where many of the patriot soldiers either deserted, taking their equipment with them, or simply lost their blankets, shoes, or firearms. To save time, and get supplies, Dumouriez made some very disadvantageous bargains with get-rich-quick operators and speculators, both French and Belgian. He met with increasing objection in Paris to his direct dealings with Belgian contractors. There was fear in Paris that, by such close arrangements between Dumouriez and the Belgians, the commanding general would become altogether too independent. Meanwhile the French soldiers in Belgium were going unsupplied. And the wealth of Belgium was going untapped, because Dumouriez, thinking of a future peaceable principality for himself, hoped to mollify the monks and abbots, the tithe-owners and the manor-owners, who were sworn enemies of the French Revolution.

Since he could not get the Belgians to do anything effective in liberating themselves, through providing a Belgian administration, funds, or army, Dumouriez found himself increasingly in the position of using his French soldiers to create a Belgian republic for himself. It was this that the French Convention objected to. And it is against this background that the famous decree of the Convention of December 15, the so-called second Propaganda Decree, must be understood.

"The more successful a general is," said Cambon in the Convention as early as November 22, "and the more he has a hold on public opinion, the more important

6 On the opening of the Scheldt see Tassier, 117–18; Colenbrander, 194–95, 198, 238.

it is that he should not have the management of finances, but be subjected to strict rules; I propose therefore that the army supply commissioners should be under the surveillance of the Minister of War, and the control of metallic currency under the surveillance of the national Treasury.”⁷ And the Convention, which had so recently offered “aid and fraternity to all peoples wishing to recover their liberty,” took the matter-of-fact line that France should not pay for this aid. The Bourbons in former times had given away millions in *louis d’ors* to subsidize their international ventures. The British government, between 1793 and 1815, gave away £57,000,000 to keep Continental armies in the field against the Revolution and Napoleon. The governments issuing from the French Revolution were not so generous. For one thing, they lacked the money. In any case, it is doubtful whether any government, bourgeois or democratic, claiming responsibility to the people, could in the eighteenth century have given away such sums for foreign aid.

Cambon estimated that the war was costing some hundred million livres a month, of which the large portion expended beyond the French frontiers had to be paid in gold or silver on ruinously unfavorable terms. “There is everlasting talk that we are carrying liberty to our neighbors. What we are carrying to them is our hard currency and our food supplies; they don’t want our assignments.”⁸

Clearly Belgium could not be abandoned in wartime to the enemies of France—to Austria, or the Statists. Just as clearly France would not pay for its liberation. The solution was obvious, and painless both to France and to the Belgian friends of France. The enemy governments and privileged classes should pay. Crown domains, public revenues, church lands, the property of other old-regime corporate bodies, tithes, seigneurial dues—all of which had been appropriated in France by the Revolution—should now be appropriated by *pouvoir révolutionnaire* in Belgium also. *Guerre aux châteaux, paix aux chaumières!*

The decree of December 15 began as follows:⁹

I. In countries which are or will be occupied by the armies of the French Republic, the generals will immediately proclaim, in the name of the French nation, the abolition of existing taxes and revenues, of the tithe, of feudal dues both fixed and occasional, of servitude both real and personal, of exclusive hunting rights, nobility and all privileges in general. They will declare to the people that they bring peace, aid, fraternity, liberty and equality.

II. They will proclaim the sovereignty of the people and suppression of all existing authorities; they will immediately convoke the people in primary or communal assemblies, to create and organize a provisional administration.

The following articles specified that officers of the old government should be excluded from the first election, and that property of the “prince” (meaning in Belgium the Hapsburgs, but the decree applied to all occupied countries), the local

⁷ Tassier, 155.

⁸ Cambon on December 9, *Moniteur, réimpression*, XIV, 703.

⁹ *Moniteur, réimpression*, XIV, 755. On international law at the time as it pertained to conquest and annexation see J. Basdevant, *La Rév. fr. et le droit de guerre continentale* (Paris, 1901), 185–97.

ruling bodies, and the church, should be confiscated. Against this property, assignats should be issued, to be used as money.

The decree stupefied all concerned. For Dumouriez, it meant the ruin of his plans. He rushed to Paris to obtain its repeal, but only aroused further suspicion of his motives. For the Statists, it killed such slight tendencies to reach an understanding with the Democrats as may have existed. Even now, at the end of December, there was some bare possibility of a Belgian republic. The French had too low an opinion of the Belgians to be altogether eager to live with them in the same body politic, and might still have settled for a program in which, while making use of Belgian resources during the war, they obtained a theoretically independent but not unfriendly buffer republic on their borders. Probably a mutual toleration of Statists and Democrats was impossible anyway. Miss Tassier has observed that there could be no viable Belgian state until one of the two parties was defeated, and that the break-up of the Statists during the twenty years of French rule after 1794 was prerequisite to the independent Belgium of 1830.¹⁰ In any event, the Statists at the end of 1792 were intransigent. Elections for the Belgian Convention took place in Brussels on December 29. It was in such a Convention that any hope for a Belgian republic would have to rest. The Statist party, led by gildmasters and priests (although only 3,000 voted in a population of 80,000), completely swamped the Brussels section assemblies, which voted overwhelmingly to uphold the Joyous Entry of 1355, the Three Estates, and the Apostolic and Roman Catholic Religion.¹¹

The Democrats also were dismayed by the December decree. Among the Dutch Patriots, including those with Dumouriez and those in Holland, it became an overriding concern, from that day forward, that when revolution came in the United Provinces the terms of the decree of December 15 must be avoided. The Belgian Democrats were forced into painful decisions. Some drew back. Others, already too far committed, or determined to advance their principles at any cost, were obliged to follow French policy wherever it might lead.

It must be understood that the Belgian Democrats, though relatively not numerous, genuinely shared in the revolutionary spirit of the age, and were distributed through most parts of the country. Under French auspices, they agitated in their clubs and municipal assemblies. They had become more radical and more anti-clerical than in 1789. At quaint little Bruges they smashed up noble emblems, and demanded the abolition of servants' livery. "It is unfortunate enough," they said, "that a servant should have to wait on a fool or a crazy woman, without being excluded from society, the theater and public balls by these humiliating outward signs."¹² They fumed against privilege, declaring that the only source of true nobility was virtue. A certain Dr. Defrenne demanded that the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines give up his title of Eminence, as "contrary to Christian humility." A certain Verplancke (as if reviving the Protestantism stamped out two centuries before) announced that "priests were made for the people, not the people for the

10 Her final conclusion, 328.

11 On this critical question of whether the intransigence of the Statists was the final obstacle to a Belgian republic, contrast Tassier, 168-72 with Verhaegen, I, 124.

12 Tassier, 218-19.

priests," and that the people should "feed but not fatten them."¹³ Everywhere there were demands for the confiscation of church property, and contrasts were drawn between the opulence of monks and abbots and the poverty of Jesus and the first apostles.

Men who had publicly taken such positions had no hope except in the French. But the Belgian Democrats could not govern the country, nor even exercise much influence within it. They were too few, or too lacking in standing, or too much merely intellectual radicals or enthusiasts. Some began to see no safety for themselves, or hope for realization of their ideas, except by incorporation into the French Republic. And the governing group in Paris came to feel—no doubt rightly enough at this moment, with the trial of Louis XVI going on, and his death imminent—that an independent Belgium would be dominated by the enemies of France and of the Revolution.

Requests for annexation came in from Liège. The Democrats were stronger in Liège than almost anywhere in the Austrian provinces, since the city of Liège was of some economic importance, and so had a considerable population of business men and industrial workmen. The territory of the bishopric comprised about a fifth of present-day Belgium. The inhabitants, having thrown off the temporal power of the bishop, had little sense of forming a state of their own, and no feeling of political kinship to their neighbors in the Austrian provinces. They could consider union with France without violating a national consciousness which they did not have. The aristocratic and Statist Triumph in the election of December 29 at Brussels made many Liègeois very cool toward the idea of joining a Belgian republic. At Spa, Stavelot, the city of Liège, and elsewhere, local assemblies petitioned for annexation to France. Voting was by acclamation, and under strong pressure from the most radically minded, but the numbers present in the assemblies were proportionately higher than in the Statist elections at Brussels.¹⁴ Requests for annexation came in also from the clubs at Ghent and Mons in January 1793.

French policy therefore entered a third phase. There had been a first stage in which an independent Belgian republic was contemplated, with matters left largely to Dumouriez. There had been a second stage in which a program of revolutionary confiscation was adopted, for the period of wartime occupation, and arising from fear of Dumouriez and from the needs of military supply. In the third stage it seemed that there could be no assurance of French interests in Belgium except by permanent annexation. The convocation of the primary assemblies throughout Belgium, anticipated since November, took place in February 1793. It is difficult to make any estimate of their tendency. Neither Belgian nor French historians have claimed that the proportion of voters really favoring annexation was very high. For modern Belgians it is a source of national embarrassment that any significant numbers voted for union with France at all. The matter is confused by the fact that Miss Tassier, while insisting that only a small minority favored annexation, offers figures which seem really to indicate the contrary. She seems to have made the error, common enough, but surprising in so exact a worker, of comparing the num-

13 *Ibid.*

14 For the rather unsatisfactory figures see Tassier, 261–62 for Liège, and 170 for Brussels.

ber of votes, not with the number of adult males, but with figures for total population in which women and children are included.¹⁵

For the election in each primary assembly a French commissioner or general would set a day and place, to which men over twenty-one from surrounding villages would repair. The French official was present, but the assembly chose its own chairman, usually a local lawyer or other radical Democrat. Club members made speeches, urging that for safety against the Austrians, or against counter-revolutionary reprisals, there was no protection except in union with the mighty Republic. Someone usually called for a vote by acclamation, and so it would be ruled; but figures for a minority as well as the majority were often recorded.

It is a curious fact that the farm population, in many regions, attended the assemblies in larger numbers than inhabitants in the towns. The best explanation is that the French and Democratic propaganda consisted in more than words—that the abolition of tithes and seigneurial dues appealed strongly to the peasants. That peasants voted as requested under these circumstances is not surprising; they undoubtedly had a hazy idea of what they were doing, and in accepting the benefits had no particular thought of any legal obligation which French citizenship, especially in time of war, might impose upon them. If they at first favored the new order, taking the gains it offered, and then soon lost interest, or turned furiously against it on other grounds (religion, conscription, or price controls) they would only be behaving like many peasants in France itself.

In any event, in February 1793, France annexed Belgium, on the advanced principles of the Revolution which were then dominant, abolishing tithes and dues without compensation, encouraging an extreme anti-clericalism, favoring the most radical of the Belgian Democrats. The old Austrian provinces and Liège were to dissolve, and be reorganized as *départements*. Belgians were to be in principle not subjects, but equal citizens of the French Republic. They were to use *assignats*, and pay war costs, drawing on the wealth of former privileged classes, just as the French did in France itself.

These events in Belgium were watched by the Dutch with a mixture of excitement and chagrin. They wanted no December decree, and no annexation. But the Patriots did want some kind of a revolution, to undo the Orange counter-revolution of 1787. Those in Amsterdam, Utrecht, and other cities became very restless. They knew from experience that there could be no Dutch revolution without French aid. Who were these Patriots? To the British ambassador at The Hague they were

15 Tassier, 305–308. For example, she says that at Couvin, “la réunion à la France ne fut voulue que par une minorité,” and tabulates the figures for twenty communes in Couvin, with the following totals:

Population	9,523
Voters	1,855
For annexation	1,747
Against annexation	108
Citizens taking the oath to Liberty and Equality	1,366

The real elements of doubt are in the accuracy of the figures as reported, and in what voters had in mind in declaring their votes in the assemblies.

“noisy and impudent” persons who sat in alehouses and “obscure clubs” engaging in seditious talk. To the representative of the French Republic they were mostly rich men and bankers, who were indeed boycotting the Orange war loan, but on whom in the end the French could not really rely.¹⁶ Estimates of a social level, it would seem, depend largely on the social level from which perception takes place. And it appears that among the Patriots there were men of many kinds, who sat both in banks and in taverns.

The French government, as already noted, long resisted the appeal of Dutch émigrés for an invasion of the United Provinces. But after the opening of the Scheldt, and with the execution of Louis XVI, on January 21, 1793, the Convention accepted war with the British and Dutch as inevitable. On January 31 Lebrun instructed Dumouriez to occupy Maastricht. Within a few days, by its own declaration, France was at war with the British and Dutch governments, which joined with Austria and Prussia in the First Coalition.

French and Dutch now crossed the Belgian-Dutch frontier. The exiles brought with them a plan for revolution, complete with primary assemblies representing the sovereignty of the people, and the banker Abbema and the nobleman Capellen van de Marsch prepared a draft constitution, in which a new government was derived from *Vrijheid en Gelijkheid*, that is Liberty and Equality.¹⁷

But the Dutch revolutionary exiles now had disillusionments in their turn. They expected, upon re-entering their own country, to take over administrative positions themselves. They wanted to bring into being, through clubs and elections, a native Dutch organization to deal with the French in matters of military housing and supply. They thought that the Dutch people, in meeting these legitimate French needs, should be allowed to deal with their own Dutch leaders. The French saw it otherwise. French generals levied direct requisitions on the population in the neighborhood of Breda. The Dutch émigrés protested. A committee of them, led by Johan Valckenaer, a former law professor in Friesland, who was to be one of the most notable of the Dutch democrats of the following years, waited upon Cambon on February 15. They asked that the decree of December 15 be not applied, and that the French accept instead a revolutionary Batavian republic. Cambon refused.¹⁸ He remarked that since the Dutch had had their own Protestant revolution in the sixteenth century, the Reformed Church possessed little property of its own, and that both the Dutch clergy and the House of Orange were already on a kind of salaried basis, so that there was little wealth in Holland of the sort that qualified for confiscation. The existing tax-structure and public revenues should therefore be maintained. But the French should control the use of them during the military occupation. At most the taxes on bread and beer should be abolished as a gesture to the Dutch populace. It was not a program with much revolutionary appeal. But the men in the French government were not enthusiasts for a Dutch revolution. It

16 Auckland to Grenville, The Hague, June 12, 1792, in Great Britain: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892–1927), II, 279; Auckland to Grenville, November 12, 1792, in Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, I, 286; Noël to Lebrun, Amsterdam, January 14, 1793, *Ibid.*, 254, 261.

17 Colenbrander, I, 106–11.

18 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, 105; *Bataafsche Republiek* (Amsterdam, 1908), 25–26.

was radicals outside the government, like Marat, who demanded a true revolutionizing of the United Provinces. It was at this time also that the Dutch émigrés in Paris founded a journal, *Le Batave*, which, somewhat following the line of Hébert's *Père Duchesne* without the vulgarity, remained for several years one of the chief organs of advanced doctrine. Pressures of popular and of international revolution thus converged against those in power.

The December decree was to be applied, at least in the sense that the French would keep the sources and channels of Dutch wealth under their own control. Serious conflict between the French and Dutch could be foreseen.

Dumouriez became increasingly desperate. Not only had the French Convention taken the management of affairs out of his hands, but the Austrians began a counter-offensive, reoccupying Maastricht and Liège. Insurrection against the French spread through Belgium, redoubled in vehemence by the expectation of the Austrian return. The French, fearing the worst, now began to loot the country in earnest. They and their Belgian supporters plundered and desecrated the churches, regarding the clergy as the most implacable of their enemies. Priests said that anyone shooting a Frenchman would go to heaven. There were murders on both sides.

Hastily returning from Holland to Belgium, Dumouriez tried to check the violence and the outrages. He denounced the radicals, ordered agents of the Convention out of the country, and tried to appease the clergy, still pursuing the idea of a middle way, to lay a broad base on which his Belgian republic could be built. He was in extreme need of a personal military victory. Only by another great battle, as at Jemappes, could he dominate the Belgian Statists and Democrats, and stand up against the French Convention.

On March 18 he accepted battle with the Austrians at Neerwinden. But this time he lost. He made an unauthorized armistice with the Prince of Coburg.

Everything must now be settled in Paris. The Convention, for months, had had good reason to distrust his intentions. His political friends in France—Lebrun, Brissot, and others—were getting increasingly into trouble. Some of them had shown hesitation at the execution of the king; and Robespierre, leading the emerging group called the Mountain, had in fact used the king's trial to discredit them, to expose them as political irresponsibles who, having started the war, could not wage it in the true interests of France, of the new France which the Revolution was to create, and in which the demands of popular revolutionaries must somehow be satisfied.

Dumouriez therefore loudly denounced the radicalism reigning at Paris. He became a "moderate." Despairing of the republic, he even saw himself as a "General Monk," in the image of the English Cromwellian who had paved the way for the restoration of King Charles II. He openly tried to persuade his army to follow him to Paris to put down the Jacobins. The troops refused. It seemed that the rank and file, given the choices, still favored the Revolution. There was clearly now nothing left for Dumouriez in France but the guillotine.

He therefore gave himself up to the Austrians, like Lafayette before him. The Austrian army, crossing into France, laid siege to Condé and Valenciennes.

The defection of Dumouriez produced violent repercussions in Paris. If Dumouriez was a traitor, it seemed that anyone might be. No one could tell whom to

trust. The Brissot group, having touted Dumouriez as their great general and genius, was hopelessly compromised. The Jacobins, tearing each other to pieces, were harried by the sans-culottes. Thousands of Dutch and Belgian revolutionaries flocked back into France and Paris, there to add to the recrimination and the confusion. There were food riots in the city. Journalists screamed their denunciations. Insurrection brewed in the Vendée. In the preceding fall there had been moments of hope and elation; with Jemappes the crisis of the summer of 1792 seemed to have lifted. Now matters were worse than ever. Dumouriez had proved as bad as Lafayette; the enemy armies were again on French soil. The stage was being set for the Terror.

To many on the side of the Counter-Revolution, however, watching these same events, it seemed that the stage was being set for a drama more to their liking. The defection of the most spectacular Republican general suggested that the Republic must be nearing its end. The feuds among the Jacobins were taken as a sign of anarchy, showing that the whole foolish experiment was about to fall to pieces. The abbé Maury was so certain of an imminent counter-revolution that he feared he could not reach Rome in time to lay plans for a restoration of the French clergy. The Count de Fersen was appointed Swedish minister to the court of Louis XVII. There was, of course, no such court; but observers in Sweden and elsewhere thought there soon would be.

In Holland, the Orange regime felt the pleasures of a narrow escape.

In Belgium the returning Austrians, to consolidate their second restoration, persecuted the Democrats and made all possible concessions to the Statists. The Monarchy, which had been so aggressively enlightened under Joseph, and more moderately so under Leopold, had fought a losing battle in Vienna, and now met complete defeat in Brussels. The elder Metternich, representing the Hapsburgs, agreed to the most reactionary demands of the Belgian privileged classes, who insisted on going back to the state of affairs, not before 1792, or 1789, but before 1780, to the good old quiet days under Maria Theresa. The historic constitutions and liberties of towns and provinces were solemnly reaffirmed. The Three Estates would rule again. The abbots and the town notables had their way. Tithes and seigneurial dues were restored, as before the late disturbance.

THE SUBMERSION OF POLAND

While the French liberated and then annexed Belgium in the name of the Revolution, the Russian and Prussian monarchies liberated and then annexed large parts of Poland, using the argument that Eastern Europe must be saved from revolutionary infection. The validity of this argument must be examined. It is not that anyone is now much concerned over the degree of honesty or hypocrisy in the cabinets of Berlin and St. Petersburg. The question is whether the new Polish regime, against which the Eastern monarchies intervened, did in fact represent a "revolution" of any significant kind. The view taken here is that it did, and that the allegations of the neighboring monarchies were not mistaken. There are two collateral questions: first, to what extent the territorial ambitions of the powers that

took part in the Second Partition were infused with an ideology of social conservatism; and second, to what extent the intervention in Poland and France, which began simultaneously in the spring of 1792, represented two branches of a single movement of European scope, designed to put down a newly emerging and in some sense “democratic” order.

The Poland of the eighteenth century was described in the first volume of the present book.¹⁹ Very different from France, it was a country of a kind admired in America a half-century later by John C. Calhoun, since it was dominated by owners of rural estates who elected their king, and kept the central government remote and weak. Within the frontiers after the First Partition (shown on the accompanying map) only about 40 per cent of the population was actually Polish in language. In the eastern region (in what are now White Russia and the Ukraine) many of the landowners were Polish, while the general population was not. It has been recently estimated that, of true ethnic Poles, as many as 25 percent may have been “noble.”²⁰ These nobles predominated the more easily because the burgher class was relatively weak and the peasants were serfs—“subjects” of their lords. Numerous changes, which left the peasants still in serfdom, had been introduced by the Four Years’ Diet. They were embodied in the Constitution of May 3, 1791, of which the king himself, Stanislas Poniatowski, was the main author.

It came to be widely asserted, in 1791 and 1792, by persons of most opposite opinions, that there was nothing really “revolutionary” about the new order in Poland. The French Jacobins ridiculed the Polish Constitution for being so favorable to gentry and nobles. Edmund Burke elaborately praised it for the same reasons, the better to discredit the French. Even the Polish authors of the new constitution, including King Stanislas, in the hope of protecting themselves from foreign intervention and internal revolt, explicitly, emphatically, and repeatedly disavowed any similarity in their work to French Jacobinism and democracy.

Nevertheless the Constitution implied changes which were revolutionary for Eastern Europe. Since it was introduced by the king and his co-workers, it was not brought into being by revolutionary violence from below. Since it preserved the pre-eminence of the middle ranks of a serf-owning noble class, it was neither “bourgeois” nor “democratic.” It was anti-aristocratic, however, in reducing the powers of the great Polish magnates, and in strengthening the powers of the crown, which it made hereditary instead of elective, and it granted rights to the burgher class, rights which might seem little enough in France, but were without parallel in Eastern Europe. Townspeople in Poland (unless they were Jews) received the right to purchase rural or noble land, to own serfs and whole villages, to

19 Above, 316–25. The present section draws on B. Lesnodorski, *Polscy Jakobini* (Warsaw, 1960), summarized for me by Mr. André Michalski; R. H. Lord, *Second Partition of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915); H. de Montfort, *Le drame de la Pologne: Kosciuszko* (Paris, 1945); Jan Wasicki, *Konfederacja Targowicka* (Poznan, 1952), with an eight-page résumé in French; and a very useful collection of documents in French, edited by K. Lutostanski, *Les partages de la Pologne et la lutte pour l’indépendance* (Paris, 1918). It is the plan of the present book to present the Second Partition in connection with Belgium, and the Third Partition in connection with Eastern Europe as a whole in Chapter XX.

20 Lesnodorski, *Jakobini*, 92.

be army officers except in the cavalry, to govern themselves in their towns by new electoral procedures, to be secure from arbitrary imprisonment, to be elevated to noble status on relatively liberal terms, and to take part in a national assembly or diet, which was still thought of as a body suited only for landed gentry, but in which burgher representatives were admitted as observers with restricted voting rights.

Such changes were sweeping enough to create opposition, especially among some of the greatest magnates, and among the small, landless, or "barefoot" nobility, the *golota*, who supplied the personal followings on which the importance of the magnates rested. These groups denounced the new order as a "revolution." They considered themselves to be counter-revolutionary in the good sense which the word enjoyed among European conservatives. They were strongest in the eastern parts of what was then Poland, that is in Lithuania, White Russia, and the Ukraine. Their aim, at first, was to turn Poland into a federation of agrarian or gentry republics, in which monarchy would be elective and very weak, or even abolished. Their leader was Felix Potocki, who had been known a few years before as an enlightened and philanthropic grandee. He was a great builder of churches and palaces, as well as an old-fashioned patriot, who had given millions of his own money to build up a Polish army. His ideal of a good society was one that would exist by the benefactions of men like himself. He registered a formal protest against the constitution of 1791, tried without success to persuade the Emperor Leopold II to intervene in Poland for the defense of its ancient liberties, and then in March 1792 went off to St. Petersburg, where Potemkin was one of his friends, to seek Russian help.

It is important to contrast what the neighboring powers, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, thought about the new Polish constitution at the time of its promulgation in the spring of 1791, with what they said about it, or conceivably even thought about it, a year later when military intervention began.

In the spring of 1791 the prevailing view in Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg was that the new Polish constitution, far from being anarchic, would make Poland into a stronger and more viable country. Leopold II spoke of the new order in Poland with approval. The octogenarian diplomat, Kaunitz, thought that the Polish crown, now made hereditary, "would find in a free bourgeoisie as well as in the peasant class a means of gradually limiting the power of the great houses" whose rivalries had kept Poland in turmoil.²¹ The Austrians regarded this prospect of a stronger Poland as desirable. Prussians and Russians made a similar diagnosis of fact, but found the fact unpleasant. The Prussian minister, Hertzberg, wrote confidentially in May 1791 to his envoy in Warsaw that by its "revolution" (as he called it) Poland "received a constitution more firm and better organized than the English." He feared that such a Poland would be dangerous to Prussia, since it might take back the losses of the First Partition. How, he asked, could Prussia defend its exposed frontier "against a numerous and well-governed nation?"²² And the Em-

21 Lutostanski, *Les partages*, 117.

22 *Ibid.*, 115.

press Catherine, in her zeal for the traditional liberties of Poland, feared in the new Polish government not its anarchy but its despotism.²³

Hardly was the new Polish constitution proclaimed when a variety of developments raised up new alarms. Political clubs multiplied rapidly in Warsaw and other cities, representing the heightening of political consciousness and participation under the new regime. Free, open, busy, and extensive discussion of public matters was not welcomed by the three eastern monarchies in their part of the world. The Polish clubs, it was therefore alleged, were but the surface manifestation of an international network of secret societies. It may in fact have been true that Poles made some attempts at propagandizing for liberty within Russia at this time.²⁴ News arrived also of the arrest of Louis XVI at Varennes, to the great consternation of royal courts. In July 1791 the first French ambassador to Poland in twenty years arrived in Warsaw. A former marquis, now an ardent revolutionary, named Descorches, he mixed actively in the Polish clubs; in any case, his very presence, after so long an interval, suggested to neighboring powers the possibility of an alliance between the two revolutionary countries. At the same time Edmond Genet was shocking the Russian upper classes in St. Petersburg, where he was French chargé d'affaires; and a colony of French émigrés added their own contribution. One of them, Count Valentin Esterhazy, in April 1792, passed on a mixture of true and false information to his wife: the King of Sweden had been murdered by Jacobins; French democrats were being rounded up in St. Petersburg and sent to Siberia, the proliferation of clubs in Poland was "opening Russian eyes on the tendency of that impious and regicide sect"; and it was feared in Russia that "the fire will start up in this country." Esterhazy, however, writing on the eve of military intervention in France and Poland, was confident that "the counter-revolution is inevitable."²⁵ The Russian army moved into Poland in May 1792.

The Russians in invading Poland were able to make common cause with the Polish counter-revolutionaries, as the French in invading the Austrian Netherlands were able to make common cause with the Belgian democrats. The Russian use of an internal Polish party, in fact, was more palpable and direct. The French Revolutionary government did not, in the spring of 1792, before the war began and hostilities opened in Belgium, take concerted action with refugee Belgian democrats in Paris to prepare a ringing democratic manifesto calling for liberation of their country. This is precisely what the Empress Catherine did with the Polish noblemen in St. Petersburg. Poles and Russians in the tsarist capital, on April 27, 1792, signed a document in which their ideas were combined. It presented a long indictment of the now year-old new order in Poland. To make its publication coincide with the Russian invasion, already in preparation, the document was given a suppositious date and place—May 14, at Targowica, a village in the Ukraine a

23 Lord, *Second Partition*, 244–47.

24 Lesnodorski describes attempts at propaganda in Russia, 274, and gives an account of the clubs in 1791 and 1792 on 131–47. He quotes, 146, a contemporary diarist for the beginning of 1792: "clubs of servants are being organized, in which the people are informed of events in France and the Declaration of the Rights of Man is read in translation, with other things relating to the freeing of the serfs."

25 E. Daudet, ed., *Lettres du comte Valentin Esterhazy à sa femme* (Paris, 1907), 422–26. For Genet in Russia see above, pp. 421–22.

hundred miles south of Kiev, on the Polish-Russian frontier as it then was, but within Poland.

The Act of Targowica is one of the more interesting declarations of the European counter-revolution, if only because of its purely nobilitarian and agrarian-gentry character.²⁶ The fact that it was immediately translated into German and Dutch and issued as a pamphlet under the title of *The Spirit of a Truly Free Government*, suggests that there were elements in Western Europe that found its doctrine relevant and congenial.²⁷

The Act opposes those twin enemies of effectual aristocracy: monarchy and democracy. It reaffirms as an ancient Polish principle the "liberty and equality of all nobles," demands that *gentilhommes non-possessionnés*, i.e., the "barefoot" *golota*, be restored to their former dignity, denounces the institution of hereditary monarchy as despotic, and declares that ambitious men have "everywhere sown the seeds of democratic ideas." To have brought "the hitherto peaceful towns" into the political order is "to drag the whole nation into slavery." The constitution of 1791 is due to a "plot." It is an "audacious crime" against the spirit of our ancestors, presenting the "fatal examples of Paris as models to our Polish cities." The new order arouses "hatred against the rich," because it deprives the great lords of "the support of gentlemen." The signers solemnly swear to destroy the new constitution, and express their confidence that the great Catherine will preserve the liberties, independence, and territory of the Republic of Poland intact.

The Russian invasion met with little resistance. With the rural population in a state of serfdom, and the burghers only barely and timidly emerging into public life, the leaders of the Polish revolution could not rally an adequate following. There was no *levée en masse* in Poland in 1792. King Stanislas, the leader of the patriot group—in an action that has been much criticized, since his emigration, flight, or death would have preserved his dignity and served the new order better—capitulated to the Russians, made his peace with the dissident Poles, and adhered to the Act of Targowica. He signed his acceptance on July 24, as the Russians approached Warsaw. It was the day before the Brunswick Manifesto against the city of Paris.

The constitution which the king now repudiated was notable for its moderation and intricate compromise. It had even been lauded by Edmund Burke. Compromise, however, was no more palatable to the Targowicans and the Russians than

26 The text of the Act of Targowica was published in French in Comte d'Angeberg (pseud, for L. Chodzko), *Recueil des traités, conventions et actes diplomatiques concernant la Pologne, 1762–1862* (Paris, 1863), 262–74. The issue for interpretation is between the view expressed by Lord, *Second Partition*, 274–76, that the Targowicans were a small and insignificant handful of Poles whom Catherine II was able to exploit for the aggrandizement of Russia, and the view set forth in the French summary of Wasicki, *Konfederacja targowicka*, 185–92, that the Targowicans were those among magnates and lesser gentry, significantly numerous but by no means "all" of these classes, who were willing forcibly to oppose the Polish revolution and constitution of 1791. The latter view is followed here; it is favored by recent Polish and French writers, and coincides with what one expects to find in revolutionary situations.

27 *Der Geist einer wahrhaftfreien Regierung, gegründet auf der Targowiczzer Conföderation*, Hamburg, n.d.; *De Geest eener waarlijk vrije regeering, door de tegen-confederatie von Targowitz, naar eene Hoogduitsche overzetting uit het Poolsch vertaald*, "in Vriesland," n.d.

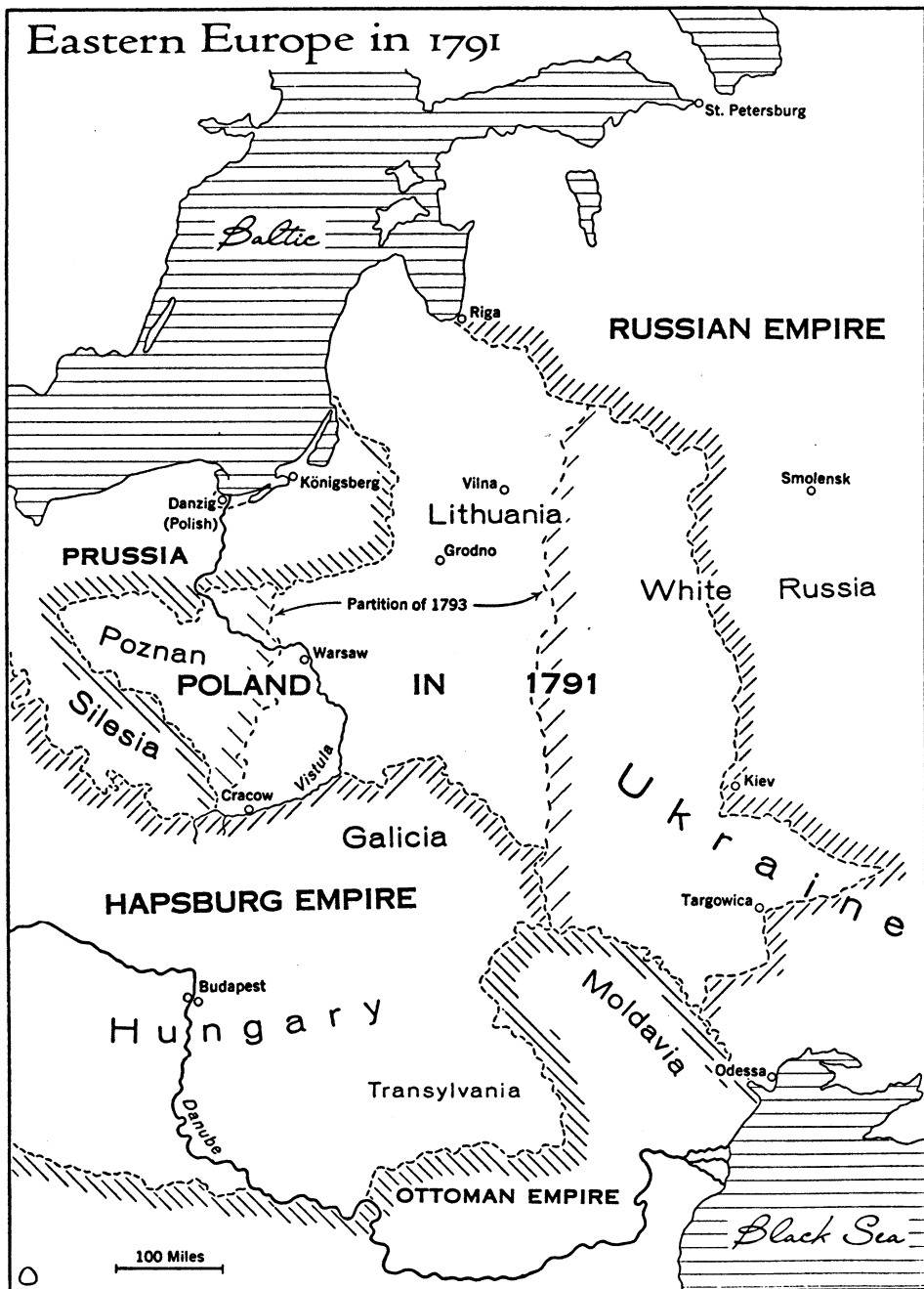
extremism would have been. The king was obliged to humble himself. He was required to endorse the commonplaces of the European counter-revolution—to confess that he had been “seduced by new and bold maxims,” that he now understood that “only the government as established by our ancestors can eternize the duration and glory of Poland,” and to agree upon the “terrible disasters” that ensued “whenever a nation, instead of correcting the defects of its former government, endeavors totally to overthrow it.”²⁸

With the Russians occupying most of the country and the Targowica party coming into control, the governments of Austria and Prussia in the summer of 1792 each signed an agreement with the Russian Empress, committing themselves to uphold the former constitution of Poland, as arranged in 1773 after the First Partition. Thus the new order in Poland was suppressed and the focus of revolutionary agitation in Eastern Europe brought presumably under control. It is conceivable that Catherine II might have been satisfied with a plan that left Poland undividedly under her own influence. But both Prussia and Austria now had reason to urge a further dismemberment.

For the Austrians, who a year before had favored the prospect of a strengthened and independent Poland, the situation was entirely changed, not only by the death of Leopold II, and not only by the Russian occupation of Poland, but by the war against France, which in the summer of 1792 the Austrians expected to be short and successful. The Vienna cabinet revived its plan for the annexation of the territories of the house of Bavaria. The Elector of Bavaria could be readily compensated by a transfer of his throne to Brussels; that is, the Austrians would give him their ten Netherlands provinces in exchange for his various south German holdings. But it could not be expected that Prussia and Russia would consent, without corresponding gains for themselves, to the substantial growth of the Hapsburg monarchy as a German power. Kaunitz therefore changed his mind on Poland, and accepted the principle that, to enable Austria to acquire Bavaria, Prussia and Russia must be allowed to take portions of Poland. A few months later, after Dumouriez' victories, and the renewal of revolutionary activity in Belgium, when it seemed that the Hapsburgs might be unable to retain their Netherlands provinces, and might have to forego the Bavarian exchange, the availability of territory in Poland became a matter of more poignant concern. Even at best, after the defeat of Dumouriez at Neerwinden, it seemed that the effort necessary for retaining Belgium might be too great. It would be still more troublesome for Austria to acquire territory, such as Alsace, from France itself. It was now clear that Prussia and Russia were about to engage in a second partition of Poland. It now seemed unfair to the Austrians, a year after the three monarchies had entered upon their operations against the revolutionary contagion, that Austria should have to work so hard for its reward, while Prussia and Russia enjoyed the advantage of a more facile self-enrichment. To quote one of the more candid expressions of the older diplomacy (so often admired for its “style”), the Austrians protested that “the indemnities and compensations due to the Emperor should have to wait upon conquests to be

28 This “confession” extorted from King Stanislas was published in the *Annual Register for 1792*; see also Angeberg, 295–96.

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made against France, conquests in which, so to speak, every inch must be bought at the price of blood and at the immense cost of a ruinous war, while the acquisitions of the two Courts in Poland have been accompanied by no danger and have met with no resistance.”²⁹ Austria, in short, desired an easier dividend. Finding France too strong, it would prefer to join in an expropriation of the weak.

As for the Prussians, they had long aspired to the annexation of the city of Danzig, and of the area called Great Poland or Poznan, which reached westward as a triangular salient between Silesia and Prussia proper. While the Russians occupied Poland, the Prussians were involved as allies of the Austrians in the war against France. The conjuncture was unfortunate for the court of Berlin, which, after its disconcerting experience with the French at Valmy, notified the court of Vienna that it would abandon the French war unless compensated by territory in Poland. In January 1793 the Prussian army crossed the Polish frontier. The governments of Prussia and Russia immediately began to negotiate their territorial demands upon Poland—the “second” partition—expecting to exclude Austria, as they in fact succeeded in doing.

It was to combat “the spirit of French democratism” that the king of Prussia sent his army into Poland.³⁰ He feared the “maneuvers of Jacobin emissaries” both in Poland and in his own adjoining states. Where formerly there had been a fear that the Poles might govern themselves only too well, it was now feared that they could not govern themselves at all. Anarchy and the poisonous influence of secret societies were seen as menaces to neighboring countries. The Poles were not even credited with having their own revolution; they were said to be merely the dupes and victims of French subversives. In January 1793 the Prussian and Russian rulers signed a kind of holy alliance; at least it was drawn up “in the name of the Most Holy and Indivisible Trinity.” The two powers declared that they must protect themselves against the “imminent and universal danger” presented by the “progress and extension” of the French Revolution. They would therefore each annex certain specified territories in Poland, in return for which the king of Prussia agreed to remain at war “against the French rebels.”³¹

The experience of the Targowica Poles was not unlike that of the Belgian democrats. They had been liberated from domestic despotism by a foreign army. Supposedly they had come, with foreign aid, into power in their own country. They had expected to enjoy an independent republic, constructed according to their own political philosophy and befriended by an ideologically sympathetic neighbor. To be annexed to this mammoth neighbor was no part of their original design. They were surprised and dismayed at the new turn of affairs. They were also divided; for, as in Belgium some of the democrats concluded that their own security, and the security of their principles, would be better assured by incorporation into France, so some of the Targowicans came to feel that their control of their serfs, and their preferred agrarian and social system, would be better guaranteed by membership

29 Lutostanski, 152.

30 The declaration of the king of Prussia on the entrance of his troops into Poland in January 1793 was widely published at the time, e.g. in the Paris *Moniteur* and in the *Annual Register*. The same is true of various Russian declarations of 1792 and 1793.

31 Lutostanski, 140–43.

in the Russian Empire. As the French promised the Belgians all the rights of citizens in the French Republic, so Catherine II promised the Poles, in the territories she annexed, "all the rights, liberties and privileges which our older Russian subjects enjoy."³² In Poland as in Belgium there were elections superintended by an occupying power. The Russian General Ingelström, in May of 1793 (and one thinks of Belgium in February) gave instructions for the local assemblies to elect certain acceptable Poles whose names were on lists which he submitted, and promised to supply either money or detachments of Russian soldiers in such amounts as might be required. The local assemblies chose deputies to a new national gathering, the Diet of Grodno. This diet, according to the Russians, really represented the "general will of the better people and of the Nation."³³ The diet, under irresistible Russian pressure, ceded large tracts of White Russia and the Ukraine to the Russian Empire. Soon thereafter it ceded Danzig and Great Poland to Prussia.

In 1793 the central part of Poland still remained technically independent, and here the Targowicans were briefly allowed to maintain a republic to their own liking. The Diet of Grodno enacted a new constitution. It followed lines which in Poland were staunchly conservative. With a few exceptions—neither the *liberum veto* nor the nobleman's right of life and death over his serf was restored—the residual Polish state was to be much as in the 1770's. Kings were again to be elected by nobles. Attempts to strengthen the central government and to give representation to townspeople were abandoned. The work of the Four Years' Diet was swept away.

It has often been said, even by the best of historians, that the counterrevolutionary professions of the partitioning powers were a mere pretense to cover up crude aggression. It has been thought that, since the French and Polish revolutions were not alike, the loudly publicized need of suppressing "Jacobinism" in both countries was nothing but an "insidious theory."³⁴ On the whole, the view that still prevails of the Second Partition (which, as Robert Lord said, was the true *finis Poloniae*) was set by a historiography that antedates 1914 and the modern revolutionary age. In the older diplomatic histories, often written with a belief in the primacy of foreign over internal politics, the expansion of the Great Powers of Europe seemed more real and important than unsuccessful revolutions or the fears that they engendered. Older histories of a liberal tendency, on the other hand, were perhaps too ready to dismiss the claims of monarchical diplomats as merely empty or "cynical." In either case the phenomena of revolution in Poland, of discontents in other parts of Eastern Europe, and hence of the genuine counter-revolutionary intentions of the three Eastern monarchies, may be excessively discounted.

The question in the summer of 1793 was whether France would go the way of Poland. It was a question not so much of partition (though talk of carving up French territory was heard) as of the imposition under foreign auspices of a form of government approximating the old regime. The powers of the First Coalition, together with Russia, after the defection of Dumouriez, the Austrian reconquest of

32 *Ibid.*, 180, 223.

33 *Ibid.*, 159.

34 Lord, 281, 504.

Belgium, the insurrection in the Vendée, and the beginning of the invasion of France, believed that they would soon put an end to the revolutionary disturbance in Western Europe, as they had seemingly done in the East.

In the East, they still had the rebellion led by Kosciuszko to contend with. In the West, they still had to face the France of the Committee of Public Safety.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SURVIVAL OF THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

The theory of revolutionary government is as new as the revolution that has produced it. It cannot be found in the books of political writers, by whom this revolution was not foreseen. . . .

The aim of constitutional government is to preserve the commonwealth; of revolutionary government, to found it. . . .

Under the constitutional regime it is almost enough to protect the individual against the abuse of public authority. Under the revolutionary regime the public authority must defend itself against factions that attack it.

Revolutionary government owes good citizens the whole protection of the nation. To enemies of the people it owes nothing but death.

—MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE, DECEMBER 1793

Everything now depended on what happened in France. The revolution in Poland had been stopped. Belgian democrats had again scurried out of their country, where the Statists came to terms with the Austrians. The Dutch émigrés had their expectations suddenly dashed, and the Dutch patriots at home, sadly disappointed, were reduced to passively awaiting a change in the fortunes of war which would bring in the French as liberators. In Ireland, Wolfe Tone privately remarked in March 1793 that ten thousand French troops in Ireland would effect Irish deliverance from Great Britain. In Britain the radical feeling was less subversive, but reformist and radical groups, of various descriptions, were dismayed and outraged by the war in which the British government was now engaged. In every country where the government was at war with the French Republic in 1793—in Britain and Ireland, in the United Provinces and in Belgium restored to the Emperor, in the Austrian Monarchy, the small German states and the Prussian kingdom, in the Italian kingdom of Sardinia (the one exception may be Spain)—there were groups

of people, more than individual dreamers, whose sympathies lay in varying degree with the declared enemy.

Feeling ran high in neutral countries. In the United States the emerging Republicans repeatedly said, in the large language of the day, that the cause of the French Republic was the cause of the human race. There were even Federalists, like Noah Webster, who could not bring themselves to desire victory for the Coalition. On the other side of Europe, in Russia, where Catherine II and the upper classes were now hysterically fearful of France, they were afraid also of malcontents among their own people, especially among the "low-born intelligentsia," or persons who did not belong to the nobility but had acquired some knowledge of the world. "I venture to predict," said a worried writer of 1793, "that the agitation in France will have many unhappy consequences for these wondrous lands"—i.e., Russia.¹

Wherever the French Revolution had been heard of there were men who wished it not to fail. Their concern was not only for France but for the future of some kind of democratization in their own countries.

For those, on the other hand, who hoped to see the whole Revolution undone, these same first months of 1793 saw a revival of the exciting expectations of a year before. In the execution of Louis XVI they saw a sign of desperation, the act of a handful of cornered regicides who had turned all decent men against them. To the outside world no one could seem more revolutionary than Dumouriez. Yet Dumouriez had repudiated the Revolution, declaring that it had collapsed into anarchy. The Republic seemed a sinking ship, crazed, in addition, by mutiny in its own crew.

The king's death was received with mixed feelings. Catherine II became ill. Pope Pius VI was genuinely concerned. He declared after much thought, as his personal opinion, that Louis XVI had died a martyr to the Catholic faith, for whom canonization proceedings might some day be in order. For a precedent he looked back, not to Charles I of England, where the analogy was clear enough to more secular minds in all camps, but to the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, who had been considered a true martyr by Benedict XIV. The French Convention, according to Pius VI, was no better than the dreadful Elizabeth of England. Both, in his view, had been swayed by bad books and "factious, Calvinistical men."²

A week after Louis' death his brother, the Count of Provence, took the title of Regent and issued a proclamation, declaring his intention to restore the "ancient constitution" of France. No European power recognized. The powers at war with France did not wish it to have a government that they need respect. Nor were leading French émigrés and noblemen in a mood to subordinate themselves to the monarchy. When a rumor spread after the king's death of a plot to assassinate his two brothers, the Prince of Condé, a leading émigré (and himself a Bourbon) put

1 For Wolfe Tone see his *Life* (Washington, 1826), I, 108; for Noah Webster, pp. 378–79 above; for the Russians, M. M. Shtrange, *Russkoye Obshchestvo i Frantsuzskaya Revolyutsiya* (Russian Society and the French Revolution, 1789–1794) (Moscow, 1956), 146. I am indebted to Dr. W. L. Blackwell for summarizing this Russian book.

2 A. Theiner, *Documents inédits relatifs aux affaires religieuses de la France, extraits des archives secrètes du Vatican* (Paris, 1857), I, 177–91.

it off with a joke: "Be assured, Princes without armies, Bourbons not surrounded by a nobility, are such nonentities as hardly to be worth the honors of assassination."³

Beyond an Allied military victory, and restoration of the French throne, what the aristocratic French émigrés and conservative churchmen hoped for, and what the revolutionary element in France with good reason feared, was restoration of the nobility and the church. It would not be a mere restoration of their persons, but restoration of social bodies with something of the old powers and privileges, and the old forms of wealth and income.

The Pope asked Maury to draft memoranda on the steps to be taken, now that the Revolution seemed to be nearing its end. The memoranda do not show what the Pope would have actually done, but they do show what the most conservative of the French clergy wanted in 1793, and the pressures to which the Pope would be subjected by his own most loyal supporters. Here is what Maury advised: the Pope should excommunicate all French constitutional clergy and depose recalcitrant bishops. A restored king should crush the Gallicanism of the restored Parlements. Toleration of Protestants should be withdrawn, and Jansenism and Freemasonry extirpated. Bad books should be censored, education supervised by bishops, and school-teaching turned over to priests. All remarriages of so-called divorced persons should be declared void. Religious orders should be re-established, with vows permitted at age sixteen. And all their former property should be returned to ecclesiastical owners, subject, however (it was Maury's one concession), to taxation by the restored king.⁴

In a few places the probable consequences of Counter-Revolution became concretely evident at the time. After defeating Dumouriez at Neerwinden, the Austrians crossed the border and occupied the regions about Valenciennes and Lille. They remained there about a year, and what happened is significant in suggesting what might have happened in the rest of France if the armed forces of the Coalition had obtained a clear victory. The occupying administration set up by the Austrians was not reactionary in principle. It tried to be moderate with the local people involved in the Revolution, those who had accepted office under the new municipalities, or purchased land formerly belonging to church bodies or to émigrés. But under the Austrian administration, local malcontents emerged from obscurity, and French churchmen, nobles, and émigrés swarmed into the occupied area, despite Austrian efforts to keep them out. Where the Austrians, for example, at Valenciennes, authorized only six persons to reside as actual returned émigrés from the locality, the Valenciennes municipality, now in the hands of French counter-revolutionaries, authorized over two hundred. The Austrians, naturally enough, gradually and under pressure came to favor their own supporters. Tithes and seigneurial dues were declared collectible, former landowners re-established themselves, and townsmen and villagers who had accepted office under the Revolution, since 1789, were branded as menaces to society.⁵

3 E. Daudet, *Coblentz 1789–1793* (Paris, 1890), 297.

4 "Mémoire de Maury . . . sur les déterminations du Pape envers l'église de France" (Rome, June 23, 1793), in Theiner, I, 381–420.

5 Georges Lefebvre, *Les paysans du Nord pendant la Révolution française* (Bari, 1959), 572–76; but

Somewhat similarly, when the British occupied Corsica in 1794, and remained for two years, setting up an Anglo-Corsican kingdom, the attempts of the British viceroy at moderation were repeatedly frustrated; and Corsica, which had belonged to France for twenty-five years, exhibited what might have happened in France if the Counter-Revolution had succeeded at this time.⁶

Rebellion broke out in western France, beginning in the Vendée, in March 1793. Led by disaffected seigneurs, in touch with the émigrés and the British government, it appealed to peasant grievances against the Revolutionary church policy and military conscription. It spread most rapidly in rural areas, since the towns, even the small ones, characteristically remained as isolated and besieged pockets adhering to the new order. The leaders of the rebellion attempted to set up a civil authority over such territories as they were able to control. This authority restored the church tithe, re-established the royal courts as before 1789, and declared all sales of former church and émigré property null and void.⁷

The issue, for France and the world in 1793, was not whether one band of Jacobins should chase out another, but whether Revolution or Counter-Revolution should prevail.

GOVERNEMENT RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE

It was true that France at the moment suffered from anarchy, and that what it needed was government. "Anarchy" is hardly too strong a word. Ministers and ministries remained in existence, but decisions lay with committees of the Convention, which consisted of 750 men from the middle classes assembled under chaotic conditions, and enjoying neither confidence in each other, nor the prestige of an acknowledged authority, nor habits of obedience on the part of the population. Organs of local government, as set up in 1790 and 1791, had not had time to consolidate. Tax reforms of the early years of the Revolution had also been caught unfinished by the war and the upheaval of 1792. Taxes, like much else, existed mainly in principle. There were no regular revenues, so that the Convention depended on paper money. Army reforms, begun early in the Revolution, had also been far from complete; the country went to war with its armies commanded largely by officers of the Old Regime; and as the revolutionary spirit mounted into 1793, the officers increasingly lost respect for the civilians in Paris who claimed to govern. Dumouriez was only the most spectacular case.

Impotence in what would normally be considered the government was matched by an intense political liveliness among the "governed." It was a question whether the country could be governed at all, except by dictatorship, whether a revolutionary dictatorship such as soon developed, or the dictatorship of a restored king, such as the moderate Mounier, writing in exile, had recommended in 1792. The French people in 1793 were too highly politicized, too spontaneously active, too

for this purpose the first edition (Paris, 1924) is better, including note I to Book II, chap. 5, omitted in the reissue.

6 See Chapter XXIV below.

7 For a good summary see J. Godechot, *La Contre-révolution* (Paris, 1961), 235.

disillusioned with persons in public office (not without reason), to accept orders from any political heights. When they said the people were sovereign, they meant it literally, and they meant themselves. Middle class citizens, associated in the Paris Jacobin club and in similar clubs in the provinces, and acting on their own initiative, tried somehow to keep going, coordinate, and dominate the shattered apparatus of state, from the National Convention down to the village communes. Citizens of more modest station were aroused in the popular revolutionism described in Chapter XVII above. They met in lesser clubs, like the Paris Cordeliers, or in the face-to-face groups of immediate neighbors, as in the section assemblies of Paris and other large cities. They too, at the local level, helped to carry on the business of government.

The people were not only sovereign but *debout*, "on their feet," to use the expression of the time. Popular leaders called for a *levée en masse*, or general "rising." The term *levée en masse* has become frozen to signify the universal military service of the Revolution, a conscription conducted by government and designed to expel foreign invaders. It is true that the military *levée en masse* would not have been very effective if it had not been converted into an organized raising and equipping of troops by a government. But in its origin the term meant much more. A "mass rising," in 1793, could be a general rising of the people for any purpose, with or without the assistance of official persons who did not command much public confidence. It could be a swarming of citizen soldiers to defy the regular armies of Prussia and Austria. It could be a rising of the sections of Paris against the Convention or some of its members. It could be an armed insurrection or an unarmed demonstration in the streets. It could be the wandering of a band of sans-culottes from one part of France to another, self-organized as an *armée révolutionnaire*, in pursuit of aristocrats or in search of food. There was something inherently anarchic in the whole idea.

Out of this anarchy there arose, however, by gradual stages, the *gouvernement révolutionnaire*, confirmed by the Convention in a famous decree of October 10, 1793, declaring "the government of France revolutionary until the peace." It began with an at first little noticed provision, when on April 6, the day after Dumouriez' final defection, the Convention authorized a special Committee of Public Safety, which in six months became the keystone of the *gouvernement révolutionnaire*. It was this government, which lasted until the death of Robespierre, and which Napoleon once called the only serious government in France in the decade after 1789, that turned the tide of foreign invasion, carried on the Terror, protected the country from both anarchy and counter-revolution, and initiated the military offensive which was to revolutionize Holland and Italy and shake the established order of Europe.

For the purposes of this book, it is of especial interest to trace the relations of this Revolutionary Government with popular revolutionism and with international revolutionism. Pressures generated by both these movements helped to bring the Revolutionary Government into being. Once established, it sought to subordinate, both movements to itself.

Between the two, as noted in an earlier chapter, there was often a certain affinity. It was not that the popular spokesmen in Paris cared much about revolution in

foreign countries. Still less, in general, did the foreign revolutionaries understand or know much about the demands of the most advanced revolutionaries in Paris. Usually, however, both had much to complain of at the hands of the French revolutionary authorities. In March and April 1793 the Brissot-Dumouriez group, despite Dumouriez' disaffection, was still preponderant in the committees of the Convention. The international revolutionaries blamed them for the defeats and failures in Belgium and Holland. (Much less concern was expressed for Poland, although Kosciuszko was in Paris at this very time to solicit aid.) The popular revolutionaries were annoyed by the defeats also, which were bringing the enemy within the gates, and in addition they suffered the effects of food shortage and inflation. An extreme crisis of confidence in the political realm coincided with an extreme economic crisis. In the inflamed psychology of the moment, both crises were blamed on the same people. Suspicion was rampant. The guilty must be investigated and pursued. In March the Convention created a new special court for this purpose, the Revolutionary Tribunal, in which the civil liberties and legal reforms introduced by the Revolution could be suspended.

An enlightening history of the Revolution in France could be written in terms of the paper money alone, the *assignats*. For the political and social consolidation of the Revolution the program proved highly successful. In the absence of gold coinage (which was hoarded, or taken out of the country by émigrés, or used in connection with foreign payments), the paper money enabled the successive Revolutionary governing groups to finance their operations. It also provided the mechanism for the transfer of former church, crown, and émigré real estate to new owners, blending the upper levels of the peasantry, the bourgeoisie, and many ex-nobles into a numerous property-owning class of modern type, which had a material interest in the preservation of the Revolutionary innovations.

But the costs of war led to a rapid printing of assignats, which steadily lost value, especially since the future of the régime that printed them was highly uncertain. The decline was precipitous in the first half of 1793, when the assignats fell to only a fourth the value of gold. There were also positive scarcities. As causes of scarcity, to the normal effects of war and mobilization, and unwillingness of farmers to part with their produce for paper money, was added a general breakdown in commercial distribution in the confusion of revolutionary conditions. Prices soared. Bakeshops and grocers' shops were often found empty by women who had waited for hours to obtain a day's supply.

There were therefore demands for price controls, and for measures against hoarding and profiteering. By attributing these demands specifically to the working class, and resistance to them to the bourgeoisie, various historians have seen this period of the Revolution as characterized chiefly by a class conflict, of a kind that relates it to the socialisms of the twentieth century.⁸ It is true that the Brissot

8 Notably Albert Mathiez in various writings; and with a significantly different emphasis, in that they see a sharp opposition between the popular revolutionaries and the middle-class Jacobins of the Mountain, Albert Soboul, *Les Sans-culottes parisiens de l'An II: mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire, 2 juin 1793–9 thermidor An II* (Paris, 1958), and the more narrowly conceived G. Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1959). See also M. J. Sydenham, *The Girondins* (London, 1961), which is wholly different in purpose and inspiration from the Left-oriented works of Soboul

group, setting the tone in the Convention, objected to economic controls. They had fallen into an attitude of negativism and helplessness toward everything that had happened since the preceding August. The idea of price control was not in itself very radical. The monarchy had practiced it before 1789, and even the weakly organized American states, during the American Revolution, had made similar attempts in the face of inflation. So bourgeois a figure as Alexander Hamilton, in 1778, had been as incensed at profiteering as a Paris sansculotte of 1793. But what for Hamilton and middle-class people was a matter for moral indignation, was for the working people of Paris a matter of life and death. The sections of Paris seethed with protest. There developed a great *poussée populaire*, as Albert Soboul calls it, a rising tide of the popular democracy described above in Chapter XVII, against the "corrupt" element in the Convention.

Early in April the Section Halle au Blé circulated among the other sections of the city a proposed petition to the Convention. Halle au Blé was not a poor section; indeed, it had the fewest "indigent" of any of the forty-eight.⁹ It demanded action against hoarders, speculators, and monopolists. Still more vehemently, it accused the Convention of endless talk and insidious treachery. The proof lay in Dumouriez' whole record in Belgium. If the Convention had not protected Dumouriez and his accomplices, so ran the indictment, "the Belgians and Liègeois would not today accuse France of having aided them only to turn them over in chains to their tyrants. It is with this that all Europe reproaches you, and posterity will do the same." The petition demanded the arrest of certain Brissotins, i.e., a purge of the Convention.

Robespierre defended the petition at the Jacobin Club and in the Convention. He paid little attention to the economic demands. It was treason that he scented, and for proof he pointed to the betrayal of the international revolution. He now sympathized with the *patriotes bataves* and the *braves Liègeois*. Why had not Dumouriez pursued and destroyed the Prussians after Valmy? Why had the Belgian Democrats been blocked by him at every turn? Why had he not sooner and more vigorously carried the war into Holland? (Readers of the last chapter will have an answer.) Had he seriously invaded Holland, France would now have the use of Dutch wealth and shipping, so that England would be ruined, and "the revolution of Europe would be assured." (This had been precisely the argument of the Dutch émigrés in December and January, which Robespierre himself had then opposed.) But no, the Brissot-Dumouriez group had never favored international revolution. They had disapproved of the annexation of Savoy and Belgium, betrayed the Dutch, tried "to halt the progress of our revolution in neighboring countries." In addition, they were suspiciously close to their friend Philippe Egalité, the *ci-devant*

and Rudé, but is more consistent with them in its findings than with Mathiez. Sydenham argues that the existence of the Girondins, as a set group or party, is a myth; that the "Girondins" can hardly be distinguished from members of the Convention as a whole, and that the name came to be attached during the political strife, and then by historians, to those persons in the Convention who called attention to themselves by outspoken opposition to Robespierriests and the sans-culottes. This view is consistent with the view of Soboul and Rudé that the sans-culottes, or popular democrats, in their demands for price controls, etc., found virtually the whole Convention and the whole Jacobin Club hesitant and unsympathetic.

9 Soboul, 1091. The petition was printed in the *Moniteur, réimpression*, XVI, 100.

Duke of Orleans. Why had this person's son (the future King Louis-Philippe, who later boasted of having fought at Valmy) been commissioned as a lieutenant-general at the age of nineteen? What kind of officers were in this republican army anyway? Brissot, according to Robespierre, now really wanted to make peace with the foreign powers, with a restoration of monarchy in the Orleans line.¹⁰

Anyone living in the democratized twentieth century knows that there can be no public talk of peace in time of war. There could be no talk of peace for Robespierre, especially if it meant a relapse into monarchy. He demanded the death penalty for anyone suggesting compromise with the enemy. This proposal, amended in the Convention by Danton, who favored private overtures to the enemy, turned into a well-known decree, by which France was supposed (at least by historians) to "renounce" the two Propaganda Decrees of 1792, which, as already explained, were not really "propaganda" decrees at all. The Convention now declared that it would not interfere with the government of other powers, but that these powers must not interfere in the affairs of France and its constitution; and that anyone favoring compromise with the enemy should be put to death, *unless* the enemy, in advance, recognized "the sovereignty, independence, indivisibility and unity of the Republic, founded on liberty and equality."¹¹ This left matters not actually much changed, since the powers had not yet made clear any such bland intentions.

Meanwhile the Convention, an incredible body, at war with all Europe, with its commanding general in Belgium proved disloyal, with peasants in armed rebellion in the West, with the currency out of control, the economy collapsing, and the popular agitation in the Paris sections boiling over, found moments to engage in its theoretically principal business, to "constitute" a regular government through a new written constitution and declaration of rights. The committee on the constitution was dominated by Condorcet and other Brissotins or Girondists. There was much on which they did not disagree with the Mountain, notably universal suffrage, universal schooling, public relief to the needy, and other attributes of a democratic state. Robespierre, however, was convinced that the Girondists were unfit to govern. He made an issue over their proposed Declaration of Rights. On April 24 he submitted and explained to the Convention a draft Declaration of his own. Though never adopted, it is a key document to the understanding of his thinking and his tactics.¹²

10 Speeches of April 3 and 10, 1793, Robespierre, *Oeuvres*, XX: *Discours*, IV (Paris, 1958), 357–68, 376–416.

11 *Moniteur*, XVI, 143.

12 *Oeuvres*, IX, 459–75, with the valuable editors' notes. This speech of Robespierre's has always been a favorite with those publishing collections of his speeches, on which curious observations can be made: *The Speeches of Maximilien Robespierre* in the *Voices of Revolt* series (New York, International Publishers, 1927) simply deletes Robespierre's remarks that "equality of wealth is a chimera," and that "it is more important to make poverty honorable than to proscribe opulence." On the other hand, *Robespierre: pages choisies des grands républicains* (Paris, 1907), published for patriotic purposes, simply omits this "social-democratic" speech altogether. It was this sort of thing that understandably annoyed Albert Mathiez. Mathiez, however, in expounding this speech, always emphasized its social democracy while saying little of its international revolutionism, which Mathiez preferred to attribute to the "Girondins."

For one thing, where the Girondist draft would limit resistance to government to "legal" channels, Robespierre was more indulgent to the right of insurrection. This meant, in the political realities of the moment, that Robespierre supported the dynamism of the sans-culottes in the Paris sections against the convention. Not yet in power himself, he was more sympathetic to "direct democracy" than he would be later.

He also called for the addition of two groups of new articles to the Declaration of Rights. The first group, composed of five articles, referred to the right of property, and touched on the ideology of popular revolution. The second group, in four articles, referred to international fraternization, and touched on the matter of international revolutionism.

Robespierre, like the popular democrats, favored a degree of economic equality which he never specified, but which fell short of the equality of incomes that Babeuf demanded three years later. "Equality of wealth is a chimera," he said, "necessary neither to private happiness nor to the public welfare." But "the world hardly needed a revolution to learn that extreme disproportion of wealth is the source of many evils." He proposed, therefore, to lay it down as a principle that property right was a creation of law, not of nature apart from law, and that, like liberty, it was inseparable from considerations of ethics, and found its limits where it touched on the rights of others. He also proposed a progressive income tax. Brissot objected, and praise for Robespierre on this score has come more from posterity than from his contemporaries. Since there was no discussion of actual rates, it is hard to estimate the social significance of Robespierre's idea of a progressive tax. He himself soon changed his mind, coming to believe that in a democratic society it was better for men of small means to carry a proportionate share of the costs, lest the well-to-do, by supplying the money, make themselves too indispensable to the state. That he was something of a social as well as a political democrat there can be no doubt.

He appealed also to the force of world revolution, which he now blamed the Girondists for ignoring. He scorned the argument that to stir up the peoples might aggravate the trouble with kings. "I confess that this inconvenience does not frighten me." The kings were already combined against France and against liberty everywhere. "All men of all countries are brothers." They should lend mutual aid as if they were citizens of a single state. The oppressor of one nation is the enemy of all. "Kings, aristocrats and tyrants, of every description, are slaves in revolt against the sovereign of the earth, which is the human race, and against the legislator of the world, which is nature." "Verbiage pretending to profundity," said Brissot, who had done as much as anyone to introduce such language into French politics since 1789.

In time of war and defeat, against the Brissotins in the Convention, and against the cosmopolitan forces of Counter-Revolution, Robespierre was willing to ally himself with two spirits that have never since been quite conjured away: those of mass upheaval and world revolution.

The Paris sections exploded in May. The Convention enacted controls on the retail price of bread. Agitation continued, sponsored by Jacobins of the Mountain. On May 31 a rising of *sectionnaires* captured the city government, and on June 2

eighty thousand armed sansculottes besieged the Convention, demanding the arrest of twenty-two of its members. Defenseless and divided, the Convention yielded. Brissot and his friends were arrested (or fled, like Condorcet), to be disposed of by the Revolutionary Tribunal. The same kind of popular rising which by overthrowing the monarchy in 1792 had brought the Convention into being now threatened the Convention itself in 1793. It remained to be seen whether the Jacobins of the Mountain could avoid the fate of those of the “Gironde.”

A constitution was thrown together in a few days. Full of elaborately democratic provisions, it came to be known as the Constitution of the Year I—that is, the first year of the Republic. The primary assemblies, throughout the country, ratified it with a vote reported as 1,801,918 to 11,610, out of some seven million adult men over 21. (Neither the French constitution of 1789–1791, nor the American federal constitution of 1787, had even been offered for direct popular ratification at all.) The Convention, given the facts of war and revolution, made no move to put the constitution into effect, seeming rather to envisage its own indefinite continuation. It appears that the mass of sans-culottes and *sectionnaires* accepted this decision, seeing in the Convention, now purged of its Girondist leadership, a necessary center and symbol of government in time of emergency. Immediately, however, voices were heard demanding the introduction of constitutional government. They came from journalists and militants, like Hébert, who were not members of the Convention and who really meant, not constitutionality, but the dissolution of the Convention and overthrow of Robespierre. Robespierre coined the term “ultra-revolutionary” to describe these men. In the logic of revolution, as he understood it, ultra-revolution came to be an insidious form of counterrevolution. Was he merely setting himself up as a norm? Was he simply identifying his own purposes with “the Revolution”? Was he only resisting the fate he had meted out to Brissot? It does not seem so. To purge the Convention was one thing; to dissolve it, another. The logic of revolution is not altogether weird or subjective, and demands for dissolution of the Convention in 1793, as voiced on the Left, would produce exactly what the most unregenerate conservatives throughout Europe most desired. It can be considered as certain that France could not be governed in 1793 by liberal or democratic constitutional means. To disband the Convention could only perpetuate anarchy. In that case a monarchist restoration, even if it masked a clerico-aristocratic dictatorship, would be welcomed.

That Robespierre could now detect “ultras” was a sign that he was turning from insurrectionism to *gouvernement révolutionnaire*, and that he himself had a hand in this incipient government. In July the Convention elected him to its Committee of Public Safety. But matters had never been worse for the Convention than in this summer of 1793. Marat was assassinated in his bath. He was the second member of the Convention to be assassinated since January. The great provincial cities, Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, where the expulsion of the Girondists angered the urban bourgeoisie, denounced the anarchy in Paris and defied the authority of the Convention. This “federalist” rebellion was of course a sign of anarchy in itself, and was abetted by the secret maneuvers of true counter-revolutionaries and foreign agents. At the end of August the royalists at Toulon threw the city open to the British and surrendered the fleet. Edmund Burke demanded that the Allies, now

that they had a foothold in southern France, recognize a royal government and make clear their common cause with the émigrés—the true people of France, as he called them (estimating their number at 70,000), the revolutionaries being “robbers” who had driven them from the house.¹³ The powers did not take his advice. They wished a free hand in what seemed an imminent victory.

In Paris the sans-culottes again invaded the Convention on September 4. The Revolutionary Government was the outcome. It rested on a compromise between the popular democrats of the sections and the middle-class Jacobins of the Mountain in the Convention. The Convention saved itself from further purging or dissolution, but only by accepting the demands of the populace, in which hysteria, suspicion, fear, revenge, resolution, and patriotic defiance were mixed together. The Convention authorized a *levée en masse* to enlarge the army. It consented reluctantly to a semi-military *armée révolutionnaire* to patrol the country. It enacted the General Maximum, a system of nation-wide price controls on a wide range of consumers' goods. It promised to rid the army of unreliable officers. It passed a draconian Law of Suspects, and enlarged the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Terror began in earnest, as the Brissotins, Marie Antoinette, and various unsuccessful generals went to the guillotine. A Republican Calendar was adopted, marking the end of the Christian Era, and the beginning of the movement known as Dechristianization. In this, as in some other measures, it was only a small minority that called for such extreme action. But it was dangerous and impossible at such a time, opening the way to suspicion and denunciation, for anyone to question the demands of the most intransigently patriotic.

On the other hand, the government began to govern. The Committee of Public Safety received larger powers. Its membership settled at twelve, who remained the same twelve individuals from September 1793 to July 1794.¹⁴ They included Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon, Barère, and Lazare Carnot. The Committee of General Security obtained wide powers of political police, and gradually subordinated the local and largely spontaneous “surveillance committees” to itself. The government was declared “revolutionary until the peace.” That is, the question of constitutionality was suspended for the duration. Members of the Convention, despatched to the provinces, to insurgent areas, and to the armies, reported directly to the Committee of Public Safety. This network of *représentants en mission* coordinated and enforced national policy, and worked to assure some measure of uniform loyalty to the Revolution. In December the ruling Committee received powers of appointment and removal of local office-holders throughout the country. A Subsistence Commission, building on the price-controls, and working under the ruling Committee, developed an elaborate system of requisitions, priorities, and currency regulations. The value of the assignat was held steady. The armies were supplied, while Carnot supervised their mobilization and training. By the end of 1793 the Vendéan rebellion was neutralized, the federalist rebellions suppressed, and the British ejected from Toulon. By the spring of 1794 an army of almost a

13 “Policy of the Allies,” (1793) in Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 12 vols. (Boston, 1901), IV, 446.

14 The Revolutionary Government is the subject of my book of 1941, reprinted in 1958 with a slightly different subtitle, *Twelve Who Ruled: the Committee of Public Safety during the French Revolution* (Princeton, 1958).

million men faced the foreign enemy. It was the first mass or "democratic" army, or at least the first above the level of casual militia, possessed of a modern kind of national consciousness, with its morale heightened by political attitudes in the common soldiers, its higher ranks filled with men promoted from the ranks on grounds of "merit," and prepared to act, by its training, equipment, and discipline, in a great war among the old military powers of Europe. Eight marshals of Napoleon's empire, in addition to Bonaparte himself, were promoted to the rank of general officer at this time.

By the spring of 1794 the French armies resumed the offensive. In June they won the battle of Fleurus, and the Austrians abandoned Belgium. In the Dutch cities the potential revolutionaries took hope again. The Poles, with Kosciuszko, again attempted revolution. Its outcome was uncertain. But in France it was clear, by mid-1794, that the Republic had survived.

It survived at a certain cost, or on certain terms. Much happened in France during the climactic Year Two of the republican calendar. Within the larger framework of the general eighteenth century revolution, and indeed of the subsequent history of modern times, it is illuminating to see two of these developments in some detail. First, the Revolutionary Government reacted strongly against popular and international revolution, exhibiting what, in the jargon, might be called "bourgeois" and "nationalist" inclinations. Second, in the extreme emotional stimulation, the Revolution, as understood by Robespierre, became the means to call a new world into being, and turned into something like a religion.

REACTION AGAINST POPULAR AND INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONISM

The Revolutionary Government, representing re-established authority, turned at once against the self-generating dynamism of the popular democrats. Events now in truth followed the lines of a classical tragedy, as seen so clearly by Albert Soboul. The Revolutionary Government crushed the very spirit which had brought it into being. The popular democrats, or *sans-culottes*, "had demanded a government strong enough to crush the aristocracy; they did not realize that this government, if it was to conquer, would have to force them to obey."¹⁵

The Paris sections had met *en permanence* since July 25, 1792. In September 1793 they were limited by the Committee of Public Safety to two meetings a week. They had originally elected their own committees, which concerned themselves with searches, arrests, identity cards, ration cards, patrols, and political agitation in their neighborhoods. By the spring of 1794 the ruling Committee appointed the members of these committees. The committee members, originally unpaid, began to receive five francs a day for their services; they developed increasingly the mentality of small public job-holders, dutifully carrying out instructions

¹⁵ Soboul, *Sans-culottes parisiens*, 1026. The following pages draw heavily on this book; see also Soboul's "Robespierre et la formation du gouvernement révolutionnaire, 27 juillet-10 octobre, 1793" in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* V (Oct-Dec. 1958), 283-94.

from on high. The section assemblies long practiced open voting. The ruling Committee imposed secret voting, which reduced the influence of the most militant.

Many demands were never granted. It was a favorite idea of the popular democrats that public employments should go to worthy family men and elderly patriots of limited means. The ruling Committee never accepted any such principle. The popular democrats, and their journalistic spokesmen, inveighed against big business men and wholesale traders, who were accused of withholding goods from the market. The Committee of Public Safety protected them, needing the services of men whose operations were above the shopkeeping level. "Profit" had an evil sound to the *sans-culottes*; the Committee accepted it as a necessity of the economic system, and allowed for it in its scales of administered prices. There were requests for more free time and easier conditions for workmen in the arms manufactories. The Revolutionary Government adopted a stern code of labor discipline. There were demands for rent controls, which the government never conceded, believing that the price controls were only a temporary wartime expedient, and fearing that rent controls might become permanent if incorporated in leases. The sections and the Commune resisted and evaded the legislation setting ceilings on wages. The Committee of Public Safety tried to enforce it, knowing that otherwise the price controls would not work at all. By a politically somewhat inept measure, on July 23, 1794, which aimed at enforcing the already legalized wage scales, but which had the effect of abruptly cutting wages in half for many workers, the Committee alienated popular sympathy at the very moment when the Convention was conspiring to overthrow Robespierre.

Independent Revolutionary activists, or persons outside the government who identified themselves with the cause of the needy, now received short shrift. The government proposed to attend to the needy itself, and denounced such agitators as *enragés*. Such was Jacques Roux, a priest who had become a vehement popular spokesman; he was put in prison, where he committed suicide. An organization of Revolutionary Women, who continued to complain of high prices and shortages, was broken up.

The last weeks of 1793 saw the outburst of Dechristianization. It developed independently in various parts of France, but in Paris, where the mass of *sans-culottes* seem to have been indifferent to it, it was brought on by certain prominent figures in the sections and in the Commune. It appealed most strongly to intellectuals of various types, such as the poet Fabre d'Eglantine, who coined the names for the months in the Republican Calendar, and the printer and bookseller Momoro, a chief sponsor of the Worship of Reason as conducted in a grand festival at Notre Dame in November. The Committee of Public Safety, while embarrassed at seeming to defend priestcraft and superstition, regarded such anti-Christian demonstrations as highly impolitic. Robespierre called them "philosophical masquerades."

Robespierre himself, so long as the Brissot group had been in power, had been indulgent to the claims of the Paris sections to a direct and immediate sovereign liberty of their own. He had been tolerant of insurrectionism, and would not confine the right of resistance to "legal" channels. Now, as spokesman for the Revolutionary Government, he adopted a different tone. In a great speech of February 5,

1794 in the Convention, he took care to offer definitions of “true” democracy, which he said the Revolutionary Government meant to introduce, as distinct from the mistaken democracy with which plausible agitators tried to confuse the people.

“Democracy,” he said, “is not a state in which the people, continually assembled, itself directs public affairs; still less is it a state in which a hundred thousand fragments of the people, by contradictory, hasty and isolated measures, should decide on the destiny of society as a whole. Such a government has never existed, and if it did could do nothing but throw the people back into despotism.”

This was an admonition to the Paris sections and corresponding local bodies throughout the country.

“Democracy is a state in which the sovereign people, guided by laws of its own making, does for itself what it can do well, and by its delegates what it cannot.”¹⁶

This was a vindication of delegated authority, or of the powers which a representative democracy should confer on its government. It must be remembered that the idea of representative democracy was still new and unformulated in Europe, since “democracy” had hitherto meant a direct democracy feasible in very small states, and since representative institutions, as they had come down from the Middle Ages, were linked closely to ideas of social rank and estate.

Robespierre went on to remark, reminding his hearers of the war, that the military strength of a democracy lay in the fact that all citizens felt that they fought in their own interest—and that France was the first “true democracy” granting a full equality of rights. “That, in my opinion, is the real reason why the tyrants allied against the Republic will be defeated.”

There were some who could be electrified by such doctrine, others to whom it seemed remote and unreal. There were some, among the ordinary people, who hoped for more material benefits from the Revolution. The Committee of Public Safety devised a new program looking toward an equalization of wealth: property was now to be confiscated from “suspects” (not only from émigrés and the church as hitherto), and transferred gratis to “indigent patriots” (not sold to new buyers, as in the past). This measure failed in its purpose. It made no dramatic impact on the sans-culottes, who saw nothing new in confiscations from enemies of the state. In any case the real poor people of the city, whose problems were food shortage and poor housing, had little to gain from the problematic future ownership of land, most of it agricultural.

Unrest continued in the Paris sections. Militants resented the loss of initiative. There was talk of another insurrection or “rising,” or vast popular demonstration against the Convention, such as had ousted the Brissotins on June 2.

There were “ultras” of another kind against whom the Revolutionary Government also turned. These were the foreign revolutionaries and ideologists who abounded in Paris, who preached universal revolution, and whose real aim was to use France to liberate their own countries or “the world.” During the Year II, among the most authentic Jacobins, there was a strong nationalist reaction against revolutionary cosmopolitanism. The men in the Revolutionary Government, while

16 C. Vellay, ed., *Discours et rapports de Robespierre* (Paris, 1908), 324–28.

hopeful for revolution elsewhere, turned to the idea, in modern terms, of revolution in one country first. This had always been Robespierre's real conviction, suspended only in moments of rhetoric or during the contest with Brissot. It was clear, in the supreme hour of need for the Republic in France, that no other people would lend any useful assistance. There was apathy, and even public protest against the war, in England, Holland, Belgium, the Rhineland, and elsewhere. Nowhere, except in far-off Poland, was there any revolt against a government with which France was at war. There was no revolution in aid of France. It was perfectly evident that the foreign revolutionaries were entirely dependent on the French. The French were indeed the only people in the whole period (the Americans having been no exception) who carried out a revolution, and defeated a counter-revolution, entirely with their own resources. The fact offers some explanation of the intensity of the Terror, and of why the Terror occurred only in France.

The French Jacobins, these being the facts, developed a scorn for the revolutionaries of other countries, whom they accused of lacking the vigor or courage to stage a revolution of their own. On September 15, 1793, as the Revolutionary Government was taking form, the Convention, on initiative of the Committee of Public Safety, in effect rescinded the decree of the preceding November promising "aid and fraternity to peoples wishing to recover their liberty." French generals in the field should have nothing to do with revolutionaries in Belgium or elsewhere. "Renouncing henceforth all philanthropic ideas adopted by the French people with a view to making foreign nations alive to the value and advantages of liberty, French generals shall conduct themselves toward the enemies of France in the same manner as the Allied powers conduct themselves toward it; they shall observe, toward countries and individuals subjected by French arms, the ordinary laws of war." They should therefore disarm the inhabitants, take hostages, and exploit the local resources, keeping such exploitation under control of the French army and government. It was the policy, which had so dismayed the Dutch and Belgian revolutionaries in Dumouriez' time, of treating occupied areas as conquered country.¹⁷

The foreign revolutionaries in Paris were a miscellaneous lot. Since they lived in an atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue, most of them on the fringes of politics, they remain one of the mysteries of the French Revolution. The personal relationships between the two kinds of "ultras," the foreigners and the spokesmen of popular revolution, remain very unclear.¹⁸

17 Mavidal, et al., *Archives parlementaires 1787-1801* (Paris, 1909), vol. 74, p. 231; A. Aulard, *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public* (Paris, 1893), VI, 553-54.

18 Soboul, interested in the popular revolutionaries but not in the international revolutionaries, believes (*Sans-culottes parisiens*, 779-885) that there was no political or ideological connection between the two groups, and that the governing committees threw the two together under a common indictment, so as to discredit the popular revolutionaries with a stigma of "conspiracy" and of association with foreigners. This view seems to arise from Soboul's unwillingness to understand Robespierre's conception of "ultras" except in a context of class conflict. On the intricacies of the foreign revolutionaries not much has been accomplished since the monographs of Mathiez over forty years ago, except for sporadic and sometimes excellent pieces of specialized research, such as those of General Herlaut, including his *Autour d'Hébert: Deux témoins de la Terreur, le citoyen Dubuisson, le ci-devant baron de Haindel* (Paris, 1958).

Anacharsis Cloots, for example, who may well have been mad, had at first called himself the *orateur du genre humain*, and now called himself the *orateur des sans-culottes*. He was in touch with the revolutionaries in Holland, and with the ambiguous Chevalier d'Eon in London. An extreme sponsor of radical Dechristianization, he presented the Convention, as an insult to Christianity, with a copy of his *Certainty of the Proofs of Mohammedanism*. He was hardly a man of the people; rich and titled by origin, he wrote laughingly to his brother that he had bought one of the confiscated estates near Paris, and was living well "for a sans-culotte." To his constituents (he was a member of the Convention) he expressed "bourgeois equality" with fatuous complacency: "all being equal before the law, if some are wealthy, others industrious, all have their qualities."¹⁹ He urged them to forget their own disagreements in a campaign against *la tyrannie européenne*.

The Dutch banker, Kock, lived in a fine house at Passy with nine children, a private preceptor, numerous servants, and facilities for entertainment. Hébert and other radicals from the Paris Commune and government bureaus were among his most frequent guests. It has been argued that they had no common political interests, and that the gatherings were purely for relaxation; but this seems unlikely, since Mme Kock complained that Mme Hébert talked too much politics, and Kock, who had been a member of the Batavian Revolutionary Committee since 1792, signed a petition of this committee to the Committee of Public Safety, on March 9, 1794, urging the French to invade and revolutionize Holland.²⁰ What Kock and Hébert had in common was a dislike of the personnel and policies of the Revolutionary Government of the Year II. They both accused it of "moderatism."

Cloots, Kock, and other Dutch émigrés supported a paper in Paris, *Le Batave*. It lasted under different titles for over three years, and is among the rarest, in libraries today, of all French Revolutionary journals that had so long a life. In general, it closely followed the line of Hébert's *Père Duchesne*. It lauded the Worship of Reason in Paris, and gave admiring publicity to the most violent episodes of the Terror. It was full of reports on revolutionaries in Holland and various other countries, whom it presented as oppressed patriots eagerly awaiting the moment of liberation.

There was also the Batavian Legion. Or rather, at the end of 1793, there were apparently two organizations by this name.²¹ One was in the field with the French army, as in 1792. The other, which remained closer to Paris, was composed of non-descripts and persons without visible means of support, recruited from half a dozen nationalities, but including Frenchmen also. One of these was "Gracchus" Babeuf, who, between periods in prison on ordinary criminal charges, kept away starvation by briefly joining the Batavian Legion at the end of 1793.

19 A. Tuetey, *Répertoire général des sources manuscrites de l'histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution* (Paris, 1912), X, No. 2482. Much else on Cloots, Proli, Kock, and others may be found here, and in the preface to Volume XI.

20 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (The Hague, 1905) I, 337. On Kock see also Tuetey, *op.cit.*, and pp. 394 and 420 above.

21 *Le Batave*, No. 265, Nov. 7, 1793. On Babeuf's membership in the Batavian Legion, see M. Dommanget, *Sylvain Maréchal: l'homme sans Dieu* (Paris, 1950), 303. On the dissolution of the legions, and arrest of foreigners, see Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers* (Paris, 1918), 168–188.

The other “legions” and émigré groups, founded in 1792, were leading a troubled existence. The United Belgians carried on in rooms supplied by the Paris Commune. They feared infiltration by other Belgians who were really Austrian spies, and indeed the émigré groups were natural places of concealment for the agents of governments with which France was at war.

Among Belgians in Paris, the most notable was a man named Proly.²² He was supposed to be the cousin of Cloots and the illegitimate son of Prince Kaunitz by a Belgian mother. Once rich, though no longer so in 1793, he had been active among the Belgian Democrats of 1789. He had edited a paper called *Le Cosmopolite* in Paris in 1792. He had served Dumouriez as a financial middleman in Belgium in January 1793, and had something to do at that time with a bold scheme to ruin the Bank of England, through counterfeit banknotes to be circulated through Amsterdam Jews during the proposed invasion of Holland. It seems altogether possible that, to protect Belgium from exploitation by the French, Proly had had some share in Dumouriez’ secret plans for a separate Belgian republic. Proly was a mysterious person, who in 1793 divided his time between the Stock Exchange and the Commune. It is understandable that Robespierre should have suspected him, however falsely, of being an Austrian spy.

Among other foreigners in the city was Thomas Paine, now under suspicion for his English birth, his itinerant past, his world-revolutionism, and his friendship with Brissotins now deceased. There was an innocuous Italian named Pio, who had a job at the Foreign Office.²³ Considering how important the Italian revolutionaries became in 1796, their absence from Paris in 1793–94 is remarkable.

Robespierre became convinced of the existence of a vast Foreign Conspiracy, composed of all kinds of “ultras,” both of the popular and international kind, preaching the *révolution à outrance*, insatiable activists, enemies of all government and all religion, working in collusion with old Brissotins, “moderates” and accomplices of Dumouriez, reinforced by super-Terrorists who feared that the Revolutionary Government would repudiate them, joined by grafters and common cheats who feared exposure, and driven frantically onward by the machinations of true counter-revolutionaries, royalist agents, clandestine clergy, and foreign spies who wished to throw the Republic into chaos so that monarchy and aristocracy could be restored.²⁴ There was no such “conspiracy.” It is true, however, that men of the most varied stripe wished the destruction of the government. It puts Robespierre’s “foreign conspiracy” in an intelligible light to observe that a certain royalist spy in Paris, who had an unknown but profitable access to the secrets of the Committee of Public Safety, came to much the same conclusion—namely that “Hébertists,” foreigners, and spies were somehow involved with one

22 On Proly see Tuetey, *op.cit.*, Mathiez, “Vonck et Proli,” in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, II (1925), 58–66; and the writings of Suzanne Tassier on Belgium, mentioned in the preceding chapter.

23 Mathiez, “Le Chevalier Pio,” *Annales révolutionnaires*, XI (1919), 94–104.

24 “Rapport écrit de la main de Robespierre sur la faction de l’étranger” in *Pièces trouvées dans les papiers de Robespierre et complices: affaire Chabot, faction Proly* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, Brumaire III), 90–99, which Mathiez seems to have accepted as genuine.

another to overthrow the ruling Committee—and so reported to Lord Grenville in England.²⁵

The Committee of Public Safety struck at all its enemies together, “amalgamating” them, as it said in its instructions to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The ensuing trials of Germinal (March 1794) marked a dramatic end to popular and international revolutionism as they had taken form in the summer of 1792. They were purely political trials, victories of one group of men over others, justified only by emergency and the “public good,” and with no pretense that either the charges, the evidence, the procedure, or the decisions would meet ordinary criteria of law.

The guillotining of Hébert, Momoro, and others, for whom the epithet “Hébertist” was invented, coming after so much else in the way of political and administrative subordination, reduced the spontaneous revolutionary enthusiasm of the common people of Paris, who from now on, like ordinary people in most countries, either accepted the decisions of government, or became politically apathetic, or, if rebellious, could hardly form more than small and sectarian movements.

Cloots and Paine were expelled from the Convention. Cloots was guillotined; Paine sat for months in prison. Proly and some of his French associates, on the charge of implication with Dumouriez’ defection, went to the guillotine. Kock was arrested a week after signing the Batavian petition to the Committee of Public Safety. He was guillotined as a friend of Hébert. Another signer, van Hooff, was imprisoned but survived. The Batavian Revolutionary Committee and the other émigré organizations disappeared. The Batavian, Belgian, Germanic, and Allobrogian “legions” were dissolved. In the pursuit of foreigners three Irish-born generals in the French army, Arthur Dillon, Thomas Ward, and James O’Moran, went under the “popular axe.” The Prince of Hesse, another foreign general in the French Revolutionary Army, went to prison. Various insignificant foreigners were rounded up, like the Italian Pio, and a man named Dengs, whose father was French Canadian.

It may be added, as a commentary on the use of such tactics in politics, that Robespierre, when his turn came a few months later, was likewise charged with implication in foreign conspiracy and world-revolutionism. The case concerned the Englishman, Benjamin Vaughan. A member of Parliament, one of the Earl of Lansdowne’s radical friends, Vaughan had defended France in the pages of the *Morning Chronicle*. In 1794 the French sent William Jackson to Ireland on a secret mission; the British discovered the plot, Wolfe Tone fled to America, and Benjamin Vaughan to France. Robespierre protected Vaughan as he passed through France in May. Vaughan then wrote to Robespierre from Geneva, urging that France invite the revolutionaries of Belgium, Holland, and the German Rhineland to form a great federation, with universal suffrage and a Congress, so that “nine million men,” paying their own war costs, could ally with France against tyrants. This letter reached Paris on 9 Thermidor, the day of Robespierre’s fall, and was

25 The reference is to the Dropmore Spy on whose “bulletins” much has recently been written. For a résumé see Godechot, *Contre-révolution*, 186–190. For the bulletins themselves see Great Britain: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore* (London, 1894), vols. II and III, and for the spy’s fantastic reports on “foreign conspiracy” see II, 548–63.

opened at the Committee of Public Safety by Barère and Billaud-Varenne. They seized on it as evidence to prove that Robespierre was conspiring with William Pitt against the Republic.²⁶

The point at present, however, is that at the height of the Revolutionary Government, in the months between the trials of Germinal and the death of Robespierre, during which the French armies resumed the offensive and again overflowed into adjoining countries, the mood was somewhat different from what it had been during the abortive victories of Dumouriez a year and a half before. The same cry was heard again: *Guerre aux châteaux, paix aux chaumières!* Its impact was as revolutionary as ever. Governments and privileged classes might be undermined—not, however, as enemies of the human race, nor as enemies of their own peoples, but because they were at war with the French Republic. The men ruling France had no confidence, and little interest, in the potential revolutionaries of foreign parts. Indeed their attitude was one of contempt.

The Committee of Public Safety had its representatives with all the armies, who plied it with reports and questions. On the Italian front, the French occupied Oneglia in the kingdom of Sardinia. Italian patriots flocked about the two Italian-speaking French agents, Saliceti and Buonarroti. The Paris government cared nothing about them.²⁷ At Geneva there was an entirely separate little disturbance arising from indigenous causes; the Genevese, setting up a Revolutionary Tribunal of their own, executed fourteen persons, in July 1794, who had been involved in the Geneva counter-revolution of 1782. The French agent, observing it from Grenoble, was extremely skeptical of this “hypocritical” revolution.²⁸ In Belgium, as the French re-entered it, the French agent held aloof from the returning Belgian refugees. They were concerned, he reported to Paris, only with their own interests and their own vengeance.²⁹ The Dutch problem was more difficult, because the Dutch revolutionary movement, since the early 1780’s, had been the strongest of all those outside France itself. The French civilian representative attached to the Army of the North was beset by Dutch patriots. The Dutch émigré general Daeindels offered to make a secret trip to Amsterdam to produce revolution there at once. The French agent asked for instructions. The Committee of Public Safety gave Delphic answers. It would welcome a revolution in Holland, but not start one. It might sponsor a Dutch revolution, or it might not. It must be remembered that the Dutch revolutionaries were thinking only of their own country. And as Carnot said, “We who are French must think of our own.”³⁰

26 Mathiez, “Robespierre et Benjamin Vaughan” in *Annales révolutionnaires* (Jan. 1917), 1–11; Vaughan, *Letters on the Subject of the Concert of Princes and the Dismemberment of Poland and France* (London, 1793). Vaughan lived from 1796 to 1835 in the United States, where he received honorary degrees from Harvard and Bowdoin, to both of which he left many books.

27 Aulard, *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public, avec la correspondance des représentants en mission* (Paris, 1899–1904), XII, XIII, XIV, XV, where the various reports of Saliceti and the younger Robespierre make no mention of the Italian refugees or patriots, although corresponding reports from the *Armée du Nord* make frequent reference to the analogous Dutch patriots.

28 Ibid., XV, 433.

29 Ibid., XV, 295, 361, 386, 409.

30 Ibid., XIV, 712; XV, 292, 383. See also XV, 261–67, for a general memorandum of the Committee of Public Safety, dated July 18, 1794, on policies to be adopted in occupied territories. Also Lazare

As for Poland, the French had no contact with it, military or diplomatic. They would of course welcome Kosciuszko's rebellion as a diversion against the Coalition. But they neither would nor could do anything about it. In May 1794 a German Protestant pastor, Karl Held, appeared in Paris, sent by a secret "Jacobin" group in Vienna, which had contacts with the insurgent Poles. The Committee of Public Safety rebuffed his approaches and put him under arrest.³¹

The mood of 1794 was realistic, ruthless, disengaged from cosmopolitan ideological sympathies, military in motive, revolutionary in the sense of securing the Revolution in France. It is a question how different it had really been in 1792. Even then, at the time of the so-called Propaganda Decrees, there had been, as was seen in the last chapter, a good deal of realistic consideration of similar problems. It has been customary for historians to see three phases in the spread of revolution during the wars of the 1790's: a "Girondist" phase of supposedly eager and indiscriminate idealistic crusading in 1792, a sterner "Jacobin" phase of triumphant republicanism in 1794, and a cynical phase under the Directory from 1795 to 1799, characterized by manipulation of satellite republics. It is doubtful whether these phases ever really existed, with enough distinctness to aid in an understanding of what happened. The problems throughout were much the same. Since the problems were difficult, recurrent, and real, answers naturally varied from person to person and from time to time.

THE MORAL REPUBLIC

The purpose of the Revolutionary Government was not merely to defend the state but to found it, not only to win a war but to introduce a new and better society. That was what made it a revolutionary and not merely an emergency regime. In its vivid sense of a new world coming, its "eschatology," the Revolution became a kind of religion. The substance of things hoped for, or new world as now desired, was one in which human dignity would rest on a foundation of fellow citizenship, freedom, and equality of status and respect. The picture had been drawn eloquently by Rousseau. It occupied the minds of many. Consider these statements by two "founders":

A constitution founded on these principles introduces knowledge among the people, and inspires them with a conscious dignity becoming free men; a general emulation takes place, which causes good humor, sociability and good manners to be general. That elevation of sentiment inspired by such a government makes the common people brave and enterprising. That ambition which is inspired by it makes them sober, industrious and frugal. You will find among them some elegance, perhaps, but more solidity; a little pleasure, but a great deal of busi-

Carnot, "Vues proposées au Comité de salut public . . .," July 16, 1794, in *Correspondance generale de Carnot* (Paris, 1907), 496-502; Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, I, 336-37.

31 France: Commission des archives diplomatiques, *Instructions données aux ambassadeurs: Pologne* (Paris, 1888), II, 328-30. On Held's mission see below, p. 500.

ness; some politeness, but more civility. If you compare such a country with the regions of domination, whether monarchical or aristocratical, you will fancy yourself in Arcadia or Elysium.

The other said:

We want an order of things . . . in which the arts are an adornment to the liberty that ennobles them, and commerce the source of wealth for the public and not of monstrous opulence for a few families. . . . In our country we desire morality instead of selfishness, honesty and not mere "honor," principle and not mere custom, duty and not mere propriety, the sway of reason rather than the tyranny of fashion, a scorn for vice and not a contempt for the unfortunate . . . good men instead of good company, merit in place of intrigue, talent in place of mere cleverness, truth and not show, the charm of happiness and not the boredom of pleasure . . . in short the virtues and miracles of a republic and not the vices and absurdities of a monarchy.

The first was written by John Adams in 1776, the second by Maximilien Robespierre in 1794. The pictures in their minds were much alike. Both thought that a properly drafted constitution (producing what Robespierre, but not Adams, called a "democracy") would do much to bring such a world about.³²

The difference was not so much in the main idea as in the action that they were prepared to take. Adams already lived in a kind of Arcadia, as contrasted, at least, with Europe. Robespierre did not. No doubt Adams had a saving grace of skepticism that would have held him back from Robespierre's course, but it is intriguing to speculate on whether John Adams, an impatient, irritable, easily frustrated but very determined man, with no very high opinion of his contemporaries, was not the one among the American founders who, under pressures such as those in France, could have most easily turned into a "Jacobin."

Robespierre, in the speech in which he defined democracy, coupled Virtue and Terror. It was clear enough what the Terror meant. It was very much a fact of political life in February 1794. It had risen gradually, from the street murders of July 1789, through the gruesome lynchings of September 1792, through the frenzies of suspicion that came with Dumouriez' defection and led to the creation of the Revolutionary Tribunal, on through the executions of the Brissotins and the queen. As in much else, so here, what began as popular clamor and violence ended up as a weapon in the hands of the government. The Terror had become an instrument of state. There had been genuine public revulsion against the Brissotins and the king and queen. There was no such popular demand for the deaths of the Hébertists, nor of the Dantonists a few weeks later, nor of the victims of the climactic "great" Terror of June and July 1794. These were devised by the government itself, which manufactured the necessary demand. Acts of government, also, were the death sentences meted out by revolutionary courts in punishment for rebellion in the

³² Adams, "Thoughts on Government," in *Works*, 10 vols. (Boston, 1851), IV, 199; Robespierre, "Rapport sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention," February 5, 1794, in C. Vellay, *Discours et rapports de Robespierre* (Paris, 1908), 325–26.

Vendée and at Lyon and other federalist cities. These sentences, in retribution for armed rebellion, made up almost two-thirds of all deliberate executions during the Terror. More conservative governments, if equally frightened, might have done the same. There is little evidence that the Terror was used as a weapon of class war: three-fifths of those executed were peasants and workingmen, and only eight per cent were noble. All told, about 17,000 were condemned to death.³³ The figure can be made to look small by application of twentieth-century standards, but such a well-publicized holocaust (there was no secrecy because there was no shame) had been unknown in western Europe since the wars of religion, and broke upon men of the humane eighteenth century with peculiar horror.

To Robespierre, a humane man himself, such violence was intolerable unless it had a strong ethical justification. It is sometimes argued that Robespierre, and others like him, ended up by killing people because they began with a visionary idea of an impossible future world—that fanaticism leads to murder. The opposite may be at least as true of real human psychology: that fanaticism itself is bred by events, or that Robespierre and others, caught up in events, and having accepted a series of decisions each more ruthless than the last, dwelt at length on the better world they hoped to create—if only to transform their own doubts or guilt feelings into a state of mind with which they could live. It is hard to explain otherwise the intensity of the feelings, since the idea of a moral republic, as a flat thing itself, was common enough to many people who did not become so excited. The French Revolution, by 1794, had in fact been so vast, so soul-shaking, so ferocious, and so pitilessly demanding of sacrifice, that it would seem to have been totally unsuccessful unless it was followed by an incomparably better world.

For moral as well as for practical reasons, for Robespierre, the Terror was unacceptable without Virtue. "If the mainspring of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the mainspring of popular government in time of revolution is both *virtue and terror*: virtue, without which terror is evil; terror, without which virtue is helpless. Terror is nothing but justice, prompt, severe and inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue." It was also the "principle of democracy applied to the pressing needs of the country."³⁴

It was the equation of Virtue and Terror that many persons then and since have found especially nauseous, and which does indeed distinguish the Terror of the French Revolution from other general liquidations in history. There seemed something insufferably hypocritical about it. To which a good Jacobin would reply that much hypocrisy has been expended on less defensible causes.

And what was this Virtue—the "virtue" which without terror was helpless? In part it meant only common honesty, the avoidance, for example, of the corruption and thieving in which a few members of the Convention were implicated when the East India Company was dissolved. In part it meant a kind of austerity, a willingness to go without coffee or new shoes when such items were in short supply, and a belief that the sacrifices imposed by public emergency should be equally

33 D. Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935).

34 Robespierre in Vellay, *Discours*, 332.

shared. It meant also patriotism or good citizenship, a subordination of private to public good, a willingness to do one's part, whether by serving in the army or by scraping saltpeter in caves. It required a suspension of factiousness and complaining, at least for "the duration." It forbade profiteering and dabbling in the black market. And it included all those qualities that were believed to be permanently necessary to a wholesome commonwealth in the future. The good citizen, in the good republic, would put behind him the false values of the immediate past, care nothing for social rank, detest everything ornamental, frivolous or rococo, live contentedly at his business and in his family, spurn riches as a snare, be free from consuming ambition, guard his civic and political freedom, accept other men as his equals and delight in a classless society.

Robespierre was not so simple as to suppose these qualities easy or "natural." Like everyone else in his day, he believed religion to be necessary to society. For the kind of society he had in mind the authorities of the Christian churches had ceased to offer much support. It was commonly believed, on all sides, that religions had been "invented." Moses and Numa Pompilius had been notably successful in this respect. In founding a religion they had each also founded a polity and a people. The Revolutionary Government would therefore invent a religion of its own. Prompted by Robespierre, the Convention decreed, on May 7, 1794, that "the French people recognizes the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul."³⁵

Thus originated the famous Worship of the Supreme Being, best known for the mammoth celebration held in Paris on June 8. Though arising from the same sources as the Worship of Reason of the preceding winter, it differed from the latter, in Robespierre's mind, in being less aggressively anti-Christian. It was his hope that all good citizens, whatever private religious views they might entertain, could publicly unite in religious services so comprehensive, so tolerant, so lacking in dogmatism, so irenic and so useful. As the "decadary cult," celebrating republican or civic religion on each *décadi*, or "Sunday" of the republican calendar, the observances originating in the worship of the Supreme Being lingered on for several years. Contrary to Robespierre's hope, they never enjoyed any mass following, and by attracting mainly the anti-Christians remained as a divisive force in the republic.

There was a genuine religious feeling in the new cult, but it was a religion that was overwhelmingly ethical. There was a sense of man's place in the universe, but a much stronger sense of his proper role and attitudes in society. As Robespierre explained it (not unlike Burke), the individual reason could be frail and misleading. It was too involved with self-centered emotions. "Human authority can always be attacked by human pride." The inadequacy of human authority is therefore "supplemented by the religious sense, by which the soul is impressed with the idea

35 See, besides the decree, Robespierre's speech in its support, "Sur les rapports des idées religieuses et morales avec les principes républicains et sur les fêtes nationales," May 7, 1794 in Vellay, *Discours*, 347-75. The decree itself appears on 375-78. For the idea of "inventing" a religion, and for the whole present discussion, see M. Reinhard, *Religion, Revolution et Contre-Revolution*, Centre de Documentation Universitaire, Paris, 1960. The question of religion and revolution is also taken up in Chapter XXVI below.

of a sanction given to moral principles by a power superior to man.”³⁶ The value and even the truth of religion were seen in the moral principles and public conduct which religion instilled. This being the end of the eighteenth century, the publicists of the opposition did not argue very differently. For Joseph de Maistre, as for Edmund Burke, the importance of religion lay in the inculcation of moral principles, that is, in a doctrine of attitudes and duties towards one’s fellow man, and one’s own place in society. The clash was less between religion and irreligion than between the cults, respectively, of an idealized aristocratic and an idealized democratic world.

The Year II reached a culmination on 20 Prairial, or June 8, 1794. It was the day of the Festival of the Supreme Being. Robespierre, just elected for the two-week term as president of the Convention, officiated as a kind of priest of the Republic as tens or hundreds of thousands watched. The victories at the front, the coming of summer, the recollection of a terrible danger that had been survived, gave a joyousness to the occasion. For Robespierre, very likely, it was the climax of his own life and the day of foundation of a new world. Even Mallet du Pan, a realistic observer, when he read the reports in the Paris papers, believed that Robespierre had successfully healed the wounds of the past years and might consolidate the new state.

Events proved otherwise. The Law of 22 Prairial gave freer rein to the Revolutionary Tribunal. Most of those executed in Paris died in June and July of 1794. The Terror had got out of control, or at least it bore less relation to outer realities, and was carried on by the relentless will of a few individual men. Everything was now centralized in the government, even the definition of religion and virtue. Virtue itself came to mean harmlessness to the government. As Robespierre himself had said, human authority was attacked by human pride. Never had he been so inquisitorial, so implacably suspicious, as in these last few weeks.

If he had no longer objective grounds to fear for the Republic, he had good reason to be fearful for himself. By his preaching of virtue, and hieratic performance on June 8, he made enemies among his own colleagues. Old Voltaireans sneered at the new Rousseau. So strict a state could have no lasting appeal for the mass of actual Frenchmen—or of actual human beings. Some were guilty of offenses, of super-terrorism in the provinces, or political or money-making intrigues, for which it was evident that Robespierre questioned their virtue, and contemplated their demise. He had sent Danton to death, and some of his associates, to hold some kind of middle ground after the death of the Hébertists. But in attacking the Dantonists he had attacked the Convention itself. He had violated the body which he himself had always held up as the only symbol of legitimate power.

The restoration of public authority, the achievements of the Revolutionary Government, the tremendous year which had assured the survival of the Revolution, and which seemed to promise the foundation of a moral and democratic republic, thus ended up in an unedifying spectacle, in which the issue was to see which handful of men would get rid of the other first. By a palace revolution, a mere conspiracy in the Convention, Robespierre was outlawed on 9 Thermidor of the second year of the Republic, and died the next day.

36 Vellay, *Discours*, 361.

THE MEANING OF THERMIDOR

Thermidor has become a byword for the reaction in which revolution ends. Many older histories of the French Revolution terminate here. For a long time Robespierre was taken to represent the most advanced point of the Revolution. He was not exactly *ne plus ultra*, but the "ultras" beyond him did not reflect the "true" movement. With his death came a "bourgeois" reaction, or at least a long, sordid, and uninspiring period until the appearance, or "advent," of Bonaparte. In more recent times, as the world has changed, it has been increasingly seen that Robespierre was by no means the furthest Left among authentic voices of the Revolution. There was a whole movement of popular excitement among the common people, largely autonomous and spontaneous, without which the Revolution could never have succeeded, or taken the course that it took. The popular movement was indeed crushed after Thermidor. But even before Thermidor it had been crushed, or at least mortally weakened. Popular revolutionism reached its height late in 1793. It was checked, disciplined, and calmed down by the Revolutionary Government itself, following the lead of Robespierre.

The French Revolution was by no means ended at Thermidor. The Revolution survived, but at a certain cost and on certain conditions. One of these was the supremacy of middle-class attitudes. Only the bourgeoisie, outside the aristocracy, was capable at the time of carrying on public business. A revolution, to be successful, was bound to be "bourgeois." This did not mean merely a triumph for a pre-existing bourgeoisie, for indeed many of the old-fashioned *bourgeois* were severely mauled. It meant that a wide variety of people, from government personnel to schoolteachers and landowning farmers, came to share in the advantages of a "bourgeois" society. It carried with it, however, the estrangement, not only of aristocrats, but of the economically most depressed classes and their spokesmen. It prepared the way for an accentuated class conflict after 1830, when the middle and the lower classes, looking back, glorified the Revolution for very different reasons.

The survival of the Revolution in 1794 was purchased also at great cost to the republican idealism for which Robespierre had stood. The Republic after 1794—if not as "cynical" as conservatives, radicals, and high-minded altruists have agreed in alleging—was above all else a government among governments.

If a certain idealism was lost, a powerful image had been created, the vision of a Revolution militant and victorious, of Liberty and Equality marching irresistibly forward. "The Convention," as Alexis de Tocqueville once said in the 1850's, "which did so much harm to contemporaries by its fury, has done everlasting harm by its examples. It created the politics of the *impossible*, turned madness into a theory, and blind audacity into a cult."³⁷ The Convention was not really so mad or so blind. If it was the Convention that accepted and conducted the Terror, it was also the Convention that called the Terror to a halt. The Convention checkmated the counter-revolution, but the price paid was to turn revolution into a highly charged social myth, which would animate revolution-makers of the future. Revo-

37 A fragment from Tocqueville's unfinished volume on the Revolution, published by J. P. Mayer, ed., *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1951–), II, part 2, p. 255.

lution became a kind of miracle for the correction of social ills. The Convention even created, for future use, the idea of *gouvernement révolutionnaire*: the theory of a revolutionary dictatorship, exercising special or emergency powers under no controls, as a “temporary” device for the introduction of constitutional government or a new peaceable and secure form of society. That Robespierre and the Revolutionary Government of 1793–1794 genuinely intended their powers to be temporary, “until the peace,” cannot be doubted. There was no hypocrisy in this respect. But it seems likely also, as matters actually worked out, that there could have been no transition to constitutional liberties as long as Robespierre lived.

Thermidor in a way was a positive vindication of the Revolution. The basically liberal and constitutionalist ideas of the whole revolutionary era reasserted themselves. For the adherents of monarchy and aristocracy, the Reign of Terror had in fact been a piece of remarkable good fortune. It “proved” what they wanted to know—that a republic, in a large, powerful, and civilized country, was an impossible, anarchic, dictatorial, and bloodthirsty kind of regime. A republic in France that could function without Terror was not exactly what conservative Europe wanted. As the American writer, W. E. B. DuBois, once remarked of South Carolina during Reconstruction: “If there was one thing that South Carolina feared more than bad Negro government, it was good Negro government.”³⁸ Somewhat the same holds for conservative Europe and republican France. If there was one thing that conservatives, at least of the unregenerate kind, wanted less than the Republic with the Terror, it was the Republic without the Terror.

For friends of the French Revolution, in Europe and America, the relaxation of dictatorship and the closing down of the guillotine brought relief. Freed after Thermidor of the incubus of political bloodshed, the Republic became an inspiration for analogous developments in other countries.

38 *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York, 1935), 428.

CHAPTER XX

VICTORIES OF THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Quis scopus revolutionis Polonicae? . . . The aristocrats expect an aristocracy to result, the wiser and more enlightened expect a future democracy, the populace and poorer people . . . will seize the land. My own belief is that the beginning was a cloak for the aristocracy, but that the end will be a democracy.

—A HUNGARIAN PATRIOT ON THE POLISH REVOLUTION,
1794

The Russian tsarina, rightly and for the good of Russia and the deliverance of the entire North from the ulcer of French corruption, had to take arms for the pacification of the wanton Warsaw horde established by the French tyrants.

—CATHERINE II TO MARSHAL SUVOROV, 1794

Hope, for a season, bade the world farewell,
And Freedom shriek'd—as KOSCIUSZKO fell!

—THOMAS CAMPBELL, EDINBURGH, 1799

The year that saw the survival of the Revolution in France saw its extinction in Poland. The same months in which it became clear that structural changes would spread to Belgium and Holland saw the stamping out of “Jacobinism” in Austria and in Hungary. The present chapter is designed to describe—not the failure of revolution in Eastern Europe, since, except in Poland, no revolution was attempted—but the triumph and strengthening of counter-revolutionary forces in Eastern Europe at this time. These were the forces, agrarian and conservatively

aristocratic, which had already largely destroyed the work of Joseph II in the Hapsburg empire, and combined to annihilate the Polish constitution of 1791.

THE PROBLEM OF EASTERN EUROPE

There are at least two reasons why it is especially difficult for an outsider to reach a firm judgment on the state of Eastern Europe in the 1790's. One is a technical or historiographical reason. Since 1945, both in Russia and in Eastern Germany and the other "people's democracies," there has been a strong movement of revisionism among historical scholars, who have generally operated, or attempted or claimed to operate, within Marxist or "scientific" historical categories. It is stated that bourgeois historiography has been in error on the matter of revolutionary or potentially revolutionary sentiment in Russia and Eastern Europe at the time of the French Revolution. It is held that bourgeois historians—that is, those of Russia, Poland, or Hungary of an older day, and those of the West even now—have through a natural bias underestimated the degree of discontent and rebelliousness in Eastern Europe in the 1790's, that they have focused their attention too much on the upper classes and have minimized the extent to which the lower classes were interested in the French Revolution and dissatisfied in their own countries. The older writers are said to have been blind to the elements of significant class struggle which existed in Eastern Europe before 1800.¹

The new tendency, therefore, is to collect all possible evidence for revolutionary inclination or class consciousness at a popular level, in which a long background for "people's democracy" in Eastern Europe may be found. The dangers in this tendency are apparent, and the ideological interest is as clear in the case of the new writers as in that of the bourgeois historians. For a Westerner, the evidence is hard to examine because the difficulties presented by the languages are formidable. And

1 Such is the tenor of M. Shtrange, *Russkoye Obshchestvo i Frantsuzskaya Revolyutsiya* (Moscow, 1956), Fr. trans. (note the French transliteration, Strange) *La Révolution française et la société russe* (Moscow, 1960); B. Lesnodorski, in *La Pologne au X^e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques à Rome* (Warsaw, 1955), 212, and the same author in very measured terms in *Polscy Jakobini* (Warsaw, 1960), with a summary in French; A. Korta, "Hugues Kollátaj et les problèmes sociaux et politiques de la seconde moitié du 18^e siècle," in *Przegląd historyczny*, XLII (1951), which contains several articles on the subject with French summaries; K. Benda, "Les Jacobins hongrois," in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* (1959), No. 155, 38–60, but apparently less is claimed for revolutionism in Hungary in Benda's introduction to his edition of the sources, *A magyar jakobinusok iratai*, 3 vols. (Budapest, 1952–1957); K. Mejdricka, "Les paysans tchèques et la Révolution française," in *AHRF* (1958), No. 154, 64–74; S. Vianu, "Quelques aspects de l'influence exercée par la pensée progressiste russe sur la société roumaine de la fin du 18^e siècle," in *Nouvelles études d'histoire présentées au X^e Congrès des sciences historiques* (Rome, 1955), 285–97; H. Voegt, *Die deutsche jakobinische Literatur und Publizistik, 1789–1800* (Berlin [East Berlin], 1955); and articles on numerous countries assembled in W. Markov, ed., *Maximilien Robespierre 1758–1794: Beiträge zu seinem 200 Geburtstag* (Berlin [East Berlin], 1958). I should like to acknowledge the criticisms made of some of my previous writings by Shtrange and Lesnodorski, and make clear that I have no knowledge of East European languages, being indebted to Messrs. Jeffry Kaplow and William Blackwell for digests of work in Russian (including Shtrange's book before its appearance in French), to Mr. André Michalski for a long digest of Lesnodorski's *Polscy Jakobini*, of which a French translation is reported to be underway, and to Mr. Peter Kenez for reading works in Hungarian.

yet, while remaining on guard, and pending further elucidation, an American may especially have reason, on somewhat *a priori* grounds, to suppose that the critique made by recent East European historians may have some validity. It is now commonly thought in America, for example, that European university professors in general, and historians in particular, have until recently most often been recruited from the well-established and relatively affluent levels of society. It is increasingly realized, also, how in American historical thinking such matters as Negro dissatisfaction or former slave rebellions long tended to disappear from view. If a Russian historian, such as M. M. Shtrange, tells us that bourgeois historiography has minimized the extent of serf uprisings and lower-class discontent there is no inherent reason to disbelieve him.

The other reason why it is difficult to deal with Eastern Europe is that as a cultural area it is impossible to define. Especially in the eighteenth century there were strong ties, reaching the point of close personal acquaintance and even frequent intermarriage, between the upper classes of Russia and Poland on the one hand and Germany and France on the other. German reached far to the east as a language of business, and French as a language of business, government, diplomacy, and polite intercourse. Books and periodicals in both languages conveyed news and works of literary and intellectual content far into the Eastern plains. Politically, the same government in Vienna ruled over Germans, Slavs, and Hungarians, and the same government in Berlin over Germans and Slavs, even before the Second Partition of Poland, effected in 1793. It must be remembered also that, before the great demographic changes of the nineteenth century, when rural migrants poured into the cities in all areas of Western Civilization, the cities of Eastern Europe were often of different nationality from their surrounding country. If Helsinki was Swedish, and Bucharest partly Greek, most of these urban islands were predominantly German. Thus Riga, Prague, and even Budapest (or rather Buda, which was called Ofen in German) were essentially German colonies of many generations of settlement, maintaining cultural contacts with Germany rather than with the non-German populations within which they were located. Even at Warsaw, Moscow, and St. Petersburg many foreigners could be found both in the government and in the merchant communities.

In basic social structure, eastern Germany merged into Eastern Europe without identifiable boundary. East of the Elbe river the peasantry was unfree. The fact was politically significant, not so much for the weakening of the peasantry, as for the enormous power that it gave the landowning class. The landowner also in a sense owned his tenants, who were subject to his local surveillance and jurisdiction, provided him with labor services which were not compensated in wages, and could neither leave the estate, nor marry, nor enter upon a new occupation without his consent. Increasingly, and notably in Russia, the lords put their laboring people into various new industries and skilled trades, even in distant cities, or in mines, allowing them to receive wages upon the remittance of a fee to their masters. These institutions, which had various legal names, but are called "serfdom" by historians, bore a strong resemblance to the slavery and plantation system of the American South.

The resulting ascendancy of a landowning gentry was made even more marked in Eastern Europe than in the Southern United States by a number of other consider-

ations. Only "nobles" could own rural estates and serfs; or, conversely, all persons qualified to own them were considered "noble." Nobles formed a larger proportion of the population than in Western Europe, a fact which carried with it numerous corollaries; the noble estate included both great magnates and a mass of lesser gentry; the latter were not considered by West European noblemen as their equals; and in Eastern Europe the noble class greatly outweighed and overshadowed the bourgeoisie. Town and country lived under separate legal institutions. Townspeople, nobles, and peasants possessed different kinds of property and different rights, and were subject to different taxes and obligations. A certain qualitative difference between town and country, characteristic of all Europe before the "bourgeois" revolution, was especially accentuated everywhere in Eastern Europe by these fundamental social and legal arrangements. Where, in addition, town and country were also of different language, the difference or indeed the antagonism became even more pronounced. Nobility, peasantry, and bourgeoisie constituted different social classes of an obvious kind—known to all, self-perpetuating, each living to itself, and unchangeable. There was little basis for cooperation or even communication between them. The possibility of change in a West-European direction, "revolutionary" or otherwise, was not very great in a world where gentleman and burgher were strangers to each other, yet both regarded the peasant as a kind of brute.

Perhaps because of the lack of homogeneity within the society, or the presence of deep estrangements, two other kinds of people took on attributes of a social class—kinds not unknown in the West but with their peculiarities heightened in the East—the bureaucracy and the intelligentsia. Both were mainly recruited from the nobility, but occasionally from townsmen. Except within the shrinking confines of Poland, where the reverse was true, the East European monarchies were highly bureaucratic. The Romanov, Hapsburg, and Hohenzollern systems had been put together, partly indeed by war, but largely by élites of government officials, who characteristically had no local roots, were intolerant of local interests, and felt that progress was to be accomplished by working against, not with, the natural inclinations of the peoples over whom they were placed. Since local interests almost always meant the interests of serf-owning nobles, who were usually very impatient of government, this bureaucratic attitude was not without foundation. Educated circles shared in the same psychology. Heavily dependent on foreign books, especially French, to some degree English (and in the Slavic world German books had the same effect), conscious of a certain superiority of other countries over their own (or consciously concerned to deny it), troubled in their own sense of rootedness or identity, lacking respect for their own people and their own society, sometimes working as employees of government, sometimes outside the government but very critical of its operations, these educated circles of Eastern Europe were developing into the group for which Russians in the following century coined the word *intelligentsia*. Bureaucracy and intelligentsia were alike in that they drew their strength not from below but from above or from outside; not from having a mass of followers but from representing authority, the authority of a monarch, or of a doctrine. Both had the psychology of an elite or a vanguard; they knew better than anyone else what was good for the country, and were not disinclined to impose their ideas.

The conflict in Eastern Europe was not between social classes. Or, at least, social classes were not the protagonists. The pattern of a conflict between bourgeoisie and aristocracy, or between new men and old hereditary corporate groups, a pattern that can be seen roughly to fit in Western Europe, is hard to detect in Germany at the close of the eighteenth century, and invisible further east. Burghers and peasants were too weak to engage in any protracted struggle. Measures taken in their behalf were taken by others.

The conflict was between monarchy, bureaucracy, or the intelligentsia on the one hand, and the conservative interests of the serf-owning nobilities on the other. In Eastern Europe, as elsewhere, there was a clash between what may be called democratic and aristocratic principles. These terms themselves were sometimes used. But in Eastern Europe the democratic principle (as in the West, only more so) stressed the equalization of rights more than the liberty of self-government. The democratic principle in Eastern Europe was characteristically upheld, so far as it was upheld at all, by monarchy and its bureaucratic servants or by the intelligentsia either in or out of the government.

Twice, before 1793, there had seemed almost to be a "revolution" in Eastern Europe. The reign of Joseph II in the Hapsburg empire had signaled one such occasion, the Polish constitution of 1791 the other.² Joseph's attempted reforms had implied a revolution from above; the work of the Four Years' Diet in Poland represented more of a movement from below. But both were revolutionary in their assault on the powers and privileges of the landowning magnates, both involved a strengthening of monarchical government, and both sought to broaden the rights and opportunities of certain disadvantaged categories of people, notably burghers and Protestants, and in the case of Joseph II even the serfs, and even the Jews. Both had failed. In both cases (in the Polish case with Russian and Prussian intervention) the forces of agrarian noble conservatism, allied with certain ecclesiastical powers, had proved stronger than the sponsors of innovation.

The continuation of this story is the theme of the present chapter.

THE IMPACT OF THE WESTERN REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

Russia in the eighteenth century, behind the facade of its tsarist autocracy, was a country of chronic instability and violence, whose history was a series of palace revolutions and assassinations at the upper level, and of bizarre pretenders and peasant revolts among the common people. The horrors of the Pugachev rebellion of 1773 were not soon forgotten. The better to keep control, the Empress Catherine had issued her Charter of Nobility in 1785, which codified and extended certain liberties of the nobles, including the liberty for them to do as they liked with their serfs. It was precisely at this time that serfdom reached its high (or low) point in Russia. Discontent continued in both the servile and the courtly classes: Catherine's son, Paul I, was assassinated in a palace revolution in 1801, and no less than

2 See above, Chapters XII and XIII.

278 serf rebellions have been counted for the years 1796 to 1798 alone.³ The two facts were not unconnected, since Paul, unlike his mother, had shown signs of trying to conciliate the peasants and of opposing the nobles.

With or without events in the West these discords would have continued in Russia. The question is whether they in any way resembled those of Central or Western Europe, and whether a knowledge of the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution acted as a new cause of dissatisfaction, and contributed to a clearer formulation of goals. The best answer seems to be a cautious and indefinite affirmative. Assassination of rulers by noble coteries seems less peculiarly Muscovite when we recall the death of Gustavus III of Sweden in 1792. Noble self-assertiveness, carrying with it a demand for more aristocratic privilege, seems quite foreign to the French Revolution, unless we believe, with Mathiez and Lefebvre, that such an aristocratic resurgence was part and parcel, at the beginning, of the French Revolution itself. A rebellion of Russian serfs—desperate, elemental, and negative, stirred up by religious eccentrics and Old Believers, often led by a strange meteoric personage who claimed to be the true tsar and father of his people, and receiving no aid or sympathy from the city-dwellers—was not much like the French peasant uprising of 1789. When we are told that Russian serf uprisings resembled the revolution of the French bourgeoisie in that both were directed against “feudalism,”⁴ it is easy to retort that “feudalism” in such a statement has no meaning except in Marxian dialectic. Yet there is a touch of truth in the observation that both French bourgeois and Russian serf opposed a privileged class which was of military and agrarian origin.

In Russia as elsewhere, though starting from a lower base, there was a rapid development of communications in the latter part of the eighteenth century, both within the empire and with Europe. Thirty newspapers and magazines were published in 1789. The censorship sometimes forced them to use guarded language in reporting on the French Revolution; if one read that there had recently been a great change in Paris fashions, one knew that some great political event had occurred. Despite all the difficulties, new papers were also founded, including the *Political Journal* established in 1790. In it one could read, for example, that in 1789 “there originated in Europe the beginning of a new era for mankind,” and that this epoch, unparalleled since the Crusades, was “the epoch of adjustment of the position of the so-called lower estates.”⁵

With the usual channels for public opinion obstructed by government, and in an atmosphere where knowledge was expected to be the possession of a special few, there developed in Russia, through contacts with Germany and central Europe, a taste for secret and mysterious “enlightenment” or “illumination,” the reverse of the publicized and rational Enlightenment that the French *philosophes* preferred. There was a fear of “Martinists,” followers of the French writer Saint-Martin, a kind of pietist in religion, some of whose admirers combined an earthly reformism with a peculiar religiosity. Freemasonry spread, and by the 1770’s there

3 Shtrange, *Rev. fr. et société russe*, 208. Most of the present section is drawn from Shtrange.

4 *Ibid.*, 209.

5 Quoted by A. Kaganova, “Frantzuskaya Bourzhuasnyaya Revolutziya . . .” in *Voprosi istorii* (1947) No. 7, p. 89.

were three large Masonic lodges in Moscow. A German, a certain Professor Schwarz of the University of Moscow, introduced Rosicrucianism, which in Russia more than elsewhere soon turned into a secret movement for social reform. The Scottish chemist, John Robison, mixed in Masonic circles in St. Petersburg in the 1770's. He found Russian Masonry very different from the British in its commitment to a kind of world salvationism. One night, at midnight, according to Robison's own account, a strange Russian gave him custody of a locked box full of Masonic papers, and thereupon disappeared. Years later he opened it in Edinburgh; and it was from the contents of this box, and from reading the *Neueste Religionsbegebenheiten* published in Germany, that he learned of the Masonic plot for world revolution whose details he purported to reveal, in 1797, in his *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and reading societies*.⁶ Thus Russia in its turn exerted an influence in Western Europe.

It was in the Russian higher classes and literary circles that the impact of the French Revolution was most evident. So much has always been well known. The same circles had shown enthusiasm for the American Revolution also. Alexander Radishchev, when he published his *Voyage from St. Petersburg to Moscow* in 1790, included parts of the ode to liberty that he had written on America several years before; and the whole book was so outspoken in its picture of the brutalities that occurred under serfdom, and so unfavorable to Russian institutions of government, that Radishchev was exiled to Siberia, and is still regarded as the first modern Russian revolutionary. N. I. Novikov was active both in Masonry and in more public ways, editing journals for popular education, such as the *Village Inhabitant*, and helping to organize a public library in Moscow and a school for translators of foreign books. Censored in 1785, obliged to see his school closed in 1787, he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison in 1792. N. M. Karamzin was somewhat exceptional in that, after long travels in Europe, he began after returning home to publish idealized pictures of rural life and serfdom in Russia, for which, however, he was much criticized by more progressive members of the nobility.

