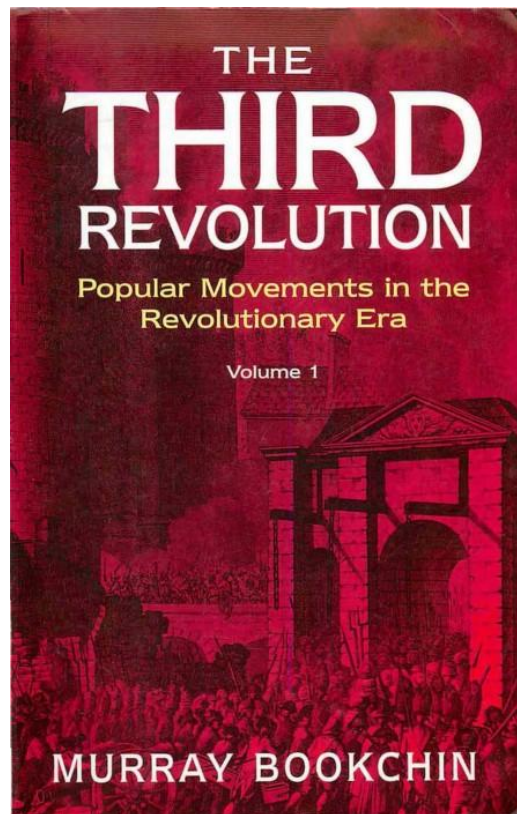# The Third Revolution

Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era

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VOLUME ONE

Preface

This book has been written because of a deepening concern I have felt over the past two decades: the ebbing of the revolutionary tradition. The era of the great revolutionary movements, from that of the English Revolution of the 1640s to that of the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39, is waning today from the consciousness of even radical young people, let alone the reasonably educated. Insofar as these revolutions are remembered at all, they are dismissed as irrelevant failures or as the incubators of authoritarian states and their rulers such as Oliver Cromwell, Maximilien Robespierre, and Joseph Stalin.

Yet while the names of the tyrants that the revolutions are said to have produced live on as historical villains, the names of the people who tried to rescue their liberatory potentialities are nearly lost, and so too are the exhilarating ideas they propounded. All but forgotten, in fact, are the littleknown popular spokespersons who articulated great visions of freedom and often coordinated great insurrectionary uprisings in towns and the countryside, like Thomas Münzer, Richard Overton, Daniel Shays, Jean Varlet, Jean Varlin, Louise Michel, and Nestor Makhno. Each of these individuals, among many others, earnestly tried to propel the great revolutions of past centuries toward a full realization of their emancipatory goals. Yet they and their endeavors are usually forgotten, often completely so, except among people who have a specialized knowledge of the revolutions in which they participated.

That the revolutionary era of the past four centuries continually widened the radical horizon of freedom is equally unknown to the present generation. Few people today are aware of the radical programs, achievements, and gains, as well as the errors that were made, especially at the popular base of revolutionary movements. Ordinary people—peasants, workers, artisans, radical intellectuals— made great attempts to take full control of society, establish fairly egalitarian forms of social organization, and defend important human rights as well as expound lofty goals of freedom. That such an era, with all its problems and ideals, may become lost to memory has been too chilling for me to contemplate.

It is this social and historical amnesia that has impelled me to write an account of the revolutionary era—to set down people, events, social factors, and political programs of popular revolutionary movements that began with the peasant wars before the modern era and reached remarkable fruition for a brief time in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39. Each of these revolutions was built ideologically on the historical memory of the revolutions that had preceded it. Americans were deeply conscious of the English Civil War of the 1640s and 1650s; the French were profoundly affected by the American Revolution, whose radicalism is usually woefully understated in the historical literature today; and the revolutions that followed were immensely influenced by the events of the French Revolution.

My principal orientation in this work has been toward the popular or "mass" movements and the so-called "grassroots" institutional structures and organizational frameworks of the groups that propelled the great revolutions forward. For each revolution, I have tried to provide the

social, economic, cultural, and political background that gave rise to and sustained its radical movement.

I have avoided viewing the intentions of these movements as reflecting the emergence and consolidation of industrial capitalism; rather, I have taken the demands of various revolutionary tendencies at their word. I believe that the great mass of people who made the revolutions described in this work genuinely believed in the notions of liberty, equality, fraternity, and the pursuit of happiness that they articulated—not necessarily in free trade, a ruthless egotism, or class collaboration, contrary to the retrospective interpretations that have been given to their liberatory slogans.

Each revolution, moreover, advanced moral, political, and social alternatives to capitalism— although they lacked any clear idea of what capitalism would become and often even cleared the way for modern capitalism. The popular revolutionaries did present alternatives to the self-seeking, competitive, and acquisitive society that prevails today. The reasons that they failed should be a matter of the greatest interest to us, now that capitalism is often taken as a given in ordinary discourse or seen as the "end of history," the outcome of humanity's long and bitter struggle for the good society.

Hence I do not work with the teleological conviction that what now exists *had* to come into existence; rather, it was one of many *other* possibilities that were latent in the revolutionary potentialities that existed generations, indeed centuries, ago. Any prejudgments of the past in the light of the present represent the abdication of a moral interpretation of history—the abjuring of an emancipatory "should be" that critically opposes the prevalent "what is." If a largely retrospective or even fatalistic perspective were to guide us, we would have to consider the high ideals that emerged in past revolutions as merely an ideological patina for uncontrollable economic forces that determined human behavior irrespective of human wishes and desires.

In fact, if cultural factors were merely reflexes of economic ones, capitalism would have emerged at almost any time in the past, as far back as antiquity. Capitalists in sizable numbers lived in ancient Greece and Rome as well as many parts of medieval Europe, and they were no less acquisitive or enterprising in their pursuit of wealth than our own bourgeoisie. But what prevented them from taking a commanding position in social life—assuming that they tried to do so—was precisely a host of cultural factors that favored the ownership of land over capital, denigrated material accumulation, and strongly emphasized social status in the form of noble titles rather than the ownership of fungible property.

The title of this book —*The Third Revolution* —has been chosen largely to show that capitalism as we know it today was not predestined to gain the supremacy it presently has; rather, that popular revolutionary movements offered, and fought for, more rational and democratic social alternatives to the present society and to so-called "bourgeois revolutions," to use the label that has so often been given to the English, American, and French Revolutions. I have thus examined the classical revolutions internally, from within their own inner dynamics, rather than externally, from the standpoint of where we are today.

My emphasis on popular insurgencies places unavoidable limits on the extent to which I can describe these sweeping historical movements as a whole. Readers who want more detailed accounts of specific revolutions may consult the sources in my notes and the bibliographical essay at the end of this book. Fortunately, nearly every work I cite in the essay contains references to the abundant, increasingly specialized works that now exist in many languages. I have tried to use sources in the English language as much as possible to meet the needs of the general readership

to which this book is addressed, and I have provided reference notes mainly for the quotations that appear in the narrative.

Let me make it clear from the outset that this book does not attempt to be a work of academic scholarship. Rather it has been written to chart out a memorable legacy for the reader unlikely to be concerned with esoteric sources or minor details. It is admittedly an account of the popular movements that propelled the great revolutions forward to their most radical and democratic extremes—and it is an interpretation of events as they might have been seen by a radical participant in them.

I do not regard such an approach by a twentieth-century lifelong student of the great revolutions as presumptuous. When circumstances afforded popular revolutionaries sufficient freedom of expression, they were often very eloquent in presenting their own interpretations of what they were doing and made their goals quite clear in pamphlets, speeches, manifestos, and actions. What I have done is to cite them, their ideas, and their actions with the attention they deserve, and free them from the historical dungeons to which many of them have been confined by conventional, often middle-class, and partisan historians.

I make no claim to be impartial in my own views—as though "impartiality" were possible in discussions of great revolutions—and I admit quite frankly that I would have stood side by side with Jean Varlet in the *sans-culottes'* uprising of 1793 and with Jean Varlin during the embattled days of the Paris Commune of 1871.

This volume—the first of two, ranging from the peasant wars of the sixteenth century to the French Revolution—was read as the basis of a course on the revolutionary tradition to my students in Vermont in 1988–89. The extensive text that I prepared was supplemented by extemporaneous elaborations and discussions. I wish to thank my colleague and companion, Janet Biehl, for editing the text and giving it more of a book format for the general reader, filling in background material, and writing most of Chapter 13 on the basis of discussions between us and her own research. Both the style and content of the book remain entirely my own responsibility. I wish also to thank my editor, Steve Cook, of Cassell, for his encouragement and support for this book.

Volume Two of *The Third Revolution* will take the reader through the nineteenth century, focusing on the French uprisings of 1830, 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871, and into the twentieth century, focusing on revolutions in Russia, Germany, and Spain. So acutely aware are we, these days, of the shortcomings of these revolutions—the elitism of the political factions and parties in France and Russia, for instance, and the extent to which the needs of women, native peoples, and persecuted minorities of all kinds were not fully encompassed by revolutionary movements—that we tend to overlook how sweeping the popular revolutionary movements in Europe and America were in so many respects.

The fact that I have not addressed in any great detail certain shortcomings of the great democratic revolutions, such as the limited role that women were permitted to play in them and the oppression that African-Americans suffered even as the American Revolution honored their "natural rights" in the breach, does not mean that I am oblivious to the rights and interests of women, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities. But any introductory account of the revolutionary era must necessarily be highly selective in its choice of events and facts. Fortunately, there are now many books available that deal in considerable detail with issues of gender and ethnicity in these revolutions and that adequately fill out my own gaps.

Murray Bookchin
Burlington, Vermont
June 14,1993

Introduction. Revolution from Below

The title of this book, *The Third Revolution,* is taken from what may seem an extraordinary historical coincidence. The demand for a "third revolution" was actually raised in two great revolutions: the French Revolution in the closing decade of the eighteenth century, and 120 years later in the Russian Revolution during the opening decades of the twentieth.

The revolutionary *sans-culottes* of Paris in 1793 raised the cry to replace the supposedly radical National Convention with a popular democracy—the Parisian sections—that they themselves had established during a series of insurrections, often against the wishes of the Convention's Jacobin leaders who professed to speak in their name. In another place and another time, in 1921 in Russia, the revolutionary workers of Petrograd and the famous "red sailors" of Kronstadt, the capital's nearby naval base, raised the identical cry. They, too, sought to overthrow an authoritarian, though seemingly radical regime—in their case, one led by Bolsheviks—with democratically elected councils or "soviets."

In surveying the events of these two periods, it struck me as fascinating—and more than a mere coincidence—that this very same demand, word for word, was raised in both Paris and Petrograd toward the end of two historically crucial revolutions that were separated by such a great span of time.

The two peoples who raised the demand profoundly differed in their cultural and social conditions. Neither the Petrograd workers nor the Kronstadt sailors were schooled, as far as I can discern, in revolutionary history—certainly not in the details of 1793—and they could not have known much about the Parisian *sans-culottes.* Yet they directed the identical cry against a seemingly revolutionary regime that they had helped bring to power and by which they now felt betrayed.

What was it about the dynamics of these two great revolutions that caused such a demand to be raised twice? What brought these revolutionary populaces into open, even bloody, opposition to the leaders, organizations, and regimes that claimed to be radical to one degree or another?

In both cases a "first revolution" had been directed against a patently obsolete monarchy—the Bourbons in France and the Romanovs in Russia—because of the gross incompetence of the royal regime. A shapeless but earnest coalition of liberals, radicals, and even dissatisfied members of the courtly ruling class had taken over the reins of government in this "first revolution," replacing the monarchy with a new and moderate but irresolute representative government. Accordingly, in both cases, a "second revolution" had followed the first one, in which a radical government that had the support of the most insurgent people proceeded to overthrow the moderate one. But once in power, the radical government, too, became discredited to a point where the revolutionary populace demanded still a "third revolution" to reclaim the power they had lost.

A number of writers on revolution, perhaps most popularly Crane Brinton in *The Anatomy of Revolution,* have advanced a "stages" theory of revolutions that accounts very well for the first two revolutions. According to Brinton's approach, the English, French, and Russian Revolutions

all underwent a series of fairly distinct steps that followed a rough schematic pattern, somewhat as follows:

Initially, the people are drawn into a more or less unified revolt against a monarchy, which leads to the establishment of a moderate regime—or what I (and they) in retrospect call the first revolution. After its initial success, the revolution moves in an increasingly radical direction, followed or accompanied by a civil war that awakens broad sectors of the lower classes, in which extremists engage in a struggle with their formerly moderate allies, thereby leading to the second revolution. In time, however, conflicts within the revolutionary camp are resolved by a military regime, which itself is supplanted by a restoration of the old regime. According to Brinton's approach—and that of Marx, I should add—this counterrevolution is never entirely successful. The revolution, viewed as a whole, wins in the sense that its social conquests cannot be removed by the restored old regime and are thus institutionalized as a permanent historical advance, despite the nominal defeat of the revolution and its military sequelae.

Besides Brinton, theorists influenced by the "human ecology" ideas of the Chicago School of urban sociology have also advanced such a highly idealized pattern. So, too, have Marxist historians. Leon Trotsky contended to the end of his life that Stalins rule over the former Soviet Union constituted a"Thermidor" comparable to the counterrevolutionary rule of the Directory—the moderates who overthrew Robespierre and the Jacobins—in France.

In fact, the "stages" theory is not completely bereft of truth. Stages there surely were in the major revolutions, successful and unsuccessful alike. The extraordinary similarity, at least in the sequence of events, between the English, French, and Russian Revolutions raises fascinating questions, some of which bear on the nature of revolution itself.

To what extent did political factors outweigh economic ones? To what extent were the outcomes different from what revolutionary leaders had intended— and if greatly so, why? What emancipatory directions *could* the revolutions have followed, had certain specific events not altered their courses profoundly? In what ways and with what goals did the popular movements—more specifically, ordinary people themselves—affect these revolutions?

The fact is that the stages theory describes only the first and second revolutions. Remarkably, the insurgent people who called for a third revolution seem to have dropped out of the historical schema worked out by Brinton, Trotsky, and others. Yet they were an abiding presence throughout the revolutionary era, and, more than any of the revolutionary figures and parties that loom over most historical accounts of the great revolutions, they were the authentic radicals in the events in which they participated.

For the insurrectionary people, almost alone, were seeking to reclaim and expand highly democratic institutions that had been established during earlier phases of the revolutionary cycle and whose power had been subsequently reduced or usurped by the parties and factions that professed to speak in their name. The French *sans-culottes* sought to extend the authority of their neighborhood popular assemblies or "sections" at the expense of the increasingly powerful, centralized, essentially Jacobin-controlled state apparatus. The Russian workers and sailors wanted to democratize and reinvigorate their grassroots councils or "soviets" as a substitute for the increasingly authoritarian Bolshevik-controlled state apparatus. In demanding a third revolution, they in effect articulated a popular desire for the establishment of a radical democracy, a demand that reached the point of outright insurgency. Ultimately, their uprisings were quelled when the self-styled revolutionary organizations of the second revolution turned against the popular movement and suppressed it with military force.

The failure of insurrectionary people to achieve a popular democracy has nonetheless profoundly affected the events of our own time. Indeed, seldom has the past been so integrally part of the present, for we live under the shadow of the failure of the French and Russian Revolutions to this very day, all recent claims to the contrary notwithstanding. Whether directly, as in the case of the Russian Revolution, or indirectly, as in the case of the French, they profoundly shaped the course of the twentieth century and of the century that is soon to follow—and we cannot afford to face the future without learning what they have to teach us.

It was not only in the French and Russian Revolutions that the demand for a third revolution arose: radical popular tendencies have emerged repeatedly in revolutionary movements of the past, essentially voicing the same demands as the French and Russian insurgents, albeit in different words and different ways. Nor have they been simple popular explosions that lacked direction, purpose, or leadership.

Revolutionary "mobs" or crowds seemed to erupt like elemental forces in major revolutions, yet they were hardly as formless or "chaotic" as many historical accounts and reminiscences would lead us to believe. Episodic crowd eruptions or "riots" should not be confused with the more lasting and underlying popular movements that slowly crystallized from small groups in neighborhoods, towns, and villages into increasingly larger ones during revolutionary periods. Before huge crowds surged around the Bastille on July 14, 1789, in Paris, or confronted tsarist troops in the avenues of Petrograd on February 23 and 24, 1917, the people had already established vital political networks in the slums and working-class neighborhoods of both cities.

Such networks existed not only in urban but in village milieus. In the countryside, village life itself often fostered among its members, for all their internal status differences, highly intimate ties and a deep sense of collective mutual responsibility. Radical historians in particular tend to overstate the extent to which the European peasantry was dispersed and atomized and therefore incapable of joint action. They echo too closely Marx's disparagement of the peasant world in general as mean-spirited, based on his perception of the egoism of the French peasantry of his own time. If all peasant societies resembled that of nineteenth-century France, it would be difficult to explain the peasant movements that fought so zealously and with such self-sacrifice in the Mexican Revolution of 1912, not to speak of the Vietnamese War against the Japanese, French, and American colonialists. The great *jacqueries* of Europe and Russia would remain mysteries to us if we did not understand that they were rooted in the strong and collectivist village ties of precapitalist agrarian communities.

From the largely medieval peasant wars of the sixteenth-century Reformation to the modern uprisings of industrial workers and peasants, oppressed peoples have created their own popular forms of community association—potentially, the popular infrastructure of a new society—to replace the oppressive states that ruled over them. Generally these popular associations shared the same goal: the *de facto* political empowerment of the people. In time, during the course of the revolutions, these associations took the institutional form of local assemblies, much like town meetings, or representative councils of mandated recallable deputies.

These networks were generally impervious not only to police surveillance but to subsequent historical investigation. With few exceptions and only in recent times have historians tried to look beyond the formal revolutionary institutions, such as revolutionary parliamentary bodies, and organizations, such as political parties, to discern how ordinary people, and particularly the anonymous militants among them, engaged in their own self-organization.

It is these subterranean popular movements, their various forms of organization such as committee networks and assemblies, and their often littleknown or neglected leaders that I explore in the pages that follow. My own success in this endeavor is necessarily limited, since this hidden area of activity is hardly replete with documentation and objective reminiscences.

Nonetheless, on the basis of what 1 have been able to gather, I have found that the process of popular self-organization often broadly follows a definite pattern. In the poorer neighborhoods—and in the countryside, in the villages of underprivileged peasants—people initially gather in local taverns, cafes, squares, and marketplaces; in industrial areas they gather in factory "hang-outs," in union halls, or in *casas del pueblo* (literally, "houses of the people," or neighborhood centers). There they have access to newspapers, lectures, classes, and the like. Ultimately, these loose gatherings give rise to a distinctive neighborhood political *culture,* with educational, debating, even choral and literary groups. Such little-noticed and poorly explored cultures then undergo a process of structuration, influenced by an articulate, militant grassroots leadership, so that an organized popular movement begins to emerge. This occurs quite often without the help of any political parties. There is a very real sense, in fact, in which all the great revolutions of the past were civic or *municipal* revolutions at their base, whether it was a village, town, neighborhood, or city where the complex process of community structuration took place. Hence what often appears to the police, to higher authorities, and even to sympathetic journalists and historians as a "mob" in a period of social upheaval is frequently a remarkably articulated, communally definable, and well-led popular upsurge.

These communal processes of structuration not only nourish revolutions, but also explain why large masses of people persistently engage in recurring battles with well-armed troops. These popular political cultures and their networks sustain the revolutionary people and its leaders during periods of temporary defeat, which are often followed by vigorous and even more decisive upsurges. In February 1917, when ever-larger crowds from the working-class Vyborg district of Petrograd invaded the center of the city, they were able repeatedly to defy the clubs and pistols of police, the sabers of dragoons, and the gunfire of infantry regiments, until finally even the military garrison itself mutinied and helped to pull down the tsarist monarchy. In a very real sense, then, movements of oppressed strata and classes were clearly civic movements, rooted in the communal life of villages, towns, cities, and neighborhoods, not only landed estates, small shops, and factories—a fact that has not received the recognition it deserves from historians of the great revolutions.

Initially, no political party led these people, least of all the principal parties of the Russian Left: the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, and the Social Revolutionaries. In fact, shortly before the Petrograd workers began their uprising, tsarist police arrested the city committees of the revolutionary parties—perhaps fortunately, since their rather dogmatic ideologies, and their inhibiting notions of the "stages" through which they believed a revolution should go, could very well have impeded the insurrectionary upsurge that overthrew the monarchy.

But this upsurge was neither formless nor impulsive. The victory of the Petrograd people is testimony to the hidden structures that they had already created within their neighborhoods and factories, and to the little-known leaders—the class-conscious insurgents—who, as orators and catalysts, provided indispensable guidance to their neighbors and co-workers in fomenting the revolution. Thus, after temporary setbacks, the people consciously reconvened their forces and, in large part because of their local leaders, continued to attack the official institutions until they had completely demolished them. Like the Russian workers in 1917, the Parisian *sans-culottes* too

were suppressed for a time, then rose up again until they succeeded in pushing the revolution in a more radical direction.

This first phase of a revolution, in which the people and their leaders initially confront the established authorities, may also be called its popular phase. Not only do the authorities of the old regimes seek to control this phase, but they seek to suppress the popular movement—and if they fail, parties, liberal or radical in complexion, try to move to the head of the popular movement. Nor do these parties hesitate to use the very slogans raised by the people and their leaders to gain control over it, as did Danton and Robespierre during the French Revolution and Lenin and Trotsky during the Russian Revolution.

Revolutions are profoundly educational processes, indeed veritable cauldrons in which all kinds of conflicting ideas and tendencies are sifted out in the minds of a revolutionary people. No sooner is the old regime overthrown than a veritable storm of pamphlets, manifestos, and resolutions appears, together with public meetings, demonstrations, clubs, and societies—in short, a war of written words and oratory from which we can begin to identify the conflicting factions and their goals within the revolutionary movement.

Individuals who enter into a revolutionary process are by no means the same after the revolution as they were before it began. Those who encounter a modicum of success in revolutionary times learn more within a span of a few weeks or months than they might have learned over their lifetime in nonrevolutionary times. Conventional ideas fall away with extraordinary rapidity; values and prejudices that were centuries in the making disappear almost overnight. Strikingly innovative ideas are quickly adopted, tested, and, where necessary, discarded. Even newer ideas, often flagrantly radical in character, are adopted with an dlan that frightens ruling elites—however radical the latter may profess to be—and they soon become deeply rooted in the popular consciousness. Authorities hallowed by age-old tradition are suddenly divested of their prestige, legitimacy, and power to govern, while the revolutionary people compels its own often unnerved and hesitant leaders to adapt themselves to radical changes in popular mood.

So tumultuous socially and psychologically are revolutions in general that they constitute a standing challenge to ideologues, including sociobiologists who assert that human behavior is fixed and human nature predetermined. Revolutionary changes reveal a remarkable flexibility in "human nature," yet few psychologists have elected to study the social and psychological tumult of revolution as well as the institutional changes it so often produces. This much must be said with fervent emphasis: *to continue to judge the behavior of a people during and after a revolution by the same standards one judged them by beforehand is completely myopic,*

I wish to argue that the capacity of a revolution to produce far-reaching ideological and moral changes in a people stems primarily from the opportunity it affords ordinary, indeed oppressed, people to exercise popular selfmanagement—to enter directly, rapidly, and exhilaratingly into control over most aspects of their social and personal lives. To the extent that an insurrectionary people takes over the reins of power from the formerly hallowed elites who oppressed them and begins to restructure society along radically populist lines, individuals grow aware of latent powers within themselves that nourish their previously suppressed creativity, sense of self-worth, and solidarity. They learn that society is neither immutable nor sanctified, as inflexible custom had previously taught them; rather, it is malleable and subject, within certain limits, to change according to human will and desire.

At some point every revolutionary people must confront the issue of how to render permanent the changes it has made and the innovations it has introduced—that is, how to *institution-*

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alize people's own participation in the management of social affairs in such a way that not even the revolutionary regime itself can exclude them. During the French Revolution the *sans-culottes* and their leaders solidified their sections and attempted to turn them into permanent institutions for a direct democracy throughout France. The Russian working class and peasantry, too, had to face the question of the sovereignty of their soviet or council form of social organization. In both cases, the popular movements found that political parties alternately appealed to and opposed their popular social aspirations, often obstructing the flow of events toward radical democratic ends.

What role, it is fair to ask, do revolutionary political parties play in this development? Normally, parties are not simply organizational structures that seek to mobilize popular support. Nor are they, given their structure and the mentality of their leadership, alternatives to the nation-state. Quite to the contrary: parties are *products* of the nation-state itself, whether they profess to be revolutionary, liberal, or reactionary, The principal difference that distinguishes one party from another is the *kind* of nation-state it wishes to establish.

In Europe the nation-state began to replace feudalistic sovereignties as recently as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The nation-states that emerged in England, France, and later Russia were the products of vigorous centralizing monarchs who, particularly in the cases of France and Russia, succeeded in establishing huge bureaucracies to manage their specific territories and empires. In contrast to the relative chaos of the feudal world, the more successful nationstates created strong, stable centralized bureaucracies that ruling classes elsewhere in Europe tried to emulate.

The political party, in turn, emulated the nation-state, even when it opposed its more tyrannical operations. Emerging after an initial historical lag, political parties paralleled the nation-state organizationally and politically; in time they became more or less inseparable from it. They were and are today consciously structured to resemble nation-states, like nation-states-in-waiting that seek to take power, whether by peaceful means, as a loyal opposition, or by force of arms, as a revolutionary organization. Like monarchies and republics, parties become centralized entities in varying degrees, with bureaucratic or quasibureaucratic infrastructures where authority characteristically flows from the center to the base.

Not only are parties organized like nation-states, but they are usually national in scale, knit together by systems of command and obedience, with their center far removed from control by their base. The tautness of their infrastructures, to be sure, varies considerably from loose systems of command in republican nation-states to stringent ones in highly authoritarian states. But they remain centralized nonetheless. In this respect, many revolutionary parties in the past came to resemble the very state structures they professed to oppose. Designed to take power—or, in Leninist language, to "seize power"—they knowingly or unknowingly became small nation-states themselves, both in their mentality and in their functioning, irrespective of their size and degree of popular support.

It should not be surprising, then, that revolutionary political parties— however idealistic their leadership and members, normally looked askance at the popular structures that the masses and their leaders created, especially in revolutionary situations when "the seizure of power" was on the agenda of the day. This raised the historical question: what kind of "power" would replace the existing structures that were to be "seized"? Often submerged in the initial sweep of the popular revolution, parties emerged in its aftermath with the distinct goal of using the mass movement

to gain power for themselves and the interests they represented, not of demolishing the state and its bureaucratic machinery.

Ultimately, these parties came into head-on collision with the popular institutions that the revolutionary people and their leaders had established, such as their town and neighborhood assemblies or factory councils, giving rise to the cry for a third revolution. Histories that emphasize the rivalries between liberal, radical, and revolutionary parties for control of the state all too easily overlook the clash between professedly revolutionary parties and the new, often directly democratic institutions created by an insurgent people.

Even more confusing for historians: as the people became increasingly radical with the unfolding of a revolution, the leaders of the more revolutionary parties needed to gain their support, particularly in interparty conflicts. This necessity temporarily compelled them to adopt the popular movement's democratic aims. But this nod in the direction of democracy was just that—a gesture—and usually did not last. In France, when the highly ccntralistic Jacobins were locked in a bitter struggle with the moderate Girondins and required popular support to dislodge their opponents from leading governmental positions, they adopted a highly revolutionary and democratic rhetoric that seemed to have no other purpose than to gain mass support. Similarly, the essentially authoritarian Bolsheviks sounded virtually like anarchists in their conflicts with the bourgeoisoriented Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries, and their liberal rivals.

Once established in power, however, iacobins and Bolsheviks alike did everything they could to neutralize the power of the sections and the soviets, respectively, accelerating the transformation of France and Russia into increasingly authoritarian nation-states. The parties and the people came into armed conflict, and wherever the people were vanquished the revolutionary process came to an end, despite the social and economic changes the revolution may have produced.

We shall follow this drama in all the classical revolutions of the modern era and examine the institutional forms that the people and their leaders created, the roles that the parties played in suppressing them, and the ideas that evolved among both the people and the parties—and finally the material and political conditions that could have led to the success of the popular movement in a third revolution.

Given this perspective, the major revolutions of the modern era are not reducible exclusively to conflicts between clearly definable economic classes. Broadly speaking, they always encompassed conflicts between the exploited and their exploiters, the rich and the poor, the well-to-do and the materially denied. But knowingly or not, these revolutions were *also* conflicts between opposing visions of political life. Workers, peasants, and radical intellectuals tended to favor the groupings they had formed in their own communities, often pitting their decentralized institutions of popular rule and face-to-face democracy in sharp opposition to statist forms of rule based on nationhood, top-down control, centralism, and bureaucracy. When the *sans-culottes* and the Petrograd working-class leaders called for a third revolution, they were concerned not only with bettering their economic position but, to take their own declarations and demands at their word, with expanding their revolutionary institutions as the principal means of conducting a democratic public life. Revolution in their eyes meant the institutionalization of direct action: namely, engaging in selfadministration as a *normal* form of politics. The organization of the revolution as a permanent condition of life, through popular assemblies, shop committees, soviets, and popular societies, constituted direct action in its most *advanced* form—ultimately far more significant than other, more sporadic types of direct action, be they the temporary occupation of factories or the raising of theatrical but militarily useless barricades. In revolution, direct action meant a

special form of *political* action: the institutionalization of self-management and the creation of an organized form of participatory democracy.

What often impeded the success of the popular movement was its failure to form a vanguard organization in the best sense of the term: that is to say, an accountable, recallable, confederal leadership group that explicitly challenged all statist organizations *as such.*[1] The failure, in France and Russia, of such an organization to emerge and mount a serious challenge to the Jacobin and Bolshevik states profoundly shaped the history of the past two centuries and will possibly continue to shape events, however indirectly, for generations to come. The popular leaders were often too irresolute, too disorganized, and too uninformed to deal effectively with the highly maneuverable centralized parties, radical or otherwise, that they confronted.

Another factor that impeded the success of the revolutionary people was the material limits that circumscribed the lives of people in their movements. It should be emphasized quite frankly that for most of human history ordinary people have lacked sufficient means and free time to engage fully in the management of social affairs. As long as they are obliged to devote most of their time to acquiring the means of everyday subsistence, political life will usually fall into the hands of the privileged few. This compelling fact has been clearly recognized since Aristotle's day in ancient Athens, where a low level of technology, slavery, patriarchy, and warfare profoundly affected the life and future of the *polis.*

The question of whether the scope of the democracy demanded by a revolutionary movement must be pared to meet the material limits of the time in which it arises has understandably occupied serious radical theorists for generations. In the eighteenth and to a much greater extent the nineteenth century, revolutionary parties tended to emphasize the importance of meeting the material needs of the people rather than the attainment of democratic ends. When the Jacobins tried to restrict the meetings of the Parisian sections, ostensibly to allow people to get enough sleep to go to work the next day, Robespierre justified this policy at the revolutionary Convention by asking, "Who were the people, in fact, who could sacrifice their time to go to meetings? … Artisans and honest working people cannot spend all their time at meetings [assemblies]."[2] However shrewd his reply, the question was not at all meaningless. Nor is it meaningless even today.

Nevertheless, the fervor of the popular movement in revolutionary situations often overrode economic considerations, at least for a time. The truth of Robespierre's assessment is difficult for historians today to establish. Section meetings that addressed very important issues generally attracted huge crowds, especially during periods of heightened radical fervor and activity. Otherwise they tended to be very small, probably in large part because of the long working hours that prevailed at the time.

Nor were the sans-culotte leaders who pushed the revolution in a democratic direction certain that the rest of France was behind them. In fact, the radical demands of the Parisian revolution-

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[1] The term *vanguard* has fallen into such disrepute these days, mainly because of the connotations given to it by the Bolsheviks and their followers, that it is easily forgotten how common it was in *all* radical movements, including anarchist and libertarian ones, during the first half of the twentieth century. *Vanguard* was the title of the principal anarchist journal in the United States in the 1930s and was used throughout Europe, particularly in Spain, as the title of anarchosyndicalist journals until the Second World War. *Vanguard[assemblies]."*[2] However shrewd his reply, the question was not at all meaningless. Nor is it meaningless even today.

[2] See Robespierre's speech in the *Gazette Nationale* or *Le Moniteur Universel,* no. 262 (September 19,1793), in *Reimpression de I'ancien 'Moniteur',* vol. 17 (Paris: Henri Plon, 1858–63), p.683.

aries increasingly alienated the peasantry in the countryside and the more well-to-do sectors of French society. So, too, did the Bolsheviks in revolutionary Petrograd have cause to doubt that Russia was behind them, although they gained a considerable edge over their political opponents by their willingness to address peasant land hunger and the war weariness of the soldiers. Ip the end, however, only the prospect of a materially comfortable life with minimal toil for the people at large could ultimately have laid the lasting basis for a free, democratic, and rational society.

Owing to the limited extent to which movements in the classical revolutions addressed radical economic issues, they were not in fact majoritarian revolutions. The heady changes that initiated most of the great revolutions initially resulted from a spirit of rejection rather than affirmation. However eager the popular movement was to establish democracy, its ideas of precisely how society would function economically were very ambiguous. That highly disparate elements in society could unite around the abolition of an arbitrary monarchy in France or tsarist despotism in Russia should not be surprising. But as soon as other issues were raised—such as the redistribution of land, challenges to wealth and profiteering, and the material needs of the underprivileged—the revolutionary process began to diverge in many directions. Needless to emphasize, as increasingly radical demands, particularly with respect to property, began to command public attention, various privileged layers of society turned against the revolutionary process.

As this juncture was reached, the revolutionary nation-state and its parties conflicted increasingly with the communal structures of the people. Such junctures have a long historical pedigree, in which the propertyless are pitted against the propertied, the poor against the wealthy, and popular democracy against bureaucratic control. This drama was played out in the peasant war in Germany during Luther's time, in the English and American revolutions, and during the Great French Revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1917–21, and the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39. All of these revolutions in their later stages (except the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871) were pushed forward by volatile if uncertain minorities, both those within the popular movement itself and seemingly revolutionary advocates of increased state power such as Oliver Cromwell, Alexander Hamilton, Maximilien Robespierre, and V. I. Lenin.

There are, to be sure, notable exceptions to this development. The Kronstadt sailors who rose up in 1921 against the increasing authoritarianism of the Bolsheviks probably spoke for most of the people in Russia when they established a revolutionary "commune" at their naval base in the Gulf of Finland. But by then, the Russian people had become exhausted and paralyzed politically by three years of bloody civil war, famine, and widespread disillusionment.

In what sense can the great revolutions of the past be seen as "bourgeois democratic" revolutions? Karl Marx's approach on this score has gained such widespread acceptance among radical and even liberal historians that it may seem heretical to take exception to his view that largely economic—and notably bourgeois—interests were the guiding factors. Historians generally tend to describe the English, American, and French Revolutions as "bourgeoisdemocratic," as if they were the work of the capitalist class. As I have already indicated in my preface, I plan to take the popular participants of the great revolutions at their word rather than retrospectively dealing with them from a present-day perspective.

I shall have occasion to examine the extent to which the classical revolutions can be regarded as bourgeois when I deal with each revolution individually. In general, Marx's view tends to render the historical revolutionary process highly fatalistic, obliging us to assume that in all the great movements for freedom over the past four centuries, there was never an alternative to the ultimate triumph of capitalism—in my view, an unacceptable case of historical teleology. We

would be obliged to assume that the German peasants who revolted in the 1520s were "reactionaries" because they were trying to retain their archaic village life; that the Roundhead yeomanry who formed Cromwell's New Model Army were historically "doomed" as a social stratum by industrial inventions and forms of production that had yet to be developed; that the radical Minutemen farmers in the American colonies inevitably had to disappear like their English yeoman cousins; that the sans-culottes who established the first French republic were declasst riffraff or mere "consumers," as more than one historian has called them—and so on, up to fairly recent times.

In the Marxist and liberal view of these revolutions, it was the bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and other entrepreneurs—the predatory men who were amassing enormous wealth in the eighteenth century—who formed the class vanguard of the great revolutions, presumably in spite of themselves. Let us agree, from the outset, that the bourgeoisie benefited from most of these revolutions. Certainly, the bourgeoisie wanted "free" trade, "free" workers, and the "free" play of egotism, which can easily be mutated into a cry for "liberte, egalitt, fraternity." But if it is true that capitalism is globally supreme today, no class in history has been more craven, cowardly, and fearful of social change (especially change involving the "dark people," as they called the underprivileged) than the entrepreneurs who peopled the commercial centers of Europe and America during the eighteenth century. As a class, the bourgeoisie has never been politically revolutionary, let alone insurgent. Indeed, until recent times it was understandably the object of disdain by nobles, intellectuals, and clerics. It was long imbued with a sense of social inferiority and political ineffectuality—and deservedly so.

If not the bourgeoisie, what social strata carried through these revolutions? Societies undergoing institutional and economic transition are by definition unstable, not only politically and economically but also culturally, psychologically, and intellectually. From the sixteenth century onward, Europeans lived in a state of chronic change and upheaval in all these respects—especially peasants, independent farmers, artisans, laborers, and, later, factory workers. From the English Revolution of the 1640s to the Spanish Revolution of the mid1930s, what stands out very strikingly in revolutionary upsurges is that they occurred during periods of sweeping social transition from agrarian to industrial culture. Men and women from small villages suddenly found themselves living in urban and later large industrial communities, far removed from the natural rhythms, extended families, communal support systems, and timehonored traditions of rural life.

But even when an emerging capitalist economy began to assail their values, people still felt themselves part of a traditional community. As they moved into cities, villagers brought with them their old communal networks and attitudes based on the intimacies of village life, while among city-dwelling artisans the traditional networks of the medieval guilds had not yet disappeared completely. The chronic riots and small-scale insurrections that exploded repeatedly throughout the seventeenth century were more redolent of the limited peasant jacqueries of the late Middle Ages—albeit now carried by new migrants from the countryside into towns, neighborhoods, and cities—than of the great revolutions into which these uprisings eventually flowed. Even before the great revolutions, in effect, there existed a spirit of rebellion, a culture of radical political life, and an ongoing process of exercising direct action that eventually led to sweeping revolutionary change. Insurrectionary tocsins, or alarm bells, sounded repeatedly over several generations of restless slum-dwellers before they gave rise to great social upheavals such as the French Revolution.

Most of the working people of the revolutionary era were peasant in origin or were removed by only one generation from village society. Caught in an increasingly atomized and synthetic world, ruthlessly exploited and lacking the basic means of life, these people were confronted daily by stark cultural contrasts. Culturally dislocated and psychologically at odds with industrial forms of life, they were highly susceptible to rebellion—and ultimately revolution. Capitalism, in effect, had not fully penetrated into their lives or undermined their sense of independence. It was this kind of "proletariat," a class with one foot in the countryside and another in the city, that turned to revolution, if only to recover a sense of social rootedness, coherence, and meaning that was increasingly denied to them in the dismal shops and congested neighborhoods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The workers who found themselves caught up in the transition between a basically rural economy, an urban economy, and later a growing industrial one were imbued with exceptional qualities. Those following the traditional timehonored crafts, such as printers, blacksmiths, jewelers, wheelwrights, and independent farmers, were often expressive individuals with strongly etched personalities. They were filled with a deep sense of their own competence and self-worth. Daily readings of the Bible in the traditional family gave artisans and yeomen farmers a remarkable degree of literacy. The letters of a yeoman farmer such as the American abolitionist John Brown reveal how eloquent and knowledgeable the artisan-farmer and the artisan generally in precapitalist societies could be.

The Parisians who raised barricades in the series of revolutions up to the Commune of 1871— what has loosely been called the "Parisian proletariat"— were primarily craft workers who, however urbanized, still retained these personal qualities. Indeed, it was precisely this kind of working class and the leaders it produced that made the French capital the center of European revolutions for the greater part of a century. If the Parisian artisan had one foot in a traditional, largely small-town past and the other in a highly urban future, the Russian worker on the eve of 1917 had one foot in the peasant village and the other in an industrial present. A very large number of the Petrograd workers were newly arrived from the countryside and even retained land allotments, to which they could return and become peasants again if the need arose. Indeed, they did return to their villages in large numbers during the near-famine conditions of the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1921. Not fully captive to industrial routines and possessed of strong agrarian support systems upon which they could rely in periods of crisis, they were militant in ways that hereditary proletarians fully immersed in modern bourgeois society are less likely to be. In neither Paris nor Petrograd did workers take capitalist society for granted as a "natural" or predetermined social order; indeed, the sharp contrasts between precapitalist and capitalist cultures exacerbated deep-seated class and social differences to a point where explosive hatred of the emerging industrial society reached revolutionary proportions.

Revolution is created not by a nondescript body of people called "the masses," however much I am obliged to use this term. Certainly, the fuel that stoked fires into blazes was a minority of militants who came from suppressed strata and, very significantly, a radical intelligentsia. A time-honored stratum that dates back to the peripatetic Greek philosophers, the intelligentsia were organizers of various dissident groups and circles, social critics, sowers of doubt, publicists, and occasionally powerful theorists. They furnished the revolutions with invaluable theoretical insights, a sense of direction, a critical thrust, and considerable creativity. By an "intelligentsia"— a Russian word, let it be noted— I am speaking not of what we call "intellectuals" today who are well ensconced in universities, but a footloose network of writers, artists, poets, and professionals

of all sorts, even actors (who formed an exceptionally close and visible community in cities such as Paris during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Their absorption in recent years into the modern university system, with its many emoluments, has been one of the most costly blows to the development of present-day revolutionary movements.

Revolution also needs a visible target, a social enemy, whose behavior in some sense provokes popular action. Most revolutions, in fact, begin as defensive actions against attempts by ruling elites to suppress an emerging popular movement. Parisians attacked the Bastille on July 14, 1789, because they believed the king was collecting troops near Paris to seize the capital and suppress social unrest. In the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks initially dispossessed the liberal Kerensky regime in Petrograd because the government fatuously closed their press, although, as was evident to everyone in the Russian capital, they had already been carefully planning an insurrection against the provisional government.

There is no doubt that the various ruling elites whom the popular revolutions overthrew and replaced were highly visible to the populace. But they were visible in a very special way. As the people moved toward revolution, often after a series of aborted local uprisings, the ruling elites made it very clear that their regimes were in a deep-seated crisis. It was not only the populace that lost confidence in the existing order; their own masters exhibited a visible failure of nerve. While the incipient revolutionary forces became more and more united, the ruling elites became more and more divided. That the established order was breaking down became apparent to all, both above and below, and only the most inflexible elements of the old society opposed the transparent need for change. Indeed, in France, many elements of the nobility patronized the great Enlighteners who created the intellectual and moral atmosphere of the French Revolution, while in turn-of-the-century Russia, individual nobles and merchants often gave large sums of money to revolutionary organizations.

It was the extent to which the elites resisted change that often determined how far-reaching a revolution would be, how radical the popular movement would become, and how long it would last. Since certain ruling strata who favored the status quo put up intense, often unthinking, resistance to even minimal reforms, many of the great revolutions went on for years, if one includes not only the insurrections or jourrties ("days"), as they were called in the French Revolution, but the civil wars that followed them. Indeed, it is questionable whether the French Revolution really ended with the overthrow of Jacobin rule in 1794. Many of the same social forces existed and clashed with each other persistently in repeated insurrections up to 1871, so that we can speak of a uniquely French revolutionary era that existed for nearly a century. The English Revolution spanned a period of at least four years and continued for nearly two decades if we include Cromwell's Protectorate. The American Revolution lasted almost three decades if we date the revolutionary period as starting with the beginnings of dissent in the early 1760s and ending with the adoption of the Constitution by the states in 1789. Even if we choose to date the start of the Russian Revolution at 1917 rather than the aborted revolution of 1905, the revolution continued for four years before it was suppressed with the crushing of the Kronstadt commune of 1921. All of these revolutions, if they were not crushed at the outset, were marked by an internal logic of events that slowly worked its way through precarious periods of uncertainty, partial victories for the masses, and eventually defeats of the popular movements to one degree or another. Although each of these developments was different in many specifics, most of them were astonishingly similar in their general outlines.

It is very much my task, if possible, to account for this similarity in the general outlines of certain major revolutions, even as I examine remarkable forms of freedom that the specific popular movements created throughout the revolutions. As I have already suggested, after the fall of the jacobins in 1794 the French Revolution became the "model" on which other revolutions based their visions of social change. The sequence of events of the Russian Revolution closely resembles that of the French, albeit in a telescoped form. That leaders of all Russian revolutionary tendencies, from Marxists like Lenin to anarchists like Peter Kropotkin, were steeped in the history of the French Revolution, however, does not in itself explain these similarities; nor does the existence of economic commonalities like the peasant majorities in both countries, the highly radicalized urban populations, and the emergence of resolute, centralized vanguard parties.

My point in saying this is that both revolutions were guided not only by similar economic conditions, but also by a compelling political goal—namely, a popular desire for freedom. These revolutions contained an eminently moral, not only economic, dimension. As well as being motivated by the very real economic interests, such as land hunger, that played so decisive a role in both revolutions, the French and Russian peasantries were possessed by a passionate, almost millenarian, desire for a new, just, and free way of life. The marvel, and the tragedy, of the classical revolutions during the 1640s in England and the 1930s in Spain is that they were fueled by a deep-seated desire for popular sovereignty which the revolutionary leaders and their nation-state type of organizations systematically undermined.

I have omitted from this book any account of the "Third World" revolutions that have occurred since the Second World War. Although space limitations alone would necessarily restrict me to revolutions in Europe (and North America) the "Third World" revolutions have been and still are different in significant respects from the European revolutions. For one thing, the European revolutions, even the American, emerged from already formed nation-states, often absolutist monarchies; the "Third World" revolutions are attempts to form nation-states, to gain a sense of national identity after long periods of colonial rule. Moreover, the European revolutions, despite their indispensable agrarian upswells, were primarily centered in cities, such as London, Boston, Paris, Petrograd, and Barcelona. The "Third World" revolutions, by contrast, have been fought out primarily in the countryside (although China in the 1920s forms an interesting exception).

The European revolutions, in fact, spoke for oppressed humanity as a whole, and the breadth of their goals has been unequaled by revolutions in other parts of the world. They not only raised major political issues such as republicanism and democracy, but had very powerful international and ideological effects upon the development of European civilization for over three centuries. Indeed, they were important ideological, cultural, and economic turning points in world history generally. Their great declarations, charters, and manifestos appealed to all of humanity in support of universal human rights and freedom, often transcending national considerations.

The "Third World" revolutions, by contrast, understandably tended to be deeply self-oriented, and their ideological impact upon the world has been very limited. A thrust toward democracy and popular demands for local rights at the expense of the nation-state are not conspicuous features of these upsurges. They are largely national struggles against imperialism in which colonized peoples seek to define their identity and achieve national independence. Despite the popularity of Maoist doctrines in the 1960s, the Chinese Communist revolution was an insurrectionary variant of Leninism, and after Mao's death it began to lose its hold even in China itself. Neither Castro's revolution in Cuba nor the Sandinistas' in Nicaragua produced major ideological changes in the world, despite the impact their uprisings had on Latin America. Indeed,

their eclipse by movements like the Shining Path in Peru and their increasing clientage to Euro-American powers reveal that their impact on social development generally is more limited than 1960s radicals in the West could have anticipated in their day.

The possible charge that I am "Eurocentric" leaves me singularly untroubled. The fact is that the authentic center of the revolutionary era was the European continent, including Russia, and the United States (whose revolution belongs very much in the European tradition). To the extent that revolutions in the "Third World" had certain universal features and sought or professed to establish a radically new social dispensation for humanity as a whole, they emulated the great European revolutions discussed in this book. Their nationalistic and anti-imperialistic aspects may be understandable in the context in which they occurred; but these revolutions should not be mystified, nor should their justifiable claims to freedom from imperialism be viewed as comparable to the universal appeals to humanity that marked the great revolutions that occurred in Europe.

Significantly, each of the classical revolutions followed the others toward a more radically sophisticated historical level in which an almost utopian internationalist outlook and a broader definition of freedom superseded any earlier nationalistic or "patriotic" claims. Indeed, the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39 challenged even domestic hierarchies as well as classes, often assuming an explicitly libertarian form. By contrast, either the "Third World" revolutions devolved into established nation-states oriented toward industrialization, or their ideologies lingered on mainly as echoes of the older European revolutions. The revolutions that helped form new nation-states in India, China, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central America have little of the internationalist character that marked the French and Russian revolutions. Even the American Revolution saw itself as a utopian beacon to an oppressed world, despite attempts by many radical historians to reduce it to a mere "war for independence."

It is my hope that this book will revive the flagging interest in the great revolutions that so profoundly shaped modern history and encourage the reader to examine the dynamics of the classical Western revolutions from the standpoint of movements from below: the institutional forms that revolutionary peoples and their leaders developed to manage society and their interaction with the revolutionary parties that professed to lead the people or certain oppressed strata. I wish to explore the problems that this interaction produced, the lessons we can learn, and the various theories that cluster around the nature and trajectory of the great revolutions themselves. Theory will closely intermingle with narrative, and generalizations with specific facts.

I would like not only to evoke the era of the great revolutions in an admittedly interpretive way—their limits and possibilities—but to convey the esprit r&volutiotmaire that existed not only during the high points of the revolutions themselves but throughout the revolutionary era, even in periods of relative quiescence. I will ask what it means to be a revolutionary, not merely a "radical" or a "progressive," to use words very much in vogue today. In view of the fact that, in 1989, the bicentennial of the Great French Revolution was celebrated more as a patriotic exercise than as an evocation of the great world-inspiring revolution it was, this task seems particularly necessary today. I wish to lift, as best I can, the chauvinistic clouds that obscure the hopes that the great revolutions produced in the hearts of all enlightened human beings, and the ideologies that have influenced them over the greater part of two centuries.

At this time of writing an eerie counter-Enlightenment is percolating through Western culture, one that celebrates egocentricity at the expense of social commitment, mysticism at the expense of naturalism, intuitionism at the expense of rationalism, atavism at the expense of civi-

lization, a passive-receptive mentality at the expense of a militant, activist one, and an enervating religiosity at the expense of a critical secularity. As capitalism expands to global proportions, a media-orchestrated barbarism is pushing the modern human spirit back into an absurd caricature of medievalism—almost centuries removed in spirit and outlook from the revolutionary era that gave birth to modern ideals of freedom. Whether this marks a definitive end of the revolutionary era and the Enlightenment that nourished it, I do not know. What I do know is that I, for one, do not want to be part of a historical period that lacks a revolutionary spirit to give meaning to life. This book is intended to evoke that spirit and, if possible, to make it relevant to our time.

Nevertheless, the fervor of the popular movement in revolutionary situations often overrode economic considerations, at least for a time. The truth of Robespierre's assessment is difficult for historians today to establish. Section meetings that addressed very important issues generally attracted huge crowds, especially during periods of heightened radical fervor and activity. Otherwise they tended to be very small, probably in large part because of the long working hours that prevailed at the time.

Nor were the *sans-culotte* leaders who pushed the revolution in a democratic direction certain that the rest of France was behind them. In fact, the radical demands of the Parisian revolutionaries increasingly alienated the peasantry in the countryside and the more well-to-do sectors of French society. So, too, did the Bolsheviks in revolutionary Petrograd have cause to doubt that Russia was behind them, although they gained a considerable edge over their political opponents by their willingness to address peasant land hunger and the war weariness of the soldiers. Ip the end, however, only the prospect of a materially comfortable life with minimal toil for the people at large could ultimately have laid the lasting basis for a free, democratic, and rational society.

Owing to the limited extent to which movements in the classical revolutions addressed radical economic issues, they were not in fact majoritarian revolutions. The heady changes that initiated most of the great revolutions initially resulted from a spirit of rejection rather than affirmation. However eager the popular movement was to establish democracy, its ideas of precisely how society would function economically were very ambiguous. That highly disparate elements in society could unite around the abolition of an arbitrary monarchy in France or tsarist despotism in Russia should not be surprising. But as soon as other issues were raised—such as the redistribution of land, challenges to wealth and profiteering, and the material needs of the underprivileged—the revolutionary process began to diverge in many directions. Needless to emphasize, as increasingly radical demands, particularly with respect to property, began to command public attention, various privileged layers of society turned against the revolutionary process.

As this juncture was reached, the revolutionary nation-state and its parties conflicted increasingly with the communal structures of the people. Such junctures have a long historical pedigree, in which the propertyless are pitted against the propertied, the poor against the wealthy, and popular democracy against bureaucratic control. This drama was played out in the peasant war in Germany during Luther's time, in the English and American revolutions, and during the Great French Revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1917–21, and the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39. All of these revolutions in their later stages (except the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871) were pushed forward by volatile if uncertain minorities, both those within the popular movement itself and seemingly revolutionary advocates of increased state power such as Oliver Cromwell, Alexander Hamilton, Maximilien Robespierre, and V. I. Lenin.

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the people in Russia when they established a revolutionary "commune" at their naval base in the Gulf of Finland. But by then, the Russian people had become exhausted and paralyzed politically by three years of bloody civil war, famine, and widespread disillusionment.

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Most of the working people of the revolutionary era were peasant in origin or were removed by only one generation from village society. Caught in an increasingly atomized and synthetic world, ruthlessly exploited and lacking the basic means of life, these people were confronted daily by stark cultural contrasts. Culturally dislocated and psychologically at odds with industrial forms of life, they were highly susceptible to rebellion—and ultimately revolution. Capitalism, in effect, *had not fully penetrated into their lives or undermined their sense of independence.* It was this kind of "proletariat," a class with one foot in the countryside and another in the city, that turned to revolution, if only to recover a sense of social rootedness, coherence, and meaning that was increasingly denied to them in the dismal shops and congested neighborhoods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The workers who found themselves caught up in the transition between a basically rural economy, an urban economy, and later a growing industrial one were imbued with exceptional qualities. Those following the traditional timehonored crafts, such as printers, blacksmiths, jewelers, wheelwrights, and independent farmers, were often expressive individuals with strongly etched personalities. They were filled with a deep sense of their own competence and self-worth. Daily readings of the Bible in the traditional family gave artisans and yeomen farmers a remarkable degree of literacy. The letters of a yeoman farmer such as the American abolitionist John Brown reveal how eloquent and knowledgeable the artisan-farmer and the artisan generally in precapitalist societies could be.

The Parisians who raised barricades in the series of revolutions up to the Commune of 1871—what has loosely been called the "Parisian proletariat"— were primarily craft workers who, however urbanized, still retained these personal qualities. Indeed, it was precisely this kind of working class and the leaders it produced that made the French capital the center of European revolutions for the greater part of a century. If the Parisian artisan had one foot in a traditional, largely small-town past and the other in a highly urban future, the Russian worker on the eve of 1917 had one foot in the peasant village and the other in an industrial present. A very large number of the Petrograd workers were newly arrived from the countryside and even retained land allotments, to which they could return and become peasants again if the need arose. Indeed, they did return to their villages in large numbers during the near-famine conditions of the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1921. Not fully captive to industrial routines and possessed of strong agrar-

ian support systems upon which they could rely in periods of crisis, they were militant in ways that hereditary proletarians fully immersed in modern bourgeois society are less likely to be. In neither Paris nor Petrograd did workers take capitalist society for granted as a "natural" or pre-determined social order; indeed, the sharp contrasts between precapitalist and capitalist cultures exacerbated deep-seated class and social differences to a point where explosive hatred of the emerging industrial society reached revolutionary proportions.

Revolution is created not by a nondescript body of people called "the masses," however much I am obliged to use this term. Certainly, the fuel that stoked fires into blazes was a minority of militants who came from suppressed strata and, very significantly, a radical intelligentsia. A time-honored stratum that dates back to the peripatetic Greek philosophers, the intelligentsia were organizers of various dissident groups and circles, social critics, sowers of doubt, publicists, and occasionally powerful theorists. They furnished the revolutions with invaluable theoretical insights, a sense of direction, a critical thrust, and considerable creativity. By an "intelligentsia"— a Russian word, let it be noted— I am speaking not of what we call "intellectuals" today who are well ensconced in universities, but a footloose network of writers, artists, poets, and professionals of all sorts, even actors (who formed an exceptionally close and visible community in cities such as Paris during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Their absorption in recent years into the modern university system, with its many emoluments, has been one of the most costly blows to the development of present-day revolutionary movements.

Revolution also needs a visible target, a social enemy, whose behavior in some sense provokes popular action. Most revolutions, in fact, begin as defensive actions against attempts by ruling elites to suppress an emerging popular movement. Parisians attacked the Bastille on July 14, 1789, because they believed the king was collecting troops near Paris to seize the capital and suppress social unrest. In the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks initially dispossessed the liberal Kerensky regime in Petrograd because the government fatuously closed their press, although, as was evident to everyone in the Russian capital, they had already been carefully planning an insurrection against the provisional government.

There is no doubt that the various ruling elites whom the popular revolutions overthrew and replaced were highly visible to the populace. But they were visible in a very special way. As the people moved toward revolution, often after a series of aborted local uprisings, the ruling elites made it very clear that their regimes were in a deep-seated crisis. It was not only the populace that lost confidence in the existing order; their own masters exhibited a visible failure of nerve. While the incipient revolutionary forces became more and more united, the ruling elites became more and more divided. That the established order was breaking down became apparent to all, both above and below, and only the most inflexible elements of the old society opposed the transparent need for change. Indeed, in France, many elements of the nobility patronized the great Enlighteners who created the intellectual and moral atmosphere of the French Revolution, while in turn-of-the-century Russia, individual nobles and merchants often gave large sums of money to revolutionary organizations.

It was the extent to which the elites *resisted* change that often determined how far-reaching a revolution would be, how radical the popular movement would become, and how long it would last. Since certain ruling strata who favored the status quo put up intense, often unthinking, resistance to even minimal reforms, many of the great revolutions went on for years, if one includes not only the insurrections or *jourrties* ("days"), as they were called in the French Revolution, but the civil wars that followed them. Indeed, it is questionable whether the French Revolution re-

ally ended with the overthrow of Jacobin rule in 1794. Many of the same social forces existed and clashed with each other persistently in repeated insurrections up to 1871, so that we can speak of a uniquely French revolutionary era that existed for nearly a century. The English Revolution spanned a period of at least four years and continued for nearly two decades if we include Cromwell's Protectorate. The American Revolution lasted almost three decades if we date the revolutionary period as starting with the beginnings of dissent in the early 1760s and ending with the adoption of the Constitution by the states in 1789. Even if we choose to date the start of the Russian Revolution at 1917 rather than the aborted revolution of 1905, the revolution continued for four years before it was suppressed with the crushing of the Kronstadt commune of 1921. All of these revolutions, if they were not crushed at the outset, were marked by an internal logic of events that slowly worked its way through precarious periods of uncertainty, partial victories for the masses, and eventually defeats of the popular movements to one degree or another. Although each of these developments was different in many specifics, most of them were astonishingly similar in their general outlines.

It is very much my task, if possible, to account for this similarity in the general outlines of certain major revolutions, even as I examine remarkable forms of freedom that the specific popular movements created throughout the revolutions. As I have already suggested, after the fall of the jacobins in 1794 the French Revolution became the "model" on which other revolutions based their visions of social change. The sequence of events of the Russian Revolution closely resembles that of the French, albeit in a telescoped form. That leaders of all Russian revolutionary tendencies, from Marxists like Lenin to anarchists like Peter Kropotkin, were steeped in the history of the French Revolution, however, does not in itself explain these similarities; nor does the existence of economic commonalities like the peasant majorities in both countries, the highly radicalized urban populations, and the emergence of resolute, centralized vanguard parties.

My point in saying this is that both revolutions were guided not only by similar economic conditions, but also by a compelling political goal—namely, a popular desire for freedom. These revolutions contained an eminently *moral,* not only economic, dimension. As well as being motivated by the very real economic interests, such as land hunger, that played so decisive a role in both revolutions, the French and Russian peasantries were possessed by a passionate, almost millenarian, desire for a new, just, and free way of life. The marvel, and the tragedy, of the classical revolutions during the 1640s in England and the 1930s in Spain is that they were fueled by a deep-seated desire for popular sovereignty which the revolutionary leaders and their nation-state type of organizations systematically undermined.

I have omitted from this book any account of the "Third World" revolutions that have occurred since the Second World War. Although space limitations alone would necessarily restrict me to revolutions in Europe (and North America) the "Third World" revolutions have been and still are different in significant respects from the European revolutions. For one thing, the European revolutions, even the American, emerged from already formed nation-states, often absolutist monarchies; the "Third World" revolutions are attempts to form nation-states, to gain a sense of national identity after long periods of colonial rule. Moreover, the European revolutions, despite their indispensable agrarian upswells, were primarily centered in cities, such as London, Boston, Paris, Petrograd, and Barcelona. The "Third World" revolutions, by contrast, have been fought out primarily in the countryside (although China in the 1920s forms an interesting exception).

The European revolutions, in fact, spoke for oppressed humanity as a whole, and the breadth of their goals has been unequaled by revolutions in other parts of the world. They not only raised

major political issues such as republicanism and democracy, but had very powerful international and ideological effects upon the development of European civilization for over three centuries. Indeed, they were important ideological, cultural, and economic turning points in world history generally. Their great declarations, charters, and manifestos appealed to *all* of humanity in support of universal human rights and freedom, often transcending national considerations.

The "Third World" revolutions, by contrast, understandably tended to be deeply self-oriented, and their ideological impact upon the world has been very limited. A thrust toward democracy and popular demands for local rights at the expense of the nation-state are not conspicuous features of these upsurges. They are largely national struggles against imperialism in which colonized peoples seek to define their identity and achieve national independence. Despite the popularity of Maoist doctrines in the 1960s, the Chinese Communist revolution was an insurrectionary variant of Leninism, and after Mao's death it began to lose its hold even in China itself. Neither Castro's revolution in Cuba nor the Sandinistas' in Nicaragua produced major ideological changes in the world, despite the impact their uprisings had on Latin America. Indeed, their eclipse by movements like the Shining Path in Peru and their increasing clientage to Euro-American powers reveal that their impact on social development generally is more limited than 1960s radicals in the West could have anticipated in their day.

The possible charge that I am "Eurocentric" leaves me singularly untroubled. The fact is that the authentic center of the revolutionary era was the European continent, including Russia, and the United States (whose revolution belongs very much in the European tradition). To the extent that revolutions in the "Third World" had certain universal features and sought or professed to establish a radically new social dispensation for humanity as a whole, they emulated the great European revolutions discussed in this book. Their nationalistic and anti-imperialistic aspects may be understandable in the context in which they occurred; but these revolutions should not be mystified, nor should their justifiable claims to freedom from imperialism be viewed as comparable to the universal appeals to humanity that marked the great revolutions that occurred in Europe.

Significantly, each of the classical revolutions followed the others toward a more radically sophisticated historical level in which an almost utopian internationalist outlook and a broader definition of freedom superseded any earlier nationalistic or "patriotic" claims. Indeed, the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39 challenged even domestic hierarchies as well as classes, often assuming an explicitly libertarian form. By contrast, either the "Third World" revolutions devolved into established nation-states oriented toward industrialization, or their ideologies lingered on mainly as echoes of the older European revolutions. The revolutions that helped form new nation-states in India, China, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central America have little of the internationalist character that marked the French and Russian revolutions. Even the American Revolution saw itself as a utopian beacon to an oppressed world, despite attempts by many radical historians to reduce it to a mere "war for independence."

It is my hope that this book will revive the flagging interest in the great revolutions that so profoundly shaped modern history and encourage the reader to examine the dynamics of the classical Western revolutions from the standpoint of movements from below: the institutional forms that revolutionary peoples and their leaders developed to manage society and their interaction with the revolutionary parties that professed to lead the people or certain oppressed strata. I wish to explore the problems that this interaction produced, the lessons we can learn, and the

various theories that cluster around the nature and trajectory of the great revolutions themselves. Theory will closely intermingle with narrative, and generalizations with specific facts.

I would like not only to evoke the era of the great revolutions in an admittedly interpretive way—their limits and possibilities—but to convey the *ésprit révolutionnaire* that existed not only during the high points of the revolutions themselves but throughout the revolutionary era, even in periods of relative quiescence. I will ask what it *means* to be a revolutionary, not merely a "radical" or a "progressive," to use words very much in vogue today. In view of the fact that, in 1989, the bicentennial of the Great French Revolution was celebrated more as a patriotic exercise than as an evocation of the great world-inspiring revolution it was, this task seems particularly necessary today. I wish to lift, as best I can, the chauvinistic clouds that obscure the hopes that the great revolutions produced in the hearts of all enlightened human beings, and the ideologies that have influenced them over the greater part of two centuries.

At this time of writing an eerie counter-Enlightenment is percolating through Western culture, one that celebrates egocentricity at the expense of social commitment, mysticism at the expense of naturalism, intuitionism at the expense of rationalism, atavism at the expense of civilization, a passive-receptive mentality at the expense of a militant, activist one, and an enervating religiosity at the expense of a critical secularity. As capitalism expands to global proportions, a media-orchestrated barbarism is pushing the modern human spirit back into an absurd caricature of medievalism—almost centuries removed in spirit and outlook from the revolutionary era that gave birth to modern ideals of freedom. Whether this marks a definitive end of the revolutionary era and the Enlightenment that nourished it, I do not know. What I do know is that I, for one, do not want to be part of a historical period that lacks a revolutionary spirit to give meaning to life. This book is intended to evoke that spirit and, if possible, to make it relevant to our time.

PART I. PEASANT REVOLTS

Chapter 1. Late Medieval Uprisings

The view that history can be summed up as "the history of class struggle," most famously expressed by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto,* has become increasingly problematical among historians and social theoriests over the past half-century. Although antagonistic class interests undoubtedly played a role of enormous importance in the social conflicts discussed in this book, in many of these struggles different hierarchical strata staked out claims to traditional rights and duties that were cultural, religious, and political as well as economic in nature. Often, in fact, it was not only classes in the economistic sense that were embattled with each other but also various culturally privileged and underprivileged status groups. The tendency of historians, liberal no less than Marxian, to reduce all social conflicts to class conflicts has placed a heavy veil over our understanding of conflicts involving hierarchies that were structured more around status than around material wealth and property ownership. Historically, in fact, the emergence of hierarchies long preceded that of classes, and persisting oppressions by privileged genders, ethnic groups, nationalities, and bureaucracies might well continue to exist in society even if economic classes were abolished.

That is not to ignore the fact that major social conflicts in history had a patently class-oriented dimension. Accounts of major class struggles appear in the hieroglyphic records of ancient Egypt, the cuneiform records of Mesopotamia, and the pictographic records of Asia and even Indian America long before Europeans invaded the continent. In some ancient Egyptian records upper-class scribes bluntly portrayed revolts in their midst as mere looting expeditions of the rich by the poor, in which ordinary people ransacked warehouses to redistribute grain and plundered manors of their wealth. To be sure, civil conflicts as described in ancient Greek and Roman accounts clearly had a component of class conflict, such as the Solonic "revolution" of the sixth century bce, and the efforts of the Gracchi brothers in republican Rome not only to eliminate the oligarchic powers of the Senate but to remove the debt burden that weighed heavily on the shoulders of the Latin yeomanry.

But the role of class conflict in these eruptions must be carefully qualified and nuanced. Many ancient conflicts were essentially popular explosions that aimed to regain rights that were being lost and that properly belonged to an era that was no more, notably the era of tribalism, or what the Marxist literature calls "primitive communism." In Mesopotamia and Egypt, popular uprisings seem to have essentially demanded the restoration of tribal egalitarianism—a demand that went well beyond mere resentment of economic exploitation by ruling classes. And if the Gracchi brothers of republican Rome gained their popular support largely because they demanded an equitable distribution of land on behalf of nonaristocratic strata, they also tried to transform their city-state into a Hellenic-type democracy.

With the possible exception of the democratic *poleis* (cities) of ancient Greece, which even ancient writers (not only modern historians) disdained as "mobocracies," these explosions failed

to create a democratic polity for humanity. Not even the Athenians of antiquity regarded their democracy as a universal ideal that would capture the hearts of so-called "barbarians." It was only Greeks as an *ethnos* or "race," in the view of thinkers like Aristotle, who were suited for living in a *polis* (much less in a democracy), not non-Hellenic peoples. Few if any Athenian democrats would have differed with him on this score. The Gracchi brothers, in their attempt to establish the sovereignty of the plebeian assembly over the Senate, were concerned only with the fate of republican Rome, not with society generally. Their essentially local conflict had no impact beyond the environs of Rome and its satellite communities on the Italian peninsula. More universal demands for freedom—that is, for freedom of humanity as a whole—were to come later, over the course of centuries of social transition and changes in popular consciousness.

FEUDAL SOCIETY

The late medieval and early modern periods, too—as well as the conflicts that occurred within them—should be understood in noneconomic as well as economic terms, and their aims were often very limited in space and time. The great nomadic invasions from the east and the north greatly unsettled life on the continent, virtually reducing many of its communities to armed fortresses and defensive enclaves, after which lifeways based on hierarchical as well as class structures froze into static pyramidal forms that remained basically unaltered for centuries. Social life was organized around fairly self-sufficient manors in which local lords, endowed with many social as well as economic privileges, held the land as vassals of still higher lords, to whom they owed not only material support but personal fealty and military service.

Initially, the burden of the material obligations was borne by serfs, who were neither slaves nor strictly freemen but families grouped in villages that were tied to the land in an elaborate system of rights as well as duties. In addition to giving over a sizable part of their crop to their local lord, they were required to perform a host of persona] as well as labor services, provide gifts to the manor house on special occasions, and when necessary, bear arms. In return, they could claim their lord's protection from invaders, robber bands, and military marauders (the "knights errant" and mercenaries who abounded everywhere). They could also expect a modest amount of care during times of infirmity and old age.

Time-honored custom had created a basically corporate and parochial society in Europe, one based on a clear-cut hierarchy of rank and of reciprocal rights and duties. The serf, boxed into his own locality, could feel relatively secure in receiving protection and a modicum of care from the local lord; the local lord, in turn, staked out his own claims on the serf for food and various services to the community as well as the manor.

Each community was a world unto itself. It had its own common land on which serfs and peasants pastured cattle, gathered wood for Ere and shelter, and found herbs for condiments and medicinal purposes. Draught animals, plows, and many farm implements were commonly shared, not privately owned, and the cultivation of land was usually a communal affair that fostered not only cooperation but collective self-discipline. Essentials such as coarse cloth, simple metal artifacts, building materials, and agricultural implements were ordinarily made entirely on the manorial estate, its villages, and its towns. This selfenclosed world had very little need for money; barter in one form or another was the rule in many parts of Europe. Serf, peasant, artisan, and local merchant were enmeshed with one another in a carefully knit, highly localized world at

the base of feudal society. And as in antiquity, social conflicts rarely extended beyond isolated localities until well into medieval times.

From the fourteenth century onward, however, commerce greatly revived in Europe with the growth of town life, the clearing of forests, and the end of the great nomadic invasions. Caravans from Italian cities laden with spices, fine cloth, artistically wrought weapons, armor, and the like were passing along the earthen roads of the continent protected from robbers not only by armed guards but by their very numbers. Their wares were not destined for consumption by the overwhelming majority of the population—the ordinary people at the base of feudal society. Materially well-endowed lords took their pickings from the caravans, often paying for luxury goods with what limited coinage was available—especially money they had gained from tolls imposed on the merchants who crossed their manorial borders. Some nobles, the "robber barons" of the era, gained further wealth through surreptitious raids on the caravans themselves. These raids, to be sure, were not without risk: robbers invited reprisals for their interference with long-distance trade, not only from nearby lords who benefited from the trade and wanted to foster it but especially from the emerging national monarchs, the growth of whose royal juridical authority over the nobility (the "king's peace") provided them with revenue in the form of taxes.

Still, the development of long-distance trade did not appreciably alter life at the base of feudal society. If local lords, peasants, or even serfs had the means, they usually purchased the commodities they could not make on their manors, or make well, from local towns, whose artisans, organized in tightly knit guilds, crafted items that met most of their needs. The guilds, in turn, carefully policed the workmanship, output, and training of their members, including master craftsmen, their apprentices, and journeymen. In time, the guilds were to differentiate themselves into well-to-do ones and poorer ones, and sharply distinguish masters from journeymen, who were increasingly excluded from guild membership and reduced to ordinary workmen. But on the whole, extremes in wealth were comparatively uncommon in the early Middle Ages: material needs were comparatively few, and trade itself was fairly simple. For a time at least, a basically harmonious relationship existed between town and country, albeit one that should not be overly romanticized, if only because the towns were obliged, often by force of arms, to assert their autonomy over their rapacious territorial lords.

AN EGALITARIAN LEGACY

In addition to a growing continental trade, another phenomenon slowly eroded the parochialism that marked the medieval landscape, namely the Catholic Church. The rise of Christianity had been an unparalleled ideological revolution for Europe. Over the centuries, the papacy and its hierarchy came to function as Europe's most important unifying and universalizing agent. After the demise of the Roman Empire, the Vatican became a pivotal center that prevented Europe's collapse into an agglomeration of quasi-tribal societies that a fatalistic Islamic world from the south and Asian barbarian nomads from the east could easily have overrun.

In the absence of the Church as a source of ideological and institutional coherence, the unique history of the European continent and its potential for a visionary dynamism might well have been suffocated by invaders who had little to offer it beyond the social stagnation that prevailed in the Asian world. Militant Christianity, with its emphasis on individual self-worth and its belief in human free will, played a major role in preventing Europe from becoming a historic backwater and in keeping alive the classical heritage of the ancient Western tradition.

But the Church was also a source of discord, as was Christian doctrine itself. Much as armies commonly reflect the conflicting social forces that exist in civil society, the Church came to reflect in exaggerated form the conflicts that emerged when feudal society began to wane in the late Middle Ages. Just as serfs and peasants began to stand at odds with barons, and barons with princes and monarchs, so poverty-stricken parish priests stood sharply at odds with their overfed bishops; monks with the well-to-do clergy; and national churches with the papacy, which filled its coffers with wealth drained from its various bishoprics throughout the continent. In the thirteenth century, England alone had paid the Vatican a thousand pounds of silver annually, a quantity that exceeded the British monarchy's tax collections fivefold.

Ironically, despite the close integration of the higher clergy with the landed aristocracy, the egalitarian ideals of Christianity set a social whirlwind into furious motion by the high Middle Ages. The idea that all people are equal in the eyes of God, at least when they enter the heavenly world, raised major ideological problems for the privileged strata in the earthly world, where Christian visions began to take a highly radical and heretical turn. Errant preachers such as the English Lollards proclaimed a fiery message of social equality, validating peasant discontent with biblical precept. Perhaps the most fecund source of these egalitarian precepts, apart from the Bible, was the writings of Joachim di Fiore. This monk's historical interpretation of the Trinity envisioned the Holy Spirit as a utopia in which the poor would eventually be freed of their material and mortal burdens. Joachimite ideas, some fairly tame but others implicitly revolutionary, abounded throughout Europe during the high and late Middle Ages and provided in their more fiery interpretations an ideological underpinning for growing discontent among peasants, serfs, and urban plebeians. By the fourteenth century, movements or extensive networks of conventicles began openly to demand a radical redistribution of wealth, often involving its outright expropriation in the name of Christian egalitarianism and communal living as described in the Acts of the Apostles in Christian Scripture. Many of these conventicles directly challenged the higher clergy for their violations of basic Christian precept, their clearly visible appetite for wealth and high living, and their oppressive hierarchical structure as a whole.

The Brethren of the Free Spirit, a widespread radical network of heretical Christian dissenters, not only abandoned themselves to a free-living, often lascivious lifestyle within their own groups, but regarded themselves as beyond the reach of the Church, the state, and even conventional Christian precepts of morality. In so doing, they advanced an ideal of communism as well as freedom, a striking advance beyond the radical movements of the ancient world and early Middle Ages, staking out a claim to privileged status based on their own special knowledge or *gnosis*—a *gnosis* that they felt endowed them with the right to act with no constraints upon their personal wishes and desires. Although the Brethren, like the adherents of many other heresies, viewed their communities as members of the "elect," their exclusivity did not keep their ideas from infecting masses of artisans, peasants, and even serfs, who tended to adopt the egalitarian aspect of their beliefs for themselves.

The fourteenth century thus saw popular attacks on the privileges of the Church that often exploded into outright insurrections, which were difficult to suppress. The Black Death, by reducing the availability of labor, gave rise to chronic peasant uprisings for better material rewards. These began to converge against local lords and bishops in England, Bohemia, Germany, and France in major civil wars that swept over entire regions, eventually reaching a scope that was virtually unprecedented in any previous period of history.

By the same token, the Vatican's role as an inspirational force began to wane significantly. Schisms within the papacy gave rise to two and even three rival popes, profoundly lowering the prestige of the Church in the eyes of its communicants, while the corruption of endowed bishops and monastic orders earned the established clergy the outright contempt of all classes in Europe, particularly the oppressed strata of the population.

As early as the twelfth century, the Waldenses (so named after the devout merchant Peter Waldo of Lyon), a sect that spread in influence among the artisans of southern France and northern Italy, militantly challenged the Church's departure from the gospel. The Waldenses' agitation eventually became a redemptive popular movement that threw itself into direct conflict with the papacy. Concurrently, the Albigensian movement, with its enlightened views and practices which challenged key precepts of Church doctrine, was suppressed by a long and brutal crusade that ended in widespread destruction in southern France—a chapter in the history of the South that aborted its development for centuries. Like darkening clouds before a storm, these movements, although invariably defeated, heralded major bloody conflicts that were to explode throughout Europe and the British Isles.

Nor can we ignore the academic critics of the Catholic Church, the scholarly precursors of the Reformation, who propounded messages that earned them widespread support not only from their militant acolytes but even from the temporal powers, which were slowly entering into conflict with the papacy. Although Pierre Abelard's rationalism and his call for intellectual freedom were relatively restrained, he left behind a disturbing body of condemnatory criticism that the Church tried cannily to assimilate, so that he managed to survive, dying in bed with adoring acolytes at his door. Similarly, John Wydif challenged such basic notions of Catholic doctrine as transubstantiation from his enclave in Oxford University and abjured the Church to yield to the temporal powers. Although he too died in bed, his doctrines and his emphasis on scriptural authority fed into the views of the emerging Lollard radicals in England and their dreams of a nation-state free of noble burdens and authority.

Arnold of Brescia, who also challenged the clergy's privileges, shared a less happy fate. Advocating as early as the twelfth century an apostolic Christianity and a simple life free of worldly authority, Arnold, who had studied under Abelard, extended his views into an outright physical confrontation with the papacy and personally participated in plebeian revolts in Rome against papal rule. Unlike in the cases of Abelard and Wyclif, Arnold's activism cost him his life when he was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1155. Jan Hus, who brought Wyclif's message to Bohemia, was also burned at the stake in 1415, as much for his commitment to Bohemian nationalism as his challenge to ecclesiastical precepts, and Wydif's Lollard followers, of whom John Ball was one, were hunted down by the authorities and often murdered ruthlessly. Abelard, Wyclif, and even Hus were academicians; they might even have been personally shocked by the radicals who reinterpretated their teachings. But John Ball and later the Bohemian Taborites, who regarded Hus as a heroic martyr, were insurrectionaries who challenged not only ecclesiastical authority but feudalism— indeed, in some cases, the entire system of social hierarchy and private property. And in their own way and time, they spoke for the third revolution that the Reformation had churned up, breaking not only with official Catholicism but with their more reticent predecessors, some of whom were protected by the selfseeking temporal powers of their day.

THE ENGLISH PEASANT REVOLT

Perhaps the earliest major explosion to be produced by the ferment that marked the late Middle Ages was the English Peasant Revolt of 1381, led by Wat Tyler and John Ball, a revolt that challenged not only the injustices of the time but privilege as such and the hierarchical core of feudal society.

The fourteenth century in England saw the emergence of a free yeomanry demanding the dissolution of feudal bonds and noble prerogatives, the right to tender service in rent, use of the forests, and higher returns for their work. Radical Lollard preachers, particularly Ball, who were roaming the English countryside, openly directed their appeal to this stratum, inveighing against privilege and expressly voicing egalitarian, even communistic, views. "Matters cannot go well in England until all things shall be held in common," Ball cried out; "when there shall be neither vassals nor lords, when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves... Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve?"[1] More pointedly, radical clerics popularized the jingle: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" Such talk found ready ears among masses who were eager to believe that social inequality was contradicted by Scripture and that a new social dispensation was in the offing. Typically, driven by their need for cheap labor because of the plague, the English nobility, with the usual myopia of arrogant feudal lords, turned this unrest into an open rebellion by trying to restore serfdom—much of which had already been abolished in England.

Eventually, in May 1381, the villages north of London rose up in revolt. Peasants and yeomen from East Anglia, arming themselves with axes and longbows and soon followed by militant peasants in Kent, elected Wat Tyler (a roof tiler as his name suggests) to be their commander and captured Canterbury, liberating Ball from imprisonment in the cathedral city. The Essex and Kentish rebels then converged in great numbers on London, pillaging manors and emptying prisons along the way. Unfortunately, they formed no organized army, so that a self-assured, disdainful London mounted no defense against them. In fact, its leading nobles were occupied with conflicts elsewhere, leaving the city's artisanal townspeople free to sympathize with the rebels. On June 12, some twenty thousand peasants assembled outside the city walls, and demanded negotiations with the king—fourteen-year-old Richard II—whom they naively viewed as their protector against the feudal lords. Apparently with a view toward getting the rebels to quietly disperse, Richard appeared among them astride his horse and flippantly granted all their demands. As was to occur repeatedly in future peasant insurrections, many of the rebels were satisfied and departed, while those who remained gratefully voiced their allegiance to the king.

Meanwhile, Wat Tyler, perhaps the most resolute of the peasant leaders, captured the Tower of London on June 14 and destroyed the Savoy, the residence of the hated Duke of Lancaster, calling upon his followers to take over the city. As Tyler seems to have realized, the king's promises were worthless. Once again, the king's nobles offered further negotiations, but Tyler persisted in his demand that all rank and status be abolished and social equality established for everyone, apart from the king. Although the young king pleasantly agreed, his aides mortally wounded Tyler in a scuffle. Upon seeing Tyler's head on a lance and Ball's corpse hanging from a gallows, the peasants and yeomen fled homeward, only to be butchered by the nobles and their supporters—a

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[1] John Ball quoted in Barbara Tuchman, A *Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 374.

scenario, as we will see, that was to be repeated again and again as nobles were able to defeat trusting peasant rebels through fraud and finally through callous murder.

THE TABORITE REVOLT

The teachings of religious mystics went far beyond reform of the Church and sometimes stepped outside the boundaries even of Christianity itself, advancing visions whose origins lay in the pre-Christian radical movements that had been suppressed in the early days of the Church. Catholicism had transformed the dream of Christ's return to earth into a distant vision, often centered on a remote Day of Judgment that would fell the wicked, and reward the virtuous with immortality. On the margins of the Church, mystical visionaries competed with seers of supernatural signs and portents, and both voiced calls for miraculous changes that would culminate in a universal brotherhood of love. These dreamers were not free of major divisions among themselves. Some advanced visions that were more messianic than activistic, bringing a pacifist, often sectarian and parochial, element into their images of the millennium. Still others, by contrast, saw the millennium as a bloody purge of the wicked—and it was precisely this embattled strain that found its sharpest expression in the Taborite movement.

The Taborite commune of 1420 in Bohemia essentially began as part of a quasi-national and religious war that Jan Hus's followers had waged against German and papal sovereignty for some two decades. Violent and extremely millenarian Anabaptists, the Taborites—so named after their city of Tabor (itself named after the mountain where Christ's transfiguration supposedly occurred)—were explicitly communistic in outlook. Their community completely abolished private property. They were a movement less of peasants than of small artisans and dispossessed urban plebeians, their communistic attitudes toward property and their essentially libertarian views toward authority were intertwined with the religious conviction that they were a chosen "elect," like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, who asserted their right freely to indulge their senses and desires. The Second Coming, they maintained, would lead to the abolition of all laws and all social differences of class and caste, and confer immortality and material abundance on all believers.

To gain more popular support against the military forces that the emperor, nobles, clergy, and moderate dissenters were amassing against them, the Taborites appealed to the peasantry for aid, declaring that Christ, disguised as a brigand, would soon appear in their midst and preside over the destruction of the existing evil world. These appeals met with very little response. For better or worse, the very isolation of the Taborite "warrior communists" assured their ultimate defeat. "If socialism in one country is doomed to become deformed and crippled, communism in one city is impossible for any length of time," Kenneth Rexroth acerbically observes in his account of the movement.

> Sooner or later the garrison society will weaken, but the outside world does not. It is always there waiting, strongest perhaps in times of peace. Tabor was never able to balance its popular communism of consumption with an organized and planned communism of production, nor the exchange of goods between city communes and peasant communes.[2]

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[2] Kenneth Rexroth, *Communalism: From Its Origins to the Twentieth Century!* New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 91.

In time, the Taborites were defeated in a series of battles with the Emperor Sigismund. The mystical and religious fervor that permeated the movement's outlook brought neither a Second Coming nor a new social dispensation. In the end, the rational calculations of Sigismund and, more importantly, the power of cold steel in the hands of well-organized armies triumphed over the millenarians, who were poorly armed, poorly commanded, and sharply divided between moderates and radicals, despite their shared mystical zeal.

Typically, the ruling classes were merciless in suppressing popular uprisings. Given the times, the monarchs, princes, and nobles of the era literally butchered the rebels, dismembering the captives they left alive and brutally torturing their leaders. Later peasant wars, too, normally ended in bloody slaughters, often preceded by truces in which the nobles rallied their forces before mercilessly turning upon and massacring the rebels.

Those on the pacifist wing of the chiliastic movement, it is worth noting, fared no better at the hands of the ruling classes. Indeed, not only did their passivity expose them to violent onslaughts by nobles and Catholics, it rendered them psychologically vulnerable to strong, demagogic leaders who often turned their "communes" into personal fiefdoms, regaled by chosen "elders" who ossified them along authoritarian lines. Custom, in effect, played as much of a debilitating role as did physical coercion, and the "elders" proved to be no less exacting in dealing with their congregations than the conventional clergy.

THE FRENCH *JACQUERIE* AND ETIENNE MARCEL

By far the most remarkable event of the era was Etienne Marcel's revolt in the 1350s, a Parisian uprising that swept in other French towns against the growing power of the monarchy. As provost of the merchants, Marcel was the equivalent of the mayor of the capital, and by all rights he can well be regarded as the popular leader of what would become the "Third Estate": the ordinary people who lacked noble or ecclesiastical status. Indeed, his principal goal was to strengthen the authority of the Estates General at the expense of the monarchy. More immediately, he tried to diminish the tax burden that the king had placed on the middle classes, much as the French Estates General were to do five centuries later, and, like most modern French revolutionaries, Marcel was ultimately driven by the logic of events to challenge the whole structure of oligarchical power in France. As Perez Zagorin observes, he "wanted to build an alliance of towns" against the monarchy and "also established some slight ties with the *Jacquerie,* the big peasant revolt that had broken out at the same time in the Ile-de-France and the surrounding region."[3] Over several stages, Marcel's insurrection in Paris nearly combined with a well-organized peasant war ably led by one Guillaume Cale. Had the revolt been successful, its consequences would have anticipated those of the French Revolution of a later era.