Among the high-born who took a positive attitude to new ideas, if not to popular revolution, the most notable were Catherine II's two grandsons, the future tsar Alexander I and his brother Constantine. These two young men, at the ages of fifteen and thirteen, were heard to discourse on the abuses of "feudalism"; their tutor, the Swiss La Harpe, was ordered out of the country in 1794, and soon thereafter began to figure in the revolution in Switzerland.⁷ Among the nobility, the best known in this connection is Count Stroganov, one of the largest serf-owners in the empire, who as a young man went to Paris with his French tutor, Gilbert Romme. Stroganov belonged to the Paris Jacobin club in 1790, and after Stroganov's return to Russia Romme became a member of the National Convention, where he spoke up in favor of Condorcet's project for public education. When in

6 4th ed. (Edinburgh, 1798), 1-4. Whatever judgment may be made of his political opinions, Robison was a man of good repute and a credible witness on matters of his own biography, except as his memory may have betrayed him after so many years.

7 On La Harpe and Alexander see two articles by L. Mongeon in *Revue historique vaudoise* (1938), 83-102, 129-45.

1801 Stroganov became one of the circle of reformers about Tsar Alexander I he had not forgotten Romme and Condorcet; and the five new Russian universities created in 1804 embodied Condorcet's ideas.⁸ La Harpe also paid a visit to his former pupil in 1801; he now offered the experience of a Swiss revolutionary to the new Tsar who hoped to revolutionize his empire from above.

The penetration of French and revolutionary ideas into the Russian lower classes is insisted on by M. M. Shtrange, the most recent authority on the subject. It must be remembered that "lower" in Russian usage meant anything lower than the nobility; and the "low-born" intelligentsia were mainly middle-class people, though the number of educated and even intellectual serfs (usually belonging to humane families like the Stroganovs), while not large, was increasing. The evidence for this deeper social penetration of the new ideas is to be found in detailed examination of provincial periodicals, in police records on the circulation of forbidden materials, in the surviving caricatures and engravings showing sympathy for the French or dislike of aristocrats, in booksellers' catalogues, and in the perusal of books and pamphlets that have been forgotten because their authors were neither literary nor famous. For example, about 1793 a manuscript pamphlet circulated surreptitiously in Western Russia, called the *Gospel to the Russian Israel*. It declared for the rights of man, questioned the rights of property and of noble distinctions, urged that "all the Russian and Slavic peoples" should be freed from serfdom, and proposed that "all gentry, lords, counts and princes should be universally destroyed."⁹ As already mentioned, some 278 peasant uprisings were recorded officially in thirty-two *guberniyas* of the empire in the later 1790's.

This new insistence, in Soviet historical writing, on the penetration of French, Western, and revolutionary ideas into relatively popular levels tends to confirm, curiously enough, the observations made at the time by the French diplomatic observer, the much decried Edmond Genet. Genet, as French *chargé* and a nobleman himself, mixed readily in Russian court circles, though barred officially from Catherine's presence after the episode of Varennes, and ordered out of Russia in the summer of 1792. Genet was an enthusiast, but not a fool; he saw that all the talk of "liberty" that he heard among the Russian nobility might mean no more than the traditional palace revolution, and that many excited Russian aristocrats admired the Polish revolution more than the French, being more interested in powers for themselves than in rights for others. But Genet thought also, like Professor Shtrange, that the peasants were very restless, and that the growth of schools and of reading habits had created a class of people who "devour the news from France which is published fairly accurately in the Russian magazines." (He was writing in 1791, before the censorship tightened.) "There exists in this empire," reported Genet, "a real germ of democracy."¹⁰ Argument will fall on the dimensions of this "germ."

⁸ G. Vernadsky, "Reforms under Czar Alexander I: French and American Influences," in *Review of Politics* (1947), 47–52.

⁹ Shtrange, *Rev. fr. et soc. russe*, 196–97.

¹⁰ Genet to Montmorin, St. Petersburg, Nov. 8, 1791, in *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France . . . Russie* (Paris, 1890), II, 518–19.

Further evidence, more open to question, of the spread of unsettling ideas to lower and wider classes of people is furnished by the chorus of conservative writings that pointed to it with alarm. In this flood of literature (as in the corresponding literature of other countries) it was said that cities are parasitic, that city people are dangerous to society because peculiarly susceptible to delusions of equality, that the poor oppose the rich because of envy, and that partisans of new ideas are a half-educated rabble composed of cobblers and lawyers—all of whom looked alike from a social point of view sufficiently elevated. In a book published at St. Petersburg in 1793, called *Thoughts of an Impartial Citizen on the Stormy Changes in France*, concern is especially expressed that the “low-born” intelligentsia are a danger to Russia, since they agitate the whole “third estate.” The author sees a danger of international revolution: “The moral epidemic of our present century may have a more rapid success than the plague that ruined Constantinople, and quarantine will be necessary.”¹¹

Quarantine, indeed, became the watchword. Against what disease? It may be thought, since there was no real possibility of revolution in Russia, and no organized group working for it in any practical way, that the counter-excitement among Russian conservative interests was an outburst of hypocrisy and hysteria. It may be supposed that the idea of quarantine was misconceived, unless we see what it was really directed against. It was really directed against even moderate change—against even partial breaches in the system of serfdom, of noble ascendancy and of a conception of monarchy by which the monarchy should exist to protect these elements in the Russian way of life. Russians who favored even piecemeal changes usually favored the French Revolution. Those who opposed such changes not only opposed the French Revolution, but equated liberalization with revolution and idealized the existing order. They became fearful of secret societies, which did in fact exist and a few of which were subversive, and even were afraid of the public expression of thought, of discussion and disagreement, of news, facts, events in the outside world or contacts with it. The impact of the French Revolution in the 1790's, which in the United States helped to form merely a two-party system, laid the basis in Russia for both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary traditions.

Anti-revolutionism gathered strength and took many forms. Radishchev and Novikov were arrested. Genet and La Harpe were expelled. The assassination of the King of Sweden was attributed to Jacobin plotters. The stories and the theories of French émigrés congregating in St. Petersburg were accepted and publicized. Police action against secret societies and Masonic lodges became more intense; the arrests reached their height between 1793 and 1796. Censorship became more strict, and foreign books and periodicals were banned; the result was a greater circulation of an underground literature of disaffection, both native and foreign.

In the spring of 1792 St. Petersburg was gripped by the fear of an international revolutionary plot against all nobility and all monarchs, a plot in which Jacobins, Freemasons, Martinists, and devotees of occult societies everywhere were said to be involved, and of which the recent deaths of Gustavus III and Leopold II, the

11 Shtrange, 170–71. Where the French translation reads *classe intellectuelle roturière* I follow my assistant, Mr. Blackwell, in his rendering, “low-born intelligentsia.”

continuing revolution in Poland, and the French declaration of war upon Austria were supposed to be evidence. It was reported also that a Frenchman was heading for St. Petersburg with designs on the "health" of the empress.¹² It was at this time that Catherine II sent her army into Poland. She "would fight Jacobinism and beat it in Poland," according to her own comment to Baron Grimm.¹³ The ensuing Second Partition, and the replacement of the Polish constitution of 1791 by the counter-revolutionary constitution of 1793, have been described.

Poland, however, continued to be a center of infection from the point of view of East European conservatism. Indeed, what is generally called the "insurrection" led by Kosciuszko, in 1794, threatened to become more of a "revolution" than anything that Eastern Europe had thus far seen.

THE ABORTIVE POLISH REVOLUTION OF 1794

After the Second Partition the core of the old Poland, a region extending several hundred miles east from Warsaw and Cracow, was still left in existence as a supposedly independent state. Internally it was dominated by the counter-revolutionary party of Targowican Poles. The Russian army remained in occupation at Warsaw under General Ingelström. The new Poland was bound to Russia by a new treaty, which gave the right of entry to Russian troops, and allowed the Russian Empress "any degree of useful influence" that she might require.¹⁴

The treaty in a rough way resembled the agreements demanded by the French from their satellite republics after 1795. There was a significant difference in the relationship, however, suggesting a difference in the confidence felt by the greater power in its adherents. The French repeatedly urged the Batavian, the Cisalpine, and the Helvetic republics to maintain armed forces of their own. The Russians immediately began to impose a reduction of the Polish army. Even the Targowicans, the original pro-Russian group, objected to the new situation. They had an-

12 Shtrange, 125ff. It is a matter for conjecture why Shtrange, in describing this scare of April and May 1792, refrains from observing that it was exactly simultaneous with the Russian invasion of Poland.

13 Quoted by Lesnodorski, *Pologne au X^e Congrès*, 216.

14 The treaty is printed in Comte d'Angeberg (pseud. for L. Chodzko), *Recueil des traités, conventions et actes diplomatiques concernant la Pologne, 1762-1862* (Paris, 1862), 347-53. This collection is valuable also for including documents of importance for internal Polish affairs. See also the twenty-four documents printed as an appendix to Zajazek, *Histoire de la Révolution de Pologne par un témoin oculaire* (Paris, 1797). Zajazek (pseud. for Zajoncek) was one of Kosciuszko's chief military subordinates, and was a general in the French army from 1797 to 1814; he served under Bonaparte in Italy and in Egypt and was wounded at Smolensk and at the Beresina in 1812. The present section draws mainly on the important book of B. Lesnodorski, *Polscy Jakobini* (Warsaw, 1960), summarized in detail for me by Mr. André Michalski, and also on H. de Montfort, *Le drame de la Pologne: Kosciuszko, 1764-1817* (Paris, 1945). See also J. Grossbart, "La presse polonaise et la Révolution française," in *AHRF* (1937), 127-50, 241-56; (1938), 234-66. Many documents of the insurrection of 1794 have been published by the Polish Academy of Sciences, unfortunately for foreigners all in Polish: *Akty Powstania Kosciuszki*, 3 vols. (Cracow, 1918-1955). A recent historiographical survey of the whole period 1764-1795 is available in French: B. Lesnodorski, "Le siècle des lumières en Pologne: l'état des recherches dans le domaine de l'histoire politique, des institutions et des idées," in *Acta Poloniae historica*, IV (1961), 147-74.

ticipated neither the Second Partition nor the continued Russian control over what was left of the Polish state, and were increasingly ready, therefore, to take sides with those who had opposed Russia all along.

Many leaders of the defeated party, those who had produced and vainly defended the Constitution of 1791, fled from the country when the Russians came in. An important colony of émigrés formed at Dresden around Ignace Potocki and Hugo Kollontay. The latter, who has been called the Polish Robespierre, had long been active in the Polish Enlightenment and the Four Years' Diet; although himself born into the lesser gentry, he had been among the most vehement in insisting on rights for the burghers in 1791, and was even known to favor an eventual emancipation of the serfs. Other émigrés went to France, among them Thaddeus Kosciuszko. A professional soldier, Kosciuszko had spent seven years in the War of American Independence, after which he returned to Poland and played a secondary military role against the Russian invasion of 1792. He reached Paris in January 1793, at the moment of the execution of Louis XVI. In the following months, with the defection of Dumouriez and the Austrian invasion of France, he was unable to get more than verbal expressions of French sympathy. In fact, by its decrees of April and September the National Convention, as already explained, disavowed any program of "world revolution" that might be read into the so-called Propaganda Decrees of 1792. The fact that the Poles planned to avoid an attack upon Austria, since it had had no part in the Second Partition, made their enterprise of less interest to the French, for whom Austria was at the moment the most dangerous of their enemies.

Throughout 1793, with no loss of time, under the noses of the occupying authorities, a Polish resistance movement formed against them. It arose spontaneously in many places, in secret meetings of angry gentry in country houses, and in the clubs and discussion groups which still existed in Warsaw, where men of noble and burgher status could meet together. The Masonic lodges now proved convenient for this purpose also. The various groups established contact with each other and with the émigrés. Together they began to prepare an armed insurrection, for which they chose Kosciuszko as the leader.

General Ingelström, the Russian commander in Warsaw, obtaining a fragmentary knowledge of the conspiracy, attributed it to French machinations. He made some arrests and ordered the immediate disbandment of certain Polish regiments. The conspirators could wait no longer; they were counting on the organized Polish armed forces to take the first step in revolt; they were obliged to act before their plans were fully laid. Kosciuszko reached Poland early in 1794; and after an uprising at Cracow he was able to defeat a force of Russians at the neighboring village of Raclawice. Upon news of this victory, in April, revolts broke out elsewhere. At Vilna the movement was very strong. The leader, Jasinski, became the best known of Lithuanian "Jacobins," and in their act of adherence to Kosciuszko several hundred citizens of Vilna pledged their "lives and fortunes" to recover "the rights of liberty and equality."¹⁵ The most decisive events occurred in Warsaw. In this city of over 100,000 inhabitants thousands of civilians joined with soldiers in assaults on

15 Angeberg, 373.

the Russian troops, making the situation so intolerable for them that Ingelström left the city.

The question now faced by the leaders of the movement, as later by historians in their interpretation of it, was whether it was to be thought of as a war of independence or as a revolution. For Kosciuszko, the problem was to obtain maximum unity among Poles, to give the mass of the people something to fight for. He believed from the beginning that this meant the abolition of serfdom. But abolition of serfdom would offend many estate-owners, whose courage, military experience, and dedication to independence were also needed. If "unity" included the lower classes, the upper class would become disunited. If independence could be obtained only by revolution, some would lose interest in independence. And Polish historians have apparently been divided by the same issues, some preferring to see in the movement of 1794 little more than a national uprising against foreigners, while others find in it, in addition, an attempt to deal with class antagonisms, including serfdom, in Poland.¹⁶

In a rebellion against foreigners even the disillusioned Targowicians could now take part. Mainly, however, the division was within the ranks of the anti-Russians of 1792, those who had been the constitutionalists of 1791 and the mild "revolutionaries" of the Four Years' Diet. The Right in this group, in 1794, meant those who wished in getting rid of the Russians simply to restore and maintain the constitution of 1791. The Left were those who believed that, if anything at all were now to be accomplished, much more than what the constitution had envisaged would have to be done. These were the Polish "Jacobins." Since no Pole applied the word "Jacobin" to himself, the term is something of a misnomer, or a mere historian's expression taken over from counter-revolutionary polemics; but we may conclude, with Lesnodorski, that, since many kinds of people called themselves "patriots," and since there did exist a category of militant patriots who resembled those of Western Europe, the word "Jacobin" can be conveniently used as a name for them.¹⁷

The leader of the Right was none other than the king himself, the pathetic Stanislas Poniatowski, the patriot-king who had virtually written the constitution of 1791, and then been obliged under the most humiliating circumstances to disown it. After the revolt in Warsaw, Stanislas came out openly for the insurrection, hoping both to moderate it and to give it strength by contributing his prestige, which, however dulled, was still royal. Actually, since he had capitulated once before, in July 1792, his return to the patriot ranks inspired little confidence, and indeed aroused typical Jacobin fears of aristocratic conspiracy and royal betrayal. With the king stood various conservative nobles and well-to-do Warsaw burghers, who were ardently anti-Russian, but feared the effects of upheaval among the Polish masses. Friends of the lower classes reciprocated their distrust.

Most of the Polish Jacobins were of the class called noble in Eastern Europe: that is, they came from the middling and lesser landowning families, or from fami-

16 Lesnodorski, 28–86, gives an excellent account of the historiography, including a comment on the work of Jacques Godechot and myself, 83.

17 Lesnodorski, 7–27, has a full discussion of the term "Jacobin" as used in Poland, and an extensive treatment (239–61) of the changing meanings of other words in the Polish language (such as "revolution," "citizen," "people," etc.), summarized below.

lies that enjoyed noble status, but owned no land. Army officers, government employees, lawyers, university people, and others of the professions and the intelligentsia were overwhelmingly of this noble class, and many were "Jacobins" in 1794. Burghers were less numerous in Poland, and not all burghers in the Polish cities were actually Poles; but the Polish bourgeoisie had received important advantages from the Statute of Cities of 1791, which was part of the Constitution of the Third of May, so that the extinction of these gains, in the reaction of 1792 and 1793, left many burghers in a belligerent and angry mood, in which an aggressive Jacobinism was easily generated. The working classes took part only sporadically. On several occasions, in Warsaw, artisans, journeymen, and small shopkeepers demonstrated or fought in the streets, but they neither developed the organized means of action, nor enjoyed the sustained influence of the French sans-culottes whom as a class they resembled. The peasants contributed no initiatives of their own. We are warned by Lesnodorski against recent tendencies to exaggerate the plebeian element in Polish Jacobinism.¹⁸

After the Warsaw uprising a club was formed in the city, whose official name was Citizens Offering Aid and Service to the National Magistrates for the Welfare of the Country. Composed of leading patriots in the capital, it revived the club that had been active in 1791 and had disappeared in 1792–1793. It was, in fact, the "Jacobin" club, consciously modeling itself on the club in Paris which was then at its height. It conceived its function to be the surveillance of the new government, and the stimulation of political interest among the people. Moderate patriots feared that the club, by seeking retribution against Targowicans and traitors, would sow division among those now willing to fight against Russia. The king asked Kosciuszko, as recognized dictator, to disband it. It is significant that Kosciuszko concluded that he could not do so, that no dampening of the most ardent spirits was advisable in the circumstances, that what the country needed was precisely the excitement and determination that the club attempted to arouse.¹⁹

The abundant symbolism of the movement gives evidence of its numerical strength, of the emotional force behind it, and of its affinity to the upheaval in Western Europe. Altars of the fatherland were built, Phrygian caps were worn, and the all-seeing eye of Providence was represented in pictures. Civic hymns were composed and sung. There were new military and marching songs, but the present Polish national anthem, as will be seen, appeared two years later among the Polish Legion in Italy. The *Marseillaise* and the *Ça ira* were translated. Prints and caricatures likewise carried the message to those unable to read. In recent years a good deal of Polish Jacobin poetry has been rediscovered, published, commented on, and admired at least for its political content. One such poem, a *Catechism of Man*, expressed the attitude both to France and to the revolutionary triad:

France is our example,
 France will be our help;
 Let cries of Liberty and Equality

18 Lesnodorski, 27.

19 *Ibid.*, 165–81.

Resound everywhere.
 Let us follow in her footsteps . . .
 Let the nobles and lords disappear
 Who would deny Fraternity to the people.²⁰

Further symptoms of a deeper development may be seen in the changes of meaning of certain Polish words, changes such as were occurring in the West European languages also. In the older usage the Polish word for "citizen" (*obywatel*) had referred to nobles only, others being called "inhabitants." A different connotation had been implicit in the constitution of 1791, but it was only in 1794 that "citizen" was applied to virtually everyone. Formerly the "nation" had meant the gentry who sat in provincial diets and took part in political life. Townsmen and serfs had formed no part of this nation; the idea of burghers in the diet, in 1791, had come to many "gentlemen" literally as a shock. Now the "nation" came to signify the Polish people, defined not by linguistic or cultural lines, but as a civic community of harmoniously cooperating classes living under the same laws. The old expression, *pospolite ruszenie*, which had formerly meant the general call to arms of all nobles, now came to mean the *levée en masse*, or mass rising of the people. Such words as "people," "liberty," etc., underwent similar modifications. In this semantic transition, it was the Jacobins who used such words in their most extended and modern sense.

The impression can be ventured, for what it is worth, that "Jacobinism" or the democratic excitement in some parts of Poland, including Warsaw, though much briefer if only because soon repressed, compared in intensity with what happened in Holland beginning in 1795, and with what happened in northern Italy beginning in 1796. In some ways its intensity was greater. The Poles, in driving out the Russians and upsetting the Polish regime which the Russians sponsored, were the only people in Europe who effected so much of a revolution without French help. A furious vindictiveness against "traitors" showed itself also, when a mob broke into a Warsaw prison and hanged eight of the prisoners, six of whom had in fact collaborated with the Russians, including the prince-bishop of Vilna. Since Polish Jacobinism was simultaneous with the triumph in France of the *gouvernement révolutionnaire*, that is, since it came before Thermidor, much sympathy was expressed in Poland for Robespierre and for the Terror, matters which the post-Thermidorian Dutch, Italian, Swiss, and other democrats generally avoided as an embarrassment.

The requirements of a war against foreigners, with the need for a maximization of manpower, advanced the principle of equality in a way that was by no means unique for Poland. In France, it had been the war of 1792 that radicalized the Revolution, and the need of raising a citizen army that forced the leadership to make concessions to the lower classes; in America, in 1775, the upper-class colonial leaders, finding themselves at war with Britain, took steps to popularize their cause; and one recalls that few things have done as much for racial equality in the United States as the wars of the twentieth century. "We want to move the whole

20 *Ibid.*, 256, translated by A. Michalski.

nation," wrote a Polish diarist of the time, "and therefore an equal freedom is necessary for all classes of people."²¹

In Poland the main problem was serfdom. Kosciuszko, as military commander of the insurrection, vested in fact with the powers of a dictator, had to choose between Right and Left among his supporters—between a Right which said that peasant emancipation would create anarchy at an inopportune moment, and that the peasant question should be regulated after independence was won; and a Left which said that more equal rights for the peasant would never be granted at all after the crisis was passed, and that, in any case, independence could not be won unless the mass of the population was given reason to fight for it. Kosciuszko chose for the Left, pressed by such Jacobin advisers as Kollontay. On May 7, he issued, at his camp at Polaniec, the most memorable document of the abortive Polish revolution of 1794.

The Polaniec Proclamation, though it declared the serfs free, was nevertheless a compromise, by which it was hoped that serf-owners could maintain their zeal for the national movement. It called for a unity of all the people of Poland, blaming the long record of past disunity on the intrigues of foreign courts. If this was an exaggeration, it spared the sensibilities of the Polish nobles. "It is this day and this moment that we must seize with enthusiasm. The enemy deploys all his forces to make us fail. . . . Against this horde of frightened slaves we must set the imposing mass of free men. Victory, we may be sure, will go to those who fight in their own cause." Robespierre had said the same, in effect, on the preceding February 5.²²

Kosciuszko therefore declared as follows:

1. The people [including the peasants], by virtue of the law, enjoy the protection of the national government.
2. Every peasant is free in his person, and may live where he pleases—but must report his movements to the public authorities.
3. The days of labor owed by peasants to proprietors are reduced and regulated—in a complex way, with peasants owing six days a week now obliged only for four, and so in proportion for those owing less. . . .
5. Men who have been called up in the general levy [the *pospolite ruszenie* mentioned above] are exempted from labor service while under arms; they will not be obligated to it again until they return home.

Much else followed, including appeals to the peasants to continue faithfully at their labors, so that agricultural production could be maintained during the struggle. For the landlords it was revolutionary thus to emancipate their serfs. It was of revolutionary import however considered. If carried through, and reinforced by the rest of the Jacobin program, it might radically transform not only the labor arrangements but many aspects of class status and human relations in Poland. But for the peasants, or those of them who gave it thought, the proclamation seemed grudging and hedged about. It lacked the ringing appeal of true revolutionary dec-

²¹ *Ibid.*, 218.

²² The Polaniec Proclamation is printed in Angeberg, 373–79.

larations. It was too calculated and practical to fire anyone with a passion for combat and sacrifice, too tepid to ignite any mass upheaval.

Fighting against the Russians, and also the Prussians, begun in April, continued into the autumn. Only in a few localities did the peasantry take part. Nothing was created (nor could it have been in the circumstances) like the French citizen army which at the same moment was pushing the forces of the First Coalition back across the Rhine. Tens of thousands took to arms. But the insurrection remained mainly an operation conducted by nobles (it must be remembered that they formed a large proportion of the population) with support from the middle classes, with many Catholic clergy of the lower grades lending aid, and with some participation by non-Polish elements, including the Jews, who were exceptionally numerous in Poland. In the defense of Praga, across the river from Warsaw, a Jewish battalion took part, commanded by a Jewish merchant named Berek Joselewicz, who fled later to the Polish Legion in Italy, and died in 1809 in the service of Napoleon's Grand Duchy of Warsaw. There were many cases in Italy, Holland, and elsewhere of individual Jews favoring the new political order, but Poland seems to offer the only case of an organized Jewish body, and an armed one at that, acting in support of the eighteenth-century revolution.

The Poles made attempts to propagandize in neighboring countries. The Polish Jacobins, like those of France in 1792, entertained a generous hope for the liberation of mankind. They drew confidence in the strength of their own cause by identifying it with both the French and the American revolutions, as in the *Civic Sermons* of a certain priest, Father Florian Jelsky.²³ Kosciuszko himself, who was not a Jacobin but inclined in that direction, believed that the liberation of Russia might be a necessary prerequisite to freedom in Poland. Emissaries were sent to Hungary, where opposition to the Hapsburgs was chronic, and where a Jacobin conspiracy was discovered in July 1794. Revolutionary literature was translated into Russian and German, and used to subvert the enemy armies. The national insurrection, and the revolutionary agitation which accompanied it, communicated itself to the former parts of Poland which the Russian and Prussian monarchies were barely beginning to organize after the Second Partition. Unrest spread even to Silesia, which had belonged to Prussia for fifty years.

There can be no doubt that Poland was a menace to the three eastern monarchies as they then existed, more of a menace even than distant France. Even a restored Constitution of 1791 might cause restlessness in Breslau, Lemberg, or Prague. A successfully established civil community on a Jacobin model might have less appeal; but the mere mention of the abolition of serfdom was enough to annoy landlords all over Eastern Europe; it might set a bad example for peasants everywhere, and remind those of Bohemia and Hungary of what they had won and lost under Joseph II; it might even infect the enlisted ranks of the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian armies. The governments of these empires were not mistaken in the belief that the new Poland was a country they could not live with, at least without some modification in their own.

23 Lesnodorski, 210, 278.

The denunciations of Jacobinism in Poland were no mere high-sounding justifications for territorial ambition. They did indeed serve that purpose. But when we find the rulers of Russia and Prussia expressing their dread of Jacobinism in Poland, not only in public to the world at large, or to the British government, but privately to their own confidential and trusted servants, we have more reason to accept such sentiments as genuine. "I feel keenly," wrote the King of Prussia to his ambassador at Vienna, referring to the insurrection in Poland, "how essential it is to crush in its germ this new and dangerous revolution, which touches so closely on my own states, and which is also the work of that diabolical sect against which a majority of the powers have combined their efforts."²⁴ And Catherine II wrote to Marshal Suvorov that, "for the good of Russia and the entire North [as much of Eastern Europe was then called] she had to take arms against the wanton Warsaw horde established by French tyrants."²⁵

The military power of the Russians and Prussians soon prevailed. In October Kosciuszko lost the battle of Maciejowice. He was taken prisoner, but soon managed to flee with his friend Niemcewicz to America, where Niemcewicz lived for years with an American wife in New Jersey. Hugo Kollontay, after desperate last-minute efforts to arouse the peasants by adding redistribution of land to emancipation, was also captured, and spent several years in prison in Austria.

Suvorov, fresh from the wars against the Turks, on November 3 occupied Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, and, though the battle and the whole war were decided, allowed his troops to slaughter six thousand civilians crowded against the river in full sight of the inhabitants of the capital. Polish nationalists long remembered this dénouement as a "massacre." On the same day the claimant to the throne of France, Louis XVIII, having received news at Verona of Kosciuszko's defeat by the Russian General Fersen, wrote humorously to a feminine correspondent: "I should like to establish a chair for professors of anti-republicanism in some university, and make this General Fersen the first incumbent."²⁶ The three monarchies moved in and effectuated the Third Partition. That was the end of Poland, and of revolutionary threats in Eastern Europe—for a long time.

The failure of the Polish effort in 1794 has been attributed to many causes, of which the overwhelming might and the mutual rivalries of the surrounding powers would not be the least. The misfortune of Poland, however, lay in its internal divisions, which no institutional superstructure had been devised to overcome. There were ethnic divisions, whereby in large parts of the country only the ruling nobles were Polish, divisions and rivalries within the large and scattered Polish nobility, divisions between classes, and especially between free men and serfs. Given these circumstances, it was probably true that national independence could not be maintained without some kind of internal revolution. But the same internal divisions made successful revolution impossible. It was the tragedy of the Poles, in

24 Quoted by Lesnodorski in *Pologne au X^e Congrès*, 216.

25 Quoted by P. K. Alefrenko in *Istoricheskiye Zapiski* (1947), 236.

26 See Montfort, *Drame de la Pologne*, p. 246 for the slaughter at Praga, and p. 242 for Louis XVIII's letter. General Fersen, of the nobility of the Baltic provinces of Russia, was unrelated to Axel de Fersen.

the 1790's, that, to exist as a state at all, they had to challenge, without hope of success, the social order of Eastern Europe.

It is well to give attention to what succeeded, rather than to what failed. The three eastern monarchies, in annexing their several portions of Poland, established a mutual interest in the continuing repression of revolution. They committed their own survival to the exclusion of "Western" ideas. In the long run, they only became the more susceptible to collapse in the twentieth century. In the short run, certain features of the European scene that are often dated from the Congress of Vienna can be more justly dated from the 1790's. In a way not true of preceding centuries, a chasm between Eastern and Western Europe had opened up—between a West that had been animated by "Jacobinism" and an East which, in repressing Jacobinism so successfully, became timorous and immobile, fearful of the future, and afraid of the modern world. This development was furthered by what happened in the Hapsburg empire.

AGITATIONS IN THE HAPSBURG EMPIRE

It has often been observed, since Pascal's remark on Cleopatra's nose, that in human affairs, unlike the world of physical objects, causes and effects and other relationships may be fantastically disproportionate. The reminder is useful in approaching the Danubian countries. In Vienna and its appertaining duchies, and in the Kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, we enter a world with a character its own, in which, if a select few responded to the music of Mozart, the surrounding atmosphere was a kind conveyed in later times by the ideas of Graustark, Dracula, and the Orient Express. In the division between noble landowner and agricultural serf, the empire resembled other parts of Eastern Europe, but Italian connections were strong (Leopold II had spent most of his life as grand duke of Tuscany, where his son Francis II had grown up), and above all it was the German influence that predominated. The higher government was more German than anything else, and the towns also were mainly German, from Bohemia through Hungary into the elbow of Transylvania, where Klausenburg (the modern Cluj) and Kronstadt (the modern Brasov) remained German after a period of settlement longer than the entire history of the United States. Neither the Czechs nor the Hungarians had yet developed a literary language, and they depended on German; but the Hungarian nobles, many of whom knew little else, actually spoke and wrote Latin as a common medium of expression, like the Poles a generation or two before. It was a world in which German Masonic lodges became even more occult and mysterious, where popular religion tended to weirdness and disguised Jesuits could really exist, where hidden revolutionaries conspired with a minimum of political purpose, and a truly secret police pursued its habits of intrigue. It was a region not easy to understand for anyone accustomed to French rationality or Anglo-Saxon common sense.²⁷

27 For the Hapsburg empire see, in addition to items by Benda and Mejdrica in note 1 of the present chapter, E. Wangermann, *From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials: Government Policy and Public*

Three points must be made. First, there was a good deal of basic disaffection in these Hapsburg countries in the 1790's. Second, Jacobin conspiracies were formed in Vienna and Hungary in 1794. Third, it was an extreme form of socio-political conservatism that won out. The three stood in no proportionate relationship to each other. The Jacobin conspiracies were fairly insignificant. Contrived by handfuls of intelligentsia, they were far from reflecting the broad discontents that were real enough. Among historians there have been attempts, on the Left, to set up the Jacobins of 1794 as spokesmen of a latent revolutionism, or predecessors of the revolution of the twentieth century, and, on the Right, to suggest that because the conspiracies were small and ineffectual there was little real dissatisfaction in the empire. The repressiveness that came to prevail was also out of proportion to any danger posed by the Jacobin plots. It might logically seem, therefore, that the repressiveness was hypocritical or hysterical, or that the social order of the Hapsburg empire was threatened by nothing at all. None of these allegations seems to be true. Pascal's principle of disproportion may save us from the errors of misplaced logic.

What happened was a continuation, very much accentuated by the war against France, of the conflict described in the first part of this book, between the attempted revolution from above under Joseph II and the aristocratic counter-attack that gathered strength during the reign of his brother, Leopold II.

Dissatisfaction was to be found among both burghers and peasants. The nobles also had their grievances against a government that had undertaken so many reforms, especially in Hungary, where the lesser Magyar nobility had developed a strong nationalistic feeling against the Hapsburg court. A further source of unrest lay in the Protestant minorities of Hungary and Bohemia, which had been reduced to inferior status by the Catholic triumphs of the Counter Reformation; in Hungary the Protestants might be relatively enlightened burghers, but in Bohemia they included many rude country people subject to queer notions of what happened in the outside world.

There had been a mass peasant rebellion in Hungary as recently as 1790 and in Bohemia as recently as 1775.²⁸ Government and landowners rightly feared renewed outbreaks. For the most part the middle class townspeople, radically set apart from the peasants by language and culture, and debarred from common interests with them because unable to own rural land, were as horrified as their social superiors by such nameless stirrings of thousands of Calibans. The peasants, however, were not totally isolated. In Hungary there is evidence that Leopold II himself stirred up rural protest, as part of his campaign against the Magyar nobles. News of the French Revolution reached the villages. As elsewhere, priests or

Opinion in the Habsburg Dominions in the Period of the French Revolution (Oxford, 1959); Denis Silagi, *Ungarn und der geheime Mitarbeiterkreis Kaiser Leopolds II* (Munich, 1960) and *id.*, *Jakobiner in der Habsburger-Monarchie: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des aufgeklärten Absolutismus in Österreich* (Vienna and Munich, 1962); and parts of F. Valjavec, *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland, 1770-1815* (Munich, 1951).

28 For the Hungarian peasant rising of 1790 see 488. The present paragraph draws on K. Mejdrička's two articles, "Les paysans tchèques et la Révolution française" in *Annales hist. de la Rev. fr.*, No. 154 (1958), 64-74, and "Die Jakobiner in der tschechischen öffentlichen Meinung" in W. Markov, *Robespierre* (Berlin, 1958), 423-39, and on F. Kutnar, "La critique de la Rev. fr. dans les brochures tchèques d'alors," in *Le Monde slave*, 1 (1935), 131-58.

tavern-keepers read aloud from newspapers to their illiterate neighbors. What the peasants talked about was less the declared principles of the new France than the fact that in France peasants had revolted, and that seigneurial dues and tithes had been done away with. Peasants of the Hapsburg countries had been made conscious of their even heavier burdens, especially the labor service or *robot* that might be as much as six days a week, by the attempts of Maria Theresa and Joseph II to bring it under regulation. They knew about Joseph II's granting of personal freedom. Agrarian discontent was directed against immediate and visible targets—nobles, burghers, churchmen, and Jews—but seldom against the Emperor, who was seen as the loving father of his people. The feeling was confused and amorphous; after the war began it was said that the French would come someday, bringing liberation; but there were also Biblical prophecies and visions to the same effect; and it was thought also, in some quarters, that Joseph II was not really dead, and would return. The peasants objected both to conscription and to the war against France. There was a near revolt in 1797, when a group led by Protestant sectaries conspired to evade military service; in this case, somewhat exceptionally, a Slovakian burgher named Michal Blazek was involved, and was found to have Latin and Hungarian pamphlets originating with the Hungarian Jacobins in his possession. The peasants expected more from the Directory than from previous French regimes, being more aware of its military successes than of its “bourgeois” character. The Austrian general, the Archduke Charles, sojourning on his Bohemian estates in 1800, declared that nine-tenths of the people wanted the French to arrive. “In the country they all say: let them come and we will kill the lords and pay no more. In the towns they all say: let them come and occupy Vienna so that we can have peace.”²⁹ In the following years there continued to be sympathy for Napoleon, who, according to some, was really the avenging son of Joseph II.

In Bohemia practically everyone of the literate classes was afraid of the peasants, and an active counter-revolutionary literature developed, replete with the niceties of argument of Edmund Burke, whose *Reflections* were read in Gentz's German translation. Existing society was said to be natural, necessary, and organic, and the ideas of the French Revolution were described as abstract and mechanical. The Revolution itself was attributed to ambitious upstarts, and to the machinations of secret societies. A certain Cornova, who was both an ex-Jesuit and a Freemason, wrote a history of insurrection in Bohemia to show how all classes suffered alike. Peasants were wrong to be so chronically discontented, said a theology professor at Prague, because they had the happiness of living close to nature. They were mistaken, said a writer named Vivak, in expecting anything of the French, who, if they came, would bring nothing but desolation, barbarity, and atrocity. The frequency with which these writings justified the *robot*, as a mere legitimate return on property, suggests how heavily it was under fire.

The Czech national revival was then barely beginning, and its spokesmen feared that disputes over social problems would interfere with the national movement. One of its leaders, V. M. Kramerius, edited the first successful popular journal in the Czech language. He gave detailed attention to the French Revolution, but his

29 Quoted by Mejdricka in *AHRF*, *loc. cit.*, 72.

purpose was to present it as sinister and destructive. He made no mention of the abolition of seigneurial dues, but dwelt on the downtrodden state of peasants in France, besides whom, he declared, the Bohemian peasant lived as a veritable "count." He developed a kind of demographic theory of the Revolution: France in the eighteenth century had become overpopulated; and its National Assembly, having purposely decided to conquer territory in Europe, had invented slogans of liberty and equality to soften up neighboring peoples for subjugation.³⁰

The upper classes of the towns had reasons for looking on events in France with favor. In Hungary they were very weak. In Bohemia their voice was muted by ethnic fears and problems; but it seems significant that the only literate Bohemian known to have strongly sympathized with the French Revolution was a banker, J. F. Opiz, who in his private correspondence expressed the hope that the French would defeat the Coalition and justified the Reign of Terror.³¹ In the solidly German areas the position of the burghers was less precarious. A certain political consciousness developed at Vienna. It included a class consciousness, which the program of Joseph II had done much to arouse. Mozart thought himself as good as any count, and he approved of the social message of Beaumarchais' *Marriage of Figaro* when he set it to music. As early as 1790 his librettist, da Ponte, was ordered out of the country, with a number of other Italians and Frenchmen, whose views were thought unsuitable by the police. The governments of Joseph and Leopold, the examples of "enlightened despotism" *par excellence*, intended to keep careful rein over the privileged classes and so were willing to equalize the status of peasants and burghers within certain limits; but it was no part of their program to do away with nobility itself, and still less to surrender any authority. Non-nobles, however, especially among intellectuals, journalists, and government officials in the capital, were beginning to outgrow the mere paternalism of enlightened despotism, to demand more latitude for expression, discussion, and debate, more freedom from censorship and from guidance by the police, more opportunity in their careers and even more of a role in decisions affecting taxation, foreign policy, and war. The idea got abroad that absolutism should be checked, not merely by the privileged classes, the nobility, and the prelates—the old idea in the Hapsburg empire as elsewhere—but also by persons of suitable substance who did not happen to belong to "the aristocracy."³²

It was discontent among nobles that any monarchy viewed with really serious concern. Leopold II, on coming to the throne in 1790, had found the nobilities of his duchies and kingdoms in a state of rebellion, in consequence of Joseph's reforms of serfdom and his movements toward equality of legal penalties and taxation. The years beginning with 1790 were a time of revival of the traditional constitutionalism, that is, of the powers of the diets as against the ruler. These diets were bodies of nobles. In part because of religious troubles two centuries before, and in part because of agrarian predominance in the society, the burghers had long

30 On Kramerius see Mejdricka in Markov, *Robespierre*, 426–30, and Kutnar, 135.

31 Mejdricka in Markov, 435–38.

32 Wangermann, *From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials*, 5–35. For the state of political feeling in Vienna see also W. C. Langsam, "Emperor Francis II and the Austrian 'Jacobins,'" in *American Historical Review*, L (1945), 471–90.

ago been excluded. In the diet of Bohemia no city was represented except Prague. In the lower house of the Hungarian parliament only one person represented all the towns of Hungary. In the estates of Styria one person spoke for all the towns of that duchy, and cast one vote. In such conditions even the Polish constitution of 1791 might seem attractive to the bourgeoisie. The Styrian burghers were the most successful in their protests, because they were able in a measure to make common cause with the peasantry; and they could do this the more readily because the duchy was ethnically homogeneous, town and country alike being German. In Styria, Leopold ordered the representation of the Third Estate raised from one to ten. On the whole, the revival of the diets marked a victory for aristocratic counter-revolution in the Hapsburg empire.³³

On the aims and personality of Leopold II there has been much discussion, because he made it a matter of policy to be devious. The best explanation is that he continued to represent, like his brother Joseph, the idea of revolution from above.³⁴ As Emperor, he favored for the whole empire the kind of modernization for which he had worked for many years as Grand Duke of Tuscany, and was therefore in conflict with the aristocratic, privileged, ecclesiastical, and particularistic forces in his dominions. But his position was complicated by the fact that he came into conflict with "democratic" forces also. It was not only that political journalism and criticism of government were developing in Vienna. There seemed also to be an international secret democratic conspiracy against all kings, himself included. In June 1790, as already noted in Chapter XVII, Leopold received word from the elder Metternich at Coblenz, a gathering-place of French émigrés, that a *club de propagande* was at work in Paris to bring about revolution in other countries. The idea of a great secret international Jacobin conspiracy began to spread. It had been launched by a fabrication of the royalist Comte d'Antraigues. Even the astute Leopold II, with his supposed Italian cunning, did not altogether see to the bottom of these intrigues, or perceive that the idea of a great democratic conspiracy was actually only another weapon in the hands of his real adversaries, the aristocratic and privileged classes. He began to take steps for a quarantine against the revolutionary contagion. In his Declaration of Pillnitz he spoke of intervention in France under certain conditions. This trend of his policy met with opposition among his own subjects. In Austria as elsewhere many enlightened middle-class people, not to mention the peasants, disapproved of interference with the French Revolution, and of the war against it which might result.

Leopold, beset on all sides, both by aristocrats and by democrats, built up his own network of secret agents. It was largely from the personnel of this network that both the Austrian and the Hungarian "Jacobins" were to arise.³⁵ In part the secret police watched over democrats; they censored newspapers, and expelled

³³ See pages 490–91, above.

³⁴ Here I follow D. Silagi (note 27 above) and A. Wandruszka, "Die Persönlichkeit Kaiser Leopolds II," in *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 192 (1961), 295–317; Wangermann and certain writers of the Left are less inclined to credit Leopold's commitment to a "democratic" revolution from above against the *Ständestaat*.

³⁵ This point, though not unknown before, is developed with new evidence, and with a new fullness and significance, in the two books by Silagi mentioned in note 27 above.

troublesome foreigners like da Ponte. Mainly, however, under Leopold as under Joseph, the secret police was an agency of the enlightened and reforming state. The weakness of enlightened despotism was that its reforms could be carried through only by bureaucrats; and that the bureaucrats were overwhelmingly drawn from the very privileged classes whose privileges enlightened despotism sought to reduce. Bureaucrats and officials were therefore often slow in the carrying out of their orders. The main task of Leopold's secret police was the surveillance of the bureaucracy itself.

The point is illustrated by Leopold's dealings with L. A. Hoffmann, editor of the *Wiener Zeitschrift*.³⁶ Hoffmann knew a great deal about the more recondite branches of Masonry, including its offshoot the Illuminati, who had been defunct for several years. Their machinations, he claimed, were the true cause of the French Revolution. He was willing enough, however, to see such methods employed to advance the Revolution from Above. Under Leopold's instructions, he began in 1791 to organize an Association with a hierarchy of four levels of secrecy. The lowest "secret" was to combat the French Revolution, to inculcate obedience in the people, and obtain "a more secure balance between moderate monarchism and democracy." The next higher secret was to oppose "aristocracy" so far as it obstructed the plans of the government. The "highest secret" was to bring the crown prince, Francis II, to these views; and the top secret of all, the *allergeheimster Zweck*, was to exert an influence on foreign states. In the whole program, and especially in the idea of propagandizing in foreign countries, Leopold and Hoffmann proposed to do precisely what they imputed (perhaps "projected" is the modern psychologist's term) to the leaders of the Revolution in France. It was the second level of secrecy that was closest to Leopold's continuing interests—the campaign against "aristocracy" within his own empire. He hoped to strengthen the bureaucracy whose inadequacy had caused the failure of Joseph's plans; to infiltrate the government service with secret members of his Association, men known only to each other, a disciplined elite with shared ideas, responding to confidential directives, inspecting, reporting on, and driving forward the ordinary employees of government; working, in short, for a Revolution from Above, and in effect realizing what the Illuminati had vainly dreamed of. Hoffmann managed to recruit various persons for the Association, including several professors and a Hanoverian doctor, J. G. R. Zimmermann, who was a personal physician to the King of England. But Leopold died before the Association could be really formed, and with his death it was forgotten.

Meanwhile the ordinary police pursued similar aims. If by "Jacobins" in Austria and Hungary are meant the conspirators of 1794, then the most notable of them originated in the secret police under Leopold II in 1790 and 1791, and not merely because of a taste for conspiratorial action, but because there was in fact an affinity between the Revolution from Above and straight revolutionism, or between enlightened despotism and "Jacobinism," in that both found their enemies in the nobility and in the prelates of the church. It was possible, therefore, for a man of some principle both to work for the police under Leopold and to conspire against his successor. But among those whose services the police accepted were also vari-

36 Silagi, *Ungarn*, 108–16, 128–31.

ous opportunists and adventurers. The most extreme of these was Ignaz Martinovics, who ended his life as the chief Hungarian Jacobin.

Both the actual facts of Martinovics' career, and the wild imaginings which he declared to be true, suggest a wonderland in which the difference between probable and improbable has disappeared.³⁷ Born in Hungary of Serbian background, trained for the church but a declared atheist, at one time the friend of the Polish patriot Ignace Potocki, for several years professor of natural sciences at Lemberg, by his own avowal a philosopher of international repute, but pronounced incompetent by the faculty at Budapest after deliberate consideration, Martinovics was pretty clearly a megalomaniac and pathological liar, who in 1791 began to work for the Vienna police. He became the panegyrist of Leopold II, and, as such, in denouncing the resistance of privileged bodies, could even say a good word for the French Revolution;³⁸ but mostly he spied on the disaffected Hungarian nobles, and submitted reports on revolutionary conspirators. In these reports, unlike those of the Abbé Barruel a few years later drawn from somewhat similar sources, numerous Jesuits and high-churchmen were as dangerous as Freemasons and Illuminati. The Belgian van Eupen, for example, a canon of the cathedral at Antwerp, was a real person and a real intriguer, one of the Statist party in the Austrian Netherlands, and a confirmed clerical reactionary. His name haunts Martinovics' pages as that of an incorrigible revolutionary, endlessly scheming against the Hapsburgs Joseph and Leopold. It is doubtful that Leopold's police believed much of the phantasmagoria that Martinovics submitted to them. Who could believe, even in Europe in 1792, that a combination of Jesuit theocrats, Illuminati, Freemasons, the Abbé Maury, itinerant Poles, and subversive Americans was at work to overthrow kings, priests, and aristocrats, turn the Holy Roman Empire into a republic, give all Europeans equal access to India, introduce Cagliostro's projects at Rome, where the papacy would disappear, and "put all states on the footing of North America"?³⁹

THE JACOBIN CONSPIRACIES AT VIENNA AND IN HUNGARY, 1794

Leopold II died in March 1792. His successor, Francis II, though more conservative and aristocratic in his sympathies than his father, was a young man of more

37 On Martinovics see Silagi, *Jakobiner*, 65–86 ff.; but I am especially indebted to an unpublished senior thesis at Princeton University, by Peter Kenéz, "The Conspiracy of the Intellectuals: the Hungarian Jacobin Movement" (1960), which draws on the documents published by K. Benda, *A magyar jakobinus mozgalom iratai*, 3 vols. (Budapest, 1952–1957). This work is edited in Hungarian, but many of the documents are in German and Latin.

38 "Oratio pro Leopoldo II," Benda, I, 559. Here *tota Europa* admires the "metamorphosis" in France against "magnates and monopolists," but about the same time (Benda, 575), Martinovicz expressed to Leopold the more characteristic attitude of supporters of enlightened absolutism: "The Americans and the French made good laws through bloody upheavals, but Your Majesty, without any revolution, has made laws which the learned world marvels at, and humanity adores."

39 Martinovicz' reports to the police chief Gotthardhi, Benda, I, 440–507 and 787–89. The quotation is from 788.

straightforward personal character, and disapproved of using police spies in the same way. War with France began in the following month. The war was not popular in many middle-class and intellectual quarters. To support it, Francis II had to rely on the aristocracy of his empire. Anti-French and anti-Revolutionary propaganda increased. Men who had worked for Leopold's police found themselves distrusted, rejected, or unemployed. In addition, as concessions to the aristocracy and to political churchmen multiplied, and as a clamorous conservative ideology became dominant, people who supported the progressive programs of Joseph and Leopold—the so-called Josephinists of Austrian history—became increasingly frustrated. Two years passed, and in the spring of 1794 the French armies were victorious in Belgium, and the Poles under Kosciuszko seemed on the point of victory also. It was in these circumstances of frustration suddenly buoyed up by hope that the Jacobin conspiracies took form in Vienna and Hungary.

The Vienna conspiracy amounted to very little. The accomplices had casual contacts with the burghers of Styria but none with the peasantry or with the simultaneous conspiracy in Budapest. Nor did they have any ties with France. No Frenchman was ever found in any contact with either the Austrian or the Hungarian "Jacobins."

At Vienna the conspiracy began when an emissary of Kosciuszko, Count Soltyk, came to Austria to seek support for the Poles. He met a Protestant pastor named Held, who introduced him to a former army officer named Hebenstreit. Hebenstreit had worked for the police under Leopold, and was at odds with the reigning society at Vienna. He in fact hoped that the French would win the war. He was also something of an inventor, who had developed a new contrivance for defense against cavalry. He put his idea at the disposal of Soltyk, who sent it on to Kosciuszko, and who also, at Hebenstreit's insistence, provided the money for Held to make a secret trip to Paris to offer this military invention to the French. Held made the trip, successfully passing through the enemy lines and reaching Paris; but the Committee of Public Safety, far from welcoming either the invention or the approaches of an Austrian revolutionary society, put Held under arrest as a suspicious enemy alien. Meanwhile, in Vienna, his associates met in small discussion groups and circulated literature hardly aimed at the lower classes, since Paine's *Rights of Man* was passed around in French, and one of Hebenstreit's contributions, a long poem called *Homo hominibus*, was written in Latin. More popular pamphlets were composed by Andreas Riedel, former professor of mathematics, former tutor to Francis II, and former agent of Leopold's police.⁴⁰

The conspiracy in Hungary had more roots. Here, as in Poland, a national feeling gave body to a potential movement of political revolution. The small nobles or gentry were especially restless, regarding the higher and more cosmopolitan aristocracy, the magnates and prelates, as sold out to the court of Vienna. They blamed the Hapsburg government for its trend to centralization and Germanization, and above all for its attempts to interfere with their free control over their serfs. The

⁴⁰ Wangermann, 132–38. For an unflattering picture of the personalities involved see also Silagi, *Jakobiner*, 161 ff. Excerpts from three of Riedel's writings are published in the appendix to Valjavec, *Entstehung*.

makings existed here for a national revolution of marked conservative and agrarian social content.

There were also smaller groups, with very different objectives, who favored reform and Westernization in Hungary. Intellectuals, lawyers, government employees, they regarded the Magyar nobility as backward and narrowly selfish; most of them were themselves nobles (since the noble class in Hungary was far more numerous than the burghers), but some were from the towns, and some were Protestants. (The names are known of about 700 Hungarian Protestants who attended German and Swiss universities in the half-century after 1750.) In the 1780's these men supported Joseph II, and from 1790 to 1792 some of them worked for the government or the secret police under Leopold. The accession of Francis II, and the beginning of war with France, for the first time estranged many of them from the authorities at Vienna. Some were not estranged, but remained faithful to the idea of imperial centralization; this was especially true of non-Magyars such as Samuel Kohlmayer, a lawyer from an old German burgher family in Pest. Kohlmayer disliked the Magyar nobility, suspected Hungarian nationalism, joined Leopold's secret police, wanted immediate abolition of serfdom, and was generally more radical than those who turned Jacobin. Ethnic Hungarians who shared Kohlmayer's anti-aristocratic views found it easier to cut the tie with Vienna. For example, Kohlmayer's friend, Joseph Hajnoczy, the son of a Calvinist minister, was able, thanks to Joseph II's policies, to become the first non-noble to hold the office of vice-sheriff in a Hungarian county. He lost it in the aristocratic reaction after Joseph's death, which was unfavorable both to non-nobles and to Protestants. He became the leading non-noble among the Hungarian Jacobins, most of whom, as already said, were of the noble or gentry class themselves.

To a larger mass of Hungarian nobles, who were hostile to the Hapsburg dynasty anyway, were therefore added smaller circles who turned against it because they opposed the increasingly aristocratic trend of its policies. Together they formed an incipient party of Hungarian revolution and independence. They expressed their feelings in clubs and reading societies, and in demonstrations of enthusiasm for France and its revolution. They read and translated the Paris *Moniteur*. They sang the *Ça ira* and translated the Marseillaise into Latin, Hungarian, and Slovakian.⁴¹ Ferenc Szentmarjay, well known as one of the creators of the Hungarian written language, made the first Hungarian translation of Rousseau's *Social Contract* (which had been known in Latin before); in doing so, he designed the modern Hungarian terms for *citoyen*, *peuple*, *souveraineté*, *égalité*, etc. Revolutionary tracts appeared in Serbo-Croatian, and at the University of Zagreb the students affected short Jacobin haircuts and planted a liberty tree in 1794 at the time of the French victories, nailing the words "Liberty and Equality" to its trunk. When French prisoners of war were brought to Hungary for internment, Hungarian sympathizers flocked to meet them. Szentmarjay traveled fifty miles to see these Frenchmen, embraced a few of them, it is said, with tears in his eyes, and obtained from them a small tricolor which he kept as a kind of idol, allowing others to see it only if they would kneel before it in reverence.

41 Benda, I, 1,049-54.

For the Vienna government these widespread agitations, at the least, were a serious handicap to its war effort, and, at the most, a threat to the continuation of Hungary in the Hapsburg empire. The police therefore infiltrated the excited Francophiles. Among their operatives was Martinovics, who managed to retain his position after Leopold's death. It is clear from the documents published by Kalman Benda that Martinovics, in 1793, was a double or triple agent. He simultaneously spied and reported for the police, and moved as a comrade among the revolutionary group, or rather the two groups, the conservative and nationalist nobles, and the more radical political ideologists. In 1794, as his position with the police became more uncertain, and with what seemed to be the great revolutionary victories in France and Poland, Martinovics went over, at least temporarily, to the revolution in Hungary. Making use of a genuine movement that he had in no sense created, and taking advantage of men like Hajnocy and Szentmarjay, men of far more character and principle than himself, he began to organize an actual rebellion against Vienna. He impressed his Hungarian friends, most of whom were fairly unsophisticated, by boasting of his important connections in France with the Committee of Public Safety. Actually he had no such connections. The revolutionary government in France had nothing to do with the projected revolution in Hungary.

Facing the fact that there were two kinds of potential revolutionaries in Hungary, the nationalist aristocratic and the equalitarian Jacobin, Martinovics brought to the problem a simple solution. He organized not one secret society but two: one for the nobles, and one for persons who did not believe in nobility. The former he called the Society of the Reformers of Hungary; the latter, the Society of Liberty and Equality. As a revolutionary tactician, he devised an expedient unparalleled in the eighteenth century for its "realism," except in the plans of Babeuf: one society should have no inkling of the other's existence; its members, having joined in the revolution and served their purpose, should later simply be liquidated. It was the noble society of Reformers who were thus marked in Martinovics' plan for extinction. When Hajnocy and some of the democrats protested, they were told that such methods were necessary. The idea was not new to Martinovics in 1794; in his wild fabrications, he had accused the Jesuits of a similar manipulation three years before.

For each society he wrote a separate call to arms, or a kind of prospectus in question-and-answer form which he entitled a "catechism."⁴² Both breathed a savage hatred of kings and priests, but it is the differences that are of most interest, and which serve to identify the two kinds of revolutionary spirit in Hungary. The tone of the catechism addressed to the noble Reformers was that of long-standing national opposition to the Hapsburgs, reinforced by the more recent note of a highly inflamed resistance to the innovations of the tyrant, Joseph II. The nobles were led to expect a future aristocratic republic without king or taxes, in which "equality" meant the equality of gentry with great magnates, who together would

42 These are translated in full by R. R. Palmer and Peter Kenez, "Two Documents of the Hungarian Revolutionary Movement of 1794," in *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XX (1961), 423-42. The original texts, in Latin and Hungarian respectively, are in Benda, I, 1,002-36.

remain the sole owners of rural land, after acquiring all the properties of the church, and would continue to enjoy the forced labor of their peasants under the "feudal system." In this catechism the war with France was deplored because it had let democratic ideas seep into Hungary, and because, if the French won, "nobility perishes." The catechism written for the Society of Liberty and Equality was of a contrary tenor. Addressed to men without experience or institutional connection with each other, widely departing from the traditions of the Hungarian diet and constitution, it moved on a level of high-flying philosophy, elucidating the nature of "man" and "reason"; but it also denounced the evils of serfdom, it referred to the "feudal system" as "awful," and it expressed contempt for all nobles, who were portrayed as brutal and vicious. France was pointed to as a model to emulate.

Both catechisms issued a ringing summons to rebellion. For the democratic Society for Liberty and Equality the call was "To arms, citizens! Let us swear freedom or death!" Such was the formula of the French Revolution. But for the noble Society of Reformers, the appeal was more dignified, in its modernized Latin, and perhaps less likely to stir up revolutionary fanaticism: *Ad arma, cives patriae nobiles et ignobiles!*

Armed with these catechisms, and with other similar literature, Martinovics and his followers set about recruiting for the two societies, and within a few weeks may have obtained two or three hundred members in various parts of the country. Given the prevalence of discontent, it seems likely that, had there been more time, a much larger number might have been brought in. The police, however, learned of Held's mission to Paris, and arrested various members of the Vienna conspiracy. Martinovics, in Vienna at the time, was also taken into custody, and whether because he thought the secret was known, or because he still hoped to ingratiate himself as a police agent, revealed the identity of the chief Hungarian Jacobins. The movement in Hungary was thus stopped sooner than it might otherwise have been.

Neither conspiracy, as an organized bid for revolution, posed any serious threat to the government. Both vividly illustrated, if anything, the impossibility of any groundswell of revolution in the Hapsburg countries, where social classes and ethnic groups were too separated to allow for common action, nobles and burghers had few shared ideas, and few educated persons could establish any contact with the peasants. Serious disaffection existed—noble complaint at the reforms of enlightened despotism, middle-class annoyance that these reforms had been compromised or abandoned, peasant resentment against poverty and servitude, all compounded by the unpopularity of the war—but on this sizeable body of discontent the "Jacobin" conspiracies were no more than tiny specks. Denis Silagi insists, indeed, that the two conspiracies, far from being the products of revolutionary ferment, or forerunners of a later liberal movement, were only the last erratic episodes of enlightened despotism in its decline, manned as they were by former servants of Leopold's police, and using the same kind of mysterious apparatus that Leopold himself had employed.

The discovery of actual Jacobin plotters nevertheless contributed greatly to the growing counter-revolutionary mentality in the Austrian empire, a mentality which had arisen, not from the fear of Austrian Jacobins, nor even from opposition

to the French Revolution, but some ten years before in the aristocratic and ecclesiastical resistance to Joseph II. The Jacobin trials could be taken (like the English state trials of 1794) as evidence of conservative fears, but the Austrian and Hungarian Jacobins, unlike those of England, were in fact guilty as charged: Held had offered aid to the enemy, and the Hungarians had plotted armed insurrection, in time of war. The trials were secret, but not egregiously unfair. Two Austrians and eighteen Hungarians were executed, and others condemned to prison.

The need of supporting an unpopular war led not only to a dramatization of the Jacobin menace, but to repression of all groups or shades of opinion that might be critical of the government. The continuing unpopularity of the war is attested by many sources (such as the statement of the Archduke Charles quoted above), and is especially emphasized by one recent student of the subject, Ernst Wangermann, who remarks that the Hapsburg government could not carry on the war after 1795 except with financial aid from Great Britain; that in 1796 the chancellor, Thugut, feared the peace sentiment in Vienna more than Bonaparte's successes in Italy; and that when the French broke into the empire in 1797, reaching as far as Leoben in Styria, they met with no popular opposition. The Austrian government, the only important Continental state remaining at war with France after 1795, was obliged to resort to more stringent controls over its own people. The war therefore, in Wangermann's view, was the "gravedigger of enlightened despotism in Austria," and marked the true beginning of the *Vormärz*.⁴³ In addition, the government had to deal with what happened in Poland, kill off the sympathy for Kosciuszko, disparage the Polish constitution of 1791, discredit the Polish moves toward abolition of serfdom—and justify the Third Partition. The French Revolution was denounced because it succeeded; the Polish, because it failed.

The rising tide of counter-revolutionary activity was not peculiar to the Hapsburg empire. Those who pressed for it pointed to the example of England, where the formation of voluntary associations against "levellers and republicans," and the suspension of *habeas corpus*, were seen as desirable models. But matters went further than in England, if only because Austrian bureaucrats were more expert and professional than English squires, and the Catholic prelates in Austria less easygoing than those of the Church of England. Church and State, recently estranged in the Hapsburg empire, joined hands for mutual protection. There was great alarm over professors, who, in truth, had proved to be less content than those of Oxford or Cambridge. The bishops extended their influence over the schools. Experiments in rural education were given up, lest peasants by learning too much become discontented with their station. The censorship clamped down, the police became more potent, more omnipresent, more unchecked by liberal protest. A police power originally designed to facilitate progress was now used to restrain it. On recommendation of the police, in 1794, measures were even initiated to prevent economic expansion, to discourage the growth of cities and the building of new manufacturing plants, since both the business and the industrial laboring classes were feared as sources of disaffection. The Josephinists were reduced to silence; and the

43 Wangermann, 107, 169. Silagi, *Jakobiner*, 200–1, sees less of a "turning point" than Wangermann in the Jacobin trials, but there is not much disagreement between them on the depth and scope of the reaction.

Austrian monarchy, so recently an exemplar of fast-moving modern enlightenment, entered upon the course that would make it, until 1848, what impatient liberals called the China of Europe.

AN ADDENDUM ON SOUTHEAST EUROPE

There is room for only a few words on Southeast Europe beyond the Hapsburg borders, that is, on Rumania, Greece, and the Balkan countries, all of which, except the Dalmatian coast, then lay within the Ottoman Empire. Even the Moslem parts of that empire felt an immediate impact of the French Revolution.⁴⁴ Newspapers were published in French at Constantinople, for the use of the foreign commercial and diplomatic colony there, but various Turks were able to read in them the news from Paris; and the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 not only brought in new ideas but produced an emergency which forced the issue of Westernizing reform upon the imperial government. It is said that the French Revolution was the first European event to make a positive impression upon Islam, precisely because it did not come to the Moslems as a Christian movement, of a kind which their religion would require them to oppose.

The Christian peoples of the European parts of the empire were subject to many diverse influences. In part these were internal, as when, with the growth of trade in the eighteenth century, Greek and Serbian traveling merchants developed a network of habitual contacts throughout the Balkans, Hungary, and Rumania. Along these lines of exchange new ideas traveled also, and by the end of the century a kind of revolution of knowledge and communications had occurred, from which the political movements of the following generation were to come.⁴⁵ External influences were miscellaneous. Recently, in the Rumanian People's Republic, historians have tried to show that there was a Russian progressive influence at this time. In Moldavia, Russian soldiers during the Russo-Turkish war smuggled in manuscript copies of Radishchev's *Voyage from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, which, it is said, were openly sold in Jassy.⁴⁶ There were German influences also. In the last decades of the century over a hundred Christian Balkan merchants went annually to the Leipzig fair. Colonies of South Slavs and Greeks in Vienna made that city a cultural center

44 B. Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey," in *Journal of World History*, I (1953), 105-25; L. LaGarde, "Note sur les journaux français de Constantinople à l'époque révolutionnaire," in *Journal asiatique*, vol. 236 (1948), 271-76; E. de Marcère, *Une ambassade à Constantinople: La politique orientale de la Révolution française*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1927); and, for Egypt, J. Godechot, *La Grande Nation: l'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde, 1789-99*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956).

45 See the long and remarkably illuminating article by T. Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant," in *Journal of Economic History*, XX (1960), 234-313; L. Stavrianos, "Antecedents to the Balkan Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century," in *Journal of Modern History*, XXIX (1957), 335-48, and *id.*, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1958). I am indebted also for much information to Professor Peter Sugar of the University of Washington, Seattle.

46 S. Vianu, "Quelques aspects de l'influence exercée par la pensée progressiste russe sur la société roumaine de la fin du 18^e siècle," in Academie de la République populaire roumaine, *Nouvelles études d'histoire présentées au X^e Congrès des sciences historiques, Rome 1955* (Bucharest, 1955), 285-97. The article shows more French influence than Russian.

for their peoples under Ottoman rule. The first Greek and Serbian newspapers were published at Vienna in 1790 and 1791; in 1792 Francis II gave his consent to a new project for a paper in the Cyrillic alphabet, on condition that it emphasize only the evils in the French and Belgian revolutions. For Rumanians and Greeks the contacts with France were important. The first Rumanian newspaper, *Courier de Moldavie*, was published in French and Rumanian in 1790; it lasted less than a year but printed news of the French Revolution.

Events, as such, were not yet of much importance, and those of political significance occurred on the Hapsburg side of the border. A congress of Serbs met in southern Hungary in 1790. The excitement in Croatia over the French Revolution has already been mentioned. The Vlachs of Transylvania (the Rumanian-speaking people, mostly peasants, among whom Magyar landowners and German burghers lived), obtaining assistance from one of the modern-minded Austrian officials, presented a petition to the Emperor and to the Diet of Transylvania in 1791. Called the *Supplex Ibellus Valachorum*, it requested equality for the Vlachs with the Magyars and "Saxons," or Transylvanian Germans. It asked for representation of Vlachs in the diet, and revealed a knowledge of the French Revolution in proposing an administrative reorganization into territorial "departments," which should be named after mountains and rivers, so that old memories might be lost.⁴⁷ The Diet of Transylvania, however, was composed of Magyar landlords. Leopold soon died, Francis succeeded, and war with France began. Nothing was done on the Vlach petition. Of the Transylvanian Vlachs it may be said that they, too, succumbed to the general counterrevolution in Eastern Europe.

It was among the Greeks that the beginnings of political action were most evident. The word then had a wide reference, including, in addition to Greeks living in Greece, persons throughout Rumania, the Balkan peninsula, and Asia Minor who were Greek in religion and language. The Greeks had connections both with central Europe and with France. Adamantios Korais went as a medical student from Smyrna to France shortly before the Revolution; he remained in France for many years, and became known as the father of the Greek cultural revival. His more active compatriot, Rhigas Velestinlis, organized a conspiracy in Vienna. His dream, in effect, was to convert the Ottoman Empire into a Greek one, undoing the Turkish conquest of 1453. He was impressed by the Cisalpine and Ligurian republics, formed in northern Italy under French auspices in 1797. In that year the French also occupied the Ionian Islands, only a few miles from the coast of mainland Greece itself. A secret assembly of Greeks from many parts of the Hellenic world met in the Peloponnesus; it began to plan revolution against the Sultan, and requested aid from the French army. Meanwhile Rhigas, in Vienna, wrote songs and pamphlets for a Greek revolution, including a proposed constitution modeled on the French. The Austrian police discovered him and several companions, and turned them over to the Turkish authorities, by whom they were executed in 1798 at Belgrade.⁴⁸

47 N. Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains de Transylvanie et de Hongrie*, 2 vols. (Bucharest, 1915), II, 216–25; E. Pascu, "Mémoires et protestations des Roumains de Transylvanie et de Hongrie de 1791 à 1892," in *Revue de Transylvanie*, V (1939), 326–36.

48 A. Descalakis, *Rhigas Velestinlis: la Révolution française et les préludes de l'indépendance hellénique*

Polish patriots, after Kosciuszko's defeat, scattered in a diaspora into many countries. Thousands went to France and Italy, where they formed a Polish Legion that was attached to the French army. Other thousands took refuge in the Rumanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. They sought Turkish and French aid for an armed return to Poland. The French sent a special agent to Wallachia and Moldavia, a Greek named Constantine Stamati, who like Korais had come to France as a medical student and become infused with the spirit of the Revolution. Stamati wrote pamphlets to arouse the Greeks to revolution, and also worked with the Poles, hoping that a great Polish revival would undermine the Hapsburg government, with which France was still at war.⁴⁹

The Polish exiles in Paris, having in mind their armed countrymen in Italy and Wallachia-Moldavia, submitted an ambitious proposal to the Directory in April 1797. Not only, they argued, would the restoration of Poland be of strategic value to France, but "the evident protection which France is giving to the newly born republics in Italy suggests that, if the Carinthians, Croatians, Slavonians, Hungarians, and Galicians will only follow the example of the Lombards in throwing off the yoke of the House of Austria, their insurrections will suit the French system of government in many ways."⁵⁰ When Bonaparte invaded the Austrian empire from Venetia, Dumbrowski, the commander of the Polish Legion, was with him, urging him to cut through the Hapsburg dominions, rekindle the embers of revolution in Hungary, join with the Poles on the lower Danube, crush the Hapsburgs, and restore Poland.

Bonaparte, however, signed a truce with Austria at Leoben. So the dream of revolution in Eastern Europe faded away.

(Paris, 1937), *id.*, *Les oeuvres de Rhigas Velestinlis* (Paris, 1937). On Rhigas' proposed constitution see also Chapter XXVI below.

49 On the Poles: L. Chodzko, *Histoire des légions polonaises en Italie sous le commandement du général Dumbrowski*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1829); M. Oginski, *Mémoires*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1826–1827). On Stamati as a Greek patriot and as a French agent, J. Lair and E. Legrand, *Correspondances de Paris, Vienne, Berlin, Varsovie, Constantinople* (Paris, 1872); Descalakis, *Rhigas*; E. Lebel, *La France et les principautés danubiennes du 16^e siècle à la chute de Napoléon I* (Paris, 1955).

50 Chodzko, II, 331–34; Angeberg [i.e., Chodzko], *Recueil*, 424.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BATAVIAN REPUBLIC

Is the seven-headed monster of the Union of Utrecht not a mere combination of special interests?

It is more than time to put an end to this ruinous situation, so that a political system can be built upon new ground in the Netherlands, securing the unity and indivisibility of all the various pieces of territory in the Republic. A National Assembly, a legal code founded on natural right, guaranteeing to each inhabitant his place as a citizen and member of society, are the only means of saving the Netherlands.

Without the National Convention our country will never be confirmed in its right to be One and Indivisible.

—DECLARATION OF THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES MEETING AT THE HAGUE, SEPTEMBER, 1795

At the very moment when the Old Order entrenched itself in Eastern Europe it began to crumble in the West. As the "Jacobins" of Poland, Hungary, and Vienna were put down, the friends of revolution from Italy to Ireland took hope from the victories of the French armies. The end of the Terror, following the death of Robespierre, persuaded most friends of France in other countries that the Revolution would succeed.

By the summer of 1794 the French were everywhere on the offensive, crossing the Pyrenees into Catalonia, occupying Oneglia on the Italian Riviera, overrunning the German Rhineland and Belgium, and penetrating the Dutch territory south of the Rhine delta, which they crossed in January 1795. The French government took a reserved attitude toward revolutionary sympathizers in these countries. They had done nothing to assist the French Republic when it seemed to be losing, and the Committee of Public Safety, with the tide now turned, viewed

them with a skepticism mixed with scorn. The French authorities and the foreign revolutionaries were willing to use each other—each for their own ends. Idealism existed, but it too was something to be used.

It was the weakness of the governments of the Coalition that brought their ruin, as much as the power generated in France in the Year II, and more than the strength of revolutionary agitation within their respective borders. With their trained armies in headlong retreat, the governments tried to appeal to their civilian populations. In Catalonia, the Rhineland, the Austrian and the Dutch Netherlands, the year 1794 saw attempts to invoke a mass rising against the French invaders. The conservative powers in desperation proclaimed the *levée en masse* for their own purposes.

The Emperor called for a “general arming” in Belgium. “Religion, constitution, property, the sovereign who wears you in his heart . . . these are the watchwords that will organize you.” He added that service would be neither long nor difficult. The Prince of Orange appealed to the Dutch: “I call upon you. . . . Here are arms and powder. . . . Take them! . . . Soldiers, citizens and peasants, let us all unanimously assemble!” He added that no one need leave his own province. The Prince of Coburg, commanding the Austrian army, tried to rally the Rhineland Germans: “Rise then, German friends and brothers! Procure us subsistence. . . . Share with us your savings. . . . Employ the treasures of your churches. . . . Arm yourselves, valorous men! Rise by thousands!” And in Catalonia, in default of action by the Madrid government, local leaders issued an appeal for men and money: “Catalans, your country is in danger!”¹

All these appeals came to nothing, except in Spain. Catalonia, indeed, seems to have been the one part of Europe where a general rising took place successfully for strictly conservative purposes. Here the issue was mainly religion. The French republicans were portrayed as fiends and monsters, and the Catalans went beyond the requirements of Christianity in defense of Holy Church. French generals found the mutilated dead bodies of their men with the genitals stuffed in the mouth.²

Further north the call was a total failure. In part, the governments were afraid of their own peoples. The King of Prussia feared that the arming of peasants would ruin both the regular army and the “constitution of the empire.” In Holland it was feared that the Dutch farmers, if armed, would turn upon their supposed allies, the British army in disorderly retreat. The call failed also because it could inspire no idealism or sacrifice. Property, constitution, and the father-image of a benign ruler could hardly stir people as civilized as the Dutch, Belgians, and Rhinelanders; Such a watchword lacked the ringing echoes of the French *levée* of 1793: “The French people risen against tyrants!” The citizens (who were not really “citizens”)

1 On the appeals for a mass rising in the Austrian and Dutch Netherlands and in the Rhineland see the *Annual Register for 1794* (London, 1799), 59, 204, 212–14, 232. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland* (The Hague, 1905), I, 470–72, 504, 547, 577, contains details on the attempt and failure of a mass rising in the United Provinces. For Catalonia, see A. Ossorio y Gallardo, *Historia del pensamiento político Catalan durante la guerra de España con la República francesa, 1793–1795* (Barcelona, 1913), 162–72.

2 Ossorio y Gallardo, 153.

were told that the task would be easy; they did not believe it, and they did not care. Governments, in the political structure of the Old Regime, did not have enough moral, psychological, or social *rapprochement* with their own peoples to make a strong stand in adversity against the Revolution. In any case, in 1794, they were beaten, bewildered, and in disarray. The mass rising in France had succeeded because a revolutionary government simultaneously arose to carry it out, to channel, organize, equip, discipline, and direct the excited feelings of the country. The Houses of Hapsburg and Orange, in the breakdown of 1794, had nothing to offer even at this purely practical level.

The French therefore met with little resistance. The Coalition broke up in 1795. The Prince of Orange fled to England, and the pro-French Dutch came into power. The King of Prussia made peace, and all the German states north of the Main River, under Prussian leadership, were declared neutral. The Bourbon king of Spain recognized and signed a treaty with the regicide Republic. The British army withdrew from the Continent, to which it did not return except for sporadic raids until 1799. After the treaties of Basel, in 1795, France remained at war only with Britain at sea, and on land only with Sardinia and Austria, with which hostilities fell into abeyance until reactivated by Bonaparte in north Italy in the following year.

Meanwhile the French prepared to re-annex Belgium. There was no talk this time, as in 1792, of a separate Belgian Republic. Belgium would simply be consolidated with France, and the Belgians assimilated as French citizens, somewhat as the segments of Poland were to be consolidated or assimilated to the three East-European monarchies. To military and strategic arguments, made important by the war, were added commercial considerations arising from the century-old mercantile rivalry between France and England. The idea of Napoleon's Continental System, of a Continent to be economically dominated by France, and closed to England, was beginning to take form. Numerous Belgians of the business classes, long stultified by the old provincialisms, were more than willing to enter into this arrangement.³

As for the Rhineland, after initial uncertainties, the French eventually decided to annex it also.

Among the Dutch there was a true revolution, of which the result was the Batavian Republic, the first and the most important of the "satellite" or "sister" republics created under French auspices. The Batavian Republic was important not only in itself but more broadly. It was hoped, by enemies of Great Britain, that the alliance of the French and Batavian Republics, controlling the whole coast without interruption from the Frisian Islands to the Pyrenees, and using the extensive shipping, banking, and other resources of the two together, would form an invincible combination against British trade and sea power. And when Italian, Swiss, German, or Irish revolutionaries wished to explain to the French what they wanted in the following years, they often named the Batavian Republic as their model.

Of the Batavian Republic it may also be remarked, as a suggestion of its intrinsic significance, that it was the first to use the words "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"

3 On the willingness of Belgian business men see above, pp. 429 and 461.

as an official motto. It is well known that these three words, used thus together, have been the motto of republican France, but this usage in France dates only from the Second Republic of 1848. In documents of the First Republic we find *Liberté* and *Egalité* printed officially on the top, and *Salut et fraternité* used as a complimentary close at the bottom, but we never find the three key words as an official triad. For a time, in 1793, the departmental authorities of Paris invited citizens to paint on the façades of buildings a formula which included the words *Liberté, égalité, fraternité ou la mort*. After Thermidor the citizens were invited to efface them. It was not by any wish of the French government that the Dutch in 1795 adopted so dangerous a slogan. There was more of a mood of revolutionary defiance among the Dutch at this time than among the now somewhat jaded French. The Batavian Republic (dropping the reference to death) printed officially, as a heading to its first proclamation, simply the three words, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."⁴

THE DUTCH REVOLUTION OF 1794–1795

The Dutch Revolution of 1794–1795 was a continuation, with differences, of the Patriot movement of the 1780's, in which an attempted revolution had been stopped by a combination of British diplomacy and the Prussian army. Britain and Prussia had "guaranteed" the restored Orange regime of William V in 1788. It was this regime with which France went to war in February 1793, a regime, as Pieter Geyl has said, "in which William V stood apart from the nation with his following of oligarchs and preachers," and in whose war with France the Dutch people generally felt no concern.⁵ The "preachers" were the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church, which was established with certain privileges, in that no other worship was legally allowed to be public, no other church could ring bells, and members of no other church could hold important office in the government, army, navy, Bank of Amsterdam, or East India Company. The "oligarchs," in Geyl's phrase, were the hereditary "regent" families, Reformed in religion, who occupied all the positions of power or prominence. Each of the many towns and each of the seven provinces had a limited number of such local dynasties. For example, thirty-six regents composed the governing council of Amsterdam, a city of 200,000, the largest in Western Europe except for London and Paris. The Amsterdam council was highly typical of those "constituted bodies" against which, according to the argument of the preceding volume, the democratic revolution of the eighteenth century was most essentially directed. They sat for life and chose their own successors. They con-

⁴ See A. Aulard, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" in *Etudes et leçons* (Paris, 1910), VI, 1–31, but Aulard did not know of the use of the triad in Holland. For this see the *Proclamatie van der Nationale Vergadering*, 15 vols. (The Hague, 1795 ff.); the journal edited in Paris by persons with Dutch connections, *Le Batave*, the issues for February 19 and 25, 1795, and other dates; a Dutch newspaper, the *Binnenlandsche bataafische Courant*, which appeared in 1795, and carried "Gelykheid, Vryheid, Broederschap" at its masthead; and J. Hazeu, *Historie der omwentelingen in vaderlandsche gesprekken voor kinderen* (Amsterdam, 1796), in which the three key words are explained at length to children.

⁵ Above, p. 57.

trolled the Amsterdam delegation in the Estates of Holland, and, through Holland, influenced the Estates General of the Union.

The Union meant the Union of Utrecht, formed in 1572 during the war of independence against Spain, and consisting of a league of the pre-existing towns, provinces, and miscellaneous districts that had taken shape in the Middle Ages, and whose medieval liberties, privileges, and autonomies persisted in the eighteenth century as inherited rights. The Estates General, though supposedly sovereign, had little power, could act on most matters only if the seven provinces were unanimous, and had to operate through a network of boards, colleges, councils, and committees among which authority had purposely been divided. A "stadtholder," or chief executive and military commander, had the task of making all this complex machinery function. The stadtholderate had become hereditary in the House of Orange, which had repeatedly intermarried with the British royal family, so that the old Dutch republic had the next thing to a king. The House of Orange, like all good monarchies, enjoyed much traditional support among the lower classes and had long seen the aristocratic regents as its chief political rivals. But William V in 1788, like Louis XVI in 1789, had become fatally identified with the cause of the privileged orders.

The system left a good many people in the position of outsiders. Persons not regents were referred to as "burghers" or "inhabitants," and were expected to have nothing to do with public or great affairs. There was no Dutch citizenship, and according to Colenbrander hardly any Dutch nation in a political sense before 1795. The lowest classes, their levels of expectation not yet raised, had little sense of exclusion, and generally felt a continuing warmth to the Orange regime. But the United Provinces, though small in size (with a population of only two million), were the wealthiest country in Europe, probably even more so than England, so that persons above the "lowest" classes were exceedingly numerous. Those of the shopkeeping and artisan levels had become very restless. Many of the outsiders were established merchants and bankers. Some were actually rich. In addition, defining the in- and out-groups in another dimension, was the difference of religion, which was the more significant since the Dutch were less homogeneous in their churchmanship than almost any other European political community. About forty percent were not Reformed. Most of these were Roman Catholic, but there were many Mennonites and other Protestant dissenters, and the Amsterdam Jewish group was the most important in Western Europe. All these people had long been peaceably tolerated, and many were affluent, but they possessed, and had come to feel, an inferior status.

It was the memory of 1787 that made the difference in the 1790's. The Patriots had been suppressed with no pretence of tact or conciliation. There was much resentment against England, by whose exertions the Patriot movement had been so recently crushed, and which also annoyed some of the mercantile interests by its old habit of appropriating the Dutch overseas possessions. As recently as the treaty of 1783, concluding the War of American Independence, in which Amsterdam and the Patriots had befriended the Americans, the British had taken the Dutch post of Negapatam in India. The callous restoration of 1787 had also had the effect of making many of the Dutch more radical. Those who emigrated had learned

much from the French Revolution; some, like Conradus Kock, had died in it. But disappointed Patriots who stayed discreetly at home also underwent a change of mind. In the Patriot movement, before 1787, the dominant feeling had been for "restoration" of an older and freer Dutch constitution. A few years later, thanks both to unpleasant experiences at home and to the spectacle of the French Revolution, the restless elements took a more forward-looking and comprehensive view. As with the Americans in the 1770's their focus changed from the Ancient Constitution to the Rights of Man.

The Dutch revolutionaries were therefore a composite group, hardly to be understood in terms of socio-economic classes, except that neither the very poor, nor the most self-consciously aristocratic, were to be found among them. Since they reflected a wide social spectrum, from Catholic to Calvinist, and from journeymen barrel-makers to modern-minded individuals of the old families, contrary reports could both be true. Thus an Englishman could see them as tavern loungers, and a Frenchman as disaffected financiers. Sometimes the class-consciousness of their enemies could make absurd mistakes.⁶ For example, the British secret agent, Robert Barclay, reporting to George Canning on conditions in Holland shortly after the revolution, commented on the appointment of the new Batavian minister to Denmark. He was, said Barclay, "the son of a shopkeeper and clerk to a parish church of the town," who certainly would "not be received as a person agreeable to his Danish Majesty." Actually the man in question, one Christiaan Huygens, was the son and grandson of East India Company officials, had been in the foreign service before 1795, was received by the Majesty of Denmark, and ennobled by King William I of the Netherlands after 1814.

It is well to take note of these later careers in understanding the revolutionaries of 1795. They show that the Dutch "Jacobins" (like many of the French Jacobins in the true sense of the word) were by no means revolutionaries merely by temperament, nor by lifelong commitment, nor as a permanent occupation or concern, but might be men of substantial abilities and position who turned temporarily very radical in dealing with real problems and real events. Some took part in, and were accepted by, every regime for over thirty years. The career of Isaac J. A. Gogel is illuminating in this respect. Born in 1765, the son of a German officer in the Dutch service, and hence not of old regent background, Gogel was employed before the Revolution in one of the Amsterdam commercial houses. He was a true subversive in 1794. With his government at war with the French, he wrote to the French, at the height of the Terror in France, to urge them to invade Holland, to bring in a ready-made constitution, abolishing the privileges, guilds, provinces, corporations, monopolies, magistracies, and law courts of the existing Dutch regime, and enforced by a temporary *gouvernement révolutionnaire*, a revolutionary tribunal and guillotine. In 1795, after the Dutch Revolution, Gogel became president of the radical club in Amsterdam, the *Een-en Ondeelbaarheid* or One and Indivisible Club. He wanted the Batavian Republic to assume and consolidate the various provincial debts, and indeed to wipe out the provinces themselves. (One is re-

6 Above, pp. 434-35; and for Barclay's letter, Colenbrander, II, 368, with Colenbrander's note on Huygens.

mind of Alexander Hamilton in America.) He was finance minister during the radical phase of 1798, again under the "second" Batavian Republic, and again under King Louis Bonaparte in the days of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Holland. When Napoleon, in 1810, simply annexed Holland to France, he made Gogel his superintendent of Dutch finances. After Napoleon's fall, Gogel went into private business. But King William I of the Netherlands named him to his council of State.⁷ Such were the tolerance of Dutch politics and the calibre of some of its "Jacobins" during this turbulent generation.

In 1794, before the French invasion, and in eager expectation of their arrival, the political or "Jacobin" clubs in the Dutch cities became very active.⁸ In June there were 34 clubs in Amsterdam and 12 in Utrecht, organized in small neighborhood units. There were probably some 5,000 or 6,000 members at Amsterdam, 800 at Utrecht, 300 or 400 at Leiden and at Haarlem, representing from 4 to 12 percent of the adult males. The clubs at this moment were known collectively as the Leather Apron, and were composed largely of tradesmen. Publicly, before the revolution, they called themselves "reading societies." They read and discussed the news from France, and such books as Paine's *Rights of Man* and the Dutch Pieter Paulus' *Menschenvriend*. They also secretly stored up arms, exchanged delegations with each other, and maintained communication with the French and the Dutch émigrés. Since the break-up of the old Batavian Revolutionary Committee in Paris, in connection with Robespierre's liquidation of the "foreign conspiracy," the most prominent of the émigrés was H. A. Daendels, a former brick manufacturer, doctor of law, Patriot of 1787, and officer of the Batavian Legion, who in March 1794 became a general in the French army.

On the night of July 31, with the French now in North Brabant, a great assemblage of the Dutch clubs from all seven provinces met at Amsterdam. It authorized Gogel and Irhoven van Dam to proceed secretly to the French headquarters, to learn the terms on which the Dutch, if they opened their gates, would be spared the fate of a "conquered province" which they thought was being meted out to Belgium.

The French reiterated the view they had adopted since the beginning of the campaign: they would treat the Dutch as allies if they first staged their own revolution. The Dutch were a little discouraged. Revolution was risky with the stadtholder's government still in existence. There was also fear of popular violence. "Nothing is easier," wrote Gogel to the French, "than for us to raise up popular disturbances, but we want no revolution unless we can protect our fellow citizens from murder and pillage."⁹

The relative moderation of the Batavian Revolution, or its weakness, as one may choose to call it, was thus manifest from the beginning. The Dutch revolutionists could enjoy sweeping change, without the accompanying "horrors," as Gogel called

7 *Nieuw nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, VII, 480. Gogel's letter to the French commissioner with the Army of the North, dated February 21, 1794, is printed in Colenbrander, I, 378-81.

8 See my article, "Much in Little: the Dutch Revolution of 1795" in *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 26 (March 1954), 15-35, from which several paragraphs in the following pages are reproduced with permission of the editors.

9 Colenbrander, I, 413.

them, because they were willing to rely, and could rely, on the French army both to overthrow the Orange regime and to prevent insurrectionary violence.

The country fell into dissolution as the French advanced. The government could get nothing done. Sporadic attempts at a mass rising failed. Nothing was offered to arouse popular loyalty. "His Highness," wrote the pensionary van de Spiegel, must "keep the republic what it now is, and yield as little to aristocracy as to democracy." He talked a little like Robespierre, but did nothing. Force must be used, he said, "to impose on the evil and sustain the good." When wealthy people refused taxes and loans to the expiring state, or shifted their investments to England, he remarked that stringent measures should be taken, "in order to leave the Hopes and other overgrown capitalists of this country no other chance of saving their property than in giving, or at least lending, part of it to supply the wants of the government." But nothing happened. The country could not exert itself. Perhaps van de Spiegel was right in observing that the Dutch enjoyed too high a standard of living to meet such an emergency.¹⁰

The British army, feebly commanded by the duke of York, behaved very badly on its retreat through the Netherlands, whereas the incoming French, under firm discipline, made a good impression. Such is the unanimous testimony of Orangist and hence Anglophile sources and of the Prussian representative at The Hague.¹¹ Peasants, if armed, preferred to fight the British; the city of Delft refused to receive British wounded. One Orangist complained that French intrigues had done less than British pillaging to alienate the Dutch people. All agreed that the duke of York was incompetent. All the old fear and dislike of the British was awakened. Even Orangists, who had owed their position since 1787 to British support, were troubled and divided. Some believed, as did the Patriots, that Britain was dangerous as either friend or foe.

The revolutionary clubs speeded up their preparations in proportion to the approach of Daendels, the émigrés and the French. Committees made ready to move in and replace existing officials in the various town halls. Soldiers in the garrisons were won over. Plans were laid to assemble insurrectionary crowds. At Utrecht, a city of some fifteen thousand, two thousand persons were in the "secret" for yielding the place to the French, and the garrison of twenty-eight hundred expressed its disinclination to resist.¹²

By keeping their troops under discipline, and holding their official demands to a minimum, stipulating only that the Prince of Orange must go, and the Dutch enter the war against England, the French reassured the numerous moderate element, who were relieved to learn that *la guillotine, réquisition, assignats, égalité, etc.* need not be expected.¹³ The French thus built on the broadest possible basis of pro-French feeling. Moderates agreed with radicals; burgomasters sat down with incendiaries. Riots in Amsterdam and elsewhere unseated the authorities. Revolutionary committees installed local provisional governments. The French cavalry

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 401, 476.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, 473, 503, 505, 525–26, 562, 565, 572.

¹² *Ibid.*, 412.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 583. An Orangist testimony, van Citters to van Nagel, Jan. 29, 1795.

rode into Amsterdam on the ice, and in January 1795 the Batavian Republic was proclaimed.

For two years the French, although they were in military occupation, interfered relatively little in internal Dutch affairs.¹⁴ The French aim was to use Holland in the war against Great Britain. This aim did not constitute forcible interference, since many Dutch were in favor of it. Nevertheless, when the terms of the treaty between the French and Batavian republics became known (the treaty of The Hague of May 1795), many in the Netherlands were disappointed. The Batavian Republic was required not only to declare war on England but to maintain a French occupying army at Dutch expense, to accept French paper money, to cede Flushing and the mouth of the Scheldt to France enlarged by Belgium, and to pay an indemnity of 100,000,000 florins.

This was severe treatment for an alleged ally. It was not severe enough to alienate Dutch revolutionaries from France, since they saw no alternative except capitulation to England and the House of Orange. Containing as it did, however, elements of both ruthlessness and deception, it gave serious offense to a great many of the most advanced Batavian democrats. One of these was Jakob Blauw, one of the negotiators from whom the treaty was extorted. He formed a deep dislike not for the French Revolution but for the French government, and seems to have been somehow involved in the Babeuf conspiracy against it a year later.

The relation of the French and the Batavian Republics, if such a figure may be allowed, was in no sense a rape, since the Batavians were more than willing to enter upon it. It rested on comparable revolutionary sentiment in both countries, but it was less a love match than a marriage of convenience.

As the Batavian Republic was proclaimed, William V retired to England. Here one of his first actions was to authorize British occupation of all Dutch colonies at the Cape of Good Hope and in the East and West Indies. Few Dutchmen believed that the British would ever give them all back. With war now declared, within a few months the British had captured some 85,000,000 florins' worth of Dutch shipping. They also naturally suspended payment on the huge British debts owed to Dutch creditors remaining in Holland.

It would be a difficult problem to compute whether the Dutch in these years lost more to the French or to the British. The question was rather, for the Dutch, what they preferred to pay for. For a price, one could have British assistance toward restoration of the Old Order, or French support for the Batavian Republic.

THE FRUSTRATION OF THE CONCILIATORS

Most of the Dutch, in all probability, wanted neither the Old Order nor the New—neither the confused and ineffectual old confederated republic with its more recent adornment of a hereditary stadtholdership, nor the up-to-date republic on the French model in which the separate identity of the provinces and the inheri-

14 Colenbrander, *Bataafsche republiek* (Amsterdam, 1908), 79; P. Geyl, *Patriotten en N.S.B.ers* (Amsterdam, 1946), 27, 30.

tance of office would disappear. Nowhere did the middle extend more widely or moderation run deeper than among the Dutch. There were important patricians who saw the need of change. Some favored simply a modernization of the Union of Utrecht. Others, of whom G. K. van Hogendorp became the most important, had firmly believed, since long before the revolution of 1795, that political life should be opened up and broader elements in the population be admitted to a liberalized citizenship. One of the most intelligent conservatives in the Europe of his generation, Hogendorp had detected a conflict between "aristocrats" and "democrats" in his own country as early as 1786. He had then advised the House of Orange to lean to the "democrats." He had seen the same conflict agitating "all nations" in 1791.¹⁵ He knew that revolutionary discontent in the Dutch Netherlands was no mere contagion from France. Ejected from office in 1795 (he was of a long line of Rotterdam regents), he neither emigrated, nor took to arms, nor secluded himself on his estates, as a French nobleman might have done. As an aristocratic "bourgeois," he turned to private business to build up the family fortunes. In 1814 he became the chief author of the constitution of the Netherlands monarchy.

The party of conciliation was strengthened by another fact unusual at the time. The Heir Apparent was himself a conciliator. The Hereditary Prince, as he was called, the son of the stadtholder William V, was a young man of twenty-three in 1795, and in 1814, accepting Hogendorp's constitution, he became the first King of the Netherlands as William I. In the 1790's, Hogendorp and the Hereditary Prince resembled in their ideas the circle of liberal or liberally conservative French émigrés that gathered about Malouet in London. In both cases it was their program, more than any one else's, that was to be embodied in the settlement of 1814. Meanwhile, however, they met only with frustration.

William V, after leaving Holland at the time of the Batavian Revolution, lived in England until his death. Hardly had he reached England when he began to receive approaches from certain moderates, men who had accepted the revolution but soon became alarmed by the radicalism of the clubs or annoyed by the demands of the French. Some of these men were old regents and Patriots of 1787. To their overtures William V responded with delight. He would now, eight years later, compromise with those whom he had found intolerable in 1787. But there could be no compromise with the Batavian Revolution. "The present day democrats and their whole faction can never receive any consideration from us."¹⁶

Other loyal Orangists approached the Hereditary Prince. They believed that there was a genuine Dutch revolution with which an understanding must be made. They were not democrats; what they wanted was an accommodation between the Orangists and the former Patriots of 1787 against "the unfortunate system of democracy that prevails today." Yet action was necessary. As an émigré named d'Yvoy wrote to the prince from Hamburg: "I believe it impossible for things to remain on their old footing. . . . What we need is not the triumph of a party, but a means of uniting parties, which we shall not have until the different sovereignties in the

15 On Hogendorp see above, 509 and 513, and the *Nieuw nederlandse biografisch woordenboek*, II, 587-93.

16 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, II, 831.

state are formed into a single body. The whole machine is too broken down to be cured by palliatives. We need an extraordinary remedy, a new order, a general recasting, a completely new administration, which, while injuring no individual, can arouse enthusiasm for the re-establishment of order and the public credit, by giving more consideration to some people and more part in the government to others. . . ." In this very accurate diagnosis he suggested England as his model, but what he described was what most Batavians hoped to achieve.¹⁷

Another Orangist, van Lampsins, submitted long reports to the Hereditary Prince after a secret visit to Holland. He thought counterrevolution impossible. He found no one outside the Batavian government itself complaining of dependency upon France. He believed that Orange and British agents were supporting "aristocracy in a few provinces like Zeeland and Friesland only by all sorts of artifices," while in Holland and Utrecht, the principal provinces, "democracy is making rapid progress." The democrats and lesser people, suspicious of old regents and oligarchs, were, it seemed to him, natural allies for the House of Orange. He proposed, therefore, that "the self-respect of the patriots of 1795 and the democrats should be saved" by a few concessions. In addition to trifles, such as abolition of hunting rights, these concessions should include the admission of the whole burger class and of Catholics and minority Protestants to positions in most offices of state, and to the managing boards of the Bank of Amsterdam and the East India Company.¹⁸ Van Lampsins' belief that the Reformed Religion should nevertheless remain established, with the highest political office limited to its adherents, was enough to keep his program, as of 1795, in the "moderate" category.

The Hereditary Prince, persuaded of the wisdom of such advice, repeatedly took up the matter with his father.¹⁹ William V, however, could not be moved. He was much influenced by his wife, a Prussian princess, who, as the heroine of counterrevolution in 1787, had shown that she was not a woman to put up with radical impudence. William V was willing to throw himself humbly on England and Prussia, though the Prussian king, having just made peace with France, showed little inclination to aid his embarrassed sister. Frederick William II, indeed, determined to keep north Germany neutral, even broke up the gathering of two thousand armed Dutch émigrés at Osnabruck. It was therefore without much chance of success that the exiled stadtholder, in May 1795, entreated his brother-in-law "to restore the constitution which Your Majesty and His Britannic Majesty deigned to guarantee in 1788."²⁰

"I persist," wrote William V to his son in September 1796, "in the idea I have always had, that I cannot accept the stadholderate unless the [old] constitution is re-established." The Batavian ideas were to him French ideas, and there could be no question of adopting "the French system and the ideas of equality and abolition of nobility, hereditary honors and offices and the dominant position of the Reformed religion." In June 1797: "Privileges of provinces, towns and corps des nobles must be restored. . . . I will not accept any such position as president of a

17 d'Yvoy to the Hereditary Prince, July 17, 1795, in Colenbrander, I, 841.

18 Colenbrander, II, 839–41, 873, 924–25.

19 *Ibid.*, 893–908, 961–65.

20 *Ibid.*, 827.

Congress, Executive Power or Directory, or even constitutional King.” In July 1797: “I am positively decided not to return on any conditions founded on the democratic basis of alleged rights of man and equality.” In short, William V would not compromise with the Revolution. Among his other reasons, he knew that Louis XVI had tried such a compromise, and come to a bad end.²¹

The situation was complicated by the British occupation of the Dutch colonial empire, which William V had sanctioned on his arrival in England. On the face of it, the British were occupying the colonies to keep them out of the hands of the French, or to protect the colonials of European origin, such as those at the Cape of Good Hope, from the influence of revolutionary ideas. But there were few even among William V’s advisers who believed that Britain would ever restore Ceylon and the Cape to any Dutch government.²² William V’s own followers, and his own son, were dismayed at his willingness to protect his own interests at the expense of the Dutch empire. As for the Dutch remaining in Holland, the fear of losing their empire to Britain was one of the most powerful and realistic sentiments that held them in a half-willing and half-reluctant alliance with France.

In 1797 the British and French governments were engaged in serious peace talks, conducted for the British by the Earl of Malmesbury, the very man who had outwitted the Dutch Patriots and restored the Orange dynasty in 1787. So successful were French military operations on the Continent, and so difficult were conditions for the British at home, that Malmesbury recommended, and Pitt had almost agreed, that Britain should sign a treaty. By this treaty it would recognize both the French and Batavian Republics and the French annexation of Belgium—in return for retaining those of the Dutch colonies which it most desired, Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. Reports of these discussions leaked out, and the Dutch, both the Batavians and the émigrés, were indignant.

The Hereditary Prince, who by now was living in Germany, believed that his father could no longer remain with dignity in England. His father thought otherwise. The British had “saved” him in 1787. No one but the British could “save” him again. In his mind there was simply nothing that anyone could do about British intentions. As the Princess of Orange wrote in explanation to her son: “No one will make a man budge for us without British money.”²³

The Hereditary Prince suggested to his father that he might do as well, for Dutch interests, by approaches to France as by relying on England. William V stuck to his opinion. He was more outraged that the French had annexed Flushing and Maastricht, than that the British should take Ceylon and South Africa.

As events proceeded, to be explained later, the British gave up their momentary inclination to accept the Batavian Republic, and turned increasingly to a positive

21 *Ibid.*, 936, 948, 950, 971.

22 *Ibid.*, 909, 980, 988–89. It was rumored that the British might offer St. Helena to the Dutch in compensation. As it turned out, the British never returned Ceylon, but returned the Cape in 1802, reoccupying it in 1806, and thereafter holding it.

23 *Ibid.*, 896 n. 1, 900, 908, 986. On February 16, 1795, the British had authorized up to £30,000 (330,000 Dutch guilders) for underground purposes in the Batavian Republic. Grenville to Bentinck, in *Papers of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Dropmore*, III, 20. At least £70,000 had been spent to overthrow the Dutch Patriots in 1787, 417.

insistence upon an Orange restoration in Holland (as upon a Bourbon restoration in France) as the most likely means to obtain a durable peace that would be satisfactory to England. Late in 1798, through the United States ministers at The Hague and London, William Vans Murray and Rufus King, a group of moderate democrats and Orangists in Holland opened negotiations with Orangists in London. They had in mind some kind of arrangement from which the Orange family might be excluded as, indeed, it had been excluded twice before since the seventeenth century. These talks collapsed when the British insisted on an Orange restoration.²⁴ In 1799 the British and Russians, as will be seen, invaded Holland, in the mistaken belief that the Dutch people would greet them as liberators and welcome the Orange family and the émigrés. They were soon expelled.

The obstinacy of William V, and the unwillingness of the British government to make any plain promise of return of the Dutch colonies (or its inability to do so, given the state of British public opinion and the attitudes in Parliament), actually worked to the advantage of the French and of the more ardent Batavian democrats. It was one of the fears of the French that the British, by promising return of the Dutch colonies, or resumption of payments to Dutch creditors, would build up an Anglophile party in the Batavian Republic. This did not happen. As for the Batavian moderates, they found that they could reach no understanding with the exiled stadtholder. It remained to be seen whether there could be any agreement between the moderates and the more radical democrats.

FEDERALISTS AND DEMOCRATS

The internal history of the Batavian Republic remained a stalemate for three years, from January 1795 to January 1798, during which it had no constituted or settled government, even on paper.

The French government, when its forces entered Holland in January 1795, six months after Thermidor, by no means represented the most radical or the most democratic opinion to be found in Europe. Still dangerously revolutionary in the eyes of European conservatives, the governments of the later Convention and of the Directory came to seem reactionary to the democrats, who were now called "anarchists" by French officials. The words *sans-culotte* and "Jacobin" now had a bad connotation to those in power in France. In the spring of 1795, in what was known as the Prairial uprising, the Convention defended itself against a renewal of popular violence only by extremely repressive action against the common people of Paris. In the spring of 1796 the Directory discovered the conspiracy of Babeuf, and arrested its leaders.

The French were afraid of the Dutch democrats, whom they described as *véritables sans-culottes*, and who were in fact not altogether dissimilar to their famous counterparts in Paris a year or two before. The Dutch democrats, issuing from the "Leather Apron" mentioned above, were composed of artisans and mechanics,

²⁴ Grenville to Rufus King, November 6, 1798, in *Papers of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Dropmore*, IV, 365.

shopkeepers and innkeepers, grocers and printers' devils, organized in clubs, and especially strong in the towns of Holland and Utrecht. To very conservative people, like William V, it might seem that the Dutch were infected by the French, but in fact, by a curious inversion, it was now the French who feared infection by the Dutch. French soldiers in the Dutch provinces were under orders to keep away from the Dutch clubs.

The Dutch popular democrats had as their leaders various men of higher economic status who, like the French Mountain in 1793, were willing to make common cause with them, the better to oppose the exiled Stadtholder's party, or to resist those who might attempt a compromise with the Orange family and the British. Among these leaders were Gogel, the financial expert mentioned above; Jakob Blauw, the Batavian envoy in Paris also already mentioned; Pieter Vreede, a wealthy cloth merchant, former Patriot, and friend of John Adams in 1780; and Johan Valckenaer, sometime professor of law, who had spent the years from 1787 to 1794 largely in France. The French, despite their apprehensions, were drawn to work with these men, not so much because of close ideological sympathy, as because these were the men most committed to the Revolution, and hence most likely to manage Dutch resources in a way useful to France in the common war against England.

All issues in the Batavian Republic came together into one—whether the new republic should be a unitary or a federal state. The bitterness of this conflict amazed even the French, though they had faced something like it in their own revolution. As a Dutchman explained to Noël, the French emissary at The Hague: "There had been less of a gulf to fill between monarchism and republicanism in France than exists here between federalism and unity."²⁵ The formal difference reflected social realities. Democrats were unitarists, conservatives were federalists, in an almost perfect correlation. The democratic clubs called themselves societies of *Een-en-Ondeelbaarheid*, Unity and Indivisibility, with reference to internal not external problems. Noël caught on quickly, "It is obvious," he wrote home, "that the families which, under the monstrous system of sovereignty for each province, each town, were able to perpetuate themselves in offices which became hereditary for them, are not inclined to fuse all these sovereignties into one."²⁶

Federalism or decentralization, the letting of each town and province alone, thus came to stand for "feudalism," for the old patriciates and oligarchies, with closed magistracies and self-perpetuating councils, for the corporative and ecclesiastical society, the *Ständestaat*, and also for the clumsy and slow-moving administrative machinery which even conservatives admitted to require some reform. The unitary, solid state, in which the old entities should be abolished, meant uniform rights for all persons considered as individuals, and it meant the sovereignty of the people one and indivisible, which in turn was a legalistic way of saying that neither family, nor church, nor estate, nor town council, nor provincial assembly possessed any public power in its own right.

²⁵ Colenbrander, II, 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13. See also 27, 510–11.

There was also the matter of the public debt of the province of Holland. For two centuries Holland had kept the confederation going by its own inordinate contributions. Its debt was enormous, larger than the debt of the Bourbon monarchy in 1789. In a unitary state this debt would become the debt of a so-called "Batavian nation"—an uninviting prospect outside Holland, especially among the squires of the inland provinces, who had never much approved the financial and maritime activities of the Hollanders anyway.

For a whole year, throughout 1795, it was impossible even to convene a National Convention or constitution-drafting body, since there was no agreement on how such a Convention should be formed. Conservatives wished to retain the form of the estates general, that is, to represent the seven provinces (as the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 represented the thirteen states) so that persons who enjoyed importance at the existing provincial levels would be present in the new Constituent Assembly. This arrangement was not generally favored in Holland, which had half the population of the Union. Radicals and Hollanders insisted upon a true national convention, representing, and elected by, individual voters throughout the republic. The clubs kept up constant pressures, staging demonstrations, issuing broadsides, interviewing officials, and convening tumultuous assemblies of delegates from many cities. Noël was more afraid of them than the Dutch upper-class revolutionists were. The latter, following the usual dynamic of revolution, made use of popular impatience so long as they needed it. The "people" were encouraged to hope for more. By October four provinces—Holland, Utrecht, Gelderland, and Overijssel—had consented to the election of a convention. A small Jacobin revolution then took place in Friesland, where Orange and British agents worked busily but in vain in the opposite direction. Friesland now favored the National Convention.

The Convention was elected in February 1796. For this purpose the seven provinces, and the two areas (Drenthe and North Brabant) which had never been admitted to provincial rights and powers, were dissolved and re-arranged into 124 equal electoral districts. All adult males were entitled to vote, except paupers. An oath, however, was required. One had to subscribe, before voting, to the belief that "all hereditary offices and dignities" were illegal and that the supremacy of the governed was the only lawful source of public authority.

The Convention, so elected, gave a broad hearing to many talents and interests. There were the usual professors and lawyers, merchants from old Amsterdam families, clergymen both Protestant and Catholic, persons socially unknown and of small incomes, and five noblemen, two of whom were Catholic. At the same time, because of the electoral process, important actual forces were underrepresented, as in all revolutions. Strict Orangists were excluded by the oath; and the smaller provinces had far fewer delegates than they had been accustomed to in the old estates general. For example, of 124 members, only 5 came from Zeeland.

The Convention, meeting on March 1, fell into acrimonious disagreement, despite the underrepresentation of upholders of the Old Regime, on the same unitary-versus-federalist question that had so long delayed its election. The clubs renewed their agitation, to persuade federalists to yield to unitary democrats in the Convention. Of the disturbances which took place in various towns, the most seri-

ous was the revolt of certain Amsterdam cannoneers, a National Guard unit which, on May 10, invaded and menaced the municipal authorities of that city.

The revolt of the Amsterdam cannoneers was simultaneous with the conspiracy of Babeuf, who was arrested in Paris on the same day, and it came very soon after the attempt of certain Italians, taking advantage of Bonaparte's victories, to set up a republic at Alba in the Kingdom of Sardinia. It is a question, therefore, whether some kind of concerted international revolutionary action was underway. More will be said later of the Babeuf affair. Contemporaries widely believed, though without much evidence, that the uprising in Amsterdam was somehow connected with the Babeuf plot.²⁷ It was known that Valckenaer, who as a former émigré had a wide acquaintance among revolutionaries of various nationalities, had made a trip from Leyden to Amsterdam with a French Jacobin, Ysabeau, a few days before the Amsterdam revolt. When Noël, in agreement with the Batavian government, called in French troops to preserve order in Amsterdam, Valckenaer was among those who objected to such intervention. It was rumored that he had paid 7,000 guilders to the cannoneers to instigate insurrection. It was not known, but was stated over thirty years later by Philip Buonarroti, in his history of the Babeuf conspiracy, that the Babouvists had received a donation of 240 francs from the envoy of an allied republic in Paris, who would seem to have been Jakob Blauw. The Paris police, when they arrested the Babouvists, found various writings on revolution in Belgium and the Rhineland in their possession.

On May 27 Valckenaer left Holland for Paris, presumably on his way to Spain, to which he had been appointed as Batavian minister several weeks before. On June 12 the French Directory decided to order Valckenaer out of Paris as an undesirable, and to apply to the Batavian Republic for the recall of Blauw as minister to France and of Valckenaer as minister to Spain. Valckenaer, however, did proceed to Spain; the Batavians were not wholly subservient. Blauw was recalled, but was immediately sent to Turin as Batavian minister to the North Italian states.

What do these facts add up to as evidence of an international revolutionary conspiracy in the spring of 1796? Italian and French historians have puzzled over the problem, in which the Dutch have taken less interest.²⁸ It seems likely enough that among Dutch, Italian, and French revolutionaries, of the type feared as "ultra" or "anarchist" by the Directory, there was a considerable mutual acquaintance, and that they shared in many of the same ideas. All thought the Directory too timid, too tepid, too inclined to put the interests of France first, and too likely to make peace with England and Austria before their own aims were accomplished. It is

27 Bielfeld to Frederick William II, The Hague, May 19, 1796, in Colenbrander, II, 273; newsletter of Bosset to the Court of Prussia, June 3, 1796, *ibid.*, 275; van Lammpsins to the Hereditary Prince, June 1796, *ibid.*, 927; Noël to Delacroix, May 19, 1796, *ibid.*, 52–53. See also J. Godechot, "Unità batava e unità italiana all'epoca del Direttorio" in *Archivio storico italiano*, Vol. 113 (1955), 347–48, and A. Saitta, *Filippo Buonarroti* (Rome, 1950), I, 30–32, 11, 26–32, where additional letters of Noël to Delacroix are printed.

28 Godechot and Saitta, while not affirming a connection between Babouvists and Dutch democrats, think that it would have been characteristic of the Babeuf movement, and that it was probable enough to alarm the French Government. P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van nederlandse stam* (Amsterdam and Antwerp, 1959), III, 395–99, believes the connection highly unlikely, but emphasizes the cannoneers' revolt as a step in differentiating radicals and moderates among the Batavian revolutionaries.

now widely thought that the famous “communism” of Babeuf was limited to a small circle within his movement, and that all kinds of persons discontented with the Directory on other grounds—popular democrats and international revolutionaries—gave his group such strength as it had. The involvement of Dutch and Italians with Babeuf would offer no evidence whatsoever that they were more than advanced political democrats, as we know Blauw and Valckenaer to have been.

It is certain that the Babeuf group, through Buonarroti, was engaged in concerted action to bring about revolution in Italy. That they would have liked to drive forward the revolution in Holland is equally beyond doubt. But the evidence seems to be against any equally concerted action by the Dutch. Valckenaer, it would seem, if knowingly involved with the Babouvists, would hardly have chosen a moment two weeks after their arrest to stop in Paris on his way to Spain. Valckenaer also, at the time, denied the reports that he had paid money to the Amsterdam cannoneers; and while the denial proves nothing, the tone of the private letters in which Vreede, Schimmelpenninck, and Valckenaer discussed the rumor suggests that it was really a false charge, or at least that the radical democrat, Vreede, had no knowledge of any such fact. As for Blauw, recalled from Paris, he went to Turin. But at Turin, during the remainder of 1796 and 1797, while he continued to dislike the French Directory, he did not befriend the Italian revolutionaries nor favor the establishment of the Cisalpine Republic. He preferred to leave North Italy under Austrian influence, the better to persuade the Austrians to recognize the Batavian Republic and give up their claims in Belgium, where the Batavians did not want them.²⁹ Blauw, in short, proved to be less an international revolutionary than a Dutch one.

The disturbances of May 1796 at Amsterdam and in other cities soon subsided, thanks in part to the French army. Though the French were apprehensive about anarchists, the foreign minister, Charles Delacroix, instructed Noël to continue to work for a centralized and unitary government in the Batavian Republic. Only a strong central government, he remarked, could both keep “anarchists” under control and subdue the British and Orange sympathizers.³⁰ The French were impatient of Dutch delay, but still refrained from imposing a form of government, believing that a government agreed upon by the Dutch, if only the strict Orangists were excluded, would be the most likely to employ the Dutch wealth and fleet to mutual advantage.

After much backing and filling, amending and patching, the Dutch Convention submitted an admittedly compromise constitution to the voters in August 1797.

29 For the correspondence of Valckenaer, Vreede, and Schimmelpenninck, see Colenbrander, II, 502–6. For Blauw's mission to Italy and opinions there see G. W. Vreede, *Nederlandsche diplomatie* (Utrecht, 1863), IV, 248–50, 264–75, where Blauw's reports of 1796–1797 to the Batavian committee on foreign affairs are excerpted. Neither Godechot nor Saitta, in noting the possibility of connection between Dutch democrats and Babouvists, has dealt with these aspects of the evidence. It seems significant also that *Le Batave*, the radical democratic paper published in Paris by persons with Dutch connections, having suspended publication on March 11, 1796, resumed it on May 11, the day after the arrest of Babeuf. Resumption on May 11 would be highly unlikely if the editors of *Le Batave* had any conscious connection with the Babouvists.

30 Delacroix to Noël, May 24, 1796, Colenbrander, II, 54.

Its most sweeping single innovation was the disestablishment of the Reformed Church. Catholics, Jews, and minority Protestants all received equal political rights. Most of the Jews, including the rabbis, lacked enthusiasm for this "French" idea. They lived apart, unused to politics, in a corporate body of their own, and they felt a loyalty to the traditional Dutch Republic to whose protection they had in fact owed so much for two hundred years. But there were also in Holland a great many modernized Jews who received their new status with pleasure, and who even had some of the Dutch legislation translated into Hebrew.³¹ Noël and the leading Dutch democrats insisted on this equality of civic rights for Jews. At a crude or immediate level the matter had little importance, even in Holland, where the Jews were exceptionally numerous; but at a more general or "abstract" level there was no better way of affirming the difference between an old regime and a state issuing from the eighteenth-century revolution.

Many Dutch leaders, as well as Noël and Delacroix, hoped desperately for approval of the constitution in August 1797. They felt that any constituted government was better than none. Nevertheless the Dutch voters rejected the constitution overwhelmingly, by a vote of 108,761 to 27,955. It clearly failed because it was too much of a compromise. It satisfied no party of any strength. It was rejected in every province. In populous Holland and Utrecht, where unitary democrats were strong, it was the democrats who voted against it; in the eastern or land provinces, the federalists and conservatives. Both parties hoped to do better on a new draft.

Thus in August 1797, almost three years after the revolution, the Batavian Republic still had no government. The old order had collapsed, leaving only a vacuum. The revolutionaries in the broad sense of the word—men of all political stripes who were willing to take the antihereditary oath—were unable to agree and unwilling to compromise.

THE COUP D'ETAT OF JANUARY 22, 1798: DUTCH DEMOCRACY AT ITS HEIGHT

At this point it is necessary to anticipate developments that will be further explained in a later place. The fate of the Batavian Republic, at the time of the rejection of the constitution in August 1797, depended on events of an all-European scope.

The summer of 1797, throughout Europe, was a time of reviving counter-revolutionary expectations. Elections in France, in the spring of 1797, had produced a majority of the "royalist" or peace party in the French legislative chambers. If this group got control of the French government, reaction could be expected in France, and the spread of revolution in Italy under Bonaparte could be stopped. Dutch conservatives took hope in the rejection of the Dutch constitution. It was

31 For this apparently unknown fact I am indebted to Professor Jacob R. Marcus of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. For Noël's insistence on equality of rights for Jews see Colenbrander, II, 50, 56, 60, 65, 67.

known that French *émigrés*, royalists, Orange emissaries, spies, and British agents were everywhere active. Rightist coups were expected.

What happened, however, was the French coup d'état of Fructidor, on September 4, 1797. Republicans in France combined with Bonaparte to suppress counter-revolution. They purged the French chambers and Directory, thus for a time giving encouragement to the democratic left. The Dutch democrats were delighted. As one of them wrote to Valckenaer in Spain, "If the plans of the [French] royalists had only succeeded, how fast Father William [i.e., William V] would have been with his! We have been finding this citizen's agents all over the country. Six of them were arrested yesterday in this city." Or as Robert Barclay, the British secret agent at The Hague, described the reassertion of revolutionism to the British foreign secretary, Lord Grenville: "The same ill temper that prevails in France is attempted to be raised in every shape in the minds of the unfortunate inhabitants of this country, and in order to effect this, My lord, more speedily, the moderate and respectable persons comprising the municipalities of the towns and villages have already been changed to make way for the most violent, and of course the vilest and most ignorant among the people."³²

After rejecting the constitution, the Dutch elected a new convention to draft another. Moderates were weaker, and democrats stronger, than in the first; but still no majority could be formed to agree upon anything. On October 11 came the battle of Camperdown. The Dutch fleet was defeated by the British. For the first time in history a Dutch admiral was taken captive. This turn of events discredited the provisional governing committees. Patriots believed that moderates in the government had deliberately ordered out the fleet before it was ready and before the time called for in the Franco-Batavian war plan, in order to avoid making a true contribution to the impending invasion of Ireland. The cry was renewed for a unitary and effectual government that would not mismanage the navy.

The Dutch clubs and other radicals demanded a Dutch Fructidor.³³ They asked for the recall of Noël, who they said had mixed too much with "aristocrats." The French post-Fructidorian government, having broken off peace talks with England, was committed to a renewal of hostilities and preparing to invade the British Isles. It was losing patience with the interminable Dutch indecision and prepared to support any strong government that would act as an ally. The Fructidor turnover brought Talleyrand to the foreign ministry, while his predecessor, Delacroix, went to Holland to replace Noël. Delacroix was an old Jacobin, who had voted for the death of Louis XVI; he was a man of experience and ability, who had been chief assistant to Turgot years before, and was to end his life as one of Napoleon's prefects. According to his present instructions, his first duty was to get a workable constitution adopted in the Netherlands; the matter should preferably be left to the Dutch, and honest elections were to be desired, but if necessary to get a decision, the elections might be "fixed."³⁴

32 *Ibid.*, 132, 396, 538.

33 Notes to Barras, Talleyrand, etc., *ibid.*, 548–52; The Amsterdam Club to Vreede, December 1797, *ibid.*, 563; "Observations sur l'état actuel de la République batave," December 17, 1797, *ibid.*, 567–71; Lestevenon to Valckenaer, Jan. 9, 1798, *ibid.*, 582–84.

34 *Ibid.*, 140–45.

Dutch historians seem to differ in judging what followed. For Pieter Geyl, the French interference was very high-handed, and the Dutch democrats who demanded it went far beyond the bounds of political common sense. To Professor Geyl it seems that the moderates in the Dutch Convention were on their way to accepting a compromise with the democrats. For H. Brugmans, the Dutch moderates had an opportunity to work with Delacroix, but failed to use it; it was the democrats who, impatient at the long deadlock of parliamentary methods, were eager to take direct action, and it was therefore the democrats with whom Delacroix worked.³⁵

Delacroix brought with him a draft constitution, put together by both French and Dutch hands, and retouched in Paris by Merlin de Douai and Barras. This constitution, or something like it, he had to get accepted by the Dutch convention, which therefore had to be purged. Forty-nine members of the stalemated convention—about a third of the whole—reached an understanding with him. They submitted to him a long document, entitled “Constitutional points agreed upon,” and listing the articles of a “democratic, representative constitution.” They agreed to exclude forcibly those of their fellow-members “in known opposition to the principles here announced.”³⁶

It is a fact of interest, for Americans, that one of these forty-nine democrats bore the name of Roosevelt—or rather of F. A. van Rosevelt-Cateau. Not much is known of him, but he had recently written a pamphlet in which the words Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and the Year III of Batavian Freedom were liberally sprinkled. Six months later he was briefly imprisoned as one of the “chief anarchists” in the country, defended by a few who objected to such abuse of language, and released.

The coup d'état took place on January 22, 1798. Twenty-two members were driven from the assembly. The re-formed constitutional committee considered Delacroix's draft, which it felt no obligation to accept blindly. In fact, it did not find the draft democratic enough. Small Holland now gave revolutionary lessons to its mighty neighbor. The Dutch, as the committee explained to Delacroix, were “capable of a greater measure of democracy than would be suitable for the French.” They proposed more direct election by original voters (i.e., less power to electoral colleges), procedures for amendment by popular initiative, and modification of the bicameral provision to keep aristocrats from dominating the upper chamber. Delacroix accepted these suggestions.³⁷

The resulting constitution, agreed to by the purged convention, was unitary and democratic. It extinguished the old provinces and replaced them with eight “departments” of equal population, whose frontiers bore no relation to the old provincial borders. It granted manhood suffrage except to persons receiving public relief. It consolidated the debt and the revenues. It abolished all guilds, monopolies, and other barriers to the circulation of persons and goods, and it completed the dises-

35 Geyl, *Geschiedenis*, III, 478–81; Brugmans, *Geschiednis van Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1937), VI, 327. See also Geyl's “The Batavian Revolution, 1795–98,” translated in his *Encounters in History* (New York, 1961), 226–41.

36 Colenbrander, II, 171–77.

37 *Ibid.*, 190–94. For a French translation of the constitution see D. R. C. Verhagen, *L'influence de la Révolution française sur la première Constitution hollandaise du 23 avril 1798* (Utrecht, 1949), 59–99.

tablishment of the Reformed religion. It provided for a bicameral legislature and for a collegiate executive of five directors to supervise the ministries, as in France.

This constitution, submitted for popular ratification in April 1798, was overwhelmingly adopted by a vote of 165,520 to 11,597. Pressure was brought at the polls, where the anti-heredity oath was again exacted, so that conscientious Orangists were excluded. The best evidence that the constitution suited a great majority of the Dutch people is the fact that, when the democrats themselves were driven from power, their democratic constitution was retained. It remained in effect until replaced by the Bonapartist constitution of 1801, which modified only a few of its principles. Unity, consolidation, equality of civil rights, and religious disestablishment remained permanent. As the Dutch say of their work of 1798, they took the medicine but threw away the bottle.

It was the behavior of the democrats rather than their constitution that led to further discord. They did nothing really drastic; there was no attempt at social revolution, general confiscation, or terror. They did, however, take steps to secure themselves in power. There was a general scramble for office; the unitary central government, using its newly acquired powers, put all sorts of democrats into local jobs. It was called a purge but was not altogether different from the American practice of "rotation." What was more serious, and justified only by the familiar argument of defense against reaction, the Dutch democrats also tried to purge the voters, by excluding political rivals from the polls. It was of course true that British and Orange agents were trying to subvert the new regime.

There was an upsurge of popular democratic excitement in which ideas like those of the Paris *sans-culottes* or American democrats were expressed. An example is offered by a certain obscure Lucas Butot. He was a warehouse keeper by vocation and a Catholic. He was also a member of the secret committee of the One and Indivisible Club at the time of the coup of January 22, and thereafter was employed by the government to conduct local purges. He thought that all, including the poorest, should vote, except for known Orangists and persons holding foreign investments, unless these were in France. He thus aimed at Dutch capitalists, who held a good deal of wealth in England. The state, in his opinion, should ignore all religious cults, and no clergy should be paid from the public purse. Merit should be the only qualification for civil and military office. Officeholders should be modestly paid ("a man can live well in the Batavian Republic on 3,000 guilders a year"); and public offices or jobs should not be held by persons drawing income from their own property or business, but be reserved for those who needed them to live. Such persons, he believed, would in any case discharge the duties better. Modest payment of officeholders, added Butot, would make the effects of bribery immediately visible. The money saved on officeholders and clergy should be put into the fleet, to aid France in the joint war against Britain.³⁸

The inrush of really plain people, with popular ideas, created general consternation, even among upper-class persons known for democratic opinions. How much the efficiency of government really suffered is endlessly debatable. Delacroix stoutly defended it, as did many others; but it would seem in the nature of the case

38 Colenbrander, II, 709–10.

that efficiency was not such a government's strongest point. Democrats fell out with one another. "True" democrats denounced "false" ones. Gogel, the radical democrat, finance minister under the new constitution, complained that all sorts of people—druggists, organists, notaries' clerks, and policemen—were trying to tell the government what to do.³⁹ People began to send anonymous letters to Talleyrand in Paris, describing the horrors in Holland; Talleyrand sent them back for comment to Delacroix, who was able to expose many gross misrepresentations. To refute the allegation, for example, that the country was ruled by riffraff and fortune-hunters he reviewed the five-man Directory: "As to the dilapidation of their fortunes, this is perhaps a matter on which a republican should keep silence, but I will reply: Pieter Vreede is a millionaire, head of one of the finest manufactories in the republic. Van Langen is hardly less rich; he enjoys large credit, and does an extensive business with Spain. Fynje was on the old East Indies Commission, with a 12,000 guilder salary. This is not rich for this country, but his affairs are in good order. The same can be said for Fokker and Wildrik, who enjoy a comfort in this country that would be called wealth in ours."⁴⁰

It is probably true that the Dutch regime set up on January 22 did not offer a basis on which the politically significant classes could reach stable agreement. The men who controlled the Dutch finances and the Dutch navy withheld their support. The French government still wanted an effectual ally. Delacroix, the old Jacobin, earnestly defended the military usefulness of the Dutch regime to France. Where the preceding Dutch rulers had done nothing but get the fleet knocked to pieces at Camperdown, the present Dutch government, he wrote in May 1798, maintained twelve ships of the line and transport for 15,000 troops and had assembled 230 vessels at Dunkirk to embark the right wing of the French *Armée d'Angleterre*.⁴¹

But, unknown to Delacroix, in May Bonaparte sailed for Egypt to assail Britain in the East. The French, while still needing Dutch power in northern waters, postponed the invasion of the British Isles. In May, also, the French government veered in an antidemocratic direction; the French elections of 1798, having shown a revival of democratic agitation, were quashed by the so-called coup d'état of Floréal. Talleyrand and the French Directors allowed Gogel, Daendels, and other Dutch leaders, in agreement with the French military commander in Holland, to form a conspiracy against Delacroix and the existing Dutch regime. Dutch politics, if not dictated, were certainly shaped by the French: the Dutch Fructidor was followed by the Dutch Floréal, which, in turn, foreshadowed the French Brumaire.

On June 12, 1798, by a second coup d'état, General Daendels arrested the leading members of the Batavian government and dissolved the chambers. Delacroix left Holland a week later. He submitted to Talleyrand a final report on his mission, justifying his own and the Dutch democrats' actions. The coup of June 12 looked to him like military dictatorship. "May the excessive ease with which it was carried out not persuade some obscure centurion that to win all he need only dare all!"⁴²

39 *Ibid.*, 761–62; see also 796, n. 2, and 807, n. 1.

40 *Ibid.*, 203, n. 2.

41 *Ibid.*, 218, n. 2.

42 *Ibid.*, 245.

After Daendels' coup d'état, matters quieted down. There was very little punishment or retribution, and an increasing willingness of men of various parties to work together. The next test came with the Anglo-Russian invasion a year later, of which more will be said.

A WORD ON THE DUTCH OF SOUTH AFRICA

When the British occupied Cape Town in June 1795 they believed themselves to be surrounded by "Jacobins."⁴³ There had in fact been a rebellion against the Dutch East India Company, to which the colony had belonged as a way-station on the route to Ceylon and Java. This rebellion had occurred in February, at the time of the Batavian Revolution in the home country. The European population in the Cape Colony, some 20,000 in number, and not yet extending very far from Cape Town, was almost exclusively made up of Dutch people some three or four generations removed from the homeland. Politically it was divided; some favored the Company and the Orange regime in the Netherlands, some had favored the Patriots and now sympathized with the Batavians, and a great many, living widely dispersed on huge tracts of land on which they raised cattle, were unconcerned with events in Europe or even at Cape Town, wishing mainly and somewhat obstinately to be let alone. Nevertheless, when the British arrived, certain symbols of the European revolution were current. There were people who wore tricolor cockades (in protest against the Orange cockades of Company officials), or who called themselves "citizens," or spoke of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

The handful of English who occupied the Cape were naturally of the classes, back in England, which produced naval and army officers, as well as colonial administrators and empire-builders, the very kinds of Englishmen who were most nervous about "Jacobins" in England, and not very congenial to such plain people as the South African Dutch. The British occupation introduced a kind of modernization, and it is from 1795 that the modern history of South Africa has been generally dated. Some of the stuffiness and narrowness of the Dutch Company, against which the South Africans had protested, was done away with. A freer internal and external trade replaced the old monopoly of the Company. But the British were not welcomed, and probably the South Africans, as between the two, would have preferred occupation by the French.

It seems likely that the British authorities may have created as many Jacobins" as they discovered. Burghers and officials were required, against their will, to take an oath to King George III. They were disappointed when a Dutch fleet, sent by the Batavian Republic to relieve them, was defeated by the British off Walvis Bay.

43 Dundas to Grenville, November 16, 1794, in *Papers of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, II, 645; G. E. Cory, *Rise of South Africa*, 5 vols. (London, 1910), I, 35–86; G. M. Theal, *History of South Africa Since 1795*, 5 vols. (London, 4th ed., 1915), I, 1–70; C. de Kiewiet, *History of South Africa* (Oxford, 1941), 30–31; John Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798* (New York, 1802); Lady Anne Barnard, *South Africa a Century Ago, 1797–1801* (Cape Town and Oxford, 1926); J. S. Marais, *Maynier and the First Boer Republic* (Cape Town, 1944); J. P. van der Merwe, *Die Kaap onder die Bataafse Republiek 1803–1806* (Amsterdam, 1926).

Nor were they pleased when another Dutch relief ship, sent from Java, was captured by a stratagem in which a British warship pretended to be an American merchant vessel. It was not very edifying when, after a mutiny in the British South African squadron, twenty-three of the sailors were brought ashore at Cape Town (alleged to be "blind agents of French miscreants") and three of them were executed. Censorship at the Cape had never been so severe. The official salary scales were a source of discontent. The Dutch head of the high court at Cape Town received £400 a year, while the Earl of McCartney, the governor, drew £10,000 a year plus a table allowance of £2,000, and ten British officials together drew £23,000, which was equal to the total revenue of the colony in 1796. The British did not much associate with the local Dutch, as may be seen from the letters of Lady Anne Barnard. She had persuaded Pitt's government to give her husband some kind of position, which, to her dismay, proved to be the secretaryship of the Cape colony, paying £3,100 a year, or the equivalent of 35,000 Dutch guilders. She complained that the Cape burghers did not seek acquaintance with the English. "As for the young Dutchmen, I hardly saw any," she said after two months, "... perhaps they are altogether Jacobin."⁴⁴

On the frontier, some two hundred miles east of Cape Town, at Graaf Reinet, where the Dutch and Bantu cattle-herders had recently begun to come into collision, there had long been dissatisfaction on the part of the settlers with the government at the Cape. Dutch officers of the Company, in the interests of a compact and peaceable colony, designed primarily as a service station for the Eastern trade, had long attempted to restrain this migration and the accompanying clashes between the Dutch and the Africans. The frontier Boers had always resisted, demanding the freedom to take up apparently unoccupied land, and to handle their labor problem in their own way, which meant in effect, though not exactly in law, the enslavement of African tribesmen. Rebelling first against the Dutch Company, and then holding aloof from the British, they set up a somewhat shadowy Republic of Graaf Reinet, often called the First Boer Republic, since it antedated the Transvaal by half a century. Another small republic was proclaimed at Swellendam.

It is perhaps unseemly for an American, having in mind conditions in the United States at this same time, to question the democratic principles of slaveholders, or the ideas of liberty and equality to be found among frontiersmen bent on acquiring land in conflict with an indigenous population. The language of the French and Batavian republics was heard on the South African frontier, as on the American. "Citizens" talked of "liberty and equality" and of the "sovereignty of the people." The republic of Graaf Reinet had a "convention." It is hard to estimate the depth of conviction which such language represented. The republics of Graaf Reinet and Swellendam, mere associations of a few hundreds of Dutch families out of touch with the world, were hardly viable as political entities in any case, and soon disappeared. Their political doctrine, such as it was, seems to have served a quite specific negative purpose—to keep outsiders, whether Orange Dutch, Bata-

44 Barnard, XXIV and 8.

vian, or British, from interfering with them in matters of land or labor.⁴⁵ Probably there was more sympathy with the Batavian and European revolutions among the Dutch in and near Cape Town than in the two “republics.”

The British in 1802, by the Treaty of Amiens, handed over the Cape Colony to the Batavian Republic, which held and administered it for four years. In 1806, with the renewal of war, the British returned, this time to remain permanently. In 1806 they met with considerable resistance, where they had found virtually none in 1795. There is this much evidence that the South African Dutch favored the changes brought about by the Batavian revolution.

Developments within South Africa, with its mere 20,000 whites, were of no more than incidental significance on the larger stage, except as a reminder of geographically remote repercussions of movements stirring the world of western civilization. External implications were more important. The British occupation of the Dutch colonies, made possible by the Batavian revolution, had many international and worldwide ramifications.

Noël, as French envoy at The Hague, in January 1796 sent an interesting letter to the French foreign minister, Delacroix.⁴⁶ The Batavian Republic, he said, naturally wished French aid in getting back the Cape. The Cape was the key to India. If the British, having the Cape and Ceylon, should succeed in the conquest of India, they would gain “much more than they lost in the American Revolution.” The French should therefore send agents to India to persuade “Tippu-Saib” (the sultan of Mysore) to ally with France and Holland. “It is in India that the strongest blows against British power must be delivered.” So the idea now arose, as some might say, of exporting “Jacobinism” to India.

45 This is the view of Marais, VI and 90. The British General Craig believed the two republics to be “infected with the rankest poison of Jacobinism.” Cory, I, 63.

46 Colenbrander, II, 29.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FRENCH DIRECTORY: MIRAGE OF THE MODERATES

The French government is now concerned with a problem of interest to all nations. How does one come out of a regime of violence after having once been in it? How get back on the road of justice and moderation once it has been left?

—THE COUNT DE MONTLOSIER, LONDON, 1796

After Robespierre's death, as the Terror came to an end, and the political and emotional crisis of the Year II receded, the question that a great many Frenchmen put to themselves both in France and in the emigration, and a question to which observers throughout Europe and America awaited the answer, was whether some kind of moderate or constitutional regime would be durably established. The next four years, punctuated toward their end by the coups d'état of Fructidor and Floreal, were to show that constitutional quietude was still far away.

The difficulty was that not everyone agreed on what either moderation or justice should consist in. Justice, for some, required the punishment of all revolutionaries and their sympathizers. For others, it meant a continuing battle against kings, priests, aristocrats, and the comfortable middle classes. Both groups saw in "moderation" a mere tactic of the opposition, and moderates as the dupes of the opposite extreme. Compromise for them meant the surrender of principle. It meant truckling with an enemy that could never be trusted, and had no real intention of compromise.

In any case, what was "moderation"? Did it mean merely the absence of spectacular violence, with no more busy public guillotines and forced liquidations and purges? Was a regime moderate because it managed to exist without such exhibitions of ruthlessness? What if it persisted in an obstinate violation of the Christian religion, of the rights of the French king, nobility, and former property-owners, or of the authority of foreign governments over their own peoples? Such were the

questions asked on the Right. What if the regime, however decorous and constitutional, violated the rights and the needs of the common people of the working classes, harrying and insulting the very patriots who had saved the Revolution in '92 and '93? Such were the questions asked on the Left.

AFTER THERMIDOR

It has already been remarked that for extreme conservatives the French Republic after Thermidor was even less welcome than the Republic of the Terror, since as long as the Terror lasted the republican government was discredited in principle and seemed to be destroying itself in practice. At the other extreme also, among the fiery activists, the post-Thermidorian republic was repugnant because it seemed to betray the glorious promise of the Year II. The *purs* of both sides combined to see in the post-Thermidorian republic a scene of peculiar corruption and cynicism. Later on it became the habit of all partisans of Napoleon to throw a bad light on the republic which he had supplanted. All who felt strongly felt a preference for something else. No one loved the Thermidorians and the Directory.

The stereotypes of corruption and cynicism were greatly exaggerated. It has been concluded by one scholar that, of all the men in the higher positions under the Directory, that is, the thirteen who served as Directors and the others who acted as ministers, only three are known to have been financially corrupt: Barras, Talleyrand, and Fouché; and it is added (as if in defence of the French bourgeoisie) that the two former were ex-nobles by origin, and Fouché an ex-priest.¹ A number of contractors and generals, including Bonaparte, made fortunes in the occupied countries during the wars, and in Paris there was more minor graft than there ought to have been, as when a bureaucrat accepted money to remove someone's name from the official lists of émigrés. As for the making of fortunes in occupied countries, the British were doing the same by not wholly dissimilar methods in their conquests in India during these same years, without incurring the shocked indignation of Europeans. As for the minor graft, such commonplace misconduct was hardly enough to meet the ideological requirements of the stereotype, since it did not prove, especially in the eighteenth century, that the Directory was especially shameless or disgraceful. Other profits were made from the purchase and sale of confiscated lands, or from business ventures that took on new life after the year of the Terror. Many kinds of people thus quietly added to their fortunes, including such diverse characters as the social philosopher Saint-Simon and the honest Yankee Joel Barlow.

In the more conspicuous circles of Paris there was a debasement of moral tone. Some of the new rich, and some who felt they had had a narrow escape in surviving the Terror, many of them persons who had never shared either in the idealism of the Revolution or in the refinements of the Old Regime, now found it safe and clever to make a joke about "virtue," wear exaggerated dress, chase after absurd luxuries, and otherwise make a show of their wealth and superiority. There was a

1 A. Meynier, *Les coups d'état du Directoire*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1927), II, 168-78.

certain amount of political hooliganism, led especially by young men of good family, the *jeunesse dorée*. Their importance should not be overstated. As a British spy reported in 1795: "The famous youth of Paris is only a conglomeration of scamps and elegant rascals, of whom this city always has a fortunate abundance. The body of them, so to speak, numbers four or five hundred." Gathering in cafes, they wear what they think is English costume, but is "really only a ridiculous caricature." Sometimes they are joined by ruffians from the public markets and by swarms of draft-dodgers. "These gentry police the theaters, and if an actor is thought tainted with Jacobinism, he dares not appear." The author of this report advised the British Foreign Office not to be misled by French foolishness. Hacking down liberty trees and stamping on the tricolor did not mean that the country had rejected the Revolution.²

The trouble with the stereotype, apart from its inaccuracy, is that it diverts attention from the problem of real interest, the political problem of introducing a moderate regime after a period of drastic action and feverish excitement. By a "moderate" regime is here meant, not merely one that preferred to avoid obvious violence, but in a more objective sense a regime that occupied an intermediate position on the spectrum of political beliefs.

This spectrum, it may be recalled from an earlier page, while of course having its nuances, consisted essentially in five distinguishable shades. At the Right was the extreme royalism of monarchical absolutism. Next came the idea of some kind of liberal, constitutional, and modernized monarchy. Then came constitutional republicanism. To the left of it was the doctrine of those republicans who were less insistent on constitutional forms, more dedicated to equality and fraternity, more militant in temper, and more hostile to all vestiges of the former social order in France. The Jacobinism of 1792–1794 had fallen at this place in the spectrum, but even at that time most Jacobins had looked forward to constitutional republicanism as their goal, so that after 1795 many Jacobins had "evolved," as the phrase was, a bit rightwards into the constitutional category. Others, unsatisfied with the new constitution after 1795, may be thought of as straight political democrats. To their left, and the furthest left on the spectrum, carrying on the tone of the popular revolutionism of 1792–1793, and attracting a few former Jacobins, was the doctrine of those for whom political democracy should merge into a kind of social democracy, with some degree of equality in wealth and income.

The post-Robespierriest Convention, continuing the reaction against popular revolutionism which the Revolutionary Government had itself initiated, ran into increasing trouble with the popular classes of Paris, whose elementary needs for warmth and sustenance in the terrible winter of 1794–1795 went neglected and unsupplied. Invaded by angry crowds, the Convention reacted with vehemence, and in the ensuing repression alienated the most active popular revolutionaries from the "bourgeois" republic. Scrapping the constitution hastily adopted and ratified in the summer of 1793, but never put into effect (the Constitution of the Year I), the Convention drafted another, the Constitution of the Year III or 1795. The

2 Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Papers of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892–1927), III, 63–64.

universal manhood suffrage and elements of direct democracy that had characterized the earlier constitution were abandoned, but the new one preserved the basic changes brought by the Revolution.

THE DIRECTORY

In its actual terms, or formal provisions, the Constitution of the Year III was about as much or as little “democratic” as the first constitution of 1789–1791.³ The number of citizens who might qualify to vote in primary assemblies (men of twenty-one or older, paying an annual property tax equivalent to three days’ wages for common labor), and the number of those who might legally qualify to sit in the electoral assemblies of the departments (proprietors and tenants defined at exactly the levels of 1791) must if anything have been a trifle larger in 1795 than in 1791. It was provided that a literacy restriction should go into effect in the future (and when operating, this provision would greatly reduce the electorate under conditions then existing); but on the other hand, any young man who had fought in a military campaign had the right to vote whether he paid a tax or not. The primary assemblies of original voters, which in 1791 had chosen one “elector” for every hundred citizens, in 1795 chose only one for every two hundred. Hence, though millions were legally eligible, the number of electors actually chosen, meeting and functioning in the departmental assemblies at any one time during the Directory, was probably in the neighborhood of 30,000, fewer than under the constitutional monarchy as set up in 1789–1791. The Directory was a “bourgeois republic” in the sense that, in fact, a few hundred locally prominent persons in each department (though subject to annual re-election as electors) kept matters pretty much in their own hands. The accentuation of class fears during the Revolution made these prominent persons, or bourgeoisie, the more determined to stay in power. The decline of political interest and spontaneous activity since the first years of the Revolution also had the effect of leaving the field more open to the upper middle class. But the Constitution of the Year III was such that a more broadly based democratic movement could legally take place under it.

The Constitution created a legislative body in two Councils, the Elders and the Five Hundred, whose members were elected by the electors in the departmental assemblies. It set up the usual ministries of foreign affairs, finance, etc. As a supervisory board above the ministers, it provided an Executive Directory of five Directors, one to be elected each year by the legislature. This collegiate executive, elected by the legislature, was of course designed, in keeping with Republican principles of the day, to avoid the danger of dictatorship or despotism, of which all constitution-alists were much afraid.

By special provision, in effect until the election foreseen for the spring of 1797, two-thirds of the first members of the two legislative chambers were required to be

3 For the text of the Constitution in English see John H. Stewart, *Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York, 1951), 572–612; see also Appendix V, “‘Democratic’ and ‘Bourgeois’ Characteristics in the French Constitution of 1791.”

former members of the Convention. The members of the post-Robespierriest Convention saw no other way of assuring not only their personal security but the continuity of republican institutions than by thus perpetuating themselves at least temporarily in office. But in so doing they made a great many enemies, who attempted in October 1795 (Vendémiaire of the Year IV) to block the two-thirds decree or indeed to stop the introduction of the republican constitution itself. This uprising of Vendémiaire was led by royalists and anti-republicans, against whom the outgoing Convention used the services of a young general then in the city, Napoleon Bonaparte, who fired his “whiff of grapeshot” on this occasion. The Directory (as the whole regime came to be called) thereupon established itself. It had been dependent on military protection for its very birth. And from the beginning a good deal of the activity in politics (for it was at first sufficiently liberal to allow “politics”) was aimed at the election scheduled for March 1797, at which time the two-thirds rule would not obtain, so that persons opposed to the whole system might be elected to the two chambers.

The Directory looked like a government, and indeed was one, the first constitutional republican government on modern principles that France or Europe had seen. It was meant to be of moderate or intermediate political color. But from the beginning there was a certain lack of substance in the Directory, which was indeed something of a mirage, because so many of the real forces and realities of political life lay outside it, distributed elsewhere along the spectrum. If the Directory failed, as it did, the failure was due in part to the war, yet in other political conditions peace might have been made. It was due partly to economic troubles and inflation, yet inflation was brought under control; and partly to religious troubles and conflict with the Church, yet these were less irreconcilable than they seemed later in retrospect. It was not due to the incompetence of the men in power, who were by no means incompetent, nor to faults in the constitution, which under more favorable conditions might have been made to work or been modified into something workable.

The difficulty was that the Directory occupied too narrow a band in the spectrum. It was never able to broaden its base. Not even all moderates could agree on it. There were too many people who refused to accept it with any finality—Frenchmen who saw in it only an interim arrangement preceding one more to their liking, whether more royal or more democratic; and foreign powers, at war with it, which hoped and expected that if they waited long enough this republican experiment would collapse and be forgotten.

Never during its four-year life was the Directory able to formulate a clear program or policy, either on internal problems or on questions of war and peace and revolutionary movements in other countries. Five in number at any given moment, the Directors were a changing body, one being replaced each year constitutionally, with additional replacements through irregularities in September 1797 and June 1799, so that thirteen persons, all told, served as Directors. Only one was in office throughout, namely Barras; but Barras was never as influential as some of his colleagues, especially Reubell, who was in office for over three years and had the main voice in foreign policy, and LaRévellière-Lépeaux, who lasted over three years and was mainly interested in the propagation of natural religion. No combination of

five incumbents ever agreed even within itself, and the Directors were often also at odds with the two legislative chambers. Far from being a disciplined committee intent on world revolution or anything else, the French executive presented itself to the world as irresolute, vacillating, and unpredictable, at the mercy of events, improvising its policies to keep abreast of accomplished facts. It shifted with developments that it could not control: conspiracies, intrigues, and elections at home; the victories and the independent actions of its generals in the field; the demands and disturbances of revolutionaries in other countries.

If not always moderate in its actions, the Directory remained essentially moderate in its preferred position, and in any case lived in nervous apprehension of the extremes. The "first" Directory, until the coup d'état of Fructidor (1797), was a predominantly liberal government, allowing much latitude to the press and to the embryonic manifestation of political parties. The "second" Directory, from Fructidor to Brumaire, was more arbitrary and dictatorial. Throughout, as Marcel Reinhard has said, the Directory "was falsified by its own principle."⁴ Claiming to represent the sovereignty of the people it could not let the people alone, since the "people," when not hostile, were largely indifferent to the men now trying to govern the country. Claiming to be a constitutional government, it could not protect the constitution except by use of unconstitutional methods. It was an awkward fact, for a government that would have preferred to be moderate, that the majority of the population, especially the rural people, had relapsed into a non-political apathy, content to enjoy the gains derived from the Revolution but no longer excited by them, while the minorities that remained most politically sensitive and alert, both the Right and the Left, made no virtue of moderation and were untroubled by constitutional scruples.

The Directory therefore followed a zig-zag or see-saw policy, *la politique de la bascule*. It was buffeted repeatedly between Right and Left, between "royalism" and "democracy." Alarmed by signs of activity on one of these sides, the moderates of the Directory would try to make common cause with moderates inclining to the opposite side, until, given such encouragement, the second side became active to the point of threatening to dominate, setting up another alarm in which the trend started in the other direction.

Of the real condition of the French people during these constitutional and political vicissitudes it is hard to speak. Marcel Reinhard concludes that the country was better off at the end of the Directory than at its beginning: the scarcities of 1795 had been overcome, a more stable currency had been introduced, schools and law-courts and regular procedures of administration and taxation had been put into operation, people were normally at work in the shops and on the farms. The "anarchy" under the Directory, according to Reinhard, came more at its beginning than at its end.

Contemporaries were very much interested in the true state of a country that had passed through so tremendous a revolution. Their judgments were widely different, but the difference was not due to impediments in the way of observation. No curtain screened France from the outside world. Travelers of all nationalities,

4 M. Reinhard, *Le Département de la Sarthe sous le régime Directorial* (Saint Brieuc, s.d.), 629–31.

except the British and Austrians with whom France remained at war, were free to travel in the new republic. An abundant press appeared in a language that was no barrier to international understanding. Differences among observers tended to reflect their own predilections. The American Jeffersonian, James Monroe, who was in France as American minister from August 1794 to December 1796, was favorably impressed. But the Massachusetts Federalist, Fisher Ames, called France "that open hell in which we see their state of torment."⁵ A large sector of British opinion, strongly influenced by French émigrés, was also very unfavorable.

Late in 1796 the King of Prussia, having now been neutral for over a year, sent a special observer, D. T. Bayard, to give him an accurate and secret description. Bayard reported that he was surprised, after reading so many newspaper declamations, to find prosperity instead of revolutionary ruins. Trade was resuming with Holland and Spain. In the cities, he said, there were a good many men who thought conditions had been better in the days of Robespierre. In the country he saw well-clothed peasants with teams of horses, industriously tilling fields where the titles to property were still unsettled. There was plenty to eat in rural areas, he found; and the country people had benefited from the abolition of manorial dues and the Revolutionary reforms in taxation. They would accept the government if it made no demands upon them. In general, according to Bayard, people thought better of the new constitution than of the character of the men in office. There were also, he warned his royal employer, in France as in other countries, especially among intellectuals, numerous cosmopolitan philanthropists, or *républicanisateurs* who wanted to transform all Europe.⁶

In short, the weakness of the Directory was not so much economic or social or administrative as it was political. And the failure in these years to find an acceptable solution to the problems of the French Revolution was of such importance, for France and for the world, both then and subsequently, that a closer examination must be made, first of the moderates, then of the two extremes.

THE SOURCES OF MODERATE STRENGTH

The sources from which a moderate solution might have been drawn were numerous and significant. They existed all over Europe. In no country of the Coalition had the war against revolutionary France enjoyed much popular support. None of the Coalition governments had gone to war for the express purpose of putting down the Revolution, and as their territorial and other aims were made difficult by the French resistance, there was a general inclination to call a halt. Older issues of international politics reasserted themselves. In Spain, the dislike of the French Republic was eclipsed by fear of the expansion of British power in Latin America and the Mediterranean. In Prussia, the main danger was seen in the growth of Austrian power in Germany. Both Prussia and Spain made peace with France in

⁵ Monroe's letters and reports in *Writings* (New York, 1899), II, and see below, pp. 763, 765; Fisher Ames, "Laocöon," written in 1799, *Works*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1854), II, 112.

⁶ P. Bailleu, *Preussen und Frankreich von 1795 bis 1807*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1881-1887), I, 91-101.

1795. Spain in the next year even signed an alliance with the Republic. Prussia embarked on a policy of neutralism that lasted for eleven years. The King of Prussia accepted the Batavian revolution as he did the French. No government except the British objected with any vigor to the French incorporation of Belgium. The Austrians were willing enough to be rid of their former Austrian Netherlands if compensated elsewhere. Dutch affairs, after the Batavian revolution, were in the hands of men who, while lacking enthusiasm for the French control of Belgium, saw in Great Britain the principal menace both to the new regime in Holland and to the preservation of the Dutch colonial empire.

It was Britain that kept the war going against France. For this fact various reasons can be seen. Though England was by no means the most conservative country in Europe, it was a country in which the virtues of an aristocratic society had been elaborated explicitly, and in which conservatism had become something of a philosophy of history and of society. Some Englishmen, in their way, in arguing against the American revolution, or against reform of the British and Irish Houses of Commons or the granting of equal civic rights to Dissenters, had made an ideology of conservatism even before the Revolution in France. Englishmen of this same kind, in 1795 and 1796, preferred to see in the war with France a great ideological struggle. They found "Jacobins" everywhere, even in South Africa and India, and to Morton Eden, the British envoy at Vienna, it seemed that even the Austrian chancellor, Thugut, who was certainly very much opposed to the French Revolution, was a "Jacobin" because insufficiently energetic against France.

England also at this time, with the industrial revolution setting in, was in a phase of rapid growth in its trade and overseas empire. For this reason also it could not readily accept peace with France, especially with a France that had been its chief commercial competitor for a hundred years, and which if successful might close the Continent to British exports. It is certainly too much to see in the Anglo-French war of the 1790's an essentially commercial conflict waged in the respective interests of French and British merchants.⁷ Too much else was at stake. But the fact that Britain was not in a passive or defensive phase, but was on the contrary highly dynamic, had important and somewhat paradoxical consequences.

On the one hand, it kept the hostilities going. The British could afford abundant outlays of money. By 1797, some eighty thousand pounds sterling had been paid to the royalists of northern France alone, to foment resistance against the Paris government.⁸ As early as the end of 1794 the British treasury had paid £1,225,000 to Prussia, over a million to the smaller German states, and £350,000 to Sardinia, to keep them in the field against France. In 1795 and 1796, through guarantees of loans on which in the end it had to pay, the British government contributed over five millions to Austria.⁹ But the Austrians, thus enabled to remain in the war

⁷ As in E. Dejoint, *La politique économique du Directoire* (Paris, 1951).

⁸ Windham's report to Pitt, *Droghmore papers*, III, 363. Windham remarked that the French royalists could not exist as a party without British money. The Princess of Orange had said the same of the Dutch Orangists, p. 417 above.

⁹ Great Britain, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers for 1900*, Vol. XLVII, No. 180, "Loans and advances to foreign states since 1792"; J. H. Clapham, "Loans and Subsidies in Time of War," *Economic Journal*, XXVII (1917), 495-501. In 1796 an offer of £300,000 was made to Russia, for opera-

after the other Continental states had left it, were badly defeated in north Italy by the French. This defeat opened the way to the indigenous forces of revolution in Italy. The Italian revolutions of 1796 and 1797, accompanied as they were by French predominance, and coming in addition to similar developments in Holland and Belgium, greatly reduced the chances for any moderate settlement of Europe's problems.

On the other hand, the dynamism of the British was certainly one of the factors (along with the partition of Poland and the unexpected strength shown by the French themselves) by which the military effort against France was greatly weakened. In some ways, the British could more effectively have led an anti-French and anti-Revolutionary alliance had their own aims been more disinterested. It was the well-grounded fear, derived from experience, felt in Holland and Spain, that the British would seize upon opportunities to acquire their colonies, or to impose undesirable trading advantages, that did as much as anything else to throw Holland and Spain—Holland with revolution, Spain without it—into alliance with the French Republic. Throughout the Continent there was a latent antipathy to England. The French could exploit it but did not have to create it, since it had accompanied the phenomenal rise of Britain and British sea power in the eighteenth century, been confirmed in the Seven Years' War, and somewhat glamorized by the American struggle for independence.

Even in England, however, there were important voices on the side of moderation. Pitt's government had no patience with French republicanism, but it refrained from recognizing the Count of Provence as Louis XVIII, and tried to persuade him of the advantages of constitutional monarchy. Of the English popular radicals, who were more sympathetic to French republicanism, more will be said in a later chapter. In the governing classes there were a good many men of political sagacity and fair-mindedness. Many of these men believed—and it was one of the signs of a "moderate" as distinguished from a *pur*—that the troubles in France could be largely attributed to the extremism of the Right. The Earl of McCartney, for example, before going to South Africa (where his sojourn was noted in the last chapter) was assigned as an unofficial British representative to the "court" of "Louis XVIII," which in 1796 gathered at a hotel in Verona. McCartney did not like what he saw there of the French émigré noblemen. "It is amusing to hear them discourse," he said, "on the former happiness of *all* social classes in France; they cannot conceive that the lower classes should have had aspirations to improve themselves, or that men of talent, without other advantages of fortune, should have any right or claim to positions of distinction."¹⁰ William Wickham, the British agent in Switzerland, lost all respect for the future Louis XVIII and Charles X. "When one has observed them as closely and as often behind the scenes as I have," he wrote in 1796, "one is tempted to believe that God Almighty has willed this appalling revolution, among other aims, for their personal correction."¹¹ Lady Elliot,

tions in the Rhineland or Holland, but it was refused. In 1799–1800 the British granted almost £3,500,000 to finance the Second Coalition.

10 Quoted by A. Lebon, *L'Angleterre et l'émigration française* (Paris, 1882), XXIII.

11 Quoted by G. Walter, *Le comte de Provence, frère du roi, "régent" de France, rot des émigrés* (Paris, 1950).

the wife of Sir Gilbert Elliot, was astonished that the French émigrés insisted on getting back their position and possessions as a matter of right. "I fear that great troubles are in store for France," she said in 1794.¹²

To men and women of this kind the extreme conservatives in England were no better. Late in 1796 Pitt sent the Earl of Malmesbury to France to enter upon talks to end the war. Edmund Burke, frightened and angry, penned his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, in which he denounced the very thought of peace or compromise as outrageous and immoral. The Revolution in France was a "system of robbery." "It must be destroyed, or it will destroy all Europe." What the twentieth century would call "co-existence" seemed to Burke impossible. "With this republic, nothing independent can co-exist."¹³ Burke's was not however the voice of all Britain. He was answered by Thomas Erskine in a widely read pamphlet.

Erskine, a brother of the eleventh Earl of Buchan, was an eminent lawyer, who had successfully defended the English "Jacobins" in the state trials of 1794. He believed that the French Revolution had been thrown onto a radical course by the Allied intervention of 1792. He saw the origin of an excessive British conservatism in the fears of republicanism raised by the American Revolution, not the French. He thought, in 1797, that the French Directory should be recognized by Britain, that it was "fit," as he put it ironically, "to be received into the holy communion of the robbers and spoilers of Poland." Pitt's government, he insisted, in remaining at war with France, pursued no attainable objective, and in fact, "while railing at home against republican theorists," was actually, since the French continued to win, contributing to the republicanization of Europe.¹⁴

Burke's *Regicide peace* went through about a dozen pamphlet editions, Erskine's *View of the causes and consequences of the present war with France* through thirty-five. In later times, for whatever reason, it was Burke's effort that was remembered, and Erskine's forgotten.

Nor, despite all the provocations, were spokesmen for compromise absent from the Roman Catholic Church. Both Popes of the period offered gestures of conciliation. Pius VI, to be sure, had little sympathy or understanding for the Revolution. Nevertheless, when the Count of Provence, on assuming the title of King of France, hoped for the Pope's endorsement, Pius VI refused to give it. His Holiness, while expressing great personal sympathy in this awkward situation, replied that only the Almighty "will decide between you and the French people, whether they ought to be republicans, or be subject to a king." He hoped and believed that the new republican regime in France was superseding the "barbarous system of terror."¹⁵

12 *The Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot first Earl of Minto*, 3 vols. (London, 1874), II, 230.

13 Edmund Burke, *Letters . . . on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France*. Letter II "On the genius and character of the French Revolution as it regards other nations," *Works* (Boston, 1877), V, 377.

14 T. Erskine, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* (London, 1797), to which there were numerous replies, notably John Gifford, *A Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine . . .* (London, 1797, at least eleven editions), where Gifford insists on a French design of conquest since 1791, the danger of Jacobin conspiracy in England, and British need for a Belgium independent of France.

15 The quotations are from a letter said to be from Pius VI to Louis XVIII, published in English in the *Annual Register for 1795* (London, 1800). I have been unable to locate any better source or author-

In the next year, 1796, in response to approaches by the Directory, Pius VI prepared a conciliatory letter, *Pastoralis sollicitudo*, recommending to French Catholics the acceptance of the republican order.¹⁶ It was never published, largely because the French constitutional clergy, issuing from the Revolution, feared that reconciliation would work to their disadvantage. Pius VI was also the first Pope to grant full diplomatic honors to an envoy from a power not Catholic in principle, when he received Joseph Bonaparte as representative of the French Republic after the Treaty of Tolentino; and the modern period of papal affairs, in which no distinction is made diplomatically between Christian and non-Christian states, is dated precisely from this year 1797.¹⁷ In that year the man who soon became Pius VII (and was to sign the Concordat of 1801), Barnaba Chiaramonti, then bishop of Imola, near Bologna, declared his sympathies with the Italian revolution, consented to work with the French, and accepted the Cisalpine Republic.¹⁸

The French clergy made notable efforts to dissociate religion from politics. The constitutional clergy in France, after 1795, were no longer paid by the state nor considered established by it, and while generally remaining committed to the Revolution were absorbed in religious reconstruction in the ruins that followed the Dechristianization. Clergy both in France and in the emigration resisted the overtures of Louis XVIII. The Abbé Emery, head of the seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, evaded the approaches of royalists. Even the émigré bishops, all of whom were monarchists by personal preference and belief, refused on various occasions to set up committees at the request of Louis XVIII, or take other joint action in which it should seem to be taught, as official Catholic doctrine, that Christianity had any intrinsic attachment to monarchy. In short, political Catholicism of the kind taught by some clerics and by such laymen as Joseph de Maistre—the doctrine of the “throne and the altar”—seems to have drawn little support from the most qualified spokesman for Catholicism at this time. This too, in later times, was easily forgotten.¹⁹

Indeed, less was heard from the Protestant clergy than from the Catholic in the way of tolerance for the new order. The various established churches of the Protestant world remained very conservative, or inclined to moralizing outbursts against the French Directory and the Batavian revolution. One has the impression (more

ity, but see J. Gendry, *Pie VI, sa vie, son pontificat*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), II, 243, n. 4. The Pope also intimated that Louis XVIII might accept a “heroic sacrifice which is worthy to be made by a soul like yours in favor of the repose of human kind.” It is understandable that later royalists and ultramontanes might not wish to publicize such a letter.

16 E. E. Y. Hales, *Revolution and Papacy: 1769–1846* (New York, 1960), 89; L. von Pastor, *History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* (Eng. trans. London, 40 vols., 1890–1953), XL, 303–5; A. Latreille, *L'église catholique et la Révolution française*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1946), I, 231–33; J. Leflon, *Histoire de l'église*, vol. 20, *La Crise révolutionnaire 1789–1846* (Paris, 1949), 142–44; M. Reinhard, *Religion, Révolution et Contre-révolution* (Paris, Centre de documentation universitaire, photo-duplicated, 1950's), 242–43. Hales is a British, Pastor a German, and the others French Roman Catholic historians. Their views may be contrasted with the more common belief of recent American Catholic writers in an essential incompatibility between the principles of the Church and the Revolution.

17 R. A. Graham, *Vatican Diplomacy* (Princeton, 1959), 41.

18 J. Leflon, *Pie VII, des abbayes bénédictines à la papauté* (Paris, 1958).

19 P. de la Gorce, *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution française* (5 vols., Paris, 1912–1931), V, 270–79, and works cited in preceding notes.

investigation would be in order) that neither the Dutch Reformed pastors, nor the Anglican episcopate, nor the Puritan pontiffs of New England showed much tendency to moderation on these subjects. The minority churches, which might be more likely to do so (and whose importance in the Dutch revolution has been seen), lacked the organization through which public statements attracting public attention might be made.²⁰

Among the hundred thousand French émigrés there were some who were moderate, and who are best represented by a group settled in London. This group included P. V. Malouet, who had been a naval official before 1789 and had signed the Oath of the Tennis Court; the Marquis de Lally-Tollendal, who had been a leading liberal nobleman in the Constituent Assembly; the Marquis de Bouillé, a professional army officer, who had tried to save Louis XVI at the time of Varennes; the Count de Montlosier, a conservative of 1789 who had now become more pliable; the publicist Mallet du Pan and his son, Louis Mallet; the three archbishops of Aix, Bordeaux, and Toulouse; and, in 1796, Calonne, the reforming minister of 1786–1787, who had moved away from his absolutist views. All regarded the Terror with horrified aversion, all considered the extreme revolutionaries to be no better than criminals, and all believed that the Revolution was a destructive menace to all Europe. What made them moderate was their conviction that mere reaction was impossible; that the new property owners and other beneficiaries of the Revolution must be dealt with on some basis of compromise; and that the future government of France must be constitutional, allowing for a modern form of elected representatives, and taking account of the principles enunciated in the revolutionary declarations of rights. They shared also in a kind of theory of the French Revolution, which they did not attribute to the *philosophes*, or to conspiracy, propaganda, or “abstract ideas,” believing, instead, that it had arisen from actual and weighty causes and moved forward by real considerations of politics. They did not think, as the extreme Right did, that the whole Revolution was a fateful force, in which small initial concessions had led on inevitably to convulsions of violence and fanaticism. That the Revolution had become violent and fanatical they agreed, but for this development they blamed the unyielding obstinacy of the extreme conservative opposition, which, they thought, gave the mass of Frenchmen no effective choice. Frenchmen in France, according to this view, were thrown on the mercy of revolutionary extremists, seeing no other defense for even moderate gains of the Revolution, so long as they believed, or were told by reactionary publicists, that any restoration meant a total and punitive restoration of the Old Order. These moderate or liberal-conservative émigrés therefore detested the royalist *purs*, in whom they saw, after the Terror, the main obstacle to conciliatory arrangements.²¹

20 Being negative, this statement on Protestantism is hard to document. Note the impatience of Erskine, *View of the Causes . . .* (p. 55), where the war, he observes, “is said to save religion and its holy altars from profanation and annihilation. Of all the pretences by which the abused zeal of the people of England has been hurried on to a blind support of ministers, this alarm for the Christian religion is the most impudent and preposterous. . . . Who ever heard of the Christianity of the French court and its surrounding nobles?”

21 The best source is P. V. Malouet, *Mémoires*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1874), containing correspondence with and references to the others named in this paragraph.

Agreeing in so much, the moderates of the emigration could not agree on what attitude to take toward the Directory. Many of them published books or pamphlets on the question. Calonne thought no peace possible with the republic; for him nothing would do except constitutional monarchy, with the institution of nobility recognized.²² Mallet du Pan, in 1796, considered the Directory to be a vulgar democracy, hardly less ruthless than the government of the Terror.²³ Except that he now seemed to disapprove of everyone equally, from Right to Left, Mallet du Pan had lost most of his earlier "moderation." He now insisted that any acceptance of equality must lead to equality of wealth. This was of course the view of Babeuf and shows the convergence of extremes against a merely "bourgeois" republic. Malouet thought Mallet du Pan's tract of 1796 unconstructively angry and doctrinaire.²⁴

His son Louis Mallet, along with Malouet, Montlosier, and Lally-Tollendal, were more willing to compromise. Disgusted with the two Bourbon princes, despising and despised by the "aristocrats" of the emigration, they were ready to believe that life in France under the Directory was possible for civilized men, while suspecting that at some future time, without much other change, the five Directors might simply be replaced by a king. From them, almost jointly (since they knew and talked with each other in London) there issued two pamphlets, one by Montlosier addressed mainly to the émigrés, and one by Lally-Tollendal addressed to the "sane" element among republicans in France.

Montlosier appealed to his fellow émigrés to give up their narrow and self-righteous royalist orthodoxy. It seemed to him incredible that, when a revolutionary leader became disillusioned with the Revolution, they ridiculed and spurned him instead of welcoming him as an ally. He himself, he complained, called an "aristocrat" in Paris, was ostracized as a "democrat" in London. The émigrés would never return to France until they co-operated with people different from themselves. "What are we to think of a party which, to prepare for a great conquest, instead of enlarging itself seeks only to diminish itself . . . which has no projects but only memories, and marches forward while not ceasing to look behind!" What are we to think of people for whom "it is not enough to be pure, but necessary to be pure in their own fashion, pure as of a certain date in the past?" We are told that everyone in France is cursing the Revolution. This is both true and false. France today is a new amalgam in which we must find our place. If we want a king, he must be the king of all France. "Nothing can efface from French soil the imprint of

22 C. A. de Calonne, *Tableau de l'Europe en novembre 1795* (London, 1796), published in English as *The Political State of Europe at the Beginning of 1796; or Considerations on the Most Effectual Means of Procuring a Solid and Permanent Peace* (London, 1796).

23 J. Mallet du Pan, *Correspondance politique pour servir à l'histoire du républicanisme français* (Hamburg, 1796). The most recent of many works on Mallet du Pan is by N. Matteucci, *Jacques Mallet du Pan* (Naples, 1957), emphasizing his "moderation" and hostility to the extreme Right, which were more in evidence in the *Considerations* of 1793 than in later writings.

24 Malouet, 466–68. It is significant of the difference between them that Malouet thought of settling in the United States, Mallet du Pan in Russia (422–23). Malouet thought that Britain's colonial ambitions were among the main obstacles to peace, and that France therefore should simply declare its own colonies independent; this plan, he said, would please the United States (413, 424, 438, 452).

its revolution." But Montlosier's arguments had little effect on those whom he most wished to persuade.²⁵

Lally-Tollendal published his *Défense des émigrés adressée au peuple français* in both London and Paris (where the press was at the time quite free) at the turn of the year 1796–1797. His intention was to influence the coming French elections, in which, without any "two-thirds rule," a third of the members of the two chambers were to be chosen. Moderates in all camps were optimistic. In France there was a strong desire for peace, which it seemed might be more easily obtainable with a constitutional monarchy than with a republican government. Moderates in France, while adhering to the principles of 1789, and believing that events since 1792 had been at worst a piece of criminal excess and at best a necessity now happily over, were in a mood to make any compromises with the monarchy and the emigration that they could consider reasonable and safe. Among the five Directors themselves, Lazare Carnot, a mainstay of the Revolutionary Government three years before, but now a Jacobin *évolué*, inclined to this opinion. Among the generals, Pichegru, whose victories had brought the Batavian Republic into being, and who still commanded the French Army of the North, was actually engaged in secret correspondence with agents of Louis XVIII. England and France were carrying on serious peace talks. The moderate émigrés in London took heart; they followed developments in France very closely, and believed that the conciliatory views of Thomas Erskine and Charles James Fox were gaining ground in England.

Lally-Tollendal's arguments were highly realistic, and aimed straight at the political center. He made no plea for restoration of either the monarchy or the church. Do not believe, he told his readers, the propaganda of those who say that return of the émigrés means the return of privilege and feudal rights. There is only one difference between us—property. By some compromise, the émigrés must receive back some of the property they have lost, and the present possessors of émigré property must give up some of what they now hold. No questions need be asked about former properties of the church. A union of old and new proprietors should be formed, of constitutionalists both monarchist and republican, but without regard to Louis XVIII or the *ancien régime*, while on the other hand presenting a strong front against the *Jacobins prolétaires*.²⁶ This was a reference to Babeuf's "communist" conspiracy discovered in 1796. In short, Lally-Tollendal proposed a bargain. The extremes of Right and Left would be ignored. Decent Frenchmen would defend themselves against both Bourbons and Babouvists. The still insecure property titles of beneficiaries of the Revolution would be confirmed, and the émigrés languishing in exile would come home.

The elections held throughout France in March 1797 proved to be an overwhelming repudiation of the Directory, and a victory, presumably, for the party of compromise settlement, stabilization, and peace. To pursue the question of the failure of moderation in the First Republic we must now look at the two extremes.

25 Montlosier, *Des effets de la violence et de la modération dans les affaires de la France* (London, 1796), 2, 18, 42.

26 *Défense*, part ii, 170. *Prolétaires* was one of the new words given currency by the Revolution; its association with "Jacobins" was mere name-calling, since the Jacobins were seldom proletarians.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FRENCH DIRECTORY BETWEEN EXTREMES

[The Extreme Right] There has been formed in Europe a league of fools and fanatics, who, if they could, would forbid man the faculty to think or see. The sight of a book makes them shudder; because enlightenment has been abused, they would exterminate all those they suppose enlightened. . . . Persuaded that without men of intelligence there would have been no revolution, they hope to reverse it with imbeciles. . . .

[The Extreme Left] Europe today excludes any possibility of democracy, direct or representative; to try the experiment is not to recast the state but to destroy it. . . . Do you wish a republic of equals amid the inequalities which the public services, inheritances, marriage, industry and commerce have introduced into society? You will have to overthrow property.

—MALLET DU PAN, 1796

DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNISM

As one moved from the center in a leftward direction, one at first entered a territory that was not very radical, peopled by men who can be called “democrats” in the ordinary American sense, though they were more likely to call themselves “true republicans” or “good patriots.” They accepted the constitution and saw no further need of violent insurrection, but they feared that the new national government might go too far in an understanding with émigrés or refractory clergy, or that the governing groups in Paris did not hold to the great principles of Liberty and Equality as firmly as they themselves did. Some now owned pieces of former church or émigré property, in amounts either large or small. Some, without having been terrorists themselves, had praised the Terror in its day or been busy and useful as local administrators for the Revolutionary Government. They feared that in a White Terror, of which there had already been enough painful examples, or even in a more moderate reaction against persons supposed to be dangerous, they them-

selves might sooner or later be engulfed. Of similar views were many shopkeepers, recently prospering farmers, ex-soldiers, young men just beginning to imagine their futures, Julien Sorels of one kind and another who disliked the notables of the newly emerging social establishment, and for whom, therefore, equality represented a value still to be achieved. Disapproving and aloof, the "pures" of the Republic, fearful of being tainted by compromise, never ready to admit that the Revolution had quite achieved its aim, they were often called *exclusifs* by the more complacent official republicans.

It is impossible to estimate the number of persons of this kind in France in 1796. Probably it was large, perhaps as large as any group that had a definite political consciousness. Their relative strength varied greatly from place to place. A good deal is known about the city of Toulouse, one of the most "Jacobin" cities of France, where the "Jacobins" controlled the municipality and won all the elections under the Directory. In this city of 60,000 (or some 15,000 grown men) there were about 1,500 persons sufficiently animated in their politics to be called Jacobins. They were recruited from the same social levels as the true Jacobins before 1794: that is, from all levels except the former nobility and the most depressed segments of the working class. They included well-to-do merchants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, members of learned academies, manufacturers, artisans, shopkeepers, and proprietors of small businesses. They kept their own firebrands under control, so as to give no excuse for counter-revolutionary reprisals, and if they were conscious of having allied with lower-class sans-culottes in the Year II they were now willing to forget any such troublesome connections. They were political or middle-class democrats. Tenacious of their own property, they were hostile to the rich. Civilized themselves, they were scornful of high society. They were out of sympathy with the reigning republicans, those who dominated in the departmental electoral assemblies and in Paris, because the reigning republicans had a low opinion of them. One has the impression that here if anywhere, among democrats of this kind, were the materials from which a law-abiding opposition to government, and a regime of competing political parties, might have been made, if only the Directory itself had been more tolerant of such opposition, and other circumstances had been more propitious.¹

There was, however, no visible boundary, at any fixed point, between these political democrats and other democrats further to the Left, though in the end the differences were clear enough. Political democrats, critical of the Directory but loyal to it, continued to use the language of the Revolution and enjoyed reading radical newspapers. Sober citizens, with no intention of acting upon or even agreeing with their contents, subscribed to journals that ferociously denounced kings, aristocrats, leagues of tyrants, the clergy, the English, and the rich. Among the numerous radical papers that sprouted up at the end of 1795 was the *Tribun du peuple*, by a then obscure journalist who called himself "Gracchus" Babeuf.

1 J. Beyssi, "Le parti jacobin à Toulouse sous le Directoire," in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, Nos. 117, 118 (1950), 28–54, 109–33. Forenlightening accounts of democrats of this kind see also the second volume of A. Meynier, *Les coups d'état du Directoire*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1927), and relevant parts of M. Reinhard, *Le Département de la Sarthe sous le régime Directorial* (Saint-Brieuc, no date).

The *Tribun du peuple*, of which about 2,000 copies were printed, was sold both in the streets of Paris and by subscription, and had a national circulation. A surviving list of 590 subscribers has been analyzed. Of these subscribers, 238 were in the departments and 345 were in Paris. In the departments a majority of the subscribers were people in the more comfortable social positions—the big merchants called *négotiants*, engineers, lawyers, doctors, public officials, army officers, and the like. In Paris a majority of the subscribers were artisans and small shopkeepers, such as house-painters, wine-merchants, and proprietors of cafes—the kind of people who had been sans-culottes and section committeemen in the Year II. Vehement revolutionism, it is clear from these lists, was relished by a precarious combination of provincial bourgeoisie and Parisian populace. All kinds of persons read Babeuf.²

Further to the Left than most readers of political papers was a much smaller category of activists for whom political agitation had become a habit, and who, having called attention to themselves by leadership in the Paris sections after August 1792, or in the Parisian *armée révolutionnaire* of 1793, or in other ways, were now regularly watched by the police. From the police records of the Directory it appears that there were some 200 or 250 such men whom the police repeatedly arrested and re-arrested between 1795 and 1800, simply on general grounds of their past records, as a preventive measure to stop insurrectionary turbulence before it could flare up. By arresting, questioning, confining, liberating, and again arresting these same individuals, the police of the Directory, in the words of R. C. Cobb, “decapitated the democratic movement,” so that there was no successful popular uprising between 1795 and 1830. From this same category of small-scale militants much of the secondary leadership in the Babeuf conspiracy was recruited.³

With Babeuf and with his co-worker Philippe Buonarroti, a French citizen of Italian birth, and with their Conspiracy of Equals of 1796, we reach the extreme Left of the French Revolution.⁴ The bare facts of the conspiracy are briefly told.

2 A. Soboul, “Personnel sectionnaire et personnel babouviste,” in *AHRF*, No. 162 (1960), 438–46.

3 R. C. Cobb, “Notes sur la répression contre le personnel sans-culotte de 1795 à 1801,” in *AHRF*, No. 134 (1954), 23–49.

4 The literature is large, and the subject has attracted increasing historical interest in recent years in many countries. The basic documents are the proceedings at the High Court at Vendôme, with speeches and papers submitted in evidence, published by the Directory under various titles in 1797. They have become very rare, but six volumes of them are at the Princeton University Library. Important also as a source is Filippo Buonarroti, *La conspiration pour l'Egalité dite de Babeuf*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1828), reprinted with a preface by Georges Lefebvre, 2 vols. (Paris, 1957); Eng. trans. by Bronterre O'Brien (London, 1836). For current work see *AHRF*, No. 162 (Oct.-Dec. 1960) where the whole issue is devoted to Babeuf in honor of the bicentennial of his birth. It is introduced by an extensive bibliographical survey by J. Godechot, “Les travaux recents sur Babeuf,” and contains articles by French, Italian, Norwegian, East German, and Russian historians. See also A. Galante Garrone, *Buonarroti e Babeuf* (Turin, 1948), and S. Bernstein, *Buonarroti* (Paris, 1949). Babeuf's writings are most easily consulted in M. Dommanget, *Pages choisies de Babeuf* (Paris, 1935); for Buonarroti's writings of 1795–1796 see A. Saitta, *Filippo Buonarroti*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1950). Where Godechot holds that the recent interest in Babouvism reflects the movement of historical science, Elizabeth Eisenstein in *The First Professional Revolutionist: Filippo Michele Buonarroti* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), relates it to ideological interests of the modern Left. That the Left may be “scientific,” and that agreement is pos-

Babeuf and Buonarroti met in 1795 in a Paris prison, where they were confined by the Thermidorian Convention, along with others who were regarded as dangerous or who had been active during the Terror. In October 1795, when the Directory took over from the Convention, it did so against the royalist opposition shown in the Vendémiaire uprising and the attempted Anglo-royalist invasion of western France, and so made a bid for support on the Left, and released these political prisoners. These men, as soon as liberated, began to publish journals like the *Tribun du peuple*, and to gather in an assembly called the Pantheon Club, of which Buonarroti was president for a time, and which had about 2,000 members. The authorities closed the Pantheon Club on February 28, 1796. The officer who enforced its closing was none other than Bonaparte, who, having put down the royalists in October, now did the same to the republican extremists, after which he went off to his military campaign in north Italy. The ardent spirits of the Pantheon Club, thus repressed, began to plot revolution. An inner circle composed of Babeuf, Buonarroti, and five others formed themselves into a secret insurrectionary committee. They worked through an outer circle of "revolutionary agents" who were unknown to each other, and each of whom was to recruit followers, among civilians and in the army, who were prepared to receive orders on the day of insurrection. The evidence is uncertain as to whether they intended to put the five Directors to death. One of the inner circle, Sylvain Maréchal, composed a Manifesto of the Equals, a powerful statement of an ongoing revolution in which property should be abolished; but the group never formally approved it, nor was it published at the time. What was published, or placarded about the city, was an *Analyse de la doctrine de Babeuf*, a declaration in twelve brief articles, very emphatic in its demand for equality of wealth, education, and happiness, but not explicitly proposing the abolition of private property, and ending up with a demand for the Constitution of the Year I.⁵ Probably the inner circle intended, after the insurrection, to govern as a revolutionary dictatorship, on the model of the Revolutionary Government of the Year II, and following the principles enunciated by Robespierre, by which a temporary dictatorship held power for a transitional period until the old order was liquidated and the new one established.

The police, through an informant, broke up the conspiracy on May 10, 1796, a few days before the day set for insurrection. At the ensuing trial Babeuf and one other were condemned to death, and Buonarroti and others sent to prison.

sible, is evident from the fact that my own indebtedness at this point is chiefly to Saitta. Saitta emphasizes the differences between the real situation of 1796 and Buonarroti's recollections as published in his book of 1828.

5 Most historians have used the text of the *Analyse* as published by Buonarroti in 1828 with amplifications. A version of the 1796 text was published by V. Advielle, *Histoire de Gracchus Babeuf et du Babouvisme*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1884), 1, 207–8. For the importance of using the 1796 text see Saitta, I, 28, 262–63. The exact place of Maréchal's *Manifeste des Egaux* in the conspiracy has long been debated, and various explanations have been given for the refusal of the insurrectionary committee to adopt it: that these "communists" would not accept the barbarous phrase, *perissent les arts*, that they wished not to frighten the straight democrats among their allies; and, third, that for most of the committee "communism" and abolition of property were not of central importance to their program anyway. Saitta inclines to the third explanation; M. Dommanget to the first in *Sylvain Maréchal, l'égalitaire, "l'homme sans Dieu"* (Paris, 1950), 322.

The Conspiracy of Equals has always been looked back on with respectful interest by partisans of the modern Left, as the first manifestation of the revolutionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. How far the Conspiracy was "communistic" remains uncertain, though Babeuf and Maréchal, as individuals, had ideas which are accepted by modern Communists as in effect communistic. But even the inner leadership had diverse aims, and the whole movement was so secret and so short-lived that the secondary organizers, not to mention the ordinary followers, never knew who the leaders were or what their purposes might be. Not much was said at the trial about "communism" or the abolition of property. The charge was subversion of the government and constitution. Babeuf, at his trial, therefore said little of private property or its abolition, denied that there had been any conspiracy except insofar as the whole Enlightenment had been a "conspiracy" for human freedom, and insisted repeatedly that he had been no more than secretary to a peaceable Society of Democrats.⁶ At no time did Babeuf ever use the word "communism," which was still unknown to the French language; but he did, both before and after his arrest, make frequent use of the words "democrat" and "democracy." In fact, of all groups in France during the Revolution, it was the Babouvists, far more than Robespierre, who most often used the word "democracy" to describe a desirable state of society. Much of the interest in the whole affair lies in the relationship between "democracy" and "communism" in this early stage of their history. In the case of Babeuf personally and a few others, we can also see how "democracy" was already used as a screen behind which a "communist" program might be advanced.

The Conspiracy of Equals was a joining together of men who genuinely believed that they were furthering the cause of democracy or equality, though they understood it in different senses. It carried on the popular revolutionism of 1792–1794, with a touch of international revolutionism in the person of Buonarroti and possibly the Dutch Blauw;⁷ and it gathered to itself a great variety of people who, for one reason or another, domestic or international, thought the Directory too bourgeois, too compromising, or too timid. Anyone having any touch with the conspiracy knew at least that insurrection was contemplated, so that all were further to the Left than the regular democrats such as those just described at Toulouse.

The actual relationship between elements in the movement is suggested by Albert Soboul, the great authority on the Paris sans-culottes, an admirer of Babeuf, and an eminent representative of the best Marxist historiography. "In the center," he says, "appears the directing group, resting on a small number of tested militants; then the fringe of sympathizers, 'patriots' and 'democrats,' kept outside the secret, and who seem not to have shared in the new revolutionary ideal; finally the popular masses themselves who were to be led. One of the essential problems of revolutionary practice posed for the Conspirators was that of their relationship to the popular masses by way of the sympathizers, who were the framework (*cadres*) not so much of the Conspiracy as of the revolutionary movement that was to follow

6 Babeuf's final speech was published by Advielle, *Histoire*, II, 1–322.

7 But for the evidence against the intriguing hypothesis of a Dutch connection, suggested by Godechot and Saitta, see above, pp. 50–51, 237–38.

the seizure of power." It is Soboul's belief, which seems to be well founded, that the "popular mass" in the movement (who may have numbered several thousands) clung to the sans-culotte ideas of the Year II, but that the ideas of the inner circle had undergone a "sudden mutation," which was "the first form of the revolutionary ideology of the new society born of the [French] Revolution itself."⁸

Thus Soboul connects certain subsequent features of Marxism with a group of men in 1796 to most of whom such ideas were entirely foreign. The great majority of persons in contact with the Babouvist movement were excited by ideas of direct democracy, popular democracy, busy and spontaneous local activity, the massive rising of the people, with an insistence on a degree of equality of respect, of dignity, of education and material level of life, but with a strong emphasis on small private property, small private enterprise and private workshops, by which small men could preserve their individual independence. The inner circle, however, by a "sudden mutation," had passed beyond this somewhat pettifogging equalitarianism to envision a truly socialist or communist world. The inner circle, who already perceived or anticipated the "new revolutionary ideal," kept its views concealed from the mass of "democrats" whom it intended to lead or manipulate. One is reminded of the manipulations of Martinovics in Hungary.

By the "sudden mutation" is meant also that the Babouvist inner circle was no mere continuation of Robespierism. Here the views of Soboul must be supplemented by the more refined analysis of Armando Saitta, the authority on Buonarroti. Saitta notes that two kinds of revolutionaries of the Year II came together to form the Conspiracy of Equals of the Year IV.⁹ One group was typified by Buonarroti, who had been a staunch Robespierist in 1793–1794, had worked for the Revolutionary Government, and remained faithful to Robespierre even after Thermidor; his belief in equality had a strong moral and religious tone, he was a fervent Rousseauist, and he strongly supported the Worship of the Supreme Being. He wanted to revolutionize or democratize Italy, his own native country, and joined the Conspiracy of Equals with that purpose in mind, believing that only by a revival of truly revolutionary forces in France could the right kind of popular revolution come in Italy, without exploitation by the French Directory and the French armies. Over thirty years later, in the book which he published in 1828 and which made the Babeuf conspiracy famous, Buonarroti had become a convert to "communism," but there is no sign that he cared much about "communism" in 1796; and indeed Saitta suggests that when the Conspiracy of Equals is rightly seen, as a

⁸ Soboul, *AHRF*, No. 162, 455–56.

⁹ Saitta, *AHRF*, No. 162, 427–28; *Filippo Buonarroti*, I, 1–36, 252–79; II, 238–43. Very important in Buonarroti's development were the months he spent as the agent of the Revolutionary Government at Oneglia, a territory belonging to the King of Sardinia, during the military operations of 1794. (See, in addition to Saitta, Pia Onnis, "Filippo Buonarroti, commissario rivoluzionario a Oneglia," *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 1939, 353–79 and 477–500.) At Oneglia, Buonarroti made the acquaintance of Augustin Robespierre and Bonaparte, became a rallying point for Italian refugees and patriots from various parts of Italy, supervised policies of requisition, confiscation, price controls, military supply, and delivered an address on the Worship of the Supreme Being (published in full by Saitta, I, 252–56) which, without mentioning Robespierre by name, echoes the sentiments simultaneously expressed by Robespierre in Paris.

combination of various anti-Directory activists, the “communism” may be no more than an excrescence.¹⁰

The other group, typified by Babeuf, was composed of men who had been anti-Robespierrist in 1793–1794. Most of them had played no constructive role during the period of the Terror, much of which Babeuf had spent in prison. In the days of the Revolutionary Government they had denounced that government as a dictatorship. They were what Robespierre called ultras or Hébertists. They were not true sansculottes, but stormy journalists and intellectuals, who had clamored for the Constitution of the Year I as early as the summer of 1793—that is, had tried to overthrow the Revolutionary Government, the Committee of Public Safety and the Convention, as they now in 1796 tried to overthrow the Directory. These men, Thermidorians of the Left, had rejoiced in Robespierre’s fall, and called him, once he was dead, an ogre, a monster, a Caligula “justly abhorred,” a tyrant crazed by private ambition. Babeuf had even written a book, *Le système de dépopulation*, alleging that it had been Robespierre’s studied policy to solve the social problems of France by reducing the population through the guillotining of two million people.¹¹ In Babeuf, unlike Buonarroti, there was no yearning for an especially moral republic. With Babeuf, but not with Buonarroti, revolutionary ideology had undergone a “sudden mutation” in abruptly departing both from sans-culottisme and from Robespierre.

Both men in 1796, however, felt themselves to be marching in Robespierre’s path. Both represented themselves as his successors, bearing the standard that had been struck from his hands. Precisely how they did so is of interest, since it illustrates the kind of continuity that existed between the French Revolution and the later revolutionary movements of which Babouvism was in some ways an anticipation.

What Buonarroti most feared is illustrated by an episode at the house of James Monroe, which occurred on March 12, 1796, the very moment at which the Conspiracy of Equals was being formed. Monroe gave a state dinner, at which various ambassadors and high personages of the French government were present. Toasts were drunk, including one *aux rois amis de la France*, which was enthusiastically cheered. The Prussian ambassador commented on this attitude in the French republicans, who now believed that kings could be their friends.¹² Buonarroti had just published a pamphlet of directly opposite tendency, *La paix perpétuelle avec les rois*.¹³ As an Italian patriot, he was afraid that the French would sign an armistice with the King of Sardinia (as they soon did), instead of befriending the Italian republicans who were working to overthrow him. Toward kings, Buonarroti argued, there was no proper policy except unconditional surrender. They could never be trusted, they would never negotiate honestly with the France of the Revolution. France, to protect itself, must make common cause with all other peoples. “I invite

10 Saitta, I, 27, “... ovvero perche il comunismo era una superfetazione sul tronco della cospirazione?”

11 *Du système de dépopulation, ou la vie et les crimes de Carrier* . . . (Paris, 1795); Dommanget, *Pages choisies*, 178–85.

12 P. Bailleu, *Preussen und Frankreich von 1795 bis 1807*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1881–1887), I, 60.

13 Published in full by Saitta as one of Buonarroti’s “unknown or forgotten writings,” II, 238–43.

the French government," said Buonarroti, "to aid the revolution in Italy by every possible means"—to assist the Italians in dethroning the kings of Sardinia and Naples, the archdukes of Tuscany and Milan, and also the Pope, so that 18,000,000 people could enjoy political freedom and the true equality that Jesus himself had taught. Italy should be remodeled on the lines of the Batavian Republic. Italian liberty, added to French and Dutch, would checkmate the monarchs and assure the liberation of mankind.

Buonarroti rightly believed that the Directory was unlikely to take up any such crusade. He attributed this hesitation in the Directory to its bourgeois and moderate character, and thought that if true democrats were in power in France, if the real people could only make its voice heard, if the great days of Robespierre and the Year II could come again, there would be more support in France for the Italian republicans and the patriots of all countries. In short, Buonarroti associated democracy with world-revolutionism. It is doubtful whether this belief had any foundation. The great Committee of Public Safety had always been skeptical of the foreign revolutionaries; it had in fact suppressed those in Paris as "ultras"; and Robespierre had never had any faith in the universal rising of peoples. Probably the Revolutionary Government of the Year II, had it faced the same situation, would have taken much the same attitude as the Directory did, asking the same questions of the Italian revolutionaries of 1796 as it asked of the Batavian revolutionaries of 1794—whether they were significant enough to be useful, what resources they could bring to a common war effort, whether they could control their own countries in a way favorable to the French Republic.¹⁴ Buonarroti, a faithful Robespierist, who had served the Revolutionary Government in the distant outpost at Oneglia, had never been privy to its inner counsels. In his hostility to the Directory, he credited the former Revolutionary Government with ideas it had never had. That Robespierre would have deeply concerned himself with revolution in Italy was a myth.

Babeuf's association of himself with Robespierre involved delicate problems. For one thing, he had been anti-Robespierist in 1793–1794. For another, he had undergone a "mutation." He did not believe in private property, and in that sense was "communist."

Babeuf derived his communism from a widely respected conception of the Enlightenment, *le bonheur commun*, the common welfare or public happiness, which, however, he believed must lead to the communauté, or equal sharing, of material goods and other enjoyments—"comfort for all, education for all, equality, liberty and happiness for all." He derived it also from the democratic movement: "Our dogmas are pure democracy, equality without blemish and without reserve."¹⁵ He believed in 1796 that this *bonheur commun* had almost been reached in 1794, and that all that now stood in the way of its realization was the reaction that had set in since Thermidor, perpetuated by the crude and callous republicans of the Directory, "banal republicans" who preached "no more than any kind of republic." In the face of such a regime, and sensing the hopes of 1794 slipping away, he was tor-

14 Above, pp. 420–22.

15 Dommanget, *Pages choisies de Babeuf*, 240, 247.

mented by the thought of an unmerciful class struggle, "a war declared between patricians and plebeians, between rich and poor."¹⁶ Reproved even by his radical friends for preaching class war, he replied that this war already existed, that the rich had started it by robbing the poor, that it had always gone on, and was perpetual until the general acceptance of his own doctrines.

In this formulation of an everlasting class struggle Babeuf anticipated Marxism, but he offered no analysis that a Marxist could call "scientific." He had no conception of an economic system as a system, and his critique fell less on capitalism, as such, than on the evils produced by uncontrolled inflation, high prices, scarcity, poverty, ignorance, and the luxurious self-indulgence of the idle rich. We hear in him the voice of the outraged victim of circumstances more than the social philosopher. He had none of Marx's interest in the processes of capital formation, or the role of wages and profit in the allocation of incomes, or the proletariat and bourgeoisie as classes generated by the relationships of production. Babeuf's enemy was not the "bourgeois" (a term he rarely used) but the "patriciate," the "gilded million," the "rascals," the "bloodsuckers," the "starvers and invaders of the rights of the People."¹⁷ The whole doctrine was non-economic: it saw no problem of production; a kind of natural and automatic plenty was posited, in which equality was upset because, from sheer cupidity, some people stole what others ought to have.

In his *Tribun du peuple*, at the end of 1795, he published a proposed *Plebeian Manifesto*.¹⁸ "It is time," he said, "to speak of democracy itself." We are accused of favoring the "agrarian law." This is ridiculous: we do not propose to divide up property, since no equal division would ever last. We propose to abolish private property altogether. Only thus can true equality be assured. Equality must be understood literally—"a sufficiency for all, but no more than a sufficiency." No one must be allowed to excel others in wealth or knowledge. We must prevent, "as a social scourge," any man from working harder or producing more than another in order to gain more income. No one has a right to take advantage of any special abilities. It is a vulgar prejudice to believe that a watchmaker should have twenty times the income of a plowman, or that tasks requiring intelligence should be more highly compensated than ordinary labor, or that inventors deserve any reward, since it is "society" that really gives birth to inventions and new ideas. "Stomachs are equal." In place of private property we need a "common administration," with each man placing his product in a common store, and receiving from it his perfectly equal share. Babeuf concluded the Manifesto with a resounding call: "Let everything then be confounded together! Let all the elements be confused, jumbled and knocked against one another! Let all return to chaos, and from chaos let a world rise new and regenerated!"¹⁹

16 *Ibid.*, 236.

17 *Ibid.*, 278 and *passim*. It should be pointed out that Dommanget, Georges Lefebvre, and others have shown a higher regard than the present author for the scientific character, or at least the intellectual quality, of Babeuf's analysis.

18 Published by Dommanget, 250–64.

19 Dommanget, 264. In the following number of the *Tribun du peuple* Babeuf refuted the charge of being an *anarchiste* or *désorganisateur*, and after his arrest declared that the conspirators had engaged in no more than a philanthropic dream, like those of other *philosophes* of the century.

It is impossible to imagine Robespierre (or Marx) using such language. Yet within a few weeks of writing the *Plebeian Manifesto* Babeuf made his great retraction. He declared that he had been mistaken in following Hébert, and that Robespierre had been right all the time. "We must remember," he said, "that we are only the second Gracchi of the French Revolution." Robespierre and Saint-Just, the first "Gracchi," we are told, had perished for attempting what Babeuf and his friends now meant to do. Hébertism, as Babeuf now saw it, had been only factious, local, Parisian, deviationist. Robespierism was the true course of the true Revolution. "The reason is simple: it is that Robespierism is democracy, and that these two words are absolutely identical."²⁰

What are we to make of such a body of ideas? Let us try to avoid both the aversion that Babeuf has aroused in conservatives, and the deference with which the modern Left has regarded its Precursor. Let us remember that the best Marxist historians agree that Robespierre was never more than an advanced bourgeois democrat, and that Babouvism was never more than a futile conspiracy, an agitation among intellectuals with few followers, not at all like the true popular upheaval of sans-culottism three years before. What, then, is the place of Babeuf and Babouvism in the history of the French Revolution and of modern revolutions in general?

It seems likely, at least to the present author, that Babeuf might have been soon forgotten, or no better remembered than others like Sylvain Maréchal, if the Directory, on suppressing his conspiracy, had merely imprisoned him and then released him under police supervision, as it did with other such *exagérés*; if it had not brought him to trial, given him a courtroom forum, made his name a by-word and his execution a martyrdom; and if Buonarroti, whose life was spared at the same trial, had not published thirty years later his *Conspiration pour l'Egalité dite de Babeuf*, in which the realities of 1796 were naturally seen through intervening experience, and transformed by the desire to speak to a newly rising revolutionary and socialist generation.

It is only by an effort that Babeuf's rabid equalitarianism can be seen as a form of socialism or communism, since it is hard to find in it any conception of organized society. Nor can it be called democracy if democracy means a form of government, in which he had no interest. It was an extreme form of radical democratism so far as democracy signified a state of equality. His insistence on "real" equality should not be taken lightly; it was an ideal that he shared with Rousseau, Robespierre, and Condorcet, and the modern world has moved in the direction they indicated, toward greater equality of income, education, and living standards, though hardly by the methods that Babeuf proposed. But no society

20 Babeuf's letter to Bodson, in Dommanget, 284–86. For men who claimed to be the "second Gracchi," it is notable that neither Babeuf nor Buonarroti, if we may argue *ex silentio*, had any recollection in the Year IV of the Ventose laws of the Year II (above, p. 457) in which Saint-Just and Robespierre had proposed to transfer property from suspects to poor patriots. When Buonarroti wrote his book of 1828, however, doubtless having made discoveries by historical research in such sources as the *Moniteur*, he declared that the Equals of 1796 had wished to carry forward this program of Robespierre's. This became a standard belief in some socialist and some Chartist circles. The political importance of the Ventose laws, stressed by Mathiez, has been discounted by Soboul and Lefebvre, and the failure of the Babouvists to mention them, only two years later, seems proof that their importance, for the Left at least, was very slight.

could long live with a principle of equality in which differences of ability were called a "social scourge."

What Babouvism had to offer later revolutionaries was above all the passionate commitment to revolution itself, a perpetual revolution, or revolutionism, drawing its force from the belief in an everlasting and irreconcilable war of classes. "The French Revolution," said Marechal, in the Manifesto of Equals which the Babeuf group did not actually adopt, "is only the forerunner of another revolution far greater, far more solemn, which will be the last."²¹ What Babeuf came to admire in Robespierre, and the reason why he found Robespierre a more useful model than Hébert, was not so much Robespierre's goals or objectives, which were different from Babeuf's, but his skill as a revolutionary theorist and tactician, his prestige as a man who seemingly had almost succeeded, and his prominence as a leader and spokesman of an effective and militant revolutionary dictatorship. To these ideas Babeuf added lessons in the techniques of conspiracy and manipulation, or the notion of producing revolution by handfuls of professional revolutionaries, which would appeal, not indeed to Karl Marx, but to a great many practicing revolutionaries of later times.

In its immediate effect, and perhaps in its longer-range effects in French history, it was an unfortunate consequence of Babouvism to confuse the whole question of political democracy with insurrectionism and social radicalism. One of the main results of the Revolution, the real French Revolution, the one which really happened, was to make France more self-consciously than ever a nation of property-owners. Nowhere else, thanks in part to the Revolution, was real property so widely owned. A movement to abolish private property had no conceivable chance of success. It could only frighten very large numbers of people. Babeuf's writings in the *Tribun du peuple* were public, and the proofs of conspiracy offered at the trial were genuine and convincing. He insisted, at his trial, that he had done no more than belong to a Society of Democrats, who, he said, were principally concerned to prevent the restoration of the Pretender. If "democrats" were like Babeuf, who would not fear them? He insisted that his views were only the natural outcome of the Enlightenment, no different from those of Diderot or Rousseau and perfectly harmonious with the general principles of the French Revolution. This was precisely the doctrine of the extreme Right, which also held that Enlightenment and Revolution led inevitably to the kinds of things that Babeuf did and said. It was all very discouraging for the growth of moderate political life. It made moderates hesitate to embrace democratic ideas, it weakened political democrats by associating them vaguely with anarchists, and it gave governments an excuse, if not indeed an actual duty, to repress agitation on the Left.

THE THRONE AND THE ALTAR

If from a hypothetical dead center one looked to the Right, the first to be seen would be the moderates and conciliators already described. They included some

21 Dommanget, *Maréchal*, 311.

men of prominence in the regime of the Directory itself, men who did not make republicanism a matter of first principle, who might accept constitutional monarchy if given adequate guarantees, or who would be inclined to listen to the arguments of émigrés like Lally-Tollendal, when he urged that a combination of old and new property-owners should attempt to decide the future of France. Of the same general complexion were Lally-Tollendal's friends among the French émigrés, the Dutch émigrés who agreed more with the Hereditary Prince than with his father, the churchmen who sought to prevent the capture of Christianity by the royalists, and persons in various governments, including William Pitt in 1797, who could entertain the thought of a peace with France that would leave the Directory in being.

Beyond them lay the extreme Right. Here the characteristic doctrines, in the middle years of the 1790's, were that everything about the French Revolution since June 1789 had been bad, that France before 1789 had had an excellent constitution, or at least one that was capable of satisfactory development and should be restored; and that the war should be fought until the republic in France was overthrown.

It was increasingly believed also that the assault on older political institutions had gone hand in hand with an attack on religion, that the real source of trouble was a false philosophy and false conception of man and his place in the universe, and that the good society of the future must therefore rest on a mutuality of interest between government and religion, or between "the throne and the altar." The extreme Right, even more than the extreme Left, also saw the Revolution as a universal disturbance overrunning all boundaries in which all established rights and authorities were threatened by the same destructive force.²²

This intransigent or anti-conciliatory conservatism was not new. It did not arise simply as a reaction against the French Revolution, still less against its violence and extremism. The enthusiasm for the fall of the Bastille expressed throughout Europe was momentary and deceptive. It was briefly shared both by potential revolutionary sympathizers and by others, deeply conservative, who had long resisted the reforming efforts of monarchs and now rejoiced in the embarrassment of kings. In a word, the advocates both of an aristocratic revolution and a democratic revolution welcomed "liberty" in July 1789. Their agreement was soon over. The Italian economist Pietro Verri, who was a moderate until his death in 1797, noted the change at Milan a few weeks after the fall of the Bastille.

"The nobles and ecclesiastics," said Verri, "seeing the French people intent on abolishing all the distinctions of these orders, prefer a decorative slavery to a liberty that admits no distinction except merit, and hence they foment opinion against France and make themselves prophets of that vast kingdom's total ruin. The most essential and palpable principles of government, of human rights and the

22 J. Godechot, *La contre-révolution* (Paris, 1961); Paul H. Beik, *The French Revolution Seen from the Right: Social Theories in Motion, 1789-99*, in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s. vol. XLVI, Feb. 1956. The Right, as treated by Beik, is defined to include only those "whose opinions would not stretch beyond the point of incorporating the Estates General on a regular basis into the political life of the nation" (p. 3).

nature of authority, principles so crude that they are the norms of savages, are now called by some of us 'metaphysical' principles."²³

Those of the Milanese patriciate who had resisted Joseph II, those in the diets of Hungary and Bohemia who had upheld their ancient constitution as a protection for serfdom, those in Poland who from devotion to "golden liberty" passed on into the party of Targowica, those in Belgium who to defend the Joyous Entry of 1355 had made up the Statist party, those who found "the cause of all legitimate governments" at stake at Geneva in 1782, those in the Parlement of Paris who in 1776 identified the *corvée* with "divine institutions," the "law of the Universe" and the society of the Three Orders, those in England and Ireland who had been alarmed by proposals for electoral reform, and had attributed such proposals to "system-mongers" and to the insufferable arrogance of the human mind—such men now saw in the French Revolution, before the year 1789 was out, a new and incomparably more formidable apparition of what they had been against all the time.²⁴ They called its principles metaphysical, and predicted, or rather hoped for, France's ruin. This was the audience most warmly receptive to Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, which he published in 1790, expanding the same ideas that he had expressed in 1784 in debates over the character of the House of Commons.

Among the French, the uncompromising conservatives included the Bourbons themselves, Louis XVI until his execution in 1793, and both his brothers, the Counts of Provence and Artois, of whom the former began to style himself Louis XVIII in 1795, on receiving news of his nephew's death in a Paris prison. Louis XVI had never approved of Artois' emigration, and by contrast with him appeared moderate, but in fact Louis XVI continued to adhere to the program that he had announced in June of 1789, and hence to insist on preservation of the three estates, Clergy, Nobles, and Third, as essential to the structure of French government and society. He never accepted the constitution of 1789–1791 or the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly. His real view on events in France was like that of William V on events in Holland. After his death, and after the death of Robespierre, there was perhaps a chance of moderate settlement under a constitutional monarchy with Louis XVI's son as regent; but the death of the eleven-year-old Dauphin was another blow to moderate expectations. The new king, or pretender, was a source of dismay both to French monarchists and to the British. Not all Frenchmen who thought a king necessary to France accepted Louis XVIII. Though the subject is obscure, some preferred the young Duke of Orleans, the son of Philippe-Egalité and future King Louis-Philippe. A British spy, presumably a monarchist Frenchman in France, reported on the confused pattern of French constitutional monarchism in 1796: "it demands a foreign king, a Protestant king, a king *à la* 1791, a king with two chambers, a king without the return of the émigrés, a king who does not have to avenge a brother's death."²⁵ He thought that the constitutional monarchists would nevertheless prevail.

23 Quoted by G. Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1956–), I, 169.

24 One of the main themes of *Age*, I.

25 J. Godechot, "Le Directoire vu de Londres," in *AHRF*, No. 116 (1949), 329.

But the constitutional Right was repeatedly outflanked by the extreme Right. French royalism, so far as it was a significant force supported by numbers of people, was far from arising from affection for the French royal family, for which respect had died in the crisis of revolution and war, but rested rather upon dissatisfaction with the republic and the republicans, and was constitutionalist and reformist in relation to the Old Regime. This moderate royalism was weakened by association with extreme royalism and with British or other foreign interests.

The outflanking had occurred at least as early as June 1792, at Frankfurt, when Mallet du Pan had found his proposal for a manifesto to the French people thrust aside, and replaced by the more intransigent Brunswick Manifesto. It occurred again in 1795. At this time the British government and the more liberally minded French émigrés desired the Count of Provence to issue a conciliatory statement, in which, while proclaiming himself as Louis XVIII, he would offer assurances to Frenchmen involved in the Revolution. Grenville, the British Foreign Secretary, gave McCartney, his representative at the Pretender's court, very specific instructions: His Highness was to be persuaded to promise an amnesty, refrain from alarming the sympathizers with the Revolution, and reassure those whose wealth was in former Church lands and in *assignats*, while agreeing to get the French out of Belgium and to make certain colonial concessions to the British. The Pretender, outmaneuvering all such advice, issued instead his Declaration of Verona.²⁶

The Declaration of Verona irritated the British, threw the French moderate monarchists into consternation, and delighted those French republicans who paid any attention to it. Avoiding all specific issues, it dwelt on that "masterpiece of wisdom," the "ancient and wise constitution" of France before 1789. It adopted the condescending tone in which Kings in former days had thought it suitable to address their peoples. "You proved faithless to the God of your fathers. . . . Your tyrants have destroyed the altars of your God and the throne of your king." Such fatherly reproof, mixed with ostensibly religious admonitions, was hardly the right accent to strike in the France of 1795.

Moderates were again embarrassed by extremists, in 1795, when an armed force of excited émigrés, urged on by the Count of Artois, financed by the British treasury and supported by the British fleet, attempted to land at Quiberon Bay, intending to proclaim Louis XVIII in Brittany and raise civil war against the Republic. These émigrés were destroyed by General Hoche's republican army. The Republic appeared, even to many moderates, as the only defender of France and the Revolution. Soon thereafter came the uprising of Vendémiaire in Paris. The leaders were mainly constitutional monarchists, and theirs was the party that the British government preferred to help, financially and otherwise; but the "absolute" royalists, for whom the constitutional royalists were more detestable than the republicans, persuaded the British agent, Wickham, that the constitutionalists were both anti-British and without strong followers in France. Wickham was tricked

²⁶ Walter, *Comte de Provence*, 234–38. The text of the Declaration seems not to have been published in the French press, but may be found in English in the *Annual Register for 1795*, 254–62. The French text is given in A. Antoine, *Histoire de sa Majesté Louis XVI* (Paris, 1816), 114–36.

into backing the wrong horse, paying British money to the “pures,” who were hardly more than conspirators, instead of to the moderate monarchists by whom something might have been accomplished. The Vendémiaire uprising was easily crushed. The Republic again seemed to defend France from the vague horrors of counter-revolution and foreign ambitions, both real and imagined.²⁷

After the failure of royalist plans at Quiberon and in Vendémiaire, and hence after the Directory began to operate as a government, the partisans of the Right, like those of the Left, took advantage of its initially liberal policies, and began to carry on, in 1796, a great deal of political activity in Paris both open and secret. Constitutional monarchists, in touch with liberal émigrés and with nominal republicans like Boissy d'Anglas, and still enjoying British support, made overtures to the Abbé Brottier, Louis XVIII's secret agent in Paris. They proposed his restoration on the basis of a modernized limited monarchy.

“His Majesty persists in believing,” came the reply, “that it is on the basis of our former constitution that the edifice of the monarchy must be re-established.” This was almost the language in which William V rebuffed the Dutch liberal émigrés at the same time: “I persist in the idea . . . that I cannot accept the stadtholderate unless the constitution is re-established.”²⁸

Royalists of various kinds worked busily to prepare for the elections of March 1797. They developed a network which resembled Babeuf's. “Philanthropic institutes” were set up throughout the country, in which there were two kinds of members, the “friends of order” and the “legitimate sons.” The “friends of order,” who were mainly constitutional monarchists, believed that the only purpose of the organization was to influence the elections by ordinary methods of publicity and discussion. They did not know of the existence of the “legitimate sons.” These latter were secretly engaged in preparing for insurrection, to be launched in the event that the elections were judged to be unsatisfactory; and for this purpose they divided France into military districts, some of which were assigned to the future command of the Count of Artois, some to the Prince of Condé, and some to Louis XVIII himself.²⁹ The Directory discovered this plot early in 1797, and published some of the papers, seeking to alarm the electorate, and win votes for itself, by simultaneous revelations of the counter-revolutionary as well as the Babouvist conspiracy.

Just before the elections Louis XVIII issued another proclamation. It was supposed to be more conciliatory than the one of Verona. He declared that he was misrepresented by republican slanders, but he still avoided concrete commitments, and while dwelling on his intentions of clemency, observed that he meant to bring back the French people “to the holy religion of their fathers and the paternal government that was so long the glory and happiness of France.” Again the moderate royalists were dismayed by such renewed proof of the ineptitude and incorrigibility

27 On Quiberon and Vendémiaire see Godechot, *Contre-révolution*, 273–81; and on the outwitting of Wickham at Vendémiaire, H. Mitchell, “Vendémiaire, a revaluation” in *Journal of Modern History*, XXX (1958), 191–202.

28 Walter, 291; above, p. 515.

29 Godechot, *Contre-révolution*, 307.

of the Bourbons. Malouet, in London, thought that no sane or patriotic Frenchman could rally to Louis XVIII.³⁰

These more or less practical activities were accompanied by a profuse output of extreme counter-revolutionary writing, which enjoyed a kind of classic flowering in the years from 1795 to 1797. Most of it was by French émigrés publishing outside France, but British and German writers also made their contributions. There was the Savoyard-Frenchman Joseph de Maistre, who has been called the French Burke. There was an adventurer named Montgaillard, who thought that all Europe was corroded by revolution, that "the democratic principle spreads even into cabinets," and the French republicans "concoct their poison even in the councils of kings."³¹ There was the Count de Ferrand, who thought the moment had come for all conservative governments to form "a holy alliance."³² There was Montjoie, a prolific royalist pamphleteer, who thought that if Louis XVI had been truly absolute before 1789 there need have been no revolution, and that the Revolutionaries had been fanaticized by a misunderstanding of certain words, such as *liberté* and *pouvoir constituant*.³³ J. F. La Harpe also found "fanaticism" a satisfying explanation of the Revolution.³⁴ In England, Burke's *Letters on a regicide peace* and other pamphlets by other authors gave currency to similar views. In Germany there was much lucubration, in which various elaborate theories were propounded, including the theory that the French Revolution, and other revolutionary disturbances throughout Europe, were the work of highly organized secret conspirators, deriving from the Illuminati of Bavaria of the 1780's.³⁵ These German findings were taken up by a Scottish chemist of considerable repute (he had received an honorary degree from Princeton College in America in 1790) who in 1797 published his *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati and Reading Societies*.³⁶ The Abbé Barruel also drew on German researches for a similar book published in 1797.

The most important of these works are those of de Maistre and Barruel. De Maistre's fame came after the Restoration of 1814, but his *Considérations sur la Révolution française* was published in 1797. It was very much a part of the controversies of the moment, for he expressed agreement with both Louis XVIII and Babeuf, declaring his full approval of the Declaration of Verona, and quoting Babeuf to argue that the existing republic was an appalling tyranny. The *Considéra-*

30 Beik, 92; Walter, 397; Malouet, *Mémoires*, 515, 521.

31 Comte de Montgaillard, *L'an 1795, ou conjectures sur les suites de la Révolution française* (Hamburg, 1795), 5.

32 Beik, 55, quoting Ferrand, *Des causes qui ont empêché la contre-révolution en France* (Berne, 1795).

33 C. F. de la T. Montjoie, *Eloge historique et funèbre de Louis XVI* (Neuchâtel, 1796), 154; *Nouveau dictionnaire pour servir à l'intelligence des termes mis en vogue par la Révolution* (Paris, 1792).

34 J. F. La Harpe, *Du fanatisme dans la langue révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1797).

35 J. Droz, *L'Allemagne et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1949), Part V, chap. 1, "La lutte contre l'illuminisme."

36 Robison's book had at least five editions. According to the records of Princeton University, the *Dictionary of National Biography* is in error in attributing the Princeton degree to the year 1798; the point is of no importance except to show that the college awarded Robison the degree for his scientific attainments, not for his political opinions of 1797, which, however, were certainly agreeable to the college authorities.

tions, however, like the polemics of Burke, rose above momentary questions to the level of a theory of knowledge, an ethic, and a philosophy of society. De Maistre distrusted "reason," and especially the reason of individuals. No society, he maintained, could exist with constant carping and criticism and the proliferation of novel ideas by private persons. A *raison nationale*, "political and religious dogmas," were necessary as a protection against the aberration and presumption of the "reason" of particular men. There must be *préjugés conservateurs*. It was impossible to invent institutions out of hand, or to constitute a government by conscious planning, or to give oneself any rights not already defined, developed, possessed through history and custom. Institutions grow, and government has a life of its own, like men; society is organic. There is no such thing as man-in-general, but only Frenchmen or Russians formed by their several cultures and environments. The French republic is an artificial creation, a monstrosity having no relation to anything real. The French Revolution is "satanic" and God-hating; philosophism is purely destructive; and the truth is that society needs what are too lightly dismissed as "superstitions." The Revolution is the embodiment of radical evil. From real barbarism men can progress. "But studied barbarism, systematic atrocity, calculated corruption, and above all ir-religion, have never produced anything."³⁷

The Abbé Barruel, born in 1741, had begun his career as a Jesuit, but after the expulsion of the Jesuits from France had spent years in Germany and Bohemia. Returning to France, he had published a critique of the *philosophes* in 1781, his *Lettres Helviennes*, which were several times reprinted into the 1830's. As early as 1789 he attributed the Revolution to "philosophism." In 1792 he emigrated to England, where he met Edmund Burke and Robert Clifford. There he wrote a history of the troubles of the French clergy during the Revolution. In 1797 he published in London the first version of his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, of which a translation by Clifford appeared simultaneously in English. It looks as if discussions with English friends, a knowledge of German and the German language obtained many years before, and a familiarity with writings of the *philosophes* acquired at least as early as 1781, had all gone into the preparation of this classic of the counter-revolution, which was published in its final form at Hamburg in five volumes in 1798–1799, with a full German translation the following year, and of which an abridgement appeared in Paris as late as 1911. There is no known explanation of the simultaneous publication of Robison's *Proofs of a conspiracy*, which Barruel himself noted as a pure coincidence.

Barruel is chiefly remembered as the classic formulator of the conspiratorial theory of the causes of the French Revolution. In that revolution, he insisted, nothing happened because of unforeseen circumstances. All was "premeditated, pre-arranged, resolved, and decided upon." A "sect," numbering perhaps 300,000 "adepts," had been deliberately at work for at least twenty years. But, as so often with historians, Barruel addressed himself as much to the future as to the past. The

37 *Considérations sur la France* (London, 1797), 73 ff. and *passim*; Beik, 62–71; Godechot, 94–106. Louis de Bonald, usually mentioned in this same connection, seems to have been little known until several years later. Beik and Godechot treat him and Chateaubriand at some length.

Revolution, he said, "is only the beginning of a universal dissolution which the sect has in mind."³⁸

Though in the last analysis a phantasmagoria, Barruel's work is not without important merits. For one thing, while talking of sects and conspiracies, he develops the framework for a kind of history of ideas, in which schools and styles of thought are seen as more than individual persons, and as having a certain logic, interconnectedness, or development of their own. As he puts it, he is not concerned to tell of Marats and Robespierres, but to describe the systems of thought "which prepare new Marats and Robespierres for every people."³⁹ He sees three stages. First came the conspiracy against the Christian religion, which he associates with the *philosophes*. Then came the conspiracy against thrones—the Freemasons in their secret lodges. Then, deriving from both, came the Illuminati, "a conspiracy of sophists of impiety and anarchy against all religion and all government, even republics—against all civil society and all property of whatever kind." This was a wild exaggeration of facts relating to the real Illuminati, who had been a handful of enthusiasts suppressed by the Bavarian government in 1786. According to Barruel, one form of audacity led to another: "Condorcet refused to obey God, Brissot refused to obey kings, and Babeuf refused to obey the Republic, or any magistrates or governing officers whatever. And where do all these men come from? From the same cavernous den of the Jacobins . . . all have Voltaire and Jean-Jacques for their fathers."⁴⁰ So again the extremes of Right and Left join hands, agreeing that everything in the Enlightenment must lead as a natural consequence to Gracchus Babeuf.

It is another merit of Barruel, if it be allowed as one, that he named by name various "adepts" who were in fact revolutionaries of one sort or another. His lists were fragmentary and peculiar. Since his purpose was to be full and specific, it is reasonable to construe his silences as ignorance, and such a construction leads to some curious observations. Of the Babeuf group he knew only what the Directory made public. He apparently had never heard of Buonarroti or any Italian revolutionaries. He knew nothing of Wolfe Tone and the Irish, and among English Jacobins, aside from Thomas Paine, he named only Watt and one other, with acknowledgments to Robison. Among the Belgians he listed Van der Noot, the darling of the Belgian Catholics in their revolt against Austria, but he had never heard of Vonck, who was more truly revolutionary and in fact more conspiratorial. Of the Dutch he named no one but Paulus, knowing nothing of the really secret Batavian revolutionaries of 1794. Among the Swiss he named Peter Ochs and a few others, and he knew also of two Frenchmen, Mangourit and Mengaud, who took part in the revolutionizing of Switzerland. Among the Swedes, he considered the noble Ankerstrom, the assassin of Gustavus III, and the regent of Sweden, the Duke of

38 *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme* (Hamburg, 1798–1799), I, iv–xviii. On the conspiratorial theory of the Revolution see also pp. 560–63 above on the fabricated idea of a Society of Propaganda in 1790–1791, and p. 627, below, on the campaign against secret societies in Germany.

39 *Ibid.*, I, xx.

40 *Ibid.*, V, 181.

Södermanland, to be Jacobins or Illuminati. Of the Poles, he named no one but Kosciuszko. He knew of Genet's agitations in Russia, but not in the United States. He declared, however, that he knew for a fact, from a letter received from Boston, that the secret societies were at work in America. He correctly named David McLane as a conspiratorial subversive executed at Quebec in 1797. His information was best for the German countries. He named Campe, Mauvillon, Sonnenfels, and Immanuel Kant, who though not conspirators were adepts in his sense of the word. He knew of the more truly conspiratorial Mainz Jacobins of 1792 (Forster, Boehmer, and a mathematician named Metternich, unrelated to the princely house) and of the Cisrhene republicans of 1797, but not of the intrigues of Poteratz in 1796. For Austria, he knew of persons named Billek, Hackl, Hebenstreit, Hoffman, Riedel, and Wolstein, all of whom were in fact implicated in the conspiracy at Vienna in 1794. He knew nothing of the Martinovics conspiracy in Hungary, merely remarking that the Austrian Jacobins were executed with seven Hungarian gentlemen. In short, his information was sporadic. He had written five volumes, and missed the conspiratorial aspects of agitation in Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Hungary, and Italy. It is obvious that Barruel reflected only a few German sources.

He knew enough, however, and it may be credited to him as a merit, to believe that the revolution was not merely French but universal. Though he included a chapter on Geneva in the 1760's, he concluded that the disturbance had begun in America. "The sect first announced itself in America, with the first elements of its code of equality, liberty and sovereignty of the people." It may be noted that in the English translation, and ensuing American reprint, the words "in America" were simply omitted at this point.⁴¹ We may easily suggest an explanation: even for conservative English-speaking persons, it was simply not believable that the American Revolution had been brought on by a sect of adepts, and they might conclude that Barruel's whole thesis was unsound.

He ended his final volume with a chapter on "The universality of successes of the sect, explained by the universality of its plots." At the time of his writing this final chapter, in 1798, the revolution had in fact spread very far, even to "Rome itself." Barruel's message was the same as Burke's: "It is not France extending a foreign empire over other nations; it is a sect aiming at universal empire, and beginning with the conquest of France."⁴² Everywhere, in all countries, there were plotters, adepts, lurking initiates of secret societies, Freemasons, Illuminati, and Jacobins in their hidden cells and lodges who were everlastingly and tirelessly working, for no reason except to forward their own misguided philosophy, to undermine all government, property, and religion.

41 *Ibid.*, V, 310–11; Eng. trans., IV, 354. The reference to David McLane at Quebec was also deleted from the English translation, which, however, supplemented the original with an appendix on the political clubs in England and on the Irish rebellion of 1798, both of which it attributed to Jacobins, Freemasons and Illuminati. That the American Revolution had also been caused by secret societies was affirmed in Germany by counterrevolutionaries as early as 1790. F. Valjavec, *Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland* (Munich, 1951), 149, n. 15.

42 *Regicide Peace, Work's* (Boston, 1877), V, 345.

And what was this misguided philosophy? It was man-worship, according to Barruel, the belief that man was lord of the universe, subject to no limitations or restraints. "For Dietrich, Condorcet, Babeuf and other recent adepts of Weishaupt, there need be no moderator except the man-king, who has nowhere anyone but himself for master."⁴³ It was in short the repudiation of God. The same idea, in more refined form, has been advanced in the twentieth century in condemnation of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. Barruel put the lesson bluntly: to give any aid or sympathy to Jacobinism was an impiety, and only those who firmly resisted the Jacobins would go to Heaven.⁴⁴

That the revolution was "universal," and that good government is somehow related to a good religion, are propositions in which one may certainly concur without agreeing with Barruel. It was preposterous to attribute the revolutionary agitation in Europe, not to mention America, in any significant degree to the machinations of plotters. As for religion, much depends on what one's religion is. For Barruel—as for de Maistre, or Louis XVIII, or indeed Edmund Burke though he did not use the phrase—it was the religion of the throne and the altar. A good religion was one that upheld the established order, or rather the order that had been established in 1789, and had seemingly been (as it seemed to them) unthreatened at that time except by bad ideas. It was a timid religion, fearful of the human mind, nervous at the mention of liberty or equality. It was a complacent religion, which found justice in custom and made institutions into idols. To what extent it was Christian would be invidious to debate, but in any case, as already observed, a great many authorized spokesmen of the Catholic Church, during these same years, refused to make any such equation between counter-revolution and Christianity.

FRUCTIDOR AND FLORÉAL

These poetic words refer to two unseemly maneuvers, by which the Directory struck out in turn against the Right and Left.⁴⁵ By the coup d'état of Fructidor of the Year V (September 1797) it put down the royalists. By the coup d'état of Floréal of the Year VI (May 1798) it did the same to the democrats. In each case it acted from considerations which the preceding pages should help to explain, but also because of certain developments on the international scene which are described in the following chapters, so that no full account of the two coups d'état is attempted here, and they are included only to round out the characterization of the Directory.

It will be recalled that by the two-thirds rule of 1795 two-thirds of the legislative chambers, the Councils of Elders and the Five Hundred, were until the elec-

43 *Mémoires*, V, 112. Dietrich was the first mayor of Strasbourg during the Revolution (p. 688); Adam Weishaupt was a founder of the German Illuminati.

44 Final conclusion, *Mémoires*, V, 325.

45 Among the many writings bearing on the subject may be cited A. Meynier, *Les coups d'état du Directoire*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1927), and J. Suratteau, "Les élections de l'an V aux conseils du Directoire," in *AHRF*, No. 154 (1958), 21–63.

tion of March 1797 former members of the Convention. They had duly chosen five other former members of the Convention for the Executive Directory—Reubell, La Révellière, Carnot, Barras, and Le Tourneur. They started out with an actual belief in their own theories. Sitting as a Convention, they had produced a constitution, and they thought that France was, should be, and could be governed as a constitutional republic. Like most genuine constitutionalists of the time, they looked upon party politics as bad, and had no idea of a system in which one party should govern while another led a recognized opposition. In anticipation of the elections of 1797 they raised alarms over conspiracies of the Right and Left, but they took no practical steps at the local level to influence the voters in their favor.

The awakening was very rude. The election of 1797 proved to be a humiliating defeat for the Directory. The royalists had not been inactive, and in any case the country felt little attachment to its new rulers. The newly elected third of the Elders and Five Hundred, when added to the “free” third elected in 1795 (that is, the third who had not been required to be members of the outgoing Convention), gave a majority of royalists of various kinds, or at least of persons not well affected to the Republic. When the time came, as provided by the constitution, for one of the five Directors to retire, the chambers replaced Le Tourneur with Barthélemy, a well-known moderate with a preference for constitutional monarchy. Of the remaining Directors, Carnot had developed similar inclinations. At least two generals in the army, Pichegru and Moreau, were carrying on secret discussions looking to a monarchist restoration. But the divisions among monarchists, their connections with England, the loud demands of extremists, and the known views of Louis XVIII all made it impossible for the forces arrayed against the Directory to cooperate. Carnot, who had voted for the death of Louis XVI, could never bring himself to entrust his fate even to constitutional monarchists. Pichegru, uncertain of the future, and unable to get any assurances of a moderate restoration from the spokesmen of Louis XVIII, never actually came forward as a Dumouriez, still less as a General Monk.

In 1797 Bonaparte defeated the Austrians and combined with Italian revolutionaries to set up the Cisalpine Republic. The British, with the Austrians obliged to sue for peace, with no remaining ally on the Continent, and afflicted by troubles at home, showed a willingness to negotiate. In the ensuing talks, which took place at Lille, the sticking-point proved to be the French incorporation of Belgium and the relation of France to the Batavian Republic. The British offered to recognize the French Republic and its annexation of Belgium, in return for the cession to England of the Dutch possessions in Ceylon and at the Cape of Good Hope. The French could not consent to give away the Dutch possessions; if they did so they would invite counter-revolution in Holland, or at least lose the good will that they enjoyed in the Batavian Republic, which would be of value in any future trouble with Britain; and they would give offense, by such betrayal of a “sister-republic,” to all revolutionary sympathizers in Italy and other countries, who were useful in the contest with Austria. In addition, on grounds of principle or ideology, the most intense republicans and vehement democrats, while not agreeing with Babeuf, took the view which had been expounded by Buonarroti in his *Paix perpétuelle avec les rois*. They favored the creation of sister-republics, like the Batavian and the Cis-

alpine, and believed that neither true peace nor true republicanism would be safe until Britain and the monarchies of the Continent were humbled if not destroyed.

Bonaparte, now the spectacular young republican general who had brought the Revolution to Italy, had no interest in a peace that he did not make himself. The monarchists in the two chambers had no interest in the career of Bonaparte, or the liberation of Italy, or the maintenance of the Cisalpine or Batavian republics, or the annexation of Belgium. Nor, of course, did they have any respect for the constitution of the French Republic. It became a question of who would violate the constitution first. The monarchists, disorganized and mutually distrustful, made plans for a coup d'état which they were unable to execute and kept postponing. Their opponents acted. The firm republicans in the Directory, Reubell and La Révellière, prevailing on the indifferent Barras, pressed by Bonaparte and by other generals and civilians who were profiting from their activities in occupied countries and satellite republics, and with the strong approval of an enthusiastic republican soldiery excited by its own victories, and of the ardent republicans in France who saw no difference between moderate monarchists and extreme reactionary royalists and political Catholics, drove through the coup d'état of Fructidor of the Year V. Bonaparte sent one of his generals from the Army of Italy, Augereau, who stood by with a force of troops while Reubell, La Révellière, and Barras expelled Carnot and Barthélemy from the Directory. The "triumvirs" then annulled the elections of the preceding spring, so that the two chambers were severely purged of monarchist and moderate elements. Carnot fled from France; Barthélemy and a great many others were shipped off to French Guiana, the "dry guillotine"; and there was a renewal of anti-clerical and anti-Christian persecution and propaganda, the worst since 1794. The altar suffered from its association with the throne.

For a few months the new or "second" Directory—now composed of Reubell, La Révellière, Barras, Merlin de Douai, and François de Neufchâteau—seemed to work harmoniously with democrats of the Left. It appointed some of them to office, and it was at this time, in January 1798, that it allowed the Dutch democrats to carry out their coup d'état against the Dutch federalists. In Italy the old aristocratic Republic of Genoa was converted into a revolutionary Ligurian Republic on the model of the Cisalpine, and for various reasons, including the protection of communications between the Cisalpine and France, Switzerland also was transformed into the Helvetic Republic. With expansionist, determined, and fiercely anti-clerical republicans now more influential in the French government than they had been a year before, and with a good deal of willing Italian assistance, even the Papal States began to fall to pieces, and a Roman Republic was proclaimed.

During the winter, however, as it looked forward to the elections of March 1798, the Directory began to feel uneasy at the strength of the Left which the Fructidor coup had done much to reaffirm. "Constitutional circles" were springing up throughout the country, not wholly unlike the former Jacobin clubs of provincial towns and cities. These new "Jacobins"—or "anarchists" as the Directorial republicans also called them—were in effect political democrats. Most of them accepted the existing constitution, but some extolled the merits of the Constitution of the Year I. The most immediate reality in this line of discourse was not that

these democrats expected an actual revival of the Constitution of the Year I, or would live under it peaceably if they had it, but that they rejected important features of the Constitution of the Year III. An unknown and imponderable element of the Left was no more loyal to the existing constitution than the monarchists were.

It does not seem that the Directory was fearful for the institution of property.⁴⁶ Babeuf's organization had been crushed, and his movement largely forgotten except at the outermost fringes of both Right and Left. But Babeuf himself had talked not only about the abolition of property, but about democrats and a Society of Democrats, the Constitution of the Year I, and the need for firm measures against restoration of the Pretender. The whole democratic wing of the political world was vaguely associated with crazy extremism. In any case the Directory had already become a kind of oligarchy, a "constituted body" which, though originating so recently in the Convention, was not wholly unlike the "constituted bodies" described in the first volume of this book, and against which the discontents of a whole generation had been aimed. The most innocuous democrats were bound to believe that new men should have a part in public life.

Losing no time in learning the less worthy arts of representative government, the Directory made serious efforts to influence the elections of 1798. These were especially important, because not only the usual third of the two chambers was to be elected, but the seats left vacant by the purge of Fructidor were to be filled, so that some three-fifths of the legislature was to be chosen. Like Robespierre, the Directory accused the Left and Right of secret collaboration against it, and although it was not true that they were in alliance, it was true, as it had been in the days of Robespierre, that they both questioned the legitimacy of the government. The Directory made known its preference for certain official candidates, and covered the country with alleged "highway commissioners," whose real business was to prepare favorable elections in local and departmental assemblies.

But the election of March 1798 resulted in a great victory for the democrats. With the broken monarchists largely abstaining, and the partisans of the government unable to keep control, the three-fifths elected to the two chambers included a great many "Jacobins." Again the chambers and the Directory, the legislature and the executive, which were purposely separated by the constitution, were certain to be at odds. The response of the Directory was more speedy than in 1797.

Raising an outcry against the revival of Terrorism, the Directory and its supporters in the two chambers quashed 106 of the elections. It thus obtained a legislative body with which it could work—at least for another year, for there was to be another crisis in 1799.

After Fructidor and Floréal no one could pretend that the Directory enjoyed a popular mandate of any accepted kind. It was a kind of dictatorship without the usual advantages of dictators: it had little prestige or "charisma" (Bonaparte was gradually drawing these to himself), and it was still restricted, even after the two coups, by strong vestiges of constitutional scruples.

46 Meynier's opinion, *Coups d'état*, II, 35.

The Directory had twice violated the constitution on the plea of protecting it. Nor was the plea by any means wholly false. By the coup d'état of Fructidor the Directory had in all probability prevented a restoration of monarchy, and what a restored monarchy would have been in 1797 may be judged from the statements of Louis XVIII and of monarchists themselves. The issue in the coup d'état of Floréal is more unclear. So far as the democrats and neo-Jacobins were constitutionally minded, the crushing of their elections in 1798 may have lessened the chance for a peaceable parliamentary development in the First Republic. So far as they cared nothing for constitutional restraints, or so far as they wanted a new constitution (which would have been the fourth in eight years), their coming into power would have offered little basis for constitutional stabilization. In any event, the Directory, having antagonized the Right in 1797, antagonized the Left in 1798, and stood alone. A republic could hardly subsist when the most ardent republicans had been alienated.

It seems likely that the chances for a moderate and constitutional settlement in France, in the years after 1795, were virtually nil. For one thing, the war was still going on. Britain broke off the peace talks after Fructidor, and though Austria made peace, its re-entry into the war could be reasonably expected. Even with governments well established, the needs and atmosphere of war are unfavorable to constitutional experimentation and personal and political liberties. The Revolution—or rather the last years of the Old Regime of which the Revolution itself was merely the outcome—had left the country too divided, with too many memories, hopes and fears, hates and attachments, disillusionments and expectations, for men to accept each other with mutual trust or political tolerance. Any conceivable regime would have had to use force to repress intransigent adversaries. There are times when real choices become very restricted, and consist in little more than a choice of evils, when all that one can really decide, short of becoming wholly unworldly, is which side he prefers to embrace and whose repression he will condone.

The French Republic, even under the imperfect regime of the Directory, continued to exert an attraction for many restless people in Europe, who considered it to represent a better way of life than the various regimes in their own countries under which they lived. We turn now to the world outside of France.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE REVOLUTION COMES TO ITALY

The Italians want to unite and they want a revolution; they want the Emperor to rule in his own house, the Austrians in Germany, the Bourbons in Spain, the Pope in matters of the Gospel; perpetual friendship and gratitude to France; in short, everything in its place. These are the sentiments of the Italians.

—GIUSEPPE POGGI, MILAN, 1797

The year 1796 is chiefly remembered for Napoleon Bonaparte's brilliant victories in North Italy. In this book, however, Bonaparte will remain no more than one of many generals in the service of the French Republic, and his first Italian campaign will be presented, not as the public initiation of his own career, but as a turning point in the larger revolutionary movement of the European world. It was not the first such turning point. Of such grand events, if we consider only those subsequent to the Terror in France, the first had been the Dutch revolution and establishment of the Batavian Republic, with the consequent alliance of Holland and France against Great Britain. The French victories in Italy made possible the creation of the Cisalpine Republic in the Po valley. Milan immediately became, in 1796, a center to which patriots and revolutionaries congregated from all parts of Italy. Other Italian republics were soon set up on the model of the Cisalpine, and in fact, by the turn of 1797–1798, there was a general alarm at the prospect of a "Cisalpinization" of Europe.

The Cisalpine Republic is best understood in a broad perspective. In the present chapter we begin with a view of "world revolution" as seen in 1796 from Paris, then turn to the French attitude to revolution in Italy, then shift the point of observation to Italy itself, in an attempt to describe the sources of revolutionary agitation in that country from an Italian standpoint. The closing section may seem a digression at first sight, being an account of the Kingdom of Corsica. This "kingdom," existing under British auspices from 1794 to 1796, offers an illuminating counterpart to the Cisalpine Republic, which is treated in the chapter that follows.

"WORLD REVOLUTION" AS SEEN FROM PARIS, 1796

When the Directory came into being, France was still at war with Great Britain on the one hand, and on the other with Austria, Sardinia, and the German states of the Holy Roman Empire south of the River Main. The new regime, having installed itself against royalist opposition, was at first inclined to make itself agreeable to the most determined republicans of the Left. These included the believers in "international" revolution—Frenchmen who demanded war *à outrance* against kings, and patriots of many nationalities who came to Paris to solicit aid for their respective projects. The mood in the new government was at first to give these patriots a receptive hearing.

At the French Foreign Office a good many staff studies were prepared in the various bureaus, some of which, though never officially adopted, breathed the spirit of Philippe Buonarroti and the atmosphere of the Pantheon Club. One of these, unsigned and undated, but written shortly after the Directory took over from the Convention, observed that since counter-revolutionaries sought to subvert the Republic (as at Vendémiaire and Quiberon Bay), it was necessary and proper for the Republic to do the same to its enemies. "If we want quiet at home," according to this memorandum, "if we want to make a peaceable end to our Revolution, we must set fire to Europe with the revolutionary flame, we must raise up rebellion in Hungary, letting the Turks pay the costs, and sow division among the bandits of Serbia and Moldavia, who have been armed by the Russians and Germans." The author went on to observe that the Committee of Public Safety had been very foolish in its attitude to the English refugee patriots, whom it had imprisoned instead of making use of. "But these elements still exist. They are ready to set England ablaze if only the fire is stirred up a little." And he added that, since the French Army of the Alps had had a few successes, uprisings should be promoted in Lombardy and Sicily, and, as a final blow to Austria, the crown of the Holy Roman Empire be transferred to Protestant Prussia.¹

Such was some of the advice that Charles Delacroix, the new foreign minister, could obtain in his own office. In addition, a wide array of foreign enthusiasts sought him out. There were men in Paris working for revolution in Ireland, Poland, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, and the Foreign Office had full reports on the signs of disaffection in England, from the Edinburgh Convention of 1792 to the mass demonstration of 1795, in which King George III, caught in an angry swarm of two hundred thousand persons, was assailed in his own state coach in the streets of London.² The French government in 1796, until events in Italy determined otherwise, seems to have had more interest in, and information on, the chances of revolution in England than in the Italian states.

But no one except a few in the government could see these various agitations in one view. The "foreign" revolutionaries in Paris had no more than the most sporadic

1 A paper simply headed "Diplomatic" in Archives des affaires étrangères, Mémoires et documents, France et divers états, vol. 655, fol. 262–63. Dated "An 4–1795" in a later hand.

2 On England see AAE, Mém. et doc., Angleterre, vol. 19, fols. 388–92, and vol. 53, fols., 187–225; *Annual Register for 1795* (London, 1800). Chronicle, 37–38; S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1786–1832* (London, 1955), 94.

knowledge of each other's existence. International revolutionism, far from being actually international, consisted in the parallel efforts of separate groups of nationalists to take advantage of the war by obtaining French support. Each group had secret interviews with Delacroix, or secret meetings with the Directors, not suspecting that others enjoyed the same privilege. The Italians led by Buonarroti were involved with the Babouvists, and hoped by gaining a more "democratic" government in France to promote revolution in Italy. Occasionally a democratic newspaper might contain items on the foreign patriots, as when the *Orateur plébéien*, on April 14, printed a letter from a "Polish republican."³ But there is no evidence that the Babouvists had any real knowledge of the simultaneous Poteratzt conspiracy for a South German republic, or the equally simultaneous activities of the Poles and the Irish in Paris. For the year 1796 we have the detailed diary of Wolfe Tone, a neglected classic of the Revolution. Living in isolation in Paris, befriended only by James Monroe, having frequent private talks with Delacroix and others, Tone knew nothing of the Italians, Poles, or Germans. He heard rumors in March that the "true original Jacobins" might return to power, and thought this might be a good thing, but he was ignorant of the Babeuf conspiracy until the conspirators were arrested, and then disapproved of their plans for insurrection. He was opposed to insurrection because, more than some others among the foreign revolutionaries, he had confidence in the Directory, which had brought him from his exile in America for the explicit purpose of concerting revolution in Ireland.⁴

From the point of view of the Directory there were two theaters, the British and the Austrian or Continental, in which the instigation of revolution might be useful. Revolution seemed not impossible even in England. Tone was dismayed to find the attention of his mentors so easily diverted from the liberation of Ireland to the direct overthrow of the British government itself. General Clarke, a Frenchman of Irish descent, who spoke perfect English, and was close to the Director Carnot, had a pet project for sending agitators to England to stir up a *chouannerie*.⁵ In Paris Tone met an American, Colonel William Tate, who had worked with Genet in 1793 and been secretary to the South Carolina Republican Society. Tate hated the British, and under protection of the French fleet actually landed several hundred armed Frenchmen on the coast of Wales in February 1797.⁶ Many Dutch democrats were also eager to take part in an invasion of either Britain or Ireland, and the French supported the unitary-democratic party in the Batavian Republic with that in mind. They also, against Britain, maintained relations with the Sultan of Mysore in distant India.

It was possible also to work through Spain, with which the Directory signed a treaty in June, and which declared war on England in November of 1796. One item of business for the French in Spain concerned Louisiana. There were some in

³ *Orateur plébéien*, 25 Germinal IV.

⁴ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1826), 110. Among the papers of the Babouvists was found one referring to the Left Bank of the Rhine (Saitta, *Buonarroti*, I, 31) but apparently nothing on the activities of Poteratzt.

⁵ Tone, 49–59, 97, 99.

⁶ Commander E. H. Stuart Jones, *The Last Invasion of Britain* (Cardiff, 1950), devoted entirely to this episode and to its repercussions in Great Britain.

the government who hoped to recover Louisiana for France. This might mean Louisiana west of the Mississippi which had belonged to Spain since 1763 and which the French proposed to regain in return for setting up a Spanish Bourbon prince with a new kingdom in North Italy—so far were these elements in the French government from sponsoring a revolutionary Italian republic. Or, “Louisiana” might mean the whole of French Louisiana before 1763, from the Alleghenies to the Rockies. Since the signing of the Jay treaty between the United States and Great Britain the French believed that the Americans were moving toward war with France. They lost whatever interest they had had in maintaining the existing boundaries of the United States, which were, or course, hardly more than a dozen years old. There was talk with the Spanish of a kind of Latin alliance to check the spread of English-speaking influence in America. There was talk of a separate political entity, in which the Western democrats in the United States, sponsored by France, should have a republic of their own. There was even talk, after the Anglo-French peace negotiations began at Lille, of offering the American West to the British, since it would be easier for the French to give away Kentucky and Ohio than the Dutch possessions in South Africa and Ceylon. Never had the American West been so involved in remote foreign developments.⁷

Believing that the Americans were now working for England, Delacroix embarked, in January 1796, on promoting *une heureuse révolution* in the United States, though all he meant by it was to sponsor the election of Jefferson as president and so bring the American “republicans” into power.⁸ The American minister, Monroe, kept assuring the French that the people of the United States (as was probably true, on balance) did not support their own government in its policies of appeasement to England. In April Jefferson wrote a letter to his old friend Philip Mazzei, then in Italy, describing the political situation in the United States, where, he said, good republicans opposed a selfish combination of monocrats, aristocrats, and Anglophiles; this letter, when first published in the Paris *Moniteur* a few months later, created a furor in America, and confirmed the French in their belief that the United States was in need of a “revolution.”⁹ Meanwhile the French General Collet, on an ostensibly scientific expedition, sounded out the separatist sentiments west of the Alleghenies, and George Rogers Clark was for the second time commissioned as a brigadier general in the French army. The well-known firebrand, Mangourit, who had been an aide to Genet in America in 1793, and who had worked at that time with the South Carolina democrats, including Colonel Tate, was transferred in June 1796 from Madrid to Philadelphia. At Madrid he had proved too outspokenly vehement, loudly declaring that the present King of Spain would be the last. He was told, in his instructions as *chargé d'affaires* in America, to favor the election of Jefferson, seek contacts with Madison and Robert Livingston,

7 F. J. Turner, “The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley in the Period of Washington and Adams,” in *American Historical Review*, X (1905), 249–79; A. P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795–1803* (New York, 1934); R. Guyot, *Le Directoire et la paix de l'Europe* (Paris, 1912), the index under “Louisiane.”

8 A. DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C., 1958), 456.

9 *Moniteur*, 6 pluviôse An V (January 25, 1797).

and discreetly encourage all anti-British, pro-French, democratic, or separatist feeling.¹⁰ In October the French minister, Adet, openly interfered in the presidential election, to the extent of making public speeches in which he intimated the displeasure of the French Republic if John Adams should be elected.¹¹ From the Hague, at the same time, the American minister, John Quincy Adams, reported that the French design was to favor a separate Western or Southern republic in the United States, "as they are now forming a republic in Italy."¹²

In Austria there was no likelihood of revolution, nor did the French imagine that there was; but after the suppression of the "Jacobins" at Vienna there remained a good deal of discontent in the city, and the chancellor, Thugut, remarked in July 1796, by which time the French had driven the Austrians from Milan, that he was still more afraid of anti-war feeling in Vienna than of the French army.¹³

Against Austria, especially since it enjoyed the backing of Russia, it was useful for the Directory to express sympathy for the Poles, of whom thousands left Poland after the Third Partition, and many converged upon Paris. Receiving certain assurances from Delacroix in March of 1796, these Polish patriots, with French assistance, brought to Paris from his place of refuge in Poland one of the heroes of the uprising of 1794, J. H. Dumbrowsky, to serve as commander of an armed force of Polish exiles. The Directory sent him on to Bonaparte in Italy, where he organized a Polish Legion, which was attached to Bonaparte's army. The Legion was recruited from Polish refugees in France, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire, and from Polish prisoners of war and deserters from the Hapsburg armies. By July 1797 it had 6,000 men, and Dumbrowsky was boasting that his émigré force was larger than either the French or the Dutch émigrés had been able to raise. Dumbrowsky had far-reaching plans, which the French listened to but never allowed him to execute—to carry war and revolution to Eastern Europe, with a grand march through Fiume, Croatia, the Serbiaa provinces of Turkey, Wallachia, Transylvania, Galicia, and the old center of Poland, rallying everywhere the enemies of the Hapsburgs, and even forcing Russia to withdraw from European affairs. The Polish Legion never made so grand a march, but it did serve with the French in Italy for two years, and occupies a place of importance in the history of the Polish nationalist movement. The national anthem of later times, a kind of Polish Marseillaise, was created in the Polish Legion in Italy.¹⁴

On May 4, 1796, the Directory authorized a French adventurer, named Poteratz, working with a few Germans, to conspire against the governments of Baden, Württemberg, and certain lesser states and set up a revolutionary South German or Swabian republic. Poteratz was instructed to work with the French General

10 R. Palmer, "A Revolutionary Republican: M. A. B. Mangourit," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, IX (1952), 483–96.

11 DeConde, 472–76.

12 J. Q. Adams, *Writings*, 7 vols. (New York, 1913–1917), II, 156. The republic in Italy here mentioned, in November 1796, was the Cispadane, the predecessor to the Cisalpine.

13 E. Wangermann, *From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials* (Oxford, 1959), 185.

14 M. Oginski, *Mémoires sur la Pologne et les polonais*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1826), II, 137–38, 206; L. Chodzko, *Histoire des légions polonaises en Italie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1829), I, 119, 172–84, 217; II, 31. The Poles, it seems from these passages, were also in touch with certain Greeks in Paris and the Ottoman Empire.

Moreau in that theater, and to "bring about the disappearance of the petty animosities which may exist between the inhabitants of the different principalities," and "to unite or weld them all into a single political body." Two weeks later, as will be seen, the Directory countermanded this order.¹⁵ It lost interest in using such methods to revolutionize Germany east of the Rhine, and signed armistices with the South German states in July. When, in January 1797, a petition with 1,500 signatures was brought to Paris from this region, asking for French aid in an attempt at revolution there, the petitioners were refused.¹⁶

In February and March of 1796, to complete the list, Delacroix had talks with Philippe Buonarroti and another Italian named Cerise. These two were in close touch with Italian revolutionaries and refugees who were assembled at Nice, and who hoped—the more so since both Bonaparte and the civil commissioner associated with him, Saliceti, were Italian-speaking natives of Corsica—to bring about revolution in Italy in conjunction with the coming victories of the French army. Plans were already laid to turn the kingdom of Sardinia into a republic. It was the desire of these Sardinian patriots to stage their revolution shortly before the arrival of the French, so that an Italian provisional government would be already in being, to shield the country from direct foreign or military exploitation. They thus echoed the hopes of various Belgians as long ago as 1792, but the model that they had in mind was the Batavian Republic, which contributed to the common cause as a partner and theoretical equal of France and not as a conquered or occupied country. As Wolfe Tone remarked to Delacroix at this same time, the foreign patriots admired the moderation of the French in Holland.¹⁷

THE BEGINNING OF FRENCH ACTION IN ITALY

Buonarroti made it clear to Delacroix that he desired, and that the French should accept, not merely a revolution in Piedmont but a general revolutionary rising of the people of all Italy—"Piedmontese, Lombard, Roman, Sicilian and Sard"—in which a vast popular and democratic upheaval should sweep aside the artificial units of existing states and merge all Italians into one consolidated republic. Delacroix seemed to agree: he was supporting the unitary party in Holland, and even instructing Poteratz to "weld together" the South Germans. He endorsed these Italian plans, and recommended Buonarroti to the French agent in Italy, Cacault. But in his instructions to Cacault, Delacroix took a more measured position: Cacault and Bonaparte should use the services of the Italian patriots as they saw fit,

15 S. Biro, *The German Policy of Revolutionary France*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), II, 573, and his whole Chapter VIII, "Poteratz and the Plan of a Republic in Southwestern Germany," where no relation is seen to simultaneous Babouvist, Italian, or other activities. A five-page appendix is devoted to the spelling of this name, whether Potera, Poterat, Poterats, or Poteratz, the last being proved correct by the author; doubtless in French it was pronounced "Potera."

16 P. Bailleu, *Preussen und Frankreich von 1795 bis 1807*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1881–1887), I, 108.

17 Tone, II, 196. On Italy in this particular connection the main authorities are Saitta and Godochot, cited below. See also R. Soriga, "L'idea nazionale e il ceto dei 'patrioti' avanti il maggio 1796" in *Società nazionale per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, Atti del XIV Congresso* (Trent, 1927), 119–40.

but only against states with which France was at war. "You understand," wrote Delacroix to Cacault, "that it is the duty of every French agent to refrain from attempts against allied or neutral powers."¹⁸

So Delacroix, in March 1796, expressed the view that Lebrun had expressed in 1792, and the Committee of Public Safety in 1794, that, whatever grand and enthusiastic language might be in vogue, the provocation of revolution was to be used as a weapon against actual enemies in the war.¹⁹ It was only the more naive foreign patriots, or the few actual international revolutionaries like Buonarroti, or editors of radical newspapers—or spokesmen of the extreme Right, like Burke and Barruel—who imagined that the French government was intent on indiscriminate world revolutionism. Delacroix also remarked of the Italian friends of Liberty (and the same had often been said of the Dutch) that they should be willing to supply the needs of the French army—"to pay, by sharing some of their wealth, for the blood that is to cement their independence."²⁰

During these talks between Buonarroti and Delacroix, the Pantheon Club, of which Buonarroti had been president, was closed by order of the Directory and through the action of General Bonaparte, just before his departure to take command of the Army of Italy. Buonarroti lost confidence in Bonaparte, and in the usefulness of the existing French government to the cause of the Italian revolution. He and Babeuf organized the Conspiracy of Equals. Meanwhile, as Bonaparte inflicted defeats upon the Sardinian army, the Italian patriots went into action and proclaimed the republic at Alba, some thirty miles from Turin. The republic thus proclaimed was not at all "communistic," but it did envisage the end of seigneurial dues, the nobility and the monarchy; and the Italian revolutionaries intended it to be a first step toward a Sardinian or even a larger Italian republic. Bonaparte, however, acting on his own authority, and without orders from Paris, signed the armistice of Cherasco with the King of Sardinia, and so recognized the continuing existence of the Sardinian monarchy. Buonarroti in Paris had added reason to overthrow the Directory at the earliest possible moment.

Buonarroti and Babeuf were arrested on May 10. With the discovery of their conspiracy, the balance of arguments in the minds of Delacroix and the Directors underwent a change. The conjunction in time between the plot in Paris, the initiative of the Italian republicans at Alba, the agitation in Swabia of which Poteratz seemed to be the agent, and the disturbances in Holland marked by the revolt of the Amsterdam cannoneers—especially in the absence of any clear evidence—created a mystery for the French government, as for historians. It seemed that there might be not only a plot in Paris to overthrow the Directory, which was evident, but a great concerted movement of international revolution. The Directory reacted

18 See the documents published by Saitta, *Buonarroti*, II, 1–33, especially Buonarroti to Delacroix, 5 Germinal IV (March 25, 1796), 13–15; Delacroix to Cacault, 7 Germinal (March 27), 16–18; and Cacault to Delacroix, 20 Germinal (April 9), 20–24. In effect, France was at war only with Milan and Sardinia among the Italian states. Naples was inactive at war with France until the signing of peace in October 1796; the papal states and Tuscany were non-belligerent but hardly neutral; Venice and Genoa clung to a precarious neutrality subject to demands from both sides.

19 Above, pp. 569, 573.

20 Saitta, II, 17; above, p. 549.

immediately, ferreted out Babouvists in France, ordered Blauw and Valckenaer out of Paris, rescinded its instructions to Poteratz, and became suspicious of the Italian refugees. The recall of Mangourit from Spain was a move in the same direction.

In general, after the discovery of the Babeuf conspiracy, the Directory, in its attitude to revolution in foreign countries, showed less inclination to deal with refugees and fiery individual patriots and more of a tendency to think in military terms, and to appeal to settled middle-class persons, who, in various countries, would never make a revolution themselves but might accept a revolutionary regime after the arrival of the French army. In the Batavian Republic, the French, while continuing to favor the unitary democrats, tried to avoid offending the more moderate federalists. The Poles were channeled into the organized Polish Legion, under Bonaparte's command. In the plans for Ireland, arranged with Wolfe Tone, internal agitation was subordinated to the great naval expedition which sailed for Bantry Bay in December 1796, and which failed to land 15,000 troops in Ireland only because of unfavorable winds.