By 1358, Cale, a peasant of Picard origin, had united a diffuse agrarian uprising into a coherent and able fighting force that threatened the very structure of French feudal society. Hardly a naive country bumpkin or "Jacques," as nobles and arrogant town dwellers disdainfully called the French peasant, Cale was in fact a highly astute and experienced military leader as well as an able political strategist. Not only did he turn a loose and scattered peasant rebellion into a well-organized peasant war, but, with rare political insight, he tried to ally it with plebeian and middle-class elements in the towns. Together, he reckoned, they could form an effective common front

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[3] Perez Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers: 1500–1600;* vol. I, *Society, States, and Early Modern Revolution: Agrarian and Urban Rebellions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 232.

against the nobility and their urban patrician supporters. For a time, this exceptional strategy met with surprising success. Radical townsmen took over towns like Senlis and Beauvais, opening their gates to the approaching well-organized peasant battalions under Cale's command; indeed, even a major city like Amiens rallied to Cale's forces, imposing death sentences on its nobles *in absentia.*

A crucial turning point of the revolt was reached when Marcel linked his Parisian supporters (clad in red and blue, the colors of the capital city) with Cale's peasant armies. Even more provocatively, the Parisian provost openly offered to his "Jacques" allies the estates of his royalist opponents, notably the properties of the king's councilors near the city. To the panic of the nobility and the urban patricians, the peasants lost no time in looting the estates. The revolt of the towns now lost its fairly moderate middle-class character and assumed an increasingly radical plebeian one that pitted Marcel not only against the monarchy and its noble supporters but against the well-to-do Parisian burghers.

The uprising's success depended heavily on the ability of Cale and his peasant armies to defeat the monarchy at the city of Meaux. Peasant prospects for successfully seizing the city seemed unusually propitious, but precisely at this strategic moment, poor strategy on the part of individual peasant commanders, combined with the nobility's cavalry, threw the invading peasants into a headlong retreat. The nobility, encouraged by their victory, proceeded to rally their forces in earnest, throwing back the peasants, who fled toward Paris, where they hoped to stand their ground outside the city walls with the aid of the radical Parisians.

But Cale and Marcel's hopes for joining forces came to naught when the peasant leader, lured into negotiations with his enemies with promises for his personal safety, was imprisoned and brutally executed. What followed was essentially an anticipation of the English Peasant War. The leaderless peasants were easily scattered, hunted down, and massacred by the thousands, while in Paris, well-to-do royalist burghers killed Marcel and slaughtered his supporters. Once the gates of the capital were opened to the king, the shrewdly forgiving monarch was free to lay the basis for royal despotism in the centuries that followed.

By no means is it clear that the defeat of Cale and Marcel was historically inevitable. Indeed, the history of France, perhaps even that of Western Europe, might well have taken a very different institutional turn—a turn toward urban and peasant confederations rather than centralized nation-states, even toward a vibrant village life rather than an egoistic peasantry—had Cale's peasant army captured Meaux and routed the local nobility. The peasant armies could have easily taken the city had they attacked it from a different vantage point or else fallen back directly upon Paris instead of trying to hold their ground at some distance from the capital's walls. Had they deployed their forces more effectively and resolutely, Marcel and Cale might very well have joined forces and established a plebeian confederation, possibly in an alliance with other French towns.

The French *Jacquerie* and Marcel's urban uprising more than amply demonstrate that there are turning points in history in which constellations of events based on able leadership and political decisiveness might very well alter the long-range course of events. A more rational social dispensation far in advance of the one that actually followed upon their defeat might very well have emerged had the two men prevailed over the forces that opposed them, as seemed very likely for a time. The historian who is concerned only with what *did* occur at a given moment and not with what *could have* occurred, given the potentialities that exist at any given period, abdicates all ethical judgment and interpretive insights. History, as a rational dispensation of

liberatory potentialities, is reduced to a random chronicle of events that have neither direction nor meaning, or even an instructive function—or, to put this thought more colloquially, the possibility of "learning from events."

A MIXED ECONOMY

Nor is it certain, still less inevitable, that the international links forged by commercial capital in Europe and the world during the late Middle Ages had to radically alter the village and even urban life along capitalistic lines. That commercial and so-called "manufacturing" towns emerged, based on longdistance trade and, by medieval standards, advanced methods of production, is hardly arguable, but the word *manufacturing* must be applied very advisedly to this complex period. Apart from mining, which employed complex gearing systems made of wood, most work was done by hand and, in this literal sense, remained within the orbit of traditional "manufacture" or handwork. Throughout most of the late medieval period, work rarely involved the use of the sophisticated machines we associate with industrial manufacturing.

Even the towns that were conspicuous "manufacturing" centers employed a technology that was surprisingly simple. Spinning, weaving, and dyeing were still performed with tools and hand-operated "machines" whose character was more ancient than modern, as were the technologies involved in the forging of metals and the building of homes. The famous arsenal of Venice, which employed several thousand workers, consisted mainly of a series of small enclaves in which artisans used traditional tools and methods to make arms. Much of this work, in fact, was done at home. Florence's late medieval textile "industry" was structured around small shops that used traditional techniques and skills, in which it was not so much the technologies that had undergone change as it was the organization of labor and the tempo at which artisans were expected to work. In towns and cities where guilds and local rules did not impede their efforts, many of these laborers went on to establish businesses for themselves and become "masters" who hired a number of proto-proletarian workers of their own.

Rationalized or industrial production was generally organized to support long-distance trade, which had grown considerably by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Italian, Flemish, Provencal, and northern German merchants now carried "manufactured" wares from towns and seaports into central Europe as well as the East, exchanging domestic goods for more exotic ones. Their profits were commonly enormous. Moreover, they demanded coinage in exchange for the exotic goods they sold, so that their customers were limited to moneyed nobles, wealthy clerics, and other rich merchants. In reality, a very small part of European society was involved in this capitalistic nexus. Only well-to-do people, the possessors of currency, could buy the silks, furs, fine woolens, delicately wrought artifacts, and expensive spices that caravans and ships carried into the heartland of Europe. Notably lacking was sufficient money and an open market unrestricted by guilds, local tariffs, customs, and feudal forms of mutual vassalage that alone could foster an authentic development of capitalism on the continent.

From the fourteenth century onward, in fact, we encounter a highly mixed economy whose foci in some cases were capitalistic, in others, largely feudal, and in still others, peasant and artisanal. The widespread existence of capitalistic elements who reinvested their profits primarily into industry rather than ownership of land and acquisition of titles is largely the product of historical hindsight rather than factual reality. That capitalism eventually emerged—not only as an economy but also as a *society* —and colonized every aspect of life was not the result of any

"inexorable laws" of social development; indeed, well into the eighteenth century, this mixed economy was the rule rather than the exception, even after feudal obligations had given way to status based on wealth rather than ancestry. As late as the early nineteenth century, in an era that was increasingly invaded by factories, mills, railroads, and heavy machinery, a thinker such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon could still work out the bulk of his social theories and political views primarily in artisanal terms, indeed, from a small-town perspective, while in the early 1840s the size of London, which by present-day standards would be regarded as modest, awed Friedrich Engels when he first visited the city.

Any description of prerevolutionary Europe must thus take into account the fortunes of this highly mixed economy and society if it is to give a satisfactory account of the popular movements of the era. Peasants, even serfs, tended to resist attempts to subvert the time-honored customs of rights and duties that gave them access to village common lands; tenants, in turn, viewed their rented plots essentially as hereditary endowments, not as tracts of real estate that could be taken away from them at will. At the same time, their landlords—noble as well as bourgeois—were beginning to discard their sense of obligation to the food cultivators whom their families had inherited over countless generations together with their estates. In the course of doing so, they reduced serfs to mere renters whom, in time, they could displace with sheep or with gang labor, guided by the needs of the international market for wool and food staples.

As the monarchy, in turn, expanded its authority to national proportions, it exacted taxes that often violated traditional exemptions, heavily burdening the farmer, artisan, merchant, and emerging capitalist alike. The growing bureaucracies that monarchies were obliged to support created the need for public financing and a royal debt. With the sophistication of weapons and fortifications, wars became more costly, the need for revenues grew, and conflicts became increasingly oriented toward commercial hegemony as well as the acquisition of territory. Not only did peasants rise up against the upper strata of society as they passed these growing exactions on to them, but nobles too rose up against monarchs who increasingly encroached upon their authority.

In the towns, guilds began to close their doors to everyone but the sons of craft masters, creating an excluded and chronically restless plebeian stratum. These privileged guilds, in turn, were challenged not only by the excluded workers but by weaker, less provident guilds, whose powers were steadily waning before the authority of the higher guilds. Chronic conflicts now arose between peasants and nobles, nobles and merchants, merchants and artisans, rich masters and poor journeymen, commercial cities, the various estates of a kingdom, and the monarchy, giving rise to centuries of tumult in Europe that left the continent insecure and deeply uncertain about its future.

FLEMISH TOWN REVOLTS

By the early fourteenth century, in fact, the Flemish textile communes of Ghent, Brabant, and Hainault became battlegrounds between a large body of dispossessed plebeians and an entrenched, usually closed elite of privileged craft guild masters. The guilds in turn were themselves divided between "lesser" and "greater," collectively generating riots as an ongoing feature of social life throughout the area. After many conflicts, victory came to the plebeian elements in Ghent in 1336, when the lesser guilds, led by the weaver Jacob van Artevelde, unseated the patrician

guildsmen of the city and established a magistracy composed of the weavers, fullers, and lesser guildsmen, largely excluding the well-to-do stratum of the city.

The commercial interests of the textile towns were intimately tied to the fortunes of England, which supplied them with much-needed wool, rather than to those of France, whose monarchy ruled them through its representative, the Count of Flanders. The common hostility these lowland communes shared toward French rule cut across class lines, with the result that their resistance to the French often led to tentative alliances between plebeian workers and rich and poor guilds in an uneasy common front against an external enemy.

The Flemish towns seemed to tilt toward civic autonomy, albeit not without protection from local nobles in the countryside, and toward a growing sense of intercity commonality, despite the economic competition between them. Facing a conflict with France, Ghent chose Philip Artevelde, the son of Jacob, who had been killed in a fracas, as the chief captain of the city. He was placed in command of the joint forces of Ghent and other Flemish towns against an invasion by the Count of Flanders. In 1382 the massed Flemish citizen militia faced the highly trained knights and troops of the count. In the face of the count's cavalry charges, the militiamen, linked together arm-in-arm, were crushed under the weight of their own bodies. The body of Philip was found on the field, trodden over by the flight of his own men. With his death, "Flanders was to give up the dream of government by a league of independent towns," observes Ephraim Emerton, "and submit to the ever more and more centralized rule of power territorial lords, whose model was naturally the aggressive monarchy of France"[4] —again foreclosing the possibility of a Swiss-like confederal political structure as distinguished from a nation-state.

It is worth emphasizing that the resistance of the Flemish burghers—or "bourgeois"—to French monarchical centralization was almost entirely an urban struggle; we find little, if any, evidence of significant peasant support. It is also worth emphasizing that these burghers were not committed to the rule of nation-states, despite the proclivity of many historians to portray medieval cities as early supporters of nationalism. Quite to the contrary, the Flemish burghers were deeply devoted to their communes, and on general regional matters, when the need arose, they were often able to work with their neighbors in leagues. Proud and independent men, fairly literate artisans who lived with their weapons by their sides so as to be able to meet any military emergency that faced their communes, they were a special human type who would play leading roles as militant revolutionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, often under the misleading latter-day rubric of "proletarians."

Chapter 2. The German Peasant Wars

One of the great culminating points in the premodern uprisings of oppressed peoples has been broadly described as the "German Peasant War", a sweeping conflict that exploded in central Europe early in the sixteenth century.

The war stemmed in part from economic problems that arose within the patchwork of principalities known as the Holy Roman Empire. As the empire began to fall apart, feudal domination intensified enormously, even as serfdom was declining elsewhere in Europe, and many of the ruling princes, lay and ecclesiastical, attempted to aggrandize themselves in their sovereign principalities at the expense of the peasantry. Whether owing to growing economic needs or in

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[4] Ephraim Emerton, *The Beginnings of Modern Europe* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1917), p. 217.

pursuit of greater power (the two are not mutually exclusive), lords and princes began to impose heavier and heavier burdens on the peasants by seizing their traditional common lands, increasing virtually all feudal exactions, and trying to restore serfdom among those who were already relatively free. The petty burdens that the upper classes placed on the lower can be judged by the sixty-two Articles of the Sttihlingen peasants, whose grievances and actions sparked the rebellion of 1525 in the Southwest. By adopting Roman law over German, the nobility were able to curtail freedoms that the peasants had enjoyed for centuries, and exact heavy penalties for infractions that would have been considered minor under traditional common or Germanic practices. Tempted by the new wares that growing European commerce made available to those who could afford them, temporal and ecclesiastical lords demanded more from the peasantry than they had in earlier times—and quite often, the fairly well-to-do peasants chafed more under these demands than the more downtrodden, who had been conditioned for generations to accept fatalistically their lot in life.

Serfdom, for its part, had become more brutal since the high Middle Ages. The medieval serf at least had a body of rights he could claim as well as duties he had to perform, and his lot was often softened by many generations of compromises between lord and underling. The common law of his quasi-tribal society and the religious precepts of the Church had served as countervailing forces to arbitrary manorial rule. With the decline of feudalism and the degeneration of the Church, however, serfdom began to approximate outright slavery, and arbitrary temporal power began to invade the most guarded realm of the peasant's life. Now he was not only compelled to give more, indeed most, of his working time to the lord and pay increasing taxes, rents, and tithes, but he could be arbitrarily imprisoned, tortured, and in some cases even killed at the lord's behest. To worsen their lot, the many peasants who were serfs or faced the prospect of enserfment suffered the loss of the common meadows on which they had pastured their domestic animals and the common woodlands from which they had gathered fuel and timber since time immemorial.

Overall, two very distinct ways of life confronted each other, and almost inevitably were destined to explode into open conflict. On the one side, there was the peasant economy, which was structured around subsistence farming with all its attendant uncertainties that obliged the food cultivator, as Tom Scott and Bob Scribner observe,

> to rely on a wide range of activities other than mere arable farming in order to make ends meet. The creation of game reserves from common land and denial of access to forests cut the peasants off from what they regarded as a natural resource which they could justly exploit to supplement their purely agrarian incomes. Access to commons and waste land for grazing or the use of the forest to fatten swine or cattle on beechmast were considered vital for the maintenance of livestock, freeing as much land as possible for cultivation, just as grass and hay were indispensable for fodder.

On the other side, the distinctly rapacious nobility were enamored of the fine goods carried over the Alps by Italian merchants, and fired by ambitions to increase their land holdings. These nobles sought to extract what they could from the peasantry's labor, with no regard for their ancestral responsibilities to the lower classes. They sought to plunder "this subsistence economy in many ways," observe Scott and Scribner,

> especially through their desire to maximize their own incomes and to take advantage of every opportunity offered by an expanding market. Forests were a rich natural re-

source which could be exploited by the sale or lease of timber or charcoaling rights, while staves and bark could be sold rather than allowed to the peasants as a traditional right. Traditional fishing waters could be leased or exploited for the lord's own use, while common land could be enclosed and converted to arable. We may perceive in some areas virtually a conflict of two economic systems, a peasant subsistence economy with necessary links to local markets and that of feudal landlords aware of the entire range of market possibilities offered by economic conjuncture.[5]

In these circumstances, little more than a mere episode was required to turn peasant unrest into a general insurrection of revolutionary proportions.

THE *BUNDSCHUH*

There was no lack of unrest among the peasantry. The immediate precursor of the German Peasant War was a largely subterranean peasant movement known as the *Bundschuh,* whose name and symbol came from the peasant's laced boot, in contrast to the nobleman's fine *Stiefel.* Arising in German-speaking Alsace, the *Bundschuh* was probably sparked by a rise in the cost of living, but over time the peasants' basic demands were widened to include ecclesiastical reforms such as reductions in clerical income, a limitation on the number of priests in a community, and an end to clerical courts. Its slogan "Nothing but God's Justice" or "God's Word," referring to biblical precepts as a guide to the interactions between lord and underling, voiced the peasants' desire for a radically new social order, one based on traditional common law rather than Roman contract law, and one that recognized the authority only of the emperor and the pope, not of lords and clergy. Regrettably, anti-Semitism was ubiquitous; Jews, who were obliged to be moneylenders because of clerical restrictions on their activities, were seen as exacting usurers. While some *Bundschuh* programs demanded a fixed interest rate of 5 percent, other members demanded the extermination of the Jews. When the *Bundschuh* called for the abolition of taxes, including tithes, and, remarkably, claimed the sole right to levy taxes for itself, the movement began to establish itself as an incipient dual power in opposition to existing princely authority. When it called for the election of pastors by congregations, its program began to resemble that of the radical English Puritans who, a century and a half later, would shake the foundations of established regal authority (which claimed to head the Anglican Church) with their demands for the election of ministers in England and on the North American continent.

What is remarkable about the *Bundschuh* is the high degree of organization it created between 1493 and 1517, and the tenacity of its membership, so unlike what is commonly imputed to peasant movements. Strictly speaking, the *Bundschuh* was a conspiracy: illegal, it had to be kept highly secret, and its members were bonded by oaths, ceremonies, and commitments to punish any treachery. Even Friedrich Engels expressed his admiration for the movement,

> which overcame the obstacles to a more centralised organisation in spite of the fact that they were scattered over the countryside, and … after numberless dispersions,

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[5] *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* edited, translated, and with an introduction by Tom Scott and Bob Scribner (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1991), pp. 8–9.

defeats, executions of leaders, they renewed their conspiracies over and over again, until an opportunity came for a mass upheaval.[6]

In 1493, certain *Bundschuh* leaders daringly planned to take over the city of Schletstadt and its nearby monasteries during Easter week, expropriate the wealth of the city's rich, and proceed to do the same in the rest of Alsace. The plan somehow became known to the authorities, and many of the leaders were arrested and tortured. Still others were driven out of the area with their hands or fingers brutally amputated. Yet despite the failure of the Alsace movement, the *Bundschuh* did not disappear; it lingered on in the hidden life of the peasantry and resurfaced continually for the next thirty years in various parts of southern Germany. By the early 1500s, its members in Speyer had broadened its program considerably to include the abolition of serfdom, the confiscation of monastic and Church-owned estates and their redivision among the people, and a Germany united under the shaky imperial crown.

As in Alsace, a plan for a major insurrection to take over the town of Bruchsal was aborted, this time betrayed by a priest to whom one of the members had naively confessed the plan. The alerted authorities, acting under a harsh decree of the Emperor Maximilian, extinguished what resistance they encountered. But the majority of the *Bundschuh* members were never discovered by the authorities, and the movement continued to exist in different forms and under different names. In Swabia, in the Duchy of Württemberg, it changed its name from *Bundschuh* to Poor Conrad, a name borrowed from that of an innocuous Catholic peasant fraternity. In the upper Rhine region. Joss Fritz, a former soldier and veteran of the Alsace conspiracy succeeded in uniting the peasants with knights, dissident clerics, and urban plebeians in a complex conspiracy, which spread back to Alsace and into Baden and WUrttemberg. Although a plot to take the town of Freiburg was betrayed and repressed once again, most of the movement members escaped. Shortly thereafter, a congress of Poor Conrad in the Duchy of Württemberg led to an uprising in 1514, which received widespread support owing to the famine conditions in the area. Together, peasants and town plebeians succeeded in taking three Swabian towns; indeed, they even managed to get their representatives seated in the Württemberg diet, which convened at Stuttgart. But the treacherous Duke Ulrich ordered the representatives of the middle classes to meet in an alternative diet in Tubingen without the peasants. The diet dutifully passed a law against the uprising, and the duke gathered troops to disperse the peasant militia. Although stern, the duke's treatment of the "rebels" was not particularly brutal; but he completely ignored the peasant demands and strengthened the laws against all peasant gatherings in the duchy. Although the main leaders of Poor Conrad again escaped, attempts to revive the *Bundschuh* in the Black Forest region were effectively suppressed by the authorities. Joss Fritz, who had lived a nearly charmed life through three abortive insurrections, fled to Switzerland, where he apparently died.

Well before the climactic years of the peasant war in Germany, a mass rebellion exploded in Switzerland, Hungary, and Slovenia between 1513 and 1515. In Hungary, a relatively benign monarch had initiated agrarian reforms that the feudal lords bitterly resented, and as soon as they regained their authority over the Crown, the reforms were flagrantly annulled. Thereupon, Gyorgy D6sza, a knight who had earned a distinguished reputation as a military commander and had organized a popular, mainly peasant militia to fight Turkish invaders, proceeded in 1514 to throw these well-disciplined forces against the nobility, opening a full-scale peasant war. D6sza

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[6] Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany,* trans. Moissaye J. Olgin. Marxist Library: Works of Marxism-Leninism, vol. 33 (New York: International Publishers, 1926), p. 79.

proclaimed a republic, abolishing the monarchy and the privileges of the nobility, and once again, as with Etienne Marcel in Paris two centuries earlier, Hungary stood at a decisive social juncture in which history seemed to hold its breath.

In fact, this peasant uprising even gained the wavering support of the urban middle class. But when the peasants burned manors and castles, the ever-fearful bourgeoisie became alarmed and, fearing too militant a peasant revolt, deserted the peasant cause and threw their support over to the nobles, on whose behalf John Zapdlyai, the future king of Hungary, had raised a substantial army. Notwithstanding the persistent belief that all peasant insurrections are chaotic, moblike affairs, Ddsza's well-disciplined, superbly organized, and highly committed army fought valiantly and stubbornly, but Zapolyai's combined force of urban burghers and rural nobles ruthlessly crushed it at Temesvar. With this military victory, the Hungarian nobility assembled in a diet and proclaimed serfdom as a permanent condition, essentially freezing the history of their country for centuries to come.

THE REFORMATION

In the German-speaking areas of the Holy Roman Empire, many ideological factors—the Reformation and its radical offspring—came into play that seemed to challenge the authority of the ruling elites and that gave a strong cultural edge to the peasants' economic demands.

The Reformation was greatly fueled by the complex interplay of political and social forces that emerged in the closing years of the Middle Ages. By the sixteenth century, a broad intellectual and popular movement, supported by the emerging European monarchs, stood opposed to a thoroughly corrupt and decadent Church. In England, Henry VIII had severed his country's ties with Rome completely, while France and Spain, for their part, had gained the right to appoint their own bishops, a right that initially belonged to the Vatican. Under these conditions the Church seemed like a useless, self-perpetuating artifact that froze vast landholdings from wider social accessibility, accumulated an incalculably large treasure that the rising national economies of Europe sorely needed, and supported a swollen hierarchy of ecclesiastical and bureaucratic parasites who made no productive contribution to the material well-being of society. At the same time, abbots and bishops, many of whom were also princely landowners, tried to exact increasing revenues from the peasants as zealously as the lay princes.

Thus, it was not only the emerging bourgeoisie who opposed the Church, whose system of charities blocked off what could have been a reserve labor force for capitalists to exploit; rather, reformation had become a pressing need for almost all strata of society: manorial lords as well as peasants, monarchs as well as nobles, urban patricians as well as plebeians, indeed everyone except the desperately poor who lived on Church handouts. Even feudal lords viewed the Church as an immense drain on their resources and dreamed of expropriating monastic lands and ecclesiastical wealth.

Reformation was in the air—but what kind of reformation would it be? The various demands for reform were vaguely divided along conflicting class lines until the Great Peasant War sorted them into clearly definable positions. The reformers essentially differed according to whether changes would serve nationalism against Catholic universalism, the temporal powers against the ecclesiastical ones, the wealthy against the poor, the princes against the peasants—or the peasants against the oppressive nobility generally.

LUTHER AND THE SWABIAN LEAGUE

In 1517, while the ever-active Joss Fritz was engaging in the last episode of his rebellious life in the Black Forest region, Martin Luther posted his famous ninety-five theses on the castle church door of Wittenberg, challenging papal hierarchy and moving Christian precept away from a faith structured around the Catholic Church to a faith based on personal belief. As a doctrine, Lutheranism was markedly subjective; it emphasized the inner light of faith over the outer reality of deeds and rituals. Although Luther's criticisms of indulgences, of papal authority over temporal German rulers, and of the widespread corruption in Rome were not strikingly innovative—they had, in fact, already been voiced by many clerics throughout the Holy Roman Empire and elsewhere—his attack came at a very strategic time, when virtually all strata of German society were alienated from Rome for a host of material, spiritual, and political reasons.

With support from the princes, urban classes, and peasants, Luther's aims evolved from mere reform of the existing Church into outright rebellion against it, indeed toward the establishment of a national church that was akin in many respects to the Church of England that his contemporary, Henry VIII, had created. In his 1520 *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,* Luther struck a blow for a total break with Rome, demanding the creation of a uniquely German clergy with its own bishops. Such writings whetted the appetite of German nobles of all levels for Church-owned lands. At the same time Luther's tenor had certain remarkably democratic features, such as an appeal to faith rather than obedience to ecclesiastical hierarchies, and his language was redolent of an apostolic Christianity that resonated deeply with peasant and plebeian aspirations for communal autonomy. Pamphlet after pamphlet written by Luther and his supporters fed the aspirations for a better life of peasants and serfs, who were chafing under increasingly severe feudal exactions, the growth of princely power, and exploitation by wealthy monastic orders and bishops.

Nor was the peasantry the only social group to feel itself threatened by the appetites of the ruling princes and the Church; the lesser nobility in the Holy Roman Empire also suffered a major erosion of its power at the expense of the dynastic territorial princes who ruled the major principalities of Germany. As the authority of the princes increased, the authority of the nobility diminished, producing unrest among the barons and knights. Given the opportunity, the lesser nobles correspondingly sought to create a "democracy of nobles"—of the lesser nobility—that would reunite the empire largely under their control, and thereby enhance their own power over the agrarian economy. These aspirations profoundly affected the status of free peasants, whom the nobles planned to enserf, as well as serfs, whose burdens would be increased, and the rural poor generally, who would suffer the loss of common lands that traditionally belonged to peasant villages.

Perhaps more so than any other stratum, the nobles wanted a German Church that would end the power of the landed monasteries and clerical princes, the secularization of clerical states and estates, and ultimately the elimination of princely power. In 1522, Ulrich von Hutten tried to use an old league of Rhenish, Swabian, and Franconian nobles—the Swabian League—to promote these aims by force of arms. Hutten amassed a noble army that could be directed not only against the Church but also against the territorial princes, and with Franz von Sickingen as its military commander, the League's forces attempted to stage a coup against the clerical states, particularly the electorarchbishop of Trier.

The attempt failed. By itself, the nobility were not strong enough to prevail militarily against the princes. Not only were the princes too powerful, but neither the peasants nor the townspeople were willing to make common cause with the lesser nobles in a plan to increase their power; indeed, the peasants sought to abolish all the privileges of the nobility, higher or lower. Instead of calling for the abolition of serfdom to gain peasant support, Hutten merely declaimed against Rome as the source of all the ills of the time. The forces of the Swabian League were defeated at Trier, where Sickingen was killed. Hutten, who fled, died shortly after. Thereafter the nobility's power was definitively broken, and the nobles were forced to submit to the princes, under whose protection and leadership the lesser nobles were to remain for centuries. Indeed, by the mid-1520s, as the empire fragmented, the princes were clearly ascendant. Even the urban patricians became largely dependent upon them, as did Luther, who wedded himself to this realignment of the German upper classes. Accordingly, the Lutheran Church lost whatever social and political independence of the ruling classes it had had, and the democratic tenor in Luther's own writings waned ominously, the writings becoming more oligarchical and committed to the authority of the temporal rulers.

Although it is tempting to see Luther's emphasis on "inwardness" and his own sharply etched personality as expressions of "bourgeois individuality," he was hardly the bearer of ideological trappings for an emerging individualistic German bourgeoisie against a corporate feudal society. In fact, quite the opposite is true. In contrast to the Calvinist aspect of the Reformation, Lutheranism did little to favor bourgeois interests in Europe; indeed, for Germany, it marked a decided setback. The Reformation in Germany largely provided an ideological patina for landlordism, not for commerce, and for the princes, not for the burgher class, which supported it more out of fear of the peasants' war and the peasants' plebeian allies in the towns of central Europe than out of any profound religious convictions of their own.

In fact, Luther, by allying himself with the agrarian princely and urban patrician elements in German-speaking areas, rather than the burghers, furthered the fragmentation of the empire into many kingdoms, princelings, dukedoms, and imperial cities, which, far from fostering a bourgeois development, essentially obstructed it. Lutheran "inwardness" essentially became a gospel of quietism and obedience that was anything but compatible with the aggressive egotism characteristic of the bourgeois spirit, and its political effects were to favor Germany's dismemberment in opposition to any attempts to unify the empire or produce a nation-state.

In favoring submission to temporal power, Lutheran Protestantism conformed completely with the interests of the German princes and later with the Scandinavian monarchs, who were to eagerly adopt it to strengthen their own sovereignty. Although the Lutheran Church made far more doctrinal and liturgical changes than did the Anglican Church established by Henry VIII (which largely subordinated Roman Catholic doctrine to the monarchy), Lutheran clerics eventually were reduced to mere bureaucratic supports of German princes and Scandinavian kings. As D. Riazanov observes, "Lutheranism became the religion of the economically backward countries. It spread in northern and western Germany, Denmark and Sweden, where the princes, bishops and the landlords became the protectors of the Lutheran Church."[7]

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[7] D. Riazanov, "explanatory notes" to Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), p. 182, note 13. Since Riazanov was a victim of Stalin's purges in the 1930s, his name was removed from subsequent editions of Engels's history.

The transformation that was taking place in Lutheranism notwithstanding, the peasants still identified with the early apostolic tone of Luther, whose appeals to faith and the Bible seemed to legitimate their demands for a more egalitarian society. In reality, they were following in the wake of the radical Reformation clerics who voiced the quasi-mystical millenarianism that they erroneously associated with Luther's name and teachings. Chafing under feudal exactions, the peasants saw the Reformation, particularly as voiced by mystical clerics such as Balthasar Hubmaier and Thomas Miinzer, as a return to the old egalitarian ideas advanced in Acts and in preachings directly ascribed to Jesus. It was in this highly charged ideological as well as economic and social environment that from the early 1500s the various local rebellions and general unrest collected into the climactic struggles that came to be known as the Peasant War, particularly in the fateful years of 1524 and 1525.

THE SCOPE OF THE PEASANT WAR

The Peasant War "proper" (as it has been called by some historians) of 1524 and 1525 was not an easily delineable conflict. It began in different places much earlier than 1524 and extended well beyond 1525—reaching into Alsace and the Palatinate—and it can be said to mark the culmination of chronic uprisings and unrest that date back centuries before the 1500s. No one region fought the upper classes exclusively on its own; various troops tried to aid each other when they could, and as one was suppressed it provided recruits to peasant troops that were still in the field elsewhere. Aside from the chronic struggles in the late Middle Ages between peasants, urban plebeians, and their overlords, the war has a distinctive place in any chronicle of European revolutionary movements over the past five centuries.

But we can single out three distinct but interrelated conflicts, each of which differed regionally and temporally over a span of a year—which is not to deny the war's long prelude and extended sequelae. The first of the wars centered in southwestern Germany, notably the Black Forest and Upper Swabia, directly adjacent to northern Switzerland and overlapping northeastern Austria. This conflict began in the late spring and early summer of 1524 and lasted well into the first half of 1525. In this area, as Scott and Scribner observe, the "balance sheet of the rebellion … was rather untidy," because, its many innovations notwithstanding, "it was lacking in political stamina or determination, and too easily drew back from realizing the implications of the political forms it had created."[8]

The second of the wars broke out in Wllrttemburg and Franconia, in southcentral Germany, and got under way in mid-April 1525. In this region, urban communities played a major role, and the rebels were more radical in their goals and resolute in their sense of purpose. But this war did not last long. After a series of easy victories, it continued into the early summer, but began to decline rapidly when peasant troops failed to take the Marienberg fortress after a twoweek siege in late May and early June.

The third of the wars had its locus in east-central Germany, most famously in Thuringia (where Thomas Mlinzer created his celebrated Eternal League of God at MUhlhausen), reaching Hesse and extending into Saxony to the east, indeed as far as Bohemia. In this region the war began around the same time as the Württemberg-Franconian conflict and was essentially suppressed before the end of May 1525.

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[8] Scott and Scribner, *The German Peasants' War,* p. 28.

What initially ignited the first of the sweeping insurrections of peasants against lords seems almost a trivial provocation. On June 23,1524, the Countess of Lupfen-Stuhlingen in Hegau, in southwestern Württemberg, ordered her peasants to collect snails and strawberries for a banquet. In itself, the order was not unusual; but she issued it at a time of the year when the peasants were hastening to gather their hay. The Lake Constance area, in which Hegau was located, had already been highly radicalized, and her arrogant demand infuriated the peasants, who assembled together and drew up a list of sixty-two grievances that protested excessive taxes, forced labor, the seizure of common lands, the loss of traditional legal principles, and the arbitrary rule of the nobility. A thousand Stuhlingen tenants, bearing such arms as they could get, elected an extraordinarily gifted leader, the professional soldier or *Landsknecht* Hans Muller, as their captain, who organized them into a highly disciplined and effective force.

In August, this force marched southwest to Waldshut, a town on the Rhine about forty miles from Zurich. A well-chosen urban base for an insurrection, Waldshut had already been stirred up by radical reformers who had all but won over the citizenry against the temporal and clerical powers. The Rhenish town's patricians were Lutherans, but its pastor was a radical Zwinglian and its plebeians had been influenced by the fiery preachings of Andreas Bodenstein of Carlstadt and by the incendiary cleric Thomas Milnzer, who was later to figure so prominently in the peasant uprising in Thuringia. The townspeople were sympathetic to the peasant forces and formed an alliance with them—in fact, even nearby Zurich gave them active assistance, including volunteers. At this time Waldshut was itself in revolt against its Austrian rulers, demanding the status of a free city, but the Austrians were much too occupied with imperial affairs in Italy to give any serious attention to a local revolt. As a result, Muller's peasant forces succeeded in fully occupying Waldshut in October 1524, making it one of the centers of the peasant uprisings in southwest Germany.

The remnants of the Swabian League formed the sole military body in southern Germany on which the princes and nobility could rely, but with only 1,700 troops it lacked sufficient strength to overcome Muller's peasant forces, which numbered 3,500 by October 1524. Accordingly, the nobles, as they had so often had done in the past and would continue to do in the future, offered truce negotiations to stall the peasants, while enlarging and arming their own forces. By conceding for a time to many of the peasants' demands, they forestalled the possibility of a decisive peasant victory, which was clearly in the offing had the rebels attacked. The uprising in these early stages was still relatively peaceful. Old habits of servility held the peasants in tow: armed though they were, they behaved more like petitioners than the formidable insurrectionaries they could have been.

Nonetheless, the revolt subsequently swept through the rest of the Hegau region, much of the German-Swiss frontier area, and eastward into the Allgau region (in what is now southwestern Bavaria). Earlier German peasant revolts had always been fragmentary and limited, largely confined to reclaiming traditional rights for their particular area, which often were quite different from those of a nearby region. What gave the Peasant War a new cohesion was the peasants' shared belief that they were supported by divine law against grasping bishops and abbots everywhere, and by their dream of a godly, egalitarian society. From the Black Forest region, the war raced toward the northeast like a huge tide, reaching Upper Swabia by the spring of 1525.

THE ARTICLES OF MEMMINGEN

In March 1525 representatives of the peasant bands in the southwest assembled in a general parliament at Memmingen, the principal town in Upper Swabia, to formulate a common program. The document they produced, "The Twelve Articles of the Peasants," was permeated with Christian piety and sought to refute the idea, held by the horrified elites, that the peasants were teaching

> that no one should obey but all should everywhere rise in revolt and rush together to reform or perhaps destroy altogether the authorities, both ecclesiastic and lay... The articles below shall answer these godless and criminal faultfinders, and serve in the first place to remove the reproach from the word of God, and in the second place to give a Christian excuse for the disobedience or even the revolt of the entire Peasantry.[9]

But in the first of the twelve articles, the peasants claimed for themselves the right to "choose and appoint a pastor" and "the right to depose him should he conduct himself improperly." This chosen pastor was to teach the peasants "the Gospel pure and simple, without any addition, doctrine or ordinance of man." The demand was by no means a frivolous one. The right of a community to choose its pastor in a world where only the elite claimed this initiative was in itself a subversion of the established order of things: in fret, by implication, it not only challenged the professional clergy by strengthening the powers of the village commune, but threatened the civil hierarchy itself.

The second article duly acknowledged that Scripture obliged the peasants to pay a "just tithe" in grain to Church authorities, but this tithe, the peasants insisted, was now to be collected by an *elected* provost—"whomsoever the community may appoint"—thereby challenging a fundamental power of the nobles to choose village clerics. The proceeds were to be used to provide the chosen pastor and his family with "a decent and sufficient maintenance", and nothing more. Beyond the amount needed for this maintenance, all funds collected from the tithe were to be distributed among the poor and used to "avoid laying any land tax on the poor." The peasants refused to pay any additional "unseemly tithe that is of man's invention," whether it be "ecclesiastical or lay"—another gauntlet that was thrown down to existing temporal and spiritual powers alike.

The third Memmingen article defined all obligations in purely personal terms and bluntly called for an end to serfdom, declaring:

> It has been the custom hitherto for men to hold us as their own property, which is pitiable enough, considering that Christ has delivered and redeemed us all, without exception, by the shedding of His precious blood, the lowly as well as the great. Accordingly, it is consistent with Scripture that we should be free and wish to be so. Not that we would wish to be absolutely free and under no authority. God does not teach us that we should lead a disorderly life in the lusts of the flesh, but that

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[9] The Twelve Articles have been reprinted in many works on the Peasant War, including Engels, *Peasant War,* pp. 157–63. An insightful interpretation maybe found in Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective,* trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., and H. C. Erik Midelfort (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 25–67.

we should love the Lord our God and our neighbour. We would gladly observe all this as God has commanded us in the celebration of the communion. He has not commanded us not to obey the authorities, but rather that we should be humble, not only towards those in authority, but towards everyone. We are thus ready to yield obedience according to God's law to our elected and regular authorities in all proper things becoming to a Christian. We, therefore, take it for granted that you will release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it should be shown us from the Gospel that we are serfs.

By radically invoking Scripture—"the Word of God"—against temporal authority this remarkable article was enormously provocative. Not only did it implicitly call the entire social order into dispute, it staked out a new claim for freedom of the individual, invoking Christian humility "toward everyone"—not merely toward one's social superiors.

In the fourth through seventh articles the peasants went on to claim the right to hunt game, fish, gather wood, and possess their land, and the right to communal lands "without restriction," which were to be administered "in a brotherly and Christian manner." These demands were crucial; not only was their fulfillment economically necessary to sustain the village way of life but they presupposed a democratic right of all strata, particularly the peasants, to enjoy full access to the bounty of the natural world. They demanded freedom from the "excessive services" that were increasingly imposed upon them, and they asserted that the nobility "should no longer try to force more services or other dues from the peasant without payment, but permit the peasant to enjoy his holding in peace and quiet." The eighth article called for rents to be fixed according to the capacity of the peasants to pay—a remarkable demand at any time, in which need rather than gain dictated economic behavior—and the ninth, that justice be rendered according to traditional common law rather than individualistic Roman law. The tenth article reiterated the demand for the return of common lands to the village communities:

> we are aggrieved by the appropriation by individuals of meadows and fields which at one time belonged to a community. These we will take again into our own hands. It may, however, happen that the land was rightfully purchased. When, however, the land has unfortunately been purchased in this way, some brotherly arrangement should be made according to circumstances.

The eleventh article demanded the abolition of the inheritance taxes that burdened widows and orphans of deceased peasants—a particularly offensive levy by the nobles that often stripped peasant families of all their belongings— while the final one avowed that Scripture was the sole criterion by which the legitimacy of the claims in the document was to be judged.

The Twelve Articles of Memmingen thus essentially placed themselves under the protection of Christian precept, "the Word of God" or holy writ, indeed God himself. "The Word of God" became a major peasant slogan, challenging all temporal authority with that of Scripture. The peasants, in effect, were appealing to a power that they regarded as higher than that of their lords and princes— hence the revolutionary content of the phrase. Social life was to be lived according to tenets established by the Bible, not by ecclesiastical or lay authorities. Men were to hold power by election, not by birth, and deal with others according to law, not arbitrary judgment. Most of the personal and institutional intermediaries between God and man, even between society

and community, were to be abolished, and people were to be regarded as neighbors, not as lord and lowly, or noble and serf. The authors of the articles thus viewed society essentially as a Christian fraternity, not as a social order based on rank and privilege. In closing the Articles, the peasants warned that they would expand the articles if it became necessary: "if more complaints are discovered which are based upon truth and the Scriptures and relate to offenses against God and our neighbour," they were "determined to reserve the right to present these also."

More articles in varying number emerged throughout the Peasant War, some even going beyond those adopted at Memmingen, including radical visions that struck at the very heart of hierarchical society. In Upper Swabia in February 1525, when tenants gathered at Sonthofen, they demanded the abolition of all feudal lords—a revolutionary demand that spread with the revolt. The "Twelve Articles" of the Alsace peasants called for the election not only of pastors but of all public officials, and completely repudiated the authority of the princes. In the Tyrol, a peasant parliament at Merano demanded that all authorities be chosen by the communities they administered. The peasants cited equality as a vital right and repeated a maxim of the English peasants a century and a half earlier, asking by what right the first noble had held the ordinary people in thrall.

Other articles raised during the war embodied ideals not only of social but of economic equality—equality that would be achieved by raising the condition of the peasant rather than diminishing that of the upper classes. A demand was raised that no one should possess more than two thousand crowns in wealth: a fairly sizable competence, to be sure, but an explicit restriction that flouted what the nobles regarded as a major right of any property owner. Utopistic visions called for the abolition of all capitalistic enterprises and for republican forms of government in which peasants and nobles would conjointly manage civil affairs, and demanded that the production of luxuries be suppressed in favor of goods that were meant to satisfy basic human needs.

The Peasant War, in effect, was as antibourgeois as it was antiaristocratic. Proposals were advanced during the course of the conflict not only to abolish tolls, dues, indirect taxes, and serfdom, but even to limit to some ten thousand crowns the amount of capital that merchants could make.[10] That such radical, indeed visionary, demands could have been made at peasant congresses and meetings—not only by radical clerics but by peasant leaders themselves—attests to the unusual nature of the insurgencies that swept over central Europe early in the sixteenth century.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES OF THE PEASANTS

To characterize the Peasant War exclusively as an agrarian movement would be a grave error, although the peasantry clearly provided the principal force and inspiration behind the upheaval. The peasant insurgents gained support from clerics, bureaucrats, officials of all kinds, knights, burghers, and even nobles, each stratum occupied with achieving the realization of its own particular interests. In nearly all the cities and towns that were in one way or another swept into the movement, the Peasant War produced a general social ferment, inducing riots in cities such

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[10] "The local demand for the abolition of seigneurial rights gave place to universal ideas of liberty, fraternity, equality; and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the German peasants in 1525 anticipated most of the French ideas of 1789." A.W. Ward, G.W. Prothero, and Stanley Leathes, eds., *The Cambridge Modem History,* "planned by Lord Acton"; voL 2, *The Reformation* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1904), p. 184.

as Strasbourg and popular attacks on the elite councils of Mainz, Cologne, and Ratisbon, and on clerical rulers in Bamberg and Speyer. Despite the peasants' initially peaceable and Christian approach, the nobility, clerics, and many well-to-do burghers were hardly soothed by the rebels' call for brotherliness but often panicked and took flight when the peasants assembled and marched upon their castles, convents and towns.

The decline of feudalism, moreover, had created a sizable plebeian element of relatively unskilled people who lived at the mercy of the patricians and local bourgeois. These urban plebeians, far from fearing the peasants, often saw themselves as their natural allies and gave the rebels their earnest support. Although beggars were easily bought off by the established authorities with food and drink, they too organized into bands or "kingdoms" and played a very helpful role as they roamed the roads, forming a communication system for the peasants. The middling burghers, for their part, who were often ensnared in battles with urban patricians, dealt with the peasants opportunistically, often supporting them in order to intimidate the patricians, a support which the burghers easily withdrew, betraying the peasants after they achieved their own ends—or when they feared plebeian uprisings in their own towns.

Generally, however, the peasant demands resonated with the poorer classes in the towns and cities, the unskilled workers and poor artisans. Indeed, as the Peasant War swept across Germany, the peasantry brought many smoldering urban grievances to the surface and virtually turned their movement into a national revolution. Throughout southwestern and central Germany, towns and cities tended to divide into two groupings in response to the upheaval: those that spoke for the poor, or the "commune," and the ruling councils and well-todo. In any given town, sympathy for the peasant cause depended upon which held the upper hand. The merchant class was generally weakest in the smaller towns and strongest in the larger ones, and it was in these small towns peripheral to the centers of the emerging bourgeoisie that "communes" were organized, either as citizens' assemblies or as crowds, exhibiting great sympathy for the peasant cause. Aid came to the peasants from Heilbronn, Wurzburg, and Rothenburg, while in Frankfurt the "commune" took over the elite council and swore a covenant of allegiance to support the peasants. The Frankfurt movement drew up articles affirming their traditional rights, which the city's council accepted and which cities as far to the north as Munster and Osnabruck used as a model for their own "social contract."

Despite its seemingly fragmentary character, the Peasant War did not lack well-organized political institutions. "A parliamentary constitution was developed in larger territories by estates of peasants, burghers, and miners," observes Peter Bliclde.

> While retaining the institutional framework... territorial estates were replaced by countrysides (*Landschaften*), which in 1525 meant both the representative assembly and all the rebels in each territory. Autonomous village, mining, market and urban communes chose representatives by election for the provincial diet, which in turn appointed a representative government (committee), which carried out the business of government with the territorial lord.[11]

More traditionally, the villagers made their decision by forming "a ring" or holding "a commune" that congregated under an oak tree,

[11] Peter Blickle, "The 'Peasant War' as the Revolution of the Common Man—Theses," in Bob Scribner and Gerhard Benecke, eds., *The Gemtan Peasant War of 1525: New Viewpoints* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 21.

in a churchyard, sometimes in a field, or even at an ancient site for the administration of justice (*Malstatt*), and was usually summoned by ringing the storm-bells to indicate that a communal assembly had been called. In theory the village commune was an assembly of equals engaged in nonhierarchical political activity, signifying that all its members were mutually dependent on the support and assistance of their fellow villagers. Demands for the restoration of village autonomy and the protection of communal rights and privileges reflected this fundamental peasant political consciousness, which supplied the lifeblood of the peasant rebellion.[12]

The Peasant War was actually a "revolution of the common man," Blickle argues. "Godly law and the Gospel [were] carried from the towns into the countryside by the preachers," he avers, although religion cannot be separated from the economic tinder that fed the conflagration that swept over the revolutionary areas.

> The limited coincidence of interests between peasants and burghers, in the shape of similar agrarian problems (farming towns), tax burdens (military levy, pallium), or encroachments on communal autonomy by territorial lords (there was an identity of interests with the miners), was strengthened by a common yearning for a more just, more Christian world.[13]

Religious zealotry gave a deep ideological dimension to class antagonisms in combating the long-hated privileged rulers and their ideologues. In central Germany alone, an estimated forty monasteries and castles were destroyed, and many cities, whether out of complicity or fear, opened their gates to the peasant armies. "The Word of God" became a rallying cry for various heterogeneous elements—professional soldiers, artisans, and plebeians—who rose with the peasants, in part as a religious expression of the rebels' cause. Some sympathetic well-to-do burgher elements found the various Protestant tendencies useful as banners under which to unite peasants and plebeians who shared their hatred of the high clerics and nobles—at least, before betraying them. So effective was radical Protestantism as a banner that some canny leaders of the princes' cause, such as the knight Gotz von Sickingen, a veteran of the earlier nobles' revolt, did not hesitate to use it as a means to draw erstwhile allies of the peasants to the princes' side.

Some princes used the war for opportunistic ends as well. The same Duke of Württemberg whom the Poor Conrad movement had fought so bitterly several years before adopted the name "Utz the Peasant" and tried to enlist peasants in order to regain control of his duchy. Knights who had been displaced by wealthy landed nobles and were now footloose were only too eager to join conflicts that held out the promise of real estate and a manorial way of life. Forming their own leagues or freebooting companies, they roamed the countryside seeking their fortunes and freely looting both sides alike for whatever wealth they could acquire. Although the knights were notoriously unreliable, as individuals and in groups they fitfully allied with the peasants, taught them the arts of war, and left behind a memory of social chivalry that German poets were to romanticize centuries later.

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[12] Scott and Scribner, *The German Peasants' War,* p. 14.
[13] Blickle, "The Peasant War," p. 21.

THE PEASANT TROOPS

Faced with the rising peasant tide, the Swabian League, now led by Truchsess Georg von Waldburg, continued its policy of delay. It still lacked sufficient troops to suppress the peasants. In one great delaying tactic, the "Twelve Articles" were actually submitted for arbitration to a commission that included Luther, his acolyte Philip Melancthon, and a representative of the princes and the emperor. Even though none of the commission's members were peasants, basic interests were clearly at war between the nobles and peasants, and no appeals to brotherly love could possibly reconcile them.

Between February, when negotiations began, and the end of April 1525, the revolt spread until it ignited nearly all of southwestern Germany, notably the Black Forest and Upper Swabia. If only because of the perfidy and arrogance of the nobility, violence was inevitable between the peasantry and their rulers. Indeed, once the peasants decided to abandon the peaceful approach they initially had adopted, they organized themselves into formidable armies *(bunderi)* or "troops," as they have been called, that were more than "mobs" of farmers poorly armed with scythes and bludgeons; in quite a few cases, they were equipped with firearms, cannon, and even some cavalry. Although these military forces were usually aided by professional military men, the *Landsknechten,* they were highly democratic in character, as was often the case with the militias of the era. Officers were elected by their units, and military plans were often made by the armed community, perhaps as "rings," as a whole.

The course of the social revolution over such a wide expanse, the mobilizing of peasant troops at various centers, their crisscrossing and merging over large territories, their victories, and finally their defeats—all is too complex a story to tell briefly. Nearly two-thirds of present-day Germany was directly involved in this sweeping conflict at some time or another, and its effects were felt as far north as Gdansk, on the Baltic, and may have reverberated into the Slavic East. At least a dozen individual peasant troops gained prominence as the conflict unfolded—which should not diminish the importance of the many other troops that operated on a smaller scale in their localities. The revolution's impact—its mistakes as well as its possibilities—can best be understood by singling out the activities of the major troops when the revolt was at its height.

As previously indicated, the earliest was the Hegau Troop, which had occupied Waldshut in October 1524 under the command of the *Landsknecht* Hans Muller, after the Stiihlingen affair. In February, a peasant insurrection in Upper Swabia produced the Baltringen Troop, which raised a revolutionary red flag and reached ten to twelve thousand men, making it one of the largest of the peasant forces in the field. During the same month, the Upper Allgau Troop of about seven thousand was formed at Schusser, and at Bermatingen, near Lake Constance, Eitel Hans formed the Lake Troop. Early in March, a Lower Allgau Troop of some seven thousand peasants established a camp near Wurzach. The Lake, Allgau, and Baltringer Troops together formed a Christian Union, whose common basis was the Twelve Articles, spreading the revolt across most of southern Germany. The Leipheim Troop was formed in the Danube area, so that at the beginning of March roughly six peasant armies were operating in Swabia, consisting of thirty to forty thousand armed insurgents—an overwhelming force by comparison with the much fewer numbers commanded by the ruthless Truchsess.

Individually, the peasant armies rarely exceeded seven thousand men, and they were often on the move, generally fighting independently of one another as they crisscrossed southern Germany. Altogether, they created an impressive record of destroying monasteries and castles. In

major battles, the troops often came to each other's assistance, and from time to time they held peasant congresses or convocations, usually at Heilbronn, on the Neckar River. Like Waldshut, Heilbronn became the political center for the peasant armies in Swabia and later Franconia.

In area after area and town after town, the war expanded. It swept northward to the upper reaches of Coburg in mid-April, reaching Saxony by the end of the month, and broadened out in the southeast to sweep into the Tyrol, Attergau, and parts of Austria by the beginning of May. In Salzburg the archbishop holed himself up in his castle in fear of his parishioners, and at Innsbruck, the Archduke Ferdinand refused to leave the city lest he be attacked by the peasants and their sympathizers in the city's environs. Freiburg, too, capitulated to the peasants when the city opened its gates to them on May 24 1525.

Many clerics played a major role in the Peasant Wars, but not even a cursory summary of them can ignore the figure of Thomas Miinzer, who looms large in nearly all histories of the conflict, especially in Thuringia. An iconoclastic antagonist of Luther who sought to overthrow the social order and establish a godly society in its stead, Miinzer acquired an honored place in Marxist iconography owing particularly to the tribute that Friedrich Engels paid him as an Anabaptist advocate of communism—a view, in fact, that may have been extracted from him by torture. Perhaps far more influential in Thuringia, however, was the radical pastor of Mtlhlhausen, Heinrich Pfeiffer, who together with Miinzer dislodged the Miihlhausen town council in early 1525, replacing it with an "eternal council" that was to be a harbinger of the imminent coming of Christ and the earthly Kingdom of God. In May, the landgrave, Philip of Hesse, after a brief attack on Miihlhausen, offered to negotiate with the city and again used the time when peasants were considering his peace offer to redeploy his artillery effectively, slaughtering the hapless peasants in droves. Rather than die in battle, Miinzer tried to escape in disguise but was caught; at their hearing Pfeiffer remained stalwart, but Miinzer recanted his millenarian beliefs and took Catholic communion, which did not prevent both men from being beheaded.

At around the same time Martin Luther replied to the Twelve Articles of Memmingen in *An Admonition to Peace: A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants of Swabia,* which urged the peasants to be peaceful. A few weeks later, however, after the peasants' "sedition" against the princes became "clear" to him—which was all the more irritating to him because they were "seditious" in the name of ideals that had an affinity with his own—Luther issued his infamous tirade *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants,* savagely denouncing their movement and aligning himself with the princes.

MILITARY EVENTS

Had the peasant armies in southwestern Germany attacked the Swabian League at the outset of the war, they would certainly have inflicted a devastating defeat on the princes and nobles and thrashed Truchsess Georg, the infamous hangman of the Peasant War. But the overly trusting and charitable Baltringen, Allgau, and Lake Troops concluded an armistice with the Truchsess, who continued all the while to gather new forces to throw against the peasants. The nobility, for their part, with arrogant disregard for the peasants' concerns, were temperamentally incapable of achieving even a semblance of the Christian brotherhood that the peasant articles so earnestly voiced.

Irrespective of the truce arrangements, the revolt spread into Franconia and to the border of Thuringia, where the peasants formed a seventh major force, the Bildhausen Troop, which

demanded that the Empire be restructured to be run by a peasants' parliament. Additionally, various peasant columns collected at Schoenthal to form an eighth major peasant army, the Gay Troop, a wellequipped force of some eight thousand men with cannons and three thousand guns. It was from this force that the Franconian knight Florian Geyer gathered his Black Host, a highly trained, well-disciplined, and select troop recruited mainly from peasant infantries and one that acted more resolutely and bravely than most of the other detachments. Although from a strictly military viewpoint Geyer was one of the most astute of the peasant leaders, he was also a welleducated man who had joined with the peasants out of a genuine belief in the rightness of their cause. Honorable and courageous, devoted to the movement, this remarkable man would die with his weapons in hand.

Still another ninth Franconian army, the Gay Bright Troop, was formed under the command of the knight G6tz von Berlichingen, while in Limpurg, the tenth, the Gaildorf or Common Gay Troop, a violent and very unreliable force, ultimately disbanded after alienating much of the population. The Wunnenstein Troop, commanded by Matern Feuerbacher, formed an eleventh major peasant army. Feuerbacher, an innkeeper, was noted for the moderateness of his political views, but he gained considerable respect for his military and organizational abilities. The twelfth troop, the Gay Christian Troop, was formed at Stuttgart. Additionally, many local groups were formed throughout southern Germany and often joined the larger troops or withdrew from them as occasion arose.

Despite the often extreme demands advanced by various peasant articles and radical clerics, the military aims of the peasants were very diffuse. They lacked a competent, accountable leadership, making do primarily with radical clerics and disaffected knights as military strategists. To have achieved even their more modest demands, they would have had to crush the Swabian League and its supporters completely. Indeed, they would have had to behave with a harshness comparable to that which the League inflicted upon them during and after their defeat. But in the absence of any coordinating, much less governing, power, each of the peasant armies often functioned very much on its own, with a degree of decentralization and often a wavering morale that imparted a decisive advantage to the gathering forces of the Swabian League.

In early April 1525, when the Leipheim Troop, under the leadership of the radical cleric Jacob Wehe, attacked the city of Leipheim, the Truchsess went into action. He crushed the troop and beheaded Wehe—a harbinger of defeats that the peasant armies were to suffer in May and June. On April 15, the Truchsess came face to face with a formidable peasant force, the Lake Constance army, before Weingarten, which could easily have routed him and decisively crushed the Swabian League; but he prudently negotiated a peace treaty with his plainly superior opponents, after which the rebels disbanded. This crucial, indeed decisive failure by the peasants would lead to their ultimate defeat. Still another major failure by the peasants occurred at Boblingen in May, when Feuerbacher ably deployed his united peasants and his cannon in a way that left the Truchsess confused and incapable of action. But once again the peasants were seduced into a truce, while the Truchsess shrewdly redeployed his forces to his own advantage. On May 12, while the truce was still in effect, the League suddenly attacked the peasants, who were guilelessly at their ease, and completely shattered them, ruthlessly hunting down and slaughtering those who were fleeing from his cavalry.

Not only did the Weingarten treaty and Bdblingen defeat eliminate the entire Wurttemberg insurrection, it demoralized all the insurgent forces, throwing them on the defensive and instilling new vigor in the nobility. The Swabian League's cavalry, which was rightly regarded after

its victories as a terrifying killing machine, was absolutely merciless in its treatment of wounded and captive peasants. The well-to-do citizens of Heilbronn surrendered the city to the Truchsess, while Geyer's Black Host was decimated in a vain attack on Frauenberg, the nearly invincible castle of the Duke of Franconia, who was also the Bishop of WUrzburg and had become the primary target of the insurgents' offensive in that area. As summer drew near, the dlan of the peasant armies gave way to demoralization. The Gay Bright Troop, during negotiations with the Truchsess, gradually melted away, and its treacherous commander, G5tz von Berlichingen (later immortalized in Goethe's eponymous drama), seeing that the fortunes of the peasant cause had taken a turn for the worse, went over to the Swabian League, claiming to have always been a captive of the peasants. In a maneuver at Krautheim, the Truchsess enveloped eight thousand peasants who were equipped with thirty-two cannon and bloodily "dispersed" them—more properly, slaughtered them. In June 1525 at the village of Sulzdorf, League forces moved against Florian Geyer, who had combined the remaining six hundred men of his Black Host with other peasant forces. The Truchsess easily defeated this small peasant army. After an unrelenting five-day pursuit by the League's cavalry, Geyer and his few men were cornered and perished in battle.

The remaining peasant armies were defeated one after another. Rottenburg fell to a patrician counterrevolution, as did Strasbourg and Frankfurt. In the Palatinate, a massacre of the peasants at Pfeddersheim on May 23 and the capture of Weifienburg on July 7 left only two peasant armies intact in southern Germany: the Hegau-Black Forest and Allgau Troops. The Peasant War now turned on itself. The Lake Troop, which had earlier come to terms with its nobility with the Treaty of Weingarten, was now brought into service against its own brethren in the Hegau Troop. The same Hans Muller who had played so important a role at the outset of the war now encouraged the Hegau Troop to disperse. Muller himself had joined the nobles and later ended his days in Switzerland. Engagements now were marked by further treasonable defections, and by agreements to honor peasant demands that were followed by betrayals of truces. On December 6, after several engagements, agreements, and betrayals, the last insurgent Black Forest troops and their allies surrendered the last peasant stronghold, Waldshut, to the nobles.

The failure of the peasant troops to attack the Truchsess at Weingarten cost them an extraordinary number of lives in the months that followed, both in Franconia and in Thuringia. For every noble's life that was lost, ten to fifty peasants were killed, a terrible ratio that the ruling classes were only too eager to inflict on the peasantry but that the long-servile peasantry were not prepared to claim from the nobility. After each defeat not only were the peasants brutally hunted down, but their villages were razed, their livestock slaughtered, their women and children driven homeless into the open, and their leaders brutally tortured. The number of rebels killed during the conflict in Swabia and Franconia reached such appalling proportions that the nobility ultimately had to desist lest they lose their workforce.

The outcome of the conflict over the long run was disastrous. Political life of southern and central Germany was set back for centuries, not only because of the ruthless determination of the ruling classes but also in no small measure as a result of the peasants' own naivete and Christian humility. The princes achieved the absolute power they sought, while none of the peasants' demands were met. To be sure, the peasant war continued in Germany for a century in the form of limited and sporadic uprisings, but the Thirty Years War of 1618–48 reduced the country to ruins and wiped out an estimated one-third of its population, ending all hope of a new social dispensation for generations.

In assessing why the Peasant War failed, at least militarily, Scott and Scribner pithily observe that while there

> were disparities in military experience and equipment [which favored the nobles], these were often compensated for [by the peasants] by shrewd tactics. Political failure, miscalculation, loss of nerve, and divided or inadequate leadership complicated the military equation, so that it cannot be claimed that the peasants were defeated simply because of their military inadequacy. The mischief of historical accident played more than a passing role, in that the conditions for success never ripened simultaneously throughout the various areas of revolt, or did not do so in ways that impelled any lasting domino effect, so vital for success. Just as the Franconian rebellion began to pick up impetus, the Upper Swabian rebellion ran out of steam and only revived after the challenge of the central German and Franconian movements was decisively blunted.[14]

In any case, the defeat of the peasants and the steady erosion of their democratic village communes foreclosed the possibility of a populist confederal German nation. It was not until the nineteenth century that the German states, duchies, and cities were to be unified into a single nation—and then mainly by Prussian militarists and the Hohenzollern dynasty, who created the authoritarian tradition that the German people were to inherit into the century that followed.

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[14] Scott and Scribner, *The German Peasants' War,* p. 64.

PART II. THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

Chapter 3. The Rise of Commerce: The Dutch Revolt and Tudor England

Despite the enormous damage that the Reformation wars and the Thirty Years War inflicted on the German-speaking regions of Europe, the social and economic decline of these areas should not be attributed exclusively to military conflict. From the mid-sixteenth century onward, Europe's historical development shifted by degrees away from the inland areas of the continent and the Mediterranean to the Atlantic coast and the northern cities of the continent, particularly to the emerging nation-states of the Netherlands and England. A booming commerce arose, in great part owing to the discovery of the New World and new trade routes along the Atlantic to the Indies. Portugal became a major maritime power for a time, as did Spain, whose cities flourished during the rule of Charles V and Philip II.

In the British Isles the forces that were to prepare a fertile soil for the emergence of capitalism were already at work in the seventeenth century. Yet this capitalist development was by no means inevitable. In terms of sheer wealth and resources, England was no more ripe than Spain, or even France, to move rapidly in a bourgeois direction. Indeed, it might have seemed at first that economic, political, and cultural hegemony in creating European capitalism would fall to Spain. The treasure that the Spaniards looted from their American possessions far and away exceeded that of the British, yet it was not until the twentieth century that capitalism truly gained ascendancy on the Iberian peninsula. The Spanish monarchs frittered away their enormous wealth in wars waged by ambitious kings on the European continent. Their efforts to gain control of the dying Holy Roman Empire and their duels with France eventually impoverished this earliest of European nation-states. Thriving Spanish cities and towns were permitted to languish, and internal as well as external commerce faded away, leaving Spain a historic backwater for centuries. The wastage of material resources in dynastic conflicts seemed almost to doom seventeenth-century France to a similar fate, save for the efforts of Cardinal Richelieu—perhaps the greatest clerical nation-state builder of the era—to transform the country into the major continental power of Europe.

THE DUTCH REVOLT

Among the northern European countries, it was the Netherlands that displaced these earlier powers, where commerce brought Dutch cities enormous material prosperity and fostered a rich cultural development. Commanding the mouth of the Rhine, the Dutch were strategically placed to control the Rhenish trade in the heartland of Germany, and, especially after chronic warfare had weakened the Germans, they began to absorb a great deal of Europe's commerce, preempting the earlier Baltic trade in which the German Hanseatic League of cities had played so important

a part. Indeed, the Dutch and, shortly afterward, the English were to be the major beneficiaries of the Age of Exploration that Portuguese and Spanish mariners had pioneered.

The involvement of Dutch merchants in the expanding commerce of the late Middle Ages fostered in the Netherlands a strong sense of nationhood and republican unity, as did the resentment that this relatively free people felt toward Spanish interference in their lifeways and religious beliefs. So considerable was the influence of commerce in Dutch life that it is easy to forget that the northern lowlands of the present-day Netherlands—as distinct from Flemish and Frenchspeaking areas of present-day Belgium—were uninhabitable marshy areas that were slowly reclaimed from the sea. Over the centuries a peasantry with spades and windmills managed to open intractable parts of their coastline to agriculture and village settlements supported by modest fishing fleets. More a yeomanry than a servile peasantry, the northern Netherlanders of Holland were notable for their ingrained sense of enterprise, personal independence, and basically heterodox lifeways. As their provinces took form, they retained much of the egalitarian law of their Germanic ancestors and their traditional system of local freedoms. When the dukes of Burgundy united the provinces of both north and south—Flanders and Brabant as well as Holland and Zeeland—under their own Estates General, the dukes, who summoned those bodies, normally permitted them to retain their original rights and traditions.

Ideologically, the Dutch largely reworked and benefited from a new form of Protestantism, notably Calvinism, that Luther had inadvertently stirred up abroad. In its origins in Geneva, Calvinism had seemed like a quietistic doctrine comparable to Lutheranism, sharing Luther's belief in salvation by faith alone, and personally John Calvin, a noble Frenchman turned theologian, was no less an advocate of obedience to authority than Luther. "The Lord has not only testified that the status of magistrate or civic officer was approved by him and was pleasing to him," Calvin instructed,

> but also he has moreover greatly recommended it to us, having honored its dignity with very honorable titles. For the Lord affirms (Prov. 8:15–16) that the fact that kings rule, that counselors order just things, and that the great of the earth are judges, is a work of his wisdom. And elsewhere (Ps. 82:6–7), he calls them gods, because they do his work. In another place also (Deut. 1:17; II Chron. 19:5–7) they are said to exercise judgment for God, and not for man. And Saint Paul (Rom. 12:8) calls the higher offices gifts of God.[1]

But Calvin, far more than Luther, insistently regarded the Church as a higher authority than the state and placed a greater premium on ecclesiastical over secular authority generally. God's will was absolutely and ultimately sovereign over earthly affairs, he enjoined. "Hence princes and magistrates must think of Him whom they serve in their office," he asserted, "and do nothing unworthy of ministers and lieutenants of God."[2] Indeed,

> from obedience to superiors we must always except one thing: that it does not draw us away from obedience to Him to whose edicts the commands of all kings must yield. The Lord, therefore, is the king of kings, and, once He has opened his sacred

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[1] John Calvin, "Instruction in Faith" (1537), trans. Paul T. Fuhrmann, in *Great Voices of the Reformation: An Anthology,* ed. Harry Emerson Fosdick (New York: Modern Library, 1952), p. 237.

[2] *Ibid.*

mouth, he must be listened to by all and above all. Only after that, we are subject to men who are constituted over us, but not otherwise than in him. If men command us to do something against him, we must do nothing, nor keep any account of such an order. On the contrary, let rather this sentence take place: that it is necessary to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19).[3]

Such remarks conferred considerable power on the clergy over the magistrates, kingly or otherwise. After 1541, when the community of Geneva finally accepted Calvin as its spiritual leader, he essentially replaced its unstable political regime with an austere theocracy, subordinating the city to the church, which ruled it with a stern rigor that regulated conduct in all areas of life. Minor infractions of Calvinist notions of appropriate behavior were treated as criminal offenses, and major heresies were punished as capital crimes, often not without torture. Calvin burned the Unitarian Michael Servetus at the stake in 1553, belying later pretensions of much radical Protestantism to a consistently libertarian outlook. Nevertheless, as Calvinism drifted through Europe, it steadily moderated its practices and credo, especially in the Netherlands and England.

Such moderation was all the more necessary because Europe remained largely Catholic, a fact with which Protestants were obliged to reconcile themselves, doctrinally as well as politically. Unlike Lutheranism, Calvinism accepted and even encouraged trade and production, ultimately (but not immediately) becoming an ideological factor in the emergence of capitalism. In fact, by no means was it simply a "bourgeois" religion. Its devotees included nobles as well as merchants and artisans and many of the poorer people of Europe. The acceptance of Calvinism depended as much on the prevailing political conditions in a given locale as on the economic. In France, where the Crown had brought the Catholic clergy into its own service, it feared the Calvinist Huguenots as an aristocratic threat to the nation-state, since many nobles adhered to that faith. Although French kings tolerated the Huguenots initially, they finally and ruthlessly persecuted them in the Wars of Religion (1562–98) and the bloody Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.

In the Netherlands, Calvin's teachings became an ideological basis for the earliest attempt in northern Europe to achieve a republican, fairly open, and pluralistic society. In 1566, when Philip II, the king of Spain, attempted to bring the notorious Spanish Inquisition into the Lowlands to root out Protestant and other heretical doctrines, Calvinism became identified with a growing nationalist sentiment that permeated Dutch people of nearly all classes and provinces against their militandy Catholic Spanish rulers. A league of some two hundred nobles tried to keep the Inquisition out of the country, but the zealous Philip arrogantly rejected their petition—a highhanded act that incited a popular revolt on the part of wage-earners and poor journeymen, not only against Spanish rule but against Catholicism as a whole. Flanders and Brabant initiated the struggle for independence in 1562, and under William the Silent, the prince of Orange, the conflict assumed widespread and chronic proportions. Northern "sea beggars" or pirates, booty hunters, and patriots raided the Spanish-held coastal towns, followed in turn by ruthless Spanish attacks on Dutch communities.

In time, the revolt opened a cleavage between the nobility of the region and the lower classes. The nobles, fearing social unrest among their underlings, were often ready to come to terms with Philip, and the struggle might have easily turned into a class war, redolent of the artisanal uprisings of the early Flemish "proletariat" centuries earlier. Instead, it became a sweeping national

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[3] *Ibid.,* p. 238.

war that reunited virtually all social strata against the Spaniards, owing in great part to Spanish arrogance and stupidity, particularly when the Duke of Alba—the Spanish equivalent of Truchsess Georg von Waldburg—was unleashed upon the Lowlands. Alba was utterly unconcerned with class distinctions. Not only did he butcher thousands of people of the lower classes, but he freely confiscated noble estates and imposed heavy taxes on the well-to-do, whose support he might have easily gained with a lenient policy. By 1576, after William the Silent successfully drove out the Spanish garrisons, all seventeen of the Lowland provinces had united in a common league to struggle resolutely to expel the Spaniards from their territory.

Following a more conciliatory policy after the removal of Alba, the Prince of Parma, who became governor-general of the Netherlands in 1578, managed to divide the union by winning over the support of the largely Catholic southern provinces. The Spanish governor Alessandro Famese eventually reconquered the southern provinces, which remained Spanish possessions, and the Protestants among them were gradually reconverted to Catholicism. In 1581 the seven Protestant northern provinces—Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Overijssel, Friesland, and Groningen—established a permanent union of their own: the United Provinces of the Netherlands, or the Dutch Republic, which declared its definitive independence from Spain. The conflict continued well beyond the lifetime of its initiators and original participants; indeed, not until 1609 was the Dutch Republic legitimated by a twelve-year truce. The conflict revived during the Thirty Years War (1618–48), upon whose conclusion the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 finally recognized the independence of the United Provinces.

The Dutch revolt has not found its proper place in the history of European revolutions. As a revolt against Spanish rule, it was one of the earliest revolutions to raise the image of the "nation" as a motive force for rebellion, a word that in the seventeenth century denoted a *people,* not merely a sovereign territorial entity. Patriotism, in turn, meant devotion to one's free "nation," rather than nationalistic chauvinism as we know it today. But the revolt had further implications as an effort to create a new kind of society. In the United Provinces the "nation" did not become a pretext for royal absolutism; quite to the contrary, it served to weaken statist elements of the kind that the great monarchies of Europe were then forging. Nor did Dutch patriotism serve to subvert local and provincial freedoms. Rather, it became the basis for a confederal republic, one that conjoined provincial customs and local autonomy with national unification. Indeed, the Dutch Estates General were composed of seven delegates from each of the seven provinces that constituted the republic, which was actually more of a confederal cantonal system than a centralized republican one.

Headed by the highly prestigious but unpretentious princes of Orange, the society of the United Provinces did not fully shed all its feudal traits, such as the authority that guild masters held over journeymen; nor did the higher social status that aristocrats enjoyed over merchants disappear. Large differences in wealth surely existed, yet moderate and humane Calvinists regarded extravagant displays of wealth and the extremes of exploitation as virtually sacrilegious. Distinctions in social strata were as much a matter of personal and family prestige as real economic power, perhaps even more so.

Still, the civilized Dutch burgher republic was unabashedly commercial. Like the figures painted by Vermeer and Rembrandt, commoners were concerned with trade, tidiness, domesticity, artisanship, and the rewards of banking. A Dutch commercial empire began to emerge even before the 1609 truce, with the formation of the Dutch East India Company seven years earlier; and if the formerly prosperous port of Antwerp languished under Spanish rule, Amsterdam and

other Dutch ports—given control over the Scheldt River by the Treaty of Westphalia—became supreme in Dutch trade, bringing the burghers immense prosperity.

Which is not to say that the Dutch revolt was a "bourgeois revolution"; indeed, quite to the contrary. The revolt was led by the noble House of Orange, and Holland's prosperity rested primarily on the ownership of land. At the same time, "bourgeois" urban centers of the Lowlands either did not participate in the struggle, hesitated to do so, or remained loyal to Spain. Amsterdam, the most "bourgeois" of the Dutch cities, initially refused to join the uprising, while Antwerp, the most important northern European banking city, retained its allegiance to the Spanish crown in the long run, owing to the fear of the popular unrest that had been aroused in the northern provinces. Nor did religious allegiances strictly follow class lines. The most prosperous areas, and in many respects the most "bourgeois" of the Spanish Netherlands, adhered to Catholicism, which remained the preferred religion of the upper classes and burgher patricians, while Calvinism appealed in great part to the lower classes.

Nor were United Provinces the only republic on the continent: the Swiss, Venetians, and Genoese enjoyed a similar political form. But the Dutch were probably the most tolerant and egalitarian of all of them, with the possible exception of certain rural Swiss cantons, inasmuch as a third of the Dutch were still Catholic, domestic harmony required a more tolerant form of Calvinism than the kind that had existed under Calvin himself. The Dutch Reformed Church never became as intolerant of dissenters, including Catholics, as other Protestant churches, such as the English Anglicans and Presbyterians, despite the fact that the Reformed Church essentially became the Dutch state religion. A decent humanism flourished in the republic, together with a strong burgher sense of duty, responsibility, and moral probity, a signal feature of the Netherlands to this very day. The republic became a refuge for oppressed peoples of all kinds, including Portuguese and Spanish Jews, Huguenots, and sectaries, who enjoyed considerable freedom as long as they did not involve themselves too deeply in the country's internal affairs.

Finally, the Dutch revolt and the republic that followed from it profoundly affected the Puritan movement on the English side of the Channel, strengthening its militancy and giving it a strong political flavor. Queen Elizabeth's support for Dutch independence, although guided mainly by *realpolitik,* greatly consolidated British Protestantism and associated the Tudor monarchy with the Protestant interest in Europe. The moderate, stable, and tolerant Calvinism in the United Provinces, in effect, became a breeding ground for more radical Puritan tendencies that surfaced in the English Revolution. It was in Amsterdam and the Hague that many refugee English Puritans learned republican ideas— ideas that they later brought back home. The freedoms that the Dutch enjoyed, in effect, reinforced desires to expand similar freedoms in England.

TUDOR ENGLAND

Like the Dutch, the English ruling classes benefited in varying degrees from the commercial advances of the Atlantic trade of the sixteenth century. But even more than the Dutch, the English aristocracy was notable for its social and structural weakness. Between 1455 and 1485, the Wars of the Roses had all but exterminated the island's traditional nobility. Unlike other baronial wars of the time, in which rivals fought to acquire each other's estates by holding their respective owners for ransom, the Wars of the Roses, in which the houses of York and Lancaster desperately fought each other to acquire the throne, carried the conflict nearly to the point of their mutual physical extermination. The object of conquest was thus control of the emerging nation-state

itself, not of a particular landed estate. After the Yorkists temporarily succeeded in winning the throne for Edward IV in 1442, bloody internecine conflicts flared up between the victors. The conflicts continued after Edward's death in 1483, this time between the future Richard III and the nobles, especially after he murdered Edward's two young sons, only to be killed in battle in the closing period of the war.

By the time Henry Tudor came to power in 1485, uniting the houses of York and Lancaster with an interdynastic marriage, the aristocracy had been largely exterminated, leaving no powerful nobility that could seriously challenge royal authority. Indeed, great territorial lords like those of seventeenth-century France, who chased the young Louis XIV out of Paris and wrought havoc on the monarchy, were largely unknown in England after the Wars of the Roses. Just as Louis, fully schooled in the dangers of an ambitious nobility, managed with Cardinal Mazarin's help to forge one of the most centralized states in Europe, so Henry VII and his ministers tried to enlarge and concentrate all power in the monarch's hands. As the Spanish ambassador to the court of Henry VII ironically observed in 1498, the king "would like to govern England in the French fashion but he cannot."

This judgment was very astute. All of Henry's efforts notwithstanding, English society was far from stable or centralized. The English monarchy, in effect, was strikingly unlike the absolutist regimes that were emerging on the European continent; indeed, if anything, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England under the Tudors was perhaps the most socially mobile and least absolutist of any monarchical nation-state in Europe.

Henry VII, as the founder of the Tudor dynasty, depended for his support on the lower gentry and independent squires, who had essentially been bystanders in the interdynastic wars, and on the county governments that they ran, as well as the realm's free farmers or yeomen. Indeed, a new nobility had been created out of the well-to-do middle classes, whose appetite for the profits of trade far exceeded their desire for the spoils of battle. The king was also obliged to rely for support on a large variety of merchants, artisans, and socially indefinable commoners who had been disgorged by the declining feudal system. As Lawrence Stone observes,

> the Crown [became] heavily dependent upon Parliament for political and financial support. The classes represented in the House of Commons were willing enough to give the King their support in his religious and political policies, but only so long as they were left to rule over the countryside and the towns. The Crown was thus in no position to proceed to the next stage in the creation of a strong monarchy, the replacement of the local gentry by paid officials of its own.[4]

Indeed, unlike continental monarchs, English monarchs did not erect a local government made up of bureaucracies of professional salaried officials dependent upon the crown. Instead, they had to rely on the prominent families in counties and corporate towns to administer local justice, enforce laws, collect parliamentary levies, and muster the militia, among other functions. Thus, as Stone observes,

> There was a tacit agreement to divide responsibility, and the main burden of local administration had to be left in the hands of unpaid gentry and urban worthies, whose

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[4] Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution: 1529–1642* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 63–4.

loyalty and efficiency was dependent on a careful regard being had for their interests, privileges, and prejudices. So far from being progressively weakened, local particularism grew step by step with the growth of the central government.[5]

While the monarchy failed to gain absolute control over the countryside, the House of Commons really began, in effect, to hold the nation together. Not that Parliament was particularly active during the Tudor era, but the Tudor monarchs—in particular Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Elizabeth—prudently respected its powers and carefully courted its members. Parliament, in turn, obligingly voted the taxes, when it was summoned into session, needed to support the monarchy. Moreover, the Tudors were shrewd enough to deal cautiously with the citizens of London, the largest and wealthiest of England's cities and certainly one of its most volatile.

Geography, too, favored both the English monarchy and English localism. With its island location, England was set apart from the devastating conflicts that swept over the Continent. In Tudor times, English interference in European affairs was centered primarily on deflecting the attention of the island's potential enemies to Continental affairs. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 secured England safety from further invasions, so that the monarchy was now accepted at home as a stabilizing force as well as a guardian of English international interests. Whether because of the country's geographic insularity or the gentry's opposition to a strong royal power or both, the Tudor monarchs built neither a standing army nor a costly and far-reaching bureaucracy. The territorial defense of the realm was undertaken by local militias or "trained bands," while the practical affairs of the realm were handled by the local gentry, whose general interests were expressed in the House of Commons.

By no means, however, were the kings and queens of England willing to accept the monarchy as a passive arbiter in domestic affairs, and their prudence notwithstanding, the most pronounced problems of the Tudor era stemmed from the throne's insidious efforts to increase its own power at the expense of the squires. Indeed, *all* the Tudor monarchs tried to be absolute rulers, albeit with limited success. Henry VII left his son, Henry VIII, a considerable financial patrimony, which he rapidly dissipated as much to strengthen his political power as for personal reasons. Although Henry's tastes were of legendary extravagance, the king, mindful of possible conflicts between nobles and his royal power, also tried to reduce what remained of the warrior nobility to a courtier stratum dependent on the monarchy. To some extent, Henry VIII anticipated Louis XIV's later policy of collecting the French aristocracy at Versailles, placing English nobles under royal supervision, and virtually divesting them of threatening ambitions. His own ambitions were clear when he declared to the Irish that his "absolute power [was] above the law"; nor did his daughter Elizabeth have less despotic aspirations during the first half of her reign.

In contrast to what happened on the Continent, the power of the English Parliament and the squirearchy for which it spoke held Henry VIII's aspirations to absolute power carefully in check, forcing all the Tudor monarchs to reach compromises between their own ambitions and the palpable limits placed on their powers by Parliament. The Crown had to conceal its ambitions with largely conciliatory measures and a royal deference to the rights of "freeborn Englishmen." Parliament, in turn, never surrendered its prerogatives to the king, and each Tudor monarch was obliged to come to terms with the Crown's dependence on the gentry and the House of Commons. "Country" and "Court," to use the language of the seventeenth century, thus lived in an uneasy,

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[5] *Ibid.*

if symbiotic, relationship with each other. The "Country" formed a parallel power to the "Court," and a potentially rebellious Parliament could place very serious impediments in the way of an overbearing monarchy—hence the astuteness of the Spanish ambassador's observations on the limits of the English crown.

ENGLISH PROTESTANTISM

Whether by design or circumstance, the Protestant Reformation in England was initiated largely from the top down, by the monarchy rather than by clerical divines. By 1534 Henry VHI had broken with the Vatican and converted the English Church, Catholic in all respects, into a symbol of national unity and a supine creature of the monarchy. English bishops and prelates, entirely under royal sovereignty, replaced Catholic clerics, and religious doctrine was turned into an ideological prop for the central government. The closing of the monasteries and the expropriation of their vast wealth that followed from Henry's measures bolstered his shaky financial position for a time and greatly expanded his authority over many aspects of English life that had hitherto been claimed by Catholic ecclesiastics.

Yet Henry himself was not fully committed to Reformation ideas; nor did he abandon Catholic rituals. The king replaced the pope with himself as head of the new Anglican Church, ended celibacy, abolished monasteries, and expropriated the Church's vast material resources. But English Protestants who publicly challenged Catholic doctrines such as the Trinity and transubstantiation were put to death with the same impartiality as Catholics who asserted the authority of the papacy over the monarchy. Henry's failure to complete the Reformation was itself a potential source of conflict between the monarchy and Parliament, for as long as the Anglican Church was basically a Catholic church tailored to English royal needs, Henry could never gain the full allegiance of his truly Protestant subjects, who were growing rapidly in number. Nor could they, in turn, seriously challenge his rule by abetting the return of Catholicism. Thus, as in the political realm, an uneasy balance of forces prevented either outright Reformation or outright rebellion in the religious realm.

Yet even in its tepid Anglican form, English Protestantism fostered a belief in individuality and its "inner light" over ecclesiastical institutions. Englishmen who were influenced by Calvinism saw themselves less as mere subjects of the Crown and more as members of a godly elite—an "elect" of "visible saints" in an ungodly world. Nor did Anglicanism reduce the individual to a mere member of a corporate estate, as Catholicism did to commoners in France and Spain. Indeed, in counterposition to the despotic proclivities of the monarchy, English commoners became increasingly self-conscious individuals, strident in expressing their views and confident of their own personal judgments. Subdued guilds gave way to raucous merchant adventurers, and placid peasants to an unruly "mobility" that was quick-tempered and ready to interfere in political and religious issues. The House of Gammons, despite its medieval origins in a corporate society, was reinforced by an independent gentry, merchant class, and artisanry and began to regard itself as the authentic voice of the "people"—an ambiguous word at the time—rather than a lowly estate in a feudal hierarchy.

After Henry VIII's death in 1547, a Council of Regency supervised English affairs on behalf of Henry's young son, Edward VI. With Henry gone, the Council further loosened English society by increasingly supplanting Henry's Anglican reformation with a more militant Protestantism—one that continued to plunder the remaining wealth of the Church and widen its distance from

Catholicism. Whether this new dispensation was the product of greed or ideology is irrelevant; indeed, both motives were probably involved. But Edward did not live into manhood, and when his half-sister Mary ascended to the throne, religious policy shifted to a flagrantly pro-Catholic extreme. The new queen married Philip of Spain, the monarch of a land that many English people viewed as their country's most dangerous rival. Quite reasonably, they saw the zealous Spanish king as the standard-bearer of a Catholic orthodoxy bent on an inquisitorial counterreformation: under Mary's rule, the Mass, which Edward's regents had discarded, was restored; relations with the Vatican were reestablished; and a furious attack, including numerous executions, was visited upon dissenting Protestants whose views were more radical than Henry's reformation. "Bloody" Mary's attempts to restore Catholicism, followed by a disastrous and costly war with France, completely alienated the English people, and when she died in 1558 England's fortunes and morale had reached their lowest ebb. Fragmented by religious conflicts and burdened by an immense debt, the country was on the edge of civil war.

Anglicans regarded the ascent of the new Protestant queen, Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, as a God-given deliverance—and she largely lived up to their expectations. Although no less imperious than her father, she made earnest attempts to compromise with all the opposing factions and interests that could have undermined the country. Relations with the Vatican were severed completely, and Catholic priests were peremptorily expelled from the country, which did not prevent her from driving radical Protestants or Puritans underground, especially their millenarian conventicles. Basically oriented toward social reforms, Elizabeth and her able advisers stabilized the currency, improved working conditions for the lower classes, and softened long-standing antagonisms between hostile social strata in the realm. The defeat of the Spanish Armada ensured English naval and commercial supremacy, while her rule gave every encouragement to trade, manufactures, and agricultural improvements. The state took over the care of the poor, many of whom were victims of the land enclosures that had been going on for more than a century. Elizabeth came to terms with the gentry to which earlier Tudor kings had to accommodate themselves, and her shrewd policy of compromise with Parliament, the nobility, the gentry, and the merchant class established a period of internal peace. Needless to emphasize, her reign was a time of exceptional literary and cultural achievement: the "Elizabethan Age," particularly famed for its drama and poetry.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The harmony created by Elizabeth's compromises, however, was in some respects illusory. Commercial life was growing at a disorienting pace. More than any country in Europe, England was undergoing a rapid transition from a feudal to a commercial society. In addition to its growing maritime commerce, the country was by far the world's greatest coal producer, and to feed a rapidly growing population (which doubled between 1500 and 1660), agricultural output increased enormously through the draining of marshy areas and deforestation.