As for the Italians, the view prevailed which Cacaault had already expressed before the Babeuf-Buonarroti conspiracy was discovered. His view was shared by most French observers in Italy, including Bonaparte. It held that broad segments of Italian opinion were dissatisfied with the existing order, would welcome the French, and collaborate in a revolution under French protection, but that little clusters of visionary exiles, fugitives, conspirators, and radical intellectuals, like Buonarroti, representing no actual forces in their own countries, would do more harm than good.

"It is not to be doubted," wrote Cacaault to Delacroix on April 9, "that when our military forces triumph in Piedmont we can rally these [locally resident] patriots and many others; I believe that in working by a reasonable method to Republicanize the conquered areas in Italy we can obtain advantages, and especially inspire fear and terror in the hearts of all the petty Tyrants by whom this fair country is subjected; but I have never proposed this except as secondary to our victories. . . . Let us enter victoriously into Piedmont, the Milanese and all Italy; we shall find a high-spirited people, and can then use the refugees who have any virtues or character—the number is not large. . . . The notes on Italy signed by Buonarroti and Cerise are pitiful. . . ."²¹

It is argued by some historians that the Directory turned against the Italian revolutionaries of the type of Buonarroti because it was afraid of them. Their implication with Babeuf and preference for a united Italy to be achieved by a vast popular rising or *levée révolutionnaire*, are thought to have stirred up in the minds of Delacroix and the Directors a kind of general bourgeois social fear. It is even argued that this fear on the part of the Directory prevented a unification of Italy that was perhaps possible in the 1790's.²²

21 Saitta, II, 22.

22 Godechot, *La Grande Nation: l'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde 1789–99*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956), I, 284–311, which restates a thesis set forth in numerous articles, especially "Unità batava e unità italiana all'epoca del Direttorio," in *Archivio storico italiano*, CXIII (1955), 335–56. Saitta, Candeloro, and some others of the best recent Italian historians also attributed the turning of the French Directory against the Italian unitarists to the fear of radicalism aroused by discovery of the

It seems at least equally likely that the French government turned against the Italian refugee patriots because it held them in contempt. The Babeuf-Buonarroti conspiracy, once discovered, proved reassuringly easy to repress. Delacroix, Carnot, and the others, who had remained active during the Terror, were not chiefly characterized by timidity. It is reasonable to suppose that they came to believe that the Italian refugees were mere dabblers in revolution, conspirators playing with fire-crackers, that revolution in Italy could not be produced by such methods, and that republics in Italy, if such there were to be, and if they were to be of any value to France, must rest upon men of some standing and experience in their own countries, and not on uprooted exiles.

But the French government was unable to hold to any firm position on the Italian question. One group, led by the Director Reubell, an Alsatian, preferred to regard conquests in Italy as mere diplomatic counterweights, to be given away in return for a peace treaty in which Austria should accept the French annexation of Belgium, and perhaps the Left Bank of the Rhine. This school of thought saw no danger or strength in the Italian revolutionaries, but emphasized their weakness and insignificance. As Delacroix wrote to Saliceti, if it should prove that the Milanese "lack the energy to conquer liberty themselves, we should limit our efforts to obtaining our own advantages, and procuring for the Republic a solid and durable peace."²³ On July 25 four of the Directors endorsed a memorandum prepared by Delacroix, in which it was concluded to be against French interests to set up either one or several "democratic republics" in Italy, since there were not enough serious revolutionaries at Milan to support such a program, but that Austria should nevertheless be expelled from Italy through the reinforcement of war by diplomacy. It was decided that Austria might receive Bavaria, whose Elector might take over Tuscany, while the Milanese went to the Duke of Parma. Thus Austria could accept the cession of Belgium to France.²⁴ No plan could have been more shocking

Babeuf plot. It is a case of the modern preference for attributing political decisions to ideological or class-oriented interests. Godechot, more than the Italians, believes that unification of Italy at this time might have been possible had the Directory been willing to support the unitarists. He has probably read too much nineteenth-century meaning into Delacroix' language. He quotes Delacroix to Cacault, March 27, 1796 (Saitta, II, 17): "Let the boundaries separating the various states disappear, so that only one shall be formed, and the peoples forget their mutual animosities . . ." as if these words meant that Cacault should favor the unification of all Italy. Not seeing the Poteratz affair in this connection, he has not noted that Delacroix used similar language to Poteratz, May 4, 1796 (Biro, *German Policy*, II, 572-73): "apply yourself to bringing about the disappearance of the petty animosities which may exist between the inhabitants of the different principalities, to uniting them, to welding them into a single political body." (Biro here cites AAE, *Allemagne*, vol. 672, fol. 259.) No one would argue from these words that Delacroix favored the unification of Germany. "Unity" meant cooperation of various kinds of revolutionaries, and disregard of local territorial, class, religious, or other structures, whether in parts of Italy, Germany, the Batavian Republic, or Ireland. For example, Noel wrote from the Hague, on June 14, 1796, that unitarists like Valckenaer and Vreede must be supported, "car enfin ce n'est pas à quelques familles de chaque province, mais à la nation entière, sans distinction de patriciens ou de gouvernés, de juifs ou de chrétiens, de catholiques ou de protestants, que les armes françaises ont rendu la liberté." Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, II, 56.

23 Delacroix to Saliceti, AAE, Mém. et Doc., France, vol. 1965, fol. 93.

24 "Italie 7 thermidor an IV," in AAE, Mém. et Doc., Italie 1794-1809, vol. 12, fols. 53-63; Guyot, *Directoire et paix de l'Europe*, 193; the document was published by C. Zaghi in *Bonaparte, il Direttorio e il problema politico dell'Italia* (Ferrara, 1938), 83-91.

to the Italian republicans, had they known of it. It reverted to classic principles of compensation and balance of power as the way to peace.

The facts determined otherwise. For one thing, Bonaparte had other ideas; he was getting out of control by the civilian government in Paris, and was intent upon setting up a new republic in the Po valley. For another, it was not true that there was no serious revolutionary sentiment in Italy. "The Italians," reported Cacault, "want the humiliation of the upper classes, the abolition of feudalisms and titles, the exclusion of nobles from office; it is necessary for the 200,000 privileged to be sacrificed to the 16,000,000 of the population."²⁵ In any case, could the French, once they were in Italy, simply abandon those who agreed with them? As Miot reported in July, even if it were true that the Italian patriots were not ripe for real republicanism, still we French must do *something*; we cannot simply hand them back to Austria, we cannot annex them to France, and we are committed by what we have already done in Holland; we must let them assemble and set up governments of their own choosing, while our presence protects them from counter-revolution both native and foreign.²⁶

The French at this time, in July, had been at Milan for two months, and Italian patriots had flocked to that city from all directions. They set up an essay contest, in good eighteenth-century fashion, on the subject, "Which form of free government is best suited to the welfare of Italy?" Fifty-two papers were written. The prize was awarded a year later to the economist Melchiorre Gioia, who argued that the only possible free government for Italy was a republic. Gioia insisted, pointing to the weakness of the American union in the War of Independence, that the only viable republic must be democratic, centralized, and unitary.²⁷ This was contrary to the decision taken by the French Directory at the time when the contest was announced.

So the basis was laid, in the summer of 1796, for the conflicts and misunderstandings that were to trouble the following years. There was the Directory, unable to hold to any positive decisions, yielding before accomplished facts, pursuing incompatible ends—to gain a lasting peace, to manipulate the balance of power, to hold on to Belgium or the Rhine frontier, to keep the support of sympathizers in Italy but to exploit Italian resources in the war against Austria, to liberate Italy but to discourage steps toward Italian unification, to make the war a crusade for freedom while alleviating the financial problems of France. There were the French generals, whom the Directory found it increasingly difficult to control, and who, like Dumouriez in 1792–1793, sought their own glory and riches in republics to be created under their sponsorship, or who indeed actually believed in liberating the peoples among whom the fortunes of war had brought them. There were the Italian partisans of revolution, both moderates whose moderation made them pas-

25 "Extrait d'une dépêche du Citoyen Cacault," Genoa, 28 Germinal an IV (April 17, 1796), AAE, Mém. et Docs., Italie 1794–1809, vol. 12, fol. 19.

26 "Extrait d'une dépêche du Citoyen Miot agent français près du gouvernement de Toscane, Rome le 9 Thermidor an IV (July 27, 1796), *ibid.*, fol. 64.

27 M. Gioia, "Dissertazione sul problema: Quale dei governi liberi meglio convenga alia felicità dell' Italia," published at the time, and in *Opere minore* (Lugano, 1833), IV, 99–311. Gioia meant unification in the nineteenth-century sense.

sive, and the more aggressive spirits who already dreamed of a united Italy, who therefore opposed all existing states and authorities in the peninsula, who had no patience with most of the considerations by which the Directory was affected, and who might turn against the French themselves without at all turning against the Revolution. And there was ground for alliance, in a diversity of grievances against the Directory, between some of the adventurous French generals, the extreme Italian patriots, and the advanced French democrats who formed an opposition to the Directory in France itself.

ITALY BEFORE 1796

Italy in the eighteenth century was very much a part of European civilization, and its revolutionary agitation was indigenous, not an import from France. It is necessary, as we turn from an emphasis on French policy to an account of Italy itself, to begin with such a dogmatic statement, since the derivative character of those Italian developments has so long been a part of the conventional wisdom. The French have characteristically seen the Italian *giacobini* as rather futile imitators of themselves.²⁸ Of the British and Americans, it is hardly too much to say that there has never been a good book on the subject in the English language.²⁹ The Italians have of course always shown more interest, but for generations it was believed that the normal outcome of Italian history was in a constitutional monarchy under the House of Savoy; and certain contrary influences associated with Fascism, while unwilling to attribute much to the French, were hardly more favorable to a historical appreciation of Italian republicanism. Since Italy became a republic in 1946, and with the successful assertion of democratic forces against Fascism, there has been a good deal of corresponding activity in historical circles. No country so much as Italy, since the Second World War, has produced such a flow of new materials and new thinking on this period in its own past.

The new studies differ with each other, some preferring to emphasize constitutional and juridical matters,³⁰ others calling attention to economic development

28 But this older French view is revised by J. Godechot, now the leading French authority on Italy in the Revolutionary era. There is much of great value on Italy in his *Commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1937); for later summaries of his more intensive work see his *Grande Nation: l'expansion révolutionnaire de la France 1789–1799*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956).

29 Literally it would be too much to say; we have had, for example, G. B. McClellan, *Venice and Bonaparte* (Princeton, 1931) and Constance Giglioli (née Stocker), *Naples in 1799: an Account of the Revolution of 1799 and the Rise and Fall of the Parthenopean Republic* (London, 1903). These are well worth reading, but the same cannot be said of Angus Heriot, *The Trench in Italy 1796–99* (London, 1957), which draws on the old French and English memoirs, pays no attention to the recent Italian studies, and does not even mention many Italian revolutionaries of the period, such as Buonarroti and many others who have been studied at least since Croce's work in the 1890's. The void in English is well-illustrated by the translation (London, 1828, Philadelphia, 1829) of Carlo Botta's *Storia d'Italia dal 1789 al 1814* (Paris, 1824). Botta devoted the first three of four volumes to the years 1789–1799, but only the parts in which Napoleon figured were thought sufficiently interesting to the English public to be translated.

30 Notably C. Ghisalberti, *Le costituzioni "giacobini" 1796–99* (Varese, 1957); G. Vaccarino, *I patrioti "anarchistes" e l'idea dell'unità italiana* (Turin, 1955); and the texts and notes published by A. Aquarone, *Le costituzione italiane* (Milan, 1958). The work of E. Rota, *Le origini del Risorgimento*,

and the contrary purposes of social classes,³¹ but they agree in seeing the revolutionary movement as a positive phenomenon arising from serious causes, and in refuting the charges that it was "passive" and "abstract." These charges were not peculiar to Italy. They were made in somewhat the same way against the Batavian Republic, and after 1798 against the Helvetic Republic in Switzerland. No allegation was more common in conservative quarters than that the French Revolution itself was too "abstract," and the same had been said even earlier of British and Irish reform bills. By "abstraction" was meant that the principles invoked in these movements were irrelevant to real problems. By "passivity" was meant, in part, a mere imitativeness, a response to external stimulus, an uncritical enthusiasm for someone else's revolution and for "French" ideas. This charge was also made against British radicals and American republicans, when their critics supposed them to reflect a vogue for French principles but to have no genuine roots within the country. Passivity also meant an inability to precipitate a revolution oneself, a dependency on France—no arrival of the French, no Italian revolution. In this limited sense the Italian revolution was "passive"—more so than that of the Dutch, who had attempted a revolution in the 1780's, and agitated in Paris from 1787 to 1794, forming a Batavian Legion and a revolutionary committee when the war began. But this argument shows only that the pressure for revolution in Italy had not in 1796 reached the point of spontaneous explosion, not that no such pressure existed, or that it was not rising.

The situation in Italy was in some ways distinctive, in others resembled that of other parts of Europe. Special to Italy was its own kind of territorial fragmentation. Less pulverized than Germany, less united than the seven Dutch provinces before 1795, the country supported about a dozen independent and very dissimilar states. There were two royal monarchies, Sardinia-Piedmont and Naples-Sicily, the papal "monarchy" in the middle, and the ducal monarchies of Parma, Modena, Milan, and Tuscany. Milan, along with Mantua, was part of the Hapsburg empire. Tuscany belonged to the Hapsburg family, but was independent in domestic and foreign policy under its own grand duke. There were also the old patrician republics of Lucca, Genoa, and Venice. Lucca was very small, Genoa ran for over a hundred miles along the Ligurian shore, shutting off Piedmont from the sea, while Venice possessed Venetia, Istria, and the Dalmatian coast and islands. The strongest political units, however, at least in the center and north, were the cities. Municipalism, descended from the medieval communalism, was ingrained in institutions and mental habits, setting town against country, and town against town.

1700–1800, 2 vols. (Milan, 1948), comes toward the end of a career devoted to the subject since 1910. For two excellent discussions of the new Italian literature see Renzo de Felice, "Studi recenti di storia del triennio rivoluzionario in Italia, 1796–99," in *Società*, XI (1955), 498–513, and G. Spini's long review of Cantimori in *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, XLIII (1956), 792–96.

31 Notably G. Candeloro, *Storia dell' Italia moderna*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1956–), I, 159–288; B. Peroni, "Gli Italiani alia vigilia della dominazione francese, 1793–96," in *Nuova rivista storica*, XXXV (1951), 227–42; A. Saitta, *Filippo Buonarroti*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1950); A. Galante Garrone, *Buonarroti e Babeuf* (Turin, 1948); D. Cantimori, *Giacobini italiani* (Bari, 1956); Renzo de Felice, ed., *I giornali giacobini italiani* (Milan, 1962); and a series of articles by Renzo de Felice in the *Rass. stor. del Risorg.*, of which the one on Giuseppe Ceracchi (XLVII, 1960, 3–32) will be of especial interest to American readers.

There were nobles in Italy, but they generally lived in the cities, and there was less stress between nobility and bourgeoisie than in northern Europe. With no central royal court to dominate fashionable society as at Versailles (though an attempt might be made at Naples), with no military tradition for several generations and hence no mentality of an aristocratic officer-caste, with nobles living in town and the old urban families owning estates in the country, there was only limited ground on which the nobleman could feel himself to be superior, or on which the wealthy non-noble could resent the noble as a noble. There were many nobles among the leaders of discontent before 1796, and of revolution after that year.

Though Italy had long lost its former leading role in long-distance commerce, it was by no means economically stagnant, and the growth of a money economy, with the habit of purposeful investment for profit, was visible in Italy as elsewhere. In the south it took the form of unproductive acquisition of large tracts of rural land by city men. In the north there was more economic enterprise, with new forms of business activity, new manufactures, new crops and methods in agriculture, new roads and better communications and development of regional markets. There was also a growing number of persons in the professions, such as medicine, law, journalism, and engineering. The Italian universities were more alive than those of France or England, with men of ideas in their faculties of law and theology; they were also distributed about the country, with men going from one to another.

These developments produced geographical and social mobility. It was characteristic of many Italian cities to have, on the one hand, an established in-group, an oligarchy composed of a few families who had been resident for generations and monopolized the offices and the honors, and on the other hand an out-group of persons newly arrived in the city, or whose fathers had settled in it, who had no local involvement with the established interests, and who believed themselves equally qualified for the conduct of large affairs. What they wanted was less a united Italy than a modern state. A united Italy was an old dream of literary people, proclaimed also in the 1790's by political intellectuals who had little connection with any organized affairs. For most persons interested in public questions, a modern state was more important, one that could go beyond a mere municipal outlook, favor economic development, be large enough to organize a significant territory, promote education, communications, and public enlightenment, introduce a reasonable kind of taxation, combat the ecclesiastical influences, use the resources of church-owned lands for more secular purposes, and overcome the in-breeding and routine-mindedness of the old urban patriciates. Enlightened despotism had already accomplished something in this direction, especially in Tuscany, which probably for that reason was the least disturbed of the Italian states by revolutionary commotion.

The place occupied by the Roman Catholic Church also made the situation in Italy distinctive. Italy had its share of writers of the Enlightenment, most especially in economic and legal studies. There was little opposition to Christianity, and few were concerned to doubt the divine or at least legitimate mission of the church. The more so, perhaps, because the Church seemed to be in the nature of things, to which no alternative was imagined, a great many people were highly critical of its personnel and procedures. They came to be called Jansenists, and they

flourished in Italy after Jansenism in France had been reduced to a clandestine and lower-class persuasion.³² Jansenists taught in the Italian universities and acted as advisors to governments. Considering themselves to be good Catholics, or indeed the best Catholics, they objected to domination by Rome, had little concern for its temporal power, were critical of monastic establishments, believed the Church too wealthy for its own good, advocated a more apostolic simplicity, and approved the confiscation and resale of church-owned property by the state. It is thought also that Jansenism, by its inner moral attitudes, favored the growth of "Jacobinism" in Italy, since on Christian grounds it emphasized principles of brotherhood and equality, and a spark of liberty in the individual soul, given by grace, apart from worldly and ecclesiastical institutions. The Italian revolutionary movement never became as anti-Christian as the French did, with the result that anti-Christian episodes, when they occurred, were more shocking to the public and more disruptive to the revolutionary parties than they had been in France.

The idea that it was possible to create a better state, a purer church, or a more modern society was mainly voiced by the newer middle classes, with much support from many noblemen and men holding some position within the church. The bulk of the population played a negative role, setting limits to effective political action, both for the old governments and for those issuing from the revolution.³³ Cities were large, with Milan, Venice, Rome, Naples, and Palermo all having over 100,000 inhabitants, and being larger than Lyon, the second city of France; but there never was any true popular revolutionism of the sans-culotte kind, nor even as much as in the Dutch cities. The rural areas swarmed with an increasing population, which rose during the century from about eleven to about eighteen millions for Italy as a whole, so that in many places there were crises over land, employment, and subsistence. It is possible that the burden of taxation and seigneurial dues was lighter than north of the Alps, since no Italian state was a great power with the chronic costs of war and large armies, and expensive living habits were perhaps less common among the Italian aristocracy than among the French. In any case, there was no peasant revolution as in France in 1789, directed against government and seigneurs, and less articulate peasant discontent than in Hungary. The peasants saw little to gain in the programs of Italian reformers and revolutionaries as they understood them, and they blamed their troubles, often rightly enough, on the activities of their own neighboring townspeople, and after 1796 on the exactions, requisitions, and pillage that followed military occupation by the French.

The Italian revolution, in short, was an affair of newer and enlightened elements among middle- and upper-class townspeople, impatient at old vested interests, at

32 There is a large literature on Italian Jansenism in its connection with the political revolution and the secularization of Italian society. See M. Vaussard, *Jansénisme et gallicanisme aux origines religieuses du Risorgimento* (Paris, 1959); E. Codignola, *Illuministi, giansenisti e giacobini nell'Italia del Settecento* (Florence, 1947); A. Bersano, *L'abate Francesco Bonardi e i suoi tempi: contributo alla storia delle società segrete* (Turin, 1957); and the fascinating case study by E. Rota, *Giuseppe Poggi e la formazione psicologica del patriota moderno, 1761-1843* (Piacenza, 1923), reprinted from *Nuova rivista storica* of 1922 and 1923.

33 This is seriously qualified or denied by Peroni, Candeloro, and others, who prefer to believe that there was a potential revolutionism among the Italian popular classes, which could have been brought to life if French policies had been more favorable.

their own exclusion from power, and at the slow pace with which the foundations of a modern state were being laid. Revolutionary leaders made no appeal for popular support, as they had done in France at moments of exceptional crisis. Nor could much response be aroused in the name of the "nation," whether in the sense of all Italians against all foreigners, or of cooperation of social classes, or of working across territorial and municipal barriers. The revolution was therefore, compared to the French, less massive, less violent, less self-sustaining, and more dependent on outside aid. To say that it was no revolution at all, however, would be to premise that all revolutions must closely resemble the French.

The news from Paris, beginning in 1789, soon divided the Italians, as it did others, into those who feared and those who favored the French Revolution. What this really meant was a division between those who feared and favored the attainment of similar objectives in their own countries. Conservative Italians, as Pietro Verri observed in 1789, soon tried to discredit the new ideas as "metaphysical." Italian governments, both those that were native and those that were subordinate to Austria, made efforts to keep out French newspapers like the *Moniteur*, and imposed a strong censorship on their own presses. These measures proved to be difficult and unpopular, since no revolution had ever occurred in such a glare of journalistic publicity, and the number of persons able and eager to read of these events in north Italy was very large. When, with the war of 1792, revolutionary propaganda began to assume larger proportions, it inspired terror in the authorities. It may be recalled that Joel Barlow's *Advice to the People of Piedmont*, in its Italian translation, was so thoroughly repressed by the King of Sardinia that no known copy now exists.

Such negativism on the part of the governments, and harping on the beauties of purely traditional institutions, made many liberally minded and reformist Italians more receptive to the French. Verri, for example, as a writer on economic and fiscal subjects, had in former years been a staunch supporter of the Austrians at Milan, looking to the enlightened monarchy of Maria Theresa and Joseph II to drive through certain reforms in taxation. When Joseph, to carry out his plans, began to cut down the liberties of the Milanese constituted bodies that opposed him, Verri had second thoughts. He became less willing to accept reform at the price of a despotism that crushed the local organs of expression. But he could have no faith in the existing Milanese magistracies, closed, exclusive, self-perpetuating, and overwhelmingly conservative as they were. He came to believe, therefore, that the combination of practical reform with political liberty was possible only in some new kind of state, which would be at first revolutionary, then constitutional. He saw a state of this kind in the French Directory with its Constitution of the Year III, which embodied what many Italian writers and law professors had been saying for many years.³⁴ When the French reached Milan in 1796, Verri, Melzi d'Eril, and other prominent citizens were willing to work with them, in the hope of using them for their own purposes.³⁵ Somewhat similarly, when the Pope spoke out

34 Ghisalberti (see note 30 above) in particular shows that the Italian republican constitutions of 1796–1799 carried out the thought of the Italian Enlightenment.

35 Above, p. 555; D. Limoli, "Pietro Verri, a Lombard Reformer under Enlightened Despotism

against the French church reorganization in 1791, the Italian Jansenists tended to divide. These Jansenists, to repeat, were often men of importance in the governments and universities. Some now made their peace with Rome. Others, continuing to favor a secularization of church properties, and to admire certain features of the French Civil Constitution of the Clergy, concluded that such aims could be achieved in Italy only through revolution, and hence through co-operation with the French.

Meanwhile, before 1796, all Italy began to vibrate with clubs, conspiracies, and agitations in which unknown and lesser persons were active.³⁶ Masonic lodges, long condemned by the papacy, and now also frowned upon by governments, in some cases turned into secret revolutionary organizations. They drew assistance from the Masonic lodge at Marseilles. Filippo Buonarroti, a graduate of the University of Pisa, in 1790 passed over to Corsica, which being French was already in the turmoil of revolution, and published his *Giornale patriottico della Corsica*, the first revolutionary journal in the Italian language. The year 1794 found him as agent of the Revolutionary Government at Oneglia, an enclave belonging to the King of Sardinia within the borders of the Republic of Genoa. With the aid of Tilly, the French envoy in neutral Genoa, various Italians congregated at Oneglia and received lessons in revolution from Buonarroti. How Buonarroti subsequently met Babeuf, and developed further plans for revolution, has already been told.

In 1794 revolutionary plots were discovered at Naples, Bologna, and Turin. The one at Naples dated back at least to 1792, when a French naval squadron had visited the city, and after much fraternization between local patriots and French sailors and officers, two revolutionary societies had been formed. Various noblemen, annoyed at the peculiar influence of the British Sir John Acton over the queen, were involved. The arrests and trials of 1794 were followed by a continuing harassment of republicans until the French army itself arrived in 1799. At Bologna, which belonged to the papal states, a young man named Zamboni, who had traveled in Corsica and France, planned an insurrection to obtain independence for Bologna from the Pope's government. The plan was discovered; Zamboni committed suicide in prison, and his father, whom he had drawn into the conspiracy, died in prison after torture.

Turin and the whole Kingdom of Sardinia had been seriously torn by the war which the King entered against France in the summer of 1792, after rejecting French offers of alliance at that time. There was much sympathy for the French Revolution; indeed, the French-speaking population of Savoy, the oldest part of this miscellaneous monarchy, voted itself into union with the French Republic late in 1792, in a plebiscite whose authenticity was not much questioned. In the next year, while the government managed to stay in the war with a grant of £200,000 from Britain, two revolutionary clubs were organized at Turin, with assistance from Tilly at Genoa. One, more moderate, was formed around a banker named

and the French Revolution," in *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XVIII (1958); C. Morandi, *Idee e formazioni politiche in Lombardia dal 1748 al 1814* (Turin, 1927).

36 A synopsis in Candeloro, *Storia*, I, 180-197; the special studies are numerous.

Vinay. The other, more definitely republican, contained a number of medical students and doctors, including Carlo Botta, then a doctor, and later famous as a historian. With the French advances of 1794 (which brought Buonarroti to Oneglia) plans were made for revolt in Turin, but they were discovered by the police, with help from the British agent in Genoa. The plotters fled or were exiled. Two years later, in April 1796, as already noted, some of these same men, in touch with Buonarroti and the Babouvists in Paris, brought on a more successful insurrection and proclaimed the republic at Alba. But Bonaparte, by signing an armistice with the Sardinian king, repudiated these revolutionaries and frustrated the republican movement.

Various other incidents could be recounted. At Rome, where popular demonstrations against the ungodly French were a common occurrence, the French envoy, Hugo de Bassville, in the revolutionary enthusiasm of 1793, was imprudent enough to display an enormous tricolor at the embassy. He was set upon and murdered by angry crowds. The French complained of the poor police protection at Rome, but did no more than to break diplomatic relations for several years. At Palermo a plot was discovered to assassinate the archbishop. In Venetia the cities of the mainland bore the supremacy of Venice with increasing disaffection. At Padua, for example, nobles, priests, and middle-class citizens, reinforced by professors and students at the University, were all hostile to La Dominante, as the city of Venice was called by its mainland subjects.

When the French under Bonaparte in 1796, having defeated Sardinia, poured down into the Lombard plain, driving the Austrians before them, they met everywhere with little or no resistance. As in Belgium, Holland, and the Rhineland in 1794, so in Italy in 1796, the most notable fact seems to have been that no one cared to defend the existing order. As in these northern regions two years before, either the governments were afraid to arm their own peoples, or their feeble attempts to evoke a kind of popular rising against the invaders came to nothing. At Milan, after the Austrians left, the patricians in the Decurionate enrolled a few volunteer defenders, but as one of them remarked, the people could not become very animated without *il nome di patria*, and there was not much for most Milanese to feel patriotic about.³⁷ When the French soon thereafter passed on into Venetia, the British representative there dreaded the approach of "the absolute Democracy," and remarked to Lord Grenville: "I may add that the Venetian nobles during this whole contest have improvidently distrusted their own subjects, and have been afraid of allowing them the use of arms to protect themselves."³⁸

So the Revolution came to Italy. Cacault thought the Italians more receptive to the French and more suited for liberty than "the stupid Belgians or brutalized Germans."³⁹ It remained to be seen how long the welcome to the French would last.

37 C. Montalcini, *Atti delle assemblee costituzionali italiane . . . Repubblica cisalpina*, 10 vols. (Bologna, 1917-1943), I, xci.

38 C. Roth, "La caduta della serenissima nei dispaacci del residente inglese a Venezia," in *Archivio veneto* (1935), 188, 211.

39 Quoted by Candeloro, *Storia*, 190.

THE KINGDOM OF CORSICA

But what if Counter-Revolution came instead? What happened if not the French, but their enemies, prevailed? What were the issues in this war, which if not ideological in intention was certainly so in its consequences? An answer is suggested by what happened in Corsica, a region which since it belonged to France had been revolutionized since 1789, but which was Italian in language and in many of its cultural contacts (so far as a region still so primitive may be said to have had any) and which experienced a counter-revolution from 1794 to 1796, when the island was occupied by the British. Before proceeding to an account of the Cisalpine Republic, it is more than a mere digression to glance at this Corsican Kingdom.⁴⁰

Corsica was divided by the revolution in France into revolutionary and counter-revolutionary parties. Among locally prominent families favoring the new order were the Bonapartes. The aged patriot Paoli, on the other hand, became a rallying point for the anti-French and anti-revolutionary elements. He made overtures to the British, proposing that Corsica be set up as a semi-autonomous kingdom on the model of Ireland. When the British were forced out of Toulon at the end of 1793 they occupied Corsica, hoping to use it as a base for naval power in the Mediterranean, for maintaining resistance in southern France against the Paris government, and for bringing Genoa and Tuscany into the Coalition.

On the arrival of the British a general election was held, which produced an assembly, which in turn adopted a constitution, declared the country a constitutional monarchy, and offered the crown to King George III. The crown was accepted, and Sir Gilbert Elliot became Viceroy of Corsica. The purpose of the new regime, as stated by the Corsicans now in power, was to protect "liberty and religion" against "the tyrannical anarchy of the present republic of France."

The new constitution was intended to resemble that of England. A Parliament was created, with that name. Legislative power rested in King and Parliament together; that is, the Viceroy had a veto, and laws were enacted, following the British formula, "by the king's most excellent Majesty." Each country district or coastal town sent two members to Parliament, as in England. Men could vote who were at least twenty-five years old, and possessed of landed property. To be elected to Parliament, however, the qualifications were rather high; an annual landed revenue of 6,000 lire was required, the equivalent of some £200 sterling. Here again the parallel to England was striking. Members of Parliament served without compensation, as in England. Since persons resembling lords could not be found in Corsica, the Parliament had only a single house. To protect religion, however, the Catholic bishops sat as members of Parliament, like Anglican bishops in the English or Irish House of Lords. Executive power lay with the Viceroy. Courts were instituted, trial by jury was provided for, and various civil rights were promised. Roman Catholicism was declared the national religion, with toleration for others.

40 For somewhat more detail, with references, see my "Kingdom of Corsica and the Science of History," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 105 (1961), 354-60.

We may profitably contrast, with a little anticipation, this Corsican constitution of 1794 with the constitution of the Cisalpine Republic of 1797.⁴¹ The Cisalpine constitution would proclaim the sovereignty of the people. The executive would be chosen by the assembly, itself elected by voters in proportion to population. The Cisalpine constitution would separate church and state; it would put no bishops in positions of government. The figure of 6,000 *lire* would occur in both constitutions. In the Cisalpine Republic, deputies would receive an annual salary of this amount. In Corsica, they received no salary, and were required to have an income of this amount from their own property. The Cisalpine Republic would embody the democratic formula that public officers were wage-servants of the people. The Corsican kingdom followed the principle that government should properly be conducted by an upper class enjoying an independent income from land.

The regime set up under this constitution soon came to represent a cross-section of the forces arrayed against French republicanism, briefly gathered in a kind of happy isle of the European Counter-Revolution. Sir Gilbert Elliot took steps to live in a state suitable to a viceroy, making arrangements for a salary of £8,000, which fortunately for the Corsicans was to be paid from British funds, since it was almost half as large as the whole proceeds of taxation in Corsica. It may be remembered that the first British governor in South Africa, the Earl of McCartney, occupying Cape Town in 1795, received a salary of £10,000, a sum half as large as the total revenue of the Cape Colony.

As his administrative secretary, the Viceroy chose Frederick North, a remarkable linguist with a good knowledge of Italian, who, so far as his social origins were concerned, was the third son of the Lord North of the American Revolution, and hence in later years became the fifth Earl of Guilford. Positions as Anglican chaplain, and as aides to the Viceroy, gave employment to other suitable young men from England. There were also British officers from the garrison and from the fleet, including the future Lord Nelson. And there were French émigré noblemen, who had lost their property after their emigration, and who now sought service with the British in the hope of winning back their former position in France. As Lady Elliot wrote to a friend in England, "We have dukes and princes as ensigns and lieutenants who once enjoyed their £10,000 or £15,000 a year."⁴²

The Viceroy had more trouble with some of his Corsican associates. Paoli was crotchety, suspicious, impossible to cooperate with, and unable to accept anyone as his superior or even as his equal in the conduct of Corsican affairs. In effect, the Corsican prime minister under the Viceroy was Pozzo di Borgo. Descended from an ancient Corsican landowning family, he was at this time a young man of thirty, just entering upon a long career of half a century of opposition to the France of the Revolution. Twenty years later, in 1814, upon the defeat of Napoleon, he was to ride victoriously into Paris with the Russian Tsar.

Such were the more prominent of the persons now active in the Kingdom of Corsica, unless one wishes also to add the Pope, who began to demand an influ-

41 For the text of the Corsican constitution in English see the *Annual Register for 1794*, 103–9; for the Corsican and Cisalpine constitutions, A. Aquarone, et al., *Le costituzioni italiane* (Milan, 1959), 87–120, 715–20.

42 *Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot*, 3 vols., 1874, II, 338.

ence in the island which both the French monarchy and the French Revolution had denied him, and which the Protestant Viceroy dismissed as an intrigue. Without further research, it is hardly possible to say who the less prominent supporters of the regime were. Probably Sir Gilbert Elliot's diagnosis was correct. Everything depended, he reported, on how the bulk of the Corsican people read the future. If they thought that the British would certainly stay, they would accept them; if they thought that the British were in the island only temporarily, they would be unwilling or afraid to commit themselves.

The legislation enacted by the Viceroy and Parliament was of course designed for the benefit of the country as understood by those who now governed it. Some of it suggests the less gentle features of British law at the time. Criminal law was severe, with burglary punishable by twelve years in the galleys, except that the stealing of sacred objects in church was punished by twenty, in the galleys. There was also the war to carry on, and France to be defeated; the British Mediterranean fleet was short 2,000 men, and Corsican seamen became subject to impressment into the Royal Navy.

Some legislation was in the strict sense simply reactionary, undoing what had been done during the Revolution. Property confiscated from the church was returned to it, though with provision for compensation to the new owners. Church tithes were reimposed. Violence against the Catholic religion was made punishable by death. The Revolutionary legislation against primogeniture and entails (*fidecommessi*) was repealed. The Revolutionary principle of removing education from church control was repudiated; a university and secondary schools were to be set up, subject to inspection by the bishops. The salt tax of the late French monarchy was restored; it was now to be much heavier than before 1789, since the new regime showed a preference for indirect taxation.

Other enactments were political, intended to protect the persons now in power from those who might overthrow them. Here the Viceroy tried to exercise restraint. He conceived of himself as a reasonable Englishman among temperamental Latins, and he repeatedly advised against vengefulness. He underestimated the internal discord within the country. He could not believe that respectable Corsicans opposed the new order, since he never met any such people. He tried to learn, and made tours about the island, but he was hardly in a position to be in close touch with the full range of opinion.

Resistance against the Anglo-Corsican kingdom soon developed an indigenous republican underground, committed to the overthrow of the regime and to ending the union with England. So far as Corsica had any professional or business people, they seem to have looked with favor on the French Revolution. Of five leaders of the underground whose names are known, three were doctors. The gentry also proved increasingly disappointing to Sir Gilbert. Where at first he had seen "remarkably good specimens" of a country gentleman, he found them, a year later, not "beyond the pitch of a good yeoman in England, or of the humblest squires of our remote counties."⁴³ The basis of a social and political system like that of England seemed to be lacking.

43 *Ibid.*, II, 258, 306.

Threatened with subversion, and despite the Viceroy's pleas for moderation, the Corsican Parliament behaved like the French Convention during the Terror. At least the legislation was much the same. There were laws against traitors and émigrés. There was a law taking their property from them, and promising it to those who had sustained losses in the late disturbances. There was a law prescribing death to émigrés if they returned, and another decreed death for correspondence with the enemies of Corsica and Great Britain. Another required priests to take an oath to the constitution. There was a law forbidding unauthorized public assemblies, as well as spontaneously formed crowds or *attrupamenti*. Another suspended jury trials, and another offered a reward of 5,000 francs for every secret republican emissary from France that could be apprehended.

Constitution or no constitution, freedom of speech disappeared. In August 1796, the administrative secretary, Frederick North, sent instructions to C. B. Buttafoco, the King's attorney at Bastia. It should be remembered that only a few months before, in England itself, Parliament had curbed political discussion by the Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices Acts. It is necessary, said North to Buttafoco, to stamp out all signs of the *maladetto republicanismo francese*. "It will be a great advantage to persuade all the most notable patriots [a word used by all parties] to prevent by common accord political discussion of any kind; but if this proves impossible, and if republicanism shows itself in any way, then it will be necessary to arouse to the utmost the patriotism of the well-affected against the guilty, and to put these persons under arrest."⁴⁴

In short, a regime ostensibly conservative adopted the features of the radicalism it denounced. The counter-revolution became the mirror image of the revolution itself. It was not only Robespierre who pursued the "guilty." Moderation failed. Choices were limited. One might choose between monarchy and republicanism, but there was no real choice between revolution and a peaceful rule of law, or between revolution and a calm and orderly conservatism.

In any case Corsica soon became untenable by the British. When the Corsican-born Bonaparte launched into his sensational campaign in north Italy, excitement in the island got beyond control. The French occupied Leghorn, threatening to invade; for preliminary propaganda, they found a Leghorn Jewish merchant who translated into Italian a work on the imminent collapse of British finances, written by Thomas Paine. The British evacuated, and their chief Corsican supporters became émigrés in their turn. That was the end of the Kingdom of Corsica.

It is ironical to be able to add that the British cabinet, a few weeks later, decided to offer the island to the Empress of Russia. King George expressed an especial personal satisfaction at this solution, which was never in fact carried out.

It was the French Republic under whose auspices the innovations of the next few years in Italy were to be made.

44 M. A. Ambrosi-R., ed. "Gouvernement anglo-corse: correspondance . . . de Frederic North . . ." in *Bulletin de la Société des sciences historiques et naturelles de la Corse*, Vol. 42 (1922), 191.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CISALPINE REPUBLIC

Liberty

Equality

IN THE NAME OF THE CISALPINE REPUBLIC

The Executive Directory, composed of Citizens Serbelloni, Alessandri, Moscati and Paradisi, recently installed by the commanding general, Bonaparte, in the name of the French Republic . . . has decreed that the same general's proclamation of 11 Messidor should be put into its Acts:

PROCLAMATION

Bonaparte, commanding general of the Army of Italy:

The Cisalpine Republic was formerly under the dominion of the House of Austria. The French Republic succeeded by right of conquest. It renounces that right from this day forward. The Cisalpine Republic is free and independent. . . . It remains for the Cisalpine Republic to demonstrate to the world by its wisdom and energy, and by the good organization of its armies, that modern Italy has not degenerated and is still worthy of liberty.

Signed: BONAPARTE
Milan, June 1797

The *triennio* of the Italians began with the irruption of the French in 1796, and ended in 1799 when the French were driven out by the Austrian and Russian armies, with some assistance from the Turks, by whose combined efforts, it was briefly hoped, European civilization in Italy would be saved from the evils of Jacobinism. The *giacobini* called themselves "democrats." Nowhere else at the time, and certainly not in the United States, was the word "democracy" so enthusiastically adopted. Where in France it was the Babeuf group that most freely applied the term to themselves, and the secretive inner core of the Babouvists understood by it

an economic equality to follow upon the abolition of property, the Italian democrats, though some of them were in touch with French Babouvists, were democrats of a more purely political and constitutional kind. The most vehement of them, men like Ranza, Custodi, and Salvador, took pains to argue that private property and some degree of economic inequality were desirable. Buonarroti's own companion of 1796, Guglielmo Cerise, died as a baron of the Napoleonic empire.¹

During the excitement of the *triennio*, even as they became disillusioned with the French themselves, the Italian revolutionaries were agreed in admiring the French constitution of 1795. Discussions such as were heard in France of the respective merits of the constitutions of the Year I and the Year III were of little interest to the Italians, for whom the various French constitutions looked much alike.² For the Italy of the Old Regime the constitution of the French Directory was revolutionary and democratic, and was willingly adopted by Italian Jacobins as a model.

By 1799 there were five revolutionary republics in Italy, all but one swept away in the Austro-Russian reaction. They were the Cisalpine, the Ligurian (which alone survived under French protection), the Luccan, the Roman, and the Neapolitan—or Parthenopean as the French called it.³ There is room to treat only the Cisalpine on the same scale as was used for the Batavian Republic in an earlier chapter. Absorbing the earlier Cispadane Republic of 1796, and evolving, after the battle of Marengo of 1801, into the Italian Republic and the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, the Cisalpine stands as a prominent landmark both in the spread of revolution in the 1790's, and in the long process of the modernization of Italy which we know as the Risorgimento.

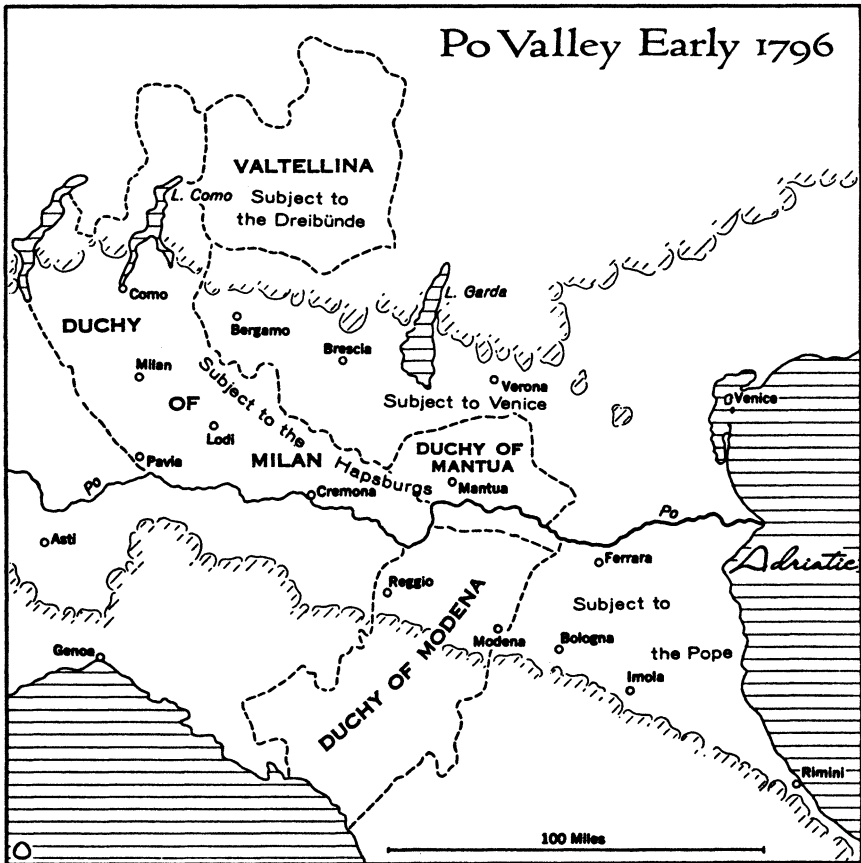
THE VAL PADANA AND THE BRIDGE AT LODI

Reaching over two hundred miles from Turin to the Adriatic, between the Alps to the north and the rough range of the Appenines to the south, lay the open expanse of the Val Padana, the Po valley, the garden of Italy, a land of music and statuary and dramatic emotions, very different from the sober Dutch provinces, but susceptible to much of the same kind of political renovation. The valley, with the changes it underwent between 1796 and 1799, is shown by the accompanying pair of maps. Proceeding downstream from the Kingdom of Sardinia, one passed the region

1 G. Vaccarino, *I patrioti "anarchistes" e l'idea dell'unità italiana 1796–99* (Turin, 1955); C. Ghisalberty, *Le costituzione "giacobine,"* 1796–99 (Varese, 1957); G. Spini in *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, XLIII (1956), 792–96, reviewing D. Cantimori, *Giacobini italiani*, Vol. 1: *Compagnoni, L'Aurora, Ranza, Galdi, Russo* (Bari, 1956), which puts more emphasis on social as distinct from political revolution. On the use of the word "democratic" in Italy see also p. 549.

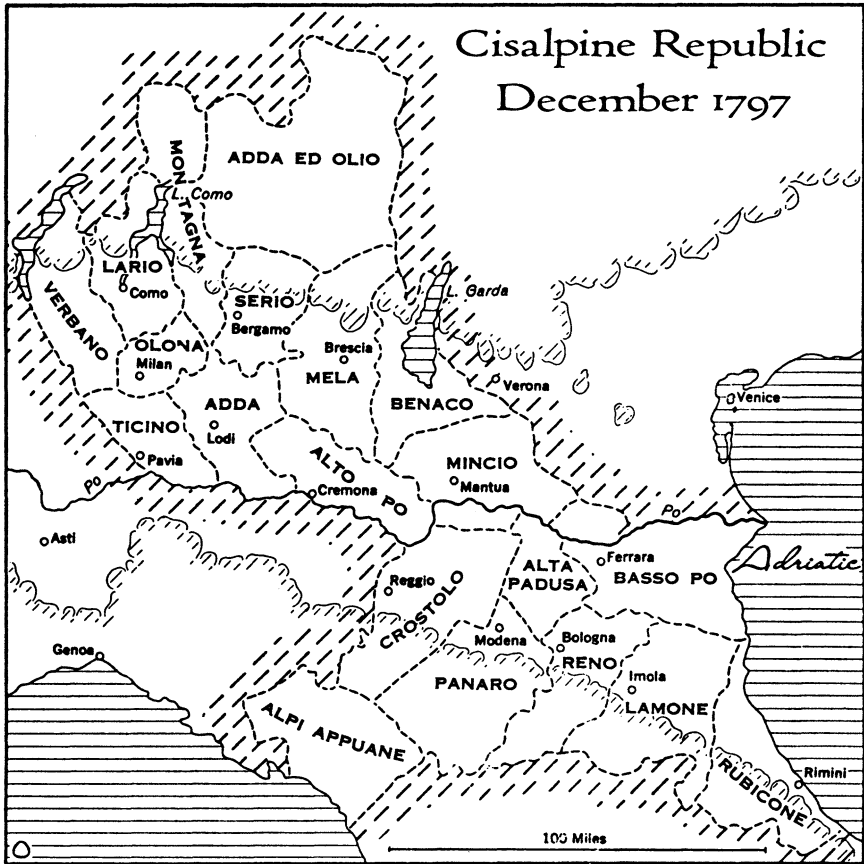
2 Ghisalberty, 87–91; G. Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna* (Milan, 1956), finds a preference of some Italians for the "Jacobin" constitution of the Year I.

3 That it has always been called "Parthenopean" in English, also, shows how much this period in Italian history has been seen through French eyes in England, and derivatively in America. The *Annual Register for 1799* called it the Neapolitan Republic; it would be well to return to this original English usage. Parthenope was the very ancient city on the site of Naples, where Neapolis or the "new city" was built about 600 B.C.



known as Emilia on the right bank, and on the left Lombardy and below it the Terraferma of the Venetian Republic. Politically, on the south bank lay the duchies of Parma and Modena, then the "legations" of the Papal States, where the cities of Bologna and Ferrara lived under the rule of papal legates. On the Lombard side were the duchies of Milan and Mantua with their famous cities, and below them the Venetian cities of Verona, Vicenza, Padua, and others. It is well to keep these cities fixed in mind, for it was in them that the Italian revolution mainly took place.

On May 10, 1796, the very day of the arrest of Babeuf and Buonarroti in Paris, there occurred at Lodi, a town on a tributary of the Po not far from Milan, an event of at least equal importance in both actual and symbolic impact. Bonaparte, the new commander of the *Armée d'Italie*, still only twenty-seven years old, so skillfully assembled his divisions that he caught the retreating Austrians at the bridge



at Lodi. He himself, against heavy artillery fire from the far bank, put two cannon into position at the bridgehead—"in person, in a hail of grapeshot," as Saliceti reported.⁴ The French poured over the bridge, led by Massena and other divisional generals, with loud cries of "Vive la Republique," in a display of all the gallantry and bravura that were then possible in time of war. The Austrians were routed, and four days later the French entered Milan.

The implications of the bridge at Lodi set a frame for all that followed. Bonaparte's victory there, and his own feat of courage, were at the beginning of his reputation, his personal charisma or prestige as a successful war-maker, and soon as a peace-maker, which began to weigh heavily upon the politics of the Directory. The republican enthusiasm of the *Armée d'Italie* became legendary. Bonaparte's

⁴ *Moniteur, reimpression*, XXVIII, 279.

troops felt more zeal for the Republic than the French armies along the Rhine, but they had little respect for the civilian chatterboxes in Paris, as they would call them, and in fact Bonaparte, with such an army, was able to become virtually independent, to upset the foreign policy of the Directory, and especially at the time of the Fructidor coup d'état to make the civilian government dependent upon himself. In Italy, also, his personal aura suffused the political atmosphere. Italian revolutionaries could act successfully only within the limits of his aims and needs. It so happened that he desired their co-operation.

"The battle of the bridge at Lodi," a leading modern Italian historian has written, "imposed on all actors on the political stage the problem of the democratization of Italy."⁵

In the following year the whole Po valley came to a boil, but it was for some time uncertain what would be crystallized from the swirling mixture. The irreducible elements were the cities. What happened, characteristically, in city after city, upon the arrival or merely the approach of the French, was that locally dissatisfied persons, who had been agitating since 1789—journalists, lawyers, doctors, university professors and students, merchants in the newer trades, landowners of modern outlook, outsiders and newcomers not ancestrally identified with civic affairs, reinforced by a good many nobles and priests—upset and replaced the older municipal oligarchies, the Senate at Bologna, the Decurions at Milan, the Centumviri at Ferrara. Each new group made its own arrangements with the French army. Many sent their own separate deputations to Paris.

Questions of territory and boundaries became fluid. Only at Venice and Genoa (for by 1797 the revolution spread beyond the valley to these historic centers) did the new provisional governments claim to represent the whole territory of pre-existing states. Elsewhere all was in flux. Padua and Brescia were in revolt against Venice, Bologna and Ferrara against the Pope, Modena and Reggio against their duke, Asti and Novara against the king of Sardinia. In such places the local leaders of revolution, committed to no kind of political unit except their own city, tended to league together for mutual protection. Or from a kind of municipal jealousy, or fear of being overshadowed by immediate neighbors, they imagined a single large Italian state in which all might merge. Thus the idea of a united Italy grew from local roots. But the same purpose might be served by new states of intermediate size. The visible units of the cities, each with its bit of surrounding country, were re-combined into larger entities, though their fates were different. By the end of 1797 Venice and most of the Venetian cities had become a province of Austria, the Sardinian towns remained in that kingdom, and the ancient city-state of Genoa had been revolutionized into the Ligurian Republic. The cities of Lombardy and Emilia, each with its *contado*, had fused into a republic, subdivided into uniform *departimenti*, as in France.

The Italians, like the Dutch, had to pay for their liberation, or rather for the protection of the French army under which they undertook to liberate themselves. For the French, whose immediate problem was the military one against Austria, it would be enough to keep control by a military administration or temporary occu-

⁵ Ghisalberti, 100.

pying authority. Such was the preferred program of the Directory in 1796. It was the strength of the native Italian movement that persuaded Bonaparte otherwise. He was a mixture of the dreamer and adventurer, the genuine believer in modernizing principles of the Enlightenment, and the realist accustomed to a careful weighing of political forces as he saw them. He concluded that it was in his own interest, in the interest of France, and of the war against Austria and Great Britain, to let the Italian patriots, within limits, have their way with new republics and constitutions. In return, they had to pay—*liberté et réquisitions*.⁶

The French army was supplied. Bonaparte, a few other officers, and various army contractors made large private fortunes. So abundant was precious metal that the *Armée d'Italie*, alone among French armies, received its wages in hard coin; here was at least one reason for its especial devotion to its commander and to the Republic.⁷ By the end of 1796 the French had officially received the equivalent of 45,000,000 francs in Italy in cash and goods, plus some 12,000,000 in gold and silver plate, ingots and jewelry from the *monti di pietà*, which were lending institutions where the owners of such valuables left them as collateral.⁸

It is hard to estimate the real impact on the populations of requisitions expressed in abstract terms of large sums of money. It sounds ominous to hear that the French levied 12,000,000 *lire* on the duchy of Modena, until we learn that the duke quickly raised 24,000,000 and decamped with the whole amount.⁹ The “looting” of Italy provided hair-raising narratives for anti-revolutionaries throughout Europe and the United States. It diminished the need of Italians to feel gratitude to their liberators, but the wiser ones knew that the costs of defeating Austria must be somehow shared, and the faith of democrats was by no means wholly undermined. Since they had not meant to imitate the French anyway, but to have an

6 On the contradictions in a policy of *liberté et réquisitions* see especially J. Godechot, *Les commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire: contribution à l'étude des rapports entre les pouvoirs civils et militaires*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1937), I, 284 ff., and his *La Grande Nation*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1956), II, 539–65 and 688–90. Godechot, as a Frenchman trying to be fair and objective, seems if anything more severe than is necessary in judging the behavior of the French at this time. The Italians, like the Dutch, were able to pay for their own “liberation”; the success of their revolutions was entirely dependent on the defeat of the Coalition, and there was no good reason, from their own point of view, why they should not contribute to the common war effort. It was the arbitrary and disorderly character of much requisitioning, and the private corruption and self-enrichment by the French, that were a ground for legitimate complaint. Godechot, while noting the impossibility of a reliable estimate, concludes (*Grande Nation*, II, 565) that in the eight years 1792–1799 the French levied at least 360,000,000 francs in the occupied countries. To give an idea of the meaning of this figure, he remarks that a sum of 360,000,000 was somewhat over half the French annual budget in the 1790's, and compares it to the five billion francs levied by the Germans upon France in 1871, a sum at that time double the French annual budget. He might also have compared it to the 700,000,000 francs levied as an indemnity upon France in 1815. Or the 360,000,000 *taken* by the French may be compared, for size at least, to the £10,000,000 (about 250,000,000 francs) *given* by the British as subsidies to Continental allies from 1793 to 1800. See the references in Chapter XXII, note 9, above.

7 Godechot, *Commissaires*, I, 295.

8 *Ibid.*, I, 572–73.

9 *Ibid.*, I, 428. The economist Melchior Gioia, in *I francesi, i tedeschi e i russi in Lombardia* (3rd ed., Milan, 1805) argued that the burden of the thirteen-month Austro-Russian occupation of 1799–1800 was much heavier than that of the Franco-Cisalpine in requisitions, confiscations, tax levies, and public disorder.

Italian revolution in which the errors and horrors of the French Revolution were avoided, the faults of the French were hardly relevant to the real questions. Nor did the depredations in Italy seem shocking to the democratically minded in America, who saw Bonaparte at this time as a Republican hero and the campaign in Italy as a Republican crusade. Andrew Jackson, thirty years before the advent of "Jacksonian democracy," hoped that Bonaparte would proceed next to England and set up a free republic there.¹⁰

It may also be noted that the Italians of the *triennio* felt a strong affinity for the American Revolution.¹¹ They thought that it had opened an era, leading on to the French Revolution which was now leading to the Italian. Works by Benjamin Franklin were translated and published at both Turin and Venice in 1797. At Venice, his *Poor Richard* was included in the same volume with the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776. The Americans, said the Venetian translator, "were the first to philosophize on the true spirit and advantages of liberty." At Bologna, at the "Circolo costituzionale del Genio democratico," late in 1797, the chairman of the meeting lauded the Americans as predecessors in the search for reason and liberty. Two Italians very active in revolutionary politics of the *triennio*, Carlo Botta and Giuseppe Compagnoni, wrote long histories of America and the American Revolution in their later years. Compagnoni, whose other achievements included the introduction of the Italian tricolor and the first professorship of constitutional law in a European university (at Ferrara in 1797), may indeed have written the longest history of America ever composed by a single man, since his work on the subject extended to twenty-nine volumes.¹²

The French, as already said, entered Milan four days after the battle of Lodi. Some of the patrician liberals and reformers, Melzi d'Eril, Serbelloni, Pietro Verri, came out to welcome and work with them. Several hundred more middle-class people formed a political club, the Society of Friends of Liberty and Equality, whose troubled existence reflected the changing reactions of the French to Italian revolutionary pressures: soon closed down for its radicalism, it re-opened as the Academy of Literature and Public Instruction, was again closed down, and reappeared again in 1798 as a Constitutional Circle, the name used in France for the revived "Jacobin" clubs of the period between the Fructidor and Floréal coups d'état.¹³ Throughout these successive forms the Milan club remained essentially

10 Andrew Jackson remarked to James Robertson (Philadelphia, January 11, 1798) that if the French succeeded in an invasion of England "tyranny will be humbled, a throne crushed, and a republic spring from the wreck, and millions of distressed people restored to the rights of man by the conquering arm of Bonaparte." *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 7 vols. (Washington, 1926), I, 42.

11 L. S. Mayo, *Beniamino Franklin 1706-90* (Florence, n.d.) with the preface by Luigi Rava, "La fortuna di Beniamino Franklin in Italia"; A. Pace, *Benjamin Franklin and Italy* (Philadelphia, 1958) *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 47.

12 G. Compagnoni, *Storia dell'America*, 29 vols. (Milan, 1820-1823), reviewed in *North American Review*, XXVII (1828), 30 ff. The work deals with both North and South America. For a full bibliography on the origins of the Italian tricolor and on the first chair in constitutional law, see C. Zaghi, "Giuseppe Compagnoni deputato al Congresso Cispadano e al General Bonaparte," *Nuovi problemi di politico, storia ed economica*, IV (1933), 3-48. On Compagnoni see also D. Cantimori, *Giacobini italiani: Compagnoni, L'Aurora, Ranza, Galdi, Russo* (Bari, 1956).

13 The vicissitudes of the club, noted in all the general histories, are conveniently explained by B. Peroni, "La 'società popolare' di Milano, 1796-99" in *Rivista storica italiana*, LXVI (1954), 511-17.

the same, as a center of public debate for the warmest patriots of Lombardy, and for many others from all over the Po valley, with visitors from Rome and Naples.

The French at first tried to rule through a Military Agency, composed of three Frenchmen, re-inforced by a civilian commissioner sent from Paris, named Pinsot, whose task was to supervise the levy of requisitions upon the country. Pinsot, reflecting the opinion then prevailing in Paris, had no desire to create a republic in Lombardy, which he expected to be returned to Austria at the peace table, and hence was unconcerned to build future friendly relations. His aim was to use the resources of Milan as quickly as possible to support the French army and government in its struggle against Austria and the counter-revolution; and he therefore attempted to tap the most mobile and available forms of wealth, which belonged to the professional and business men of the city. Some of these men, however, were the leaders of the democratic or radical party, which as an urban group preferred to have the burden borne by the landowners and rural people, whom Pinsot wished to spare lest they rebel, and by rebelling interfere with the movements of French troops. Bonaparte in this instance supported the Italian democrats against Pinsot.¹⁴

The first weeks of the occupation therefore saw a conflict at Milan which was to characterize all Italy in the next three years. On one side stood the French government and its civilian commissioner, supported by the more moderate of the Italians, who were often owners of rural estates. On the other side stood the more vehement Italians, city men who demanded an independent republic, or even talked of a unified republic of all Italy; they made no effort to conciliate the rural population, but had the sympathy of many French generals. The latter party won out; Pinsot was recalled; and by the end of 1796 the Directory gave up the whole principle of attaching civilian commissioners to the army. The military increasingly prevailed over the civilian authority, in the formation of French foreign policy as in other respects. The Directory, pressed by the generals, and so weakened by the revival of royalist sentiment in France that it could hardly do without the firm republicanism of the Army of Italy, came to accept, at least half-heartedly, the establishment of revolutionary republics south of the Alps.

At Milan the recall of Pinsot marked the triumph of the more advanced Italian democrats. The Military Agency was replaced by a General Administration of Lombardy, composed of Italians. This body worked actively for a Lombard republic and an all-Italian revolution. It sponsored the famous essay contest, which Gioia won, on "Which form of free government is best suited to Italy?" It organized a Lombard Legion, so that within a few months an Italian army (then called Cisalpine) was in the field along with the French. It was in this Lombard Legion that the Italian tricolor—red, white, and green—first appeared. The Italian tricolor and the Polish national anthem of later times (as already explained) were thus generated simultaneously in the Po valley in 1796.

14 The best account of the disputes centering on Pinsot is in Godechot, *Commissaires*, I, 371–88. Most Italian historians see it as typical of the struggle in Italy of town against country, but Candeloro, *Storia*, I, 211, preferring a class analysis, believes that the Directory and Pinsot, being "moderates," wished to spare the rich and throw the burden on "a greater number of citizens." These "citizens" (*cittadini* or city men), forming the radical party, did include, however, "rich" merchants and financiers.

Patriotic feeling ran high at Milan, the more so since the Austrians were not yet really defeated. When Wurmser, regrouping his forces, began a counter-offensive, audiences in the theater sang the Marseillaise. In November there was an uprising in the city, when the patriots, after a great demonstration at a tree of liberty before the cathedral, solemnly proclaimed the independence of Lombardy and demanded elections for "primary assemblies." What they wanted, in short, was a constituent assembly to establish a republic. The uprising was suppressed by the French Army. With military operations still in progress in the Milanese, neither Bonaparte nor the Directory was yet ready to countenance a republic north of the Po.

South of the river the situation was different, and the first Italian republic to be constructed along modern lines was therefore the Cispadane.

THE CISPADANE REPUBLIC

The Papal States extended from the mouth of the Po to a point south of Rome, and the men who controlled the affairs of the Church were well aware that the best of Catholics saw nothing sacred in this temporal power. The Austrians or the King of Naples, or both in concert, might someday annex or partition these territories of the Church; but in 1796 the danger seemed most imminent from the French. The Pope maintained no actual army, but after the battle of Lodi the Curia, optimistically expecting a successful counter-attack by the Austrians, took steps to raise a kind of *levée en masse*, in which it had no more success than other governments of the Old Regime. The only effect was to provide the French with another excuse for intervention, and they entered Bologna on June 18, 1796.

At Bologna, it may be recalled, there had been an unsuccessful conspiracy led by Zamboni in 1794. The trial had dragged on, and Zamboni's father had died in prison, and an accomplice had been executed, only two months before the French arrived.¹⁵ There was much restlessness in the city, so that many welcomed the invaders gladly, and complied eagerly with the French demand that Bologna break off from the Papal States. A dispute developed between the Senate of Bologna and those who complained of its closed and oligarchical character. Both were eager to throw off the papal overlordship and restore communal independence, but the Senate took the view that independence, or "liberty," should leave its old position and privileges unimpaired. Somewhat the same question, between constituted bodies and new men, had of course arisen in many other connections—in the Dutch revolt against the House of Orange, the aristocratic revolt against the monarchy in France, and even in the rebellion of Massachusetts against the British Parliament in 1775.¹⁶

A committee drafted a constitution for a "Bologna republic." It began with a declaration of rights, virtually a translation of the French Declaration of 1789. The body of the Constitution, putting sovereignty in the "universality of the citizens,"

15 Candeloro, 187–88; L. Frati, *Il Settecento a Bologna* (n.p., 1923), 246–47. In 1798 the remains of Zamboni and his accomplice, De Rolandis, were placed in a civic urn at the foot of a liberty tree; in 1799 they were scattered to the winds.

16 Above, pp. 536, 565, 583, 584.

and mapping out legislative, executive, and judiciary powers in quite modern style, was more specifically adapted to the situation at Bologna, since it represented something of a compromise between the two parties in the city. It reflected also the historic municipalism, in the sense of predominance of town over country: the city of Bologna, with a third of the population, was to receive three-quarters of the representation. This Bologna constitution of 1796 is regarded as the first constitution of the Italian Risorgimento, and was in any case the first such written document to be officially drafted in Italy.¹⁷

There were revolts also at Ferrara in the Papal States, and at Modena and Reggio in the duchy of Modena. The patricians at Ferrara, the Centumviri, tried to keep control, but Bonaparte's civilian associate, Saliceti, out-maneuvered them by setting up a Ferrara Central Administration in which ordinary *borghesi* were included. It was the French also who brought the four towns together, with assistance from the more "radical" or "democratic" of their citizens, those, that is, who were the least identified with the aristocracies of the several municipalities. A congress of the four towns, in October 1796, organized a league for common defense against counter-revolution, not unlike the old leagues of Communes in the Middle Ages. Bonaparte and Saliceti concluded, however, that it would be more practical for them to work through some kind of organized territory; and the more enterprising patriots from the four cities desired more than a mere league to serve the purposes of the French. A second congress met at Reggio in December. It was the first elected assembly of the *triennio*, and its 110 members, many of whom were to serve in later years in the Cisalpine Republic and Napoleonic Empire, came mostly from the business, professional, and landowning middle class, but included several priests and a few nobles. There was also a Jew among them, whose presence signified the new order. After a dispute on vote by head or by *stato* (which in this case meant by city), a problem which both the French Estates General and the Philadelphia Convention had had to face, it was decided that voting should go by head.

The decision favored the democrats, and the Congress proclaimed, under Bonaparte's urgings, the Cispadane Republic One and Indivisible.¹⁸ "Indivisibility" meant, as in the Batavian Republic, that the new state should not disintegrate into municipal units, since an emphasis on municipalism, federalism, or decentralization would leave the old patriciates in positions of influence. It was therefore the democrats, as elsewhere in Europe but in contrast to the United States, who de-

17 The Bologna constitution is printed by A. Aquarone, et al., eds., *Le costituzioni italiane* (Milan, 1958), 8–33, as the first modern Italian constitution. The Corsican constitution of 1794 (see above, p. 586), included by the editors in their appendix, was "modern" in a different way, and less truly Italian. For the revolution at Bologna see Candeloro, 220–22, and Ghisalberti, 104–8.

18 On the formation of the Cispadane see Candeloro, 222–28, and Ghisalberti, 108–12; the latter indicates the sources and special studies. Where older writers of more nationalistic or conservative outlook saw the unification of Italy as a thing-in-itself, or supreme and conscious goal of those who effected it, the modern writers see it more as a byproduct of democratic or other revolutionary aims. Local democrats, in this view, having in each case to overcome the opposition of their local oligarchies, reached out to join forces with those of neighboring places, thus building up political communities of increasingly wider scope. As long ago as the Fascist period Carlo Morandi, in an excellent book, *Idee e formazione politiche in Lombardia dal 1748 al 1814* (Turin, 1927), argued that the desire for Italian political unity was thus mainly a result of democratic developments.

mandated a homogeneous and unitary state. These men already dreamed of a merger with Lombardy across the Po—some even of an Italian Republic. But the municipal feeling remained strong in the Cispadane. Ferrara, Reggio, and Modena all resisted the ascendancy of Bologna. Bologna, in turn, fearful of subordination to Milan, showed the least enthusiasm for a single republic in the Po valley. The second congress also created an Italian Legion (like the Lombard Legion at Milan) to which it gave the tricolor as a standard, and received with much fanfare an enthusiastic delegation of “Transpadanes” from the Lombard capital.

A third Cispadane congress became a true constituent assembly, the only one to meet in Italy during the *triennio*, since the other Italian republics were to receive their constitutions from the French, or from Italians whom no one had elected for the purpose. The resulting Cispadane constitution, the most unquestionably native to Italy, was of all the constitutions of the years 1796–1799 the most similar to the French constitution of 1795. It was when they were least pressed by the French that the Italian democrats most fully agreed with them on constitutional principles, because they saw in these principles, not “French ideas,” but the distillation from a body of thought, the Enlightenment, in which national peculiarity counted for little.¹⁹

The Cispadane declaration of rights repeated the French even more closely than that of Bologna. A few divergences from the French model, which became characteristic of later such declarations during the *triennio*, may be worthy of a brief comment. Where the French said “nation” (as in “the principle of sovereignty rests essentially in the nation”) the Italians said *universalità de' cittadini*, “the citizens as a whole,” perhaps because “nation” would suggest a consolidation of all Italy, which would give offense not only to the French, but to many locally rooted Italian interests. The Italians were careful to specify the rights of man “in society,” as if to emphasize that “nature” had nothing to do with the question. The Cispadane and later Italian declarations omitted the assurance of consent to taxation, which, however, they said must be reasonable, equitable, and within the bounds of necessity. Equality they explicitly defined as excluding privileges of birth and inheritance. No peaceful citizen was to be disturbed for his religious opinions, but among non-Catholics only the Jews were allowed to have any public signs of their worship. The Cispadane constitution, as if to show its thoroughly “bourgeois” character, not only guaranteed property but offered “special protection to manufacturers, merchants, artists and men of letters of all nations who may wish to come and settle among us.”

An Executive Directory of three persons, a Legislative Body in two elected houses, together with machinery for judicial, administrative, financial, military, and electoral functions were set up. The constitution was ratified by a popular vote, 76,382 to 14,259, the size of the minority being large enough to suggest that, though the French urged its adoption, they did not force it on a reluctant or intimidated country. In April 1797 the constitution went into effect, and the new organs of government began to establish themselves.

19 For the Cispadane constitution see Aquarone, 42–79; Ghisalberti, 20, and the whole account of Italian constitutional thought before 1796, pp. 23–78.

Few republics of such great significance have been destined to so short a life. The Cispadane, under its constitution, lasted only three months. By the spring of 1797 the military issue was settled. Bonaparte had pursued the Austrians into Carinthia and Styria, and caused panic in Vienna itself, where the Bank of Vienna closed its doors, and crowds demonstrated outside Thugut's house. Thugut and Bonaparte called off the hostilities and signed a preliminary peace at Leoben on April 18, 1797.

Bonaparte was now free to decide what to do about the revolutionary ferment in north Italy. His decision favored the patriots of Lombardy and the Cispadane, to the disadvantage of those of Venetia and Piedmont. With hostilities suspended, he needed no longer to fear the Kingdom of Sardinia in his rear, or to keep it in check by tolerating revolutionary plots against it. He withdrew all pretense of support for the republicans of Piedmont. Toward Austria he would pursue no *guerre à outrance*, nor demand unconditional surrender as favored by French and Italian democrats, but would arrange a negotiated peace, with due regard to balance and compensation, persuading the Austrians to acknowledge the loss of their former possessions at Milan in return for the acquisition of Venice. Where the Directory, in 1796, had wished to gain the old Austrian Netherlands and the Rhine frontier by letting the Austrians keep Milan, Bonaparte in 1797, wanting Milan in addition, would give them Venetia instead.

The Cisalpine Republic, with its capital at Milan, was promulgated in June 1797. The Cispadane was dissolved, and its territories merged into the Cisalpine.

But the exclusion of Venice was the price paid for the birth of the Cisalpine.

THE VENETIAN REVOLUTION AND THE TREATY OF CAMPO FORMIO

Venice, founded in the fifth century, was the "eldest child of Liberty," according to Wordsworth's sonnet on the Extinction of the Venetian Republic. It was ruled, however, especially in the eighteenth century, by a group of patricians so exclusive, so tightly knit, so purely hereditary, so secretive, and so few in number that Disraeli, when he entered British politics in the 1840's, could make the term "Venetian oligarchy" a by-word for aristocratic Whiggery of the most exaggerated kind.²⁰

The oldest families, whose fortunes had been established in commerce in earlier centuries, now usually lived from the incomes of landed estates on the mainland. The most active men in trade were typically "newcomers," but the word must be understood in a relative sense; in a patrician republic where the last doge, Ludovico Manin, was considered a parvenu because his family had been inscribed in the Golden Book in 1669, a newcomer might be reasonably well established; and the "newcomers" and "outsiders," men of the business, professional, and intellectual

20 For Venice, 27-28; M. Berengo, *La società veneta alla fine del Settecento* (Florence, 1956); M. Pettrocchi, *Il tramonto della repubblica di Venezia e l'assolutismo illuminato* (Venice, 1950); G. B. McClellan, *Venice and Bonaparte* (Princeton, 1931); A. Bozzola, "L'ultimo doge e la caduta della Serenissima" in *Nuova rivista storica*, XVIII (1934), 30-58; for Verona, R. Fasanari, *Gli albori del Risorgimento a Verona, 1785-1801* (Verona, 1950). See also Candeloro, 232-34; Ghisalberti, 112-18.

classes, who became “democrats” (which to say anti-aristocrats) at Venice as in other Italian cities, were by no means merely transients. There were many such democrats in the city of Venice itself. Since the Republic was organized on the old city-state principle, with the cities of the mainland having no part whatever in its affairs, the mainland cities were somewhat ill-disposed toward the Queen of the Adriatic. In these places also there were “democrats,” who might be patricians of their own cities, or middle class people, or priests, or Jews. The actual lower classes, such as servants, water carriers, or gondoliers, and the mass of the rural people, remained either conservative or indifferent.

The rulers of Venice tried desperately to remain neutral in the war that began in 1792. It was difficult for them to get their neutrality respected, especially since they had no armed forces beyond a few Dalmatian mercenaries, whom they did not trust. Any step that they took gave offense to someone, as when they allowed “Louis XVIII” to settle at Verona. The French invasion of the Po valley in 1796 made neutrality even more precarious, since the Austrians could not operate at all, nor the French pursue them, without touching on territory of the Venetian Republic, which reached to within twenty miles of Milan. Indeed the Austrians had already signed with the Russians, before the French invasion, an agreement by which Austria should annex the Most Serene Republic to the Hapsburg empire.

Revolutions against Venice broke out at Brescia and Bergamo as the French approached. Provisional governments were instituted. After a revolt at Verona against the French, and after an unpleasant incident at Venice itself, where the appearance of a French naval vessel at this supposedly neutral port had met with hostile demonstrations; Bonaparte ordered the occupation of all the mainland cities, and sent an ultimatum to Venice, in which he demanded its immediate “democratization.” By this he chiefly meant, as did many more genuine democrats, the displacement of the small governing and privileged class.

There were a good many even among the Venetian nobles, as the patricians of the city were called, who had come to believe that there was no future for their venerable republic in its existing form, and who therefore either sank into apathy, or waited with resignation for their fate to be decided by foreigners, or in some cases were excited by the changes that were beginning in the Po valley. “An immense quantity of French cockades” was discovered in the houses of two noblemen who had just returned from a trip to Milan.²¹ The formation of the Cispadane Republic was watched with interest. After the revolts at Brescia and Bergamo, which declared themselves to be “republics” independent of Venice, and where the patriots really preferred union with the yet unborn Cisalpine, a Venetian noble spoke up in the Senate for “voluntary democratization.” He declared that Venice should at last join with its own mainland dependencies on an equal basis, and that it was impossible to “maintain a pure but discredited Aristocracy in the face of the new democratic Italian government,” by which he meant the governments taking form in Lombardy and Emilia.²² But the Senate refused to admit even the main-

21 C. Roth, “La caduta della Serenissima nei dispacci del residente inglese a Venezia” in *Archivio Veneto*, 5th ser. (1935), 193.

22 Bozzola, 43, quoting a speech of Gabriel Marcello.

land nobility to any role in the government. The doge himself believed reform to be necessary, but impossible; he remarked later, in his memoirs, that the old Republic could bear neither its diseases nor their remedies.

After Bonaparte's ultimatum in May 1797, a Provisional Municipality replaced the old government at Venice.²³ It was never able to exert any authority throughout the territory of the old Republic, for the Austrians occupied Istria and Dalmatia, and in the Venetian cities the patriots, under the French occupation, hoped for union with the Cisalpine. In any case, from the preliminary peace at Leoben in April to the final peace at Campo Formio in October, it remained very uncertain what the future would really bring. The Venetian democrats, less able than those of Bergamo or Padua to accept Milan as a capital, were the more inclined to think along the high level of a united Italian republic, but they could do little more than engage in demonstrations, ceremonies, political festivals, oratory, debates, and some actual attempts at reform. These were in the usual revolutionary direction, and need not be detailed except for one matter in which Venice was a special case.

Among places thus far directly affected by the Revolution, Venice was the one, after Amsterdam, that had the largest Jewish community. Though well received in earlier times, the Jews of Venice had not recently enjoyed very flourishing circumstances, and they lived under various disabilities, including residence in a ghetto. They played a more positive role in the revolution at Venice than at Amsterdam. Many Jews joined with commercial and professional men and with the progressive patricians in support of the Provisional Municipality, in which three Jews sat as members. Jews also joined the new National Guard. In July there was a great public celebration, in which people of all kinds proceeded to the Jewish quarter, French soldiers and Catholic priests exchanged fraternal embraces, a tree of liberty was set up, and Jews and Christians joined together to tear down the ghetto gates and hack the hinges to pieces. Similar scenes occurred at Padua. At Spalato, however (the modern Split, on the Dalmatian coast), the ghetto was attacked by angry crowds that feared that the Venetian Republic was ceasing to be a Christian state. The Jews lost their newly declared equality of rights when Venice and most of its territory were ceded to Austria at the end of the year.²⁴

Meanwhile the fate of Italy was being settled in France. The contrary was indeed equally true: that the fate of the French Republic was being settled in Italy. The French elections of March 1797, as already explained, brought into the legislative councils a majority of moderates and royalists, who favored ending the war on terms acceptable to Austria and Great Britain. Should they gain control of the government, there would be an end to republics in Italy and France alike. Three Directors in Paris—Reubell, LaRévellière, and Barras—appealed for aid to the victorious commanding general of the Army of Italy. Bonaparte, his officers and men, the French civilians who were profiting from the occupation of Italy, and the Italian revolutionaries and democrats (together with the Batavians who feared the outcome of the peace talks then going on between France and England) all de-

23 Its proceedings have been published by the Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Coommissione per gli atti delle assemblee costituzionali italiane, A. Alberti et al., eds., *Verbali delle sedute della Municipalità provvisoria di Venezia, 1797*, 3 vols. (Bologna, 1928–1940).

24 C. Roth, *Venice, in Jewish Communities Series* (Philadelphia, 1930), 309–10, 329, 344–69.

pended on the preservation in France of a government firmly committed to the Republic. Bonaparte sent one of his generals, Augereau, who stood by while the three Directors expelled their two colleagues and purged the two chambers.

The coup d'état of Fructidor (September 4, 1797) thus upheld republicanism in France by drawing on strength generated in Italy, and opened the way for the spread of republicanism in Italy by producing a French government more sympathetic to revolutionary expansion. It was in the next few months that republics were set up at Rome and in Switzerland, and the Batavian Republic was democratized. The Fructidorian Directory not only broke off the negotiation with the British, but was not eager for a compromise peace with Austria. Hence for a moment it was receptive to the idea of a democratic republic at Venice. The reviving French democrats, or neo-"Jacobins," also looked with sympathy on the Venetian revolutionaries. Bonaparte, however, now desired a quick and dramatic treaty with Austria. He could then depart from Italy with the prestige of having served as its liberator, and return to France to be enthusiastically hailed as a peacemaker, the military hero who had imposed at least a "land peace," *la paix continentale*, after five years of war.

The result was the treaty of Campo Formio of October 1797. Venice was ceded to Austria, and its territories were divided. France annexed, from Venice, the Ionian Islands off the coast of Greece, which now felt the breath of revolution close at hand. Dalmatia, Istria, and most of Venetia went to Austria. A sizable western segment of the Venetian mainland was added to the Cisalpine Republic.

This arrangement produced general consternation. On the Left, in both Italy and France, there was an outcry against the cold-blooded sacrifice of the Venetian democrats to the greed of Austria and the ambition of Bonaparte. The liberator of Italy seemed an ambiguous character to the Italian republicans. He had, indeed, followed a foreign policy of his own. To the Right, throughout Europe, Bonaparte was a Jacobin. The Cisalpine Republic seemed firmly established. Since other clauses in the treaty allowed France to obtain the Rhine frontier, and provided for the reorganization of Germany at a Congress to convene at Rastadt, it was evident that the Holy Roman Empire was also about to undergo a certain modernization.

THE CISALPINE REPUBLIC: SKETCH OF A MODERN STATE

The Cisalpine Republic spread out about equally on the two sides of the Po.²⁵ It had a population of three and a half million, almost twice as large as the Batavian.

25 The great work is M. Roberti, *Milano capitale napoleonica: la formazione di uno stato moderno*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1946–1947), but only parts of the various topical chapters relate to the Cisalpine Republic before 1799. Roberti gives a briefer statement in his "Politica e amministrazione nell'Italia napoleonica" in E. Rota, ed., *Questioni di storia del risorgimento e dell'unità d'Italia* (Milan, 1951), 75–110. Legislation, etc., was currently published as *Raccolta di tutti gli avvisi, editti e proclami pubblicati nella Lombardia*, 18 vols. (Milan, 1796–1799). The proceedings of the Cisalpine Legislative Body have been published by the Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Commissione per gli atti delle assemblee costituzionali italiane, C. Montalcini et al., eds., *Assemblee della Repubblica cisalpina*, 2 vols. (Bologna, 1917–1948). Publication is in progress of Melzi's papers, *I carteggi di Francesco Melzi d'Eril, duca di Lodi* (Milan, 1958–), but those for the Cisalpine period have not yet appeared. For the present author two

It was put together from territories formerly belonging to six different jurisdictions: the duchies of Milan, Mantua and Modena, the northern part of the Papal States, western Venetia, and the region known as the Valtellina, the upper valley of the Adda above Lake Como, which had long been dependent on the Dreibünde in Switzerland, and where, as elsewhere, a "revolution" occurred in 1797. The new republic brought together men who had had no habits of working together, and so, like the Cispadane, marked the beginning of a unifying experience. The popular club at Milan became a forum for the most vehement and the most visionary patriots from all Italy. Some five or six hundred from Rome and southern Italy visited Milan in these years. To Milan also came, as refugees, the Venetian revolutionaries who felt they had been betrayed, and others in flight from the Kingdom of Sardinia, where their attempts at revolution, breaking out at Asti, Novara, and elsewhere in 1797, had been ignored by the French and suppressed by the royal Sardinian government. The Cisalpine was a cockpit of republican politics, in which some were satisfied with the new arrangement, others eager to go immediately beyond it, some willing to work constructively with the French, others suspicious of the French as mere self-seeking and cynical moderates.

The Cisalpine constitution, drafted by an Italian committee, was proclaimed by Bonaparte in the name of the French Republic. It resembled the French constitution of 1795, but it also reproduced much of the Cispadane constitution which it replaced, and which had been written by a constituent assembly of Italians working in relative freedom from external pressure; and most of the recent Italian historians, differing from their nineteenth century predecessors who found it important to dwell on national differences, agree that the Cisalpine constitution was not in a meaningful sense "imposed" by the French. If imposed, it was imposed by modern-minded Italians, making use of the occupying authority of the French, upon their own more conservative countrymen.

The document began with the usual declaration of rights, and with a regrouping of the miscellaneous territories into homogeneous "departments," which reached twenty in number by the end of 1797. It set up a legislative body of two elective chambers, which came to be called the *Seniori* and the *Juniori*, and an Executive Directory of five persons to be elected by the two chambers. Other clauses dealt with local government, the judiciary, the armed forces, finances, and public instruction. To smooth the transition from provisional to settled rule, and from obvious French control to a regime that was at least in principle independent, Bonaparte himself, upon orders from Paris, appointed the first members of the Cisalpine Directory and of the two chambers. The Italians chosen for these positions included both moderates and democrats, and were purposely drawn from various regions within the new state.²⁶

The constitution had a troubled history, as will be seen, and most of what the new Cisalpine authorities attempted was swept away in 1799. It was only in the

of the most enlightening works ever written on the subject were produced in the 1920's: E. Rota, *Giuseppe Poggi e la formazione psicologica del patriota moderno, 1761-1843* (Piacenza, 1923), available also as a series of articles in *Nuova rivista storica*, 1922 and 1923; and C. Morandi, *Idee e formazione politiche in Lombardia dal 1748 al 1814* (Turin, 1927).

26 Aquarone, 83-153; Ghisalberti, 116-18, 129-34.

years after 1801 that their ideas began to be institutionalized, only to be again partly reversed in the reaction after 1814. The legislation of the Cisalpine Republic is therefore to be understood, not as a body of achievements, but as the sketch or design for a new regime, showing what the revolution in Italy during the *triennio* was about.

The Cisalpine period, both before and after the promulgation of the constitution, was a time of rapid development of public opinion and political consciousness, such as Italy had hardly seen since the invention of printing. In contrast to the Old Regime, freedom of the press was at least the rule, and censorship the exception. Ideas made familiar by the Enlightenment were now regarded as matters for action. There were many political journals, which have become very rare even in Italy. Their names suggest the heated political atmosphere in which they were written: the *Termometro politico*, the *Giornale repubblicano di Pubblica Istruzione*, the *Genio democratico*, the *Estensore Cisalpina*, and the *Repubblicano Evangelico* (or "Gospel Republican"), edited by the Parma Jansenist Poggi in refuge at Milan.²⁷ There were also a good many polemical pamphlets, such as one of 1796 with the revealing title, *Il Risorgimento della oppressa democratia*.²⁸ Its proposals were moderate and specific: that taxes should be borne by property owners, that measures should be taken to improve agriculture, that international commercial companies should be encouraged, and a "useful" liberty of the press allowed.

Nobility was abolished, with all its titles, ranks, and display of heraldic emblems, along with an array of other practices that had become shocking to enlightened and humane sentiment. Torture disappeared from the law-courts. The opera and the churches were forbidden to use *evirati cantori*, the emasculated tenors that a somewhat baroque taste had made peculiar to Italy.

Steps were taken to create an army.²⁹ The Italians formerly under Austria, like those of the former papal legations, had been subject to no military service whatever, but it was a principle of the new order that free citizens must assume responsibility for their own defense. The troops organized in 1796 were at first used to keep the peasants and the counter-revolutionaries under control, but by the end of 1797 there were 15,000 organized Cisalpine troops, who soon thereafter were employed at both Rome and Naples. Conscription was introduced in 1798, in anticipation of the renewal of war; it caused trouble in the rural districts, though it called for a levy of only 9,000 men in a population of three and a half millions. Some Cisalpine soldiers were very enthusiastic; a group of cavalrymen, in 1798, wished to volunteer for the projected Franco-Dutch invasion of England, to attack the "enemy of the human race."³⁰

The abolition of gilds, and of many old excises, tolls and internal tariffs, was designed to open the way both for a new fiscal system, with planned budgets and less cumbersome taxation, and for an enlarged and more active trading area in place of the old local and municipal units.

27 Rota, *Poggi in Nuov. riv. St.*, 128. Note the remark of the *Encyclopedia italiana*, XVIII, 185: "Il giornalismo politico italiano ha i suoi inizi nelle repubbliche italo-francesi."

28 Morandi, 218–19.

29 In addition to works cited above see C. Cattaneo, *L'antico esercito italiano* (Milan, 1862).

30 Montalcini, II, 619–21.

The market for real property was revolutionized by the abolition of *fidecommessi* and by the confiscation and sale of lands belonging to the church. *Fidecommessi* were Italian equivalents to the English primogeniture and entail. They supported landed aristocracy as a social institution, but many nobles as well as middle-class persons in the Italian revolutionary movement desired an end to them. Their abolition allowed younger sons of landed families to inherit land, and individual land-owners to sell or borrow at will. Income-producing church properties were confiscated in the Cisalpine as in France. Full studies have yet to be made of the actual consequences, which in any case only began to make themselves felt after 1801, when the new regime became sufficiently stabilized for buyers to take the risk of purchasing land expropriated from the Church. It is known that in the neighborhood of Bologna the proportion of land owned by church bodies dropped from 9 per cent in 1796 to 2 per cent in 1804. The share owned by noblemen fell from 78 per cent to 51 per cent in 1835. The corresponding increase went mostly to middle-class city people, some of whom put the land to more productive use than the former owners.³¹

In Italy the Catholic Church was omnipresent, and disputes over ecclesiastical institutions took place as much within it as against it. Church reformers, though without influence at the court of Pius VI, were numerous throughout the peninsula. Some, like Scipione di Ricci, long before 1796, had stressed the power of governments to reorganize and reform the clergy. Others (they were all called "Jansenists") preached a primitive Christian simplicity. Such was Giuseppe Poggi, who edited several different papers at Milan. In Poggi the Jansenist and the Jacobin were completely blended. He argued that true Christian doctrine and the new principles of liberty, brotherhood, and equality of rights were the same. He thought the church should have no authority in the state, and the state none in religion; that there should not even be a civic cult in the manner of Rousseau or Robespierre; and that state and church should simply be separated, with persons of any religion or no religion equally acceptable to the state, and Christianity working upon the state only through the moral consciousness of the individual. "In a well ordered republic," he wrote in his *Repubblicano Evangelico*, "the priest being reduced to a citizen equal to others, deprived of all extrinsic authority and temporal possessions, restricted to a pure administration of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel . . . will no longer be harmful to the State, but will do his part to making a republican government, such as ours, loved and cultivated as a matter of conscience."³²

The measures taken by the Cisalpine Legislative Body were not meant to be fundamentally anti-Catholic, but they were inspired in some degree by French Jansenism and Gallicanism, and even had a certain flavor of Protestantism. Secularization of Church property has already been mentioned. Payment of fees to priests for religious services was abolished. Monastic houses and religious vows

31 R. Zangheri, *Prime ricerche sulla distribuzione della proprietà fondiaria nella pianura bolognese, 1789-1835* (Bologna, 1957).

32 Rota, *Poggi*, 138; G. Cattana, "II giansenismo e la legislazione ecclesiastica della Cisalpina" in *Nuova rivista storica* XV (1931), 105-23.

were prohibited. Civil marriage was provided for, with divorce under certain conditions. Outdoor manifestations of the Catholic cult were severely restricted, images of the Virgin and the saints were to be removed from the streets, streets named for saints were to be re-named for republican worthies, priests were not to offer public blessing to private houses, and no church bells were to toll at night. No ecclesiastical documents originating outside the Cisalpine borders were to be admitted, bishops were to be designated by the government, and parish priests elected by citizens. The Cisalpine (unlike the Batavian or the later Helvetic Republics) even adopted the French republican calendar, without the overtones of radical anti-Christianity in which that calendar had originated in 1793. Italian names were invented for the months, and much of this ecclesiastical legislation was known as the law of 13 Vendemmiale of the Year VI (13 Vendémiaire, or October 4, 1797).

Many Italians were of course horrified. As Carlo Morandi once remarked, the fact that republicanism and Christianity were closer in Italy than anywhere else meant that many simple people, especially in the country, thought that "liberty" was some kind of a heresy, to be detested accordingly.³³ There were occasional outbursts of violence, more often in words than in fact, for there was much less real ferocity in the Cisalpine than in France, or in the Roman Republic of 1798. Sometimes, however, speakers at the Milan Club worked themselves into a high pitch of excitement, as when a woman there, in an impassioned speech, offered her hand to any man who would bring her the Pope's head in a basket.³⁴ Moderate and conservative persons seized upon and exaggerated such episodes to denounce the irreligion of a rampant democracy.

It was in this overcharged atmosphere, or in this Jansenistic-Jacobinical uproar, that the man who was to be the next Pope (becoming Pius VII in 1800) made his first direct and personal acquaintance with the European revolution.³⁵ When the French entered Bologna, in June 1796, Cardinal Barnaba Chiaramonti was the bishop of Imola only twenty miles away. His reception of the French officers was so courteous, and his efforts to keep the peace so consonant with their demands, that he was already mentioned by some as a "Jacobin." A year later, with the rest of the Cispadane, the bishop of Imola found his diocese incorporated into the Cisalpine Republic. He accepted its constitution, with its abolition of nobility, though like all the cardinals except Maury he was of noble birth himself. He never conceded the right of the government to appoint churchmen or to exclude papal communications from the country. But he agreed to waive the title of Monsignor and be addressed as "Citizen Cardinal." He put Liberty and Equality on his letter-

33 Morandi, 241.

34 B. Peroni, "La società popolare di Milano, 1796-99," in *Rivista storica italiana* LXVI (1954), 511-17.

35 J. Leflon, *Pie VII: des abbayes bénédictines à la papauté* (Paris, 1958), is not only an account of Pius VII's career before 1800, but gives a detailed view of the Cisalpine Republic, pp. 360-531. For a briefer account see Leflon, "Le cardinal Chiaramonti, évêque d'Imola, et la République cisalpine," in *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, XLIII (1956), 427-33. See also V. Giuntella, "Cristianesimo e democrazia in Italia al tramonto del Settecento: appunti per una ricerca" in *Rass. st. del Rts.*, XLII (1955), 289-96.

heads, and in between, where the civil authorities put "In the Name of the Cisalpine Republic," he put "The Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He gave up the Gregorian calendar in his episcopal documents, and adopted the Republican, in which more recent and more touchy American Catholics have seen a blasphemy against the Incarnation. Late in 1797 the Cisalpine government requested of Chiaramonti, or rather demanded of him, a public declaration that "the spirit of the Gospel is founded on the maxims of liberty, equality and fraternity and in no way in opposition to democracy."

He complied, in his own way, in a Christmas sermon at Imola. His discourse was really a sermon, not a political speech. It abounded in theological references, in quotations from Jesus, St. Paul, and St. Augustine, and in warnings against reliance on merely natural virtues and the dangers of human pride and presumption. Its drift was to argue that democracy was perfectly Christian, but that it needed the Church, since it depended, more than other forms of government, on an unselfishness that only a true religion could instil. He accepted liberty and equality by defining them in his own terms. "The democratic form of government adopted among us, dear brethren, is not in opposition to the maxims I have set before you; it is not contrary to the Gospel. . . . Civil equality, derived from natural law, refined by moral considerations, brings harmony to the political body, when each person co-operates for the good of all to the extent of his own moral and physical faculties, receiving in turn from the protection of society all the advantages which he has a right to expect. . . . Be good Christians and you will be excellent democrats."³⁶

This Christmas sermon of 1797 has had a curious and significant history. Bonaparte is supposed to have remarked, with approval, that the Citizen Cardinal "preached like a Jacobin." The event was well remembered for a short time. At the conclave of Venice, during the winter of 1799–1800, when the election of a new Pope was deadlocked for three months, and when Chiaramonti was finally chosen, he was well known to have stood for the conciliation, or Christianization, of the Revolution. Soon thereafter the printed copies of his famous sermon disappeared. Bonaparte, after he turned into Napoleon, wanted no talk of a "Jacobin" pope. Still less after 1814, as the doctrine of the Throne and the Altar came to prevail, or after 1848 and the quarrel between Pius IX and liberal civilization, did the partisans in either camp, Catholic or anti-Catholic, wish it to be known that a Pope had once praised the principles of the Revolution. Only in recent years, with the growth in Europe of a Christian Democracy, and with the scholarly work of Giuntella in Italy, and of the Abbé Leflon of the Catholic Institute in Paris, has the Christmas sermon of 1797 been disinterred and expounded.

At the time of his sermon Chiaramonti was regarded as a moderate. There were other Cisalpine bishops who, for whatever reason, accepted the new republic with less reservation than he did, with less insistence on its need of the Church, and less warning against what would now be called naturalism and religious indifferentism. To neutralism in religion the Cisalpine was in fact committed. It did not officially care whether its citizens were Catholic or Christian. Indeed, like the French Republic, it offered a world view that was a kind of alternative religion, with its own

36 Leflon, *Pie VII*, 434.

ethic, its own sense of regeneration, and its own theory of what had happened in history. It laid great stress on education, and it took education away from the Church.

The whole Cisalpine Republic may be thought of as an educational enterprise. Those who governed it saw in its constitution, not only a structure of government (as such it never worked well) but a vehicle of public enlightenment on the nature of the modern state. They publicized the constitution extensively. They set up, at the universities of Bologna, Pavia, and Ferrara, new chairs in "Cisalpine constitutional law and universal jurisprudence."³⁷ The constitution, like the French constitution of 1795, specified that the right to vote should in twelve years become dependent on literacy, and it provided that common schools should be maintained at public expense. The Cisalpine legislature spent a good deal of time in the discussion of schools, and was debating this problem when the Russians, under Marshal Suvorov, broke into Lombardy and put an end to the republic.

POLITICS AND VICISSITUDES OF THE CISALPINE

In the Cisalpine, as elsewhere, three kinds of people could be roughly identified: the standard democrats, the moderates, and the reactionaries.³⁸ The bulk of the people remained passive, for the Italian revolution, unlike the French of 1789, did little or nothing to relieve the problems of any large number among the rural masses. Complaining of any regime that caused them trouble, victimized by requisitions and pillaging, suspicious of neighboring townspeople, and disliking any change in religion, the rural population remained generally non-political or conservative in a negative way. Among notables, real reactionaries were not much in evidence. A few, from attachment to their former privileges and advantages, became *austriacanti* or "Austrianizers." Of truly reactionary literature the best example was Barzoni's *I Romani nella Grecia*, published, at least ostensibly, at London in 1797. Its message was that the French were like the ancient Romans, the Italians like the ancient Greeks (some Germans at the time thought the same of themselves); the "Greeks" were cultured and flourishing but weak and divided into small states, so that the cruder "Romans" easily conquered them, subjecting them to wanton extortion and plunder, ruthlessly imposing themselves while forever talking of "liberty." When the Austrians returned in 1799 they strongly recommended this work, which was then reprinted in Italy.³⁹

Among moderates, there were some who were very conservative. Thus Melzi d'Eril, a liberal patrician who had been among the first to greet Bonaparte after

37 Ghisalberti, 190.

38 On parties and politics in the Cisalpine see C. Zaghi, *Bonaparte e il Direttorio dopo Campoformio* (Naples, 1956), 152–84, and the same author's "Il Direttorio francese e l'Italia: il primo colpo di stato nella Cisalpina" in *Rivista storica italiana* (1950), 218–56; also Godechot, *Commissaires*, II, 34–37, 178–94, and his *Grande nation*, II, 451–77, where a valuable comparative survey of coups d'état in France and the sister-republics is given; Candeloro, 237–43; Ghisalberti, 129–35.

39 Ghisalberti, 170; Morandi, 282–83; *Collezione di proclami avvisi, editi . . . pubblicati dal giorno 28 Aprile 1799*, 5 vols. (Milan, 1799–1800), III, the book notices between pp. 148 and 149.

the battle of Lodi, was dubious of the whole republican undertaking. Held back from reaction by his distrust of Austria, which he rightly suspected of wishing to kill the Cisalpine state, he toyed with the thought of a Cisalpine monarchy under a Spanish Bourbon prince. Most moderates did not differ from democrats except in degree. Their "moderation" showed itself in a tendency to federalism, or preference for municipal autonomy as in former times, by their warnings against irreligious excesses, a disinclination to promote revolution throughout Italy as a whole, and a sense of caution against becoming too outspokenly anti-French.

It was the democrats, or *giacobini*, who had the most influence during these years. Some were active in the government, some at the Milan club; and they edited most of the political journals. Advanced democrats talked of vast popular and national upheavals, but had little contact with the actual masses. Those who came from Venice, Sardinia, Rome, or Naples were made radical by the repression from which they had suffered, and by the unteachable immobility of the governments that they opposed. A united Italy was easy for them to conceive, since there was nothing in the country's institutions worth preserving by mere federation. They thought that the French should liberate the human race, or at least the Italian part of it, and were critical of the French Directory for being swayed by military, strategic, or diplomatic considerations. They found friends, therefore, among Frenchmen in Italy who for various reasons were also critical of the Directory—army contractors who resisted sporadic attempts to keep their depredations within bounds; political generals of advanced democratic views, or those who merely strained at the leash of civilian control; or itinerant civilians of one kind and another, whose opinions had been formed during the most radical phases of the Revolution in France. Thus Sylvain Maréchal, who had been a Babouvist, published a diatribe on the French betrayal of Venice. Or there was young Marc-Antoine Jullien, who had worked for Robespierre in 1794, and was working in 1797 for Bonaparte, for whom he published a soldiers' newspaper of enthusiastic republican tone: *Le courrier de l'Armée d'Italie*. At Milan he became involved in propaganda for Theophilanthropy against Christianity, and in plots with secret Italian committees for revolutionizing beyond the borders of the Cisalpine, "to devour the duchies and monarchies that surround it."⁴⁰

For the French Directory, after the peace of Campo Formio, the more excitable of the Italian democrats, with their French friends, became something of a nuisance, causing broils with the Church, preventing the consolidation of the Cisalpine Republic, playing politics with French generals, and making difficult any arrangement with Austria.

The official French attitude toward the "sister" republics was determined in part by ideological factors, which for a few months after the Fructidor coup d'état favored the democrats, and still more by arguments of a military or practical character. We have seen that in Holland a Dutch Fructidor was followed by a Dutch Floréal, that in January 1798, when it seemed that the democrats in the Batavian Republic were more willing than the federalists to co-operate in an attack on En-

40 G. Vaccarino, *I patrioti "anarchistes" e l'idea dell'unità italiana, 1796-99* (Turin, 1955), 59; A. Aulard, "Bonaparte républicain" in *Etudes et leçons*, IX (Paris, 1924), 82-88.

gland, the French favored a democratic coup d'état in that country; and that five months later, when it seemed that the democrats could not control the Dutch financial and naval power, the French sponsored a coup d'état by their more moderate adversaries. The picture in the Cisalpine Republic was analogous but less clear-cut.

Early in 1798 the French and Cisalpine governments negotiated a treaty. By its terms, France recognized the independence of the Cisalpine, while offering it protection; and the Cisalpine, in addition to maintaining its own army of 22,000 men under French higher command, was to keep a French army of 25,000 and pay 18,000,000 lire a year for its expenses. By additional secret articles, it was to engage in no trade with England, and limit its import tariff to six per cent.⁴¹ The treaty, though judged unfavorably by most historians as a sign of the cynicism of the Directory, does not actually seem to have been very unreasonable. The very existence of the Cisalpine Republic depended on the further abasement of Austria, which in turn depended on the defeat of Britain. Despite the treaty of Campo Formio, the Austrians had not yet recognized the new government at Milan. It was known that, not content with annexing Venetia, they aimed at further annexations at the expense of the Cisalpine or the Papal States, and that their real desire was to destroy the Cisalpine altogether, and get the infection of new-style republicanism out of Italy. These aims were made perfectly clear a few weeks later at a secret conference held at Selz.

The Cisalpine Legislature refused to ratify the treaty, which had more support in the Cisalpine Directory. A constitutional stalemate was therefore imminent, as in France before 18 Fructidor of the Year V. In the Cisalpine, as a few weeks earlier in the Batavian Republic, the proposals for a coup d'état originated with the citizens of the state in question, not with the French; the difference was that, where the Dutch coup of January was meant to end a situation in which no constitution was possible at all, the Cisalpine coup, which came in March, did violence to a constitution that seemed not to be satisfactorily working. The Cisalpine minister to Paris was Francesco Visconti. He was of the ancient Milanese patrician family of that name, and a democrat. To the Paris government he submitted a list of men in the Cisalpine legislative chambers and Directory, who he said were aristocrats and Austrianizers, and whom he proposed for expulsion. There would really be no violation of liberty, he said, since the incumbents had been appointed, not elected. The situation became very confused, because Bonaparte, who had left Italy in the preceding November, objected to the expulsion of men who were his own appointees. The French Directory, however, agreed with Visconti.

41 For the treaty see Zaghi, "Direttorio francese," 228–29. In the same year, in India, Lord Mornington made a treaty with the Nizam of Hyderabad, who, as an allied or dependent state, agreed to pay the equivalent of about 4,000,000 francs a year to support a British army of 6,000 men. It was *not* usual, then or later, to see resemblances between such European and extra-European developments, but parallels can be pointed out in these simultaneous actions of the French in Italy and the British in India. They would include, besides the terms of treaties and creation of dependent states, the self-enrichment of French and British individuals, programs of "reform," and expansion carried out despite reluctance of the home governments.

A purge in the Cisalpine was therefore ordered from Paris, and it was carried out, although word arrived, soon after the dispatch of the order to Milan, that the Cisalpine legislature had accepted the treaty. As the diplomatic and constitutional crisis thus abated, the purge at Milan took on more the color of ideology and party strife. General Berthier, Bonaparte's successor in Italy, resisted full compliance with the order from Paris. He was replaced by General Brune.

Brune was the very type of the democratic or firmly republican general. A law student and typesetter in his youth, he had joined one of the volunteer battalions in 1791, and was one of the men (he later became Marshal Brune) for whom the Revolution had most obviously provided careers open to talent. When transferred to Italy in March 1798, he had just been involved in the revolution in Switzerland, where the Helvetic Republic had just been proclaimed. Brune was a believer in international democratization, and he entered with gusto into the purge at Milan. The effect, as in France with the Fructidor coup, and in Holland by the *staatsgreep* of January, was to bring forward the advanced democrats in Italy, where also, through a chain of events to be related later, a Roman Republic was set up at about this same time.

Brune consorted at Milan with the most vociferous revolutionaries, those who looked eagerly to a unification of all Italy, and favored strong language and strong measures against the Church. In France, meanwhile, the democratic revival had shown its strength in the April elections. The French Directory became nervous about the upsurge of "anarchists." By the coup d'état of Floréal it crushed the movement in France. Italian, Dutch and French democrats all denounced this maneuver, accusing the French Directory of moderatism. The Directory therefore decided to "florealize" the two sister-republics also.

Events in the Cisalpine became too complex for lucid narration. The Directory sent a moderate civilian, Trouvé, as minister to Milan to serve as a check upon Brune. He was instructed to work with Italian moderates for a change in the constitution, so that the agitation of democrats, unitarists, and anti-clericals could be allayed. Brune refused the military support necessary for such an action. He went to Paris to plead the Italian democrats' case. The Directory, seeing an issue not only of "sound republicanism" against "anarchy," but of civilian authority against military interference, ordered Brune to uphold Trouvé. Brune returned to Milan but still refused to co-operate. He gave secret information to the Cisalpine democrats on the measures designed against them, while in Paris the democratic press denounced the intimidation of Italy. Trouvé, nevertheless, managed to drive through a new constitution. The one promulgated by Bonaparte a year before was discarded. The new one, dated September 10, 1798, confined the vote to adult males who paid a direct tax, and strengthened the executive with respect to the legislative power.

Trouvé was replaced by Fouché, a man of ambiguous views, still better known as an extremist of the Terror than as the police official that he later became. Fouché sided with Brune. The two together continued to favor the Cisalpine democrats, and by still another coup d'état, the third since March, recalled a great many of them into the government. The French Directory, its orders thus flatly defied, recalled both Fouché and Brune, transferring Brune to Holland. A new set of French

agents, dispatched to Milan, ejected Brune's Italian supporters in what amounted to a fourth coup d'état, so that Trouvé's constitution was promulgated in January 1799. Constitutionally speaking, if the word be appropriate, the "Jacobins" had lost out in the Cisalpine, though by this time they were very active at Rome, and had set up a republic at Naples.

The dizzy succession of coups d'état in the Cisalpine made certain general features in the situation very clear. The Cisalpine Republic was not really independent; nor could the French allow it to be, so long as the war was in progress, and so long as the peace of Campo Formio was not really a peace, but a breathing spell before the renewal of war, which occurred at the end of 1798. The Cisalpines naturally resented the domination by France. Anti-French feeling in fact became very strong among Italian revolutionaries and democrats. It is hard, however, to see how, if left really to themselves, they would or could have taken the measures necessary to preserve their independence from Austria. The party conflict in the Cisalpine was native to Italy. The French did not manufacture it. But in the strife between moderates and democrats neither party had any expectation of settling their affairs alone. Each side looked to the French for assistance against the other. They could hardly do otherwise, with the French army present in force within the Cisalpine borders, a situation which in turn could hardly be otherwise so long as no reliable peace existed. It was the French, in consequence, who controlled the internal politics of the Cisalpine Republic.

As for the French Directory, the affairs of the Cisalpine showed the continuing difficulty of keeping dissident generals in order, and the way in which these generals, reinforced by French "Jacobins" who sympathized with foreign revolutionaries, and by Italian democrats at odds with the French government, formed an opposition that threatened the existence of the Directory itself.

CHAPTER XXVI

1798: THE HIGH TIDE OF REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRACY

Bonaparte has not yet left [for the Channel]. I had dinner with him here yesterday. He is well satisfied with the turn of our affairs. He is delighted with the chain of Directories which the Batavian, French, Helvetic, Cisalpine and Ligurian Republics are going to form.

—PETER OCHS AT PARIS TO BURGOMASTER PETER
BURCKHARDT AT BASEL, FEBRUARY 1, 1798

Pray assure the Empress from me that . . . I shall remain here ready to save the sacred persons of the King and Queen. . . . “Down, down with the French!” ought to be placed in the Council-room of every Country in the world.

—ADMIRAL NELSON AT NAPLES TO SIR MORTON EDEN
AT VIENNA, DECEMBER 10, 1798

The period of about a year beginning late in 1797 was the high point of the whole decade, and indeed of all European history until 1848, in the matter of international agitation stirred up by the revolutionary-democratic movement. The purpose of this chapter is to try to recapture this moment of excitement, and to offer an impression of the movement as a whole before following it again in separate countries.

Events happened so swiftly, with so little central direction, and yet with so many immediate repercussions over hundreds and thousands of miles, that no plan of exposition can do justice to the reality, which is best seen, though elusively, in any number of chain reactions. For example, in March 1798 the French occupied the Swiss city of Bern and seized its famous “treasure” of some 6,000,000

livres in coin.¹ The money was used to help finance Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt, which in turn was directed in part against the British in India, where the Earl of Mornington, the later Marquess of Wellesley, was at war with Tipu Sultan, who had planted a tree of liberty and considered himself an ally of the French Republic. Mornington was victorious, and while seizing Tipu's treasure at Seringapatam, worth about 25,000,000 livres in gold and jewels, and while setting up satellite states in India, and complaining that his own British subordinates were "vulgar, ignorant, rude, familiar and stupid," remained very much concerned with developments at home.² In India he received the weekly *Anti-Jacobin* which the young George Canning, already employed in the Foreign Office, edited for a few months in 1798. He was told by Lord Auckland, in April, that there were secret societies of "United English" committed to the "wildest and bloodiest democracy"; and, as a member of an Irish landed family, he knew the gravity of the United Irish rebellion at its height in 1798, in which the Irish, as Lord Mornington learned from Lord Hawkesbury, desired a "democratic republic independent of Great Britain."³ Actually, the cause of the United Irish had been lost on the day when the French Directory had decided to send Bonaparte to Egypt instead of across the Channel. What the Irish revolutionaries wanted was a republic under the protection of France, like the Helvetic Republic that followed on the French occupation of Bern.

Irish patriots, like many from England, had for some years been emigrating to the United States, where they joined with native republicans to form a growing "Jacobin" party. Never yet in America had the issue of Jacobinism burned so hot as in the first months of 1798, especially since the French Directory, favoring for the moment the spread of international revolution, preparing plans for the invasion of England, and regarding the American government as intolerably pro-British, refused to deal with American emissaries who had come over to adjust the differences between the two countries. Mysterious agents, probably representing Talleyrand and Barras, approached the Americans, in overtures beginning in October 1797, with the suggestion that a treaty might be negotiated if the American envoys would consent to certain financial arrangements, which in effect were bribes. William Pitt himself, in October, was on the point of accepting almost exactly the same proposal, which, as it happened had been made to him through the mediation of an American living in France, probably a Federalist in American politics. It involved the taking of certain "rescripts" of the Batavian Republic in exchange for cash; and Pitt believed it possible to find the necessary £450,000, without the knowledge of Parliament, in certain revenues that came to the British government from India.⁴ The Americans, however (and especially the Federalists) were shocked

1 J. Godechot, *Les commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire* (Paris, 1937), II, 58.

2 *The Wellesley Papers*, 2 vols. (London, 1914), I, 83–84; R. A. Majumdar et al., *An Advanced History of India* (London, 1950), 711 ff.; J. W. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, 13 vols. (London, 1902–1930), IV, 715 ff.

3 *Wellesley Papers*, I, 52–53, 80, 281.

4 Great Britain: Historical Manuscript Commission, *Papers of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892–1927), III, 356, 360, 369, 378–80; E. Channing, *History of the United*

by the disclosure in 1798 of the XYZ affair, as they called it, which led to further maritime hostilities with France, to the Alien and Sedition Acts (supposedly aimed against Irish democrats) and to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions by which democracy was to be protected against the encroachments of government. In these circumstances, some believed that the best way to allay democratic agitation in the United States was to launch a war of conquest against the American possessions of Spain, then France's ally. This was the view of Alexander Hamilton. The same idea was expressed by General Dumouriez, who was then living in Germany. Appalled by the proliferation of revolutionary republics very different from the one he had envisaged for Belgium in 1792, Dumouriez wrote a book urging all governments to come to the aid of England, and advised the United States to suppress its Jacobins by a war to annex New Orleans, Texas, and trans-Mississippi Louisiana.⁵

The revolutionizing of Switzerland, itself set in motion by the creation of the Cisalpine Republic, aroused the hopes of certain Germans who wished to revolutionize Germany. A group of Germans in Basel, a Swiss town across the Rhine from Baden, revived the agitation for a Swabian Republic that had been briefly favored by the French, working through the adventurer Poteratz, in 1796. From Mainz, occupied by the French, Professor A. J. Hoffman of the University in that city sent agitators into Baden and Württemberg. The professors at the University of Kiel were denounced by Dumouriez for their Jacobinism. At the University of Jena, Professor J. G. Fichte was the favorite of the radically minded students. At the University of Königsberg, Professor I. Kant wrote a "justification" (which he did not publish) of the policy of the French Directory toward England.⁶ To the English, in whose own universities such sentiments were unheard of, the behavior of German students and professors seemed most reprehensible. As Hugh Elliot (brother of the Viceroy of Corsica already mentioned in these pages) wrote from Dresden in August 1798 to Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary: "The partisans of revolution and innovation have not been more active in any country than in Germany; and, unfortunately, the German universities have been the center of a spirit of democracy, which has from thence been diffused into all the various classes of what are styled the learned professions."⁷

States (New York, 1907-1943), IV, 185-88; R. R. Palmer, "Herman Melville et la Révolution française" in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, No. 136 (July-Sept., 1954), 254-56. It appears that the intermediary between the French and Pitt was the uncle of Herman Melville.

5 Le Général Dumouriez, *Tableau spéculatif de l'Europe*, n.p., février 1798, reissued and amplified as the *Nouveau tableau* . . . septembre 1798; see pp. 257-61 of the latter.

6 K. Obser, "Die revolutionäre Propaganda am Oberrhein in Jahre 1798" in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Oberrheins*, new series, XXIV (1909), 199-245 (Obser furnishes no evidence for his remark that the propagandists were "mostly Jews," p. 201); X. Léon, *Fichte et son temps*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1927), I, 518-85; I. Kant, "Rechtfertigung des Direktoriums der französische Republik wegen seines angeblich ungereimten Planes, den Krieg mit England zu ihrem Vorteil zu beendigen. 1798," in *Sämtliche Werke* (1867-1868), VIII, 644-45; a memorandum of the Prussian resident at Frankfurt, about February 1798, of which a copy was sent to England, *Dropmore Papers*, IV, 107-8, reporting on "l'influence morale du système révolutionnaire français dans cette partie de l'Allemagne et sur la manière dont les agents démocrates cherchent à agiter les pays de la rive droite du Rhin. . . . Ce ne sont plus actuellement les agents français, mais les clubbistes de l'Allemagne. . . ."

7 *Dropmore Papers*, IV, 281.

THE GREAT NATION, THE SISTER-REPUBLICS, AND THE WAVE OF CISALPINIZATION

The year began with the Fructidor coup d'état and the signing of the treaty of Campo Formio. By the first, the French Directory for a few months favored the advanced or democratic republicans in France and elsewhere. By the second, there was "peace on the Continent," or at least the hostilities between organized armies came to a halt; and in effect, if not quite in law, all governments except the British now recognized not only the French Republic, which had incorporated Belgium and was in occupation of the Left Bank of the Rhine, but also the Cisalpine Republic; the Ligurian Republic, which had come into being at Genoa at about the same time; and the Batavian Republic, which dated from 1795.

The French, except for continued British resistance, had clearly won the War of the First Coalition. As one German moderate put it, a war begun to stamp out one revolutionary republic had now resulted in the establishment of four. The French began to call themselves the Great Nation, "not without good reason," as Wolfe Tone remarked in December 1797.⁸ The word "nation" was still charged with strong revolutionary significance, implying a people that asserted its sovereignty and its rights against aristocratic, feudal, ecclesiastical, and monarchical adversaries. The term *grande Nation* became widely current, but there was something equivocal in it from the start. For the French it took on overtones of a national self-esteem, from which a contempt for foreigners, including the foreign revolutionaries and republicans, was by no means absent. Republicans outside of France soon came to look on the Great Nation with mixed feelings, respecting it for its power and its principles, but often alienated by its practice, and so turning anti-French while not ceasing to favor the Revolution. For conservatives the expression was always merely ironic.

The Great Nation had its Sister Republics, as they were sometimes called, and these were in fact more sisters than daughters, since in no case had the French government brought them into being by a deliberate or sustained action of revolutionary propagation. The Batavian, Cisalpine, and Ligurian Republics were by-products of military success, of the weakness of the old regime in their respective territories, of the agitations of native patriots, the independent programs of French generals, and the willingness of the French government—the Convention in the case of the Dutch, the pre-Fructidian Directory in the case of the Cisalpines, and the Ligurians—to accept *de facto* decisions, to recruit allies, or to befriend ideological sympathizers in time of war.

The signing of peace, with its recognition of a new republican order in Western Europe, seemed to open the way to a world of the future—hoped for by some, dreaded by others—in which more such republics might be created in a widening wave of "Cisalpinization." This term, though never current, was in fact used by a counter-revolutionary and émigré writer, the French General Danican, who as a Vendémiaireist had tried to block the establishment of the Directory in 1795. In

⁸ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone Written by Himself*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1826), II, 455.

1798, in a pamphlet sadly entitled *Cassandre*, Danican predicted the progressive Cisalpinization of the whole Continent except Russia.⁹

"The intention of the French," wrote Axel de Fersen in his diary in January 1798, "is clearly to turn all Europe into republics."¹⁰ The German journalist, K. J. Lange, who was warmly hostile to England, which he blamed for the continuation of the war and hence for the spread of revolution, was not so much friendly to the French as ambivalent toward them. He reflected philosophically, after the peace of Campo Formio, that the French had always favored "freedom" for others: Henry IV had helped the Dutch, Mazarin had helped Cromwell, Louis XVI had helped the Americans, and by the Westphalia system the French had assured the liberties of princes and cities in the Holy Roman Empire—and now that France was a republic it would republicanize or "municipalize" all Europe.¹¹

"To municipalize," said Dumouriez in February 1798, "to divide up into departments, to establish a provisional Executive Directory and a National Guard, to form primary assemblies to elect representatives to two Chambers, to seize the public funds and the estates of the clergy, to confiscate the property of all kinds of aristocrats, that is of the rich, to demand the protection of France, which has offered it to all peoples aspiring to liberty: it is all very easy, quick and alarming for the various peoples." Since Dumouriez believed it entirely possible for England to be invaded, as was generally expected in February 1798, he called upon all the European monarchies to re-enter the war at once. If they did not, he warned, the "fall of all thrones and the destruction of all political, civil and religious constitutions would be the terrible result. Democracy would devour Europe, and end by devouring itself."¹²

In the older "sister republics" there were coups d'état of Fructidorian type, by which the more ardent democrats came into power, in January among the Dutch, in April at Milan. In the Batavian and Cisalpine republics, as in France, political clubs of neo-Jacobin type, now often called "constitutional circles," enjoyed a period of lively activity; a law of February 24, 1798, created such a *circolo costituzionale* in each of the Cisalpine departments.

Newer "sister-republics" now sprang up also, in time of peace or apparent peace, as the older ones had sprung up in time of war. In the summer of 1797 a group of Rhineland Germans, working with the French General Hoche—both of them inspired by Bonaparte and the Cisalpine Republic—organized a movement for a Cisrhene Republic to comprise the Left Bank of the Rhine. One of their spokesmen, Rebmann, saw a "heavenly dream in which the Batavian, Cisrhene, Helvetic, Cisalpine and Ligurian Republics" should be joined.¹³ The French soon decided,

9 Quoted by A. Meynier, *Les coups d'état du Directoire*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1927–1928), II, 279, from *Cassandre*, 152.

10 *Axel von Fersens dagbok.*, 4 vols. (Stockholm, 1925–1936), III, 173, 222–23. I am indebted to Dr. H. A. Barton for translation of this and other Swedish materials, incorporated in his doctoral dissertation at Princeton on the career of Fersen. French and English versions of Fersen's diary are much abridged.

11 *Deutsche Reichs- und Staatszeitung für den Geschäfts- und Weltmann* (Bayreuth, Nov. 3, 1797), 1,399–1,401.

12 *Tableau spéculatif*, 131; *Nouveau tableau*, 279.

13 J. Hansen, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Rheinlandes im Zeitalter der französischen Revolution*, 4 vols. (Bonn, 1931–1938), IV, 308. On the Cisrhene movement see below, pp. 697–98.

however, merely to “municipalize” and “departmentalize” the Left Bank, and later to annex it, not to countenance a separate republic there. The effect was the same so far as destruction of the old order was concerned. The agitation for a Swabian Republic on the Right Bank flared up at the same time, in mysterious conjunction with General Augereau, who replaced Hoche in October, and had been one of Bonaparte’s aides in the Cisalpine. Meanwhile the Irish exiles worked for similar liberation, and Wolfe Tone, who spent a good deal of time in the Batavian Republic on plans for the Franco-Dutch invasion of Britain, and was present at Bonn in September 1797 at the abortive proclamation of the Cisrhenane, pursued his dream for a Republic of Ireland. The Swiss cantons fell into turmoil, and from a welter of short-lived “republics,” Lemanic and Rhodanic, a unified Helvetic Republic emerged in March 1798. After the death of the French General Duphot in a street riot at Rome, the papal city was occupied by units of the French army, supplemented by troops of the new Cisalpine army and of the Polish Legion. A Roman Republic followed. At the end of the year the French occupied Turin, where the end of the Sardinian monarchy could be envisaged, and also Naples, where the most insubstantial of the sister-republics, the Neapolitan or Parthenopean, was proclaimed.¹⁴

The wave of enthusiasm made itself felt beyond the zone of the satellite republics. At Berlin the Abbé Sieyès made a point of treating the royal court with republican disdain. Asked, upon his arrival as ambassador, whether “His Excellency was clothed with a civil or military character, and was a count or a baron,” he replied haughtily that in France there were only citizens, and all citizens were soldiers. When he requested to be excused from wearing a sword at his presentation at court, the king shrugged and the queen laughed, but they let him have his way, since it was Prussian policy to remain neutral between France and its enemies.¹⁵ At Vienna, at about the same time, the French envoy, General Bernadotte, provoked a serious riot by displaying a huge tricolor flag from his balcony. As Fersen remarked of this future king of Sweden, he was “one of the raging Jacobins” (nor was Fersen mistaken) who wished to push the Directory into a more aggressively revolutionary program toward Europe.¹⁶ Fersen himself, newly installed as chancellor of the University of Upsala, was combatting the Jacobinism of Swedish students. “As to

14 No less than eight tricolors had been devised by 1798, of which five were then officially in use. The five were the French; the Cisalpine of green, white, and blue; a gray, white, and red for the Roman Republic; a Dutch or Batavian red, white, and blue with horizontal stripes authorized in 1795; and a Swiss or Helvetic tricolor of red, green, and yellow adopted on April 14, 1798. Two others had been ventured but had disappeared: the Belgian red, yellow, and black of 1789; and a Cisrhenane red, blue, and green of 1797. A Greek tricolor of red, white, and black had also been proposed in 1797. Of these, the French, Italian (Cisalpine), Dutch, and Belgian are in use today. The German republican colors of black, red, and gold, used today in the German Federal Republic, date from the revolutionary movement of 1848.

On the Dutch and Belgian tricolors see the *Algemene Winkler Prins Encyclopedie*, art. “Vlag”; on the Helvetic, J. Strickler, *Actensammlung aus der Zeit der Helvetischen Republik, 1798–1803*, I, 644; on the Cisalpine, above, p. 387; on the Roman, A. Dufourcq, *Le régime jacobin en Italie: étude sur la République romaine* (Paris, 1900), III; on the Cisrhenane, J. Venedey, *Die deutschen Republikaner unter der französischen Republik* (Leipzig, 1870), 269; on the Greek, A. Dascalakis, *Oeuvres de Rhigas Velestinlis* (Paris, 1937), 123.

15 P. Bastid, *Sieyès et sa pensée* (Paris, 1939), 204.

16 *Dagbok*, III, 223–26, 229.

the Swedes," wrote Lord Grenville in 1798, "more than half the people there, particularly in trade, are as great Jacobins as Rewbell or Talleyrand, and the Government is little better."¹⁷ (It must be admitted that Grenville's category of Jacobins was fairly ample.) In Spain, now allied to France, the "Jansenist" Jovellanos was in office, and a flurry was created in official and ecclesiastical circles, early in 1798, by a letter written by Bishop Grégoire of the French constitutional church. Thousands of copies were disseminated in Spain and Spanish America. Grégoire called the Inquisition a disgrace to the Catholic world, and urged enlightened Spaniards to get rid of it, at a time when "the cry of liberty sounds in both hemispheres" and "the revolutions begin now in Europe."¹⁸

Alarms and rumors filled the air when it became known that Bonaparte, transferred from his command of the *Armée d'Angleterre*, had embarked with a huge fleet at Toulon. Not only Wolfe Tone, but Pitt and Grenville, believed him to be headed for Ireland. Fersen was told by Jacobi, a Prussian diplomat, that the French were really going to the Crimea, "to support Poland and revolutionize Europe by stealing in at the back door."¹⁹ It was true that a final uprising of the Poles against the partitioning powers had occurred only the year before, that Kosciuszko passed through Paris in 1798, and that the Polish Legion in Italy, despite the peace with Austria, still hoped to press on into Eastern Europe.

The French landed in Egypt in July 1798, and the modern period of Egyptian and Ottoman history is often dated from that event. The French Revolution, as Bernard Lewis has said, was the first European movement to exert a strong influence on the Moslem world, precisely because it did not appear to be Christian.²⁰ At the same time the Christian, Greek, and Balkan parts of the Ottoman Empire were thrown more open to revolutionary influence from another direction.

By the treaty of Campo Formio France annexed the Ionian Islands, formerly a possession of Venice. They were Greek-speaking communities, lying close to the western coast of Greece. In these "Gallo-Greek departments" the processes of "municipalization" and "departmentalization" soon began to work; that is, the old institutions began to disintegrate, and members of the old ruling families (including in this case Count Capodistrias of later fame) fled from the country, seeking aid from Britain or Russia. On the Greek mainland, late in 1797, patriots from Athens, Macedonia, Epirus, and Crete, meeting secretly in the Peloponnesus, appealed to Bonaparte to send troops to liberate them from the Turks. In June 1798 Rhigas Velestinlis, who had written a constitution for a Hellenic Republic, was executed with seven accomplices by the Ottoman authorities at Belgrade.²¹ A few months later, at Ancona, an Adriatic town in the Roman Republic, the French

17 *Dropmore Papers*, IV, 349.

18 R. Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton, 1958), 417.

19 *Dagbok*, May 15, 1798.

20 B. Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution in Turkey," in *Journal of World History: Cahiers de l'histoire mondiale*, I (1953), 105–15.