The improvements that were being made in agriculture, particularly the shift from food cultivation to sheep runs, were to affect profoundly the future of English society. The common lands that the peasantry had traditionally shared for centuries were ruthlessly enclosed in order to create sheep pasture for the growing wool trade. Aside from the large pool of labor produced by the enclosures, the entire landscape of rural life began to change along lines that stood very much at odds with the country's feudal past. Beginning in the fourteenth century, the English

had exported raw wool to the Lowlands across the North Sea, where it was refined and woven into the finest cloth in northern Europe. By the mid-sixteenth century, when Flemish Protestant weavers sought refuge on the island from religious wars, England had grown to ascendancy in the European cloth trade, rivalled only by the Dutch in the production of cloth. By fostering the enclosure of common lands and eliminating many tenant farms, textile production created a nationwide economy rather than one structured around small, isolated regions. As Lawrence Stone has observed, trade in cloth

> was a powerful unifying force in society since its prosperity affected the landed classes, who owned the sheep which produced the wool, the poor labourers and their wives and children who spun it, the artisans who wove it, the clothiers who handled it, and the merchants who exported it.[6]

Isolated regions of England were thus brought into a wide-ranging skein of economic interactions that often served to make it a nation as much as did its religious and political institutions.

It is easy to exaggerate the burgeoning English commercialism. Seventeenthcentury England was neither an industrial society nor a capitalist one in the sense that we speak of capitalism today. "England in the seventeenth century remained what it and the rest of Europe had always been," observes Stone,

> an undeveloped society. On the other hand there can be no doubt that it was permeated with small-scale industry and commerce, more market-oriented, and richer than it had ever been before, and more so than any other contemporary society, with the probable exception of the United Provinces.[7]

Stone's judgment here is sound. The country was still precapitalist, neither fully agrarian nor fully bourgeois; indeed, its Industrial Revolution still lay far ahead, despite the fact that sheep-farming was making agricultural capitalism a relatively widespread phenomenon, unequaled anywhere in the world. But as late as 1688, only a half million out of the five million English people were engaged in trade and craft production, and of these, about half were involved in commercial transactions.

In general, a quasi-feudal sense of obligation to underlings was still more common than the predatory bourgeois mentality that was to be ushered in a century and a half later. During the sixteenth century, to be sure, capitalism was taking a considerable toll on English laborers, and new technologies, while not very revolutionary, were creating serious unemployment. But the monarchy still felt a tradition-hallowed sense of obligation to the lower classes. Typically, as late as the reign of Charles I, the king prohibited the use of a new sawmill that threatened to reduce the jobs of woodworkers, and placed restraints on land enclosures. He even limited rising prices as well as wages to soften the economic dislocations that created hardships for the poor. To what extent such actions were the result of genuine concern for the lower classes or attempts to curry favor with them at the expense of the commercial classes is hard to judge. Later, of course, when capitalism was fully established in England, the neglect that the poor and the proletariat suffered was to be appalling. But the congested, polluted, and disease-ridden England of the Industrial Revolution was not to emerge for some two centuries.

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[6] *Ibid.,* pp. 68–9.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 70.

At the time of Elizabeth's death in 1603, the total population of the country, including Wales, numbered only four and a half million. Apart from London, very few towns exceeded ten thousand inhabitants and most had two thousand or fewer; in fact, England's second-largest city, Bristol, a lively commercial center, numbered only 48,000 people. The larger towns of England were small merchant and artisan centers, few of whose workers were members of guilds any longer. Indeed, the guild system had almost completely died out in most of the country apart from London, and artisanal production, at least, was largely unencumbered by guild restrictions.

But certain feudal traditions still existed in the countryside. Well over four million people were still working in agriculture or agriculture-related tasks, and the majority lived in villages as copyholders, whose families held lifetime feudal claims to their parcels of land. Still, new economic developments were subverting traditional agrarian lifeways. More and more cottagers became involved in the production of cloth, generally for "factors," as their employers or contractors were called, who supplied them with wool and rented them hand-operated machines. Still others were servile tenants who could easily be dispossessed from the land to make way for sheep runs, while a minority of the rural population were independent yeomen, who proudly owned their own farms.

Serfdom had long disappeared from the realm, unlike on the Continent, where it was still dying out in Western Europe and was retained or firmly restored in the east. Still, as late as the end of the seventeenth century, by far the majority of England's growing five and a half million people lived in villages and hamlets, followed by less than a million in large and small towns, and approximately a half million in London. Numerous paupers lingered in English towns and villages, subsisting on pitifully small food allotments or drifting aimlessly from the countryside to London, where they increased the capital's unruly multitudes.

Normally obedient when the nobles and gentry dealt with them paternalistically, husbandmen could become almost insurrectionary when their overlords threatened to dispossess them of their smallholdings. Adding fuel to their volatility in times of uncertainty, growing sectarian religious differences increasingly fragmented England; indeed, the most materially dependent tenant might break away from the most caring landlord if the tenant was a radical Puritan and the landlord a conservative Presbyterian. With the onset of the revolutionary period, which can be dated back to the death of Elizabeth in 1603, these varied differences sharpened into social turmoil and, in the early 1640s, exploded into open revolution.

Surprisingly, even the aristocracy, the ruling elite of England, was still small in the 1630s. It consisted of only 122 peers and 26 bishops, to which can be added some 300 eldest sons of peers and newly created baronets. The nobility had suffered losses in prestige and wealth over the years and no longer enjoyed their high status as energetic warriors of medieval times. Their status in the social hierarchy was further eroded when the financially burdened Stuart monarchs who succeeded Elizabeth, the last of the Tbdors, sold titles (especially the newly created status of baronet) to raise cash for the spendthrift throne. Unlike the lesser gentry, the titled nobility gravitated toward the lively court life in London and became absentee landlords, retaining little or no contact with their rural clients.

The real structural base of England rested on the local gentry, who may have numbered 1,800 knights and 9,000 squires at the most, while a lesser gentry of 14,000 gentlemen, that is to say, landed property owners (who enjoyed a status somewhat higher than yeomen), as well as well-to-do merchants, professionals, academics, and officers of the crown. Taken as a whole, it was these men who held England together, filling the county offices of the realm as sheriffs, justices

of the peace, and commanders of the militia. From among the poorer gentry— men who barely qualified as "gentlemen"—the county recruited its constables, overseers of the poor, churchwardens, and parish clerics. Thus, the aristocratic elite, including its "gentlemen," and the country gentry accounted for one out of every twenty-five people. Moreover, together with freeholders who could claim to earn twenty-five shillings a year—not a trivial sum in those days—the elite and the gentry constituted the principal qualified voters in parliamentary elections, leaving a large part of the population disenfranchised.

The men who actually held seats in the House of Commons were the merchants, gentry, academics, and lawyers of the country. The House spoke for the materially well-to-do and prestigious part of the population, clearly not for the majority of the people. Given the property restrictions of the time, perhaps one in ten Englishmen was qualified to vote, and of these voters, a much smaller number were likely to run for the House of Commons. Of the House's five hundred members, about three-quarters were from the gentry and only a quarter from the merchant and professional strata.

Like all leaders in later revolutions, when the Commons finally confronted the king in armed conflict Parliament spoke in the name of the "people" to legitimate its claims. But who were the "people" in sixteenth- and seventeenthcentury England? The mixed economy and society made a dear answer to this question difficult to formulate, and as new economic developments created new disparities of wealth, these ongoing changes would lead to major divisions within the "Country" forces themselves—and ultimately to movements toward a third revolution. But before these movements arose, the "people"—in the sense of the majority of the House of Commons— had waged an earnest campaign to restrain new monarchical claims to absolute authority over that aborning entity, the nation-state.

Chapter 4. "Country" versus "Court"

The seventeenth century was an era of nation-state building *par excellence,* marked by efforts by emerging absolutist monarchs to centralize power. In France, Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, the principal ministers of Louis XIII and XIV respectively, seemed to lead the development along strictly monarchical lines, excluding the nobles and their particularistic claims to sovereignty over their regions. In England, the effort to centralize monarchical power intensified with the Stuart successors of Elizabeth. At her death in 1603, Elizabeth left no direct heir. Since the Tudor line had branched off earlier into Scottish royalty, including the Stuarts, a Stuart dynasty now replaced the Tudors, and the English throne fell to James VI of Scotland. Upon his ascension as James I of England, Scotland and England were now united by a shared monarchy.

But this shared monarchy did not produce a truly unified realm. Indeed, in many respects, England and Scotland were utterly different from each other. For one thing, they differed in religion: If England's reformation had been a topdown and incomplete affair, Scotland's had been more deeply rooted in the urban populace—and more extreme in its convictions. John Knox, a Scottish prelate who had repudiated Catholicism and had personally known John Calvin as a mentor in Geneva in the early 1550s, steadily won many Scots over to a militant political version of Calvinism in subsequent decades. Organizationally, Knox's Calvinism replaced the Anglican system of bishops with committees of elders or presbyters—hence its name, Presbyterianism— and in the minds of Presbyterians, these committees and their ministers resembled the early

Christian Church as it had existed before the Bishop of Rome, the pope, gained supremacy over the ecclesiastical monarchy created by Catholicism. As could be expected in an era when politics was normally cast in religious terms, Presbyterianism's antihierarchical ecclesiastical sentiments posed a challenge to secular absolutism itself. Knox did not mince words in declaring that it was the duty of the righteous to overthrow "ungodly" monarchs, and, armed by this faith, he stridently entered directly into affairs of state.

Moreover, Presbyterianism ultimately came to be identified with Scottish nationalism. When Mary of Guise, a devout Catholic and a Francophile, ascended the Scottish throne as regent in 1554, she was accompanied by sizable French military contingents that clearly seemed to threaten Scottish independence, evoking widespread opposition to her rule in much of Scotland that led to an open conflict between an anti-French and anti-Catholic party on one side and a pro-French and pro-Catholic party on the other. After Mary of Guise tried to move against the Protestants in England, the troubled antiCatholic party summoned Knox back from Geneva to be their leader, and the Scottish Estates, under his firm guidance, voted to abolish the authority of the pope and ban Catholic practices in Scotland.

Upon Mary's death in 1560, her equally devout Catholic daughter Mary, known as Mary Queen of Scots, was obliged, after a series of scandals, which Protestants eagerly exploited, to abdicate and flee Scotland in 1567 and seek protection from her English cousin, Elizabeth. Presbyterianism became the state religion of Scotland, and the Scottish Kirk (as the Presbyterian Church in Scotland was called) exercised even greater influence over the country, for a time, than the Estates and the monarchy—both of which normally spoke in the interests of the country's privileged strata. The Kirk thus became the most powerful institution in Scotland.

STUART CENTRALIZATION

This turbulent history greatly influenced the political outlook of lames, the son of Mary Queen of Scots. On his ascendancy to the English throne, his halfScottish and half-French parentage aroused considerable unease among his new subjects, who dreaded another attempt to force a return to Catholicism. In the socially mobile and relatively pluralistic society of England, moderate Puritans had quietly co-existed with the official Anglican Church. Despite James's Protestant avowals, his French background cast doubts in the minds of many English about his commitment to Protestantism. And, in fact, James had actually hated the Protestant Scottish Kirk, which, together with the Scottish Estates, he regarded as forces that countervailed his own royal authority. Nor were popular doubts about his commitment to the Protestant faith diluted by his vacillatory treatment of Catholics, whom he alternately tolerated and restricted, until in 1605 a Catholic attempt to blow up Parliament, and himself with it, led him to take a firmer anti-Catholic stand domestically. But whatever support his anti-Catholic measures reaped him from his English subjects was more than outweighed by his numerous flirtations with Catholic Spain, England's bitter, indeed hereditary, enemy at the time.

In contrast to Elizabeth's tolerance, James's harsh treatment of the democratically oriented Puritans served to further cast serious suspicions on his religious policies. More egalitarian than the Presbyterians in Church matters, the Puritan movement found growing support among the literate and the parliamentary strata of the country. Persecution by Tudor and Stuart monarchs alike had driven the growing radical Puritan tendency underground, where it took the form of small, hidden congregations whose members were imbued with a zealous, millenarian com-

mitment to the power of individual faith. The "saints," as Calvin's elect were called—those who, according to Calvin's doctrines, were predestined to be saved—placed their allegiance to God, their individual conscience, and especially the Bible, above the claims of any secular authority; indeed, it seemed self-evident that the Bible had clearly laid out the framework for the kind of society in which God willed people to live—which was far removed from the social structure that prevailed in England. In 1604, after affording the moderate Puritans an opportunity to preach their doctrines before the throne at Hampton Court, James came out flatly against them. "No bishops, no king" became a guiding maxim of Stuart absolutism, and the persecution of their conventicles was reinforced.

That James's temperament was authoritarian did not substantially distinguish him from his more popular Tudor predecessors; but his rule stood in marked contrast to that of Elizabeth, who knew her people and their traditions better than a monarch who had been raised in Scotland. England was a culturally unknown territory to James, and its localise traditions were totally at odds with his clumsy penchant for absolutism. The Scottish-born king had no understanding of the gentry's prerogatives as administrators of their counties and shires, or the extent to which most government in England was local.

Not only was England unknown territory to James culturally, it was extravagantly rich by comparison with the sparse resources of Scotland. Despite standard accounts of the Reformation as a "bourgeois" phenomenon, Calvinist Scotland, in fact, was not economically advanced, and it certainly lacked a burgeoning commercial class. Quite to the contrary: it was undeveloped even by seventeenth-century standards, burdened by archaic clans and their chieftains, and a quasi-feudal social order whose institutions seemed to give the king a larger measure of power than in England. Far more than in Scotland, James felt completely orphaned in his new, more secular and prosperous realm, which seemed increasingly to resent his pretensions.

And these pretensions were socially very unsettling. A devout believer in the divine right of kings, James seemed to view England as his own personal patrimony, asserting a doctrine of the divine right of kings to the Parliament and the country's growing middle classes. England, in effect, was an estate he felt he could milk without restraint. Nor did James understand Parliament's right to levy taxes and approve all money bills. In a period of rising prices, the modest annual revenue of £400,000 that had satisfied Elizabeth seemed not only inadequate but unseemly to a king who looked with envy to the high-living French court and the vastly wealthy Spanish monarchy for his models of royal authority. Adopting a policy that was to widen significantly the chasm between "Court" and "Country," James began to seek funds that would make him and his successors financially, even militarily, independent of parliamentary controls, with results that were to have dire political consequences.

After failing to gain sufficient funds from the sale of monopolies, titles, and the like, James was finally obliged to summon his first Parliament to increase taxes. Faced with a king committed to absolutism, the House of Commons expressly obstructed the king's requests; at most, he was voted only a portion of the money he asked for, and no less humiliating, the House of Commons proceeded freely, and critically, to debate his foreign and domestic policies, thereby trespassing upon what James believed was his exclusive royal executive prerogative to deal with affairs of state. "As to dispute what God may do is blasphemy," he sternly declared, "... so it is sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power... I will not be content that my power be disputed upon." To this provocative avowal, Parliament, with equal aplomb, replied

that it had the right "to debate freely all matters which properly concern the subject and his right or state."[8]

Outraged, James peremptorily dissolved Parliament in 1611; nor did he summon it into session again for a decade. During this interregnum, the king functioned increasingly as a despot, reinforcing the popular suspicions that he was an absolutist in secular affairs and pro-Catholic in religion. He imposed forced loans on his well-to-do subjects and levied new customs duties on the mercantile interests; he sold off titles, creating the rank of baronet in 1611 for no purpose but to be placed on the market for purchase. Monopolies over key commodities were sold that comprised a sizable part of English goods and maritime commerce, with the result that the two Parliaments James was finally obliged to call—one in 1621, the other in 1624—were again adamantly unwilling to vote the Crown more than a part of the taxes he demanded. The Parliament of 1621, in fact, rubbed James's nose in the dust by impeaching his own lord chancellor, Sir Francis Bacon, for financial irregularities, thereby flinging down a challenge to the monarchy's "divine" claim to control and administer all policy in the realm.

Engendering popular unrest still further, James produced widespread consternation among his subjects by visibly allowing the Spanish ambassador to influence his views and by trying to negotiate a marriage agreement between his son Charles and a Spanish princess. The uneasy English people had not forgotten the Armada, nor were they ignorant of the horrors which the Spanish Inquisition had visited upon persecuted Protestants on the Continent. Despite James's rather belated shift to an anti-Spanish policy that was more in line with what Parliament favored, the Commons spitefully granted him less than half the taxes he demanded—even for a war against Spain. The shabby failure of an English naval expedition against Cidiz in October 1625, led by the king's favorite, George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, followed by a costly conflict with the French presumably to help the besieged Huguenots of La Rochelle, served to arouse rather than allay the anger of the entire country. Fears that England would slip into Continental-style absolutism, that it would tolerate Catholics, that its finances would be depleted by extravagances, and that Spain would gain hegemony over its commerce all fed a growing, potentially explosive antagonism between "Country" and "Court."

It was probably only by his timely death in March 1625 that James escaped the outbreak of a revolution. This was not to be the fortune of his son Charles, who not only shared his father's idea of absolute royal prerogative but became even more embroiled with Parliament than his father. Because he had married a French Catholic princess, Charles's succession to the throne produced widespread popular misgivings, and his first Parliament, which convened in June 1625, viewed with deep suspicion his requests for money for governmental expenses and the war with Spain. Despite Charles's pledges to uphold the Protestant cause at home and abroad, the funds Parliament voted were wholly inadequate for his purposes. In a decision that he saw as even more degrading and unprecedented. Parliament limited the term for which the king could levy customs duties (called tonnage and poundage) to a single year—a right that previous Parliaments had routinely given to every new monarch for the entire term of his or her reign. The House of Lords, in fact, simply let the allocation of this levy lapse, leaving Charles hanging in the air financially. King and Parliament sharply collided when Charles simply began to levy customs

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[8] James 1,1610, in Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, eds., *The Good Old Cause: Documents of the English Revolution of 1640–1660: Its Causes, Course, and Consequences,* 2nd ed., rev. (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1949; New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969), p. 119.

duties without any parliamentary consent whatever. When Parliament reconvened at Oxford in August, "Country" and "Court" were entering into a collision course over claims by both parties to manage foreign and religious policy, which led the king to prorogue the House abruptly on August 12,1625.

Less than a year after this grim beginning, and in the wake of serious foreign policy blunders as well as growing quarrels over religious policy, Charles was finally forced by lack of funds to convene his second Parliament, which met in early February 1626 at Westminster. The king blatantly attempted to exclude the House of Commons' principal spokesmen, such as Edward Coke and Robert Phelips—efforts that served only to infuriate rather than deter the Commons. Parliament's leaders. Sir John Eliot and Sir Dudley Digges, entered into an open collision with the Court, mobilizing a powerful opposition to the hated Duke of Buckingham and formally impeaching him at the bar of the House of Lords on May 8. Charles responded by imprisoning Eliot and Digges, both of whom however were soon released, whereupon the king dissolved the second Parliament on June 15, leaving a dark cloud hanging over the country.

Charles now took those major steps toward personal rule and arbitrary action that would be his complete undoing. He systematically levied forced loans on the country, billeted soldiers in private homes, and collected tonnage and poundage in the flagrant absence of parliamentary sanction. The Crown's patrimony was sold off by disposing of royal lands, forests, and other properties; monopolies and titles were placed on the royal auction block, enriching the few and enhancing their status; and the mercantile interests of the country were subjected to continual interference in a period of rising prices and commercial competition with the Dutch.

By the time Charles was obliged to convene his third Parliament in March 1628, "Country" and "Court" were completely at loggerheads. With extraordinary effrontery, the king demanded that a staggering million and a quarter pounds be added to his ordinary requirements, as well as to prosecute wars with Spain and France, which the House of Commons (by now immensely overshadowing the House of Lords in both wealth and popularity) denied him. To the parliamentarians, not only were Charles's wars abject failures and not only had he abused fiscal rights that properly belonged to them, but he was increasingly using the Star Chamber—a body established by Henry VII, composed of the king's counselors and judges—to control unruly nobles; to secretly and arbitrarily jail his opponents. This last abuse seemed particularly odious to "free Englishmen," who viewed every arbitrary act as an egregious violation of the country's basic liberties.

Nor did Charles's approach to religious issues do anything but increase the antipathy toward him. Under William Laud, who was made the archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, the Anglican Church became a servile ideological prop in support of absolutism. Anglican practices and beliefs veered ever closer to the rituals, structures, and creeds of Roman Catholicism, which were notably useful in enforcing royal authority. Laud, drawing upon the Arminian doctrines, tried to move the High Church in a Catholic direction, indeed, to distance the Church from Puritanism, whose popularity had become widespread among the middling and lower classes. Even the milder Presbyterianism that was filtering from Scotland into England stood sharply at odds with this new pro-Catholic trend, making Archbishop Laud one of the most detested figures in England.

No longer did any doubt exist that Laud's efforts were intended to strengthen the Crown's powers by supporting the divine right of kings and enlarging the king's authority in the Anglican Church. High churchmen even preached that it was a sin to question the king's authority. Anglicanism, in effect, was becoming strictly a Court religion, in which king and bishops significantly

upheld each other's claims to divine right. Although the wealthy, the titled nobility, the courtier stratum, and their dependents supported Laud and his High Church episcopacy, the great mass of squires, craftsmen, merchants, and yeomen began to rally in growing numbers around his opponents in the Commons and among the more committed, indeed critical, Protestant preachers, who abounded through the land.

Led by Sir John Eliot, a monarchist who nevertheless felt that Charles was impinging on traditional English rights, and by the great legal expert of the day, Sir Edward Coke, Parliament presented the king with a comprehensive Petition of Right on June 7, 1628, demanding that he respond to it favorably. The document bluntly declared

> that no man hereafter be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such-like charge, without common consent by act of Parliament; and that none be called to make answer, or to take such oath, or to give attendance, or to be confined, or otherwise molested or disquieted concerning the same, or for refusal thereof; and that no freeman, in any such manner as is before mentioned, be imprisoned or detained; and that your Majesty will be pleased to remove the said soldiers and mariners, and that your people may not be so burdened in time to come; and that the foresaid commissions for proceeding by martial law be revoked and annulled; and that hereafter no commissions of like nature may issue forth to any person or persons whatsoever to be executed as aforesaid, lest by colour of them any of your Majesty's subjects be destroyed or put to death, contrary to the laws and franchises of the land.[9]

The Petition did not deny the king his established domestic and foreign prerogatives; nor did it challenge his status as the executive head of the realm or his traditional relationship with Parliament. But it was far-reaching in its demands to make England into a constitutional monarchy. Accordingly, the Petition made *all* levies—apart from the sale of royal properties—illegal without parliamentary consent, including the means for developing a centralized bureaucracy and a standing army that the king could have used against his domestic opponents. It made illegal the arbitrary use of power, such as that exercised by the Star Chamber, and it denied the right of the High Church hierarchy to use commissions or courts to persecute the Puritans and sectaries who were springing up like mushrooms after a rainfall throughout the realm. The document, in effect, amounted to a Bill of Rights, completely rejecting the absolutism that so many kings abroad were attempting to achieve.

Charles still held as fervently as ever to his father's view in 1610 that

> monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods— I will not be content that my power be disputed upon.[10]

But he ultimately assented to the Petition, mainly as the result of a parliamentary bribe: the Commons promised him £350,000 in subsidies that he desperately needed, should he sign the document. No sooner had Charles accepted the Petition, however, than he proceeded to violate

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[9] "The Petition of Right," June 7,1628, in Hill and Dell, *Good Old Cause,* pp. 148–9.

[10] James 1,1610, in Hill and Dell, *Good Old Cause,* pp. 118–19.

it by collecting customs duties unilaterally. When the Commons demanded that the impeached Buckingham be removed from his position as a royal adviser, Charles angrily prorogued Parliament. When the next Parliament convened in January 1629, it again restricted to a year the king's right to tonnage and poundage, which Charles arrogantly rejected as a restriction of his divine authority.

In fact, the last session of the Commons ended in tumult. To prevent the speaker (an appointee of the king) from closing down the House, its members forcibly held him in his chair and rushed through several resolutions that designated anyone who attempted to introduce "popery" or levy a tax unauthorized by Parliament as an enemy of England, subject to capital charges. The House was then dissolved, but its members were prepared to bring the fight directly to the people. So acrimonious were the sentiments that pitted the Commons against the Crown that armed conflict between "Court" and "Country" seemed unavoidable.

CHARLES'S PERSONAL RULE

This grim prospect did not temper Charles's behavior or his absolutist policies. Quite to the contrary: the king simply did not summon another Parliament for eleven years. During this period, he turned to direct, personal, and arbitrary rule by continuing to collect tonnage and poundage in flat defiance of the Petition and Parliament's last legislation; raising tax rates without sanction; reviving and increasing feudal dues; selling trade monopolies indiscriminately; and marketing titles like so many commodities. The king flatly challenged the parallel system of local government that Elizabeth had more or less respected by appointing royal sheriffs to collect taxes in the counties, thereby undermining the authority of the local gentry itself. Archbishop Laud tried to prevent the traditional mustering of local militias in village churchyards, calling it a sacrilege, while Charles attempted to recruit and maintain a centralized standing army—or what he gallingly called a "perfect militia." Requirements that the people quarter soldiers generated intense local resentment and a feeling that those in charge of the new army intended to undermine established English liberties. Finally, the king angered the City of London by delaying the repayment of loans, with the result that the monarchy began to lose its credit with the capital's banking houses.

Acting largely under the king's pressure, courts behaved more and more arbitrarily in their proceedings and decisions, engendering fears among all who were outside the king's circle of personal confidants that they were threatened by the loss of their liberties. In a series of highly sensational cases, critics of the king were punished with such ferocity that it aroused a nationwide furor. John Eliot was thrown into the Tower for his opposition to the king during the last Parliament and adamantly refused to make the apologies to Charles that would have easily resulted in his release. He died in prison after being deliberately mistreated by jailers. Like the lesser courts and commissions, the Star Chamber was active in imprisoning, torturing, and humiliating pamphleteers who challenged the king's excesses. Religious dissenters, known critics of Charles, and those who refused to pay what they regarded as illegal taxes and levies were singled out for harsh royal retribution. Some twenty thousand Puritans are believed to have fled the country during this period to escape persecution, most of them resettling in New England.

Perhaps the most detested evidence of monarchical arrogance was the issue of ship money, which came to a head in the mid-1630s. English kings had traditionally imposed this levy exclusively on coastal communities for the construction of ships to protect them from pirates and

hostile invaders. Charles, by extending the payment of ship money to the inland counties as well, broke with a time-honored precedent. Had the king succeeded in collecting this tax without parliamentary consent, he would have emerged victorious in a basic constitutional issue and could have dispensed with the limits Parliament placed on his increasingly arbitrary powers. But it did not go uncontested. The legality of the levy was put to the test when a well-to-do Puritan from Buckinghamshire, John Hampden, openly refused to pay it. At his celebrated trial of 1637–38, Hampden's attorneys argued that the levy had been imposed without parliamentary consent and thereby violated the Petition of Right. Under strong pressure from the king, however, the judges denied the validity of Hampden's claim by seven to five, and the chief justice went so far as to void any parliamentary act that claimed to bind the king's behavior to the wishes of his subjects, specifically Parliament.

Public resentment against this verdict, and against the king, boiled over. For Englishmen, the decision called into question not only Charles's motives but the very legitimacy of the monarchy, the courts, indeed, even of the state itself. One writer viewed the verdict as "an utter oppression of the subjects' liberty... What shall freemen differ from the ancient bondsmen and villeins of England if their estates be subject to arbitrary taxes?"[11] Large sectors of the propertied classes were now mobilized against the king, including the City of London, which took the radical step of completely denying credit to the Crown.

To the majority of parliamentarians like Eliot, the king was introducing measures in flat contravention not only of Parliament but of English common law and tradition. Generally, the parliamentarians viewed themselves as guardians of custom and "ancient Saxon liberties"—the pre-Norman heritage of English freedom (even though much of seventeenth-century English common law had actually been introduced by the Normans). But the image of "Norman" legal importations suited the popular sentiment that oppressive laws had been inflicted on them by invaders, who transgressed ancient "Saxon" liberties and defiled the traditional "rights of Englishmen." The challenge to the king, in effect, was cast in terms of restoring liberties that had been violated by an alien monarchy, indeed one that lacked any knowledge of its subjects' traditional freedoms.

The Puritans, for their part, viewed themselves as the upholders of biblical precept, of older Christian practices that the "popish" religion had adulterated. The word *Puritan* was used ecumenically to refer to anyone who wished to "purify" the Church in the name of an "authentic" form of Christianity that was free of clerical hierarchies, morally committed to a way of life consistent with biblical precept, and guided not only by faith and an inner light but by a political dispensation consistent with Christian virtue. English Protestantism had advanced well beyond Luther's subjective emphasis and had moved directly into spheres of overt social action. Before the outbreak of the Civil War, these concepts were sufficiently vague, to be sure, to be accepted by the gentry, yeomanry, middling merchants, artisans, and even many nobles. Initially, in fact, a Puritan could be a Presbyterian, who preferred the presbyter structure in religious organization, or a Congregationalist, who strongly advocated grassroots control of ministers by congregations. But all of these strains were strongly committed to social reform, and the more authoritarian and democratic tendencies were to enter into sharp conflict with each other as well as with the king.

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[11] Quoted in Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603–1714* (London: Thomas Nelson 8c Sons, 1961; New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), p. 55.

THE LONG PARLIAMENT

After eleven years of personal rule, Charles was finally obliged to convene Parliament. The immediate cause of his action seemed like a side issue: his attempt to place the Scottish Kirk under Anglican control. Charles's rule in Scotland had been only nominal: the local Scottish nobility was very strong, and the Kirk was still the most powerful institution in the land. The king's fatuous attempt to force the Anglican Book of Prayer on the Kirk and its militant Presbyterian following misfired, provoking a storm of opposition throughout the land to the north. In 1638 large numbers of Scots adopted a National Covenant to resist the king's efforts, pledging to disregard all Charles's changes until they were approved by free assemblies and parliaments.

With the foolhardiness that characterized so much of his reign, Charles thereupon proceeded to invade Scotland with English troops that were, if anything, more sympathetic to the Scots than to himself, and with domestic support that was as secure as that of the hostile and short-lived Parliament he had summoned to fund the invasion. This Short Parliament, as it came to be known, refused to give the king financial aid and was abruptly dissolved after three weeks. The Scots, in turn, responded to Charles's aborted invasion by occupying the northern English counties of Northumberland and Durham and demanding a large financial indemnity before they would leave. At length, in 1640, Charles was obliged to call the famous Long Parliament into session—a Parliament that would preside over a decade of civil war and his own execution nine years later.

The Commons, most of whose members were now fervently united in their aversion to the king's personal rule, economic misadventures, and religious absolutism, asserted its own authority by rapidly enacting a series of radical measures that essentially reduced the king to a constitutional monarch. Henceforth, the House declared, Parliament was to be summoned into session every three years, regardless of the will of the king, who would be deprived of any right to dissolve it without its own consent. Ship money, tonnage and poundage—indeed, *all* levies and taxes imposed without parliamentary consent—were declared illegal, thereby reducing the Crown to complete financial dependence on the Commons. The Star Chamber and ecclesiastical courts were abolished, and those who had been imprisoned by these bodies were freed.

Parliament's darkest suspicions of the king and his ministers—particularly of Archbishop Laud and the royal adviser, the Earl of Strafford—were aroused when Strafford tried to form an army in Ireland, presumably to aid the king against the Scots. Many parliamentarians viewed this measure as an attempt by the king and Strafford to raise an army against the Commons. Their fears were hardly allayed by rumors that the king had gone to Scotland to win military support for disbanding the House. The Long Parliament responded to this challenge by impeaching both Laud and Strafford, despite anguished efforts by Charles to save their lives. Strafford was executed in 1641 and Laud in 1645 by order of Parliament—acts that Charles properly viewed as overt challenges to his authority.

An Irish rebellion in 1641 finally caused the conflict between king and Parliament to reach explosive proportions. Parliament, flatly refusing to equip the king with an army, took direct command of England's military forces, notably the local "trained bands" or militias. On behalf of the House, John Pym prepared a Grand Remonstrance to justify parliamentary mistrust of the king and his intentions, chronicling Charles's ill-doings throughout his reign and essentially demanding parliamentary approval of all his ministers, Church reforms, and military actions. The king, of course, flatly rejected the document, whereupon Parliament issued nineteen demands that were plainly revolutionary in character. These demands included not only religious reforms

so sweeping that they would have extirpated Catholicism from England, but also gave the Commons the right to appoint all royal ministers and judges, indeed even to undertake the education of the king's children.

On August 22, 1642, the king raised his standard at Nottingham, declaring open war upon Parliament, while Parliament did the same at London. Two opposing armies, the Cavaliers, as the royalists were to be called, and the Roundheads, as the parliamentary and Puritan troops were disdainfully called because of their short-cropped hair, now faced each other, plunging England into the first of the modern revolutions.

THE ALIGNMENT OF FORCES

It is commonly claimed in hindsight that the English Revolution was caused by a basically bourgeois mentality, bourgeois institutions, and bourgeois lifeways, making it, in effect, a "bourgeois revolution." More precisely, the Revolution must have been "bourgeois," it is argued, since the bourgeoisie—landed as well as commercial and industrial—ultimately benefited from its occurrence. England, after all, was the country in which capitalism later made its most important historic breakthrough into world history; that is to say, it was in England that capitalism finally triumphed in a manner that was to affect, indeed to *define,* the future of Western civilization to an unprecedented extent. That the triumph of capitalism—particularly, in later years, of industrial capitalism— over feudalism played a world-transforming role unequaled by the role it had previously played in northern Italy, Flanders, and central Europe is hardly arguable; indeed in the nineteenth century, England became the model of economic analysis, not only for Karl Marx but for most social thinkers of his age. It is not surprising, then, that many able historians trace the emergence of this world-transforming development back to the English Revolution itself, thereby imparting to it a pride of place in fostering capitalism that is even greater than that of any of the revolutions that followed.

Yet at the very least this interpretation is arguable. Firstly, to analyze the Revolution strictly or even primarily along class lines—let alone to find a "revolutionary bourgeoisie" anywhere in the mid-seventeenth century—stands at odds with many established facts. By no means did the English aristocracy monolithically support Charles. To be sure, the very highest nobility—that is to say, the court aristocracy and peers of the land who directly benefited from Stuart-endowed privileges—generally favored the king's cause. But even families of the same social class among the aristocracy, landed gentry, and commercial strata divided and opposed each other. Indeed, far from being merchants, the great leaders of the parliamentary forces were landed gentry. John Hampden, John Pym, Sir John Eliot, and even Cromwell himself lived on estates as country gentlemen between sessions of Parliament and dabbled in trade rather than engaged in it. Eliot, as we saw, died in prison rather than surrender his principles and accede to Charles's demands for compromise. One might well have expected the Earl of Essex to fight under the king's standard; James I, after all, had restored his estates to him after his father led a Catholic rebellion against Elizabeth's religious policies. But as we will see in the next chapter, Essex resolutely supported Pym's policy against Charles's absolutism and was actually the first commander of Parliament's armies. Similarly, the 2nd Earl of Manchester, who commanded the parliamentary armies in East Anglia, including Cromwell's cavalry, struck a strategic blow against Charles's forces in July 1644 with the capture of York and defeated the seemingly invincible royalist forces commanded by Prince Rupert.

If landed gentry and noblemen played a major role in the parliamentary struggle against the king, the bourgeoisie—if we can use this word loosely to refer to people involved in commerce, industry, and finance—played a surprisingly minor role. By no means were the parliamentary Roundheads made up of members of the bourgeoisie. Moneylenders, to be sure, gave less and less support to Charles I and threw their financial support to the parliamentary forces. But the king's arbitrary exactions, his expensive court, and his fiscal irresponsibility made him a very bad investment. Yet some of England's commercial cities rallied to the king's standard; indeed, at the beginning of the civil war, the lord mayor and aldermen of London sided with Charles out of concern for their oligarchic municipal and commercial interests.

Although the ports, the manufacturing towns, the South and the East, and most of the middle class generally rallied to the Parliamentary cause, other bourgeois sectors of the country actually regarded the monarchy as a traditionhonored institution and opposed its overthrow. If the Revolution was primarily bourgeois or if there was a truly "revolutionary bourgeoisie" in seventeenthcentury England, it was either scarce or inordinately myopic. Indeed, one could more easily argue that the bourgeoisie were militantly counterrevolutionary during certain decisive turning points in the trajectory of classical revolutions that have been designated as "bourgeois" in our own time.

Chapter 5. The Levellers and the New Model Army

Despite its premodern, often religious vernacular, the English Revolution had a remarkably modern and secular character. In retrospect, the religious factions that prosecuted its internal conflicts actually had very practical and worldly social goals. Their theological rhetoric tends, if anything, to conceal the extent to which the English Revolution opened the era of the great, basically secular democratic revolutions that were to follow in its wake.

For one thing, the English Revolution had a notably plebeian dimension. It was fought out not only in the halls of Parliament and on various battlefields but also in the streets of London as well as other cities and villages. The House of Commons spoke in the name of "the people," not of God, to legitimate its claims, declaring that "the people" or at least their "representatives" had sovereignty superior to that of the king. In the free discussion of the 1640s, questions were raised about how representative Parliament actually was of "the people" as a whole. Sir Robert Filmer, a defender of the king, relished the opportunity to point out that the parliamentary electorate, far from comprising the people of England, consisted of perhaps one out of every ten Englishmen—and these were the upper ten in social rank. Like Filmer, radical democrats criticized the narrowness of the parliamentary electorate and tried to extend the franchise to include most of the male population. One such pamphleteer claimed that in the scriptural injunction "Touche not mine anointed" it was the common people who were anointed. Still another pamphleteer warned as early as 1642 that this "dangerous tenet hath been buzzed into the ears of the people as if they only were anointed, none but they."[12]

Another modern aspect of the "Great Rebellion," as many British historians call the English Revolution, was the extent to which it was an ideologically selfconscious upheaval, bringing the entire establishment—social as well as institutional—into question. To judge from the documents we have, it was an immensely literate and polemical revolution: presses worked overtime to

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[12] Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603–1714* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), p. 173.

produce a host of pamphlets and newspapers. Easy as it may be today to take a popular literature for granted, it should be realized that newspapers did not even exist until England moved toward revolution. Whereas in earlier times dissenters had relied primarily on sermons from pulpits to radical congregations to disseminate their message, now incendiary parliamentary speeches, proclamations, and remonstrances were committed to print and distributed widely throughout the country.

The written word was brought into close unison with the spoken word. Parliamentary proceedings became highly visible public arenas, not unlike the Elizabethan stage, where oratory was directed not only to legislators and the court but to the nation as a whole. In this sense, the Revolution was an eminently popular event, at least to anyone who chose to participate in it. Finally, what raised the Civil War of the 1640s from a "Great Rebellion" to a modern social revolution was the emergence of socially challenging radical groups that directed themselves not only against the most sacrosanct institutions of traditional England but against seemingly popular leaders who replaced the established government, nearly culminating in a third revolution by the most radical sectors of the revolutionary movement.

THE FIRST CIVIL WAR

The English Civil War can roughly be divided into two distinct periods, the first lasting from 1642 to 1646, and the second from 1648 to 1649. The first was initially marked by considerable social, political, and religious unanimity among the parliamentary forces. During this time. Parliament did not throw down its gauntlet against Charles, whose person remained inviolable, still less against the monarchy as such; rather, it professed to be fighting for "Country" mid "Court," not "Country" *against* "Court." The House of Commons saw itself as defending the traditional constitution against royal "innovations" and fought to constrain the king rather than eliminate his office. Charles was seen, at least for public purposes, as a benign but ill-advised ruler who was transgressing ancient liberties at the behest of an unscrupulous courtly and clerical camarilla.

The most important military leadership during this early period came from wealthy landowners, as indeed it had to, for, following still-existing medieval custom, it was the peers of the realm who were accorded the highest commands in the army and sat on the parliamentary Council of War. Accordingly, the leadership of the parliamentary forces was conferred on Robert Devercaux, the 3rd Earl of Essex, and Edward Montagu, the 2nd Earl of Manchester. These aristocratic commanders, far from seeking to remove Charles from his throne, sought merely to rectify the king's relations with Parliament. Essex in particular had an abiding aversion to facing the king on the battlefield. Nothing seems to have embarrassed him more than when on October 23,1642, during the Battle of Edgehill—the first major engagement in the Civil War—the earl found himself commanding a parliamentary force against royalist troops directly under Charles's leadership. It was only through the king's own duplicity and wiliness that he eventually alienated even these moderate parliamentarians and lost their loyalty.

The opening conflicts between "Court" and "Country" were marked by debilitating archaisms that stalemated the civil war inordinately and perhaps inevitably. Thus, the aristocratic commanders relied primarily on the feudal institutions—militias and county administration—that tradition bestowed upon them to conduct a war. But traditional means proved woefully inadequate for achieving victory. Heredity rather than merit did not provide a particularly sound criterion for choosing commanders, and the struggle seemed to lumber along until new, innovative comman-

ders and more committed troops were recruited from lower strata of the social hierarchy to make up the parliamentary army. After 1644, the gentry, the yeomanry, and the so-called "masterless men," or common laborers, poor tenant farmers, and artisans became involved in the conflict, providing Parliament with more zealous—and socially troubling— forces. Despite the proclivities of these men for radical democratic views, Parliament was compelled to turn to them for aid not only because they opposed the king but, in the best of cases, because of their outstanding courage in battle and the high level of their morale.

In religious affairs, too, the solidarity among Parliament's supporters was initially extensive but very superficial. Conservative parliamentarians had little quarrel with the Anglican Church, notwithstanding the objections of moderates to Archbishop Laud's introduction of "popish" features. In 1643, by denying Anglican bishops the right to govern ecclesiastical affairs, the moderate majority in Parliament struck a direct blow at the divine right of kings, which the Anglican Church had tried to validate. But as Anglican clerics increasingly sided with the king against Parliament, moderate and even conservative parliamentarians found it necessary to shift their religious affiliation from the Anglican Church to the once-radical Presbyterianism of Knox and the Scots. This shift had a strategic benefit as well: it enlarged the popular base of the parliamentarians beyond the borders of England by gaining them Scottish support. Even Essex drifted toward Presbyterianism, together with a substantial number of the parliamentarians who formed the majority in the House of Commons.

Although the shift to Presbyterianism allowed Parliament to adapt itself to the increasingly radical turn that the Revolution was beginning to take, it also opened a cleavage between the religious moderates and conservatives, on the one hand, and the religious radicals on the other. These radicals were the sterner Puritans, the Independents, who steadily increased their influence among those who opposed the king. As Congregationalists, the Independents did not look to bishops for religious guidance, nor did they look to presbyters to stand between their congregations and God. Rather, they dispensed with religious hierarchies entirely and formed their own congregations of people with like-minded beliefs, choosing their own preachers and ministers. Most of them sought spiritual guidance entirely from Scripture, while some, essentially pantheists, even denied the authority of the Bible altogether—and the existence of a traditional deity.

Nor was the radicalism of these Independents limited to religious affairs alone. Just as they demanded religious freedom, so too did they demand political freedom. Many, in fact, adopted views that were expressly republican, insisting that the Commons, not the king, was sovereign. And indeed, under the impact and exigencies of civil war, all English political structures were changing rapidly. As the traditional state was partially destroyed, new political institutions were created to replace them. In some towns and villages, revolutionary committees were created, whose members, as one unhappy squire of the Isle of Wight lamented, included people of lower social rank rather than the traditional gentry: "We had a thing here called a Committee which overruled DeputyLieutenants and also Justices of the Peace, and of this we had brave men." This committee, he observed with disdain, included a peddler, an apothecary, a baker, two farmers, and a poor man. "These ruled the whole Island, and did whatsoever they thought good in their own eyes."[13] But this extreme situation was far from typical; in fact, most of the new committees

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[13] Sir John Oglander, quoted in Christopher Hill, *The English Revolution 1640: An Essay* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1940), pp. 46–7.

were dominated by the gentry and were ultimately brought under the centralized control of Parliament.

The English Revolution was also modern because of its social trajectory: the king's duplicity and his repeated attempts to impose absolutist rule on England and Scotland thrust the conflict in an increasingly radical direction. More and more, the majority of the Parliament found it impossible to accept the kind of constitutional monarchy that a moderate Puritan like Pym would have wanted and that peers such as Essex and Manchester would have accepted. During the summer campaign of 1645, when the parliamentary army captured York and defeated the royalist cavalry led by Charles's dashing nephew Prince Rupert, many radicals were already calling for the elimination of the monarchy, not merely for restraining it. Their frustration became intense when their Presbyterian generals proved unwilling to defeat the king decisively in battle. At Newbury in October 1644, the parliamentary commanders Manchester and Sir William Waller deliberately delayed the offensive as long as they could. After it finally began, the enthusiastic parliamentary forces roundly defeated the Cavaliers, only to find that their generals permitted the royalist forces to withdraw, largely intact, from the field of battle with all their equipment. There could be little doubt that Manchester and Waller had no intention of decisively defeating the king and his Cavaliers.

In fact, generals who came from noble families seemed to be more fearful of their increasingly radical officers and troops than of their royalist opponents, and the parliamentary soldiers responded in kind to their aristocratic commanders. Essex avowedly despised the lower classes with all the haughtiness of a peer. In December 1644 he denigrated popular demonstrations in London streets with the remark: "Is this the liberty which we claim to vindicate by shedding our blood? Our posterity will say that to deliver them from the yoke of the King we have subjected them to that of the common people."[14] What was at issue was not merely differences in social pedigree that divided the parliamentary forces; diverging political aims were also emerging among parliamentary moderates, conservatives, and radicals that essentially divided the army against itself and its officers.

In time, the real leadership of the Roundheads fell to a man from the lower squirearchy, Oliver Cromwell, an outspoken militant who was an iconoclastic Puritan and the ablest of the Independent cavalry officers. Cromwell had risen to the fore of the Independents partly by virtue of his extraordinary military ability and partly by boldly denouncing the conservative generals before the House of Commons. In response to these denunciations, Essex, Manchester, and other Presbyterian leaders made a scandalous attempt to impeach him for sedition, but Cromwell's capacities as a commander had already made him so indispensable to the war that he eluded removal from the army. He had organized his "Ironsides" cavalry regiment (the name was Prince Rupert's sobriquet for Cromwell himself) at Cambridge in 1643. At Marston Moor in July 1644, after other parliamentary forces had been routed, Cromwell led a cavalry charge in which his military abilities and the zeal and discipline of his horsemen defeated the royalists and in fact saved the army from ignominious defeat. The subsequent failure of Manchester and Waller to crush the royalist army at Newbury brought Cromwell and his cavalry into open opposition to Manchester and his irresolute supporters in Parliament. "If we beat the King ninety-nine times, he would be King still and his posterity, and we subjects still," Manchester is reported to have

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[14] Quoted in Jasper Ridley, *The Roundheads* (London: Constable & Co., 1976), p. 43.

told Cromwell reproachfully, to which Cromwell rejoined, "My lord, if this be so, why did we take up arms at first?"[15]

THE NEW MODEL ARMY

The increasingly plebeian rank and file of the parliamentary forces and their growing mistrust of peers generally fed their scorn for the parliamentary generals whose dilatory tactics and reverses seemed irremediable, giving rise to a radical republican movement that began to form out of the socially mixed parliamentary troops. To the radicals, it was apparent that the old system of military organization had to be scrapped and the army thoroughly reorganized. The Independents introduced a Self-Denying Ordinance into Parliament, which, when passed in April 1645, forbade any member of either House to hold a military command. Inasmuch as peers could not resign from the House of Lords, it forced all parliamentarians to surrender their army positions. No longer would tradition dictate that peers had to command the armed forces; indeed, military rank now had to be based on merit, not on birth, which led to the resignation of Essex and Manchester from the army command.

Nor was Parliament to be trusted to decisively defeat the king. Instead of forming a new parliamentary army, the Presbyterians in Parliament dithered and hoped that their moderate coreligionists in Scotland would take over the war in the absence of the old generals—a prospect that was tenuous at best. Thus, ultimately, they were obliged to authorize the creation of a New Model Army, naming Sir Thomas Fairfax as commander in chief and Cromwell as lieutenant-general in charge of the cavalry. Cromwell proceeded to organize and train his expanded force along the same lines that he had organized his "Ironsides" regiment, obliging it to adhere to the discipline of a loyal and completely zealous crusading force. Preaching and hymn-singing were routine, and complete freedom of discussion reigned in the ranks, forging a deep sense of purpose and commitment and a high level of political consciousness among the troops. The New Model Army was to become a military force that not only won the revolution but was never defeated in battle.

Its yeoman cavalry turned a looming defeat into a decisive rout of the Cavaliers at Naseby on June 14, 1645, a battle that clearly rendered Charles's cause hopeless. By May 5 of the following year, after a series of royalist defeats, the New Model Army had finally vanquished the king's forces. The First Civil War ended when the king's base at Oxford surrendered in June 1646 and Charles gave himself up to the Scots, who turned him over to parliamentary commissioners in 1647.

Although the real power of the country passed into the hands of the House of Commons, sharp divisions opened between its Presbyterian majority and Cromwell's zealous troops. As conservatives in the Commons began in increasing numbers to drift back to the royalist cause, the Independents radically redefined the entire political perspective of the antiroyalist cause. While Presbyterian political aims focused increasingly on bringing the revolution to an end by negotiating with the king and restoring him to power, radical Puritans began to form an opposition to Presbyterian rule in the Parliament, demanding what were ultimately to be republican goals and an expanded, more popular electorate.

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[15] Quoted in Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973; originally published in Great Britain as *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men* by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1973), p. 138.

In fact, the only major obstacle to a Presbyterian compromise with Charles was the Army itself. The New Model can truly be regarded as one of the most democratic armies in history. Its ideology was distinctly republican in character at a time when republicanism was seen as outrageously radical in a country saddled with a hierarchy of peers and squires. Once the king had surrendered, Parliament sought quite overtly to eliminate this gnawing obstacle to constitutional monarchy by disbanding the Army, leaving only a small remainder with which it hoped to reconquer Ireland—an enterprise, moreover, that would be under the command of new, reliable officers rather than Cromwell.

To the fury of the Presbyterian-dominated Parliament, however, the Army command and most of the troops simply refused to disband. Most of the politically astute New Model troops did not regard a mere end to the war as the victory for which they had fought. The social and political turmoil of the conflict had unleashed high hopes for a transformation of the social order, arousing millennial aspirations and yearnings for a new social dispensation of justice and freedom, which a restoration of Charles would hardly have produced. Nor was it clear that the existing Parliament was preferable to the king: the House of Commons began to imprison people arbitrarily without trial and to refuse to receive popular petitions, while its members were patently using their positions to enrich themselves at public expense—abuses that produced widespread dismay among the radicals. By 1646, the popularity of the so-called Levellers, or radical democrats, was growing steadily in the ranks of the New Model, impelling it to advance increasingly radical demands, notably the complete elimination of the monarchy and the election of a new and more popular Parliament.

THE LEVELLERS

Of all the various independent groups that opposed the moderate and conservative leaders in Parliament, the Levellers were historically the most serious, well-organized, and resolute. It was their movement, both in London and in the Army, that posed the most important revolutionary threat to the ruling strata of the country.

The Levellers emerged just at the moment of Parliament's victory over the Cavaliers, a time that seemed to call out for radically new political ideas. They were Independents in both a political and religious sense. As a democratic movement, they originally stood for the sovereignty of the Commons, but as its abuses became clear—it had arbitrarily imprisoned one of their foremost leaders, John Lilburne—they began to shift their emphasis to the sovereignty of the people, often against the moderate House of Commons. Congregationalism taught them democratic principles, while a certain messianism convinced the most religious among them that they were the instruments of God. The term *Leveller* was not one of their own choosing; it was applied to them by Commissary-General Henry Ireton in the fall of 1647 as a term of opprobrium for the democratic faction of the Parliamentary cause, particularly with a view toward discrediting them in the New Model Army, which was exercising an everincreasing political influence on the Revolution. Although some Levellers resented the name, it had acquired an honorable pedigree in English history: in 1607 in Leicestershire and Warwickshire, rebellious tenants and copyholders who were trying to recover their common lands from the gentry had used the word to express their desire not for social equality but to "level" the fences and hedges that were then being raised to enclose land. In the English revolution, the name became popular after the spring of 1648, and in time many radical Independents adopted the Leveller name for their own movement. In fact,

Gerrard Winstanley's communistic Digger movement used the name *True Leveller* to distinguish itself from the larger movement of radical Independents.

Considering the brutality of the times, the Levellers had a broad sense of social right and decency; indeed, they were exceptionally humane people. Even when English blood was more than overheated with desires for revenge against Irish rebels, who had massacred immigrants from Scotland and England in their struggle for national freedom, the Levellers seem to have stood alone in their sympathy for Irish struggles against tyranny. They emphasized that English folk needed to focus their attention against their own domestic tyrants rather than Ireland's just attempts to free itself of English rule. Moreover, their movement was very expansive in its attitude toward the oppressed of all kinds. Levellers, observes H. N. Brailsford, "encouraged women to play their part in politics side by side with their husbands and brothers, because they believed in the equality of all 'made in the image of God'"[16] —a view virtually unprecedented in seventeenth-century Europe.

In the eyes of the Levellers, society was basically divided between the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the dispossessed. "O you Members of Parliament and rich men in the City," John Lilburne wrote in January 1648, a time of great economic hardship,

> that are at ease and drink wine in bowls and stretch yourselves upon beds of down, you that grind our faces and flay off our skins, will no man amongst you regard, will no man behold our faces black with sorrow and famine?... What, then, are your ruffling silks and velvets and your glittering gold and silver laces? Are they not the sweat of our brows and the wants of our backs and bellies?... What else but your ambition and faction continue our distractions and oppressions? Is not all the controversy whose slaves the poor shall be?[17]

Yet the Levellers were neither socialists nor extreme social radicals. They affirmed with all sincerity that they upheld and would defend the right of property, and indeed, the final version of their program, called *An Agreement of the People* (issued from the Tower of London on May 1, 1649), explicitly repudiated any intentions to "level mens Estates, destroy Property, or make all things Common."[18] The ownership of property, in their view, played a fundamentally important social role. Property, Levellers believed, conferred social responsibility, independence, and a basic decency of behavior, even promoting aid for less fortunate individuals in dire material straits. A merchant who owned his own property and employed men or women under decent conditions did not earn their opprobrium—although radical Levellers like William Walwyn did not hesitate to denounce the taking of interest. What irked them far more than a modest measure of wealth were the exploitative prerogatives that royal monopolies conferred, the rising prices that burdened consumers, and the economic regulations that monopolies imposed on basic goods at the expense of the poorer classes.

What the Levellers normally meant by property was the modest competence of the common man, who had to be defended against the rich, the nobility, and the economic monopolists. Such

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[16] H. N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution,* ed. Christopher Hill (Nottingham: Spokesman University Press, 1976), p. 316.

[17] Quoted in Brailsford, *Levellers,* p. 324.

[18] Article 30, "An Agreement of the Free People of England" (May 1, 1649), in G. E. Aylmer, ed., *The Levellers in the English Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975).

small artisans and yeomen were viewed as the basic sinews of the social and political order, in contrast to the rich and exploitative strata, who held massive accumulations of wealth and reduced thousands of people to servants or beggars dependent on alms. Accordingly, the Leveller pamphleteer Richard Overton demanded that "all orders, sorts, and societies of the natives of this land" be able to

> freely and fully enjoy a joint and mutually neighborhood, cohabitation, and humane subsistence, one as well as another, doing unto all men as we would be done unto; it being against the radical law of nature and reason, that any man should be deprived of an humane subsistence.[19]

Despite their considerable influence in English cities, especially London, the Levellers' influence in the countryside should not be overlooked. Although the Levdlers did not call for a drastic land redistribution, they bluntly challenged quasi-feudal "badges of slavery," such as the "oaths of fealty, homage, fines" that the nobility and squirearchy (which they identified with the Normans) imposed on the freeholders and tenants of the English countryside. Hence they insisted

> that a certain valuable rate be set, at which *all possessors of lands so holden may purchase themselves freeholders,* and in case any shall not be willing or able, that there be a *prefixed period of time after which all services, fines, customs, etc. shall be changed into and become a certain rent,* that so persons disaffected to the freedom and welfare of the nation may not have the advantage upon the people to draw them into a war against themselves upon any occasion by virtue of an awe upon them in such dependent tenures.[20]

Modest and reasonable as these demands to eliminate "base tenures" may seem today, they "would have changed the face of England" had they been instituted, observes Brailsford.

> A fixed tribute is compatible with mental, social and political independence and with a hopeful spirit of enterprise. The peasant's improvements would have been his own. The insecurity and the fear of rackrent [i.e., the highest possible rent that can be squeezed from a property] and exploitation, which bent him into a posture of cautious servility, would have vanished. The Levellers, in short, *would have peopled the English countryside with an enfranchised peasantry, so securely planted on the soil that it would have dared to stand erect.* This, needless to say, was not a communistic policy: it was in its inspiration individualistic, though something of the traditional communism of the open fields would have survived through several generations. But it would have broken the power of the great landed families which ruled England through the next two centuries, by adding immeasurably to the capacity of the villages for resistance. It would have made rural England what rural France became after the Revolution, a land of small peasant owners.[21]

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[19] Richard Overton, "An Appeal," July 17,1647, in Don M. Wolfe, ed., *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (1944; New York: Humanities Press, 1967), p. 182; I have modernized the spelling and punctuation.

[20] Article 16 of "A New Engagement or Manifesto", quoted in Brailsford, *Levellers,* p. 440 (emphasis added).

[21] Brailsford, *Levellers,* pp. 441–2 (emphasis added).

Brailsford regards this trend as atavistic—but was it? An "enfranchised peasantry" might well have placed major limits on the extent and viciousness of English capitalism—limits that might have profoundly shifted England's economic development along humane and socially progressive lines. The Levellers, in effect, were not only trying to democratize England politically; their program represents a realistic and populist alternative to the brutal capitalist development that the British people would face a century and a half later.

Variously Puritan, Presbyterian, or Anglican in religion. Leveller supporters were generally "the middle sort of people," noted Lilburne; yet Lilburne, who regarded himself as a "gentleman," may have snobbishly overemphasized the middle-class nature of the movement. To all appearances, the Levellers seem to have attracted the so-called "leather apron" strata of the population, such as cobblers, weavers, printers, and miners, and among agrarian strata, the poorer tenant farmers and insecure copyholders. (It was these strata that also formed the rank and file of the New Model infantry, as distinguished from the officers, who were commonly recruited from the gentry and yeomanry.) The movement gained some support from individual well-to-do tradesmen and professionals, although the latter for the most part drifted toward the Presbyterians and moderate Independents. But the larger number of Leveller supporters were those who earned less than the forty pounds per year required to gain the legal right to vote.

Hence a central plank in the various versions of the Levellers' political program. *An Agreement of the People,* was the extension of the franchise to all Englishmen, regardless of wealth or income. The several versions of the *Agreement* that the Levellers wrote over the course of the English Revolution shared basic political demands for the overthrow of both the monarchy and the House of Lords and the sovereignty of a single House of Commons, whose members were to be reelected every year by a broad electoral constituency of all males of twenty-one years of age and over, "not being servants, or receiving alms, or having served the late King in arms or voluntary Contribution." These exclusions from the suffrage may seem harsh to us today, but they were premised on the not unwarranted belief that servants and beggars would use the franchise on the behest of their masters or almsgivers, creating large blocs of votes for the wealthy.[22] The sovereign House of Commons, in turn, was expected to be wholly accountable to the people of England: annual elections and various constitutional guarantees would ensure that Commons would not become tyrannical or arrogant. Along with these tenets, the Leveller demand for absolute religious toleration as an ultimate desideratum of a free society should also be cited—no minor point in a time of considerable religious intolerance.

Individual Levellers often issued pamphlets that were far more radical than the more formal Leveller documents or manifestos. Although John Lilburne had no sympathy for Digger-like tendencies within the Leveller movement that favored communalization of the common lands, his *Earnest Petition* of January 1648 advanced a notion that at the time would have led to a radically decentralized form of democracy: the election from below—rather than appointment from above, in Westminster—of "sheriffs, justices of the peace, committeemen, grand jury men, and all ministers of justice whatsoever, in their respective counties," for terms of only one year: in essence, the decentralization and selfgovernment of every parish and county of England, and the end of the hereditary authority of landowning gentry in the rural localities.[23]

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[22] "Agreement of the (Free] People of England, May 1,1649," in Aylmer, *Levellers of the English Revolution,* pp. 160–8.

[23] Lilburne quoted in Brailsford, *Levellers,* p. 321.

William Walwyn, a close associate of Lilburne, came closest to advocating a vague form of communism by denouncing inequities in the distribution of the means of life as the source of all ills. This remarkable man, in effect, advanced what we would call a communistic social dispensation so benign in its intention that government would have been unnecessary. He is reported to have said in conversation that the social situation in England would never be well until all things were held in common. "But will that ever be?" his interlocutor objected. "We must endeavor it," Walwyn replied. "But that would destroy government," it was protested. "There would be no need of government," Walwyn is said to have retorted, "for there would be no thieves or criminals."[24] Some years later, in April 1649, writing in his defense as a prisoner in the Tower of London, he denied that he had ever called for an end to government or for a communistic society. Yet he did not fail to note that

> the community among the primitive Christians was voluntary, not coactive; they brought their goods and laid them at the apostles' feet. They were not enjoined to bring them; it was the effect of their charity and heavenly mindedness ... a voluntary act occasioned by the abundant measure of faith that was in those Christians and apostles... and not the injunction of any constitution.[25]

Unlike the senior Army officers and other strict Independent Puritans, who would end their political speeches with calls for the severe punishment of swearing, drunkenness, and wenching, the Levellers were not given to sanctimonious prudishness. Quite to the contrary: it was their custom, whenever

> Leveller soldiers had suffered under the brutal punishments of the military code to carry them off in a coach for a feast at the Whalebone or the Windmill. They had their own standards of decency and good manners ... for they did not admire grossness. But there was nothing in their temperaments of that Puritan sourness which never tired of condemning the pleasant sins of others.[26]

In a period when a ponderous religious mien and a suitably self-righteous biblical quotation commonly served to mask hypocrisy. Leveller tolerance gave rise to a remarkable degree of secularity. In this respect the Levellers contrasted markedly with Cromwell, a master of pious hypocrisies, whose continual references to Scripture and smug religious philistinism concealed a policy of treachery to his men as well as to his professed religious ideals.

THE LEVELLERS IN THE ARMY

By the time the Army moved as a revolutionary force to the forefront of English radical politics, many officers and most of the troops had essentially been plebeianized and were under

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[24] Quoted in G.P. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. 179. So disliked was Walwyn by the Cromwellians that at the end of the Second Civil War, when the "Grandees" were trying to regain the Leveller support that they had lost earlier, the Levellers were obliged to remove him from their negotiating committee.

[25] "A Manifestation," attributed to Walwyn and signed by John Lilburne, William Walwyn, Thomas Prince, and Richard Overton, dated April 14,1649, in Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestoes,* pp. 390–1.

[26] Brailsford, *Levellers,* p. 314.

Leveller influence. The Army saw itself as the savior of the English people, as embodying their will, and as the guardian of their liberties. It was responsible for defending the people against all abuses, whether by king or Parliament. The Levellers, for their part, saw the Army as an institution that could "teach peasants to understand liberty,"[27] and in evergreater numbers, New Model soldiers were becoming receptive to their propaganda. To understand the course of the Revolution, we must look more closely at this revolutionary army, the New Model Army itself, which was so crucial in bringing about the radical phases of the Revolution.

Within the Army, whose total authorized force consisted of 22,000 men, a crucial distinction must be drawn between the cavalry and infantry regiments. A sizable part of the infantry or "foot" consisted of conscripts, but the New Model cavalry was made up of volunteers, many of whom were supporters of the more democratic aims of Army radicals. These small farmers, often freeholders, and artisans were more politically aware than the infantry. Marked by an independence of mind and means, they brought their own horses and weapons into battle, and (in contrast to the infantry, which was largely illiterate), the majority of the cavalry troopers could read and included among their numbers men of some education.

The initial devotion of the soldiers to their commanders—notably Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell—was almost reverential. In their eyes, these officers, together with figures such as Cromwell's son-in-law, Henry Ireton, and popular commanders like Colonel Thomas Rainborough, provided the Army with an excellent and trustworthy military leadership. As to their social background, as C. H. Firth has noted, most of the general officers of the New Model Army were

> commoners of good family… A large number of the inferior officers belonged to the minor landed gentry, and came from families whose pedigrees and arms were registered in the visitations of the heralds. A good many were drawn from the trading classes in London and elsewhere, but did not generally rise to command regiments till much later in the war. And throughout the whole period the cavalry officers, like the troopers they commanded, were drawn from a higher social class than the infantry officers.[28]

An extraordinary phenomenon by any historical standard, the New Model was the most ideological force in the country. Cromwell carefully selected his own cavalrymen—of all faiths except Catholics and Anglicans—for their religious zeal and independence. Here religious education went hand in hand with military training. As already noted, the cavalry rode into battle singing hymns, and its soldiers formed congregations for Puritan preachers whom the earlier parliamentary army would have cashiered for their subversive messages. Over the course of its existence, the New Model was continually worked upon by Puritan divines who exhorted it to battle as a matter of sacred duty and in response to a godly calling. Within the cavalry's ranks, radical Anabaptists fought side by side with moderate Independents, and Presbyterians were tolerated with none of the discrimination they might have been expected to encounter from antihierarchical Puritans.

The ferment in the cavalry was not only religious but intensely political. "In the political movements of 1647 and subsequent years," Firth observes, "it was always the troopers of the

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27 Rev. Hugh Peter, 1646, quoted in Hill, *The English Revolution,* p. 48.

28 C.H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, being the Ford Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford 1900–1901* (London: Methuen 8c Co., 1962), pp. 46–7.

cavalry who took the lead."[29] After 1647, the New Model cavalry, for all practical purposes, formed the political vanguard of the Revolution, and it was the section of the Army that was most open to Leveller propaganda, indeed to that of radicals generally.

During the first two years of the New Model Army's life, to be sure, the Army played little role in the political events that were coming to a head in the English Revolution; but following its victory over the Cavaliers at Naseby and the Scots' surrender of the king to parliamentary commissioners in 1647, the Army encamped itself some forty miles from London, at Saffron Walden, where the soldiers read Leveller propaganda and listened to the preaching of the Independents from the city. Two days after Naseby, a visitor to the Army complained that

> a great part of the mischief was caused by distribution of the pamphlets of Over-
> ton and Lilburne, against the King and the Ministry and for Liberty of Conscience;
> and the soldiers in their quarters had such books to read when then had none to
> contradict them.[30]

It was precisely at this time that the Presbyterian Parliament was obdurately trying to dissolve the increasingly politicized Army, even while it negotiated with the very king whom the Army had defeated, a patent act of treachery that only strengthened the resolve of the New Model not to disband. No less infuriatingly, Parliament had failed to give the soldiers the back pay they were owed over some ten months; indeed, for nearly a year, the soldiers had fought and subsisted without pay, while the Presbyterian Parliament refused to vote it the subsidies it needed, heaping scorn on the Army's actions and its growing radical ideas.

Finally the anger of the Army boiled over into a head-on revolt against the House of Commons. In the spring of 1647 a council of officers was chosen by the troops to receive the parliamentary proposal that the Army be disbanded. This council, a sizable body in its own right, included even the lowest military ranks, such as subalterns. In fact, the unnerved Parliamentary commissioners who visited the Army's Saffron Walden headquarters in April 1647 attested that no fewer than two hundred officers met them and almost the same number a month later. These meetings, which were meant to subdue the Army, ended with a resolute refusal by the New Model to disband.

Moreover, differences between Army moderates and radicals began to emerge, leading many rank-and-file soldiers to conclude that their senior officers were not adequately working on their behalf. The "Grandees," as the commanders were called, seemed overly eager to preserve good relations with Parliament. Creating a new precedent in revolutionary history, the ordinary soldiers and troopers met among themselves to choose representatives of their own, the "Agitators" as they were called—a name that was synonymous with "agents" and had none of its pejorative present-day overtones—to voice their increasingly firm demands. Late in April 1647, Agitators representing eight cavalry regiments formed a council, whose existence they justified in a letter to their generals and to Parliament, expressing both professional (back pay) and political (Leveller) demands. The following month, the infantry followed suit and chose its own council of representatives. C. H, Firth tells us that "the committee of troopers [cavalry) met at St Edmunds-bury, and the foot (infantry), who chose two out of every company, sent them to confer with the troopers, and every foot soldier gave fourpence apiece towards defraying the charges of that meeting"[31] The infantry in turn wrote a protest letter of their own that expressed their personal

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 40.
[30] Quoted in Gooch, *Democratic Ideas,* p. 120.
[31] Firth, *Cromwell's Army,* p. 349.

grievances and also raised disquieting Leveller demands. Finally, cavalry and infantry together elected a smaller body that would represent the rank and file of both military divisions. This was dangerous stuff indeed, not only to Parliament but to the leadership of the Army. A soldiers' council movement had been initiated, which the Levellers in the ranks were only too eager to expand among the New Model soldiers.

The soldiers' letters and petitions were duly ignored by Parliament, which demanded that the "Grandees" put an end to the councils, and provocatively instituted proceedings against officers who had taken part in these meetings. As if to provoke a confrontation, it disbanded a number of the more restive regiments, whereupon the soldiers, faced by parliamentary obstructions, called for a rendezvous of the entire army for June 4, 1647 at Newmarket to deal with its demands. These events occurred precisely at a time when the Presbyterian Parliament seemed on the point of reaching a compromise with the king—indeed, even to use the king as a weapon against the Army. On June 2–4, on the instruction of the Agitators, a squad of cavalry troopers led by a Leveller soldier. Cornet Joyce, nervily kidnapped the king from his house arrest in Northamptonshire, removing him from parliamentary custody, and brought him to Newmarket, where the rendezvous was taking place. The king was now in the hands of the Army—an Army that was now turning against Parliament as well as the monarchy.

On June 5, the rendezvous accepted by acclamation a document called the *Solemn Engagement of the Army,* in which it announced that the New Model would not "willingly disband or divide, or suffer itself to be disbanded or divided" until such time as the council was convinced that Parliament would meet the Army's demands.[32] More significantly, the *Solemn Engagement* set up a General Council of the Army that, unlike the previous Council of War, was no mere military body of strategizing generals but a body of representatives from all military ranks that would make political decisions on behalf of the soldiers. Two representatives of the rank and file of each regiment and two of the junior or commissioned officers from each regiment were added to the old Council of War, together with its senior officers, the "Grandees." The rank and file were expected to

> choose out of the several troops and companies several men, and those out of the whole number... two or more for each regiment, to act (on the council) in the name and behalf of the whole soldiery of the respective troops and companies.[33]

Also called Agitators, these rank-and-file representatives were to have equal votes with the "Grandees," regardless of the rank they represented. With this expansion of the council, the General Council of the Army had now become a revolutionary soldiers' council, perhaps the first to emerge in a modern revolution.

Moreover, councils were now formed throughout the New Model, until they constituted a far-flung network, in great part the result of the work of a militant Leveller known as Private Edward Sexby. Indeed, owing to Sexby's organizing talents, the New Model established councils, "very like the soldiers' soviets which the revolutionaries formed in the Russian army in 1917," observes Jasper Ridley in his account of Puritan leaders. On the higher military level, in turn. New Model soldiers elected Regimental Committees, "and each Regimental Committee elected two delegates to the Army Council of Agitators," for whom Sexby, in turn, became the "leading spokesman."

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[32] *Ibid.,* pp. 349–50.
[33] "Engagement of the Army," June 5,1647, quoted in Firth, *Cromwell's Army,* pp. 349–50.

Nor were these soldiers' councils confined to the regiments stationed near London: they were formed not only in the South but also in the North, Sexby having succeeded in networking them throughout most of the New Model Army's structure.[34]

To all appearances, the Army's political intention was to overturn Parliament's nonpayment of salary and to resist parliamentary attempts to disband the Army. But the expanded General Council now became a highly political body in its own right whose goal was to formulate policies for the Army—a network that had, in effect, become a dual power in the land, basically in tension with the Court, Parliament, and the "Grandees" as well.

Chapter 6. The Putney Debates

Had it not been for the "Grandees" on the Army's General Council, the New Model Army might well have made a successful third revolution of its own in England. After two fruitless months of negotiations in the summer of 1647 between the Army and Parliament, the Agitators expressly called upon the Army to march on the capital and occupy it. Over the strong objections of Cromwell and Ireton, this powerful, well-disciplined, and socially conscious military body that no force of arms could defeat began moving toward the capital, bringing England to the edge of a radical political democracy and perhaps even an agrarian and artisanal social democracy. On June 14, in an extraordinary appeal to Parliament and indirectly to the people—again, perhaps, the first of its kind in modern revolutions—the Army issued its *Declaration of the Army,* in which the soldiers justified their involvement in politics and declared that the New Model was very different from the conventional armies of the day. In this moving, indeed thrilling, document, unprecedented by a military force thus far, the soldiers solemnly declared:

> We were not a mere mercenary army, hired to serve any arbitrary power of a state, but called forth and conjured by the several declarations of Parliament, to the defence of our own and the people's just rights and liberties. And so we took up arms in judgment and conscience to those ends, and have so continued them and are resolved … to assert and vindicate the just power and rights of this kingdom in Parliament, for those common ends premised, against all arbitrary power, violence and oppression, and against all particular parties or interests whatsoever.[35]

The *Declaration* did not merely define the Army's view of its own role in the Civil War but asserted its claim to be the guardian of the people's "just rights and liberties" against tyranny. These liberties, it declared, were based on "principles of Right and Freedom," and "the just Principles and the Law of Nature and Nations, being that law upon which we have assisted" the people of England.[36] It demanded that the Long Parliament be terminated and replaced with an elected body, based on a franchise that was more representative of the people's wishes. This was clearly Leveller thought and language.

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[34] Ridley, *Roundheads,* p. 94.

[35] "Army's Declaration," June 14,1647, in Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, eds., *The Good Old Cause: Documents of the English Revolution of 1640–1660: Its Causes, Course and Consequences,* 2nd ed., rev. (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1949; New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969), pp. 348–9.

[36] Quoted in *The Clarke Papers,* ed. C.H. Firth, vol. 1 (London: The Camden Society, 1891–1901), p. 260n.

In the meantime, Parliament, controlled by its majority of Presbyterians, did an about-face once the king had been defeated: it began to deal with him differently and tried to restore the authority he had enjoyed before the Civil War. But the Army's march toward London threw Parliament and the well-to-do middle classes into utter consternation. The City placed its militia under Presbyterian control and tried to mobilize it, but to no avail: by early August, all parliamentary resistance simply collapsed, and the New Model occupied London, forcing eleven Presbyterian members from the House. After installing the king in Hampton Court (he was still being held under military guard, essentially as a hostage), the Army basically took over complete control of the country. As Denzil Holies, a Presbyterian parliamentarian who fiercely opposed the New Model, lamented, "The Army now did all, the Parliament was but a Cypher, only cry'd Amen to what the Councils of War had determined. They make themselves an absolute Third Estate."[37] A third revolution, in effect, had begun, led by radical Independents and Levellers.

CROMWELL AND "THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY"

The Army now controlled the country—but who controlled the Army? And what future did its leaders have in mind for England? To these questions, there was as yet no unified answer, even within the Army itself.

What seems to be clear is that, even before the march on London, Cromwell and the "Grandees" on the Council of War patently feared the Leveller and Agitator movement in the rank and file far more than they feared the royalists and the Presbyterians. At most, they had to put up with the Levellers owing to the considerable support that they enjoyed among the soldiers, particularly the cavalry, and, far from leading the radical political developments in the Army, Cromwell and Ireton prudently but uneasily followed them. Whenever Cromwell appeared to support the Levellers, his principal goal seems to have been to contain an outright Army revolt, but as a member of the General Council of the Army he shrewdly worked to restrict the soldiers' demands for a redress of professional grievances and to abort the social, economic, and political program into which the Levellers had so successfully educated the rank and file. Indeed, feeling the Army slipping from his fingers, Cromwell proceeded to pack the General Council with conservative soldiers from all ranks—in some cases, even with privates who could be used to countervail the more sophisticated Agitators.

At the same time, he also used upper-class fears of the Levellers as a bargaining chip in dealing with the king and the then-Presbyterian Parliament. In August 1647, just before the Army marched on London, the "Grandees," firmly entrenched in their official Council of War, drew up *Heads of the Proposals of the Army,* a set of propositions for a new political order for England. Prepared by Commissary-General Henry Ireton, who wrote most of the "Grandee" documents, this hazy document was meant to be used as the basis for the Army's negotiations with the parliamentary commissioners. Unlike the Leveller-based programs, particularly their versions of *An Agreement of the People,* the *Heads of the Proposals* was favorable to the king: not only did it preserve the House of Lords, it essentially restored Charles to a condition of safety and honor, without limiting his ability to exercise his personal rights, and even gave him the right to veto parliamentary legislation. To blunt Leveller criticism, it modestly expanded the franchise. During

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[37] Holies quoted in Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector (New* York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973; originally published in Great Britain as *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men* by Wcidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1973), p. 208.

the drafting of the document, in fact, Ireton had secretly met with an agent of the king, modifying several articles in the hope of placating Charles and gaining his support. Indeed, the army leaders are suspected of having been negotiating with royal agents with a view toward acquiring earldoms for themselves if the king and Parliament could work out any of their differences. So frequent were these meetings that Cromwell was obliged to ask a royal agent to visit him less often, "the suspicions of him being so great that he was afraid to lie down in his own quarters."[38]

At length, when the *Heads of the Proposals* appeared, whatever remaining political support the rank-and-file soldiers had for Cromwell and Fairfax evaporated rapidly. Most of the soldiers had still not been paid by the hostile Parliament, and a number of them faced criminal prosecution by the courts for acts that they had been compelled to commit in combat. As reports of secret meetings between the Army leaders and the king circulated among the soldiers, rumors abounded that Cromwell would restore to the king all his rights, and many soldiers began visibly to lose faith with the general officers under whom they served, giving rise to the prospect of an open split between the "Grandees" and the ranks.

By the autumn of 1647, even as the army occupied the capital, rank-and-file opinion turned against Cromwell and the "Grandees." To add fuel to the Army's anger, Parliament banned all meetings in September between the officers and men—although meetings between the officers and the king were still permitted. The Agitators and many officers of lower rank now openly accused the generals of usurping authority over the General Council of the Army. As C. H. Firth puts it, the "democratic party" within the Army opposed not only Cromwell's negotiations with the king but the influence that the "Grandees" and superior officers exercised in the Army's deliberations generally.[39] "When Cromwell and Ireton, and their faction of self-interested officers, thought they had got the soldiery fast by the brain," as a Leveller pamphlet later summed up the events,

> as to dote sufficiently upon their transaction and conduct of business, they then decline the Agitators, decline the Engagement, slight their Declarations and Promises to the people and the Army, rendering the Agitators but as ciphers amongst them … by degrees, step after step they cast out the interest of the soldiery from amongst them, destroyed the Engagement, and broke the faith of the Army.[40]

By October 1647, the discontent of the more radical New Model soldiers was virtually uncontrollable. In Yorkshire, as Jasper Ridley tells us, the local Council of Agitators "arrested their Commander-in-Chief, the Presbyterian General Poyntz, accusing him of treason in seeking to provoke a new civil war between Parliament and the Army. They sent Poyntz as a prisoner to Fairfax's headquarters at Uxbridge." Fairfax, the nominal head of the New Model, was "shocked at this act of indiscipline" and "released Poyntz at once."[41] Further, five cavalry regiments decided

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[38] Cromwell quoted in G.P. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. 127.

[39] C.H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, being the Ford Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford 1900–1902* (London: Methuen & Co., 1962), p. 352.

[40] "The Hunting of the Foxes, from Newmarket to Triploe Heaths to Whitehall, by Five Small Beagles (Late of the Army), or the Grandee-Deceivers Unmasked (That You May Know Them)," dated March 1, 1649, in Don M. Wolfe, ed., *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (originally published 1944; New York: Humanities Press, 1967), pp. 362–3.

[41] Jasper Ridley, *The Roundheads* (London: Constable 8c Co., 1976), p. 94.

that the Agitators who had been representing them were either incapable of fulfilling their task or else had willingly betrayed it, and they proceeded to elect even more radical representatives, now known by the name of New Agents.

Aided by the democratic leaders from outside the Army, the ten Agents of the cavalry regiments published a manifesto titled *The Case of the Army Truly Stated,* a document that bluntly stated that "all power is originally and essentially in the whole body of the people of this nation." It demanded that the nation establish a "law paramount"—that is, a fundamental law—that Parliament be elected every two years "by all the freeborn at the age of 21 years and upwards … excepting those that have or shall deprive themselves of that their freedom" by fighting for the royalist cause. This demand, giving even recipients of wages and alms the franchise, was, in its day, an extraordinary step that symbolized the growing radicalization of the ranks.

The documents of this period, in fact, reveal a remarkable advance over earlier, more restrictive suffrages and demands. The first *Agreement of the People,* issued in late October, virtually amounted to a draft Leveller constitution for England. What makes this document remarkable is that it addressed itself to the *people* of England rather than to Parliament and called for the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, establishing the Commons as supreme power in the state. Lest any doubt exist that Parliament gained its authority from the people, the *Agreement* declared: "Parliaments are to receive the extent of their power and trust from those that betrust them; and therefore the people are to declare what their power and trust is, which is the intent of this Agreement."[42] Moreover, the document emphasized that

> If any shall enquire why we [i.e., the Army] should desire to join in an agreement with the people to declare these to be our native Rights, and not rather petition to the Parliament for them: the reason is evident. No Act of Parliament is or can be unalterable, and so cannot be sufficient security to save you [the people) or us harmless, from what another Parliament may determine, if it should be corrupted.

Although the *Agreement* vested authority in the Commons, certain rights— such as freedom of religion, freedom from impressment, and equality before the law—were regarded as the "native rights" of all Englishmen that no Parliament could diminish or take away.[43] Not only did the *Agreement* demand manhood suffrage, equal electoral divisions, and biennial Parliaments, it significantly demanded that enclosed common lands should be restored to the poor, and that monopolies and sinecures should be abolished, a demand of paramount economic importance for the destiny of the country and its lower classes. The Levellers in the Army thereupon presented the *Agreement* to the General Council of the Army on October 28, 1647, recommending that it be accepted by the Council and placed before the country as a whole.[44]

Thus, two essentially irreconcilable factions within the Army, each with its own basic document about the future of England and ways of determining it, stood in open confrontation with each other—a confrontation whose outcome was to decide the future of the Revolution and of the realm.

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[42] "An Agreement of the People (October 28,1647)", in A.L. Morton, ed.. *Freedom in Arms: A Selection of leveller Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1975; London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), p. 144.

[43] See Firth, *Cromwell's Army,* p. 354.

[44] *Ibid.,* p. 354.

THE PUTNEY DEBATES

The form this confrontation took was the justly famous Putney Debates between the Army radicals—among whom Leveller influence and political interest in a more democratic England had now reached their peak—and the largely conservative "Grandees."

The debates occurred between October 28 and November 11, 1647, in St. Mary's Church at the Army's headquarters in Putney, a short distance from London. Formally, they consisted of a series of meetings by the General Army Council on whether the New Model Army would place before the House of Commons the *Heads of the Proposals* prepared by Ireton or the *Agreement of the People* prepared by the Levellers as the basis for future government in England. We are fortunate that a member of Fairfax's secretariat, William Clarke, kept a nearly verbatim account of the key debates, which brings to life the often heated exchange of views that exploded between the Levellers and their "Grandee" opponents.

The debates were chaired by Cromwell and attended by a sizable complement of officers of all ranks as well as ordinary soldiers and a few civilians. Ironically, Fairfax, the nominal commander of the New Model, was absent. Instead, Cromwell's son-in-law and close political associate, Commissary-General Henry Ireton, emerged as the principal spokesman for the "Grandees," although as chairman, Cromwell himself was anything but neutral; his repeated interventions on behalf of Ireton and his reprovals of the Levellers occasionally reached menacing proportions. The Lieutenant-General even threatened to resign his command if the Council adopted the *Agreement,* which set the debaters on edge and unnerved many of its observers. His was an intimidating voice rather than a compromising one.

The Levellers, in turn—which is to say, a large portion of the Army—were represented by the Agitator Private Edward Sexby and by two London Levellers, John Wildman and Maximilian Petty, among others, whose presence turned the debates into a relatively popular forum. Perhaps their most effective debater was Colonel Thomas Rainborough, an extraordinary man whose clear, pointed arguments provide us with one of the most outstanding articulations of radical opinion in mid-seventeenth-century England, and whose almost aphoristic observations were to reappear in radical British tracts long after the Revolution had passed into history. Rainborough, perhaps the only figure who could have replaced Cromwell in the leadership of the Army, would have been indispensable to the Leveller cause in the coming years, but in one of the tragedies of the Revolution, he died in a skirmish with Royalists in 1648.

The Putney Debates are all the more remarkable for having placed some of the most paramount social issues of the time in their proper context and place. They covered not only the full range of topics on democratic rights and social relations in seventeenth-century England but inferentially even the redistribution of property, if the logic of an unrestricted franchise were followed to its logical end. Nor did the "Grandee" debaters fail to point out that the views of the Levellers would lead precisely to this end.

The major topic that came to the foreground at Putney was the franchise: would all Englishmen be free to vote in parliamentary elections? Underlying this discussion were issues that concerned the consequences of so sweeping a franchise, notably its impact on wealth and the basic structure of government. The Levellers, as radical republicans, plainly wanted to bring the monarchy and the peerage to an end, just as surely as the "Grandees" hoped to retain a political and social hierarchy in the realm.

Ireton and the "Grandees" stood firmly with the social status quo, apart from small modifications offered by their *Heads of the Proposals,* such as more equal electoral districts. They plainly viewed the Leveller attack upon civil laws versus the "laws of nature" (or natural rights) as a political challenge to the entire social order. From the very outset of the debates, Ireton emphatically affirmed,

> I do not seek, or would not seek, nor will join with them that do seek, the destruction either of Parliament or King. Neither will I consent with those, or concur with them, who will not attempt all the ways that are possible to preserve both, and to make good use, and the best use that can be made, of both for the kingdom."[45]

This was the voice, of course, of a constitutional royalist who was closely attuned to aristocratic as well as economically privileged social interests.

By contrast, the Levellers at Putney upheld their *Agreements* assertion that the House of Commons was the sole national authority, answerable to the people, and called for the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. They expressly opposed blind obedience to unjust civil law. "I confess to me this principle (of obedience] is very dangerous," declared John Wildman, one of the civilian Levellers. "... It is contrary to what the army first declared" in the June 14 declaration: "that they stood upon such principles of right and freedom, and the laws of nature and nations, whereby men were to preserve themselves though the persons to whom authority belonged should fail in it."[46]

At issue here was the nature of the basis of the franchise. Was it a right based on natural law, as the Levellers argued? Or was it a privilege, depending upon property ownership, as the "Grandees" argued, in which case some people could justly be deprived of the right to vote? For the Levellers, all Englishmen possessed this right by virtue of their birth. Thus Rainborough called for the widest possible adult manhood suffrage, regardless of property ownership, arguing

> that every man born in England cannot, ought not, neither by the law of God nor the law of nature, be exempted from those who are to make laws, for him to live under, and for him, for aught 1 know, to lose his life under.[47]

Sexby, in turn, affirmed, "I am resolved to give my birthright to none."[48] If the franchise was to be denied to those who had taken up arms to fight for Parliament, Sexby continued, they should have been informed beforehand, for otherwise what had they fought for?