21 A. Dascalakis, *Rhigas Velestinlis, la Révolution française et les préludes de l'indépendance hellénique* (Paris, 1937); M. Mangourit, *Défense d'Ancône et des départements romains . . . aux années VII et VIII*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1802); S. Pappas, "L'agence du commerce français d'Ancône 1798–99" in *Acropole*, VII (1932), 124; J. Lair and E. Legrand, *Documents inédits . . . Correspondances de Paris, Vienne, Berlin, Varsovie, Constantinople* (Paris, 1872), 21. On southeast Europe see Chapter XX above.

Directory set up a "commercial agency" which was in fact, as Talleyrand admitted, "an insurrectionary committee for the Greeks of Albania and the Morea against the Ottoman Porte."²² The much traveled militant, Mangourit, who had shown his revolutionary sentiments in America, Switzerland, and Spain, was put in charge at Ancona. The Roman Catholic bishop of Scutari offered his help, and a Spanish ex-Jesuit born at Oran contributed his knowledge of Near Eastern affairs. But the most useful member of the secret committee was Constantine Stamati, a Greek who had gone to Paris in 1787 as a medical student and who had worked for the Revolution ever since. He had been a secret emissary of the Committee of Public Safety to the hospidars of Moldavia and Wallachia, and now, at the turn of 1798–1799, from the base at Ancona, he despatched shipments of muskets and ammunition into Greece and Rumelia. Provision was also made for more peaceful penetration; or at least Talleyrand, still Foreign Minister, directed his agents at Rome and Corfu to send fonts of Greek and Turkish type to Ancona. The type never arrived, nor did the Directory ever supply the Ancona mission with any money. The enterprise collapsed in 1799, when the French were driven by the Russians, Austrians, and Turks from the Gallo-Greek departments and from Italy.

Nor, on the opposite side of Western Civilization, was the English-speaking world unaffected by these excitements of 1798. England itself, threatened by invasion, was not immune. A secret committee of the House of Commons, appointed to look into such matters, could find no evidence, by name, of a single Frenchman or other foreign agent in concerted action in England with the English clubs. The committee believed, however (the belief is not shared by later historians), that the naval mutinies of 1797 had been precipitated and given a political character by subversives and spies. It believed also that there were, in 1798, in and near Manchester, some eighty local units of United Englishmen, who in fact included a great many Irish drawn as working people to that city. The committee seized certain documents of the United Englishmen, and when one of their leaders, an Irish priest named O'Coigly, was arrested in February on his way to France, he was found to be bearing a letter to the Directory. In this letter, the United English tried to persuade the Directory that England would rise in revolution at the moment of French invasion.²³

Among the United Irish in Ireland, as among the Irish exiles in France, there were high hopes for a French landing in either one of the British Isles. As for the Greek patriots or for Thomas Jefferson (who was impressed by "that wonderful man Bonaparte") or Andrew Jackson (who hoped that Bonaparte would liberate England), the twenty-nine-year-old French general exerted a fascination for the Irish. A street ballad went:

Oh! may the wind of Freedom
 Soon send young Boney o'er,
 And we'll plant the Tree of Liberty
 Upon our Irish Shore!²⁴

²² Pappas, 124.

²³ House of Commons, *Report of the Committee of Secrecy*, 1799; printed also in the *Annual Register for 1799* (London, 1801), 150–82, and in Mallet du Pan's *British Mercury*, II.

²⁴ Jefferson to Madison, June 4, 1797, quoted by S. Kurtz, *Presidency of John Adams* (Philadelphia,

But Bonaparte went to Egypt. The United Irish rose and were repressed, in what Robert Stewart (the future Lord Castlereagh) called "a Jacobinical conspiracy throughout the kingdom, pursuing its object chiefly with Popish instruments."²⁵ The French, too late, landed a few hundred soldiers on the west coast under General Humbert, who was soon obliged to surrender. Lord Grenville thought that if the French had arrived in force two months sooner the outcome would have been very different.²⁶

Canada also had a brief shudder over Cisalpinization. Conspiracies involving handfuls of Canadians and Vermonters (whose trade outlets were easier through the St. Lawrence River than through the New England mountains) were rather trifling in themselves, but they were enough to keep the British authorities in a state of alarm, so much so that one of the conspirators, David McLane, had not only been executed in 1797, but executed with all the ancient public solemnity, by hanging, drawing, and quartering.²⁷ There is in the French Foreign Office Archives an unidentifiable memorandum sent from America in February 1798. It declared that many Canadians were restless, that they preferred an independent republic to re-annexation to France, that an independent Canada would be useful in checking the expansion of the United States, and that two American citizens (probably the Allen brothers from Vermont) were willing to start a revolution, if provided by France with a mere \$2,000 with which to begin bribing the Canadian garrisons. Apparently the French took no action on this proposal for a Canadian Republic.²⁸

In the United States, though the country was on the verge of war with France, there was less internal interference by France in 1798 than in the preceding years. George Rogers Clark, indeed, using his commission as a general in the French army, made another attempt, as in 1793, to rally followers to invade and "revolutionize" Louisiana; but he received no encouragement from Paris on this occasion, and being blocked also by the American government, fled to St. Louis, then a French village of about a thousand people under the Spanish crown. Between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi there was a good deal of separatist and democratic sentiment, and much hostility to the "aristocratic" East and to the British, but little or no interest in Europe. A separate Western republic, had one ever come into existence, would have been less welcome to the French than to the British and the English-speaking Canadians, who were at this time almost all Loyalists born in the Thirteen Colonies, very much out of sympathy with the American union.

Democracy itself was the great political issue in the United States in 1798, as it was in Europe; and in the United States, possibly even more than in England, Holland, Germany, or Italy, conservatives believed that ideas of popular government were brought in by foreign malcontents and subversives. The young Phila-

1957), 288; Jackson to James Robertson, Jan. 11, 1798, in *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, 1926), I, 42; R. Hayes, *Ireland and Irishmen in the French Revolution* (London, 1932), 4.

25 Castlereagh to Wickham, Dublin Castle, June 12, 1798, in *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, 12 vols. (London, 1848-1853), I, 219.

26 Grenville to Rufus King, *Dropmore Papers*, IV, 288.

27 On McLane see below, p. 752.

28 Translation of a memorandum written in English, entitled "Moyen d'une insurrection dans le Canada," sent to Paris with a despatch of Létombe, French consul at Philadelphia, in *Archives des Affaires Étrangères*, Corr. Pol., États-Unis, Vol. 49.

delphia lawyer, Joseph Hopkinson, for example, to arouse his countrymen for war, wrote *Hail Columbia* in 1798. It became the first national anthem. Hopkinson's ideas were expressed, not in the words of the song, which dwelt only on American liberty and the greatness of General Washington, but in a pamphlet which he wrote at about the same time.²⁹ The French, he here said, having in mind the wave of Cisalpinization, were out to plunder the world. He then called for stricter laws of naturalization, since Jacobinism in America was due to the inrush of riff-raff from Europe, who came to America howling for Liberty and Equality—"fortune-hunting foreigners . . . imported patriots from England, Ireland and Scotland . . . gangs of discontented and factious emigrants." If it remained a little unclear, in Hopkinson's view, whether the trouble was due to the dreadful French, or to persons whose native language was English, it was perfectly evident that democracy in America was foreign and unwanted, a mere poison diffused by a European revolution.

In Brazil also, in 1798, a republican conspiracy was discovered in the city of Bahia. Four free mulattoes were hanged and quartered. They had declared that they favored, to quote the official sentence, "the imaginary advantages of a Democratic Republic, in which all should be equal."³⁰ It was the island of Haiti, however, the former French colony of Saint-Domingue, that saw, in the 1790's, "the first great shock between the ideals of white supremacy and race equality."³¹ And here, in the latter part of the decade, before insurmountable internal and external forces closed in upon him, Toussaint l'Ouverture seemed almost to be succeeding in founding a free republic of a kind that some European republicans of 1798, though hardly those of the United States, might accept as akin to their own.

A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE NEW REPUBLICAN ORDER

In the rest of this chapter some observations will be assembled, such as are made elsewhere in the book in connection with particular countries, to show what was common to the revolutionary-democratic movement as a whole, which, as Dumouriez said, seemed in 1798 to threaten "all political, civil and religious constitutions."

The class or kind of people to whom the French Directory meant to appeal, and the images and symbols by which it was believed that this appeal might be made effective, are suggested in two grand public events staged in Paris in 1798. In this interval of peace on the continent it was hoped to show what a victory of republicanism would bring. It is in the triumphant Republic of 1798, as much as in the harried Republic of 1794, that one should look for the climax of the Enlightenment.

29 Joseph Hopkinson, *What is our situation? and what our Prospects? A few pages for Americans*. (Philadelphia, 1798.) Reprinted in London as *What is our situation? and What our prospects, or a Demonstration of the Insidious views of Republican France. By an American*. (London, 1799.)

30 A. Ruy, *A primeira revolucao social brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, 1942), 227. I am indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Stanley J. Stein for assistance in Portuguese.

31 The phrase is T. Lothrop Stoddard's, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston, 1914), vii.

On 9 Thermidor of the Year VI, or July 27, 1798, a long procession in Paris paid honor to Liberty. A troop of cavalry was followed by professors and students from the newly reorganized Museum of Natural History, marching beside triumphal cars bearing exotic plants and minerals and accompanied by a bear from the zoo at Bern, lions from Africa, and camels from Egypt. Next came delegates from the printers and public libraries of the city, and professors from the new Polytechnique and the old College de France. Prize pupils carried manuscripts and rare books. Artists walked beside works of art which had been captured in Italy, and which, it was believed, could be better appreciated and cared for in the capital of the civilized world than in a land of superstition—paintings by Titian and Raphael, and ancient sculpture including the Discus Thrower and the Apollo Belvidere. Also included were the famous Corinthian bronze horses, which the Byzantines had long ago taken from Corinth, and the Venetians from Constantinople. The French now brought them from Venice to Paris, “to rest at last upon free soil.” Of various inscriptions carried in the procession one was a quotation from Seneca: “To live ignorant is to be dead.”³² It was indeed a great moment for French science; Laplace, Lamarck, and Cuvier could all have been working in Paris on that day; and Frenchmen then disembarking with Bonaparte at Alexandria were about to become the founders of Egyptology.

A few weeks later an industrial exposition was put on in the Champ de Mars. It was the first of a kind which the Crystal Palace of 1851 was to make more famous. The Minister of the Interior, François de Neufchateau, opened it with a speech. Our French manufacturers, he said in effect, will abundantly demonstrate the superiority of a free people in matters economic; genius and ingenuity are now liberated from guilds and monopolies and from ancient regulations and routines; the day foreseen in the *Encyclopédie*, the day of systematic and public sponsorship of the practical arts, has at last arrived. While the wonders of science were displayed by the illumination of the exhibition halls at night, and by a balloon from which a fire was ignited on the ground, the main business was the viewing and judging of exhibits submitted by 110 French manufacturers and *artistes*. A prize was awarded to one of the Didot family for book design. (Even typography was revolutionized in these years, since the type-face still called “modern” was introduced by Didot and his Italian contemporary Bodoni.) Another prize went to Nicolas Conté for the invention of the lead pencil. A better symbol of a middle-class and “enlightened” world would be hard to find.³³

In the French view of the new republican order, as conceived under the Directory, the French were definitely to be dominant. There was little thought of equality or mutuality between the French Republic and its satellites, none of which had more than an eighth of the population of France within its old frontiers. It seemed natural to the French—as indeed to many eighteenth-century Europeans—that the learned and artistic worlds should converge upon Paris. It seemed natural that the allied republics should accept the lead of French foreign policy, and contribute

32 *Moniteur*, 9 and 11 Thermidor, VI; other newspaper reports reprinted by A. Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1898 1902), Vv, 6–9.

33 *Moniteur*, 5 and 12 Vendémiaire, VII; G. Gérault, *Les expositions universelles au point de vue économique* (Paris, 1901), 24–25.

money, supplies, and soldiers to armed forces that remained at the highest levels under French command. It seemed natural to favor France in commercial policy, as in the Treaty of 1798 with the Cisalpine; to prevent the importation of British goods throughout the new republican order, and to promote the sale of French manufactures in allied states, while refusing to give equal access for Dutch or Italian products into France.

This clear insistence on putting French interests first, which in some ways merely continued the habits of the Old Regime, and in others anticipated those of the Napoleonic empire, was probably unavoidable, and even necessary. The maintenance of revolution in all countries depended entirely on the strength of France. The Cisalpine, Batavian, and other republics, threatened by their own counter-revolutionaries and by foreign powers, would rise or fall with the French Republic. But the French pursuit of their own national interest, carried to a point of actual exploitation of weaker allies, began very soon to confuse the new republican order. It divided the revolutionary or progressive forces in Europe. Men who remained committed to revolutionary changes in their own countries came to disagree on the extent of collaboration that should be accepted with France; some tried dealing with conservative forces instead; some rebelled against French interference; some accepted the French and hoped to make use of them in a way as calculating or disillusioned as that of the French Directory toward them.

Nevertheless, the surprising and notable fact, at the time of the Directory as later under Napoleon—a fact which the following nationalistic generations tended to minimize, and which twentieth-century developments in Europe may make more acceptable and more visible—is the degree to which many Europeans looked on the new order with favor.

In a class analysis, as already observed, the international revolutionary and democratic republicanism was above all a movement of the middle ranks of society. Upper-class persons were by no means absent; nobles and prelates were especially prominent in the revolutions at Rome and Naples, and individual “Jacobins” of aristocratic birth could be found in all countries. One has the impression that they were rarest in Germany. The lowest classes outside France, and in France after 1795, were generally apathetic or hostile. Here the great exception was furnished by Ireland, where the mass of the rural population, led by a good many priests, was in active revolt against the English and the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, and for that reason sympathetic to France, the more so since they did not experience the burdens of a French occupation. Elsewhere, and notably in Belgium and Italy, peasants were in a state of insurrection before the year 1798 was over.

Middle-class persons were themselves divided. It has been observed of South Germany that republican propaganda was most successful among the *wohlhabendere Klasse*, while the solidly established old burgher families remained largely impervious.³⁴ Similar divisions existed within the Batavian and Helvetic republics, where almost everyone of importance was middle-class by general European standards. Men whose habitual business connections were with English firms, or who

34 K. Obser, “Die revolutionäre Propaganda am Oberrhein in Jahre 1798,” in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, n.s. XXIV (1909), 230.

either invested or borrowed in England, were likely to be on the conservative side ideologically; yet even in these cases a resentment against the “modern Carthage,” which had been growing throughout the century, might induce a willingness, at least temporarily, to experiment with new arrangements. In the United States, where commercial contacts with England were reinforced by strong cultural ties, the mercantile community was predominantly Federalist and pro-British, and it was among small farmers and landed gentry, remote from the cities, that one found sympathy for republicanism and for France. In this respect the United States stood in contrast to the European Continent. One result was that Americans never understood how “bourgeois” the European revolution was.³⁵ A list of North of Ireland radicals in 1798 included Presbyterian ministers, schoolteachers, merchants, shopkeepers, innkeepers, a miller, a land steward, and a watchmaker. A list of Italian revolutionaries in Piedmont, at the same time, for about two thousand whose occupations are known, included many lawyers, Catholic clergy, merchants, doctors and government employees, but hardly any peasants or city laborers.³⁶

The friends of the Great Nation, and the warmest citizens of the Sister Republics, were therefore middle-class people of certain kinds. As Mallet du Pan scornfully said in 1796, they were “those foresighted people with their little investments, those sagacious men of business, those second-hand shopkeepers of every description who in most of the commercial cities of Europe continue to show themselves as auxiliaries of the French Revolution.”³⁷ They were lawyers, doctors, journalists, writers, professors and students, middling property-owners and *rentiers*; persons prospering in towns but not belonging to the established inner circles; those hoping to gain from the purchase of church land, as happened in Belgium and Italy, but not in Holland, and not much in Switzerland; those profiting from business with the republican armies; members of religious minorities; Jews who desired a fuller acceptance in the general community, and who obtained it in all the republics except the Helvetic; and enterprising men of affairs, who chafed under the older restraints of gild and town, and could see a place for themselves in a new European economy, dominated by France, in which they would have more freedom in the recruitment of labor and the development of new enterprises or new inventions.

Throughout Western Europe, and by no means confined to the new revolutionary republics, there was a universal phenomenon of politicization. In Poland somewhat the same development had been suppressed. It became manifest in two ways, in political clubs and in the rapid growth of a political press. It would seem that every city of Central and Western Europe must have had its “club,” in some cases simply continuing the reading societies and discussion groups that had flourished for years before 1789, in other cases introduced by French soldiers or even by French generals during military occupation after 1792.³⁸ The word “club,” of En-

35 See Chapter XXXI below.

36 R. B. McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750–1800* (London, 1944), 196; G. Vaccarino, *Storia del Piemonte* (Turin, 1960), 245–71, as cited by J. Godechot in *Revue historique*, Vol. 228, p. 185.

37 J. Mallet du Pan, *Correspondance politique pour servir à l'histoire du republicanisme français* (Hamburg, 1796), p. 5.

38 See the chapter, “Les clubs,” in J. Godechot, *La Grande Nation* (Paris, 1956), I, 317–55.

glish origin, spread throughout Europe. To designate a busy patriot of republicans views in a derogatory sense, the word "clubbist," *clubbiste*, etc., sprang up in English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian, and so on to *klubista* in Polish. Usually the clubs were open, since publicity was their aim, but even open clubs might develop secret activities, as in Holland in 1794, or turn from an open to a secret existence when forbidden by governments, as with the United Irish groups at the same time. In America the democratic clubs that sprang up in 1793 or 1794 turned into ordinary units of party organization; in England after 1794 the more vulnerable middle-class members ceased to come to meetings; in Continental monarchies they became clandestine; in France after the closing of the Jacobin Club late in 1794 they were prohibited, but soon rose again; so that in France, as in the Sister Republics, in the late 1790's, the democratic clubs and "circles," while often disliked even by republican governments as too radical and too turbulent, managed to remain open as centers of political discussion.

The world of clubs shaded off into a wonderland of secret societies, on which it is almost impossible to obtain satisfactory evidence or to form any rational judgment. A club of a kind that in another country would be open might be secret for local reasons, as at Naples in 1792. The secret societies seem to have been quite distinct from Masonic lodges, though membership might be overlapping. A secret society differed from a club in being organized for action, with no pretense of discussion, since the views of the members were assumed to be firmly formed. A secret society might preserve a certain democratic character, with power flowing up from the membership, through election of delegates by local units to higher levels, as with the United Irish; but it was more usual for secret societies to be controlled tightly at the top, with the members themselves excluded from the secrets. There were organizations of this kind of both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary purpose, such as the Martinovicz conspiracy in Hungary and the Babeuf conspiracy in France, or, at the extreme Right, the Eudaemonists of Germany from 1794 to 1798, the "philanthropic institutes" in France in 1797, or a peculiar organization which the Swedish Fersen learned of from a French émigré at the German city of Rastadt in 1798.

Members of clubs, in some cases more or less clandestine, were usually among the first to welcome the French army in many places from Amsterdam to Naples, and to try to take part in setting up a revolutionary republic. But there is no case in which any serious revolutionary disturbance can be attributed to the machinations of a secret society, again with the exception of Ireland, where the United Irish were certainly more than a secret society in any ordinary sense of the word. The books of John Robison and the Abbé Barruel have already been analyzed. They purported to expose a universal secret plot against all governments and religions. They were written in 1797, before the actual height of revolutionary expansion, of which both authors had really very little knowledge. Both drew heavily on German sources, and it seems likely (such an opinion being inevitably impressionistic) that there was in fact more proliferation of secret societies in Germany in the 1790's than in other countries. But Germany was also, along with Spain and Portugal, the part of Europe in which truly revolutionary activity or successful republican agitation could least be found.

It cannot be too often repeated that publicity, not secrecy, was the moving force in the revolutionary-republican movement. Or, to put it more accurately, the desire for publicity was the moving force, for in most countries a politically articulate periodical press did not exist under the old order, but was one of the immediate consequences and manifestations of the new.³⁹ Political journalism was oldest, most firmly established and most free in England and the United States, but even in England it was only since the 1770's that newspapers had been allowed to report speeches in Parliament. In the old Dutch provinces, the bishopric of Liège, and some of the German states and cities, the periodical press had for some time been relatively free and very voluminous, but even in Holland the editors were not free to report or comment on local affairs, especially after the Orange restoration of 1787. At most, such papers criticized the governments of their political neighbors. In France, the Mediterranean countries, and Eastern Europe there were no politically minded newspapers at all under the old regime.

What happened was therefore in some countries the marked politicization of a press already well established, and in others the creation of a political press as a new thing. A few editors were supported by governments, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary as the case might be; but the economics of publishing were so simple that political journalism was an easy field for private and individual enterprise. Few papers had the gravity or the dimensions of the Paris *Moniteur*. Never "official" in the 1790's, the *Moniteur* was established late in 1789, and appeared daily in four or more folio pages eighteen inches high. It was filled with despatches from foreign countries, local news, and full texts of legislation and speeches in the assembly. The name was widely copied, as in the *Monitore Cisalpino* of 1798 and the *Monitore Napoletano* of 1799. But most newspapers were small in size, crudely printed, weekly or semi-weekly or simply irregular, limited to a few hundreds or at most a few thousands in circulation, and frequently quite ephemeral. They were short on news and long on opinion, and usually polemical in the extreme. Venom, recrimination, name-calling, and wild accusations were common in all political camps. It is well known what the American Founding Fathers had to suffer at the hands of newspaper writers. The indignation of conservatives at the excesses of the new democratic press would have been justified, had not the conservative papers been equally bad.

In the United States the newspapers multiplied as the democratic movement developed, and most of the persons indicted under the Sedition Act of 1798 were newspaper editors. In Ireland the press had been very lively during the political agitation of 1780–1784, but was thereafter held under restraint, though it managed to express a good deal of enthusiasm for the French Revolution in 1789. The Irishman John Daly Burk, after getting into trouble for his newspaper writings in Dublin, and hence emigrating to America, got into further trouble with his *New York Time Piece* in 1798. In England there was more freedom, and as late as 1798, five years after the war with France had begun, there were three London newspapers that disapproved of the government and its foreign policy, and were called "Jacobin" by their opponents. They were the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Courier*. The editor of the *Morning Chronicle* was the favorite target of

39 See the chapter, "L'essor de la presse politique," in Godechot, *op.cit.*, II, 367–417.

Canning's *Anti-Jacobin*, which nicknamed him Père du Chêne, "the name assumed by the Atheist Hébert, the friend and confidant"—so Canning claimed—"of Robespierre."⁴⁰

In France the press was very active under the Directory. There were journals of royalist tone, but normally the government was most apprehensive about those of the most advanced democrats. When it closed them down they appeared under new titles, so that a fitful liberty was in fact enjoyed. Between 1792 and 1800, for example, there were half a dozen successive titles for the paper most commonly known as the *Journal des hommes libres de tous les pays*. This title alone suggests one ground for the Directors' concern, the affinity between the French militant democrats and "world revolution."

For the rest of the Continent—or more exactly, for Holland, Belgium, the Rhineland, Switzerland, and Italy—Jacques Godechot, in a remarkable survey, cites about a hundred newspapers by name for these years of revolution. The Dutch press was quite free under the Batavian Republic, even after the democratic coup d'état of January 1798, when opposition in other ways was silenced. On the Left Bank of the Rhine, which had not shared in the journalistic development of the rest of Germany in preceding years, there was a great outburst of newspapers during the French occupation. The Belgians, now "departmentalized" within the French Republic, had more newspapers than they had had in the Austrian Netherlands. The Swiss cantons had been very inhospitable to newspaper editors, and Bern had even forbidden the importation of the *Moniteur*, so that the Helvetic Republic brought about a journalistic as well as a political revolution. The famous educator, Pestalozzi, in September 1798 began publication of *Das Helvetische Volksblatt* under the sponsorship of the new government. In Italy, except in Venice after its transfer to Austria, the story was the same; each new republic had its variety of political journals; and even in Piedmont and Tuscany, which were not republicanized, the spring of 1799 saw a *Repubblicano piemontese* at Turin, and *Il Democratico* at Florence. Journals edited in French at Malta and in Egypt, during the French occupation, began the transmission of new ideas to the Arab world. It is said also that the first newspaper to be printed in Arabic appeared in Egypt at this time.

It is evident that this eruption of journalistic activity, partisan though it was and limited in number of readers, carried with it a revolution in political consciousness, until repressed in the various compromises which the Napoleonic order, and the opposition to it, imposed upon most of Europe.

THE REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTIONS

Ten constitutions were written for the Sister Republics between the end of 1796 and the spring of 1799. In a survey of their provisions one may consider also the constitution drafted by Rhigas Velestinlis for a Hellenic Republic, and some of the demands of democrats in Britain, Ireland, and the United States belonged within

40 *Anti-Jacobin*, June 11, 1798, II, 471, and *passim*.

the same school of constitutional thinking. The German journalist Lange expressed a fundamental idea very well, if in somewhat Kantian fashion. In Germany, he said regretfully, there were rulers and subjects, but no citizens. "A man without citizenship is out of his element, like a fish out of water. He is unawakened to the feeling of his own independence, because he is kept in the perpetual status of a minor and is treated as a Thing, not as an End."⁴¹

Of the ten constitutions there were some in which native inspiration and authorship were very strong (the Bolognese, Cispadane, Ligurian, Neapolitan, and Batavian), others in which Frenchmen predominated in the drafting (the two Cisalpine constitutions, the Helvetic, and a document prepared for Lucca in 1799), and one, the constitution of the Roman Republic, which was simply written in Rome by four French commissioners. The constitutions were nevertheless all much alike, and all strongly resembled the French constitution of the Year III, both because the French would not have tolerated any wide departures, and because the revolutionaries from Holland to Naples drew on the same fund of ideas, and faced the same problems of "feudalism," oligarchy, church questions, and privileged classes. Even in France, where a revolutionary vanguard continued to favor the constitution of the Year I, most ordinary democrats accepted the structure of the Directory and criticized only its politics and its personnel. In the Sister Republics the constitution of the Year III was accepted without argument as "democratic."

All the constitutions began with declarations of rights, with which all but the Batavian and Helvetic incorporated declarations of civic duties, following the French model.⁴² All stated the basic rights to be liberty, equality, security, and property. Equality meant equality in the eyes of the law. As the Greek draft curiously put it: "All men, Christians and Turks, are equal by the natural order." All declared sovereignty to reside in the "citizenry as a whole," which meant, as the Swiss said, that "no part or right of sovereignty could be detached and become a private property." Native-born men became citizens at a certain age, generally twenty-one. Little encouragement was given to foreigners in these revolutionary republics. Where by the French constitution it was possible to be naturalized after seven years' residence, in the Cisalpine the requirement was raised from seven years in the first constitution to fourteen in the second. The Ligurian constitution required ten years, the Roman fourteen. The Batavians would grant citizenship to persons of foreign birth only if they had resided in the republic for ten years and could read and write Dutch. The impenetrable Swiss, in their revolutionary constitution of 1798, demanded twenty years for naturalization. It may be noted in

41 See the chapter, "Les constitutions," in Godechot, *op.cit.*, II, 418–50; K. J. Lange, *Deutsche Reichs- und Staatszeitung*, April 23, 1799.

42 For the texts of the Italian constitutions see A. Aquarone, *Le costituzioni italiane* (Milan, 1958); for the Batavian constitution in French translation, D. Verhagen, *L'influence de la Révolution française sur la première constitution hollandaise du 23 avril 1798* (Paris, 1949), 59–99; for the Helvetic constitution in German and French, J. Strickler, *Actensammlung aus der Zeit der helvetischen Republik*, Bern, 1886–1940, I, 567–87; for Velestinlis' proposed draft, in Greek and French, A. Dascalakis, *Oeuvres de Rhigas Velestinlis* (Paris, 1937), 76–125. See also the discussion of the Batavian constitution in Chapter XXI of the present book, and of the Bolognese, Cispadane, and Cisalpine in Chapter XV. C. Ghisalbetti, *Le costituzioni "giacobine" 1796–99* (Varese, 1957), gives an incomparably more substantial discussion of the Italian constitutions than does Verhagen of the Dutch.

passing that the American Federalists, in the Naturalization Act of 1798, denounced by the democrats because it raised the requirement for naturalization to fourteen years, only attempted what revolutionary democrats in Europe regarded as normal.

The Batavian, Helvetic, and first Cisalpine constitutions were more liberal than the French in granting the vote to all male citizens, though the Dutch excluded servants and bankrupts. The Cisalpine (like the French) provided for a literacy requirement to take effect twelve years in the future, and the Helvetic stipulated five years of local residence in the commune in which one voted. All the constitutions provided for voting in "primary assemblies," in which two or three hundred voters chose delegates to electoral assemblies, which in turn chose the Legislative Body and certain local officials. All this machinery went back to the first French constitution of 1789–1791. Qualifications to sit in electoral assemblies or in the legislature of the republic varied from one republic to another, but were in no case prohibitively high. Against the older aristocratic tradition of uncompensated public service all the new constitutions except the Helvetic specified salaries for both Legislators and Directors. The Batavian legislator received 4,000 florins a year, the Ligurian ten lire a day; elsewhere, as in France by the constitution of the Year III, given the uncertainty of the currency, salaries were made dependent on the price of wheat.

All the constitutions provided for a legislature in two houses, and for an executive board of five Directors, called "consuls" at Rome and "archons" at Naples. To this pattern there was no exception (since the Cispadane constitution with its three directors had never really been in effect); and even Rhigas' constitution for a Greek Republic reproduced these features. All the constitutions made much of the doctrine of the separation of powers, and contained careful provisions on the judiciary, armed forces, taxation, and management of the public finances. All except the Swiss and Dutch provided for juries in criminal cases. All gave toleration, and were essentially secular, but they varied in religious provisions; the Batavian granted complete religious equality, while the Cisalpine and Ligurian recognized a certain "predominance" of the Catholic Church.

All the Italian constitutions called for common schools of reading and writing, with teachers to be paid from the funds of the several republics. In general, when the constitutions are set in chronological order, a trend is seen toward a strengthening of the executive; and since the later constitutions were in general more dictated by the French than the earlier, a trend in French constitutional thought has been detected suggesting that, if Bonaparte had not taken power in November 1799, a stronger but less military kind of executive might have been created in France.⁴³ On this point there can be no certainty; and in any case the political machinery of the Sister Republics, as of France itself in these years, never worked very well, and is not the element of major interest in these new governments.

Each constitution (except those for Bologna and Lucca) began by declaring its republic to be "one and indivisible." Each then immediately proceeded to the "divi-

43 This was the argument of R. Guyot, "Du Directoire au Consulat," in *Revue historique*, Vol. III (1912), 11–31.

sion of the territory." Indivisibility and division, to paraphrase Talleyrand, were two words for much the same thing. They reflected the basic structure of a unitary democratic republic. As the French constitution of the Year III, in its first article, divided the area of France into eighty-nine departments, which it listed by name, so did the constitutions of the Sister Republics. The Batavian and Roman constitutions each created and named eight departments, adopting the names of rivers or other natural features; the Cisalpine, eleven, which expansion raised to twenty; the Neapolitan, seventeen. The Ligurian constitution left the names and the exact number for subsequent legislation. The Helvetic created twenty-two "cantons," soon reduced to eighteen; the historic names were used, but boundaries were redrawn to obtain more equality between cantons, and to admit the former subject districts to cantonal status. In each republic the Legislative Body possessed the power to alter the boundaries and number of the departments. Each department, in each republic, had an elected council and a single executive officer appointed by the central government, usually called a "commissioner," as in France, but known as a "prefect" in the Roman and Helvetic republics, in anticipation of the later French usage. Within each department there were to be municipalities organized on a uniform pattern according to new legislation.

It was these features of "departmentalization" and "municipalization," as contemporaries saw, that marked the cutting edge of the revolutionary process, mowing down the dense growth of feudal, manorial, aristocratic, patrician, and old-fashioned burgher influences on the immediate local scene. It was these features also, more than the higher levels of government structure, that anticipated the political organization which in later times was to become characteristic of Continental Europe. And it was in these features that European constitutional principles in the 1790's most widely departed from those in the United States.

Nowhere is the difference between American and European "democracy" more evident. In the American union it was Alexander Hamilton who could conceive of abolishing the pre-existing states, or of dividing a big state like Virginia into several small ones so that all might be more equal. In America it was the democrats who in such matters favored the inherited order. In America, to use European terms (in which "federal" was opposite to the American "Federalist"), both the unitary and the federal principle could be accepted. The unitary principle prevailed, at the national level, in the direct election of members of the House of Representatives by electoral districts equally populous, and in the direct authority of the national courts and executive over individual citizens in certain spheres. The "federal" principle prevailed in the equal representation of states in the national Senate, regardless of size, and in the theory that the states were themselves emanations from the sovereign people, and so were not subject, like European departments, to redefinition or reshaping by any higher organs of government. In America the possessors of local power were not thought of as obstacles to democratization. Indeed, it was in the traditional township or county meeting, or in the farmhouse and the village store, that liberty and equality were believed to be most firmly rooted.

In Europe the opposite situation prevailed, with local power and influence reposing in manorial landowners, seigneurial judges, ancestrally prominent families, gild notables, and closely knit urban patriciates, all enmeshed in a variety of local-

ized laws, customs, concessions, and privileges, and all generally reinforced by an officially recognized parish clergy, whether Protestant or Catholic as the case might be. These were the people who generally had the most influence with the mass of the population, which looked to them, rather than to upholders of new ideas, for cues as to their opinions or conduct and for initiative in public affairs.

In Europe, therefore, as already observed in preceding chapters, the democratic movement had to be unitary and centralizing, because it had to destroy before it could construct. It was in Switzerland that the greatest concession was made to the federal principle, for reasons analogous to those in America, namely the popular character of some pre-existing institutions. By the Helvetic constitution, each canton sent four delegates to the senate, regardless of size, while the lower house was ultimately to be elected in proportion to population. Elsewhere the revolutionary movement swept pre-existing collectivities into the discard. It attempted to break up and transform the local leadership structures, the local centers of influence and loyalty, the local habits of deference and subordination. It proclaimed the existence of a "people," not necessarily any pre-existing unit of human beings, and not necessarily a "nation" in the later meaning of the word—a "Cisalpine" people, a "Helvetic" people, the "people between the Meuse, Rhine and Moselle"—of which the first two declared themselves to be independent republics, the third used its newly declared sovereignty to join itself to the French Republic, within which it was organized in departments.⁴⁴ In each such case, by the declaration of sovereignty, the claims to sovereignty made by older corporate entities were denied. The change was to be deep, chemical, and molecular. Or, as in a meat chopper, the tissues and sinews of the old order were to be ground up until nothing remained but the individual particles, or citizens, who, if the figure can be tolerated, might then be re-arranged into patties (or "departments") of similar content and equal size.

The same points are illustrated, at the level of pure ideas, by Rhigas Velestinlis' proposed statute for a Greek Republic, which of course never went into effect and has remained virtually unknown. The uncertainty of meaning of both "Greek" and "people" in this document is very dear. On the one hand, Greeks are "the descendants of the Hellenes, living in Rumelia, Asia Minor, the Mediterranean islands and Moldo-Wallachia." On the other hand, the Greek people is a kind of necessary constitutional postulate, "the universality of inhabitants of the State, without distinction of religion or language, Greeks, Albanians, Vlachs, Armenians, Turks and all other races." All are equal, but Greek is the official language, because it is easiest to learn. The republic is one and indivisible, but is divided into eparchies and toparchies. These replace the existing collectivities in the Ottoman Empire. The "nation" itself is the basis of representation, "*not simply the rich and the great*" (italics in the original); the people meet in primary assemblies of from 200 to 600 voters, and elect a member of the Legislative Body for every 40,000 of the population. By such means, even more than by the Directory and other organs that the constitution then described, it was hoped that the complex realities of the Greek

44 For the "people between the Meuse, Rhine and Moselle" see numerous documents in J. Hansen, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Rheinlandes im Zeitalter der französischen Revolution*, and especially IV, 315–26.

world, or Ottoman Empire in Europe and Asia Minor, could be dissolved or distilled into a democratic republic.

In Britain, Ireland, and America a process akin to departmentalization took the milder form of the demand for representation according to numbers, that is, of election of representatives by something approaching universal suffrage in equal electoral districts. In England this demand had accompanied the parliamentary reform movement since the 1770's; the purpose was to undercut borough-owners, entrenched town corporations, and other such entities of the English old regime. In America the principle of numerical representation was incorporated in the state constitutions issuing from the Revolution, and in the federal constitution of 1787. In Ireland in 1794, before they turned revolutionary, the United Irish drew up a proposal for parliamentary reform. By this plan "the nation, for the purposes of representation solely," that is, for election to the Irish House of Commons, "should be divided into 300 electorates . . . as nearly as possible equal in point of population." It was hoped thus to break "the vassalage of tenant to landlord," and in the long run, by overcoming the vested interests, to get rid of tithes paid to the Anglican church, reform the taxes, and make it legal for newspapers to be sold for a half-penny.⁴⁵

In France and the states associated with it in 1798 the changes at the concrete local level, in departments and municipalities, proved more permanent than the short-lived republics within which they were first projected. After 1800 the Napoleonic administrators continued to develop and strengthen these local arrangements, which also survived the Restoration of 1814, in different degree in different countries, and so became part of the fabric of modern Europe.

At the more general level of democratic constitutional doctrines a difference between Europe and the United States was already apparent. It may be recalled, from the first part of the present book, that the American state constitutions, when they became known in Europe in the 1780's, had been the subject of much eager discussion. It does not seem (though the matter has not been thoroughly studied) that the American practice was much cited in the constitutional discussions that went on in Holland, Switzerland, or Italy after 1795. The French example had in the intervening years thoroughly overlaid the American, but in any case the American example did not meet the needs in Europe, where democratization required the building up of a central authority by which the territory could be "departmentalized." The point is borne out by a rare publication which appeared in Paris in 1798.⁴⁶ It presented in four languages—French, Italian, German and English—the constitutions of the French, Cisalpine, and Ligurian Republics, and the Declaration of Independence of the United States. Perhaps the publisher hoped to circulate it widely as a handbook throughout the new republican order. If so, its rarity

45 E. Curtis and R. B. McDowell, *Irish Historical Documents 1172–1922* (London, 1943), 237–38; McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion*, 197–98.

46 *Constitutions des républiques française, cisalpine et ligurienne, avec l'acte d'indépendance des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, dans les quatre langues française, anglaise, allemande et italienne* (Paris An VII). This title was advertised in the *Moniteur*, 2 Vendémiaire VII (September 23, 1798). A copy with a variant title, *Acte d'indépendance des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, et constitutions . . .*, without place or date, is at the New York Public Library.

today suggests that he was unsuccessful. In any case, it is to be noted that, though he did not forget the Americans, he included no American constitution.

RELIGION AND REVOLUTION: CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY

It was somewhat inconsistently observed by Tocqueville, in his great classic a century ago, both that the Revolution became a kind of religion in itself, and that in the most fundamental sense, despite appearances, it was not directed against the religion of Christianity. In calling the Revolution a religion Tocqueville did not mean, like J. F. LaHarpe in 1797, or numerous more recent historians, to stress its psychology of fanaticism or to see in it a fiercely unreasoning "faith." That it took on these qualities Tocqueville was far from doubting, but it was not in such qualities that he saw the distinctive essence of religion. It was the peculiarity of a religion, he thought, and he was thinking of Christianity, to look upon man in an abstract light, apart from the incidental peculiarity of race, class, nationality, culture, environment, or conditioning, apart from every kind of institutional framework, simply as "man" in relation to other men and to the world as a whole, with all men subject to the same judgment and working out their destiny under the same higher law. It was in this universality, and the corresponding sense of an underlying equality of all human beings, that Tocqueville found the French Revolution to be like a religion, and for that reason to spread rapidly, as Christianity had spread, beyond the boundaries of any one people or country.

The evidence that Tocqueville was unable to gather confirms his insight. The religion of revolutionary republicanism spread beyond France, beyond the Sister Republics, beyond Western Europe. When Rhigas Velestinlis declared Greek and Turk to be equal in the "natural order," he echoed not only the eighteenth-century revolution of Europe but the first-century revolution of St. Paul, who had said that in Christ is neither Jew nor Greek.

With institutional Christianity in the 1790's, revolutionary republicanism or democracy collided violently in all countries. It is true that in France, between 1795 and 1801, church and state were legally "separated," since the connections set up earlier in the Revolution had been repealed; and that the new republics in Italy formally recognized Catholicism as the prevailing religion. Many Catholics nevertheless opposed the new republics as un-Christian. The new states took the view that religion was a purely private and individual matter; they generally forbade church processions and the display of religious images in the streets; they admitted non-Catholics to office; and they granted the church no powers of censorship, political representation, or other instruments of social control. There were many journalists, pamphleteers, writers of books, and speakers in the clubs who criticized or ridiculed the traditional faith; the authorities in the new republics might deplore such outbursts as impolitic, but could hardly restrain them, either in fact, or in accord with the new principles of free expression. Whatever the law, the actual state of feeling was highly inflamed. The situation was comparable, if less acute, in Protestant countries, in all of which some form

of Christianity had long been established, with exceptions for most states in the United States.

The collision of republicanism with organized Christianity can be explained in large part, yet only in part, by the reasons that were apparent to Tocqueville, namely that the churches had become identified with institutions of government and social class. That the churches were dominated by worldly elites was enough to explain why revolutionaries attacked them. But it was not the whole explanation, for the conflict went beyond the merely sociological. The Revolution represented the Enlightenment in militant form, and the Enlightenment, popularizing and disseminating the effects of the scientific revolution, offered no less than a new view of man and the cosmos. It was, in the plain sense of the word, profane; it meant to “desacralize” man, as Marcel Reinhard has said.⁴⁷ It offered a new theory of the source of reliable knowledge, new methods of verification and certitude, a new *logos* for a meaningful universe, a new picture of what had happened in the past and would happen in the future, a new ethics in which ideas of liberty and equality received a new application, a new idea of a new man in a new era, a new set of the truths that should make men free. In the churches, on the other hand, as human institutions, a good deal of traditional human lore and learning had accumulated alongside a more purely spiritual message. The churches had not yet come to terms with the most indubitable findings of science. They expected belief in matters which persons touched by the Enlightenment simply could not accept. And they had not, in their treatment of questions of right and wrong, made a clear distinction between what they regarded as religious truth and what were only cultural, social, or utilitarian values. Conflict was therefore fundamental. Between “enlightenment” and “superstition” or between “divine truth” and “bad books,” it was hard to see any possible basis of agreement.

The whole question is difficult to deal with beyond a merely descriptive level, since it involves a judgment on what constitutes a “real” religion, and an assessment of the genuineness of inner motives and attitudes. Whether the conflict was between religion and irreligion, or between competing religions, or between doctrines in which the religious appearance was equally specious, is to some extent a matter of terms.

To follow Reinhard again, the distinctive thing in religion is to regard something as sacred; the “sacred” is that which is considered untouchable, above any criticism, questioning, or levity, the object to which feelings of awe and reverence are addressed. In this sense the Revolution became in fact for many people a religion, for its most intense partisans did regard something as sacred: the Revolution itself, or the Republic, for some in France in 1793, or “humanity” or the “rights of man,” *les droits sacrés de l’homme*, as they were called in French and other languages throughout the decade. As in any religion, the sacred object had the power to evoke self-sacrifice. It could also induce fanaticism and ruthlessness. It could preach a morality in which anything was justified by the sacred cause. In all this

47 M. Reinhard, *Religion, Révolution et Contre-Révolution*, Centre de documentation universitaire (Paris, 1960), 141. This is by far the best discussion of the whole subject. On the connection between the Revolution and religion see also the present volume, above, pp. 383–84 and 458, and below, p. 641.

Reinhard, a Catholic himself, sees no difference between the Revolution and the Counter-Revolution. Indeed he finds that the displaced forces of the Old Regime were the first to identify their cause with "religion" in their theory of the throne and the altar, and that the outrages of counterrevolutionary terror were if anything worse than those of the Terror proper.⁴⁸

Zealous republicans favored a form of deism or natural religion, professing a belief in a Supreme Being and in immortality of the soul, and in a "natural" code of moral law, in which equality and fraternity were highly esteemed. Attempts were made to organize religious services for the expression of these principles, from Robespierre's Worship of the Supreme Being on through the movement of Theophilanthropy for several years after his death. Under the sponsorship of LaRevéllière-Lépeaux, who was one of the French Directors for the unusually long period of four years, the Theophilanthropists enjoyed a measure of success in Paris, where they were allowed the use of some of the church buildings. Theophilanthropy also attracted a few temporary congregations in the Batavian Republic. It was introduced at Milan without success. There was a group calling itself Theophilanthropist in Philadelphia, led by the well-known American deist, Elihu Palmer. Probably the feeling in these movements was genuine enough, if only because new religions and optional cults are less likely to be troubled with hypocrites. But it was a feeling in which the religious element could hardly be separated from the political. Theophilanthropy, in Reinhard's words, was more anthropophile than theophile. As the Abbé Barruel bluntly put it, the religion of the Revolution was Man-Worship, and the abbé gave more food for thought as a theologian than as a historian of the Revolution. There were many Revolutionary hymns and prayers, in which, however, God was not so much invoked or implored as called upon to witness the mighty actions of the day. Far from expressing any sense of humility, or of man's littleness and dependence, they struck a note of defiance and grandeur, of pride in the Revolution and confidence in the new republican order.⁴⁹

In the use made of Christianity by many conservatives there was much the same subordination of a religious to an essentially political message. There was nothing "religious," as most people understand the word, about the future kings Louis XVIII and Charles X and many other doctrinaires of the throne and the altar. In England the *Anti-Jacobin* was very free with the epithet "atheist," but it was hardly a journal of religious concern. Its real philosophy appeared in a quatrain:

Let France in savage accents sing
Her bloody Revolution;
We prize our Country, love our King,
Adore our Constitution.⁵⁰

48 Reinhard, 96–97, 163–85, 220.

49 *Ibid.*, 193; on Barruel see above, pp. 560–61; on Theophilanthropy in France, A. Mathiez, *La théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire* (Paris, 1903); in Holland and Italy, Godechot, *Grande nation*, II, 511, 527; in the United States, G. A. Koch, *Republican Religion: the American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (New York, 1933).

50 *Anti-Jacobin*, or *Weekly Examiner*, November 30, 1797, p. 104. Note that when Canning and his

It is hard to believe that some of the most insistently professing church people, at the close of the eighteenth century, saw any more meaning in the Incarnation or Crucifixion than did Maximilien Robespierre or the Theophilanthropists. At St. Paul's cathedral in London, at Holy Communion at Easter in 1800, only six persons presented themselves as communicants.⁵¹ "Of all the pretences," said Thomas Erskine in 1797, "by which the abused zeal of the people of England has been hurried on to a blind support of ministers, this alarm for the Christian religion is the most impudent and preposterous. . . . Before this discovery of the present ministers, who had ever heard of the Christianity of the French court and its surrounding nobles?"⁵²

The organized and responsible church or churches, since the days of the Roman Empire, had always called for civil peace, obedience to law, and acceptance of the civil authorities. The peculiarity now was that they continued to do so with so little compunction. Idealizing stability at a time when society had in fact become unstable, they had not yet digested the new idea of social change, and largely ignored the unsettling aspects of Christianity which had been well known in earlier times. The price paid was that, for over a century, much of the most significant moral development in European civilization, with its changing sense of justice and humanity, went on outside the pale of institutional religion.

Some ideas that seem recognizably Christian were more frequently expressed by persons who did not call themselves Christians, or were in fact called atheists by their enemies. There are more Biblical echoes in Thomas Paine than in Edmund Burke, appeals to Genesis and St. Paul to argue for human equality and the unity of mankind, to prove that "every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God."⁵³ The idea that Jesus had been a good sansculotte was common enough in France in 1793. The situations and the style of language often appear comical, but what seems incongruous in one set of circumstances is less so in another. Filippo Buonarroti, for example, when he was French representative at Oneglia in 1794, delivered a harangue on the occasion of the Worship of the Supreme Being. It was a long outpouring of Robespierist and Rousseauist religious feeling. It included an apostrophe to Jesus Christ: "Philosopher-Founder of Christianity, the day of fulfilment of your wishes is not far removed. Your doctrine, disfigured by tyrants, is ours. The time has now come when, following your prediction, science and nature will join all men into a single flock. Brothers and friends, let us give thanks to the Eternal; the Revolution, new proof of his existence, is his work."⁵⁴ There are similar overtones in the writings of the radical German republican, Rebmann. When the Dutch, who as already noted were the first to do so, adopted "liberty, equality, fraternity" as a national motto,

friends ceased publication of their somewhat playful *Anti-Jacobin* in July 1798, another and entirely different group used the same title in publishing a journal more intentionally religious, *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, which appeared monthly from 1798 to 1821, changing its title in 1810 to *Anti-Jacobin Review and True Churchman's Magazine*, and adding *Protestant Advocate* in 1816.

51 H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England . . . 1690-1850* (Princeton, 1961), 280.

52 T. Erskine, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* (33rd ed., London, 1797), 55. At least thirty-five editions in 1797.

53 *Rights of Man*, Everyman ed., 42.

54 A. Saitta, *Filippo Buonarroti*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1950), I, 255.

there were many who regarded it as an expression of Christian doctrine. In Switzerland, Pestalozzi attributed modern ideas of freedom and equality to the "Christian revolution" by which paganism had been superseded in ages past. "Jesus was the most fervent democrat and the most excellent philanthropist," said a Polish Jacobin in 1794.⁵⁵

That the clergy, especially the established clergy in various countries, Catholic or Protestant, were among the chief opponents of the Revolution there can be no doubt. They had good reason, since the Revolution threatened them with the loss of their corporate status, their role in conjunction with governments, their property and tithes. Especially in France, it attacked the religion of which they were ministers, and exposed them to exile, insult, and persecution, which in 1798 were at their highest point since 1794. Since at the same time the clergy retained their influence with large segments of the population, the result was a fatal weakening of the revolutionary-republican movement, and a conflict between democracy and the churches that was to last for at least a hundred years. The Enlightenment, especially in its Voltairean aspect, and not without reason, had coupled a strong anti-Christianism with the prospect of worldly improvement. No fact was more damaging to the democratic revolution.

All this is so well understood, however, and so true as far as it goes, that a more exact picture must call attention to the opposite fact, that a great many Christian clergy did accept or sympathize with the Revolution, or at least with its goals and its principles. The Revolution caused differences among the clergy, as among men of other kinds. It is necessary to proceed with caution, especially in the absence of detailed studies of the Protestant clergy of northern Europe of the kind that have been made of the Catholic clergy in France and Italy. As when we find business men sympathetic to the Revolution, the question arises whether they were engaged in "legitimate" business or were merely adventurers, in an account of the clergy it is important to know (and it is often impossible) whether in favoring the Revolution they did so as Christians, as apostates, or as de-Christianized humanitarians. Thousands of French clergy accepted the constitutional church. Some became what Burke called "atheistic buffoons";⁵⁶ but of men like Grégoire, while they were clearly in a state of schism with respect to Rome, it is hard to deny that they continued to be Christians.

In Holland and Ireland the Roman Catholics and many of their clergy, having long lived under a Protestant ascendancy, were well-disposed toward revolutionary change. A great many Polish clergy supported Kosciuszko. Most of the French émigré bishops, even under the pressures of exile, refused formally to identify the cause of Catholicism in France with the restoration of Louis XVIII. In all the Italian revolutions priests played a role, nor were they all Jansenists by any means. It has already been seen how the future Pius VII accepted "democracy" in the Cisalpine Republic. Two cardinals accepted the Roman Republic of 1798, and the

55 On Rebmann, see Hansen, *Quellen*, IV, 1004 n.; on the Dutch, J. Hazeu, *Historie der omwentelingen in vaderlandsche gesprekken voor kinderen* (Amsterdam, 1796), *passim*; on the Swiss, P. Wernle, *Der schweizerische Protestantismus im 18. Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Tübingen, 1925), III, 511–12; on the Poles, B. Lesnodorski, *Polscy Jakobini* (Warsaw, 1960), 246.

56 Burke, *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (1793) in *Works* (Boston, 1839), IV, 114.

Archbishop of Naples accepted the Neapolitan Republic of 1799. The Archbishop of Scutari was willing to assist in revolutionary agitation in Greece. The German Catholic clergy produced a number of revolutionary enthusiasts, of whom one of the most notorious, and probably the most thoroughly de-Christianized, was Eulogius Schneider, the terrorist of Alsace. One of the great mysteries of the period is the activity of the ex-Jesuits, men now middle-aged or older, living in various countries as individual clerics, who had belonged to the Society of Jesus before its dissolution by the Pope in 1774. Most ex-Jesuits were apparently counter-revolutionary, like Feller in Belgium, Barruel among French émigrés, or the ex-Jesuits at Augsburg who were a center of anti-revolutionary propaganda in Germany. Others went a different way: the ex-Jesuit Cérutti was a political leader and newspaper editor in the French Revolution until his death in 1792; the Polish ex-Jesuit Switkowski hailed the revolution in both France and Poland; the ex-Jesuit Bolgeni, at Rome in 1798, favored democratization of Italy; and we have mentioned the unknown ex-Jesuit from Oran, who figured in the Greek agitation.

As for the Protestant world, little seems to be known in accessible form about the views of the Dutch Reformed clergy. A significant minority of Swiss pastors showed sympathy for the Revolution in France, and welcomed the Helvetic Republic. It is always said that German Lutheran pastors were very conservative, but one hears of cases among them of sympathizers with republicanism. No bishop of the Church of England or of Ireland is remembered for anything said in favor of the Revolution across the channel, or of parliamentary reform in either island. In England, the inclination to "republicanism" was found among the Dissenting clergy, many of whom favored Unitarianism, or persons in Anglican orders who had turned Unitarian, like Thomas Fyshe Palmer, who was convicted of subversive activity in Scotland in 1793. In Scotland there were various Presbyterians outside the established Presbyterian Church—"seceders," New Lights, and others—who often belonged to democratic political clubs. It was against such people, in large part, that Professor Robison at Edinburgh, in 1797, wrote his *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe*. These New Lights in Scotland, like the Methodists in England, might or might not sympathize with the Revolution in France, but they sympathized with the upper levels of British society even less; and in their demands for itinerant preaching and for Sunday Schools, as a means of improving the condition of the people, their movement was a competitor rather than an antithesis to political radicalism. In Ireland, there were Presbyterian ministers as well as Catholic priests in the ranks of the United Irish.

In the United States the Congregationalist ministers of New England and the Presbyterians of the Middle States expressed a good deal of tolerance for the French Revolution as late as 1795. Even Jedidiah Morse, who in 1798 raised up a scare by spreading Robison's ideas of revolutionary conspiracy, spoke well of the French Revolution in his Thanksgiving Day sermon of November 1794. As for French guillotining and atheism, he thought that such "irregularities" should "neither be justified, nor yet too severely censured," but in the last analysis, in a great measure, "excused."⁵⁷ In short, contrary to the idea perpetuated by most historians,

57 Morse quotes from his own sermon in his *Present Situation of Other Nations of the World Con-*

the American clergy were not unduly shocked by the Reign of Terror. In the French Dechristianization of 1793, which was not unlike the original Protestantism in its smashing of images and repudiation of vestments, the American ministers tended to see another awful judgment on the errors of popery. What turned them more conservative, and to more of a belief that Christianity was itself in danger from democratic excesses, was rather, it seems, the furor raised by Paine's *Age of Reason*, the spread in America of unitarianism, deism, and movements like the Philadelphia Theophilanthropy, and probably also the collapse of the customary order in such respected Protestant countries as Holland and Switzerland after 1795. In America, dependent on England for news and interpretation, these developments were seen purely as cases of French aggression, of the French Revolution degenerating into cynical conquest and exploitation; no native democratic or revolutionary impulse among the Dutch or Swiss was perceived. By the end of the decade, it was more common among the American clergy to look upon the whole European revolution of the past ten years as a sad mistake.

In many countries, however, there was enough sympathy for the new republican order on the part of contemporary Christian ecclesiastics to make it possible for some modern writers, looking back from the middle of the twentieth century, to find anticipations of Christian democracy at that time. Books of this tenor have appeared in France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany.⁵⁸

But with the French occupation of Rome in 1798, the promulgation of the Roman Republic, and the ensuing fate of Pope Pius VI, the relations of religion and the Revolution took another downward step, which further embroiled the conflict between Christianity and democracy.

trusted with Our Own (Boston, 1795), 15 n. I am indebted for this item, and for the general findings here expressed, to a paper in my seminar by Mr. Gary B. Nash, "The American Clergy and the French Revolution," based on a wide reading of the sermons and writings of American clergy in the Middle and New England states.

58 For France, the works by Reinhard, J. Leflon, A. Latreille; for Italy, V. Giuntella, "Cristianesimo et democrazia in Italia al tramonto del Settecento: appunti per una ricerca" in *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, XLII (1955), 289-96; for Belgium, H. Haag, *Origines du Catholicisme libéral en Belgique, 1789-1839* (Louvain, 1950); for Germany, H. Maier, *Revolution und Kirche: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der christlichen Demokratie 1789-1850* (Freiburg, 1959). J. N. Moody et al., *Church and Society: Catholic Social Thought and Movement 1789-1950* (New York, 1953), is very slight on the earlier years.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE REPUBLICS AT ROME AND NAPLES

Before going further in the discussion allow me to support my opinion against yours on the affairs of Italy. What you call the force of things, this general tendency towards a republican order, which you think we are unduly opposing in that country—does it exist there really? We have proof to the contrary on every side. At Milan and Rome liberty has struck feeble roots. . . . If at Naples, and especially at Turin, there is a party that calls for the Revolution, it is unfortunately only too true that a more numerous party is working to restore tyranny in the Republics already formed. . . . But even suppose that all Italy were free and united under a single government, do you think we should have nothing to fear from a nation still swayed by prejudice and exasperated against us . . . ? I persist in believing so. We would have much to gain at the moment if we could get a guarantee of the status quo in Italy.

—TALLEYRAND TO SIEYÈS, PARIS, OCTOBER 1798

Peace prevailed on the Continent from the signing of the treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797 to the attack on Rome by the King of Naples in November 1798, which proved to be the opening episode in the War of the Second Coalition, and hence of the grand climax or confrontation in 1799 between the Old Regime and the New Republican Order.

But the peace was no more than a semi-peace. On the one hand, neither France nor Austria could accept the terms of Campo Formio with any finality. Each looked for bastions against the other in Switzerland and Italy. On the other hand, France with its Dutch ally remained at war with Great Britain. While British diplomacy worked to bring Continental armies back into the field against France, the French first threatened to invade England and support revolution in Ireland (while carrying on the “half-war” against American trade with Britain), then redirected their fleet and army into the expedition to Egypt, from which it was hoped that Bonaparte could counteract the growth of British power in the Indian Ocean, where both French and Dutch interests were at stake. The Egyptian campaign transferred the

Anglo-French conflict to the Mediterranean and the Near East. This in turn simplified the British problem in Ireland, and gave the Bourbon Kingdom of Naples and the Russian Empire a more definite interest in the outcome of the Anglo-French war, so that the British, especially after Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at Aboukir, and the isolation of Bonaparte and his army, found it easier to recruit Continental allies, and to form the Second Coalition early in 1799.

THE POLITICS OF THE SEMI-PEACE

In 1798 the French Directory wished to keep the peace on the Continent, the better to concentrate against England.¹ It saw in peace also a means to build up a much needed popularity for itself, and to prevent the further growth of military glory and reputations, of which Bonaparte had already given an alarming example, and which were well understood to be a menace to the Republic. That the Directory wanted peace was agreed upon by informed observers, including some who saw in the very desire of the French for peace a good opportunity to attack them. "We want war all the more positively because the enemy persists obstinately in wanting peace."² So the French could read in a letter which they intercepted, written in October 1798 by a British agent at Naples to a correspondent employed by the King of Sardinia.

What made peace impossible, at the moment, was the Revolution. It was not that the French government, despite allegations to the contrary, had any set plan of revolutionary expansion. The men of the Fructidorian Directory, having dominated the Right and checked the royalist resurgence in the coup d'état of September, would have liked nothing better than to dominate, extirpate, or at least win the confidence of the revolutionary and democratic Left. They were unable to do so. The five Directors after Fructidor were Reubell, who exercised the main influence in foreign policy; Barras, whose importance was exaggerated by his ill repute; La Révellière-Lépeaux, of Theophilanthropic fame; Merlin de Douai; and François de Neufchâteau. Their foreign minister was Talleyrand, whose actual influence in these years hardly went beyond the writing of magisterial memoranda. All would have preferred to subordinate the energies of revolution to the needs of government, to use the idealism of others as means to ends defined by themselves, to be able to turn revolutionary enthusiasm off and on, as an instrument of policy which they themselves determined in Paris. For such to occur, there would have to be some single centralized and disciplined party closely tied to the state, with a cohesive apparatus, both national and international, responsive to manipulation by those in authority. But this was precisely what was lacking, and not even thought of.

The Revolution in 1798, as Carlo Zaghi has said, had ceased to be the organ of a revolutionary government and had become a thing in itself. It had a life and force of its own, as threatening to the permanence of the French Directory as to the

1 This section draws heavily on C. Zaghi, *Bonaparte e il Direttorio dopo Campoformio* (Naples, 1956).

2 Letter published in appendix to *Mémoires de LaRévellière-Lépeaux*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1895), III, 197.

governments of the old order. In France the democrats remained very vociferous, were indignant when the Directory referred to them as "anarchists," expressed sympathy in their newspapers for democrats in other countries, and criticized the Directors for failing to support "world revolution." Had the revolutionary disturbance been French alone it would have been easier for a French government to control it. It would also have been easier to maintain the advantages of a victorious peace. But the revolutionary movement in Italy in 1798 (as in Switzerland or Ireland) was native, genuine, and significant. Patriots in those countries did not intend to serve merely as tools of French policy, to turn hot or cold as the French Directory might desire.

Many French generals, especially those in Italy, thought of themselves as representatives less of a government than of an international revolutionary movement. They were flattered and excited by the solicitations of the native patriots in the various theaters of war. Since Dumouriez' campaign in Belgium, in 1792, the problem of civilian-military relations had thrown its shadow over the French Republic. Dumouriez, in seeking to please the Belgian Statists, had been reactionary from the French point of view of 1792. The case of Bonaparte in north Italy was more equivocal. In his armistice with the King of Sardinia and repudiation of the Sardinian republicans and in the peace that he dictated to Austria at Campo Formio, involving the cession of Venice and abandonment of the Venetian revolution, Bonaparte outraged the wishes of the most vehement French and Italian democrats, who like Buonarroti believed that there could be no peace with kings. Yet it was to Bonaparte, among the French, that the Cisalpine Republic mainly owed its existence. Bonaparte had befriended Italian revolutionaries in Lombardy, and such was his prestige that the French Directory received most of the blame for not befriending them elsewhere, while the hero of the Lodi bridge was hailed as the liberator of Italy. After his departure from Italy, Italian patriots flocked about other French generals, notably Brune, Joubert and Championnet.

The persistent question, in its crudest form, was: who was to benefit from the wealth which military occupation and local revolution made available? There were requisitions to be levied, and property confiscated from former governments and from the church. Here again the question had existed since 1792. There were various possible answers. The French government might regard the occupied areas simply as temporarily conquered countries, exploiting their resources during the period of occupation for its own purposes in time of war, and keeping power in its own hands and those of its civilian emissaries. This policy required the maintenance of firm civilian control over the military, and of French control over the patriots of occupied countries—neither of which proved possible. A second course was for the French generals in the field to make fortunes for themselves (as Bonaparte had done, and Brune and others did on a lesser scale), by taking the control of army supply away from civilian commissioners from Paris, and lodging it in their own headquarters. In pursuing this line the French military commanders in Italy sought support among the most enthusiastic Italian Jacobins, with whom they combined to resist and discredit French civilians and the French Directory. At the same time, the Italian revolutionaries (like the Dutch a few years before) wanted to enjoy the fruits of revolution themselves; to set up new republics, not be

exploited as conquered peoples; and while conceding a certain right of orderly requisition to the French, or agreeing to make payments under treaty, to protest against arbitrary extortion and looting, and to keep the proceeds of the sale of confiscated properties for their own purposes.³

Peace was made impossible by revolutionary movements beyond the French borders which the Directory could neither prevent before they happened nor repudiate afterwards. Among the Swiss there were many—Ochs at Basel, La Harpe in the Vaud, Usteri at Zurich—who wished to seize the opportunity to transform the institutions of Switzerland. In addition, Bonaparte desired French control in the upper Rhone valley (the Valais) to secure the communications between France and the Cisalpine Republic. The conservative Swiss élites looked for support to Great Britain and Austria. The Directory could not ignore the Swiss revolutionaries without favoring its own enemies. It told the Swiss, in effect, at the turn of 1797–1798 (as the Committee of Public Safety had told the Dutch in 1794) that it would be best for them to stage their own revolution; but it also ordered General Brune to stand by with French troops; and since the Swiss revolutionaries were mild men who abhorred violence and discouraged mobs, their revolution was in fact effectuated by French intervention, and the Helvetic Republic was proclaimed in March. It is discussed in the next chapter.

Meanwhile trouble brewed at Rome. Some of the Italian democrats from all parts of Italy, who for two years had congregated at Milan, moved on to Rome after the Cisalpine was established. They formed an extreme fringe to a group of permanent inhabitants of the city who desired changes in the Pope's temporal and ecclesiastical government. It is very doubtful what action the French would have taken except for one incident. It seems clear that both the Directory and the Pope, until this incident, saw their advantage in remaining at peace with each other, the Directory because it wished to keep Austria quiet, the Pope because he knew that his territories were threatened as much by the Austrians as by the French, and as much by the King of Naples as by the revolutionary Italians. The papal government was unable, however, to keep order in the turbulent city, and on December 28, 1797, the French General Duphot was killed in a political demonstration near the French embassy. The death of Duphot seemed the more intolerable to the French because it recalled the death of Hugo de Bassville under similar conditions five years before. In the ensuing uproar it was politically impossible for the Directory to excuse the papal government. French troops from Milan occupied the city. In February the Roman Republic was proclaimed. And soon the peripatetic Italian revolutionaries, now gathered at Rome, were demanding the republicanization of Naples, which, however, was resisted by the Directory and did not occur until a year later, when a combination of a French general with Italian Jacobins brought it about.

The appearance of two more revolutionary republics in peacetime, within three months of the treaty of Campo Formio, made the preservation of peace far more precarious. The new situation was entirely unacceptable to the Austrians. It was the French hope that, by secularization and transfer of the ecclesiastical states of the Holy Roman Empire, currently under discussion at the Congress of Rastadt, the

3 J. Godechot, *Les commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1938).

Austrians might receive German territory (as eventually they did, in the archbishopric of Salzburg and elsewhere) in sufficient amount to give up not only their claims in Belgium but their ambitions in Italy. But the Hapsburg government, willing enough to accept a radical transformation of Germany so long as it was effected by ordinary diplomatic means, could not accept transformations brought by revolutionary action. It could view without excessive scruple the end of the thousand-year Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Poland, the ancient Venetian Republic, or the temporal sovereignty of the Pope. It could not accept anything done in the name of the Revolution reinforced by the French. The ideological issue was basic, however realistic the motives on all sides, and however much more territory, power, or strategic advantage were in the forefront.

On the one hand, so long as only a semi-peace prevailed, and so long as the French were strong, however much the Directory desired peace, and however "moderate" it might seem to the radicals, revolutionary republicanism could be expected to spread. On the other hand, Austria was already committed to the reactionary position for which it was to remain famous. Frightened by the plots discovered in Vienna and in Hungary in 1794 (and by the Greek plot of 1797, for Rhigas Velestinlis was discovered and arrested in Austrian territory, though executed by the Turks at Belgrade); facing the problem of holding down revolutionaries both in Galicia, annexed from Poland in 1795, and in Venice and Venetia, annexed late in 1797; and having in addition to tolerate the Cisalpine Republic on its own borders, the Austrians were in no mood to accept revolutionary republicanism in the Papal States, which almost adjoined Venetia, or in Switzerland, which adjoined Austria itself. Nor were the British, committed to the overthrow at least of the Batavian Republic, more inclined to accept such republicanization of Europe, which in the nature of the case would mean the ascendancy of France.

The Directory wanted peace, but peace was impossible because the French could not repudiate the revolutions in other countries, and the conservative powers could not accept them. Peace was impossible, as Zaghi puts it, "because the revolution and the fear of revolution were not in the Directory in and of itself, or in the men who composed it, but in the very existence of the Cisalpine, the Roman, the Batavian and the Helvetic Republics. As long as these republics stood, Europe could expect no peace."⁴

If in the French government there was at first some enthusiasm for the birth of new sister republics, or some belief in their usefulness, it was an enthusiasm that as the months passed was increasingly tempered by doubt. The spread of revolution to other countries excited the advanced democrats in France. The revival of democratic demands in France, the "neo-Jacobinism" which was very marked in the spring of 1798 and which in fact won a majority in the French elections at that time, gave encouragement, in turn, to the revolutionaries abroad. The French Directors quashed these democratic elections by the Floréal coup d'état in May. They did so because, like other governments, including the American government in 1798, they objected to public criticism by "democrats." They also feared the association of democracy with Babouvism. And they disliked the predilection always

4 Zaghi, 183.

shown by the French extreme democrats for crusading war and foreign revolution. The pacifying of Austria was necessary to a victory over Great Britain, and to pacify Austria the extremists both of France and the sister republics had to be held in check. Such was the turbulence in these republics that Talleyrand argued, in a state paper of July, that except for the Batavian, which had a strength of its own and was useful against England, the sister republics were more trouble to France than they were worth, draining off French military resources for their protection, and making peace on the Continent impossible.⁵ It must never be forgotten, according to another unusually candid French document, that the sister republics existed for the advantage of France, that they could not be regarded as equals, and that France wished them to possess only a certain measure of "liberty"—enough to make them dependent on France, but not enough to allow them to be hostile or neutral.⁶ The realistic Directory had no faith in a mere ideological tie of republicanism to hold other peoples within its orbit.

The British government seems actually to have believed that in continuing the war with France it was working for the liberation of "Europe." No more able to brook neutrality in third parties than the French were, the British considered the conduct of Austria in making peace disgraceful, and the Prussian insistence on non-alignment extremely short-sighted. When the British sent a fleet into the Mediterranean in April they demanded its reception in the ports of powers not then at war, notably at Naples and Leghorn, and at Venice which was now Austrian. They required that Naples and Austria each furnish at least 3,000 seamen to man British warships.⁷ They anticipated that the reception of the British fleet at Naples would provoke the French to attack the Neapolitan kingdom for its breach of neutrality; and that this in turn would draw Austria back into the war, so that a Second Coalition could be formed.⁸ Actually, when Nelson landed at Naples, after defeating the French fleet in Egypt, the French Directory refused to be provoked, and it was the King of Naples, urged on by Nelson and other British advisers, who took the initiative in attacking the French in Rome. By this time, at the end of 1798, British hopes for the liberation of Europe were fastened upon Russia. But the British, to quote a document as candid as the French one just cited, meant to serve their own interests: "to subsidize an army of Russians for British purposes . . . for a vigorous attack on Holland, for the recapture of

5 See Talleyrand's long memoir of July 10, 1798 (22 Messidor An VI) in G. Pallain, *Le ministère de Talleyrand sous le Directoire* (Paris, 1891), 243–346, especially the conclusion, 345.

6 See the "Instructions pour le citoyen ambassadeur . . . près de la République romaine," Paris, 26 Pluviose An VII (February 14, 1799), published by V. Giuntella in *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, XXXIX (1952), 25–29.

7 Despatches by Grenville, April 1798, printed in appendix to *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, 3 vols. (N.Y., 1923), I, 580 ff.

8 See, for example, the letter of Grenville to the American minister to Britain, Rufus King, August 3, 1798, predicting the renewal of war on the Continent when Naples received British naval ships, and remarking that all would be well if only the Continental powers showed "half the energy of the British and American people" against France. (The "quasi-war" between France and the United States was at its height at this time.) Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols., 1892–1927, IV, 272–73.

Malta, the defense of Switzerland, the opening of the markets of South America, the capture of Brest.”⁹

It is well to insist on this “realism” or traditional self-interest of the Powers. Not much wisdom is to be gained, however, from a continued emphasis on the point made by Albert Sorel, that the conflict was an evolutionary phase in the ancient rivalry of France with the Hapsburgs, or of the “Second Hundred Years’ War” between France and England. Considering the kinds of friends and admirers that each Power was then able to attract, the war had a strong ideological character. The form of European institutions depended on which side should win, or on the nature of the compromises in which the conflict might be resolved. It was a war of democrats and republicans against monarchists and aristocrats.

THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Discontent and disorder had long been endemic in the Papal States and at Rome.¹⁰ In this city of 150,000 governed by ecclesiastics, there had been 4,000 murders in the years from 1758 to 1769, and even before the arrival of the French army the annual number of abandoned babies was about a thousand. Since church affairs were the only industry, along with the fine arts and the training of art students, as in the French Academy at Rome, there was very little of a middle class of the kind found in northern Italy and northern Europe. After the loss of the northern legations—that is, after the revolt of Bologna and Ferrara against Rome, and their absorption into the Cisalpine Republic—the papal territories were limited to some of the most unproductive country in Italy. The rural areas were chronically distressed. A peasant revolt broke out in 1791 near Fano on the Adriatic. The bishop reported that “complaint against the government is universal, and there are people who talk in public of the French as liberators and even go so far as to conspire for their arrival.”¹¹ In fact, when the French did arrive, or even approach, the peasants were horrified. At Rome the poverty contrasted with the showy wealth of a few rich families, whose incomes came mostly from rural land, which they owned in such vast amounts that even a backward agriculture could support them in luxury in the city.

“There is nothing to be seen between the ranks of princes and shoemakers, and the houses are palaces or hovels.”¹² Sir Gilbert Elliot, in thus describing Rome in 1794, thought that revolution was imminent, held down only by power and big-

9 Dundas to Pitt, December 9, 1798, *Ibid.*, IV, 435.

10 For the Roman Republic: V. Giuntella, *Bibliografia della Repubblica romana del 1798–99* (Rome, 1957); *id.*, *La giacobina Repubblica romana in Archivio della Società romana di storia patria*, LXXIII (1950), 1–213; writings by Renzo de Felice cited below; A. Dufourcq, *Régime jacobin en Italie: Etude sur la République romaine* (Paris, 1900); L. von Pastor, *History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, Eng. trans., 40 vols. (London, 1891–1953), XL. Pastor’s account of the revolution at Rome is the fullest available in English (XL, 213–60, 289–348), but despite its merits, the original German having been published in 1933, it does not take account of the recent work of Godechot and the Italians on the subject. See also E. E. Y. Hales, *Revolution and Papacy* (New York, 1960), 91–129.

11 Giuntella, *Bibliografia*, XX.

12 *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot first Earl of Minto*, 3 vols. (London, 1874), II, 246.

otry. He was of "the school that believed revolution to be caused by ignorant and desperate men. Actually, given the relative absence of a middle class enjoying some independence from church and state (which at Rome were the same), the surprising thing is that there could be any revolutionary movement at all.

Pius VI had tried, in preceding years, to carry out reforms of the kind associated with enlightened despotism in other countries, working especially through his minister Ruffo, who, however, had made enemies among the great landowning interests, so that the Pope had had to dismiss him. In 1797 Pius authorized the sale of church-owned rural land to raise money for public purposes. Financial reform proved unsuccessful. Paper money, inflation, debt, and deficit took their toll. Historians well-disposed to the papacy agree that conditions in both state and church needed much reform. The Pope's nephew, the Duke of Braschi, involved in the grain trade by which the city was provisioned, and having in fact made a somewhat questionable fortune, was attacked in the streets by a mob; his carriage window was broken, his lackey was manhandled, and a plot to blow up his house was announced by the police.¹³ Violence at Rome was frequent enough, but it was elemental and undirected.

For a revolution on the European model, there seemed to have been little intellectual preparation. At Naples and at Milan, in the preceding half-century, there had been active-minded Italian "philosophers," but hardly at Rome. Jansenism, so strong in Tuscany and in the universities of the Po Valley, had little following in the pontifical city. The influx of French clerical émigrés in the 1790's hardly favored an understanding of recent events in Europe. Nowhere was there a greater dread of Freemasonry, which had been prohibited to Catholics as a secret society since the days of Benedict XIV. The French Academy at Rome, which continued to be a center for Frenchmen in the city during the years of the Revolution in France, was thought of as a nest of Masonic conspirators. The famous Cagliostro, impostor, alchemist, medical quack, and self-styled founder of a new branch of Masonry (whose successes, it must be admitted, had been obtained north of the Alps), was tried and convicted at Rome in 1789, and died in a Roman prison in 1795. To conservatives there seemed to be something "revolutionary" about Cagliostro, and revolution was but another form of charlatanism. Since at Rome, as elsewhere, one of the first steps of the innovators was to break down the ghetto, and engage in fraternization with Jews, it was also believed, by some, that the Revolution was Jewish.

Nevertheless, there was a revolution at Rome in 1798, and a significant number of Romans took part in it. A detachment of the French *armée d'Italie*, now commanded by Alexander Berthier as Bonaparte's successor, arrived on February 10. The Pope was ordered out of the city, and the papal government was dissolved. On February 15, in the still unexcavated field of the ancient Forum, where a few time-worn Roman columns thrust themselves up among wandering cattle, a gathering of a few hundred patriots, assembled by Berthier, shouted its acclamations to an Act of the Sovereign People. This act asserted the independence of the Roman People, and their dedication to "truth, justice, liberty and equality"; and while

13 Pastor, XL, 259.

specifying that the "spiritual authority of the Pope should subsist intact," abolished his temporal power.¹⁴ A few weeks later the constitution was proclaimed. It was written, as already noted, by four Frenchmen; and it included, as article 369, a provision that, until a future contingency which never came, no law of the new republic could take effect until signed by the French military commandant. It is a curious fact, worth mentioning in passing, that no foreign government ever recognized the Roman Republic, except, in a sense, that of the United States, which was represented at Rome by an Italian who acted as American consul. Having been accredited to the "city of Rome" (not to the Pope) he decided to remain.¹⁵

Who were the Roman "Jacobins"? Some were nobles—dukes and princes—including Prince Borghese and two others of that family. Doctors were even more prominent than among "Jacobins" elsewhere; one doctor, Angelucci, became a consul or Director of the Republic. Lawyers were active as usual, including *curiali* who practiced in the papal courts. Laymen with careers in the papal administration, whose advancement was blocked by a system in which higher positions were always held by churchmen, were also numerous in the revolutionary ranks. So were persons hoping to buy at low prices properties confiscated from church bodies—a practice for which Pius VI had already set a kind of precedent. There were also various artists, including the younger Piranesi and the sculptor Ceracchi, who had twice been to America, where he had mixed with democrats in Philadelphia, been elected to the American Philosophical Society, and done the busts, still famous, of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, and Adams. Among the Jews of Rome, who threw off the ghetto badges on the day Berthier entered the city, there were a few who were able and willing to go into public life; several joined the new National Guard, and one was elected a senator. The Jews were, of course, at Rome, the only religious minority. The most astonishing thing about the Roman Republic is the number of Catholic churchmen who accepted it.¹⁶

Fourteen cardinals (of twenty-six then in the city) took part in a *Te Deum* at St. Peter's in February to express thanks for "liberty regained." It is true that, as the revolution grew more radical, most of these dignitaries left the scene. Nevertheless two cardinals, Antici and Altieri, reached the point of actually resigning from the Sacred College, for reasons that remain unclear, but in which a reluctance either to go into exile or to suffer from anticlerical persecution seems to have figured. Granted that opportunists and cynics were not absent from the hierarchy of the day, it is not necessary, and would probably be false, to attribute such acceptance of the republic—with its corollary, the end of the Pope's temporal sovereignty—to

14 Giuntella, *Giacobina repubblica*, 2; Dufourcq, 105.

15 Giuntella, *Giacobina repubblica*, 72, quoting Timothy Pickering's despatch of June 11, 1799, to Giovanni Batista Sartori, United States consul. Pickering refused formal recognition on the ground that the Roman Republic was not really an independent state.

16 On Ceracchi see Renzo de Felice, "Ricerche storiche sul 'giacobinismo' italiano: Giuseppe Ceracchi," in *Rass. st. del Risorgimento*, XLVII (1960), 3–32; on the Jews, H. Vogelstein, *Rome: Jewish Communities Series* (Philadelphia, 1940); on the Catholic clergy accepting the republic, Giuntella, *Giacobina repubblica*, 17, and R. de Felice, "L'evangelismo giacobino e l'abate Claudio della Valle" in *Rivista storica italiana*, III (1957), 196–249, 378–410. It is significant how fully de Felice agrees with Giuntella, the two being the chief experts on the subject, in a long review of Giuntella's ideas in *Rass. st. del Risorgimento*, XLIV (1957), 830–32.

mere opportunism or timidity. Cardinal Chiaramonti, the later Pius VII, it should be recalled, had accepted the Cisalpine Republic in his diocese near Bologna, itself recently detached from the papal states. He had delivered his famous Christmas homily, on Christianity and democracy, only a few weeks before his fellow-cardinals gave their blessing to the new order at Rome.

From the cathedral chapter of St. Peter's itself came a finance minister and various other officers for the new government. Various parish priests became known for "republican" sermons. Two friars put on uniforms as battalion commanders. A Dominican joined the new *Istituto Nazionale*. Most inclined of all clerics to republicanism were those called *scolopi*, an order of regulars who conducted a system of schools. Catholics who felt strongly that the church was too wealthy for its own good, or that some of its property could be better used for other purposes, or that governmental power should be wielded by laymen, had no reason, in principle, to oppose the Republic. The extent of such "Jansenist" ideas in Rome is uncertain (common as they were elsewhere in Italy), but such ideas did not have to be Jansenist. The ex-Jesuit Bolgeni was already well known for anti-Jansenist writings. He rejected in Jansenism the idea that the Church should return to an original purity. Arguing, instead, that it should change with the times and accommodate itself to modern conditions, and that spiritual and temporal power could be separated, he took the oath to the Republic, and wrote a pamphlet to explain why good Catholics could be equally loyal to the exiled Pope and to the new Republic at the same time.¹⁷

It is agreed, by the two best recent authorities on the subject, that the desire for church reform and for political and administrative modernization were both fundamental in the revolution of 1798. It is agreed that the "Jacobin" clergy, while surprisingly numerous, were a minority among ecclesiastics in Rome. To what extent they were early "Catholic Democrats," to what extent the "Jacobin Evangelicals," the *evangelici giacobini*, in whom deism and Theophilanthropy were often mixed with appeals to the Bible, were or were not "in the bosom of the Church," or were or were not Jansenists, or even influenced by Calvin, are matters best left to Italians to discuss and to Catholics to define. It is clear that some of their ideas waited a long time for realization. In particular, the Roman Question, or question posed by the temporal sovereignty of the Pope, while first presented in actual politics by the Republic of 1798, was not settled until the twentieth century.

The Republic, in its life of a little over a year, never took on even the degree of solidity enjoyed by the Cisalpine. It was never more than a project, and even the zealot Mangourit, when he passed through, reported that it had organized nothing but anarchy. It lived in the shadow of imminent, and later actual, war. It was divided from the beginning by incurable fissures, between French and Italians, between Romans and revolutionaries from other Italian states, between civilian and military authorities, between governing personnel and journalistic extremists, between Rome and the outlying parts of the former papal dominions. Territorial consistency was minimal; an abortive "Ancona Republic" had to be brought in by

17 A. Quacquarelli, *La teologia antigiansenista di G. V. Bolgeni, 1733-1811* (Mazara, n.d., about 1950), 85-93.

force, and the “departments,” as drawn by the constitution, proved recalcitrant village republics, when they were revolutionary at all.

Hardly had the French arrived, and begun to requisition housing, jewelry, cash, and miscellaneous property, when a mutiny broke out against the troop commander, Masséna. The men and their lesser officers objected to being unpaid, and to lacking lodging and proper rations, while the military higher-ups, by abuse of the requisitions, lived at ease or laid by little fortunes for themselves. (There was a saying at Rome that nothing was so honest as a French soldier, from private to captain inclusive.¹⁸) While the troops were out of control, revolt broke out among the populace on the right bank of the Tiber, who hated the French, loved the Pope, and engaged in anti-Semitic outbursts. Discipline was restored to the army, and obedience to the population, when a few of the latter were shot by a firing squad. A few weeks later the rural areas fell into insurrection and “brigandage,” especially in the most civilized regions along the main road from Rome to the north, where the repeated passage of soldiers made the requisition and pillage especially burdensome. It is estimated that in the end the French levied some 70,000,000 francs in the Roman Republic. They used these sums (apart from illicit private enrichment) in part to support the troops in Rome, in part to supply and pay the main body of the army at Milan, and in part to finance the expedition to Egypt.

When the government was set up the five Consuls, or executive, tended to take sides with the French civilian commissioners, while the two legislative chambers, and especially the lower house or Tribunate, found friends among the French soldiers and generals. The latter were also favored by most of the journalists, many of whom were not Romans, but migrants from the Cisalpine or refugees from Naples, like Vincenzo Russo, the editor of the *Monitore di Roma*.¹⁹ Patriots divided between moderates and extremists. Disillusionment set in very soon, with the moderates aghast at radical demands, and the radicals impatient that so little progress was being made.

“I am tired of politics,” wrote a moderate as early as March 29. “I would like to go somewhere where I could hate men in peace, and die.” The more ardent democrats were well aware that democracy had not yet been gained. “When people tell me that Rome is democratized,” wrote one of them in the *Monitore*, “I answer that the horses are more democratized than the people. These poor beasts, which were accustomed to the grave, majestic pace of the empurpled tyrants [the cardinals] or the Roman matrons, must now run at a brisk trot or furious gallop, with the plainest harness, under the democratic whip of the French warriors.”²⁰

The more advanced Jacobins, especially in the clubs and the newspapers, called for revolution in Naples, or wanted all Italy consolidated into one unified republic. Many were from other parts of the country, and they wanted all Italian states of the Old Regime to be dissolved. Consuls and other officials, put by the French in the government, were by contrast moderate Jacobins. Natives of Rome, by the Revolution they meant certain practical reforms in taxation, administration, and

18 Godechot, *Commissaires*, II, 189.

19 Russo's *Pensieri politici* and other writings from the *Monitore di Roma* are reprinted in D. Cantimori, *Giacobini italiani* (Bari, 1956), 255–398.

20 Giuntella, *Giacobina repubblica*, 8 and 20.

tenure of office in their own city. As in other revolutionary republics, primogeniture and entail (*fidecommessi*) were abolished, and there were serious discussions of the penal code and of public education. But the governing personnel had no interest in a big, vague unified Italy in which they would be politically lost. The French Directory were positively set against the idea of a unified Italy, which, if established successfully, would become independent of, or even hostile to, France. The Directory and its civilian commissioners therefore sided with the Roman moderate Jacobins, and were attacked by the radicals for betraying the Revolution.

Advanced Jacobins denounced the rich absentee landowners, and called for a system of more equal property in the hands of small owner-farmers. Vincenzo Russo, in his *Monitore*, gained a reputation for Utopian radicalism by demanding what is now called land reform. Some of the French could see the wisdom of such a program, for the small owner-farmer was common enough in France; but fear of the agrarian law or of Babouvism (which had proposed to abolish property, not divide it) made it hard for the French to sympathize very warmly. The matter reached the stage of serious discussion in the Tribune but was blocked by the moderate Jacobins of the Senate and the Consulate. The latter were in many cases landowners themselves, and were buying up land confiscated from the Church. It has been found that, of the 400 known purchasers of Church land in the Roman Republic, about 70 were persons occupying a place in its government. Most others were of the agricultural or mercantile possessing classes; and the total effect of the land redistribution was to produce more, rather than less, concentration of land ownership.²¹ It is conceivable, and has been argued, that a serious land reform might have attached the peasantry to the Revolution; but it seems very doubtful that legislation of this kind, with the accompanying legalisms, delays, and confusion, could have overcome the hatreds aroused in the countryside by requisition and looting, and by attacks on religion.

At first, to repeat, persons feeling themselves to be good Catholics had accepted the Republic. Nothing in the constitution or the official republican philosophy questioned the spiritual authority of the Pope. Some Jacobins were religious, some not. In May, some of the French troops were relieved by the Polish Legion sent down from Milan. The Poles, fierce republicans in other respects, were also very positive Catholics. They swarmed to the shrines of the city with cries of devotion to the saints and the Holy Father. These exhibitions of piety aroused the disgust of advanced Jacobins and Jacobin Evangelicals. Efforts were renewed to wipe out superstition. In July there was a great demonstration that recalled scenes in France in 1793. Before an altar of Liberty a miscellany of cardinals' hats, titles of nobility, minutes of the Inquisition, and the golden book of the Capitol were committed to flames; and an architect named Barberi, in addition to breaking a cross and throwing it in the fire, went on to debaptize himself by the simple expedient of washing his hair.²²

In this overcharged atmosphere, as the advanced wing of the Italian Jacobins loudly threatened the Kingdom of Naples, the governments of Naples and Austria

21 R. de Felice, *La vendita dei beni nazionali nella Repubblica romana del 1798-99* (Rome, 1960).

22 Dufourcq, 241.

bided their time until all the revolutionary republics in Italy might be destroyed. For a while it seemed that Austria would recognize the Roman Republic (taking Bologna and Ferrara for itself), if only the French would abandon the Cisalpine. Even the most moderate and upper-class Italian republicans, even Melzi d'Eril, the Cisalpine representative at the Congress of Rastadt, were dismayed by signs of conservatism in the French Directory (as in the Floréal coup d'état), and alarmed by the thought that the French, to prevent a renewal of war on the Continent, might abandon them to the Hapsburgs. The minister of the Ligurian Republic in Paris, on hearing of the riotous demonstration against Bernadotte in Vienna, believed that Austria planned an early attack in Italy. He drew the only conclusion possible even for a moderate: "We and all the other democratic republics," he reported to Genoa, "will be unable to avoid making common cause with France against the common enemy."²³

In September it was learned in Italy that the British had destroyed the French fleet at the mouth of the Nile. Bonaparte with the best of the French army was cut off. Nelson docked at Naples on September 23. He was a pronounced anti-Jacobin, and his enthusiastic monarchism made him a warm advocate even of the Bourbon monarchy at Naples. He was hailed as a saviour, and his officers enjoyed a series of fetes and triumphs. Nelson's arrival reinforced other British influences by which the royal court had long been surrounded, since the king's chief minister was an English expatriate, Acton, and the queen's confidante was the famous English adventuress, Emma Hamilton, wife of the British ambassador. While both the British and the Austrian governments warned against premature action, and preferred to wait until the French attacked Naples, which they stubbornly refused to do, Nelson and the English colony persuaded King Ferdinand to force the issue. The chaos at Rome, and peasant insurrection in the Roman departments, seemed to offer an irresistible opportunity, especially since, as Sir William Hamilton wrote to Grenville, Rome was defended by "not more than 3,000 Poles and French."²⁴ The Neapolitan troops were commanded by an expert borrowed from Austria, General Mack—a soldier much dogged by misfortune, who had been worsted in Belgium in 1794, and was to surrender to Napoleon in 1805 at the famous capitulation of Ulm.

Mack with his Neapolitans invaded the Roman Republic on November 23. Pushing through without opposition to Rome itself, they tore up the trees of liberty, and King Ferdinand appeared in person to promise the restoration of order and true religion. While panic and consternation gripped the Roman republicans, the French general, Championnet, gathering a force much smaller than Mack's, soon turned the tables. By a movement equally speedy in the reverse direction, he put Mack to flight, and in January 1799 the French, along with Polish and Cisalpine forces, entered the city of Naples, against the fierce but unorganized opposition of the *lazzaroni*, or populace. The king and queen fled abruptly to Sicily, taking off with 50,000,000 gold francs' worth of valuables and their English friends in Nelson's ships to Palermo. The Neapolitan Bourbons, like the House of Orange, made themselves unabashedly into wards of the British government.

23 Zaghi, 106, 180, 236.

24 *Camb. Hist. Br. For. Policy*, I, 583.

Meanwhile the British signed a treaty with Russia. The Ottoman Empire, at war with France since the invasion of Egypt, prepared to send Turkish forces to Italy. The Austrians, protesting that the time was not ripe, nevertheless soon joined in. The Second Coalition had been formed. The general crisis of 1799 will be described at the end of this book.

At Rome, the invasion, the renewal of war, and the elation of momentary victory all contributed to radicalize the republic. There were forced loans and attempts at economic controls. Since the allied powers claimed to be fighting a crusade for Christianity and the papacy, the handfuls of violent anti-Christians came to the fore as the firmest defenders of the Roman Republic. Their attempts to make political use of a church in which they did not believe only turned Christians against them. The argument that Christianity was democratic, or democracy Christian, began to sound very hollow. Catholic democrats, believers in the separation of church and state, who had at first favored the Roman Republic, were appalled at the treatment accorded the Pope by his captors, especially after the war began—moved at the age of eighty-two from city to city in Italy, increasingly forbidden to see subordinates or advisers, taken through the snows of the Alpine passes to France, and dying there in seclusion. On the other hand there were those, more numerous among the French than the Italians, who could view these events with a positive satisfaction, believing that with the death of Pius VI there would never be another Pope of Rome at all. They found it eminently fitting that in 1799, as the eighteenth century came to a close, in which so much else that was ancient and benighted had disappeared, an end should also be put to the Catholic Church. It seemed that the *infâme* had at last been crushed.

The occupation of Naples raised a new crisis between the French Directory and its own generals supported by the Italian patriots. The Directory was averse to the establishment of another republic in Italy. It estimated that, by direct military occupation, it might raise as much as 200,000,000 francs in the Kingdom of Naples, and at the same time be free of troublesome commitments at a future peace conference.²⁵ Championnet resisted his orders, refused to deal with the civilian commissioners from Paris, and consorted with Italian patriots who followed him from Rome to Naples, and with those at Naples who welcomed him upon his arrival. In exploiting the resources of Naples, he meant to favor the Italian revolutionaries, his own soldiers, and himself. Remembering Bonaparte and the founding of the Cisalpine, he declared that he had overthrown the Neapolitan monarchy, not to serve the ends of civilian graft and corruption, but to advance the liberation of Italy and mankind.

A Neapolitan Republic was thus proclaimed in January 1799.

THE NEAPOLITAN REPUBLIC

The Neapolitan Republic lasted less than six months. Farthest out and most briefly seen of all the satellites of Paris, it was by no means the dimmest, since it has al-

25 On this matter, and the conduct of Championnet, see Godechot, *Commissaires*, II, 254–74.

ways shone with some magnitude in historical literature. It produced the best remembered book to come out of the Italian *triennio*, Vincenzo Cuoco's *Saggio storico*, of which more will be said. At the end of the nineteenth century Benedetto Croce, before turning to the philosophy of history, began his career by writing history itself, and chose the *Rivoluzione napoletana* for his subject. The idyl of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, dallying in Mediterranean palaces while war raged about them, kept an interest in these events alive in England. Of all the sister-republics the Neapolitan is apparently the only one on which a book has ever been written in the English language.²⁶

The Kingdom of Naples, embracing the southern half of the Italian peninsula and the island of Sicily, had belonged since 1735 to a branch of the Spanish Bourbon family, represented at the end of the century by King Ferdinand IV. His queen, Maria Carolina, was a Hapsburg, one of the many royal offspring of the Empress Maria Theresa, and hence a sister to the late Marie Antoinette of France, and an aunt to the reigning Austrian Emperor, Francis II. The loathing of the royal pair for the French Revolution was implacable, and exceeded if possible only by their dislike of republicans in their own country.

Naples and Palermo were among the largest cities in Europe, huge aggregations of the underemployed and the wretchedly poor, locally called *lazzaroni*, for whom the future held no promise since population was far out of proportion to economic development. Many small and ancient cities dotted the kingdom. As in the Papal States, and in contrast to northern Italy, the rural land was worked by primitive methods, but it was owned in large tracts by men who lived in Naples or the smaller cities, of which they formed the hereditary patriciates. Something remained of the manorial and seigneurial systems, but the condition of the kingdom was not especially "feudal." In the landowning classes, along with an older nobility, were numerous persons who in recent generations had applied the profits gained in the law, government office, or trade, to the acquisition of rural estates, which they used for income without troubling to develop them. Between peasants and townspeople, or between the lower and upper classes in the towns, there was less contact than in northern Italy or western Europe. Peasants and *lazzaroni* were not only illiterate, but spoke no language except dialects which varied from place to place, so that they were shut off from the great world, and even from each other. From the outside world they were reached only by their priests, to whom they were likely to be devoted without actually being very religious. Isolation, poverty, and social disorganization were so great, according to the most recent historian of Calabria, that the peasants had little awareness of belonging either to the Kingdom of Naples or even to the Catholic Church.

26 V. Cuoco, *Saggio storico sulla Rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* (Milan, 1801), reprinted at Bari, 1913, from the second edition of 1806; B. Croce, *La Rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* (Bari, 1926), first published about 1895; C. Giglioli, *Naples in 1799: an Account of the Revolution of 1799 and the Rise and Fall of the Parthenopean Republic* (London, 1903). For somewhat more recent works see N. Rodolico, *Il popolo agli inizi del Risorgimento nell'Italia meridionale, 1792-1801* (Florence, 1925); A. Lucarelli, *La Puglia nel Risorgimento*; II, *La Rivoluzione del 1799* in Commissione provinciale di archeologia e storia patria di Bari, *Documenti e monografie*, XIX (Bari, 1934); C. Cingari, *Giacobini e Sanfedisti in Calabria nel 1799* (Messina, 1957).

The educated classes—those of the higher clergy, the professions of law and medicine, and the circles of the newer Enlightenment which was well represented in the cities—were drawn from the landowning families, among whom the divisions between old nobility and newer gentility were somewhat blurred. With a good deal of leisure and few nagging problems, many of these people favored the most altruistic principles of the day. Nowhere was the sympathy for revolution more disinterested or more idealistic. Given the social realities in the Kingdom of Naples, there was little ground for a self-admiring conservatism, and under a dynasty of such recent date and unedifying deportment the upper classes were not fervidly royalist.

Revolutionary agitation began at least as early as 1792. At that time a French naval squadron had visited the Bay of Naples, and there had been much excited fraternization between French officers and sailors and inhabitants of the city. Two clubs had been formed, and it was in this case a fact that Masonic lodges became conspiratorial centers. The government, which as recently as 1789 had attempted, in recognition of the *lumi del secolo*, to break up the privileged oligarchy at Brindisi by making all its citizens “equally subject to the laws and taxes,”²⁷ now became fearful of anything suggesting modern enlightenment. Government and clergy combined to keep out a knowledge of French newspapers, French books, French ideas, and French events. Repression became more severe after the dethronement and execution of the French king and queen, and after Naples entered the First Coalition. Large elements of the educated classes, disapproving in Naples as elsewhere of the war against France, became increasingly contemptuous of a government that lived in terror of any public discussion, and even of what its subjects might be privately reading or thinking in their houses. Official prohibitions were countered by secret organizations, which in turn led to arrests and imprisonments. In the years from 1794 to 1798 in Calabria alone, the “toe” of Italy, 493 persons were prosecuted for “crimes of opinion.” Hundreds of Neapolitan patriots went into exile, first to France, then in 1796 to the Cisalpine Republic and in 1798 to Rome, which they regarded as a final stage in their return.

When Championnet entered Naples he brought a band of these exiles with him, and was joyously welcomed by patriots who had suffered at home in the preceding years. With the king’s ignominious abandonment of the mainland, and the breakdown of the royal government, a great many others who were not really “Jacobins” rallied to the Republic. Thus the eighty-eight-year-old Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Zurlo, despite all that had happened by this time at Rome, advised acceptance of the new order; and when the miraculous liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius took place at the cathedral with only minor irregularity, it was given out that God favored the new regime.

Neapolitan republicanism was indigenous and predominantly upper-class. It was indigenous in the sense that hardly any “outsiders,” from other parts of Italy, took part in the Neapolitan Republic, as they had done in the Cisalpine and the Roman. Except for returned exiles like Vincenzo Russo, who had been active in the disturbances elsewhere in Italy, and except for a few intellectuals of enlarged

27 Rodolico, 20, quoting an official document of 1789.

outlook, the South Italian “Jacobins” had little idea of a unitary all-Italian state or nation. The Cisalpine troops who came in with the French were regarded as foreign. North Italian interference or co-operation was not desired.

The high social standing of the republicans is beyond question. Two princes, Caracciolo and Pignatelli, four marquises, a count and a bishop were among the 119 executed as Jacobins in the Bay of Naples before the year was out.²⁸ To observers like Lord Nelson and Cardinal Maury this infection of the aristocracy by republican principles was the most intolerable and disgusting aspect of the whole affair, and was in fact taken by them as another sign of Italian degeneracy.²⁹ Very active in the revolution also, after the French arrived and the royal authority crumbled in the provinces, were the town-dwelling rural landowners of the cities of Calabria and Apulia, a *borghesia* that performed few functions of a “bourgeoisie,” but which made up most of the educated class outside the capital. To these were added the intellectual and professional elites—doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, university graduates, professors, students, writers, and a surprising number of the clergy. In Apulia, the “heel” of the peninsula, the bishops at first accepted the republic; if they did so primarily to keep the peace, and in deference to “established” authority, they were at least not yet deterred by any systematic conservatism or ideology of the throne and the altar. In southern as in northern Italy there were Jansenists who welcomed a chance for church reform, or even for a kind of spiritual renewal on whose desirability Christians and secular humanitarians could agree.

The weakness of the Republic, which was as apparent to the philosophical idealism of Croce as it has been to more sociologically minded historians, lay precisely in this elite character of its leadership, and in the fact that the leadership never had enough support either from the French or among the mass of its own people. The French Directory did not favor the Republic; Championnet was soon recalled to Paris; there were never more than a few thousand French soldiers in Naples, and most of these, by May 1799, were recalled to the Po Valley to meet the threat of Austrian invasion in the War of the Second Coalition. Left thus to themselves after three months, the Neapolitan republicans, unable to recruit an army of their own, had to face a population which at worst was in armed rebellion and at best had no understanding of what they were trying to do.

The best of the republicans genuinely desired to improve the lot of the common people, to give them schooling and education, to endow them with the benefits of liberty and equality, to impart to them the dignity of citizenship in a decent country and some share in the advantages of European civilization. Typical of these attitudes was Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel, soon to be remembered as one of two women executed at Naples for republicanism, a high-minded and generous soul

28 Names and occupations of the 119 are listed in Cuoco, 369–75.

29 On Nelson, see below; Maury wrote in October 1799 to Louis XVIII that “not eight noble families preserved themselves from the revolutionary contagion” and that “revolutionary fanaticism [in Naples] has been more ardent, atrocious and universal among the clergy and nobility than in France itself, so that we are at least under the unexpected obligation to this horde of cannibals of now no longer being the lowest among civilized nations. . . . Ninety-year-old priests, on being hanged, have preached democracy and invoked the French at the steps of the gallows.” *Correspondance et mémoires du Cardinal Maury* (Lille, 1891), I, 206 and 233.

who edited the *Monitore napoletano*. Her view was that “the people distrust the patriots because they do not understand them.”³⁰ She proposed, therefore, that civic missionaries be sent into the countryside, and that writings be made available to the people in dialect, to explain the true nature and aims of democracy; and this was in fact done when, for example, a certain priest published, in dialect, *The Republic Justified by the Holy Gospel*. But, as Croce observed, the good Eleonora was in fact mistaken; the people understood only too well, and refused to agree with the patriots because they distrusted them. They distrusted them in part as coming from a distant and pretentious class of society, like modern slum dwellers viewing volunteer settlement workers with suspicion. They associated them with Frenchmen, civilian and military, who were draining the meagre resources of the country. Ignorant and superstitious though they were, they understood that these well-dressed patriots, with their cultured ways, were in many cases precisely those absentee owners of rural land, living in cities and holding country life in contempt, who had for years been encroaching on village commons and building up vast estates to be worked by an agricultural proletariat. Vincenzo Russo, who had called for a division of great estates in the Roman Republic, could get even less attention for this idea in Naples than in Rome. It is true that he befogged the issue with other sentiments then favored by democrats in all countries, such as that public officials should serve for little or no pay. The Neapolitan legislators enacted “the abolition of feudalism,” and they did away with primogeniture and entail, though the Republic did not last long enough for these measures to take effect. Basically, they did nothing about the land question. Abject poverty remained the main social problem; the mass of the people were hardly mistaken in seeing no advantage to themselves in the fine ideals of political liberty, freedom of thought, and strict equality before the law with which the republicans sought to attract them.

The fall of the Italian republics in 1799 was part of the general European counter-revolutionary offensive described below in Chapter XXXII. It is appropriate to note here some distinctive elements in the débacle at Naples—the constructive efforts of the man by whom Naples was recovered for the monarchy, Cardinal Ruffo; his repudiation by the anti-republican extremists; and the consequent fate of the leading Neapolitan “Jacobins,” who were not the only Jacobins in Europe to be summarily disposed of in 1799, but who were subjected to an especially dramatic end.

Ruffo, who came from a noble Neapolitan family, had been a reforming minister of Pius VI in the Papal States in the 1780's, and though not a priest had been made a cardinal in token of his services at the time of his dismissal from office. He had tried in the Papal States, without success, to find means by which the peasants might obtain secure tenures of small plots of land. He had more of a sense of the actual social problems of the country, as well as more experience and capacity in administration, than the republicans of either Rome or Naples. In January 1799 he had advised Ferdinand IV not to desert the mainland, but had nevertheless followed him to Sicily. In February he landed in Calabria with only eight companions, and was soon able to combine the armed insurrectionary bands, which he found already in existence, into a half-organized host called the Christian and

30 Croce, 36.

Royal Army. Since this host was sometimes also called the Army of the Holy Faith (San Fede) the ensuing movement has been known as San Fedism, and represented as an outbreak of religious fanaticism. That it was basically a religious movement is open to question; at least Cardinal Zurlo expressed disapproval at the invasion by Cardinal Ruffo, and many priests were later punished for resistance to the *Armata Cristiana*.³¹ Nor was the movement a peasant uprising only, since upper-class townspeople sometimes assumed command of local troops, using the occasion to seize the property of fellow-townsmen who could be discredited as “Jacobins.” It was upon the peasants, nevertheless, that Ruffo was able to rely for a mass following, and he rallied them the more easily because he gave ear to their grievances. He allowed them to reoccupy common lands, abolished certain taxes and unpopular local offices, and declared the “abolition of feudalism.” When he requisitioned food for his army he tried to pass the burden to the absentee landlords, and he issued a good many pardons to broaden the basis of his support. But the swarm that swept over the country was under no control, and it descended with fury on cities where the republicans had come into power; at Paola in Calabria numerous Jacobins were killed, and all the upper-class homes, noble and bourgeois, were looted. In May Ruffo reoccupied the city of Naples, and besieged some of the last and most prominent of the republicans in the fortress of St. Elmo. Ferdinand IV had instructed Ruffo to offer no terms. “We wish no mercy shown to any rebel against God and me.”³² Ruffo, nevertheless, in the king’s name, gave his promise to the republicans at St. Elmo that if they surrendered their lives would be spared. They surrendered on this understanding.

Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina considered Ruffo entirely too indulgent to traitors. The English at their court were of the same opinion. Nelson, whose fleet now re-occupied the Bay, believed that countries should be governed like a British warship—by rewards and by punishments. The queen was consumed by feelings of vengeance toward her own capital. “*Enfin ma chère Milady*” as she wrote to Lady Hamilton in her international French, “*je recommande à Milord Nelson de traiter Naples comme si ce fut une ville rebelle en Irlande.*”³³ Nelson pressed for severity, and if there was any odium in the execution of Jacobins the king and queen were willing enough to let him bear it. The king, still at Palermo, gave orders that the recognition of Ruffo’s terms of surrender should be left to Nelson’s judgment. A man of stern duty, like Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*, Nelson also believed that the saving of civilization from Ireland to the Straits of Messina required the condign and conspicuous execution of Jacobins. Discussing the terms of the surrender with Ruffo, “that swelled up priest,” he was shocked when Ruffo referred to the rebels as “patriots”—“what a prostitution of the word!”³⁴ To his own subordinate, Foote, he

31 Fifteen clerics were among the 119 executed at Naples and listed by name in Cuoco; Lucarelli, p. 37, names twelve more for Apulia, as a mere sample from the official register.

32 Ferdinand IV to Ruffo, Palermo, April 11, 1799, quoted at length in H. C. Gutteridge, *Nelson and the Neapolitan Jacobins: Documents Relating to the Suppression of the Jacobin Revolution at Naples*. Printed for the Navy Records Society (London?, 1903), 38.

33 *Ibid.*, 213.

34 *Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, 7 Vols. (London, 1845), III, 334, 387.

observed: "Your news of the hanging of thirteen Jacobins gave us great pleasure; and the three priests, I hope [will] dangle on the tree best adapted to the weight of their sins."³⁵ Nelson, in short, carried out King Ferdinand's wishes with complete personal satisfaction. The prince and former admiral, Caracciolo, was hanged by his order from the yardarm of the warship *Minerva*. He was one of 119 republicans put to death at Naples in the following months.

The Neapolitan Republic expired in an anarchy which in some parts of the country sank into habitual brigandage. The Bourbon monarchy was restored at a ruinous cost: the intellectual élite had been wiped out or silenced, a monarchy once enlightened became notorious for its imbecility, and the king boasted that he would henceforth rely on his faithful *lazzaroni*, the most ignorant and destitute among his people. Loudly complaining that republicans were tools of the French, the monarchy at Naples depended, until its final collapse in 1860, on British, Austrian, or any other foreign support that it could obtain against its own subjects.

One of the survivors of the Neapolitan revolution was Vincenzo Cuoco. He had played a minor role, but was condemned to twenty years' exile and went to France, from which he returned to Italy in 1801 to enjoy a career of some prominence in the Napoleonic states. In 1801 he published his *Saggio storico sulla Rivoluzione napoletana*. It was less a history than a series of reflections on history. Its message was that the revolution at Naples had failed because it was "passive" and "abstract." He extended the same criticism to the whole Italian movement of the 1790's, and, pursuing his reflections, attributed the quality of excessive "abstraction" to the French Revolution itself. His work thus came to represent in Italy, in a mild way, the kind of thinking that Burke expressed in England and which the emergence of the historical school of jurisprudence was soon to express in Germany. Indeed, the *Saggio* was translated into German in 1805. "Abstraction" in this case meant the argument, already long familiar in 1801, that the ideas of the patriots were too general, involving conceptions of a universal liberty or equality, or humanity, or constitutionalism, or asserted rights, that had no relation to practical issues or circumstances, or to the differences among nationalities and national cultures. By the "passivity" of the Italian revolution Cuoco meant that it had been brought in by the French, or at least that the Italian republicans had been hardly more than enthusiasts responding to a French stimulus and entirely dependent on French decisions. Under nineteenth-century conditions Cuoco's view became part of the conventional wisdom.

Italian historians of all schools, for the last half-century, while differing with each other, have found it necessary to refute Cuoco. They have argued that the

35 *Ibid.*, 376. The role of Nelson at Naples in 1799 has been much debated. Croce in 1896 (*Rivoluzione napoletana*, XXI) called for an intensive study, which was supplied by F. Lemmi, *Nelson e Caracciolo e la Repubblica napoletana, 1799* (Florence, 1898). Lemmi concluded, 89, that "while many causes may have worked together to push Nelson into the iniquities by which he stained himself at Naples in 1799, the principal cause must be sought in his education, in his proud and imperious temperament and in his political passions and convictions." Gutteridge, *op.cit.*, 1903, reached a more favorable judgment, but though publishing and reprinting many documents, he refrained from including many in which Nelson's "political passions" were apparent, and which had already been published in the *Dispatches* of 1845, from which a few examples are quoted above.

Revolution of the *triennio* was neither as passive nor as abstract as it seemed to the disillusioned exile. The reader of the preceding chapters of this book can judge for himself. It would seem that the Italians, far from being passive, often pushed the French further than they wished to go. Passive the Italian republics were in the sense of dependency on French power; it was the French defeat of 1799 that destroyed them, and Napoleon's victory at Marengo in 1801 by which, in north Italy, republicanism was restored. But the Italian republicans were not so "passive," or so merely pro-French, as to be incapable of revolt against the French in 1799, as will be seen. The anti-French movement in Italy, by 1799, was confused by the fact that counterrevolutionaries and revolutionaries, while detesting each other, could agree in opposing the French Directory. As for "abstraction," it must be said that something of this quality must enter into any conception of law and justice, and that the ideas of Italian republicans, given the real conditions of the Italian old regime, had enough concrete relevancy to be very uncomfortable to partisans of the old order.

At least three causes for the failure of the Italian republics can be seen, more important than their alleged passivity and abstraction. Most important was the lack of common ground between town and country, arising from the old Italian tradition of urbanism and the city-state. Lack of rapport between townsman and peasant weakened republicanism in north Italy; positive hostility between them made it impossible in the center and south. Secondly, there was the religious question. Enough has been said to show that there was no simple conflict between the Church and the Revolution. Many good Catholics were democrats and republicans; but their efforts were discredited by the extremists of both sides, by a political religiosity which denounced the Revolution as wicked (a view not unknown in Protestant countries) and by the much publicized insults and onslaughts of those who thought the whole Christian religion ridiculous. Thirdly, the French, still engaged in a war for the preservation of their own republic, had more interest in exploiting the wealth of the Italians than in sharing republicanism with them. There was nothing new in the exploitation of countries occupied in time of war, but the French conducted it with thoroughness and persistency, through agents sometimes lacking in personal honesty, in a turmoil enlivened by much talk of liberty and democracy. If they created in Italy not friends but dependents, it was because they themselves saw the Italian republicans in this light.

It is in the *triennio* that many Italians today see the first step in the Risorgimento. To the old dream of a regenerated Italy, and to the writings and labors of eighteenth-century reformers, there had now been added something new. Action had followed upon words. Italians had sat in elected assemblies, adopted constitutions, debated and enacted laws, engaged in politics and diplomacy in the name of the people. New classes of men had come into public life. In a country noted for secretiveness in matters of state, a sphere of public life and of political publicity had been created. And there was in some circles a cult of the martyrs of 1799, like Vincenzo Russo, who was said to have shouted from the scaffold, "I die for liberty. *Viva la Repubblica!*"³⁶

36 Croce, III.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE HELVETIC REPUBLIC

To preserve the independence and welfare of Switzerland is our highest goal. Both are threatened by the present internal and external relations of the country. These are due in part to the troubles of the day, but mostly to the deficiencies of our governments. . . . Our governments should do now what they should have done long ago—give Switzerland a constitution which, while granting equal rights and equal liberties to all, endows all with a single interest, and so creates a total community endowed with a new force of life, which can stand against threats both present and future.

—PAULUS USTERI TO PETER OCHS,
ZURICH, JANUARY 8, 1798

All Switzerland is only twice as large as the American state of New Jersey, but until 1798, small as it was, it was an incredibly complex mosaic of dissimilar pieces. Nowhere else was the impact of certain principles of the Revolution more apparent and more lasting—especially of the principles of legal equality and of the unity and indivisibility of the Republic. If in New Jersey, with the passage of a few generations, there has grown up a jungle of adjoining boroughs, townships, cities, planning boards, boards of education, and joint districts and authorities of many kinds, they at least exist within a single state and under a comprehensive system of law. In Switzerland, over a millennium, there had grown up an indefinite number of small communities—from cities like Zurich to remote clusters of pastoral families in Alpine valleys—which no longer belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, and did not yet belong politically to anything else.

SWITZERLAND BEFORE 1798

Today Switzerland is composed of twenty-two cantons. There were only thirteen at the beginning of 1798, and the thirteen embraced only parts of the region

called Switzerland. They were associated for external defense in a perpetual "oath-fellowship" or *Eidgenossenschaft*; not until the eighteenth century did the term come to signify a territory as well as merely a league. All the oath-fellows were German-speaking. They were bound to certain "allied districts" by arrangements which varied in each case. The largest of the allied districts were the Bishopric of Basel (from which the city of Basel had separated when it turned Protestant in the sixteenth century); the Abbey of St. Gallen; the Valais (or German Wallis), which was in the upper Rhone valley above Lake Geneva; and the eastern part of Switzerland which is now the canton of Graubünden, but was then called the *Drei Bünde*, or Three Leagues, one of which was in turn composed of the Ten Jurisdictions. There was a third general category, called the "subject districts." These were areas conquered in past centuries from the dukes of Savoy or Burgundy by one, several or all the cantons together. Thus the French-speaking Pays de Vaud, north and east of Lake Geneva, belonged to the German-speaking canton and city of Bern. Among the subject districts were also the "common lordships," which belonged to the cantons as a group, or to two or more of them, or to the *Drei Bünde*. The largest were Thurgau, east of Zurich, and various Italian-speaking regions, such as the area about Locarno and the part of the Adda valley called the *Valtellina*. After a revolt against the *Drei Bünde* in 1797, the *Valtellina* was incorporated into the Cisalpine Republic. To add to the variety, the present French-speaking cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel did not belong to the confederation at all; Neuchâtel was a principality of the King of Prussia, and Geneva was an independent republic, connected with the cantons only by treaties of specific import.

Local liberties flourished. In the "democratic" cantons of the high valleys, Uri, Schwyz, Zug, and Unterwalden—isolated, small, rural, and Catholic—there was a good deal of local direct democracy, which the inhabitants preferred to keep as local as possible. (These four democratic cantons, however, despite a popular idea current even then, accounted for less than a twentieth of the population of Switzerland.) In the city-cantons, Zurich, Bern, and Basel (as in Geneva), which were busy, Protestant, and fully in touch with Europe, local liberties meant a corporate independence in the councils and constituted bodies described in the first volume. Their citizenship was a tightly held privilege. "An inhabitant of Zurich who has the right of citizenship," said the Russian traveler Karamzin, "is as proud of this as a king of his crown."¹ Certain families enjoyed a hereditary monopoly in the powers of government. There were local liberties of a kind even in the subject districts, which, however, were actually governed, taxed and in fact exploited by members of the ruling families sent out from the dominant cantons. Local liberties and privileges were everywhere, for this or that kind of people, but as Peter Ochs remarked in 1796: "To be born in Switzerland gives no rights whatsoever."²

There was no Swiss state, Swiss citizenship, Swiss law, or even Swiss government except for some purposes in foreign relations. Each canton lived "like a snail

1 N. M. Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveler, 1789–1790* (New York, 1957), 131.

2 *Korrespondenz des Peter Ochs*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1927–1937), II, 36.

in its shell."³ There was religious variety from place to place, but no religious freedom for individual persons. There were no uniform coinage, weights, or measures. Defendants in criminal cases were liable to torture, and newspaper editors to intimidation and censorship. Transportation was rudimentary, even in the lowlands. There were about a hundred "internal" tariffs. Business and labor in the towns were regulated by conservative guilds, of which there were some thirty in Zurich alone. In many places the rural people were subject, even more than in more modernized monarchies, to heavy manorial dues and to seigneurial jurisdiction. There was certainly none of the equality among language groups for which modern Switzerland is famed. If the Swiss ruling classes spoke French, as they did, it was because French was then spoken by all ruling classes of central Europe. The country was uniformly republican in having no king, nor did it have much of a titled nobility; but with its burghers and patricians, its guilds and seigneuries and locally established churches, it was a picture-book example of what the eighteenth century, still unused to the word "medieval," simply called "Gothic."

That the Swiss remained independent, and had so long managed to stay out of European wars, was due more to the balance of power between France and the Hapsburgs, and to the small size of the neighboring German and Italian states, than to any power or wisdom in the town oligarchs and rural notables of the thirteen cantons with their allied and subject districts. Swiss independence was threatened by the French Revolution and the ensuing war. So was the territorial integrity of the country, especially since the marginal zones on all sides except the north were only loosely attached, enjoying no equality with the inner centers. In the Drei Bünde there was always an Austrian influence. In 1797 the Valtellina went to the new Italy, to which it still belongs. The French occupied the Bishopric of Basel in 1792, and at the same time took over, from the King of Sardinia, the region of Savoy which adjoined and resembled French Switzerland. Geneva had always been separate. Disaffection against Bern was very active in the Vaud and the Valais.

A partition of Switzerland was a clear possibility in these years. Under pressure of war and revolution, Switzerland would either fall to pieces or emerge more solid than before. For the fact that it emerged more solid at least two reasons can be given. There was, in all the institutional pulverization, a certain consciousness of common culture and common identity as Swiss, arising from memories of a shared defense of local liberties against outside powers. Secondly, there was the political revolution that produced the Helvetic Republic. The borders of this republic, like those of the Batavian, and unlike those of the Cisalpine or Roman, coincided with

3 E. Chapuisat, *La Suisse et la Révolution française* (Geneva, c. 1946), 262. This is a popular summary by a man who devoted many scholarly monographs to the same and related subjects. See also the book-length article on the Helvetic Republic by Arnold Rufer in *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Suisse*, 7 vols. (Neuchâtel, 1921–1933); or the same in German, *Hist. biog. Lexicon . . .* (Neurenburg, 1921–1934). Rufer and Chapuisat are the two outstanding authorities of the past generation on eighteenth-century Switzerland. The principal source collections are the Ochs correspondence and J. Strickler, *Actensammlung aus der Zeit der helvetischen Republik, 1798–1803*, 12 vols. (Bern, 1886–1940), of which A. Rufer took over the editorship on Strickler's death. See Rufer's account in *Zeits. für schw. Gesch.* (1952), 261–63. Very full also of information and documents on the subject are several chapters of J. Godechot, *Commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1938).

the borders of a group of people who had some sense of identity as a nation. The idea of a Swiss people was in the realm of the possible. Much that was durable was accomplished in the Helvetic Republic, whose main features were confirmed in the Napoleonic Act of Mediation of 1803, and reconfirmed at the Congress of Vienna. It is universally agreed that modern Switzerland dates from 1798.

GENEVA: REVOLUTION AND ANNEXATION

Although it never belonged either to the old confederation or to the Helvetic Republic, it is well to say something first of Geneva, because its fate, annexation to France in 1798, pointed up the dangers to which much of Switzerland was exposed.

At Geneva, when the Revolution broke out in France, there were still at least four different levels of persons: the *citoyens*, the *bourgeois* and the *natifs* of the city, and the *sujets* who lived in the few square miles of its rural territory. The *natifs*, "natives" for several generations, had no political rights, but could live and work in the city. A few were well-to-do, but mostly they formed the lowest economic class. The *sujets* were an inert peasantry. As already related, the preceding quarter-century had re-echoed to the clashes of *citoyens* and *bourgeois*, with the *natifs* playing a minor role and occasionally receiving a few concessions. Since 1763 there had been two opposed parties, one called the *Négatifs*, representing the old principle of government by a closed corporation of self-co-opting governing families, the other called the *Représentants*, not because they favored "representative" government (which was still unknown at Geneva) but because, by making "representations" or complaints against the government, they had come to espouse a democratic or at least anti-aristocratic position. There had been an abrupt counter-revolution in 1782, followed by an "aristocratic resurgence." The patrician *Négatifs*, supported by the intervention of France, Zurich, and Bern, had managed to undo the changes made since the 1760's. Their Edict of Pacification, guaranteed by France, Zurich, and Bern, was called the Black Code by the defeated *Représentant* or democratic party, some of whom were banished from the city, while others went into voluntary exile, mostly in France.⁴

The Revolution in France radically transformed the state of affairs in Geneva.⁵ For one thing, the aristocratic party had repeatedly depended on intervention by the French monarchy, along with Zurich and Bern, to protect itself against Genevese opposition. From no government in France after 1789 could the Geneva patricians expect so much sympathy. On the contrary, French official action was now more likely to favor the Genevese democrats. The exiles favored such pressure, and one of them, the banker Etienne Clavière, was even thought to favor the annexation of Geneva to France as early as 1789. The fact that Protestants and Catholics in France now had the same rights, and that the French state no longer defined

4 Above, pp. 391–99, 476–77.

5 For the following paragraphs see *Histoire de Genève des origines à 1798 publiée per la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève* (Geneva, c. 1950), in which the pages by E. Chapuisat and F. Barbey, 495–538, review the years from 1789 to 1798. There is a large literature.

itself as Catholic, made it possible for a few Genevese, despite their Calvinist background, to see in annexation at least a tolerable idea. In addition, the French agrarian revolution of 1789 had immediate effects in the territory of Geneva. The frontier at its nearest point was no more than a mile from the city. The *sujets* of Geneva, the rural people who had never had any political rights, and who had taken no part in the civic struggles of the past, were aroused to a new political consciousness, not by propaganda but by facts, when they saw peasants a few miles away throwing off their old obligations, and knew that French villagers were receiving newspapers from Paris, talking to returned deputies, setting up new municipalities, and electing local officers under legislation of the Constituent Assembly. In 1792 Savoy was annexed to France, and received the new agrarian and municipal institutions. Within revolutionary France, which now reached both shores of the lake, Geneva was no more than a tiny enclave.

The coming to political life of the rural *sujets* was the new feature in the civil struggles at Geneva after 1789. A certain Jacques Grenus, himself of the old ruling citizen class, having been banished in the counter-revolution of 1782, and having developed an intense animosity toward the aristocratic party, set himself up as leader and spokesman for the *sujets*. What was lacking in Italy became apparent in Geneva (as in Switzerland proper, especially in the subject districts): namely that rural people could see an advantage to themselves in the Revolution, and that there were city men who were able and willing to make use of rural discontent, and in whose promises the country people could feel some interest and confidence.

The *natifs* also were aroused by the Revolution in France. The greatest concession hitherto made to them (in 1768) had been the right by which some of them, if sufficiently wealthy, could obtain promotion to the rank of *bourgeois* by the payment of a sum of money. Additional efforts to extend rights to the *natifs* had been blocked by the counterrevolution of 1782. Now the *natifs* and *sujets*, under Grenus' leadership, combined into a new party of protest called the *égalisateurs*, determined to abolish the old distinctions altogether. Against this truly popular menace the two traditional adversaries tended to come together. Making peace with each other they introduced a few reforms, but not enough to satisfy the new opposition. They again banished Grenus and annulled his citizenship. When the war began, in 1792, the exiled Grenus was encouraged by the French occupation of Savoy, while the Geneva government brought in troops from Zurich and Bern to protect its neutrality—against objections not only by France, but in the Swiss confederation itself, for it is not to be supposed that the cantons, especially the conservative rural Catholic cantons, were eager to have Geneva as a member of their league, or to be responsible for its protection. Troops of both sides were withdrawn from the neighborhood of the city after negotiations, but in the heat engendered by these proceedings, in December 1792, at a moment when French revolutionary republicanism was streaming into Savoy, Belgium, and the Rhineland, the *égalisateurs* rose up at Geneva, displaced the old government, and effected a "revolution."

The Edict of December 1792 ended the old regime at Geneva. Legal and civil equality was declared for all inhabitants of the territory. The call went out for a National Assembly for the Genevese "nation," some 27,000 persons in the city plus a few thousands of peasants. Political clubs became very active. In part they merely

continued the old assemblies called “circles,” but some of the clubs modeled themselves on those in France, now at the height of its own Revolution, even calling themselves *clubs de la Montagne*.

The Assembly produced a constitution in 1794, which was duly submitted to popular vote, and ratified clause by clause, by majorities which differed for each clause, but were of the order of 4,300 to 200. In such figures a very high percentage of adult males was represented. In one way the Geneva constitution of 1794 adhered firmly to Genevese tradition: it gave full political equality only to persons of the Reformed Religion. In other respects, while meeting demands that were genuinely indigenous, it resembled the French constitution of 1793. It was very “democratic,” for, while it introduced at Geneva the principle of representative government, that is the enactment of laws by a legislature chosen for the purpose, it allowed for a great deal of direct initiative on the part of the citizens in legislation, which it also made subject to a popular referendum.

Meanwhile the economic situation had gravely deteriorated. The war, though Geneva remained neutral, was ruinous to its trade; the export of watches declined drastically. Men out of work frequented the revolutionary clubs. The city was even cut off from its own agricultural districts, most of which did not adjoin it, but were enclaves within France or Savoy several miles away. The city itself, as noted, was an enclave after 1792. With a few boats on the lake, the French could shut it off even from the neighboring Pays de Vaud. The French complained that Geneva, by its neutrality and independence, became a nest of smugglers, spies, and speculators in French paper money. They subjected it repeatedly to blockade and to strict controls in the movement of goods and persons.