In his response Ireton argued that the basis for any social order is property, a social institution as distinguished from a natural right: "If you will resort only to the law of Nature, by the law of Nature you have no more right to this land, or anything else, than I have," he declared firmly. "I have as much right to take hold of anything that is for my sustenance, [to] take hold of anything that 1 have a desire to for my satisfaction, as you."[49] The natural political rights for which the Levellers argued, he maintained, would inevitably lead to the end of property. "No person," Ireton emphasized,

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[45] *Clarke Papers,* vol. 1, p. 233.

[46] *Ibid.,* vol. l,p. 260.

[47] *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 305.

[48] Quoted in Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, eds., *The Good Old Cause: Documents of the English Revolution,* p. 356.

[49] *Clarke Papers,* vol. 1, p. 263.

has a right to an interest or share in the disposing or determining of the affairs of the kingdom, and in choosing those that shall determine what laws we shall be ruled by here, no person has a right to this, that has not a permanent fixed interest [i.e. property] in this kingdom; and those persons together are properly the represented of this kingdom and consequently are to make up the representers of this kingdom, who taken together do comprehend whatsoever is of real or permanent interest in the kingdom.[50]

In short, it was property that counted in sorting out "the rights of the English," not natural right or virtue or personal excellence; neither the franchise nor property was a birthright of Englishmen. To constitute society according to a "law of nature" rather than a "social contract" that allows heirs to stake out their unchallengeable claim to property would be to jeopardize the very existence of the civil interest that property confers. Or as Ireton put it:

If we shall go to take away this fundamental part of the civil constitution, we shall plainly go to take away all property and interest that any man has, either in land by inheritance, or in estate by possession, or anything else.[51]

Indeed, as he later declared:

All the main thing I speak for is because I would have an eye to property. I hope we do not come to contend for victory, but let every man consider with himself that he do not go that way to take away all property. For here is the case of the most fundamental part of the constitution of the kingdom, which if you take away, you take away all by that.[52]

And challenging the natural law position of the Levellers, Ireton went on to say:

Is it by the right of nature [that the Levellers found social life]? If you will hold forth that as your ground, then I think you must deny all property too, and this is my reason. For thus: by that same right of nature, whatever it be that you pretend, by which you can say, "one man has an equal right with another to the choosing of him that shall govern him"—by the same right of nature, he has an equal right to any goods he sees: meat, drink, clothes, to take and use them for his sustenance. He has a freedom to the land, [to take] the ground, to exercise it, till it; he has the [same] freedom to anything that anyone accounts himself to have any property in.[53]

This view on the "state of nature" and the "rights" it confers is redolent of very traditional arguments not only for private property and parliamentarism but for oligarchy and monarchy.

The most dramatic counterposition of Leveller and "Grandee" positions occurred during the second day of the debates. Rainborough, by affirming that all Englishmen had the right to actively decide their own political fate irrespective of their station in life, voiced a statement that has echoed over generations as one of the great declarations of radical democracy:

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[50] *Ibid.,* vol. l, pp. 301–2.

[51] *Ibid.,* vol. l, p. 303.

[52] *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 306.

[53] *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 307.

the poorest he that is in England has a life to live as the greatest he; and therefore truly, Sir, I think it's clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government; and I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he has not had a voice to put himself under;… I should doubt whether he was an Englishman or no, that should doubt of these things.[54]

These words, apparently spoken in some heat, were not to be translated into political fact until three centuries or so later; nor did "the poorest he" find his clearest voice against the "greatest" until the emergence of modern socialism.

Although the Levellers repeatedly declared that they had no intention of "levelling men's estates," they were nonetheless intent on ending every form of legal or political privilege. The "Grandee" debaters were equally emphatic in their assertion that this view implicitly challenged the legitimacy of private property. Indeed, the views of the more extreme Levellers implied a relatively equitable distribution of wealth, with a reasonable material competence for artisans and land-hungry farmers, and possibly even a communitarian kind of society in the distribution of goods and resources.

Cromwell himself accused the Levellers of advancing a politics of Swiss-like cantonalism—or confederalism, as we might call it—charging Rainborough, Sexby, Wildman, and the Agitators with views leading to anarchy. "No man says that you have a mind to anarchy," he sternly declared,

> but *the consequence of this rule tends to anarchy,* must end in anarchy; for where is there any bound or limit set, if you take away this [limit], that men that have no interest but the interest of breathing [shall have no voices in elections]?[55]

The word *anarchy* was patently pejorative and in no way reflected the actual views of the Levellers. Rainborough and Petty, in fact, strongly denied the charge. But Rainborough qualified his reply and struck an egalitarian note nonetheless by asking "how it comes about that there is such a property" of some men, not of others.[56] Indeed, he continued, in stronger language.

> So one on the other side said, that if otherwise, then rich men shall be chosen (there would be no property]. Then I say the one part shall make hewers of wood and drawers of water of the other five, and so the greatest part of the nation be enslaved. Truly I think we are still where we were; and I do not hear any argument given but only that it is the present law of the kingdom.[57]

Given its time, this statement was nothing less than extraordinary. It implied the need for economic as well as political democracy. Rainborough essentially tore off the political veil that Presbyterian and Independent alike had placed over the material conditions that continued unchanged even after the people had taken up arms against the arbitrary power of the king. Nothing had improved for them, and, as Rainborough concluded, "They have now nothing to say for themselves."[58]

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54 *Ibid.,* vol. 1, pp. 300–1.
55 *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 309 (emphasis added).
56 *Ibid.,* vol. l,p.3U.
57 *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 320.
58 *Ibid.*

The various statements of Rainborough, Sexby, Wildman, and other Levellers were to be evoked time and again in the centuries that followed. At Putney, these men created a radical tradition without ever knowing that they had done so.

On November 4, having heard both sides, the Council of the Army finally voted to accept a resolution affirming the basic positions of the *Heads of the Proposals.* The monarchy and the House of Lords would be preserved. The only positive accomplishment that the Levellers won was a franchise that was broadened to include all freeborn males who had served in the war or contributed materially to it, regardless of property qualification, "if they be not servants or beggars." The Agitators were clearly disappointed by this last limitation, declaring that in the adopted proposals "the King's corrupt interest was so intermixed that in a short time, if he should so come in, he would be in a capacity to destroy… the people."[59]

Cromwell and Ireton remained steadfastly opposed to the broad franchise demands of the Agitators and their Leveller supporters. He and the other "Grandees" saw to it that the Agitators were dispatched back to their regiments, and once they were gone a committee of fairly conservative officers took advantage of their absence to close the debates. This move not only ended the Agitators' public forum but essentially dissolved them as a group.

THE RENDEZVOUS

Before the Putney Debates began, it had been agreed that the Army would hold a general rendezvous of all the regiments in the Southeast to adopt the Leveller *Agreement* , but the "Grandee" committee parceled this general rendezvous into three separate meetings, cannily fracturing the Army and isolating its more militant regiments. At a single rendezvous, the united Army might very well have adopted the Leveller program, and indeed, the Agitators had hopes that the resolution could be overturned in a general gathering of the soldiers.

The authority of the "Grandees" in the Army was soon put to a dramatic and decisive test. During the first of the three rendezvous, some eight regiments met at Corkbush Field, near Ware. Two of the more militant regiments, the cavalry of Major-General Thomas Harrison and the infantry of Colonel Robert Lilbume (a brother of John Lilbume who strongly sympathized with the Leveller cause and commanded "the most mutinous regiment in the army"[60]), bitterly resented the outcome of the debates. Although these two regiments were not among those that were supposed to attend the Ware rendezvous, they suddenly appeared, flagrantly wearing copies of the *Agreement of the People* in their hats together with the motto "England's Freedom and Soldiers' Rights," and wearing green sprigs, the color of the Leveller party. Colonel Rainborough also came unscheduled, without his regiment, as did John Lilburne, who had just been released from prison. Clearly, Cromwell now faced a near-mutiny against his authority.

Fairfax's officers managed to cow Harrison's men by tearing the *Agreement* from their hats and arresting nine of the most militant soldiers, three of whom were tried on the spot by a military court-martial and sentenced to death. The three men were then told to throw dice for their lives. The loser, Private Richard Arnold, was shot to death before his regiment— "for promoting and assisting the work of the soldiery in reference to the Solemn Engagement of the Army," as a later

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[59] *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 441.

[60] H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution,* ed. Christopher Hill (Nottingham: Spokesman University Press, 1976), p. 296.

Leveller pamphlet angrily and ironically put it.[61] The Levellers and their supporters would not forget this execution, for blood had finally been drawn between Leveller and "Grandee." Indeed, as the Leveller "Hunting of the Foxes" pamphlet argued, the ultimate failure of the Army rank and file to fulfill Leveller political goals was the work of these "foxes of the deepest kind."[62]

What may very well have postponed an Army mutiny was the news, which reached Ware four days before the rendezvous, that Charles had escaped from Hampton Court and taken refuge on the Isle of Wight, raising the likelihood of a second civil war. Cromwell, who had been negotiating with Charles well in advance of the Putney Debates, seems to have planted the notion in the king's head that Levellers were trying to "assassinate" him, which may have prompted the king, who was loosely guarded, to take flight. In any case, Cromwell knew that Charles had been negotiating with the Scots and with royalists in England to restart the Civil War, and the Lieutenant-General may have even tried to restore the monarchy in the hope of acquiring an earldom for his services. He could hardly have been unaware that the king would try, sooner or later, to escape from Hampton Court, since it was Cromwell's cousin, Robert Hammond, who, conveniently enough, was holding him under guard.

The "escape's" timing—precisely when the "Grandees" were dueling with the Levellers—could not have occurred at a better time for the Lieutenant-General: it served to unite the Army with its general officers against the king and his supporters, and it forestalled any plans for a mutiny. It required no effort by the "Grandees" to persuade the soldiers that a divided army would mean a royalist victory, and the men of the New Model had always prided themselves on their strong sense of military discipline. Events now forced them to place their loyalty to their militant and victorious Army above their Leveller aspirations. The Second Civil War that now loomed over them completely overshadowed the sharp political divisions that the Putney Debates had opened within the Army.

Chapter 7. Regicide and Defeat

Although Charles was still the nominal head of the Church of England, he opportunistically agreed to accept the Presbyterian faith in exchange for Scottish support and was once again able to lead a military force into battle against the New Model Army. The persistent treachery of this "man of blood," as he was called by the Puritans, had put an end to all patience on the part of the New Model Army—and early in 1648, the Second Civil War erupted in England.

Unlike the first, it lasted for only a few months. Yet despite its brevity, the Second Civil War often demanded more military prowess and even greater ruthlessness from Cromwell's forces than the first. The New Model Army was now obliged to defeat an invading Scottish army that was substantially larger than itself. Indeed, much of England expected that this time the royalists would prevail. Yet within a matter of months, the zeal of the New Model troops and the exceptional abilities of Cromwell and his commanders gave their Army its ultimate victory over the renewed royalist onslaught. At Preston in August 1648, Cromwell decisively defeated a force of Scots and Cavaliers twice the size of his own, and after mop-up operations against royalist holdouts during the rest of the summer, the New Model finally put an end to the renewed hopes of the monarchical cause.

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[61] "Hunting of the Foxes," *Leveller Manifestoes,* p. 363.

[62] *Ibid.,* p. 359.

The definitive victory of the revolutionary Army did not have the full support of the English people, nor did it gain the sympathy of the squirearchy and the merchant class, which had rallied to the House of Commons in the opening years of the revolution. By 1648, the radicals had frightened off most of the wellto-do classes and their dependents, sharply polarizing much of the country. As a whole, the English people—nobles, gentry, and plebeians—were not antiroyalist; they were merely outraged by the particularly noxious behavior of Charles. But the radicalism of the Army engendered fears of social instability that unsettled all the greater and lesser privileged strata of the country. When Army Agitators and the civilian Levellers who worked closely with them prepared *Agreements of the People* and demanded a democratic Army, the middle classes and landed gentry united in opposition to the radicals, bringing their tenants and many dependents along with them.

In some areas of England the rural tenant population, in fact, took up arms against the revolutionary Roundheads, often on behalf of their own landlord. South Wales, Kent, and Essex in particular became sites of widespread royalist insurrections that Cromwell was obliged to subdue by military force. In these restive regions, the peasantry passively adopted the loyalties of their local lords, most of whom supported the king.

THE LEVELLERS AND THE SECOND CIVIL WAR

The setbacks that the Levellers encountered in the Army—the defeat of their *Agreement,* the murder at Ware, and the restored unity between the soldiers and their general officers in the Second Civil War against the king—shifted the focus of their political efforts to civilians, especially to London, where they probably became the earliest democratically organized political party in the modern era.[63] They recruited members from signatories to various manifestos and petitions and drew their finances from regular dues, which were collected in direct proportion to a member's income. These funds were used to print pamphlets and newsletters, and probably even to send organizers to various parts of the country to spread Leveller views and form new groups associated with those in the capital. No such organization had existed before, and given the times it had a significant impact on a Revolution that might have easily run adrift in many different and diffuse directions in its absence.

The London Leveller organization, the one on which we have the most detailed information, was clearly structured on a civic basis around ward groups in the city, which met regularly in local taverns sympathetic to the Leveller cause. Each ward group, in turn, sent representatives to a parish committee that embraced several wards, and, on a still higher level, elected "commissioners" or "agents" (the word was borrowed from the name that radicals used in the New Model Army) who constituted the Executive Committee of the Greater London area. This citywide executive made decisions of a tactical nature for the capital as a whole. Some three Executive Committee meetings were held every week, rotating from one tavern and ward to another. Depending upon the size of a given community, a similar form of organization existed outside London and its suburbs. Indeed, the structure, which doubtless varied from place to place, encompassed the "many thousands" that Leveller accounts loosely claim for the movement outside of London. Actually, it is likely that wherever parliamentary troops were stationed in any sizable numbers, they

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[63] On Leveller organization, see A.L. Morton, ed., *Freedom in Anns: A Selection of Leveller Writings* (New York; International Publishers, 1975; London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), chap. 17.

helped to create some kind of Leveller organization in their locality, a phenomenon of a kind we shall encounter in some of the revolutions of a later time.

Leveller forms of organization, far from inhibiting democracy within the movement, actually gave it a nearly libertarian form, partly by rotating office and meeting places. In the taverns where the Leveller movement found its local home, political life was very much part of the neighborhood in which a group was located, knit together by personal friendships and local agitation. The Leveller weekly. *The Monitor* , was widely read in London, both by civilians and soldiers, and Levellers generally "debated their grievance over a tankard of ale or a glass of sack and enjoyed all three," observes Brailsford, which helped loosen many tongues and make for lively arguments. Indeed, far from being limited to the New Model Army, the Levellers were in every sense a community movement with deep-seated, local roots among the ordinary people.

Nor did Leveller activity within the Army come to an end after Ware. While the Second Civil War was still in progress, the Levellers were deeply involved in nurturing radical sentiments in the Army, to which even the "Grandees" were obliged to yield. On the first day of the decisive Battle of Preston (August 17, 1648), a pamphlet apparently written by Henry Marten, one of the most radical of the Levellers, furiously attacked the "rich and mighty" in the name of the "plain men of England." All the troubles that beset the country, Marten's pamphlet argued, had been caused by "a confederacy amongst the rich and mighty to impoverish and so enslave all the plain and mean people throughout the land." Addressing this privileged and wealthy stratum of society, he made the accusation that

> by corruption in government, by unjust and unequal laws, by fraud, cosenage, tyranny and oppression (men of property have gotten] most of the land of this distressed and enslaved nation into your ravenous claws. Ye have by monopolies, usurers and combinations engrossed all the wealth, monies and houses into your possessions; yea and enclosed our commons in most counties.[64]

Such attacks on the wealthy—and on wealth as such—occurred throughout the Second Civil War, reaching deeply into the Army, which still had the force to back up such demands.

The summer and autumn of 1648 were to mark a high point in Leveller influence—within the Army, among the lower classes of London, and in farflung districts of the countryside. Ironically, even the Presbyterian Commons and the so-called "silken Independents," as the more well-to-do and conservative elements of the Independent movement were called, tried to court the Levellers in the hope of using them against Cromwell. In late August 1648, the Commons went so far as to release "Honest John" Lilburne from another of his prison terms in the Tower and even vote him £3,000 in recompense for his suffering at the hands of the Star Chamber in the 1630s.

But far from forming a faction against Cromwell, Lilburne, upon his release, immediately established contact with the Lieutenant-General in order to forge a common front against the king and the danger of a restoration of royal rule. The Leveller leader proposed that the parliamentary Independents, the Army, and the Levellers all send representatives to a meeting to draw up a final *Agreement of the People.* Lilburne, whose personal loyalty to Cromwell reached guileless, even obsessive, levels, naively closed his message with the pledge, "Yours to the last drop of my

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[64] Quoted in H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution,* ed. Christopher Hill (Nottingham: Spokesman University Press, 1976), p. 340. Marten, it is worth noting, belonged to the very class he attacked in the pamphlet. His father was a rich lawyer who owned a large landed estate and, like his son, sat in the Commons.

heart's blood." And in fact this pledge laid the foundation for an alliance between the Levellers and the Cromwellian Independents, one that both parties needed at the time, despite the basic antagonisms that still existed between them. The Presbyterian Parliament once again began to move provocatively toward disbanding the Army, or at least removing its commander, while, on the other side, Cromwell's own troops, many of whom were under Leveller influence, were forcing him to act decisively against the Presbyterians and especially against the king.

Although Cromwell was consistently contemptuous of the Levellers, he was necessarily obliged to come to a temporary compromise with them. In a series of conferences "Grandee" and Leveller representatives wrangled as always over drafts of their respective visions of England's future, often coming to verbal blows until it seemed that any reconciliation was impossible. In November, Fairfax called a meeting of the Army General Council that actually consisted only of the officers; the Agitators or Agents were not summoned. It issued the draft of a *Remonstrance* drawn up by Ireton that tried to offer the Levellers conciliatory positions on questions of religious toleration and the future of the king. But the Levellers, (Agitators or Agents), and rank and file troops were not taken in. They firmly demanded that the council issue a more strident *Remonstrance,* one that clearly advocated that the "man of blood" (Charles) be brought to justice and that the peerage be completely abolished. Like it or not, Cromwell desperately needed the Levellers at this point, and Ireton rewrote the tepid passages on the king, openly calling for his execution. Moreover, the document urged, any future king would have to be an elected one and would have to accept an *Agreement of the People* —a term that by now was becoming synonymous with a constitution or a fundamental law—according to which an elected Parliament would exercise power in the name of the people's wishes.

The Levellers, in fact, demanded substantially more. Unlike Ireton's *Remonstrance,* they wanted neither oligarchical parliamentarians nor Army officers to frame this fundamental law. Rather, they demanded that the great majority of Englishmen should elect what we would now call a constitutional convention to draw up an *Agreement* —that is, to state explicitly the power of the people's deputies and to draft and ratify a constitution.

THE RUMP PARLIAMENT

As usual, the Presbyterian Parliament remained ambivalent about the king. It wanted his return to power to ensure that Presbyterianism would be England's state religion, and it regarded the monarch as the only bulwark against a republic—or possibly, to its horror, even a democracy. Its commitment to the second war against the king had been as equivocal as its behavior during the first conflict. If anything, the Presbyterian Parliament was often overtly hostile to the New Model Army. "The Presbyterians, the majority in the House of Commons, had never wished for too decisive a victory for either side," observes Christopher Hill in his biography of Cromwell.

> They still hoped the King would save them from the "heretical democracy"— freedom of discussion and organization for the lower classes—which the Army advocated. In May, 1648, they had passed a savage act against heresy and blasphemy. They resumed the weary negotiations with the King while Cromwell pursued the defeated royalists into Scotland at the beginning of October.[65]

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[65] Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 100.

Indeed, such behavior by the middle class and liberal political center was not unique to the English Revolution, as we shall see; it was to recur in every major revolution in the centuries that followed.

For its part, the Army had exhausted every possibility of coming to terms with the Presbyterian Parliament and the Crown, and after its victory over Charles's forces, Brailsford observes, "the Army felt entitled to impose its will—God's will—on the defeated majority."[66] The Revolution seemed to enter an entirely new, more radical phase of its development. On December 6, 1648, trudging back to London after its victories in the north, the New Model Army again occupied the capital, and Colonel Thomas Pride, backed by troops and acting in accordance with the whole range of opinion within the Army from Cromwell to the radicals, surrounded and invaded the Commons. But Pride was a "Grandee." He did not dissolve the existing Parliament and replace it, as the Levellers demanded, by a popular convention that would choose a new House; rather, he created a one-party Parliament from the remaining 250-member Long Parliament, driving out its royalist and Presbyterian members. The few who still occupied their seats—only sixty-eight, principally Independents, whom Pride considered the "honest" or godly members—became the short-lived Rump Parliament, which subserviently followed the demands of the Army officers. A day after Pride's Purge, as it was called, Cromwell himself entered London, piously disclaiming any advance knowledge of the coup, which is hardly credible, but dutifully declaring his support for it.

The Rump Parliament, guided by its Cromwellian Independents, proceeded to construct a republican state, the "Commonwealth", and half-heartedly coopted many of the demands that had long been raised by the Levellers. By January 1649, the House passed three major resolutions to the effect that all state power ostensibly had its source in the people, specifically designating the House of Commons alone as their representatives. Enactments of the Commons alone had the force of law, requiring consent neither from the king nor from the House of Lords. Theoretically at least, England was now a republic, and after the monarchy was formally abolished on January 30 and the House of Lords on February 7, it seemed to become one in reality.

But in fact, no new elections were held. The Rump remained the sole legislative body of the nation in lieu of a more representative one prescribed by its own resolutions. Voting, when it occurred, was still based on a limited franchise, and state power was shared by the Rump, by a very powerful Council of State chaired by the Lieutenant-General, and by a High Court of Justice, or revolutionary tribunal. Moreover, the source of the Rump's power clearly was not the people but the Army; more precisely, its general officers. Although this Parliament was to form the country's supreme legislature for five years, the "Grandees" formed the *de facto* institutional basis for state power. Indeed, by its arbitrary proclamations the Rump approximated a collective tyranny, which troubled even Cromwell, a latent royalist sympathizer, who had never quite abandoned the idea of a settlement "with somewhat of monarchical powers in it." As time was to show, he may very well have aspired to precisely that status for himself.[67]

To Lilbume's lasting credit, the Leveller denounced Pride's Purge as the arbitrary foisting of a one-party rubber-stamp legislature on the country; indeed, the Rump essentially diluted and neutralized the Leveller vision of a popular convention. Instead of calling a constitutional convention to create an *Agreement of the People,* as the Levellers demanded, the Rump created a

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[66] Brailsford, *Levellers,* p. 337.
[67] Hill, *God's Englishman,* pp. 107–8.

sixteenman committee to draw up an *Agreement,* a term that had been coopted and its meaning cheapened by the "Grandees." After the committee members—who included both "Grandees" such as Ireton and even Levellers such as Lilburne— hammered out some generalities concerning their areas of political agreement, the committee fell apart over the issue of religious toleration: the Levellers insisted on complete religious freedom, including freedom for Catholics, Jews, and atheists, while the officers adamantly opposed it, maintaining that only selected "saints" should govern and hence that dissent should not be tolerated.

It is entirely possible that this quarrel was staged to drive the Levellers out of the committee. In any case, after a vehement quarrel, Lilburne withdrew in outrage at the committee officers and, with all the rhetorical powers at his command, warned of the dangers of outright military rule. On January 20, the remaining committee members submitted their own version of the *Agreement,* drafted largely by the "Grandees," to the Rump—which simply let it drift into oblivion, producing a constitutional stasis that the committee's officers did not find in the least objectionable. Any Leveller agitation for a fundamental law thus was dissipated by the sheer inertia of the Rump and the "Grandees"; nor was it to be picked up for more than a century, notably in England's North American colonies. Finally, on January 27, the Rump condemned the king to death, fulfilling another aim for which the Levellers had long pressed. But the Levellers, again true to their principles, had always intended that this task should be undertaken by a truly representative House of Commons, not the illegitimate Rump, and Lilbume denounced the trial of Charles—whom he detested no less than the most radical of Independents—as an illegal and arbitrary act.

Charles's execution three days after his trial marked the first time in the modern era—perhaps ever—that a *popular* movement had committed regicide, a privilege that was formerly reserved only for members of the upper classes. By this behavior, the English Revolution thus attained a degree of radicality unprecedented in revolutionary movements in the past. Not even the English Peasant Revolt of the late fourteenth century had threatened the life of the monarch or challenged the sovereignty of the throne. In fact, for a brief period after the regicide, the English Revolution veered sharply to the left, relying partly on a measure of increasingly critical Leveller support, but above all on the growing radicalism of the New Model.

Yet needless to say, all did not sit well with the increasingly distrustful radicals. Sporadic outbreaks, even virtual mutinies, against the rule of the "Grandees" broke out in a number of radical Army contingents, which the regime quickly put down. Soldiers and officers who openly challenged the authority of the "Grandees" were arrested, and the Rump even tried to suppress dissenting opinions throughout the country. But dissent was ubiquitous. By April 1649, harsh Leveller attacks on the new regime and on Cromwell in particular appeared in print, notably John Lilburne's *The Second Part of England's New Chains Discovered,* in which the Leveller leader called for a restoration of the General Council of the Army with the inclusion of Agitators and the formation of a new Parliament elected on the basis of the Leveller *Agreement of the People.* Richard Overton's scathing *Hunting of the Foxes* blamed the officers' obstruction, opportunism, and hypocrisy for the Army's failure to impose a constitutional settlement along Leveller lines at a time when it could easily have done so.[68]

The new regime no longer regarded these pamphlets as dissent but as outright sedition, and four prominent Levellers—Lilburne, Walwyn, Overton, and Thomas Prince—were peremptorily

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[68] "The Hunting of the Foxes," March 1,1649, in Don M. Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (originally published 1944; New York: Humanities Press, 1967), pp. 359–83.

arrested on charges of treason and thrown into the Tower. While he was awaiting trial, Lilburne, from behind closed doors outside the Council of State, overheard Cromwell tell the Council's president: "I tell you, sir, you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them in pieces" or

> they will break you; yea, and bring all the guilt of the blood and treasure shed and spent in this kingdom upon your heads and shoulders; and frustrate and make void all that work, that with so many years industry, toil and pains, you have done.[69]

Popular clamor for the Levellers' release brought thousands of Londoners in demonstrations before the court where they were being tried, just as, a little over a year earlier, huge Leveller street demonstrations had followed the coffin of Colonel Rainborough to its interment. Cowed by these mass actions, the "Grandees," in the end, had no choice but to acquit "Honest John" and the other Levellers, but the situation in the capital and elsewhere remained as heated as ever.

THE DEFEAT OF THE LEVELLERS

The execution of Charles sparked royalists in parts of Ireland and Scotland to proclaim the late king's son, also named Charles, as his successor, and, incongruously, the young Charles was obliged to raise his royalist armies in Catholic Ireland as well as Presbyterian Scotland, against Anglican and Puritan England, where English supporters of the king had nearly all been subdued. In the course of crushing this uprising, the Commonwealth took the opportunity to rid itself of troublesome radical military regiments as well by dispatching them to Ireland, thereby diminishing the impact they might have had on the domestic political situation—an obvious ploy that only heightened rank-andfile unrest in the Army.

In May 1649, this unrest finally came to a head. In Salisbury, Colonel Scroop's cavalry regiment, which was scheduled to go to Ireland, called a new Council of the Army for the ostensible purpose of discussing arrears in pay. In fact, the council was actually convened to coordinate the resistance of regiments who were being sent to Ireland without their consent. The same crisis that had led to the confrontation at Ware was now being replayed, this time possibly with greater success. Over a twelve-day period Scroop's and five other disgruntled regiments elected Agitators to represent them, and at the same time, troopers and civilian Levellers at Oxfordshire gathered into supportive formations of their own. Had these scattered dissenters acted entirely on their own, none of them would have posed a serious threat to the authority of Cromwell and the "Grandees." But if the various mutinous regiments could assemble together from their separate locations into a single military force, the regime had every reason to regard them as a major revolutionary challenge. And this was precisely the plan that the Levellers had in mind. On the evening of May 14, some twelve cavalry troops, largely under Leveller influence, gathered at the village of Burford, near Oxford, waiting for sympathetic forces from other parts of the country to join them. But they did not come in time. Cromwell, apprised of the Leveller troop movements, furiously raced some forty miles to the Burford encampment, reaching it at midnight and taking the mutineers completely by surprise. He easily crushed the fragmented revolt in a nearly

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[69] "Li!burne before the Council of State, April 1649," in *The Good Old Cause: Documents of the English Revolution of 1640–1660: Its Causes, Course and Consequences,* ed. Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, 2nd ed. (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), p. 403.

bloodless victory. Although three men were shot for their role in the mutiny, the remainder were either cashiered from the Army or pardoned.

The defeat of the troops at Burford essentially marked the end of the radicals' influence in the Revolution, although they were to participate in or initiate aborted insurrections for years to come. In another manifesto, issued by the Levellers in September 1649, *The Remonstrance of Many Thousands of the Free People of England* , which Brailsford "ranks among all their utterances as the most reckless and the most revolutionary," they hurled

> a declaration of war ... at "all those tyrants and usurpers now sitting at Westminster." "Our burdens," it declares, "become so insupportable, that we are ... compelled to make use of that means nature teacheth us for our own preservation." It calls for disobedience to all acts and orders of these usurpers, especially for a refusal to pay all taxes, assessments and tithes.

The manifesto openly threatened to avenge the Levellers who had been shot at Ware, Burford, and elsewhere; to gain debentures for the soldiers; to confiscate the wealth and estates that Members of Parliament had obtained as a result of the revolution; to enact the 1648 *Agreement of the People;* and most strikingly, to guarantee "every free commoner" the means of life. This last guarantee was an explicit threat to all the propertied classes of England. "For the attainment of all these ends," the manifesto concluded, "we have drawn our swords and are resolved not to put them up again till we have obtained the things before specified, not doubting of the aid and assistance of all honest and well-meaning men."[70] Approximately 100,000 people signed this challenging manifesto, nearly ten times the number who normally signed earlier Leveller petitions, and panic swept the ever-uneasy propertied classes. But no swords were drawn. The "Grandees" thoroughly purged the regiments on which the Levellers relied most, while other troops were by now thoroughly exhausted and largely demoralized. Nor is it likely that many civilians had the means or the stomach to do battle against an Army that had earned, and still retained, their deepest respect.

Thereafter, the Leveller movement fell apart, or dissolved into often pitiful conspiracies against Cromwell. The Burford defeat had produced a social vacuum, followed by defeats that left the radicals in despair. Individual Levellers each followed separate and surprisingly odd destinies. Sexby, the former soldier, came to detest Cromwell so much that he even joined with royalists in conspiracies against him and his regime. Many Leveller officers who had not been cashiered by the "Grandees" rose in the ranks to become professional soldiers, while still others retired to private life. A few, like Lilburne, became Quakers, turning to nonviolence as a credo. The third revolution, which had seemed so close to success at Ware and at Burford, came to its tragic end in England. The new historical course on which the country embarked favored more enclosures of common fields, the dispossession of the peasantry and even the yeomanry from their land, and eventually the rise of industrial capitalism.

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[70] "The Remonstrance of Many Thousands of the Free People of England", quoted in Brailsford, *Levellers,* pp. 573–4.

Chapter 8. Millenarian Sects and Cromwellian Governments

The waning influence and defeat of the Levellers did not bring the English Revolution to a complete end—but they did lead to a period that combined parody with pathos, absurdity with tragedy. Once the "Grandees" had firmly established themselves in power, they found themselves in a political cul-de-sac, much as the Jacobins would a century and a half later. Many goals that the parliamentary forces had long sought were fulfilled: the king was executed, and the monarchy and House of Lords were no more. Having accomplished these ends and created a Commonwealth, the "Grandees," who were unwilling to fulfill more radical ones, could advance no further socially. In the lack of new causes to fight for and ideals to uphold, the sense of rectitude that had impelled the revolutionary fervor of Puritanism and given it a social motivation was drastically diminished, and the officers, who were entrenched in positions of power, seemed to hold their offices for no other purpose than their private aggrandizement. To compensate for this spiritual emptiness, the "Grandees" turned inward, toward mysticism. Indeed, even on the eve of Pride's Purge, at a time when the Levellers were becoming increasingly secular, Cromwell's aides began to invoke variously images of a "New Jerusalem," of the "Fifth Monarchy" predicted in the Book of Daniel, and of the coming rule of a returning Christ.

Mysticism, in fact, had been a feature of the English radical milieu since the early 1640s. Mingling with the Independents and often straying well beyond their antiauthoritarian structures, a wide assortment of millenarian revolutionaries formed conventicles during the Revolution that in some cases were expressly pantheistic, if not outright atheistic. These sects, largely rooted in the wilder fenlands or "dark corners" of the North and West, seemed to echo the mystical anarchism of medieval sects such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit. Quakers, who would hardly be recognizable to the pious Brahmins who speak in their name today, mingled with revolutionary Anabaptists like Familists, who strongly believed that a heaven on earth was imminent and roamed through the countryside spreading the good news. In the 1640s "there was a period of glorious flux and intellectual excitement," observes Christopher Hill in his radical, perhaps most libertarian book on the English Revolution; indeed, for a time it seemed that,

> as Gerrard Winstanley (the Digger leader] put it, "the old world is running up like parchment in the fire." Literally anything seemed possible; not only were the values of the old hierarchical society called into question but also the new values, the protestant ethic itself. Only gradually was control re-established during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, leading to a restoration of the rule of the gentry, and then of King and bishops in 1660.[71]

Nevertheless, most of these movements—if such they can actually be called— went unnoticed or exercised influence only in the most remote areas of the land.

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[71] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), p. 12. Religious sectaries, anarchistic mystics, and communistic pantheists add spice to this account of the English Revolution, but it should be noted that *The World Turned Upside Down* was written at a time when libertarian movements and ideas were very much in vogue in America and Western Europe.

THE FIFTH MONARCHY MEN

Perhaps the most prominent of these sects was an overheated millenarian tendency, the Fifth Monarchy Men, who lived in momentary expectation of a Second Coming of Christ and a communistic dispensation of the world's goods. Their name was taken from the Fifth Monarchy envisioned in the Book of Daniel, in which "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the kingdom of the Saints of the most High" (vii:27). According to the dispensation advanced by Fifth Monarchy Men, the "saints," in effect, would gain the divine mantle that kings had previously worn and live in blissful happiness in a world free of sin and want.

The strength of the movement lay more in its demands for religious reform and its simple sense of humanity for the poor than in its fervent expectation of miraculous intervention into human affairs, which thus made its ideas acceptable to a wide range of people across social class. Indeed, a belief in a Fifth Monarchy that would be installed with the coming of Christ, for all its apocalyptic overtones, did not necessarily constitute an overt challenge to property, and the movement failed to spell out a concrete program for economic change. Hence, it remained a pious tendency that sought generally but harmlessly to see oppressions removed and grievances resolved.

Even fairly extreme Fifth Monarchy Men, such as they were, gave no support to the Levellers' *Agreements of the People,* since what this era needed, they believed, was not a republic but, rather vaguely, a dictatorship of "saints." The very notion of "saints" which the Fifth Monarchy Men promoted was patently elitist, in stark contrast to the Levellers' egalitarian ideas and demands for a popular franchise; thus Fifth Monarchism was not without its appeal to the saintly "Grandees" themselves, who were bitterly hostile to the very real and dangerous—secular demands of the Levellers. "The Saints of the Most High … are a people distinct from the world," a Fifth Monarchy tract observed,

> … and are by themselves a Common-Wealth and Free State; and there 'tis to be desired from good and sound grounds, that they would exercise that Royal Authority which God has given unto them, and invested them with, as they are saints by calling.[72]

Even one of the most distinguished Fifth Monarchy Men, Major-General Thomas Harrison, a New Model soldier who had been converted to millenarianism during the Revolution, had a rather wayward career. During the Putney Debates, Harrison had sided with Rainborough and resolutely sought to bring the king to justice; afterward he formed a close relationship with Cromwell against his former associates and was one of the architects of a later parliament of "saints" known to history as Barebone's Parliament.

Their elitism, as it turned out, locked many Fifth Monarchy Men into naive conspiracies, failed uprisings, and individual acts of defiance that more closely resemble the hapless terrorists of Russia or the Blanquists of France than the mass movement that the Levellers tried to establish. In contrast to Leveller secularism, the mystical message of an elect group destined to redeem the world in spite of itself offered no serious threat to the rule of the "Grandees," and when the time came to do without it, it was easily suppressed.

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[72] Quoted in P.G. Rogers, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 304.

THE RANTERS

The turn toward mysticism that followed the waning of the Leveller movement found its most absurd and noisiest, if not its strongest, expression in the Ranter movement: a collection of small groups that were neither coordinated nor knit together in any palpable way but oddly gained a sizable and ineffectual urban following, particularly among the London poor, who could only dream of a forthcoming miracle that would "levell" the wealthy "to lay the Mountain low." That their number grew rapidly after the Leveller troops at Burford were subdued suggests that they were largely a product of the despair that followed that defeat rather than an advance in the fortunes of the Revolution. Their name came from their alleged tendency to talk, shout and gesticulate—in short, to rant—unintelligibly in public. Whether such behavior really characterized the Ranters is arguable, since Presbyterians, royalists, and Independents alike tended to caricature sectaries of all kinds* if only to erode their influence with ridicule when they could not destroy them outright.

What Ranter groups seem to have shared was a rejection of all literal interpretations of Scripture as well as a rejection, based on moral law, of deference to any kind of authority, be it secular or divine. God, these basically pantheistic radicals declared, existed everywhere and was embodied in all things. One Ranter pamphlet reads:

> I see that God is in all Creatures, Man and Beast, Fish and Fowle, and every green thing, from the highest Cedar to the Ivey on the wall; and that God is the life and being of them all, and that God doth really dwell, and if you will personally; if he may admit so low an expression in them all, and hath his Being no where else out of the Creatures.[73]

This outlook led the Ranters to very radical social conclusions: "a deep concern for the poor, a denunciation of the rich and a primitive biblical communism," observes A.L. Morton in his comprehensive account of their activities, "that is more menacing and urban than that of Winstanley and the Diggers." Indeed, their antiauthoritarian rejection of Scripture and deferent behavior, as well as their flagrant disrespect for religious institutions and the state, has led some historians to characterize them as "anarchists."

Possibly—but if the Ranters were anarchists, they were mystical anarchists, and their mysticism tended to completely paralyze their capacity to change the real world. As Morton points out, for the Ranters it was "God himself [who] was the great Leveller, who was to come shortly 'to Levell with a witnesse, to Levell the Hills with the Valleyes, to lay the Mountaines low.'"[74] Alas, divine intervention was not an auspicious program for action. The Levellers had tried to set things right by the sword, and the Diggers, more feebly, by the spade, as we shall see, but the Ranters could offer nothing more than another millennium. Indeed, there is much to show that their outlook drifted toward an ineffectual quietism. A Ranter pamphleteer of the late 1640s articulated a distinctly quietistic approach in a work that addressed "King, Monarchy and Parliament" with the following denunciation:

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[73] Jacob Bauthumley,"The Light and Dark Side of God," quoted in Norman Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York; Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 304.

[74] Quoted in A.L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution* (London: Lawrence 8e Wishart, 1970), p. 71. It is worth noting that the Ranters' numbers included even atheists, for whom "the sacred BIBLE was but a meer Romance, and contradictory to itself, only invented by the Witts of Former Ages, to keep the People in subjection."

You are afraid to lay down your Swords, lest you should lose your Liberties; but the Lord will recompense this seven-fold into your bosme, he is coming to make you suffer a blessed Freedom, a glorious Liberty, a sufficient recompense for the loss of all outward glories… When you are become children of the new birth, you shall be able to play upon the hole of the Aspe, and to dwell with the Cockatrice in his den, oppression and tyranny shall be destroyed before you.[75]

The very religiosity of this injunction almost seems sanctimonious at a time when England was still in turmoil and Levellers were hoping for an insurrection that would overthrow Cromwellian rule.

How many small groups and individual converts there were among the Ranters is very unclear. Iconoclastic and devout as they no doubt were, the more outstanding Ranter "leaders," whatever that term meant, were basically commanders without an army, and any notion that they constituted a serious threat to established authority was more useful to royalists, who wanted to panic the public in order to suppress more serious competitors in the conflict with the Commonwealth, than to more knowing authorities who had no difficulty in silencing them with harassment, arrests, and ridicule.

THE DIGGERS

The Diggers advanced explicitly communistic ideas that they hoped to apply to the common lands still available in England, and sought a radical dispensation of property in the interests of the landless. Denoting themselves as the "True Levellers," the Diggers went almost completely unnoticed during the English Revolution itself; their fame in our own time is the product more of radical research into the era than of their actual impact on it. We know from legal documents that on Sunday, April 1, 1649, a small group of landless men— perhaps no more than a dozen—and their families gathered with spades at St. George's Hill, a common just outside London, and began to dig up the very unpromising soil there in order to cultivate food. This action was perhaps more symbolic than materially rewarding. Their encampment grew to about forty or fifty, and with it grew their boldness, which soon began to distress the local parson and the gentry in the area. These radicals with spades were led by William Everard, a former New Model soldier who had been cashiered out of the service because of his radicalism, and by Gerrard Winstanley, a linen tradesman in London whose small business had been ruined by the Civil War.

The appearance of Gerrard Winstanley marks a genuine high point in the Digger movement. Although he had never been educated beyond ordinary grammar school, Winstanley was a superb pamphleteer, and within little more than a year, he was flooding London and other receptive areas of England with his works, detailing his communistic aims and his pantheistic beliefs. The earth, in Winstanley s view, was a "common treasury" that should be shared by all and worked communally. His social program was simple and basically rural: "The earth with all her fruits of Com, Cattle, and such like, was made to be a common Store-House of Livelihood to all mankind friend and foe, without exception."[76]

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[75] J. Salmon, "A Rout, A Rout," quoted in Morton, *World of the Ranters,* p. 85.

[76] Gerrard Winstanley, "A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England," in *Selected Writings,* ed. Andrew Hopton (London: Aporia Press, 1989), pp. 26–7.

This economic program, as Christopher Hill observes, represented a possible alternative course of development for England:

> Collective colonization of the waste by the poor (which amounted to about a third of the land in England] could have had the advantages of large-scale cultivation, planned development, use of fertilizers, etc. It could have fed the expanding English population without disrupting the traditional way of life to anything like the extent that in fact happened. The Diggers sowed their land with carrots, parsnips and beans—crops of the sort that were to transform English agriculture in the seventeenth century by making it possible to keep cattle alive throughout the winter in order to fertilize the land… Winstanley had got a solution to his own paradox: "the bondage the poor complain of, that they are kept poor by their brethren in a land where there is so much plenty for everyone, if covetousness and pride did not rule as king in one brother over another."[77]

By conviction, Winstanley was more of a pantheist than a Puritan or Independent, for "to know the secrets of nature is to know the works of God," he wrote, denying the existence of a heaven or hell as a "strange conceit."[78] "Reason," in his eyes, is the "great creator," and anarchy— at least, the absence of rule—was the earliest and most benign form of social life, for "not one word was spoken in the beginning that one branch of mankind should rule over another."[79] Not only did the Diggers squat on common land that manorial lords coveted when they tried to break up Digger settlements (both the one at St. George's Hill and a later one at Cobham), but when Diggers took to cutting timber, they committed an affront to the gentry and yeomanry that was almost comparable to stealing horses. This action was done very publicly, in order to assert the right of ordinary folk to common lands and, perhaps more disquietingly, to a way of life in which land was shared by all in common.

Moreover, the Diggers sent out their own missionaries to the countryside, with the result that Digger colonies appeared in Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Bedfordshire, and on a common in Kent, among other places. At their colony in Wellingborough (in Northamptonshire) they met with a good deal of sympathy from local farmers who provided them with seed and some assistance. Agriculturally, 1650 was a very difficult year in England; the sharp rise of food prices over the previous three years, together with burdensome taxes, had reduced many rural dwellers to virtual beggary. Warehouses containing corn were looted, and hunger spread into the towns and cities of the realm.

Local attempts to suppress the Diggers, however, soon brought in the Army. The Digger leaders met with Fairfax, who treated them courteously and apparently regarded them as harmless. Although the ever-prudent Cromwell seems to have shown some concern over their activities, in the end the Army did nothing to stop them, and they were left to the less kindly mercies of the surrounding inhabitants. Ironically, it was not the manorial lords who finally destroyed the Digger experiments but the yeomanry, who kept a sharp eye on the common lands for their own

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[77] Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 104–5.

[78] In Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, eds., *The Good Old Cause: Documents of the English Revolution of 1640– 1660: Its Causes, Course, and* Consequences, 2nd ed„ rev. (London: Frank Cass 8c Co., 1949; New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969), p. 385.

[79] Hill and Dell, *Good Old Cause,* pp. 385,395. See also Winstanley, *Selected Writings.*

ends and generally despised the Digger colonies as an affront to their parochial interests. What the Army did not try to do with troops, the locals successfully did with raids on Digger encampments and harassment—and within a year after the Diggers first spaded St. George's Hill, most of the colonies were dispersed.

As a pacifist who eschewed violence as a matter of principle, Gcrrard Winstanley would have had little in common with the leaders of the great peasant revolts of earlier centuries in England, France, and the German states. He sought to win the hearts of his opponents by his example and powers of persuasion, playing no role in the Leveller revolts. Nor was he associated with the somewhat militant politics of the Fifth Monarchy Men. Indeed, it is likely that he felt distant from the mass movements that had brought down the monarchy, although he opposed the Cromwellian dictatorship. The "True Magistracy"—the vision he advanced for the future—was not a direct democracy but at least a representative one, and his surprisingly centralistic politics called for a social order based more on punitive measures than on love.

BAREBONE'S PARLIAMENT AND THE PROTECTORATE

The uprising of the Irish and the Scots had provided Cromwell with sufficient excuse to invoke the danger of a perpetual external threat to the Revolution, as did Robespierre and Stalin in later times. Thus, after the Army subdued these uprisings, the "Grandees" dissolved the Rump Parliament in April 1653 and created still another, even less representative, body to rule the country. Cromwell and his Council now decided to gather a picked assembly, or Nominated Parliament, of the more colorful religious radicals from among the independent congregations to usher in the reign of the "saints."

With the help of the Fifth Monarchy Man Thomas Harrison, devout Congregational ministers prepared a list of potential nominees, leaving it to Cromwell's own commanders to choose 140 "godly men" to be members of the new Parliament, which presumably would issue laws and devise a constitution for the country based on Puritan principles. The royalist and anti-Cromwellian wags in London took to mocking the assembly as "Barebone's Parliament," named after Praise-God Barbon, a leather merchant and Fifth Monarchy Man who, in fact, played a rather insignificant role in the Parliament's proceedings.

The convocation of the Parliament marked the zenith of Fifth Monarchy influence. About half or more of the new parliamentarians seem to have been either Fifth Monarchy Men or influenced by Fifth Monarchy ideas. Cromwell opened the sessions of the Barebone's Parliament with an ecstatic speech, declaring, "I confess 1 never looked to see such a day as this—it may be nor you neither—when Jesus Christ should be so owned as he is at this day… by your call." The speech resounded with the cry: "Truly you are called by God to rule with him and for him."[80] The saintly body remained in existence for five months, while Cromwell, needless to say, conducted state affairs in the background.

Barebone's Parliament has entered into historical accounts as more of a wrangling, semihysterical congregation than a legislative body, but it also had a pragmatic side that has largely been ignored by some historians. Despite sharp divisions around religious policy, it tried to reform and remove some of the feudal archaisms from the legal system, provide relief for creditors and poor prisoners, humanize the penal system (including limiting the use of the death penalty to

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[80] Quoted and discussed in Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (New York: Harper 8c Row, 1972), p. 139.

major crimes), and provide assistance for victims of land enclosures and oppressive landlords. It even turned marriage into a civil ceremony and made earnest attempts to foster literacy among the ordinary populace.

To what extent Cromwell's professed piety sincerely guided his actions is hard to judge. Much to the disgust of the Levellers, he routinely invoked God, especially in difficult moments, when the cold pragmatics of power required him to abjure his ostensible egalitarianism. "You shall scarce speak to Cromwell about anything," Overton's pamphlet sarcastically noted, "but he will lay his hand on his breast, elevate his eyes and call God to record; he will weep, howl and repent, even while he doth smite you under the first rib." "Oh Cromwell!" cried the pamphleteer, "Whither art thou aspiring?"[81]

As it turned out, Cromwell was aspiring less for sainthood than for power. Barebone's Parliament sufficiently frightened the well-to-do strata with whom Cromwell had curried favor throughout the stormy 1640s to open the way to direct military rule, and he abruptly disbanded the Parliament in December 1653. The radicals were forced out of the House and the remaining conservatives obligingly called upon him to take over the state completely. A new Instrument of Government proclaimed Cromwell "Lord Protector" of a military dictatorship, the Protectorate—a euphemism for complete military rule over the country and the enforcement of a Puritan moral code that was none the less weakening.

A Council of State (more precisely, the major-generals of the Army and the Lord Protector) took over the real governing of the country and, as if to remove any pretense of representative government, the Lord Protector and the Council all but placed the country under martial law in the summer of 1655. England was divided into twelve military districts, each ruled by a major-general and a corps of largely professional troops. Many of the more humane achievements of Barebone's Parliament were simply eliminated, and censorship was not only reinstated but gradually tightened to a point where virtually all free political expression in the land came to an end.

The Lord Protector now began to turn on his own erstwhile comrades. Old revolutionaries who had aided Cromwell during his halcyon years, such as Thomas Harrison, a dyed-in-the-wool millenarian, and the scholarly Independent Sir Henry Vane, were imprisoned, and the radicals were unrelentingly driven from any positions of power or fled into exile. "The Protectorate meant the victory of conservatism in church and state," Hill observes in his biography of Cromwell.

> A member of the old family of the Howards, who had been reactionaries even in the days of the monarchy, was made colonel of the regiment of Nathaniel Rich, dismissed for his radical views. The whole army was under constant process of transformation from the ideologically committed force of the 1640s to the formidable professional army of the later 1650s... Gone were the exuberant days of free discussion: opposition pamphlets could appear only illegally.[82]

The triumph of reaction is perhaps best seen in Cromwell's address to the first of the specious Parliaments that he summoned to give his rule a veneer of legitimacy. Addressing this assemblage of wealthy members, gentry, and magistrates, the Lord Protector sharply attacked the Levellers—his erstwhile rank and file in the Army—and assured the "natural rulers" of the realm:

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[81] "The Hunting of Foxes," in Don M. Wolfe, ed., *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (1944; New York: Humanities Press, 1967), p. 370.

[82] Hill, *God's Englishman,* p. 149.

a nobleman, a gentleman, a yeoman: that is a good interest of the nation and a great one. The magistracy of the nation, was it not almost trampled underfoot, under despite and contempt by men of Levelling principles? ... Did not the Levelling principle tend to reducing all to an equality?... What was the design but to make the tenant as liberal a fortune as the landlord?[83]

Whatever defiance existed came from Fifth Monarchy preachers who became the nuclei in London around which congregations hostile to the Protectorate were formed. A plot by Fifth Monarchy Men and discontented Army officers to assassinate Cromwell in January 1657 seems to have been intended as a prelude to a more concerted attempt to rise in insurrection. But their efforts were quickly headed off. Before they could even take any violent action, Thomas Venner, the leader of the plot, and his supporters were rounded up and brought before Cromwell and the Council of State. That they and their followers were treated with extraordinary leniency by Cromwell and eventually released is perhaps evidence of their ineffectuality; in any case the Lord Protector, who was being groomed as an uncrowned king, apparently viewed the sect as harmless. The movement continued to foment plots, conspiracies, and aborted plans for uprisings, directly up to the Restoration, but to no avail. The same is true of the Ranters. In the early 1650s, a parliamentary committee was established to investigate the activities of the Ranters and their spokesmen were imprisoned, but the charges against them had less to do with sedition than with religious heresy, and they were slowly driven underground until they too all but faded away.

As early as 1652, Gerrard Winstanley was thoroughly disenchanted with the results of the Revolution and with the popular disregard of the Digger experiments. Among the memorable lines in his famous *Law of Freedom* are the very moving poetic passages that express his bitter disillusionment:

> Truth appears in Light, Falsehood rules in Power;
> To see these things to be, is cause of grief each hour.
> Knowledge, why didst thou come, to wound, and not to cure?
> I sent not for thee, thou didst me inlure.
> Where knowledge does increase, there sorrows multiply.
> To see the great deceit in which the World doth lie...
> O death where are thou? wilt thou not tidings send?
> I fear thee not, thou are my loving friend.
> Come take this body, and scatter it in the Four,
> That I might dwell in One, and rest in peace once more.[84]

Thereafter Winstanley faded into oblivion. Like the once combative John Lilburne, he ended his life quietly as a Quaker.

DENOUEMENT

To those who would view the Protectorate as a regime guided by capitalistic interests, the evidence is essentially disappointing. Throughout its existence during the 1650s, the regime followed commercial policies that often indicate a surprising subordination of strictly bourgeois

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[83] *Ibid.,* p. 150.

[84] Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform, or True Magistracy Restored,* ed. Robert Kenny (New York: Schocken Books, 1941), p. 147.

interests to ideological precepts. The Protectorate did not encourage *laissez-faire* ideas any more than the Stuarts had; indeed, it was a mercantilist theory of controlled trade that prevailed over any *laissez-faire* notions. Government interference in economic affairs was very common. As Lawrence Stone observes,

> old views about the just price, the wickedness of usury, and society's obligation to provide for the poor persisted throughout the century. At every period of harvest failure, the government of Charles I, the Rump Parliament, or the Restoration monarchy, resorted to the usual measures of control of prices, prohibition of hoarding, ban on exports, attempts to bully employers to put more people to work, and pressure on the local authorities to increase poor relief from local taxation. Maximum interest rates remained limited by law and the limit was in fact reduced. Poor relief for the old, the sick, the orphaned, and involuntarily unemployed continued throughout the century, regardless of the regime, and tended to increase rather than decrease in quantity as time went on.[85]

Admittedly, Cromwell's conflicts with the Dutch, which culminated in an English victory in 1652, were primarily commercial in nature, conflicts that Lawrence Stone has called a "watershed in English history." But during the Protectorate, Stone continues, it is notable that Cromwell's foreign policy

> was far more ambiguous. He hated fighting fellow Protestants and soon put an end to the war with Holland. His support for England's huge navy and his use of it to obtain bridgeheads around the coast of Europe and to launch an onslaught on the Spanish colonial empire in the Caribbean were motivated only marginally by commercial considerations. He was primarily concerned to make England feared in Europe, to deter foreign powers from supporting the Stuarts, to strike a blow against the power of Spain, and to transfer the mineral wealth of Latin America from that popeish country to Protestant England.

Cromwell's policy did not "meet with much approval from England's merchant community," Stone adds, "who saw their lucrative Mediterranean and Spanish trade cut off with no compensating gain, since the attempt was a dismal failure."[86]

A portrait of Cromwell that dates from shortly before his death depicts him clothed in monarchical ermine, which suggests that he may have been intent on creating a new royal dynasty. Evidently only the memory of his radical past restrained him from proclaiming himself king. Not surprisingly, his third son, Richard, took over the Protectorate after his death in 1658, only to founder in conflicts that erupted between the military and Parliament, and the scion seems gladly to have resigned his office in May 1659.

Finally, in February 1660, royalist troops led by General George Monck entered London, dissolved the remaining Parliament, and reestablished the Presbyterian Long Parliament, which Pride had purged a decade earlier. The Long Parliament officially dissolved itself after reestablishing Presbyterianism as the virtual state religion, and the new Commons that followed upon

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[85] Lawrence Stone, "The Results of the English Revolution," in *Three British Revolutions: 1641,1688,1776,* ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 45–6.

[86] *Ibid.,* pp. 45–6,48.

the Long Parliament's dissolution was overwhelmingly royalist—a political orientation that probably reflected widespread support for England's "natural rulers" after the military interregnum and the Protectorate. Charles II, the son of the late monarch, was proclaimed king and during his reign tried to steer a course between Puritans, Anglicans, and Presbyterians, while his Parliaments were firmly intent on retaining the powers they had accrued during the Revolution.

Under the restored monarchy, the Fifth Monarchy Men Thomas Harrison and John Carew were hanged as regicides. Thomas Venner and some fifty other Fifth Monarchy Men managed virtually to convulse London in a series of guerrilla attacks and battles until all of them were eliminated. When Venner was captured, he behaved with unusual heroism at his trial and execution in January 1661, and executions of accused Fifth Monarchy Men continued for years thereafter, although the government's fears of serious uprisings by this rather formless sect were patently unfounded.

The generally lax rule of Charles II was followed by the high-handed reign of his brother, James II, who still laid claim to divine right and openly adhered to Catholicism, creating widespread disaffection in the country. In time, peers, lawmakers, and the well-to-do classes of the realm invited William of Orange to "invade" England, and he and his wife, Mary, who was next in line in the succession to the English throne after James's newborn son, landed with a Protestant "armada" of some fifty warships and five hundred transports at Torbay, an inlet on the Devonshire coast. With virtually no support from his own army, James II was permitted to "escape" to France in December 1688. What English historians were to hail as the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–89, as distinguished from the "Great Rebellion" of the 1640s, established a domesticated Protestant monarchy that was now answerable to Parliament and the laws of the land.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

Certainly the immediate result of the English Revolution was less than a capitalist transformation. English society and its basic politics remained primarily agrarian in character; and although trade became very important in the century that followed, this does not alter the fact that England was ruled by a landed hierarchy—not by men whose main interests were industrial and commercial. Nor did the strengthening of Parliament in itself confer political power on the commercial classes as a result of the Civil War; rather, it was returned legally to the "Country" at the expense of the "Court"—that is to say, to landed classes. In the eighteenth century most of Parliament's members were still rural-based gentry who, while admittedly engaging in a great deal of commerce and the production of goods for the market, were by no means necessarily involved in the wool trade and indeed were more agrarian in their outlook and lifeways than urban and bourgeois. These essentially agrarian strata recovered the institutional power they had enjoyed earlier, but in a setting that allowed for greater political and personal freedom. They may have ultimately created a more favorable climate for capitalism, but they were not the initiators of a capitalistic dispensation. Indeed, a major achievement of the English Revolution may well have been a restructuring of the English nation-state from an emergent absolutist regime to a largely oligarchical one.

What made the "century of revolution," as Christopher Hill has called it, so important for England and later for the Western world, is largely political: it vastly diminished arbitrary power

as such.[87] For hundreds of years, monarchs ruled with little restraint, draining the wealth of their realms for dynastic or ideological purposes, despoiling their subjects, and confiscating their property. By the eighteenth century, Spain had been ruined by the arbitrary exactions of its Habsburg rulers, while France was brought to near ruin by the demands of its last Bourbon rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With the diminution of royal power, new social forces and tendencies beyond individual control began to play a more ascendant role than they could when monarchies—strong or weak—could inhibit new historical developments.

The English Revolution enormously strengthened the power of a politically innovative Parliament at the expense of a smothering, reactionary monarchy. Where James I had succeeded to the English throne by hereditary right, an Act of Parliament was required to give George I the throne in 1714. Where the Tudors had summoned Parliament at their own discretion, by 1714 Parliament was more or less in permanent session and not only controlled finance and formulated economic policy but had a major voice in formulating foreign policy. Moreover, in England, the "century of revolution" created an orderly, collectively ruled, relatively more decentralized and tolerant political state that gave rise to a constitutional regime. Unlike under feudalism, individuality became more important than corporate relationships, and personal liberty, which was closely associated with the sanctity of private property, began to count for more than arbitrary behavior in dealing with persons and their wealth. It was now widely accepted that England was to be ruled by law rather than custom, and it was Parliament, the collective representative of the propertied classes, that made those laws, not the "Court." All of these changes created a vital setting for what existed of a capitalistic economy, but they did not necessarily bring it to the island.

England had been awash with countless sects, "gathered churches," and movements too numerous to mention, but with the defeat of the Levellers and the rise of a military regime, the focus of revolution shifted elsewhere.

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[87] Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603–1714* (London: Thomas Nelson 8c Sons, 1961; New York: W.W. Norton 8c Co., 1966), pp. 1–2.

PART III. THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Chapter 9. "A Kind of Revolution"

The men and women who rallied to the Leveller cause in the late 1640s faded away with the rise of Cromwell's interregnum. But their political ideal of "an agreement of the people acceptable to the general will," as H.N. Brailsford observes, did not disappear. "It crossed the Atlantic ... and bore ripe fruit. Defeated in Europe, the English Revolution found its triumph and its culmination in America."[1]

Until recently, there has been a tendency among historians to deprecate the migration of radical ideals to colonial America and the radicalism of the American Revolution generally. Its revolutionary character has been slighted by historians who treat it as a mere war for independence, a conservative movement to preserve existing political institutions, or a purely economic conflict between competing colonial interests and the "mother country." Even so populist a historian as Howard Zinn has dismissed the American Revolution as a "kind of revolution" and demeaned it for its presumed tameness and upperclass bias,[2] while other historians portray it as a gentlemanly ballet between bewigged Anglo-Americans.

It is one thing to look at the Revolution in the terms of the varying fortunes of the late-twentieth-century American Left, and quite another to examine it within the context of its own time, more than two centuries ago. As an eighteenth-century phenomenon, the American Revolution continued an earlier political tradition based, like the English Revolution, on "the rights of Englishmen," but it built this tradition into a force that would gain monumental importance, no less for Europe and even colonized countries than for the United States. In its own time, this Anglo-American tradition was to become distinctly revolutionary, in a sense that would have been congenial to figures such as Lilburne, Rainborough, and Overton.

In arguing the case that the American colonies underwent a revolution in the 1770s and 1780s and not merely a war for independence, R.R. Palmer explores the question according to two quantitative and objective criteria: "how many refugees were there from the American Revolution, and how much property did they lose, in comparison with the French Revolution?" By the first criterion, he observes that whereas there were "24 emigres per thousand of population in the American Revolution," there were "only 5 Emigres per thousand of population in the French Revolution." As for the second criterion, the French revolutionary government's confiscation of the property of French *imigris* is well known, but judged by indemnities that the British made American loyalists for their property losses in the American Revolution, the American revolutionary government did not confiscate any less than the French Revolution in proportion to population.[3]

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[1] H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, ed. Christopher Hill (Nottingham: Spokesman University Press, 1976), p. 376.

[2] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

[3] R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolutions: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800: The Challenge* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 188.

In short, the American Revolution produced an even greater *émigré* population than the French, and comparable expropriations of property.

Perhaps more significant than these statistics is Palmer's quite sound observation that the American and French Revolutions were guided by identical principles: "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."[4] These principles, he observes, were

> much more deeply rooted in America, and... 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. [The American Revolution] 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... America was different from Europe, but it was not unique.[5]

The less inflammatory character of the American Revolution can be attributed to the fact that American colonists had already been revolutionizing their society from the inception of colonization some two centuries earlier. By the time hostilities broke out, they had come to regard their liberties as part of their patrimony. On the eve of the Revolution, many Americans had significantly less to fight about internally than revolutionaries in France, whose feudal past burdened them with an entrenched aristocracy, a fairly centralized monarchy, and a powerful clergy.

The fact that American colonists generally accepted that one-fifth of the population were chattel slaves; that they waged genocidal wars against Indian peoples; and that colonial families were patriarchal may seem to belie Palmer's thesis and my own. But it is easy to forget that Americans were no different from Europeans in these respects. None of the imperialist European countries were gentle guardians of subject peoples, as witness the treatment of the Irish by the English; nor did any of them accord women political, legal, and economic equality. As for slavery, Napoleon—generally regarded as the crowned defender of French revolutionary ideals from the late 1790s to 1814—restored slavery to the French colonies after the French Revolution had abolished it. In Europe itself, slave labor would have made no economic sense given the continent's high population density—in contrast to America, where labor was chronically scarce for centuries. The Americans, particularly the plantation owners who depended so heavily on field hands to cultivate tobacco and later cotton as their most important cash crop, were chronically short of labor and used white indentured servants—people who gained passage across the ocean to America in exchange for five to seven years of work once they arrived—as well as blacks, for servile tasks throughout the colonial period. These facts do not in any way justify slavery, but they explain the reasons why it emerged in the specific context of colonial society.

The English people in general acutely remembered that they had had to force their monarchs to respect their rights—rights that Frederick II of Prussia, Louis XVI of France, or Catherine II

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4 *Ibid.,* p. 189.
5 *Ibid.,* p. 189.

of Russia would have abrogated without a second thought. In this respect, as Palmer suggests, *all* the revolutions of the democratic era were in some sense conservative, for the revolutionaries asserted popular rights that they regarded as hallowed by tradition, against invasive or domineering innovations that would limit them. An appreciable radical literature of the English Revolution asserted that popular rights were Saxon rights, as we have already seen, which the Norman conquerors had presumably abridged following William's invasion of the island in 1066. However specious such claims were and however distorted the history they invoked, revolutions have often been initiated as defensive actions. What Americans were trying to "conserve" in reaction to British interference was a spectrum of English liberties, many of which, in fact, were by no means conservative in the usual meaning of the term.

After the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–89, in which the last Stuart monarch was replaced with the more domesticated. Parliament-controlled monarchs, American colonists, even more than their English cousins, elaborated the "rights of Englishmen" into fairly autonomous institutions, ranging from oligarchical colonial legislatures typified by the House of Burgesses in Virginia to direct-democratic town meetings in New England—assemblies that were quite capable, when necessary, of defying royal colonial governors and raising barriers to the exercise of arbitrary powers not only by the Crown but also by the British Parliament. Indeed, on the eve of the Revolution, many colonists, echoing the English Roundheads of the 1640s, considered that the Crown and its ministers were usurping the sovereignty of their institutions.

But as the American Revolution unfolded, Americans did not merely "conserve" local institutional forms of "Englishmen's rights"; rather, the very momentum of popular boycotts, riots, acts of defiance of the royal authorities in their land; the establishment of grassroots institutions to mobilize people against the royal and parliamentary invasion of their "liberties"; and finally the actual facts of armed insurrection that spread through the colonics—all produced a very radical institutional upheaval. Out of this upheaval emerged new political ideals and values and popular insurrectionary institutions that had an inestimable impact on Euro-American history, and which were to reappear, often with no change of name, as we shall see, in the French Revolution itself. Although the ideas of the age of Enlightenment "were more fully incorporated and less disputed in America than in Europe," as Palmer observes,

> [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.[6]

The American Revolution, in effect, marked the culmination of revolutionary tendencies that had been a significant part of the Atlantic seaboard's colonization as far back as the 1630s—and it is to these tendencies that we must first turn our attention.

THE ORIGINS OF REBELLION

Perhaps the most important single factor that shaped the trajectory of the Revolution was the availability of vast expanses of land for settlement and the existence of a strong and highly

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[6] *Ibid.,* p. 189.

independent yeomanry. In this respect, the situation of the American colonists was quite different from that of European revolutionaries. England's yeoman population was losing out to land enclosures, a process that would ultimately create an urban proletariat, while later, in France, it was not until after the Revolution began that redistribution of former church lands would create a large peasant stratum.

By contrast, the American colonies nestled at the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, beyond which lay a vast expanse of arable land. This immense area rendered unnecessary the demand for radical land redistribution, such as occurred in France. Although the growth of the yeoman population was achieved at the expense of rich Indian cultures, it produced quite unique political conditions. In New England, the abundance of arable land made possible a self-conscious yeomanry that saw no reason why its self-sufficient lifeways should be inhibited by any exogenous elements, such as merchants, speculators, or, later, industrial entrepreneurs. Despite the immense landholdings that eastern speculators and southern plantation owners acquired, the western frontier provided a major reservoir that absorbed millions of landless immigrants for more than a century after the Revolution came to an end.

Paradoxically, the frontier also served as a force to dampen social unrest by absorbing many discontented elements. When more aggressive, militant, and socially unruly individuals found their aims stymied by large landowners and wealthy merchants, they drifted westward rather than remain behind and provide leadership to popular movements against privileged elites. On the frontier, moreover, these militant elements could create their own rough-and-ready egalitarian communities, and when further immigrants rolled in, they could move still further on to recreate democratic lifeways in the West—or at times remain where they were and become elites in their own right. The vastness of the continent, the richness of its soil, its uncharted wilderness, and the absence of a highly stratified society made possible the formulation of an egalitarian "social contract" that kept the democratic ideals of the English Levellers very much alive.

English colonization of the New World did not begin in earnest until the opening decades of the seventeenth century, when the Virginia Company, chartered in 1606, established a permanent community at Jamestown. This settlement was more of a business enterprise than an idealistic undertaking. By 1630, tobacco shipments from the new colony had soared from a mere token £2,000 of cured leaves to about £1.5 million, anchoring the southern colonies in a plantation way of life. In the coastal areas of Virginia and the Carolinas, the white landed gentry, who tended to be Anglican, even developed aristocratic pretensions, and their affinity for hierarchy was second nature. This oligarchy lived in hostile coexistence with its own white indentured servants and a growing number of African slaves.

Pushed inland into the demanding foothills of the Appalachians—the Piedmont—an impoverished white population of Scotch-Irish settlers formed insulated communities of their own that were more likely to be Presbyterian than Anglican and that shared the hardships of frontier life: its poverty, insecurity, and continued Indian raids. These yeoman farmers had little patience with the social distinctions that coastal elites so fervently cultivated. The common people, complained William Byrd, "are rarely guilty of flattering or making any court to their governors, but treat them with all the excess of freedom and familiarity."[7]

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[7] Quoted in Elisha P. Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Books, 1955), p. 73.

These backcountry settlers typify another feature that contributed to the Revolution. In many parts of the colonies, a militia system had developed that made for a mentality and character structure among American farmers that had long since ebbed among the lower classes in England, where the once volatile "train bands" of the 1620s and 1630s had been replaced by a stable professional standing army. At a time when England was instructing its lower and middle classes in the arts of servility, the demanding living conditions in America were instructing its population in the arts of self-assurance. Survival in a harsh land required not only strong community ties but keen marksmanship. Three wars in which American militia, along with British regulars, fought the French at outposts on the frontier, and numerous wars against Indians who resisted white encroachments on their lands produced in the colonies a well-trained popular military force and a skilled officer cadre that, by the eve of the Revolution, knew the art of warfare as well as, if not better than, their British counterparts.

This is not to say that there were no class conflicts in colonial America; indeed, quite to the contrary: opposing class interests within the colonies gave rise to considerable domestic skirmishing between different strata of the population. Local armed uprisings were common enough, partly because ordinary colonists were irascible in temperament, and partly because their familiarity with arms gave them the ability forcefully to assert their demands. These hardy people were as accustomed to taking direct action in defense of their rights as they were forward in their demeanor. When a seventeenth-century royal governor of Virginia, William Berkeley, voiced his upper-class concerns—"How miserable that man is that Govemes a people wher six parts of seavan at least are Poore Endebted Discontented and Armed"[8]—his complaint reflected not only serious economic inequities but fears that an armed people would try to resolve those inequities in their own combative way.

The sharpest colonial hatreds were initially domestic: the rough Piedmont lived in enduring hatred of the sophisticated and aristocratic coastal plain. In Virginia, Nat Bacon led a revolt of 1676 that was conducted largely by frontiersmen who demanded not only protection against Indian raids but the easing of inequitable taxation of the poor and the lifting of controls over the beaver trade that favored the well-to-do. The revolt reached even more menacing proportions when it was joined by armed indentured servants and black slaves. Other civil conflicts broke out between the highly privileged planter clique that controlled the provincial assemblies and the backcountry settlers, who felt overtaxed by their social betters and denied their democratic rights.

The failure of Bacon's rebellion inflamed the ingrained hatred toward the quasi-aristocratic Anglican tobacco planters that festered among the rude Presbyterian frontiersmen. On the eve of the Revolution, associations of frontier settlers known as Regulators—a term that would be used for armed backcountry rebels throughout the century—came into conflict with the semiaristocratic legislators from the Atlantic seaboard. Such revolts would likely have become chronic throughout the colonial period had planters not imported ever more black slaves to provide the labor upon which the southern economy was built. Indeed, one reason planters accelerated the importation of black slaves was to avoid still another revolt like Bacon's, which, had created a panic among elite strata in southern society.

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[8] William Berkeley to Thomas Ludwell (July 1676), Henry Coventry Papers at estate of the Marquis of Bath (microfilm, Library of Congress), no. 77, fo. 145.

In New England and the middle Atlantic colonies, settlers on the edge of the wilderness developed strong antagonisms toward city merchants and well-to-do artisans. By the eighteenth century, in the coastal cities the poor and bitterly oppressed were a visible part of the population. Homeless children, indeed entire families, lived precarious lives in the streets; young people were impressed into service in trading ships, whalers, and fishing vessels; most indentured servants were little more than slaves for the period of their servitude, and many of them did not survive their often harsh treatment. At the same time, merchants in the northern provinces, planters in the southern, and lawyers almost everywhere stood at the summit of colonial society and filled the various provincial legislatures. The contrast between street beggars misshapen by poor nutrition and neglect, on the one hand, and merchants and landed proprietors who rode in ornate carriages with black drivers and liverymen, on the other, was evident to any honest visitor to the colonies.

Within the working population, sharp antagonisms divided unskilled laborers—many of whom earned a miserable day-to-day livelihood on the wharves of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston—from masterartisans, who enjoyed a substantially higher standard of living. These masterartisans, in turn, ruthlessly exploited apprentices and especially journeymen, who were increasingly denied the opportunity to advance their guild status. Taken together, these economic strata—as well as indentured servants and slaves—tended to share a common hatred of the merchants, who formed the wealthiest class in the colonies as a whole.

Moreover, the colonies themselves were very much at odds with one another. New York and New Hampshire conflicted over claims to the so-called Hampshire Grants, which were later to become the separate and extremely radical state of Vermont; Virginia and Pennsylvania clashed over claims to the unsettled lands of the Ohio Valley; and the southern colonies competed for lands in the Alleghenies and westward—lands vital to the tobacco plantation economy because of the enormous toll that the crop takes on soil fertility. Although differences between the colonies over religious issues diminished with the passing of time, varying religious and cultural traditions also pitted settlements against each other. Finally, frictions between colonial assemblies and their royal governors, and between municipal organs of government and colony-wide institutions, became nearly continuous.

NEW ENGLAND TOWN MEETINGS

The slave plantation economy of the south and the semifeudal patroon system of the Dutch in the Hudson Valley stood in marked contrast to the lifeways that prevailed in New England—the region that became the popular center for the Revolution *par excellence.* In 1629, the Massachusetts Bay Company, a branch of the Virginia Company, initiated the major settlement of New England, literally rescuing the devout Puritan colony at Plymouth from ruin after its founding in 1620. The Company steadily populated the region with yeoman farmers, merchants, fishermen, and artisans, and new colonies were soon founded in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, partly because of religious differences with Puritan Massachusetts and partly because of the need for land. But socially the New England colonies were surprisingly alike: they were based on independent farmsteads organized into a village society, on the one hand, and a coastal merchant class oriented toward internal and foreign trade, on the other.

Whether consciously or not, the Congregationalist world of the Puritans was marked by democratic values similar to those that had surfaced during the English Revolution. Democracy

was explicitly loathsome to Congregational divines: they believed rather in rule by the elect, whose authority was God-given and authorized by Scripture. Indeed, democracy was "the meanest and worst of all forms of government," wrote John Winthrop.[9] Yet even as the Congregationalists denied that they pursued democratic ideas, Puritan religious precepts stood in flat opposition to ecclesiastical hierarchy—which, they believed, was contradicted by the Bible—and thus, if only inadvertently, their religious order gave rise to remarkably democratic institutions. Rather than forming a unitary church presided over by bishops and presbyters, each Puritan congregation created its own church, by means of a compact or covenant among individual men and women who agreed to abide by Scripture, look after each other's souls, and elect their own minister, thereby fulfilling an old demand that had been raised in the German Peasant War of 1524–25.

Not only were the New England congregations self-constituted and, as such, virtually all-powerful in religious matters, but they themselves and no one else wrote the individual covenants that bound them together. Almost unavoidably, the towns they formed became extensions of their religious congregations and, over time, answerable only to themselves, not to any higher governmental authority. Formed on thirty-six-square-mile parcels of land patented by the Massachusetts assembly, they governed themselves in town meetings, which were the secular counterpart of the covenanted religious community. Thus, where the congregation elected its minister, the town in turn elected its moderator and selectmen; both met in the meetinghouse in the center of town. By 1641, the Massachusetts Body of Liberties recognized their legal existence and acknowledged their considerable autonomy in managing' their own local affairs.

During the early years of settlement, to be sure, Massachusetts townspeople permitted these local powers to devolve on the selectmen, who formed an ongoing oligarchy, reelected for one-year terms year after year. By 1720, however, the town meetings had ceased to act as rubber stamps for the decisions of their selectmen on day-to-day affairs, even on matters as fundamental as altering bylaws. The towns now met more frequently—indeed, whenever they deemed it necessary—and easily turned unsuitable selectmen out of office, electing their moderators and engaging in ever more contentious debates. By 1705, when Cotton Mather was attempting to unify and centralize authority in the congregational churches, John Wise, the head of the church at Ipswich, could rebut him and, remarkably for the time, extol *democracy* as "a form of government which the light of *nature* [not God—M.B.] does highly value, and often directs us to as most agreeable to the just and natural prerogatives of human beings."[10]

Perhaps more important than ideology was the reality of democratic lifeways in New England and in the backcountry of the other colonies. The demands of colonization fostered a highly egalitarian outlook on the ever-changing frontier. When New England was the frontier in the 1630s, town meetings were created, as we noted, largely as an extension of a town's Congregational church to civil affairs, and the franchise expanded steadily with new settlers. In time, compared with the southern colonies, where perhaps one out of ten white males was an eligible voter and only the most select members of society gained entry to the provincial assemblies, four out of five New Englanders had the right to vote, and commoners often sat alongside wealthy merchants and lawyers in colonial legislatures. Although, before 1691, church membership in Massachusetts was a prerequisite for voting, over time voting qualifications were steadily re-

[9] John Winthrop, "Defense of the Negative Vote," June 4,1643, quoted in Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Meetinghouse Hill 1630–1783(1952;* New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 36.

[10] John Wise, "Vindication of the Government of New England Churches" (1717), in Perry Miller, ed.. *The American Puritans* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), p. 135, emphasis added.

duced and the franchise extended from church members to householders of even fairly limited means. Once the religious qualification was eliminated, the only remaining qualification for participation in a town meeting was that a man was required to have an income of 50 shillings. But after a while it was not difficult for male inhabitants with very little property or low incomes to meet this requirement, with the result that most male inhabitants of a town were enfranchised.[11]

The town meetinghouse finally became a community's genuine popular center, and as an institution it acquired fairly considerable powers. Town meetings could levy taxes, distribute land, settle property disputes, admit new residents, organize and control the militia, construct roads, and voice and debate political opinions on all issues in times of social unrest. Moreover, the towns enjoyed considerable autonomy in managing their own affairs. "The only links connecting the town with the larger world in the colonial capital," observes Richard Lingeman, "were the deputy it sent to the legislature and the county officials—the sheriff and the circuit judges—who were appointed by the governor."[12] Authority was based upon the direct face-to-face democracy of the community, and delegation or representation was strictly mandated by the town meeting itself. When the Massachusetts towns dispatched legislators to the colonial assembly or General Court in Boston, their mandate limited them to being mere agents of the town, and they could vote on any given issue only as they had been instructed by their town meetings. So assiduous were the Massachusetts towns in assuring that their delegates behaved according to their mandates that they often sent along a second member whose sole role was to see how each deputy voted in the assembly. Finally they insisted that assembly proceedings be published so that all citizens could scrutinize the behavior of their deputies.

NEWER COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS

The establishment of the mid-Atlantic seaboard and newer colonies may be summarized rather quickly. New York, initially settled by the Dutch for commercial reasons, was based on a patroon system whereby large landowners along the Hudson and Delaware Rivers were allowed to exercise nearly feudal rights over their large estates, such as the right to appoint local officials and the authority to set up local courts. In 1664 New Netherlands was taken over by the English, who did not dismantle the Dutch system; thus, a quasi-feudal society extended up the Hudson Valley and remained in place well into the Revolution, although, incongruously, the colony's famous port city of New York—formerly New Amsterdam—soon rivaled Boston as a center of business activity.

Maryland was settled almost exclusively for economic purposes, and its wellto-do founders, like the Dutch patroons in the Hudson Valley, established a semifeudai dominion structured around a class of manorial landlords with bond servants, tenants, and slaves interspersed with small but fairly independent farmers. Pennsylvania, initially chartered by William Penn as a haven for English Quakers, became the center for an extraordinary variety of religious immigrants, such as German Lutherans, Welsh Baptists, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, and later Catholics

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[11] Needless to say, women and children had very limited rights in Massachusetts, as was true of the colonies generally. Indeed, rights such as the franchise and economic independence for women did not appear in the Western world until the French Revolution, and even then they were rescinded shortly thereafter, not to be reinstituted until the present century.

[12] Richard Lingeman, *Small Town America: A Narrative History, 1620-The Present* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), p. 50.

and Jews. Philadelphia, in turn, became one of the most culturally vibrant of American cities, even though an oligarchy of Quaker merchants presided over its political life. New Jersey and the Carolinas were peopled by small farmers and manorial landlords respectively, and only slowly established a distinctive cultural identity—in the case of New Jersey, a highly varied and ambiguous one.

Georgia was initially settled as a haven for the indigent and debtors by the English philanthropist James Oglethorpe, who actually prohibited slavery and opened the doors of the colony to religious sectarians of every variety as well as Jews. (Catholic settlers, to be sure, were prohibited.) But the colony's extraordinary diversity, high-minded goals, and religious tolerance could not withstand the pressure of economic forces. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, coastal Georgia had been parceled into plantations worked by African slaves, and its philanthropic goals were sacrificed to the intensive cultivation of tobacco for material gain. Like the Carolina Piedmont, its highlands became a turbulent backwater of largely indigent—and indignant— white farmers, from which angry Regulators surfaced who engaged in ongoing social conflicts with the wealthy landlords.

Initially, the thirteen colonies were of three political types: corporate. Crown and proprietary. The New England colonies were corporate, which meant that they enjoyed considerable local autonomy, possessing their own charters and largely self-governing assemblies. Although Massachusetts governors were appointed by the Crown after 1692, Rhode Island and Connecticut elected their own governors and executive councils. By contrast, Crown colonies such as the Carolinas, Georgia, New Jersey, and New York were obliged to accept governors and councils chosen by the Crown. The proprietary colonies—most notably, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania— were founded by proprietary lords, such as the Penn family, who enjoyed feudalistic powers granted by the king. Ostensibly managed by chartered companies, these companies' authority declined rapidly, and in time the proprietary colonies simply became Crown possessions. Hence, apart from those of Rhode Island and Connecticut, all colonial governors were eventually either appointed or approved by the king, whose powers over the colonies were nominally sweeping. The Crown could appoint or reject all civil authorities, veto legislation enacted by the colonial assemblies, and prorogue them at will.

The colonial legislatures, for their part, normally consisted of fairly well-to-do individuals: planters, merchants, and freeholders, many of whom were also lawyers or had legal training, In periods of social stability, tensions between the Crown and the colonies were low; as Palmer notes, only 5 percent of the laws passed by colonial assemblies were actually vetoed by London.[13] But potentially, at least, these legislatures formed a rival power to the executive: they could, if they chose, make a governor's life utterly miserable and, if necessary, all but annul his authority. "These little parliaments enjoyed powers which were nowhere strictly defined in laws, charters, and decrees," observe Charles and Mary Beard in their magisterial history of the United States.

> From small and obscure beginnings they grew in dignity until they took on some of the pomp and circumstance long associated with the House of Commons. In the course of time they claimed as their own and exercised in fact the right of laying taxes, raising troops, incurring debts, issuing currency, fixing the salaries of royal officers, and appointing agents to represent them in their dealings with the government at London; and, going beyond such functions, they covered by legislation of

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[13] Palmer, *Democratic Revolutions,* p. 190.

their own wide domains of civil and criminal law—subject always to terms of charters, acts of Parliament, and the prerogatives of the Crown.[14]

The colonial assemblies, to be sure, often defended the interests of domestic elites against those of the lower classes. Yet: "Endowed with such impressive authority," the Beards continue,

> these assemblies naturally drew to themselves all the local interests which were struggling to realize their demands in law and ordinance. They were the laboratories in which were formulated all the grievances of the colonists against the government in England. They were training schools where lawyers could employ their talents in political declamation, outwitting royal officers by clever legal devices. In short, in the representative assemblies were brought to a focus the designs and passions of those rising economic groups which gave strength to America and threw her into opposition to the governing classes of the mother country. Serving as the points of contact with royal officers and the English Crown, they received the first impact of battle when laws were vetoed and instructions were handed out by the king's governors or agents of the proprietors.[15]

Palmer, in fact, regards these assemblies as "the most democratically recruited of all such constituted bodies in the Western World." In New England, the great majority of the people were enfranchised, while half or more enjoyed the right to vote in New Jersey and about half or less in Virginia.[16] Indeed:

> 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.[17]

Yet the radicalism of the American Revolution is hardly exhausted by an account of the colonial legislatures. Too often overlooked by Palmer, the Beards, and a great many historians of the American Revolution were the local popular institutions that sprang up at the grassroots to conduct the revolution— institutions that ultimately formed a radical-democratic dual power at the grassroots level to oppose not only British rule in America and Tory sympathizers but wealthy elites at home.

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[14] Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization,* revised and enlarged ed., vol. 1 (originally published 1927; New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 111.

[15] *Ibid.,* pp, 111–12.

[16] Palmer, *Democratic Revolutions,* p. 190.

[17] *Ibid.,* p. 191.

A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

The Crown's subjects, it must be emphasized, were not a vanquished people. They were feisty English Anglicans and Congregationalists for the most part, as well as Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, many of whom still marched into battle with kilts and bagpipes. They included Dutch burghers, whose ancestors had fought Spanish oppression; Lutheran and Anabaptist Germans, whose radical traditions dated back to the Peasant War; and an array of fiercely independent backwoodsmen, who had been schooled in Indian wars and skirmishes with French adventurers. Collectively, colonial Americans were a highly adventurous, largely plebeian people, however much their elites aspired to the staid aristocratic ways of London and Paris.

It testifies to the fairly egalitarian atmosphere in most colonial settlements that neither Patrick Henry in Virginia nor Sam Adams in Massachusetts was a man of means or affected aristocratic airs. Adams spent much of his time among the boisterous artisans and wharfsmen of Boston who provided the muscle for the chronic riots in the city, while Henry deliberately affected crude rustic manners, often speaking in the accent of a backcountryman rather than using the polished expressions of an urban dweller. He dressed carelessly, wearing cheap clothing that affronted his well-to-do peers; in fact, most upper-class British visitors found that a "most disgusting equality" prevailed in the colonies, and what differences in material means there were did not always produce differences in social status.[18]

Nor were those who affected aristocratic airs necessarily of a deferential cast of mind. Andrew Burnaby, an English clergyman who traveled through Virginia in 1759, thought the young bloods of the province "haughty and jealous of their liberties, impatient of restraint and [they] can scarcely bear the thought of being controuled by any superior power."[19] Such qualities were not conducive to the servility that most British aristocrats would have preferred in their American cousins. The colonial elites were made up of highly educated men: Virginia aristocrats gained a "sound education in the ancient classics and political theory" at the College of William and Mary, as did many of the revolutionary leaders of New England at Harvard College. "Running a plantation, serving on the [Governor's] council or in the house of burgesses," according to Samuel Eliot Morison, "and reading Cicero, Polybius, and Locke gave Virginians excellent training in statesmanship."[20] Nor were well-to-do colonials the only beneficiaries of an education. As early as 1692, every Massachusetts town was required to provide a free grammar school for each child in the community.

The cities, cottages, and assemblies of the colonies had, in effect, produced a remarkably literate public, nurtured on regular readings of Scriptures and law books, as well as the classics. It should be noted that the first edition of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* reached as many as 100,000 adult readers, a very substantial literate public. To a large proportion of the population, the duties that were ordained by Deuteronomy, even the tenets advanced in Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*, were probably as familiar as royal fiats. The assemblies of this people—be they town meetings or provincial legislatures—had trained them in the arts of polemic, legal discourse, and rational explanations for selfgovernment. The town meetings in New England and colonial assemblies generally taught many American colonials how to govern themselves,

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[18] Quoted in Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 172.

[19] Quoted in Morison, *Oxford History,* p. 174.

[20] Morison, *Oxford History,* pp. 174–5.

especially locally, to an extent that would have astonished most continental Europeans of their day.

Finally, the conflict between England and America emerged at a time when the Enlightenment was cresting in Europe and encompassing the New World. The utopian Puritan vision of "a city on the hill," a "New Jerusalem" in the American wilderness, to be sure, was never lost by the colonials, irrespective of their religious and regional differences, but the Enlightenment had secularized this vision, particularly for home-grown intellectuals like the unassuming Benjamin Franklin. Franklin, it should be noted, had a European reputation as a savant: his scientific works, writings, and technical innovations won him international acclaim for his remarkable combination of intellectual and artisanal virtues. When he met with Voltaire in Paris and the two men embraced each other publicly, they produced a great ovation from the Parisians that should have signaled to England's arrogant rulers that they were not dealing with the American country dolts depicted in their snide cartoons. Least of all were they dealing with men and women who were willing to live in abject servility to the dull-witted king who had been installed on the British throne. A society, remarkably egalitarian for its time in outlook, if not in all of its institutions, had arisen that no longer deferred to petty hierarchical distinctions. Unknown to Parliament, the Crown, and even the royal governors of the colonies, British America had spawned a new kind of individual who was neither a rural naif nor a craven subject but an active citizen. What some two centuries of colonization had begun, British mercantilism and royal arrogance largely completed in the crucible of a revolution.

Chapter 10. Colonial Resistance

There is little to show that the mother country was very motherly toward her American colonies. From the 1650s onward, British economic policy was overwhelmingly mercantilist in character, aimed at the accrual of a favorable balance of trade, in which raw materials flowed into England at the expense not only of commercial rivals but of the colonies themselves. In the mercantilist world, wealth and a sound commercial policy required the accumulation of bullion. Hence, the Crown sought not so much to expand as to *control* the market in order to acquire gold and silver, a policy that it often implemented by outright parasitism and commercial piracy.

Britain's policy toward its American colonies, basically guided by the mercantilist ideas of the day, aimed not to foster their industrial development but to pillage them of their resources. One of the most succinct statements of this policy was made by Sir Francis Bernard, an eighteenth-century governor of Massachusetts: "The two great objects of Great Britain in regard to the American trade," Bernard observed,

> must be (first) to oblige her American subjects to take from Great Britain only, all the manufactures and European goods which she can supply them with: [and second,] To regulate the foreign trade of the Americans so that the profits thereof may finally center in Great Britain, or be applied to the improvement of her empire. Whenever these two purposes militate against each other, that which is most advantageous to Great Britain ought to be preferred.[21]

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[21] Quoted in Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization,* revised and enlarged ed., vol. 1 (originally published 1927; New York; Macmillan, 1949), pp. 115–16.

Indeed, from the early days of settlement, although southern agriculture flourished, British mercantile policies directed this slave-worked wealth into tobacco, rice, and indigo, exclusively for English markets and coffers. Credit supplied by English merchants to the plantation owners came with such crippling interest rates that many planters and their families were held in thrall to London merchants for generations. In addition to high interest rates, planters had to pay import duties at English ports, costs of transportation, commission rates to English salesmen, warehouse, inspection, insurance fees, and the like. To counter the soil exhaustion produced by the cultivation of tobacco, planters continually needed new land—a need that the Crown frustrated when it spitefully barred settlement west of the Alleghenies in 1763.

According to the mercantile system, the colonists who reaped and exported these raw materials were not to manufacture anything that would compete with British industry. Rather, Americans were to be consumers exclusively of English manufactures. Yet colonial manufactures developed nonetheless, posing no trivial problem for British entrepreneurs. An estimated seventy ships a year were constructed in New England shipyards, followed by forty-five in New York and Pennsylvania and forty in the southern colonies, making an annual total of more than 150. Inland from the port cities, the colonies supported a growing number of small lumber mills, family-made and later community-made textiles, earthenwares, leather goods, and iron forges that yielded much-needed hardware, nails, kettles, hoes, spades, and guns. These artisanal manufactures directly competed with British imports. By the 1750s, furious protests from English ironmongers, leather-workers, woodcutters, and a variety of other tradesmen were flooding Parliament. The colonials, in turn, were faced with mounting debts, partly for want of coinage to pay for the manufactures they were obliged to purchase from Britain.

Mercantilist policy, to be sure, had partly motivated the land grants that the Stuart kings gave to corporate enterprises such as the Virginia Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company, but active legislation to ensure Britain's commercial monopoly over all its colonies did not really get under way until the mid-seventeenth century—that is, during Cromwell's Protectorate. In 1651, the East India and Levant Trading companies managed to persuade the government to compel the colonies to transport their produce to England exclusively in English ships manned by English crews, to use only English ships in their coastal traffic—the primary means of intercolonial transport—and to export raw materials such as salted fish, timber, and whale products to Britain alone. To this legislation—the first of the notorious Navigation Acts—more and more articles were added between 1660 and 1696, including sugar, tobacco, wool, rice, furs, lumber, iron, copper—indeed, virtually all exportable products from the New World. Barred from shipping goods to non-British ports, American ships were obliged to go first to British ports for their produce to be reshipped to markets elsewhere.

Other legislation required colonials to purchase manufactured goods exclusively from England. Persistent attempts were made to limit or arrest colonial manufacturing, metallurgy, and even household weaving, lest they compete with similar English commodities. A Pennsylvania law to foster commercial shoemaking, a New York act to develop sailcloth production, and a Massachusetts ordinance for promoting linen production—all were disallowed by the mother country. Other regulations had the effect of limiting intercolonial trade along the Atlantic seaboard. The Crown went so far as to inhibit Virginia's attempts to establish new towns, lest they become industrial rivals of English manufacturers.

It is difficult to say how the sparsely populated American colonies would have reacted if the Navigation Acts had been strictly enforced—but they were not. For a century a succession of wars

with Britain's commercial rivals—the Dutch, Spanish, and French, in different coalitions with each other—kept the Crown too occupied to enforce its commercial restrictions on the colonies. American merchants, for their part, realized that if they were to prosper, they had to bypass these regulations by all means possible, otherwise they would be rendered completely subservient to British commerce.

As it turned out, American infractions of the Navigation Acts were chronic. American ships traded freely with Europe, Africa, the Indies, and other areas, blatantly ignoring the Acts; in fact, by the 1760s, smuggling had become a way of life for many coastal colonials. The population everywhere avidly protected its smugglers and even smuggled goods for political as well as economic reasons. Indeed, smugglers were among the most respectable businessmen in the colonies: after 1736, Thomas Hancock, the father of the rebellious John Hancock, made a fortune as a smuggler—and earned considerable respect for his activities. The illegal commercial prowess of the northern colonies was especially notorious. A merchant would purchase sugar and molasses from the West Indies—and molasses from the French possessions in the Indies was considerably cheaper than that of the British possessions, which mercantilism constrained the Yankee traders to buy.

Little wonder, then, that in 1763, 97 percent of the molasses imported into Massachusetts was smuggled. Once in New England, this molasses was processed into rum, which was then shipped to Africa, where it was used to buy slaves. These slaves were brought across the Atlantic to the Indies and the South, where they were forced to produce the sugar that was sent north to New England. This three-way pattern of trade generated large fortunes for Boston merchant families; indeed, so great was the appetite of Yankee traders for commercial intercourse that they even supplied naval stores to England's enemy, France.

The French, in turn, had replaced the Spanish as the hereditary enemies of the British, and their colony, Quebec, was an obstacle to English hegemony in North America. During the French and Indian War, which broke out in 1756, and in which Britain and France fought for domination of North America, American militiamen joined British troops, some with greater zeal than others, to defeat the French, who had induced Indians to harass the frontier colonists. Britain finally cowed France on the Plains of Abraham outside of Quebec City in 1759, neutralizing France as a colonial power in North America, and the 1763 Peace of Paris now left the British alone, face-to-face with their colonial subjects along the Atlantic seaboard. American colonists now had no other major European adversary to confront but England, which soon became the greatest impediment to the exercise of their liberties and to their trade.

In fact, the seven-year-long war had provided Americans with considerable profits; to the British, however, it had been very costly. Parliament, which regarded the conflict as a benign and self-sacrificing struggle waged to protect American settlements from French and Indian attacks, felt that it was time for the Americans to provide at least some recompense to the Crown. The Navigation Acts, which had been all but dormant since their passage during the preceding century, were now enforced, and with increasing vigor. The Americans, in turn, were little disposed to comply with them. They remembered all too well the numerous wars they had fought against the Indians in which Britain had provided them with no assistance, and they chafed at the disparaging attitudes that the British regulars had held toward the rough American militiamen who fought with them against the French.

This dissension was complicated by the ascent of a stubborn, strong-willed, and, as it turned out, mentally unsound monarch, George III, who became the most politically intrusive of the

Hanoverian kings of Britain. Although the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had assured supremacy to Parliament in the allimportant matters of policy and finance, it had not clearly defined the full range of the monarch's authority. English kings could still appoint and dismiss ministers, use patronage to corrupt Parliament, and play an active role in colonial policy. The difficulties in adjusting the authority of the monarch to the power of Parliament were further complicated by the fact that the Earl of Bute, the new king's tutor, mentor, and a privy councillor, believed in the supremacy of the monarchy over Parliament—a view his young royal student thoroughly imbibed. Britain's economic need to cover its war debts by taxing the colonies was thus reinforced by the monarchy's political need to create a more authoritarian regime at home and abroad. Where once Britain had administered its empire with laxity—indeed, with benign neglect—the Crown now took determined measures to expand and centralize all colonial administration under monarchical rule.

The new stridency in Britain's policy toward its empire occurred precisely at a time when the French were driven from North America, as has been noted, and the need for the mother country to aid the colonies had all but disappeared. The colonies, in fact, had developed into thirteen *de facto* independent nations, each with a potential for economic and demographic growth that seemed enormous. More forward-thinking American colonists knew that they had to achieve home rule juridically, even though they had already achieved it in almost all other respects *de facto,* and, without saying as much, they seemed to be convinced that the logic of colonial development ultimately led to outright independence from Britain. Yet the policies followed by British Tories, conservative Whigs, and certainly by George III and his Court cabal tried to expand not only the economic but also political sovereignty of England over the colonies. The growing arrogance of the Court and the Tory parliamentarians was heading into direct collision with greater colonial self-assertiveness and self-confidence—two radically opposing trends that, if it continued, could lead only to a war for independence.

RESISTANCE TO TAXATION

When the British undertook to rigorously enforce the Navigation Acts, the task of enforcement fell to the new Tory prime minister, George Grenville, who, anticipating popular resistance to his policies, stationed an intimidating force of ten thousand British regulars in colonial ports. Adding to this extremely provocative step, Grenville in 1755 allowed duty collectors and soldiers to use warrants called "writs of assistance" that enabled them freely to search ships, wharves, warehouses, retail outlets, and even homes for smuggled goods. The highly arbitrary way in which the searches were conducted, often on the merest suspicion of smuggling and sometimes even maliciously to harass unfriendly colonials, produced a far-reaching impact on the already restive Americans. Nothing seemed more outrageous than the freedom that the troops acquired to break into and search any kind of domicile. Riots broke out; soldiers were pelted with rocks; known British sympathizers were insulted; and those who favored the Crown's policies were targets of unremitting anger. To most Americans, the writs were seen as outrageous affronts to traditional popular claims of the "rights of Englishmen."

In response, the Grenville ministry adopted only faint conciliatory halfmeasures, which served only to reveal its weakness without allaying public anger. It lowered duties on coffee, various wines, and other items, while enforcing the collection of existing duties all the more rigorously and clumsily. When some colonial assemblies tried to issue paper money for local

trade, owing largely to the lack of metallic currency for domestic use—a problem that, as has been noted, stemmed from the need of Americans to pay their debts in coin to their English counterparts—the ministry flatly prohibited such measures, a prohibition that could serve no purpose other than to assert the authority of the British pound, and with it the power of the Crown to regulate colonial economic life.

Matters were worsened further when, in 1763, the Grenville ministry drew a boundary line along the watershed of the Allegheny Mountains, proclaiming all lands to the west closed to colonial settlement. Ostensibly, this proclamation was intended to remove any causes for Indian uprisings, which the ministry, lacking funds, complained it could not suppress—and, more provocatively, to retain the wilderness as a source of fur pelts. Few of the colonists, however, doubted that the ministry was trying to emphasize the serious consequences that would befall the Americans if they failed to pay duties to the Crown. The Proclamation Line, as it was called, was made to be ignored; to observe it would have proved fatal to the tobacco planters, who needed fertile soil to keep the southern economy alive, and landless or land-poor settlers saw it as an intolerable obstacle to the carving out of farms beyond the mountains. The main effect of these policies was to turn illegal behavior into a general way of life in the colonies and to increase the disrespect for the Crown and its representatives that people felt throughout America.

The monarchy and its supporters, to be sure, could still count on the traditional loyalties that colonists felt for the mother country and on disunities that existed between the colonies themselves. But nothing could have raised colonial anger or fostered a conscious drive for home rule more effectively than the Grenville ministry's measures, its endless nuisance duties, its attempts to challenge the freedom of colonial legislatures to promote local interests, and its prohibition of western settlement.

At length, on March 22, 1765, the Grenville ministry finally imposed a fiscal measure that definitively brought more colonists in common opposition to its policies, namely, the notorious Stamp Act. Colonists were now obliged to affix stamps on a whole array of documents necessary for daily life—not only on wills, deeds, contracts, licenses, and the like, but also on pamphlets, calendars, newspapers, and even dice and playing cards. Without such stamps, which were sold by government-appointed individuals, legal documents were no longer valid, indeed illegal. Although such stamp taxes were common enough in Europe, Americans, like their Puritan ancestors in England a century earlier, were unaccustomed to the levy and viewed it as an outrage. Not only was the stamp tax a costly nuisance, it was the first direct tax—as distinguished from a tariff—that the colonists had been obliged to pay to a government in which they had absolutely no parliamentary representation.

The amount of revenue that the Grenville ministry expected to receive from the tax was, in fact, quite small—roughly £60,000 per annum—hence, more than money was at stake on both sides of the issue. To Britain, the tax symbolized its right to exercise complete ministerial and parliamentary control over the colonies. The Americans regarded the tax as a direct challenge to the right of their own colonial legislatures to control the purse. The cry "No taxation without representation" was similar, in principle, to the opposition that John Pym and other Parliamentary leaders had voiced generations earlier to Charles I's arbitrary imposition of ship money and other levies without the consent of the House of Commons. Americans saw the tax, in effect, more as a political challenge to the rights of a free people than as a major economic burden. Their hostility focused more on the political logic of the stamp tax than on the economic costs it entailed.

Opposition to the Stamp Act united colonists across all social lines: southern planters who were heavily indebted to British creditors; northern colonists who were harassed by trade restrictions; artisans who chafed under the limitations on manufactures; and backwoodsmen who resented any settlement restrictions. Many colonists formed local clubs (most famously, the Sons of Liberty—as well as Daughters of Liberty in New Jersey) to force a revocation of the Stamp Act, and although the Sons' membership came largely from the middle and upper classes, it broadened considerably as the movement spread. From Connecticut, where the Sons of Liberty had originated, the clubs spread to Boston, where the volatile Sam Adams was a key spokesman against British authority, and further, as far south as Charleston, where the club met in the building of the Fireman's Association. In Baltimore the Sons were distinctly plebeian, emerging out of the Ancient and Honorable Mechanical Company, and in Philadelphia they were recruited from the Heart-and-Hand Fire Company. More and more, the Sons became a movement of artisans and laborers, or "mechanics," as well as tradesmen, professionals, planters, and yeomen.

Whenever an attempt was made to implement the Act, the Sons organized large and repeated demonstrations in the streets of towns and cities, many of which ended in seeming riots. Yet as Jesse Lemisch points out, the riots showed that:

> the mob had begun to think and reason_Their "riots" were really extremely orderly and expressed a dear purpose. Again and again, when the mob's leaders lost control, the mob went on to attack the logical political enemy, not to plunder. They were led but not manipulated.[22]

The enormity of the popular American reaction against the Stamp Act—in crowd actions, popular meetings, and fiery denunciations—may well have astonished the ministry and its supporters. Stamp tax collectors were tarred and feathered, and places that sold the stamps were burned to the ground. In Boston, Governor Thomas Hutchinson's mansion was completely sacked. When the colonial militia were called out to suppress the riots, they flagrantly refused to obey the orders of the authorities. Crowds rioted against attempts not only to impose the measure but even to acknowledge its legitimacy, and they did so with a fury that finally caused the Grenville ministry to repeal the Act.

Once again, the ministry had overstepped its capacity to curb the colonies; but the repeal of the Stamp Act, far from allaying colonial resistance, served only to chum up popular sentiment against British authority on an unprecedented scale.

With incredible fatuity, Parliament fed this resistance to its authority even more by passing the Declaratory Act, which affirmed the House's absolute right to inflict any legislation it pleased upon the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." With this ominous clause, Parliament transformed a formerly loosely held empire into a tight unitary state, transforming itself into a tyrannical central government over the colonists. Parliament now felt free to billet troops in the homes of ordinary colonial citizens, demand recompense for damages that resulted from riots against the stamp tax, and centralize its authority to collect duties in a powerful Board of Commissioners. When the New York Assembly attempted to resist the billeting order, it was summarily dismissed by the home government.

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[22] Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History,* ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York; Pantheon, 1968), p. 20.

The notorious Townshend Act of 1767 that followed placed a new series of tariffs on a wide variety of goods that the colonists were obliged to purchase from Britain, including lead, glass, paper, paint, and tea. The Act created a furor. Its passage led not only to the usual riots and acts of defiance on the part of colonial legislatures but significantly to the formation of a wide-ranging network of committees to enforce a general colonial boycott against English goods. In February 1768, Sam Adams, on behalf of the Massachusetts Assembly, drafted a Circular Letter to other colonial legislatures that called for the mobilization of intercolonial united resistance to the duties, bluntly asserting that colonies ruled by Crown-appointed governors were not free. When Governor Hutchinson ordered that the Circular Letter be withdrawn, the Assembly flatly refused and was immediately suspended. Moreover, as Hutchinson angrily wrote to London, "every town [in Massachusetts] is a body corporate but without any form of government an absolute democracy which exists hardly anywhere else all being upon a level… The town of Boston is an absolute democracy."[23]

In fact, Hutchinson's remarks were not far from the truth. Parliament and the Court had opened the sluice gates of democratic sentiment in the colonies to an extent that had not been seen since the English Revolution more than a century earlier. As still further evidence of the home country's weakness, the ministry, faced with sweeping colonial resistance and an extraordinarily well-organized boycott, repealed the Townshend tariffs on all the listed items except tea. When, in the face of continued disorder, the government threatened to send troops to Boston, the Boston Town Meeting flatly declared on September 13, 1768, that to maintain a standing army among them "without their consent in person or by representatives of their own free election would be an infringement of their natural, constitutional, and charter rights; and the employing of such an army for the enforcing of laws made without the consent of the people, in person or by their representatives, would be a grievance."[24]

Inasmuch as the Assembly was still suspended, the more radical Boston Town Meeting, guided by Sam Adams and his colleagues, called on the other Massachusetts towns to send delegates to a new convention for the following week, a call which most of the towns eagerly answered. Almost under the very eyes of the British army, the delegates assembled at the usual meeting place of the suspended Assembly for what necessarily turned out to be a short meeting, but not without declaring their firm opposition to a standing army, after which it quickly adjourned. Nor should the brevity of the convention be allowed to belie its significance: it showed that the towns alone could meet in an extraconstitutional assembly, even when the regular Assembly was dissolved, thereby claiming the right to exercise sovereign power over themselves and for the public interest.

To reinforce troops already billeted in American homes, two British regiments were nonetheless sent to Boston. Adams shrewdly advised Bostonians not to provoke the soldiers; the time was not right, he warned, for a direct confrontation between ordinary citizens and regulars. This request was honored in sullen quietude. But it was a situation that could not last. In March 1770, after a year and a half of tension, the latent conflict came to a sudden head when British troops opened fire on a crowd after some children threw snowballs at them. Five citizens were killed and six wounded. Following the Boston Massacre, as the shooting was called, Adams addressed

[23] Quoted in Robert E. Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691–1780* (New York: Harper 8c Row, 1955), p. 58.

[24] Quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 113.

a huge town meeting and, speaking for the city, demanded that the troops be immediately withdrawn. The British responded again half-heartedly by redeploying one of the two regiments to an island in the harbor. When Adams demanded, "Both regiments, or none!" the administration gave in under the overwhelming pressure of the townspeople.

Thereafter, each year on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre, the town meeting was given a lecture, for the purpose of public education, on basic liberties. The oration was essentially the same each year. Reasoning from first principles, the speaker would explain that society was formed for the defense of basic rights, guiding his listeners from an unruly "state of nature" into the voluntary compact of civil society. Public education of this kind became a crucial feature of the Revolution, reflecting the extraordinarily high goals and regard for fundamental social principles that guided the revolutionary generation of that remarkable era.

The Boston Massacre was followed by a misleading lull. For the next two years, acts of resistance flared up only intermittently. But in 1772, true to his reputation for fatuity, the king stirred up the colonists again by deciding that the salaries of all colonial judges would be paid by the Crown rather than the assembly, depriving the colonial judiciary any independence from the king, in violation of a tradition that dated back to 1701 in England. Once again, in November, Sam Adams revived the dormant Boston Committee of Correspondence to inform other Massachusetts town meetings about this latest outrage, which defied another constitutional principle that the colonists had taken for granted: the independence of their judges and courts from the king. The Boston Committee, which was accountable to the Boston Town Meeting, invited the other towns to prepare statements that listed their political rights as they saw them, as well as violations of those rights, and to form their own Committees of Correspondence, made up of all adult inhabitants, to educate each other and to maintain a state of general alertness.

Within two months, some eighty Massachusetts towns formed such committees, each of which, in varying degrees, began to discuss, articulate, and formulate their political principles in written statements. This activity proved to be an immense political education for the ordinary people of the colony. All over the province, heated discussions broke out, in which townspeople in their meetings inveighed against the king's officers and their abuses of power, against standing armies, and against the centralized and absolute authority of Parliament. Even more than the grievances (*cahiers*) that preceded the convocations of the Estates General in France nearly two decades later, the statements that towns sent to Boston asserted that sovereignty lay with the people organized in towns, not in Parliament or even in the General Court of Massachusetts. In early 1773 the replies—filled with generous principles and expressions of courageous determination—were read aloud to the Boston Committee of Correspondence in Faneuil Hall.

More and more, ordinary people of the city began in increasing numbers to participate in the Boston Town Meeting. "The meetings of that town," Governor Hutchinson complained in May 1772, are

> constituted of the lowest class of the people under the influence of a few of a higher class but of intemperate and furious dispositions and desperate fortunes. Men of property and of the best character have deserted these meetings where they are sure of being affronted. By the constitution forty pounds sterl.—which they say may be in doaths household furniture or any sort of property is a qualification and even into

that there is scarce ever any inquiry and anything with the appearance of a man is admitted without scrutiny.[25]

The following year, Hutchinson replied to the declarations of popular sovereignty that the towns had sent to Boston by declaring:

> No line... can be drawn between the supreme authority of Parliament and the total independence of the colonies: it is impossible there should be two independent Legislatures in one and the same state; for... two Legislative bodies will make two governments as distinct as the kingdoms of England and Scotland before the Union.[26]

As had been the case in England more than a century earlier, the governor was describing the existence of a dual power, which he correctly observed was an impossible situation that had to be ultimately resolved—one way or the other.

Thereafter, the network of standing Committees of Correspondence that Adams had created in Boston and in the Massachusetts towns became a model for revolutionary organization throughout the colonies. In mid-March 1773 radicals in the Virginia House of Burgesses, led by Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Richard Henry Lee, established a Committee of Correspondence to maintain contact with Massachusetts, thereby increasing intercolonial solidarity. Initially, these committees were created to coordinate activities throughout the colonies and to educate the citizenry, but over time they began to correspond with each other in order to define their common problems and formulate common strategies, especially economic boycotts and political goals. These local committees became the earliest means by which radical leaders aroused their communities to resistance, and their growing role in building local and intercolonial solidarity as well as translating abstract new political concepts into daily practice was crucial, for such extra-constitutional local bodies were to become the embryos of a later, more grassroots network for revolutionary organization and action.

Although all of the Townshend duties had long been revoked except for the tax on tea, in 1773 Parliament, as part of a bailout of the largest tea company in Britain, agreed to allow the British East India Company to sell tea in the colonies at greatly reduced prices, well below the price that the Dutch demanded. Far from celebrating the opportunity for Americans to purchase inexpensive tea, the Boston Committee of Correspondence responded with outrage to Parliament's new Tea Act, viewing it as a blatant attempt to break the colonial boycott. In November, the Committee called a "Meeting of the People" at the Old South Meeting House, to which about eight thousand fervent Bostonians responded. There the assembly unanimously voted that the tea should be returned to England, and it charged the Committee with the task of assuring that no tea would be unloaded in Boston's harbor.

This "Meeting of the People" was not a town meeting. The Boston Town Meeting was a legally constituted body that was required to exercise a restraining authority over those of its members who broke the law. By contrast, the "Meeting of the People" was a palpably extralegal body, bound solely by its own sovereign decisions, which gave it greater freedom than the town meeting to resist British laws and actions. From this point onward, the Boston Committee of Correspondence

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[25] May 29,1772; quoted in Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy,* p. 60.

[26] "Speech *of* the Governor to the Two Houses, January 6,1773," in Alden Bradford, ed., *Speeches of the Governors of Massachusetts 1765–1775* (Boston, 1818), pp. 336–42, at p. 340.

ceased to be accountable even to the Boston Town Meeting; it was now an extralegal committee of a kind that, under various names, as we shall see, was to spring up all over the colonies. And indeed, it was citizens from this body—as well as the Town Meeting—who, disguised as Indians, boarded ships in Boston harbor, dumping £75,000 worth of tea into the ocean in the Boston Tea Party.

London responded immediately and furiously to the Boston Tea Party by passing the so-called Intolerable Acts of 1774, which blockaded the port of Boston by armed British gunboats and radically altered the Massachusetts charter so that the upper council of the General Court was now to be appointed by the king rather than elected by the people. Most notably, town meetings throughout the province of Massachusetts were drastically limited to only one meeting in each town per year, to elect town officials. In this unprecedented denial of local autonomy, no further town meetings could be called without the explicit approval of the governor. Long afterward, Americans remembered the prohibition of the Massachusetts town meetings as the most damaging act, short of armed coercion, that the Crown could possibly have inflicted on a free people.

General Gage, commander of the king's forces in America, in turn, was appointed Governor of Massachusetts, essentially placing the province under military rule. Parliament thereupon passed the provocative Quebec Act, which established a government for Quebec that was highly authoritarian, lacking both juries and assemblies. This Act was all the more troubling coming when it did, because, to many Americans, it seemed to presage the form of administration that the colonists feared Britain would ultimately impose upon the American colonies as a whole.

COLONIAL REBELLION

The Intolerable Acts precipitated the simmering rebellion into an outright revolution. Daily riots exploded throughout the towns and cities of British America, as men began openly to collect arms and train for defensive action against the British. Committees of Correspondence were activated throughout the colonies, and the Massachusetts town meetings, hotbeds of revolution, defiantly continued to meet, totally ignoring the new restriction on their activities. Towns soon had not only Committees of Correspondence but Committees of Inspection and Committees of Safety, of which we shall have a good deal to say later. On the eve of the revolution, observes Harry Cushing,

> the governor's authority now embraced little more than Boston; the royal treasurer soon failed to receive payments of recognition from the towns; by the towns had been brought about the end of the royal legislature; at their instance the royal courts had been abolished; and it is significant that in this general collapse the town system, and that alone, had maintained an existence and an activity that were practically continuous. By this element the government of the King had been destroyed; by it the reconstruction was to be effected.[27]

According to Samuel Eliot Morison, the towns had become

> in fact the several sovereigns of Massachusetts Bay. Their relation to the General Court closely approximated that of the states to the Congress of the Confederation,

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[27] Harry Cushing, "Political Activity of Massachusetts Towns during the Revolution," American Historical Association, *Annual Report* (1895), pp. 108–9.

with the important difference that there were not thirteen but almost three hundred of them.[28]

By the summer of 1774, in the absence of a provincial assembly the towns in each county of Massachusetts joined together to form an extralegal county convention to coordinate and direct provincial political activity. Initiated by the towns of Berkshire County in July, the western towns were particularly enthusiastic. Functioning essentially as confederations of municipalities, the conventions were themselves managed like town meetings, with elected moderators, reporting committees, and open votes, thereby constituting a farflung direct democracy.

By autumn, town meetings all over Massachusetts began to drill their militias and form them into a military force of some consequence and create militias where none had existed. "Whereas a great part of the inhabitants of this town may soon be called forth, to assist in defending the Charter and the Constitution of the Province, as well as the rights and liberties of all America," the Marblehead Town Meeting resolved, " … it is necessary that they should be properly disciplined and instructed in the art of war." These militias, whose officers and rank and file often overlapped with the old Sons of Liberty, elected their officers and operated according to the same democratic principles for which they were prepared to fight. Indeed, they became the backbone of the revolutionary war. A special militia of farmers called Minutemen was specifically organized to respond immediately to any British military action against their communities—and the name they adopted resurfaced throughout the colonies long after hostilities with the British had begun.

These acts of virtual insurrection, needless to say, were provoked by the British when they had originally decided to set an example for all the colonies by cracking down on Massachusetts. By this divide-and-conquer strategy, British authorities naively expected that the other colonies would turn against the New England province in order to preserve good relations with the Crown. It was a gross yet typical miscalculation. One colonial assembly after another, totally ignoring British bans on convening and protesting the Intolerable Acts, publicly voiced their outrage against the Crown's measures, while large quantities of food and supplies flooded blockaded Boston overland from other colonies to express their solidarity with the beleaguered New England port.

By early 1774, the assemblies of all but one of the colonies had established a Committee of Correspondence, "the earliest and most common revolutionary organization," over the opposition of the royal governors. "The members of the lower houses of the legislatures," notes Margaret Burnham Macmillan, "seem to have been motivated by a desire to create an official mouthpiece for the opinions of the colony such as they felt the governor was for the views of the English government."[29] In the summer and fall, many provincial governors tried to shut down their provincial assemblies, fearful that their members were inflaming public opinion against Britain's suppression of colonial rights. When the governors refused to call the assemblies back into session, many Committees of Correspondence provocatively took it upon themselves to convoke them. Thus, when the governors of New Hampshire and North Carolina dissolved their provincial assemblies, the Committees of Correspondence in those provinces simply summoned them back into session,

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[28] Samuel Eliot Morison, "The Struggle over the Adoption of the Constitution of Massachusetts, 1780," *Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings,* vol. 50 (1916–17), p. 360.

[29] Margaret Burnham Macmillan, *The War Governors in the American Revolution* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 15.

essentially displacing the governors as the executives of the colonies. In South Carolina, the lieutenant governor had planned to prorogue the provincial assembly at ten o'clock on August 3, 1774, but the assembly convened at eight o'clock—"because of the heat"—and carried out its business quickly since its members were all in agreement with each other. By the time the governor prorogued it at ten, it was too late; its legally binding decisions had already been made.[30]

As the grassroots power, legal and extralegal, began to grow, attempts by British authorities and colonial governors to dissolve the assemblies had less and less effect. Not only were Committees of Correspondence insisting that the provincial assemblies reconvene, but they began to supplant their legislative role and took over many of the executive and judicial activities of the provincial government.

In Massachusetts, Gage refused for months to call the General Court into session. At length, in October, the first provincial congress—an extralegal, revolutionary legislature—was organized in Massachusetts, to which the county conventions ceded their leadership of the revolution. This was the first of such outright revolutionary provincial congresses or conventions to be formed throughout the colonies. The regular provincial congresses now began to assume legislative and executive duties that hitherto had belonged entirely to the domain of the royal governors. Like the county conventions that had preceded them, the provincial congresses freely enacted revolutionary legislation, organized new militias or reconstituted older ones into revolutionary forces which elected their own officers, and began to take action against the loyalist Tories. As the Massachusetts Provincial Congress was to recognize, the ultimate source of power lay in the towns and town meetings.

It is important to emphasize the dynamics of the municipalities' revolutionary development: the enormous impetus they gave to the uprising, their role in restructuring the old colonial assemblies into the new, more democratic ones, and the coordinating role of popular local committees. In addition, the colonies exhibited an extraordinary capacity to network, confederate, and empower various institutions on all social levels, many of which had been in existence for generations. Often, the revolutionaries changed very few of the local bodies that had been created during the early days of the colonies; they shrewdly restructured them, expanding local powers at the expense of the provincial institutions and those of the provincial institutions at the expense of the Crown and British Parliament.

THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

By now, the time had come to assemble a Continental Congress to coordinate the efforts of specific provincial and local struggles, although the source of the original call is not known precisely. According to many accounts, after the Virginia House of Burgesses was dissolved for supporting Boston, the members reassembled at the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg to issue a call for a general or continental assembly of representatives from all of the colonies. Carl Becker cites the New York Whigs—mainly conservative merchants—as another source. The Whigs, who valued their trade with Britain, appear to have believed that they could evade the need to respond to Boston's appeal for a congress to boycott all British goods; indeed, they presumably intended to pre-empt the appeal by convening a Continental Congress that they could dominate, reducing its action to a humble petition for redress by the Crown.

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[30] See *ibid.,* p. 20.

In any case, the First Continental Congress that met in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, was no mere conservative oligarchy; it was composed of delegates from the provincial assemblies and, in the six colonies where assemblies no longer existed, from local Committees of Correspondence and other extralegal bodies that had been defiantly elected by ordinary citizens. "Wherever such a revolutionary group selected the delegates," Macmillan observes, "they chose them from among the more radical Whigs," or patriots.[31] As a result of this selection process, for the first time in many colonies the backcountry yeoman received their rightful proportion of delegates.

To the radicals of Massachusetts and Virginia, the prospect of being assembled in one place was a source of unrestrained rejoicing: Richard Henry Lee of Virginia exulted that the colonies' political salvation lay with Massachusetts, and Paul Revere, who received a hero's welcome, arrived bearing the resolves passed by the Suffolk County Convention, which called for an end to all intercourse with Britain. The radicals immediately banded together to press for the Continental Congress to adopt a similar, binding resolution. No doubt because of the equal representation that brought many backcountry farmers to the Congress, the radicals prevailed—to the utter consternation of the conservative Whigs.

To enforce nonintercourse, the Congress bound the separate colonies together into a Continental Association to boycott British goods, ending all importations from the mother country almost immediately and, if Britain failed to comply with colonial demands, completely prohibiting the exporting of American goods to Britain. Although the radicals carefully avoided pronouncing the word *independence* —except, perhaps, to deny that they sought it—this Continental Congress and the one that met the following year passed a variety of resolutions that essentially amounted to a *de facto* break with Britain. They created a new government for each colony, mobilized a continental army, formed an intercolonial confederation, and opened American ports to trade with the entire world.

For the New England townsmen, the Continental Congress had still another, indeed broader, meaning. Clearly, self-government had been bred into their bones and sinews, and when it was usurped, they knew they would rebel. For much of the colonial period, the towns themselves had been fairly insular, preoccupied mainly with their own purely local affairs; now events on a larger, indeed international, scale swept them up and thrust far-reaching responsibilities upon them. Nor was the Crown unmindful of what the Congress meant for British authority in the colonies. To the news that a Continental Congress was convoked, the king responded: "The die is now cast. The colonies must either submit or triumph." Parliament, keeping apace with the statement, declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion and proceeded to arrange for the transportation of more troops to America.

The events that followed are part of the American national tradition. On the night of April 18, 1775, General Gage, now Governor of Massachusetts, convinced that he could quell the rebellion in one bold action, dispatched eight hundred troops to Concord, eighteen miles north of Boston, with orders to seize the military stores that the colonials had collected in the town, and then proceed to Lexington to arrest two important Massachusetts leaders, Sam Adams and John Hancock. Warned by advance riders that the British troops were on the move, Minutemen began sporadically to engage them along their entire route. Finally, after suffering losses of more than a third of their complement in pitched battles at Lexington and Concord, the British were forced to retreat toward Boston. American losses numbered only about ninety. It was a humili-

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[31] *Ibid.,* p. 17.

ating defeat for a highly disciplined contingent of professional troops against presumably raw, untrained farmers. Whether they were conscious of their actions or not, the American colonies had initiated a revolution whose values, organizational forms, ideals, and even vocabulary would be echoed in democratic revolutions around the world.

Chapter 11. Revolutionary Ideology

When the American colonists rebelled against rule by the British, there was as yet very little of a conscious revolutionary tradition with which they could identify and to which they could appeal. The radical aspects of the 1640s in England were little known to the people at large. What the revolutionary intellectuals were acutely aware of, however, was an ongoing decline of liberty throughout the world. Nearly everywhere, they believed, people had known only tyranny. Only a few societies had ever been able to enjoy liberty for any length of time, notably, ancient Athens, the Roman Republic, the Swiss Confederacy, the Dutch Republic, the Venetian Republic, Sweden, Denmark, pre-Norman England, and post-1688 England. In these societies, virtuous and sturdy citizens had lived the cherished simple and patriotic lives devoted to justice and individual liberty that Americans identified with freedom.[32]

But, as the American revolutionaries noted, most of these societies had subsequently lost their liberties. While ambitious and opportunistic men from without or within sought to expand their own power, the governing structure became tyrannical, and the republican virtues that had upheld the system had given way to corruption, cynicism, and venality. Thus, Athens had fallen to Sparta and later to Alexander's Macedonian empire; the Roman Republic— whose history fascinated America political theorists, as it did the French— had degenerated into a tyrannical and blatantly corrupt empire; the Swedish people, once free, were now subjected to monarchical tyranny; Denmark's parliamentary freedoms had been destroyed in the previous century, as the result of a corrupt nobility and a standing army; and Venice, formerly a republic, was now ruled by a cabal of despots. Only those free societies whose members had maintained their virtue and exercised continual vigilance had been able to resist this tendency toward tyranny and retain their liberties: most notably, the Swiss and the Dutch.

The other major exception to worldwide tyranny, in the eyes of early American thinkers, was Great Britain. Centuries ago, to be sure, the liberty-loving Saxons had been subjugated by the Normans under William the Conqueror, and more recently, to be sure, the Stuart kings had almost succeeded in destroying English liberties. But as a result of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which had established parliamentary sovereignty, liberty still existed in Britain, it was believed; nor was this history lost on English Whig intellectuals of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, who extolled the liberties that the English system still preserved. Men of independent property enjoyed freedoms unparalleled elsewhere on earth, and the key to preserving them, so the Whig writers maintained, was Britain's unique constitution—unwritten and organic—embodied in the traditions of its monarchy and Parliament. Both institutions existed

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[32] In using the term liberty interchangeably with freedom, I am conforming to the usage of two centuries ago. Following the natural rights doctrines of the time, which endowed each individual with inborn autonomy, the revolutionaries of the eighteenth century tended to conflate personal liberty with social freedom—a distinction that was not to be clarified until the next century by socialists, for whom the individual divested of a social context was an abstraction.

in equilibrium as a result of what were later called "checks and balances" that prevented the encroachment by one branch of government on another, which John Locke grounded in natural rights and a social contract. The American intellectuals believed that as Englishmen (and they were mainly men) they shared in this unique legacy, and accordingly—at least before the prerevolutionary decade— they viewed the English system as a paragon of lasting personal freedom.

But in the 1720s a number of oppositional intellectuals in England realized that this system, so extolled by earlier Whig intellectuals like Locke, was a sham. The equilibrium of court and Parliament within the English system had gone awry. The king and his ministers were becoming all too powerful and were threatening to usurp the privileges of Parliament. The Crown's ministers had corrupted members of Parliament through patronage and favors; standing armies had been established by the king and remained under his control, rather than Parliament's; and the steady usurpation of power by the monarchy threatened to disrupt the institutional balance that had allowed England's system to preserve individual liberties.

The coffeehouse radicals and the opposition politicians who made these criticisms in 1720s England called themselves the Independent or True Whigs, as opposed to the false Whigs who had betrayed the Glorious Revolution. They revived the "Country" critique of the "Court" that had existed in the decades before the English Revolution, and their primary polemicists, pamphleteers John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, invoked the ideals of the Glorious Revolution and the writings of Locke, Harrington, and others against the present corruption of English politics and society. Writing with verve and color in The Independent Whig and Cato's Letters, these polemicists inveighed against the manipulative and corrupting encroachments of Walpole's ministry, emphasizing the dangers that a powerful government posed. Again, they popularized ideas of natural right, the social contract, and England's constitution, as these had been expounded by Locke, Sidney, Neville, and especially the republican James Harrington, but this time, in the service of opposition to the status quo rather than to its celebration.

The polemicists of the 1720s did more than merely uphold the aims of the Glorious Revolution; their writings were often overtly libertarian. They maintained that government as such was intrinsically hostile to human liberty, existing only because people whose needs it served allowed it to; if it trespassed beyond its proper limits and became tyrannical, it not only could be but should be overthrown. Whether knowingly or not, their program revived the spirit of the more radical Leveller manifestos by insisting that government was necessarily accountable to the sovereign people if it was not to slip into tyranny. The pamphleteers even raised old Leveller demands for adult manhood suffrage, the binding of representatives to their constituencies, freedom of the press, and complete religious tolerance.

Surprisingly, these ideas had relatively little political impact in the England to which they were addressed, but in the American colonies their influence was enormous. The colonists thought that the trend of the British Empire was no longer toward the preservation of freedom in America but rather toward the centralization of all British territories under the authority of a Parliament controlled by the Crown. Like the English opposition writers of the 1720s, they held that the royal government was not preserving but denying them the "rights of Englishmen." Accordingly, when Britain tried to impose taxes and tariffs on Americans, legitimating them in a seemingly representative body, Parliament, but one in which Americans had no representation, such actions were equivalent to denying the Americans their own liberty-preserving political institutions, such as the town meetings of New England and the colonial legislatures south of the Hudson alike. The Americans were outraged that the ranks of the royal administration,

particularly customs commissions, were being expanded, creating the possibility for more of the British-style patronage and corruption against which Trenchard and Gordon had inveighed. And, in fact, some of the colonial governors, especially Hutchinson of Massachusetts, seemed intent on developing a large patronage machine that was being filled with people who, as Benjamin Franklin explained, were

> generally strangers to the provinces they are sent to govern, have no estate, natural connection, or relation there to give them an affection for the country... they come only to make money as fast as they can; are sometimes men of vicious characters and broken fortunes, sent by a minister merely to get them out of the way.[33]

Like the English True Whigs, Americans regarded the royal power as selfaggrandizing, seeking to expand itself at their expense. "The crown will take advantage of every opportunity of extending its prerogative in opposition to the privileges of the people," wrote James Wilson of Pennsylvania, which destroyed their virtue since "it is the interest of those who have pensions or offices at will from the crown to concur in all its measures."[34] The attempt by Parliament in 1772 to appoint colonial judges, a practice that had been disallowed in England since 1701, was a step that Americans saw as particularly aggrandizing and a tyrannical subversion of the English constitution on their side of the ocean. Clearly, the powerful in Britain were conspiring to overthrow liberty-preserving institutions in America; indeed, it was feared, priests would be imposed upon America and the separate colonial legislatures would be eliminated. This is precisely the way in which many Americans viewed the Quebec Act: as a regression to "popery" and absolutism.

Accordingly, the English libertarian tracts, especially Cato's Letters, were republished over and over as pamphlets and in colonial newspapers for what seemed like a public of insatiable readers. To Americans, according to Bernard Bailyn, "the writings of Trenchard and Gordon ranked with the treatises of Locke as the most authoritative statement of the nature of political liberty and above Locke as an exposition of the social sources of the threats it faced."[35] These writings seemed almost tailored to the way the colonists conceived of their lives and their destinies. Americans, if only in theory, assumed that theirs was a land based on independent farmsteads, relatively representative legislatures, and a polity made up of free, virtuous yeoman farmers who conformed to radical Whig ideas of a free polity. Indeed, a good deal of Enlightenment thought supported the notion that America was in effect purer and freer than England, the apotheosis of "the rights of Englishmen," and more generally an enclave of virtue and liberty. Both Voltaire and Diderot viewed America as the distillation of all that was good in England, and many Americans were only too glad to oblige them in this image. John Adams voiced the same attitude in 1765 when he maintained:

> The liberties of mankind and the glory of human nature is in (Americans'] keeping. America was designed by Providence for the theater on which man was to make his true figures, on which science, virtue, liberty, happiness, and glory were to exist in peace.[36]

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[33] Franklin quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1967), p. 102.

[34] Wilson quoted *ibid.,* p. 103.

[35] *Ibid.,* p. 36.

[36] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 20.

The American revolutionary intellectuals thus viewed their battle as a struggle for liberty as such, and their colonies as the crucial holdout against the worldwide demise of freedom. It was no small matter that Thomas Paine, in his electrifying pamphlet Common Sense, assigned a quasi-millenarian goal to the American Revolution:

> O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa long expelled her—Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.[37]

In this perception, all that stood between liberty and tyranny was vigilance, as the cases of the virtuous Swiss and Dutch seemed to demonstrate.

In fact, the American analysis of the institutional sources of their liberty was based on a fallacy. The colonists had depended much less on the existing English constitution for the preservation of their liberties than on the "benign neglect" of the colonies by the royal administration over past generations. Before 1760, the Crown and Parliament had scarcely exercised their powers over the colonies, with the result that the colonists had become accustomed to a system in which they essentially governed themselves. In the absence of strict administration from London, the town meetings and the colonial assemblies exercised real power in most important areas of colonial life. Thus, Parliament's legal powers to approve or reject bills passed by colonial legislatures and decisions by colonial courts, to make appointments, to regulate trade, and the like, were less integral to daily life, even when they had been exercised before 1760.

> It had in fact been local, common law courts that administered justice in the colonies;... And it had in fact been local bodies—towns and counties in the Erst instance, ultimately the provincial Assemblies—that laid down the rules for daily life; rules concerning the production and distribution of wealth, personal conduct, the worship of God—most of the ways in which people deal with the world, animate and inanimate about them. And these same bodies had been the ones accustomed to tax. Moneys had of course been collected by the home authorities; but they had been fees, dues, and rents—charges, for the most part, incidental to the regulation of overseas trade—not taxes. The power of taxing, from the earliest years of settlement, had been exercised by the representative Assemblies of the various colonies, and exercised without competition—indeed with encouragement—from England. The condition of British America by the end of the Seven Years' War was therefore anomalous: extreme decentralization of authority within an empire presumably ruled by a single, absolute, undivided sovereign.[38]

Under such circumstances, the English constitution was scarcely relevant to American liberties, and when they began their revolt against Britain the Americans found that the social and political order that they were constructing exhibited relatively little resemblance to the much-apotheosized Glorious Revolution. Whether knowingly or not, they were reviving the demands

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[37] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense and the Crisis* (New York: Doubleday & Co, 1960), p. 42.
[38] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins,* p. 204.

that the Levellers had made in their very first Agreement of the People : sovereignty of the people, if only by developing and enlarging the scope of institutions they had established under the neglect of the British authorities across the Atlantic.

PAINE'S COMMON SENSE

Nevertheless, at the time when hostilities broke out between the colonies and Britain, many patriots remained devout monarchists who thought they were merely trying to rectify abuses of power on the part of a flawed king and his ministers—even as George III was declaring them "rebels" and obliging them to fight their English cousins in red coats. The armed conflict went beyond mere skirmishes at the Battle of Bunker Hill (actually of Breed's Hill) on the outskirts of Boston on June 17,1775—the first organized encounter of British regulars with New England militiamen on a large scale. The British victory was a pyrrhic one: more than a thousand dead and 2,200 wounded fell against entrenched Americans, who lost only 441 out of an estimated 3,200. In selecting George Washington to command the 15,000 militia who formed the united colonial forces, the Continental Congress showed unerring judgment: the wooden image that Americans commonly hold today of this gallant man does him little justice. Washington commanded a force of his own during the French and Indian War, during which time he exhibited exceptional qualities as a military strategist. He was a man of immense personal courage in combat situations and a devoted leader of his troops. In the early period of the war the Continental Army—that is, the army in which Americans enlisted as regulars— and local militias tried to outwit rather than recklessly confront the relatively sluggish but well-trained, well-equipped, and sizable army of British regulars. Once the colonial forces were routed in the New York City area—which remained in British hands until the end of the war—Washington's tactics alternated between retreats designed to preserve his small army from total destruction and limited surprise attacks that threw the British commander, General William Howe, off balance.

After these months of armed conflict, with bloody bodies left on battlefields, increasing numbers of American colonists began to abandon any allegiance to the monarchy. Many who had continued to favor America's association with Britain lived in the vain hope that the mother country would maintain a basic respect and affection for its colonies—a hope that was finally shattered by the news that the Crown had hired 20,000 Hessian mercenaries to fight against its own colonial subjects. So devastating to loyalist arguments was the deployment of foreign mercenaries that even many committed monarchists were outraged, and for many loyal colonists the bond between ruler and subject was revealed as a sham.

In January 1776, Tom Paine's stirring pamphlet Common Seme dearly formulated the still inchoate but increasingly hostile sentiments of the colonials into a flat rejection of the notion that the English constitution, with its king and Parliament, could conform to American conceptions of liberty. Contrary to more than a century of English Whig thought, Paine argued, the balance of king and Parliament constituted an outright threat to colonial freedom. Not only did Americans lack any representation in Parliament, but they could not feasibly obtain such representation in a body that met thousands of miles away. To restore a balance in their relations with Britain was chimerical, Paine argued; bluntly, Americans had to sever their ties with England and independently follow their own destiny.

Contrary to the commonly held view that Common Sense merely inspired the patriot party to demand independence, Paine's pamphlet was actually a spirited argument for republicanism as

such. "The nearer any government approaches to a republic the less business there is for a king," he militantly declared.[39] And it was not the king alone but the English system as such that was fatally flawed—"the so much boasted constitution of England," as Paine called it—which consists merely of two tyrannies, "monarchical tyranny in the person of the King … [and] aristocratical tyranny in the persons of the peers," a system that merely relies on the oligarchical House of Commons to create the illusion of true representation. The idea "that the constitution is a union of three powers reciprocally checking each other," Paine wrote, "is farcical."[40]

Tyranny was endemic to kings, argued Paine; they naturally tended to expand their own power. Grasping and tenacious, restless and insatiable, monarchical power invariably corrupted virtue and destroyed liberty. Like the Leveller Thomas Rainborough, who had invoked the natural rights of the individual in the Putney Debates almost a century and a half earlier, Paine too invoked natural rights in formulating his case against monarchy: "the exalting one man so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature." Further: "For all men being originally equals, no one by birth could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others."[41] Paine left no argument for monarchy unanswered, no claim to scriptural authority unrefined. "For monarchy in every instance is the popery of government," he warned, associating kingship with the widely regarded enemy of liberty, the Catholic Church.[42]

Fortunately, Paine's argument continued, a king is unnecessary to political systems; indeed, monarchy "is a political superfluity." Nor is a balance of forces or "checks and balances" necessary to preserve liberties. In fact, he continued, the source of the liberty-preserving elements of the English constitution has been misidentified: the liberties of England, such as they are, are all "wholly owing to the constitution of the people, and not to the constitution of the government."[43] There is no reason for Americans to try to recapitulate the English system in America, since "it is the republican and not the monarchical part of the constitution which Englishmen glory in, viz. the liberty of choosing a house of commons from out of their own body."[44] Americans should cast off the ancient traditions of England's corrupt system and create a new political order based not on English tradition but on natural rights, which alone are the true bases of human liberty. As the radical English Whigs had previously done and as French revolutionaries would do only a few years later, he invoked "republican virtue" as the moral basis of the new system. "It is easy to see," he wrote, "that when republican virtue fails, slavery ensues."[45]

Independent America, Paine argued, should adopt the republic as their form of government—a body of representatives without either a king or an aristocracy. Falling back on the long experience of the colonies with written colonial charters, which had often protected them from British interference, Paine called upon the thirteen new states to adopt constitutions that institutionalized unicameral assemblies—a single house of parliament—whose members would be elected annually, based on a relatively equal suffrage, and presided over by an elected president. For the colonies as a whole, Paine raised the cry for a "Continental Charter, or Charter of the United Colonies" that would "secur[e] freedom and property to all men." He offered his own plan for a

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[39] Paine, *Common Sense,* p. 26.

[40] *Ibid.,* p. 16.

[41] *Ibid.,* pp. 19,22.

[42] *Ibid.,* p. 22.

[43] *Ibid.,p.* 18.

[44] *Ibid.,* p. 26.

[45] *Ibid.*

republican constitution, again with a large unicameral assembly, whose members ("at least 390") were to be elected annually by a broad suffrage. The presiding officer, the president, Paine argued, should be chosen by lot and rotation by the Congress from among the delegates of the states.

Not all patriots, to be sure, agreed with Paine's call for the unicameral legislature nor with his rejection of the "checks and balances" of the English constitution. Paine's conception of republican government, complained John Adams, "was so democratical, without any restraint or even an attempt at any equilibrium or counterpoise, that it must produce confusion and every evil work."[46] Popular assemblies, Adams felt, were too changeable, too subject to hasty judgments, and too amenable to demagoguery to lend stability to a political and social order. Adams, in his own Thoughts on Government, which appeared only a few months after Common Sense and apparently in response to it, presented a model of republican government that recapitulated the equilibrium of the English constitution, albeit without the king and the aristocracy: there would be two houses in the legislature, Adams prescribed, and an executive that could veto bills passed by the legislature, as well as an independent judiciary.

Although American constitutionalists were to eventually accept Adams's views in his Thoughts on Government, it was Paine's pamphlet that fired the mood of the revolutionaries. With blistering polemical ardor and taut rationality, Common Sense electrified the patriot movement, and more than any single work at the time it led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

Following its publication. General Washington ceased toasting the king's health at the nightly mess of his officers. As he noted in a letter of January 31,1776, "the sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet Common Sense" among other arguments, "will not leave members at a loss to decide upon the propriety of a separation."[47] Within a week or two, the Virginia aristocrat and military commander had been converted from a royalist to a republican, and he ordered his officers to read the pamphlet to their troops.

The debate over the proper form of government, especially as articulated by Paine and Adams, reached a peak of intensity once the American provinces no longer considered themselves subjects of the king, and it became their task to write constitutions for themselves as independent states. "Up and down the still sparsely settled coast of British North America," writes Bailyn,

> groups of men—intellectuals and farmers, scholars and merchants, the learned and the ignorant—gathered for the purpose of constructing enlightened governments..., Everywhere there were discussions of the ideal nature of government; everywhere principles of politics were examined, institutions weighed, and practices considered. And these debates ... were direct continuations of the discussions that had preceded Independence.[48]

Indeed, in 1776 alone, eight states drafted and adopted constitutions establishing their independence from the Crown.

On June 12,1776, the famous Virginia Bill of Rights appeared, clarifying what Americans were fighting for. Written by George Mason, the Virginia bill stated the cherished liberties of citizens

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[46] Quoted in Bailyn, *Ideological Origins,* p. 289.

[47] Washington's letter to Joseph Reed, quoted in Samuel Eliot Morison, *Oxford History of the American People* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 220.

[48] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins,* p. 231.

that had always been won by countless struggles throughout English history, but unlike later bills of rights of which it was to be the progenitor, the Virginia bill was also presented as a "basis and foundation of government." "All power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people," the bill declared in sweeping prose; "magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at all times amenable to them." Its articles asserted the right to "alter" and "abolish" government "in such a manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal," with "frequent certain and regular elections" (which at this time meant annual ones). It upheld suffrage for "all men having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to the community" (a property qualification), and proclaimed the judicial right of all accused persons to confront their accusers in open courts in the course of a "speedy trial by an impartial jury of [their] own vicinage," prohibiting excessive bail, "cruel and unusual punishment," and general warrants such as writs of assistance. Finally, the bill affirmed freedom of the press as "one of the great bulwarks of liberty," and it favored a militia as against a standing army that "in times of peace should be avoided as dangerous to liberty." This sweeping document eliminated all restraints on religious liberty and endowed all men with "the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience."[49] It may be well to note that most of these rights and freedoms would have been considered treasonable in the rest of the world at that time.

INDEPENDENCE

The rapid advance from a conciliatory attitude toward the king to one of open hostility and disavowal is remarkable, reflecting the fact that revolutions telescope events that ordinarily take generations, even centuries, into a single year or less. By the early months of 1776, patriot sentiment throughout the colonies was so inflamed that John Adams, at the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, could write: "By every Post and every day, Independence rolls in on us like a torrent."[50] Not that the colonies were undivided; in Rhode Island the backcountry was the driving force toward independence, for example, but Newport and Narragansett Counties in the wealthy southern part of the state remained loyal, while the agrarian north, which was in control of the provincial government, openly declared the colony's independence.

Moreover, many delegates to the Continental Congress were hesitant about supporting separation from the mother country. In the spring of 1776, the defenders of proprietary interests in Pennsylvania and delegates from many southern colonies were shocked by Paine's demands, and at the Congress itself they maintained a particular wariness of the New Englanders, with their town meeting "mob rule" democracy and their apparent desire to extend it to the other colonies. The delegates from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New York— colonies where wealthy conservative interests were still in power—had been specifically instructed to vote against independence if it was raised. Nor would delegates from these colonies vote for independence until the radicals at home turned to outright revolutionary actions and established popular governmental institutions.

Still, Paine's words profoundly influenced the committee that the Second Continental Congress appointed in mid-June 1776 to prepare the Declaration of Independence. The commit-

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[49] "Virginia Bill of Rights," June 12,1776, in Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., *Sources and Documents Illustrating the American Revolution 1764–1788 and the Formation of the Federal Constitution,* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), pp. 149–51.

[50] Quoted in Morison, *Oxford History,* p. 221.

tee included Sam Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Robert Livingston of New York and, of course, Thomas Jefferson, who was asked by his co-members to draft the Declaration with which his name is famously associated. The document was a sweeping statement of the basic concepts of liberty that had been percolating through the colonies from the inception of their struggle:

> 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 abolish it, and to institute new Government.

Many of the "self-evident truths" of which Jefferson wrote had their immediate roots in the treatises of John Locke: notably, that men as individuals (and women no less, we would interject today) have inalienable natural rights that cannot be abridged; that these rights stem from the very natural order of things; and that government exists by the consent of the governed and has no authority except what the people grant to it. Many of these ideas have clear predecessors in the writings of the Levellers, although at the time of the English Revolution they were hardly seen as "self-evident." If not by design, the authors repeatedly express views, even statements, in the Declaration that parallel early Leveller assertions going back to the 1640s. "By natural birth," Richard Overton had asserted, "all men are equally and alike born to like propriety, liberty, and freedom."[51] Similarly, "by nature," John Lilburne had written, they are "all equal and alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty."[52] And again: "We are resolved upon our natural rights and freedoms," Overton wrote.[53] "The only and sole legislative law-making power is originally inherent in the people," Lilburne affirmed, "and derivatively in their commissions chosen by themselves by common consent and no other."[54] "So ought the whole nation to be free therein even to alter and change the public form," William Walwyn asserted, "as may best stand with the safety and freedom of the people."[55]

By contrast, it is worth adding, the constitution that John Locke himself had prepared for his patron's newly acquired colony of Carolina in the late seventeenth century was a curious regression to feudal privilege and hierarchy. Yet Locke's theoretical ideas bear implications that are far in advance of previous thinking on social contract and natural law ideas. Although the notion of equal natural rights had been long in the making, Locke's *Second Treatise* turned it into a rational idea by emphasizing that men by their own labor refashion nature, in a sense, when they invest their labor to meet their own needs and aims. That is to say, their labor recreates

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[51] Richard Overton, *Defence against All Arbitrary Usurpations,* September 9,1646, in Don M. Wolfe, ed., *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (1944; New York: Humanities Press, 1967), p. 11. In this and the remaining Leveller quotes in this passage, I have modernized the spelling and punctuation. On the parallels between these passages and the opening paragraph of the Declaration of the Independence, I am indebted to Charles Beard's introduction to Wolfe's collection.

[52] John Lilburne, *The Freeman's Freedom Vindicated,* June 19,1646, in Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestoes,* p. 8.

[53] Richard Overton, *Alarum to the House of Lords,* July 31,1646, in Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestoes,* p. 11.

[54] John Lilburne, *The Charters of London and London's Liberty in Chains,* December 18, 1646, in Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestoes,* p. 14,

[55] William Walwyn, *England's Lamentable Slavery,* October 11,1645, in Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestoes,* p. 7.

nature as a domain of individual rights. Nature, in effect, is not merely an original condition of human equality; it is a realm permeated by property rights, formulated by human activity, and recreated by work and intelligence.

By Locke's time, radical statesmen had indissolubly wedded property to natural law; human labor, they argued, had conferred "natural rights" upon the individual that were beyond the reach of the state, still less of arbitrary rulers.

The fact that nearly all the great declarations promulgated by republican revolutions in the eighteenth century wedded property to natural rights or at least swept property rights into their list of inalienable rights—including their right to the liberty of their own bodies—was not necessarily due to self-interest or class interest, important as these interests were to men of property. Rather, by virtue of the fact that property was acquired through labor in reworking nature, Locke in effect shifted the priority Hobbes had given to the state over the individual to individual property as a major source of natural rights, thereby diminishing its authority over the people.

Property, in turn, conferred major liberties on the citizen. It gave him the material independence to act as a free agent, beholden to no one and nothing other than his own reason and conscience. Unlike the dependent serf of the feudal system, who had owed produce and service to his lord in exchange for military protection and the use of the lord's land, the independent citizen in the republic owned his own land, provided for his family with it, and bore arms to defend his own land and his community. And unlike servants and others who had no property and hence could be manipulated by their masters, the propertied man could be guided by his own rational judgments, free of external coercion or fears of material want. He was not a client but a citizen, or at least potentially so. Nor was he a "drifter," a member of the "mobility" or "mob," but rather a well-rooted member of a given community who had a social stake in its welfare. He had lasting friends, neighbors, material interests, and responsibilities, and hence he could be counted upon to be concerned with the community's best interests as well as his own.

Bourgeois as these notions seem to us today, they date back to ancient times and can be found in the works of Aristotle. Doubtless, had John Locke himself attended the Putney Debates, he would have sided with Henry Ireton when Cromwell's son-in-law insisted that property was the prerequisite for political rights. But Locke's ideas could be used, by implication at least, by Thomas Rainborough, who defended universal suffrage on the basis of natural rights and was willing to extend citizenship even to the poorest Englishman who was not a servant. Ireton had argued to considerable effect that a social order based on natural rights would not only give everyone the vote but could be used by the propertyless to claim a right to property. Locke had yet to write the *Second Treatise* when the Putney Debates were under way, and Rainborough had no effective rebuttal to Ireton's argument. Yet Locke's theories wresting private property from nature through one's labor could have been used by Rainborough to counter Ireton, assuming that he was prepared to assert the "right" of all men to own property—an issue that was to emerge two decades later among the radical Jacobins, at least by implication, in the famous Ventdse laws of 1794.

Unknown in the 1640s, the nonbourgeois aspects of Locke's theories were very much in the air a century and a half later. To yeoman farmers of limited means, their world of property was a world of familial husbandry; American farmers, in fact, tended to cultivate only as much land as they needed to meet their immediate needs. One might farm more land if one lived close to the larger artisanal and commercial towns along the Atlantic seaboard and riverways, where a growing market economy tended to seduce the farmer into commercial agriculture. But the

closer yeoman farmers came to the frontier, the less this condition prevailed, as we shall see in our discussion of the Shaysites. Here the view of property as a natural right, carved out of the wilderness by virtue of one's own physical labor, seemed only too obvious, and a Lockean argument could be used as effectively against the merchants of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, to whom the farmers were indebted, as it could against the king. Nor did the small proprietors of America ever quite lose sight of the view that attempts to seize their farmsteads and possessions for unpaid debts were a violation of their "natural rights," and from the 1770s until as late as the 1930s they took up arms to keep merchants and bankers from dispossessing them from land that they or their ancestors had wrested from "nature" by virtue of their own labor. The notion that property was sacred was thus highly elastic: it could be used as effectively by precapitalist strata to hold on to their property as it could by capitalist strata to expand their holdings.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence—which was no less a summons to the American people to take up arms against the monarchy than a claim to independence—were mainly lawyers, although quite a few had thriving businesses and perhaps fewer had thriving plantations of their own. The well-to-do merchant class, the nearest thing the Americans had to an authentic bourgeoisie, constituted only a minority of the signers, and the extent to which they were representative of their class is questionable, despite efforts to characterize the Revolution as "bourgeois." In a sense the signers reflected the interests of a broad middle class, as yet undefined, and even of a "bourgeoisie" in the sense of burgesses who were not strictly capitalistic. They belonged to a world that was still mixed economically, in which "property" included a man's life, social status, liberties, and personal esteem as well as his material holdings. Should one add to this list one's responsibility to the community, the description is more Hellenic than capitalistic and in some respects more public than privatistic.

Rooted in natural law, the Declaration of Independence stands apart from most revolutionary declarations of the eighteenth century in its demand that the "unalienable rights" include life, liberty, and the "pursuit of happiness," rather than property, as the French Declaration of Human Rights would announce thirteen years later. Nearly all the proclamatory literature of the era used "life, liberty, and property" as a definition of rights and freedom. Jefferson, who drafted the document, was hardly indifferent to the rights of property, to be sure; indeed, he upheld it as a source of meaning to natural law doctrines, and it is he who is most clearly identified in the early history of the United States with the political demands and interests of the independent farmer-proprietor. Whatever Jefferson himself may have meant by the word *happiness,* his use of it added a utopian, indeed transcendental dimension to ideas of rights and freedom. It conveyed the vision that the revolution was an ethical and humanistic movement, not merely a material one or a "tax revolt" or commercial adventure by merchants and planters who wished to have greater freedom of trade.

But the Declaration is not without a major contradiction: although it speaks almost lyrically of humanity's natural rights, it takes no note whatever that one in five people in America were black slaves, let alone Indians who were treated as aliens in their own land, and women who were the legal equivalent of juveniles. Particularly in the light of the many American denunciations of British rule as "slavery," Jefferson was acutely aware of the paradox created by the existence of chattel slavery in the colonies. Among the grievances he listed against the king in the original draft of the Declaration was the charge that "he has waged a cruel war against human nature itself... in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating them and carrying

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them into slavery in another hemisphere" and kept an "open market where MEN could be bought and sold." This clause in the Declaration was deleted, however, to satisfy objections from delegates from southern states and Yankee slave-traders from New England.

What makes the Declaration extraordinary is the fact that it was a proclamation directed to the entire world. To cite its opening lines, "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" obliges the American revolutionaries to "declare the causes that impel them to separation." The Declaration explicitly addresses itself to humanity and to public "opinion"; the Americans who signed this remarkable document were patently declaring their cause to the world, a precedent that all later major revolutions would follow, with its implied appeal to solidarity among all people and with its implied application of inalienable natural rights not only to the English and Americans but to everyone whom its words could reach. Like the Enlightenment itself, it was a clearly universalistic declaration that appealed to people as a whole who are free or live in trammels of political repression, avowing that the American Revolution was oriented toward the world and concerned with the existence of oppression as such.

The Revolution proved that a free people could create remarkably effective institutions at the very base of their society, institutions that were ultimately far more effective than the bureaucracy of the English monarchy. The Declaration brought this reality to the foreground such as no public document had done before. Where the Levellers had the New Model Army and an easily fragmented political network as an institutional base, the Americans had a *society* and a *body politic.* George III had essentially lost the colonies once British troops were no longer needed to protect them from the French and Indians in 1760. The Declaration took this fact for granted when it cited many of his royal prerogatives as violations of colonial sovereignty: it described his monarchical right to veto laws and suspend legislatures as the abuses of an invading tyrant, not as the exercise of legitimate royal authority by eighteenth-century standards. It is no wonder, then, that a democratic spirit inspired many ordinary patriots after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Thereafter, revolutionaries used not only *Tory* and *loyalist* as epithets for their opponents, but with increasing frequency *royalist.*

Chapter 12. The Committees of Safety and the Militias

The American Revolution was to innovate very remarkable revolutionary institutions, many of which were to resurface in popular uprisings throughout the world. Perhaps one of the most remarkable of these innovations was the network of revolutionary committees that emerged at every level of society, which were to constitute the authentic engine of the Revolution—later to be emulated in the French Revolution and in other comparable upheavals well into the twentieth century. When the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in September 1774 to create a Continental Association designed to end all intercourse with Britain, it also set up a specific mechanism to implement its goals. Article 11 of the resolution passed by the Congress on October 20 recommended "that a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town, by those who are qualified to vote for representatives in the legislature, whose business shall be to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association"—that is, to enforce the boycott of British

goods.[56] These committees were to examine every shipment of imports that arrived from Britain after December 1,1774, and to supervise the disposition of confiscated goods.

In accordance with this resolution—and very much on their own initiative as well—ordinary citizens began to constitute grassroots, county, and provincial committees throughout the colonies. Although the Continental Congress expected that the various colonies would instruct the Committees of Correspondence to enforce the Continental Association, these committees were already so overburdened with responsibilities that smaller auxiliary bodies were formed to perform special duties, which generally went under the name of Committees of Safety. By July 1775 the Continental Congress called upon every colony to establish a Committee of Safety, presumably to take on the overflow of work that nonimportation committees were unable to handle, thereby legitimating their existence as special revolutionary bodies.

Committees of Safety were not entirely unprecedented historically, but nowhere else did they emerge on a scale even remotely comparable to that created in America in the late 1770s. During the English Revolution of the 1640s and 1650s, the House of Commons had established bodies with that name to deal with crucial situations that required swift action by a small number of elected parliamentary representatives. But the British committees of safety were primarily parliamentary bodies; they rarely had local roots.

By contrast, the Committees of Safety in the American colonies were generally far-flung popular bodies whose insurrectionary pedigree reached back to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when William and Mary replaced lames II, a revolution that aroused widespread hopes for greater liberties not only in England but the colonies as well. In both Boston and New York City the citizenry had risen in insurrections to unseat Court-approved executives of James by men of their own choosing. In New York, many citizens harbored long-term resentments against their heavy tax burdens, the high-handed behavior of Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson, and the arrogance of a small, privileged oligarchy composed of established families such as the Van Cortlandts and Philipses that exercised firm control over the colony. In the spring of 1689, Nicholson, who was slow to inform the people of the change of royal power that had occurred in England, aroused widespread popular suspicion, which, together with fears of a possible French invasion of the city, led to a broad uprising. Nicholson was obliged to flee from his own province, and in June the city's affairs had been placed in the hands of an elected Committee of Safety composed of sixteen members, led by the commander of the rebel militia, Jacob Leisler, a German merchant immigrant. Driving the ruling merchant- landowner elite from office, Leisler had replaced them with a wider social spectrum of officeholders and remained at the Committee's head for some eight months until he assumed the title of lieutenant governor of the entire province, replacing the Committee with a conventional executive council. In March of the next year, Leisler was arrested, tried, and hanged, and the entrenched oligarchy whose rule he had temporarily disrupted was restored to power in the province.

But Leisler's Committee of Safety had established a precedent that was not easily forgotten. Even before the recommendation of the Continental Congress in October 1774, Committees of Safety had spontaneously sprung up in almost every patriot province, county, city, and town, each elected by the people of the area to enforce the Continental Association. In some areas, the Committees appeared under a variety of names, such as Committees of Supply and Committees of

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[56] "The Association," October 20,1774, in *Sources and Documents: American Revolution, 1764–1768,* ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 124.

Observation and Inspection, which zealously saw to it that the Continental Association boycott was honored. As Governor Dunmore of Virginia complained:

> A Committee has been chosen in every County whose business it is to carry the Association of the Congress into execution, which Committee assumes an authority to inspect the books, invoices, and all other secrets of the trade and correspondence of Merchants; to watch the conduct of every inhabitant without distinction, and to send for all such as come under their suspicion into their presence; to interrogate them respecting all matters which, to their pleasure, they think fit objects of their inquiry; and to stigmatize, as they term it, such as they find transgressing what they are now hardy enough to call the Laws of Congress, which stigmatizing is no other than inviting the vengeance of an outrageous and lawless mob to be exercised upon the unhappy victims.[57]

Although Dunmore's description specifically cites committees that were established to implement nonimportation of British goods, the distinctions between mere boycott and open revolution became increasingly murky.

The Continental Congress provided little guidance on how the committees were to gain the personal adherence of their fellow citizens to boycott British goods or gain pledges to consume only what America could produce itself. "The Continental Congress laid down the program on general lines," observes A.C. Flick, "but let each colony devise its own ways and means."[58] The first method of the committees was relatively genteel; they simply published the name of any individual who violated the Continental Association in the local press. To ferret out more surreptitious violators of the boycott, in some places copies of the Continental Association document were circulated for signature by the people, and those who refused found their names listed in the press as well.

In time, during recess periods between meetings of a legislative body—be it a town meeting, a county convention, or a provincial congress—the local Committee of Safety often became a temporary executive authority to meet the growing and varied needs of the revolutionary cause. As Margaret Burnham Macmillan observes, the loyalist royal governors in 1774 and 1775 were "compelled to admit that entire new revolutionary governments, parallel and coexistent with the old authority, had been established in their respective provinces."[59] In December 1774, Virginia governor Dunmore warned in alarm: "Every County ... is now arming a Company ... for the Avowed purpose of protecting their committees, and to be employed against government, if occasion require."[60] Between June and October 1775, most of the royal governors took refuge on offshore British warships or in British military fortifications. There were, to be sure, exceptions. The governor of New Jersey, for example, remained in office, although the revolutionaries placed his house under guard, intercepted his mail, and finally arrested him in June 1776. The governor

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[57] Earl of Dunmore to Earl of Dartmouth, December 24,1774, in *American Archives: Containing a Documentary History of the English Colonies in America,* 4th ser., vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1833), p. 1062.

[58] Alexander Clarence Flick, *Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution* (originally published c. 1900; reprinted by New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969), p. 65.

[59] Margaret Burnham Macmillan, *The War Governors in the American Revolution* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 23.

[60] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 24.

of Connecticut, on the other hand, remained in office throughout the war, prudently working together with the committees, and even became governor of the new state of Connecticut after the Revolution. On the other hand, the governor of Maryland, who was very popular with the elite strata of the colony, was forced out of office when more vigilant revolutionaries discovered that he had been in correspondence with Britain and with the loyalist governor of Virginia.

In time, the Committees began to meet continually, even during the sessions of the various bodies whose duties they had only temporarily taken over, often assuming executive powers when they were not granted them outright. As such, they became a revolutionary executive during the period from the end of the rule of royal governors to the adoption of new state constitutions for patriot governments. Indeed, once actual military operations began, their tasks expanded enormously, well beyond the enforcement of the Continental Association. They became the active forces *par excellence* in overseeing the authority of the Revolution, coordinating military efforts where necessary, issuing enlistment orders, setting quotas for the number of militia each town was expected to provide, and mobilizing troops for existing militias and the new Continental Army. It was the committees that often procured arms for the militias, equipped them with supplies, and cared for the dependents of absent troops. In many cases, the committees functioned as the collective commanderin-chief of the militias, and commonly maintained close surveillance of known or suspected loyalists, even rounding them up for questioning and imprisonment. They fixed prices, confiscated loyalist property, and when necessary conducted military operations, appointing officers when they were not elected by their men. Where no institutionalized patriot judiciary existed, the committees generally functioned as revolutionary courts.

It was these bodies, as Richard Alan Ryerson points out, that gave grassroots institutional embodiment to the democratic ideals espoused by revolutionary intellectuals. If "the American Revolution was a seminal event in world history," Ryerson writes, it was "not because it proclaimed the right of revolution, but because it developed the ideological, governmental, and popular means to bring about a revolution." Indeed, it took that democratic ideology "out of the realm of theory and rhetoric and into the domain of reality and action."[61]

With the exception of Rhode Island, every colony had a Provincial Committee (or Provincial Council) of Safety at one time or another during the course of the Revolution, working with coexisting county and local Committees of Safety that often outlasted a provincial committee's dissolution by new state institutions. The Committee of Safety in New Hampshire, among the longest-lived in the colonies, was not disbanded until June 1784, three years after British troops began to debark from the former colonies, while the Connecticut committee lasted until 1783. Some committees had very limited authority, as in Massachusetts, while others had virtually dictatorial powers.

The structure established in North Carolina almost ideally exemplifies the structure that existed to one degree or another in nearly all of the colonies.

Established in September 1775, the province's carefully graded structure of committees consisted of a reliable and patriotic Provincial Council of Safety, whose thirteen members were elected by the Provincial Congress together with two members from each of the province's electoral districts. County committees formed the next tier of the structure, followed by Committees

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[61] Richard Alan Ryerson, *The Revolution Is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765–1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), pp. 5,256.

of Safety that met quarterly in major towns of each elected district. Not only did the committees direct the local militia, but they functioned as appeals courts for Tory defendants whom the all-important local committees had convicted of offenses against the patriot cause. The town Committees of Safety were elected annually by the local freeholders. Ranging in number from seven to fifteen members, they established their own operating regulations and were free to arrest and confine all suspected Tories. The local militias, which they organized and commanded, often served as the real force in the communities and counties. The militias, it should be added, elected most or all of their officers, and they played a decisive role in winning a given town or region to the revolutionary cause.

By no means were all the Provincial-level Congresses and Committees of Safety eager to carry out the responsibilities that had been thrust upon them. A number of them conspicuously lagged behind the local, district, and county committees, which were usually notable for their revolutionary zeal and initiative. Although the local committees were given a broad latitude in carrying out their responsibilities, they eagerly took many matters into their own hands. Thus in New Hampshire it was the local committees that typically undertook the job of rooting out Tories, confiscating their land, mobilizing and equipping militia forces, and caring for the dependents of militiamen on active duty. In New Jersey, the main function of the Committee of Safety and Inspection seemed to consist almost entirely of dealing with Tories. The province had become a battleground for bitter conflicts between Tories and patriots, exploding in widespread bitter guerrilla warfare, especially in areas where the fronts between British and Continental armies were still ill-defined.

At the provincial level of some provinces, however, uncertainty about the outcome of the conflict and fear of reprisals after a possible British victory undoubtedly caused many moderate patriots to be wary of undertaking overt anti-British activity. Not only were they glad to leave the responsibilities of supporting the Revolution to the local Committees of Safety, but in Maryland, to cite an extreme example, the provincial committee was composed almost completely of the more "respectable," prudent and hesitant supporters of the Revolution. So conservative was this committee, in fact, that it tended to deal with patently Tory officials with remarkable deference. There, Continental Army officers such as the militant General Charles Lee had to turn to the radical Baltimore committee, composed largely of workmen, to challenge the provincial committee and circumvent the governor's barely disguised support for the British.

On the other hand, patriots in the New York City area were often in the minority and were obliged to depend mainly on committees at the provincial level to countervail the strong loyalist sentiment in Westchester, Queens, and Kings Counties and on Staten Island. In these counties, patriots actually lost control of the local Committees of Safety to virtual loyalists, who carried out none of their obligatory functions. So moderate was the provincial revolutionary government of New York that General Washington, John Hancock, and General Lee had to urge it to take stronger measures against Tories to keep the city from falling to the British. When the city finally did fall in the autumn of 1776, the local committees were disbanded and the city became the major gathering place for Tories from throughout the provinces.

Thus, throughout the provinces the local committees often acted on their own, beyond the strict control of the provincial committees. In general, "the central government [of a province] had no means of enforcing authority over [the county committees]," observes Agnes Hunt, a historian of moderate political views. "These county committees … were tenacious of their local supremacy and stood as a complete barrier against any attempt at centralization which must pre-

cede any practical exercise of independence in a central executive."[62] The Committees of Safety, in effect, emerged as a dual power on every level of sovereignty, county and local as well as provincial, even paralleling various provincial congresses as well as the Continental Congress itself.

Like the French revolutionaries a decade later, the patriots' civilian authorities in the American Revolution were continually suspicious of possible coups by the military—and, as it turned out, their suspicions were often quite warranted. Thus, some Committees of Safety openly resisted any attempt by the Continental Army to dictate orders to them. "Committee of safety members usually were civilians well imbued with the prevalent distrust of unchecked military authority," Macmillan notes.[63] In Massachusetts the Provincial Committee was accountable only to the Provincial Congress and assiduously upheld the supremacy of the civil authority over that of the military. When General Ward of the Continental Army ordered a Massachusetts committee to place its military stores at the discretion of the army's officers, the committeemen complied but solemnly took the pains to assert the authority of civilian institutions over that of the military, warning, "It is of vast importance that no *orders* are issued by the *military* or *obeyed* by the *civil* powers, but only such as are *directed by the honorable representative body of the people, from whom all military and civil power originates.*"[64]

Essentially, all the institutions for a revolutionary democracy were very much in place in areas controlled by the revolutionaries. The New England town meeting was extended to many communities along the Atlantic seaboard and even to inland frontier settlements. Outside New England, as one patriot later recounted, resistance leaders envied the New England town meetings and their ability to unite "the whole body of the people in the measures taken to oppose the Stamp Act induced other Provinces to imitate their example." Even sizable cities developed popular assemblies of one kind or another that were markedly democratic. Thus, Charleston's patriotic local artisans consciously imported the New England town meeting to their city, an act that was all the easier because the city was unincorporated on the eve of the Revolution and lacked municipal bodies that patriots might use to press their resistance to British rule. In time, the town meeting gradually became the municipal government of the southern city. Initially, in 1768, "mechanics and many other inhabitants of this town" gathered to urge that South Carolina join the other provinces in the nonimportation agreement; by September 1769, merchants and planters began to attend the boycott committee, so that the meeting soon became a "general meeting of inhabitants ... to consider of other matters for the general good" besides nonimportation. The same "general meeting of the inhabitants of and near Charlestown" then convened in late 1773 in order that the "sense of the community might be collected" on its response to the passage of the Tea Act, followed again in March 1774 by another meeting on the closing of the port of Boston. Finally, this "general meeting" called upon the various parishes of South Carolina to choose delegates to a General Convention, which thereupon formed a committee in which as many as half of its members were mechanics. Typically, Christopher Gadsden, the leading South Carolina Whig, distrusted the Charleston town meeting as a disorderly mob and even defamed it in 1778, when he speculated that the people's "running upon every fancy to the meetings of liberty tree" was a "disease amongst us far more dangerous than ... the whole present herd of

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[62] Agnes Hunt, *The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution* (originally published in 1904; reprinted by New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968), p. 153.

[63] Macmillan, *War Governors,* p. 35.

[64] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 35. Original emphases.

contemptible tories." The Charleston town meeting continued to be the municipal government of the city for a total of fifteen years, until the city was incorporated by the state legislature in August 1783.[65]

Nor were the newly formed revolutionary militias immune to the democratic fervor that swept over the colonies. In Baltimore, to cite a remarkable example, democratic practices had so completely imbued the local revolutionary militia that its troops actually assumed the lead in democratizing the city's lagging institutions. "At a time when Baltimore had no elective offices," observes Charles G. Steffen, "privates were suddenly choosing their own officers." With the strong democratic spirit that existed among the citizen-soldiers, Maryland's provincial convention of 1775 abrogated its previous policy of appointing local militia officers and "permitted companies to elect officers below the battalion level," Steffen notes. The temper of the militias suggests that the assembly gave this "permission" only reluctantly; in any case, popular impulses to democratize the militia swept over the entire province. "Across Maryland the new militia law sparked a revolution within the units, as soldiers debated openly the merits of their prospective commanders." The "mechanics" or artisans and other urban workers who made up much of the militia chose officers to lead them who were "fellow mechanics, not... merchants, lawyers, or physicians; only a decade of experience in the Mechanical Company, Sons of Liberty, and Mechanical Fire Company could have prompted such independent action."[66] As a result of the popular initiative unleashed by the Revolution and the revolutionary storm that erupted following the beginning of hostilities, many local militias soon came to be as democratic as that of Baltimore. Similarly, captured American seamen who were taken prisoner formed their own prisoners'organizations: "Separated from their captains and governing themselves for the first time, on their own they organized into disciplined groups with bylaws: in microcosm the prisoners went through the whole process of setting up a constitution."[67]

MILITIAS AND LOYALISTS

Every stratum in the American provinces was affected by this storm: the merchants and artisans who could or would not sell their goods to the British; the farming families bereft of manpower or subject to requisitions by both sides of the conflict; the black slaves who overheard talk of equality and inalienable human rights; and the wealthy landowners, merchants, speculators, financiers, as well as privileged artisans—not to speak of the thousands of bureaucrats and officials in the king's service who lived in deadly fear of the "levelling" language of the revolutionaries. Indeed, as Richard Alan Ryerson points out, the colonies were politically divided, industrially feeble, and militarily unprepared. The only strong element of their capacity to resist Great Britain was their will. Extraordinary self-sacrifice *would* make them powerful, visible sacrifice *would* unify them. When thousands of patriots publicly cast their timid self-interest aside, they rein-

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[65] All quotations in this paragraph are from Pauline Maier, "The Charleston Mob and the Evolution of Popular Politics in Revolutionary South Carolina, 1765–1784," *Perspectives in American History,* vol. 4 (1970), pp. 173–96.

[66] Charles G. Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763–1812* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 62.

[67] Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History,* ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon, 1968), p. 27. See also Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., vol. 25, no. 3 (July 1968), p. 401; and "Listening to the'Inarticulate': William Widger's Dream and the Loyalties of American Revolutionary Seamen in British Prisons," *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1969), pp. 1–29.

forced the courage of all.[68] Indeed, it was mainly through the zeal of the ordinary citizenry that the war could possibly be won.