Unemployment, food shortage, and high prices thus afflicted the city, and the Geneva revolution therefore ran a somewhat parallel course to the French in economic as well as constitutional matters. The poor turned against the rich. The working class revolutionaries of the radical clubs demanded confiscations and price controls, progressive income taxes, taxes on inheritances and on rents. In July 1794 they revolted again, disarmed and arrested their opponents, and installed a Revolutionary Tribunal. The Tribunal, under armed popular pressure, decreed banishment for 94 persons, and the death sentence for 37, of whom, however, 26 were *in absentia*. The accused were charged, not incorrectly, with resistance to the popular will as far back as the “Black Code” of 1782, and with bringing in foreign intervention at that time. A few months later a second tribunal, the political wind having changed, condemned several others to death, both “aristocrats” and “anarchists,” and including some extremists charged with conspiring with France against the independence of the republic.

In 1795 there was a return to regular government under the new constitution. Despite all that had happened, despite the intense hatreds aroused over many years in a small inbred community, the chance for harmony and stabilization looked promising, if only Geneva could be let alone by outsiders. It was not easy, however, for the French to let it alone. Geneva was not, after all, an insignificant place like San Marino, which the French allowed to retain its independence in 1798 on the border between the Cisalpine and the Roman republics. Geneva was an enclave in France, or rather a cluster of enclaves, not claimed with any enthusi-

asm by the Swiss. Under modern conditions as they were developing, with uniform territorial organization on an expanding scale, it was hard to see how a city as important as Geneva could live encysted in a larger body. In any case the French Directory had no intention of leaving it alone. After a series of protests and counter-protests, with imposition, removal, or reimposition of blockade, the French Directory annexed Geneva in 1798 as part of its general plan of that year for the reorganization of all Switzerland.

Geneva became the *chef-lieu* of a new French department, the Léman. To make it big enough for a department, the Directory added bits of French and of former Savoyard territory to its jurisdiction. Only a few Genevese, irritated to the point of desperation by their own internal conflicts, welcomed the annexation as a solution to problems that they had not solved themselves. The Genevese were never content with membership in the French Republic and Empire, which, however, proved to be not without its reward. When Geneva became a Swiss canton in 1815 it retained some of the former French and Savoyard territory which the French Republic had bestowed upon it. That is why the canton of Geneva today, though one of the smallest in Switzerland, is a good deal larger than the old republic of Rouseau and Calvin.

THE SWISS REVOLUTIONARIES

It has never been easy in the English-speaking world to see that along with French military intervention in Switzerland there went a good deal of native Swiss revolutionism and willing collaboration on the part of the Swiss themselves. Especially among political reformers and in romantic literary circles in England, where a tendency to sympathize with foreign revolutionary efforts could be found, there had come to be an image of Switzerland as a land of peaceful and innocent liberty, in which no internal revolutionary disturbance was to be expected. The legend of William Tell, for example, was appealed to by conservatives as well as revolutionaries in both Switzerland and other countries.⁶ Or (to take another symbol) Lord Byron in 1816 visited the famous chateau at the water's edge in the Pays de Vaud at the eastern end of Lake Geneva. He was so appalled by its dungeons that he wrote his famous poem *The Prisoner of Chillon* on the horrors of prolonged solitary confinement. The poem referred to a sixteenth-century episode. It was not generally realized in England or America that Chillon was used as a state prison until 1798.

Another "prisoner of Chillon" attracted little attention when he turned up as a refugee in Philadelphia in 1794. This was F. A. Rosset, of a prominent Lausanne family, who had taken part in a political banquet held at Lausanne in July 1791 to celebrate the fall of the Bastille. In discoursing on the liberation of France and of mankind, the banqueters had really meant to voice their dissatisfaction at the subjection of Vaud to Bern. Bern reacted accordingly, sensing sedition. Several

6 Cf. R. Labhart, *Wilhelm Tell als Patriot und Revolutionär, 1700–1800. Wandlungen der Tell-Tradition im Zeitalter des Absolutismus und der französische Revolution* (Basel, 1947).

Protestant pastors who had expressed patriot views at the same banquet were removed from their churches; one was sentenced to prison for four years. Rosset was condemned to twenty-five years' confinement at Chillon. Rescued from the Château by audacious friends, he fled to America, where he was joined by another Vaudois patriot, J. J. Cart. John Adams saw them in Philadelphia, and mentioned them to Jefferson. Adams was amazed that the "canton of Bern could have been so tyrannical," but the two Americans thought little more about such matters.⁷ Four years later, in the Helvetic Republic, Americans could see nothing but French aggression.

The Swiss revolutionaries were in truth a mild group of men, the easier to overlook for that reason. Neither then nor by their historians were they often called "Jacobins." Radical tendencies, with adoption of a natural-rights philosophy in criticism of the old order, were more common in the French-speaking than the German-speaking wing of the Helvetic movement, as shown for example in F. C. La Harpe of the Vaud in contrast to Paulus Usteri of Zurich. The fact that before 1798 no French-speaking area enjoyed cantonal status would be enough to explain the sharper demand for liberty and equality, which in any case the closer ties with French thought and culture would reinforce. The German Swiss were less differentiated from the Germans than they later became, if only because Germany itself was not yet the Germany of Bismarck. Valuing their historic traditions, they shared with the Germans a tendency to historicist theories of law and constitutionalism, and saw in a Swiss revolution a need mainly to amplify and extend things already excellent in themselves. Like many Germans, the German Swiss also took a somewhat moralizing view of revolution, deploring all violence as unseemly, believing that the state existed to make men good rather than happy, and holding that only men of elevated character and high ideals should have an influence in politics. Like good Germans, they could look on the French with a certain condescension. The Swiss republican party, one of them wrote, "would wed what is great and true in the maxims of the French Revolution to the results of German morality and higher philosophical culture."⁸

7 L. J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1959), I, 253 ff.; on Rosset and the Vaudois banquets, C. Burnier, *La vie vaudoise et la Révolution* (Lausanne, 1902), 212–38; on the arrest of the pastors, P. Wernle, *Der schweizerische Protestantismus im XVIII Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Tübingen, 1925), III, 517. There is a large specialized literature on the Vaudois revolution, much of it published by the Société Vaudoise d'histoire et d'archéologie. That Americans saw only French aggression in the Helvetic Republic seems substantially true, but can be qualified. The American traveler, Joseph Sansom, who inclined to Federalism in American politics, visited Switzerland in 1801, and, upon learning of the Swiss old regime, remarked: "Yet a free and equal Citizen of the American Republic, whether *naturalized* or native born, can see but little to regret in the exchange of a *despotic Oligarchy* for a Foreign Dictator—of *oppressive prescriptions* for forced loans—of *National Independence* for Individual emancipation." *Letters from Europe during a Tour through Switzerland and Italy in the Years 1801 and 1802, Written by a native of Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1805), I, 106.

8 Quoted by E. His, *Geschichte des neuern schweizerischen staatsrechts*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1920–1938), I, 679, n. 13. On Germanic-Kantian and French-natural-rights attitudes in Switzerland see also W. von Wartburg, "Zur Weltanschauung und Staatslehre des frühen schweizerischen Liberalismus" in *Schw. Zeits. f. Gesch.* (1959), 1–40, and H. Büchi, "Die politischen Parteien im ersten schweizerischen Parlament (12 Apr. 1798 to 7 Aug. 1800): Die Begründung des Gegensatzes zwischen deutschen und welscher Schweiz" in *Politisches Jahrbuch der schw. Eidgenossenschaft*, XXXI (1917), 153–428.

The revolution of 1798 was for most of the Helvetic republicans a brief and not even especially memorable episode in their lives. In no sense did the revolution represent the intrusion and subsequent overthrow of new or unknown persons. Most of the leaders were men of standing before 1798, though only Peter Ochs, the most patrician of all, was at the head of a cantonal government. La Harpe came from the aristocracy of the Vaud, but the Vaudois aristocracy was excluded from the ruling oligarchies of Switzerland. Generally the innovators were men who had traveled widely or developed extensive contacts outside Switzerland, so that, while remaining well aware of the advantages of their own country, they were free from the provincialism of self-adulation. Usteri, a medical doctor of Zurich, was active also as a journalist in Leipzig and Augsburg. La Harpe had been tutor to the Russian grand-dukes Alexander and Constantine, until ejected from Russia for sympathy with the French Revolution. His fellow Vaudois, P. M. Glayre (who like La Harpe and Ochs became a Director of the Helvetic Republic), had served as adviser to the King of Poland during the Four Years' Diet, and had long been active in international Freemasonry. Peter Ochs owned property in France; his sister had married the man who became the first Revolutionary mayor of Strasbourg. It was in his sister's house that the music of the Marseillaise had been composed, and in his own house that the treaties of Basel of 1795, by which France made peace with Prussia and Spain, had been signed.⁹

Most of the leaders enjoyed long and successful later careers, not discredited by their experiment with revolution in 1798. Peter Ochs emerged the most stigmatized as a collaborator with the French (so much so that his two sons changed their name to His in 1818); but even Ochs was respected by many persons in the Switzerland set up by Napoleon's Act of Mediation, and served as vice-burgomaster of his native Basel in 1816. La Harpe, the most nearly "Jacobin" of the leaders, went into retirement under Napoleon, but came forward in 1814 to defend the liberty of Vaud against the claims of Bern at the Congress of Vienna, and spent another two decades as leader of the Swiss liberal party until his death in 1838. Usteri, being a doctor, served as a federal sanitary commissioner after 1800, and then, after 1814, was active in the liberal party and press until he died in 1831. J. J. Cart, the fugitive of 1794 in Philadelphia, served for fifteen years after 1798 as senator and appellate judge in the Helvetic Republic. The Zurich educator, Heinrich Pestalozzi, who received his first opportunity to try out his ideas when given charge of war orphans by the Helvetic Directory in 1798, and who played a role as a republican journalist at that time, went on writing, teaching, and observing child development until 1827. Pestalozzi's benefactor among the Directors of 1798, J. L. Legrand from Basel, lived on as a cotton spinner and philanthropist until 1836 in Alsace, where he worked on religious and school problems with the pastor J. F. Oberlin, after whom Oberlin, Ohio, was named.

The Helvetic revolution had its similarities and its differences to those that produced the other sister republics. Dutch and Italian revolutionaries, to advance their aims, had relied on the war between France and its enemies; the Swiss thought

⁹ On Ochs before 1798 see 663–64; on the careers of all persons mentioned here, *Dict. hist. et biog. de la Suisse*.

their cause best advanced by peace, and hardly even saw a chance for Swiss revolution until the treaty of Campo Formio brought peace to the continent. The more ardent Batavians and Cisalpines, once their new republics were established, were eager to fight Britain and Austria respectively; most Helvetic republicans tried to remain neutral in the War of the Second Coalition, expecting the French to protect them. The Swiss produced no such apostles of international revolution as Filippo Buonarroti, who believed that no peace could be made with kings. In Switzerland, as in the Dutch provinces and in Italy, once the new republic was established, an intense struggle followed between unitarists and federalists, the former being the democrats, the latter the moderates. Territorial uniformity, the equalization of rights between town and country, between *Stadt* and *Land*, or burgher and peasant, a basic issue in all the sister republics, and in the French Revolution itself, was most especially of the essence of the Helvetic revolution. We hear more of peasant uprisings in Switzerland than in Holland or Italy. The Swiss rural people were in fact radically divided. Those of the democratic Alpine cantons or *Urkantone*, such as Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden, were strongly opposed to the Helvetic movement, wishing to keep their ancient liberties unaltered by such modern developments; but the peasants of the subject districts (like the *sujets* of Geneva) put on revolutionary demonstrations in 1798; and it must be remembered that one such subject district, the Thurgau which belonged to Zurich, had almost as many people as Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden combined. A degree of cooperation between rebellious peasants and urban leaders is a characteristic of the Helvetic revolution which we miss in the revolutions of the Italian *triennio*. Finally, to complete this comparison, Switzerland suffered, less than the Italians but more than the Dutch, from the burdens and problems imposed by French requisitions, levies, and pillaging, and by the disputes between French civilian commissioners and military commanders in its territory.

SWISS UNITY VS. EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Crises of internal and of external origin combined at the end of 1797 to threaten the Swiss confederation, as the treaty of Campo Formio between France and Austria, following upon the establishment of the Cisalpine Republic, seemed to open the prospect of a new political order in Europe. As elsewhere, the internal and the external were inseparable. Swiss partisans of the old ways hoped that Austria and Great Britain would remain strong; those who desired change looked with a mixture of hope and fear to France. Reformers were alarmed by the discussions between France and Austria initiated in November at the Congress of Rastadt. They feared that these two powers, the better to digest their respective gains under the treaty, would agree upon a guarantee of the existing order in Switzerland. If so, the opportunity for a new course in Switzerland would be missed.

Internal stresses had accumulated to the point where the leading innovators had to make decisions. Resentment against Bern continued in the French-speaking areas of Vaud and Valais. Peter Ochs and his circle at Basel, including men both

inside and outside the governing group, were convinced that the existing order in Switzerland was no longer viable and that the rural areas and subject districts must somehow be allowed to participate in a common life along with the old ruling cantons. They too were annoyed at Bern, where the council tried to use its influence with the other cantons to prevent discussion of the French Revolution and of new ideas for Switzerland.

The situation at Zurich was explosive, thanks to what the Swiss call the Stäfa affair. Stäfa is a village about a dozen miles from Zurich, to which it was then subject. It had a reading society, four of whose members drew up a memorial in 1794 addressed to the city, requesting an equalization of rights between town and country, more freedom of entrance into occupations and schools, and the buying up of certain seigneurial dues. Against the appeals for moderation by various notables of the city, such as Pestalozzi, Usteri, and the physiognomist Lavater, the Zurich government dispatched 2,000 troops to Stäfa, and punished no fewer than 260 persons by fine or imprisonment. The ruling elements, to quote a modern Swiss, proved immovable to the point "where even contact with their subject people had been entirely lost."¹⁰ As with Bern and the Lausanne banquet of 1791, so with Zurich and Stäfa, the obstinacy of the authorities, and the extreme disproportion between the punishment and the offence, left a great many people profoundly disaffected. They were to prove in 1798, not essentially pro-French, but in favor of some kind of radical change and unwilling to defend their own governments against French intervention.

Bonaparte, returning to Paris from Italy, was determined to secure the communications of France with the Cisalpine Republic, through control of the upper Rhone valley and the Simplon pass. This meant extending French influence in Vaud and Valais, the very heart of French-speaking Switzerland in which discontent with the Bern oligarchy was so strong. La Harpe, the chief spokesman for the discontented French Swiss, had been established as an exile in Paris for some years, and now began to work closely with Bonaparte. At the moment he was not eager to merge his countrymen with the German Swiss, to be swallowed up in a "German ocean," as he put it, and he proposed to the French Directory, in September 1797, that France intervene to obtain the independence, under French protection, of the Pays de Vaud and adjoining areas. He entered also into correspondence with Peter Ochs, who, though himself bilingual, was the recognized leader among German Swiss who desired a transformation of their country. For both Ochs and La Harpe the main problem was to overcome the resistance of the conservative oligarchies at Bern, Zurich, and elsewhere.

Ochs feared also that the city of Basel was in danger of being annexed to France, as the territory of the bishopric of Basel had been annexed already; and one of his reasons for desiring a quick revolution was that the overthrow of conservative and pro-Austrian elements would remove the excuses for French intervention. Ochs and La Harpe, at the end of 1797, while remaining for two years the principal

¹⁰ The reviewer in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* (1957), 400, commenting on W. von Wartburg, *Zürich und die französische Revolution* (Basel, 1956).

figures, and even colleagues, in the Swiss revolution, entered upon curiously divergent lines of development, in which the problems of the small political satellite are well illustrated.

It was Ochs, at first, who objected to French intervention, and put his faith in spontaneous Swiss uprisings by which the old order in the several cantons would be displaced, and a Swiss National Assembly be convened to enact a constitution. It was La Harpe, at first, who welcomed the French army into Switzerland, and even believed that the Swiss were so divided that the new constitution should be drafted and imposed by the French.¹¹ Thereafter the two men moved in opposite directions. Invited to Paris in December 1797, Ochs sat in conferences with La Harpe, Bonaparte, and the French Directors, at which it was decided that France should sponsor revolution in Switzerland. To Ochs was assigned the task of preparing a constitution, and he did so, believing that his draft would be discussed and amended by a future Swiss convention; but in fact Bonaparte and La Harpe vetoed the idea of such a convention, and the Directors Reubell and Merlin de Douai made numerous changes in Ochs' draft.

Ochs was persuaded, nevertheless, to lend his name to the constitution (which the Swiss call the "Paris constitution" of 1798), so that it might seem more acceptable in Switzerland. Once the Helvetic Republic was promulgated, Ochs found himself repeatedly taking the French point of view, urging compliance with French demands for men and money, finding excuses for the most arbitrary actions of the French government and its agents, and persuading his countrymen to accept the needs of French foreign policy, all on the ground that no other defense against Swiss reactionaries and Austrian influence was possible, until the name of Ochs, who was certainly a man of great personal integrity, became identified with the most unpleasant forms of collaborationism. La Harpe, on the other hand, once the new republic was set up, increasingly resisted the French demands, criticized the more extortionate practices of the French occupation, and tried to avoid signing a treaty that would subordinate the Helvetic Republic to French foreign policy, while at the same time tending to a more radical position in Swiss internal affairs, looking to a rapid extinction of seigneurial rights, to special taxes on the wealthy, and to the confiscation and sale of church and émigré properties, so that a Switzerland energized by its own revolution would be the less dependent on France. The result was that by a coup d'état of 1799 La Harpe drove Ochs out of the Helvetic government, only to be driven out himself in 1800.

Only at Basel, in January 1798, did events follow Ochs' original formula. The country people rose up, burned a few chateaux, and lent aid to revolutionary bour-

11 See the discussion by G. Steiner, ed., *Korrespondenz des Peter Ochs*, II, clxxxiii–ccviii; and the letter of La Harpe to General Brune, Paris, March 8, 1798, in Strickler, *Actensammlung*, I, 499–500: "The Executive Directory will put the finishing touch to its favor to us, if it persists in replacing the Gothic Swiss constitution, mother of all evils, with an indivisible republic that will unite the various peoples of Switzerland. . . . The minions of oligarchy will doubtless redouble their efforts to prevent the execution of this salutary measure. . . . Ah! Citizen General, preserve us from the double scourge of federalist oligarchy and delirious demagoguery. You have the force needed to render us this signal service . . . for you yourself to give us a constitution that would cost us years of labor and torrents of blood if we undertook to do it ourselves." There seems to be a critical misprint here of *vous* for *nous* in line 2 of p. 500.

geois in the city, so that the conservatives yielded, equality of town and country was proclaimed, French intervention was forestalled, and an assembly met to write a constitution. In the following weeks there were revolts in other cantons and subject districts. In the Vaud a party of patriots captured the chateau of Chillon, and proclaimed a Lemanic Republic independent of Bern. Elsewhere the violence met with more resistance. The situation was especially turbulent at Zurich, where the rural subjects of the city, and the large population of the adjoining district of the Thurgau, many of whom were normally employed in weaving and other household crafts under management by Zurich business men, rose in a revolt that had strong economic as well as political implications.¹²

The French, who at first hoped that the Swiss would stage their own revolution, soon concluded, and were pressed by La Harpe to believe, that the Swiss oligarchies would not yield without a struggle. It was decided to finish off quickly—to get a decision of some kind. The Directory in February ordered General Brune, one of the most ardent republicans among French commanders, to occupy the city of Bern. Brune, modeling himself on Bonaparte in Italy, sent an ultimatum to Bern, demanding a *changement démocratique* within three hours.¹³ He occupied and “revolutionized” the city in March, ordering the abolition of such titles as *baron* and *bailli*, elections in primary assemblies open to all resident men over twenty, and an end to tithes and manorial dues, on terms to be considered in a future Helvetic Republic. Meanwhile the civilian commissioner Mangourit superintended revolution in the Valais, where there was a good deal of intestine conflict which Mangourit’s own intransigence did nothing to pacify. On one occasion the French and the revolutionary Valaisins killed 400 “insurgents,” at least according to Mangourit’s perhaps boastful report. “Almost 400 enemies have been bayoneted,” he wrote to Paris. “These fanatics fought like tigers; they died without a sigh, clutching their rosaries and their relics. . . . Eight priests bit the dust (*ont mordu la poussière*).”¹⁴ And he proposed to send the bishop of Sion to Paris “in the same cage with the bears from the Bern zoo.” The Directory soon transferred Mangourit to Naples.

The Directors in Paris could neither agree with each other on the disposition of Switzerland, nor find out what the Swiss themselves might agree on. Nor, if all the subject districts and common lordships were to become “independent” of the formerly dominant cantons, was it at all obvious what political configuration should ensue. By March 1798 there were some parts of Switzerland in which revolutionary leaders preferred the constitution drafted at Basel, which allowed for a measure of “direct democracy” and cantonal or local autonomy, and others where the revo-

12 On the actually revolutionary uprisings of 1798 see, in addition to basic works already cited: W. von Wartburg, *Zürich und die französischen Revolution* (Basel, 1956); A. Custer, *Die Zürcher Untertanen und die französischen Revolution* (Zurich, 1942); F. Brüllmann, *Die Befreiung des Thurgaus* (Weinfelden, 1948); M. Salamin, *Histoire politique du Valais sous la République helvétique*, chez l’auteur (Sierre, 1957); Soc. vaudoise d’hist. et d’arch., *Documents inédits sur la Révolution vaudoise de 1798* (Lausanne, 1948).

13 The correspondence of Brune in this connection is published in *Archiv für schw. Gesch.*, XII (1858), 233–496. See p. 265.

14 Quoted by Godechot, *Commissaires*, II, 115.

lutionaries said they wanted the Paris constitution, which provided for "representative democracy" in a unitary republic.

In March General Brune, upon orders from Paris, proclaimed a Rhodanic or Rhone Republic under the Paris constitution, and a Helvetic Republic under the Basel constitution, with a third entity, the Tellgau, named for William Tell, where the regime was yet to be determined. The Rhone Republic, in this plan, was to embrace the non-German parts of the old confederation, in general from Lausanne to Locarno.¹⁵ The Helvetic would be essentially the northern region of the German-speaking cities. The Tellgau would be the region of the "primitive" and old-fashioned democratic and Catholic cantons of the high mountains. Since the whole eastern area of the Grisons (Dreibünde or Graubünden) was not occupied by the French, and might fall to Austria, and since Neuchâtel and Geneva were at no time under consideration, it is evident that by this plan what the world thinks of as Switzerland would have been dissolved. Nevertheless, there were forces in Switzerland to which the plan might appeal, or at least seem preferable to any alternative then in sight. The conservative old cantons might prefer to be let alone in an Alpine Tellgau, and the Latin and Germanic peoples of Switzerland had never yet lived together on a plane of equality.

La Harpe, overcoming his fears of a German majority, now threw his influence in Paris against such a partition and in favor of a unified Switzerland. Swiss patriots and revolutionaries generally took the same view, even if the new order had to be imposed on the conservative cantons by force, through the action of a far more centralized government than Switzerland had ever known. For the French, there was an obvious advantage in a unified Switzerland in which their influence might exclude that of other outside powers. The Directory therefore sent new instructions to Brune, who on March 22 proclaimed a single unitary Helvetic Republic under the Paris constitution. This was the constitution which Ochs had drafted, which the French had amended, which the Swiss now accepted as the price of preserving their territorial integrity, and which, being unitary and consolidationist, gave the Swiss revolutionary leaders, and the French commissioners sent to work with them, the means to restrain aristocratic, oligarchical, counter-revolutionary, federalist, and secessionist tendencies. A Helvetic legislature began to sit at Aarau, with Peter Ochs as president of the Senate; and a Helvetic Directory of five members, chosen by this legislature, assumed the executive power.

The new constitution introduced a legal homogeneity, or equality of rights between town and country and between region and region. The entire territory was laid out in legally equal cantons. To the thirteen already existing, among which Bern and Zurich were reduced in size, were now added a number of others: the German-speaking Thurgau, Aargau, and St. Gallen; the mixed French and German Valais; the French Léman (the old Pays de Vaud); and for the old Italian-speaking *baillages* or *Vogteien* two new cantons, Bellinzona and Lugano, which were combined into the single canton of Ticino in 1803.¹⁶ The constitution also

15 E. Mottaz, "La République rhodanique" in *Zeits. f. schw. Gesch.* (1947), 61–79, in addition to more general accounts.

16 The fact is that all the modern Swiss cantons whose date of entrance into the confederation is officially listed as 1803 or 1815 (the Act of Mediation or the Congress of Vienna), with the exception

"invited" the eastern region (the Grisons or Dreibünde) to enter the Helvetic Republic as a new canton of Rhaetia or Graubünden. Here, however, internal dissension was very great. Conservatives and Catholics of eastern Switzerland would have nothing to do with the Helvetic Republic; they preferred Austria; and Austrian troops entered this part of Switzerland in October 1798, a few weeks before Mack's attack on Rome opened the War of the Second Coalition. During this war the French under Masséna pushed the Austrians out of the Grisons, where the local patriots, in March 1799, proclaimed the canton of Rhaetia as part of the Helvetic Republic. With this action, the essential outlines of modern Switzerland were delineated.

Partition or dissolution had been avoided. Neutrality was difficult or impossible. The history of the Helvetic Republic, as one Swiss writer has remarked, cannot be understood except as a phase of the European conflict between revolution and counter-revolution.¹⁷ The French needed their ideological sympathizers in power in Switzerland. As Reubell said in 1801 (after Suvorov's campaign of 1799), his decision to sponsor revolution in Switzerland had kept the Russians out of Paris.¹⁸ By the same token, the powers of the Second Coalition much preferred the Swiss old regime. Conversely, the parties in Switzerland depended on foreign support against each other.

"Switzerland today must be either Austrian or French," wrote Talleyrand to Ochs in August 1798; "I do not suppose it will hesitate in this choice."¹⁹ The view was the same, *mutatis mutandis*, on the other side. William Wickham, the British emissary to Switzerland, worked strenuously to restore the old order there. He did not suppose that the country could remain neutral or truly independent. The old cantons in their old form, he wrote to Grenville in August 1799, "must be delivered, *bound hand and foot*—they cannot have any will of their own. . . . The great Powers of Europe, if they are unanimous, may make of these states what they please."²⁰

of Geneva and Neuchâtel, and with some modification of boundaries, really date from the revolution of 1798. It is somewhat as if the United States chose to date its independence from the lawful treaty of 1783 instead of from the revolutionary action of 1776.

17 Steiner in Ochs, *Korrespondenz*, II, ccxxix.

18 Reubell, who did not get along with Bonaparte during the Consulate, made a private note, printed in the appendix to the Ochs *Korrespondenz* (ii, 562), and worth quoting at length: "Every day I hear the E(xecutive) D(irectory) blamed for having revolutionized Switzerland, and strangely enough the present government is one of the first to blame it.

"It was after a dinner for Bonaparte and Ochs that Bonaparte pressed Ochs, in my presence, to hurry up with the revolution. The conference took place in my drawing room, shortly after Bonaparte returned from Italy, and it is no doubt to remove all suspicion of his own complicity in this revolution that he now affects to disavow it.

"But far from disavowing it myself I think that I never deserved better of the country than in pressing for it with all my strength. If we had not occupied Switzerland Suvorov would have been in Paris and Bonaparte could not have won the battle of Marengo. I can see that brutes . . . wild beasts and imbeciles . . . who would desire to see Suvorov in Paris would continue to find fault with the Swiss revolution. Intelligent and sensible patriots will keep silent. . . . Look at what this Switzerland was: a crazy formless assemblage of governments without any connection, some oligarchic, others democratic, all despotic and all enemies of the French Republic."

19 Ochs, *Korrespondenz*, II, 439.

20 *Dropmore Papers*, V, 218.

The French influence lasted long enough for Swiss revolutionaries to proceed with internal changes.

INTERNAL STRESSES IN THE HELVETIC REPUBLIC

There is room only to mention some of these changes, which in any case resembled those undertaken in other countries touched by the Revolution, and which, while launched in 1798, were generally carried out, with various compromises, in the years when Switzerland, like the rest of western Europe, was protected by the famous Emperor of the French.

From the beginning of the Helvetic legislature two parties developed. One, that of the moderate revolutionaries, was led by Usteri of Zurich and other men from the cities, who advised against haste and violence, thought that action should be taken for the people but not by them, and imagined themselves to be walking in the footsteps of the French Girondists. The other and more radical party drew its strength from rural areas, where the inhabitants, having so lately been subjected to the cities, still harbored suspicions against them. The tendency for peasants to be more revolutionary than townspeople was a peculiarity of the Swiss situation, hardly paralleled either in France or the other sister-republics. The two parties differed on much, especially on the liquidation of tithes and manorial dues. Only a fifth of the tithe at the end of the eighteenth century was owned by church bodies or clerical persons; much of it had become simply a secular property; and most of it had passed into the hands of the former cantonal governments, and so in effect constituted a kind of tax, but a tax that was paid only by rural people, especially in the lowlands. That the tithe had already disappeared from the high valleys suggests one reason why the people there were little drawn to the revolution. Since the tithe was largely a tax, to abolish it was to raise hard questions of public finance and of new forms of revenue. Nor could either the tithe or the manorial dues be liquidated without threatening the incomes of many middle-class revolutionaries. The result was delay, confusion, and frustration; after 1800, when Usteri's party drove out La Harpe and won out over the radicals, various complex adjustments were introduced.

The Republic simmered in what Brune called a "ferment of organization": abolition of guilds, new freedom of occupation and enterprise, new laws of purchase and sale; rationalization of tolls and tariffs—abolition of torture and reform of the courts—proliferation of pamphlets and journals under new press laws—religious liberty and separation of church and state; closing of convents and monasteries and confiscation of their property, with pensions to former inmates; transfer of birth registration from parishes to municipalities; provision for civil marriage, transfer of matrimonial cases to civil courts, and authorization of mixed marriages between Protestants and Catholics—projects to codify the laws—plans to develop higher education and public schools, in which uniform standards should be prescribed, compulsory religious instruction eliminated, and bright boys from poor families given financial aid; along with programs for the training of teachers, for which Pestalozzi received a grant from the Republic to operate a normal school at Burgdorf near Bern.

All this went on during military occupation by the French, while the French were at war with Britain and foreseeing renewed war with Austria. The French made heavy demands on the country, beginning with Brune's removal of the 6,000,000-livre "treasure" of Bern, and continuing with requisitions to support the French forces in Switzerland, to help finance the expedition to Egypt, and for other purposes. Various civilian commissioners arrived from Paris. It was their task, while attempting to control the French military and to repress individual pillage, to produce a lucrative flow of money and provisions. The best-remembered of these commissioners was Rapinat, a man who made jokes about his own name, telling the Swiss with a hearty laugh that he "loved rapine." He seems to have been guilty of no more than excessive zeal in the discharge of his duties, but was lastingly pilloried by a quatrain famous in its day:

Le pauvre Suisse qu'on ruine
 Demandait qu'on examinât
 Si Rapinat vient de rapine,
 Ou rapine de Rapinat.²¹

The exactions of the French, the irrepressible individual pillaging, the imposition of the new constitution and the initiation of all kinds of structural reforms, naturally combined to create a wide array of enemies to the new regime. Active opposition, as distinct from apathy and resentment, came on the whole from two quarters—the former elites and privileged classes, and the old democratic cantons.

Among the former privileged classes two men stood out as leaders of a wave of Swiss émigrés, who came to number 5,000 or more, and who, like the Orange émigrés from Holland in 1795, or the French émigrés, appealed to the Austrian and other governments for armed intervention, and received British money to foment resistance in their home countries. One of these was N. F. von Steiger, the last *schultheiss* (or chief magistrate) of Bern, a member of one of the families which had flourished for generations by the government of subject districts. The other was the abbot of St. Gallen, who as temporal ruler of some 100,000 people had been an ally of the thirteen cantons, and had nothing to gain by the conversion of his territory to a cantonal status.

The rural, upland, "primitive," and "democratic" cantons, of which six were Catholic and two Protestant, likewise opposed the Paris constitution and the Helvetic Republic. They too, in a way, had been privileged under the old order, in which, as original oath-fellows, they were full members in the Eidgenossenschaft, and shared in the suzerainty over various subject districts and common lordships. They were accustomed to sovereignty in their own local affairs, which were very simple. They governed themselves through folk-meetings attended by all grown men. Nowhere in Europe was the antithesis so clearly posed between the old and the new conception of democracy. Against a new conception of national citizenship, and of organized government deriving powers from an extensive people, the

21 Godechot, *Commissaires*, II, 73.

older conception reflected a dislike for government itself, so far as it was distant, or possessed of significant powers, or conducted by strangers.

The point is illustrated by a letter to Ochs from K. H. Gschwend, *landespräsident* of the upper Rheinthal, protesting against the new order. (That much the same letter could have been written in America should be evident.) Ochs, said Gschwend, "does not understand the democratic cantons." For centuries they have chosen their own officers "under the open sky." In each canton there is a simple folk whose combined wealth is less than a Basel burgher's. "Where will people find the money to pay for a Directory, two Councils, a Supreme Court, cantonal judges, a standing army and a host of secretaries and clerks?" A despot would be no worse. "Our people have never paid taxes. They will be crushed to the ground if so many taxes are levied now." All these government functionaries will become a new aristocracy. "Do you suppose that free people, sons of the Alps, will bow under such a yoke?"²²

It is clear that when the Helvetic constitution, the only constitution of the period to do so, explicitly affirmed the new regime to be a "representative democracy," its purpose was to counter the arguments for direct democracy which could be expected from parts of Switzerland. Robespierre, five years before, had likewise upheld representative democracy against the direct democracy of Paris sans-culottes in their local clubs and assemblies. To insist upon representative democracy was to insist upon the authority of a central government, without which no revolution could be made to prevail against its opponents, or any reforms carried out in practice.

The constitution, out of consideration for the small "primitive" cantons, departed from the generally accepted new principle of representation according to numbers and gave equal representation in the legislative councils, for the immediate future, to the small and large cantons alike. Thus Zug with 20,000 inhabitants had as many representatives as Zurich with over 150,000. In the small cantons there seem, to be sure, to have been a few persons open to modern ideas—"too many false brothers and evil-minded new-fangled people," as one observer expressed it.²³ On the whole, despite the concessions made to them, the small cantons detested the new Helvetic Republic, disliking the thought of subordination to any government beyond their own mountains. They called the constitution the *Höllenbuchlein*—the little hell-book—because, in the words of the community of Nidwalden, "it seeks to rob us of our holy religion, our freedom enjoyed undisturbed for hundreds of years, and our democratic constitution inherited from our blessed ancestors."²⁴

The democratic cantons therefore rebelled. The new democratic Republic found itself in the awkward posture of repressing, by force of arms, little groups of simple people who insisted that theirs was the truly democratic way of life. The situation was much relished by the Swiss émigrés, and by the Austrians and the British, all of whom did what they could to prolong it. On the other hand, it was only to the

22 Strickler, *Actensammlung*, I, 530.

23 A Catholic priest of Schwyz, J. T. Fassbind, in Ochs, *Korrespondenz*, II, 622.

24 Strickler, *Actensammlung*, I, 608–9.

French army that the new Helvetic government, which had no armed force of its own, could look for the means to enforce its authority. It also, only a few weeks after the new constitution went into effect, decreed the dissolution of four "primitive" cantons, Uri, Schwyz, Zug, and Unterwalden, and their combination into a single new canton of Waldstätten. The new republic thus strongly affirmed the unitary principle, by which local districts were only changeable subdivisions of the political community as a whole. The people of the abolished cantons remained in a state of armed insurrection, insisting on the federal principle, or the indissolubility of pre-existing units, the better to protect their traditional customs and outlook.

In these circumstances the French army remained in Switzerland, and was even reinforced. The burden of levies and requisitions mounted. Agents like Rapinat and others could not be controlled by the Paris government. Even in the Helvetic Directory and legislative councils a strong anti-French sentiment soon developed. There were official protests against the French exactions, and pleas that the Helvetic authorities be given more freedom to manage the resources of their own country. Yet the continuing dependence on France could not be denied. Peter Ochs, in particular, took the view that, with the regime of representative democracy threatened in its very existence by enemies both internal and foreign, it would be ruinous to allow anti-French sentiment to go too far; that criticism of the French must remain private and prudent; that public complaint, or exaggeration of regrettable episodes, would only give arguments to the British and Austrians, and to Swiss oligarchy and parochialism.

The history of the Helvetic Republic, like that of the Batavian and the Cisalpine, was therefore punctuated by abrupt coups d'état. Ochs joined forces with Rapinat to prepare a change of government, Ochs acting secretly without the knowledge of his Swiss colleagues, and Rapinat without instructions from Paris. Both wished to get men into the Helvetic government who would work more willingly with the French in the matter of requisitions, and be prompt and decisive in employing French troops against the insurgent cantons. Rapinat forced two members of the Helvetic Directory to resign. The French Directory, as usual, accepted the accomplished fact. The Helvetic councils then proceeded to elect two new Directors, Ochs and La Harpe. They elected Ochs in order to placate the French, and La Harpe in a gesture of independence against them. Ochs and La Harpe agreed on fundamentals, so that the revolutionary legislation outlined above continued to go forward, and French troops were used to suppress a new and more serious outbreak in the high Alpine districts. They differed in the policy to be adopted toward the Great Nation and the European war. The French demanded an offensive and defensive alliance. Ochs, supported by one other Director, Viktor Oberlin, favored such an alliance, arguing that the Helvetic Republic should do its share in a war on whose outcome the existence of all modern republics seemed to depend. La Harpe, two other Directors, and most other Swiss revolutionaries preferred either that the Helvetic Republic should remain neutral, or that its citizens should fight only within their own frontiers if attacked. The French forced Swiss acceptance of the treaty nevertheless.

After the Austrian army occupied the Grisons in October, and the war of the Second Coalition began, the French pressed their demand that the Swiss organize

an army of their own (in addition to the old militia) to the extent of 18,000 men, as an auxiliary force to operate with the French army, and to be maintained and equipped at French expense. A good many people in Switzerland, including Pestalozzi as well as Ochs, believed this proposal to be altogether reasonable.

The Helvetic army, however, never developed the strength of the Batavian, or even the Cisalpine, and its weaknesses revealed the weakness of the Helvetic revolution itself.²⁵ There were too many who wished for the advantages of the revolution without having to fight for them, or who complained of the French yet were content to remain dependent upon them. Many others, of course, objected to the new regime altogether. It was said that the country could not possibly supply 18,000 men, though at least 11,000 Swiss mercenaries had been in the French service in 1789. It was said that Switzerland, already drained by French requisitions, could not afford such an army, even at French expense, which might only take the form of renewed French requisitions. The French asked the Swiss to introduce conscription, on the model of the new French conscription law of 1798. "Nothing would better suit the kings," said Ochs, "than for republics to renounce compulsory service."²⁶ The Helvetic Directory, after a delay, proposed conscription to the legislative councils, which, on the eve of invasion by the Austrians and Russians in 1799, flatly refused it. Voluntary enlistment proceeded slowly. In some places, notably the former Pays de Vaud, there was an enthusiasm to join; and within limits the new army served as a school of new republican citizenship. The officers, for example, came from various social classes. They included professional soldiers who had seen service with European monarchies in former times, but they also included a former monk of St. Gallen, a butcher, and an impecunious landowner whose income had disappeared when the Helvetic government abolished seigneurial dues. Some of these officers were later to be with Napoleon in Russia, and one lieutenant of 1799 lived to become commander-in-chief of the Swiss Federal Army in 1830. In the overall view, however, for an army planned for 18,000, only 469 officers and 3,587 men were actually incorporated in the six demi-brigades of which the force was composed. And these units suffered heavily from desertion.

On the other hand, attempts to raise a Swiss counter-revolutionary armed force at British expense were even less successful. The most vociferously reactionary districts contributed the least. Supposedly, by September 1799, there were 2,800 men in such units, but hardly two-thirds were in the field. The Genevese Mallet du Pan, who was editing the *British Mercury* in London at this time, and who regarded all partisans of the Helvetic Republic as traitors, reported with disgust, or perhaps with deliberate exaggeration to terrify the conservative powers into action, that far more Swiss, including even a few women, were fighting on the French side than on the side of the Coalition.²⁷ On the whole, to quote a Swiss historian, "there was as little enthusiasm in Switzerland for military service in English pay, which might lead to a campaign against France, as there was willingness to fight for the

25 See F. Bernoulli, *Die helvetischen Halbbrigaden im Dienste Frankreichs, 1798–1805* (Bern, 1934).

26 *Korrespondenz*, II, 486.

27 *British Mercury*, III (July 1799), 341–43.

French."²⁸ The predominant feeling in Switzerland, even with Russian, Austrian, and French troops operating in the country, seems to have been one of innocent neutrality violated by outsiders, as if Swiss destinies were uninvolved.

In fact, however, when Marshal Suvorov and his Russians, in July 1799, crossed the St. Gotthard pass from Italy, where they had just overthrown the Cisalpine Republic, into Switzerland, where they meant to destroy the Helvetic Republic, the action was part of a widespread anti-republican movement, with an Anglo-Russian force simultaneously preparing to expunge the Batavian Republic in Holland, and to converge with Suvorov against the French Republic and the supposed source of the whole disturbance—Paris. This grand confrontation is described in a later chapter. In Switzerland, as the Russians entered from the south, the Austrians came in from the east. The Swiss émigrés returned. Some of them, whose views were expressed by the former *schultheiss* of Bern and abbot of St. Gallen, and strongly insisted on by William Wickham, demanded the total restoration in Switzerland of the situation of 1797. Even moderate conservatives wished to restore the system of subject districts with domination by ruling cantons. The Helvetic Republic was kept in being by Masséna's victory at the second battle of Zurich in September 1799; and the exclusion of the old regime from Switzerland, north Italy, Holland, and France itself was further settled by Bonaparte's victory in 1800 at Marengo, which, according to Reubell, could never have happened without the Swiss revolution two years before.

The Helvetic Republic, or at least the Paris constitution of 1798, proved to be more unitary and centralized than the Swiss would tolerate. Other constitutions were to follow, and many compromises made, but they modified without repudiating the principles of the Revolution. The Helvetic constitution of 1798 had the kind of permanence that the exactly contemporary Dutch constitution also enjoyed. It was not itself permanent, but its principles of territorial uniformity, legal equality, assured civil rights, and modern citizenship proved to be lasting. In 1920 an important three-volume history of modern Swiss public law began to be published at Basel. Its author, a member of the university there, was Eduard His. He was the great-great-grandson of Peter Ochs. It was not family attachment, but the nature of the subject itself, that made him begin his history with the revolution of 1798, and devote the entire first volume to the fifteen years thereafter.

28 F. Burckhardt, *Die schweizerische Emigration, 1798–1801* (Basel, 1908), 287. This is excellent also on the incipient restoration of 1799.

CHAPTER XXIX

GERMANY: THE REVOLUTION OF THE MIND

In republicanism it is rightly accepted that all men as rational beings are free and have equal rights. . . . If power is usurped, abused and oppressive, no objection can be made, it seems, to the justice of a revolution by which it is done away with. For man must not be aggrieved in his rights. But since the abolition of one form of government and introduction of another, if it occurs by force, necessarily involves a state of anarchy in between, which is in itself contrary to reason and opens the way to a thousand wrongs, the rationality of revolution certainly seems to have much against it.

—“WHAT SHOULD THE JUST MAN DO IN TIMES LIKE
OURS?” IN *DEUTSCHES MAGAZIN*, 1798

The position of Germany was intermediate in more than a geographical sense. When we take a comparative view, we find in this heartland of Europe neither a triumph of counter-revolution as in the East, nor yet the setting up of revolutionary assemblies and republics as in the West. Not wholly content with the place of their own country in the world, the Germans could not enjoy the self-congratulating conservatism of the English, but on the other hand, since they retained a high respect for their existing authorities, they had none of the aversion to their own past that characterized the revolutionary French. It so happened, also, that these years of political change coincided with the supreme efflorescence of German thought and culture. It was the age of Goethe and Schiller, of Mozart and Beethoven, of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Herder, Schleiermacher, and the Humboldts. Under the influence of such masters, and at this moment of upheaval, a new German national consciousness was beginning to take form. An ambivalent attitude to revolution entered into the national outlook. The Germans neither rejected revolution in the abstract, nor accepted it in its actual manifestations. Nothing was more characteristic, in Germany before 1800, than to continue to hail the principles and goals of

the French Revolution with enthusiasm, and to believe that in French hands, thanks to French faults, these principles had miscarried.

The problem of its nationality, and later its nationalism, was for a long time the compelling theme in historical thinking about Germany; but since the Second World War, as in other countries, interest has attached to other matters, accentuated in Germany by the actual division of the country. The question, crudely simplified, is whether Germany really belongs to the world of Western constitutionalism and democracy. For one's view on this question the years of the 1790's are of importance. The Mainz "Jacobins" of 1792, for example, have been variously interpreted as traitors who in collaborating with the French betrayed the true spirit of their country, as simpletons whose ineffectual antics showed the political immaturity of the Germans only too well, and as predecessors of a later democracy of either Eastern or Western type. "German Marxists," wrote an East Berlin historian in 1957, "consider the Mainz Commune and the Rhine Convention as the first democratic republic on German soil." But such German republicans can be seen as forming part of a background to Western democracy also. Recently the tendency in West Germany, breaking with an older tradition that put high value on the special peculiarity of *Deutschtum*, has been to argue that Germany in the 1790's, while of course different, shared in the common experience of Western Europe.¹

THE AMBIGUOUS REVOLUTION

There was no revolution in Germany before 1800. The great changes came in the following decade, when the Holy Roman Empire was converted into some twenty

1 The huge literature on Germany at the time of the French Revolution is currently dominated by two outstanding works, F. Valjavec, *Die Entstehung der politischen strömungen in Deutschland, 1770–1815* (Munich, 1951), and J. Droz, *L'Allemagne et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1949), of which Droz gave a compact preview in the *Revue historique*, Vol. 198 (1947), 161–77. Valjavec and Droz in a way supersede the older books by G. P. Gooch and A. Stern, which drew heavily on memoirs and literary materials. Recent East German works, more assertively Marxist than those written elsewhere in Eastern Europe, in the present author's experience, include W. Markov and F. Donath, *Kampf um Freiheit: Dokumente zur Zeit der nationalen Erhebung 1785–1815*, Verlag der Nation [East Berlin, 1954]; H. Voegt, *Die jakobinische Literatur und Publizistik 1789–1800* (Berlin, 1955), which reprints many extracts from the publicist Rebmann; and P. Stulz and A. Opitz, *Volksbewegungen in Kursachsen zur Zeit der französischen Revolution* (Berlin, 1956). The West German school, arguing for an affinity between Germany and the West, is chiefly represented by Valjavec, mentioned above; see also W. Groote, *Die Entstehung des Nationalbewusstseins in nordwest Deutschland 1790–1830* (Göttingen, 1955); an article by W. Stämmler, "Politische Schlagworte in der Zeit der Aufklärung," in *Lebenskräfte in der abendländischen Geistesgeschichte: Dank- und Erinnerungsgabe an Walter Goetz* (Marburg, 1948), 199–259, where it is argued that the words for liberty, tyranny, equality, humanity, and natural rights were used in Germany as in the West; and the significant older work of E. Hölzle, *Das alte Recht und die Revolution: Eine politische Geschichte Württembergs in der Revolutionszeit, 1789–1805* (Munich, 1931). The work of the American S. S. Biro, *The German Policy of Revolutionary France: A Study in French Diplomacy during the War of the First Coalition, 1792–97*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), suffers from the author's unconcealed distaste and hence impoverished understanding for his own subject. For the minutely fragmented political geography of Germany, with both textual explanation and large-scale folding map, see G. Franz, *Deutschland 1789*, Frankfurt, 1952. The quotation from Markov in the paragraph above is from *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, No. 148 (1957), 285.

modern states; and these changes were brought about by German governments themselves, when the rulers of Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria, Saxony, and other domains, in cooperation with Napoleon and with their own reforming civil servants, and at the expense of German prince-bishops, imperial knights, the patricians of free cities, and miscellaneous lesser lordly beings, effected a territorial and legal transformation that wiped out many aspects of the Old Regime. The Revolution from Above, checkmated in the Hapsburg lands, swept over the rest of Germany with astonishing success. Europe offered no other case of structural changes accomplished so rapidly by existing authorities. It was among the princes themselves, in Germany, that the French of the Revolution eventually found their most effective collaborators.

The present chapter, like the whole of [Part 2 of] the present book, is concerned only with the decade that closed in 1800. It was a decade, in Germany, without great events or dramatic confrontations. Revolution was in the air, but the idea of revolution—and of counter-revolution—was ambiguous.

There was a feeling that “revolution” might be a good thing, if only carried out in due form by the proper persons; and this belief of the 1790’s was in a measure confirmed in the following years. The confidence in existing authorities inhibited the growth of a truly revolutionary movement, or even of a critical opposition. There were active groups of radical republicans in the Germany of the 1790’s, but they achieved little outside the spheres of journalism and conspiracy. Incipient liberalism was ambivalent, sometimes favoring old estates and constituted bodies as checks upon princely power, sometimes more authoritarian, favoring the princely power against the privileged classes. Conservatism was also inhibited by the fact that so many German governments were not conservative, being committed to policies of progressive change. In Germany, unlike England, conservatism was not the solid philosophy of an active and experienced ruling class. Conservatism itself became an unsettling ideology.² To express its disgust with the present, it glorified the medieval, the *altdeutsch* and the *altständisch*, or it asserted the superiority of a pure spirituality over a vulgar world of practical affairs. It found itself opposed, not only to German republicans but in a more insidious way to tendencies in the German governments themselves, and in an unwholesome fashion to the influence of foreigners. It is well known how in the long run the aberrations of Hitlerism built upon pathologically ethnocentric qualities in German conservatism.

Distinctive of Germany in the last decades of the Holy Roman Empire was a profound incapacity for collective political action. Divided into some three hundred states, interlaced with fifty free cities and the minuscule acres of a thousand sovereign imperial knights, the German world was one in which any action on the public stage was bound to be local. Waves of political protest or indignation, even if generated, broke against frontiers which were never more than a few miles away. Except for the oligarchic free cities, and for the aristocratic *Reichsritter* or knights, government was conducted by absolutist princes with their officials and experts, so that, even on the local scene, the people outside government had little expectation of participating in it, or even understanding the reasons for its decisions. The

2 This point is developed by Valjavec, *Entstehung*, 310–26.

prominent elements in the middle class were not lawyers in private practice, nor wealthy men of affairs, with exceptions for trading centers like Hamburg. They were bureaucrats, civil servants, writers, and university professors. In the Protestant states the pastors and men whose fathers were pastors added a strong contribution. But economically the middle class was weak, since commercial enterprises were local and old-fashioned, or else, as in Prussia, dependent for investment capital and management on the state, so that the material base was lacking for vigorous independent initiative. The middle class, in any event, was not estranged from the monarchies under which it lived. Individual burghers might criticize individual noblemen, but there was no deep feeling against nobility or privilege itself, and the belief continued to prevail (contrary to what happened in France in the 1780's) that the government would do what it could to uphold middle-class against noble interests. The fact that German officialdom was reasonably honest, trained, and efficient, whatever its less evident shortcomings, kept criticism of it on a moderate plane.

In these circumstances two kinds of organizations took on more importance in Germany than elsewhere—the universities, and a variety of secret societies. In Germany in the eighteenth century, unlike England and Western Europe, several of the universities were new foundations and others had been recently invigorated with new ideas; they were closely allied to the governments, not in the manner of Oxford and Cambridge, but as training centers for official personnel; at the same time, since professors and students in each institution, such as Jena, came from all over Germany, and indeed from all over Central and Eastern Europe, the universities were places in which the narrow localism of the individual states could be transcended. Beginning about 1770 several new semi-secret student “orders” were established. Modeled somewhat on the lodges of Freemasonry, they aspired to replace the older student societies with their emphasis on drinking and dueling, and they pursued, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, goals of humanitarianism and the self-improvement of youth, which in the 1780's turned to more definitely political interests.³ The radical journalist, Rebmann, was active in one of these student orders, the *Schwarze Brüder*; and Fichte, when professor of philosophy at Jena, found in them an enthusiastic audience for his message. In general, from some time before the French Revolution until some time after the Revolution of 1848, Germany was characterized by the “radicalism” of students and professors on the one hand; and, on the other, since professors were a species of public officials, and many students became professional government servants, by a certain receptivity in the governments themselves, not indeed to revolution, but to ideas of world-renewal and sweeping change.

Secret societies proliferated in Germany for various reasons, as a protection against censorship and police controls, as a means of overcoming political localism, and as centers for more exciting discussions than were possible in the open reading societies, which sprang up in Germany as in other countries.⁴ Freemasonry became

³ Valjavec, *Entstehung*, 235.

⁴ On secret societies, the Illuminati, etc., see Valjavec, 229–39; Droz, *Allemagne*, 399–419. There is a large heterogeneous literature.

more concerned with worldly affairs than in England, and more perversely mysterious than in France. From the 1770's or before, there were secret societies of both progressive and conservative orientation, designed both to advance and to combat the *Aufklärung*. The Rosicrucians were conservative on social questions. The famous Illuminati were radical in their way. Founded in 1778 by Adam Weishaupt, a professor of natural law at Ingolstadt in Bavaria, the Order of Illuminati was apparently modeled on the student associations, but in 1780 it became identified with Masonry and the occultist tradition by A. F. von Knigge of Hanover. It recruited a few hundred members, who were initiated into a private doctrine of world salvation, quasi-religious and quasi-enlightened; but it had no political program, and indeed it spurned mere practical action, while urging its "adepts" to infiltrate the governments and the universities, to acquire power without much thought as to its application. The order was suppressed by the Elector of Bavaria in 1785. Various of its members turned up as individual revolutionary enthusiasts in the 1790's. The fame of the order, however, is *ex post facto*, a creation of counter-revolutionary propagandists like the Abbé Barruel, who in the 1790's attributed to the Illuminati an importance that they never had. It was true, nevertheless, that secret associations continued to flourish in Germany, of both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary persuasion, mostly quite ineffectual so far as their secrecy permits any judgment of their operations. Examples are the Vienna Jacobins described in Chapter XX, and the counter-revolutionary Eudämonists described later in the present chapter.

The habit of mind engendered both in the secret groups and in the much broader spheres of public discussion and journalism was increasingly political in that attention turned more to questions of government and society, but at the same time remained essentially non-political in an important way.⁵ There was an eagerness to consider the state in the abstract, but no chance to plan courses of action, assume responsibilities, weigh alternatives and probable consequences, or form alliances with persons of different ideas from one's own. Political thinking became idealistic; it fell not on the contending interests of conflicting groups, nor the actual dilemmas of justice, nor the illogicalities of empirical problems, nor the imperfections that attend the result of all human effort, but on the pure essence of the state itself, or of liberty, right, law, human dignity, perpetual peace, or the general movement of history. The tragedy of Germany, as an acute Frenchman has expressed it, lay in the divorce between politics and intelligence.⁶ The intelligence of the Germans went into philosophy; policy was an affair of cabinets, and there was no politics at all.

The Germans themselves at the time, not unaware of this situation, took pride in excelling in the realm of thought. No other people showed such a passion for metaphysics or such a concern for the absolute and the unconditioned. The doctrine of Kant, eventually recognized everywhere as a great step in technical philosophy, was of importance in Germany at the more commonplace level of the

⁵ Valjavec, *passim*, emphasizes the "politicization" of German thought after 1780; Droz, its non-political character; but both can be true according to what is meant by "political."

⁶ Droz, *Rev. hist.*, Vol. 198, p. 177, and *passim* in *l'Allemagne*.

history of ideas. The conception of a Categorical Imperative, an absolute sense of duty in general, without much attention to specific duties in day-to-day living, took on momentous overtones as a basis of morality and chief evidence of the existence of God; as such it pervaded the thinking of people in quite ordinary walks of life. There was a feeling that with Kant a great intellectual revolution had been effected in Germany, commensurate in its magnitude to the merely external revolution of the French. As an obscure journalist named Geich wrote in 1798: "Our nation has produced a revolution no less glorious, no less rich in consequences than the one from which has come the government of the [French] Republic. This revolution is in the country of the mind."⁷

If a revolution of the mind was a somewhat ambiguous revolution, entirely consistent with inaction on the part of the citizen, the same was true of the Revolution from Above, and indeed of the concept of citizenship itself. In France the language made possible the distinction between a *citoyen* and a *bourgeois*, for both of which the Germans had to use the word *Bürger*. This fact of language alone helps to explain why the German nobility, more than the nobles of France or Italy, looked on "citizenship" with disrelish. Even for the middle classes the old idea of a "burgher" had become archaic. It suggested the jealous localism of the walled town, and a modest acceptance of social inferiority, which the spread of education and enlightenment had rendered intolerable. Burghers came therefore to call themselves *Weltbürger*, which must be translated as cosmopolitans or citizens of the world. The word suggests the absence of national consciousness, and *Weltbürgertum* was long seen by historians as a stage on the way to a more mature and final phase, the *Nationalstaat*.⁸ It is not necessary, however, to limit oneself to so negative a view, and it is illuminating to throw the emphasis, not on a *Welt* that was the absence of nationality, but on the *Bürger* who was trying to think of himself as a citizen. As a young diarist at Hamburg confided to himself in 1794: "While inwardly I strive to become a staunch republican, even a democrat, outwardly I admit to being a *Weltbürger*."⁹

Increasingly the German burgher was convinced that, with the broad formation of mind and character which the Germans called *Bildung*, he had claims to recognition that monarchs and noblemen must respect. He believed in natural rights, which he called the rights of humanity, long before the French Revolution. The *Weltbürger* was a potential citizen in search of a country. It must be a country of like-minded persons, a true community, assuring a measure of liberty and equality. Some, in the 1790's, found this country in the French Republic, which they saw more as a human than as a French creation. It was not for them a choice between France and Germany, but between a free and an unfree society, or between an en-

7 J. Droz, *La pensée politique et morale des Cisrhénans* (Paris, 1940), 39. Droz quotes at length from various inaccessible journals of the period edited by Geich and others.

8 Classically set forth by F. Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat: Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates* (Berlin, 1908).

9 From the diary of Ferdinand Beneke (1774–1848), published by Valjavec in the appendix to his *Entstehung*, 445. It is the argument of Groote, *Entstehung des Nationalbewusstseins*, that the *Weltbürger* first tried to reach out to other classes and kinds of people everywhere or anywhere, then developed a national consciousness stressing the similarities between Germans, but not, as in nationalism, glorifying their differences from others.

lightened and a more backward part of Europe or the world. No treason was involved; there was no German national state for them to be traitors to—or citizens of. For the same reason—the existence of hundreds of jurisdictions unrelated except by the ritual of the Holy Empire—there was no arena or forum of collective public action in Germany. In addition, neither the nobleman nor the peasant would work with the burgher, nor he with them. The *Weltbürger*, however excited, was condemned to inaction. His “revolution” was in the mind.

In Prussia the situation was somewhat different because of the prestige of the monarchy. Not typical of Germany as a whole, with a few duchies near the Dutch border but most of its territories lying east of the Elbe (in what are now East Germany and Poland), Prussia was the largest German state other than Austria. Its burghers, in Berlin, Königsberg, and elsewhere, had become rather class-conscious with respect to the agrarian and military *Junker* nobility, but their confidence in the monarchy remained firm. A codification of Prussian law, made public in 1791, was finally promulgated in 1794. The code in fact sanctioned the separation of legal classes in the *Ständestaat*, recognizing a different and unequal status in nobles, burghers, and peasants, and so was in fact contrary to everything in the French Revolution from the Declaration of 1789 to the Code Napoleon of 1804.¹⁰ It was, however, a code—regular, known, predictable, well administered, and, on its own premises, intended to be just. The Prussians took pride in living in a *Rechtsstaat*, or state of law.

Sympathy with the French Revolution was widespread in Prussia. The common belief, however, was that the French were only struggling to obtain what the Prussians already enjoyed, and that certainly no popular disturbance was necessary in Prussia, where the monarchy itself would confer all the benefits at which revolution, all too fruitlessly, aimed. Nor was the belief without a tincture of evidence to sustain it. “Jacobins,” that is, persons who disapproved of the war with France, or who favored some extension and equalization of civil rights in Prussia, were fairly numerous even in the upper classes. Most exalted among them was Prince Henry, the king’s uncle and brother of Frederick the Great. In the Prussian officer corps the British diplomat, Lord Malmesbury, found “a strong taint of democracy,” by which he must have meant a reluctance to accept the foreign policy of Great Britain.¹¹

There were in fact new stirrings in Prussia, especially after Frederick William III became king in 1797. Serfdom was ended on the crown domain. Studies were made in the General Staff, signaling the need of reforms which were not instituted until after the collapse of the army at Jena almost ten years later. Thus an officer named Behrenhorst, in 1797, pointing to American, Dutch, and French examples, found that peoples made better soldiers when they felt a positive emotional attachment to their political constitution. A Lieutenant Colonel Karl Ludwig Lecoq proposed that the officer ranks be opened to men of the educated middle classes, and that, for the enlisted ranks, Prussia should cease to rely so much upon

¹⁰ For the text of parts of the Prussian code see 802–5.

¹¹ Malmesbury to Grenville, Oct. 21, 1794, in *Diaries and Correspondence*, 4 vols. (London, 1845), III, 137–39.

"foreigners" (Germans from outside the Prussian dominions) and draw more on "actual citizens," *wirkliche Bürger des Staates*. "An improvement in the soldier's inner spirit," said Lecoq, "is of more real advantage than an increase of numbers." Hermann von Boyen, the later reformer, wrote in 1797 that public floggings and degrading punishments should be abolished. They killed, he said, "a certain self-feeling which must be considered the source of courage." Effective discipline must rest upon the inculcation in the common soldier of a sense of his own honor. All these were lessons drawn in Prussia from the Revolution. But the necessary building up of "spirit" was to be done by the authority of the Prussian government itself, so that no concessions to revolution or to popular clamor need be made. "The salutary revolution which you made from below," the Prussian minister Struensee remarked to a Frenchman in 1799, "will take place gradually here in Prussia. The king is a democrat in his way; he is working constantly to limit the privileges of the nobility. In a few years there will be no more privileged classes in Prussia."¹²

Considered a "Jacobin," and a co-worker of Struensee's, was none other than the grandfather of Bismarck, a typical career official named A. L. Mencken. Accompanying the royal party on the military promenade that ended at Valmy, he was known for French proclivities even then. In 1796, he was commissioned to plan the organization of the part of Poland taken in the Third Partition. It was a task looked forward to with satisfaction by liberals in many parts of Germany, for whom it seemed a good thing for the cowls and cassocks of Warsaw to yield to the brisk bearers of a Protestant and modern enlightenment. Mencken drew up a detailed plan, which was said both to embody certain lessons of the French Revolution, and to be usable in a reorganization of the Prussian monarchy as a whole. Such, however, are the ambiguities of authoritarian revolution that no one can say, without more knowledge, whether the "Jacobin" Mencken and his grandson, the "red reactionary," would have actually differed in very much.¹³

Both ideological attitudes and considerations of foreign policy produced in Germany a strong current of neutralism. It became manifest even in Hanover, which belonged to the King of England, and where there was an attempt in the diet of Calenberg to summon a National Assembly of the "Calenberg Nation" to declare neutrality in the quarrel between George III and the French Republic.¹⁴ Here also, in Northwest Germany, Malmesbury reported "a great Jacobin party" in 1795. The German diplomatic historian, Bailleu, writing a hundred years later, concluded that the war of 1792 was the most unpopular war that Prussia had ever fought.¹⁵ It was widely believed that the war was England's war, waged by the modern Carthage to enlarge its control of overseas trade and shipping. Such was the

12 Extracts from various staff studies, either unpublished at the time or published in technical journals, were printed in M. Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften vornehmlich in Deutschland*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1891); see III, 2127, 2252, 2280. It is curious to find, in 1798, a certain von Ribbentrop warning against admission of Jews into the army (2253). Struensee's statement is quoted by Droz, *Allemagne*, 109.

13 There is an account of Mencken in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Biographie*.

14 G. S. Ford, *Hanover and Prussia, 1795-1803: A Study in Neutrality* (New York, 1903), 46; Droz, *Allemagne*, 131. Calenberg was the part of the electorate that included the city of Hanover.

15 P. Bailleu, "König Friedrich Wilhelm II und die Genesis des Friedens von Basel," in *Hist. Zeitschrift*, Vol. 75 (1895), 237-75.

view not only of excited German republicans, or of the kind of liberals who did not see in the British parliament a model for imitation. It could be heard even at the card-tables in royal courts.¹⁶ Prussia made peace in 1795, taking with it Germany north of the Main in a policy of neutrality in which it stubbornly persisted for eleven years. An ideological and class explanation of Prussian neutrality was even then offered. "The unfortunate neutrality system," wrote a contemporary, "is the fruit of the rivalry between the nobility and the Third Estate. The former, partly for personal reasons, and partly because it gets better prices for its raw products from the English, wanted a war against France. The latter, composed of the industrious and literary classes, wanted an alliance with France. The government, forever beset by both parties, now takes the middle course and remains neutral."¹⁷

MAINZ JACOBINS AND CISRHENANE REPUBLICANS

For Germany it is even less possible than for Switzerland or Italy to trace the agitations that occurred in a multitude of places without any central focus. It was in the Rhineland and Southwest Germany that revolutionary republicanism became most apparent. But two other places must be mentioned.

The nearest thing to a mass upheaval occurred among the peasants of Electoral Saxony in 1790.¹⁸ Here, as in neighboring Bohemia, the rural people showed a surprising interest in newspapers, and made positive efforts to learn about the peasant rebellion in France; they were also aroused, as in Bohemia, by unorthodox religious prophets, as when a certain deacon of Döbeln saw signs of the second coming of Christ in the French and Belgian revolutions. The peasants revolted against the servile and seigniorial system. The noble landowners took refuge in Dresden. For a few weeks the unorganized insurgents were in control of some 5,000 square kilometers of the Electorate. The rebellion has been called the most significant such movement in Germany since the Peasant War of Luther's time, and as such has attracted the attention of a recent East German historian, who finds that its importance has been gravely understated in bourgeois historiography. His conclusion, however, confirms the established view. The Saxon insurrectionaries were soon put down by the Elector's troops. Their uprising was an almost unarmed outbreak of simultaneous but unconnected local disturbances; and although the towns of the Electorate were themselves full of unrest, there was no cooperation between town and country. The peasants were isolated, and the net effect, as in Bohemia, was to strengthen the propaganda of counter-revolution. Similar troubles, though less violent, appeared in the following years in the adjacent territory of Silesia. The protests of the rural weavers grew into a general agrarian restlessness, which reached its height in the summer of 1794, when a rumor spread among

16 See the indignant report of Grenville's agent, de Luc, Berlin, March 13, 1798, in *Gt. Brit.: Hist. MSS Commission, Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, IV, 128.

17 G. F. W. von Cölln, *Vertraute Briefe über die innern Verhältnisse an preussischen Höfe seit dem Tode Friedrichs II.*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam and Cologne, 1807), I, 141-42.

18 Stulz and Opitz, *Volksbewegungen*; Stulz treats the peasants, Opitz the townspeople, of Electoral Saxony. For Bohemia and Poland see Chapter XX above.

the peasantry, probably inspired by Kosciuszko's proclamation at Polaniec, that the new Prussian code would abolish forced labor on the lords' estates.¹⁹ The rumor was of course false, and order was restored. The French had had nothing to do with the Saxon and Silesian agitations, except by the power of their example.

At the other extreme was the free city of Hamburg, the chief overseas port of Germany, a very bourgeois community where the merchant class ruled and no nobles existed, and of all the cities of Germany the most well-disposed to the French Revolution.²⁰ It was estimated to have no less than forty-one millionaires. Leader of the Francophile group was Heinrich Sieveking, one of the wealthiest and most active commercial magnates. His house became virtually a political club, in which French, Dutch, German, Irish, and American patriots often assembled. Such a mixed group, for example, celebrated American independence on July 4, 1796, at Sieveking's home. A. G. F. Rebmann, the most significant German exponent at this time of advanced revolutionary ideas, was also admired and befriended in these circles when he passed through Hamburg. In 1797 a few Batavian and Hamburg patriots founded a new association, the Philanthropic Society, which worked to promote Theophilanthropy and republicanism. It sent congratulations to Peter Ochs on the Swiss revolution, and it attracted the attention of an investigating committee of the British House of Commons.²¹ On the whole, however, the Hamburg republicans had no idea that much change was needed in Hamburg, or even in Germany. For France they simply had a warm fellow-feeling, reinforced by a general belief that the principles of the Revolution were a good thing for the world.

As in Holland, Switzerland, and Italy, so in Germany it took the actual arrival of the French army to precipitate local democrats into open defiance. This happened in the Rhineland beginning in 1792.

The Left Bank of the Rhine was the most microscopically pulverized region in the Holy Roman Empire. Between Alsace and the Dutch frontier there were about a hundred and fifty states. Some of the largest of these were church-states, where the bishop governed as temporal prince. The large bishopric of Liège has already been mentioned in connection with Belgium. There were also the three great archiepiscopal sees, Mainz, Trier, and Cologne. The three cities so named, together with others in the archbishoprics, such as Coblenz and Bonn, were far from being cities on the order of Hamburg. Commercial development in the Rhineland had long been at a standstill. The towns were cathedral towns, or uni-

19 Donath and Markov, *Kampf um Freiheit*, 26–27; Valjavec, 201. Here again, the idea that the French of the Directory had lost their appeal to the working classes must be classified, in some measure, as a popular fallacy, or rather a learned cliché. A shoemaker at Giessen was reported to say in 1798 that the rich were “so harsh with the poor people hereabouts that it would be no wonder if they threw the gates open to the French, if they came this far.” Valjavec, 227.

20 P. Rudolf, *Frankreich im Urteil der Hamburger Zeitschriften in den Jahren 1789–1810* (Hamburg, 1933); Droz, *Allemagne*, 135–54; P. Schramm, *Hamburg, Deutschland und die Welt* (Munich, 1943), 25–29; Beneke's diary in Valjavec, 437–54.

21 *Korrespondenz des Peter Ochs*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1927–1937), II, 360; Gt. Brit., Parliament, House of Commons, *Report of the Committee of Secrecy* (London, 1799), XLI. Droz, *Allemagne*, 143, says that the Philanthropic Society was closed in November 1798, before the Parliamentary committee published its apprehensions.

versity towns, or courtly and governmental centers, in which the leading persons of economic importance were old-fashioned and conservative guild members. As a result, there was very little bourgeois development, but a large supply of middle-class intellectuals—Catholic ecclesiastics, university professors, librarians, doctors, journalists, booksellers, writers, and employees of government.

The Rhineland had been under strong French influence at least since the time of Louis XIV, and news of the French Revolution produced an immediate impact.²² As early as 1790 there were cases of peasants, who were not serfs as in eastern Germany, refusing to pay taxes and seignorial dues. Many purely indigenous disputes were revived by the French example. In the diets of the territories of Trier and Cologne there were demands for tax equality between Third Estate, nobles, and clergy. The privileged classes made no concession. The arrival of French émigrés, who congregated especially at Coblenz, had contrary effects. Their accounts of the Revolution increased the conservatism of some, while their aristocratic behavior sharpened the radicalism of others. The local rulers became more conservative, adopting, among other measures, a stricter control over the universities. Two university professors who had taken priestly orders, and who had in fact become very unorthodox, may be mentioned. One, A. J. Dorsch, professor of philosophy at Mainz, and one of the rare individuals who had actually belonged to the order of the Illuminati, was deprived of his position in 1791 for Kantian opinions. He spent the following years collaborating with the French in the Rhineland. Eulogius Schneider, a highly successful professor at Bonn, was removed in 1791 for the liberality of his views in the divinity of Christ. He went to Alsace, plunged into the Revolution in France itself, became increasingly violent, and was executed in Strasbourg in 1794 by Saint-Just as an extremist.

There was also Georg Forster, librarian of the University of Mainz, a man of about forty, well known for a variety of publications on science and literature. A cosmopolitan and peripatetic intellectual, born German but of Scottish background, brought up near Danzig, where he had formed Polish connections (he was at one time professor at the University of Vilna), he had, in his youth, accompanied Captain Cook around the world. At Mainz in 1792 he formed a political club, like the clubs so common all over Europe. At Mainz in the summer of 1792 such a club was unavoidably secret. The East German historian, Walter Markov, calls it "a secret democratic party on the model of the Jacobin club,"²³ though how a secret

22 The great published source collection is J. Hansen, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Rheinlandes im Zeitalter der französischen Revolution*, 4 vols. (Bonn, 1931–1938). Useful also for the sources it incorporates is the work of a German republican of 1848, drawing on the papers of his father, a Cisleithanian of 1797: Jakob Venedey, *Die deutsche Republikaner unter der französischen Republik* (Leipzig, 1870). For a contemporary account in English see Ann Radcliffe, *A journey made in the summer of 1794 through Holland and the western frontier of Germany*, 2 vols. (London, 1795). The best historical treatment is by Droz, *Allemagne*, 187–247, 439–50, and the whole of his *Cisleithanians*. Droz holds that German national consciousness took form around a sense of cultural and moral mission, which in the Rhineland in these years expressed itself in the belief (exquisitely ironical to a Frenchman) that Rhineland Germans should be annexed to the Republic for France's good. There is much illuminating material on the French occupation of the Rhineland in J. Godechot, *Les commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1938).

23 *Kampf um Freiheit*, II. There is a large mass of writing by and about Georg Forster.

association could resemble the Paris Jacobins is impossible to understand. In October 1792, a month after Valmy, the French general Custine occupied the city of Mainz. Looking about for inhabitants to employ in a provisional government, and finding the gildsmen and town councillors uncooperative, Custine turned to Forster and his group, since they welcomed the French with enthusiasm. The group included a doctor, G. C. Wedekind; a director of the Protestant school at Worms, G. W. Böhmer; and four professors at the University of Mainz, including A. J. Hoffmann, who was to attempt revolution in Swabia and live to see the Revolution of 1848, and Matthias Metternich, a mathematician unrelated to the noble house of the same name.

The Mainz "Jacobins" found hundreds of like-minded persons in the neighboring cities and principalities. The French were at first well received throughout the Rhineland. The peasants favored the agrarian, fiscal, and property reforms of the Revolution. In the towns, the *Weltbürger* had long been thinking of liberty, equality, and the *Rechte der Menschheit*; and there was little in the crazy-quilt of political geography—free cities, duchies, bishoprics and territories of imperial knights, some of them no bigger than any well-to-do gentleman's private estates—to which a person of enlarged views could feel much positive political loyalty. For everyone who greeted the French with enthusiasm there were a dozen who saw nothing in their own situation to defend. At Aachen, for example, Protestants were annoyed at their failure to receive toleration from the Catholic council of that free city; and since the city possessed rural "subjects" who had begun to object to their inferior status, the peasants offered no resistance to the French. "The spirit in these countries could not be worse," as Freiherr von Stein, the future reformer of Prussia, reported to his government in Berlin. "The magistrates of Worms sent a deputation to meet the French, to give them the keys to the city; and I have no doubt that the burghers here will do the same as soon as the enemy appears before the gates."²⁴

A basis existed, therefore, for some kind of democratic movement. The problem in some ways resembled that at Liège, which the modern mind thinks of as Belgian, but which in 1792 was a state of the Holy Roman Empire like any other. The difference was that the bishopric of Liège, relatively industrialized, had already had an indigenous revolution in 1789. It was explained in Chapter XVII how the Liège democrats, having no desire or reason to combine with the adjoining "Belgian" provinces at a time when they were under conservatively aristocratic domination, took the initiative, in January 1793, in requesting annexation to France. Similarly, in the principalities of the Left Bank, there was no reason why persons who favored change should wish to combine with a "Germany" which had no more existence than "Belgium." Nor was there any special tie among the Left Bank territories themselves, from which the notion of a separate Rhineland Republic could derive any strength.

24 Hansen, *Quellen*, II, 378. Hansen prints many other similar sources. Edmund Burke wrote in 1791 that a "great revolution is preparing in Germany" and that the Rhineland was particularly infected with the *droit de l'homme*; he thought the Westphalia settlement should be maintained in Germany, to preserve the balance of power in Europe, whether the Germans liked it or not. See his *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791) in *Writings* (Boston, 1901), IV, 328–34.

In March 1793 Forster assembled at Mainz a gathering of patriots from other clubs in the neighborhood, the "Rhenish-German National Convention." It declared the independence of a new state, which could not be otherwise described than as the "region from Landau to Bingen." This area, which had no identity whatsoever, reached from the Alsatian border about fifty miles north to the bend in the Rhine. The only sovereign was declared to be *das freie Volk*. In the abolition of former sovereignties it was necessary to specify no less than twenty-three jurisdictions, not including the imperial knights nor all the church bodies and free cities which had territorial powers. Three days later the Convention declared for incorporation in the French Republic. At a time when language and culture were not felt to be divisive, the "free people" of the new phantom state, or at least their spokesmen, expected to enjoy more freedom in the great Republic than outside it.²⁵

The tide of war turned at this very moment with Dumouriez' defeat at Neerwinden. The Coalition reoccupied Mainz and the zone around it. But the French returned in a few years, and by 1797 another movement of revolutionary character developed. It took the form of demands for a Cisirhenane Republic. The leadership included the former Mainz Jacobins, Wedekind, Dorsch, A. J. Hoffmann, and Professor Metternich (Forster had died), but was now amplified by other groups, by men who had been in trouble during the imperial restoration, those who had formed habits of working with the French occupation authorities, and still others, often disinterested patriots and progressives, who were excited by the spread of revolution since 1793, as now manifested in the Batavian and the Cisalpine Republics. The most famous was Joseph Görres, now a youth in his early twenties, later famous as a Catholic social thinker. But the Cisirhenanes seem never to have numbered more than two or three thousand.

"Citizens!" cried the Cisirhenanes at Bonn to their city council. "Italy is ahead of us; it has proclaimed the Rights of Man and become a free and independent state. We wish valiantly to follow their lofty example. The power of France protects us, so that the revolution of humanity that has become necessary for us will cost no tears."²⁶ Dutch, Swiss, and Italians had all used this same argument. All hoped to have a peaceable revolution in which the French army would be the substitute for "tears," or mob violence and civil discord.

In newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, and meetings there was demand for a Cisirhenane Republic, to embrace the whole area from Alsace to Holland. The French general Hoche favored the idea. In later generations, in the heyday of nationalism, it was argued by many Germans, including those of radical outlook, that the Cisirhenanes had been good German patriots, warmly insistent on a Rhineland Republic, who had accepted annexation to France only under French pressure. It has more recently been shown by Jacques Droz that the Cisirhenanes were at least ambivalent on this matter, and that, far from demanding a formal independence, many of them really preferred, like the Mainz Jacobins, annexation to France from the beginning.²⁷ In any event, the Directory decided against a Cisirhenane Republic

25 Hansen, *Quellen*, II, 798–801.

26 Hansen, IV, 67; Venedey, 292.

27 Droz, *Cisirhenans*, 17–19. Venedey, *Deutsche Republikaner*, 308, writing as a "radical" in 1870, insists upon the anti-French national patriotism of the German republicans of the 1790's. Of the

late in 1797, and initiated the steps which led to complete annexation by 1800. Petitions requesting annexation circulated throughout the Rhineland. Thousands of signatures were collected. Most of the population undoubtedly had no desire for incorporation with France (which now included Belgium also); on the other hand there was little resistance, since there was no alternative that had much appeal. Not only were the French in military occupation, but Rhinelanders themselves as a whole lacked positive faith in the peculiarities of their Old Regime. Across the Rhine lay no political Germany for them to join, but only a Gothic wonderland of incongruous principalities, verging off in the East to the land of *Junker* and serf. It was neither surprising nor discreditable, given such choices, for the Rhinelanders to accept union with France and Belgium. Annexed until 1814, they proved very amenable citizens, and they benefited from various reforms which the Napoleonic empire mediated to them from the Revolution.

Like so much else in Germany, the Cisirhenane movement was ambiguous, and if a revolution at all it was a revolution of the mind. Many Cisirhenanes, a handful of youngsters, doctrinaires, and professors, had the presumption to conceive of themselves as equals to the French in the matter of revolution. They hoped, in becoming French citizens, to make a moral contribution to the Republic which was sorely needed. "In the last ten years," wrote Görres, "we have seen in Germany a revolution which has done no less good for mankind in matters of theory than that of France in matters of practice—I mean the reforms of Kant in philosophy." Or as another Cisirhenane, Wyttenbach, put it: "What a blessing for humanity that the two revolutions, the French and the German, have occurred at the same time! May the one raise up what the other has destroyed!"²⁸ To Latin vivacity would now be added a German earnestness in one great commonwealth. The Swiss, too, it may be remembered, had expressed a similar idea: they would fortify the principles of the French Revolution with "German morality and higher philosophical culture."²⁹ There were two revolutions, which were of similar force; and to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen would be added the equally emancipating and stirring doctrine of inward freedom and unconditional duty, the Categorical Imperative.

The case of Rebmann, a prolific radical journalist, is very illuminating. Born in 1768 in central Germany, and educated for the law, he turned to writing, and by 1792 was established at Leipzig in Saxony, where memories of popular rebellion were much alive. He exposed the misery of the stocking-workers at Erlangen, and set forth a socialist idea that the government should purchase and own the stocking-frames, so as to give work to the needy. He likewise, in 1794, translated certain speeches of Robespierre. Forced to move on, he went to Erfurt, a Saxon city which belonged to the distant Archbishop of Mainz. At this time some of the

thousands who signed petitions for annexation to France, one of the more curious and obscure cases was that of Cornelius de Pauw, whose *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, published in 1768, had been well known for its thesis of the degeneration of the flora and fauna, including man, in America. De Pauw, an uncle of Anacharsis Cloots, and of equally unidentifiable nationality, signed the petition for annexation at Xanten in 1798. Hansen, IV, 699.

28 Quoted by Droz, *Cisirhenanes*, 38–39.

29 See above, p. 670.

Mainz Jacobins were imprisoned at the citadel of Erfurt, so that Rebmann came to know something of their revolutionary efforts of the year before. He also, in his paper, saluted the Negro revolution in Haiti, and denounced the evils of European colonialism. Again driven away, he went to Hamburg, where he was well received by Sieveking's group; passed on through Holland, where he mixed with the Bataavian revolutionaries; and arrived in Paris in 1796, shortly after the arrest of Babeuf. In Paris he published a journal in German (estimating that there were four thousand German workers in the city), in which he seems to have shown little or no knowledge of Babeuf—so limited, apparently, was the impact of Babouvism even in radical circles. He was now very critical not only of the Directory but even of Hébert and Robespierre; he thought the French Revolution had failed “for the fundamental reason that it was lacking in morality.” “Paradoxical as it may seem,” he complacently wrote, “the truly republican spirit, enlightenment and sound philosophy are infinitely more widespread in Germany than in France.”³⁰

Rebmann joined in the demand for a Cisrhenane Republic, which he hoped would be the first step toward a great unified democratic republic for all Germany. More than other Cisrhenanes, he resisted the idea of annexation, on the ground that the French did not understand true moral freedom; but he abruptly changed his mind, influenced by the Director Reubell, and in November 1798 accepted not only annexation but appointment as a judge in the newly organizing department of Donnersberg or Mont-Tonnerre. Obligated, as he explained, to abandon the beautiful dream, the *schöne Traum*, of making “Germany a republic and the Germans a nation,” he was glad that at least some Germans, those west of the Rhine, could be free citizens of a free country.³¹ Rebmann, giving up his writing, continued to serve in the judiciary of the Rhineland throughout the Napoleonic years, and even retained a similar post after the Restoration, when some of the territory passed to the crown of Bavaria. Rebmann was of course not the only advanced democrat of the 1790's who held office under the Consulate and Empire. There were many similar cases among the French, Dutch, Poles, and Italians. Some democrats accepted Napoleon, some did not; and both had their reasons.³²

30 Droz, *Allemagne*, 254–58.

31 Hansen, *Quellen*, IV, 793, n. 4.

32 The *Rebmannfrage* seems to be in need of clarification. Hedwig Voegt's complaint that Rebmann has been shamefully belittled by bourgeois historiography seems hardly fair, since the French bourgeois Droz devotes a whole chapter to him, and the West German bourgeois, Valjavec (218–23) calls him the most important revolutionary journalist in Germany before 1848. Voegt (*Jakobinische Literatur*, 112–30) praises him for his views on class war, but she also emphasizes his attack on “colonialism.” It is Valjavec who gives attention to his socialist ideas, and his defense of the Erlangen stocking-workers, of which Voegt seems not to have heard. Voegt, Valjavec, and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Biographie* are all silent on Rebmann's Cisrhenane period, which, however, is abundantly documented in Hansen's source collection, where he may be traced through the copious index. Droz thinks Rebmann the most important German republican propagandist of the 1790's, and notes his Cisrhenane phase, but as a Frenchman is a little impatient of his claims to German moral superiority, and as a good neo-Jacobin feels that Rebmann's ideas on revolution were nebulous, unrealistic, moralizing, and basically not very “radical.” One would not suppose that these three writers are talking about the same person. The discrepancies can be attributed to the fact that Rebmann's writings are numerous, rare, scattered, and inaccessible; but Voegt's ignoring of Valjavec and the Hansen documents is hard

Southwest Germany, east of the Rhine, was also the scene of considerable unrest during the years from 1796 to 1800.³³ Here it was the well-to-do non-noble class that was most disaffected—doctors, lawyers, merchants, government servants, and men of independent income. They formed clubs and read the numerous papers, such as Posselt's *Annalen*, that favored the new order in Europe. Some of them secretly worked with the French emissary, Poteratz, sent by the Directory in 1796. The Directory cancelled Poteratz' mission, and matters quieted down; but A. J. Hoffmann and others of the original Mainz Jacobins continued to agitate across the Rhine, reinforced by Rebmann in 1798, by which time the Helvetic Republic added a strong stimulus also. At the very moment of the Basel revolution, in January 1798, there was a small *putsch* of Germans from Basel into Baden. In Württemberg there was a long history of parliamentary disputation between the reigning duke and the estates, which had preserved their powers to a degree unusual in Germany. The old quarrels broke out afresh in 1798, but this time with a more modern note; a deputy in the estates, named Baz, actively sought French intervention, and projects were even drawn up for a Swabian or Danubian Republic, under a constitution to be modeled on the French constitution of the Year III. In 1800 a republican plot was brought to light in Bavaria. None of these movements was ever supported by the French government. Their failure illustrates the general truth that nowhere, except temporarily in Poland, did revolutionaries or radical democrats accomplish anything without French aid. The agitation subsided after 1800. Probably a good many south-German "Jacobins" were pacified by the active reformism, with "abolition of feudalism," equalization of civil rights, and rationalization of territory, that prevailed in Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria in the time of Napoleon.

THE COLOSSI OF THE GOETHEZEIT

Above the busy level of journalists, pamphleteers, publicists, and professors rose the solemn peaks of the great authors of the Age of Goethe, on whom the little that can be said here must be trifling in comparison to what has been said before.

Goethe himself was among the various civilian spectators, like A. L. Mencken, who were present at the cannonade of Valmy. In a phrase often quoted, he later remembered having said, when asked by a companion what he thought of it: "Here and on this day begins a new era of world history, and you can say that you were there." The young poet, Tieck, longed to fight alongside Dumouriez, whose republican army he compared to the Greeks at Thermopylae. Klopstock penned an Ode to the French Revolution when the war began in April 1792.³⁴ Schiller's Ode to

to explain on this ground. The statement in the *Deutsche Allg. Biog.* that Rebmann became a member of the Legion of Honor in 1804 is not borne out by published membership lists.

33 K. Obser, "Der marquis von Poterat und die revolutionäre Propaganda am Oberrhein, 1796," in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, VII (1892), 385–444; *id.*, "Die revolutionäre Propaganda am Oberrhein im Jahre 1798," *Ibid.*, XXIV (1909), 199–258; Biro, *German Policy*, II, 568–86; Droz, *Allemagne*, 126–30; Valjavec, *Entscheidung*, 43, 203.

34 Excerpts from Goethe, Tieck, and Klopstock are given by Markov, *Kampf um Freiheit*, 39–47.

Joy, written several years earlier, was a favorite with German republicans of the 1790's:

Seid umschlungen, Millionen,
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!

Sometimes the words were sung to the same tune as the Marseillaise.³⁵ Schiller, however, whose early dramas had upheld a stormy idea of freedom, turned against the violence of the French Revolution and what seemed to him to be the low level of its aims as revealed in practice. By 1801 he found true liberty to be not of this world:

Edler Freund: Wo öffnet sich dem Frieden,
Wo der Freiheit sich ein Zufluchtsort?

Viewing the struggle between France and Britain as a detached observer, he washed his hands of both. No liberty could be at stake in such a contest:

Freiheit ist nur in dem Reich der Träume
Und das Schöne blüht nur im Gesang.³⁶

The temptation to flee to a dream-world of true liberty led on into the peculiarities of German romanticism, and the idea that the beautiful could flower only in works of art, *im Gesang*, contributed to the serenities of classical Weimar. Both represented a form of withdrawal or an aesthetic attitude for which the interest of events lay in the kind of appeal they made to a spectator, who, while remaining essentially unexcited and uninvolved, could enjoy a succession of somewhat literary emotions—admiration, inspiration, indignation, or disgust. They were part of what Droz characterizes as the humanist reaction to the French Revolution, shared by Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, and Wilhelm von Humboldt.³⁷ These men did not explicitly oppose the Revolution; they entered into no noisy counter-revolutionary polemics; but they were troubled by the violence and fanaticism that were engendered, and feared that so much obsession with politics would have a bad effect on higher civilization. Deeply non-political, preoccupied with the problems of an elite, concerned for the cultivation of mind and taste, they were too much interested in making room for romantic genius on the one hand, or for classically rounded personalities on the other, to care much about popular doctrines of liberty and equality, by which so many irreplaceable human values and achievements

35 Venedey, *Deutsche Republikaner*, 3–4; Schiller, *Werke* (Leipzig, 1895), I, 61. The verses may be translated: "Be embracéd, O ye Millions, Here's a kiss for all the world!"

36 "Der Antritt des neuen Jahrhunderts" (1801), *Ibid.*, 264–65. In translation; "Noble friend: Where opens there for peace, Or where for freedom now a place of refuge?" And: "Freedom is only in the realm of dreams, And the beautiful blooms only in song."

37 Droz, *Allemagne*, 297–336. For the argument that the lack of an outlet for action, together with certain social and career frustrations, led many into the "way of the dream," or the expectation of a "miracle" (i.e., solutions without effort or understanding), see the brilliant book by H. Brunschwig, *La crise de l'état prussien à la fin du XVIII^e siècle et la genèse de la mentalité romantique* (Paris, 1947).

might be threatened. For this “humanist” school, while their critique fell on the betrayals of liberty, it was essentially the doctrine of equality—whether interpreted to mean more equality of wealth, political participation, legal rights, career opportunities, or education—that they found incomprehensible or distasteful.

The thought of Herder, as of Wilhelm von Humboldt, while not expressed in belligerent terms, exerted an influence in an anti-French and anti-Revolutionary direction, since it represented human affairs as moving forward—not by taking thought, nor by setting up the abstract goals of justice, and still less by learning from foreign countries—but by a process of organic or plant-like growth, in which each people or culture went through an experience of which the germ was somehow inherent in itself. A similar insistence on national peculiarity, and on unconscious historic growth as preferable to deliberate planning, could be found in Burke, who was widely read in the 1790’s in Germany. At the level of disputatious journalism these ideas were developed by others, many of them Hanoverians, and so especially susceptible to English influence, such as Ernst Brandes and A. G. Rehberg.³⁸ The ultimate tenor of such a position was to argue that Germany was altogether different from France, and indeed from the whole of Western Civilization, by whose influence its true and deeper character might be corrupted. It was not until later, however, with the development of German nationalism in the nineteenth century, that these implications made themselves evident, superseding the eager cosmopolitanism of the *Weltbürger*.

Kant, Fichte, and Hegel were all warmly sympathetic to revolutionary republicanism. Of Kant, it has been said³⁹ that he understood the French Revolution better than any other German philosopher, both on its everyday level, since he assiduously read the newspapers while living quietly as professor at Königsberg, and on the more abstract level where his own thought moved. Acknowledging a deep indebtedness to Rousseau, he saw the Revolution as a moral act, an attempt to create a society in which the worth and freedom of the human personality could be unobstructed. There was a strong note of equality in his famous ethical maxim, that each man should so live that the principle of his action might become a universal law. Kant was distrustful of the English, to whom, like many others in Germany, he mainly attributed the continuation of the war. His project for *Perpetual Peace*, written in 1795, was used in Prussia to support the argument for neutrality. In his insistence on the need of moral education for a free society Kant was not altogether different from Robespierre, and Kant himself never ceased to explain the violence of the Terror by the threats of the counter-revolution; but his philosophy became so widely accepted that conservatives in Germany made use of it also. In its conservative form, the argument held that no great improvement in society could occur, and surely no “revolution” should be undertaken, except under the guidance of high-minded and unselfish leaders, and after moral education of the whole citizenry was well-advanced—a simplified “moral” interpretation that Kant himself did not maintain. The criticism to be made of Kant, in which the French

38 On Brandes and Rehberg see Droz, *Allemagne*, 348–70. Droz also has chapters or sections on the more eminent thinkers. See also parts of W. H. Bruford, *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar, 1775–1806* (Cambridge, Eng., 1962).

39 Droz, *Allemagne*, 155.

historian Droz is seconded by a recent American writer, is that, despite his undoubted knowledge of current events, his philosophy left too impassable a gulf between the ideas of liberty and political action on the one hand, and the domains of empirical knowledge and the actual thinking of individual persons on the other.⁴⁰

Fichte and Hegel, born respectively in 1762 and 1770, were young enough for the upheaval of the revolutionary decade to have a formative effect on their innermost thought and feeling.⁴¹ The same, indeed, has been said of Beethoven, also born in 1770, of whom it may be true that the grand movement for human liberation entered somehow into his music; but it is the nature of music to make such speculations controversial.⁴² Since they dealt in words, the impact of the Revolution on Hegel and Fichte is easily documented.

The young Hegel found himself at Bern for four years, from 1792 to 1796, during which he observed the ruling oligarchy of the Swiss old regime at close hand, and sympathized strongly with the revolutionary agitation in the Pays de Vaud. In 1797 he went to Stuttgart in Württemberg, where he could watch the conflict between the duke and the diet. He wrote in 1797 (but did not publish) a pamphlet marked by a vehement radicalism, which he dedicated to "the people of Württemberg," and in which he attacked both the duke for his absolutism and the diet as no more than a selfish privileged oligarchy.⁴³ It was of course the great French Revolution of 1789 that most profoundly impressed him. At the practical level, he could agree that it had been brought on because the monarchy had proved incompetent, and "the Court, the Clergy, the Nobility, the Parliaments themselves were unwilling to surrender the privileges they possessed." In the larger view, the Revolution embodied the Concept of Right. "Never since the sun has stood in the heavens and the planets moved about it," as he later wrote in his *Philosophy of History*, "had it been seen that man relies on his head, that is on thought, and builds reality correspondingly." If it be the chief characteristic of Hegel's philosophy to see the world as a succession of historical stages, each moving on to a higher degree of freedom, each representing the imprint of mind on outer reality, and each exhibiting an interconnectedness among all aspects of culture and society at a given moment in a common *Zeitgeist*, then this philosophy seems to have been confirmed in him, in his youth, by the acute consciousness of living at a great historical turning point, the grand upheaval of revolutionary republicanism by which everything in the world of human relations was permeated and affected. In 1802, in his *Constitution of Germany*, he called for a revolutionary modernization of the outmoded Holy Roman Empire. In later years, as is well known, Hegel became a convinced monarchist, and held that the Prussian monarchy embodied a higher if not final stage

40 Droz, *Ibid.*, 155–71; L. Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom* (Boston, 1957), 124–25.

41 See the special number, entitled "La Révolution de 1789 et la pensée moderne," Vol. 128 (1939) of the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, where M. Gueroult writes on "Fichte et la Révolution française" and J. Hyppolite on "La signification de la Révolution française dans la Phénoménologie de Hegel." The same number is memorable for Ernest Barker's views on Edmund Burke.

42 See the erratic little book by Bishop F. S. Noli, *Beethoven and the French Revolution* (New York, 1947).

43 Droz, *Allemagne*, 125.

in the evolution of freedom. He never turned against the French Revolution. He did not have to, since his dialectic allowed him to see it conveniently in retrospect as a "stage," which, even though now superseded, had been necessary and right in its own time and conditions. When he delivered his Lectures on the Philosophy of History in the 1820's he made the French Revolution in a broad sense their conclusion and climax—finding that "world history is nothing else but the development of the concept of freedom."⁴⁴

Fichte, more of a firebrand than Hegel, owed his general philosophical orientation to Kant, but was inspired by the French Revolution in his most essential metaphysical insight. His doctrine was one of absolute liberty, of a liberty unrestricted by outer reality or by the Thing-in-Itself, since it was the task of the self to employ the Not-Self in the building up of a distinctive universe of its own. It was a doctrine long admired for its stern view of self-reliance, but which in the twentieth century may seem open to debate on both social and psychiatric grounds, not to mention those of theology, and which in any case hardly reflected the civic emphasis of the French Declaration of 1789. In 1793 Fichte wrote a long tract defending the French Republic against hostile criticism at the very moment when it was moving into its period of Virtue and Terror.⁴⁵ A year later he published his *Theory of Knowledge*, or *Wissenschaftslehre*. In his own mind the two books were closely connected. The French Revolution and the Fichtean Revolution were, for him, two manifestations of a common impulse, two battles in the one war for freedom. "My system," he wrote in 1795, "is the first system of liberty. As that nation [France] liberated man from external chains, my system liberates him from the chains of the Thing-in-Itself, or of external influence, and sets him forth in his first principle as a self-sufficient being. It was in the years when the French were fighting for political liberty against external forces . . . when I was writing a book on the Revolution, that there came to me as a compensation the first inklings and intimations of my system. Hence the system belongs in a way to the [French] Nation, and the question is whether that Nation wishes to adopt it openly and officially as its own, by giving me the wherewithal to develop it further."⁴⁶

It was not to France, but to the University of Jena, that Fichte was called as professor of philosophy in 1794. He proved to be a sensational lecturer, attracting streams of students who became his personal devotees. He eloquently preached the liberty and equality of all men, lectured on Sundays, became involved in the affairs of the student orders, and engaged in journalistic controversy on the nature of God. The extreme counter-revolutionary paper, *Eudämonia*, of which more will be said shortly, mounted a press campaign against him; and parents began to complain of the atheism and democratic radicalism to which their sons were exposed. The University of Jena, even then, strongly upheld the principle of *Lehrfreiheit*, or

44 See the last chapter of the *Philosophy of History* in any translation, or the *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. XI, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1928), 557, 568.

45 *Beitrag zur Berechtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution* (1793) in *Werke* (Berlin, 1845), VI, 39–288. Translated into French in 1859, but never into English.

46 H. Schulz, ed., *J. G. Fichte: Briefwechsel*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1925), I, 449–50. See the discussion in Droz, *Allemagne*, 260–73; Guérout, *op.cit.*; X. Léon, *Fichte et son temps*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1922–1927).

freedom of teaching. The university was in the grand duchy of Weimar, and it happened that the grand duke's minister for cultural affairs was none other than Goethe. The memoranda of Goethe on the Fichte case make curious reading. Goethe was well aware of Fichte's Jacobin principles at the moment of appointment; he hoped he would be discreet; he understood that the new professor espoused democracy only in a theoretical sense, with no actual intent of subversion, etc. Fichte, however, would not be silent, and was loudly accused of atheism by his critics. Since there were many German professors who taught Fichte's views on the divine nature with impunity, it seems that the objection against him was really aimed at his politics. "I have never believed," he wrote, "that they are pursuing my so-called atheism; they are pursuing in me the freethinker who begins to make himself understood (Kant's good fortune was his obscurity)—and an infamous democrat. They are terrified as if by a ghost by the independence that my philosophy awakens."⁴⁷ Goethe and the grand-duke tried to protect him, but were finally forced to yield. He was allowed to submit a presumably voluntary resignation. *Lehrfreiheit* and everyone's dignity were technically preserved, but many outraged students departed when Fichte left, and the enrollment at Jena suffered for several years. It was a sign that the youth were not gained for the counter-revolution.

Fichte, who had been eager in 1795 to be accepted as a kind of official philosopher of the French Republic, was made even more pro-French by this experience at Jena. In the spring of 1799, as the War of the Second Coalition began, he thought that "only the French Republic can be considered by a just man as his true country . . . on its victory depend the dearest hopes and even the existence of humanity. . . . The present war is a war of principles. . . . If the French do not obtain an overwhelming predominance, and if they do not bring about a transformation in Germany, or at least in a considerable part of it, there will be no peaceful place for any man in Germany who is known to have had a free thought in his life."⁴⁸ Fichte, like the Ciceronians, believed that the Republic was too great and too universal an enterprise to be left to the French alone.

He began to put his hopes also in Prussia, where signs of reform were stirring, and it was to the Prussian minister, Struensee (the one who told a Frenchman that the King of Prussia was really a democrat) that Fichte dedicated his next book, *The Closed Commercial State*, published in 1800. The book drew in part on the Kantian doctrine that the purpose of the state was to improve the moral character of its citizens, and partly on what Fichte recalled of the French Republic in the Year II, when France, because of the war, had in fact been a "closed" state governed by a revolutionary dictatorship. The general idea of the book was to restrict individual liberty, and avoid dependence on foreigners outside one's own control, as a means to building a more just and desirable civil community. How Fichte became an extreme German nationalist some ten years later need not be told. In conclusion, one may agree with Leonard Krieger on both Fichte and Hegel: that they separated

47 *Briefwechsel*, II, 105; Droz, *Allemagne*, 272; Fichte exhibited a certain caution in his *Appellation an das Publikum gegen die Anklage des Atheismus* (1799) in *Werke* (Berlin, 1845), V, 193–332. The whole episode of Fichte at Jena, and the state of the university at the time, are examined at length in Léon, I, 269–629.

48 *Briefwechsel*, II, 100–101, 104; Droz, *Allemagne*, 279.

the idea of liberty from actual individual persons, and lodged it in a collective group, which in later years, after their revolutionary-republican period was over, became for Hegel the rational state of the Prussian monarchy, and for Fichte the cultural-linguistic-kinship community of the German people.⁴⁹

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY CROSS CURRENTS

A conscious and controversial conservatism, deliberately aimed at discrediting the new ideas, was neither adopted by the leading thinkers and literary figures of Germany, nor sponsored by the governments of the German states. It was carried on, as was the pro-revolutionary propaganda, by writers of a lesser kind: journalists, publicists, and pamphleteers. Eventually, Friedrich Gentz became the best known of these writers. He translated Burke in 1793, and in 1799 he published at Berlin his *Historisches Journal*, which was designed to combat the whole revolutionary movement in Europe; but it is to be noted that Gentz received his emoluments not from the Prussian government but from the British, from which, beginning in 1800, he sometimes drew as much as £1,000 a year.⁵⁰

Conservatism in Germany antedated the French Revolution, having first taken form as a campaign against secret societies, and against the rationalism, the alleged aridity, and the abstract ideas of the Enlightenment.⁵¹ It was less political than in England, since it did not serve, like Burke's ideas as expressed in 1784, to protect a Parliamentary governing class against the perils of new modes of election.⁵² In Germany conservatism sometimes justified the peculiarities of the small states, as in the thought of Justus Möser. Often it arose from religious sources, both Protestant and Catholic. The fact that many Lutheran pastors and Catholic priests thought of themselves as vehicles of the Enlightenment—the fact, that is, that the problems posed by rationalism were internal to the churches themselves—only made the argument the more vehement.

Among Protestants, the most notable anti-revolutionary editor was H. M. Koester, who was also a professor at the University of Giessen, where he taught history and political science. In 1777 he launched the *Neuesten Religionsbegebenheiten*, directing it against the critical and freethinking tendencies of the day, and carrying on in the 1790's with a denunciation of revolution and secret societies.⁵³ Protestant Germany had also long been affected by the movement of Pietism, which, so far as it taught that Christian satisfaction was to be found in subjective religious feelings, was generally conservative in its implications. Thus the Pietist Jung-Stilling remarked in 1793 that a pure and obedient Christianity, "not the spirit of revolt and revolution," was the best way "to do away with all abuses."⁵⁴ Pietism was hardly to be equated with social class, but there was an important

49 *German Idea of Freedom*, 125–38, 179–92.

50 Golo Mann, *Secretary of Europe; the Life of Friedrich Gentz* (New Haven, 1946), 50.

51 One of the leading arguments of Valjavec, *passim*, but see 5, 11, 255–302.

52 See above, pp. 556–62.

53 Valjavec, 305.

54 Quoted by Droz, *Allemagne*, 422.

group of Pietists among the nobles of Holstein, where they defended the privileges of the noble estates, resisted the reformist absolutism of the King of Denmark, and denounced the faculty at the University of Kiel, including the theologians there, as no better than Jacobins.⁵⁵

Among Catholics, a group of ex-Jesuits established at Augsburg took the lead in denouncing the Enlightenment as a menace to religious faith and to civil society. Augsburg was a free city enclosed in Bavaria, where the Illuminati were founded in 1778, and to combat the Jesuits, while using the clandestine methods with which they were credited, seems to have been one of the aims of the Illuminati; at any rate, it is among the Augsburg Jesuits, as early as 1784, that the first deliberate formulation of the "plot theory" of the eighteenth-century revolution is to be found. The theory grew out of earlier attacks on the Freemasons, but the Illuminati made a more sensational target. It was from these somewhat intramural disputes among Catholics, mediated by Protestant Germans, as well as by the Scotch Presbyterian Robison and in America by a stalwart of Congregationalism, Jedediah Morse, that the world was asked to believe, in 1798, that the Revolution of Western Civilization was due to the machinations of a secret society. The Augsburg Jesuits continued to issue a number of periodicals into the 1790's, aimed at the lower clergy and at the mass of the Catholic faithful, to whom they offered an absolute acceptance of the church as the only defense against the horrors of irreligion and anarchy.⁵⁶

In Vienna, L. A. Hoffmann, in his *Wiener Zeitschrift*, took up the same crusade against secret societies. How Hoffman himself, in conjunction with Leopold II, had organized a secret "Association," to combat both aristocracy and democracy, has already been explained.⁵⁷ The *Wiener Zeitschrift* was shut down in 1793 by the government of Francis II, which wanted no discussion of revolution pro or con, and which, far from subsidizing a conservative ideology, preferred to have no ideology at all. More widely read than the *Wiener Zeitschrift* was the *Revolutions-Almanach* of H. A. O. Reichard, librarian to the duke of Saxe-Gotha. As early as 1790, at the time of the peasant rebellion in Saxony, Reichard had been asked by the government of the Electorate to publish a counter-revolutionary journal at the popular level. He had apparently done so, declaring that some "fine passages from Dr. Martin Luther and the writings of other pious men" should serve this purpose very well.⁵⁸ In 1793 he began to issue his *Revolutions-Almanach* at Göttingen. It was aimed at a more sophisticated audience, and lasted until 1801. At Göttingen, in Hanover, much was known about England; and one of the early articles in the *Revolutions-Almanach* was a long and laudatory account of an English society, founded in 1792, the Association for the Protection of Freedom and Property

55 *Ibid.*, 423–38. The ex-revolutionary, Dumouriez, in Holstein in 1798, also denounced the Kiel faculty for Jacobinism. See above, p. 616.

56 Valjavec, 290, 292, 305–307. On Robison and Barruel see above, pp. 559–64 and 627; on Morse, below, p. 746. See also Droz' *Allemagne*, and his article, "La légende du complot illuministe et les origines du romantisme politique en Allemagne," in *Revue historique*, Vol. 226 (1961), 313–38.

57 On Hoffman and the *Wiener Zeitschrift*, Valjavec, 308; Droz, 409–11; D. Silagi, *Ungarn und der geheime Mitarbeiterkreis Kaiser Leopolds II* (Munich, 1960), 105–16; and see above, p. 495.

58 Stulz, *Volksbewegungen*, 101.

against Republicans and Levellers. "Levellers" significantly became *Aufklärer* in German.⁵⁹

Reichard and others, in 1794, formed a secret alliance which they called the "Association A-M," since each member was given a letter of the alphabet as a code name. They published a journal, *Eudämonia*, and so were known as the Eudämonists. The Eudämonists offered the best example in Germany of the 1790's of what a later generation would call the Radical Right. They included the editors Reichard and Koester, already mentioned; G. B. Schirach, editor of the Hamburg *Politisches Journal*; two conservative booksellers at Frankfurt and Leipzig; the court preacher at Darmstadt; and J. G. R. Zimmermann of Hanover, who was physician to King George III, and who, it may be recalled, had been recruited by Hoffmann into Leopold II's secret Association. They were a Protestant group, but reached out to join with like-minded Catholics, notably Hoffmann, soon after his *Wiener Zeitschrift* was suppressed in Vienna. Organized secretly, concealing their operations, composed in part of men who were former or disillusioned Freemasons, and claimed personal knowledge of conspiratorial societies over the past dozen years, they busily corresponded and exchanged information, using a cypher in which "44" meant the Illuminati and "43" the Jacobins, and they accused, denounced, exposed, and reported upon various persons in government or the universities as crypto-Jacobins or unregenerate Illuminati in disguise. Their journal, *Eudämonia*, was for three years the most influential counter-revolutionary organ in Germany. It was the repeated attacks in its pages, and the campaign of complaint and letter-writing which the Eudämonists organized, which, more than anything else, forced the grand-duke of Weimar to accept Fichte's resignation at Jena. Wild charges finally defeated their own purpose. When the imperial censor at Vienna found himself accused of Illuminism he forbade the paper in Austria. Silenced or discouraged as a nuisance in various of the German states, *Eudämonia* ceased publication in 1798.⁶⁰

Such extreme counter-revolutionaries, though voluble and articulate, were not numerous, and it is difficult to assess their significance. Their polemics, however, at the least—like so much that was non-polemical in Germany—contributed little, and indeed set up a barrier, to the intelligent understanding of the French Revolution and the European upheaval that accompanied it. A movement fundamental to Western Civilization was trivialized into the doings of plotters. As one of the future Eudämonists said to another, on first hearing of the fall of the Bastille: "It is the work of the 44!"⁶¹

On the other hand, much in the counter-revolutionary campaign—like much in what German sympathizers with the Revolution also said—inflated and ballooned up the Revolution beyond rational measure. It was more in Germany than in France, more among those who watched it as spectators than among those who were active participants, that the idea grew up of revolution as a vast force with a

59 *Revolutions-Almanach von 1794* (Goettingen, 1794), 323–33.

60 Valjavec, 304–5; Droz, *Allemagne*, 414–16; Léon, *Fichte*, I, 536–49; G. Krüger, "Die Eudämonisten," in *Hist. Zeitschrift*, Vol. 143 (1931), 467–500.

61 Krüger, 474.

life of its own.⁶² In an empirical view, the Revolution could be seen as an episode, a crisis in affairs, momentous indeed, but still within the pale of comprehensible politics, arising from a breakdown of the old government, involving understandable conflicts of interest, aiming at a future state of society that could at least be foreseen and described in words, subject to criticism for its success or failure, for the wisdom or unwisdom of its measures, or for the moral implications of the means adopted in the pursuit of ends. Among the real revolutionaries of France, including Robespierre, some such view prevailed on the whole, though in France also there were some who glorified revolution for its own sake. Such was not the view taken in Germany either by excited but frustrated revolutionaries without a revolution, or by counter-revolutionaries desiring to argue that revolution was aimless chaos.

"The lava of revolution flows majestically on, sparing nothing. Who can resist it?"⁶³ It was the Mainz Jacobin Georg Forster who wrote these words. Longing for revolution, he was pleased by the thought of its "irresistibility," though Robespierre, as a real revolutionary, found much to resist, such as the "ultras," in a real revolution. The image of flowing lava, since it made the Revolution seem mindless and inhuman, could appeal to counter-revolutionaries as well as to merely potential, incipient, frustrated, or spectator-type revolutionaries. There is no room here to go into the arcana of German romanticism, in which men like Schlegel and Novalis, while rejecting revolutionary republicanism, looked for a vast outburst of vitalistic and creative life forces to regenerate the world. The rational and politically minded Friederich Gentz, no romantic, began in 1793 to characterize events in France as *eine Total-Revolution*. Repeatedly he contrasted the American Revolution, constructive and rational, with the French Revolution, which he saw as a vast, boundless, all-consuming, blind force, aiming at unrealizable goals, or with no goals except violence and upheaval. The French revolutionaries imagined that when their revolution was over, civil peace would follow. It was Gentz and the counter-revolution that thought otherwise, who saw in France a destructive force that would "favor other revolutions into infinity . . . lead to a succession of revolutions, and turn human society into a theater of never ending civil war."⁶⁴

The accuracy of this interpretation is a matter of judgment. It was at least a way of taking attention from the announced goals of the movement, such as liberty and equality. The irony is that the idea of a dynamic, continuing, and perpetual revolution, of revolution as an elemental or historic force rather than as a political expedient to be rarely used, arose at least as much in Germany as in France, and at least as much among conservatives as among revolutionary democrats and republicans.

62 The argument of K. Griewank, *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff* (Weimar, 1955), in the chapter on "Der dynamische Revolutionsbegriff und die Gegenrevolution," 240–59.

63 Quoted by Griewank, 243.

64 *Ibid.*, 248–49.

CHAPTER XXX

BRITAIN: REPUBLICANISM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement; hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1794

Lord Malmesbury and I have made a large circuit on horseback today. . . . The cottages picturesque; the inhabitants thriving, but preserving a sylvan sort of character. . . . Everything is in the highest possible order, and this country affords a specimen of general prosperity and comfort which should make even a *Sans-culotte* think twice before tearing off the breeches of the world, and making us sit bare under the Tree of Liberty, instead of on a good, broad, well clothed, aristocratic basis, as they do in Hampshire.

—SIR GILBERT ELLIOT,
LATER EARL OF MINTO, 1793

Until late in 1792 the British government expected to remain at peace, but once engaged in the war with France it became the most persistent adversary of the New Republican Order. In the British official view, at least after 1797, there could be no lasting settlement, nor would British interests be secure, except by a liquidation not only of the French Revolution but of the new regimes in Holland and elsewhere. And it seems true that Britain, which if not fighting for its life was fighting for the freedom to grow, could never have enjoyed its great Victorian and Edwardian imperial age without the destruction of the new order of the 1790's, and the Napoleonic system which succeeded it. The greatest single champion of

the European counter-revolution was England, which supplied conservative Europe with an example of perseverance, with a philosophy either traditionalist or constitutionalist as one chose, and with a good deal of money to pay for Continental armies, in sums which reached £10,000,000 by 1800 and £57,000,000 by 1815.

In England itself, however, and more so in Scotland and Ireland, there was a good deal of opposition to the war and sympathy for republican France. On the extent and significance of this "Jacobinism," especially for England itself, there has been considerable difference of opinion. Its importance was stressed half a century ago by the appearance of several books within a single decade.¹ Since then the subject has been in abeyance. In recent years, at a time when German, Italian, Austrian, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian "Jacobins" have all had their several historians, hardly anything has been written on those of Britain, except for one book by a Frenchman which leaves an exaggerated impression of revolutionary agitation in England, and except for a few specialized articles by British writers, some of which, to be sure, are extremely illuminating.² On the whole, British historians now warn against an over-estimation of the importance of the British Jacobins, and against attempts to see parallels between British and Continental developments. One writer, a British expert on the French *sans-culottes*, affirms that the English Jacobins were of no significance, that they were strangers in their own country, and that any war against Frenchmen was well liked by the popular classes. These views seem hardly to coincide with the evidence, and they reflect about what a proper English gentleman might have thought in 1797.³

The question is not whether any groups in England desired a revolution in the French sense, or whether revolution was possible in England in any case. The only good answer to these questions has always been "No." The question is rather to examine the kind and degree of disaffection that existed in England and Scotland (the issues in Ireland being somewhat different); to find out who was disaffected, and why; to explain why, except in Ireland, the disaffection could not reach revolutionary proportions; and to set forth the way in which disaffection was dealt with

1 G. S. Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1913); W. T. Laprade, *England and the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1909); W. P. Hall, *British Radicalism, 1789-97* (New York, 1912); H. W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Glasgow, 1912); P. A. Brown, *The French Revolution in English History* (London, 1918). The most accessible printed sources, aside from pamphlets and the *Annual Register*, are T. B. and T. S. Howell, *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials . . .*, 33 vols. (London, 1809-1826); and the many documents of the popular clubs printed by order of Parliament: *Gt. Brit., Parl., Committee of Secrecy, Fire Report . . . and Second Report . . .*, London, 1794, and *Report . . .*, London, 1799.

2 J. Dechamps, *Les lies britanniques et la Révolution française 1789-1803* (Brussels, 1949). For the articles mentioned here see below. About a fourth of S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1786-1832* (London, 1955) is devoted to the years before 1800. There has been some good work by Americans: R. T. Oliver, *Four Who Spoke Out: Burke, Fox, Sheridan, Pitt* (Syracuse, 1946); L. S. Marshall, *The Development of Public Opinion in Manchester, 1780-1820* (Syracuse, 1946); D. V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire* (Princeton, 1954). Since writing the above I have seen the American edition of E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1964), which puts great stress on English "Jacobinism."

3 R. C. Cobb, "Les jacobins anglais et la Révolution française," in *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire moderne*, No. 3 for 1960. The warning against exaggeration of the significance of English "Jacobinism" seems to be shared by A. Cobban, *The Debate on the French Revolution* (London, 1950), and by J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III* (Oxford, 1960), which is Vol. XII of the *Oxford History of England*.

and overcome by the Establishment, to use a modern term, which then referred only to the establishment of religion in the Anglican Church. As for the disaffected, they were variously known by their enemies as Jacobins, Levellers, "clubbists," or "anarchy men." They had no name for themselves, but might occasionally confess to "republican" sentiments. It was not that they proposed to do away with the monarchy; but they were critical of the kinds of men and institutions by which the monarchy was surrounded, they thought that church and state were controlled by aristocrats, and they regarded more equality as desirable.

In Britain and Ireland, as in Eastern Europe, it was counterrevolution that prevailed. The net effect of the revolutionary decade was to demonstrate, or to consolidate, the strength of the established order. The very lengths to which the established order went, however, in dealing with disaffection (or what was called "sedition") offer a measure of the magnitude of the discontents. The men who ruled England were not the sort to be frightened by witches. The British governing class was neither timid, foolish, intolerant, nor especially ruthless when unprovoked. That Englishmen of this class became fearful of unrest at home, intolerant of ideas or organizations suggesting those of the French Revolution, repressive in Britain, and deliberately terroristic in Ireland can be taken as evidence of the reality of something of which, from their own point of view, they had reason to be afraid. In England as elsewhere there was a contest between democrats and aristocrats.

BRITISH RADICALISM AND CONTINENTAL REVOLUTION

Situated on an island, commanding the sea, trading with all the world, possessing a highly developed national unity, rejoicing in its liberty, its constitutional monarchy, its common law, and its Parliament, England was in truth very different from the rest of Europe. Of "feudalism" in its many senses nothing remained, or what remained had been transformed into a sort of landowners' rule; the country was politically more homogeneous than France before 1789, or the Dutch provinces before 1795, with the landed class providing a central direction through Parliament and the Crown, while as individuals they retained a good deal of local initiative in the counties. Landownership was highly concentrated, and in process of becoming more so; there was no peasantry, as on the Continent, either of small free proprietors as in Western Europe, or of serfs as in the East; the mass of the rural population worked as wage laborers for farmers who paid rents to the landowners, or in such household manufactures as cutlery and weaving. Freed of peasant conservatism, British agriculture had become innovating and productive, and since the country was also a commercial and financial center, well launched on the process of industrialization, England was the most wealthy region in Europe, or indeed the world. In a population of nine millions in 1800 there were perhaps ten thousand families that could be called rich, having £1,500 (or over 30,000 French *livres*) of annual revenues. Land was still the chief source of wealth. In Patrick Colquhoun's estimates for 1801, the category of titled persons, "esquires" and "gentlemen and ladies living on incomes," with 27,000 families, was almost twice as large as that of "eminent merchants" and "lesser merchants by sea." In the same estimates there were two million

persons in the families of artisans and mechanics, and almost 400,000 in those of tradesmen and shopkeepers. A million persons were habitually on poor relief. Extremes of wealth and poverty were very great.⁴

England had pioneered in many of the developments described in preceding chapters as characteristic of the revolutionary decade on the Continent. The "politicization" of opinion was an old story, dating back to the Puritan Revolution and before. Clubs and coffee houses served the function of reading societies elsewhere. Pamphleteering had long been a national custom, and the periodical press was both highly developed and relatively free. It is thought that the literacy rate about 1780, before the new Sunday School movement sought to extend it, was no higher than in the reign of Elizabeth, since the intervening years had not been as favorable to the lower classes as to the upper. In the 1780's the number of persons able to read began to mount, and in any case, thanks largely to interest in the French Revolution, the number who desired to read the papers, or to listen while others read them, appears to have increased. Nine new dailies were established in London in the 1780's, four of these in the year 1789 alone.

Newspapers in England, however, like books, were expensive. There was a stamp tax to be paid on every copy, raised from 1½ to 2 d. in 1789, and to 3½ d. in 1797. The famous daily generated in Paris by the Revolution, the *Moniteur*, without advertising or government subsidy, was able to sell by subscription for 18 livres a quarter, raised to 20 in 1797. This amounted to two English pence per copy. In France such a price was thought too high for most people, for whom other papers, weekly or semi-weekly, were provided after 1789 for a penny a copy.

In England the dailies sold for four pence in 1789 and sixpence in 1797. By the latter year they were three times as expensive as the *Moniteur*. The enthusiasm of French Revolutionaries for cheap popular newspapers was not shared by the British government. Little is known of circulation; the *Times* by 1800 was selling about 4,800 a day, but there were a dozen other London dailies; the circulation of the *Moniteur* is unknown, but the *Journal de Paris* had 12,000 paid subscribers.⁵

England was distinguished above all by its Parliament, and the traditions, claims, powers, and prestige of Parliament were so overwhelming that issues of many kinds, including religious, economic, and social, presented themselves in terms of Parliament and its "reform." The Parliament was one of those constituted bodies, described in Part 1, against which much of the revolutionary impetus in eighteenth-century Europe was directed. The British House of Lords in the 1790's consisted of about three hundred temporal peers and twenty-six bishops. The House of Commons consisted of 558 members sent from boroughs and counties by a variety of methods. Most "burgesses" sitting for boroughs were in fact country gentlemen, as were the "knights of the shire." The law, though sometimes circum-

4 Colquhoun's tabulations may be found in his *Treatise on Indigence* (London, 1806), following p. 23.

5 R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: a Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1957), 35-77, 322-24; R. L. Haig, *The Gazetteer, 1735-1797: a Study of the Eighteenth-Century English Newspaper* (Carbondale, Ill., 1960); L. Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press, 1772-92* (Lincoln, Nebr.), 1963. For France see E. Hatin, *Bibliographie de la presse périodique française* (Paris, 1866); J. Godechot, *Institutions de la France sous la Rev. et l'Emp.* (Paris, 1951), 57-61.

vented, still required an income from landed property of £300 a year for the burgesses, and of £600 a year for the knights, that is the members who sat for counties. In the House of Commons elected in 1790 (and the one elected in 1796 was much the same) there were 85 baronets and 121 peers (of Ireland) or sons of peers. Three-fifths of the 558 had had fathers or other close relatives previously in the House. No less than 278 had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge, and 115 at Eton. Eighty-five were career officers in the army or navy, and 41 others held temporary commissions. Over a fifth, that is, while essentially gentry, could be thought of as military personages, while there were 72 lawyers, 27 bankers, and another half hundred whose economic interests were primarily commercial.⁶

It was a point of strength in the British system, in Parliament and elsewhere, that men of agricultural and commercial wealth could meet and act together, and that both forms of wealth were often possessed by the same individuals. There was less tension than on the Continent between elites of different kinds. The elites of birth, rank, wealth, and fashion, of government, the church, and the army and navy, of the universities, the law and the learned professions, if not actually all drawn from the same circles, all merged into a generalized upper class. The upper class was not rigidly exclusive; capable persons of modest origins could occasionally reach high positions, in return for acceptance of the upper-class scheme of values. The result was to strengthen the aristocracy, and to deprive the truly common people of an effectual leadership. Precisely because it had avoided the crude dualism of *noblesse* and *roture*, England was of all countries the most successfully aristocratic. If the idea of equality seemed in England especially shocking and nonsensical, it was because what some called inequality, and others a due subordination of ranks and orders, was seen not merely as social necessity, but as an adornment of civilized society, interesting and warmly attractive in itself.

England was the only one of the leading European monarchies, before 1792, which had for a dozen years been a republic itself, and in which a king had been tried and executed, and a significant democratic movement had once developed. Resemblances between the French Revolution and the Puritan Revolution and Commonwealth are evident enough to twentieth-century historians. In the 1790's they were mainly perceived by conservatives, especially those who were not English; Mallet du Pan saw, in the "doctrines" of the French Revolution, a lot of "stories drawn by Rousseau from the filth of the English republic."⁷ In England these events had disappeared from the center of consciousness. The name of Cromwell stood as a sign of evil ambition, and the word "Leveller" survived as a term of reproach. The names of Milton and Algernon Sydney might be invoked as symbols of classical republicanism and antique virtue, as in Wordsworth's great sonnets of 1802. But the actual politics of the Puritan Revolution had been put out of mind. It was not for the Dissenters, in their unsuccessful efforts to obtain equality of political rights, to revive memories of a regicide past. Few English "Jacobins," in all probability, had ever heard of John Lilburne. Their historical imagination, like that of Thomas Jefferson, dwelt by preference on King Alfred or even Hengist and

6 G. P. Judd, *Members of Parliament 1734-1832* (New Haven, 1955), 79-89.

7 J. Mallet du Pan, *Corr. pol. pour servir à l'hist. du républicanisme français* (Hamburg, 1796), XIX.

Horsa, in a remote age of Saxon liberty before the Norman Conquest. In a country so conscious of its own history this phenomenon is of psychological interest; English Jacobinism was to suffer a similar eclipse or oblivion for a hundred years.

What was remembered was the revolution of 1688, which had been peaceable enough in England itself. The centennial produced a certain activity on the part of various Revolution Societies, some of which greeted the beginnings of the French Revolution with approval, since in England, as in Prussia for different reasons, it was at first supposed that the French were only seeking to obtain what the English already enjoyed. It was to members of such a Revolution Society that Richard Price, in 1789, delivered his famous discourse on the love of country, which provoked Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, with its indignant denial that the English in 1688 had "cashiered a king," or ever made laws of their own choosing. On the whole, the disaffection of the 1790's had little to do with the Revolution Societies, and it had no conscious relationship to "the filth of the English republic."

Disaffection in England, though it may have forgotten its past, was national and indigenous. It was a plant with native roots, which the sudden blaze of light across the Channel brought luxuriantly into blossom. Something has been said in the preceding volume of moves for the democratization of Parliament that had begun in the 1760's, of the agitations led by John Wilkes, of the proposals of the Westminster committee in which the six points of Chartism were already foreshadowed, of Pitt's repeated failure to obtain Parliamentary reform, and of the similar failures to obtain removal of the disabilities upon Protestant Dissenters. Something has been said also of the formation, before 1789, of a philosophy of conservatism, which held that the British constitution was in no need of change, and indeed could not be modified without risk of anarchy and collapse—a conservatism which is not at all to be understood as a reaction against the "excesses" of the French Revolution.⁸ In these earlier movements, except for groups in London and for the Dissenters, the main strength had come from landowners meeting in county associations. Many of the leaders had been of the upper and Parliamentary classes. Persons of this kind remained active after 1789, notably those Whigs who developed in the direction of Charles James Fox. Some of them in 1792 founded a society called the Friends of the People. They continued for years to oppose the war, enjoying a freedom of speech, as members of the upper classes, which would probably have been tolerated in no other country in wartime. They continued also, though with declining conviction, to talk of a reform of the House of Commons. As late as 1797, after years of war and domestic turmoil, a reform bill was introduced by Charles Grey; it failed, but the same Grey was to obtain passage of the First Reform Bill thirty-five years later. As in other countries, so in England, there were upper-class "Jacobins," men who sometimes from conviction, sometimes from eccentricity, and sometimes from factiousness, set themselves in opposition to the views of the government, and the predilections of the established order. In general, however, their contacts with popular discontent were desultory at best. The Whig Friends of the People had no desire to mix with men of lower station, and the true radicals felt for them neither confidence nor respect.