And it was a war that was fought within every city and in many towns and villages. If we accept John Adams's estimate, one-third of all Americans were patriots, and another third were loyalists, while the remaining third were "neutral." In fact, it would have been very difficult to be neutral during these demanding times: the revolutionary committee system that reached into the very marrow of colonial society—the sheer depth of the revolution, penetrating into every aspect of everyday life from New England to the Carolinas—left little room for indifference. Almost everywhere, patriots viewed loyalist sympathizers with intense suspicion, even if they did not commit overt acts in support of the British. C.H. Van Tyne, a historian sympathetic to opponents of the Revolution, recounts in considerable detail the patriots' growing, active suspicion toward loyalists. "Exclusion from public favor was the first step in the political purification," he notes. "This social ostracism was at first informal. After the first violent agitation and discussion there was a breaking of old bonds. Loyalists were sent to Coventry by their townsmen. Old friends did not speak as they met; neighbors ignored neighbors; Whig and Tory drifted further apart, because neither modified the views of the other by friendly argument"[69] Lists of loyalist sympathizers were published, their businesses boycotted, and their homes often burned to the ground. Their presses were smashed by irate patriot crowds, while other loyalists were refused any services by tradesmen and mechanics. In Massachusetts in 1775 alone, two hundred conservatives, including the Hutchinsons, left America altogether.

Nor was it easy to hide one's views—neutral or otherwise—from public surveillance. Loyalists had initially been identified by their refusal to sign on to the Continental Association, but patriot committeemen soon found that it was far too easy for someone to conceal his or her loyalty to the Crown by simply signing their name. To make identification more certain, loyalists or neutrals were identified by their failure to volunteer for militia associations or muster with the patriot militia. Other activities that soon came to constitute punishable acts in support of the Crown included writing or speaking against the American cause; harboring or associating with known Tories; being "in arms against the liberties of America"—meaning, arming oneself or others in support of the British; recruiting soldiers to fight for the British; drinking to the health of the king; even rejecting Continental currency.

Betraying the American cause soon became a punishable crime. According to resolves that the Continental Congress passed in August 1775, suspects arrested for antipatriotic crimes could be tried by a local Committee of Safety, and their property temporarily placed in the custody of "some discreet person" whom the Committee could appoint. By January 1776, even so moderate a patriot as General Washington described the loyalists as "abominable pests of society," demanding that "vigorous measures, and such as at other times would appear extraordinary, are now become absolutely necessary."[70] In March the Congress recommended that all arms found in the possession of nonassociators, persons "disaffected to the cause of America," and those who refused to take an oath of loyalty to the patriot cause be confiscated and placed in the temporary custody of a county committee. When General Washington complained to the Congress in June

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[68] Ryerson, *Revolution,* p. 147.

[69] Claude Halstead Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 213–14.

[70] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 211.

1776 about the activities of loyalists in New York, the province was ordered to create better means "for detecting, restraining, and punishing disaffected and dangerous persons in that colony."[71]

As the conflict intensified in scope and bitterness, punishment of loyalists increased in severity, ranging from denunciation to fines, and worse. A loyalist in Baltimore was required to pay five hundred pounds to the revolutionary government, as well as nine shillings daily to each of the soldiers assigned to "guard" him under house arrest. In time, Tories were tarred and feathered, or tried and imprisoned. Weapons that had been confiscated only temporarily were kept for permanent use on behalf of the patriot cause. Indeed, revolutionary committees became increasingly ruthless in their treatment of their loyalist opponents, turning themselves into revolutionary tribunals, sentencing loyalist spies to death and filling prisons with supporters of the Crown. Some loyalists were exiled to other states; North Carolina's Committee of Secrecy, War and Intelligence recommended that loyalists captured in the Battle of Moore's Creek be sent to Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, since "their pernicious influence… might and probably would prove fatal."[72] Some revolutionaries held convicted Tories as prisoners of war in what Van Tyne calls "reconcentration camps."[73] Finally, temporary confiscations of real and personal property became permanent possessions of the patriot cause and were sold off to support the revolutionary army. Indeed, sweeping confiscations of personal wealth, livestock, crops, and land that followed gave the American Revolution that "levelling" quality that conventional historians tend to ignore.

After the mid-1770s, patriots seethed with so much hatred toward the loyalists that even seemingly authentic neutrals, whom both sides, in fact, tended to view as closet opponents, began to suffer retribution. Very likely, many "neutrals" drifted from one side to the other, changing their allegiances with the fortunes of the contending forces. Beyond New York City and Long Island, the virtual capital of the British Army in America, the areas controlled by the patriot and British forces shifted back and forth incessantly and were marked by eversharpening conflicts and destruction.

But even if British regulars had taken and held all the urban centers and larger towns of the colonies, it is highly unlikely that they could have been able to conquer the rural areas in which the majority of Americans lived and worked. For the redcoats to go too far inland was to risk decimation and defeat at the hands of armed yeomen, who easily changed from farmers into guerrillas. In January 1777, Washington's rout of a substantial British force at Princeton demonstrated that the British were incapable of holding the northern rural areas for any extended period of time, and were limited primarily to capturing and occupying colonial cities. It is not accidental that after General Howe captured Philadelphia on September 26, 1777, he made no attempt to pursue Washington into the countryside, where the battered Continental Army took refuge at Valley Forge, some twenty miles to the northwest. Although Howe might have all but wiped out the patriot forces in a conventional battle, he prudently chose to settle back with his army in the safety of urban surroundings. "The British could not win," observes Jesse Lemisch, "precisely because the Americans were fighting a popular war"—and one that the redcoats could not hope to win in the countryside, as the Battle of Saratoga was to prove.[74]

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[71] The Congress's resolves of August 1775 and March 1776 and its order to New York are quoted in Flick, *Loyalism in New York*, pp. 62–3,65.

[72] Quoted in Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, p. 219.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[74] Lemisch, "American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," p. 27.

The victory of the Americans over Major General John Burgoyne at Saratoga in October 1777 was not only the turning point of the war, but graphically testifies to the populist nature of the conflict. Burgoyne's ill-starred Saratoga campaign in the summer of 1777 was undertaken to cut New York off from New England, an enterprise that would have divided the northern colonies along the Hudson River. But "Gentleman Johnny" was hardly the man to lead an army of 4,000 British regulars, 3,000 Hessians, 1,000 Canadian militia, and highly unreliable Indian allies through the dense wilderness that separated Fort Ticonderoga at the southern tip of Lake Champlain from Fort Edward on the Hudson. Overloaded with baggage, with the families of his officers, and with supplies that were more suitable for conventional warfare in open country than a conflict in a heavily forested region, the army was slowed to a snail's pace, eventually to no more than one mile a day. This highly encumbered force contrasted markedly with the lightly equipped yeoman militia it opposed, which enjoyed enormous maneuverability and close proximity to a home base, and was thoroughly familiar with the terrain.

Part officer, part light-minded courtier, "Gentleman Johnny" took nearly a month to reach Fort Edward, which the Americans by then had already abandoned. Lacking sufficient food for his men, Burgoyne made two expeditions into the countryside, which aroused all the patriot forces in the area. The first expedition went up the St. Lawrence River to Oswego and then into Mohawk country, where it encountered such strong patriot resistance that it retreated back into Canada, completely abandoning the main force under Burgoyne's command. The second expedition moved into the Hampshire Grants (later Vermont) and was wiped out by the Green Mountain Boys under the command of General John Stark. So completely had Burgoyne's march stirred up the countryside that zealous farmers and militia—almost twice as numerous as Burgoyne's own forces, which were now reduced to a mere thousand as a result of the two failed expeditions— surrounded him at Saratoga and forced him to surrender on October 17. Most of the men who brought this well-armed, largely European military force to a standstill and then to defeat were not professional soldiers but armed farmers organized into militia units under elected officers, who fought more as an armed people than a professional army. The defeat served to reinforce British fears that rural America was not secure battleground on which to deploy a largely uninspired conventional military force, however easily it could capture cities and towns along the Atlantic coast.

With this victory the Revolution sharpened in intensity, and patriot and loyalist fought each other with increasingly vicious measures. The conflict was fought by fair means or foul, in nearly all the colonies and at all levels of social life. Aside from more traditional forms of military engagement, guerrilla warfare sprang up everywhere, a "partisan warfare," as Charles Royster calls it,[75] with all its attendant bitterness and cruelties. Once the British troops entered the countryside, they came under attack from revolutionary farmers, using tactics of "mobility, withdrawal, and unexpected counterattack; they fled only when they could not win and turned and fought only when they had a good chance of victory."[76] Snipers often decimated small detachments of British regulars and wiped out their patrols. Patriot guerrillas used roadblocks to impede the movement of British supplies, destroyed bridges that the redcoats needed in order to move in the wild countryside, conducted sudden raids from behind stone fences, and waged demoraliz-

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[75] See Charles Royster, A *Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 11–12, 26–7. See also the same author's *Light-Horse Harry Lee and the Legacy of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1981), chapter 1.

[76] *Ibid.,* p. 26.

ing small-scale engagements, until it was difficult, often impossible, for the British regulars and Hessian mercenaries to operate in the rural areas.

Loyalists, too, took up arms in support of their own cause. Southern backwoodsmen who smoldered with resentment toward the patriot tobacco planters, together with adventurers of all sorts who found the conflict an invitation to pillage and profiteer, incongruously joined royalist elites to form a "loyalist party" and, once the conflict had crossed a river of blood, established a military and guerrilla force in their own right. It is estimated that in New York, the loyalist base for most of the war, some 42,000 American loyalists created a Tory militia that often fought with British regulars. Together with small or large forces elsewhere in the colonies, they carried on a furious, continual assault against the patriot forces. The region between Newburgh, New York, and Manhattan became a blood-soaked guerrilla battleground in which the Tories massacred whole families and burned their homes to the ground. In New York generally, yeoman farmers played less of a role in the Revolution than elsewhere because much of the province's agriculture was dominated by landed families, unlike in New England, with its fiercely independent towns and villages. Inasmuch as the British never altered the old Dutch patroon system after their capture of New Amsterdam, many of the big landholders became Tories.

By contrast, a furious struggle ravaged the Mohawk River valley of the province, where newly settled yeomen farmers—many of whom, in fact, were uncommitted to either side—were harassed by Tory guerrillas, such as Sir John Johnson's Loyal Greens and John Butler's Tory Rangers, who behaved with exceptional brutality toward all settlers in the area.[77] In early 1776, General Schuyler, leading a force of Tryon County militia, captured the arms of the thousand-man loyalist force in the region, naively releasing Johnson on parole—who then continued with his guerrilla activities, fleeing to Canada only after he learned that Schuyler was again in pursuit of his forces.

Even more brutal than the Tory raids in the North were those which were led by Benedict Arnold in the South. Arnold had defected to the British and came to be hated as much by his countrymen for his cruelty as for his betrayal of the patriot cause. During the southern campaign commanded by General Charles Cornwallis, loyalists took full vengeance not only on the patriot forces but on civilians whom they suspected of being patriot sympathizers. These raids were often carried to the point of near extermination of patriot frontier settlements.

So much had the Revolution cut across ethnic as well as social lines that Loyalists readily allied themselves with aggrieved Indians and white ruffians, who spared neither women nor children in their attacks on outlying settlements.

The American Revolution, in effect, was a harsh civil and social war. Landlord, merchant, yeoman, tenant, artisan, ropemaker, or freight carrier—all who signed its documents and fought as guerrillas or spies—were fair game for one side or the other. For every Burgoyne or Cornwallis who led well-organized British troops with flags flying and drums beating, there were others who served the king as guerrillas with extreme brutality. By the same token, the patriots often terrorized the loyalists in their midst into silence, forced them to flee abroad, divested them of their wealth, and occasionally executed them as spies. But if the revolution was a bitter fight for "home rule," as Carl Becker put it in 1909, it was also a fight for "who shall rule at home."[78]

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[77] John Ford's 1939 motion picture *Drums along the Mohawk* conveys with considerable accuracy the brutality of the Tory guerrillas and the fear they inspired.

[78] Carl L. Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760–1776.* PhD dist. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1909).

Chapter 13. Internal Revolutions

As avidly as people from all strata of American society united to fight the British for independence, many were also fighting to alter their society at home—to eliminate political privilege and create a polity that lived up to the ideals of liberty and popular sovereignty enunciated in the Declaration of Independence. Backwoods yeomen, commonly abetted by the poor stratum of "mechanics" in the large towns and cities, pitted themselves against plantation aristocrats, Hudson valley patroons, merchants large and small, land speculators, shippers, landlords of all sorts, well-to-do artisans, and an emerging financial stratum that profiteered from the war and from the deflation of the currency. If broad republican ideals were "self-evident" to Whigs and patriots generally, they were by no means in agreement about what *kind* of republic would replace the royal administration. Indeed, patriots such as Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Gouverneur Morris, James Duane, John Dickenson, and Robert Morris could easily have become loyalists, so abhorrent were the "mob" and "democracy" in their eyes.

In some provinces more than others, serious clashes emerged within the patriot party itself—between radical patriots and conservative Whigs. The radicals asked a crucial question: Would the thirteen new independent republics retain politically powerful elites that might well become bastions of privilege, corruption, and even tyranny in their own right? Or would these republics be based on majority rule by the broadest possible male citizenry? The conservatives, on the other hand, asked: Would the new independent republics contain governmental "checks and balances" to prevent the "mob" from gaining power—and keep an unchecked majority from forming a tyranny in its own right? Would the independent republics protect large landholdings and mercantile wealth against "the people," who might try to undermine privilege?

NEW YORK: RADICAL PATRIOTS AND CONSERVATIVE WHIGS

These differences long predated the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. New York, as we have seen, had a history of clashes between the privileged and the powerless during the colonial period, and in the prerevolutionary decade the lines of internal tension were redrawn in even sharper terms during the struggle over the Stamp Act. To be sure, the stamp tax generated wide opposition in all social strata, among merchants as well as artisans in the cities, and among landholders as well as yeomen farmers in the countryside. In fact, it was merchants who had originally formed the Sons of Liberty in New York to oppose the Act, and merchants and landowners had even encouraged popular demonstrations to exhibit colonial solidarity in opposition to the hated measure. But when demonstrations became riots, in which artisans and mechanics threw bricks at British forts where the stamps were stored and hung the lieutenant-governor in effigy, the upper classes became deeply alarmed. "This sort of thing brought men of property to a realization of the consequences of stirring up the mob," Carl Becker observed.

> A little rioting was well enough, so long as it was directed to the one end of bringing the English government to terms. But when the destruction of property began to be relished for its own sake by those who had no property, and the cry of Liberty came loudest from those who were without political privilege, it was time to call a halt. These men might not cease their shouting when purely British restrictions were removed. The ruling classes were in fact beginning to see that "liberty and no taxation"

was an argument that might be used against themselves as well as against the home government. The doctrine of self-government, which for so many years they had used to justify resistance to colonial governors, was a two-edged sword that cut into the foundations of class privilege within the colony as well as into the foundations of royal authority without. Dimly at first, but with growing clearness, the privileged classes were beginning to realize the most difficult problem which the Revolution was to present to them: the problem of maintaining their privileges against royal encroachment from above without losing them by popular encroachments from below. It was this dilemma which gave life and character to the conservative faction.[79]

When the wealthier New York opponents of the Stamp Act felt that resistance had eluded their control and become too radical, opposition to British imperial policy divided sharply into radical and conservative factions. Thereafter, the wealthy and established merchants, the lawyers, and the Anglican clergy in the province began to resist the king's actions by cautious, moderate, and strictly legal means, forming their own separate party in order to do so. In 1770 they unilaterally abandoned the resistance policy of nonimportation of goods that the colonists had agreed upon as a means of resisting the Townshend Act, thereby essentially ending the boycott in the province.

In rural areas of New York, where the patroon system flourished, the large landholders were no less frightened by the specter of popular rule than were the merchants in the city. And their fears were more than justified. The tenant farmers who worked their ever-larger baronial estates had long suffered under patroon rule and their resentments ran high. The rents the tenants were required to pay for their leaseholds were excessive, indeed, in some cases, they were obliged to pay quasi-feudal dues. When they sought recompense in court, justice was often meted out by a judge appointed by the landlord. Although many tenant farmers could meet the forty-shilling qualification for voting, they were reluctant to exercise this right in their own interests because voting occurred in public in the province—and people who dared to vote had to do so *viva voce*. Thus, a vote that was cast against the pleasure of the landholder upon whom the voter was precariously dependent could cost him his leasehold or worse.

In 1766, the year after the Stamp Act riots, tenant farmers in Westchester and Dutchess Counties finally refused to pay rents until landlords converted their tentative leaseholds into permanent freeholds. The landlords responded by evicting the tenants, who then took up arms, driving out local officials and smashing up the Poughkeepsie jail. In the hope that the Sons of Liberty in New York would rally to their support, they then threatened to march on the city and burn down Pierre Van Cortlandfs home. But the merchant-dominated organization, instead of acknowledging the commonality between its own demands for liberty and those of the oppressed rural poor, joined the landholders in urging royal troops to suppress the insurrection being waged by the rural "levellers." Long after the royal troops obligingly put down the revolt, the tenant farmers harbored a deep bitterness against the city's wealthy Sons of Liberty. In turn, the landholders either joined the fairly conservative Whigs in the city—among them the Van Cortlandts, Livingstons, De Lanceys, and Philipses—or else they became outright Tories and supported the British cause.

Meanwhile, in the city itself the younger lawyers and merchants, led by Isaac Sears and Alexander McDougall, were forming their own popular movement, and their radical agitation caused consternation among the urban elites. After the Boston Tea Party and the closing of the

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[79] Carl L. Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760–1776.* PhD disl. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1909), pp. 31–2.

Port of Boston, the arrogantly conservative Whig, Gouverneur Morris, wrote in a letter on May 20,

> These sheep, simple as they are, cannot be gulled as heretofore. In short, there is no ruling them, and now, to leave the metaphor, the heads of the mobility grow dangerous to the gentry, and how to keep them down is the question. While they correspond with the other colonies, call and dismiss popular assemblies, make resolves to bind the consciences of the rest of mankind, bully poor printers, and exert with full force all their other tribunitial powers, it is impossible to curb them.

Morris went on to disgorge his contempt for the popular movement:

> The mob begin to think and to reason. Poor reptiles! It is with them a vernal morning; they are struggling to cast off their winter's slough, they bask in the sunshine, and ere noon they will bite, depend upon it The gentry begin to fear this... I see, and I see it with fear and trembling, that if the disputes with Great Britain continue, we shall be under the worst of all possible dominions; we shall be under the domination of a riotous mob.[80]

And yet Morris favored independence from Britain. Apparently, conservative Whigs such as he realized that they would have to join the resistance if they hoped to dominate and control its trajectory. They set about to capture the organization by running fifty-one of their own nominees for a Committee of Correspondence, of whom many were elected; but when the time came for the committee to oversee the election of delegates to the Continental Congress, a Committee of Merchants tried to skew the results in its own favor. It was prevented from doing so only by an alert Committee of Mechanics, composed largely of artisans and journeymen, which acted as a watchdog on the activities of elite committees. When other provinces tried to organize a nonimportation boycott following the blockade of Boston, the New York elites were able to delay their participation until the Continental Congress definitively adopted a nonimportation policy in the fall of 1774.

In January 1776 the New York Committee of Mechanics enthusiastically welcomed the publication of Paine's *Common Sense* and demanded that the province's delegates to the Continental Congress be elected at large and instructed to vote for independence. A few months later, in May, while the Provincial Congress was establishing the procedure for a new state government, the Mechanics became alarmed by a provision that accepted whatever constitution the new Congress prepared without ratification by the people of New York. Calling for sovereignty of "the people at large," the Mechanics insisted that "inhabitants at large exercise the right which God has given them, in common with all men, to judge whether it be consistent with their interest to accept, or reject, a Constitution framed for that State of which they are members." This, they argued, is "the birthright of every man."[81] The Mechanics, in effect, demanded a popular ratification of the state constitution, but by this time the conservatives had gained control of the Provincial

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[80] Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Penn, May 20,1774, in Richard B. Morris, ed., *The American Revolution, 1763–1783: A Bicentennial Collection* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 142–3.

[81] Quoted in Staughton Lynd,"The Mechanics in New York Politics, 1774–1788," *Labor History.v* ol. 5, no. 3 (Fall 1964), p. 231.

Congress and dominated the revolutionary government. The Mechanics' demands were haughtily rebuffed, and it may well be that "only the timely invasion of Long Island by the British saved the aristocrats from a political crisis of an explosive character."[82] A genuine class conflict existed in New York, which the Revolution stoked up into a virtual class war.

THE CAROLINAS: BACKCOUNTRY LOYALISM

Unlike the tenant farmers in rural New York, yeomen farmers in North Carolina easily obtained their own freeholds, but their economic independence was not accompanied by political freedom. Although two-thirds of the population lived in the backcountry on the eve of the Revolution, small farmers were drastically underrepresented in the Assembly, which the numerically smaller coastal elites completely controlled. Nor was there any tradition in the South of voters instructing their representatives on how to vote, as was the case in New England. Local government, too, in North Carolina was egregiously unrepresentative. Not only were there no town meetings in the province, but the tidewater aristocracy had constructed a system in which all political authority at the local level rested with officials in the county courts, such as magistrates, clerks, registers of deeds, sheriffs, and constables, with the result that people who had differences to resolve were obliged to travel to distant courts to transact their business, especially in North Carolina, where most county authorities were appointed by the governor.

The county authorities routinely overcharged ordinary people for their services and formed what amounted to a scandalous extortion ring. Justices of the peace demanded exorbitant fees for the dizzying array of services they concocted, while the sheriffs embezzled part of the tax revenues they collected, sometimes charging more than the required legal amount. When a farmer was finally charged with greater fees than he could afford to pay, his land was expropriated and sold off for a pittance to friends of the courthouse gang. In one hypothetical case that epitomized the farmers' plight,

> a man … has had execution levied on him by a merchant for a five pound debt secured by a judgment note. Personal effects to the amount of the judgment are seized, but the poor man's troubles are not over. For entering the judgment on the court docket and issuing the execution—"the work of one long minute"— the justice of the peace demands forty-one shillings and five pence. Unable to pay the fee, the unfortunate debtor is confronted with the alternative of a distraint or twenty-seven days work on the justice's plantation. But even after he has worked out his debt to the justice, the poor man's account is not settled. "Stay, neighbor … you must not go home. You are not half done yet. There is the damned lawyer's mouth to stop… You empowered him to confess that you owed five pounds, and you must pay him thirty shillings for that or else go to work nineteen days for that pickpocket…; and when that is done you must work as many days for the sheriff for his trouble [in levying execution and selling the debtor's goods], and then you can go home to see your living wrecked and tore to pieces to satisfy your merchant."[83]

[82] Roger Champagne, quoted *ibid.,* p. 232.

[83] George Sims, *Address to the People of Granville County,* summarized by Elisha P. Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats,* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Books, 1955), pp. 78–9.

The Regulator revolt of 1768–70 erupted largely in retaliation against this overt extortion ring. In 1768 the sheriff of Orange County in North Carolina announced that rather than go around the county to collect taxes, he would go to only five places in the county, to which the farmers were obliged, often at considerable distances, to travel to pay him. Those who failed to make the journey would be penalized. This announcement, coupled with the news that the Assembly had just allotted £15,000 to build a new gubernatorial palace, was the last straw. Farmers mobilized and formed "associations"—a militia term— to "regulate" or reform the system, flatly refusing to pay any more taxes until the courthouse gangs provided an open public accounting of county finances—a demand that the magistrates duly declined.

Having endured all they could take, Regulators in 1770 invaded the county seat of Orange County, removed the justices, and simply tried cases on the docket themselves, whereupon the Assembly passed a riot act, forbidding gatherings of ten or more persons. If those taking part in a gathering of ten or more refused to disperse when ordered, they could be shot outright. When the Regulators protested, the governor organized a military force whose officers came from the gentry but whose unruly rank-and-file refused to follow, agreeing to do so only upon the offer of a bounty. They inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Regulators at the town of Alamance, due mainly to the lack of competent leadership among the latter.

Whereas some of the tidewater gentry who had fought at Alamance went on to become major Whig leaders in the province, many backcountry farmers, in turn, became intensely pro-British. Others who would have favored the patriot cause raised demands for democratic reform, such as the transfer of county courts to eighteen "selectmen" elected by white manhood suffrage; still others demanded an unrestricted suffrage for all freemen and the popular election of clerks and sheriffs. None of these demands, however, came to anything; if, in later years, the state constitution ultimately incorporated some Regulator demands, it failed to inaugurate responsible local government. The old courthouse cabals remained intact, and justices of the peace in North Carolina were still appointed by the governor.

In Virginia, the seaboard planters and the yeomen in the interior waged a continual struggle over the social order that would emerge from the Revolution, while in South Carolina, as the Beards observe.

> slave-owners of the lowlands and merchants of the towns engaged in almost daily contests with mechanics from the shops and farmers from the back country... So threatening in fact was the menace—a group of "levellers" bent on overthrowing the aristocracy of "wealth and talents"—that the notables of the state had to exercise considerable skill in saving their privileges and prestige. Across the border in Georgia the social battle between conservatives and radicals was carried to such a pitch that in a moment of bitter rivalry the patriot party could boast of two legislatures and two executives.[84]

BACKCOUNTRY PATRIOTS

No less intransigent were backcountry farmers in Maryland and Pennsylvania, where radicals found that the wealthy elites who constituted the Whig resistance moved too slowly against the

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[84] Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization,* revised and enlarged ed. vol. 1 (1927; New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 267–8.

British, delaying or even impeding the struggle for independence. Rather than siding with the British, as in North Carolina, the backcountry farmers used the opportunity presented by the Revolution to break with the established system of political privilege and, arms in hand, acquire long-sought rights.

Before the rupture with Britain, Maryland's colonial assembly had consisted of large landowners and slaveholding tobacco planters, whose base was in the capital, Annapolis, and generally in Ann Arundel County. But more and more of the settlers moving into northwestern Maryland were Scottish Presbyterian yeomen farmers, differing from the established Episcopalian gentry in both ethnicity and religion. Urban support for these farmers came from the city of Baltimore, filled with its restless population of mechanics, whom the Maryland Assembly disdainfully refused to grant a city charter that would have given it even a modicum of self-government. From 1729 to 1786, Baltimore was governed by commissioners who were picked by the Assembly. Not a single local official was elected.

With the advent of the Revolution, Baltimoreans seized the opportunity to strike a blow against the Assembly. During the Stamp Act crisis, members of the Mechanical Company formed the core of the Sons of Liberty in Baltimore. As we have seen, the strongest impetus for local democratization came from the militia: specifically, the Baltimore Mechanical Volunteer Company, whose privates were electing their officers in 1775. The militia was also the most important institution in politicizing the mechanics. When citizens of Baltimore subsequently chose Committees of Inspection and Observation to enforce the Continental Association, they created an embryonic municipal government and for the first time provided the townspeople with a taste of home rule.

But in Annapolis, the Whig leaders who controlled the provincial revolutionary government were conservatives—indeed, some even wanted a reconciliation with Britain—and, led by wealthy planters and lawyers such as Charles Carroll of Carrollton, they differed little in social status and wealth from the royal administration. These conservative Whigs made up the Baltimore and Annapolis Committees of Correspondence and the provincial Council of Safety, who called the provincial conventions and dominated their sessions. As a result, a furious patriot General Lee was obliged to turn to the radical Baltimore committee—made up mainly of artisans—to challenge the Provincial Committee and oppose the governor's barely disguised support for the British.

Nor did the backcountry farmers of Maryland become loyalists. Although they had been grossly underrepresented in the colonial assembly and their resentments might well have inclined them toward the British, many of their local committees issued resolves in favor of independence. Not only were these formers strong patriots, but they had little patience with the machinations of Whigs in the Provincial Convention, where debates were often kept secret from the public. The most decisive factor that seems to have rallied the Baltimore mechanics and backwoods farmers against these oligarchs, however, was the feet that the Maryland Whigs seemed to fovor a reconciliation with Britain. The Frederick County committee for the mechanics and farmers bluntly declared that the Provincial Convention was "incompetent to the exigencies of the province and dangerous to our liberties."[85] Not until June 28,1776, under strong pressure from Baltimore radicals and backcountry patriots, did the convention instruct Maryland's delegates to the Continental Congress to vote for independence.

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[85] Quoted in Bernard C. Steiner, *Western Maryland in the Revolution* (Baltimore, 1902), Johns Hopkins Studies in History and Political Science, vol. 20, p. 19.

As to the new convention that was to be held on August 1 in order to draft a state constitution, the backcountry militia declared that whether they met the property qualification or not, they had the right to vote for delegates since they had "armed in defense of the country." Although this principle guided the Frederick County voters in electing their delegates, the convention refused to seat them. It finally adopted a constitution that was based on the typically conservative "checks and balances" model that preserved the political privileges of the elites. But in 1777, the Baltimore radicals formed the extralegal countervailing Baltimore Whig Club to express their dissatisfaction with the conservatism of the new state government and vigorously pressed it to harry Tories from the land.

PENNSYLVANIA DEMOCRACY

Undoubtedly the most radical and, for a time, the most successful internal revolution in the American provinces occurred in Pennsylvania, where backwoods yeomen fought furiously not only to achieve independence from Britain but to take political power from the Quaker and other oligarchs in Philadelphia. While the conflict between America and Britain overshadowed internal conflicts in many of the other colonies, in Pennsylvania internal conflicts ultimately even superseded the conflict for independence in importance. The Revolution radically transformed Pennsylvanians from parochial and docile freemen who bowed to their cultural and social betters into cosmopolitan, contentious citizens. More than any other province, Pennsylvania was torn by a genuine class war.

On paper, Pennsylvania's charter of 1701, granted by William Penn, had provided the colony with a relatively democratic government: annual elections, an upper house of only limited powers, and an assembly with a wide range of legislative powers. In the backcountry, moreover, western Pennsylvanians had far less to complain about than had the inhabitants of the Carolinas. Pennsylvania's yeoman farmers had, if not town meetings, at least relatively responsive local government: the citizens elected their own sheriffs, the justices of the peace as well as the members of county boards who levied their local taxes. Nor was the voting franchise narrow; rather, in the west the suffrage was so broad and land so abundant that nearly every farmer of whatever ethnicity had the requisite freehold to qualify for the vote.

Yet in practice, Pennsylvania at the provincial level was as oligarchical as North Carolina. As late as 1774, Quaker merchants and lawyers essentially ruled the colony by means of two devices. One was a suffrage based on a high property qualification for residents of the city of Philadelphia. Unlike the suffrage in the west, this restriction excluded most lower-class inhabitants of the city, so that only about one-third of the white males could vote. Second, the Philadelphia elite saw to it that the western inhabitants were grossly underrepresented in the colonial assembly. Although the Quakers made up only one-tenth of the colony's population, they controlled more than a third of the assembly representation. In 1770 the original eastern counties of Philadelphia, Bucks, and Chester and the city of Philadelphia sent a combined twenty-four representatives to the Assembly, while the five western counties sent only ten. The ever more numerous westerners continually petitioned the Assembly to gain representation proportionate to their numbers, but the Quakers consistently denied their petitions lest reapportionment cost them their political control. At times when, under pressure of circumstances, they could no longer avoid admitting representation to a newly created county, the oligarchy would draw its borders much larger than the densely populated eastern counties, and allot it only a few representatives. Inasmuch

as representation was based on a county, irrespective of its area or demographic numbers, western delegates increased only slightly in number, even though their potential constituents grew rapidly over time. Another source of western discontent was the fact that the Quaker Assembly refused to aid the westerners in their backcountry wars with the Indians. The pacifism of the Quakers enraged the frontiersmen, who, as in western North Carolina, were also ethnically and religiously different from the coastal elites— primarily Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and German religious dissidents rather than English.

Initially, the early years of the revolutionary period were very tranquil in Pennsylvania. The British imperial policies that outraged other provinces had left the local, presumably pacifist, Quaker elite remarkably unruffled. Indeed, the Pennsylvania legislature was the only major assembly in British North America that engaged in no sharp controversy with the ministry during the years between the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 and the Intolerable Acts in 1774. The Pennsylvania elite may have considered these breaches to be affairs of the royal colonies; after all, Pennsylvania remained a proprietary colony, technically a possession of the Penn family and not of the Crown. Although Philadelphians formed an effective committee during the Stamp Act crisis, to resist the Act, and held a number of demonstrations, citizen protests were mild compared with the furor that the Act aroused in New York and New England. Led most notably by the merchant Charles Thomson, Pennsylvanians participated in the Townshend Act boycott in March 1769, electing a Committee to enforce it.

In 1770, Thomson, called by John Adams the "Sam Adams of Pennsylvania," formed a faction on the committee that was committed to earnestly resisting imperial policy. This faction both helped and was helped by a growing articulate and united mechanic class in Philadelphia. In September 1770, however, the Pennsylvania merchant Whigs, like their fellow importers in New York, unilaterally abandoned the nonimportation boycott of the Townshend duties. The mechanics' spokesmen denounced the merchant Whigs for this betrayal; since the boycott affected the public welfare, they argued, all "tradesmen (merchants and artisans], farmers, and other freemen" should have participated in any decision on making such a change.[86] This act of betrayal destroyed the merchants' reputation among the politically active community of the province, which ceased to look to them for leadership.

Clearly a new, more radical set of leaders and institutions was needed. In particular, Thomson mobilized a new resistance movement in the city's neighborhoods, and by November 1773 the patriot faction formed a Committee of Twenty-four to resist the passage of the Tea Act, whose members included the core patriot spokesmen at this time: Charles Thomson, Thomas Mifflin, and Joseph Reed. Although the members of this committee were less affluent than any established Pennsylvania committee, they increasingly defined the resistance movement more in ideological rather than economic terms. In 1774, townspeople militantly refused to allow the East India Company's tea to be unloaded in the City of Brotherly Love; partly as a result of the committee's efforts, a large number of Philadelphians had moved from a resigned acceptance of all British authority to opposition to the imperial policies. In time, most of the leading wealthy families of the city, including merchants, lawyers, and liberal members of the Quaker oligarchy, came to favor the Whig cause, but the Whigs were still sharply divided over how far to carry resistance to British imperial policy. While conservative Whigs favored a cautious and legal approach, the

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[86] Richard Alan Ryerson, *The Revolution Is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia,* 27<55—J77<5 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), pp.32–3.

radicals favored bold and extralegal action, with the result that between 1774 and 1777, the conservative and radical factions began to openly struggle with each other for control of the resistance movement.

Meanwhile, between May 1774 and July 1776, the new committees that sprang up in the city not only reflected this struggle but gave the citizenry dramatic experience in self-government. As Richard Alan Ryerson points out, this movement

> quietly worked a revolution in Pennsylvania politics. In these twenty-six months more than 180 Philadelphians served on civilian committees; another hundred sat on the city militia's Committee of Privates. In rural Pennsylvania, another thousand persons were committeemen on civilian boards alone. Perhaps 90 percent of these individuals had never before held public office. The committees revolutionized Pennsylvania politics not only by what they planned, said, and did, but by what they were.[87]

In May 1774, word of the closing of the port of Boston spread to Philadelphia. When Paul Revere rode into Philadelphia bearing an appeal from the Boston Committee of Correspondence for the city's support, he was greeted enthusiastically not only by the radical Whigs but by the committees, who agreed to support the city. On June 1, the day the port was to be shut down, radical committeemen tried to mobilize the whole community, and, as a public show of support for Boston, Thomson called a "solemn pause" in which all regular business was suspended so that citizens could "ponder" the imperial crisis. Thomson, in effect, had called a general strike. Typically, the Quakers refused to participate, but most Philadelphians closed their shops, and church bells rang out for the entire day.

In anticipation of the upcoming Continental Congress, which was to meet in Philadelphia, the Committee of Nineteen demanded that Governor Thomas Penn call the Pennsylvania Assembly into session so that it could choose delegates for the Congress, but the stubborn Penn refused, whereupon the committee called a public assembly on June 18 that elected a larger Committee of Correspondence that was empowered, in the Assembly's stead, to call a provincial convention to elect the delegates. This committee sent out a letter to all the counties in Pennsylvania, urging them to form committees of their own. The members, they advised, should be chosen by citizens in every district and township in the county. These county committees, in turn, were asked to send delegates to the provincial convention, which would then choose delegates to the Continental Congress.

Thus, between June and July, with the help of Philadelphia radicals, a comprehensive committee system was created that essentially coordinated the resistance effort throughout the province. Pennsylvanians formed local committees and assembled delegates at the provincial convention with such eagerness that one can only conclude that their distrust of the Assembly's ability to handle the crisis must have been enormous. The men they elected to the Provincial Convention met on July 15, 1774, passed resolves against all the abuses of British imperial policy, voted to join the Continental Association, and chose delegates to the Congress.

In the meantime, realizing that the situation might well slip out of his and the Assembly's control. Governor Penn decided to call the Assembly into session after all. Dominated by conservative Whigs, the Assembly met at the same time as the radicals' Provincial Convention; indeed,

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[87] *Ibid.,* p. 4.

Pennsylvania was the only colony where rival assemblies met simultaneously. The official Assembly's aim was to keep resistance activities legal: it ignored the Provincial Convention's extralegal resolves and activities and chose its own delegates to the Continental Congress. Led by Joseph Galloway, these delegates were distinctly conservative in outlook, and were given no instructions to vote for independence. Provocatively, Galloway declared that the competing extralegal Provincial Convention had no power whatever and would only set up "anarchy above order." This statement infuriated the yeomen farmers, who raised an outcry for the complete transformation of the province's political structure. The Provincial Convention, they argued, was legitimate even though it was extraconstitutional, and, far from being anarchic, its meetings were conducted with scrupulous attention to procedure, since the delegates believed fervently in the importance of expressing the popular will in proper form. Nor were the radicals averse to hearing opposing views; on the contrary, they were committed to debate and sought to involve everyone in the general discussions.

Significantly, when the first Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in September 1774, the delegates assembled in Carpenters' Hall, a popular committee meeting place, instead of the State House, the venue of the conservatives. After the Congress voted in favor of the Continental Association and recommended the formation of committees to enforce it, Philadelphia elected a radical Committee of Observation and Inspection that had little difficulty in enforcing nonintercourse with Britain, since the boycott was already very popular in Philadelphia. During the next few years, whenever the Philadelphia Committee faced elections, the members that the citizenry returned were ever more zealous, ever younger, ever more radical and ever more of mechanic-class origins. In time, the revolutionary committees became the real government of the colony.

After the Battle of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, when militias were mobilized in all the American provinces, all counties of Pennsylvania formed voluntary militia units, called Associations, under the auspices of each local committee. Although they acted with no legal foundation, the Association militias drilled intensively and grew rapidly, so that by May 10 there were more than thirty companies in Philadelphia alone, aside from the backcountry, which mustered its own companies with equal zeal. Wherever the committee movement opened the way for political activity by the mechanics, the militia movement brought in still poorer artisans, journeymen, apprentices, daylaborers, and even servants. Such privates were not to the taste of the Assembly Whigs, who disdained them as "in general damn'd riff raff—dirty, mutinous, disaffected."[88]

From the start, the radicalism of the Pennsylvania militiamen assumed a highly militant form; indeed, no longer a "mob," they were now organizing politically as well as militarily. Deeply committed to the preservation of their communities and their liberties, they opposed all those who resisted their rights in Pennsylvania at least as much as they opposed British imperial policy. Like the Maryland radicals, "the political procedures of the individual companies fostered a spirit of democracy," as Elisha Douglass observes. Political debates among the Associators—as the Pennsylvania militiamen were called—was intense: the uneducated soldiers learned from the radical intellectuals they met in the ranks, and privates elected the junior officers and even some of the senior officers who were to command them. "The associations served as a kind of school for democratic processes"[89]—much like the New Model Army during the English Revolution. Their

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[88] Quoted in Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 63.
[89] Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats,* p. 252.

commitment to egalitarianism even extended to uniforms; although the officers were demanding that they wear expensive and distinctive uniforms, the ordinary militiamen in a May 1775 broadside declared that all soldiers should wear cheap hunting shirts, which would "level all distinctions" within the ranks.[90]

Proud of their own patriotic virtue and service to their community, these men felt strongly that service in the militia should be universal. Every ablebodied man, they argued, should associate as a matter of civic virtue. Increasingly, they despised those who refused to associate as opportunistic and self-interested, seeking only to profit from the war that others were fighting. Indeed, a man's worth was to be judged, they contended, not by his birth or wealth but by the intensity of his commitment to the Revolution. If a man could not serve, for whatever reason, he should at least make some significant financial payment to underwrite those who did.

A source of particular resentment for the Associators was the pacifism of the Quakers and the privileges this ideology conferred upon them, an ideology for which the conservative Whig Assembly exhibited an inordinate degree of solicitude. Indeed, the Quakers were exempt not only from serving in the militias but from paying any taxes to support them. The Associators viewed this exemption as a dodge by which the Quakers used their religious scruples to avoid aiding the patriot cause, a hostility that was exacerbated by the fact that Quaker oligarchs owned some of the largest and wealthiest estates in the province. Thus the Associators strongly felt that the Quakers should at least be taxed—preferably in proportion to the property they owned—to pay the soldiers who were protecting their community and to support their families while they were away from their fields. Time and again, the Philadelphia Committee demanded that the Assembly guarantee pay for the Associators, which the Assembly repeatedly rebuffed—again feeding the resentments of the backcountry farmers.

Ill-feeling toward the Assembly's failures grew, as it had to. Perhaps more than in any other province, the conservatives of Pennsylvania were intractable about making concessions to those who would challenge their rule. Accordingly, the Philadelphia Committee called another Provincial Convention, which met in early 1775, to protest the tepid way in which the Assembly was conducting the opposition to Britain. During the summer of 1775, a large network of institutions, often with overlapping memberships—the local Committees of Observation and new Committees of Militia Officers, even Committees of Militia Privates, so redolent of the Leveller agitators a century and a half earlier in Britain—began to function as the real power in the colony.

The Committee of Privates was particularly militant in demanding sacrifices from the Quakers. Its members refused even to serve as Minutemen as long as the Quakers were exempted from both service and special taxation, a decision the officers endorsed, declaring that it was "unreasonable" to expect privates "to remain in the field, while a great number of men equally able to bear arms are suffered to remain at home."[91] Further, the officers noted that people

> sincerely and religiously scrupulous are but few in comparison to those who upon this occasion, as well as others, make conscience a convenience;—that a very considerable share of the property of the province is in the hands of people professing to be of tender conscience in military matters; that the associators think it extremely

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[90] "To the Associators of the City of Philadelphia," May 18,1775, reproduced in Foner, *Tom Paine,* p. 67.
[91] Quoted in Foner, *Tom Paine,* p. 66.

hard that they should risk their lives and injure their fortunes in defense of those who will not be of the least assistance in this great struggle.[92]

When the conservative Assembly met again in September, the privates demanded that it tax non-Associators in lieu of military service. At length the Assembly gave in, but even in making this concession it humiliated the Associators: the levy, some fifty shillings, was not only woefully inadequate but seemed to place a pitifully low price on privates who were endangering their lives in the patriot cause. Gallingly, it even stipulated that the pay for the soldiers in the training period was to be drawn from poor relief rather than from a special fund—another flagrant insult, inasmuch as the privates hardly saw remuneration as charity and demanded full support for their entire term of military service.

In particular, the Assembly insulted the Philadelphia Associators by continuing to deny them the right to vote. The Associators considered it a selfevident truth that every armed man who was defending the province should have the franchise, regardless of how much property he owned (indeed, even if he received alms or was a servant or tenant), and regardless of age. Despite a resolve by the Committee of Privates to this effect on February 23, 1776, the Assembly not only denied its request but even had the effrontery to choose officers for the Associations. As the Committee of Privates declared to the Assembly, those who "expose their lives in defense of a country, should be admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of a citizen of that country which they have defended and protected."[93] The Associators thereupon openly repudiated the authority of the Assembly altogether, setting the stage for an open conflict between the two clashing authorities.

During the period between the Intolerable Acts of 1774 and the Declaration of Independence in 1776, most of the other colonies were already at war with Britain and had already shed their colonial governments and royal governors, which meant almost inescapably that they were committed to independence. The conservative Pennsylvania colonial government, which had been established under British rule, still held office even as revolutionary passions boiled over among the citizenry. Not only did the colonial Assembly refuse to pay soldiers adequately but it still refused to extend the franchise to them and, as we have seen, refused to instruct Pennsylvania's delegates to vote for independence in the Continental Congress. Independence now became a crucial issue in the province because it meant an end to the existing colonial government as well as the establishment of a republic. In short, arguments for independence in Pennsylvania were actually direct assaults on the legitimacy of the Assembly and established government by the supporters of committee power. The only way to secure the liberties of the people, the committeemen concluded, was for the people to run their own affairs. No longer in revolt merely against British rule, they were calling for a new political and social order in the colony itself.

The Assembly patently feared political and social revolution more than anything else, and its fears were only heightened after Paine's *Common Sense* appeared in January 1776. One of the Pennsylvania Whig leaders, John Dickinson, who had formerly worked with the more radical elements, now lauded the power of the king and Parliament as "indispensable to protect the colonies from disunion and civil war." Without the monarchy, "the democratic power" might "prostrate all barriers, and involve the state in ruin."[94] Besides, the Whigs argued, there was no

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[92] Quoted in Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats,* p. 250.
[93] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 251.
[94] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 253.

need for a revolutionary government; after all, they controlled the Assembly. When the Assembly met in May, however, it once again refused to instruct the delegates to vote for independence. The radicals now decided to remove the conservatives from power by force, seize sovereignty in the state, and establish an independent revolutionary government.

The Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia, meanwhile, was eminently willing to help them. The Congress had looked upon the Pennsylvania Assembly's obstinacy with increasing impatience; clearly, if Pennsylvania were ever to cast its vote for independence, its delegates would have to be under the instructions of a different provincial government. It was with this situation in mind that, on May 10,1776, John Adams proposed a resolution that those provinces that had not yet adopted governments "sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs" should be encouraged to adopt such government "as shall, in the opinion of the representatives of the people, best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular and America in general."[95] No government that still held power under the authority of Britain could be considered satisfactory any longer; new governments should be formed that derived their power from the people. For all practical purposes, the Congress's advice amounted to a general recommendation that the provinces still under the old system of colonial government undertake a revolution, and, since all the other provinces had by then shed their old governments, the recommendation was clearly directed at Pennsylvania.

Adams's resolution was passed on May 15, and a general meeting of Philadelphia inhabitants on May 18 used it to legitimate the abolition of the Assembly. The existing Assembly, it resolved, had no right to form a new state government, since any government it formed would be a means "of subjecting us and our posterity to greater grievances than any we have hitherto experienced."[96] Two days later, the Philadelphia Committee—now directed by Tom Paine, James Cannon, and David Rittenhouse—called for a Constitutional Convention for Pennsylvania to be held the following month to carry out the resolve of May 15 and, in a demand cheered by the four or five thousand people who attended the meeting, to form a new government for the province.

The Assembly's days were quickly running out. For its June 10 meeting it could not even attract a quorum of members, and on June 14 those members who were present quickly instructed the delegates to vote for independence. The Provincial Conference of Committees met on June 18 and declared the end of the Assembly. Moreover, the conference directed that all adult associators and legal voters who repudiated loyalty to Britain be eligible to vote for delegates to the Constitutional Convention, whose purpose was to establish a new government, "on the authority of the people only." No unrepentant Tory who had attacked this takeover of power by the committees could vote, and the people were urged to mandate their delegates with instructions on how to vote at the Convention.

When the Constitutional Convention met on July 15, 1776, the more conservative Whigs did not show up, thereby abandoning the political stage to their radical opponents. The delegates in attendance were mainly farmers and artisans who had been active Associators, led chiefly by Paine, Rittenhouse, Cannon, and Thomas Young, and the constitution they established was the most democratic that any American state had created up to that time (to be surpassed only by the

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[95] Quoted in Merrill Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), p. 98.

[96] Quoted in Jensen, *Articles,* p. LOO.

one that Young subsequently wrote for Vermont after he left Pennsylvania), closely resembling the model that Paine had recommended in *Common Sense.*

According to its preamble, government was to hold power "without partiality for or prejudice against any particular class, sect or denomination of men whatever."[97] There was to be only a single legislative chamber in the government, rather than two, elected annually by citizens, whose franchise would not be limited by any property qualification. Every tax-paying freeman over the age of twenty-one could both vote and hold office. The doors of the meeting place of the assembly hall were to be open to all citizens at all times, and bills passed by the new assembly would not take effect until they had been published and then approved by the next elected assembly—that is, until the people had expressed their will through what approximated a referendum. In addition to the assembly there would be a Supreme Executive Council that had only coordinating and administrative duties, chaired by a president who was merely a first among equals. All officers were to be "servants… at all times accountable" to the people. The constitution also provided for the continuation of democratic local government: justices of the peace, sheriffs, coroners, commissioners, and tax assessors were to still be locally elected.

Its popularity was immense; as Lemisch points out, "The people cherished their copies as they did the Bible, and they would later take up arms against its domestic opponents."[98] Although the radical constitution went into effect, the struggle over its legitimacy consumed state politics. It was as bitterly opposed by the conservative Whig leaders as it was supported by the people, and ultimately the powerful elites in Pennsylvania succeeded in replacing the 1776 constitution with a conventional "checks and balances" constitution in 1790.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania finally fully entered the Revolution, throwing all of its resources into defeating the British. In March 1777 insurgent radicals terminated the moderate Committee of Safety, which had been handling military affairs all this time, and established a revolutionary Committee of Safety in its place. This Council took over the militia and quartered its troops in the homes of non-Associators. It arrested suspected Tories and subjected them not only to imprisonment but even to capital punishment, confiscating arms, supplies, and landed estates from its known opponents. Between mid-October and early December 1777, the revolutionary "dictatorship" of the Committee of Safety conducted what Agnes Hunt calls a "reign of terror," which came to an end only on the order of Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council.[99]

EFFECTS OF THE INTERNAL REVOLUTION

Actually there was no reign of terror in the American Revolution in any way comparable to the unrestrained bloodletting in France a decade and a half later. But the grassroots nature of the American Revolution, its chronic fury, and the deep-seated structural changes it introduced made it at least as far-reaching in its effects as the French. As a result of the Revolution—whose effects were both internal and external—all the colonies saw a large-scale confiscation of loyalist property, including vast western territories held by loyalist land speculators. As loyalists either

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[97] The Constitution of Pennsylvania (September 28,1776), in Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., *Sources and Documents Illustrating the American Revolution, 1764–1788, and the Formation of the Federal Constitution,* 2nd ed. {London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 162–75.

[98] Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History,* ed. Barton J. Bernstein {New York: Pantheon, 1968), p. 12.

[99] Agnes Hunt, *The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968), p. 96.

fled the American provinces or were forced to leave, the committees seized and put up for sale the lands they left behind. In New York, the patroon system was largely demolished: land holdings like the threehundred-square-mile Philipse estate, as well as those of the De Lanceys, the Van Cortlandts, and the Coldens, were confiscated and put up for sale.

Nor did the provincial and state committees and governments simply resell confiscated lands to wealthy bourgeois, such as occurred to a great extent in the sale of the Church lands during the French Revolution. By and large, in what amounted to a virtual land redistribution, the broken-up estates were sold in small parcels to ordinary farmers and agricultural workers. To sell tracts of land in excess of 500 acres was viewed with opprobrium. Characteristically, the enormous De Lancey estate in southern New York was parceled out among 275 independent buyers, while the Roger Morris estate in Putnam County was acquired in modest plots by about 250 purchasers. As C.H. Van Tyne observed of the loyalist movement in New York, the revolutionaries in their land policy were "thus leveling, equalizing, and making more democratic the whole social structure" of at least the northern colonies and those of the mid-Atlantic seaboard.[100]

Nor was it simply the quasi-feudal estates of the New York patroons that were broken up. A sizable part of the lands of the American landed aristocracy as well as lesser gentry were disposed of in this fashion. The largest estate confiscated in all colonies was that of the Penn family, which at 21.5 million acres was worth a million pounds. Under the Divesting Act of 1779, Pennsylvania's Assembly took control of these vast holdings of the proprietor's family. Virginia confiscated the six-million-acre Fairfax estate. In Massachusetts, a law was passed confiscating the property of everyone who had fought against the colonies; the aristocratic William Pepperel lost his lands, which stretched for thirty miles along the coast of Maine (then part of Massachusetts). In New Hampshire twenty-eight Tory estates were confiscated, including the property of the royal governor, Wentworth, while in New Jersey five hundred Tory estates were taken over and sold in smaller packages to other citizens. In North Carolina, confiscated land was sold in two-hundred-acre plots. The Crown domains also fell into the hands of state legislatures, most notably the forests of New Hampshire.

This intensive political education in human rights and liberties could not help but call attention to the plight of those who, in America itself, had none. The Quaker oligarchy in Philadelphia fought slavery as resolutely as they opposed the patriots, owing largely to their pacifism; indeed, the first antislavery society in the world was formed at a meeting of Quakers in Philadelphia on April 14,1775. This society as well as subsequent ones gained direct or indirect support from such prominent figures as Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Abigail Adams, Tom Paine, and a multitude of small religious sects. In 1780 Pennsylvania passed a law instituting the gradual abolition of slavery; as its preamble stated, "When we consider our deliverance from the abhorrent condition to which Great Britain has tried to reduce us, we are called on to manifest the sincerity of our profession of freedom, and to give substantial proof of gratitude, by extending a portion of our freedom to others, who although of a different color, are the work of the same almighty God."

In 1785, the Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves was formed in New York and a similar society in 1788 in Delaware, which had already abolished the slave trade in 1775. Connecticut and Rhode Island outlawed the slave trade in 1774, while Vermont, even before Pennsylvania and other colonies, forbade the existence of involuntary servitude in any form whatever from its

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[100] Claude Halstead Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. 280.

inception as a short-lived republic in its constitution of 1777. In 1780 the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that the state's constitution had abolished slavery within its borders when it said "all men are born free and equal." Even in Virginia, a law easing manumission in 1782 led to the freeing of more than 10,000 slaves in eight years.

But in most southern states the very opposite pattern prevailed. North Carolina made the manumission of slaves more difficult than before the Revolution. South Carolina gave slaves as bounties to induce white residents to enlist in the Continental Army, turning them into a form of human currency to pay soldiers from the South. If Americans, tragically, did not abolish slavery in the South until some ninety years later, they legally eliminated all remaining feudal privileges that had been carried over from the Old World to the New.

To be sure, more state constitutions instituted by the Revolution followed the guidelines prescribed by John Adams in his relatively conservative *Thoughts on Government* than those of Tom Paine in *Common Sense.* Thus, most of the new states had two legislatures, and property qualifications for voting and holding office disfranchised many people until decades later, when the qualifications were dropped completely. To this extent, the conservative Whigs prevailed in the internal revolution. "The Whig leaders of 1776," observes Douglass, "could congratulate themselves after the struggle that their revolution, like that of 1688, was glorious as much for what it left untouched as for what it had altered."[101] As in the English Revolution, the radical tendencies were ultimately defeated.

Yet the mobilization for the Revolution brought active and direct participation in political life to thousands. Not only did republicans stand in opposition to royalists, but democrats stood in opposition to republicans, if not in name then in practice. Indeed, the revolution both preserved and built a democracy *within* the American Republic. This democracy took the form of committees that oversaw a wide variety of crucial tasks; of town meetings, which swept from New England to the other provinces and which the ruling strata dismembered only in part after the war. It took the form of a democratic and popular militia. And people abroad avidly watched the Revolution unfold, later borrowing its radical vocabulary as well as its insurrectionary institutions. "What an engine!" John Adams wrote of the committees. "France imitated it and produced a revolution... And all Europe was inclined to imitate it for the same revolutionary purposes."[102]

Chapter 14. Shays's Rebellion and the Constitution of 1789

Even after independence was achieved, prominent Whigs and radical patriots continued their battle over what kind of republic the states should establish. Most of the moderate Whigs favored a strong, unitary, centralized republic after the war was over. To the camp of John Adams, James Wilson, and Gouverneur Morris were now added Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, as well as many lesser figures. Some of these men, to be sure, were more centralistic in their views: Hamilton and Morris, in fact, would not have been averse to a constitutional monarchy, whereas Adams and Madison merely wanted an oligarchical republic in which mainly men of "wealth and talents" would hold power—in short, a republic that contained checks against "mob rule." Many patriots, on the other hand, favored a quasi-confederal republic: Richard Henry

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[101] Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats,* p. 8.

[102] John Adams to Dr. J. Morse, December 22,1815, in Charles F. Adams, ed., *Works of John Adams,* vol. 10 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1856), p. 197.

Lee, John Rutledge, Christopher Gadsden, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Samuel Adams sought to devolve real power on to the state governments or, more precisely, the state legislatures.

None of these parties, however, favored building the new republic upon the institutional machinery of the Revolution, notably the town meetings, popular assemblies, conventions, and the far-flung committee system. Still less did they wish to establish a "revolution in permanence," with higher levels of authority whose powers diminished as their scope widened and were fully accountable to the local communities, in which real power reposed. Few even held the word *democracy* in high esteem, although it was to enter into common use as time passed by. The committee system disbanded as quickly as possible once the state governments were in place, sometimes even before hostilities came to an end. In Pennsylvania, the rule of the backwoods farmers who had unseated the Quaker establishment came to an end when the radical Constitution of 1776 was replaced with a bicameral and gubernatorial structure that restored the privileges of the Philadelphia elite in 1790. At the same time, state governments made resolute and largely successful efforts to replace the town meetings and popular assemblies with a system of mayors and city councils. Any man, wrote Gadsden, "whatever station his country may have put him in during the war," should fall "cheerfully into the ranks again," "sacrificing all... resentments and private feelings, to the good of the State," whose legislatures and governors were to be "untrammeled" by citizens.[103] Charleston was duly incorporated in 1783, followed by New Haven and towns in New Jersey and Virginia, many of which had established town-meeting forms of political management. The tide of civic incorporation, however, was halted in much of New England, where Sam Adams and his supporters adamantly rescued the Boston Town Meeting from what they regarded as the encroachment of tyranny. The conflict over municipal selfgovernment was essentially a duel between the wealthy and the relatively poor: in nearly all cases the commercial and patrician strata of the population furiously opposed civic democracy, while less fortunate artisans, laborers, radical intellectuals, and farmers firmly supported it.

In Massachusetts, despite the persistence of the town meetings, the new state constitution—framed primarily by John Adams, now a conservative lawyer, and James Bowdoin, a hard-fisted businessman—raised property qualifications for voting by 50 percent and required sizable estates for holding senatorial, representative, and gubernatorial offices. This constitution, like so many others, clearly reflected the interests of the merchants, lawyers, and well-to-do. As Samuel Eliot Morison observes, "The [Massachusetts) Constitution of 1780 was a lawyers' and merchants' constitution, directed toward something like quarterdeck efficiency in government, and the protection of property against democratic pirates."[104] On this score, Massachusetts suffered setbacks after the Revolution that were not to be undone for years to come.

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

At the national level, however, it was the confederalists who seemed to prevail over the centralists in the 1780s. Owing to their years of struggle against the arbitrary power of the Crown, Americans had become acutely mistrustful of any central authority, which they still identified

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[103] Quoted in Pauline Maier, "The Charleston Mob and the Evolution of Popular Politics in Revolutionary South Carolina, 1765–1784," *Perspectives in American History,* vol. 4 (1970), p. 191.

[104] S.C. Morison, "The Struggle over the Adoption of the Constitution of Massachusetts, 1780," Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings* 50 (1916–17).

with a single executive. The Articles of Confederation, drawn up in the heat of the revolutionary conflict and ratified in 1781 as the constitutional document for interstate cooperation, created only a loose alliance between the states, giving rise, in effect, to thirteen new and independent republics.

In this sense, the Articles created a decentralized national polity, albeit by no means a democracy based on local bodies and entities. The second article declared quite bluntly, "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled." Its confederation congress had not only legislative power but executive power as well, and its delegates were "annually appointed in such manner as the legislature of each state shall direct... with a power reserved to each state to recall its delegates, or any of them, at any time within the year, and to send others in their stead for the remainder of the year" (Article 5). Each state, regardless of size, had at least two members, and "no person shall be capable of being a delegate for more than three years in any term of six years" (Article 5). The government's "executive," which met only between sessions of the Congress, consisted not of an individual president but of a Committee of the States, in which each state had one vote, irrespective of its size or population (Article 9).

The Confederation "central government" was dependent upon the state legislatures for almost every resource and authority. In this respect, the new United States was not a typical nation-state. Expressly forbidden to maintain a professional army, Congress relied entirely upon the states to provide it with military forces as need arose, "for the common defence or general welfare." It could not call for a mobilization of the militia and naval forces "unless nine states assent to the same." Nor could the Congress levy taxes or collect customs duties unless every state agreed to it in a unanimous vote, and therefore it was entirely beholden to the state legislatures for financial resources. If a state was delinquent in fulfilling a congressional request for revenue or military forces— as every state was, in fact—Congress could not punish it. Nor could it borrow funds. Although it could issue currency, the national government had no control over currency and banking in general since the states could also issue currency, as seven of them actually did. It had no power to conclude commercial treaties or intervene in any domestic affairs of a state, even in the face of an impending civil war; "nor shall a question of any other point... be determined, unless by the votes of a majority of the United States in Congress assembled."[105] Once the conflict with Britain was won, the states were less inclined to grant requests that the Congress made and were increasingly indifferent to the alliance as such, regarding themselves as sovereign republics. While the Congress had responsibility for paying off the enormous debt that the former colonies had incurred during their struggle, the states were prepared to allocate it only very meager resources.

However adamantly the Articles of Confederation preserved state powers against central authority, however, this system was not decentralized to the point where power rested in towns and counties. Since the Articles devolved legal power upon the state legislatures, political authority was defined more by the state constitutions than by the Articles themselves. In the southern states and even in Massachusetts, their constitutions were expressly oligarchical, and the legis-

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[105] Articles of Confederation, 1777 (1781), in *Sources and Documents Illustrating the American Revolution, 1764– 1788 and the Formation of the Federal Constitution,* ed. Samuel Eliot Morison, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 178–86.

lature usually elected the governor (who could not veto legislative acts) and exercised complete control over the courts, whose rulings were essentially subordinated to the legislature. Although the governor could appoint judges, he essentially remained under the legislature's control.

Still, oligarchical tendencies often intertwined with republican ones. Countervailing the power of state legislatures was the considerable power enjoyed by the citizenry. Elections were annual affairs, and voters consisted mainly of independent yeomen farmers, most of whom enjoyed a widely extended franchise. In Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New Hampshire property as a qualification for voting, sacrosanct during colonial times, was replaced by the mere fact of tax payments. Typically, the New England states had a very broadly based electorate; as early as 1777, Vermont placed no property or tax qualifications on the male franchise, and it was followed shortly afterward by Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, which made it possible for such relatively broad electorates to change legislatures very easily if they so chose.

Although "farmers by no means voted against the American aristocracy, for many of them were equally conservative on many issues," as Merrill Jensen observes, still, "where agrarian interests were involved in such matters as local self-government, paper money, and debt collection policies, they could and did outvote the minority"—that is, the merchants, financiers, and tradesmen in the large cities.

> And in such cases, there was no central government to which a hard-pressed minority could appeal for help; the governors had no veto; the courts were weak. Thus the American Revolution made possible the democratization of American society by the destruction of the coercive authority of Great Britain and the establishment of actual local self-government within the separate states under the Articles of Confederation.[106]

NEWBURGH

The conservative Whigs found the polity created by the Articles of Confederation wholly unacceptable, and the old unabated fears of "mob rule" among the commercial classes and their spokesmen resurfaced with particular acuteness after the war. Once the fighting essentially came to an end in 1781, elitist reactionaries such as Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris were resolved to undo the newly achieved republic by establishing a monarchy or, failing that, by placing the states under military rule.

To this end, they tried to exploit widespread disaffection in the army. Despite the Continental Army's definitive victory at Yorktown in 1781, the soldiers had received little or nothing in the way of pay for four or even six years. Washington pleaded with the Confederation Congress for money to pay his troops their wages and to give them the pensions that they had been promised during the fighting. But no funds were forthcoming. Unpaid, penurious, and uncertain of their future, the neglected soldiers felt unappreciated by the people whose liberty they had sacrificed so much to defend.

After Yorktown the aggrieved army, together with a militant group of officers, had collected around army headquarters at Newburgh, New York. Instead of returning home to Mount Vernon, Washington remained with his troops and tried to ease their semimutinous state of mind.

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[106] Merrill Jensen, *The New Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1950), p. 128.

Although he dispatched a committee of officers to Philadelphia to express the soldiers' disillusionment to Congress and again demand that it fulfill its financial commitments to them, the bankrupt Congress could do nothing. Indeed, just after the committee arrived, a bill that would have allowed it to collect its own taxes was defeated when two states voted against it.

While they were in Philadelphia, the officers on the committee conferred with the financiers Gouverneur and Robert Morris, who were interested in getting Congress to make good on the debt certificates that they held. After exploring their common ground, the officers and financiers agreed that the army should not disband until it had been paid, and if it were not paid, the officers should use the military to establish a strong central government, which could meet its demands—and, needless to emphasize, those of the government's creditors. For the army officers, the success of this plan depended upon the cooperation of General Washington, who the conspirators eagerly hoped would agree to lead the army, like a prototypical Bonaparte, disband the Congress and the state legislatures, and perhaps even become a constitutional monarch.

The task of gaining Washington's support for this counterrevolution fell to Alexander Hamilton. In mid-February 1783, Hamilton, following a carrot-andstick policy, sent a carefully composed letter to Washington at Newburgh warning him that the Congress could not pay the soldiers, and that when this became clear the following June, the army would take up arms "to procure justice to itself."[107] It would do this with or without Washington, Hamilton warned, but he shrewdly added the prediction that without Washington, "the difficulty will be to keep a complaining and suffering army within the bounds of moderation." The far preferable alternative, he urged Washington, would be for the general to lead his troops in taking control over the country himself and establish a system of taxation that "can do justice to the creditors of the United States."[108] Monarchy was the system of government that was most known to history and most common in the world today, Hamilton argued; in accepting the offer to become king, Washington would merely be adhering to the norm of the times.

One of Washington's own confidential correspondents, Joseph Jones, confirmed for him that danger was indeed very real in the army. The general's reputation with the men he commanded, Jones warned, was being systematically undermined by "dangerous combinations in the army," so that should Washington refuse to go along with the *coup* plan, "the weight of your opposition will prove no obstacle to their ambitious designs" and it could be carried out without him. When Washington investigated the situation himself, he found that Jones was correct; the mood of the soldiers was more rebellious than he had supposed.[109]

To his lasting credit, Washington in March rejected Hamilton's proposal in the firmest possible terms and refused to lead an enterprise that would be "productive of civil commotions and end in blood." "I shall pursue the same steady course of conduct which has governed me hitherto," he wrote; "fully convinced that the sensible and discerning part of the army cannot be unacquainted (although I never took pains to inform them) of the services I have rendered it on more occasions than one."[110]

Once the conspirators realized that they would have to bypass Washington, the "dangerous combinations within the army" of which Jones warned grew rapidly in numbers and decisive-

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[107] Quoted in James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Boston: Little, Brown 8c Co., 1975), p. 172.

[108] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 171.

[109] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 171.

[110] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 172.

ness. Unsigned literature circulated throughout Newburgh deprecating the general himself and calling for a mass meeting of the officers to discuss the upcoming military coup. Frustrated by his own inability to help his soldiers gain the pay they were owed, Washington nonetheless felt that he had "to arrest on the spot the foot that stood wavering on a tremendous precipice." To head off the upcoming mass meeting, he announced a meeting of his own at Newburgh, for March 15, 1783. "This was probably the most important single gathering ever held in the United States," writes Washington's biographer, James Thomas Flexner[111]—a decision by the general that probably rescued the Revolution from defeat and the former colonies from domestic monarchical rule.

Although Washington hinted to his officers that he would not attend the meeting he had called, his sudden appearance onstage took the rebellious officers in attendance aback. He told his angry men that the country in which they were being asked to establish a tyranny was that of "our wives, our children, our farms and other property," and he implored them not to "deluge our rising empire in blood." But their faces remained stonily impassive. He then took out a letter from a congressman that he wanted to read, but he could not see it well enough and so had to put on his spectacles. His men had never seen him wear them before. "I have not only grown gray but almost blind in the service of my country," he quietly explained. His momentary helplessness completely won over the hearts of his men, who gathered around him and wept with contrition over the frailty of their commander. The conspiracy simply dissolved. "The moderation and virtue of a single character," Thomas Jefferson later wrote, "probably prevented this Revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish."[112]

SHAYS'S REBELLION

The aborted coup still left the decentralized Confederation Congress and the Articles of Confederation in place, and the republic's wealthy creditors loathed it all the more once the prospect of changing the confederal government seemed to be postponed indefinitely. All the difficulties that the republic faced were portrayed by these men as stemming from the Articles, and later nationalist or so-called "federalist" historians of the Revolution were to paint the Confederation era in the darkest colors. In fact, the 1780s was a period of marked if uneven recovery from wartime dislocations. Trade between the American port cities and Europe began to revive soon after the end of hostilities, and with the Peace Treaty of September 1783—in which His Britannic Majesty recognized his former colonies as "free, sovereign and independent"—American ships were far freer to trade than they had been under the imperial system. The southern economy, too, recovered rapidly: its tobacco, indigo, and raw materials were direly needed by the British, and a brisk trade developed between the two former enemies.

The population in and around Boston in particular was basically oriented toward a market economy, fueled by growing opportunities for profit and expansion. During the Confederation, Boston was no more an industrial town than other American towns and cities, although English methods of mass manufacture were beginning to penetrate the United States; but unlike in much of rural America, money rather than barter was the principal means of exchange, and increasingly one's needs were supplied by purchasing goods that others had produced with their labor rather than by homemade goods. The city's population consisted largely of merchants, artisans,

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[111] *Ibid.,* p. 174.
[112] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 175.

speculators, and a host of professionals; it was clearly a commercial town whose authentic concern was business and economic growth.

By contrast, the backcountry agrarian culture was radically different from that of the seaboard towns. The farmers who had settled in central and western Massachusetts had developed a modest subsistence agriculture that allowed them to be almost wholly self-sufficient and required little, if any, currency. The yeoman who remarked that he could acquire "a good living on the produce of [his farm]" for himself and his entire family was not unusual. "Nothing to wear, eat or drink was purchased, as my farm provided all."[113] Such yeomen, to be sure, usually produced small crop surpluses for the market, which they took to shopkeepers in Deerfield and Northampton to exchange for glass, gunpowder, iron, medical supplies, and the like, but these transactions generally took the form of barter rather than monetary exchanges, in which foodstuffs and homespun cloth were traded off for items crafted by nearby artisans or in distant cities.

In this respect, the household budget of a yeoman family in Whately, Massachusetts, described by David P. Szatmary, was nearly autarchical:

> In 1784, twenty-nine-year-old farmer Paul Smith had three dependents and owned fifty-six acres of land, an ox, two cows, and six swine. To feed himself and his family for a full year, he needed roughly 60 bushels of flour, 500 pounds of pork, 200 pounds of beef, flax for making clothes, and small amounts of peas, turnips, potatoes, fruit, and carrots to round out his family's diet. In addition, he needed grain for seed to be planted the following year, another 16 bushels of corn to feed the cows, some grain to pay the cost of milling grain into flour, and about 5 tons of hay for the ox and the cows.[114]

Moreover, Smith lived outside the market economy:

> [He] utilized only enough land to meet these immediate needs. Although he had the chance to grow more surplus crops for market, given his fifty-six acres of land, the labor of himself and his wife, and the close proximity of Whately to the Connecticut River, he generally used only the land and labor necessary for shortrange requirements.[115]

Such eighteenth-century New England yeomen, who farmed mainly to maintain themselves and their families in reasonable comfort, lacked any orientation toward commerce or innovation and followed very traditional customs they had inherited from their fathers. Cultivating only enough to meet his family's simple needs and enjoying freedom from servitude to others, the backcountry yeoman lived in a premarket culture that fostered a strong sense of individuality, moral probity, and a sturdy willingness to defend his independence from outside commercial interlopers. This condition of near-autarchy, however, was not individualistic; rather it made for strong community interdependence. "Although priding themselves on their autonomy," Szatmary observes,

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[113] "Diary of George Richard Minot, June 9, 1787, quoted and discussed in David P. Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980),p. 1.

[114] Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion,* p. 2.

[115] *Ibid.,* p. 2.

yeomen lived in a community-directed culture. During planting and harvesting, family and friends eased their backbreaking work. The independent status of yeomen, then, resulted in neither self-sufficiency nor a basically competitive society but led, rather, to cooperative, community-oriented interchanges.[116]

In fact, the independence that the New England yeomanry enjoyed was itself a function of the cooperative social base from which it emerged. To barter homegrown goods and objects, to share tools and implements, to engage in common labor during harvesting time in a system of mutual aid, indeed, to help newcomers in barn-raising, corn-husking, log-rolling, and the like, was the indispensable cement that bound scattered farmsteads into a united community.

For better or worse, however, this culture could not resist the impact of the outside world. In the early 1780s, the market economy began to penetrate inland to central and western Massachusetts, slowly locking the yeoman culture in what Szatmary calls a "chain of debt collections." The "chain" started abroad, when major English shippers to America demanded payment of the loans they had previously extended to Boston merchants. These shippers refused to accept anything but specie—that is, gold or silver coin—in payment, since paper currency had become virtually worthless. But specie was relatively rare among war-stricken Yankee merchants, making it extremely difficult for them to pay off debts. By demanding coinage in payment for their goods, English shippers placed an enormous burden on American merchants, who passed it on to traders along the Connecticut River, compelling them to demand specie on the loans they had made to retail shopkeepers in Deerfield and Northampton.[117]

Standing at the end of this "chain of debt collections," the yeomanry were now cajoled by local shopkeepers not only to purchase more goods than they had in the past but to make all their payments and meet all their debts in money rather than barter. Since the farmers lacked money, the shopkeepers granted them short-term credit for their purchases. In time, many farmers became significantly indebted and could not pay off what they owed, least of all in specie, which was what everyone along the "chain of debt collections" demanded—and significantly lacked.

By the late 1780s, this "chain" began seriously to jeopardize the traditional, basically independent way of life of the yeomen, who faced the loss of their farms to merchants and speculators in debt collections. With their creditors pressing them for specie, merchants and shopkeepers flooded the courts with suits demanding the repayment of their loans to farmers. Many farmers were dispossessed of their landholdings, cattle, implements, homes, and even furniture, valuables they had usually crafted with their own hands; and if the dispossessed goods of a yeoman were inadequate to pay his debts, he was likely to be imprisoned. Between August 1784 and August 1786, the docket of the Massachusetts Court of Common Pleas contained nearly three thousand debt cases from Hampshire County alone, over two and a half times more than in 1770–72. At least 31 percent of the county's male citizens over sixteen years old were swept up into this wave of prosecutions, and comparable percentages can be cited for Essex, Bristol, and Berkshire counties. Nor was Massachusetts alone in the wave of prosecutions: over a fifth of Connecticut taxpayers were hauled into court for indebtedness in 1786, and such cases were also numerous in New Hampshire and Vermont.

As if to deepen the yeomanry's outrage, the Massachusetts General Court had biased the state's tax collection system toward the commercial classes of the seaboard towns, imposing the

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[116] *Ibid.,* pp. 6–7.
[117] *Ibid.,* p. 19.

lion's share of the tax burden on land rather than on salable stock. Needless to say, taxes, like debt payments, were generally demanded in specie. The yeomanry, many of whom were veterans who had been discharged from the army with paper currency, if they were paid at all, were placed in an intolerable position: not only were they required to pay off impossible debts, but they were also being asked to carry the major tax burden of their respective states.

Precisely because many of the farmers were veterans of the Revolution, they were hardly willing to sit by and allow city entrepreneurs to deprive them of their cherished lifeways. A spontaneous movement of resistance broke out among the yeomanry in which they began to replicate their behavior in opposition to the Intolerable Acts of March-June 1774—much to the consternation of the erstwhile Whigs, who had encouraged these very actions a decade earlier against the British. Calls now went out in town meetings throughout Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire for county conventions, which were chillingly redolent of the assemblies that had led to the Revolution a decade earlier. Initially, the assemblies' demands were by no means revolutionary. In Massachusetts, they merely asked that the state issue paper money and, to provide debt relief, recognize goods as a legitimate form of debt payment. Nearly a third of all the towns in the state sent petitions to the General Court with such demands, while comparable actions were taken in Vermont and New Hampshire.

The urban commercial elites adamantly resisted these peaceful petitions; indeed, they arrogantly viewed them as appeals from an archaic rural world that lacked a full appreciation of the sanctity of contract and metallic wealth. Despite its legality, paper money was viewed by the puritanical urban elites as immoral by contrast with metallic specie, and they gallingiy blamed the presumably improvident farmers for incurring the very debts they had actually been induced to accumulate by all the merchants along "the chain of debt" from Boston to the frontier. At the same time, financial speculators quickly bought up depreciating Continentals, as the new American currency was called, from debtpressed veterans at scandalously low prices, which in later times they redeemed at their par value, much to the outrage of the soldiers who had sold them for a mere pittance.

Heavily influenced by the coastal elites, the state legislators also turned a deaf ear to the yeomanry's demands. In fact, state capitals such as Boston, Hartford, and Exeter, where most of the legislatures met, also doubled as major commercial centers; hence merchants and lawyers in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire were always physically present and well positioned to influence state policy directly. Not surprisingly, state legislators tended to favor specie by persistently refusing to issue paper currency; indeed, only Rhode Island exhibited any sensitivity to the yeomanry's needs by validating the use of nonmetallic money.

The continuing debt prosecutions and the indifference of state legislators to the plight of the farmers pushed the peaceful movement to violent rebellion. In the late summer of 1786, many Massachusetts yeoman farmers formed militias that systematically closed down courts throughout most of the state's inland areas. By calling themselves Regulators, these armed farmers were invoking the menacing prerevolutionary agrarian uprising of the Carolina backwoodsmen. To history, however, they came to be known as Shaysites after Daniel Shays, a revolutionary war veteran who was actually only one of several coequal members of a "Committee of the People" for Hampshire County.

In Vermont, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, the Shaysite movement mainly took the form of undisciplined crowd actions, which were easily subdued by local militias composed of well-to-do people who assisted local police officials. But in Massachusetts, the rising took a serious,

potentially revolutionary form. Not only were many of the Shaysites in the state veterans of the Revolution, but some had even served as officers and knew how to plan and lead a sustained campaign. Daniel Shays himself had served as a captain, as had his fellow leaders Luke Day, Agrippa Wells, and Adam Wheeler, among others. The Massachusetts Shaysites, in effect, were not undisciplined, ill-trained crowds but rather disciplined, single-minded, and well-trained soldiers with able military leaders.

Their militias, moreover, were organized along typically libertarian lines, structured around county committees ("Committees of the People"), each of which assumed military leadership of the armed forces in every county and remained its highest military unit. Whether wisely or not, this structure obviated the need for a supreme command over the entire movement. Local militia committee leaders served more as chairpersons than as officers, and the agreement of the men was indispensable for every major decision and action. As Richard M. Brown has observed in his discussion of American agrarian rebellions, "the protagonist of the back country rebellion rose from the people but, unlike John Adams of the patriot movement, for example, did not rise above them."[118] They drilled together on greens in front of taverns or in open spaces in the countryside, adopting an evergreen sprig as an insignia on their three-cornered hats—perhaps with no knowledge that the English Levellers of the previous century had used the same symbol.

The Shaysites now formed their militias into well-organized platoons. Shrewdly selecting their targets and carefully coordinating their plans, they marched in regular order to courthouses and systematically closed them down. Their popularity was much too wide and their maneuvers too well planned to make it easy for local authorities to suppress them. In Worcester, the county militia refused to oppose them, while in Berkshire, Hampshire, Bristol, and Middlesex counties, many militiamen deserted to the rebels.

The commercial strata on the seaboard and in the inland market towns responded to these developments with virtual hysteria, raising cries of "anarchy" and actually voicing appeals to replace the Commonwealth with a monarchy.

The legislature, not without the aid of Samuel Adams, shamefully passed a riot act to prohibit any gathering that the authorities might view with suspicion, and even suspended habeas corpus, despite its sanctity in English common law. All of these attempts foundered. It was not until the wealthy strata of the state collected sizable contributions from their own kind to recruit what was little more than a mercenary army, made up partly of their personal servants, that the state could begin to offer serious resistance to the insurgents.

Far from intimidating the Shaysites, however, this mobilization by the upper classes served primarily to radicalize them. From what had started as a debt rebellion, Shaysites now began to escalate their goals to broader and more threatening dimensions. Presumably with the purpose of taking complete control of the state government, various Shaysite detachments united into an army numbering several thousand men and laid plans in January 1787 to capture the Confederation arsenal in Springfield, which would have provided them with 7,000 military muskets, 1,300 barrels of powder, and, very significantly, artillery with a good supply of shot and shell. Had the armory been taken, they would have become a formidable insurrectionary force, probably capable of capturing Boston. Armed with their old muskets and even wooden clubs, the Shaysites,

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[118] Richard M. Brown, "Back Country Rebellion and the Homestead Ethic," in Richard M. Brown and Don Fehrenbachar, eds., *Tradition, Conflict and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 86–7,91.

between January 21 and 24, formed three separate companies along three approaches to Springfield. According to their carefully laid plans, the Berkshire County rebels were expected to attack the arsenal from the north on January 25, in conjunction with the Worcester and Middlesex companies from the northeast, and the Hampshire company from the west.

On the day of the planned attack, Luke Day from the Hampshire company decided on his own initiative to send an ultimatum to General William Shepard's government forces, who were defending the arsenal, giving them twenty-four hours to lay down their arms. Day also sent a message to the two other companies, apprising them that he had postponed the date of the attack by one day to allow time for a reply from the arsenal. But this message was intercepted by Shepard's men, and it never reached the other Shaysite companies, which proceeded with the attack on the twenty-fifth as originally planned. Lacking the support of the Hampshire company, the assault entirely miscarried: Columns of yeomen prematurely attacked the government forces, which raked artillery fire directly into their ranks. In the absence of artillery and sufficient forces, the attacking Shaysites were compelled to withdraw to outlying towns, leaving behind twenty-four dead and wounded. Eli Parsons, a Shaysite, later declared that Day's intercepted message "occasioned [the Shaysites'] failure—they must have carried it, if their measures had been properly concerted."[119]

Conventional histories of the insurrection create an egregiously misleading impression that the Shaysites were dispatched by a whiff of grapeshot. Armed only with old muskets, clubs, and lacking aid from Luke Day's column, they had no choice but to retreat; nor did the movement evaporate after the Springfield fiasco. In fact, skirmishes and minor battles continued throughout Massachusetts until the Shaysites were finally quelled by General Benjamin Lincoln, who commanded a well-armed force of three thousand men from Boston, supported by artillery. During February, Lincoln surprised the Shaysites at their Petersham camp and dispersed them with his massively superior forces and equipment. Many Shaysites were subsequently rounded up and tried; others fled, finding refuge in Vermont, as did Daniel Shays himself, or in New York, and ultimately drifting westward into the Ohio Valley. The majority of Shaysites, however, seem to have remained behind in Massachusetts as the economy improved and gradually accepted the new social dispensation that followed the Revolution.

If the definition of a revolutionary requires that the person hold views antithetical to property as such, then in that sense the Shaysites were not revolutionaries. They were property owners themselves and never questioned its legitimacy. But to the New England yeomanry, property, as we have seen, meant something very different from what it did to the emerging bourgeoisie. They regarded it as a means of life that formed the basis for personal independence and individual freedom, not a means for profiteering, acquiring riches, or gaining power. Their notions of property were imbued by a sense of strong moral responsibilities for the land, the community, and communal lifeways and came closer to a form of simple usufruct than production for gain. Although the commercial men of the New England cities and market towns shared the yeomanry's views of property as sacred, they were engaged in making profit and created a highly monetized market and an expanding economy that conferred power and status as well as security on an exploitative elite. The yeomen, for their part, had literally carved their small properties out of the forest. Hence, as in the German Peasant War, two cultures collided that were guided by radically

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[119] Quoted in Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion,* p. 102.

dissimilar values and economic imperatives: the one to seek enrichment and power, the other to retain modest, traditional, and communal lifeways.

We will never know with certainty what the Shaysites would have done had they seized the Springfield arsenal. But Shays himself told the *Massachusetts Sentinel* in January 1787 that after taking the arsenal, they planned to "march directly to Boston, plunder it, and then ... to *destroy the nest of devils, who by their influence, make the [General] Court enact what they please,* burn it and lay the town of Boston in ashes." The Shaysite farmers would then have it "in their power to overthrow the present constitution" and eliminate the present government, which was controlled by commercial interests.[120] Whether Shays actually made these patently incendiary remarks is difficult to establish. The political system that the Shaysites intended to establish in place of the old regime seems to have been a yeoman democracy, which already existed in varying degrees through their own network of town meetings and county conventions. Had they won, Massachusetts, conceivably, could have become a confederal democracy, not unlike early Switzerland, and yeomen throughout New England could have tried to emulate them. In any case, together with the revolutionary events in Pennsylvania during the war, Shays's rebellion was as close as America came to an insurrectionary third revolution.

THE CONSTITUTION OF 1789

The men who suppressed Shays's rebellion were surprisingly lenient in their treatment of the rebels. They made no effort to follow up their victory with a counterrevolutionary bloodletting; indeed, the few Shaysites who were sentenced to death were ultimately pardoned. But if the "men of wealth and talents" drew no blood, they profited immensely from the yeoman rebellion. The Shaysite uprising was portrayed as dramatic evidence that the decentralized Articles of Confederation were unworkable, indeed chaotic, and that they had to be replaced by a new Constitution, one that provided for an effective, centralized nation-state. To frighten wavering supporters of the Articles, General Henry Knox, the Secretary of War and a rabid centralist, bluntly denounced the Shaysites as "levellers," awakening fears that the British ruling elite had felt in the previous century. To Knox, the "state [confederal] system" was "the accursed thing which will prevent our being a nation ... the vile state governments are sources of pollution which will contaminate America for ages." What was needed, Knox claimed, was a strong central government with checks and balances. The worthy general himself was prepared to enforce the commands of such a government "by a body of armed men to be kept for the purpose": that is, by a standing army. Rising to oratorical heights, Knox enjoined such a government, which had yet to be established, to "smite" the state governments "in the name of God and the people."[121] Edmund Randolph agreed that "the chief danger [in the present situation] arises from the democratic parts of our [state] constitutions. It is a maxim which I hold incontrovertible that the powers of government exercised by the people swallows up the other branches. None of the constitutions have provided sufficient checks against the democracy." A senate was necessary as a bulwark against "evils" that stem from "the turbulence and follies of democracy."[122]

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[120] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 100. Original emphasis.

[121] Quoted in Merrill Jensen, *The Making of the American Constitution* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1964), pp. 36–7.

[122] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 40.

The state constitutions that Knox and Randolph denounced so vigorously were, in fact, the only refuge for small farmers who were faced with crushing debts. Under the pressure of yeoman protests and near revolts, many state legislatures finally did pass laws delaying or suspending the collection of taxes and debts, and more than half of the thirteen states issued paper money, making it possible for impoverished farmers to resolve their financial difficulties. A few states compelled creditors to accept paper instead of specie as an authentic means of exchange. If any single feature of the Articles of Confederation seems to have infuriated James Madison—the "Father of the Constitution"—it was precisely the fact that these measures were taken by the state legislatures. He viewed them as serious transgressions of property rights by improvident agrarians, and regarded creditors as an oppressed minority whose rights it was the government's responsibility to protect "Government," Madison wrote, "is instituted to protect property of every sort," a concern that was clearly focused on the interests of the well-to-do strata in the new country. "This being the end of government, that alone is a just government which impartially secures to every man whatever is his own."[123]

Despite the differences that existed between them, merchants and plantation owners required no arguments to convince them that the Articles of Confederation had to be supplanted by an entirely new instrument of government. The wealthy and well-educated elite of the new nation thereupon proceeded to adopt a strategy that they learned from the radical patriots during the Revolution: they convoked an extralegal convention to create a new, basically nationalistic, constitution. If "the people" could call conventions in the name of preserving their liberties, the wealthy felt free to call them in the name of protecting their property. In September 1786, an assembly in Annapolis sent out a call for such a convention, presumably to revise the Articles of Confederation. Six months later the Confederation Congress, under strong pressure, agreed to the convention for "the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation" and "to devise such further provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the federal government adequate to the exigencies of the union."[124]

The convention's mandate, it should be emphasized, was very limited, but the Constitutional Convention, which met from May 25 to September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia, blatantly and illegally exceeded it. In fact, the Convention carried out a political revolution—and unlike the assemblies of the people during the Revolution, which were open to all citizens, it was held in extraordinary, indeed conspiratorial, secrecy. The windows on the ground floor of the Pennsylvania Statehouse, where the Convention assembled, were kept shut even during the sweltering summer days to prevent ordinary people from overhearing the debates within, while troops patrolled the grounds outside. The secretary of the Convention recorded little more than the various motions and the votes each one received. Fortunately for later historians, Madison took copious notes of the proceedings, but they were not published until the last of the delegates present—namely, Madison himself—had died. Thus, the process by which the present-day Federal Constitution was drawn up largely remained unknown to the much-revered "people," in whose name it professed to speak, until well into the nineteenth century, by which time the Constitution had sedimented itself into everyday American statecraft and tradition. Given this procedure and all the maneuvering surrounding the Convention, it is not lurid to consider it a conspiracy by a self-interested elite

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[123] Quoted in Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier, *Decision in Philadelphia: The Constitutional Convention of 1789* (New York: Ballantine, 1986), p. 65.

[124] Quoted, for example, in Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 62–3.

against the people and the governing institutions of the Confederation. The presence of Washington at the gathering gave the Convention a legitimacy it probably could not have attained on its own. Rhode Island refused to send any delegates, while Patrick Henry declined to attend it with the remark, "I smell a rat."

James Madison's political philosophy draws a clear distinction between democratic and representative government. In his famous *Federalist* No. 10, Madison defines "a pure democracy" as "a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person... A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert results from the form of government itself"[125] —concepts that could almost have come from the writings of Rousseau. The practicability of democracy, Madison observes, is a function of size and scale: it was possible only in small communities of intimates, not in large cities, still less in a nation-state. Rooting his views of politics in the fixities of human nature, he asks: "What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary." Inasmuch as this was not the case, he continued: "In framing a government... you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions."[126] A separation of powers is necessary as a check on tyranny by playing each branch of government—the legislative, executive, and judicial—against the other, thereby limiting the powers of any single branch.

Most of the delegates at the convention agreed on the need for a centralized national government whose authority enjoyed preeminence over the states. For some, this meant that the states would have to defer to the central government but would retain real powers that the national institutions did not claim for themselves; for others, including Madison himself, it meant that the states would all but disappear except as administrative units, somewhat like the departments later established in revolutionary France. The majority of the delegates, however, favored a national government not only based on a dear separation of powers but allowing considerable authority to state legislatures. How the powers of the national government were to be structured, allocated, and given authority was the subject of intense debate, but most of the delegates favored a bicameral legislature in which an upper chamber presumably would consist of wise, moderating, and conservative elements over a more popular and irascible lower one.

Madison and his allies were unsuccessful in producing the highly centralized system they wanted. The document preserved considerable states' rights, which was to produce an ongoing tumult over construing their powers for more than two centuries afterward. Indeed, in failing to clearly specify the powers of the states, the men who sat at Philadelphia throughout the summer of 1787 created a new form of government that was neither a highly centralized nation-state of the kind that suffocates French political life to this day, nor a Swiss-style cantonal confederacy, but rather a hybridized system in which the federal government remained surprisingly weak throughout the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. Only the New Deal era

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[125] *Federalist* no. 10, in James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 81.

[126] *Federalist* no. 51, in *Federalist Papers,* p. 322.

and the Second World War massively bureaucratized the national government and increased its scope over public life.

The government that the Federal Constitution established was nonetheless much more centralized than the Articles, appropriating powers that had formerly been cherished, however briefly, by the states. Indeed, some of the delegates never accepted Madison's centralistic approach. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts maintained that the respective powers of the President and Congress were too sweeping to avoid a "tyranny," while George Mason eloquently warned that a constitution formed in secret from the public, with a powerful executive, might expand into a bureaucratic despotism and, lacking any bill of rights, undermine the domestic goals of the Revolution.

The ratification struggle that followed the extralegal convention was fought furiously over precisely these issues. The conventioneers had decided upon a ratification procedure that deliberately avoided submitting the new Constitution to the state legislatures, which almost certainly would have rejected it. Instead, taking another page from the book of the Revolution, the conventioneers decided to bypass the legislatures and go directly to the sovereign "people." If the legislatures were adamantly opposed to ratification, the "people" might still be persuaded to accept the new Constitution. In each state, it was decided, the people would elect a ratifying convention to consider the document. Aware that most Americans might still remain highly skeptical of a central government after their experience with the British Crown, supporters of the Constitution cynically coopted the label *federalist* to denote their cause, rather than *nationalist,* which would more accurately have expressed their authentic goals. Thus was an illegal act, the closed and far-ranging Convention, compounded by a demagogic act of misrepresentation. The Convention prudently instituted the requirement that the support of no more than nine states out of the thirteen was needed to ratify the constitution.

Opponents of ratification were stamped with the unenviable and uninspiring sobriquet of *antifederalists.* Madison's arguments for a national government and Mason's in opposition demarcated the broad outlines of the "debate" over the Constitution, if such it can properly be called, given the level of manipulative "federalist" pamphleteering that went on. Opinion ranged from extreme antifederalists whose views verged on "Switzering anarchy" (as a Cromwellian might have put it more than a century earlier) to extreme nationalists who seemed to favor a constitutional monarchy rather than a republic. The "federalists" shrewdly availed themselves of radical slogans and measures to gain popular support, such as Tom Paine's maxim, "That government is best which governs least." When antifederalists expressed concern that the Constitution nowhere guaranteed the basic liberties of each individual, the "federalists" assured them that these guarantees were implied in the Constitution, but the antifederalists were not taken in by this ruse, and the "federalists" were obliged to accept the need for a bill of rights that explicitly stated the liberties that Americans were to enjoy.

Elite and well-to-do sectors of the population mobilized in great force to support an instrument that clearly benefited them at the expense of the backcountry agrarians and urban poor. A powerful central government would be able to establish a sound, well-regulated currency, make international treaties that favored commerce, establish a transportation system that penetrated into the interior of the continent with its potentially inexhaustible riches in furs, forest goods, and cultivable land, and mobilize troops not only to deal with domestic unrest but to wage expansionist territorial wars.

But the economic considerations should not be overemphasized. The ratification debate, as a whole, seemed to be guided primarily by political concerns. Admittedly, many of the "federalists" were men of substance— merchants, well-to-do artisans, patroonlike lords, and slave-owning planters— but furiously as the "federalist" and antifederalist debate was waged among the elite strata of the country, it stirred surprisingly little passion among the socalled lower classes. An economic upswing in the late 1780s had quieted the rebellious agrarians who formerly united as Shaysites and Regulators but now benefited from the country's relatively stable currency and Europe's need for grain. Indeed, the debate crossed many class lines. Some of the most adamant antifederalists were actually men of wealth and position such as George Mason, James Winthrop, Christopher Gadsden, Patrick Henry, the Lees of Virginia, and, for a time, John Hancock, whereas Sam Adams was obliged to end his opposition to the Constitution since his constituents among the Boston shipwrights supported it.

The ratifying conventions held in the smaller states quickly accepted the document. It granted them parity of representation (two senators for each state, irrespective of its size) with the larger states in the Senate, which was the most they could have hoped for. Indeed, it was the largest states that posed the most serious obstacles. Massachusetts was so sharply divided on ratification that only the most cunning maneuvering, the most insistent pressure tactics, and major concessions to the antifederalists gave the "federalists" a nineteen-vote majority out of the 355 representatives at the state convention. Virginia and New York's decisions hung in the balance for months. Despite the strong nationalist sentiment among the delegates that Virginia had sent to the Convention in Philadelphia, Virginians were largely antifederalist. It required much heated debate and maneuvering before the state ratified the Constitution, and then by only a ten-vote margin out of 169. A huge barrage of articles and pamphlets favoring the Constitution was unleashed in order to garner New York's vote, spearheaded by the *Federalist Papers* (written mainly by Hamilton and Madison with a few essays by John Jay). Nevertheless the "federalists" won the state by only three votes out of fifty-seven. Rhode Island, having refused to send delegates to the Philadelphia Convention, also refused to call a ratifying convention. The Constitution went into effect without its assent, and only in 1790 did Rhode Island finally ratify the document and rejoin the Union.

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights essentially allowed the states and, by indirection, the small localities enough leeway to retain "democratic" features of federalism within a loosely centralized union, as Tocqueville observed in the 1830s. Over time, as new states entered the union, the right to vote was further broadened and a large variety of human rights were granted that did not fall within the purview of the federal government. States could decide whether they would be free or slave, whether they would restrict or expand the franchise, grant the vote to women or not, have bicameral or unicameral legislatures, tax or not tax their inhabitants—indeed, as we see today, allow for abortion, capital punishment, or gambling, harbor or extradite fugitives from all but federal crimes, legally "rebel" or not, and a host of other lesser but personally relevant and politically important rights, including varying degrees of easy access to the levers of government itself. Despite the bourgeois, commercial, and later imperialistic society that emerged in the following decades, the American Revolution had produced a remarkably multilayered governmental system: within the centralized republic existed instrumentalities for creating a fairly decentralized democracy. Whether this structure can continue to exist and its democratic features be expanded at the expense of the centralized nation-state remains the most uncertain and undecided legacy of the Revolution to this very day.

PART IV. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Chapter 15. The Ancien Regime

If the American Revolution has been too often seen as merely a genteel disagreement over colonial independence, the French Revolution of 1789–95 has been widely seen as the classical revolution *par excellence.* This interpretation became so deeply ingrained in revolutionary social thought during the nineteenth century that it immensely influenced the behavior of revolutionary leaders thereafter, so that the French Revolution became a kind of template for revolutionary movements in the century and a half that followed. Revolutionary leaders of all kinds expected the course of events to duplicate those of the French Revolution, and they drew upon its history for an understanding of the "stages" their revolutions would follow. By studying the Jacobins, their assumed prototypes, they learned what social strata they could expect to trust or mistrust, and what alliances they could expect to make and break. They formulated strategies, analyzed the relationship of forces that existed in revolutionary situations, and diagnosed the outcome of revolutionary crises generally along lines that modeled the French Revolution.

Such interpretations of the French Revolution were often based on mythology and were even obfuscatory, as Marx saw in the 1840s. In his caustic opening to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* he mocked the 1848 revolutionaries' proclivities for drawing parallels with the events of 1789–95: "Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Caussidi&re for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the *Montague* of 1848 to 1851 for the *Montague* of 1793 to 1795, the Nephew for the Uncle. And the same caricature occurs in the circumstances attending the second edition of the eighteenth Brumaire"[1] (18 Brumaire being the date in the French Revolutionary calendar on which Napoleon Bonaparte took power).

Nevertheless, the image of the French Revolution exercised an immensely powerful influence on the Russian Revolution of 1917–21. Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Left Social Revolutionaries, and even many anarchists preconceived

their revolution and formulated their strategies largely in terms of the French. To Marxian revolutionaries, every revolution—French and Russian alike—unfolded in stages, according to "inner laws" of development, as Trotsky was to write in the preface to his *The History of the Russian Revolution.* "The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction," he observed,

> but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime. Only the guiding layers of a class have a political program, and even this still requires the test of events, and the approval of the masses. The fundamental political process of the revolution thus consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems

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[1] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), p. 398.

arising from the social crisis—the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations. The different stages of a revolutionary process, certified by a change of parties in which the more extreme always supersedes the less, express the growing pressure to the left of the masses—so long as the swing of the movement does not run into objective obstacles.[2]

Prudently, Trotsky noted that "such, at least, is the general outline of the old revolution."

In fact, not only Trotsky but Lenin and revolutionaries of the 1930s regarded this stages theory of revolution almost fatalistically as a historical law. They saw the overthrow of tsarism as parallel to the creation of the National Assembly in France, while Trotsky himself viewed the rise of the short-lived Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev "troika" in 1924 as a replication of the Directory and Thermidor of the French Revolution. Disastrously, he regarded Stalin merely as a Bonapartist rather than as the brutal totalitarian that he turned out to be, and the mild Nikolai Bukharin as a spokesman for a capitalist restoration. That he totally failed to see his situation accurately stems in no small part from his proclivity and that of other revolutionaries for a century and a half to view all major revolutions in terms of the French Revolution.

A BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION?

In particular, most Marxist interpretations were notable for their attempts to deny any importance to the ideological content of the French Revolution and see it almost exclusively as a clash of economic interests—between an emerging, indeed vibrant, highly self-conscious bourgeoisie and a declining, indeed moribund feudal system. The revolution was seen as a paradigmatic "bourgeois revolution" in which the rising middle classes supposedly came to such a high stage of historical development that they consciously, even courageously and insightfully, overthrew the restrictions of feudal society that were impeding the advance of their commerce and manufactures. Thus, according to Jean Jaurés, the French socialist leader: "The bourgeoisie is not merely a force of prudence and economy; it is a bold and conquering force that has already in part revolutionized the system of production and exchange and is about to revolutionize the political system."[3] Albert Soboul went so far as to call the French Revolution "the definitive model of all bourgeois revolutions… *Everyone* knows that the bourgeoisie led the Revolution."[4]

Indeed, it is not only Marxists who interpret the Revolution in this manner: orthodox interpretations in the twentieth century have seen French revolutionary developments in terms of naked bourgeois class interest and the ascent of capitalism in France, and there can be no doubt, in retrospect, that the French bourgeoisie in later years were the principal beneficiaries of the Revolution, the class that gained most from its outcome. But by no means is it clear that the French Revolution itself was "bourgeois" if by a "bourgeois" we mean a modern "industrial capitalist." The two words, it should be emphasized, are not synonymous. Before the advent of industrial capitalism, the "bourgeoisie" consisted of urban dwellers or burghers, including many

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[2] Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution,* trans. Max Eastman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1932), pp. xviii-xix.

[3] Jean Jaur&s, *Histoire socialiste,* vol. 1 (Paris: 1901), p. 47; quoted in Norman Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 20.

[4] Albert Soboul, *A Short History of the French Revolution, 1789–1799,* trans. Geoffrey Symcox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. i, 16 (emphasis added).

artisans, merchants who transported and sold goods to faraway places, and a great variety of professionals. Some burghers had humble material status, while others enjoyed considerable wealth. Generally, deep-seated cultural attitudes inherited from antiquity attributed an inferior status to men who profited from trade or worked at menial tasks, so that the more successful commercial strata of the past tended to invest their wealth in landed property and live as *rentiers* or idle gentry. Almost consistently, their ideals remained those of titled nobility, owners of rural estates and landed property, with whose families they tried to intermarry; indeed, French financiers and tradesmen aspired to land ownership and titles well into the nineteenth century; that is to say, long after they presumably "led" or "made" the great Revolution.

Moreover, although industrial capitalism ultimately benefited from the diminution of privilege during the French Revolution, so too did other strata in French society, notably that distinctly noncapitalist class, the peasantry. No less than the emerging industrial entrepreneurs of the late eighteenth century, the small food cultivators of the countryside were among the beneficiaries of the sweeping demolition of feudal or quasi-feudal manorial holdings and privileges. It took France well into the nineteenth century to shift from a putting-out or cottage system of manufacturing to a factory system, long after the mechanized production of cotton goods was burgeoning in England. In England, agriculture, more than any other branch of the economy, took giant strides toward capitalistic and rationalized forms of production during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but in France rural society remained largely peasant and domestic in nature throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. According to available economic indices, France lagged behind England in nearly every sphere of the economy, except for the crafting and production of luxury items.

To attribute determining economic factors to a complex cultural system and assume that they form the base of the culture's "superstructure"—that is, the most decisive factors in explaining social developments—is to reduce human social activity and creativity to a simplistic interplay of mechanistic actions and reactions. Indeed, the kind of image that people living in a certain time and place have of their society has an importance that should not be minimized; especially in periods of revolutionary change, what people think about their aspirations and goals profoundly affects the very economic forces that supposedly uniquely motivate them. Marx's famous remark to the contrary notwithstanding, we would be wise to judge a man by "what he thinks of himself,"[5] for his view profoundly affects his behavior, and, by the same token, we would be wise to judge "a period of transformation by its own consciousness"—for thought and consciousness, whether of a man or of a period, profoundly shape what people do and how societies develop. The critical consciousness that the French Enlightenment created fed directly into the Revolution itself, while the egalitarian beliefs generated during the Revolution actually did much to inhibit the emergence of modern capitalism in France. When emigres returned to France after the execution of the Robespierrists, they found a nation substantially different from the one they had left upon the collapse of the ancien regime, one that not only looked different but thought very differently—and critically—about rank, privilege, authority, religion, and personal values.

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[5] Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* vol. 1, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works,* p. 504.

THE EVOLUTION OF 1789 FRANCE

On the eve of the Revolution, France was a chaotic, often dizzying collage of administrative and religious jurisdictions, traditions inherited from centuries past, enormous disparities in privilege, and cultural archaisms. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church divided France into eighteen archepiscopal provinces and 135 dioceses, many of which reflected divisions dating back to the Roman Empire. What was then France consisted of disparate feudal baronies and duchies, many of which were not strictly Gallic in origin and nearly all of which were heir to unique customs, systems of privilege, and cultural differences. So fractured was feudal society into small sovereignties that for a long time the king exercised virtually no control over the country. Slowly, over the centuries, French kings pieced the country together through incessant wars, dynastic marriage alliances, and diplomacy. As they added new territories to the domain, they often did little to alter the institutions that came with acquired lands; rather, they modified or adapted them to the growing kingdom, so that provincial centers remained culturally distinct, with autonomous feudal municipalities, and laws and customs very much as they had been for centuries.

In the seventeenth century, Richelieu and Mazarin, two strong-willed cardinals committed to unifying and centralizing France under a powerful Crown, patched together an absolute monarchy for their sovereigns, Louis XIII and XIV respectively. Upon the old provinces, Richelieu superimposed a new set of administrative units known as *giniralitis,* appointing royal officials called intendants whose main function was to supervise the behavior of the provincial aristocracy. Finally, between 1648 and 1653, the conflict between the monarchy and aristocracy came to a head when the nobility, irate over the restrictions imposed by the cardinals, directly challenged the growing royal authority in an armed uprising, the Fronde, which ended in abject failure and humiliation for the nobility. Thereafter, the young Louis XIV shrewdly established his court at Versailles, some fifteen miles away from Paris, largely to collect and keep an eye on his once-unruly nobles, seducing them with the pleasures of a languidly idle life, straitjacketing them with an elaborate aristocratic etiquette, and training their children to become effete and obedient courtiers. To induce them to remain at Versailles, he endowed the nobles who were "presented" to court with benefits, pensions, and sinecures that turned them into harmless and dependent parasites.

Above all, to avoid future Frondes, Louis XIV removed the nobles as much as he could from the substantive tasks of officeholding and policymaking, responsibilities that the monarch gave to an increasing number of servile commoners, opening a gap between the traditional nobility of the sword *(noblesse de I'ipie)* and the new, largely bureaucratic nobility of the robe *(noblesse de la robe).* The latter, many of whom had purchased their titles, depended heavily upon the king's favor and goodwill, while the sale of titles, in turn, became a sizable source of income for the Crown. Taken together, the king managed to increase its revenues, gain a trustworthy bureaucracy, and divide the elite classes themselves, playing the nobility of the sword against the nobility of the robe. Despite the growing chagrin that the old nobles felt toward their new counterparts, the king continued to allow commoners to buy up key positions as intendants and members of the courts of appeal, or *parlements,* as well as the royal bureaucracy. In the end, they formed much of the administration of the country. Increasingly, nobles of the robe, whose positions were held for life and were hereditary, became politically more powerful as a stratum than the nobility of the sword.

The monarchs who followed the Louis XIV were made of stuff less stern. The languid Louis XV and Louis XVI lacked Louis XIV's capacity to keep the nobility cowed, so that the traditional nobles, always mindful of their former powers, began to encroach on the monarchy's powers. If Louis XIV mistrusted his nobility, shrewdly trying to render them dependent upon him, his successors lived in the very bosom of their courtiers. If the sardonic Louis XV was an indolent caricature of his assertive predecessor, Louis XVI was a vaporous shadow of both: dull, awkward, and utterly indecisive, behaving much as though the crown had been thrust upon him unawares. Nor were these attributes lost upon his courtiers, who soon concluded that he was a dull buffoon, a view shared by his own wife, the frivolous Austrian princess Marie Antoinette.

Deeply discontented by their powerlessness, the nobles of the 1780s now sought to reclaim at least some of their lost power and steadily began to filter back into governmental positions. In 1781 they succeeded in getting an ordinance instituted that required all commissioned officers in the military to prove that their families had been in the nobility for four generations. By 1789 all the bishops in France hailed from noble families and nobles occupied all but one of Louis XVI's ministerial posts, as well as choice positions in the military and the Church. With the increasing return of the old aristocracy to political influence, ambitious nobles ultimately reclaimed a considerable degree of the independence that Louis XIV had successfully quashed.

At the same time, the nobles of the robe, although well entrenched in key institutions such as the *parlements,* were increasingly blocked from influencing governmental policy. As Norman Hampson observes,

> The exclusiveness of the aristocracy now deprived the newly ennobled of some of the most important practical advantages that their status had formerly conferred and consequently created a sharp division of interest between the old *noblesse* and the upper middle class and *anoblis* [ennobled] which accentuated the divergence between social hierarchy and the economic structure of the country.[6]

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Nevertheless, in the 1780s the French monarchy was still highly centralized. Royal authority was preeminent in determining economic, religious, and foreign policy for the more than twenty-five million people living in some 277,000 square miles over whom Louis XVI ruled. But despite the efforts of the two earlier cardinals to centralize the state in the Crown's hands, France still remained a patchwork of different sovereignties steeped in administrative chaos. In contrast to the American colonies, which were structured around governors, legislatures, and English law, the disparate feudal baronies and duchies that made up France still laid claim to special customs, traditions, and privileges. The intendants had never been able to break down local privilege in places such as Brittany, where the local provincial assemblies remained powerful enough to thwart reforms from Paris. Avignon, the seat of a French pope during the great schism centuries earlier, was still owned by the pope in Rome, while Alsace contained pockets that were nominally under the rule of German princes and the city-state of Mulhouse.

Provincial legal systems varied enormously. Some areas followed Roman legal codes, while others adhered to customary law. In northern France, where customary law was prevalent, provinces, principalities, and cities were governed according to sixty-five general customs and

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[6] Norman Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 11.

three hundred local ones, with the result that important differences existed with respect to marriage, inheritance, and the ownership of property. The thirteen *parlements,* or high courts of appeal, were ancient institutions that had jurisdiction in various *bailliages, sdndchausdes,* and other districts of such diverse size that the jurisdiction of the *parlement* of Paris alone—the most powerful of all— covered a full third of the kingdom, while that of Pau in the south was minuscule by comparison.

From one province or region to another, one could hear German, Italian, Breton, Basque, Proven 9 al, and even English spoken, not to mention an extraordinary variety of French dialects that would have been virtually incomprehensible to a Parisian. Systems of weights and measures differed considerably from place to place. Taxation varied widely, with the heaviest tax burden generally falling on the northern provinces. In the kingdom at large, in some places the principal and most oppressive direct tax, the *faille,* could be levied on personal income, while in others it was levied on land ownership. Nobles and clergy were exempt from this onerous tax, which was imposed overwhelmingly on the peasantry, while the notorious salt tax, the *gabelle*, varied from area to area according to a scale of sue different rates. Internal customs barriers crisscrossed the entire kingdom with bewildering frequency based on unpredictable rates. Customs duties could be collected at town gates, river crossings, and provincial boundaries, so that goods shipped from the FrancheComté down the Saone and Rhdne rivers to the Mediterranean might incur thirty-six distinct public and private imposts along the way.

On the eve of the Revolution, France was overwhelmingly an agricultural country, although, contrary to popular notions, its feudal structure was decaying rapidly. Serfdom had disappeared almost entirely; unlike in Central and Eastern Europe, where the manorial system still prevailed, only about 140,000 serfs still existed. A great many of the peasants, who probably formed nearly 70 percent of the population as a whole, owned a modest plot of land with a cottage and garden, but an acreage that was seldom large enough to support their families year-round. "All peasant households," observes RM. Jones, "shared one overriding ambition: to assemble, by inheritance, by marriage, by purchase or by renting, a holding which would enable them to live decently."[7]

Traditionally, the peasants lived in villages that held strong collectivist feelings, so that (the existence of small individual plots notwithstanding) individual ownership of the land was generally circumscribed in one way or another. Communities prohibited fields from being fenced off and required that crops be rotated in various ways. Harvests were often considered to be community property, and peasants shared the right to gather the stubble that remained afterward. Open fields were set aside for communal grazing in pastures, together with forested areas that were set aside for communal gleaning of wood. These common rights were absolutely essential to the peasants' day-to-day survival. Underscoring the importance of the general conception of the village as a collective entity, the most important royal tax, the *faille,* was imposed on a community as a whole, which all residents were obliged to pay as a single unit.

From a technical standpoint, most of French agriculture seems to have been small-scale, with peasant families working their own plots using simple equipment, but here too we find notable exceptions. In the north and northeast, for example, the *grande culture* (to use the term of the Physiocrat Francois Quesnay) was structured around the intensive cultivation of cereals, often in large-scale holdings, and even in these areas, where agriculture was so unlike the small-scale forms of cultivation practiced in other parts of France, the fields were often cultivated "by tenants

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[7] P.M. (ones, *The Peasantry in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 8.

on behalf of absentee landlords," Jones tells us in his authoritative work on the peasantry during the revolutionary period. "Owner exploitation was restrained and share cropping virtually non-existent."[8] In fact, in marked contrast to the innovative trends of the English, who pastured and cultivated on an increasingly large scale, the French grain cultivators of the north used very traditional methods such as a three-year-cycle rotation of crops. The lands of the *petite culture,* of course, were farmed by small peasant proprietors and sharecroppers, generally producing rye or maize, rather than wheat, as their basic cereal crop.

Although the peasantry had strong community sentiments, as a class they were anything but monolithic; indeed, like the rest of French society, they were divided into several very distinct strata. At the apex of the peasant social hierarchy stood the *gros fermiers* or great farmers who, while relatively rare, existed mainly in the rich areas to the north and east of Paris, where large-scale farming was more common than elsewhere. Significantly, they owned fertile grain-raising lands and practiced agriculture that was highly profitable and virtually capitalistic. Some were private proprietors who hired rural labor to cultivate marketable grains, while others were long-established tenants who worked the lands of large noble and ecclesiastical estates. Below them were the *laboureurs,* who also owned their own draft animals, plows, smaller freeholds, and dwellings, and who cultivated areas that were large and well-balanced enough to support their families comfortably throughout the entire year, even to accumulate a grain surplus for difficult times.

But by far the largest group of peasant landowners were those known as *haricotiers* in southern Picardy and by several other names elsewhere. These peasants owned some domestic animals, basic implements, and a few freehold plots, but no plows or draft animals. The subsistence they derived ranged from the moderate to the precarious, and in addition to cultivating their small plot, they were obliged to rent land in a leasehold or work as day laborers for more affluent, often seigneurial landlords for part of the year. In return for their labor and half of the crop they produced, the seigneur would provide them with farm equipment and animals. Finally, at the base of the peasant hierarchy were those who owned little or no land at all, the distinctly poor day-laborers, or *journaliers,* and land workers, or *travailleurs de tern.* Numbering about 21 percent of the rural population, they were frequently unemployed and traveled around looking for short-term work.

Numerically, these peasant strata varied from place to place within France. The well-to-do *grosfermiers* were at best only a very small minority. Even on the relatively prosperous Picardy plain, a small village of several hundred households might contain only two *gros fermiers,* five or six *laboureurs,* twenty *haricotiers,* and twenty to fifty day-laborers. In other areas, the majority of the peasants were *laboureurs* and *haricotiers* , and in still other areas, landless peasants formed a substantial part of the community, working as day-laborers and parttime artisans. Most French peasants, despite their ownership of some land, were very impoverished, and their day-to-day existence was miserable and extremely precarious.

In comparison with a serf, who was tied to the land, the peasant had a much looser bond with his seigneur. He could not be sold together with the land; nor was he legally tied to it. But he was nevertheless obligated to pay feudal dues and obligations left over from the past. These were delivered over to the seigneur either in kind, as in grain, or in money (*cens*), often in exorbitant amounts. Peasants were also burdened by a wide array of other seigneurial rights.

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[8] *Ibid.,* p. 15.

Lords had the right to hunt on the lands they tilled, thereby trampling the peasants' crops, which infuriated their underlings; they enjoyed monopolistic privileges *(battalias)* over local corn mills, wine presses, and ovens, even obliging the peasant to use them instead of less expensive ones that might be available. Peasants were expected to give *corvie* labor, or road work, to the nobles, who could compel them to feed their seigneurial pigeons, a privilege that was as debasing as it was frivolous. Indeed, the seigneur had the right to demand that peasants perform a wide variety of personal services—sometimes numbering in the hundreds—for residents of the manor house. To enforce these privileges, the seigneurs could avail themselves not only of state courts but of their own seigneurial courts—and in the process levy fees on the peasants that provided them with further income. Finally, inasmuch as the *taille* was imposed exclusively on the peasantry, it and the other levies the peasant had to pay made for a highly oppressive and bitterly hated burden. As C. B. A. Behrens observes in his work on the ancien regime: "The royal taxes hung like a millstone round the peasant's neck."[9] Thus, the countryside seethed with hatred within and between the social hierarchy, and, in various ways, divided the land-hungry peasantry and the oppressive, visibly parasitic nobility. Continually verging on civil war, the potential conflict was nourished by memories of past *jacqueries* and perpetuated by continual riots.

Taxes on the nobility varied with the status of the individual noble involved, but the nobility as a whole was exempt from paying the onerous *faille.* Indeed, enormous extremes of wealth and poverty existed among the nobles of prerevolutionary France. In the countryside the greater part of the income of the landed nobility was derived from feudal dues, but in reality these were not substantial: they provided little more than an estimated annual total of a hundred million livres for the entire French nobility. Thus, in times of rising prices, the provincial nobles tried to squeeze ever more feudal dues from the peasants, with ever greater ruthlessness, lest they be brought to ruin—and evoked a searing hatred from among the peasants themselves.

The poorer the noble, the more urgent was his need to exploit the peasant; and there were many relatively poor nobles in eighteenth-century France. As a result of the feudal right of primogeniture, the eldest son of a noble family inherited most of the patrimonial lands, with the consequence, as Albert Mathiez points out, that the younger sons were left with smaller and smaller portions on which to live. The antagonism between the well-to-do and poorer nobles increased the farther down the social scale one went.

> Reduced to straitened circumstances, they [the younger sons] sold their rights of justice, their rents in money and in kind, and their land, in order to live; but they did not dream of working, for they did not want to lose caste *(dtroger).* A whole class of impoverished nobles sprang up, very numerous in certain provinces … where they vegetated gloomily in their modest manor-houses. Detesting the higher nobility, who monopolized court appointments, and despising and envying the middle classes in the towns, who were growing rich by trade and industry, they stubbornly defended their last rights of immunity from taxation against the encroachments of the king's agents; and their arrogance increased in proportion to their poverty and impotence.[10]

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[9] C.B.A. Behrens, *TheAncien Regime (London:* Thames 8t Hudson, 1967; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967), p. 32.

[10] Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution,* trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 4.

The court nobles, notably those who stayed at Versailles as courtiers, drained the resources of the country in their unrelenting pursuit of pleasure and status. As much as one quarter of the country's national budget was diverted for the use of the great nobles, who were paid lavishly in income, pensions, and sinecures. Nobles who became bishops and other clergymen could dip freely into the Church's immense treasury. Although this profligate nobility, including not only barons but dukes, marquis, and even princes of the blood, ran up debts in the millions, they were sometimes paid off by sizable grants from the sovereign, who saw his higher nobles as supporters of the regime.

By far the most massive block of economic wealth was possessed by the bloated Catholic Church, which owned about a tenth of France's land and in theory collected a tenth of the income of rural folk as a tithe to support local priests. The revenues that the Church enjoyed are estimated to have amounted to a quarter of a billion livres yearly. With its enormous wealth, the Church supported 130,000 clerics, half of them in regular orders and half distributed over its ecclesiastical hierarchy. At its apex, the clerical hierarchy performed virtually no religious duties whatever, and at its base it consisted of grossly overworked country *curb* who subsisted on pitiful incomes. Actually, only a thin social line separated high Church officials from the nobility, since the great religious chapters with their extensive landholdings recruited their canons from noble families; indeed, noble sons became bishops at the age of twelve or thirteen and were the recipients of enormous incomes. In 1789, all 143 bishops in France were recruited from noble families and, far from living in their dioceses and attending to the souls of their parishioners, idled away their days at court. Yet this swollen and wealthy ecclesiastical establishment was completely unencumbered by taxation. At most, the Church voluntarily provided a financial balm to the state by granting a donation of approximately sateen million livres annually, which, insofar as it was a "gift," could be withheld at will, thereby exerting a strong financial influence on the Crown's policies.

Even greater was the political power of the Church, which, through its network of country *curb* , guided the souls of the peasantry, educated much of the literate public in its schools, and used its pulpits as a means for influencing rural politics and providing a message of resignation and submission to authority. The Church, to be sure, was a source of social assistance to the poor, and controlled hospitals as well as enjoying a monopoly over the registration of births, deaths, and marriages. Its authority over the minds and hearts of the more backward rural masses in France was enormous. Rooted in time-honored medieval custom, it had its own judicial system, and its bishops held vast power in the civil administration. Yet in the end, its power ultimately rested on the monarchy—a dependency of which it was rudely reminded in 1764, when the Crown suppressed the Jesuits in the country.

THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION AND STATUS

The court nobility spent the income it received from the Crown with lavish profligacy. In Versailles and Paris noble expenditures on sumptuous garments, carriages, furnishings, art works, jewelry, banquets, balls, and servants literally sustained entire industries and provided innumerable individual livelihoods, from clothiers and jewelers to wig-makers and cosmeticians. The importance of status in the aristocratic hierarchy is difficult to overestimate: one's position in life was scrupulously calculated according to the degree, if any, to which one's family's lineage was related to the royal dynasty. Not surprisingly, each noble disdained those on the social ranks

below, resulting in what one historian has called a "cascade of contempt."[11] One of the most parasitic social hierarchies in history, the French nobility focused overwhelmingly on consumption rather than production. Indeed, it cultivated a debilitating national *culture* based on idleness and conspicuous consumption, which extended into all the well-to-do sectors of French society, including the middle classes, and gave rise to appetites that were, in fact, antithetical to the parsimony needed to create capital for modem industry and mass production.

Capitalists there surely were in prerevolutionary France: bankers, merchants engaged in large-scale trade, dealers in silk and other exotica that made the nation a center of good living for the rich, manufacturers of fabrics, speculators who amassed vast fortunes in land dealings and commerce, and genteel retailers who pandered to the whims of the nobility. Below them in the urban social hierarchy were lesser merchants and small-scale manufacturers; and still lower were successful artisans and retailers. But these capitalists, if such all of them could be called, were marked by very archaic features. In contrast to the thrifty puritanical capitalists of England, who made money to invest it into their enterprises in order to make still more money, French financiers, manufacturers, and merchants lived in perpetual envy of the nobility and sought above all to attain noble positions of their own, as we have seen. This is not to claim that France lacked thrifty capitalists in all fields of endeavor, for whom wealth outweighed social position; but their influence on the character of the bourgeoisie lay in the future—indeed, well into the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, rich capitalists normally absorbed the values of the aristocracy, as had so many capitalists in ancient and medieval times. No less than the nobility, they viewed trade as menial and its rewards merely as a means to a greater end, that of higher social status. As a result, a great proportion of capital flowed into land and the purchase of titles at the expense of industrial development. A single statistic reveals the difference in economic values that distinguished France and England: in 1789 British coal production was twenty times that of France, despite the much higher French population.

This archaic valorization of status over wealth, of land over production, and of idleness over work was particularly ironic in view of France's eminent position in the European economy. Its foreign trade was second only to that of Great Britain, and it led every Continental country in output. But England was more open to innovation, both social and technical, owing to its essentially Protestant culture and its better-balanced, fairly modem state machinery, which was relatively free of the social archaisms that burdened French society. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, the idle *rentier* way of life that still characterized so much of the French nobility had given way to an activist and innovative landed nobility. Only too aware of their commoner origins during the Wars of the Roses a few centuries earlier, the English nobility mingled more familiarly and comfortably with the middle class. Moreover, together with the commercial classes of the realm, the English nobility produced an agricultural revolution of their own, not only by establishing sheep runs and enclosing land that left behind "deserted villages," but also by draining the fenlands, rationalizing crop cultivation, and constructing new roads and canals. No less than the mechanical devices that gave rise to mass manufacture, these measures paved the way for the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of modern capitalism.

The French nobility of the sword, by contrast, were overly preoccupied with flaunting their status, often claiming their ancestry in the Frankish conquerors of Gaul (for which Voltaire subjected them to much buffoonery), and exhibiting haughty contempt for tradesmen, who supplied

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[11]). Droz, introduction, *Histoire du rigne de Louis XVI* (Brussels, 1839), quoted in Hampson, *Social History,* p. 6.

them with goods, and the parvenu nobility of the robe, who lived in envy of the privileges and social recognition enjoyed by the blooded aristocrats. Whereas the power of the eighteenth-century English monarchy was waning as a result of parliamentary sovereignty, in France the monarchy was still the greatest power in the land, however miserably and irresolutely Louis XV and Louis XVI exercised that power. Whereas English capital increasingly flowed into industry, especially into cotton manufactures—which pioneered the industrialization of the country— French capital flowed into land and titles as the most tangible sources and evidence of social status.

The French nobility, in turn, would have found it difficult to become capitalist had they even wanted to. They were legally debarred from entering into all but a few industries, such as overseas trade and glassmaking. Moreover, whereas agricultural practices had been extensively rationalized in England, in France this process came very slowly and in piecemeal fashion. French agricultural wealth continued to derive more from the intensive exploitation of labor than from technical and scientific improvements. A French peasant who lost his land to a bourgeois knew that he was displaced primarily because his rents had gone up, not because any striking technological innovation removed him from food cultivation. In other respects his way of life, however impoverished it might become, remained unchanged; the village still retained most of the old customs that had been worked into the French rural tradition for countless generations, with very few changes in traditional methods of production and in social status, with its many restrictions as well as privileges.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, some French officials and provincial nobles, influenced by the economic thinking of the Physiocrats, tried to emulate their British counterparts by reforming old agricultural practices. They intensified crop production and tried to undertake farming on a larger scale by enlarging their landholdings. Agricultural societies were formed throughout France to teach and encourage new, scientific methods of food cultivation, and royal edicts were announced that permitted the enclosure of common lands. Indeed, some seigneurs impudently claimed that, according to feudal law, the common lands were actually their own property—claims that received open support from the monarchy. As Mathiez observes:

> Their seignorial courts... became hated instruments of extortion in the hands of their underpaid judges. They used them in particular as a means of gaining possession of the common lands_The poor man's goat, deprived of its common rights, could no longer pick up even a scanty subsistence, and the complaints of the poor became more and more acrimonious.[12]

Nor were such practices confined exclusively to the landed nobility. Capitalist farmers, usually large landowners who rented out land to individual peasant households, worked hand in glove with the nobility to eat steadily into the village's common lands. Once such lands were enclosed, the new agriculturalists could abolish peasants' traditional grazing rights in common pastures and divide up the common lands for their own use, while raising the rents of their tenants and reducing them to destitute rural laborers. All of these practices aroused vehement peasant opposition and rural unrest. Indeed, "during the revolution," observes P. M. Jones, "the defence of common rights became a key issue, perhaps *the* key issue, in the political programme of the poor peasantry."[13]

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[12] Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 5.
[13])ones, *Peasantry in the French Revolution,* p. 9.

But by no means were the nobles the sole acquisitors of landholdings. As Alfred Cobban, in his pathbreaking work, has carefully shown, rural and urban capitalists played a major role in the process. As indebted nobles forfeited lands from their great estates, they were greedily bought up by a new breed of agricultural bourgeois, who purchased not only seigneurial lands but even seigneurial rights, which were merchandised like so many alienable commodities. "By the eighteenth century … in Walloon Flanders seignorial rights were as active a market as land," Cobban observes. "Of course, some of the purchasers themselves became nobles in their turn; but by 1789 the *tiers etat* [Third Estate] included many owners of seignorial rights." When peasants tried to deny these claims, their case was taken to the local *parlemertt,* which more often than not sided with the landowners.

Finally, some nobles employed specialists in feudal law to devise novel, selfserving interpretations of seigneurial rights, such as the right to graze cattle and sheep on common lands, or to lease common lands, claimed by peasant villages, to commercial stockbreeders. Still other lords farmed out their seigneurial rights to individuals or companies, which collected on them ruthlessly as so much profitable raw material. By demanding that the peasant pay ever more *cens,* they drew him into a cash nexus on a scale that his feudal ancestors had never experienced; indeed, the seigneurial agents who collected feudal dues, as Cobban observes, "especially when they were paid on a commission basis, had an interest in screwing up the seignorial dues to the highest pitch." As enterprising nonnobles and nobles alike used lands and seigneurial rights to intensify this grim and dehumanizing development, the exploitation of the peasant, like agriculture itself, was becoming increasingly rationalized, albeit still by the use of many archaic techniques based on time-honored traditions. The intendant of Dijon, for example, noted in 1751 that urban elites were reducing the peasants to the status of mere day-laborers.[14] Not surprisingly, the French peasantry, despite its varied internal differences, came to detest the seigneurs, so that, by 1788 and 1789, the countryside was on the point of a new *jacquerie.*

This capitalistic offensive, if such it can be called, into the countryside stands at odds with accepted images of the French Revolution as "bourgeois" in nature. "There is at least some excuse for believing that the [peasant] revolution in the French countryside was not against feudalism," observes Cobban, "but against a growing commercialisation; and that it was not a 'bourgeois' movement but on the contrary was directed partly against the penetration of urban financial interests into the countryside."[15]

THE NONAGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

As to the nonagricultural economy in late-eighteenth-century French towns, its structure was very mixed, as was very much the case in Western Europe for centuries. Town society, like that of the countryside, was marked by pronounced social stratifications, with considerable differences in wealth, education, and lifeways. The greatest fortunes were made by financiers. Contracting with the Crown to collect its taxes, these collectors eventually transformed themselves into creditors of the government as the national debt steadily expanded. Towns also included businessmen, especially in the port cities, who were intensely hostile to the nobility. Their causes, as Hampson observes, "were social rather than economic. It was not that the middle class could not expand

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[14] Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 43–4,45,45–6.

[15] *Ibid.,* pp. 48–9,52,53.

and prosper, but that it was increasingly excluded from the social status and privilege that prosperity had previously been able to buy more easily."[16]

Unlike towns in England, French towns and cities were hardly centers of a "rising" bourgeois economy. A powerful guild system still held a tight grip on many urban industries, and most working people were journeymen employed in small shops by master craftsmen. Fearing for their status and their livelihood, they vigorously opposed any "free trade" measures that would have allowed rural manufacturers to sell competing products in their own markets. So strongly did the guilds defend traditional family monopolies over various trades that they even prevented many journeymen from becoming master craftsmen, swelling the number of urban journeymen who could never hope to rise above the status of hired laborers. Still, as Hampson points out, "the modern division between capital and labour was not yet clearly marked and the distinction between aristocracy and 'people' was not the same thing as the division between 'gentlemen' and 'lower classes.'"[17]

Only a limited number of authentic factories existed in France, and the few that were mechanized were located in the countryside to make use of water power. Despite its widely touted role in producing the Industrial Revolution, well into the nineteenth century the steam engine developed by James Watt was used mainly to pump water from mines. It was too bulky to be employed by most factories, except a few wool- and muslin-processing plants, and the new English spinning jennies and weaving machines had yet to reach France in any sizable numbers. Accordingly, French industry remained overwhelmingly artisanal, despite the introduction of new machines.

Yet a growing corps of merchant-manufacturers tried to evade guild restrictions by bringing their cotton and wool into the countryside, where peasant artisans spun and wove the raw produce into cloth on looms owned by the manufacturers. These "factors," as the cottage industry merchants were called in England, could easily outsell guild artisans. At Lyon, where the guild system had essentially collapsed, a few hundred rich merchants controlled the great silk industry of the city and its environs, which provided employment to as many as sixty-five thousand workers. Yet this industry too was primarily artisanal. Silk was produced either in small shops or in family cottages located within a sixty-mile radius from the center of the city. Thus, factories were far from common in France before the Revolution; most work was done on a small craftlike scale, even where workers were assembled in large numbers in a socalled "industrial" area.

Lastly, the cities also contained many men of highly uncertain occupations who depended upon day-to-day earnings, as well as a host of servants, small retailers, such as grocers and cafeowners, and transport workers from wharfsmen to water carriers. Beggars abounded everywhere, roaming on country roads and filling city streets. The crazy quilt of prerevolutionary laws provided a livelihood for a host of lawyers, who not only pleaded criminal cases but, in far greater numbers, drew up contracts, mortgaged lands, and validated or challenged peasant and feudal rights. It was they who looked through the old feudal deeds that still constituted the basis for wealth, and they who could bear testimony to the burdens that choked the life out of a potentially prosperous country. Indeed, despite the fact that their very livelihood depended on the skein of legal archaisms, the most earnest of them began to oppose feudal systems of land tenure and privilege, in effect constituting the practical men of the Enlightenment—men of action who, idealistically or demagogically as the case may be, tried to give reality to the ideas advanced by

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[16] Hampson, *Social History,* p. 22.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 14.

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the French *philosophes.* As we shall see, they became the Revolution's most outstanding political leaders and constitution-makers.

Any attempt to find a shared bourgeois interest in the many cross-currents that marked French social life collapses in the widely disparate differences that pitted one stratum of society against another, from the base of society to its apex. Indeed, when the eminent historian of the Revolution Georges Lefebvre tried to define the eighteenth-century French bourgeois, he was obliged to divide them into five categories—each of which, in fact, stood very much at odds with the others. "Bourgeois" landed proprietors who used feudal rights to their advantage would have had very little in common with the "bourgeois" lawyers who formed such a substantial part of the Third Estate in 1789. Nor would they have much in common with the commercial "bourgeoisie," for whom the multitude of tolls were onerous to trade. "Bourgeois" officeholders in the royal administration would have regarded the "bourgeois" lawyers—if bourgeois they can be called at all—as the bane of their existence, and rallied more to the monarchy, to which they owed their status, than to their "revolutionary" class compatriots. More fundamentally, a "bourgeois" who was ennobled thought or tried to think like a noble and was very likely to conceal his own past in commerce. To speak of this melange as a unified bourgeoisie, still less one with a profound awareness of a distinctive social role clearly directed toward attaining class objectives, is very simplistic.[18]

The French Revolution occurred not because of a resolute bourgeois leadership but often in spite of—and against—the capitalism that was slowly emerging in western society as a whole. That the Revolution was clearly directed also against the aristocracy is undeniable, but it can be called bourgeois only by reading the history of our time into the past as the predestined outcome of what was an ambiguous social development.

Chapter 16. The Origins of Revolt

The many factors that produced the French Revolution—a revolution that reached searing proportions over a span of five years—utterly transformed Western life, from traditional to new ways of thinking, even of dress, speech, and everyday manners. But was that far-reaching revolution inevitable? An answer to this question is not easy to give. The archaic French state, structured around explicit privileges and disorganized by a jumble of often conflicting jurisdictions, could hardly have lasted long into the next century. Had the royal administration been less incompetent, France might have evolved gradually in a direction similar to that of England. In fact, this possibility had been the dream of *philosophes* such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Diderot, whose writings, no less than Rousseau's, profoundly influenced the revolutionary intelligentsia. But none of the men who were to play leading roles during the Revolution, not even Jean-Paul Marat, in time the seeming ultrarevolutionary, could have predicted the explosive events of the late 1780s and early 1790s or the alternative trajectories they opened.

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[18] Albert Soboul's view can be found in the opening pages of his *Short History* and in his *Precis d'histoire de la Revolution franfaise* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1962), published in English as *The French Revolution, 1787–1799: From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon,* trans. Alan Forest and Colin Jones (New York: Random House, 1974).

THE REVOLT OF THE NOBLES

Ironically, the French Revolution was initiated by a revolt neither of the peasantry nor of various bourgeoisies but by the nobility. The immediate cause of the upper-class revolt stemmed from France's disastrous fiscal condition. Ever since the reign of Louis XIV, costly wars and internal consolidation had swollen the state's debt to increasingly unmanageable proportions, and during the reigns of his successors, rising prices after 1733 and the large expenditures bestowed on the privileged social ranks at court had expanded enormously. Most disastrously, the monarchy had waged four major wars between 1733 and 1783, whose costs totaled about four billion livres, a stupendous sum at the time, and attempts to curb the debt were largely failures because of the tax exemptions enjoyed by the clergy, nobility, and ennobled officeholders.

By 1776, France faced a financial crisis of disastrous proportions, worsened by the fact that the comptroller-general in the king's ministry, the Genevan Protestant Jacques Necker, was an astute banker rather than an insightful economist. Necker, in effect, had a banker's faith in the beneficent effects of borrowing. Accordingly, under his guidance the government's fiscal problems seemed to disappear under a mountain of loans, often borrowed at interest rates of up to 10 percent. Juggling the facts about the country's financial condition gave Necker's budget policies a veneer of success. In his 1781 *Account to the King of National Finances* , the first disclosure of the royal finances that had ever been made to the general public, Necker's deliberate distortions created a roseate picture of an annual surplus of ten million livres in revenues over expenses. Actually, the country's annual deficit, not to speak of its accumulated debt, greatly exceeded 46 million livres. By 1788, nearly half of France's expenditures consisted of paying off the interest on the national debt, and lacking other sources of information to contradict Necker's figures, the public remained oblivious to the state's increasingly serious financial straits.

In 1783, shortly after the debt had risen still further as a result of France's participation in the American war against Britain, Necker was succeeded as comptroller-general by Charles Alexandre de Calonne. Calonne, fully mindful that if the country were to avoid national bankruptcy, it had to overhaul the entire tax system, proposed a comprehensive, wide-ranging plan that would increase the tax liability of the nobility and clergy by establishing a direct tax on land and its produce. This plan allowed for no exceptions: the tax was to fall on the clergy, nobles, and commoners alike, and, more disquietingly, it was to be graduated, so that the greater burden would fall on the wealthy. The severity of the hated *gabelle* and *taille,* as well as the *corvie,* was to be reduced, mitigating the tax burden placed on the peasantry.

Moreover, Calonne's plan called for the election of local assemblies in all villages of a thousand inhabitants or more to assess the basis for the tax. Although these assemblies were to be attended only by landholders with an annual income of more than 600 livres, the plan created a system of district assemblies to distribute the tax burden among the villages; it also included the creation of provincial assemblies in the *giniralitis,* removing any distinctions between the three estates: clergy, nobles, and commoners. Thus not only were the nobility and clergy to be taxed, they were to be stripped of their accustomed dominance of local government. Had it been instituted, Calonne's plan would have significantly altered not only France's tax system but its very polity by giving considerable power to the localities. Not that Calonne sought to decentralize the French political structure; indeed, as Albert Goodwin points out, Calonne's new assemblies

would remain under the close supervision of the royal intendants: "The reform was designed … to achieve not so much effective decentralisation as greater administrative uniformity."[19]

But the plan outraged the *parlements* —and for good reason. These thirteen appeals courts, as we have seen, were composed of rich commoners who, by purchasing their hereditary judgeships and noble tides, had obtained exemption from most taxation. Calonne's plan for rural assemblies challenged their jurisdiction as quasi-legislative bodies, since historically the Crown's edicts had to be registered with them. In fact, the *parlements* seem to have had their own ambitions to decentralize France under their control. From the fifteenth century onward, they had attempted to transform their traditional right to register laws and edicts into a *de facto* right to veto any laws and edicts they disliked simply by refusing to register them, which brought them into direct confrontation with the Crown. Only by fiat could the monarchy override their refusal. Thus the power of the *parlements* was essentially obstructive of the king, and they were obliged continually to ally themselves with the provincial estates against royal intendants and provincial governors.

Exasperated by their obstructionism and quasi-legislative capacities, Louis XV had simply abolished the Paris *parlement* —by far the most important in the realm—and replaced it with a system of regular appeal courts whose functions were strictly judicial. But his inexperienced successor, the incompetent Louis XVI, naively revived the Paris *parlement* in 1774, and it now began vigorously to flout the monarchy's authority by claiming to possess not only the power to veto royal decrees but the power to consent to taxation. This power, in fact, really belonged to the Estates General, the assembly of the three estates of the realm, which had not met since 1614. Arbitrarily assuming the prerogative of the Estates, the *parlements* obstructed Calonne's plan and cannily tried to portray the ministry's efforts to reform the fiscal system as onerous and oppressive abuses of royal power. Moreover, the *parlements* demagogically used Necker's initial spurious report of a budget surplus to rally widespread popular support behind their efforts to curb royal authority, allowing them to posture as champions of popular liberty, even invoking ideas of the *philosophes* such as social contract theories to justify their opposition to what was in fact a plan to rescue France from financial ruin.

Calonne, who clearly saw that the *parlements* would not register his plan and that Louis lacked the character to override them, prevailed upon the king in 1787 to convene an Assembly of Notables, whose stated purpose was to discuss how his plan was to be put into effect. Inasmuch as Louis could be expected to choose as delegates nobles and other high-status personages in the land who would oppose an added tax burden, Calonne should have suspected that the Assemblies would disapprove of his proposal; instead, he seems to have inordinately relied on the resolutions of a monarch who, by now, left little doubt that he was too weak to carry much weight with any sector of French society.

Nor was the king's lack of character the sole failing of the French monarchy. The late eighteenth century was a time of profound unrest and demands for social changes. In its ever-growing cities, France saw an upswell of urban discontent with a society structured around privilege, while in the countryside rural discontent reached the proportions of open peasant outbreaks. A new phenomenon was emerging in the land: a definable public opinion. For centuries, the French people had turned to their local pastors for news about the king and his ministers; indeed, about two-thirds of the population at this time were still illiterate and essentially allowed the pulpit to shape their social views. But entirely new developments were changing the cultural landscape of

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[19] Albert Goodwin, *The French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1953; New York: Harper Torchbook 1966), p. 28.

the country. The Enlightenment was percolating down from the summits of French society to its very base, with results that were subversive of religious faith and feudal hierarchy alike. A new literati, an intelligentsia, began to flood France— especially its towns and cities—with pamphlets, periodicals, treatises, and books that were openly hostile to privilege. The country's financial condition ceased to be a private matter between the king and his ministers and became a yardstick by which to measure and judge the competence of the monarchical state itself. Thus, the struggle between the *pariements* and the king was watched very closely. It became a matter of growing public concern to privileged noblemen, ordinary journeymen, and literate commoners in all walks of life.

Even republican ideas were being discussed, albeit prudently. When the constitutional documents and various accounts of the American Revolution and its institutions became widely available, including the Pennsylvania state constitution of 1776, they were read and discussed with growing enthusiasm. Political clubs came to life, advancing the cause of the Third Estate in various ways and popularizing the writings of the *philosophes* to an ever wider and hungrier readership. New critical writings were read aloud for the benefit of those who were illiterate. More knowledgeable sectors of the French public were obsessed by the history of the Roman Republic, by satires that, for their time, were outrageously critical of authority, and by news of conflicts within the court and the aristocracy. The coffeehouses of the Palais Royal—the gardens that the politically ambitious Duke of Orleans had given to the people of Paris—became a center for radical agitation, as did cafes in cities and towns throughout France. Pamphlets rained down upon thousands of insatiable readers, and were read everywhere from salons to guardhouses in front of the Tuileries, the residence of the king, as contemporary visitors to the city attest. The fuel for the French Revolution, as for the American before it, in effect, was created in a public realm in which masses of people could hope to pressure the monarchy for reforms, threaten the aristocracy for its insolence—and ultimately, as time was to show, exercise violent revolutionary force to gain their own ends.

To add to the many ironies of the era, the so-called notables of the land were only too eager to be assembled and thereby create another forum for challenging the monarch's control of the state. Still chafing at their lack of institutionalized corporate power, the French nobility were eager to regain the power they had lost after the Fronde. When, at length, the Assembly of Notables convened at Versailles on January 29, 1787, it consisted overwhelmingly of nobles, including princes of the blood and dukes, provincial governors, clerics, and mayors; indeed, only 10 of the 144 notables were not members of the nobility. In short, the Assembly was composed precisely of highly privileged men who were in no way willing to accept any new tax burdens or rival institutions and were bent on patently weakening the monarchy's authority. Calonne, despite his methodical attempt to reveal the grim state of the public finances, had grossly miscalculated the intention of the notables; indeed, the majority of them, no less than the members of the *parlements* , categorically opposed any diminution of their privileges, particularly of their tax exemptions. Nor were they willing to surrender any of their authority to his proposed assemblies, still less to those that were to be supervised by royal intendants.

To the contrary, falling back on Necker's spurious report, the notables vilified Calonne in pamphlets, which, in turn, obliged the abused minister to retaliate by publishing the full text of the assembly's secret proceedings, thereby inviting the public into the most hidden and sordid recesses of the state—its financial extravagances—and the behavior of its leaders. Perhaps for the first time in French history, the proceedings of a once-hidden assembly of France's elite— with

all the charges and countercharges that filled the air—had been opened like a lanced abscess for all to see, and whether the public chose to believe Necker or Calonne, discussions of the assembly's proceedings in clubs and cafes enormously raised the political temperature of the country, especially in Paris.

Typically, after four fruitless months of wrangling, Louis yielded to the complaints of the outraged notables and replaced Calonne with a more amenable comptroller-general, Brienne, whose name had been suggested to him by the queen. Despite Brienne's attempts to soften Calonne's proposals, he was ultimately obliged to adopt much of his predecessor's plan, including the uniform land tax, only to meet once again with the obstinate resistance of the Assembly of Notables. Indeed, denying that it lacked any fiscal authority, the notables—to their everlasting detriment—reminded the king and the country that only the defunct Estates General had the right to levy taxes. The Marquis de Lafayette, fresh from fighting in the American Revolution, called for the "convocation of a truly national assembly" to settle the problems confronting the kingdom. Angrily, the king's brother, the Count of Artois, asked him, "What, Sir—are you calling for the Estates General?" to which the young marquis pointedly replied, "Yes, my lord, and even better than that"[20] What Lafayette, possibly speaking for many in France, patently had in mind was to convert the Estates General into a legislative assembly modeled on the American Congress, with a constitution to ensure that it met at regular intervals and exercised clearly delineated powers.

With the incredible myopia that so often blinds ruling elites to the crises they are fostering, many of the notables took up the demand for a convocation of the Estates, in most cases cynically so, in the hope of avoiding any new taxation. The traditional structure of the Estates itself guaranteed hegemony to the nobility— lay and clerical combined: at its last meeting in 1614, each of the three orders— clergy, nobility, and commons—had had an equal number of representatives and had met, deliberated, and voted separately, by order, not by individual members. This procedure had given the nobility and clergy the two-to-one majority needed to outvote the Third Estate on all controversial matters. Understandably, perhaps, the king viewed uneasily the prospect of convoking the Estates, which he may well have associated with the uprising of Etienne Marcel in the 1350s; at any rate, he dismissed the Assembly of Notables in May, leaving France's fiscal problems completely unresolved.

Once again, in the summer of 1787, Brienne, as naively as Calonne, tried to register a new stamp tax on newspapers, receipts, and other documents—a common enough practice in other European countries—only to be rebuffed by the *parlements* with the claim that the Estates alone could ratify any new levy. The call for a meeting of the Estates now became a rallying cry among the aristocracy and *parlements,* percolating downward to all strata of French society. Indeed, it now became a national cause propagated by lawyers, clerics, tradesmen, and nobles— among them Lafayette, the Marquis de Condorcet, and the Count Mirabeau—who formed a quasi-republican faction that hoped to transform France into a constitutional monarchy. The ideas of these "Americans" or "Patriots," as they were commonly called, became immensely popular in the cafes, which, as one observer declared, were becoming "public schools of democracy and insurrection."[21]

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[20] Quoted in William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 74.

[21] Counsellor Sallier, quoted in Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution,* trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Russell 8c Russell, 1962), p. 26.

The king simply floundered with little support from his own nobles, still less other strata of French society. Emulating his predecessor, he tried once again to virtually abolish the *parlements* and replace them with his own courts of appeal *(grands bailliages),* while issuing edicts for new taxes, but the *parlements* openly defied him and issued remonstrances demanding the Estates General. At length, Louis agreed, initially, to convoke the Estates five years later, in 1792; finally, in May 1789. The opposition faced by the monarchy to any delay, even among the aristocracy, was massive. A "noble revolt," as the king called it, swept across France, especially in B6arn, Brittany, and Dauphine. Provincial nobles provocatively convened their own unauthorized assemblies, secure in the knowledge that they had the full support of the clergy and officer corps. Major riots broke out in several cities. In the Dauphufe province the *parlement* was expelled from its courthouse, but its magistrates subversively announced that if the royal edicts went through, Dauphine would no longer regard itself as owing fidelity to the king. When the military governor tried to silence the *parlement* by sending troops to Grenoble on June 7 (later known as the Day of Tiles) the citizens bombarded the troops with roof tiles, drove them out, and then enthusiastically escorted the *parlement* back to the courthouse.

Nor was it only the nobles who revolted. In the new municipal structures that Brienne created, the mayor, supposedly appointed by the royal intendant, was elected by the peasants and held accountable to them. "In Alsace," observes Mathiez, "as soon as the new municipalities were formed, their first care was to bring actions against their feudal lords, and the latter complained bitterly of the 'innumerable abuses' which the establishment of the municipalities had occasioned."[22]

THE ESTATES GENERAL

Finally, when the time came for Louis to convoke the Estates, the monarchy, following precedent, structured them into three deliberative and voting orders, each of which was to have an equal number of representatives. But nearly two centuries had passed since 1614, when the nobility and clergy could still be allowed to combine and outvote the Third Estate, and the old procedure now aroused a furor throughout the country, which saw it as a flagrant attempt to flout the will of the people and avoid reform. After the Day of the Tiles, the Dauphinl assembly met and resolved that the Estates should cast its votes by individuals (*par tite*) rather than by orders (*par ordre),* and further, that the Third Estate should have twice as many representatives—"double representation"—so that it could achieve parity with the two privileged orders. The plan immediately became immensely popular. Indeed, in September, when the *parlement* of Paris tried to support the traditional 1614 arrangement, the people turned against their erstwhile allies, whom they had recently lionized, and denounced them with fury.

The political temperature of France now began to soar, raised higher almost weekly by an extraordinary outpouring of pamphlets affirming the sovereignty of the nation—as opposed to sovereignty of the king and the estates—and calling for the creation of a declaration of rights and a constitution. The Abb6 Sieyfcs's famous brochure *What Is the Third Estate?,* which appeared in February 1789, played a role much like Paine's *Common Sense* in the American Revolution. With its pithy formulations, it galvanized the public sentiment around the notion that the Third Estate alone was the sole body that spoke for the nation.

Again, a second Assembly of Notables was summoned in November 1788— this time by Necker, who had replaced Brienne—to persuade the nobles to forgo some of their privileged

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[22] Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 34.

status among the Estates. But predictably, the assembly flatly refused to grant the Third Estate its demand for "double representation"; Necker gained approval for it only after much behind-the-scenes maneuvering. To stoke the already rising flames still more, the assembly left open the question of whether the three orders would vote as separate groups or as individuals in a united body, a grave omission, as time was soon to show, that provoked a national crisis.

The upcoming meeting of the Estates General became a source of enormous national expectation. For the first time in generations, millions of people, even the lowest strata of the population, who had been ignored by the monarchy and oppressed by France's elites found themselves called upon to participate, however indirectly, in matters of state. "Politics," wrote Madame de Stael, "were a fresh sphere for the imagination of the French; everybody flattered himself that he would play a part in them, everybody saw an object for himself in the many chances which offered themselves on all sides."[23] The process of electing representatives to the Estates was accompanied by uprisings and pillagings of grain stores. A crowd in Nantes surrounded the city hall crying *"Vive la liberte!"* Very much like the American revolutionaries, members of the Third Estate met in extralegal assemblies and established networks for correspondence from town to town. Addressing the Crown, these assemblies listed for the king's edification a series of grievances and demands, addresses that were meant to be a model for people in their localities to follow in listing their own grievances, the *cahiers de doUances.* The *cahiers* now flooded the royal government, presenting complaints that, by the very process of drawing them up, became in themselves a form of political education, much like the process that the Massachusetts towns had experienced in 1774.

But the procedures for electing representatives to the Estates were willfully complex and indirect. Elections of the clergy and the nobility, of course, presented no difficulties; all male members of the two orders over the age of twenty-five could attend an assembly in their locality or urban district and there vote directly for their representatives who would attend the Estates meeting at Versailles. For the Third Estate voters, however, the voting system was different, indeed tortuous in its complexity. All male members of the Third Estate who were over twenty-five and paid taxes were obliged to meet in their rural parishes, urban guilds, or urban district assemblies to choose two electors for every hundred valid participants. These electors, in turn, would then be expected to meet at the city hall and choose yet another set of electors to represent the assembly or district. This third group of electors would meet with electors from other towns in their *bailliage* to choose a fourth group of electors, this time representing a new district that had been created expressly for electoral purposes, and it was they who finally chose the actual representatives to the Estates General in Versailles. The overly guarded indirectness of this procedure may account for the fact that the majority of the Third Estate representatives were lawyers, the people who were best able to navigate the process, which inadvertently filled the Third Estate with highly articulate and informed individuals for whom the nobles and clerics were no match.

At each stage of the voting process for all orders, citizens drew up *cahiers de doliances* for their given electoral jurisdiction, assembled and combined them into a general list of the jurisdiction's grievances, then sent them off to the next electoral stage, where they underwent the same process of consolidation. The grievances listed in the *cahiers* were remarkably similar among all the orders. All agreed that the Estates General should destroy royal and ministerial despotism; that there was a need for a constitution that would restrict the king's rights; and that a national assembly, which would meet periodically, should be created. They agreed in supporting trial by

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[23] Madame de Stagl quoted in Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 36.

jury, freedom of speech, and a certain degree of structural decentralization. The nobility even accepted the principle of equality of taxation—on the condition that it was assessed by elected local assemblies and not by the king's agents.

Yet not all was unanimity in the *cahiers:* the nobility and the clergy did not yet accept the political equality of the Third Estate. As Goodwin observes,

> The clergy were determined, if possible, to retain their corporate independence and the nobility to defend their traditional social distinctions, their feudal dues and their political control of the provincial estates. To that extent the *cahiers* reflect the political and social conflicts which divided France as the ancien regime drew to its dose.[24]

Other serious grievances hardly made it onto the lists in the *cahiers.* the last versions of the Third Estate's *cahiers* were edited mainly by their urban lawyer representatives, who simply deleted many peasant demands for protection of their traditional village lifeways against the encroachments of capitalist agriculture.

THE TAKING OF THE BASTILLE

The dramatic first stage of the French Revolution is well known. In less than two months—from May 5 to June 27,1789—the three estates convened together in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles for the opening ceremonies. The next day the Third Estate was informed that the orders would be required to meet separately, an instruction that the Third Estate flatly refused to carry out, demanding that it vote together with the nobility and clergy as a single body. The nobility remained uncompromising on this score, asserting their separate identity, a position with which the king firmly concurred. In response, the Third Estate called upon its supporters in the other orders to meet with it, and on June 17 this meeting constituted itself as a National Constituent Assembly, thereby assuming temporary legislative sovereignty with a view toward writing a constitution for France. When the king refused to allow this seeming usurpation of power, the new National Assembly (as the Third Estate was to be generally called) was literally shut out of its meeting place on June 20. Its members, outraged by the monarch's behavior, defiantly met next door in a tennis court, where they swore an oath not to disband until they had written a constitution for France. Four days later, the majority of the clergy—particularly a large numbers of poor *curis* —joined the Third Estate, followed by forty-seven nobles on the day that followed. However unwillingly, the king was obliged to yield: on hearing that a crowd of thirty thousand people from Paris would invade the palace if he refused, the king on June 27 invited "his loyal clergy and his loyal nobility" to convene with the National Assembly.

Yet Louis's agreement to accept the unity of the three estates was patently a ruse to gain time—and gather loyal troops—to forcibly disband the National Assembly. Scarcely a week before he ostensibly yielded, he had signed marching orders to bring soldiers to Paris, and on June 26, a day before he expressly conceded to the existence of the National Assembly, he signed more orders strengthening the forces at Versailles and around Paris. As early as July 7, the visible massing of troops on the outskirts of the city generated mass consternation throughout Paris, justifiably arousing popular suspicions that the king was about to invade and take over the capital.

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[24] Goodwin, *French Revolution,* p. 49.

The closing days of June should have provided Louis with ample evidence that his troops in the capital, particularly the blue-uniformed French Guards *(Gardes fratifaises),* were completely unreliable. The officers of this force had imposed severe military rules and Prussian-style discipline on the soldiers, which profoundly disaffected them, as did their steady contact with the city's increasingly insurrectionary population. Mindful that the *Gardes* were vulnerable to the sentiments of the populace, Louis decided to rely primarily on regiments of mercenary foreign troops, who were less likely to favor the popular cause. Yet, as their commanders warned, even the foreign regiments, including the usually loyal Swiss mercenaries, were unreliable. As Paris grew increasingly restless, inflamed by its mounting suspicions of the king's intentions, so too did the troops who were stationed there; between June 24 and June 28, several companies made it clear, by their behavior both to the people and to their officers, that they would refuse to quell any disorders by rioters. The ringleaders of this near-mutiny were arrested, but in a daring rescue a crowd of three hundred spirited them away from prison, after which they were feted and hailed in open defiance of the royal authorities.

Meanwhile, a new political force was taking shape in the capital. Although the four hundred electors who had gathered in sixty district assemblies to choose Parisian representatives to the Third Estate were obliged to disband after fulfilling their mandates, the assemblies remained in place even after the Estates General had convened. Meeting again on June 25, they began to explore the developing political situation as quasi-legal bodies, even moving into the Hdtel de Ville (the city hall) where they carefully maintained organized surveillance of the city's aristocrats and retained close contact with the National Assembly at Versailles. On June 29 these "districts," as the assemblies were called, laid plans to establish a militia of two hundred citizens from every part of the city, partly to intimidate the king should he try to disband the National Assembly, partly to keep watch over the more radical elements that might instigate transgressions of property. They placed this militia under the control of a Permanent Committee at the Hdtel de Ville. On the same evening that the militia was created, the districts merged with the existing municipal government, which traditionally had been appointed by the king, to constitute a new Paris Commune, or city council. The reemergence of the Paris Commune revived troubling memories of the insurrectionary body led by Etienne Marcel centuries earlier and, in time, the Commune was to become one of the civic hotbeds of the Revolution. By mid-July, when the fever in Paris reached insurrectionary proportions, the Commune and districts constituted a latent dual power even rivaling the Estates, and organized the capital's defense against the king's troops.

In fact, the French people had been arming themselves for more than a year, creating citizens' militias *(milices bourgeoises)* in various cities and peasant militias in the countryside, presumably to protect property and harvests from vagrants. Now that Parisians could reasonably expect to be attacked by foreign regiments of the king, rumors flew wildly all over the city at the slightest hint of a troop movement. The citizens of the capital needed more than weapons for what they were convinced would be a siege of the city by a well-trained army, which left open only one course of action: to seize the means of life wherever they could be found. On July 10–13 they destroyed the hated customs barriers around the city, mainly to remove any impediments to the entry of arms and food supplies. On July 13 they captured the Saint-Lazare monastery, where more arms and grain had been stored. As armories were plundered for weapons, citizens massed in self-defense, turning the capital into a loaded gun that required only one spark for it to go off.

On July 11 the gun was fired when the popular comptroller-general, Necker, who the people believed tried to hold down the rising price of bread, was fatuously dismissed by the king.

Necker's dismissal initiated a chain of spontaneous riots throughout the capital. Huge crowds gathered in the Palais Royal, where, as a number of accounts have it, on July 12 an incendiary speech by Camille Desmoulins summoned the people to arms. "Citizens, you know that the Nation has asked for Necker to be retained, and he has been driven out!" the improvident young lawyer declaimed to an eager audience from atop a table. "Could you be more insolently flouted? After such an act they will dare anything, and they may perhaps be planning and preparing a SaintBartholomew massacre of patriots for this very night! ... To arms! to arms!" Desmoulins cried out, dramatically raising one or two pistols—as the stories go—or none. To the police who observed him, he taunted, "At least they will not take me alive, and 1 am ready to die a glorious death!"[25] Whether this speech was accurately recorded or not, it was typical of the fiery oratory that by now filled the Palais Royale and that was to mark popular agitation throughout the Revolution.

On the same day, in the gardens of the Tuileries itself, Paris exploded into an outright insurrection against the throne. A crowd of some five to six thousand armed Parisians defiantly engaged the Royal-Allemand regiment of German mercenaries, which had been sent to disperse them. Although the crowd, reinforced by sympathetic French Guards, managed to put the Royal-Allemand regiment to flight, rumors rapidly spread throughout the city that the mercenaries had massacred peaceful citizens in the Tuileries. Open fighting now broke out in the city between the German troops and the French Guards, plunging all of Paris into open insurrection. In fact, nearly all the king's troops in the capital were unreliable, and none of the contingents stationed there could be safely deployed against the insurrection that rapidly engulfed the city.

Even as conflicts spread from one neighborhood to another, new rumors again swept through the city on July 14 that the king's troops, stationed on its outskirts, were beginning to invade the capital. The citizenry were desperate for additional arms. The Permanent Committee of the districts now issued a call for barricades to be erected and for sympathetic French Guards to be mobilized, simultaneously dispatching its militiamen—soon to be called the National Guard—to protect banks and property against looters. All carts were prohibited from entering or leaving Paris, with the result that food and military stores in sizable quantities were collected at the Place de Grfeve, facing the Hotel de Ville. Shortly after dawn, a huge crowd converged around the Hdtel des Invalides, Paris's military hospital and compound, demanding that the governor provide them with the weapons inside. When the demand was refused, the crowd stormed the building and carried off 28,000 muskets and ten cannon—while the Invalides guards passively stood by their artillery without firing a shot. Nor did the governor of the Invalides dare to call upon the troops encamped nearby, at the Champs de Mars, for assistance; he had been advised by their uneasy officers that they were completely unreliable.

But if the crowd acquired sizable numbers of muskets and cannon from the Invalides, the building was lacking in powder and shot—and powder and shot were what they now desperately needed. Rumor had it these military stores could be found in the Bastille. This fourteenth-century prison-fortress, whose eight rounded towers rose some seventy feet above the Faubourg Saint-

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[25] I have reconstructed the events of July 14 from several sources, including Jacques Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille* (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), pp. 187–8; and Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1980; published in Great Britain under the title *The French Revolution* (Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 1980)), pp. 65–6. Whether Desmoulins, whom Hibbert treats unsympathetically, raised one or two pistols is difficult to determine. Contrary to legend, it was not Desmoulins's speech that sent the people marching to the Bastille.

Antoine, was equipped with eighteen imposing cannon that, even now, were trained on the city's insurrectionary eastern *quartiers.* At the same time that the Invalides was being besieged, other Parisians, intermingling with sympathetic soldiers, began to converge on the fortress, which had been heavily reinforced with artillery and garrisoned by Swiss soldiers. At ten o'clock in the morning, four deputations from the new Commune at the H6tel de Ville tried to negotiate the Bastille's peaceful surrender with its commander, the confused Marquis de Launey, asking him to withdraw his ominous cannon from the parapets and then allow the Commune's militia to take custody of the fortress. De Launey was totally incapable of dealing with the situation that faced him. Alternating between craven cowardice and mindless belligerence, he behaved with incredible indecision. His cannon were first pulled back, then reappeared, only serving to infuriate the poorly armed crowd outside the fortress.

In retrospect, it seems evident that de Launey had no intention of surrendering the Bastille. In any case, the people outside the fortress realized that they had to take it by storm, if they were to gain it. Around two o'clock, two men managed to get into the inner courtyard of the fortress, smashing the drawbridge pulleys, and the huge doors fell open with a crash. Immediately, shooting broke out between the crowd and the garrison, even while the Commune delegation was futilely asking de Launey to surrender. In the late afternoon, around three-thirty, a former sergeant in the French Guards, one Pierre-Augustin Hulin, hearing cannon fire from the Bastille, decided to lead a contingent of French Guards and several hundred civilians to the fortress. Wellequipped with muskets and some four cannon, they reached the Bastille, only to be joined by another column of armed citizens, under the command of a Lieutenant Jacob Élie. Firing their cannon directly into the fortress gate, the two columns surged over the lowered drawbridge into the Bastille, followed by other armed besiegers, and forced its surrender at five o'clock. De Launay, while escorted from the Bastille, was summarily killed by the crowd near the Hdtel de Ville, and his head was impaled on a pike, together with the head of Jacques de Flesselles, a royal municipal authority whose apparent attempts that morning to misdirect the crowd away from arms stores had aroused popular suspicion. The entire conflict claimed the lives of some ninety-eight assailants of the Bastille and perhaps two or three of its defenders.

The fall of the Bastille marked the climax of the insurrection of July 13–14. At the same time, it abruptly marked the end of royal tyranny in France and validated the shift of power to the National Assembly at Versailles and to the new Commune of Paris.

The *journie,* or "day," as the French revolutionaries were to call their eventful insurrections, could not have been won without the support of the troops in the capital, or at least their benign neutrality. Within the French Guards, the mutinies at the company level in early June were soon followed by the outright participation of entire regiments in the popular uprising. The authorities, for their part, had been irresolute and senselessly provocative even when it was apparent that the people had won the battle in the capital. The "bourgeoisie" were characteristically prudent. They mistrusted the people even more than they mistrusted the monarchy, an attitude, as time was to show, that surfaced throughout the Revolution.

THE PARISIANS

Who were the people who made this insurrection? A list of 954 of those who were subsequently awarded the title "conqueror of the Bastille" records the professions of 661 of them. To judge from this list, they came from a distinctly preindustrial world. The great majority were arti-

sans, including joiners, cabinetmakers, locksmiths, and engravers, as well as more or less casually employed men. They included cobblers, gauze weavers, wine sellers, jewelers, hatters, nailsmiths, monument masons, tailors, dyers—in all, 332 artisans and nondescript workers. What might pass for "bourgeois" included a few tradesmen, small-scale manufacturers such as the brewer Santerre who hired workers for his enterprise, together with a variety of merchants and rentiers. To the insurrectionaries, we might also add a large contingent of soldiers and a number of officers. We have no way of knowing the financial status of these "conquerors," and among the artisans it is impossible to distinguish between masters and journeymen. Since the majority (425 out of 602) came from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the most radical neighborhood or *quartier* of the Revolution, they might well have been the kind of people who later became the more radical elements of the famous *sans-culottes* —the men in long trousers instead of knee breeches—and the bare-armed laborers, or *"bras nus."*

Like the yeomen and artisan Levellers in the English Revolution or the backcountry farmers in the American Revolution, the artisans of Paris were often fiercely independent, took immense pride in their skills, and were very self-reliant and expressively individualistic. The ownership of property in their eyes seems to have simply meant that they enjoyed a measure of personal freedom from the vicissitudes of the market and from the servility inculcated in unskilled workers, who could be easily hired and fired by an unfeeling employer. They had no commitment to what we would call socialistic views; property, to them, was a means of assuring their independence from employers and other figures in authority. By the same token, they viewed unwarranted privilege and excessive wealth as heinous. There were also many poor, even economically destitute *sans-culottes* who had nothing to lose in participating in, even stirring up, *journies,* which often approximated to food riots. This nascent, as yet unformed, proletariat of *bras nus* in the closing years of the Revolution found its most articulate spokespersons in the *enragis* of 1793 (a French word that can be variously translated as "enraged men," "madmen," or "fanatics," depending on one's political persuasion) and the various revolutionary societies that mushroomed in the slum areas of the cities.

Although Albert Mathiez contends that the attack upon the Bastille was a typically Parisian *journie,* Jacques Godechot notes that "most of [the participants] had only recently become Parisians; if we study the references to their birthplaces, we find that 345 of them came originally from the provinces,"[26] especially from the North and Northeast. Having moved to Paris from rural villages and towns, these people lived in cultural tension between the slower rhythms and natural surroundings of rural life, and the faster, seemingly artificial pace of city life. They would have been inclined to favor a fairly egalitarian society of provincial craftspeople and farmers, who traditionally enjoyed the competence and freedom to create their own chosen lifeways. During the Revolution their sense of independence, whether real or imaginary, would guide them toward a fairly decentralistic social structure and an economy based on intimate ties between buyers and sellers—in short, toward a direct democracy based on a moral economy rather than a representative republic structured around profit-making and acquisition.

Using the sobriquet of *sans-culotte,* a document of April 1793 describes this kind of artisan as

> a man who goes everywhere on foot, who has none of the millions that you would like to have, no chateaux, no valets to serve him, and who lives quite simply with

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[26] Godechot, *Taking of the Bastille,* p. 222.

his wife and children, if he has any, on the fourth or fifth floor [in contrast with the well-to-do, who lived on lower floors]. He is useful because he knows how to plow a field, how to use a forge, saw, and file and cover a roof, how to make shoes and to fight to the last drop of his blood for the safety of the Republic-In the evenings, he goes to his section [that is, his neighborhood assembly] not powdered, perfumed, and manicured so that the citoyennes in the galleries will notice him, but to support sound resolutions with all his might and to crush the abominable faction of the governing men of state *[hommes d'etat*]. When he is at rest, a *sans-culotte* always keeps his sword sharpened, so that he can clip the ears of those who wish him ill.[27]

As Gwyn A. Williams observes, the term *sans-culotte* became "a concertina word"[28] that could expand to include people who did not fit this description, like the wealthy brewer Santerre and even the carpenter Duplay, who never deigned to sit at the same dinner table as his men and earned 10,000 to 12,000 livres from his rents. At the other extreme, the word could include utterly impoverished revolutionaries like Pierre Ducroquet, a radical who could barely find clothing for his newborn baby and was 700 livres in debt when he was executed.

Between these two extremes, the small-propertied *sans-culotte* of independent means cherished the Spartan virtues and strong collective identity of the craftsman. Such people would eventually form the radical working class of Paris well into the 1860s and 1870s, until they were supplanted by a more regimented industrial proletariat who had become disciplined by a highly rationalized factory routine. The later *journees* of the French Revolution were fueled no less by this small-propertied or highly skilled *sans-culotte* than by the desperately poor who, under the pressure of demoralizing economic need, seldom rose beyond a food riot or else fell easy prey to oratorical demagoguery.

Like *sans-culotte,* the word *peasant* too became a "concertina word," encompassing well-to-do capitalist farmers at one extreme and landless laborers at the other. But for the most part, the French peasant who owned a small plot of land was little more than a subsistence farmer and still had to work as a day laborer or rent a leasehold to make ends meet. Like the urban artisan, the peasant also valued property, more as a means to a modestly good life than as a springboard for wealth and power. During the Revolution, he too sought to attain his independence by gaining a secure if modest competence to meet the needs of his family year round. He tried to obtain material security, but, unlike his urban cousin, he hoped to find it by preserving traditional collective village practices by which his community shared draft animals, plows, and common lands. For him, part of attaining security meant eliminating the seigneurial privileges that allowed the nobility to grind him into the dust, and freedom from the rapacious royal tax-gatherers and engrossing capitalist farmers who threatened his traditional way of life. From this immense population of peasants came the great *jacqueries* that effectively shredded the remnant feudal order of privilege—and placed a powerful brake on capitalist agriculture.

Nor were the prerogatives of the nobility the only source of French popular anger. The artisan and the peasant alike detested the feudal privileges retained by the masters of closed guilds, and by self-serving and patently hypocritical bishops. They deeply resented the slights that the

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[27] "Reponse *&* 1'impertinente question: Mais qu'est-ce qu'un Sans-Culotte?" in Walter Markov and Albert Soboul, eds.. *Die Sansculotten von Paris: Dokumente zur Geschichte der Volksbewegung, 1793–1794* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), p. 2.
[28] Gwyn A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), p. 19.

wealthy of all strata inflicted daily on their "inferiors," as if they were less than human. No less did they detest the centralized state, with its military officers, bureaucrats, and officials of all kinds who bore down heavily on all the lower strata of French society. The centralization of the previous two centuries, they saw or implicitly understood, undermined their time-honored customs of communal autonomy and self-rule.

Similarly, the typical small artisans and peasants bitterly hated the encroachment of capitalism on their traditional lifeways. The free market, so widely lauded by the Physiocrats and the king's comptroller-general, set them adrift in an increasingly atomized and fearfully insecure world. Many corporate features of France's quasi-feudal ancien regime were still popular desiderata: a master craftsman was at least expected to see to the welfare of his workmen and servants, however much he honored this responsibility in the breach. The Church, however oppressive and parasitical, was expected to care for the sick and helpless and provide education for the poor. Guild masters were obliged to care for their apprentices and journeymen, and villages as a whole were expected to care for their infirm or impoverished residents. Capitalism, at least in the commercial towns, threatened to shred these time-honored relationships, offering in their place the cold indifference of a free market economy without any public responsibility. Both artisan and peasant were placed at the mercy of heartless employers, grain hoarders, speculators, and land-grabbers, who ruthlessly raised prices during food shortages and profited enormously from the misfortunes of the poor. And since nearly half of an artisan's income might go on bread for himself and his family, any inflated prices that followed grain shortages could be completely devastating.

Hence, economically and even culturally, the *sans-culottes* and the peasantry tended to lean toward traditional forms of economic life, more redolent of the Middle Ages than of modern times. The urban masses demanded price controls, the distribution of grain to feed the hungry population, and an active concern for social welfare, while the poorer peasantry and the landless rural workers favored measures designed to restore the common lands that the nobility and rural bourgeoisie had expropriated. Although none of these demands was opposed to private property as such, they implied a hostility to extremes of wealth and poverty—ideas that were expressed in liberal interpretations of Rousseau and even by Robespierre and Saint-Just in the final weeks of their rule.

In the towns and cities of France, the basically traditional economy that existed in the eighteenth century generated an intensely social way of life, with a sense of community in urban *quartiers* and rural villages that still haunts the popular imagination of our own communally desiccated society. The Faubourg Saint-Antoine, which surrounded the Bastille, throbbed with human activity, discussions, peddlers hawking their wares, children playing games, women shouting to each other or to passersby from windows overlooking streets and alleys, beggars and prostitutes intermingling with ordinary workmen and even bourgeois with modest incomes, a multitude of open retail stores, workshops, apothecaries, notaries, bakers, greengrocers, and wineshops that were filled with people after working hours who played cards, gossiped, discussed, and in times of social upheaval laid plans for *journies.* Here news was exchanged, peppered with exhortations to action. Here, too, newspapers and pamphlets were fervently read aloud to the illiterate as well as individually in silence. The streets and wineshops of the *quartier* became the lived forums of the Revolution where, during a *journie* , the tocsin would be sounded, alarm guns fired, and drums beaten, calling the people to insurrection. With one out of three in-

habitants unemployed, the Saint-Antoine became the easily ignited source of the great *journdes* and the public arena of its most radical egalitarian demands.