⁸ See above, 477–91, 537–39, 565–88, 654–58.

On the Continent the professional classes, including the clergy, furnished many sympathizers with the French Revolution and sponsors of change in their own countries. The same was much less true in England. A church whose bishops were administrators sitting in Parliament, whose parsons hobnobbed with squires, whose ranks were recruited from yeoman and gentry families, and which in any case had lost touch with the newer forms of the laboring population, was in no mood to be critical of the social order. "Individuals have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them," said the Bishop of Rochester in the House of Lords.⁹ Dissenting and Unitarian clergy were more susceptible to republicanism. In Scotland, where a system of patronage to church livings, on the English model, had been introduced into the established Presbyterian Church after the Union, and where, partly in protest against this system, various other Presbyterians had broken away, the established clergy were generally satisfied, feeling close to the government and the landowners, but the "seceders," "New Lights," etc., were rightly suspected of political radicalism. Methodist clergy in England tried to be officially neutral on political questions. The effects of Methodism, however, were by no means conservative. Men taught to read in Methodist Sunday Schools, or to speak up in Wesleyan meetings, often figured as leaders in radical clubs.¹⁰ Home missions, Bible reading, and itinerant preaching, in both England and Scotland, offered a kind of competing program to that of the French Revolution as a force calling the established order into question.

On the Continent, eastward from France itself, university professors and students were prominent among partisans of the new ideas. At the two English universities, assimilated to the aristocracy since the Restoration, and at a low point in their intellectual history, the same was not so. Even in Scotland, where the universities were more alive, but attached to the Presbyterian establishment, a "Jacobin" professor was a rarity. In Europe, professional government employees, sometimes trained in the universities in subjects corresponding to modern economics and political science, might favor reforms or even collaborate with the French. The same was not true in England, which had no professional class of this kind. In Europe, and also in America, the new groups usually included a contingent of doctors. We hear little of doctors in the English radical clubs. In Europe, the lawyers were everywhere divided, but few types were more common than the radical lawyer. In England the radical lawyer was less in evidence. Causes for these differences can only be suggested, in the absence of more detailed investigation; they might range from the class structure of the professions in England to the empirical habits of the English mind. As for the lawyers, their division into a hierarchy of barristers, solicitors, and attorneys, the fact that legal counsel was associated with large property rather than small, the location of legal study, and the formation of lawyers in the Inns of Court, with nothing like the atmosphere of a Continental university, the steeping of the youthful mind in the mysterious lore described by Blackstone, the disregard of Roman law as taught on the Continent, which was more likely to

⁹ *Parliamentary History*, XXXII, 267.

¹⁰ See the report on an unpublished dissertation by R. F. Wearmouth, "Methodism and the Working Classes of England, 1800-1850," in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research of the University of London*, No. 41 (1936), p. 121. The same point is made for Manchester by L. S. Marshall, *op.cit.*, 122. For Scotland see Meikle, *op.cit.*, 34-40, 194-213.

raise questions of principle concerning the state, public authority and justice, may all help to explain the incredible conservatism for which English law was to remain famous until the days of Dickens.

In Europe it was usual enough to find business men favorable to the main aims of the Revolution, and in this matter the same was true, to a degree, of England also. Commercial men were already more integrated into accepted society than in the other monarchical states of Europe. It has just been observed that 27 bankers sat in Parliament, in which the interests of trade were far from being unrepresented. The knighting of Richard Arkwright in 1786, and the granting of a baronetcy to the elder Robert Peel in 1800, suggest the transition of the factory-builders into higher social circles. Peel himself, however, at first felt enthusiasm for the French Revolution, as did various other men of affairs, the more so if they were outside the established church, or lived in the newer and politically unrepresented industrial towns. Such men often looked on the aristocracy as arrogant social drones, unbroken to useful work, who wasted their own money on racing, gambling, and large entertainments, and the people's money in lucrative but idle jobs and appointments. Both partners of the famous firm of Watt and Boulton were strongly of this opinion, and even talked, not very seriously, of emigrating to America. Their sons, before settling down in the firm's business, were notorious "Jacobins."¹¹ The fate of Thomas Walker of Manchester will be mentioned later. The most curious case, in a way, was that of the ironmaster, John Wilkinson, the man who had first successfully used coal in place of charcoal in the smelting of iron ore, and had designed and cast the first iron bridge in Britain. A Dissenter and a friend of Priestley's, he was irritated at the failure, which became "final" in 1790, to obtain equal rights for non-Anglican Protestants. He was so outraged and alarmed by the church-and-king mobs that attacked Priestley in 1791 that he protected his ironworks with howitzers and swivel-guns against similar attentions. "Manufacture and commerce," he wrote, "will always flourish most where Church and King interfere least." A man of sixty, who had made a large fortune, he bought £10,000 worth of French Revolutionary public bonds. Late in 1792, only a few weeks before England and France went to war, needing a scrip with which to meet his payrolls, he had his cashier endorse French *assignats* and circulate them as money. Since his workers were mostly Dissenters full of the ideas of Thomas Paine, this device, in December 1792, was inflammatory to say the least. Wilkinson would have agreed with the "clubbists" of Norfolk: "Surely the interests of all the industrious, from the richest merchant to the poorest mechanic, are in every community the same: to lessen the numbers of the unproductive, to whose maintenance they contribute."¹² By the "unproductive," such men meant the leisure class, not the unemployed.

11 On the Watts and Boultons of both generations see E. Robinson, "An English Jacobin: James Watt, Jr.," in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XI (1955), 349–55.

12 W. H. Chaloner, "Dr. Joseph Priestley, John Wilkinson and the French Revolution, 1789–1802," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., VIII (1958), 21–40; E. Robinson, "New Light on the Priestley Riots," in *Historical Journal*, III (1960), 73–75. The quotation from the Norfolk society is from H. Butterfield, "Charles James Fox and the Whig Opposition in 1792," in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, IX (1949), 293–330.

Well-to-do business men in England, however, had too much to lose to persist indefinitely in opposition. They were close enough to some segments of the upper class to be sensitive to its scorn, ridicule, or hostility. Men in their position, after the war began, could not remain obstinately unpatriotic; even so, many of them disapproved of the continuation of the French war, which interfered with their export trade. A group of textile manufacturers at Manchester signed a petition for peace in 1795.¹³ Among the signers were Robert Peel and Robert Owen, who were no merely passive conservatives, since Peel a few years later obtained passage of the first English factory act, and Owen became famous in the annals of socialism. By this time, however, whatever their views on the war (Peel resoundingly changed his mind in 1798 with a free gift to the government of £10,000), they had ceased to feel any sympathy for the French Revolution, or to have anything to do with the English radical clubs. As the years passed, the business men joined with the professional classes in repudiating republican sentiments. And as these upper middle-class groups made their peace with the established order, the English "Jacobins," those who felt most strongly in 1792, and who continued to feel so, were characteristically of a lower occupational status, neither the paupers nor the agricultural laborers of whom the lower third of the English people consisted, but the industrious, skilled and self-respecting men of good habits and limited income, strongly resembling, in their socioeconomic level but hardly in their psychology or their actions, the Paris sans-culottes as described by M. Albert Soboul.

It is a question whether England had, as a class, any such people as "intellectuals," since thinking and writing were neither unduly admired on the one hand, nor unduly looked down on by the active classes on the other. The establishment had its intellectuals, as in Archdeacon Paley; Hannah More and others rallied to it vigorously after 1793. Jeremy Bentham approved neither of the British Constitution nor of the Rights of Man. Various newspaper editors, such as the Joseph Gales who published at Sheffield before going to America, were democratic radicals of a type familiar both on the Continent and in the United States. Thomas Paine (though considered somewhat American), with his *Rights of Man* of 1791, Mary Wollstonecraft with her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* of 1792, and William Godwin with his *Political Justice* of 1793, all showed contemptuous impatience of the established order, and of the kind of arguments marshaled in its defense. Mary Wollstonecraft's retort to Burke deserves perpetuation: "It is, Sir, *possible*, to render the poor happier in this world without depriving them of the consolation which you gratuitously grant them in the next."¹⁴ She and Paine had ideas on the division of large landed estates, but Godwin, a more purely speculative thinker, had little interest in persons who could not afford the three guineas charged for his book.

The poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Campbell, Blake, and Burns, all resonated excitedly to the message for human rights. All except Blake and Burns were still quite young men in the 1790's. Burns, the most humble in origin, was the first to lose sympathy for the French Revolution. Blake lived as an engraver in London, and mixed in the political clubs of the city. It was Blake who helped

13 Marshall, *Public Opinion at Manchester*, 126.

14 Quoted by Veitch, *Genesis*, 169.

Thomas Paine escape to France when he was indicted in 1792. It is argued that Blake's enigmatic style, both in his poems and in his engravings, was a defense against threats to which men of his kind were exposed; that, in short, had he felt more free, he would have expressed his republican sympathies more plainly. He is remembered for his brooding dread of "these dark Satanic mills." The phrase has usually been understood to signify a poet's fear of the degrading effects of long hours of factory employment. It would seem, however, that Blake, an artisan in London, had not yet heard that an Industrial Revolution was in progress, and really felt horror for the shops in which weapons to destroy the French Republic, and human liberty, were being made.¹⁵ Wordsworth perhaps felt the whole drama most deeply. It is possible that his poetry, like Fichte's metaphysics, was in some sense the product of a profound feeling for liberty and equality. He himself, in his theory of poetic diction, favored a forthright and easy simplicity which he liked to believe was the language of the common people. Wordsworth grew away from his first exaltation very slowly. The English poets, in fact, seem not to have turned against France until the winter of 1797–1798.¹⁶ It was not the Terror nor Thermidor that made them change their minds, so much as Fructidor, Campo Formio, and the transfer of Venice to Austria. Since they saw Italy, Switzerland, and Holland in an unrealistic glow, with no knowledge of their contemporary political problems, the setting up of new-style republics in these countries seemed to be no more than the conquest and cheap collusion that conservative propaganda said it was. Coleridge eventually turned into one of the more weighty philosophers of the organic society, and Wordsworth into the poet of the church. Since their contacts were with the gentle classes, they had never been "clubbists" even in their youth.

In a different category may be put true working-class bards, such as the Paisley weaver, Alexander Wilson, and the Sheffield file-maker, Joseph Mather. Their songs and ballads, at first printed ephemerally only in broadsides for their own neighbors, were not published in book-form until a half-century later. Both sang the merits of Paine and his *Rights of Man*. Both raged against the king and court. According to Alexander Wilson:

For British boys are in a fiz,
Their heads like bees are humming,
And their rights and liberties,
They're mad upon reforming
The court this day.

Mather, whose style was more solemn, wrote on the war with France:

Facts are seditious things,
When they touch courts and kings,
Armies are raised.

15 Erdman, *Blake*, VII and *passim*. For Wordsworth, F. M. Todd, *Politics and the Poet: a Study of Wordsworth* (London, 1957), is the most recent of many relevant works.

16 J. Voisine, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et l'Angleterre à l'époque romantique: les écrits autobiographiques et la légende* (Paris, 1956), 150–52.

Some of Robert Burns' poems, before his change of sentiment, were of the same character, as in his "a man's a man for a' that." How much such verses circulated locally and orally is not known.¹⁷

The English radicalism of the 1790's, to summarize, so far as it was represented by the popular clubs, was largely a disturbance among what must be called the lower middle class, since for one reason or another persons above this level either took little part, or ceased to take part, after 1793. It is this more genuinely popular character of organized discontent that distinguishes the reform movement of the 1790's from the agitations of the days of Wilkes and the American Revolution.

In Scotland the disaffection was more broadly based. For example, when the Whig Club of Dundee sent an address of greeting to the French Assembly, seventy-six persons signed it, virtually all of whose occupations were also given.¹⁸ There were eleven "esquires" and eleven members of the clergy. There were one doctor and three surgeons. There were two "writers"—a word used in Scotland to mean a kind of lawyer. There were thirty-three merchants. With them were the rector of a school, a teacher of English and a teacher of mathematics—also a watchmaker, an architect, a dyer, a stationer, and a baker. It is a list of the sort that one might expect from Ireland or parts of the Continent, but not from England. The Scottish Society of Friends of the People likewise had a mixed membership, where the English society of the same name, with its dues of two-and-a-half guineas, was limited to the well-to-do. A lingering feeling against England, a sense of exclusion from public life (there were only about 1,300 actual freehold voters in a population of a million), a Presbyterian habit of participation in common affairs, the repeated splits and disputes among Presbyterians since the Union, the connection between church and state, the existence of severe poverty along with a widespread literacy, the sermons of itinerant and unauthorized preachers, who were frowned upon by established Presbyterians, and much inclined to anti-aristocratic outbursts, combined to spread discontent in Scotland, especially as the American and French Revolutions, over the period of a generation, began to arouse a new political consciousness.

One other feature of the radicalism of the day—English, Scottish, and Irish—may be mentioned as of more than incidental importance. Many troublemakers left the country, not like Dutch or Italian refugees fleeing to France and hoping soon to return, but to places so distant as to make them thereafter inoffensive to the established order. This exodus took the form both of more or less voluntary emigration to America, and of involuntary transportation to Botany Bay. The number of those going to America in the decade before 1800 is not known, but it included Joseph Priestley, Benjamin Vaughan, Thomas Cooper, John Binns, and Joseph Gales from England; James Callender from Scotland; William Duane and John Daly Burk, and for a few years Wolfe Tone, Napper Tandy, and Hamilton Rowan, from Ireland. Australia had received a heterogeneous lot of some 8,000 convicts by 1799. Some of these were vicious characters; but at a time when there

17 On Wilson see Meikle, *Scotland*, 121; on Mather, W. H. G. Armitage, "Joseph Mather: Poet of the Filesmitths," in *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 195 (1950), 320–22.

18 The address, dated June 10, 1790, is printed in full in the appendix to Veitch, *Genesis*, 359–62. See also Meikle, *Scotland*.

were over a hundred capital offenses in English law many others were hardly guilty of serious misbehavior. From England and Scotland not many were deported on political charges—indeed the “Scotch martyrs,” Muir, Palmer, Skirving, Gerrald, and Margarot, may have been the only ones. Many deported as criminals, however, were probably “democrats” also. In 1800 there were two thousand Irish political offenders in New South Wales. Mutinous soldiers and sailors were also sent there. On the whole, and with exceptions, these offscourings from the “Pitt terror” proved to be useful citizens in both America and Australia. Vaughan received an honorary degree from Harvard, and Cooper became president of a college. One of the founders of the hospital at Sydney was a young medical officer involved in the mutiny of the *Nore*. The first Presbyterian service held in Australia was conducted by Thomas Muir, deported from Scotland in 1793 for sedition.¹⁹

CLUBS AND CONVENTIONS

A popular democratic movement appeared quite suddenly in Britain in the course of the year 1792. Clubs sprang up all over the country, sometimes called “popular societies,” as in France, consisting of neighbors who met in taverns to talk about the meaning of the French Revolution, the war beginning on the Continent, the policy of the British government, and the vices of the idle rich. Two clubs came especially into prominence in London. There was the Society for Constitutional Information, to which Thomas Paine gave £1,000 received as royalty for his *Rights of Man*. More important, and more popular, was the London Corresponding Society. It was founded by Thomas Hardy, a master shoemaker who owned a shop employing half-a-dozen skilled craftsmen. By his own account, Hardy, having been interested in the American Revolution, and having observed the failure of upper-class efforts to obtain Parliamentary reform a dozen years earlier, deliberately decided to organize a more purely popular movement, to be carried on by “tradesmen, shopkeepers and mechanics.” The immediate aim was to change the mode of election to the House of Commons, but the impulse and the ultimate goal were more broadly social, reflecting the deep resentments of “an industrious class of men.” As he wrote to a correspondent in Scotland, explaining the origin of the London society, with the rambling syntax of one unused to writing: he and his friends had discussed “the low and miserable conditions the people of this nation were reduced to by the avaricious extortions of that haughty, voluptuous and luxurious class of beings who wanted us to possess no more knowledge than to believe all things were created for the use of that small group of worthless individuals.”²⁰

19 For those going to America see the biographical dictionaries; for Australia, E. O'Brien, *The Foundation of Australia, 1786–1800: a Study of English Criminal Practice and Penal Colonisation in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1937), 282–93, 321, 384; M. Roe, “Maurice Margarot: A Radical in Two Hemispheres 1792–1815,” in *Bulletin of the Inst. of Hist. Res. of Univ. of London*, XXXI (1958), 68–79.

20 See the Manuscripts of Francis Place, British Museum, Add. MSS, 27,814 fol. 178. The fairly sudden appearance of a popular radicalism in 1792 is evident in H. Butterfield, “Fox and the Whig Opposition,” *loc. cit.*

Charging dues of only a penny a week, the London Corresponding Society within a few months had a membership of about 2,000, divided into neighborhood units that held their own local meetings. It took its name from the intention to correspond with similar societies that were being organized throughout the country, with a view to bringing a concerted pressure of the literate working classes upon Parliament. Its enemies tried to fix in the public mind the idea that it was established to correspond with the French Jacobins. There was never much more than an exchange of compliments between the Jacobins and the British clubs, in whose activities, when later closely studied by Parliament, no Frenchman was ever detected. The London Corresponding Society was like the Paris Jacobins in that it was not at all secret; it differed altogether from them in its primarily working-class membership.

It was one of the chief activities of the popular clubs to distribute propaganda, or, as they would say, to instruct the public on the real circumstances of the country. Most especially, they reprinted the works of Thomas Paine, the Second Part of whose *Rights of Man* appeared in February 1792. In it, Paine went beyond ideas that were merely political. He denounced in detail the fiscal system by which taxes were thrown heavily onto articles of common consumption. He proposed a progressive inheritance tax, so designed that income in the bracket between £12,000 and £13,000 would be taxed at 50 percent, and all income above £22,000 a year would be confiscated *in toto*. His purpose was not to give land to the poor, nor even to take it away from the rich as a group, but to oblige the wealthiest families to divide their landed estates among their heirs—to do away, in short, with primogeniture and “aristocracy.” The point, in fact, was to force the rich to live on their own incomes, instead of being obliged to find emoluments for younger sons in church and state. Such ideas threatened the social system at its foundation. Before much could be accomplished, however, it was necessary to alter the way in which the Commons were chosen. In the First Part of the *Rights of Man* readers could find a comparison, or rather a contrast, between the British and the French Constitutions. In the latter, Paine pointed out, every man who paid 2s. 6d. in taxes had a vote, and each member of the French parliament represented an equal number of persons, counted as persons—not boroughs, counties or corporations of absurdly various size and importance. This was what was called “universal representation.”

In May, faced with these tracts of Paine's, and with a swelling volume of similar literature, much of it written in angry refutation of Burke, the government issued a proclamation against seditious writings. The effect, if anything, was to extend their circulation. While Paine, indicted for his Part Two, escaped to Calais, the clubs remained relatively quiet during the summer, in breathless expectation of what would follow upon the Austro-Prussian invasion of France. Then came the fall of the French monarchy in August, and the September Massacres. These events further estranged the British upper classes from the French Revolution. They had no such effect on the democratic clubs. After Valmy and the French invasion of Belgium, as it seemed that the newly born Republic would triumph, the clubs reached a feverish height of excitement. Bonfires at Sheffield in October celebrated the Prussian retreat. At Dundee, in November, a thousand people ri-

oted, and burnt in effigy “two gentlemen who were obnoxious to them.”²¹ Scotch peasants, according to an informant of the Duke of Buccleuch, cared nothing for Parliamentary reform, but would like to get ten acres apiece in a division of land, and were all reading Thomas Paine. In London, also in November, hundreds of persons trying to hold a mass meeting in Kensington Common were dispersed by dragoons. English clubs took steps to send muskets and shoes to French soldiers. Five of them—the London Corresponding Society, the Manchester Constitution Society, the Manchester Reformation Society, the Norwich Revolution Society, and the London Constitutional Whigs and Friends of the People—combined to convey a joint address to the French Convention, expressing the hope that Great Britain would enter the war against “tyrants” on the side of France, or at least remain neutral. An English-speaking group in Paris—English, Scotch, Irish, and American—presented a similar declaration to the Convention in November.²²

On December 11, 1792, just as the government was ordering up the militia, mainly to preserve internal order, but in expectation also of war with France, an assembly met at Edinburgh. Delegates attended from eighty societies in sixty-five Scottish towns and villages, mostly in the zone of handicraft manufacture from Glasgow to Dundee, an area in which there were now tens of thousands of club members. Delegates addressed each other as “citizens,” and there was an alarming connotation in the word “convention” itself, which had come into use in France only three months before. It was not that the word signified what it did in France or America; there was no thought of a convention as a body empowered to draft a new and written constitution of government; the dangerous idea was that a collection of men brought together by clubs and societies, by claiming to represent the people, should question the adequacy or legitimacy of the House of Commons. The Convention, which met for three days, overruled but did not silence its more militant members: it voted against officially receiving an address from the United Irish; it professed its attachment, to which some took exception, to King and Lords as well as Commons; and it declined even to petition Parliament, on the legal ground that petitions would be received only from such constituted bodies as counties and boroughs, or from individuals. It passed a resolution, however, for a more equal representation in Parliament, it published its minutes, and it made arrangements to meet again. On disbanding, the members took the French oath “to live free or die.”²³

21 The quotation is from the *Annual Register for 1792*, Chronicle, 44.

22 The addresses of English clubs to the French Convention sounded more revolutionary when put into French, presented in an atmosphere of public excitement in the Convention and published in the *Moniteur*, which was read all over Europe. The London Friends of the Revolution of 1688, claiming to represent “plusieurs milliers de négociants, d’artisans, de manufacturiers et d’ouvriers,” declared that they would regard war against France as “une déclaration de guerre contre nos propres libertés.” The spokesman for the Society for Constitutional Information, in his speech preceding presentation of the address, observed that with the French example “les révolutions vont devenir faciles,” and that there might soon be “une Convention nationale d’Angleterre.” The spokesman for the English-speaking residents of Paris called all existing governments *prétendus*. *Moniteur, réimpression*, XIV, 543, 592–94.

23 The proceedings are printed in full by Meikle, *Scotland*, 239–73.

As Britain and France went to war, in February 1793, the radical agitation became more intense. The Society for Constitutional Information voted honorary membership for several members of the French National Convention including Jeanbon Saint-André, a former Protestant pastor. By 1793 some 200,000 copies of the *Rights of Man* had been sold; the total a few years later was put at the unbelievable figure of 1,500,000, which, however reduced by skepticism or caution, remains well above the 30,000 estimated for Burke's *Reflections*. In 1793 petitions for reform poured in upon Parliament. Those from Scotland outnumbered the ones from England. The one from Edinburgh stretched "the whole length of the floor of the house." In England the movement was lively, with new societies forming in various towns. A petition from Norwich had 3,700 signatures, one from London and Westminster 6,000, one from Sheffield 8,000. The House of Commons refused even to receive the Sheffield petition, finding it "disrespectful." It was true that the thought in these petitions was not so much to reform the House as to transform it. What was wanted was not simply an extension of what existed, but the replacement of one theory by another, with respect to what the House of Commons and its relations to the country ought to be.

The Dundee Society, composed largely of weavers, since its petition had had no effect, prepared and published an *Address*. It was written by George Mealmaker, and submitted for improvement of language to Thomas Fyshe Palmer, an Englishman who was a graduate of Eton and Cambridge, and had gone to Scotland after developing Unitarian ideas. He had played a prominent role in the militant minority at the Edinburgh Convention, becoming what Robert Dundas called "the most determined rebel in Scotland." He nevertheless advised the Dundee society against publication of its manifesto, in which the war was denounced in very strong language as the scheme of a wicked ministry to enslave the people.²⁴ Palmer was arrested, tried, and sentenced to seven years in Australia for his part in the Dundee affair. His case followed that of Thomas Muir, also prominent in the Edinburgh convention, who was sentenced to fourteen years.

These Braxfield trials left an unpleasant impression on many persons not sympathetic to the militant radicals, since Justice Braxfield had made a political commotion in his own courtroom and offered a variety of emphatic *dicta*: such as that "in this country . . . the landed interest alone has a right to be represented," and that he "never was an admirer of the French," but could "now only consider them as monsters of human nature."²⁵

Undeterred by the fate of Muir and Palmer, the Scotch clubs persisted in their idea of a Convention. A second Convention met in April, and a third, this time a British Convention, planned in conjunction with the London Corresponding Society, met at Edinburgh in November 1793. Hamilton Rowan came from Ireland, and the London and Sheffield societies sent delegates from England. Among the Scotch, fewer of the educated or substantial classes attended than at the first Convention a year before. The British Convention was very vehement in its language. When the Lord Advocate of Scotland accused it of desiring "not a reform but a

24 Extracts are printed by Maccoby, *English Radicalism*, 71.

25 Brown, *Fr. Rev. in Eng. Hist.*, 97, quoting from *State Trials*, XXIII, 231.

subversion of Parliament," he was far from being mistaken, though he greatly exaggerated the degree to which it accepted violence as a means of introducing "a republic or democracy."²⁶ Thirty constables sufficed to break the Convention up. Three leaders, Maurice Margarot, William Skirving, and Joseph Gerrald were sentenced by Braxfield to terms in Australia. In 1794 most of the clubs in Scotland ceased to meet.

In England, however, the repression of the Scotch clubs and conventions, and the sentencing of the "Scotch martyrs" to deportation, had inflammatory effects: The London Corresponding Society held a general meeting on January 20, 1794. It protested against the proceedings in Scotland, denounced the war to restore despotism in France, and declared that, if the government sought to crush liberty in England, the Society should "issue summonses . . . to the different societies affiliated and corresponding with this society, forthwith to call a General Convention of the People."²⁷ Feeling ran high at Sheffield, where thousands of toolmakers, cutlery workers, and other skilled mechanics read a variety of radical literature, including the *Register* edited by Joseph Gales. A great public meeting took place on April 7, of which the general theme was that everything else having failed, and the petition of a year before having not even been received, some other (but unspecified) course of action must be found. One speaker darkly hinted that the voice of the people would soon "recommend the 558 gentlemen in St. Stephen's Chapel to go about their business." Resolutions were passed, demanding "universal representation" as a right. An "Address to the British Nation" was adopted, probably composed by Joseph Gales.²⁸ One of the best statements of British radicalism of the day, this Sheffield *Address* made no reference to France but refuted the argument for "virtual representation," as the Americans had refuted it a quarter of a century before. It declared that petitioning had been proved useless and a "complete revolution of sentiment" must come about. It complained that plain mechanics could get no attention from "gentlemen," and that the common man in England was not free or secure in his property. "What is the constitution to us, if we are nothing to it? The constitution of Britain, indeed, is highly extolled as the greatest effort of human wisdom—so is the constitution of Turkey at Constantinople." The Sheffield mechanics went on to explain what they meant by equality.

"Yes, countrymen, we demand Equality of Rights, in which is included Equality of Representation, without which terror is law, and the obligations of justice are weakened, because unsanctioned by the sacred voice of the people. We are not

26 Meikle, 142.

27 While the fear of a "convention" is noted in all works on the subject, the quotation is from a printed leaflet in the Wentworth Woodhouse collection at the Central Library in Sheffield, headed "At a General Meeting of the London Corresponding Society, held at the Globe Tavern Strand, on Monday 20th of January 1794, Citizen John Martin in the Chair, the following Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland was read and agreed to."

28 The Address is printed with *Proceedings of the Public Meeting . . . at Sheffield . . . of April 1794* in the Wentworth Woodhouse collection. On Joseph Gales' years in England see W. H. G. Armytage, "The Editorial Experience of Joseph Gales, 1786–94" in *North Carolina Historical Review* (1951), 332–61. For Sheffield, an important center of radicalism, see also G. P. Jones, "The Political Reform Movement at Sheffield," in *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* (Sheffield), IV (1937), 57–68, and J. Taylor, "The Sheffield Constitutional Society," *Ibid.*, V (1943), 133–46.

speaking of that visionary Equality of Property, the practical assertion of which would desolate the world . . . but that Equality we claim is to make the Slave a Man, the Man a Citizen, and the Citizen an integral part of the State, to make him a joint Sovereign, and not a Subject." At Sheffield, the Address continued, people wanted a state in which rich plunderers would not go unscathed—where the same law would apply to all. Joseph Gales, the probable author, soon fled to Hamburg, from which he passed on to America. Here he astonished the natives by producing a verbatim record of speeches in Congress, having brought with him the Old World art of shorthand; he lived many years as a democratic journalist in North Carolina.

In 1794 the government struck back against radicalism in England, as in Scotland in 1793. The talk of a Convention amounted to talk of an Anti-Parliament, of a body claiming more representative validity and more rightful authority than Parliament itself. In addition, so much agitation against the war was undesirable after a year of hostilities. The war against France would seem more necessary, and become more popular, if it could be proved that seditious Britons, in conjunction with the French, meant to revolutionize Britain itself. Conservatives would be mollified by the prosecution of persons bold enough to desire change in the institutions of England.

Pitt's government therefore put on the State Trials of 1794. Indictments for treason were issued against various persons—Thomas Hardy as head of the London Corresponding Society, Horne Tooke and John Thelwall as radicals and clubbists over many years, Thomas Walker of Manchester, and others. Beginning in September 1794, the trials were simultaneous with the last operations of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris and with the initiation of the Jacobin trials in Vienna, to both of which they offered a refreshing contrast; for, though the government tried hard to obtain the conviction of men whom it regarded as enemies of the state, as it had successfully done in Scotland, it had now to go through the procedures of English law, which meant that the proceedings were public, the jury was independent, and competent counsel was available to the accused. Hardy and the others were defended by Thomas Erskine, who had defended Paine *in absentia* in 1792. He showed that some of the evidence brought in by the government was fabricated. No serious intent of armed rebellion, or of collusion with the French, could be proved. The jury, composed of substantial London business men, such as brewers and wholesale grocers, acquitted Thomas Hardy after only two hours of deliberation. All the other defendants were acquitted also. The prosecution of these critics of the established order, though legally unsuccessful, was not without effects of the kind intended. The fear of similar proceedings, with the disgrace and the expense that they involved, helped to drive men of standing out of the radical movement, which became more clearly identified than ever with certain elements of the working classes. The state trials also hastened the process, evident since 1792, by which, in the Parliamentary classes, the Whig Party fell to pieces. It is indeed from early in 1792 that the pre-history of what became the Conservative and Liberal parties half a century later can first be traced. Some Whigs, such as Fox, Sheridan, Erskine, and the Earl of Lauderdale, had held firm for neutrality, advised against domestic repression, thought that a little Parlia-

mentary reform might prevent radicalism, and while uninvolved in the popular clubs generally felt for them a tolerant attitude. Others, led by the Duke of Portland, and including Burke, William Windham, and Sir Gilbert Elliot, had urged Pitt to control seditious writings and associations, and even, in November 1792, to go to war against France. What the British ministry needed, said Burke, was a "basis in the strong permanent Aristocratical interests of the country."²⁹ A third group of Whigs, conservative in home affairs, who could not go along with Fox, or "with men who call on 40,000 weavers to dictate political measures," had nevertheless been afraid, six weeks before the war began, that public opinion would not support it. The aristocratic Whigs joined Pitt's government in a coalition in 1794. The Duke of Portland became Home Secretary, Windham Secretary at War, and Elliot, as explained in Chapter XXIV, Viceroy of Corsica at £ 8,000 a year. It was the coming of these Whigs, as Keith Feiling once said, that made the Tory party conservative.

The acquittals of 1794 gave encouragement to the London Corresponding Society, whose minutes show increasing attendance at its general meetings through 1795. In England as in France the war produced food shortages and rising prices, so that immediate economic grievances were now added to a general social malaise and a bitter class consciousness as sources of discontent. The society had perhaps as many as 5,000 members in London in 1795. It served as a nucleus for mass meetings and public demonstrations, usually orderly, for, as a recent British writer has put it, plebeian politics had come a long way since the days of Wilkes and the hooliganism of No Popery mobs. In October 1795 the most enormous crowd that anyone could remember, estimated at 200,000 persons, swarmed in the streets to watch the procession for the opening of Parliament. With hoots for the dukes and earls, and with cries of "Bread! Bread! Peace! Peace!" the populace pressed closely about the king's own coach, in which "a small pebble, or marble or bullet broke one of the windows."³⁰ The king was extricated with difficulty amid the hisses of his subjects.

The government, now reinforced by the Portland Whigs, and with popular agitation after three years showing little sign of abatement, proceeded at once to severer measures. Parliament passed two bills: the Treasonable Practices Act, which greatly enlarged the definition of treason, and the Seditious Meetings Act, which made it unlawful for gatherings to assemble to hear "lectures" except in the presence of some kind of officer of the law. Fox, Erskine, and some seventy others voted against the two bills in the Commons. They argued that the London Corresponding Society had had nothing to do with the assault on the king, that to deny lawful means of expression would produce more revolutionary sentiment rather than less, and that the government was concocting imaginary dangers, which was doubtful, in order to persist in an unpopular war, which was more nearly true. The sponsors of the two bills were in a great majority. The state trials, they said, had proved that some people wanted "representative government." The young Lord Mornington, not yet off to his conquests in India, complained of books de-

29 Quoted by Butterfield, "Fox and the Whig Opposition," 319.

30 *Annual Register for 1795*, Chronicle, p. 38; Maccoby, *Eng. Radicalism*, 93-94.

signed “to excite the poor to seize the landed property of the kingdom.” William Windham asked gentlemen of the house to remember that “there was such a thing as the French Revolution.” There was a French party in Holland, he said, and there was one in America. “Was there a country in Europe,” he demanded rhetorically, “safe from the poison of these principles, or which had not felt the effect of this great democracy?”³¹

As the Two Acts went into operation, the membership of the London Corresponding Society, and of similar radical clubs throughout the country, began to decline. Cautious spirits, or respectable young men aspiring to rise in trade, like Francis Place, ceased to be active. Under the new conditions the management of club affairs fell to the adventurous and the bold. Where in 1793 the London Corresponding Society had voted against the use of the word “citizen” as a term of address by its members, the word was commonly used in the society in 1796, and by its correspondents in Leeds and other northern towns, who also closed their letters with “Health and Fraternity”—the *salut et fraternité* of the revolutionary French.³² In November 1796 there was enough life in the radical movement for five hundred persons to sit down to an eight-shilling dinner, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in London, with the radical Earl of Stanhope, who praised the “80,000 incorrigible Citizens” despised by Edmund Burke.³³ Under pressure, the London society became more secret. It established contacts, difficult to unravel, with the United Irish, who broke into full rebellion in 1798, and with the nebulous groups called the United English, who were fairly numerous among the old “clubbists” in the neighborhood of Sheffield and Manchester. Some clubbists began to drill and arm. In 1797 there were mutinies in the Navy—in the Channel fleet at Spithead, in the North Sea fleet at Nore, in the South Atlantic squadron near Cape Town—and indeed the very ship that carried the “Scotch martyrs” to Australia in 1795 was troubled by a mutiny in which the convicts were joined by the soldiers who guarded them. The mutineers complained against abuses of treatment and in the receipt of their pay. No connection with radical clubs was ever discovered, and historians have agreed in dissociating the outbreaks from any revolutionary intentions; but the investigating committee of the House of Commons believed (as seems likely enough) that what might have been a mere “breach of subordination and discipline” was made far more serious by the persistent agitation of the political clubs against the form of government and the governing class.³⁴ In 1798 there was still enough disaffection for Pitt, expecting invasion by the French at any moment, to have *habeas corpus* suspended. Various organizers and agitators went to prison without trial. In 1799 the London Corresponding Society and certain other clubs were proscribed by name, and ceased to exist. The government had succeeded in crushing the popular radical movement—at least until after Waterloo.

31 *Parliamentary History*, XXXII, 274–363.

32 British Museum, Add. MSS., 27,814, fol. 126 for August 1, 1793, and Add. MSS. 27,815 for materials of 1796ff.

33 Add. MSS. 27,817, fol. 44.

34 *Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons, Ordered to be Printed 15 March 1799*, p. 18.

THE "LEVEE EN MASSE" OF THE PEOPLE OF QUALITY

But the government did not have to do it alone. If the liberty of England was shown in the latitude, all things considered, so long allowed to the voices of disaffection, it was shown also in the alacrity with which the upper classes, on their own estates and in towns and villages far from the capital, rushed on their own initiative to uphold their way of life. "The hands of Government must be strengthened if the country is to be saved," wrote Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, to his brother the Marquis of Buckingham during the crisis of November 1792; "but, above all, the work must not be left to the hands of Government, but every man must put his shoulder to it, according to his rank and station in life, or it will not be done."³⁵

On the Continent, from Holland to Naples, the conservative elements, when they faced domestic agitation and foreign threats, showed little but helplessness and bewilderment, or, indeed, counted on Great Britain for protection. One German journalist, dreading Cisalpinization in 1797, could think of nothing to recommend to his readers except to keep calm and trust the authorities. In England matters were different. Here the government could call for an arming of the people without serious trepidation. England, with the possible exception of Catalonia, was the one country that saw a kind of spontaneous mass rising of conservative character. The aristocracy showed its powers of self-help.

There were four things that England must do, wrote William Eden, Lord Auckland, from his post at The Hague, in November, as Dumouriez' republican hordes swept over the Low Countries. It must work for a pacification in Europe. It must prepare its navy. It must put down internal sedition. And it must bring Englishmen of all classes to a due sense of "the blessings which they are risking in pursuit of a bubble."³⁶ This should be done, he said, by proclamations to the people, by speeches in Parliament and discourses in the pulpit. Many other methods were soon found.

We must do something, said the Marquis of Buckingham, "to reconcile the lower ranks of people to our Constitution, and to their situation under it."³⁷ Here, implicitly, was a recognition of the deep social alienation expressed by the working people of Sheffield, when they said that the Constitution was nothing to them since they were nothing to it. There was not much, however, that the marquis had to propose, beyond the lightening of certain taxes, the repeal of the law of 1773 requiring laborers to work six days a year on the roads, and an amendment of those features of the Poor Laws which prevented laboring people, if it seemed that they might become public charges, from moving about freely from place to place in search of work. In effect, with one notable exception, nothing was done in the way of actual concessions to allay popular discontent. In 1793 a few concessions were made to property-owners among the Catholic Irish, in the hope of preventing

35 *Memoirs of the Courts and Cabinets of George III... by the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos*, 2 vols. (London, 1853), I, 228.

36 *Gt. Brit., Hist. MSS. Comm., Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892-1927), II, 342.

37 *Ibid.*, 327.

their drift in the direction of "Jacobinism." In England it was not possible even to modify the game laws. By these laws, only landowners possessing estates worth £100 a year were legally allowed to shoot as much as a partridge. A bill was introduced in 1796, and the Foxite Whigs made their usual speeches, arguing that both modest farmers and "opulent merchants" were injured by the game laws; but a majority in the Commons held that even the game laws were part of the fabric of the constitution, devised by the wisdom of ancestors, and not to be tampered with without danger to existing ranks and orders.³⁸

The one notable exception was the "Speenhamland system" in the administration of poor relief. It arose, characteristically enough, outside the circles of Parliament and the government, when the justices of the peace in Berkshire, in 1795, taking note of the rise of prices, ruled that wages of the laboring poor should be supplemented by grants from the poor funds. The practice soon spread to other counties throughout much of England. It was criticized for holding down wages, and for pauperizing much of the laboring class; but it did something to relieve the worst cases of destitution, and it did so at the expense of the landowners who paid the poor rates. The annual cost of poor relief for all England in the 1790's rose from about £2,000,000 to about £4,000,000. Whether the upper classes took up this burden for political reasons, out of social fear, is very uncertain; it was not "the poor," but the next higher classes that were most vocal in their disaffection. Frederick Eden, the nephew of Lord Auckland, also prompted by the rise of prices after 1794, made detailed studies of how families contrived to live on £20 a year, and in 1797 published a famous book, *The State of the Poor*, which Karl Marx later praised for its exact and factual content. Nowhere in the book did Eden show any actual fear of the people whom he was studying. He remarked, however, that it was not the agricultural laborers so much as the rural "manufacturers" that were most often on relief. So far as the increase of relief payments, under the Speenhamland system, went to weavers and other rural household workers, it may have reduced their interest in radical clubs and propaganda.

The propertied classes, in short, to a degree that one would not find in many parts of the Continent, were willing to lay taxes upon themselves in return for their domination in government and society. In 1799 Pitt was even able to introduce a new income tax. Exempting persons with less than £60 a year, and containing a progressive feature from £60 to £200, it imposed a flat ten percent on incomes above £200, so that the rich paid at the same rate as the broad middle class. It is not clear whether the landowners paid any more under the new income tax than under the old land tax which it supplanted. The public revenues continued to come largely from indirect taxes, of which the stamp tax on newspapers, already mentioned, was but a small example. But in principle the English govern-

38 *Parl. Hist.*, XXXII, 838-54. Sir Richard Sutton remarked (p. 848) that "in these times of democratical doctrines, he did not hesitate to utter the aristocratical opinion that the game laws of this country were founded on good principles, and secured to the landed proprietors that superiority of privilege and enjoyment which they could best exercise without injuring themselves, or interfering with other pursuits." So little was the interest in the matter, or likelihood of passage, that only 82 members were present, or at least took the trouble to vote: 65 Noes to 17 Ayes.

ing class, in its war with France and with its own adversaries at home, accepted its liability to taxation.³⁹

The conservative *levée* took the form mainly of counter-organization and counter-propaganda. As early as 1791, in the Birmingham riots, a mob more or less spontaneously formed had attacked the home of Joseph Priestley, popularly disliked as a Unitarian and a reformer; his house and scientific equipment had been destroyed; and the sequel had shown the solidarity that existed between the local gentry, the Anglican clergy, and some of the less enlightened popular strata. Priestley's friends—Wilkinson, Watt, and Boulton—had been outraged, but were made more cautious. Priestley himself continued to speak out, and was listened to by the radical clubs that began to spring up, according to a letter written by Horatio Nelson to the Duke of Clarence in December 1792. At this time, as the government called up the militia, and set guards at the Bank of England and the Tower of London, more organized methods of checking "sedition" were adopted.

In November there met at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in London, as a group of private citizens, but with encouragement from the government in the background, a gathering of gentlemen who organized themselves as the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. Its chairman was John Reeves, a writer on English law, and on its executive committee was John Bowles, a barrister, who was provided with secret service money and wrote a number of highly conservative pamphlets in the next few years. The new Association printed thousands of copies of its *Proceedings*, which it sold for three shillings a hundred, so that they could be given away for a halfpenny, or for nothing. Within a few weeks hundreds of other such associations were formed throughout the country, under the auspices of gentlemen and the clergy. Only in a few places, notably Sheffield, was discontent so nearly universal as to deter their formation. The associations called the attention of government to booksellers who kept radical literature in their shops. They threatened innkeepers with suspension of licenses if they allowed radical gatherings to meet on their premises. They got up petitions for which signatures of the "lower orders" were solicited. Thomas Paine was burnt in effigy in many places. A few of the associations took to secret methods, a bit like the Eudamonists in Germany, putting spies into the democratic clubs, and spreading defamatory rumors about persons of contrary opinions. Often they received large contributions from wealthy donors, of which they spent the proceeds on circulating books and pamphlets in praise of church, state, and constitution, and in derogation of France.⁴⁰

39 The Speenhamland system, set forth in all the general histories, is noted as one of the means used to "blanket discontent" by A. Mitchell, "The Association Movement of 1792-93," in *Historical Journal*, IV (1961), 77. French historians, such as Mathiez, who made so much of the Ventose laws of 1794 as Robespierriest projects to assist the poor, seem not to have known that the British upper class did somewhat the same, more effectively. For the income tax see A. Farnsworth, *Addington, Author of the Modern Income Tax* (London, 1951). Addington in 1803 maintained the yield on Pitt's tax while reducing the rate to 5%. The war-time rate on the old land tax had gone as high as 4s. in the pound of income, i.e., nominally 20 percent.

40 Mitchell, "Association Movement"; *Proceedings of the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers* (London, n.d.).

Except in places like Manchester, where feeling ran high on both sides, the associations went out of existence as organized bodies in 1793. They had done much to impose silence on merely moderate critics of the existing order, and to confine radicalism to persons willing to take the consequences of open defiance. From Birmingham the London Association heard that loyalists outnumbered the malcontents six to one; confidence grew, though a situation in which, in wartime, the loyalty of a seventh of the population was uncertain would appear to be little to boast of. When Lord Auckland returned from Holland he found, "with concern," in November 1793, "that all the lower classes are more or less affected by the execrable doctrines of the day. But the main body of the kingdom is still sound."⁴¹ It is not possible to say what a man in Auckland's position meant by "lower."

As the Associations against Republicans and Levellers became inactive, they were succeeded by armed and uniformed companies of volunteers, organized by men of local prominence after the war began. It must be remembered that England had next to no regular army; that what army there was, in 1793, was on the Continent and in Ireland; and that the English, in any case, would not tolerate the presence of regular troops in their neighborhood. The volunteer companies, ostensibly organized to repel French invasion, were mainly engaged in combatting internal disaffection. In some places, landowners recruited their tenants; in others, factory owners of the new type, enjoying a closer contact with their workers than was possible under the old system of dispersed rural industry, drew on reliable employees to build volunteer units. The companies were of course officered by the upper classes, and largely filled by the middle, but efforts were made to obtain a representation of the lower classes also in their ranks. At their drills, parades, and assemblies the right ideas were inculcated and publicized. The companies taught, as Auckland had put it, the blessings that Britons had the good fortune to enjoy. A lieutenant in Renfrewshire called them "a principal means of crushing that seditious and democratic spirit which has so much prevailed." At Chiswick, near London, it was found that the volunteers "encouraged and restored a due principle of subordination amongst the different classes of the people."⁴²

The impact of all this self-generated but well-organized activity could be illustrated from many specific cases. Thomas Walker, for example, was a textile manufacturer at Manchester, a man of inherited means, an Anglican of sufficient social station to have had his portrait painted by Romney. He had even once been elected boroughreeve, as the chief public officer was called at Manchester, which though already a town of 75,000 had no municipal organization except for its old manorial institutions. Walker developed an interest in radical politics and parliamentary reform. He was the friend and employer of James Watt, Jr., and the sponsor of Thomas Cooper, who founded the democratic *Manchester Herald*. He was attacked by the local branch of the Society against Republicans and Levellers, caught up in the treason trials of 1794, victimized by false testimony, and, though acquitted, obliged to spend thousands of pounds on his defense, and to suffer a besmirch-

⁴¹ *Dropmore Papers*, II, 455.

⁴² J. R. Western, "The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force, 1793-1801," in *English Historical Review*, LXXI (1956).

ment of character from which his public reputation never recovered. To take another example, in 1797 about fourteen hundred Frenchmen landed on the coast of Wales under the command of an American adventurer in the French service, William Tate, a "democrat" from South Carolina. The invasion was a fiasco; the Welsh did not rise in the insurrection to which they were invited; the enemy was soon disarmed and captured by volunteer companies that rushed to the scene. It was the events that followed that were significant—more treason trials, false evidence, and local persecution, not of the coal workers and rural laborers of whom no one was afraid, but of the Dissenters and Methodists who were detested by upholders of the establishment, and of farmers and tradesmen who, especially in Wales, remained obstinately outside the Church of England.⁴³

Meanwhile the country was flooded with reading matter. John Bowles, of the Association against Republicans and Levellers, published early in 1793 his *Real Grounds for the Present War with France*. It went through several editions, and it introduced into historiography, since many historians continued to repeat it, the idea that the French Convention, in offering aid "to all peoples wishing to recover their Liberty" on November 19, 1792, had actually intended to subvert and revolutionize all governments, including the British. John Reeves, of the same Association, wrote his *Thoughts on the English Government Addressed to the Quiet Good Sense of the People of England*. It found the French Jacobins to be much like the old English Puritans, and propounded the theory that the French Revolution and the Protestant Reformation were the twin sources of the evils of modern times. William Playfair, in 1795, published his *History of Jacobinism, Its Crimes, Cruelties, and Perfidies*, in which he neglected to mention that he had once been involved in Paris in the French Revolution himself. At Edinburgh, where Playfair's brother was an eminent scientist at the university, there was a good deal of apprehension, since the faculty was alarmed by the radical sentiments and democratic preaching of Presbyterians outside the official Church. John Robison of Edinburgh University, as already mentioned several times, gave warning to the public in his *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All Governments and Religions*. Edmund Burke, when it seemed that Pitt might sign a treaty with the French Directory, wrote his uncompromising *Letters on a Regicide Peace*. George Canning edited the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Writings of French emigrés were translated; indeed the English edition of Barruel antedated the French. Mallet du Pan's pamphlets were also translated; in 1799 he set up in England, with a government subsidy, and published his *British Mercury* to attack the French Revolution. An obscure tract by the Italian Barzoni came out in English, the *Romans in Greece*. It held that the French in Italy were nothing but plunderers. Someone found and translated a shocking work by the German Count von Soden, who had left the Prussian civil service because he disapproved of the Prussian policy of neutrality. It was a tale of French atrocities in Franconia. The republican soldiers (called Huns) were said to frequent "Jew taverns"; they seized

43 F. Knight, *The Strange Case of Thomas Walker: Ten Years in the Life of a Manchester Radical* (London, 1957); Commander E. H. Stuart Jones, R.N., *The Last Invasion of Britain* (Cardiff, 1950); A. Davies, "La Révolution française et le Pays des Galles," in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* No. 140 (1955), 202–12.

women and violated them in the streets, against the resistance of fathers and brothers who were “inhumanly mangled”; when remonstrances were made to the French Commander, General Bernadotte (the future king of Sweden), he replied airily that “these are trifles, which in time of war must be overlooked.”⁴⁴

Malthus’ *Essay on Population*, a more creditable work, first published in 1798, also formed part of the campaign of dissuasion against the new ideas. Malthus, though in Anglican orders, was more the type of the French *abbé*. He came to feel, like Frederick Eden, a deep and sympathetic interest in the problems of the poor. He thought, however, that the ideas of Godwin, which he attributed also to the French Revolution, offered only a treacherous and deceptive hope to the poor themselves; and his *Essay on Population* was designed explicitly as an answer to Condorcet’s *Progress of the Human Mind*. Malthus, like Eden, had the merit of emphasizing that the best way to relieve the poor was to raise the productivity of their labor. He agreed, in 1798, that the existing extremes of inequality of wealth were bad, that the rich had a greater “facility of combination” than the poor, and that the poor could live on a seven-hour working day, if only they could “agree.” These observations disappeared from later editions of the *Essay*, in which Malthus, aiming at a clinical objectivity, and harping more on “abstinence” as a check on overpopulation, produced a classic of the dismal science. Even in 1798, however, what he had to offer the laboring classes was mostly a lesson in patience. It was simply a fact, he said, that in the lottery of life some people must draw a blank.⁴⁵

The books and pamphlets just mentioned were aimed at persons of at least a moderate degree of education. This was the first generation, however, of what may be called the true common reader. The Sunday School movement for a dozen years had with difficulty been spreading some knowledge of reading among the actual lower classes. In 1797 there were some 1,086 such schools with 69,000 pupils. The sponsors of the movement were generally devout people, Evangelicals or Methodists, who, against the skepticism or indifference of the more satisfied clergy, had hoped to spread an acquaintance with the Bible. They were shocked to find their pupils devouring Thomas Paine. Archdeacon Paley’s *Reasons for Contentment* was abundantly distributed in reply. Hannah More, a good lady who had done much for the lower classes, resolved to put the spread of literacy to better use. Beginning in 1795, she wrote a series called the “Cheap Repository Tracts.” Funds contributed by well-wishers, from the Evangelicals of the Clapham Sect to the Bishop of London and the king’s brother, the Duke of Gloucester, made it possible to sell them for less than a penny. By March 1796 no less than two million were in circulation. Thomas Paine was engaged on his own ground; perhaps he had even met his match, though no one can tell what effect these efforts really had. One of Miss More’s more successful compositions was *Village Politics*, written in the form of a dialogue in twenty-four pages. It was a bit different from the *Feuille villageoise*, one of the most successful papers of the French Revolution. She published it anony-

44 *Anecdotes and characteristic traits respecting the incursion of the French republicans into Franconia in the year 1796. By an eye-witness. Translated from the German* (London, 1798), 20–21, 65. A translation of *Die französischen in Franken 1796* (Nuremberg, 1797).

45 T. R. Malthus, *First Essay on Population*, 1798, *with Notes by James Bonar* (London, 1926).

mously, and, when found out, apologized for it as intended only for “the vulgar.” Its tone and message may be judged from the following excerpt:

Tom: Pooh! I want freedom and happiness the same as they have got in France.

Jack: What, Tom, we imitate them? . . . Why. I'd sooner go to the Negroes to get learning, or to the Turks to get religion, than to the French for freedom and happiness. . . . Instead of indulging in discontent . . . (for envy is at the bottom of your equality works), I read my Bible, go to Church, and think of a treasure in Heaven.

Tom: Aye, but the French have got it in this world.

Jack: 'Tis all a lie, Tom. Sir John's butler says, his master gets letters which say 'tis all a lie.⁴⁶

THE ABORTIVE IRISH REVOLUTION OF 1798

Whether the Irish rebellion of 1798 should be thought of as an unsuccessful revolution is perhaps optional. As Wolfe Tone said shortly before his suicide in prison, in such matters it is success that counts: “Washington succeeded, and Kosciuszko failed.”⁴⁷ In any case the Irish uprising was of significant magnitude, involving a population equal to that of the United States, and half that of England. The discontents were put down by force, and a good deal of force proved to be necessary. Late in 1798 there were 140,000 British troops in Ireland, of whom half could be called regulars; and this half, or 70,000, was twice as many as the number of British soldiers that ever fought on the Continent against the French Republic and Empire from 1793 through the battle of Waterloo.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Village politics, addressed to all the mechanics, journeymen and day labourers in Great Britain, by Will Chip, a country carpenter*, 3rd ed. (London, 1793), 5, 18; Altick, *English Common Reader*, 67–77.

⁴⁷ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1826), II, 531. Tone's diary and autobiography, especially in this first edition with its large appendix of other documents, remains a principal source for the United Irish movement. For sources and older studies see S. Simms, “A Select Bibliography of the United Irishmen,” in *Irish Historical Studies*, I (1938), 158–80. For more recent work: R. Jacob, *The Rise of the United Irishmen, 1791–94* (London, 1937); R. Hayes, *Biographical Dictionary of Irishmen in France* (Dublin, 1949); R. B. McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750–1800* (London, 1944); H. Nicolson, *The Desire to Please; A Story of Hamilton Rowan and the United Irishmen* (New York, 1943); B. Inglis, *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, 1784–1841* (London, 1954); C. Dickson, *The Wexford Rising in 1798* (Tralee, 1956); and the studies by two Americans: H. L. Calkin, “La propagande en Irlande des idées de la Révolution française,” in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, No. 139 (1955), 143–60, and *Les invasions d'Irlande pendant la Rév. fr.* (Paris, 1956); and J. H. Stewart, “The French Revolution on the Dublin Stage,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, XCI (1961), 183–92; “Burke's *Reflections* in the Irish Press,” in *French Historical Studies*, II (1962), 376–90, and “The Irish Press during the French Revolution,” in *Journalism Quarterly*, XXXIX (1962), 507–18.

⁴⁸ Buckingham to Grenville, Dublin, November 5, 1798: communications are “almost stopped” despite “71,000 effective regulars and 47,000 yeomanry” (plus some militia), *Dropmore Papers*, IV, 362. Not counting Hanoverians and other Germans in the British army, the British had about 36,000

To recall briefly the well-known tribulations of eighteenth-century Ireland, it seems safe to say that the contrasts between poverty and great wealth, and between discrimination and privilege, were more pronounced than in any country of Western Europe before the French Revolution. There were three religious communities that had little to do with each other. A tenth of the population was Anglican. This tenth, the "ascendancy," owned five-sixths of the land, and received such benefits as the established Church of Ireland was able to confer; its members occupied the government offices and enjoyed an array of pensions and sinecures; a few hundred of them controlled the Irish Parliament at Dublin; and they included the families of various British notables of the next generation, such as Castlereagh, Palmerston, and the two Wellesleys, that is the Earl of Mornington and the Duke of Wellington. A fifth of the population were Presbyterians. In eastern Ulster they lived as a compact majority group; they were predominantly middle-class, or at least they had no aristocracy; many were merchants, tradesmen, linen weavers, and artisans, but many also were tenant farmers; and, thanks to their lively interest in America, to which there had been much recent emigration, and to their Dissenters' dislike of bishops and landed gentility, they were peculiarly susceptible to republican sentiments.

Almost three-quarters of the people were Roman Catholics. The Catholics had been largely expropriated in the seventeenth century, through seizures by Anglican landlords and the mass settlement of Scottish and English Presbyterians. The Catholic Irish had joined with the French on a famous occasion, when the French landed an army of 6,000 men in Ireland to support James II; it was upon the defeat of the Irish and French in 1690, at the battle of the Boyne, that the eighteenth-century regime in both Britain and Ireland was constructed. The Irish Catholics long suffered the consequences by deprivation of almost all legal rights. By 1790 the most severe features of the penal code had been removed. No Catholic could yet hold office or vote for a member of the Irish House of Commons, but normal property rights had been restored, though the number of Catholic gentry and freeholders was in fact very small. A Catholic episcopate was tolerated, a shadowy group alongside the Protestant prelates of the Church of Ireland, who, though often absentees, held the ancient sees, titles, and revenues—Armagh brought £8,000 a year. The Catholic bishops of Ireland, accepting the inferior status of their people, proved in the 1790's to be far more conservative than those of France or Italy. Since the middle of the century an important class of Catholic merchants and business men had grown up, as among French Protestants before the Revolution, and for similar reasons—since they were kept legally out of the government and the armed forces and were restricted in the professions, the universities, and remunerative church appointments, they could advance themselves only in trade.

Catholics and Presbyterians had long held each other in mutual aversion and horror, but by the end of the century the old religious animosities had begun to fade, and leaders of the two out-groups came to feel that they shared the same

troops in the Anglo-Russian invasion of Holland in 1799; 26,000 at Salamanca in 1812; and 26,000 at Waterloo. See J. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, 13 vols. (London, 1910–1930), IV, 666; VIII, 630; X, 430.

grievances, suffering alike from the insecurities of farm tenancy, from the expense of paying tithes to an alien church, and from exclusion from politics. The coming together of Catholics and Dissenters was correspondingly feared by the ascendancy and by the British government. The failure of the two groups to cooperate in 1783, a failure due both to themselves and to the manipulations of Anglicans, had been a main cause of the collapse of the movement for Parliamentary reform at the time of the American Revolution.⁴⁹ From the upheavals of those years somewhat opposite results had ensued. The Irish Parliament enjoyed a little more freedom with respect to Great Britain after 1782. But as the instrument of an entrenched and hereditary minority, the Irish Parliament firmly refused any extension of political rights. The governing class, anticipating that the granting of power to the "native" Irish would undermine the whole system in church and state, and undo the whole seventeenth-century settlement of law and property (as eventually it did), stood fast against what was called reform, and would indeed mean revolution. The troubles of Ireland were thus primarily internal, though the Anglicans could maintain their position only through the connection with England. As so often in the history of the empire, however, the central government at Westminster was sometimes more willing than the local rulers to listen to popular discontents. William Pitt, as early as 1791, was coming to feel that the only solution might be in an abolition of the Irish Parliament and a union with England, as happened in 1801. Only thus, he reasoned, could the obstinacy of the Irish ascendancy be overcome, and the causes of revolutionary ferment alleviated; only thus, by merging the Irish Catholics, along with the Dissenters, into a larger United Kingdom in which they would be a minority, could they be given political rights without danger to Great Britain. Pitt's views on union with England, in short, while unwelcome to the Irish Parliament, were not unfriendly to the Irish people.

Unrest in Ireland was endemic. Agricultural workers, made desperate by poverty or by loss of land through eviction, or stirred up when landlords replaced Catholic with Protestant tenants, or vice versa, formed secret associations to offer threats and retaliation. Such, in the last decades of the century, were the Defenders, who were mostly Catholic, and the Protestant Peep-of-Day Boys in Ulster. Very different were the middle-class organizations, public and avowed, such as the armed Volunteer companies which had formed about 1778, and worked without success for a reformation of Parliament. Discouraged and inactive after 1784, the members of these companies were still in possession of their weapons, especially among the Presbyterians of the north. In 1789 they were reawakened to politics by news of the French Revolution. The press and the theaters of Dublin, Cork, Belfast, and other towns re-echoed with enthusiastic praises for the new order in France.

In Ireland, however, as in England and Scotland, organized disaffection came to a head in 1792, in the very months that preceded the outbreak of war between France and Britain. The new feature, distinguishing it from the agitation of a decade before, was a more determined resolution to overcome the old Catholic-Protestant differences. The Catholic Committee, a kind of self-help organization formed many years before, fell into new hands in 1792, when the Catholic bishops

49 For Ireland, 1778–1784, see above pp. 569–76, 620–29.

and gentry were outvoted by a more militant group of Catholic laity. "What prevents you," asked a certain Dr. Ryan in the Committee, "from coalescing with your Protestant brethren? Nothing! Not religion. It is the spirit of the present times to let religion make its own way by its own merits. . . . Let us lay down the little character of a sect, and take up the character of a people."⁵⁰ The Catholic Committee of Dublin developed a network of similar committees throughout the island. It employed as its agent a young lawyer named Theobald Wolfe Tone, who had been born an Anglican. Tone helped also to found at Belfast, late in 1791, a group that called itself the Society of United Irishmen, composed mainly of Presbyterian merchants and professional men, who, by the word "United," meant to express their willingness to work with Anglicans and Catholics. In 1792 a United Irish club was established at Dublin. It included 130 Protestant and 140 Catholic members, among whom there were 67 "cloth merchants," 32 other "merchants," 30 attorneys, 26 barristers, 16 physicians, 15 grocers, and so on down through a list of solid occupations.⁵¹ United Irish lodges spread rapidly through the country. They were at first perfectly open and orderly, resembling the political clubs that were common on the Continent and in the United States, aiming at a reform of the Irish Parliament as a first step toward further social changes, but already inclined, in view of the frustrations of a decade before, to be radical in their ideas. The Belfast group, in 1792, established one of the most significant democratic newspapers of the English-speaking world at this time—the *Northern Star*. Published twice a week, it sold by subscription for less than twopence a copy. In December 1792, simultaneously with the first convention in Edinburgh, and with the triumph of the militants in the Catholic Committee at Dublin, a few Ulstermen formed a society called "The Irish Jacobins of Belfast."⁵² It was possibly the only such group, in any country except France itself, that openly adopted and acknowledged the name "Jacobin" for itself; it was soon closed down by the government.

The United Irishmen pressed for parliamentary reform, denounced the war against France, circulated Paine's *Rights of Man*, and demanded the calling of an Irish "convention," of the kind that had met in Ireland in 1783, and which the example of the French Convention now made far more fearsome. The Catholic Committee, which even when radicalized was more moderate than most United Irish clubs, drew up a petition to the king in December 1792. Deliberately avoiding the inflammatory phrase, "rights of citizens," and modestly requesting only the restoration of ancient privileges, the petition begged for relief from discrimination, and was in fact graciously received by King George III.⁵³

The authorities reacted in 1793 with a mixture of concessions and new controls. On the one hand all "conventions" claiming any representative character were prohibited. On the other, the Irish Parliament under strong pressure from the British ministry, enacted certain measures of Catholic relief. Catholics (if they met the usual requirements, such as the forty-shilling freehold) were now allowed to vote

50 Minutes of the meetings as published in Tone, I, 266.

51 R. B. McDowell, "The Personnel of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen," in *Irish Historical Studies*, II (1941), 12–53.

52 Jacob, 180.

53 Tone, I, 227, 451–61.

for the Irish House of Commons—though not to be elected to it. They could now become members of municipal corporations and take degrees from Dublin University. It was hoped thus to prevent the union of Catholics and Dissenters against the establishment, but the number of Catholics benefited by the concessions of 1793 was not great, and the agitation continued. A small group of Whigs in the Parliament introduced a reform bill, hoping to deflect the forces of radicalism. It was a moderate bill, but it soon collapsed before the immovable self-satisfaction of the Irish Commons, expressed, as in 1783, by that strong man of the established order, and friend of Burke, Sir Hercules Langrishe, who now reinforced his former arguments by pointing to the horrors of the Revolution in France, which proved, he said, that a mere breath of change would lead to convulsions.

The United Irish Society of Dublin, early in 1794, produced and publicized a draft for a reform bill of its own. To undercut the vested interests lodged in boroughs and counties, and to push aside differences arising from religion, it adopted the new principle of personal, individual, and numerical representation. It proposed that 300 electoral districts, equal in population, should each send one representative to the House of Commons. All domiciled men over twenty-one were to vote. The House should be newly elected once a year. Members were to receive pay, and be under no requirement to own property. Except in rejecting the secret ballot, the program anticipated the Chartism of the 1830's, and it shared in the theory of representation which the American and French revolutions had developed, and which the "sister republics" to France were soon also to adopt. Such theory, however, was contrary to the theory of the British and Irish constitutions; and would also, if acted upon, become an actual menace to the existing social order. The United Irishmen of Dublin, far from being merely or naively political, saw their program as a step toward other changes—toward the abolition of tithes and primogeniture, and a transformation of taxes and tariffs, upon which the socio-economic-ecclesiastical institutions of the country so largely rested.⁵⁴

Meanwhile many of the Irish radical leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, came to believe that the welfare of most of the Irish people required a severance of the British connection, without which the ascendancy in Ireland could not survive. Their case was not unlike that of the Dutch patriots who also had made serious efforts for constitutional change in the 1780's, run up against an uncompromising refusal on the part of Dutch conservatives, and had reason to believe that the Orange regime, as restored in 1787, was wholly dependent on the support of England. Like the embittered Dutch patriots, the frustrated Irish felt neither loyalty to their own government nor sympathy for its war with France. Irish and Dutch both entered into secret correspondence with the French in 1794. The Committee of Public Safety sent over an agent to inquire into the strength of a revolutionary movement in Ireland. This agent was William Jackson. It may be noted, as a suggestion of the role of America in these events, that it was this Jackson who had edited, back in 1783, the London edition of the American state constitutions and state papers of the American Revolution. Jackson was caught in Dublin by the

54 McDowell, *Public Opinion*, 197–99, and "Select Documents: United Irish Plans for Parliamentary Reform," in *Irish Historical Studies*, III (1942), 39–59.

Anglo-Irish authorities, who now had evidence against various English and Irish conspirators. Benjamin Vaughan, Hamilton Rowan, and Wolfe Tone all fled, by different routes, to America.

The authorities, detecting collusion with the enemy in wartime, and regarding the United Irish program as subversive in any case, declared the United Irish societies to be illegal. Driven underground, they became more positively revolutionary. They began to accumulate arms, impose secret oaths, hold clandestine meetings, and plan rebellion, counting on French aid. They aspired to set up a republic, and after 1795 took the Batavian Republic as their model. To Wolfe Tone, at least, when he was in Paris in 1796 (assisted by money given privately by the American minister, James Monroe), it seemed that the "moderation" of the French in Holland was an inspiration to the Irish.⁵⁵

The French, from 1796 to 1798, along with their Dutch allies, made three attempts at invasion of the British Isles. The first two were of large scale, but unsuccessful; the third was successful, but the force put ashore was too little and too late. The French Directory could never commit itself wholeheartedly to an invasion of Ireland. It was not only that the hazards of the sea and the British fleet had to be faced, and that the war required, until late in 1797, the concentration of French forces in Italy. There was a feeling in Paris, among those willing to venture on an amphibious operation, that if an overseas attack were to be launched it should be launched directly against England itself. The public tumults in England and Scotland, the outcries in the British press, the state trials, the alarm loudly voiced by conservatives, the messages brought to Paris from English clubs, reinforced in 1797 by the naval mutinies and the suspension of gold payments by the Bank of England, gave a kind of credibility to the reports of a tiny handful of British visionaries, that revolution would break out in England if only a French army could be brought in. By the French Directory these reports were relished rather than believed. It seemed likely enough, however, that if a few tens of thousands of veteran French troops could set foot in England, the British army would be too small and ineffectual to prevent their marching into London. The idea of invading England directly, or at least of stirring up an inverse Vendée in the West (as in Colonel Tate's raid in Wales), was a source of consternation to the Irish in Paris, who believed it to be a diversion and a delusion, ruinous to Irish hopes.

In 1796 a force of 15,000 French soldiers, commanded by Hoche, and with Wolfe Tone in a French uniform as his aide, reached Bantry Bay, on the southwest coast of Ireland, without interception by the British fleet. The site was a poor one in that the United Irish were not yet organized in the southwest, so that no preparations had been made to receive them. Stormy weather in any case made disembarkation impossible, and after sixteen days of agonizing uncertainty the fleet withdrew. In 1797 the Dutch prepared an invasion. The Batavian leaders were strongly hostile to England, remembering the events of the 1780's, the flight of William V to England in 1795, and the constant British threats to the Dutch colonial empire. Among the shifting plans there was one for landing in Scotland, crossing that country, and ferrying over to Ulster, where the United Irish plans for

55 Tone, II, 164, 169, 173, 196, 203.

revolution were well advanced in 1797. An expedition of almost 15,000 troops was organized with a minimum of French aid, and a Dutch fleet ready to escort them stood at the Texel. Weeks of dead calm, broken only by contrary winds, held the expedition in total immobility while the British fleet recovered from the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. It was not British sea power that prevented invasion in 1796 and 1797.⁵⁶ England, as Tone remarked, had had its greatest escape since the Spanish Armada, which also had been defeated by the wind.

In October 1797 the British inflicted severe damage on the Dutch naval power at Camperdown, reducing the escort available to prospective invaders, though not enough to make them give up their plans. Early in 1798 an even more imposing force was assembled, the famous if shadowy *Armée d'Angleterre*, composed of both French and Dutch units, and with Bonaparte, just returned from Italy, assigned to command it. It was commonly believed in the British government that the enemy was about to attack either England or Ireland. No moment in Ireland could be more propitious, for the United Irish preparations were as well developed as they ever became. The Directory, however, advised by Bonaparte and Talleyrand, decided at the last moment against the risk of a channel crossing. Bonaparte with an army of 38,000 men sailed for Egypt instead. It is possible that this was one of the worst strategic blunders ever made.⁵⁷ The French started for Egypt on May 19, 1798, just as the Irish rebellion, having broken out in April, was raging at its height. So far as the Egyptian expedition was part of an intelligible strategy, it was designed as an alternative means of weakening the power of England—this time by threatening the Indian sources of British wealth. The campaign in Egypt and the Levant, however, instead of weakening England, the only European power with which France was then at war, reactivated war in the Mediterranean and opened the way to the Second Coalition. An invasion of Ireland in 1798 might have been no more costly than the invasion of Egypt, in which, eventually, the French lost both a fleet and an army. Supposing that a French army were to land in Ireland at all, which was not impossible—the French had landed there in 1689, and spent sixteen days in Bantry Bay in 1796—such an army, even if its communications were cut off, would be more embarrassing to the British than the French army isolated in Egypt, which surrendered in 1801. Had the French occupied Ireland for any length of time, it may be doubtful that a viable Irish Republic would have resulted. The Directory might even have traded Ireland away at the peace table, as Venice had been traded away to the Austrians. But the British might have been obliged to make peace on terms favorable to the French Republic; and if the French had had troops in Ireland and not in Egypt, and if Nelson's fleet had been on the coasts of Ireland and not of Naples, the Continental powers, which were hardly likely to come to the rescue of England, would have formed no Second Coalition. To pursue speculation even further, the Directory, by making a relatively lasting peace, might have established itself as a relatively lasting regime.

⁵⁶ The judgment of Commander E. H. Stuart Jones, R. N., *An Invasion that Failed: The French Expedition to Ireland, 1796* (Oxford, 1950). See Tone's diary, *Life*, II, 205–447, for the Bantry Bay and the Dutch expeditions, with the allusion to the Spanish Armada on p. 266.

⁵⁷ The point is developed in an unpublished doctoral dissertation at Princeton University (1963), by Steven T. Ross, "The War of the Second Coalition."

As it turned out, the French went to Egypt, and all that happened, so far as invasion of Ireland was concerned, or French aid to an Irish revolution, was that General Humbert with a thousand men landed on the western coast, at Killala, in August 1798.⁵⁸ Another 10,000 French troops were ready to follow, should Humbert have enough initial success. By this time, however, the strength of the United Irish uprising had already been broken. Although the extreme western part of the island, where the people still largely spoke Gaelic, was the least affected by the United Irish organization, Humbert found several hundred Irish who were willing to join him. The astonished Anglican bishop of Killala found his palace swarming with Frenchmen and native Irish. The Franco-Irish force repelled a party of cavalry sent against them, and penetrated the country for some fifty miles. Excitement ran high for a moment; songs of liberation were composed:

Ireland's sons, be not faint hearted,
 Welcome, sing them *Ça Ira*.
 From Killala they are marching
 To the tune of *Vive la*.
Vive la, United heroes,
 Triumphant always may they be,
Vive la, our brave French brethren
 That have come to set us free.

Humbert was soon obliged to surrender; there were, after all, 140,000 British troops in the island. Exchanged and returned to France, he was too much of a republican to suit Napoleon a few years later, and withdrew to America. He had the pleasure of fighting the British again in the War of 1812, was mentioned in despatches by Andrew Jackson, and died at New Orleans in 1823.

To recur to the Irish themselves. As they proceeded after 1796 secretly to accumulate arms, the British proceeded to disarm them; and as they built up an organization, from the local to the national level, the British arrested their leaders. The "British," it must always be understood in this connection, included those Irish who either upheld the established order, or who, whatever their doubts, were opposed to armed insurrection or to separation from England. Almost half the British troops in Ireland were Irish yeomanry or militia of various degrees of reliability. Presbyterian Ulster was a hotbed of the United Irish movement and of democratic republicanism, but it produced also in 1795 the Orange lodges, ultra-Protestant, violently anti-Catholic, and determined to crush the United Irish at any price. The troubles rekindled the religious hatreds that had slowly been burning out. In the worst of the atrocities that followed, it was often Irish against Irish.

The United Irish armed themselves by accumulating pikes and pitchforks, or fitting up the weapons they had had since 1780, or stealing firearms from military depots. The French Republic seems to have done less in the way of surreptitious arming of potential revolutionaries in Ireland than the French monarchy had done

58 R. Hayes, *The Last Invasion of Ireland: When Connacht Rose* (Dublin, 1939). The verses quoted here are from Hayes, the page preceding the table of contents.

for those in America in 1776. After the French showed their intentions, however, at Bantry Bay in December 1796, the mass recruitment of United Irish went rapidly forward, until there were 100,000 in Ulster alone. Local societies chose delegates to form regional bodies, which culminated in an Executive Directory, ready to take over, at the proper moment, as a government for an Irish Republic. The contrast has already been noted between the truly popular and relatively democratic though “underground” United Irish, and the conspiracy formed in 1796 by Babeuf in Paris, with its Directory in which power flowed from the top, and which remained shrouded in secrecy from its own handful of followers.

The British countered by reinforcing their garrison in Ireland against both insurrection and invasion, by searching homes and hiding places for concealed weapons, and by infiltrating the United Irish lodges with spies. Command was entrusted to an officer chosen for his willingness to be ruthless, General Lake, who wrote to his superiors, in 1797, that “nothing but terror will keep them in order.”⁵⁹ The terror took the form of quartering troops on the inhabitants, searches, seizures, burnings, hangings, “half-hangings,” tortures, deportations without trial, and condoning the barbarities of Orangemen and bands of yeomanry that wandered about the country under no control. The United Irish and their sympathizers replied in kind so far as possible. The appalling struggle was not between Catholic and Protestant, and still less between Anglo-Saxon and Celt; it was a struggle of political type, for and against an independent Irish republic.

The measures taken by the government, or taken in its name, were so effective that the United Irish, like Kosciuszko in 1794, had to act before they were ready, and before it should be too late. The insurrection began in Ulster in April 1798. It soon spread to other parts of the island, with all sorts of people, such as the agrarian Defenders, and those who had hitherto belonged to nothing, joining in as the moment of decision seemed to present itself. The most serious fighting was in the southeast, in Wexford. Here a certain Father John Murphy, who had hitherto been politically inactive, but was maddened by the recent acts of repression coming on top of the chronic misery of his people, emerged as a military leader of some talent, guiding a host of poorly armed peasants into battle. Other priests, while their bishops deplored the whole proceeding, also appeared in the ranks of the rebels—enough for Castlereagh, who was then chief secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, to call the uprising “a Jacobinical conspiracy pursuing its object chiefly with Popish instruments.” These rebel priests, said a conservative Catholic, were “the very faeces of the Church.” Twelve Presbyterian ministers are also known to have been involved in the rebellion, of whom three were executed.⁶⁰

The insurrection, however, was doomed from the start. Its higher leaders were either on the Continent or in British jails. There was widespread participation, but no central direction; no one knew what was happening beyond his own locality; nothing could be synchronized, momentary successes could not be consolidated, nor local defeats of the British turned to advantage. The hope of French armed

59 Quoted by Jones, *Invasion that Failed*, 197.

60 Dickson, *Wexford Rising; Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, 8 vols. (London, 1848), I, 219; McDowell, *Public Opinion*, 241; W. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service under Pitt* (London, 1892), 290.

intervention gradually faded; it remained faintly alive for weeks, while Bonaparte and his army were at sea, until the news came, stupefying to the Irish, that the French were in the most incredible of all places, at the far opposite end of the world of Europe and of republican revolution, contending in the desert with the Mamelukes of Egypt. Humbert's landing in August was for the United Irish only a tragic reminder of what might have been.

It was clear by July that the revolt had failed, but sporadic fighting continued, and the repressive measures used to prevent rebellion before it came were continued with a new intensity after the worst of the danger was over. Many Englishmen were disgusted by what they saw. Cornwallis, who had commanded in America and who was sent to Ireland in 1798, thought the conversation of officers at his own table too extreme; it was all about "hanging, shooting, burning, etc., etc., and if a priest is put to death the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company."⁶¹ One is reminded of Nelson and his officers at Naples a year later. The Marquis of Buckingham thought Cornwallis' generals "the worst in Europe"; the "rapine and cruelties" of his troops were "atrocious"; rebels were afraid to surrender; and with forty-three generals the government forces were undisciplined and "licentious."⁶²

No estimate of the number who died in the rebellion and in its repression has ever been possible. Many were sent to Australia. Various leaders were executed for treason; and Wolfe Tone, who had slipped into Ireland from France during the fighting, and who was captured and faced certain hanging, cut his throat in prison. The time was far distant when inmates of British prisons could emerge as heads of independent states on good terms with their former rulers.

The rebellion was followed by the Act of Union of Great Britain and Ireland. The union, which lasted until the First World War, was clearly one of the diverse products of the revolutionary era. There were at least three good reasons for it. It was strategically necessary to Great Britain; the French had threatened an invasion of Ireland in every war since the days of William III, and this time they had come uncomfortably close to causing real trouble by their efforts. The union was intended also, by Pitt, Buckingham and others, as a system within which Irish Catholics could safely be granted political rights. How this intention came to nothing is a fact well known and requiring no elaboration here. Finally, and more often forgotten, the union was a phase in the general movement of counter-revolution, or anti-republicanism, throughout the British Isles and the Continent. It was a device for suppressing Jacobinism in Ireland.

In 1799, during the debates on the union, one of the new peers, Lord Minto, the former Sir Gilbert Elliot, delivered a long speech in the British House of Lords. He gave a good many reasons for a union of Ireland with Great Britain. One of

61 *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, 3 vols. (London, 1859), II, 369, his letter from Dublin Castle, July 24, 1798: "Except in the instances of the six state trials that are going on here, there is no law either in town or country but martial law . . . conducted by Irishmen heated with passion and revenge. But this is trifling compared to the numberless murders that are hourly committed by our people without any process or examination whatever. The yeomanry are in the style of the Loyalists in America, only much more numerous and powerful, and a thousand times more ferocious."

62 *Dropmore Papers*, IV, 264, 266.

them was that "an Irish democratic republic, or rather anarchy, must be the first and instant consequence of our separation." Such a republic, allied to France, he said, would bring chaos not to Ireland only, but to England. "It is part of our own tenement which is in flames, and we come in absolute contact with this pestilent contagion." Even in England, in 1799, "internal discontent, or speculative error, or the secret machinations of French corruption and English treason, or popular hope" would all be aroused and amplified if both an Irish and a French republic lay across the narrow seas. The old order in Ireland, in its old form, could not be maintained. But the Anglican supremacy in the smaller country, together with the existing order in Britain itself, would emerge safer and more secure, reconfirmed and reinvigorated by their union.⁶³

So republicanism in both islands succumbed to the forces or persuasions of the establishment. The movement was not only defeated, but in a way almost forgotten. The United Irish attempt at a revolution fell into the category of lost causes, its memory kept alive by circles of devotees, but its once living significance generally disregarded. A historian of the United Irish found herself unable even to make a list of towns in which lodges had existed, since records had been destroyed, and local annalists had drawn a discreet veil over these embarrassing forebears.⁶⁴ In Great Britain, when a democratic radicalism gathered strength again after 1830, there was a certain hesitation, even by men who had lived through both phases, to refer back to the days of the London Corresponding Society, to a time when democratic ideas had been tainted by sympathy for another country's revolution, and for a government with which Britain was at war. It came to be believed in some quarters that the disaffected had been not very numerous, and not very reputable. Here was another victory for the *levée en masse* of the people of quality.

It is tempting to look once more into the mail pouches by which the far-flung members of the British aristocracy were held together. Late in 1798 Lord Mornington, as he made his preparations against the Sultan of Mysore, and fretted about Jacobinism in his native Ireland, and the future of his own large estates there, received a communication sent to him months before by William Eden, Lord Auckland. It was the same Auckland who had urged upon Grenville, in 1792, the need of making Britons aware of their special blessings. Writing in April, Auckland had to admit that the news from Ireland was very bad. But in England the outlook was better. "With respect to this good old island," said Auckland, "I can say with extreme pleasure and confidence that I have never seen it so rightly disposed. There certainly exist in London, Manchester and other places, clubs and secret societies of men connected and affiliated as 'United English' on grounds of the wildest and bloodiest democracy. But they are few in number, and composed of the refuse of mankind."⁶⁵

Vae victis!

⁶³ *Parliamentary History*, XXXIV, 771–72.

⁶⁴ Jacob, 5.

⁶⁵ *The Wellesley Papers: The Life and Correspondence of Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley* . . . , 2 vols. (London, 1914), I, 52–53.

CHAPTER XXXI

AMERICA: DEMOCRACY NATIVE AND IMPORTED

Beware, ye American aristocrats! Your principles and efforts are leading you to a precipice. . . . If the cause of France, which is the cause of human nature, should succeed, then farewell kings, aristocrats and the long catalogue of clerical impositions.

—ELIHU PALMER, 1793

The cursed foul contagion of French principles has infected us. . . . If she fails the world will be free. I have the highest confidence in the success of England.

—GEORGE CABOT, 1798

I see how the thing is going. At the next election England will set up Jay or Hamilton, and France, Jefferson, and all the corruption of Poland will be introduced; unless the American spirit should rise and say, we will have neither John Bull nor Louis Baboon.

—PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS TO HIS WIFE, 1797

It was the Americans who had first given the example of rebellion, proclaimed the rights of man and the sovereignty of the people, and established a new public authority in their state constitutions by recognizing a constituent power in bodies called conventions. They had attracted the lively notice and admiration of dissatisfied persons in many parts of Europe. A mere fifteen years later the American image had already faded in a more blinding light on the screen of the world's opinion, and the mild accents of the heralds of liberty had been succeeded by a more ringing and compelling voice. If an influence had passed from America to

Europe before 1789, after that year the direction was reversed. If, as Barruel said, the “sect” had first shown itself in America, within two decades the United States was in the worthy position of a kind of Israel, and the ecumenical church, as embodied in the New Republican Order, had its center—complete with power, doctrines, and abuses—in Paris.

Like other countries, the United States felt the strong impact of the French Revolution. As elsewhere, the development was twofold. On the one hand, there was an acceleration of indigenous movements. On the other, there was an influence that was unquestionably foreign. The latter presented itself especially with the war that began in Europe in 1792, and with the clash of armed ideologies that the war brought with it. The warring powers in Europe, which for Americans meant the governments of France and Great Britain, attempted to make use of the United States for their own advantage. Different groups of Americans, for their own domestic purposes, were likewise eager to exploit the power and prestige of either England or France. Some Americans saw the future of the United States best secured by a victory of the French Republic; others saw no hope for their own country except in a triumph by Great Britain. Political thought was also sharpened, heated emotionally, and broadened to the all-embracing dimensions that the word “ideology” suggests. American democracy, as expressed in the new Republican party, was shaped in part by the revolution in Europe; and American conservatism, as it came to be expressed by High Federalists, shared in some of the ideas of the European counter-revolution, especially as transmitted in books imported from England. The indigenous and the foreign became indistinguishable. In the way in which internal dissension passed into favoritism for foreign powers, the United States did not differ from the countries described in preceding chapters, from Ireland to Poland and from Scotland to Naples.

At the same time the case of the United States was very special. Despite the war of words, the domestic conflicts were for most people not deeply bitter. Between social classes there was less fear and hostility than in Europe, less deference, and less contempt. “Aristocrats” in America had less to lose, and “democrats” less to complain against. There was always, however buried and overgrown, a truth at the bottom of the famous aphorism of Tocqueville, that the Americans had been born equal, and so needed no revolution to become so. There was an underlying bent toward equality in the customs of the people, of the kind that perplexed the Venezuelan revolutionary, Miranda, in 1784, when he was travelling in the United States to seek aid for a revolution in Spanish America, and found it difficult to arrange for his servant to eat alone. One notable of the New England “establishment” was the clergyman Jedediah Morse, who in 1798 was an extreme Federalist. He had recently received an honorary degree from Edinburgh University. In 1798 the established Presbyterians of Scotland would have thought him suspiciously radical, since he not only wanted to do something for Negroes, but actively sponsored Sunday Schools, a popular religious press, frontier missionaries, and itinerant preaching.

Most especially, the United States had already had its revolution. New forms and new principles had been introduced into government, an older colonial aris-

tocracy had been displaced, and an ideal of equality as well as of liberty had been affirmed. The great question in the 1790's was how the American Revolution would turn out. After 1789, when the new federal constitution went into effect, it was also a question of whether the constitution would become implanted and, if so, to what kinds of people and classes of the population the government of the new republic should mainly look for support. The United States was unique also in the grand reckoning with which the century ended. In 1801, after a generation of democratic agitation and counter-agitation throughout the area of Western Civilization, the American republic was the only country in which a peaceable transfer of power took place in a democratic direction, when, without use of a coup d'état, and without armed rebellion against him, a man denounced hysterically in some quarters as a Jacobin calmly assumed the highest executive office.

In a book of this kind, it may be illuminating first to glance briefly at the "other" Americas.

THE "OTHER" AMERICAS, LATIN AND BRITISH

For Latin America, where revolution against Spain broke out somewhat later, the years before 1800 were a time of precursors and preparations.¹ Contact with Europe north of the Pyrenees was infrequent, and with the United States even more so. Jefferson, when in Paris in 1787, was approached by both a Mexican and a Brazilian interested in "revolution," but he gave them no reason to expect his aid; and in fact, for a long time thereafter, Latin Americans with new ideas looked more to France than to the United States. Ironically enough, in the light of world revolution, it was from very different sources that aid for Latin American independence was most forthcoming. Miranda, after seeking support in vain in the United States and in France, found it in England. The break-up of the Spanish empire, opening its possessions to world trade, was one "revolution" for which Pitt's government could feel a positive sympathy; and Alexander Hamilton in 1799 talked more of liberating Latin America than Thomas Jefferson ever did.

Latin America then began at the Mississippi. At St. Louis, where Frenchmen lived under Spanish rule, a society calling itself the Sansculottes serenaded the priest on 1 Vendémiaire of the Year V, to wish him a republican New Year. At New Orleans the *Moniteur de la Louisiane*, set up in 1794, was one of the first newspapers in Spanish America; there was also some kind of political club, and six persons were deported to Havana for expressing republican sentiments.²

1 See H. D. Barbagelata, *La Révolution française et l'Amérique latine* (Paris, 1936); R. R. Caillet-Bois, *Ensayo sobre el Rio de la Plata y la Revolucion francesa* (Buenos Aires, 1929); A. Ruy, *A primeira revolução social brasileira, 1798* (Rio, 1942); E. Clavery, *Trois précurseurs de l'indépendance des démocraties sud-américaines: Miranda, 1756-1816; Nariño, 1765-1823; Espejo, 1747-1795* (Paris, 1932); A. Montalvo, *Francisco Javier Eugenio de Santa Cruz y Espejo* (Quito, 1947). I am indebted to both Professor and Mrs. Stanley J. Stein for assistance with the languages and for findings they have made in Brazilian and Mexican archives.

2 A. P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795-1803* (New York, 1934), 39, 155; A. Fortier, *History of Louisiana*, 4 vols. (New York, 1904), I, 152-56.

Various conspiracies were discovered further south, all purely local and momentary. There was one at Quito in 1794, at Buenos Aires in the same year, at Caracas, La Paz, and remote Potosi in 1797, and at Bahia, in Brazil, in 1798. Generally the conspirators were found to be using French terminology (such as "citizen" and "republic"); at La Paz part of the evidence consisted in copper engravings showing the death of Louis XVI. Distance, censorship, and the absence of any systematic French propaganda meant that French writings, as found in South American conspiratorial circles, were of a highly random character. At Bogota, in 1793, Antonio Nariño printed a hundred copies of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. At Rio, after a visit by a French ship in 1792, a translation of the French constitution was made into Portuguese. Otherwise, the French works that we hear of were extremely sporadic. For some reason, both at Mexico City and at Bahia, about five thousand miles apart, the authorities were alarmed to find handwritten copies of speeches made in the French convention by Boissy d'Anglas, who was certainly one of the most sedate men of the French Revolution. *The Orateur des Etats-généraux de 1789*, attributed to J. L. Carra, was found in the hands of a Brazilian mulatto—as in the bookshops of Moscow. Worried officials also found copies of Volney's *Ruines*, with its disconcerting subtitle, *Méditations sur les révolutions des empires*.

The Latin American disturbances, even at this early date, are of interest in that they raised racial issues in a way that had no parallel in Europe or the United States. Many persons of Indian or Negro descent were already better off than in English-speaking America. At Quito the leading figure was Espejo, a pure-blooded Indian, a medical doctor, who was also head of the first public library at Quito. In 1792 he began to publish a periodical, and founded a patriotic society of some fifty members, in the best European style. His group secretly obtained copies of Nariño's edition of the Declaration of Rights, and in 1794, possibly on hearing news of the French invasion of Catalonia, put up placards in the streets. It is not clear to whom they were addressed, since at least one of them was written in Latin. Espejo was imprisoned, tortured, and died thereafter. Nariño was transported to Spanish Africa.

At Buenos Aires and Bahia the plots involved mulattoes and Negro slaves. At Buenos Aires certain French merchants were alleged to have offered freedom to Negroes in return for joining in a revolt against the Spanish crown. At Bahia the conspiracy was more substantial. A French frigate had stopped at Bahia in 1797, and a number of local teachers, doctors, and clergy had thereupon had the idea of forming a literary society. About the same time a company of mulatto soldiers petitioned for equality of treatment with a company of white soldiers at Bahia. A handful of whites, mulattoes, and slaves formed secret links with each other. Most of the mulattoes were soldiers, but one was some kind of minor official or notary. Of the whites, one was a Latin teacher from a local planter family, and one was a surgeon educated in Portugal. However hopeless as a revolutionary movement, their efforts suggest the social discontents, the thinking, and the knowledge of the outside world in a town on the Brazilian coast at the time. The conspirators probably had heard that the French had abolished slavery; whether they knew of the revolution in Haiti is not clear from the evidence. By the middle of 1798 they

had learned that the Pope had been ejected from Rome, and that the French were about to invade England. Some thought that the French would soon reach Brazil.

On August 12, 1798, proclamations appeared in public places, addressed to the people of the *Cidade da Bahia Republicana*. They denounced the oppressiveness of government and taxes, urged that the yoke of Europe be thrown off, demanded freedom to trade with countries other than Portugal, and specifically with France, and issued warnings to priests who preached "fanaticism." They called upon all soldiers, both white and colored, to work together, as "brothers and equals," for Popular Liberty. The outburst was easily put down, and thirty-four persons were arrested. They were accused of sedition and impiety, and of wanting "the imaginary advantages of a Democratic Republic in which all should be equal, with access to public office and representative positions without difference of color or condition . . . following the example of the unfortunate and disgraced people of France."³ Four persons, all free mulattoes, were hanged and quartered, and several others transported to Africa.

Brazil, as it turned out, was the last American country to abolish slavery. Haiti was the first. It was here, in the wealthy French sugar colony of Saint-Domingue, where 30,000 whites lived among almost half a million slaves, along with some 25,000 free Negroes and mulattoes, that the repercussions of the French Revolution in America were the most immediate and the most violent. From early in the Revolution, over protests of the planters, the French had given equal civil rights to free colored persons in their colonies. When the slaves also were aroused, and began to rebel, the Convention, in 1794, abolished slavery in all possessions of the Republic. Most of the whites left the island, and Toussaint l'Ouverture, a Negro, emerged as the local leader. He worked for several years to maintain the tie with France, in whose army he was commissioned as a general officer by both the Convention and the Directory. Struggling against chaos, against breakdown in labor, production, and government, in a turmoil of strife between rivals, and between mulattoes and Negroes, with threats of Spanish and British intervention, and in fear of a reimposition of slavery, Toussaint managed to maintain a regime whose stated ideals at least were those of the European revolution, at the cost of atrocities that were worse than those of the Vendée or Ireland. In 1802 Bonaparte tried to regain control for France, capturing Toussaint in the process, and to return the ex-slaves to the old conditions. The French army perished of disease. Toussaint's successors declared independence.⁴

It is hard to estimate the effects in the United States of the revolution in Haiti. The French consul at Philadelphia estimated in 1797 that there were over 20,000 French refugees in the country. Almost all must have come from San Domingo

3 Ruy, 236.

4 There have been many books on the revolution in Haiti, of which two of the best are by T. L. Stoddard (the later racist or Anglo-Saxonist) *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston, 1914), and by an American Negro, C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, 1938). On French refugees, largely from Haiti, see E. Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States 1790-1800: An American Chapter of the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1940).

and other French West Indian colonies. Such men, if not exactly fervent republicans, were no lovers of England either; and their presence, especially in places like Philadelphia, where they congregated, added fuel to the flame of American political agitation. In a larger sense, the famous Cotton Kingdom of the American South, if it be dated from Eli Whitney's invention, was born simultaneously with an increased dread of slave rebellion. The number of known slave revolts in the United States rapidly rose in the decade of the 1790's, culminating in the one called Gabriel's rebellion in 1800. The heightening of the tempo would seem to reflect the growth of republicanism, with its demands for "liberty," among American whites and especially Southern whites. American slaves must also have overheard conversations about what had happened in San Domingo. American Negroes, like those of Brazil, or like the serfs of Hungary and Bohemia, were not wholly impervious to news from the outside world.⁵

British North America was in a way as much a product of the American Revolution as was the United States. The Canada Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1791, was designed, in the words of a Canadian-born historian, as a defense against both the French and American revolutions.⁶ It expressed the idea that the troubles in the old thirteen colonies had been due to an excess of democracy. The act created two provinces, Lower and Upper Canada (Quebec and Ontario), with similar structures of government. Each received an appointed governor, an appointed upper house which it was hoped might become hereditary, and endowments for an established church. In Lower Canada the British favored the old French seigneurial land law; and in the development of Upper Canada, in which émigrés from the United States had settled, they granted land in extensive tracts, hoping that a good solid landed aristocracy would grow up. Adequate provision was made also to support the dignity of officers of state. For example, William Smith, a native of New York and a Yale graduate, who had been chief justice of New York before the Revolution, went to Canada as a Loyalist, declaring that "all America was abandoned to democracy." He became chief justice of the new province, where he received a larger salary than the chief justice of the United States. The same was true for the new office of chief justice of Upper Canada, which still had practically no population. Upper Canada, though a frontier community, was deeply conservative, because peopled by refugees from the American Revolution. In Lower Canada the French were more restless, having no affection for the British authorities; but they lacked sympathy also for the anti-Catholic New Englanders with whom they had often been at war, and the arrival of some fifty émigré priests from France, reinforcing the views of the British governor and such Loyal-

5 H. Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, 1943), 209-34.

6 J. B. Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven and Toronto, 1945), 66-67. See also Mason Wade, *The French Canadians* (London, 1955), 97-101, and his "Quebec and the French Revolution of 1799: the Missions of Henri Mezière," in *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXI (1950), 345-68. An unpublished dissertation at the University of Chicago (1950) by H. L. Vernon, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Lower Canada, 1789-95," stops short in the middle of the story. There is a good deal of detail in the older works by the British Canadian, W. Kingsford, *History of Canada*, 10 vols. (Toronto, 1887-98), VII, 337-454, and the French Canadian, F. X. Garneau, *Histoire du Canada*, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Paris, 1913), II, 431-54.

ists as William Smith, helped to inoculate the *Canadiens* against sympathy for the new France.

The two countries, representing the losers and the winners of the American Revolution, remained in an odd conjunction in the 1790's. Both were involved in the war between France and England, and in the agitations of Genet; both had their furor over Jacobinism, and their alien and sedition laws. The difference was that there was as yet no significant indigenous democratic movement in Canada.

Neither France nor Great Britain yet quite accepted the boundaries in the North American interior as really final. For both, it might seem reasonable for the United States to remain confined east of the Appalachians. The French had plans, never of high priority, for a possible recovery of the whole of the former Louisiana, of which the part east of the Mississippi now belonged to the United States, and the part west of the Mississippi to Spain. When Genet was minister to Philadelphia in 1793, at a time when France was at war with both Spain and England, he tried to organize expeditions against the possessions of both these powers. In these designs he found many Americans eager to participate—South Carolinians against the Spanish in Florida (William Tate, who later led the French raid into Wales, was one of the moving spirits here); George Rogers Clark and his Kentuckians against St. Louis and the lower Mississippi; Vermonters against the British in Lower Canada. Genet and a certain French Canadian, Mezière, prepared a revolutionary pamphlet, *Les Français libres à leurs frères canadiens*. It called for Canadian independence, and for abolition of seigneurial dues, compulsory road work, and privileged trading companies. It was circulated by hand, and read aloud at the door of a church in Montreal. Next to nothing happened, but enough happened to alarm the British authorities. Lord Dorchester, the governor of Lower Canada, feared disaffection among the French-speaking people of his province. An act was passed for the expulsion of aliens. Loyalty Associations were formed, as in England. The governor in Upper Canada, J. G. Simcoe, who until the Jay treaty considered much of the Great Lakes and Illinois country to be part of his territory, was sure that the woods were full of "Jacobin emissaries" far into the back country. In what must surely be one of the earliest references to the politics of Chicago and St. Louis, Simcoe, in 1794, named both places as centers of agitation against England. He was particularly annoyed at a "Black Chief" at Chicago, whom he believed to be in the pay of the United States.⁷ This individual must have been Baptiste Point du Sable, a French-speaking Negro remembered as the first "white man" to live permanently at the site of Chicago, a mysterious figure of whom nothing is really known, but who was said to be—as if to show the long interconnections in this wilderness—an escaped slave from San Domingo.

The agitations went on for several years. In 1796 the French general, Victor Collot, on the pretense of a scientific expedition, made a western tour as far as the Mississippi. He found the French at St. Louis to be "excellent patriots," and the spot well suited as a base from which to end "the usurpations of England"; but the British, in consequence of the Jay treaty, were now beginning to withdraw from the region south of the Lakes, and the drift of Collot's secret plans was to detach the

⁷ *The Correspondence of Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe*, 5 vols. (Toronto, 1923–31), II, 222.

country west of the Alleghenies from the United States.⁸ Meanwhile George Rogers Clark, the conqueror of the Illinois country, the hero of Kentucky republicans, and the co-worker of Genet, concluded that the United States was controlled by a British faction which he detested. He went to St. Louis, and there, among its French population, hoped for a time, in 1798, that Louisiana would come under the control of France.

At the same time there were mysterious contacts between Lower Canada and Vermont. In 1796 the Vermonter, Ira Allen, was captured by the British at sea, aboard a vessel, the *Olive Branch*, carrying 20,000 muskets bought in France, presumably for use in a Canadian revolution. Létombe, left as French consul at Philadelphia after Adet's recall, received approaches from conspirators, including two Americans who offered to revolutionize Canada and set up a republic there.⁹ There were some Vermonters who, if given the option, would prefer to be joined with an independent Canadian Republic rather than with the United States, since the only easy mode of communication of Vermont with the outside world was by the Richelieu and St. Lawrence rivers. In view of such plots the government of Lower Canada passed a sedition act in 1797. Its most spectacular victim was David McLane, who was in fact guilty of subversion, and who was hanged at Quebec in 1797.¹⁰ It has already been remarked how the Abbé Barruel included McLane in his list of "adepts" of the international revolution, and how the British edition of his work, and hence the American, simply deleted his name, as if to suggest that such things—except in France—should best be forgotten.

It would be wrong to suggest that any possibility of revolution existed in British or in Latin America, Haiti excepted, before 1800. It is clear, however, that pockets of discontent could be found, and that there were conspirators who hoped to imitate or benefit from the French Revolution. Persons were executed for sedition from Quebec and Quito to Bahia and Buenos Aires. In the United States no one was executed under the Seditious Act of 1798, and in that respect the politics of the United States exhibited a certain moderation. The hanging of numerous rebel slaves was regarded as a police action, of no political consequence; just as the desire

8 Collot's travels were published in 1826 in Paris in both French and English; both are rare, and the present reference is to the edition in English, *A Journey in North America*, 247–51. See also D. Echeverría, "General Collot's Plan for a Reconnaissance of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, 1796," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., IX (1952), 512–20. Also A. DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C., 1958), 446–49.

9 *The Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States 1791–97*, edited by Frederick J. Turner for the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1903*, includes the dispatches of Létombe only to the end of 1797; the series continued into 1798, and includes a memorandum of February 1798 in which two American citizens are said to be ready to instigate a revolution in Canada if supplied by the French with some \$40,000. Archives des Affaires Étrangères, M. et D., Angleterre, vol. 47, fols. 349–52.

10 See Garneau, II, 449; Kingsford, VII, 444–51. It appears that the body, after hanging, was decapitated and "drawn" but not "quartered." The head of a "traitor" was then held up to public view, in the traditional manner. See also Timothy Pickering to Rufus King, June 20, 1797, in *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, 6 vols. (New York, 1895–1900), II, 192. It does not occur to the Federalist Secretary of State, Pickering, writing to his minister in London, to doubt that American citizens, of whom he mentions McLane and two others, should be accused of "treason" to the British crown.

of slaves for liberty, having nothing to do with American politics, was not even to be dignified by the epithet of Jacobinism.

WHICH WAY THE NEW REPUBLIC?

There has been a recent trend toward seeing the problems of the United States in the 1790's as those of a "new nation," of the same general kind as the "new nations" of the twentieth century.¹¹ In many ways the parallel does not hold. Though the first people to break away from a European colonial empire, the Americans had never lived under colonialism in its more recent sense. They themselves, most of them, were transplanted Europeans by racial stock, and their only culture was that of Europe, however modified or diluted. Some of the more difficult problems of adjustment to Western Civilization, as faced by new nations of the twentieth century, therefore did not exist in the United States. In addition, the Americans had enjoyed a good deal of self-rule in the old British empire; and, except at the extremes, among the upper classes and among the slaves, the level of wealth was higher than among corresponding classes in Europe. The Americans in colonial times had not suffered from exploitation, and in their first years of independence they did not suffer from poverty. Only in some respects was the country a "new nation" at all; it had announced some new ideas that had proved exciting in Europe, and it was already modern in its lack of feudal, dynastic, and churchly attachments; but in some ways it was actually old-fashioned, having shared less than Europe in the scientific, literary, capitalistic, governmental, and bureaucratic development of the preceding two hundred years. American English, with its neologisms and its archaisms, was characteristic of the state of society.

Nevertheless, the United States faced some typical problems of a new nation. It had to create a viable government, avoid domination by foreign powers, and prevent its territory from falling to pieces. It had to follow up its revolution by developing a new principle of legitimacy or authority. The leadership had somehow to enlist the interest of the whole people in a new enterprise, and build up their loyalty to a new regime. It was necessary also to develop roads, communications, public opinion, and group spirit or national identity. There was the general problem of economic development, and hence of access to foreign capital and the technical skills of older and more civilized countries; or, at least, decisions had to be made on whether or not such development was desirable.

It happened also, as for new nations in the twentieth century, that the United States found itself in a world agitated by revolution, with all forces tending to gather around opposite poles, each of which represented something ultra-modern. England, while conservative socially, led in industrial, commercial, and financial development, and in its network of relationships with the transoceanic world. France, by no means economically backward, had become through the Revolution

11 See W. N. Chambers, *Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience 1776-1809* (New York, 1963); R. L. Ketcham, "France and American Politics, 1763-93"; in *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXVIII (1963), 198-223; and forthcoming studies by S. M. Lipset.

more modern than England in other important respects: it now represented a society in which tradition had been rejected, planning for the future was thought to be possible, government was detached from an institutional church and from legally defined social classes, land law and local government had lost their old seigniorial features, careers were to be open to talent, promotions made by merit, and schools and higher education developed by the state in the interests of public utility. Where older societies, to obtain general acceptance, stressed the duties of social subordination and religious faith, the newer society stressed the duties of citizenship and the advantages of modern enlightenment. In the test of war the new order in France, with its citizen army and its popular patriotic enthusiasm, had proved itself stronger than the old regimes which opposed it. The announced principles of the new order, liberty, equality, and the recognition of human and civic rights—originally developed as weapons against the older society, and still far from being realized in the new—proved to have a strong appeal in all countries to which news of them came. Indeed, they had their own roots in many parts of Europe and in the United States. To call them “French ideas” was a mere allegation of their opponents.

In the United States, hardly had the new federal constitution gone into effect, when differences of opinion began to show themselves on the course which the new republic ought to take. One view held that the country needed economic development, along the lines in which Western Europe was then more advanced. The other view held that the older, simpler, and in a way more native ways in America were better and should be adhered to. The former view held that the country needed more banking, credit, shipping, transportation, and manufactures, both as things desirable in themselves and as a means of consolidating national independence, and that the central government should have enough power to plan and sponsor such innovations. In the other view it was better to favor the existing agricultural character of the country, keeping trade in an auxiliary position; a central government with minimum powers would suffice. In the former view, the new central government should associate itself with men of means, persons who had capital of their own to invest, or who could borrow it abroad, and who in any case might make trouble for the new regime if they withheld their support; in the opposing view, such a policy smacked of favoritism or privilege for the rich. Finally, in the one view it was necessary to seek good relations with an advanced European country, which for Americans could only be England, in view of the familiarity of the language and methods of doing business, the availability of long-term credit, and the British predominance at sea; while in the opposing view it was distasteful to try to conciliate England, whose government had not yet accepted the American Revolution very gracefully, and against which there remained a good deal of popular hostility, generated by the still recent War of Independence.

It need hardly be said that the first of these views was Alexander Hamilton's, and the second, that of the men who came gradually to look to Thomas Jefferson as their leader. Hamilton managed to enact his program during the first years under the new constitution. The assumption of pre-existing state debts by the national government, the paying off at par of all public securities however depreci-

ated, the establishment of a bank under federal charter, the introduction of excises and import duties to produce revenue for debt service, the encouragement of foreign trade to provide customs revenues at a high level, were all designed to serve his political as well as economic ends—to build up the power and credit of the new central government, and to encourage men of wealth to lend, invest, or speculate with their money.

If such purely internal questions had been the only sources of disagreement, it is possible that the fortunes of the new republic would have been worse than they proved to be. Hamilton's program lacked popular appeal. It was not easy to understand, and it offered nothing for the ordinary citizen to become enthusiastic about. It emphasized the differences of class interest. However national in design, it was highly regional in the feelings which it elicited; it made most of its friends in the northeast, and most of its enemies in the south and west. Division of opinion and interest there was bound to be; the question, in a "new nation," was what form such a division should take. Quarrels between elites without popular following might be ruinous, especially if geographically localized. They might lead to a disintegration of the existing union into a plurality of smaller republics, as happened in the great vice-royalties of the Spanish empire a generation later. They might lead to demands for a new constitution, and replacement of one constitution by another, as happened in France, until no constitution commanded enough respect to enjoy the advantages of legitimacy and authority. Or the divisions might take the form of political parties, each having members scattered throughout the country, each offering a means of connection between leaders and popular following, each providing symbols that could arouse enthusiasm and serve as a basis of organized if not always very informed opinion, and each willing, in the last analysis, to surrender the powers of government into the hands of the other without rebellion, revolution and violence.

The remarkable thing is that the divisions in the United States took this latter form, the form of political parties, and in particular the form of a two-party system. In producing the two parties, as in the constitutional convention of 1787 and the Revolution before it, the Americans displayed a good deal of political originality, since there had never been parties of this kind before, simultaneously popular and governmental, at work both in the national capital and in local taverns and clubs, and brought into existence to take part in really contested elections.¹² The parties made possible a mass participation in the exercise of public powers as laid down in the constitution. They made it possible also for a free government to function successfully, if a free government be defined as one which can tolerate opponents, and presumptive successors in office, without fears for its own existence.

It is widely agreed, among those who have most studied the matter, that the two American parties, and hence the beginnings of a two-party system, were produced in the United States by reactions to the European war and the French Revolution. The paradox, therefore, is that the ideological differences aroused in the United States, which became very heated, and the actual dangers of subservience to for-

12 The theme of Chambers, *op.cit.*, to which I am much indebted.

eign powers, which were very real, may have contributed, by creating national parties to debate national issues and elect candidates to national office in an atmosphere of public involvement, to the solidarity of the union, the maintenance of the constitution, and the survival of the republic.

There was, to be sure, something peculiar in the entire phenomenon. Hamilton, who loathed the French Revolution, was more of a revolutionary than Jefferson both in temperament and in the policies that he espoused. He was more impatient of the compromises on which the federal constitution rested, he wanted to make over the country, and he would have liked, if he could, to abolish the states (especially Virginia) and replace them with small *départements* created by a national government, as in the French and other revolutionary republics in Europe. Jefferson, who sympathized with the French Revolution, was actually a good deal of a moderate, both in personality and in his ideas of what should be done. He spoke for a kind of liberty and equality that had long existed in America, and did not have to be fought for as in Europe, a liberty that meant freedom from government, and an equality of the kind that obtained among yeoman farmers—a way of life that had been threatened by British policy before 1775, and was threatened by Hamiltonian policy after 1790, in each case with the support of American “aristocrats” or persons aspiring to become such. Because of their different views on the need of change, it was Hamilton who was the “unitarist,” and Jefferson the “federalist,” in the sense then current in Europe, where, as has been seen, the radical democrats were unitarists, and the moderates inclined to the decentralization of power. The unitarist and “revolutionary” Hamilton was certainly no Jacobin, but he was the nearest that the United States ever produced to a Bonaparte.

On a more general plane, also, the kinds of people who in the United States favored the French Revolution were not the same as in Europe. Nor were conservatives in America socially akin to those of Europe. There was a curious reversal or transposition. In Europe, on the whole, those who favored the French Revolution were middle-class people living in towns, including a good many bankers and businessmen, especially those interested in the newer forms of economic enterprise and development. Among the rural population, on the Continent, it was the landowners and property-owning farmers living nearest to the cities, most involved in a market economy, and enjoying the best communications with the outside world, who were most receptive to the Revolutionary ideas. In America the opposite was more nearly true. The business and mercantile community, and the farmers who lived nearest to the towns, or along the rivers and arteries of traffic and communication, were generally Federalist, and they became anti-French and anti-Republican. The same inversion holds for the counterrevolution, which in Europe was essentially agrarian. It drew its strength from the landed aristocracy, and from peasants who were politically apathetic, or looked upon cities as the abodes of their enemies. In the United States the Virginia gentry, and the farmers farthest from towns, along the frontier from Vermont through western Pennsylvania into Kentucky, were strongly Jeffersonian, Republican, anti-British, and partisan to the French Revolution. To this broad generalization various exceptions must be recognized, since in America (as in Europe) many urban “mechanics” and many of the professional classes, notably doctors, favored the newly forming republicanism; but

the cities in America were still small compared with those of Europe in any case; and the broad features of the transposition would appear to be valid.¹³

This reversal of roles can best be explained by the differences between the United States and Europe, differences which Louis Hartz has summed up as the lack of the "feudal factor" in America.¹⁴ It was due also to a certain failure on the part of Americans, because of these very differences, to understand the Revolution beyond the Atlantic. In Europe the revolutionary movement, though it carried aristocratic liberalism and Babouvist communism at its fringes, was most especially a middle-class or "bourgeois" affair, aimed at the reconstruction of an old order, and at the overthrow of aristocracies, nobilities, patriciates, and other privileged classes. It is hard to see how Jefferson, who so much disliked cities with their moneyed men and their mobs, could have been so sympathetic to the French Revolution had he seen it in an altogether realistic light. The same is true of American democrats generally. But Hamilton and the Federalists were if anything even more mistaken. They imagined that men like themselves, in Europe, were as hostile to the Revolution as they were. Or rather, in their own self-definition, they failed to identify with the European urban middle classes, which they really resembled, and preferred to associate themselves with the British and European aristocracies, which they hardly resembled at all. Hamilton was a self-made man, a parvenu; even George Cabot, who became a very "high" Federalist, and whose family later became prominent, was the author of his own fortune, largely made in privateering during the War of Independence. These men could not see, and probably did not even know, that many men of business in Europe—the Watts and Boultons, Walker and Wilkinson, Gogel, Sieveking and the Bohemian banker, J. F. Opiz, to name only those mentioned in preceding pages—were willing enough to sympathize with the ideas of the French Revolution in principle.

Hamilton began in 1790 to borrow money in Europe, to pay off the debt to France incurred during the American Revolution. For this purpose it was awkward to obtain funds in England, and he turned to Holland. The principal Dutch banker in these transactions was Nicolaas van Staphorst, who with his associates provided the United States with 23,500,000 guilders between 1787 and 1794. Staphorst, an old Patriot of the 1780's, accepted the Dutch revolution of 1795 and was active in the early months of the Batavian Republic. He worked on American affairs through a leading Antwerp banker, Joseph de Broeta. Broeta was very pro-French; he welcomed the opening of the Scheldt river, collaborated with Dumouriez, and, at some personal risk during the Austrian restoration of 1793, concealed 267,000 livres due to the French, which he paid over to them on their return to Belgium in 1794. Yet Alexander Hamilton preferred to believe that the Revolution in Europe was the outbreak of an unruly and ignorant populace.¹⁵

13 For comparisons of Europe and America, both explicit and allusive, see above, pp. 377–79, 387–88, 395–96, 453, 456, 461, 472, 486, 510, 525, 537–39, 632–35, 641, and below, 765–66, 773, 793–95.

14 L. Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York, 1955).

15 On Staphorst see P. van Winter's account in *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, VIII,

The point is, of course, that both parties in America, far from being interested in an exact understanding of events, were using the current ideological arguments for their own purposes. Nor, for all the reversal of roles, were those arguments irrelevant to American issues. The bankers, merchants and shipping magnates who supported the Federalist party would not have been considered really high-class in Europe. In the class structure of America, however, they were upper crust; and the fact that there was no higher or older aristocracy for them to rebel against is what made it possible for them to be so conservative. The High Federalists seem to have thought (John Adams and merely moderate Federalists were not so sure) that the upper classes of the United States and Great Britain had a great deal in common. Aspiring to be aristocrats, they made themselves into legitimate targets for democrats. Appropriating the language of the European counterrevolution, they naturally found "republicans" arrayed against them. The great dispute in America was no mere comedy of errors, nor incongruous shadow-boxing; it was, as in Europe, a contest between different views on right and justice, on the form of the good society, and on the direction in which the world in general, and the new United States in particular, ought to move.

THE IMPACT OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Before more is said on internal divisions, it is important to point to a few ways in which there was no division at all.¹⁶ There was no revolutionary extremism in America. Not only did no one propose "communism"; no one had even officially proposed, as in France, a comprehensive system of public schools. Truly counter-revolutionary opinion was equally absent. No one called for a restoration of King George, or a return to subordination under the Parliament of Great Britain. No American of any importance would have accepted the Canada Act of 1791. Natives of the old colonies who preferred such arrangements had departed; those who returned either changed their minds or kept silent. The United States had no party of returned émigrés. Such "counter-revolution" as had occurred was purely relative. The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, with its resemblances to the French Jacobin constitution of the Year I, was replaced by a new one in 1790; but the new Pennsylvania plan, in which the governor, senate, and lower house were all directly elected by a wide suffrage, was exceedingly democratic, not only by European standards of the 1790's, but also in the light of American experience before 1776. The federal constitution was "conservative" in that it created a national government, in

1285–86; on de Broeta, E. Discaillies, "Un négociant anversois à la fin du XVIII^e siècle," in Académie royale de Belgique, *Bulletin de la classe des lettres* (Brussels, 1901), 505–58.

16 For the present section it is hardly necessary to cite the abundant bibliography, of which a good recent summary is given by Chambers, *op.cit.*, 209–16. I have drawn especially on Chambers; on J. Charles, *Origins of the American Party System* (Williamsburg, 1956); A. DeConde, *Untangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C., 1958); D. Malone, *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (Boston, 1962); J. C. Miller, *Alexander Hamilton, Portrait in Paradox* (New York, 1959); and have attempted to point up what is commonly known with observations arising from a comparative view of Europe and America.

place of a league of states; but it created also, for the first time in America, a theater for popular politics on a national stage.

To the constitution itself there was no basic opposition. Those who had argued against it in 1787, while the argument was open, accepted it in good faith after its ratification, and after adoption of the first ten amendments to protect individual and state rights. Here again the difference from France and its sister-republics was pronounced. The divisions that formed in the 1790's did not prolong earlier differences over the constitution itself. That the anti-Federalists were unfriendly to the new constitution was an empty accusation; the chief founder of the Republican party, James Madison, was himself one of the authors of the new federal document, and co-author with Hamilton of the *Federalist* papers. If Madison and Jefferson, in 1798, toyed with ideas of "nullification," it was Hamilton and the High Federalists who, under pressure, were tempted by the thought of scrapping the constitution altogether. As the constitution itself was not a party issue, neither was "democracy" in the mere sense of the extent of the suffrage. The issue, as it developed, was the activation of voters whose right to the suffrage was not in question. As the decade passed, more men already qualified to vote actually voted.

At first, in 1790 and 1791, there was only Hamilton's program, and the opposition to it. Or rather, there were Hamilton's various measures, and sporadic critiques in which different individuals, in the new Congress and outside it, objected to some of these measures while accepting others. Hamilton, supported by Washington, took the view that the opposition was opposition to government itself. Since no parties of modern kind yet existed, nor was the idea or need of them even recognized, the issues soon took on larger dimensions, becoming a question of the propriety of opposition itself, or the right of citizens to disagree with, criticize, and work against public officials. In addition, Hamilton's plans required good relations with England. It may be that at this time, in the aftermath of the American Revolution, a dislike of England, or rather of its government and social institutions, was a more positive and more popular sentiment in America than was affection for France. With France the alliance of 1778 was still in effect, and there were memories of French aid in the late war with England; but what aroused fellow-feeling in America was the French Revolution, since the French declaration of rights, the new constitution, and the vocabulary of debate, vindicating liberty against tyrants, and equality against privilege, echoed what had been heard in America for some time. When Adams and Hamilton spoke out against the French Revolution, they aroused others all the more fiercely to its defense. A feeling spread that the French Revolution was a continuation of the American, and that the American Revolution itself was endangered, or unfinished.

In America, as in England and Europe, the year 1792 was a turning point. The war was seen by some as an outburst of militant and destructive revolutionary crusading, and by others, probably far more numerous, as a defense against a brutal intervention in French affairs by a league of aristocrats and despots. The proclamation of the French Republic was seen by some as a piece of madness and violence, and by others, far more numerous, as the dawn in Europe of a light first seen in America. The French victories at Valmy and Jemappes were enthusiastically hailed. On February 1, 1793, the French declared war against England; they were now

fighting that old bugbear of Americans, King George III. News of this development came almost simultaneously with the arrival of the first minister of the French Republic, Edmond Genet, who disembarked at Charleston, South Carolina, on April 8, 1793.¹⁷

Genet had spent several years in Russia, where he had formed a low opinion of those who raged against the French Revolution while crushing the new order in Poland. He had found signs of potential revolutionary disturbance even in Russia. He had been present in Paris when English-speaking delegations, including the American Joel Barlow, came to offer greetings to the Convention. Late in 1792 he had been to Geneva, and he had worked in Paris with Dutch revolutionaries who urged the French to invade and liberate their country. Genet, from experience, sensed an international struggle of momentous scope. He was prepared to see the American critics of France as another species of the same old aristocrats, and American democrats as another branch of the forces of world liberation. He would have enjoyed the toast made at Oeller's Hotel in Philadelphia, in 1795, long after his departure: to the emancipation of Holland and the revival of Poland—"may the Russian she-bear [Catherine II] be made to dance to the tune of Ça Ira!"¹⁸

Genet received a series of ovations on his long journey from Charleston to Philadelphia. He was told that in America relations were strained between government and people. He went about his business, counting on the United States as an ally under the treaty of 1778, devising expeditions against the British and Spanish possessions, issuing French military commissions to Americans, seeking accelerated payment on the debt, arranging to get shipments to France through the British blockade, and using American seaports as bases for French privateering. President Washington meanwhile issued his Proclamation of Neutrality. That the United States should remain neutral, or uninvolved in actual hostilities, was agreed to by everyone in the government, including Jefferson as Secretary of State; and indeed Genet himself, and his home government, believed that the United States could be more useful to France if technically neutral. It was the proclamation that caused trouble, since sentiment in the country was not neutral at all. To announce neutrality in formal terms seemed, to the opposition, to be an insult to an ally, a rejection of a sister republic, and an unnecessary concession to arbitrary demands by the British. As for the British, now at war with France, they began to strengthen their alliances with Indians in the West, to stop American vessels bound for Europe, and to impress American seamen into the British fleet.

Genet plunged also into American politics. He sponsored the political clubs that were forming quite independently of his arrival. He mixed familiarly with the opposition, by which he was feted and lionized. Many Americans thought that Genet and the French represented their interests better than their own government. They thus resembled many Dutch, Irish, and others. There was a widespread feeling, especially in the West, where the operations of men like Simcoe had their

17 On Genet see above, pp. 421–22, 440, 480–81; W. Blackwell, "Citizen Genet and the Revolution in Russia, 1789–92," in *French Historical Studies*, III (1963), 72–92; M. Minnigerode, *Jefferson, Friend of France 1793: The Career of Edmond Charles Genet* (New York, 1928); E. P. Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies* (New York, 1942); and works cited in the preceding note.

18 M. Haiman, *The Fall of Poland in Contemporary American Opinion* (Chicago, 1935), 215.

most immediate impact, that if Britain and the coalition defeated the French Republic the American Republic would collapse also. "If kings combine to support kings," asked Hugh Brackenridge, novelist, Princeton graduate, and Western Pennsylvania landowner, "why not republics to support republics?" "A breach between us and France," said the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, "would infallibly bring the English again on our backs; and yet we have some wild beasts among our own countrymen who are endeavoring to weaken that connection."¹⁹

Genet naturally encouraged such sentiments. Jefferson as the warmest friend of France in the government was distressed that Genet went so far as to weaken his own cause. It was from the French government, however, that Genet received his first rebuke, on the basis of information that must have left America less than three months after he stepped ashore in Charleston. In France he had been associated with Dumouriez and Brissot, who in the spring of 1793 were replaced in power by the new party of the Mountain. On July 30 the French foreign minister, under the newly forming Robespierriest Committee of Public Safety, in a sharp reprimand to Genet, reminded him that he was accredited "to treat with the *government* and not with a *portion of the people*," and that the American President and Congress were the only legal authority in the United States, according to the constitutional principles of the French Revolution itself.²⁰ In short, the most Jacobin of all French governments agreed with the American Federalists, when they accused Genet of appealing to the people over the head of the government. At the request of the United States, Genet was recalled a few months later. Finding more admiration among American democrats than among French ones, he remained in America, married the daughter of a New York Republican, and lived in the United States for forty years.

During the months of Genet's ministry new political clubs began to form, the democratic or republican societies. While active Federalists had met in each other's living rooms, or the public rooms of the better hotels, people of a plainer sort now began to meet in more modest quarters, in taverns or country stores. Over forty such clubs are known to have existed, beginning in March 1793, chiefly in the seaboard towns and along the frontier. According to Oliver Wolcott they were composed of "the lowest order of mechanics, laborers and draymen"; and Timothy Dwight, perhaps recalling a famous remark of Burke's, thought that democracy, like the devil, was entering into "a herd of swine."²¹ It is true that the societies had numerous members of inferior station, but about half the membership was middle-class, consisting of merchants, lawyers, larger landowners, and a good many doctors. They somewhat resembled the Sons of Liberty of the 1760's, or the radical clubs that sprang up in England and Scotland in 1792, or similar groups in Holland, or the provincial Jacobin clubs of France. They hardly resembled the Paris Jacobin club, which, especially in 1793, was full of men active in the government. Men in the American government of republican opinions, such as Madison and Jefferson, did not belong to these clubs, which were of local, spontaneous, and

19 Link, 54–55.

20 F. J. Turner, ed., *Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States*, in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1903*, II, 228–29.

21 Link, 94.

popular origin. They were not yet a political party but only a step in that direction; most of them disappeared within two or three years, as a more organized Republican party came into being. Some of the clubs did take part locally in elections, and it was these clubs, apparently, that inspired the older Tammany societies with political interests. Their attitude was one of suspicion of government and of office-holders, an anti-elitism, a class consciousness of a general sort pitting the "many" against the "few." The tone was suggested by the Ulster Democratic Club in the Catskills of New York, which stood "on guard against designing men in office and affluent circumstances, who are forever combining against the rights of all but themselves."²² The clubs were opposed to Hamilton's policies, to British influence, and to fine gentlemen who used hair-powder or wore silk stockings. At a time when the newspapers carried more foreign than local news, they were fascinated by the great spectacle of the war in Europe. They were unanimously and excitedly pro-French. On the success of the French Revolution against its armed enemies, according to the prospectus of the Massachusetts Constitutional Society, in January 1794, depended the happiness of "the *whole world of Mankind*."²³

To men who still conceived themselves as the proper guardians of society, suited by wisdom, experience, and position to form a governing class—that is, to most of the more articulate Federalists—this sprouting up of popular clubs, whose stock in trade was the criticism of government, seemed novel and alarming, if not revolutionary. When the farmers of Western Pennsylvania demonstrated against the new federal tax on spirits (in the so-called Whiskey Rebellion of 1794), it was charged that the clubs promoted insurrection, which was not true; but it was true that both the formation of clubs and the resistance to taxes expressed an antipathy to Hamilton's program, and indeed to government itself. President Washington called the clubs "self-created." He meant that they were extra-legal, and that only duly constituted bodies and duly elected representatives should deliberate or exert pressure on public issues; the phrase recalled what the British authorities had said of American correspondence committees twenty years before, and were saying of the London Corresponding Society at precisely this moment. So far as the Federalists found themselves denying the legitimacy of any opposition to government arising outside government circles, the emerging Republicans could rightly accuse them of betraying the American Revolution.

The Federalists thought also that the clubs, since they appeared simultaneously with Genet, were the result of his machinations. "Genet's clubs," the British minister called them contemptuously in reporting to Grenville; and American Federalists agreed. Many likewise insisted that "democracy" was a foreign and imported idea. The bulldog of the Federalist press, William Cobbett, himself a foreigner lately arrived from England, was especially emphatic in this opinion. The Pennsylvania Democratic Society organized itself in the middle of 1793. According to Cobbett, it was Genet who proposed the word "Democratic" for its title.²⁴ Two-

22 *Ibid.*, 95.

23 C. D. Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1897), 194.

24 Link accepts this as a fact, citing Minnigerode, who gave no reference, but probably drew on Cobbett, *History of the American Jacobins Commonly Denominated Democrats* (Philadelphia, 1796), 16. Cobbett's word cannot be accepted as evidence.

thirds of the democrats in America, said Cobbett, were foreigners who had landed since the war. Their very language had an alien flavor: "The word citizen, that stalking-horse of modern liberty men, became almost as common in America as in France."²⁵ Others took up the cry; the altogether native American, Joseph Hopkinson, declared it to be a "notorious" fact, in 1798, that "the bulk of opposition to our government," by which he meant the Republican party, "is composed of these fortune hunting foreigners."²⁶ The Republicans were also "vile organs of a foreign democracy."²⁷ The word democracy became so controversial that Jefferson preferred to avoid it, and the opposition adopted the less offensive name of Republicans.

That either the clubs or the word "democracy" were a foreign growth in America was untrue. It was as false as Cobbett's preposterous allegation that Genet had spent 20,000 *louis d'ors* to set up the Pennsylvania Democratic Society. The democratic societies arose from native causes, and the word itself, in a favorable sense, was used in America before Genet arrived. Patrick Henry had so used it in the Virginia ratifying convention. At another center of indigenous traditions, Plymouth, Massachusetts, on January 24, 1793, there was a public meeting "to celebrate the victories of the French Republic." The Congregationalist minister, Chandler Robbins, who was considered to be a fairly strict Calvinist, pronounced a eulogy on the French Revolution, with copious quotations from the Bible. An ode was written for the occasion by Mr. Joseph Coswell in four stanzas one of which read:

See the bright flame arise
In yonder eastern skies,
Spreading in veins.
'Tis pure Democracy
Setting all nations free,
Melting our chains.²⁸

Genet, as the vivacious young envoy of an embattled republic, probably had a stimulating effect on American democrats; but it was not Genet, nor foreign intrigue, that brought a democratic movement into consciousness of itself at this time.

The American popular democrats, though not Jefferson and the Republican leaders, might if left to themselves have welcomed, or even forced, another war with England (as in 1812), especially in view of the uncompromising demands of the British, which at times filled even Hamilton with dismay. John Jay went to England to negotiate a treaty. At the same time James Monroe went as minister to Paris, to maintain good relations with France while Jay tried to deal with England.

Monroe, an enthusiastic republican, arriving just after the death of Robespierre, was very partial to the French Convention and to the Directory after it. Well dis-

25 *Ibid.*, 22, 25.

26 *What is our situation? and what our prospects? A few pages for Americans* (Philadelphia, 1798), 22.

27 Quoted by J. C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom: The Alien and Sedition Acts* (Boston, 1951), 32, from the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for October 18, 1797.

28 Coswell's Ode to Liberty is bound with Chandler Robbins, *An Address Delivered at Plymouth on the 24th day of January, 1793, to the inhabitants of That Town, Assembled to Celebrate the Victories of the French Republic Over its Invaders* (Boston, 1793).

posed to democrats everywhere, he befriended Thomas Paine and Wolfe Tone in Paris. He was so eager to please the French that he sometimes failed to put the policies of his own government in their proper light. He believed that Jay in London was betraying him; he was so opposed to an American rapprochement with England that the French thought he must be deceiving them; and he seems not to have known, or to have been unconcerned, about French designs on the region west of the Alleghenies. Washington finally recalled him, and the ensuing uproar formed another stage in the differentiation of Federalists and Republicans. Meanwhile Jay negotiated his famous treaty, with Alexander Hamilton secretly working, through the British minister in Philadelphia, to satisfy the British in a way that even Jay thought too extreme. The British conceded practically nothing except evacuation of the Northwest Territory. They refused to moderate their position on the impressment of sailors, or on matters of contraband, search, and seizure at sea in wartime; they refused to pay for American slaves taken off during the War of Independence (a sensitive matter to southern Republicans); and they refused to open their West Indian islands in a useful way to American commerce. The best that could be said in America for the treaty was that it prevented war with England. Undoubtedly such a war at this time would have been ruinous to the new republic, both from the impact of British power, and the effects of internal dispute and break-up within the United States. Politically, however, the argument was not a strong one; it sounded too much like appeasement.

It was in the controversy over the Jay treaty that the democratic movement grew into a Republican party, and that the Federalists closed ranks to obtain the goodwill of Britain, which was necessary both to their practical program and to their view of life and society. When Washington and the Senate ratified the treaty, debate raged in the House on measures for putting it into effect. The treaty became a question between government and opposition, or Federalists and Republicans. It raised also, above the prosaic problems of debt and taxation, and above localized grievances such as the excise on spirits, a question on which people of all kinds, throughout the country, could form an opinion and become emotionally aroused. The question was seen, and strongly felt, as a choice between England and France, between two sides in an ideological war, between the old forces and the new in a contest without geographical boundaries, between monarchy and republicanism, Anglomen and Gallomen, men of substance and Jacobins—and between those who wished to move forward with a continuing American Revolution, and those who wished to restrain or qualify the implications of that event. On this basis the treaty was attacked and defended in the newspapers. Political leaders had an issue on which they could ignite public opinion, form connections with interested local groups, bring out the vote, and offer candidates for election on a basis of continuing principle, not merely of momentary issues or personal or passing factional groupings. The decisive bill to implement the treaty passed the House in April 1796 by a narrow margin, 51 to 48, on a clear party division. The two parties, Federalist and Republican, then girded for the presidential election of that year, which, with the retirement of Washington, was the first contested presidential election.

Both contenders for the office of President of the United States, in 1796, were denounced as the tools of foreign ideologies and foreign powers. Both parties pre-

sented themselves, their candidates, their opponents, and the issues in terms of the struggle raging in Europe. For Federalists, Jefferson was a Jacobin, an atheist, a libertine, a leveller, and almost a Frenchman. Adams was the friend of order, talent, and rational liberty. For the Republicans, Adams was a monocrat and an aristocrat who longed to mix with English lords and ladies; and Jefferson the upholder of republican principles. An electoral circular put out by the Republican Committee of Pennsylvania explained the choice. It was "between the uniform advocate of equal rights among citizens, or the champion of rank, titles and hereditary distinctions; . . . the steady supporter of our present republican constitution; or the warm panegyrist of the British Monarchical form of Government."²⁹ That the bland Virginian was a Jacobin, or the irritable Boston lawyer an Anglomaniac, were about equally fantastic; but such was the atmosphere of debate.

THE "CORRUPTION OF POLAND"

The French Directory took the Jay treaty, along with Monroe's ambiguities and his recall, to mean that the United States was now virtually allied to Great Britain.³⁰ Indeed the British were of somewhat the same opinion; the new treaty with the United States, as already noted, was one of the few matters for encouragement mentioned in the address opening Parliament in 1795. As Grenville remarked to Rufus King a little later, in 1798, at a time when Britain had no allies on the Continent, he wished that Europe had shown "half the energy" of the Americans against "the infernal spirit of atheism and modern philosophy."³¹ The French also concluded from the debate over the Jay treaty, not without evidence, that the United States government did not enjoy the entire confidence of its own people. The Directory began to do more officially what Genet had done so largely on his own initiative. Secretly, with Collot's mission, it explored the possibilities for a separate republic west of the Alleghenies. Publicly, the new minister to Philadelphia, Adet, under instructions from Paris, interfered in American political affairs; as the election of 1796 approached, Adet made speeches advising the Americans to avoid the displeasure of France by electing a true patriot and friend of the great Republic—Thomas Jefferson. With reason, and counselled by Hamilton, Washington at this moment reshaped his Farewell Address; he urged Western Americans to remain in the Union, and all Americans to keep enthusiasm for foreign powers out of their domestic politics.³²

29 A facsimile of the election circular is included in N. E. Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans, 1789–1801* (Chapel Hill, 1957), 112.

30 For the present section, in addition to works previously cited: S. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795–1800* (Philadelphia, 1957); M. J. Dauer, *The Adams Federalists* (Baltimore, 1953); E. W. Lyon, "The Directory and the United States," in *American Historical Review*, XLIII (1938), 514–32; J. M. Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, 1956).

31 See above, p. 576; and Great Britain: Hist. MSS. Comm., *Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892–1927), IV, 272–73.

32 F. Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1961), 123–34.

Adams was elected, but only by 71 electoral votes to Jefferson's 68. Jefferson became vice-president, but the Federalists remained in power, especially since Adams retained Washington's cabinet, which was composed of a group of strong Hamiltonians. In January 1797 the Paris *Moniteur* somehow obtained and published a copy of Jefferson's "Mazzei letter," written some months before at the height of the agitation over the Jay treaty. It caused an uproar on becoming known in America, but it was of course read in Paris also. The Frenchman could read, in his paper for 6 Pluviôse of the Year V, on the authority of the new American vice-president, that, though the American people remained soundly republican, the government was controlled by *un parti anglican-monarchico-aristocratique*. The editor remarked that the French Directory, by breaking relations with a government so perversely submissive to the English, would serve the cause of republicanism in the United States. It was now possible for the French, in their relations with the United States (as later for Americans in their relations to other countries) to feel that they could be hostile to its government while remaining friendly to its people.

In the following months, having imposed peace on Austria, the French hoped to do the same with England, and went to work on their plans for invasion. American Republicans, including Jefferson and the still unknown Andrew Jackson, looked forward with satisfaction to a French landing in England. "Nothing," wrote Jefferson, "can establish firmly the republican principles of our government but an establishment of them in England. France will be the apostle for this."³³ For other Americans such an event would signify the collapse of civilization.

The French began to attack American shipping, which since the Jay treaty was far more useful to Great Britain than to France. An American commission went to France to attempt a settlement. Someone in the French government, probably Talleyrand or Barras, made to these Americans a proposal that had almost been accepted by the British; they could have peace, for a price, the price being payment in cash for certain "rescriptions" of the Batavian Republic of uncertain value. The Americans refused the bribe; and Adams, under Federalist pressure to discredit the French and their American sympathizers, published the documents on this episode, the "XYZ papers," in April 1798. Had the Federalists known that Pitt, in his need for peace, had almost accepted a similar proposal, made to him through the respectable mediation of a Boston merchant then in France, Thomas Melville, they would surely have been disconcerted;³⁴ but this secret was well kept, and the Federalists complacently seized on the XYZ papers as proof of the incorrigible corruption of the French Directory, which, officially, had had nothing to do with the matter. Jefferson and the Republicans, having somewhat idealized the French anyway, reacted with shock and dismay to these unfortunate revelations; and since clashes at sea continued between American merchant ships and French privateers in an undeclared quasi-war, a great many people found their admiration of the French suddenly cooling. Others, as in all such ideological conflicts, remained un-

33 A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh, *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols. (Washington, 1903), IX, 412. On Jackson see above, p. 595.

34 *Dropmore Papers*, III, 356-69; above, p. 516.

shaken in their previous sympathies, and blamed the trouble with France on the British orientation of American policy. As for the French, in these early months of 1798, at the height of the wave of revolutionary democracy in Europe, with revolution in Switzerland and Rome and insurrection expected in Ireland, they were in no mood to be patient with an American government which its own people called Anglophile and aristocratic. A little later, with the renewal of the European coalition against them, Talleyrand and the Directory became more willing to deal with the United States.

Against the possibility of real war with France, and over Republican objections, Adams created a Navy Department and began to build a fleet. Hamilton and the Federalist militants pressed also for an army. Taxes were raised, the small regular army was enlarged, and generals were appointed, with Hamilton as commander under Washington's nominal leadership. What use such an army could be against the French neither Adams nor the Republicans could understand; but Hamilton and his followers began to call war with France inevitable and even desirable, and to dream of campaigns in which, allied with Great Britain, they might invade and liberate Latin America, in regions unspecified—perhaps Florida, the West Indies, New Orleans, Texas, or Mexico—an ambition at other times most alive among “democrats.” There was ground also to suppose that Hamilton, whose dislike of Virginia was well known, and who had shown his taste for using martial methods to teach respect for government in the Whiskey Rebellion, might employ his new army against the agrarian Republicans in the south, or even to bring in what he would consider a more workable constitution.

Matters were further inflamed by the Naturalization Act, the Alien Act, and the Sedition Act, passed by Federalist majorities against Republican resistance in 1798. The first two reflected the belief that democratic ideas were an importation from Europe. And, indeed, as noted in the last chapter, a remarkable number of British and Irish radicals had come recently to the United States, and several were editing very vociferous Republican newspapers. There were also thousands of Frenchmen in the country. At a time when hostilities with France were actually in progress, and when the French had shown their willingness to interfere in American politics, and enjoyed a large American following, a reasonable argument for precautionary measures could have been made; but in truth the three Acts, like the war spirit which they reflected, were conceived and executed for domestic political purposes. No one was ever deported under the Alien Act, though many French refugees were frightened away. About fifteen persons were indicted under the Sedition Act, and eleven convicted. There was no “sedition” in the United States, except possibly for certain intrigues in the west which never came into the question. At Quebec, Bahia, Vienna, Budapest, and Dublin the persons put to death for sedition had in fact conspired against the state. The same was true of many counter-revolutionaries executed in France during the Terror. In the state trials in England and Scotland, the accused had at least favored ideas incompatible with the British constitution as then understood. The same was not true of those convicted of sedition in the United States. None of them had taken part in any conspiracy, and they all accepted the form of government and the constitution. They differed with the Federalists on how the government should develop, and they criticized its person-

nel and its policies, often in extravagant and abusive terms. The Federalists, however, had not yet accepted the propriety of criticism of government. Opposition to their policies, or even to their persons, was what they meant by sedition. The repression on which they embarked, astoundingly enough in view of American "moderation," had less actual justification, if only by *raison d'état*, than the repression conducted by either conservative or revolutionary regimes in Europe and the rest of America. All eleven persons convicted under the Sedition Act were active Republicans, and six of them were newspaper editors. The Federalists, it seemed, really meant to crush a party which had arisen in opposition to government, even if they destroyed freedom of the press as well. The Republicans naturally took alarm, since the existence of their newly formed party was what most obviously was at stake. In the south they responded, through Madison and Jefferson, with the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, in which state legislatures took it upon themselves to declare federal laws, in this case the Alien and Sedition Acts, to be unconstitutional and of no effect. The remedy would have proved as fatal as the disease, had matters gone further, so far as the creation of a viable national government was concerned.

At the same time the polemics in print came to a climax. Over the decade, it is possible to distinguish two periods, an early one in which writings favorable to the French Revolution seemed to preponderate, and a later one, beginning about 1795, when the tide, in words at least, turned more in favor of England. The Americans were not yet a book-writing people. Books, often enough, like the *Federalist*, were reprints of articles written for newspapers. Adams' *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* had been written in England; since it drew heavily on works which did not then exist in American libraries, it could not have been written in America. Paine's *Rights of Man* was also written in England. Strongly identifying the French and American revolutions, it was reprinted at least nineteen times in the United States between 1791 and 1796. The first American printings of some of Rousseau's works, including the *Social Contract*, were made also at this time. On the whole, most books in the United States, as in colonial times, were still imported; and this fact gave an advantage to Great Britain.

Newspapers and pamphlets, and printed sermons and Fourth of July orations, were the more usual native media of expression. The newspapers, having no reporters, copied from each other, and from the papers which every arriving ship unloaded on the docks from Europe. Here again the British had the advantage. As early as 1790, Thomas Jefferson, having just returned from France, and finding Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* full of British accounts of the French Revolution, reached an agreement with him to supply extracts from the *Leyden Gazette*, published in French in Holland by the old Patriot, John Luzac.³⁵ In the following years, as controversy mounted, native-born editors were joined by others from Britain and Ireland. The Federalists won William Cobbett to their side; but most of the newcomers found the Republicans more congenial, and brought to the American political scene some of the animus that they had formed against the Establishment in England and Ireland. John Daly Burk edited the Boston *Polar*

35 J. P. Boyd and others, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, XVI (Princeton, 1961), 237-47.

Star, and later the New York *Timepiece*; Joseph Gales moved from the Sheffield *Register* to a paper in North Carolina; and Thomas Cooper, formerly of the Manchester *Herald*, wrote pamphlets for which he was convicted under the Sedition Act in 1800. There was in truth, as the Federalists said, a certain foreign influence conveyed through American newspapers, both in their clamorous emphasis on war and revolution in Europe, and in the personal backgrounds of some of the editors. Even the native-born firebrand, Benjamin Franklin Bache, irrepressible editor of the Republican *Aurora*, had spent, as the grandson of Benjamin Franklin, eight years of his boyhood in Paris and Geneva.

More purely American was the Fourth of July oration, a new *genre* already well developed, and most American of all, the long and meaty sermon. The surprising thing about many Fourth of July orations was the way in which many of them subordinated the American Revolution to the French. In 1793 someone printed and bound together two such orations, one delivered by Elihu Palmer at Philadelphia and one by Hugh Brackenridge in western Pennsylvania, along with extracts from one of Robespierre's speeches, containing sentiments that would appeal to American democrats, such as that government caused more evil than "anarchy" did, and that the farmer should have the same vote as the grain merchant.³⁶ And according to a patriotic oration at Boston, a year after Robespierre's death, the struggles of Americans in their revolution, compared to those of the French, "were but as the first achievement of Hercules in his cradle to the wonderful labors that were reserved for his manhood."³⁷

The clergy included, until 1795 or later, a good many who spoke sympathetically of the French Revolution from the pulpit. It was usual to attribute the signs of irreligion in France to the impostures of Roman Catholicism, and the violence of the Terror to the horrors of the Old Regime and the arrogance of European aristocrats. As Chandler Robbins said at Plymouth, quoting Solomon, oppression makes men mad. In the fall of the old system in France, Samuel Stillman saw "the judgment of God." Even the president of Yale, Ezra Stiles, hailed the execution of Louis XVI as a sign that European monarchs would soon be "tamed." The clergyman and geographer, Jedidiah Morse, as late as 1795, declared that the "irregularities" in France, including the atheism, were temporary and should be excused.³⁸

A change came about in 1795. For the clergy, and those who followed their lead, the publication of Paine's widely read *Age of Reason*, and the development of Elihu Palmer into a deistic lecturer who reached popular audiences, caused great consternation. It was realized that Christianity itself and not merely Roman Ca-

36 *Political Miscellany* (New York, 1793).

37 George Blake, *An Oration Pronounced July 4, 1795, at the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston* (Boston, 1795), 27. The historian David Ramsay delivered a similar oration, praising France, at Charleston, S.C., on July 4, 1794.

38 Chandler Robbins in the Address cited in n. 28 above; S. Stillman, *Thoughts on the French Revolution* (Boston, 1795), 12-14; *Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 3 vols. (New York, 1901), III, 428; J. Morse, *Present Situation of Other Nations of the World Contrasted with our Own* (Boston, 1794), quoting from his Thanksgiving Day sermon of 1794. I am indebted for this information on the clergy to my former student, Mr. Gary B. Nash, who reports finding only one case of opposition to the French Revolution among American clergy before 1794, and that this one case is the only one cited by various historians who think that the American clergy soon turned against the French revolutionaries.

tholicism was being called into question. The French invasion of Holland and Switzerland, two Protestant countries highly regarded in America, made an unfavorable impression. In addition, by 1795 and 1796, party lines were being sharply drawn over the Jay treaty. Federalists became more committed to England than ever, and one way to expose and refute Republicans in America was to circulate increasing numbers of English books.

The waves of British writing against the French Revolution, as described in the last chapter, now began to wash over the United States. Of books actually imported there can now be little trace. It is possible, however, to identify reprintings made and sold by American booksellers, some of whom made a specialty of literature of this kind.³⁹ One of these was William Cobbett; another was Paul Nancrède, a Frenchman who had been in America since 1785, detested the French Revolution, taught French at Harvard, and sold books in Boston.

Burke's *Reflections* had two American printings in the 1790's, one at New York in 1791, and one at Philadelphia in 1792. There were none thereafter; it is hardly surprising that the book had little appeal for Americans at that time. In 1795 Cobbett reprinted Playfair's book on the "crimes and perfidies" of Jacobinism, to which he added an appendix of his own on American democrats. Cobbett likewise, with associates in New York, brought out an American edition of Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy* in 1798. The English translation of Barruel, in four volumes, appeared in 1799 at Elizabeth, New Jersey. Works by Mallet du Pan were printed in New York as early as 1795. Nancrède reprinted the English versions of Barzoni's *Romans in Greece*, and Mallet du Pan's *History of the destruction of the Helvetic union and liberty*.⁴⁰ A short work called *Cannibals' progress, or the dreadful horrors of French Invasion*, brought out in England but apparently not very successful there, was printed in 1798 in at least fourteen different American towns, mostly in New England, and obviously by prearrangement. Five thousand had been sold at Philadelphia in a few days, according to the *New Haven Gazette*, which perhaps exaggerated in order to sell it in New Haven. "The despots of France," said the American introduction to *Cannibals' Progress*, after enslaving France and desolating all European republics, "have insulted America and demanded of her a tribute." The reference was to the XYZ affair; and foolish American republicans were to learn from the horrors in Germany, where there had at first been many sympathizers with the French Revolution, what fiends the French republicans really were—they tied women to trees for wholesale rape, and butchered civilians without mercy.⁴¹ Cobbett sold this tract for \$3.50 a hundred. Another Philadelphian, Joseph Hopkinson, who wrote *Hail Columbia* in preparation for war with France, made a contribution toward restoring the balance of trade in this kind of commodity. One of his

39 See C. Evans, *American Bibliography: A Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States of America* [from 1639 to 1800], 14 vols. (Chicago, 1903–1959).

40 For these books see above, pp. 401, 556–60, 682, 732.

41 Anthony Aufrere, *The cannibals' progress; or the dreadful horrors of French invasion, as displayed by Republican officers and soldiers, in their perfidy, rapacity, ferociousness and brutality, exercised towards the innocent inhabitants of Germany. Translated from the German*. (London, 1798.) The British Museum lists only one English edition. It is not clear whether Aufrere, an English antiquarian, really translated this work or wrote it himself. References here are to the Albany edition (1798), 3–4, 23.

efforts was reprinted in London 1799: *What is our situation? and What our prospects, or a demonstration of the insidious views of Republican France, By an American*. In the next year, on a more honest and dignified level, John Quincy Adams, American minister to Berlin, reading Friedrich Gentz's new *Historisches Journal*, came upon his comparison of the French and American revolutions. Gentz, a professional counter-revolutionary polemicist, declared that the American Revolution had been a good thing because it was only a conservative protest against innovation, the French Revolution a bad thing because it had attempted systematic change. This was what John Quincy Adams wanted to hear; he translated it and published it in America in 1800, no doubt hoping to assist in the re-election of his father against the Jacobin Jefferson. It was reprinted in America in 1955 as a study in revolution.⁴²

Meanwhile Jedidiah Morse had stirred up a furor of his own. As late as 1795 he had sympathized with the French Revolution, but he learned from his correspondents in Edinburgh, in 1797, that Professor Robison was preparing a book showing the real causes of that upheaval, and he managed to obtain a pre-publication copy of Robison's work in Philadelphia. In 1798, just at the height of the XYZ excitement, Morse delivered two "fast day" sermons. He solemnly announced that the world was in the grip of a secret revolutionary conspiracy, engineered by the Order of the Illuminati—that Genet's clubs of five years before had been surface manifestations of this underground plot, and that the Republicans in America, recently so much in evidence, were the dupes or accomplices of this same pernicious organization, which labored everywhere, at all times, patiently, implacably, and behind the scenes, to overthrow all government and all religion. The publication of Robison's and Barruel's books served to confirm these allegations. An enormous outcry arose in the press. The Republicans were indignant. There were many skeptics, even among the New England clergy. For the Federalists such disclosures were welcome if not altogether believable; some odor of disreputability might be expected to cling to the democrats; and in any case, following the usual psychology of such affairs, to wish to doubt or examine the charges might in itself be grounds for suspicion. On the whole, the scare soon blew over. The hostilities that it reflected were more lasting and more real.⁴³

Such was the state of the country during the presidency of John Adams—divided by interminable contention, bewildered by accusation and counter-accusation, flooded by propaganda, with its citizens appealing to foreigners in their disputes with each other, beset by laws against sedition and by their partisan enforcement, threatened by counter-resolutions putting the states above the federal government, carrying on actual hostilities with France at sea, and with important

42 First edition, F. von Gentz, *Origin and principles of the American Revolution, compared with the origin and principles of the French Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1800). Reprinted in paperback by Henry Regnery, with an introduction by Russell Kirk (Chicago, 1955). Gentz's work also, at this time, far from reflecting the dominant sentiment in neutral Prussia, was of British inspiration. "In short, the *Historisches Journal* for 1800 took the tone of an English propaganda sheet. Nothing betrayed its Prussian origin except its language, its author and its place of publication." P. R. Sweet, *Friedrich von Gentz: Defender of the Old Order* (Madison, 1941), 49.

43 V. Staufier, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* (New York, 1918.)

men clamoring for all-out war against that infidel republic, for which armies were being raised, American citizens prosecuted as if they were traitors, and alliance solicited with Great Britain.

As John Adams expressed it to Abigail, it was the corruption of Poland, with the roles of Russia and Prussia played by John Bull and Louis Baboon. He was captivated by neither.

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

That the United States not only survived intact, but saw the Republicans come peaceably into office, and within three years even acquired Louisiana, so that the old European ambitions in the heart of the continent were at last removed, was due to a combination of factors, some of which can be credited to the wisdom of the Americans, and some simply to their good fortune. The British by 1799 were so preoccupied with restoring their rule in Ireland, and the French found the restoration of their rule in Haiti so hopeless, while both became so involved in the renewal of hostilities on the Continent, that they both relieved their pressure on the United States, which, being on the other side of the ocean, they could not in any case really quite treat as a "Poland." Adams reasserted Washington's policy of governmental neutrality, however unneutral the country itself might be. He decided early in 1799 to negotiate with France. Since he was doubtful of French intentions, his chief aim was to combat the war spirit of the Hamiltonians, which was running very high. Russian victories in Italy, mediated through the British Foreign Office, convinced Hamilton that the hour had come to strike. The High Federalists, like counter-revolutionaries in Europe, believed for several months in 1799 that the French Revolution was at last over, that the Bourbons would be restored, that Britain was about to triumph, and that the moment was therefore opportune for an Anglo-American liberation of Spanish America. Adams scoffed at the notion; the French Revolution, he said, would go on for years.

Against the loud protests of the most intransigent Federalists, Adams sent over a peace commission. French attacks on American shipping soon came to a halt. The High Federalists, robbed of their war and their dreams of glory, in which some of them had hoped to snuff out American "Jacobinism," disowned their own president as hardly better than a Jacobin himself. Adams, in making peace, probably expressed the wishes of the rank and file of his party, but he ruined himself in the eyes of its leaders, who, detesting him as a traitor, would not exert themselves for his re-election.

In the election of 1800 the Republicans, Jefferson and Burr, won 73 electoral votes against 65 for Adams and Pinckney. After the crisis produced by the tie between Jefferson and Burr, which had to be resolved by the House of Representatives, the transfer of power took place to what, until then, had been an organized opposition. Adams yielded his office rather ungracefully; Hamilton refrained from the coup d'état of which, in another environment, he might have been capable; and Jefferson proved to be entirely conciliatory, happily free of any spirit of retaliation. No doubt the special conditions in America, in contrast to Europe, made it possi-

ble to practice these irenic virtues. The fact that the central government had little power anyway, in contrast to Europe, likewise made its transfer to new hands less alarming.

The "Revolution of 1800" hardly lay in the acts of the new administration, which repealed the war taxes of 1798, reduced the army, allowed the Alien and Sedition Acts to expire, effected a few changes in the judiciary, and made it easier for small farmers to acquire land in the West, where Ohio became a state in 1803, and the whole of the former *Louisiane* soon stood open to settlement. The "revolution" consisted in the repudiation of pretensions to which the Federalist chieftains had become victims.

The Federalists had fallen from a precipice of their own making, as Elihu Palmer had somewhat floridly predicted in 1793. A party which had begun with constructive economic and fiscal ideas wound up ten years later crying for military demonstrations. A party that had at first stood for national unity in ten years brought the country to the brink of civil war. Men who claimed to be the best friends of the constitution, and to be consolidating the American Revolution, now disparaged the sovereignty of the people and denounced liberty and equality as delusions. Gentlemen hardly known for their own piety called republicanism atheistic. Those who happened to be manning the government identified themselves with government itself. The prominent Federalists, at least in their own estimation and their attitudes, became, under stress of the world ideological conflict, so much like the privileged classes of Europe that Americans turned against them in disgust. Plain farmers who had voted Federalist in 1796 voted Republican in 1800. Many who had never voted before now came to the polls. The Federalists never again elected a president or had a majority in Congress. That was the Revolution of 1800. It was, in its way, a considerable "revolution," for it gave answers to two of the great questions posed during the decade. It showed that the constitution was becoming authoritative, generally accepted above the strife of parties. And it showed the direction in which the new nation would develop.

In this vindication of democracy in America it is hard to disentangle what was indigenous and what was owing to influences from abroad. It is clear that the foreign influence was very great. The division into Federalists and Republicans was itself the consequence of war and revolution in Europe. Federalism suffered from too close an association with the European counter-revolution. Republicanism, or the ideology of American democracy, gained in range and drive from association with the European revolutionary forces. Never again could American democratic ideas be ethnocentric or backward-looking, dwelling on good old Saxon liberties in the far-off days of King Alfred, nor predominantly defensive, complaining of innovations and protecting simple farmer folk from the wiles of cities. Henceforth, there would be a belief, more than in 1776, that democracy was a matter of concern to the world as a whole, that it was a thing of the future, that while it was blocked in other countries the United States should be its refuge and its example, that Americans had a kind of duty meanwhile to develop it and to promote it, so that peoples of other nations, old and new, might someday move in the same direction. Both the successes and the reverses of the Revolution in Europe helped to fix this attitude in the American mind. There is something in the paradox pro-

pounded by a third party, the German historian Otto Vossler, who thought that the “American mission,” like the Statue of Liberty, was the gift of the French Republic.⁴⁴

44 *Die amerikanischen Revolutionsideale in ihrem Verhältnis zu den europäischen: Untersucht an Thomas Jefferson* (Berlin, 1929); and see my summary of this work in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XII (1955), 462–71.

CHAPTER XXXII

CLIMAX AND DÉNOUEMENT

And where shall we find this Dramatic Monarch who shall have the courage to allow himself to be installed by Regicides and Democrats, and to brave the shame, the instability and the dangers of his dignity? In one of the Courts of Europe? . . . Will France herself furnish this borrowed Monarch from the filth of the Revolution, to succeed to the Throne of Charlemagne?

—MALLET DU PAN, LONDON, 1799

The French can no longer be governed except by me. I am persuaded that no one but myself, were it Louis XVIII or even Louis XIV, could govern France at this time.

—BONAPARTE, PARIS, 1800

Do you call this a Republic? . . . I know of no Republic in the world, except America, which is the only country for such men as you and I. It is my intention to get away from this place as soon as possible . . . I have done with Europe and its slavish politics.

—THOMAS PAINE, PARIS, 1802

In the year 1799, with the War of the Second Coalition, there took place a gathering and confrontation of the forces separately described in preceding chapters—a confrontation in which the matter in question was the survival of the New Republican Order in Europe, as in 1793 it had been the survival of the Republic in France itself. Neither side can be said to have won. Or rather, the Counter-Revolution was certainly defeated, but the New Order prevailed only by being

transmuted into something else, the authoritarian, innovating, dynamic, and yet compromising semi-monarchism or semi-republicanism represented by Bonaparte.

As the year began it was clear that revolutionary, democratic, radical, or republican movements (the appropriate word varying from place to place) had been extirpated in Poland and Eastern Europe, crushed in Ireland, and silenced in Great Britain, while even in the United States the continued existence of Republicanism as a political party was not yet certain. On the continent of Europe, on the face of things, or as seen on a map, with the installation of a republic at Naples in January, and the addition of the Grisons to the new Switzerland in March, the zone of the new-style republics now reached its furthest extension. The *République française*, including Belgium and the German left bank of the Rhine, adjoined the Batavian Republic on the north and the Helvetic on the east. Its troops were in occupation of Turin, from which the King of Sardinia had withdrawn to the island half of his kingdom. The French also occupied Tuscany with the renewal of war. The rest of the Italian mainland (except for Venetia) was laid out in republics to which the names Cisalpine, Ligurian, Roman, and Neapolitan had been given. A short sail from Brindisi lay the "Gallo-Greek departments," or Ionian Islands, now annexed to France and undergoing the usual changes. Farther overseas, in Egypt, though cut off by Nelson's victory, was the already fabulous hero of the Lodi bridge, who, with his soldiers and his corps of civilian administrators and scientific experts, was giving the Arab world its first injection of Western modernity.

On the surface, it all looked imposing, and it horrified the conservative in all countries. In fact, the situation in the New Republican Order was very precarious.

THE STILL RECEDING MIRAGE OF THE MODERATES

The struggle went on because compromise was impossible, and compromise was impossible because so few people were ready to occupy a middle ground, and because so many, on both sides, feared that any advantage gained by their adversaries would be ruinous to themselves. "Moderation," as remarked in Chapter XXII, could have two meanings, not necessarily related. It could mean a preference for a middle way, and it could mean a desire to avoid violence, in the sense either of war against other states, or forcible repression of dissent within, or abuse of constitutional law by the resort to coups d'état. Given the facts of war and revolution, it was a question whether even a middle way could preserve itself without violence.

The French Directory, early in 1799, was a moderate regime in many respects. It had little interest in revolutionary expansion. It had done less than it might have for the United Irish. It disapproved of the establishment of the Neapolitan Republic, and it recalled General Championnet, by whose action that republic had been created. By coups d'état at the Hague and Milan, during the preceding year, it had supported Batavian and Cisalpine moderates against democratic elements in those countries, and it had discouraged those Italians who aspired to Italian unification. Distrusting their own generals, fearing military dictatorship, and satisfied with the republican cordon that extended from the Texel to the Tiber, the civilian Directors of France—who in early 1799 were Reubell, LaRévellière, Barras, Merlin de

Douai, and Treilhard, along with their foreign minister Talleyrand—would greatly prefer to remain at peace on the Continent. Peace was made impossible, however, as explained in Chapter XXVII, by the very existence of the sister-republics, among which the Batavian was intolerable to Great Britain, and the Cisalpine to Austria. The astounding decision to send an army to Egypt, made at the instigation of Bonaparte and Talleyrand against the judgment of Reubell, was designed to finish off the maritime war with England, but resulted instead in the renewal of hostilities on the Continent. The French invasion of Egypt brought Turkey and Russia into the war, while the French reverses in the East, and the consequent appearance of Nelson at Naples, tempted the King of Naples into attacking the Roman Republic, in what proved to be the opening move in the War of the Second Coalition. To this extent, the foreign policy of the Directory had proved a failure.

Domestically, the Directory sought to hold a middle position between restoration of the monarchy with features of the old regime on the one hand, and a revival of the popular revolutionism and aggressive equalitarianism of the Year II on the other. The course pursued had been zig-zag rather than middling. It had also been unconstitutional and immoderate in its methods. Twice the Directory had annulled the results of lawful elections. In 1797, by the Fructidor coup, it had probably prevented a restoration of the monarchy under Louis XVIII. In 1798, by the Floréal coup, it prevented the “Jacobins” from enjoying the majority in the two Councils to which the election of the Year VI entitled them.

This *floréalisation* of the democrats preceded by only a few days Bonaparte’s departure for Egypt, and, like it, marked a point of no return for the First French Republic. That the Directory should have used violence against royalists and clericals was at least understandable; most of them were irreconcilable to the Republic on any terms. To do the same for the most eager republicans was more clearly fatal to republican institutions. The truth seems to be that the “official” republicans, those enjoying office or influence, from the Directory itself down through the several branches of government and locally into the departments—mostly men of some means, standing or prominence, born in the upper strata of the former Third Estate—seem already to have come to see themselves as a natural ruling class, and to regard any criticism of government, or avowed opposition, as improper. Jacobins themselves in the eyes of William Pitt and Alexander Hamilton, these official French Republicans, like English gentlefolk and American Federalists, denounced other republicans as Jacobins, anarchists, *énergumènes*, and *désorganiseurs*. The “Jacobins” of 1798 were not, however, the militant Jacobins of 1793. Still less were they the old sans-culottes, who had been crushed since 1795. Their very numbers, sufficient to win elections in many parts of the country by constitutional and open methods, suggest that they were more than a small minority of extremists. They were, in a sense, the predecessors of the Radical party of a century later, predominantly middle-class persons of various levels of income and occupation, men who had developed a strong political consciousness, were committed to the Revolution and the Enlightenment, detested priests, émigrés, aristocrats, and “the rich,” wanted a more general participation in public affairs, and claimed a right to be elected to office without being selected by those already in power. Probably in

France at this time, torn by war and revolution, no party development such as occurred in America could take place. If it could, the Jacobins of 1798 might have become a kind of French Jeffersonian party. In any case, the Directory itself killed the experiment.

The Directory, in short, with its middle way, had no friends. Among the French, the regime by its very nature repelled both the former privileged orders and the former sans-culottes and the working classes, and after Floréal it no longer appealed to the large body of democrats and republicans that the Revolution had brought into being. French generals in occupied areas, even those who were firmly republican, were disaffected toward the Directory as then constituted, if only because the Directors had tried to assert civilian authority over their operations, military, political, and financial. Generals who favored the more revolutionary elements in the sister-republics, like Championnet at Rome and Naples, and Brune at Milan and later in Holland, accused the Paris government of moderatism and sympathized with the French Jacobin opposition, by which in turn they were regarded as heroes. In the sister-republics the most pronounced patriots had turned anti-French. Still adhering to the aims of the Revolution, in Italy and elsewhere, they believed that the interests of their new republics were sacrificed to those of France, they objected to the coups d'état and to the looting and pillage, and they complained of the more orderly requisitions which, not unreasonably in the circumstances, were designed to support the French armies.

It was widely agreed, in France and in Europe, that the regime in France was about to undergo another abrupt mutation. The royal pretender, "Louis XVIII"—largely forgotten in his own country, and unrecognized even by the Powers as a king-in-exile—felt renewed hopes for his restoration. He had become more moderate than in 1797. Evolving toward the mood for which he would be known in 1814, he now conceded, in 1799, that it would be necessary to deal with men involved in the Revolution—that, as he wrote to his royal brother in July, "there can be services which oblige us to close our eyes on the greatest crimes."¹ But he made no public promises or offer of guarantees, and he aroused no confidence or enthusiasm in France. Among the French émigrés his stock had risen. With the young Duke of Orleans (the future Louis-Philippe) severely compromised by the Revolution, and far off on a tour of America in any case, the idea of a restoration of monarchical authority pointed straight at the "legitimate" candidate. Even Malouet, who as a moderate and liberal émigré had thought in 1797 that no good Frenchman could rally to Louis XVIII, rallied to him two years later, with or without any constitution, charter, or prior statement of program or policy. It was necessary, said Malouet, simply to rely on the new king's discretion.² Even Mallet du Pan, who was "moderate" at least in believing a total counter-revolution to be impossible, believed that Louis XVIII offered the only solution. Yet he was still the Cassandra, darkly declaring to be essential what he knew to be out of the question. Thus he said, in 1799 (as in 1793), that the Coalition needed the firm central con-

1 Quoted by G. Walter, *Le comte de Provence* (Paris, 1950), 335.

2 *Mémoires de Malouet*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1874), II, 529–30.

trol of a kind of Committee of Public Safety. And as for the necessary new ruler of France, as he sarcastically asked, who would accept a throne from "regicides and democrats," with the shame and instability that would ensue?³ The question of course was soon answered by Bonaparte.

The difficulties in an intermediate course were illustrated also by the Dutch. It may be remembered from Chapter XXI that the émigré Stadholder, William V, relying wholly on the British, was opposed by his own son (the future King William I of the Netherlands), who resented the loss of Dutch shipping and colonies to the British, believed that the former Dutch regime had suffered from serious weaknesses, and advised some kind of concession to the new forces in the Batavian Republic. There were men high up in that republic who secretly favored a moderate Orange restoration, preferably under the ex-stadholder's son. The Hereditary Prince had a painful scene with two Orangist émigrés at a meeting at Yarmouth in England in March 1800. British policy at this time, as in 1787, required an almost unconditional restoration of William V and the old Union of Utrecht. The Hereditary Prince was told by his two friends that he must choose between England and France—that the English were his benefactors, and the French robbers and rebels. The prince, losing his temper, shocked his companions by shouting that the British had long wanted a "dictature" over Holland and that his own ancestor, William the Silent, had after all been a rebel. "It was hard," said this future King of the Netherlands, "that a man could not declare his own opinion, if it went against the [British] ministers, without being declared a Jacobin."

His friends immediately reported this distressing episode to Lord Grenville.⁴

THE CONSERVATIVE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE OF 1799

Never between Valmy and Waterloo did the Counter-Revolution come so near to success as in 1799—as may be seen, for example, in the fact that the Russian armies, operating in Italy, Switzerland, and Holland, had never until that time, and have never since, been seen so far westward in Europe in conditions of actual combat. Russian power, absent from the First Coalition, was essential to the Second. Subsidized by the wealth of England, at a rate of £850,000 for 45,000 men, the Russian troops were greeted in conservative quarters as the hope of civilization, to effect the "deliverance of Europe," as Pitt said in the House of Commons.⁵ Without the Russians, said Mallet du Pan (who was now drawing £100 a month from the British government), there would be an "end to Christianity, Royalty, Property, Liberty and the whole structure of society" in central Europe.⁶ And Cardinal Maury, writing at length and repeatedly to Louis XVIII from the supposed privacy of the conclave of Venice, during the long stalemate of the papal election, reported

3 For this and other quotations used at the head of this chapter see Appendix I.

4 H. T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland* (The Hague, 1907), IV, 1102–5.

5 *Parliamentary History*, XXXIV, 1044.

6 *British Mercury*, 5 vols. (London, 1799–1800), II, 207.

that this august Christian assemblage hoped devoutly for a prolongation of the war and an invasion of France by the Russians.⁷

It was the British who took the lead in bringing together the Second Coalition, and in setting its aims. In the years 1799 and 1800 they granted subsidies of almost £3,500,000 to Russia and various German states. The Prussian king remained obstinately neutral, while the Spanish were still more afraid of England than of France. Russia came into the war by the decision of the new Tsar Paul, who was disturbed by the continuing unrest in Russian Poland, the agitation of Polish émigrés in the French service, and conspiracies of Poles and others in the Moldavian border zone, as well as by the French invasion of Egypt; and who also, though not a Catholic, had been elected grand-master of their order by the Knights of Malta, in the hope that by his influence they might get back their island from the French. It was the Austrians who gave the British the most concern, for the Hapsburg government lacked enthusiasm for having its territories crossed by the Russian army, nor, intent on getting the French out of Italy, did it much care who or what kind of people governed in Paris. The British were haunted by the thought in 1799 (as in 1813) that Austria and France might make a separate peace, by which Austria would recognize the French government and its possessions in return for the destruction of the Italian republics and a hegemony of Austria in the peninsula.

Pitt was now convinced, after years of experience, that no lasting peace could be made with the French Republic. For this view there was indeed some reason, for it was the peculiarity of the Directory that it could not control its own generals, that revolutions sprang up, as at Naples, which the Directory itself did not desire; that, as Carlo Zaghi has said, the Revolution had become a thing quite independent of the French government, which, seldom actually pressing for revolutions in other countries, could not repudiate them once they occurred, without playing into the hands of its own most implacable enemies.⁸

To restore the Bourbon monarchy in France was therefore one of the British aims in the war of 1799. For the rest of the revolutionized region the formula was much the same. Externally, there might be changes: Belgium and Holland might be joined under the House of Orange; and the Dutch possessions in Cochin, Ceylon, and South Africa were to remain British. Internally, the several old regimes in these countries were to be revived. For Switzerland, the British offered £30,000 a month to raise a force of Swiss against the Helvetic Republic, and recommended the "re-establishment of the ancient order of things in that country" as demanded by N. F. von Steiger, the former *schultheiss* of Bern and leader of the most intransigent of the Swiss émigrés.⁹ For Belgium, the British considered themselves the guarantors of the old provincial constitutions, violated not only by the Belgian and

7 *Correspondance diplomatique et mémoires inédits du Cardinal Maury*, 2 vols. (Lille, 1891), I, 253, 256, 268, 275, 318, 347.

8 See Chapter XXVII above and C. Zaghi, *Bonaparte e il Direttorio dopo Campoformio* (Naples, 1956), 69, 183–84.

9 See the documents published in the appendix to F. Burckhardt, *Die schweizerische Emigration, 1798–1801* (Basel, 1908), 432–35.

the French Revolutions, but by "the Emperor Joseph, the first Jacobin of his time."¹⁰ For the Dutch, Lord Grenville, speaking as British foreign secretary, explicitly rejected the proposals of the Dutch moderates. He agreed that nothing quite like the British constitution would work in Holland, since the Dutch had no "great body of landed proprietors," of the kind that, in Britain and Ireland, filled the Parliament and the "magistracy of the country." He insisted that the Dutch abandon the kind of unity introduced by the Batavian Republic, and replace it with a degree of provincial sovereignty as under the Union of Utrecht. Explaining what he meant, Grenville allowed himself a rare flight of ideological generalization, which may stand as a programmatic statement for the counter-offensive of 1799.¹¹

"The reasons," said Grenville, "which have induced H.M. to incline towards a different arrangement [from that proposed by Dutch and Batavian moderates] . . . are founded principally in an opinion that such is probably the wish of the best and soundest part of the people of the United Provinces, and also in a desire to avoid as much as possible the appearance of innovations proceeding on general and abstract principles of equality, in opposition to institutions grounded on ancient usages and conformable to the old and established distinctions and classes of that people." He might have said the same of Belgium and Switzerland, Italy and France.

The plan for the overthrow of revolutionary republicanism was essentially military, but involved also the expectation that native elements would rise against their republican governments as soon as the armies of the Coalition appeared. There was in fact, throughout the New Republican Order, a good deal of peasant discontent and rebelliousness in 1798 and 1799. Rural unrest persisted in western France since the days of the Vendéan disturbance, and rural insurrection was chronic in Belgium. In Switzerland the small rural "primitive" cantons were held in the Helvetic Republic by force. In Italy the peasants had never favored the new movements, and by February and March of 1799 the whole of southern Italy was in a state of revolt. We have seen how Cardinal Ruffo gathered a host of Neapolitan peasants by the promise of reforms. It has been seen repeatedly, in the preceding pages, how in Europe, in contrast to America, revolutionary republicanism was a movement of townspeople, and conservative attitudes largely agrarian in their origin. Mass rural discontent throughout the New Republican Order offered a force, a social reality already in existence, to which leaders of the Counter-Revolution might have appealed to heighten their own strength.

The notable fact, however, remarked upon by Jacques Godechot, was the lack of any contact between conservative doctrine, as expressed by Burke, Mallet du Pan, Joseph de Maistre, and others, and the realities of anti-Revolutionary sentiment and insurrectionism among the common people.¹² Conservative ideology, if "agrarian," was agrarian in that it looked with suspicion on cities, and expressed a view of life in which large landownership, along with manorial or seigneurial institutions,

10 Great Britain: Historical MSS Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue Preserved at Droghda*, 10 vols. (London, 1892-1927), V, 199.

11 Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 410-12.

12 J. Godechot, *La Contre-révolution* (Paris, 1961), 407. See pp. 347-90 for *le grand assaut contre-révolutionnaire* throughout Europe in 1799.

was very important. It was not agrarian in reflecting the outlook of rural laborers or small farmers. Peasants often had ideas of their own for which the philosophy of conservatism made no more allowance than did democratic republicanism. Peasants complained of poverty, under-employment, lack of land, unfair taxes, unjust law courts, and much else. To recruit and hold mass rural support against the New Order it would have been necessary, as Ruffo attempted to do in Naples, to offer some positive expectations about the future. It was not enough to praise ancient ways, or inveigh against city people and abstract ideas, or raise alarms about the state of the Christian religion. But to deal adequately with real agrarian grievances would have been to propose another kind of revolution, and this was what the conservative ideology, and the international conservative leadership, could not do. In the great anti-republican campaign of 1799 the one actual source of popular anti-republicanism was not used.

The Coalition, therefore, and most notably the British government, in its plans for fomenting and using discontents within France and its sister-republics, looked less to the desires of the rural masses than to those of the former aristocracies and privileged classes. Royalists in France, and old regents or patricians or other disaffected persons in the Helvetic and Batavian Republics, worked busily and secretly with their respective émigrés and with various British agents, such as the mysterious Colonel Crauford and the acknowledged envoy, William Wickham. In France the royalist "agency" in Paris and the secret "philanthropic institutes" in the provinces again became active, as before Fructidor. In southern France the strength of "Jacobinism" at Toulouse made the royalist reaction in the surrounding area all the more intense. Almost ten thousand insurgents besieged Toulouse in August 1799; the republicans of the city with difficulty drove them away. The plan was for such revolts to coincide with one another, and with the invasion of France by the Coalition. But as underground and conspiratorial movements they could not be coordinated or synchronized. Occurring one by one, they were suppressed in turn; and, as it happened, the Second Coalition never entered France at all.

The military plan envisaged a far-flung deployment. "From the Zuyder Zee to the Tiber," said Mallet du Pan, "Europe is now covered with armies, almost contiguous, embracing one of the most extensive circles ever heard of in the history of wars ancient or modern."¹³ Indeed, the Coalition reached beyond the Tiber, for Nelson reigned at Naples, the Russians soon occupied the Ionian Islands, hoping to do the same at Malta; a force of British and Turks obliged Bonaparte to retreat from Acre in Palestine, and in India Mornington disposed of Tipu, subjugated his kingdom, and put an end to French Jacobinism in that country.

On the European continent the armies were in three parts. One Russian force, under Marshal Suvorov, along with the Austrians, and with Turkish assistance, operated in Italy. Another Austro-Russian force had Switzerland for its immediate object. An Anglo-Russian expedition was preparing to land in Holland. The three were then to converge upon France, with the main blow delivered by the Austro-Russians from Switzerland, who were to enter by way of Lyon to the acclaim of the royalists.

¹³ *British Mercury*, IV, 117.

It was in Italy that the conservative counter-offensive enjoyed its greatest successes. Suvorov began to defeat the French, with their Cisalpine and Polish auxiliaries, in the Po valley in April. Except at Genoa, all the Italian republics fell. When Pius VI died in France, to which he had been removed at the outbreak of the war, the victories of the Coalition made it possible for the cardinals to meet for the election of a new pope. This fact alone was significant, since the most determined free-thinking and Voltairean republicans had hoped that with the Roman Republic the papacy itself might become extinct. The collapse of the republic at Rome left the city in a state of confusion, so that the cardinals met for their conclave at Venice under the protection of Austria.

They assembled in the belief that the Revolution was at last about to expire. Cardinal Rohan, of Diamond Necklace fame, the *ci-devant* Bishop of Strasbourg, once the richest prelate in France, with over 400,000 livres a year of church revenues, was so confident of his imminent restoration that he refused to attend the conclave at all. He hovered about south Germany, ready to proclaim himself in his diocese upon arrival of the Austro-Russian armies. The conclave proved to be a long one, since the Austrian party among the cardinals could not elect their candidate, it being known that Austria wished to annex portions of the Papal States. After several months, in March 1800, when it seemed that the new regime in France would be more tolerant of Catholicism, and in opposition to the ambitions of Austria, the Spanish government used its influence to support those cardinals who were least uncompromising toward the Revolution. The result was the election of Cardinal Chiaramonti, the Bishop of Imola, who had in his way welcomed democracy and accepted the Cisalpine Republic in 1797, and who, as Pius VII, soon negotiated a concordat with the French Republic.

Meanwhile, in 1799, the anti-republican forces were triumphant. At Naples 119 republicans, including fifteen clerics, were put to death; and the restored monarchs gave classic expression to the most extreme sentiments of counter-revolution, when Queen Maria Carolina told Nelson to treat Naples "like a rebel Irish town," and King Ferdinand ordered no mercy for "these rebels against God and Me." Reactionary insurrectionism using religious slogans spread from south to north. What was called San Fedism in Naples was called the Viva Maria in Tuscany, and a good deal of violence broke out against persons not sufficiently Christian. Enraged country people invaded the town of Siena, sacked its ghetto, killed over a dozen Jews, and burned three of them alive along with the tree of liberty in the *piazza*. Jews were also brutally manhandled at Ancona, in the Roman Republic, after its surrender by the French. Further north, with the collapse of the Cisalpine Republic, the *triennio* was followed by the *tredici mesi*, or thirteen months, known also as the Austro-Russian Reaction.¹⁴

14 For the phrases quoted from the King and Queen of Naples see p. 660 above. For confirmation of the incidents at Siena my former student, Mr. R. B. Litchfield, has made a study in the libraries of Florence; he concludes that at least three Jews were actually burned, but that the archbishop's remark, *furor populi, furor Dei*, was the embellishment of an anti-clerical writer about 1880. For Ancona see M. Mangourit, *Défense d'Ancone et des départements romains . . . aux années VII et VIII*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1802), I, 207.

What happened in the now defunct Cisalpine Republic is worth amplification, since it suggests the kind of thing that might have happened in France and elsewhere if the Coalition had won the war. At first, in April 1799, the Austro-Russians were welcomed, especially in the countryside. Even at Milan, like the French in 1796, they met with a friendly reception, signalized by public festivals and poems written for the occasion. This good feeling did not last long.

The military victory was due mainly to the Russians, but the Austrians assumed the dominant role in the occupation. It was only in certain ways, chiefly internal, that the Austrians wished to restore the old order. Having obtained Venetia from Bonaparte in 1797, they now wished not merely to regain the old Milanese but to expand it, and they therefore preferred the enlarged boundaries of the Cisalpine Republic, which gave them a foothold in the papal territories across the Po. In Piedmont, for which they had ideas of their own, they forbade the King of Sardinia to return. In the Cisalpine they continued to collect taxes as levied by the late *intruso governo democratico*; and (being still "Josephist" at least in this respect) they did not restore to the Church the property confiscated by the Republic, though they took it away from persons who had begun to buy it. In other ways the work of the revolution was supposedly undone. "All laws," according to a proclamation of the Emperor Francis, "published in the time of anarchy of the so-called republic are totally abrogated." *Austriacanti* replaced Cisalpines in office. Eight hundred *giacobini* were deported to Austria, other hundreds having fled to France. The school for teaching the German language at Milan was reopened. Other schools and universities were closed, notably the University of Pavia; Jansenists were hunted out; Jews and other non-Catholics lost their recently gained civil rights. Observance of religious holidays was made compulsory. A strong censorship was imposed on the press, and the Archbishop of Milan issued a pastoral warning against bad books, "the fruits of unrestrained liberty," which sometimes taught that hell was an invention of priests, and in any case conveyed "the malignity of the black conspiracy against the Altar and the Throne." Book-burnings took place in public squares. For more edifying reading, Mallet du Pan's *British Mercury* appeared in Italian. Hunting rights, seigneurial courts, and *fidecommessi* were restored; but even the Lombard nobles disputed with men sent down from Vienna. Meanwhile the Austrian and Russian armies, as formerly the French, lived by requisition upon the country, and although the Austrians within a few months obtained the removal of Suvorov and his Russians to Switzerland, the burden of military occupation remained heavy, and the complaints against arbitrary pillage and looting remained at least as numerous as under the French. Moderates, and even former *austriacanti*, soon turned against Austria. The economist Melchior Gioia, a year or two later, wrote a book to show that, for agriculture, commerce, and taxation, not to mention ordinary freedom from censorship and the police, the Austro-Russian "liberation" had been incomparably worse than the French. The feeling grew that what northern Italy really needed was independence, but when the French returned in 1800 there were many Italians who, in the circumstances, were delighted to see the restoration of the Cisalpine Republic.¹⁵

15 *Collezione di proclami, avvisi . . . pubblicati did giorno 28 aprile 1799 in avanti, epoca memorabile del*

In May 1799, soon after the Austro-Russian victory in Italy, the Austrian commander at Milan, who somewhat incongruously was the Count of Hohenzollern, expecting to make an early entrance into France, issued a manifesto. It was addressed to the soldiers in the French army, and it told them that their Directory were a pack of despots, hated in France itself, who had enslaved Italy for their own advantage. It urged them not to resist their true friends, and pointed to the vast array of armed forces poised "from the Tiber to the Rhine"—Austrian, Russian, British, Turkish, aided by the outraged victims of the countries oppressed by France. "But," the Count of Hohenzollern continued, still addressing himself to the French (for something had been learned since the Brunswick Manifesto seven years before), "it is not a war of the Sovereigns who govern those mighty States. It is a war of Peoples, who no longer tremble before your armies and who have ceased to worship your principles."¹⁶

It remained to be seen whether the peoples would rise in answer to such a call.

THE REVOLUTIONARY RE-AROUSAL AND VICTORY

The debacle in Italy precipitated a crisis in France. In part the trouble was parliamentary and constitutional. In mid-April the voters met in their assemblies for the elections of the Year VII, by which a third of the two legislative councils was to be renewed. News of Suvorov's victories was just coming in. The republics had collapsed at Naples, Rome, and Milan. In April, also, near Rastadt, two French delegates to the diplomatic conference at that city were waylaid and murdered. Invasion of France was expected, with which royalist conspirators and insurgents were known to be in collusion. Zealous republicans threw the blame for these conditions on the Directory, which they accused not only of inefficiency but of venality, immorality, cynicism, and corruption, exaggerating as much as the royalists the shortcomings of a regime that no one loved. In the elections the candidates sponsored by the Directory did very poorly. The independent candidates, democrats and "Jacobins," won most of the seats, so that the incoming third, when added to the *jacobins non-floréalisés*, or democrats in the two councils who had survived the purge of 1798, produced almost a democratic majority in the legislative branch of the government, composed of the Five Hundred and the Elders. Since even many moderates had long objected to the way in which the Directory had abused the constitutional equality of the Legislative Body, the road was open for a legislative retaliation against the executive.

The military crisis made the Republic more dependent than ever on the army. The Directory, however, had alienated the generals. It had consented to send Bonaparte to Egypt in part to get him off the political stage. It was about to try Championnet for insubordination. Bernadotte, Brune, Masséna, and Joubert had

fausto ingresso fatto in Milano dalla Vittoriosa Armata di sua Maesta l'Imperatore Francesco II, 5 vols. (Milan, 1799–1800), I, 247; IV, 148–53; V, 87. See also M. Roberti, *Milano capitale napoleonica: la formazione di uno stato moderno*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1946–1947), I, 54–56, 234–36. For Gioia's work see p. 577 above.

16 *Collezione*, I, 128. (May 26, 1799.)

all shown their lack of respect, in one way or another, for civilian superiors in Paris and for civilian commissioners in the field. They now added their contribution to the discrediting of the Directory, declaring that the civilians sent to Italy and other occupied areas in the past years were guilty of dishonesty, pillaging, exploitation, and fortune-hunting, the very offenses of which most of the generals were guilty themselves, and which the Directory had tried to regularize or prevent. The democrats in the two councils, in their dislike of the Directory, gladly believed the indictment that the military men drew up.¹⁷

A coalition of democrats and generals rapidly formed. In May, as provided by law, the five Directors drew lots to see which of them should retire; the lot fell to Reubell, who for almost four years had strongly insisted on civilian control over the military. To replace Reubell the Council of Five Hundred nominated a firmly republican general, Lefebvre; but the Council of Elders still resisted the drift toward military solutions; and the two councils agreed on electing Sieyès to Reubell's place. Sieyès, then minister to Prussia, had been known since 1789 as a constitutional expert, and was to take the lead in bringing in Bonaparte and a new constitution a few months later. No one, probably not even himself, knew in May what course he might adopt for the internal reorganization of France; but he had at times thought the Directory too moderate in its attitude to revolutionaries in Italy and Poland, and to that extent was acceptable to the more vehement democrats and the generals who favored revolutionary activity abroad.

Not content with the constitutional replacement of Reubell by Sieyès, the democratic-military coalition, in retaliation for Floréal, and in a mood of urgency in the face of invasion, arbitrarily reorganized the rest of the executive also. Though not wholly illegal, this operation came to be known as the coup d'état of Prairial of the Year VII. The election of Treilhard as Director a year before was annulled on a technicality. Threats of investigation and outlawry induced Merlin de Douai and LaRévellière to resign. The one Director who was unquestionably corrupt was now the only one left, Barras, who, not to mention the scandal of his private life, was intriguing with the democrats, the royalists, and the British at the same time. In place of Treilhard, Merlin, and LaRévellière, the Five Hundred proposed a list wholly composed of generals and admirals, but the Elders again demurred; and three mild, ineffectual, and honest men were in fact chosen—Ducos, Gohier, and Moulins. As for the generals, Bernadotte became war minister, Joubert the military commandant in Paris, Championnet received the newly reactivated *Armée des Alpes*, and Masséna and Brune were confirmed in their commands in Switzerland and Holland.

What had happened, in a way, and continued to happen throughout the summer of 1799, was a kind of revival and breakthrough, against the Directory, of the popular and the international revolutionism described in Chapter XVII above. Yet the difference from 1792 or 1794 was very great. There was no sans-culottisme, no truly popular revolutionism in the streets. International revolutionism was now represented, not by foreign exiles congregated in Paris, but by French army commanders

17 J. Godechot, *Les commissaires aux armées sous le Directoire: contribution à l'étude des rapports entre les pouvoirs civils et militaires*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1938), II, 369–91.

who had worked with native democrats in the sister-republics. French democrats found these generals ideologically sympathetic, and necessary as allies against both the Directory and the Coalition. The French neo-Jacobins of 1799, who represented a kind of popular movement at least in opposing the Republican oligarchy, were sensitive also to revolution and counter-revolution in other countries. They had been aroused by the fall of the Cisalpine Republic, and the fate of Poland was not far from their minds. In Puy-de-Dôme, for example, when the departmental officials gave a patriotic address to the new auxiliary battalions being raised for the war, they pointed to the contrasting precedents of Poland and the United States. "Let this contrast awaken your courage! If victors, we shall have the good fortune of the United Americans; if vanquished, the fate of Poland will be ours."¹⁸

The "foreign" or "international" revolutionaries themselves, that is those Italian, Swiss, and Dutch who most warmly upheld the new-style republics in their own countries, shared the dislike of French neo-Jacobins and generals for the French Directory as it was constituted before Prairial, and had indeed become skeptical of France itself. In Italy the Milanese La Hoz, an officer in the Cisalpine army, working through a secret society called the *Raggi*, or "rays" (the first secret society of the Risorgimento), fought for republicanism and independence in north Italy, and became so anti-French that for a time he aided the Austrians. In Switzerland, where the Helvetic Republic faced the same threat of invasion and dissolution as the French and the Cisalpine, the more militant party overcame the moderates in June 1799, when La Harpe drove Ochs out of the Helvetic Directory. La Harpe, more "Jacobin" than Ochs, was also more hostile to the French. In Holland, where it was known or suspected that moderates in the Batavian Directory were in touch with Dutch émigrés, the democratic groups sought to undermine the moderates and looked for support from the sympathetic General Brune. Here also a neo-Jacobin movement might have occurred had not the coup d'état of Brumaire, in Paris in November, changed the whole situation.

In France the two councils, having subordinated the Executive Directory to themselves, began to take on the attributes of a Convention, that is of a body possessing unlimited public powers, and in particular of the Convention of 1793, which had used drastic measures to cope with a supreme emergency.

The mood was as in 1793, yet noticeably different. Despite all appearances, a spirit of law-abidingness and constitutional routine had developed. The cry of *la patrie en danger* was again heard, but it was not officially proclaimed. There were demands for the death of the ex-Directors, but they were not acted upon. All annual classes of conscripts were called up, as in the *levée en masse* of 1793; but they were called up in more methodical fashion, under the Conscription Act of 1798. A forced loan of a hundred million francs was levied upon the rich; what came out, in practice, was a progressive income tax developed in orderly fashion in the legislation of 19 Thermidor of the Year VII. It was, to be sure, incomparably more "progressive" than Pitt's income tax of the same year. Where the very richest per-

18 G. Bonnefoy, ed., *Histoire de l'administration civile dans la province d'Auvergne et le département du Puy-de-Dôme* (Paris, 1900), II, 306, as cited by my former student, Mr. Isser Woloch, who in a study of the "Jacobin revival" of 1799 found references to Poland fairly frequent.

sons in England paid only ten per cent by the law of 1799, those in France might lose as much as three-quarters of their annual revenue. Most ominously recalling the Terror was the Law of Hostages of July. It was enacted to deal with counter-revolutionary conspiracy, insurrection and collusion with enemy powers, of the kind which, as already mentioned, threatened Toulouse in August. By this legislation, in any region declared by its local authorities to be troubled, the relatives of émigrés, ex-nobles, and “brigands” were to be put under arrest. For each patriot killed by political violence, four “hostages” would be deported. For each act of pillage, the hostages would raise a sum to indemnify the victim. The emergency passed before much enforcement of this law began.

A sign also of revived revolutionary enthusiasm, outside the ranks of government itself, was the reopening of political clubs, on the model of the true Jacobins of five years before, in Paris and other cities through the country. The Constitution of the Year III, like George Washington, frowned upon “self-created” societies. It put the formation and operation of political clubs under close restriction. The Pantheon Club had been closed in 1796, and the constitutional circles of 1798 had found it hard to develop beyond the status of local discussion groups. In the summer of 1799, facing much the same situation as in 1792, upholders of the new order again rushed to its defense. On July 6 a group met in Paris that called itself the Reunion of the Friends of Liberty and Equality—the very name that the Jacobins had officially adopted in 1792. Several of its members had played prominent roles during the Year II; one, Prieur of the Marne, had been a member of the great Committee of Public Safety. Speakers called for a return of that exalted spirit that had stopped the First Coalition; they denounced suspects, conspirators, profiteers, royalists, and aristocrats; they praised various figures of the past, even the “virtuous martyr” Babeuf; and they demanded that the Republic save itself by using the money of the rich and the enthusiasm of the common man. The Paris club voted to restore “the democratic spirit” in government, to establish “equal and common education,” to provide work for the needy, and property for veterans who had risked themselves in defense of the country. The notable point, however, is that this revived Jacobin club proved very ephemeral. The Directory itself, which now reflected the wishes of the democratized councils, closed the club down on August 13. It had lasted only thirty-eight days.

Enough happened in the summer of 1799 to raise a specter of social revolution, “agrarian law,” division of property, and confiscatory taxation of the rich. All this made it easier for Bonaparte a few months later to present himself not only as the defender of the New Order against the Coalition and the Bourbons, but as the savior of society itself from dissolution and anarchy. Yet it seems clear, on balance, that the neo-Jacobinism of 1799 was not an actual renewal of real revolution, so much as the excited reaction of an abortive democracy, half-formed and ill-formed by four troubled years of very imperfect constitutional government, to a threat posed by internal subversion and foreign invasion, on the part of men and powers whose intention to destroy “democratic” institutions was unconcealed. It is very doubtful that the neo-Jacobin or quasi-democratized regime in France in 1799 was a viable government. But its non-viability was due as much to the strength of its enemies as to its own weaknesses.

On the other hand, the enemy also had his weaknesses, and if the New Order survived in France in 1799 (somewhat transmuted) it did so in part, as in 1793, because its enemies could not agree, and shared no true common purpose against it. Each of the Coalition powers had its own interests. The British could presumably have assembled more strength against France on the Continent, had they been less involved in India and in Ireland, and if their overseas and commercial ambitions had not made both the Dutch and the Spanish fearful for their own colonial empires. They might have produced wider fissures in the Continental republics if they had had more appeal for the moderates in those countries, if they had not in 1799, as at Quiberon and Vendémiaire in 1795, become identified with the ultra-conservatism of intransigent émigrés. In 1799 the Austrians and Russians could agree neither with each other nor with the British, whom they regarded with the air of a lord toward his banker as hardly more than a source of funds to finance their armies. The Russians, after Suvorov's conquests in Italy, were annoyed that the Austrians so soon maneuvered to get them out.

North of the Alps, as in Italy, the Austrian designs were more territorial than ideological. At the critical moment in the summer of 1799, as the Austro-Russian campaign was about to open in Switzerland, the Vienna government, instead of carrying through with this main blow which was to lead to a direct invasion of central France, ordered its army to move in the direction of Mainz, so that Austrian influence might prevail in a future disposition of the Rhineland, Liège, and the former Austrian Netherlands. The Russians were left to carry on the Swiss campaign alone. For this purpose Suvorov moved up from Italy to join Korsakov, taking his army through the St. Gotthard Pass in a memorable operation, and very much irritated at the Austrian betrayal of Russia in both Italy and central Europe. The Austrians, said Lord Grenville, cared nothing about overthrowing the government in France, "the real root and origin of its wickedness." Pitt called Austrian policy "atrocious and perhaps fatal."¹⁹

It was among the crags of Switzerland and in the watery lowlands of north Holland that the Second Coalition came to grief. In Switzerland, after the main Austrian force had departed, the Russian general Korsakov faced the French Masséna, whose French army was supported by a few thousand Swiss in the new demi-brigades of the Helvetic Republic. The expected rising of Swiss against the French never materialized. The Swiss did not find the "Cossacks" congenial. To William Wickham, who had said that Switzerland could not be neutral, that it must be dominated and made over either by France or by the Coalition, the rough indiscipline of the Russian soldiers was a cause of infinite dismay, since it made the Swiss more tolerant of the French. The Russians, said Wickham of these indispensable allies, were "shag all over," and he quoted Voltaire: *ôtez seulement l'habit et vous sentirez le poil*.²⁰ Masséna defeated Korsakov in a three-day battle, on September 25–27, called the Second Battle of Zurich. Suvorov, struggling

¹⁹ *Dropmore Papers*, V, 147, 404.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 485: "just remove the clothing and you will feel the hair." See also, on the Russians in Holland and Switzerland, *ibid.*, 449, 455–56; but on October 24, 1799, Dundas was still telling Pitt that "a Russian army as large as can be got, and as large as you can afford to pay, is an essential ingredient to every purpose," *ibid.*, 498.

through the passes from Italy, arrived too late, since without Korsakov he was too weak to challenge Masséna alone. The great Russian commander, the hero of Odessa, the counter-revolutionary by whose orders the dummies used in bayonet practice were called "French republicans," and who was remembered in Poland as the butcher of Praga, was obliged to retire with his Russian host into the Hapsburg dominions. Far away in America, on the northernmost frontier of New York State, the settlers learned of this news with such pleasure that they named one of their new towns Masséna.

Meanwhile, late in August, in an unopposed amphibious operation, a combined force of British and Russians, under the Duke of York, landed on the tongue of land between the North Sea and the Zuyder Zee. Against them, on a line across the middle of the peninsula, stood a force of French, with several thousand Dutch troops under General Daendels, all commanded by the French General Brune. The strategy of the invaders depended on a rising of the Dutch against the Batavian Republic. The Orangist émigrés, though never numerous, had excellent connections with the British government and royal family, so that their accounts of Dutch restlessness under French tyranny had been well received in England; Grenville had thought, on July 30, that the country "unanimously" favored the British, as he imagined that it had done in 1787. It is true that Henry Dundas was more skeptical, reminding his colleague of the false hopes once put in the American Loyalists.²¹ In any case, no rising took place in the Batavian Republic. The Russians were no more welcome to the Dutch than to the Swiss, especially since, far more poorly supplied than the British, they did a great deal of pillaging in the small territory that they occupied. The country remained calm. A party of Orangist émigrés, entering from the German side, was easily put to flight by the National Guard of Arnhem. The main invasion force, floundering in useless maneuvers among the polders, hemmed in by Brune and Daendels, waited for weeks for news of an insurrection that never came. Sir Ralph Abercrombie, the chief actual commander under the Duke of York, suffered a gradual disillusionment. Two weeks after the landing, while still hopeful, he remarked that "the Prince [of Orange] has been deceived in thinking he had more friends than enemies in this country." The truth dawned on him a month later, just before the final collapse: "The grounds on which this great undertaking were founded have failed. We have found no cooperation in the country."²² On October 10 Brune, thinking it best to get the invaders off the Continent while preserving his own forces intact for employment elsewhere, signed the Convention of Alkmaar with the Duke of York. The Anglo-Russians returned to their ships, and departed. They had captured some of what remained of the Dutch navy; that was all.

The Tsar Paul, much displeased at the fortunes of his armies in Western Europe, where they had been so unsuccessful against the enemy and so little appreciated by their friends, recalled Suvorov and refused to take any further part in the war. Except in Italy, it was clear by October that the conservative counter-offensive had been repulsed by the New Republican Order, in a kind of ideological showdown

21 *Ibid.*, 208, 215.

22 *Ibid.*, 387; Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, III, 429.

that was evident in the social origins of the leading antagonists. Brune, a provincial lawyer's son who had once been a printer's apprentice, had forced the brother of the King of England to sign a humiliating agreement and beat an ignominious retreat. Masséna, who had begun life as a cabin boy at sea, and then been an army sergeant, with further promotion impossible under the conditions of aristocratic resurgence in the 1780's, had discomfited a Russian nobleman, the "Prince of Italy," Marshal Suvorov, who himself was the son of a general and senator of the Tsarist Empire. The facts did not escape contemporaries. Mallet du Pan commented on the failure of "oppressed nations" to show sympathy for the Allies. Country people, he thought, had not behaved too badly. But people in the towns "have everywhere but too plainly discovered the degeneracy to which they were sunk by luxury, selfishness and the love of pleasure."²³ Those who could not defeat the bourgeoisie could at least insult it.

With the battle of Zurich in September, and the Convention of Alkmaar in October, the threat of an invasion of France was alleviated, and the neo-Jacobin agitation began to subside. Brune and Masséna, the real victors of the moment, had no political following, at least outside the ranks of militant democrats, and no political ambitions. On October 9 Bonaparte stepped ashore at Fréjus. A Republic which had in any case become dependent on generals, and in which the democrats most especially wished to have army commanders in office, now succumbed to the fascination of the youthful general who since the bridge of Lodi had outshone them all. A month of rapid and secret machinations, involving Sieyès, Bonaparte, and his brother Lucien and others, and with strong resistance from a good many democrats, who had never forgotten the betrayal of Venice, and preferred a general with a more unswervingly republican record, eventuated in the final coup d'état under the Directory, that of 18 Brumaire of the Year VIII—or November 9, 1799—by which the Republic underwent its expected mutation, and emerged as the Consulate. Its disillusioned philosophy was expressed by the new First Consul: "The French can no longer be governed except by me."

TWO MEN ON HORSEBACK

In the end we retreat into symbolism. Revolutions, agitations, social movements, and glacially slow readjustments in a democratic direction were to go on for a long time, but a historical period came to a close with the century itself, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution may be thought of as ending in a final scene of two men on horseback.

On the first day of the new century, January 1, 1801, the vice-president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, soon to be president, left the boarding-house in which he resided with a few colleagues among vacant lots and half-finished buildings, on an unpaved and untidy thoroughfare known as C Street, in the new Federal City. The vice-president was hardly an inexperienced provincial, for he had known the court of Versailles well enough in former days, and been present in

23 *British Mercury*, III, 332; see also 341–43.

Paris at the time of the fall of the Bastille; but he accepted the peculiarities of life in America. Going down from C Street, he took the public ferry across the Potomac, and at Alexandria hired a horse, for which he paid three dollars.²⁴ He rode for some ten miles to Mount Vernon for a social call on Mrs. George Washington. He had sometimes disagreed with her late husband, but her high-columned establishment overlooking the river already represented a common ground of American politics. He then returned as he had come, a solitary figure on a slow-moving, placid beast, of a kind that anyone was free to ride, or at least anyone who was white and had three dollars.

At about this same time the painter David, an old Jacobin of 1793, was at work on one of his memorable compositions, which may now be seen near the empty royal apartments at the palace of Versailles. He conceived of a horse and rider against a rocky Alpine background, moving steeply uphill, the horse a highstepping, tense, and furious charger, with startled eye and mane flowing in the wind, the rider a uniformed officer seated securely on his restless mount, transfixing the spectator with an imperious gaze, and while lightly holding the reins in one hand, pointing with the other over the mountains and into the future. It was a glorified picture of the master of the New Order in Europe—"Bonaparte crossing the St. Bernard Pass"—just before his descent for the second time into the Po valley, where in June 1800 he defeated the Austrians at Marengo. This victory restored the Cisalpine Republic, and finally broke up the Second Coalition. Democracy in Europe had not exactly succeeded, but the great conservative and aristocratic counter-offensive had utterly failed.

That Bonaparte and Jefferson were very different human beings, as different as the horses they rode on, hardly needs to be pointed out. Jefferson, like American republicans generally, had once admired Bonaparte; even today there are at least six places in the United States named "Marengo." But Jefferson turned against the increasingly despotic ways and mad egotism of his one-time hero. "Do you call this a Republic?" asked the disgusted Thomas Paine in 1802. The author of the *Rights of Man* had had enough of Europe, and returned to America, and his abandonment of the old continent was also symbolic. As the great republican enthusiasms of the 1790's subsided, and as Europe went on with its chronic wars, there came to prevail for a long time in the United States a feeling of self-chosen and fortunate isolation, a belief that the vices of Europe were incorrigible, and that Americans should be as little involved as possible with an old world where true liberty could not exist. It was hard for the man on the three-dollar horse to understand the man on the charger, to comprehend why decent people could so long uphold Bonaparte, to think in terms of alternatives instead of ideals, to see that some things taken for granted in America, like "equality before the law," might in Europe have to be fought for.

Bonaparte and Jefferson had this much in common: both were detested as "Jacobins" in some quarters, yet under Bonaparte as First Consul and Emperor, and under Jefferson as President, the democratic and republican agitation quieted

24 D. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time. Vol. III: Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (Boston, 1962), 499.

down. Revolutionary excitement was over. In America republicanism faded off into the general attitude of most people in the country. In Europe, where Bonaparte for a time treated republicans and royalists pretty much alike, giving them jobs if they could be useful, and imprisoning or even executing those who persisted in conspiracy or subversion, the forces making for change were content for a while to operate within an authoritarian framework which he provided. Men of practical bent and modern outlook, freed both from popular demands and from old-noble pretensions, relieved of the fear of both revolution and reaction, and protected by armed force, until 1813, against the inroads of ever-reviving Coalitions, worked together at a liquidation of the Old Regime in various countries, in an area much like that of the New Republican Order of 1798. This area was the Continental heartland of Western Civilization, comprising France and Italy, Switzerland and what are now called the Benelux countries, to which was soon added Germany as far as the Elbe—the sphere of Napoleon's empire, and of the "Europe" of 1960. The very German philosopher Hegel, as he watched the Emperor of the French ride through the streets of Jena in 1806, just before annihilating the Prussian army, saw the movement of history, of humanity, and of true liberty embodied before his eyes—"the World-Soul sitting on a horse."²⁵

In the twentieth century both the World-Soul and the horse have become archaic, and the dialectic of Hegel has become unconvincing. It is not as easy to generalize about the grand sweep of human events as it once was. It is not easy to summarize what happened in the world of Western Civilization in the forty years from 1760 to 1800, or to be certain of the meaning of these years for the subsequent history of mankind. For the ideas set forth at the outset of the first part of this book a thousand pages of evidence have now been offered. In history, for large ideas, there is no such thing as proof; no view, however much demonstrated, can pretend to be conclusive or final. It is hoped, however, that the reader can now see these events of the eighteenth century as a single movement, revolutionary in character, for which the word "democratic" is appropriate and enlightening; a movement which, however different in different countries, was everywhere aimed against closed élites, self-selecting power groups, hereditary castes, and forms of special advantage or discrimination that no longer served any useful purpose. These were summed up in such terms as feudalism, aristocracy, and privilege, against which the idea of common citizenship in a more centralized state, or of common membership in a free political nation, was offered as a more satisfactory basis for the human community.

What had happened by 1800, even in countries where it was temporarily suppressed, was the assertion of "equality" as a prime social desideratum. It was an equality that meant a wider diffusion of liberty. That the assurance of some liberties meant the curtailment of others was well understood, so that, more on the continent of Europe than elsewhere, the democratic movement brought a consolidation of public authority, or of the state. It was not an equality that could long

25 J. Hoffmeister, ed., *Briefe von und an Hegel*, 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1952), I, 120.

accept the surrender of liberty; the solution provided by Bonaparte could not prove to be durable. Nor was it an equality that repudiated the power of government; the world of Thomas Jefferson would also pass.

In forty years, from 1760 to 1800, "equality" took on a wealth of meanings, to which few new ones have been added since that time. It could mean an equality between colonials and residents of a mother country, as in America; between nobles and commoners, as in France; patricians and burghers, as at Geneva; ruling townsmen and subject country people, as at Zurich and elsewhere; between Catholic and Protestant, Anglican and Dissenter, Christian and Jew, religionist and unbeliever, or between Greek and Turk in Rhigas Velestinlis' memorable phrase. It might refer to the equal right of gildsmen and outsiders to enter upon a particular kind of trade or manufacture. For some few it included greater equality between men and women. Equality for ex-slaves and between races was not overlooked. For popular democrats, like the Paris sans-culottes, it meant the hope for a more adequate livelihood, more schooling and education, the right to stroll on the boulevards with the upper classes, and for more recognition and more respect; and it passed on to the extreme claim for an exact equality of material circumstances, which was rarely in fact made during the Revolutionary era, but was feared as an ultimate consequence of it by conservatives, and expressed in Babeuf's blunt formula, "stomachs are equal."

Monarchy, religion, the church, the law, and the economic system—along with the British Parliament, the Dutch Union of Utrecht, the old folk-democracies of the upland Swiss, the gentry republic in Poland, and the patrician communes of Italy—were brought into question so far as they upheld inequalities that were thought to be unjust. "Everywhere inequality is a cause of revolution," said Aristotle long ago, and his observation may remain as the last word on the subject. The problem of the historian in deciding upon the causes of revolution, as of rulers in preventing or guiding it, is to identify the sore spots, the political, economic, sociological, or psychological matters which arouse, in a significant number of relatively normal human beings, the embittered sense of inequality which is the sense of injustice.

The present book began with a quotation from Alexis de Tocqueville, and may close with another. For Tocqueville the course of all history revealed a continuing movement toward a greater "equality of conditions." In the introduction to his *Democracy in America*, thinking of both France and the United States, and indeed of all Europe since the Middle Ages, he explained his view of world history, in which he was less oracular than Hegel, and less dogmatic than Marx.

"The gradual trend toward equality of conditions," he said, "is a fact of Providence, of which it bears the principal characteristics: it is universal, it is enduring, it constantly eludes human powers of control; all events and all men contribute to its development.

"Would it be wise to think that a social movement of such remote origin can be suspended by the efforts of one generation? Can it be supposed that democracy, after destroying feudalism and overwhelming kings, will yield before the powers of money and business—*devant les bourgeois et les riches*?

"What then does the future hold? No one can say."²⁶

Here was no prediction of revolution to come, no conservative theory, as with Friedrich Gentz, that one revolution must lead endlessly to another, to show what a great evil the French Revolution had been; no neo-revolutionary message, as with Karl Marx, to show that since one revolution that he called "bourgeois" had occurred, another that he called "proletarian" must surely follow. It was only a prediction that the future would see an increasing equality of conditions, brought about in ways that could not be foreseen, and were not prescribed. It was a prediction that even inequalities of wealth and income, like others, would be reduced either by revolution or otherwise. Such has in fact proved to be the case.

For Tocqueville it was a troubled anticipation, in which difficulties and losses were to be expected as well as gains. In substance, however, it was the anticipation that had inspired the last days of Condorcet, who had rejoiced to see, in 1794, at the end of the "Progress of the Human Mind," the vision of a future world in which all invidious differences between human beings would be erased.

All revolutions since 1800, in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, have learned from the eighteenth-century Revolution of Western Civilization. They have been inspired by its successes, echoed its ideals, used its methods. It does not follow that one revolution need lead to another, or that revolution as such need be glorified as a social process. No revolution need be thought of as inevitable. In the eighteenth century there might have been no revolution, if only the old upper and ruling classes had made more sagacious concessions, if, indeed, the contrary tendencies toward a positive assertion of aristocratic values had not been so strong. What seems to be inevitable, in both human affairs and in social science, must be put in contingent form—if *x*, then *y*. If a sense of inequality or injustice persists too long untreated, it will produce social disorganization. In a general breakdown, if a constructive doctrine and program are at hand, such as were furnished in the eighteenth century by the European Enlightenment, if the capacities of leaders and followers are adequate to the purpose, and if they are strong enough to prevail over their adversaries, then a revolution may not only occur and survive, but open the way toward a better society. The conditions are hard to meet, but the stakes are high, for the alternative may be worse.

26 *Démocratie en Amérique*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1951), Vol. I, Part I, p. 4. The standard English translation (Reeve-Bradley, New York, 1946, I, 6), by calling *les bourgeois* "tradesmen," betrays its mid-Victorian origin and misses the full relevancy for modern times. The other quotation from Tocqueville alluded to here appears as this book's epigraph, and is from *L'ancien régime et la Révolution*, Book I, Chapters III and V. The quotation from Aristotle is from the *Politics*, V, I, Jowett translation.

APPENDIX I

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IX. M. J. Chénier, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1826), I, 218; V. Alfieri, *Rime* (Florence, 1933), 308; *Berliner Monatschrift*, April 1783, 368–91; A. Loosjes, *Gedenkszuil, ter gelegenheid der vrij-verklaring van Noord-Amerika* (Amsterdam, 1782), 31; A. Radishchev, *Izbrannyye filosofskyye sochineniia* (Moscow, 1949), 435.

X. *Correspondence between the Rt. Hon. William Pitt and Charles Duke of Rutland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* (London, 1890), 52; Burke, *Writings* (Boston, 1901), VII, 101.

XI. Adams, *Works* (Boston, 1851), VIII, 455.

XII. F. Valsecchi, *L'assolutismo illuminato in Austria e in Lombardia* (Bologna, 1931), I, 128–29.

XIII. Académie polonaise des sciences, *La Pologne au X^e congrès international des sciences historiques à Rome* (Warsaw, 1955), 201; C. Desmoulins, *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, No. 79 (April 1791), 36–37.

XIV. Lavissee, *Histoire de France* (Paris, 1910), IX, 344; *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris . . . présentées au roi le 4 mai 1788* (Paris, 1788), 6.

XV. Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, XV (1958), 269; H. Carré, *La noblesse de France et l'opinion publique au 18^e siècle* (Paris, 1920), 365.

XVI. J. Mallet du Pan, *Considérations sur la nature de la Révolution de France, et sur les causes qui en prolongent la durée* (London and Brussels, 1793), V.

XVII. A. von Arneth, ed., *Die Relationen der Botschafter Venedigs über Österreich im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, in *Fontes rerum austriacarum*, Pt. II, Vol. 22 (Vienna, 1863), 340.

XVIII. This and other letters by "A Calm Observer," first published in the *Morning Chronicle*, were reprinted as a book under the same pseudonym by Benjamin Vaughan as *Letters on the subject of a concert of princes and the dismemberment of Poland and France* (London, 1793); see p. 260 of the second edition.

XIX. "Rapport sur les principes du gouvernement révolutionnaire, 5—nivôse An II, 25 décembre 1793" in C. Vellay, *Discours et rapports de Robespierre* (Paris, 1908), 311–12.

XX. Letter in Latin from Szulyovsky to Hajnotzy in K. Benda, *A magyar jakobinus mozgalom iratai*, 3 vols. (Budapest, 1952–1957), I, 1066; P. K. Alefirenko in *Istoricheskiye Zapiski* (1947), 236; Thomas Campbell, *The Pleasures of Hope, with Other Poems* (7th ed., London, 1803), 28.

XXI. H. T. Colenbrander, ed., *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (The Hague, 1906), II, 493–94.

XXII. Comte Reynaud de Montlosier, *Des effets de la violence et de la modération dans les affaires de la France* (London, 1796), 33.

XXIII. J. Mallet du Pan, *Correspondance politique pour servir à l'histoire du républicanisme français* (Hamburg, 1796), p. vi of *avant-propos* and p. xv of text.

XIV. Giuseppe Poggi in his paper, the *Estensore cisalpino*, as quoted by E. Rota in *Nuova rivista storica*, VII (1923), 246.

XXV. *Raccolta degli editti, proclami, avvisi ecc. pubblicati in Milano dal 7 maggio 1796 in avanti*, 18 vols. (Milan, 1796–1799), VII, 475–76.

XXVI. G. Steiner, ed., *Korrespondenz des Peter Ochs*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1927–1937), II, 275; *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, 7 vols. (London, 1845), III, 194.

XXVII. G. Pallain, ed., *Le ministère de Talleyrand sous le Directoire: correspondance diplomatique* (Paris, 1891), 394.

XXVIII. Steiner, *Ochs*, II, 220.

XXIX. "Was hat der rechtschaffene Mann in Zeitläufen zu tun wie die unsrigen sind?" von Herrn Professor Rickfels in *Deutsches Magazin*, Altona (January 1798), 10.

XXX. W. A. Knight, ed., *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, 3 vols. (London, 1907), I, 68; Countess of Minto, ed., *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot First Earl of Minto*, 3 vols. (London, 1874), II, 129–130.

XXXI. "Extracts from an oration delivered by Elihu Palmer, 4 July 1793," in *Political Miscellany* (New York, 1793), 23; H. C. Lodge, ed., *Life and Letters of George Cabot* (Boston, 1877), 173; C. F. Adams, ed., *Letters of John Adams Addressed to his Wife*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1848), II, 252.

XXXII. J. Mallet du Pan, *The British Mercury, or Historical and critical views of the events of the present times*, 5 vols. (London, 1799–1800), III, 472–73 (August 15, 1799); *Oeuvres du comte P.-L. Roederer*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1854), III, 332 (conversation with Bonaparte, August 2, 1800); H. R. Yorke, *Letters from France in 1802*, 2 vols. (London, 1804), II, 342 (conversation with Paine).

APPENDIX II

TRANSLATIONS OF METRICAL PASSAGES

P. 177

This vast continent that the seas surround
Will soon change Europe and the world.
There arise for us, in the fields of America,
New interests and a new system of politics.

—M. J. CHÉNIER, *CHARLES IX*, 1789

The raging storm,
Which is bringing salvation and liberty to us.

—V. ALFIERI, *AMERICA FREE*, 1783

O land to the singer dearer than Fatherland!

—ANON., *THE FREEDOM OF AMERICA*, 1783

My friends! Each of you sees
The well-being of this state in American liberty.

—A. LOOSJES, *THE INDEPENDENCE OF NORTH AMERICA*, 1782

To you my inflamed soul aspires,
To you, renowned land. . . .
Your example has revealed the goal.

—A. RADISHCHEV, *ODE TO FREEDOM*, 1782
(WITH ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO R. H. MCNEAL
AND C. E. BLACK FOR THE TRANSLATION)

P. 191

Venerable Congress, of a people free and good
 You have cemented the glory and union;
 You have delivered America and its waters
 From the furious Leopards, the tyrant of two worlds:
 Clear-headed scrutinizers of our vain prejudices,
 You have descended to the depth of our hearts;
 You plunge into them a torrent of light,
 Which brings clarity to this sad hemisphere,
 Strikes its tyrants, and from their shameful yoke
 Invites us to break the detestable bonds.

Where without distinction of birth or rank,
 The most honest man, the most worthy of respect,
 The most useful in short, is always the greatest.

P. 192–93

Be free! (say it in high victory note,
 Enraptured song!) free, free now, America!

Thine example calls out loud to the Nations:
 “Free is, who free will be, and is worthy to be!” . . .

O land to the singer dearer than Fatherland!
 The first shoots of thy freedom grow quickly
 To the tree. . . .

Where sweet equality dwells, and the spawn of nobles,
 The plague of Europe, does not defile the manners of simplicity,
 Without desert, in spite of better men.

O take, beloved, take the stranger up,
 The weary stranger; let me at your breast
 Allay the long consuming sorrows,
 The bitter pangs of secret grief.

Why do I tarry? Still clank the iron chains,
 Reminding me, poor me, that I am a German.
 I see you, lovely scenes, disappear,
 Sink back into the depth, and weep.

From Goethe:

Here or nowhere is America
and
America, thou hast it better
Than our continent, the old one.

P. 194

And man was now again man; many noble beings
Planted eagerly the seed of truth.
Far on Philadelphia's shores there glowed
A milder dawn.

P. 274

How the times have changed! Who could ever have believed it?
Civil equality is ennobling the French. . . .

APPENDIX III

EXCERPTS FROM CERTAIN BASIC LEGAL DOCUMENTS

The following are excerpts from basic legal or constitutional documents of ten countries between 1782 and 1791, chosen to illustrate provisions with respect to nobility, hierarchy, corporate society, inheritance of legal status, equality or inequality of rights, and uniformity of citizenship.

I. RUSSIA: CATHERINE II'S CHARTER OF THE NOBILITY, 1785

1. The noble calling is the result, rising out of the qualities and virtues of men who held high office in the past, and distinguished themselves by their merits, by which they transformed the service itself into a dignity, and won for their descendants the noble appellation.

2. It is not only useful for the empire and the throne, but also just, to preserve and firmly establish the honorable estate of the well-born nobility; and hence the dignity of nobility shall remain inalienable from oldest times to the present, and for all time by inheritance to the descendants of those families that now enjoy it, as follows:

3. The nobleman transmits his noble status to his wife.

4. The nobleman transmits his well-born noble status by inheritance to his children.

8. Without judicial proceedings no well-born person can lose noble status.

9. Without judicial proceedings no well-born person can lose his honor.

10. Without judicial proceedings no well-born person can lose his life.

11. Without judicial proceedings no well-born person can lose his property.

12. The well-born person can be judged only by his peers.

15. Corporal punishment may not be inflicted on any well-born person.

16. Noblemen serving in the lower ranks of our Army shall be liable only to such punishments as our military regulations prescribe for higher officers.

17. We guarantee independence and freedom to the Russian nobility for all time, by inheritance in future generations.

18. We guarantee to noblemen, now in our service, the right either to continue in service or to apply for release from it according to regulations now in effect.

19. We guarantee permission to noblemen to enter the service of other European powers allied with us, and to travel in foreign lands.

20. [Duty of nobles to defend the state.]

21. The well-born person has the right to sign his name [as owner of a landed estate].

22. [Rights of sale, alienation and testament.]

23–25. [Miscellaneous.]

26. Well-born persons are confirmed in the right to purchase villages.

27. Well-born persons are confirmed in the right to sell at wholesale what has been harvested in their villages or produced by handicraft.

28. Well-born persons are permitted to have manufactories and industrial works in their villages.

29. Well-born persons are permitted to set up market towns on their estates and to open annual or other markets in them, as provided by law, with the knowledge of the governor and the administration of the province. . . .

30. Well-born persons are confirmed in the right to possess, build or buy houses in the cities, and to carry on manufacturing enterprises therein.

31. [Nobles may obtain burgher rights.]

32. Well-born persons are permitted to sell products raised on their estates at wholesale overseas or to have them exported through the designated ports. . . .

33. Well-born persons, in accordance with the ukaz of June 28, 1782 are confirmed in the right to possess, not only the surface of the lands belonging to them, but also whatever minerals or plants may be present in the depths beneath the soil or waters, and likewise all metals extracted therefrom, in the full sense and scope of the aforementioned ukaz.

34. Well-born persons are confirmed in the right to possess the forests on their estates, and in the right of free use of these forests. . . .

35. In the villages the house of the lord shall be exempt from military quartering.

36. The well-born person is himself freed from personal taxes.

Translated from the German text in V. Gittermann, *Geschichte Russlands*, 2 vols. (Zurich, 1945), II, 470–72, I am indebted to my colleague, Professor Jerome Blum, for comparing the translation for accuracy of meaning with the original Russian. Further clauses granted the nobles the right of provincial assemblies.

2. THE PRUSSIAN GENERAL CODE, 1791 INTRODUCTION: ON THE LAWS IN GENERAL

1. This general code contains the provisions by which the rights and obligations of inhabitants of the state, so far as they are not determined by particular laws, are to be judged.

6. *Decrees or other measures of higher authority, which have issued in contested cases without judicial cognizance, create neither rights nor obligations.

9. *Particular favors, privileges and exceptions to the law, arising from the action of the sovereign, are valid only so far as the particular rights of a third party are not thereby injured.

26. The laws of the state bind all its members without difference of estate, rank or family.

58. Privileges and grants of liberty, in doubtful cases, must be so interpreted as to do the least damage to third parties.

77. *The welfare of the state in general, and of its inhabitants in particular, is the aim of civil society and the general objective of the laws.

79. *The laws and ordinances of the state should restrict the natural liberty and rights of citizens no further than the general welfare demands.

83. Every inhabitant of the state has a right to demand its protection for his person and property.

84. No one therefore is entitled to obtain his rights by his own powers.

89. The rights of man arise from his birth, from his estate, and from actions and arrangements with which the laws have associated a certain determinate effect.

90. The general rights of man are grounded on the natural liberty to seek and further his own welfare, without injury to the rights of another.

91. The particular rights and duties of members of the state rest upon the personal relationship in which each stands to others and to the state itself.

93. Rights which are not supported by the laws are called imperfect, and give no ground for complaints or pleas in court.

94. Actions forbidden by neither natural nor positive law are called permissible.

Part I: Title I: Of Persons and Their Rights in General

1. Man is called a person so far as he enjoys certain rights in civil society.

2. Civil society consists of a number of smaller societies and estates, bound together by Nature or Law, or by both.

6. Persons to whom, by their birth, destination or principal occupation, equal rights are ascribed in civil society, make up together an estate of the state.

7. Members of each estate have, as such, and considered as individuals, certain rights and duties.

9. The rights and duties of various societies in the state are further defined by their relation to each other and to the supreme head of the state.

Part II: Title IX: On the Duties and Rights of the Noble Estate

1. The nobility, as the first estate in the state, most especially bears the obligation, by its distinctive destination, to maintain the defense of the state, both of its honor without and of its constitution within.

21. In regard to the essential rights and attributes of the noble estate there is no difference between old and new nobility.

PRIVILEGES OF THE NOBILITY

34. Persons of the nobility are normally subject to the jurisdiction only of the highest court in the province.

35. The nobleman has an especial right to places of honor in the state for which he has made himself fit.

36. But the sovereign retains the power to be the judge of fitness and make selection from among candidates.

37. Only the nobleman has the right to possess noble property.

38. Which properties are noble is determined by the particular constitutions of the several provinces.

40. Only the nobleman may create entails and family trusts for noble properties.

41. Noble property-owners have the right to exercise, in their own name, the hunting rights appertaining to their property.

42. They may have the jurisdictional powers pertaining to their property exercised in their name.

43. They possess the honorific rights that go with church patronage.

45. They may use the names of their property as personal names, and in official documents or on public occasions, use the possession thereof as a special title.

46. Only the resident nobility normally have the right to appear in the noble assemblies of circles and provinces, and to have a voice on matters under consideration there.

51. Persons of the burgher estate cannot own noble property except by permission of the sovereign.

60. Burgher owners cannot convey ownership of noble property to other persons of burgher estate, except by special concession.

76. Noblemen shall normally engage in no burgher livelihood or occupation.

77. Where a wholesale business is not associated with a gild, a nobleman may enter upon it.

79. No nobleman, normally, except with special permission of the sovereign, may become a member of a closed merchant gild.

80. Particular rights and duties of the nobility, as belonging either to the whole estate, or to individual members, with respect to their person and property, are determined by the special laws and constitutions of the different provinces.

81. Whoever, by concealing or denying his noble estate, slips into a gild or corporation and carries on a burgher trade, will suffer the loss of his noble rights.

82. The same is all the more true when anyone of noble birth chooses a dishonorable way of life, or any way of life by which he sinks into the common people.

Translated from *Allgemeines Gesetzbuch für die preussischen Staaten*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1791). The clauses printed above appeared in identical form in the *Allgemeines Land-recht für die preussischen Staaten* of 1794, except that those marked with an

asterisk were simply deleted, presumably because in 1794 they too much suggested the principles of the French Revolution.

3. SWEDEN: THE ACT OF UNION AND SECURITY, 1789

1. The king is hereditary; he has full powers to govern and defend the realm, declare war, conclude treaties of peace and alliance with foreign powers; grant pardons, life and restoration of honor and property; dispose at his good pleasure of all royal employments, which must be held by Swedes; administer justice and provide for execution of the laws. Other affairs of state are conducted in the manner he judges most useful.

2. All subjects enjoy the same rights, under protection of the laws; hence the royal high court to which cases are evoked must be composed of both noble and non-noble members. Great and small persons must be judged by the legal tribunals.

3. All orders of the state have the same right to possess and acquire land. The equestrian order and the nobility, nevertheless, are confirmed in their ancient privilege of allodial possession. Peasants shall also have the right to lease crown lands and are guaranteed in their possession.

4. The high dignities and principal offices of the kingdom, and employments at court, are exclusively reserved for the equestrian order and the nobility. Other offices shall be accessible to all subjects of whatever birth or condition.

5. The Swedish people have the incontestable right to discuss and reach agreements with the king on all things concerning subsidies to the state.

6. In meetings of the diet only matters proposed by the king may be deliberated upon.

7. The privileges of each order are confirmed in all respects not contrary to the present Act of Union and Security.

8. The present Act of Union and Security will be personally signed by all kings of Sweden on their accession to the throne, and no change herein made; and in the event of extinction of the dynasty, the Act will bind the new king to be elected.

9. The form of government of 1772 will be preserved inviolably in all respects not changed by the present Act.

Translated from a French text in L. Léouzon Le Duc, *Gustave III* (Paris, 1861), 367–69.

4. POLAND: THE CONSTITUTION OF MAY 3, 1791

In the name of God, etc. we, Stanislas-Augustus, by the grace of God and the will of the nation, king of Poland, etc. . . . decree the present constitution. . . .

1. *Religion of the Government.* The Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion is and will remain forever the national religion. . . . However . . . we assure a free exercise of all religions and forms of worship throughout the extent of Poland. . . .

2. *Landed nobles*. . . We guarantee . . . to the body of the nobility . . . all its liberties, immunities and prerogatives, likewise the preeminence pertaining to it in private as in public life, and notably the rights and privileges granted to this estate by Casimir the Great, Louis of Hungary, Ladislas Jagellon etc. . . . We declare the noble estate in Poland equal in dignity to that of all other countries; we establish the most perfect equality among all members of this body, not only in the right of possessing all offices in the republic, and filling all honorable and lucrative functions, but also in the liberty of uniformly enjoying all liberties and prerogatives attributed to the equestrian order. It is our will above all that individual liberty and security, and property in real and personal estate . . . shall be forever respected in each citizen. . . .

3. *Towns and Burghers*. It is our will that the law decreed by the present diet, under the title, *Our royal towns declared free throughout the extent of the republic*, shall have full and entire force . . . and be regarded as forming part of the present constitution.

4. *Coloni* [*colons*, field workers, serfs] *and other inhabitants of rural districts*. [Humane principles favored; agreements made between owners and serfs must be respected.]

5–11. [Executive, legislative, judicial, military organs of the state.]

Translated from the complete French text in the *Moniteur* (Paris), May 24, 1791.

5. HUNGARY: THE CORONATION OATH OF 1790, AS PRESCRIBED IN THE DIPLOMA AGREED TO BY LEOPOLD II AND THE HUNGARIAN DIET

We, Leopold II, by grace of God elected Emperor of the Romans, always august; of Germany, Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, etc., Apostolic King; Archduke of Austria, etc.: As king of the aforesaid Kingdom of Hungary and other kingdoms and regions annexed to the same, we swear by the living God, and by His most holy mother the Virgin Mary, and by all the saints, to preserve the churches of God, the lords prelates, the barons, magnates, nobles, free cities and all inhabitants of the realm in their immunities, liberties, rights, laws, privileges and good and approved ancient customs; and to do justice to all. . . .

Translated from *Corpus juris hungarici*, 5 vols. (Budapest, 1901), V, 150.

6. BELGIUM: THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF BRABANT, 1789

The three Estates representing the people of the Duchy of Brabant, having decreed on December 26 and 27, and also on December 29 and 30, 1789, the following points . . . :

1. That the sovereignty lately exercised by the former duke shall be henceforth exercised by the three Estates of Brabant.
2. That otherwise the constitution of this province remains intact on all points.
3. And in particular that the Council of Brabant will preserve all its pre-eminencies, rights and prerogatives. . . .

In consequence, on December 31, 1789 . . . at the Town Hall of Brussels, in the great hall prepared for the occasion (a crucifix and a copy of Holy Scripture having been placed in the room), there assembled the above-mentioned three Estates of Brabant, to wit:

Of the First Estate, His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, His Illustrious Greatness the Bishop of Antwerp, etc., etc. . . .

Of the Second Estate, the Prince of Grimbergue, the Marquis of Wemmel, etc., etc. . . .

And of the Third Estate, from the chief-town of Louvain M. Henri Tielens, acting burgomaster . . . from the town of Brussels . . . from the town of Antwerp. . . .

The ceremony opened with prayer. . . .

And the three estates then took an oath . . . [to uphold] the rights, privileges, statutes, usages, properties and exemptions of the churches . . . [and swearing] faith and homage to the three Estates representing the people of Brabant . . . and . . . to support the constitution in all points on the basis of the Joyous Entry, and of the above resolutions.

Translated from F. X. Feller, *Recueil des représentations . . . des Pays-bas autrichiens*, 17 vols. (n.p. 1787–1790), XV, 123–28.

7. GENEVA: THE EDICT OF PACIFICATION, 1782

Title I. On the various Orders in the Republic, and on its Sovereignty

1. All the various Orders which compose the government of Geneva—to wit, the four Syndics, the Small Council or Council of Twenty-five, the Council of Sixty, the Council of Two Hundred or Great Council, and the General Council—will preserve each its particular rights and attributes, in such a way that none of the above named Orders shall encroach in any way on the rights and attributes of the others.

2. The Syndics may be chosen only from among the Council of Twenty-five; members of the Council of Twenty-five may be chosen only from among the Council of Two Hundred; those of the Council of Sixty, only from among the Council of Two Hundred; those of the Council of Two Hundred from among the Citizens and Burghers; and only the Citizens and Burghers of a full twenty-five years of age shall have the right of entrance to the General Council, along with the Syndics and the members of the Small and Great Councils.

3. The sovereignty of the republic belongs to no one of the Orders taken separately, but the General Council alone shall be called the Sovereign Council.

Translated from *Edit de pacification de 1782 imprimé par ordre du Gouvernement* (Geneva, 1782).

8. GREAT BRITAIN: THE CANADA ACT, 1791

... May it therefore please Your Most Excellent Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and of the Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same. ...

5. That every member of each of the said Legislative Councils [of Upper and Lower Canada] shall hold his seat therein for the term of his Life. ...

6. That whenever His Majesty ... shall think proper to confer ... under the Great Seal of either of the said Provinces, any Hereditary Title of Honor, Rank or Dignity of such Province ... it shall and may be lawful ... to annex thereto ... an Hereditary Right of being summoned to the Legislative Council of such Province ... and that every person on whom such Right shall be so conferred, or to whom such right shall severally so descend, shall thereupon be entitled to demand of the Governor ... his Writ of Summons to such Legislative Council. ...

Great Britain: *Statutes at Large*, 31 George III 31. The provision for a hereditary and titled upper house never went into effect in Canada; its significance is its reflection of views in the British Parliament.

9. THE UNITED STATES

(1) The Federal Constitution, 1787

Article I, Section 9. No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States: and no person holding any office of profit or trust under them, shall, without the consent of Congress, accept any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any king, prince or foreign state.

Article IV, Section 2. The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states. ... No person held to service or labor in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall ... be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.

(2) The Pennsylvania Constitution, 1790

Article I, 5–6. The senators shall be chosen for four years by the citizens ... apportioned among the districts according to the number of taxable inhabitants in each. ...

Article IX. That the general, great and essential principles of liberty and free government may be recognized and unalterably established, we declare:

1. That all men are born equally free and independent. . . .

24. That the legislature shall not grant any title of nobility or hereditary distinction, nor create any office the appointment of which shall be for a longer term than during good behavior.

F. N. Thorpe, *Federal and State Constitutions*, 7 vols. (Washington, 1909), V, 3093, 3099, 3101.

10. FRANCE: THE CONSTITUTION OF 1791

Preamble

The National Assembly, wishing to establish the French constitution on the principles that it has recognized and declared, irrevocably abolishes the institutions that have done injury to liberty and to the equality of rights.

Nobility no longer exists, nor peerage, nor hereditary distinction of orders, nor feudal regime, nor patrimonial courts, nor titles, denominations or prerogatives deriving therefrom, nor any order of chivalry, nor any of the corporations or decorations for which proofs of nobility used to be required or which presupposed distinctions of birth, nor any other superiority than that of public officers in the exercise of their functions.

Property in office, and its inheritance, no longer exist.

No privilege or exception to the common law for all Frenchmen any longer exists for any part of the nation or for any individual.

Gilds and corporations for professions, arts and crafts no longer exist.

The law no longer takes cognizance of religious vows or any other engagement contrary to natural rights or to the Constitution.

Title I: Fundamental Provisions Guaranteed by the Constitution

The Constitution guarantees as natural and civil rights:

1. That all citizens are admissible to all positions and employments without other distinction than that of virtues and talents.

2. That all taxes shall be apportioned among all citizens equally in proportion to ability to pay.

3. That the same offenses shall be punished with the same penalties without distinction of persons.

The constitution likewise guarantees as natural and civil rights [liberty of movement, speech, publication, religion, assembly, petition, property, relief of the poor, work for the unemployed and observance of patriotic holidays].

A code of civil law common to the whole kingdom will be drawn up.

Translated from M. Bouchary, ed., *La Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen et la constitution de 1791* (Paris, 1947), 17–18. For the whole constitution in English see J. H. Stewart, *Documentary survey of the French Revolution* (New York, 1951), 231–62.

APPENDIX IV

THE VIRGINIA DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF 1776, AND THE FRENCH DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF 1789

Below are printed, in such a way as to show the resemblances, most of the Virginia Declaration of Rights drafted by George Mason and adopted by the Virginia assembly on June 12, 1776, and most of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen adopted by the French National Assembly on August 26, 1789.

The Virginia declaration differs from the French in its emphasis on freedom and frequency of elections and on jury trial, in its concrete warnings against excessive bail, general warrants, suspending of laws and standing armies, and its more explicit reference to Christian and moral virtues. The French declaration differs from that of Virginia in its clearer formulation of citizenship, its definition of law as the expression of the general will, its definition of liberty as the right to do what does not harm another, its more explicit provision that the law must be the same for all and public office open to all alike on the basis of abilities, its greater reserve in relating freedom of thought and religion to law and order, its provision that property may be taken for public use only with due compensation, its less explicit reference to moral virtues and its adoption of a deistic rather than a Christian tone.

The resemblance remains remarkable. Resemblance in the sequence in which ideas are presented is a stronger indication of filiation than resemblance in content.

Virginia, 1776	France, 1789
1. That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.	1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. . . .
2. That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people; that magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at all times amenable to them.	2. . . . These rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression.
3. That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation or community.	3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation.
3. . . . when a government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, unalienable and indefensible right to reform, alter or abolish it.	15. Society has the right to hold accountable every public agent of administration.
4. That no man, or set of men, are entitled to exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges from the community but in consideration of public services, which not being descendible, neither ought the offices of magistrate, legislator or judge to be hereditary.	2. The aim of all political association is to preserve the natural and imprescriptible rights of man.
5. That the legislative, executive and judicial powers should be separate and distinct.	2. . . . resistance to oppression.
	3 . . . No body, and no individual, may exercise authority which does not emanate from the nation expressly.
	16. Any society in which . . . the separation of powers is not determined has no constitution.

Virginia, 1776

France, 1789

6. That . . . all men having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to the community have the right of suffrage, and cannot be taxed, or deprived of their property for public uses, without their own consent, or that of their representatives. . . .

8. That in all capital or criminal prosecutions a man hath a right to demand the cause and nature of his accusation, to be confronted with the accusers and witnesses, to call for evidence in his favor, and to a speedy trial by an impartial jury of twelve men of his vicinage, without whose unanimous consent he cannot be found guilty; nor can he be compelled to give evidence against himself; that no man be deprived of his liberty, except by the law of the land or the judgment of his peers.

9. That excessive bail ought not to be required . . . nor cruel and inhuman punishments inflicted.

10. That general warrants, whereby an officer or messenger may be commanded to search suspected places without evidence of a fact committed, or to seize any person or persons not named . . . ought not to be granted.

6. . . . All citizens have the right to take part, in person or by their representatives, in the formation [of the law]. . . .

14. All citizens have the right, by themselves or through their representatives, to have demonstrated to them the necessity of public taxes, to consent to them freely. . . .

7. No man may be indicted, arrested or detained except in cases determined by law and according to the forms which it has prescribed.

8. Only strictly necessary punishments may be established by law. . . .

9. Every man being presumed innocent until judged guilty, if it is deemed indispensable to keep him under arrest, all rigor not necessary to secure his person should be severely repressed by law.

7. . . . Those who instigate, expedite, execute or cause to be executed arbitrary orders should be punished. . . .

Virginia, 1776

France, 1789

12. That the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty. . . .

13. That a well-regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural and safe defense of a free State; that standing armies in time of peace should be avoided as dangerous to liberty; and that in all cases the militia should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power.

15. That no free government . . . can be preserved . . . but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality and virtue, and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.

16. That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion. . . .

. . . it is the duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity towards each other.

11. Free communication of thought and opinion is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may therefore speak, write and print freely, on his own responsibility for abuse of this liberty in cases determined by law.

12. Preservation of the rights of man and the citizen requires the existence of public forces. These forces are therefore instituted for the advantage of all, not for the private benefit of those to whom they are entrusted.

PREAMBLE. . . . that this declaration, by being constantly present to all members of the social body, may keep them at all times aware of their rights and duties; that the acts of both the legislative and executive powers [may be] liable at every moment to comparison with the aim of all political institutions. . . .

10. No one may be disturbed for his opinions, even in religion, provided that their manifestation does not trouble public order as established by law.

PREAMBLE. . . . in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being.

APPENDIX V

"DEMOCRATIC" AND "BOURGEOIS" CHARACTERISTICS IN THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION OF 1791

It seems desirable to perform, for the French constitution of 1791, an operation resembling, in a lesser way, the one recently performed by Robert E. Brown for the Massachusetts constitution of 1780 and the United States federal constitution, that is, to assemble evidence that the French constitution of 1791 was somewhat more "democratic," and somewhat less "bourgeois," than has been commonly said in the past half century.

Conservatives in 1791, such as Burke and Mounier, regarded the constitution as "democratic," meaning that it applied the elective principle very extensively, based representation on numbers, and did away with inheritance of public position. As late as Taine it was customary for conservatives to stress, though with disapproval, the breadth of popular participation in politics under the constitution of 1791 (*Origines de la France contemporaine*, 1882, II, 263–70). With Madelin, on the conservative side, we get an emphasis on narrowly bourgeois provisions which belied the Declaration of Rights (*Rev. fr.*, 1912, pp. 108–9). Burke, defending "a permanent landed interest," had already, in 1791, identified the French experiment in political democracy with a kind of bourgeois rule, or government, as he said, by "tradesmen, bankers and voluntary clubs of bold, presuming young persons: advocates, attorneys, notaries, managers of newspapers, and those cabals of literary men called academies" (*Works*, 1839, IV, 13).

On the democratic side, in 1789–1791, Robespierre, Desmoulins, Grégoire, Marat, and others objected to the limitations placed by the constitution on suffrage and electoral powers. By the time that Michelet and Louis Blanc treated the subject, shortly after the Revolution of 1848, the question was already an old one, with Michelet emphasizing the democratic character of the constitution, offering figures, and denying that the constitution was "essentially bourgeois, as has so often been repeated," and Louis Blanc maintaining that it "was essentially bour-

geois, whatever M. Michelet may say." "It is not a question of figures," added Blanc, "but of justice" (Michelet, *Rev. fr.*, ed. 1868, II, 381; Blanc, *Rev. fr.*, ed. 1854, VI, 99). A half century later, Jean Jaurès, a social democrat and a Marxist, but a humane and perceptive historian, reached a rounded judgment on the work of the Constituent Assembly, which he found to be halfway between the democracy of universal suffrage and the *bourgeoisie censitaire* of 1815–1848. He concluded that only the "sub-proletariat" had been unfranchised in 1791 (*Hist. socialiste*, I, 378–98).

Many of the French academic school have shown a less judicial tone than the socialist Jaurès. For Aulard, "the bourgeoisie formed itself into a politically privileged class" (*Hist. pol. de la Rev. fr.*, Paris, 1905, p. 70), for Sagnac "the bourgeoisie monopolized power" (in Lavissee, *Hist. de Fr. contemp.*, Paris, 1920, I, p. 165), for Mathiez an "aristocracy of wealth replaced that of birth" (*Rev. fran.*, Paris, 1922, I, 115), for Villat the electoral regime was "a system of bourgeois selfishness" (*Rev. et empire*, Paris, 1936, I, 72–73), and for Godechot "only the rich could vote" (*Institutions de la France sous la Rev. et l'Empire*, Paris, 1951, p. 73). These views have passed into many histories of the French Revolution written in English. They all reflect Louis Blanc's impatience with figures.

The Constituent Assembly, by an actual count based on local returns, determined on May 27, 1791 that there were then 4,298,360 "active citizens" in France, that is, adult males, at least twenty-five years of age, domiciled locally for one year, not in domestic service, and paying an annual direct tax equal in amount to the wages of three days' unskilled labor. Only these active citizens received the vote. The population of France at this time was probably between 25,000,000 and 26,000,000 (not 27,190,023 as stated by the Assembly, which made no pretense to knowing or having counted the total population); and as for age distribution, both Moheau and Lavoisier estimated that 44 per cent were under 21 years old, and 59 per cent under 31. (Levasseur, *Population française*, 1889, I, 276.) We may assume that half the males were under 25, and half 25 or older. The highest possible figure for total men of 25 and over is thus 6,500,000; and if there were 4,298,360 active citizens, Mathiez was exaggerating in saying that "3,000,000 poor were excluded from the rights of citizenship" (Mathiez, I, 114). Counting all men of 21 and over, it is apparently true that about 3,000,000 were excluded from the vote, since there would be about 7,280,000 men over 21; but these "passive citizens," without the vote, included young men under 25 of all social classes, men living with parents and hence paying no tax, those not yet domiciled locally for a year, and domestic servants, as well as persons too poor to be liable for the required tax. It must be remarked also that the tax reforms of the Constituent Assembly, by replacing many indirect taxes of the Old Regime with a direct tax on real and personal property, carried the liability to direct taxation far down in the social scale. Assuming the accuracy of the figure of 4,298,360 for active citizens (which may be debatable, but is not in fact contested), I would judge that a quarter of adult males may have been excluded from the vote by reason of poverty. Young people, transients, and newcomers in particular areas, of various economic levels but all without the vote, would, however, be a force of political importance, especially in revolutionary

times. In practice in 1791 the distinction between active and passive citizens was often locally uncertain. In principle, it is hard to see how the Assembly excluded more than a quarter of the population on economic grounds.

Active citizens had the right to vote only for "electors," who in turn, in electoral assemblies, chose the national deputies, the bishops and various local officials. It was these electors who exercised true political citizenship, and the heart of the question is how many persons were qualified to be chosen as electors. To be an elector, one had to be an active citizen paying a tax equal to ten days' wages of common labor. Various writers state that only about 50,000 persons in all France could qualify as electors; see Gottschalk, *Era of the Fr. Rev.* (1929), p. 172; Gershoy, *Fr. Rev.* (1947), p. 147; J. M. Thompson, *Fr. Rev.* (American edition, 1945), p. 136; Göhring, *Grosse Revolution* (1951), II, 52; Klay, *Zensuswahlrecht und Gleichheitsprinzip . . . 1791* (1956), p. 85. I have also fallen into this error in my *History of the Modern World* (1956), 347. The enormity of the misrepresentation may be seen by the fact that the number qualifying as electors, though not really known, is estimated at 3,000,000; see Sagnac, p. 165 and Godechot, p. 74.

The error has arisen from a confusion of the number qualified to serve as electors with the number actually chosen and functioning as electors in 1791, which was in the neighborhood of 50,000—naturally so, since the constitution provided that there should be one elector for each hundred (or local fraction thereof) of the active citizens, who, as stated, were found to number 4,298,360 in 1791. It was of course not always the same 50,000 persons who functioned as electors, or at least such was not the intent or provision of the constitution. Electors were chosen in 1790; new electors were chosen in 1791; and the constitution provided for a new choice of electors by active citizens in March 1793 and every two years thereafter. Three-quarters of the active citizens, and some three-sevenths of all men over 21, were in short qualified to serve as electors. The extent of participation is illustrated by a curious incident of June 15, 1791, when the constitutional committee recommended to the Assembly, for the forthcoming election of national deputies, the use of a kind of mechanical tabulating device to count the vote in electoral assemblies. One of the reasons offered was to prevent the deception of "electors who cannot read and write." This is very different from the picture of a France ruled by 50,000 of the "rich"; in this respect, at least, Taine's picture of a bustling popular political activity in 1791 seems far more realistic.

It has been usual even for historians with all the figures at hand to reach conclusions somewhat at variance with them. Thus Sagnac and Godechot both tell us that 3,000,000 qualified as electors, but that the wealthy bourgeoisie controlled the state; that there were only 967 electors in Paris (meaning that 967 were chosen in the election of 1791), which of course signifies that there were about 100,000 active citizens, which in a city of 600,000 would in turn signify that only a minority of adult males were "passive"; and they intimate that had the system been less "bourgeois" the electors would have been more numerous, whereas actually absenteeism was chronic in the electoral assemblies, and sometimes there were only 200 present and voting in the electoral assembly of Paris, because most of the electors could not afford to spend several days away from their normal occupations. It is

true that such absenteeism in the assemblies threw decisions into the hands of the most assiduous, who might be the more economically independent, but included also those who made a business of politics.

The majority in the Constituent Assembly did conclude, in August 1791, with the rise of radical republicanism after Louis XVI's flight to Varennes, that it had gone too far in a democratic direction, and did make changes whose purpose was to confine the significant vote, that is, the vote of the electors, more definitely to the middle class. It left the qualifications for active citizens untouched. For electors, however, who before August 1791 had qualified by the payment of a direct tax equal to the value of ten days' wages (and it was by this system that the election of 1791, including choice of national deputies for the forthcoming Legislative Body, had already taken place), the Constituent Assembly, in August 1791, prescribed more restrictive qualifications. These resemble those of the British Reform Bill of 1832, in that they based the electoral right on amounts of property or rental varying from place to place. To qualify as an elector, by the provisions of August 1791, it was necessary (1) in cities of more than 6,000 inhabitants to own real property assessed on the tax rolls at an annual income value equivalent to 200 days' unskilled labor, or to lease a dwelling worth an annual income value (or rental) of 150 days' labor, (2) in cities with less than 6,000 inhabitants, the same, with 150 in place of 200, and 100 in place of 150, (3) in rural districts to own real property of an annual value of 150 days' labor, or to lease, or to work on shares (*métayage*), real property of an annual value of 400 days' labor. I have seen no estimates of how many persons lost their right to be chosen as electors by these changes. At the same time, where before August 1791 it had been necessary to pay a direct tax of 54 livres (the *marc d'argent*) to qualify as a national deputy, after August 1791 any active citizen might so qualify. The changes are significant only of the intent of the Constituent Assembly toward its end, since the constitution did not last long enough for them to take effect.

There has been no attempt, to my knowledge, to make a comparison of the property qualifications under the French constitution of 1791 with those obtaining at the same time in Great Britain and America, though these were often mentioned in a general way during the debates in the French Assembly. Were such comparisons realistically made, it would be difficult to say, for example, that the Constituent Assembly, in prescribing a *marc d'argent* for national deputies, wished to "reserve the seats for a landed aristocracy, as in England." (Godechot, *Institutions*, 74.) In England, a member of the House of Commons representing a county was required by law to own land of an annual income value of £600, or 15,000 French livres. Since the French tax of 1791 was intended to represent about one sixth of annual income from property, a tax of a *marc d'argent*, 54 livres, would represent an income of about 300 livres from property. The difference between 15,000 and 300 reflects a difference between conflicting theories of society.

Comparison is made difficult, but by no means impossible, by the setting of the French qualifications in terms of days' labor, as well as the differences between livres, dollars, and shillings. As for the relevancy of the comparison, it must be emphasized that the great difference in the three countries lay in the distribution of land ownership, small properties being very common and indeed almost uni-

PROPERTY QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOTING AND ELIGIBILITY, 1791 (IN DOLLARS OF 1792)

	Voter	Elector	Deputy
France			
To August 1791	Direct tax of 30 to 60 cents a year	Direct tax of \$1 to \$2 a year	Direct tax of \$11 a year
August 1791	Same as above	Rural districts: Real property worth \$15 to \$30 a year; or lease or <i>métayage</i> worth \$40 to \$80 a year Towns under 6,000: Real property worth \$15 to \$30 a year; or lease worth \$10 to \$20 a year Towns over 6,000: Real property worth \$20 to \$40 a year; or lease worth \$15 to \$30.	Same as for voter
England	Counties: Real property worth \$10 a year; freehold only; copyhold excluded Towns (if represented as boroughs): Various		Counties: Real property worth \$3,000 a year Towns (if represented as boroughs) : Real property worth \$1,500 a year
Massachusetts	Real property worth \$12 a year, or any property worth \$240 capital value		Lower house: Real property worth \$400 capital value, or any property worth \$800
Pennsylvania (constitutions of 1776 and 1790)	Taxpayers and their grown sons		Taxpayers and their grown sons
U.S. Federal Constitution	As determined by states		No property qualifications

versal in Massachusetts, less common but not uncommon in France, and increasingly rare in England.

The accompanying table converts all property qualifications into dollars. The first United States dollars were authorized and defined in 1792, and the error will not be too great if we assume that a dollar of 1792 equaled five Massachusetts shillings of 1780, four English shillings, and five French livres. The money value of a day's unskilled labor in France, for determination of electoral qualifications, was set locally according to local conditions, but, by a ruling of the Constituent Assembly, it could nowhere be set for this purpose at less than half a livre or more than one livre per day. A tax of "three days' wages" thus meant a tax of between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 livres. In 1791 the Assembly replaced various old taxes with a direct tax of 300,000,000 livres on real and personal property, or rather on the income from such property—land, farm equipment, business property, mechanics' tools, etc. The average mean incidence of this tax was thus about 12 livres per capita, or, assuming as many as 6,000,000 taxpayers, about 50 livres per taxpayer; and, while this gives no indication whatever of the distribution of property, it suggests that the livre of taxes required for active citizenship, or the 5 to 10 livres required for electors, were not actually very high. Indeed, even the marc d'argent, or the 54 livre tax required to qualify as a national deputy, and which aroused such controversy, was not far in amount from the probable mean average tax; according to one estimate expressed in the Assembly on August 12, 1791, about 60,000 to 80,000 persons paid a direct tax of at least a marc d'argent. One is led to conclude, if the total of men over 25 was about 6,500,000, that almost seventy of them in a hundred had the vote, about fifty in a hundred could serve as electors, and one in a hundred could qualify as a national deputy, before August 1791.

It is certain that the Constituent Assembly wished to reduce and screen the direct impact of the mass of the population upon government; but only from a modern Marxist point of view can its work be meaningfully described as predominantly bourgeois; nor did Jaurès himself so describe it. Whatever the high hopes of early democrats, political democracy seems to work best when little more is asked of the voter than to pause briefly at a convenient polling place and mark his choice among candidates on a ballot prepared beforehand. This requires a complex system of decentralized polling places, and organized political parties which draw up lists of candidates for the voter. Neither existed in any country in 1791. It was necessary for voters to meet in assemblies where the names of candidates could be proposed and their merits discussed. The electoral arrangements made by the Constituent Assembly must be explained by mechanical and administrative needs as well as by political objectives.

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