Chapter 17. The *Journees* of 1789–1790

As the news resounded throughout Europe, indeed in many of its remote towns, the fall of the Bastille seemed for millions to usher in a new historical era. Nearly all thinking people waxed enthusiastic, celebrating in fervent prose and poetry the heroism of the Bastille "conquerors" and planting liberty trees, where they could, as symbols not only of the victory over tyranny in France but of a historic step toward liberty for the entire world.

Still, not everyone's heart was gladdened at the news. Terrified by the events of July 14, many French nobles, led by the Count of Artois, fled in a steady stream out of the country and settled abroad. These numerous aristocratic *emigres* subsequently devoted themselves to turning back the revolutionary tide. As for the king, two days alter the fall of the Bastille, he was still considering suppressing Paris by force, a plan that his minister of war advised him was impossible given the uncertain loyalty of his army. The queen brightly suggested that Louis flee northeast to Metz, where he could reconvene the Estates General under the protection of troops loyal to himself. Although Louis would have readily escaped the uproar of his unruly capital, he feared the possibility of repeating all the blunders of his English predecessor, Charles I, who lost his head in the throes of an earlier revolution. Once again, his minister of war discouraged the queen's plan, warning that he could not guarantee the royal family's safety traveling through a countryside in the throes of revolutionary upheaval.

Finally, seeing no alternative, the king acceded to the implacable facts that he confronted and withdrew the troops at Versailles and the military cordon that ringed Paris. He deigned to inform the delegates in the National Assembly, which was jubilant at this concession, that he planned to undertake no military moves against the body. Paris, too, naively greeted this news with enthusiasm and Parisians turned out in masses, wearing the revolutionary emblem: the tricolor cockade of red and blue—the traditional blue and red colors of the city—and white, the color of the Bourbons. The Assembly was now secure from the threat of dissolution. Even the judges of the *parlements,* who had recently urged counterrevolution, quietly bowed to its authority. The delegates thereupon set about their primary task, which was to draw up a constitution for France based on the *cahiers* and prevent a resurgence of despotism and feudalism.

Significantly, the sixty Parisian district assemblies, initially a creation of the old regime, continued to meet daily at the Hotel de Ville, providing remarkable evidence that a seemingly ad hoc civic institution of the past could transform itself into a revolutionary institution of the present and future, a lesson that modern radicals, in fact, have yet to absorb. Following the fall of the Bastille, the electors chose Jean-Sylvain Bailly, the president of the Assembly, to be mayor of the city, while the Permanent Committee of Paris named the Marquis de Lafayette commander of the new National Guard—that is, of the militia. This important appointment transformed Lafayette into a mediator between the king, the Assembly, and the people—a role he apparently relished in his aspirations to become the George Washington of France.

PROVINCIAL REVOLTS

In the provincial towns, the assumption of sovereign authority by the National Assembly led to the nearly complete collapse of the ancien regime's centralized infrastructure. The fall of the Bastille and the establishment of the Commune in Paris revived with new fervor the antioligarchical ferment that had erupted during the elections of the Estates General. Municipal revolts swept across the country; as Michelet tells it, everywhere "the people go to the communal house, take the keys and assume power in the name of the nation."[29] In some towns, the change involved a peaceful broadening of the basis of municipal authority as in the case of the Parisian districts; in others, change meant the establishment of a Permanent Committee as well as special committees to address problems such as food shortages. The first order of business of the Permanent Committees was to establish a municipal militia or National Guard to guard against counterrevolution and to maintain order, which entailed taking over local arsenals and whatever weapons were needed to safeguard the Revolution.

In some towns it was the electors of the Estates General deputies who chose the Permanent Committee; in others it was a general assembly of the citizens, as at Dijon, Montpellier, and Besan^on. Typically, the members of these new committees tended to come from the property-owning strata, not from the poorest townsfolk, but a precedent for recreating new and broader sovereignties was being created that would also serve radicals as the Revolution moved to the left. Few of the old royal administrators dared to put up much resistance; indeed, the intendants typically fled their offices. But in some towns, like Strasbourg and Amiens, the old order was more intransigent, and a rising of the people was necessary to quell royalist resistance. When existing municipal corporations failed to meet the townspeople's demands for price controls on food, they would invade the H6tel de Ville and forcibly expel the old authorities, replacing traditional institutions and their officeholders with more democratic forms and personnel. Once again, the unreliability of the army made these changes possible. At Strasbourg, for example, royal troops looked on passively as the H6tel de Ville was sacked by demonstrators. By such various means did the vast local officialdom of the ancien regime—from the loftiest intendant to the lowliest bureaucrat— withdraw from the places they had occupied, causing the collapse of the central authority. Effectively, France was now decentralized: the new municipal governments agreed to accept the decisions of the Assembly, but only with the proviso that those decisions accorded with the wishes of the local population.

Meanwhile, the rising price of bread in Paris had produced a highly volatile urban populace, beleaguered by fears of imminent counterrevolution and conspiracies to create famine. Edgy nearly to the point of panic, Parisians once again erected barricades in the streets of the capital. When the lieutenant-mayor of Saint-Denis refused to lower the price of bread, they chased him through the streets and decapitated him. A reactionary minister who speculated in grain and had allegedly declared that the people should eat hay was lynched, and his son-in-law, the intendant of Paris, was murdered for making similar statements. As a deputy from Paris lamented, the city had "no more army and no more police," while Bailly, the mayor, ruefully acknowledged that "everyone knows how to command but nobody knows how to obey."[30]

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[29] Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution,* abridged ed., trans. Charles Cocks, ed. Gordon Wright (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 434.

[30] Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1980; published in Great Britain under the title *The French Revolution* (Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 1980)), p. 92.

As for the peasantry, the Assembly delegates at Versailles had assured them that their needs would soon be addressed, and for a few weeks the peasants' hopes remained high. But when the Assembly procrastinated, the patience of the peasants wore thin. Not only was the countryside suffering from rising feudal payments, but it had known bad harvests from 1788 into 1789, creating nearfamine conditions in certain rural communities. Bread prices soared until they were twice as high in the countryside as in the towns (where the price was carefully controlled), with the result that peasants crowded into the towns to obtain bread at lower prices. Once there, the municipal revolts they saw inspired them to follow in the tow of urban dwellers, and they now surrounded manor houses, brazenly shooting the pigeons of their seigneurs in manorial court-yards. Indeed, throughout France, peasants tried to retrieve seigneurial title deeds to the land, upon which feudal dues had been based, and often burned the hated documents on the spot. Seigneurs who refused to hand over the documents risked the very real likelihood that peasants would burn their manor houses (a common practice, in fact). Nor were landlords alone targets of peasant fury: millers and prosperous farmers suspected of hoarding grain saw their premises plundered and burned as well.

By late July and early August, a panic swept the countryside as rumors spread that the aristocratic *6tnigr6s* who had fled France after July 14 were scheming, if not returning, to abolish the Assembly, awakening fears that foreign states were on the brink of invading France to restore Louis to his former sovereign status. Perhaps most fearful of all was the belief that aristocrats were inciting roving brigands to despoil crops and wreak havoc in the countryside. Although many starving beggars had indeed been reduced to thievery, this "Great Fear," as it was called, that swept the countryside had no foundation in fact; nevertheless, the peasants established protective village associations in ever larger regions of the countryside, and, as Michelet observes, these associations

> confederated against the stewards, collectors, managers, attorneys, and bailiffs... against those troops of pillagers, who were [supposedly] overrunning France, people starving for want of work, beggars turned thieves, who, at night, cut down the grain, even when unripe, thus destroying hope... All the villagers armed, and promised each other mutual protection. They agreed among themselves to unite, in case of alarm, at a given spot, in a central position, or one commanding the principal passage by land or by water.[31]

Finally, in late summer and early autumn of 1789, the peasants launched a full-scale assault on privilege: they openly reclaimed enclosed lands, refused to pay feudal dues, and now began in earnest to burn chateaux, abbeys, and tax offices and destroy whatever feudal records they could find. In effect, a widespread *jacquerie* spread over the land, a veritable peasant war that buoyed up the Revolution—even as it frightened many of its middle-class spokesmen. In some places, the urban oppressed made common cause with their peasant brothers: in Lyon, for example, town laborers, the *bras nus,* joined the peasants against their allied enemies, the noble and bourgeois strata of the city. Typically, the largely bourgeois National Guards, guided by the permanent committees, used force to put down the peasant revolt—as, for example, in Beaujolais, but not until the peasants had burned seventy-two manor houses.

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[31] Michelet, *History of the French Revolution,* pp. 435–6.

"DEFEUDALIZATION"

If the Assembly looked with favor on the revolts in the towns because the bourgeois civic leaders exhibited a prudent respect for property, they were blatantly horrified by the peasant revolts and even passionately advocated their repression. To many nobles, the peasant uprising boded an agrarian civil war. As their chateaux went up in flames, they recognized that if they were to save any of their property, at least nominal concessions were called for. Indeed, the Breton Club, composed of deputies from Brittany to the National Assembly, shrewdly planned what was to be hailed as a spontaneous and memorable event: an official, seemingly disinterested dismemberment of the feudal privileges that the peasants had in fact already largely achieved with their pitchforks and scythes. On the night of August 4, one nobleman after another, including ranking members of the clergy, rose at the Assembly and, with high emotion and rhetoric and theatrical expressions of self-sacrifice, voluntarily renounced their ancient seigneurial rights and privileges "on the altar of the nation." The clergy gave up their tithes, and the nobles surrendered their hunting and fishing rights and their immunity from taxation, eschewing the purchase of judicial offices and governmental sinecures. "The people is at last trying to cast off a yoke which has weighed upon it for so many centuries past," exulted the canny Duke of Aiguillon, one of the wealthiest of all the landowners. "Though this [peasant] insurrection must be condemned … an excuse can be found for it in the vexations of which the people has been the victim."[32] These staged self-immolations continued until two o'clock in the morning, with the nobles cheering each other's self-denial for privileges that the peasants had already abolished, and mutually congratulating one another with tearful embraces.

In reality, in the week that followed August 4, the Assembly, in the course of recasting its revolutionary assertions into legislative decrees, preserved many aspects of the old order. While it abolished personal servitude, for example, it required the state to compensate the nobles for the loss of feudal dues related to the land itself. Not only did it mandate state reimbursement, but it allowed feudal dues to be levied as they always had been during the interim, even upholding the unproven and hotly contested principle that the landlords were the original owners of peasant holdings, without any serious regard to the existence of title deeds. Thus, when it came to legislative practice, the renunciations of August 4 were often honored in the breach.

The initial response of the peasantry to the Assembly's "abolition" of the feudal regime was typically one of naive exultation. The peasants were all too prone to accept mere declarations of the regime as established fact. But as rents continued to be collected, the evident speciousness of the "defeudalization" decrees quickly disabused them of their enthusiasm. Indeed, little seemed to have changed from the old regime, apart from the abolition of clerical tithes. Thereafter, for three torturous years, the peasants would have to continue to struggle, often fruitlessly, to gain Assembly acceptance of their legitimate claims, and during that time they would rise up again and again, even after each uprising was quelled by National Guards from the towns. Not until the Assembly was replaced by the Legislative Assembly and, later, by the relatively radical Convention would feudal rents finally be completely abolished.

Yet innocuous as the Assembly's "defeudalization" decrees proved to be, the king vetoed them. Worse still, he proceeded to veto the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which the Assembly had completed on August 26. The Declaration was a keystone document of the Rev-

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[32] Quoted in Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution,* trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 53.

olution. It expressed philosophical principles that broadly reflected the wishes expressed in the *cahiers* and was intended as the preamble to a new constitution. Upholding law above arbitrary power, the Declaration essentially inventoried basic "natural rights" and inalienable rights, such as those of individual liberty and security, freedom of speech, and trial by jury, affirming the right to resist oppression and thereby legitimating all the revolutionary events of the previous six months. All men, the Declaration said, were "equal in [these] rights"; indeed, reflecting the doctrines of the Physiocrats, property, too, was an "inviolable and sacred right" on which social life was based.

Of equal importance, the Declaration upheld the sovereignty of the nation, as opposed to the supremacy of the king. Louis had previously been "Louis, by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre," which had implied that France was his personal property; after October 10, when the Constitution was adopted by the Assembly, his title was pointedly changed to "Louis, by the grace of God and the Constitution of the State, King of the French," a far less proprietary formulation according to which monarchical authority was derived from the sovereign nation: that is, the people. The King of the French could be their leader, never their feudal lord. By vetoing the document, Louis laid down a gauntlet to the Assembly, indeed to the Revolution itself, that not even the most moderate of the deputies could ignore.

THE MARCH ON VERSAILLES

Such royal stupidity and arrogance created the seedbed for another *journie* ; indeed, one that was to have far-reaching consequences. Throughout September, the Assembly continually requested that Louis overturn his vetoes of the August "defeudalization" decrees and the Declaration, which the king adamantly refused to do. To add fuel to this incendiary situation, in mid-September, Louis, ordered the loyal Flanders regiment to be transferred to Versailles, where it arrived on September 29. This flagrantly counterrevolutionary act aroused such popular fears that even Lafayette, whose views were fairly moderate, demanded that the regiment be removed. Moreover, the sixty Parisian districts and the Commune reinforced the marquis's sentiments with similar demands, none of which had any effect on Louis's behavior. As if to exacerbate all of their suspicions, two days after the arrival of this regiment Louis's personal guard feted the officers of the Flanders regiment with a sumptuous welcoming banquet at the palace's Opera House in Versailles. What should have been a purely ceremonial affair, presided over by the king and queen, turned into a heady royalist demonstration. Flushed with wine and counterrevolutionary fervor, the officers of the newly arrived regiment arrogantly tore off their tricolor cockades and replaced them with Bourbon white, while the courtiers and ladies who filled the large chamber serenaded Louis with royalist airs.

Rumors in Paris variously described this as a "royalist plot" or "orgy," and were all the more inflammatory because they surfaced at a time of severe bread shortages in the city and lengthening lines for food. Popular opinion had long blamed the near-famine conditions in the capital on counterrevolutionaries and speculators, and the sixty Parisian districts were obliged to ask the National Assembly for an explanation for the high prices. Camille Desmoulins once again mounted a table at the Palais Royal, this time demanding that the king move from Versailles to Paris, where he could be kept under the surveillance of the people. Newspapers such as Jean-Paul Marat's *Ami du Peuple* (Friend of the People), in turn, called upon the Parisian districts to

arm themselves, march on Versailles, and bring the entire national government—including the Assembly—back to the capital.

On October 5, hundreds of market and working women of Paris, fishwives and prostitutes, stormed the H6tel de Ville to gain arms. Then, as a young girl beat a tattoo on a drum, they set out to march the fifteen miles to Versailles. This *journie,* the first since July 14, was expressly intended to demand bread from the king and to punish those who had dishonored the tricolor cockade. Others in the crowd demanded the removal of the royal family to Paris. Bearing pikes, scythes, pitchforks, and muskets, some six thousand women—interspersed with sympathetic men—resolutely marched along the road to Versailles despite a heavy downpour. Lafayette, commander of the National Guard, prudently refused to participate in the march unless he received the approval of the Paris Commune; indeed, it was not until after dusk that he set out with some twenty thousand National Guards along the road the women had taken hours earlier.

The women arrived at Versailles at around five o'clock, swarming into the Assembly, where the delegates were debating the king's constitutional status. The king himself was hunting, and when he heard the news of the *journte* he considered fleeing, then hesitantly agreed to receive a small deputation of the women. He answered their demand for bread with facile expressions of sympathy, even declaring in writing that he would take appropriate steps to furnish Paris with flour. With the arrival of Lafayette who subserviently promised the king that he would preserve and expand his remaining powers, Louis reluctantly agreed to accept the "defeudalization" decrees and. the Declaration of Rights. Once the king told the Commune delegation that he would consider moving to Paris, the crisis seemed to be over; ironically, in fact, even the Flanders regiment was fraternizing with the crowd.

At dawn, however, some of the women came upon the body of a workman whom a royal bodyguard had apparently killed during the night. Enraged by what they took to be the murder of one of their own kind, they invaded the chateau, racing through its courtyards and up its staircases. A group shouting "Death to the Austrian! Where is the whore?" broke into the queen's bedroom, only to find it empty; the "Austrian whore," as Marie Antoinette was contemptuously called, had fled only a few moments earlier to her husband's quarters, leaving her bed to be shredded by the angry women. Elsewhere, encounters between the armed women and the troops claimed the lives of several royal bodyguards. To put an end to the fighting, Lafayette showed himself to the crowd at the window with the royal couple, only to be greeted by shouts of "The king to Paris!" Denied any choice by now, the king announced that he would depart with them. Hostages to the crowd of armed women, the king and queen, along with their two children and governess, entered a royal carriage and were led away by the National Guard along the muddy road to Paris, followed by wagonloads of wheat and flour and by the disarmed Flanders regiment. Behind this train came a hundred or so deputies of the National Assembly in their own carriages. All were received in Paris by a huge crowd that conspicuously cried *"Vive la nation!"* rather than *"Vive le roif"* The procession installed the royal family in residence—more precisely, for all practical purposes, under house arrest—in the Tuileries Palace, and ten days later the Assembly too officially moved to Paris, where it took up quarters in a former riding school, the Manage, near the Tuileries.

This *journee* marked a turning point in the Revolution. For two long years, Louis would live as a captive of deeply mistrustful Parisians; indeed, the National Assembly ordered she National Guardsmen to follow him everywhere, under close supervision. Shortly after his removal from Versailles, the Constitution of October 10 was adopted, which turned France into a limited con-

stitutional monarchy, divesting the king of all his autocratic powers. Although the Constitution granted Louis 25 million livres a year to pay a civil list of bureaucrats and administrators, he could neither initiate legislation nor personally dispose of public funds. Beyond these administrative functions, the Constitution gave him a "suspensive veto"; that is, the power to suspend for four years the execution of laws that the Assembly had passed.

Louis's acceptance of the August 4 decrees and his new role as a constitutional monarch had been brought about only under the threat of crowd violence. Nor did many believe that his agreement was wholehearted. To the contrary, increasing numbers of people viewed the king as a source of obstructive vetoes, sinister plots, and outright treachery to France. If anyone prepared the way for the establishment of a French republic, it was the fatuous monarch, his wife, the court cabal, and royalist counterrevolutionaries, who unrelentingly resisted the wishes of an increasingly radicalized people.

THE NEW GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

If the revolution could be said to have a "bourgeois" phase—"bourgeois" in the sense of an amorphous middle class of professionals, tradesmen, *rentiers,* officials, and small-scale manufacturers as distinguished from a definable selfconscious capitalist class—it began when the full National Assembly gathered at its permanent quarters at the riding school.

The October Constitution that had just been adopted by the National Assembly divided France into eighty-three departments (*départements*) of roughly equal size and population, each of which was further subdivided into districts, cantons, and communes. The old semimedieval provincial France was abolished. Ancient municipal, corporate, and provincial privileges—privileges that had survived Richelieu and Mazarin—were no more, nor were there to be *bailliages* and *gdnflalitfl, pays d'état* and *pays d'flections.* Where people in some provinces had previously been governed by Roman law and others by customary feudal law, they would now all be subject to what was basically Roman law, and all would pay the same taxes. Prized traditions of provincial autonomy were erased, and distinctions between Provencals and Dauphinois and Bretons were subsumed under the all-encompassing national category of "French". The Constitution imposed on France a purely legal and territorial grid, within which France remained relatively decentralized in that each department could function juridically very much on its own; nor in the departments were there any royal agents to execute the arbitrary wishes of the monarchy.

Formally speaking, the new Constitution embodied the egalitarian notion that since "the law is the expression of the general will," "all citizens have the right to co-operate in its formation, whether personally or by their representatives." But some citizens were plainly more equal than others. The same document went on to draw a distinction between "active citizens" and "passive citizens," who differed in the number and kind of rights they could exercise. "Active citizens" were those who possessed "political rights"; that is, they could actively participate in public life. A small fraction of the total population, they were the educated stratum that had a modest livelihood, adequate leisure, and paid taxes equal in value to three days of labor. Only they could become members of the National Guard. By contrast, "passive citizens" were people who possessed no property and were uneducated or illiterate; as ordinary laborers and servants, they enjoyed only "civil rights," such as fair trials and freedom of expression, and did not possess the franchise or right to hold public office. Thus, only about four million out of twenty-six million qualified as "active citizens."

When it came to actual voting, the new Constitution enshrined yet another distinction, creating an oligarchy within the oligarchy it had established.

Although only active citizens who paid taxes on *ten* days of labor were granted the right to vote, the electoral system was frustratingly indirect. Active citizens met in primary assemblies in the major town of their canton (only the better-off could afford the journey) and chose electors to a secondary or electoral assembly, which, in turn, met at the capital of the department and selected National Assembly deputies, judges, bishops, and other officials. Deputies to the National Assembly could be elected only from those who paid taxes equal to at least a "silver mark" (about fifty francs) and owned some land, so that a mere fifty thousand men in the entire country were eligible for membership in the National Assembly. Maximilien Robespierre and Jean-Paul Marat, the future leaders of the radical Jacobins, protested the system, while Camille Desmoulins, who also played a major role in the Jacobin Club, acidly observed that Rousseau could not have held office under this Constitution.

The two-stage system for election to the National Assembly was carried over to the departmental level, with the result that each departmental government was run by a council of thirty-six elected by the departmental electoral assembly. At the level of the communes, however, the new local regimes, created by the summer municipal revolts, sought to preserve the popular structure of village communities and towns. Unlike the old provinces, towns and parishes retained their traditional boundaries and were simply renamed communes. But the summer municipal revolts had produced a variety of local forms of selfgovernment that the National Assembly found distasteful, and in December 1789 it passed a decree that restructured the communes along uniform lines based, in each case, around three essential bodies, all of which were elected by active citizens: a mayor and municipal officials; the general council of the commune; and the town clerk.

These changes did not prevent the towns from remaining hotbeds of political activity. Indeed, as Mathiez observes, "it was above all the intense activity of its municipal life which gave revolutionary France its resemblance to free America."[33] The old oligarchs had fled during the summer revolts, and each town now constituted an electoral assembly. All remnants of the old three-Estate system were stripped from the constitution of local assemblies, as they "may not be formed according to crafts, professions, or corporations." As the December 14 municipal decree stated, communes could be structured "only according to quarters or arrondissements"[34] —that is, by residence; hence, unlike the indirect voting at the higher levels of government, voting in the municipalities was direct. In larger towns, the decree noted, "where there are several special assemblies of active citizens, such assemblies shall be regarded only as sections of the general assembly of the town or community" (Article 18). Thus, in all the large cities of France, neighborhood sectional assemblies became the bases for municipal life. Lyon and Marseilles, for example, each had thirty-two sections, Bordeaux, twenty-eight, and Toulouse, fifteen, all of which exercised control over the central municipal authority in their respective towns. "In towns with more than twenty-five thousand inhabitants the sections, like the cantons in the country districts," Mathiez tells us, "had permanent officers and committees, and could hold meetings which controlled the action of the central municipality."[35]

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[33] *Ibid.,* p. 89.

[34] "Decree Establishing Municipalities," December 14,1789, article 7, in John Hall Stewart, ed., A *Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951),pp. 120–7.

[35] Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 90.

Moreover, the communes had the right to deal not only with local affairs but with matters of national concern. "The communes," continues Mathiez,

> possessed extensive powers... They had the right to call out the National Guard and the troops. They enjoyed a wide autonomy under the inspection and supervision of administrative bodies which sanctioned their financial enactments and audited their accounts. The mayor … might be suspended, but the municipal assembly could not be dissolved.[36]

In effect, about 44,000 autonomous local authorities blanketed France, many in the form of citizen assemblies or sections.

In the years that were to follow, these sections and communes became increasingly democratic and radical:

> At the outset the mayors and municipal officers were chosen from the rich middle classes, but they were for more exposed to the constant pressure of the people than the departmental and district directories, so that in 1792, and especially after the declaration of war, a certain lack of harmony was apparent between the communes, which were rather more democratic in character, and the administrative bodies, which were more conservative.[37]

Indeed, as we shall see, the communes and sections formed the bases for a radical popular, face-to-face democracy—a municipalist democracy—that, in Paris at least, was to challenge the centralized nation-state.

THE FEDERATIONS

The formation of confederal structures can be dated back at least to the time of the "Great Fear" in the summer of 1789, when the towns of various provinces such as Franche-Comté and Dauphiné formed confederations with each other in common defense against "brigands" and aristocrats. Thereafter, towns continued to confederate, partly to evoke the feeling of fraternity that the Revolution had promoted as a spiritual expression of its social goals. Federations of towns within a single province soon formed federations with those of other provinces, to affirm their sense of common citizenship. In February 1790, for example, delegates from Anjou joined hands with delegates from Brittany to swear that they were "neither Angevins nor Bretons, but citizens of one and the same community."[38] The federation of Franche-Comfo, Burgundy, Alsace, and Champagne, says Mathiez, was "carried out amid a patriotic exaltation which assumed a religious character."[39] Partly civil and partly military, these celebrations were attended by representatives of the various provincial National Guards—the *fdddrds* or federals—who swore to uphold the new social order, enforce its laws, and suppress disorder.

In the year after the fall of the Bastille, federation became "the new religion" of a France that abhorred centralization and royal despotism. On the first anniversary of July 14, provincial

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[36] *Ibid.,* pp. 89,90.

[37] *Ibid.,* p. 90.

[38] Quoted in Hibbert, *Days of the French Revolution,* p. 112.

[39] Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 55.

federations fused together temporarily into a national federation in Paris that was marked by an enthusiastic national celebration known as the *Fete de la Federation.* Contingents of National Guards from the eighty-three departments poured into the capital in a huge amphitheater on the Champs de Mars, where, despite a heavy downpour, thousands assembled with raised banners to the music of a twelve-hundred-piece orchestra to reaffirm their solidarity and revolutionary commitment. After Lafayette swore on an altar to uphold the Constitution and be faithful to the nation, the crowd of deputies, Guardsmen, and spectators in turn shouted the same oath: "I swear it!" When the king and queen themselves took the oath, the crowd cheered them wildly, after which all departed singing *"Ça ira,"* the lively and authentically popular song of the Revolution.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

This show of unity, however, barely concealed the major social and political differences that persisted in France, as could even be seen in the seating arrangement of the National Assembly itself. Facing the tribune on the left were the more radical deputies, who pressed for further limitations on the monarchy, far-reaching economic and political reforms, and the abolition of all status ranks. The seats on the right were occupied by monarchist and conservative deputies who dreaded the danger to authority and stability that came from the revolutionary people and strongly believed that the monarchy should have greater authority to hold the country in tow. From this time onward, the terms *Left* and *Right became* part of the vocabulary of modern politics.

But the number of those who sat on the right was relatively low, in great part owing to their own lack of organization and to the headlong emigration of monarchists, which gave the Left considerable leeway in making drastic changes in French society. It made them with alacrity. Accordingly, the Assembly abolished the *parlements* and replaced the hereditary judiciary of the ancien regime with a graduated system of tribunals independent of the king, accountable only to the sovereign nation. Judges had to be elected and draw their salaries from the state; torture was abolished as a hated relic of medieval barbarism.

Perhaps the National Assembly's most radical economic acts at the time concerned the Catholic Church, the largest landowner in France. In November the Assembly confiscated all the landed estates of the Church, without compensation, and auctioned them off to raise funds to avert the immediate bankruptcy of the state. Presumably, these confiscated lands were meant to underwrite interest-bearing treasury bonds—or *assignats,* as they were called— which later became the legal paper currency of the realm.

Having already abolished the Gallican Church's corporate status, feudal prerogatives, independence, tithes, and landed estates, the National Assembly now forced the Church to yield to another innovation. French kings had long enjoyed the prerogative of choosing Gallican bishops, but in July 1790 the Assembly established a Civil Constitution for the Clergy that brought the Church completely into accord with the principles of the Revolution. It stipulated that thenceforth all clerics, bishops and priests alike, were to be elected by active citizens, that is, by the laity, and the salaries of the clerics were now to be paid by the state, essentially reducing the clergy—formerly a separate estate of the realm—to civil servants. The number of bishops was significantly reduced in each department, and the contemplative monastic orders were disbanded as parasitic. Finally, the Civil Constitution forbade clerics to acknowledge the supremacy of the pope, who was now seen as a foreign monarch, thereby severing the ties of the Gallican Church

to Rome. It was with great reluctance, indeed, that the king was obliged formally to approve the Civil Constitution on August 24,1790.

For many of the clergy, this drastic change was an abomination. Reactionary traditionalist bishops who had accepted civil changes by the Assembly flatly refused to acknowledge the validity of the Civil Constitution. The Assembly, in turn, by no means oblivious of the fact that coercion would be necessary to reform the Church, required all clerics to take an oath to uphold the new Civil Constitution on pain of losing their benefices. Only seven bishops and about 54 percent of the lower clergy took the oath, and these mainly in Paris, and in Dauphin^, Provence, and the Pyrenees. In the western departments, the clergy overwhelmingly refused, opening a schism between so-called "constitutional" clergy, who took the oath, and "refractory" clergy, who refused, that was to widen into an irreconcilable rupture with enormous consequences for the future of the Revolution. Indeed, the Civil Constitution became the basis for a more widespread counterrevolution among devout peasants than anything the aristocratic émigrés could generate, but in 1790 neither open counterrevolution nor radical *journees* were as yet the order of the day.

Chapter 18. *Journées* toward the Republic

The Left in the National Assembly following the fall of the Bastille was by no means republican, still less radical. It was composed largely of constitutionalists, who accepted the monarchy as an indispensable part of the new government, and its deliberations were guided by prudent lawyers who tilted toward fairly conservative views. Far more liberal—even radical—were the elected officials in the municipalities, whose constituencies were more open to public scrutiny and pressure than departmental officials or Assembly deputies.

The authentic radicals of this period could be found in the Cordeliers district, on the Left Bank of the Seine. Perhaps the most militant district in the capital and a major propaganda center of the Revolution, the Cordeliers played a strategic role in awakening public consciousness in favor of a republic. Led by the ebullient lawyer Georges Danton, who presided over the district's assembly, as well as other fervent leaders of the Revolution who also lived and worked there, it became at once a center and a protective haven for radicals throughout the city. Jean-Paul Marat moved to the district for a time to seek refuge from the police, and it was here that the printer Antonio Momoro's press published some of the most incendiary pamphlets of the period. Here, too, the famous Cafe Procope attracted some of the Revolution's ablest journalists, intellectuals, lawyers, and artists, continuing a tradition that dated back to Moltere and Diderot. Finally, most of the radical publishers were located in the district: the Cordeliers was home to Desmoulins's newspaper *La France Libre* and the older *Revolutions de Paris,* among others of the same fiery genre.

The Cordeliers district had led all other districts in the *journees* of the preceding years. In the summer of 1789 it issued fierce denunciations of the king's gathering of troops in Paris, and in the *journee* of October 5 it petitioned Lafayette's National Guards to follow the women to Versailles. This activity was due in no small measure to the head of the Cordeliers district, Danton himself. Gargantuan in build, richly endowed with oratorical gifts, Danton helped to establish perhaps the most vigorous example of a militant direct democracy, at least of active citizens. "Danton realised the political capital to be made out of appeals to local autonomy and denunciations of municipal despotism," observes Norman Hampson in his biography of the revolutionary leader.

He was the inventor of what were to become the tactics of every radical group fighting for its place in the sun: the basis of all authority was the local meeting which claimed to reflect the direct democracy of the sovereign people, even if, in fact, it stood for no more than a militant minority. As far as possible, all power was to be located in such gatherings, and when concerted action on the Parisian scale was necessary, it should be taken by the spontaneous co-operation of the Districts (and later, of the Sections), communicating their resolutions to each other and electing *ad hoc* executive committees as necessary. All men elected to any higher body were to be delegates, not representatives, the mere agents of the Districts and subject to instant recall. Throughout the Revolution this was to be the programme of the men at the bottom.[40]

The French were by no means unaware of the grassroots popular network created during the American Revolution—the great committee "engine," as John Adams called it. Indeed, from the outset of that revolution, committees and assemblies had formed throughout France, comparable to the American Committees of Correspondence, Committees of Safety, and conventions, on which the districts and later the sections depended for their effectiveness.

The sixty electoral districts of Paris had essentially become permanent neighborhood assemblies of active citizens, many of which were gadflies for the less radical National Assembly, which had transformed itself into a Constituent Assembly to write a constitution, and later the Legislative Assembly that followed the constitution's adoption. In June 1790, the reticent municipal authority, fearful of the districts' radicalism, persuaded the National Assembly to diminish their influence by reducing them to forty-eight sections in the vain hope that the fewer their number, the more controllable they would be. Unlike the districts, whose origin stemmed from the election of the Third Estate, these new sections were the creation of the Assembly, and as such the Assembly sought to define and limit their powers as it saw fit. Participation in sectional assemblies, it stipulated, would remain legally open only to active citizens. (Each section ranged from seventeen hundred to eighteen hundred potential participants.) A section's assembly meetings were to be circumscribed: it could meet only to elect officials or when fifty members requested a meeting. Perhaps naively, right-wing deputies probably congratulated themselves "on decimating certain of the 60 electoral districts which had begun to function as centres of popular radicalism," observes William Doyle.[41]

But the various clubs and revolutionary societies, especially those in the Cordeliers district, campaigned vigorously against the change, and although they lost, the reorganization and name changes—the Cordeliers district, for example, was renamed the Theatre-Français section—failed miserably to have their intended effect. The new sectional assemblies still claimed a wide latitude of political authority; indeed, in practice the distinction between active and passive citizens was honored less and less as time went by. Danton's formidable political machine continued to influence not only the other sections of Paris but the nation as a whole. In fact, almost from the start, the new sections jealously upheld their own autonomy and developed a critical stance not only toward the National Assembly but toward the fairly conservative Paris Commune at the H6tel de Ville. As early as September and October 1790 many of the sections voted to censure the ministers for conniving with aristocrats, a proposal that Danton himself brought to the National Assembly. Although it was defeated, the vote was so close that all the ministers but one resigned.

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[40] Norman Hampson, *Danton* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 33–4.
[41] William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 127.

Still another reason why the sections remained powerful and became increasingly radicalized was the growing influence that the new popular clubs and societies exercised on the people of Paris. One of the most important clubs that was to play a major role in the events of the Revolution was the Society of Friends of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, formed in the summer of 1790 and located in an old Franciscan monastery on Cordeliers street in the Théatre Français area of the Left Bank. Not to be confused with the old Cordeliers district, it generally became known as the Cordeliers Club and proved in time to be an action group rather than a debating society, dedicated to protesting the grievances of the poor and voicing some of the most radical goals in the Revolution. According to the founding Cordeliers charter, its "main object is to denounce before the tribunal of public opinion the abuses of the various authorities, and every sort of infringement of the rights of man."[42] An eye was imprinted on the club's public papers, symbolizing a "vigilant eye" always on the alert to detect the misdeeds of elected representatives and officials. The club famously conducted investigations into abuses, drew up petitions for redressing malfeasances, and played a leading role in mobilizing popular demonstrations.

The Club drew no distinctions between active and passive citizens, and its membership fee was kept very low (only two sous a month) so that the poor, as well as shopkeepers and artisans, could join it. Significantly, unlike many other clubs in Paris, the Cordeliers also opened its doors to women. During the winter of 1790 and 1791, in fact, fraternal societies that were in sympathy with the Cordeliers were formed throughout Paris, and by May 1791 the Cordeliers formed a confederation with other clubs that was linked by a central committee. As Mathiez observes in his history of the French Revolution:

> Their ideal, borrowed from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was that of direct government. They held that the constitution and even the laws should be subject to the ratification of the people, and they were not slow to express their distrust of the oligarchy of politicians which had replaced the oligarchy of nobles and priests.[43]

By the end of 1790, the Cordeliers in Paris numbered a thousand members, who constituted themselves into a highly democratic vanguard of the Revolution, making the Club a major propelling force in the drift toward the Left.

In contrast to the Cordeliers, the Jacobin Club was initially quite moderate, even rather elegant. Formed in the earliest days of the Revolution under the name of the Society for the Friends of the Constitution, its meeting rooms were located in the Jacobin monastery, hence the clerical name. Deputies of all political shades attended Jacobin meetings at one time or another. Although by no means a club of the Left in its early days, the Jacobins maintained a confrontational stance that reflected a wide spectrum of revolutionary public opinion, as Desmoulins grandiously observed:

> Not only is it the grand inquisitor which strikes terror in the aristocrats; it is also the great accuser, redressing all abuses and coming to the aid of all citizens. It is, indeed, as though the club exercised the functions of a public prosecutor to the National

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[42] Quoted in Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution,* trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Russell 8c Russell, 1962), p. 122.
[43] *Ibid.,* p. 123.

Assembly. In its bosom are poured out the grievances of the oppressed, which come to it from every side before being taken before the august assembly.[44]

Indeed, after October 1791 the debates of the Jacobins were opened to the public, and very often the club's galleries were filled to overflowing. More so than the Cordeliers, who remained largely Parisian, the Jacobin Club was replicated throughout the provinces until some four hundred clubs formed a network across France, with which the Parisian society maintained a close correspondence, sharing publications, ideas and strategic advice and spreading its political ideas.

If the societies exercised increasing influence on the sectional assemblies, the sectional assemblies, in turn, continually tried to extend their powers, despite attempts to restrict them. Thus, even before May 1790, Pari—who became president of the Cordeliers district after Danton abandoned his role in it for national office—denied that the Paris Commune's police had legitimate authority to search for Marat, who was hiding in the district at the time. The district, in effect, claimed the sole right to arrest malefactors in its territory, a claim that openly flouted the authority of the Paris Commune itself.

In fact, by the summer of 1790, the mood in Paris and in France was anything but placid. After a year, the Constituent Assembly, it became clear, had failed to deal with the needs of the urban poor and the peasantry. The popular song "Ça ira"—to which radicals had added the line "Let's hang the aristocrats from the lanterns"—created panic among the aristocrats of the city, with the result that carriages of nobles heading for the frontier could be seen daily in the streets of Paris. No one doubted that an outright royalist counterrevolution was being plotted to restore the king and the Church to their former status. *Jacqueries* continued to flare up in the countryside as peasants, who refused to pay feudal dues after the August 4 "defeudalization," repeatedly invaded seigneurial forests and game parks and destroyed the hated chateaux that had dominated rural life for centuries.

Once again, enough tinder was accumulating so that the Revolution needed only a spark to ignite it—and that came, surely enough, from the king, his "loyal clergy," and the pope.

THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES

On April 13,1791, the pope formally instructed the Gallican bishops not to take the oath for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, an order that the radicals were only too eager to challenge. Anticlericalism, always popular in the political clubs and the theaters, now increased in intensity among the people, who burned the pope in effigy, invaded convents, and prevented the refractory priests from conducting mass. In the church of Saint-Sulpice, for example, whose *curd* was refractory, an invading crowd ordered the organist to play "Qj *ira*" which they sang menacingly together with the panicked congregation.

The king, never at peace with the Civil Constitution, patently regretted he had signed the document; and Paris, ever mistrustful of his behavior, grew still more suspicious of his intentions after he helped his aunts, who were also his close advisers, to journey to Rome in February 1791 to discuss the affairs of the French Church personally with the pope. Louis was accused of taking communion from a refractory priest, for which outraged Parisian pamphleteers called him a traitor to the nation. By now, Parisians were so incensed toward the monarchy that when Louis tried to leave the capital to spend Easter Week at Saint-Cloud, a hill overlooking the city, a crowd

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[44] Desmoulins quoted *ibid.,* p. 77.

actually prevented the monarch's carriage from moving. With good reason, they were convinced that he planned to escape abroad to organize a counterrevolution with the *dmigrds* and invade France at the head of a foreign army. Indeed, so numerous were antiroyalist and anticlerical riots in Paris that Lafayette sent the National Guards rushing around the city in a fruitless effort to suppress them.

The Constituent Assembly could do little to calm the situation. Exacerbating popular fears of a counterrevolution were serious economic dislocations that made Paris more restive than at any time since July 1789. Unemployment was rising, earnings were declining, and workers and journeymen were in a dangerously sullen mood. The Assembly's abolition of guilds in March 1791 had freed working people, especially carpenters and blacksmiths, to organize for higher wages, which, with the support of the popular clubs, seemed to portend a wave of strikes for a minimum wage. But the Assembly, horrified by this prospect, promptly passed the notorious Le Chapelier law on June 14, which prohibited workers from forming any associations—what would later be called trade unions—on the excuse that any economic combinations were redolent of feudal corporations. The law, which was to remain in effect well into the next century, deprived workers of the right to strike. Ironically, Le Chapelier, who had proposed the bill, had been a leading radical and a founding member of the Jacobin Club, but by 1791 he decided that the course of the Revolution had to be slowed down because popular emotion threatened to render it uncontrollable.

To allay popular suspicions that the king was trying to elude the people's surveillance {and possibly to protect him), hundreds of National Guardsmen were dispatched to stand guard around the Tuiieries. In fact, as the summer of 1791 approached, the king and his closest advisers had laid detailed plans for him to flee with the royal family to Montmédy, on the Luxembourg frontier. There, Louis hoped to gain the necessary military support from *imigris* and the Austrian emperor, Leopold, Marie Antoinette's brother, to undo all the achievements of the Revolution. Finally, on the night of June 20, the king and queen, their two children, and an entourage consisting of the king's sister, two seamstresses, and the children's governess slipped out of the Tuiieries through an unguarded door and left Paris in a large, heavily laden carriage, accompanied by a cabriolet for the royal servants. Traveling incognito toward the frontier with imprudent dilatoriness, they arrived four hours late at Pont de Somme Vesle, where the escape plan called for the royal party to meet up with a cavalry escort. But these plans misfired completely. By the time the carriage arrived, the escort that was assigned to accompany them had withdrawn because it had aroused suspicion among the local peasants who, fearful that the troops were there to collect overdue rents for a local landlord, menacingly threatened them with pitchforks.

As the party continued unescorted to Sainte-Ménéhould, it could not remain unnoticed for long. The postmaster of the town, who recognized the king from his picture on the *assignat,* excitedly rushed to Varennes, the next town along the route, raising the alarm over the entire countryside. By the time the royal carriage reached Varennes, the entire town came out to intercept the escapees. Like the many blunders that marked his reign, Louis's attempted flight had failed because of an arrogant disdain for his opponents—his carriage was slowed down to a leisurely pace once it left the environs of Paris—and the royal family was escorted back to Paris under guard. The people came out to witness his return in sullen silence. Louis had left behind a written statement abjuring the Revolution and his previous endorsements of its acts and condemning the Constitution, which outraged revolutionaries all over the country. The king's position as head of state was now completely untenable. On June 24 the Cordeliers Club, backed by a crowd of thirty thou-

sand, presented a petition to the Constituent Assembly demanding that it either depose the king or hold a referendum on his fate. Talk of republicanism, considered heinous two years earlier, now became open, and the symbols of royalty were desecrated throughout the capital.

To add to all the mishaps that plagued Louis's flight, the Emperor Leopold of Austria issued an arrogant circular note from Padua calling upon the European powers "to vindicate the liberty and honor of the Most Christian King and his family, and to limit the dangerous extremes of the French Revolution."[45] An Austrian invasion, with or without Louis at its head, seemed imminent, and French military forces, ranging from the local National Guards to the army, were mobilized on a war footing.

The Constituent Assembly now found itself in a hopeless dilemma. France without a king seemed unthinkable to many of its deputies, and a republic would require the writing of a new constitution to replace the one that had just been so painstakingly completed. Moreover, the deposal of the monarch would almost certainly, it seemed, invite invasion by foreign powers as well as vindicate republican demands for basic changes in the state. With the typical awkwardness of moderates in a searing revolutionary situation, the Assembly resolved to preserve the unpresentable monarchy. Two days after the flight, it issued a patently false statement that the king had been kidnapped by royalists and that his compromising statement had been coerced from him by sinister advisers. But no one believed the story. The Cordeliers militantly protested against the whitewash, as did other radical clubs throughout France, but Louis remained king. The Assembly, for its part, temporarily deprived him of his constitutional functions and took over the power of the executive for itself, issuing decrees without royal approval.

None of these actions served the Constituent Assembly well among the Parisian masses. Indeed, the firmly republican Cordeliers prepared another petition calling for a republic, and called upon the people of Paris to sign it by placing it upon the Altar of the Nation in the Champ de Mars—the site of the 1790 *Fete de la Federation.* On July 17 a crowd of fifty thousand gathered in the parade ground. Some sue thousand had signed it when two suspicious men were discovered hiding under the altar; the surly crowd decided they were spies and hanged them. Bailly, the mayor of Paris, used the lynching as a pretext to declare martial law and called out the National Guard, to which Lafayette responded with alacrity. The marquis, apparently eager to disperse the crowd, marched to the Champs de Mars with the mayor and his mainly bourgeois troops. When the Guard raised the red flag of martial law, the crowd greeted them with stones and a few shots. After they refused to disperse, Lafayette ordered his troops to fire several volleys point-blank into mostly unarmed people, and when the smoke cleared, fifty people were lying dead on the parade ground.

With the massacre of the Champs de Mars, the popularity of Lafayette and Bailly came to a definitive end. Lafayette and his circle of members, who favored retaining the monarchy, withdrew from the Jacobin Club, of which they had been members, rather than sign a petition demanding the overthrow of the king, and formed a new club that met at the former convent of the Feuillants. All the Jacobin deputies to the National Assembly departed with them. Maximilien Robespierre, who stayed behind, managed in effect to keep the club from dissolving completely by holding together a handful of wavering republicans. Indeed, all that remained of the Jacobins

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[45] "The Padua Circular," July 5,1791, in *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution,* ed. John Hall Stewart (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 221.

were its Left elements, which Robespierre and his supporters rebuilt, in time, into a powerful political machine.

The Constituent Assembly, in turn, used the Champ de Mars massacre to launch an attack not upon the royalists, who had supported the king's flight, but the growing number of republicans in the capital, who were outraged by it. Using a law against so-called "tumults" that had been passed as early as October 1789, municipal authorities and police were unleashed on antiroyalist revolutionaries. The radical presses and newspapers that had supported republican views were closed; radical leaders were arrested and tried in the hundreds; and generally, every effort was made to intimidate known republicans. Thereafter, the Assembly passed a law—unanimously, except for Robespierre's dissent—restricting freedom of the press for those who "deliberately provoke disobedience to the law" or "disparagement of the constituted powers and resistance to their acts."[46] Danton was obliged to flee from the city and take refuge in England, while Marat, whose newspaper had raged against the royalists, hid in the cellar of the Cordeliers Club.[47] Desmoulins, Santerre, and other vocal Cordeliers were placed under proscription and went into hiding.

The new Constitution, which had yet to be completed, was made more moderate. It removed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy from the document, thereby allowing refractory clergy to support the Constitution and enabling the Constituent Assembly's successor, the Legislative Assembly, to modify it, if it so chose. Still another change raised property qualifications for voting for Assembly deputies so high that only the fairly well-to-do could exercise the franchise. With these amendments, Louis agreed to sign the new Constitution and, despite his flight to Varennes, was officially restored to the throne.

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EUROPEAN WAR

The old National Constituent Assembly disbanded, having completed its labors, and a new Legislative Assembly convened on October 1, 1791. Since deputies to the former assembly were excluded from becoming deputies to the latter, the membership was entirely new and consisted largely of lawyers and the bourgeois elements of the period. The largest single political bloc in numerical terms was the royalist Feuillants. They expressly called for the loyalty of the king to the changed Constitution, reconciliation with the refractory clergy, and the return of the *imigris.* But the Feuillant bloc, despite its size numerically, was still a minority in the new Assembly—and a diminishing one whose uneasy members and supporters were trickling into foreign exile.

Far more influential than the Feuillants, on the whole, were the leftists, mainly lawyers, journalists, and merchants, who constituted a new type of radical. They were extremely ambitious and eager to mouth revolutionary slogans to gain popular support. These young people and their supporters were generally known as Brissotins; not until later would they acquire the more familiar name of Girondins. Led by Jacques-Pierre Brissot, a gifted orator and a prolific author and pamphleteer, the Brissotins dominated the Assembly with their skillful leadership. In contrast to the royalists' views, their platform called for a war against the *tmigrds,* who were gathering in cities near the French frontier, and, if necessary, with European monarchies who protected them. This demand was basically tactical: a war against the enemies of the Revolution, the Brissotins emphasized, would force the king to work with the Legislative Assembly, heighten patriotic fervor,

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[46] Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), p. 155.

[47] The story that Marat hid in the sewers of Paris and there contracted the nerve condition that produced his skin disorder is entirely apocryphal.

and rally the country around the Revolution. "Do you wish at one blow to destroy the aristocracy, the refractory priests, the malcontents?" cried Brissot. "Then destroy Coblenz [the center of *émigré* military activity]. The head of the nation will then be obliged to reign in accordance with the Constitution."[48] A war, Brissot argued, would also spread the principles of the Revolution, fomenting civil conflicts against tyrants in other European countries.

The Jacobin deputies, for their part, were divided over the issue of war, although their divisions had little immediate impact. Their authority lay with their club, which was shifting to the Left, rather than in the Assembly. Indeed, the various clubs and popular societies were now developing into an extraparliamentary political sphere of considerable power in Paris, particularly in the forty-eight Parisian sections. Economic shortages and rising food prices during the spring of 1792 had given a new impetus to the growth of radical societies, which now began to parallel the sectional assemblies. As Goodwin observes;

> Pétion, who replaced Bailly as mayor of Paris in November, Danton, as assistant deputy of the town clerk, and Robespierre, as public prosecutor of the department of Paris, did much to extend the power and influence of the municipality and to develop the activity of the political clubs. It is significant that the most vital issue of foreign policy at this time—war or peace with Europe— was fought out as much in the Jacobin club as in the Legislative Assembly, and that the most important issue of domestic politics—the fate of the monarchy— was decided by the Parisian sections.[49]

Moreover, the prospect of war was very popular in the provinces. Peasants still saw very little change in their situation. Although their noble landlords might reside in Savoy or Coblenz, their agents still remained in France and exploited the peasants as much as before. The redistribution of the Church lands had been neither thorough nor equitable, producing growing rural unrest and even armed peasant revolts.

The war fever in the countryside and among the Brissotins notwithstanding, however, the French army was in no way prepared for what might well become a major European conflict. Most of the army's erstwhile officers had deserted to various *imigre* centers, and its regular troops were demoralized, undisciplined, and disorganized, lacking equipment, weapons, and ammunition. The risks opened by a war would be enormous: well-equipped foreign armies could decisively defeat the Revolution, and even if France were victorious, such a conflict could easily lead to a military dictatorship at home. Both Marat and Robespierre insightfully foresaw these dangers and spoke out strongly against the war fever generated by the Brissotins—but to no avail, as events soon revealed.

The queen and the *tmigres,* on the other hand, welcomed a war and the prospect of a foreign invasion. Indeed, Louis, not surprisingly, brought several pro-Brissotin ministers into the royal council, including the vain and ambitious but able General Charles-François Dumouriez. At length, Louis declared war against Austria on April 20, 1792, with the enthusiastic assent of the Assembly. Three months later, Prussia allied itself with Austria and declared war against revolutionary France.

Almost from the outset, the war went badly for the French, who, after advancing into Belgium, were obliged to retreat precipitously toward Lille, while still another force fell back on

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[48] Quoted in Hibbert, *Days of the French Revolution,* p. 138.
[49] Albert Goodwin, *The French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1953; New York: Harper 8c Row, 1966), p. 97.

Valenciennes. For their part, the Brissotins were rapidly losing credibility in the capital, while the war had the effect of raising Robespierre's star owing to his bitter criticisms of the king, the war, and the Brissotins.

Yet on one matter the Brissotins at least had been correct: the war revealed the hatred of the monarchy for the Revolution. Almost openly, the king and queen of France sided with the enemy, and rumors abounded among the people of machinations by the queen on behalf of Austria. With good reason, she was accused of providing Vienna with intelligence, and her alleged "Austrian Committee" in the Tuileries was popularly blamed for the defeat in Belgium. As it turned out, Marie Antoinette had actually disclosed the plan for the French military campaign to the enemy, which, after the behavior of the royal couple became known, could lead to nothing but the end of the monarchy.

THE *JOURNEE* OF AUGUST 10

In the early summer of 1792, faced with military defeats and fearing treachery in the Court and army, Paris was reaching a state of revolutionary fervor comparable only to its mood on July 14,1789. The polarization of the country between even constitutional monarchists and republicans was now acute. As French armies rolled back toward Longwy and Verdun, Lafayette frantically rushed from the front back to Paris to rally the Assembly in support of the king and quash the Jacobin Clubs immediately. The once-moderate marquis was apparently planning a military coup to restore order, perhaps to abet the king in another flight out of the country. The Assembly received Lafayette coolly, its suspicions reinforced by the fact that he was neglecting his troops in the face of a Prussian advance, and he despondently returned to the front Reports of pro-Austrian plots in the court and among refractory priests in the provinces filled Paris with alarm, pushing public sentiment increasingly in a republican direction.

On June 8, 1792, the Legislative Assembly passed a decree summoning twenty thousand *fidiris,* or provincial National Guards, to Paris for the annual *Fite de la Federation* on the third anniversary of Bastille Day. These *fidiris* were expected to free up the regular troops in the capital for service at the front. Around the same time, the sectional assemblies of the capital petitioned the Assembly to abandon the distinction between active and passive citizens at their meetings and allow them to meet every day—in permanent session. They also requisitioned a large number of pikes for general distribution to citizens, even though carrying weapons was still a privilege officially reserved to the National Guard.

As the month drew to an end, the sections carried out a demonstration against the king on June 20, that is, on the anniversary of the Tennis Court Oath. In view of the economic crisis that the war was creating (rising prices had already caused widespread food riots), some ten thousand Parisian *sans-culottes,* both women and men, illegally armed with pitchforks, muskets, and pikes, gathered in the eastern faubourgs, and then invaded the Tuileries with petitions against the king's veto of Assembly decrees and his recent dismissal of several popular ministers. The crowd chopped down doors of the palace with hatchets and even dragged a cannon up a staircase. Behind a smashed door they found Louis, wearing a red *sans-culotte* bonnet. Although the monarch calmly refused their demands, the new mayor of Paris, Potion, persuaded the crowd to leave the palace after it became clear that Louis would stand firm on behalf of his royal prerogative.

Finally, on July 11 the Assembly tried to convey the full sense of danger that faced the country from its foreign and *emigre* opponents, proclaiming a national state of emergency. At the urging

of the sections, which felt that the resources of the nation should be completely thrown into the war effort, the Assembly called the National Guards everywhere to arms. Within a few days, fifteen thousand Parisians had answered the call, and new battalions of volunteers were quickly formed. The Commune of Paris, in turn, decreed that all citizens who possessed pikes be drafted into the National Guard, thus opening its ranks to ever-lesser members of the social hierarchy. As *ficUris,* or National Guards from the provinces, began to arrive in the capital, Robespierre addressed them with the icy warning: "Citizens, have you hastened here for a mere ceremony, the renewal of the Federation of July 14?" The generals, including Lafayette, were deserting, he told them, and the Legislative Assembly "has been outraged and degraded, but [owing to its own inaction] has not avenged itself!" He then charged the *fidiris* with the sweeping—patently republican—task of saving the nation.[50] Within short order, petitions flowed into the Legislative Assembly, calling for the deposition of the king.

The celebrations of July 14 were observed without incident—and with no shouts of " *Vive le roif'* Most of the *fidtris* prudently remained on in the city after the celebration lest counterrevolution rear its head, and their very presence in Paris proved incendiary. The *fedirts* overwhelmingly supported the demands of the sections; indeed, on July 17, they established a central committee of their own at the Jacobin Club to back up the radicals and *sans-culottes* in an insurrection against the king. The Cordeliers, in turn, openly called for a National Convention, so similar to the American conventions decades earlier, that would unseat the king and write a strictly republican constitution for France.

Meanwhile, in the sectional assemblies, the distinction between active and passive citizens had essentially disappeared. The Theatre-Fra^ais section (formerly the Cordeliers district) officially initiated the distinction by opening its doors to all the underprivileged in the neighborhood. This democratization of the Theatre-Fran^ais assembly was quickly emulated by other sections and finally validated by the Legislative Assembly itself. On July 25 the Legislative Assembly permitted the sections to meet daily, whereupon they officially went into "permanent" session. Moreover, many sections opened their National Guard battalions to former passive citizens, radically transforming the Parisian National Guard from a middle-class force into a *sam-culotte* militia. The irresolute Assembly, which did little to intervene in these changes, was patently losing control of the capital.

Amidst this steady flow of events, on July 28, Parisians awoke to a provocative manifesto from the Duke of Brunswick, commander of the enemy forces, in which he declared that his Austrian and Prussian armies would invade French soil to restore the king to his rightful place. Any National Guards who tried to impede the allied armies, the Duke warned, would be shot, and if the Tuileries were invaded again or the royal family harmed in any way, savage vengeance would be wrought upon Paris, reducing the city to rubble. Two days after the manifesto was published, it is worth noting, five hundred *fider&s* from Marseilles arrived in Paris, after stopping to put down a royalist revolt at Arles, and were quartered in the old Cordeliers district. Marching through the streets, they sang Rouget de Lisle's stirring "Marseillaise," the intoxicating hymn that revolutionary organizations throughout the world were to adopt well into the next century.

Brunswick's declaration can be regarded as the turning point in the Revolution, the event that forced France to change from a constitutional monarchy into a republic. With fears of invasion running high and royalist plots abounding, the revolutionary Parisians had little doubt that the

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[50] Quoted in Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 157.

king intended to resist the Legislative Assembly and the sections, indeed to open the way for a foreign invasion that could establish his full control over the city. To head off this looming disaster, the sections and the *fidiris* were decided that they had to force the king to abdicate without delay.

Within the week, on August 9, delegates from the sectional assemblies arrived at the H6tel de Ville and disbanded the old conservative Commune, replacing it with a new revolutionary municipality, the Insurrectionary Commune. The mayor was confined to his house under guard and the brewer Santerre was placed in charge of the National Guard. In response to protests by moderates against this action, the delegates flatly replied, "When the people place themselves in a state of insurrection, they withdraw all power from other authorities and assume it themselves."[51]

The insurrection had been thoroughly planned, and there is no reason to doubt that the Jacobin leaders, including Danton, had been complicitous in carrying it off. On August 10, the following day, the revolutionary Commune ordered its supporters to march on the Tuileries. To the sound of the tocsin, some twenty thousand armed *fediris* and *sans-culottes* attacked the palace, and the royal family, warned in advance, fled to the nearby Legislative Assembly, which nervously agreed to protect them. With their flight, most of the remaining National Guard battalions that had been accountable to royalist sections shifted their allegiance to the insurrection. The Tuileries was now left to defend itself with only nine hundred Swiss Guards and a few hundred courtiers. The crowd tried to fraternize with the Swiss, but following a chance shot by one of their men, others opened fire and a fruitless battle ensued.

Crying "treachery," the Marseillais streamed into the palace under fire, cutting down everyone in sight. Of the Swiss Guards, who surrendered after their ammunition ran out, six hundred were massacred—while the insurrectionaries lost about four hundred. By the afternoon, they were in complete control of Paris. With the Assembly members fearful for their own lives, the king was surrendered and confined to a small prison known as the Temple.

This *joumie* of the *fidMs* and *sans-culottes* sealed the fate of the monarchy, and marked the definitive end of the so-called "bourgeois" Revolution. Like it or not, the king had been dethroned, and the Constitution of 1791, so recently completed, was abrogated. The *sans-culottes* had not only avenged the Champs de Mars massacre, but after playing a crucial role in *jourrtees* that unseated the ancien regime, they now moved to the center stage of the Revolution and pushed it ever farther to the Left.

Chapter 19. The Sections of Paris

The triumph of August 10, 1792, produced an exuberance that infected nearly every aspect of Parisian life. The more affluent abandoned their powdered wigs and adorned clothing for the simple garb of artisans; jewelry and fans that depicted revolutionary scenes became fashionable; newborn infants were given names that reflected the revolutionary era. In conversation, *citoyen* (citizen) replaced *monsieur* (sire) as a form of address. The "Scythian" red cap *(bonnet rouge),* the ancient headgear of freed slaves, had already been a popular way of proclaiming fidelity to the Revolution; now, after August 10, various sections adopted it—"the red cap of freedom"—as the required headgear for their officials to wear. Indeed, it became a symbol of the sections' political power. Many sections once again changed their names, giving themselves more revolutionary

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[51] Quoted in Hibbert, *Days of the French Revolution,* p. 154.

appellations: the section Theatre-Fran^ais now became the section Marseilles, while the section Place-Royale became the section des Fédérés, and the section Roi-de-Sicile became the section Droits-de-l'Homme. Nor was the republican fervor any less intense in the provinces. Upon hearing the news that the king was dethroned, army volunteers in the Vosges cried, "Long live the nation with no king!" while the Jacobins of Strasbourg demanded, "Long live equality! Down with the king!"[52]

Although many *fidiris* had participated in the invasion of the Tuileries Palace, "the dethronement of Louis XVI was, in fact, a victory above all else for the direct democracy of the Parisian sections," observes Albert Goodwin.[53] Up to this point, the sections had looked to the National Assembly for leadership and supported it during earlier *journies* with their armed strength. But the newly elected Legislative Assembly had not carried out the *journie* of August 10; indeed, its role had been hesitant and dilatory, and its passivity and ambivalence toward the uprising morally discredited it. The Insurrectionary Commune, a municipal body, coordinated the *sans-cuiottes* of the sections in overthrowing the monarchy.

As the vanquishers of royal treachery, the sections were acutely conscious that they had performed the culminating service to the Revolution and to the nation. They had gone well beyond neighborhood, even municipal concerns, and viewed themselves, says Mathiez, "as the incarnation of the public interest and as having acted in the name of revolutionary France as a whole,"[54] or, in Doyle's words, "as the guardians and watchdogs of the new republic, and the arbiters of what it should stand for."[55]

By the same token, the new Insurrectionary Commune had gone far beyond the scope of the previous Paris Commune, which in the past had continually attempted to encroach upon the sovereignty of the sections by trying to "regularize" them, appoint their officials when it could, and limit the size of their committees and the range of their activities. The Insurrectionary Commune was the visible center of the sectional democracy. It contained twice as many members as the old Commune: where the sections had sent three delegates each to the old Commune, they now sent six, expanding the Insurrectionary Commune to a total of 288 members. All were elected on the basis of near-universal manhood suffrage. Moreover, the new members were politically more radical and less wealthy than their predecessors: although some were lawyers and professionals, most were small shopkeepers and artisans—that is to say, *sans-culottes.*

The new Commune was also more active than the old Commune had been; where the old Commune had met irregularly, the new one met daily. "The result," observes Goodwin, "was that the sectional representatives were now consulted at every turn on the smallest matters of administration, as well as on large questions of national policy."[56] Accordingly, the sections enjoyed an intense feeling of moral superiority over the Legislative Assembly. Not only did they play the leading role on August 10, but, while the Assembly delegates were regarded as less representative of the people—having been chosen through an indirect voting system with property restrictions on the franchise—the sections now voted for their officials directly without any limited franchise.

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[52] Quoted in Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution,* trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 193.

[53] Albert Goodwin, *The French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1953; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 116,117.

[54] Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 165.

[55] William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 220.

[56] Goodwin, *French Revolution,* pp. 116,117.

Nor was the sections' superiority over the Assembly merely moral: they also possessed a major military force in the capital. The National Guard was answerable to the sections and the Commune, while the Assembly, meeting in Paris, possessed no reliable military force by which it could defend itself from popular pressure. In 1792 and 1793, every man who could have been spared for a separate force like the National Guard was sent to the front, leaving the Assembly vulnerable to demonstrations and future *journies.* Nor was the National Guard necessarily eager to carry out the Assembly's will. No longer made up of the selected bourgeois soldiers of the kind who had fired on the petitioners at the Champs de Mars, it was now open to all citizens and consisted primarily of *sans-culottes* under Santerre's command.

The Legislative Assembly, in turn, despite its reluctance, was increasingly obliged to carry out the measures favored by the sections. On August 10, it decreed that "the classification of Frenchmen in terms of active and non-active citizens was abolished,"[57] and it sent emissaries out to the provinces to justify the dethronement of the king to gain popular support for Louis's removal. In many of the provinces, this was not a difficult task: the communes outside of Paris were losing their largely bourgeois membership and becoming ever more radicalized. In Lyon and Marseilles, among others, Commune members had been discredited by their failure to solve the problem of scarce bread and high prices, leading to the outbreak of food riots. There "the lower middle classes and even the artisans," working through their local Jacobin clubs, "took the power into their hands."[58] On August 26 and 28 the Assembly abolished all the feudal landed dues that had remained, except where the landlord could produce an original title deed to the lands that the peasants tilled. It declared that all common lands belonged solely to the village communities, and directed that the lands of the *imigris* be divided up into small lots. In a helpless position vis-ii-vis the Commune, the Assembly futilely tried to assert itself on August 30 by issuing a decree dissolving the Paris Commune and calling for new elections. This decree was completely ignored by the Commune and sections, and the Brissotins had to withdraw it in ignominious embarrassment. The Insurrectionary Commune of Paris now stood at the head of the revolution, even of the armies and the provinces. As one radical Assembly deputy, Chabot, sternly warned his colleagues in the Assembly, "Never forget that you were sent here by the sans-culottes."[59]

THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRES

Hardly had the king's dethronement been agreed upon when the military situation seriously deteriorated; during the month of August, the French war effort at the eastern frontier took a severe turn for the worse. The now-despised Lafayette finally defected to the enemy in mid-August, as republicans had long expected; nor was he alone. Other army officers joined the royalists in exile and threw their support to the Austrians and Prussians. The older generals who remained in the French army could no longer be trusted, which left the revolutionaries without enough reliable commanders. Under the hated Duke of Brunswick, the Prussians captured the fortress at Longwy on August 23, after a resistance so brief that it was obvious that French treachery had assisted the invaders in their victory. A Prussian invasion of France now seemed imminent, stok-

[57] Quoted in Albert Soboul, *The Sans Culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793–1794,* trans. R6my Inglis Hall (1968; New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 165.

[58] Mathiez, *French Revolution,* p. 90.

[59] Quoted in Doyle, *Oxford History,* p. 220.

ing deep fears among the Parisian masses of royalist conspirators, Church spies, and the danger of a counterrevolution in the undefended capital.

A week later, on September 1, news reached the capital that Verdun was about to fall, together with reports that a counterrevolutionary uprising had taken place in the western department of the Vendee. Paris went into a frenzy. The Commune decreed two days of house-to-house searches in which suspects were to be disarmed and their weapons given over to volunteers for the army. At its call, the newly armed volunteers assembled in the Champs de Mars before their departure for the front, where Danton gave a rousing speech—perhaps his most famous—summoning the country to fight heroically and audaciously— *"L'audacer"* —for its Revolution.

At the same time, two of the more popular newspaper publishers were demanding not only the defeat of the Revolution's enemies abroad but the extermination of those within Paris as well. Jean-Paul Marat had been engaged in populist politics through his own journal, *L'Atni du Peuple* (The friend of the people), since 1789, followed by Jacques-René Hubert, in his *Le Pire Duchesne,* which demanded the most extreme measures against the Revolution's enemies. *"Nous sommes trains"* ("We are betrayed") was Marat's constant cry, actually with greater accuracy than demagoguery about the realities of the situation at times. The betrayers that both Marat and Hubert singled out were variously the royal family, the Assembly, the Brissotins, and even moderates in the Commune. "In order to ensure public tranquillity," Marat warned, "two hundred thousand heads must be cut off."[60] By late August 1792, he flatly demanded: "Let the blood of the traitors flow. That is the only way to save the country"[61] —a demand that was not lost on the increasingly furious *sans-culottes.*

In particular, the enemies that Marat and others singled out were the prisoners in the city's jails, many of whom were detained political suspects, and it seemed only too obvious to Parisians that when the Prussian-Austrian invasion approached Paris, royalist plotters would throw open the prison doors to gain supporters for a counterrevolution. Not unreasonably, alarmed *sansculottes* felt that this danger from within was all the greater because increasing numbers of volunteers were departing for the front, leaving the city itself defenseless. Indeed, in the first week of September, the fear of internal counterrevolution in the capital reached such frenzied proportions that it led— with or without planning—to what was to go down in the history of the Revolution as one of its most desperate acts. Large crowds began literally to butcher the city's prison population. The first to be killed were recalcitrant priests who were imprisoned in convents and seminaries, followed by hundreds of inmates in the city's jails.

The September massacres, as these rulings came to be called, continued for seven days, during which twelve hundred people—about half the entire prison population in Paris—were killed, either outright or after extremely summary trials. Perhaps no more than one-third of the dead were political suspects, priests, nobles, or speculators; most of those killed were common criminals, thieves, debtors, and prostitutes. Although the Commune tried to establish tribunals to try the prisoners, its efforts were largely ineffectual; indeed, Marat, who had helped to incite the massacres, was himself a member of the Commune's vigilance committee, while one of the Commune's deputy commissioners, Billaud-Varenne, went to the prisons while the massacres were

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[60] Quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), p, 140.
[61] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 169.

under way and encouraged them, exclaiming, "You are slaying your enemies! You are doing your duty!"[62]

The massacres ceased only after the popular hysteria ran its course. Yet terrible and deplorable as they were, they served to strike terror into the hearts of counterrevolutionary forces within Paris, upon whom Brunswick seems to have counted to capture and destroy the capital, and their very savagery inadvertently served to undermine any potential resistance to the creation of a republic.

THE CONVENTION

The idea of establishing a National Convention that would give France a republican constitution originated in the Parisian sections and the Jacobin Club. Although the Paris Commune tried to persuade the Assembly to agree to universal manhood suffrage in electing the Convention's delegates, the Brissotins, with the support of moderate elements, took pains to restrict the franchise. Accordingly, when the Convention finally assembled on September 20, the moderate and Brissotin members held the majority. Owing to the fact that many Brissotin leaders were elected from the Gironde department, the group now acquired the name of Girondins, who shifted from the Left in the Legislative Assembly toward the Right in the new Convention in reaction to the radicalization of the Revolution.

On at least one issue, the new Convention was virtually unanimous: the official abolition of the monarchy. This new social dispensation—the declaration of a republic—was heralded by establishing a revolutionary calendar in which September 22, when the Convention began to take up its historic tasks, was designated as the first day of Year One of the French Republic. Thereafter, very few were the tasks that the body carried out with general agreement among the members. A breach almost immediately opened up between two major factions: the provincial Girondins and the Jacobin Montagnards, who specifically represented Paris. Both favored the end of the monarchy and the establishment of the republic, but agreed on little else. The Montagnards, who now constituted the Left in the Convention, acquired their name because they occupied the upper benches of the Convention—hence the widespread use of the term "Mountain" to designate their deputies and the view they expressed.

That they had major differences became especially clear during the Convention's debate over the future of the king. The Girondins wanted to avoid trying Louis for his treacheries, while the Montagnards sought, and gained, a trial for him, charging him with treason against the Constitution and the nation. After heated debate, on December 11 the Convention found Louis guilty, but having once condemned him, its members could not agree on his punishment: the Montagnards strongly favored a death penalty while the Girondins vehemently opposed it. Following a close vote favoring execution, Citizen Louis Capet—as the former king was now designated—was guillotined on January 21, 1793, an act of popular self-assertion against royalty that stunned Europe's upper classes.

Thereafter the two factions in the Convention began to attack each other bitterly, often over trivial as well as important issues. Underpinning the acrimony that separated them was the Girondins' fear that Paris was playing a decisive role in the Revolution—notably, the Parisian *sans-culottes,* the sections, and the Commune, whom the Girondins detested with unrestrained fury

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[62] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 176.

but upon whom the Montagnards, for their part, depended for support, together with the Jacobin Club, whose policies they seemed to echo. Indeed, nearly all the twenty-four delegates to the Convention from Paris were either Montagnards or Montagnard supporters, as well as Jacobins, most notably Robespierre, Danton, Marat, and Desmoulins. Presumably following Rousseau's notion of the "general will," they professed to constitute the will of the nation, which they patently identified with insurrectionary Paris. Thus, when rebellions against Paris later broke out in the provinces, the Montagnards were quick to designate the rebels as opponents of the national will, which, in the language of the day, they derogated as "federalism."

The Girondins, for their part, derived most of their support from the provincial cities—although they were not without supporters from Paris as well. Consumed with an intense hatred of the Insurrectionary Commune and Montagnard dominance, they often quite provocatively tried to undermine the prestige of the capital in the country at large, reducing its hegemonic role in the Convention, and later fomenting anti-Parisian and essentially anti-Jacobin revolts. Increasingly, the Girondins portrayed the capital as the victim of bloodthirsty, pike-wielding radicals who had either carried out or connived in the September massacres, now a *cause cilibre* for opponents of the Revolution. The Paris Commune, in turn, was depicted by the Girondins as a nest filled with "*anarchistes*," who, with the support of bloody lower-class ruffians, threatened to impose a tyranny on the nation as a whole.

The Girondins themselves were open to grave charges which the Montagnards eagerly exploited. In contrast to the Montagnard leaders, particularly Robespierre, they were primarily identified as the war party, having led the call for France to take up arms to maintain and spread the revolution. Such a charge would have carried no weight in the fall of 1792, when French revolutionary armies won their famously important victory over the Prussians at Valmy and occupied Savoy and Nice soon thereafter; indeed, on November 6, under General Dumouriez, the French defeated Austria at Jemappes, and on the nineteenth, the Convention decreed that France would offer "fraternity and assistance to ail peoples who wish to recover their liberty." A month later, the Girondins decreed that whenever French troops occupied a country, they would confiscate the property of the nobles and the Church and destroy feudal dues and obligations, a decree which was applied to Belgium the following month, in the wake of advancing French troops. In this respect, it should be noted, the Girondins were no less revolutionary than the Montagnards and the two differed very little in their basic principles—including a shared fear of the "*anarchistes*" in the poorest *sans-culotte* quarters of Paris.

But when the Girondin-controlled Convention declared war on Great Britain, then on the Netherlands, and Spain, France by March 1793 found itself at war with almost every major European power. The military tables that had favored the French armies now began to turn. With a British blockade that choked off France's economic life and with serious reverses on the northern front, the unfavorable military situation in Paris, at least, evoked growing hostility toward the Girondin deputies, who seemed to occupy most of their time pouring venomous scorn on the Mountain and its lower-class supporters in the capital. While the *sans-culottes* in the sections worked ardently to save the Revolution from foreign invasion—manufacturing and distributing pikes, constructing a camp for soldiers outside the city, enlisting more troops, and seizing weapons from suspects—the Girondins exhibited less concern about the war and more in bolstering their political advantage over the Montagnards. With extraordinary ineptness, they steadily infuriated the radical and powerful Parisian sections, which they targeted for unrelenting attacks.

It is arguable whether the differences in social principles between the loosely formed Girondin faction and the Montagnards, who were to be ecumenically called the Jacobins, were quite as basic as they seemed from the harsh Convention debates between the two. Brissot and Robespierre, who typified the membership of the two factions, belonged to the same Jacobin club in the early years of the Revolution. Both, too, were provincial lawyers, essentially of similar social backgrounds, with shared political values. Despite their populist rhetoric, the Montagnard deputies in the Convention were no less uneasy about the Paris Commune than were the Girondins; indeed, for a time, Robespierre and his associates were essentially its captives who simply required its support to preserve their parliamentary dominance. Differences in personalities may have played as much a role in the conflict between the two factions as secondary issues, such as the various power bases on which the two factions rested: on one hand the Girondins, in relatively moderate or conservative provinces; on the other the Mountain, in Paris with its extremely democratic sections, whose powers Robespierre was to eviscerate after the Girondins were defeated.

THE SECTIONAL DEMOCRACY

What, then, were these little-known forty-eight sections of Paris, where the more radical of the *sans-culottes* exercised so much influence on public affairs? How were they organized? And how did they function?

Ideologically, the *sectionnaires* (as their members were called) believed primarily in sovereignty of the people. This concept of popular sovereignty, as Albert Soboul observes, was for them "not an abstraction, but the concrete reality of the people united in sectional assemblies and exercising all of their rights."[63] It was in their eyes an inalienable right, or, as the section de la Cité declared in November 1792, "every man who assumes to have sovereignty [over others] will be regarded as a tyrant, usurper of public liberty and worthy of death."[64]

Sovereignty, in effect, was to be enjoyed by *all* citizens, not pre-empted by "representatives," as was the case in earlier national bodies and even the Convention. In this respect, the sectional movement that emerged in Paris in that year was perhaps the most self-conscious and explicitly democratic phenomenon to appear in history since ancient Athenian times, and certainly the most popular in its composition. The radical democrats of 1793 thus assumed that every adult was, to one degree or another, competent to participate in management of public affairs. Thus, each section, whether its members were politically radical or not, was structured around a *face-to-face democracy:* basically, a general assembly of the people that formed the most important deliberative body of a section, and served as the incarnation of popular power in a given part of the city. At the height of the radical sectional democracy, the general assembly comprised all male residents within a section's jurisdiction, which, meeting in expropriated chapels and churches, each elected six deputies to the Commune, presumably for the purpose merely of coordinating all the sections in the city of Paris.

Each section also had its own various administrative committees, whose members were also recruited from the general assembly. These committees performed the functions of police, supply, finance, and neighborhood surveillance. Broadly, they may be grouped into three categories.

The *civil committees,* dating from the days of the districts, were responsible for administrative problems such as food supply and finance, as well as recordkeeping, and were normally overbur-

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[63] Soboul, *The Sans Culottes,* p. 95.
[64] Quoted *ibid.,* pp. 95–6.

dened with work in these practical areas. Initially, under the mayorship of Bailly in 1789–90, the civil committees' members were directly appointed by the Commune and had a dual accountability to the Commune and the assembly, which they seem to have shrewdly negotiated by staying out of politics as much as possible. Their meetings were normally businesslike, and their outlook was fairly conservative. After the *sans-culotte* Potion replaced Bailly as mayor, however, civil committee members were elected by the sections' general assemblies, to whom they were directly accountable.

Shortly after the August 10 *joumie,* the Legislative Assembly, as evidence of its populist credentials, shifted the task of prosecuting political crimes to the Paris Commune, which for its part, delegated much of this responsibility to the sections. The sections thereupon set up *vigilance committees* to handle suspected counterrevolutionaries. Elected directly by the assemblies, these vigilance committees proliferated enormously after the August *journie.* Since they were empowered to levy accusations and arrest suspects, the political views of the committee members became a source of increasing contention between radical and conservative sections—indeed, between the sectional democracy as a whole and the Commune, and, generally, between members of the Commune and the Convention—escalating from the base to the summits of society as the Revolution itself became more radical.

A large number of *ad hoc committees* were organized for special tasks such as providing the unemployed with work, collecting gunpowder or seeing to its production, mobilizing recruits for the war, establishing contact with other sympathetic sections, and even planning *joumies.* During festive periods, openair suppers for the poor and for neighborhood people generally were common and were regarded as ways of fostering fraternity within a community.

Of paramount importance, each section had its own battalion of National Guard, over which it had complete control and whose movements it alone could authorize. Usually the battalion was entirely subordinate to the orders of the section's general assembly, many of whose members were part of the Guard itself. Assembly meetings in which National Guard officers were elected drew high attendance, higher even than those in which civilian officials were elected. Clearly, Parisians fully recognized the importance of the armed force their section commanded and held strong views on the kind of commander it should have.

During the height of the Parisian radical democracy, sectional life was vibrant, disputatious and earthy, as Albert Soboul tells us in one of the livelier accounts in his study on the *sans-culottes:*

> A section was headed by a president, whose work was aided by an executive committee. A recording secretary chronicled the section's proceedings—indeed, the activities of many of its committee meetings as well as the debates and decisions of its general assembly. Ushers maintained order during assembly proceedings, while tellers counted the votes, which were expressed by standing up or recorded in roll calls. Democratic practice, so important in a section's life, required that the assembly elect or reelect the executive committee each month, often by acclamation if there were no complaints about its activities. The president usually occupied his position for a year, although he resigned when he differed from the decisions of assembly, as occurred during the bitter fights in early 1793 over plans to engage in an insurrection against the Convention. What kept the sections going, in reality, was a core of committed militants who remained at their posts and were fervently devoted to

an ideal of direct democracy even when the general assembly dwindled to a small number of participants.

Meetings of the general assembly opened with a reading of the minutes, followed by a reading of the Paris Commune's decrees and laws, and the proposed agenda which was drawn up by the president and his committee. This was commonly followed by protracted debates.[65]

Periods of crisis and episodes that evoked popular anger might draw as many as a thousand citizens or more to an assembly meeting, in which case various factions contended vigorously with one another, debates were heated, and every seat in the assembly hall was occupied. Meetings were commonly quite raucous, even indecorous, and extremely fervent, leading to threats, shouts, mutual recrimination, and even fistfights. During the heated Year II of the revolutionary calendar (1793), when one crisis followed soon upon another, Soboul tells us,

> many citizens talked at random or screamed deafeningly, making all discussion impossible; this was in the *Rfyublique* section. In the *Chalier* section on 1 Ventdse [February 19], the president of the assembly drank a glass of wine in a chair, and some wanted to dismiss him; "This place is a wineshop now; it will soon be a tobacco shop as well." Others remarked that several citizens had done the same; after an hour's confusion, they merely returned to the order of business.[66]

Indeed, the sections were real political battlegrounds, and few of the fortyeight were politically unified. Within a particular *quartier* or neighborhood, citizens' interests might differ enormously according to their economic status, ideologies, and overall social background. Royalists and moderates did not disappear from sectional assemblies during even the most militant periods of the Revolution. But a relative uniformity of views existed primarily in the poorest sections of Paris and in the wealthiest ones; in between, radical and conservative views often competed with each other furiously and were often resolved with highly intimidating tactics.

Nor was each section drawn entirely into its own life and problems. Radicals, moderates, and conservatives often communicated directly with their own kind across sections and formed joint committees that bypassed the Commune and the Convention altogether. During intense internal disagreements, *sectionnaires* did not hesitate to "call" upon their ideological allies in other sections for aid, which at times led to the outright invasion of one section by members of another. More often than not, it was the radicals who would invade the general assemblies of nearby sections on the pretext of fraternizing with their colleagues but in fact to combine forces to shift a vacillating assembly to their side.

POVERTY AND REVOLUTION

The poor and ragged *sans-culottes,* whom Jules Michelet in his famous history of the French Revolution was to call the *bras mis* , or "bare arms," and in whose name the Montagnards often professed to speak, were especially unruly; the middle classes consistently labeled them *"le*

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[65] Albert Soboul, *Les Sans-culottes parisiens en I'An 11: Histoire politique et sociale des sections de Paris, 2 juin 1793–9 thermidorAn 11 (La* Roche-sur-Yon: Henri Potier, 1958), pp. 583–4.

[66] Soboul, *The Sans Culottes,* pp. 166–7.

canaille" and, in 1792–93, *"les anarchistes."* Grinding poverty starved and debilitated thousands of Parisians, leading to food riots and even more brutal behavior in times of social unrest and fear, such as the September massacres. Poverty may have elevated riots to a nearinsurrectionary level, but in itself could not sustain a revolution. Poor *sansculottes* who were little more than wage-earners remained active adherents of the Revolution and direct democracy until their movement was crushed, but it was an economically more privileged stratum that actually shaped the overall radical tendencies of the Revolution. As we have seen, artisans, tradesmen, and small entrepreneurs could also be called *sans-culottes* because they were not nobles or men of great wealth. The famous *enragi,* Jean Varlet, in fact, was wellto-do. Yet he was willing to risk his life for the downtrodden and, like Marat, chose to live among the poor and share their living conditions.

Nevertheless, moral factors alone cannot sustain a revolution, given the material conditions in which the poorer Parisian population lived. Even with the distinction between active and passive citizens, the percentage of more affluent people who took part in the political process during the French Revolution was strikingly low. Of the fifty thousand citizens in Paris who had the right to vote in 1789, less than a quarter took part in the elections for the Estates General, and fewer than one in ten participated in electing deputies to the Legislative Assembly in 1791. Even at sectional assembly meetings, attendance rarely exceeded 10 percent of the citizenry and was often substantially less, to judge from the limited available data.[67] Normally, in fact, as few as thirty citizens attended—especially in affluent areas, since many conservative bourgeois considered nonparticipation in political affairs to be a more honorable course than participation together with the despised *sans-culottes.*

Nor could the full participation of laborers and artisans have been possible, considering the working hours that the poorest *sans-culottes* had to endure. "In many trades a sixteen-hour day seems to have been normal," observes R.B. Rose,

> beginning at first light (in the summer as early as 4 a.m.) and finishing at 8 p.m. In the building trades the working day was normally about twelve hours, but during the summer the workers, women and children included, were often on the site from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. The workers at the Saint-Gobain royal mirror works were slighdy better off: their day stretched from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., with half an hour for breakfast, an hour for lunch and a half-hour for tea. Wage rates varied from eight livres a day for some goldsmiths and jewellers down to two or three livres for building workers and joiners and one or two livres for labourers.[68]

Those in the lower wage rates—and they numbered in the tens of thousands—led lives of desperate poverty. Cost-of-living calculations indicate that a day's food cost one livre and four sous on the average, while "the most basic lodging," to use R.B. Rose's expression, cost one to three livres a week. "Basic lodging" might mean that a family of four lived—and sometimes worked—in a single room on the sixth or seventh floor. Living conditions in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel, whose thirty thousand craftsmen and workers provided crowds for *journees* comparable in numbers only

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[67] The minutes of the sections, recorded by the sectional secretaries, were lodged in the Hdtel de Ville and were lost irrevocably when the building was set on fire by the Communards of 1871 during their desperate battle for Paris. But observers'and newspaper accounts of the sectional assemblies allow for some rough estimates.

[68] R.B. Rose, *The Making of the Sans-Culottes: Democratic Ideas and Institutions in Paris, 1789–92* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 15.

to the Faubourg SaintAntoine, were described as miserable by Sebastian Mercier, a contemporary observer. "An entire family occupies a single room," Mercier related,

> in which the four walls are bare, the wretched beds lie without covers, and the kitchen utensils are piled up with chamber-pots. All the furniture together is not worth twenty crowns. Every three months the inhabitants, thrown out for owing back rent, must find another hole to live in. Thus they wander, taking their miserable possessions from refuge to refuge. No shoes are to be seen in their lodgings; the stairs echo only with the sound of wooden clogs. The children are naked and sleep helter-skelter.[69]

People who lived under such conditions were necessarily preoccupied with obtaining food, shelter, clothing, and the simplest amenities of life. They could hardly have participated actively in running revolutionary institutions or attending assembly meetings regularly, especially when so many of those meetings overlapped with their working hours. A journeyman or laborer could hardly report to work in fit condition at six in the morning or even earlier after attending a general assembly meeting until eleven or later the evening before. What is admirable is the extent to which laborers like the *bras nus* and artisans did participate in their sectional assemblies; indeed, the *bras nus* and lowly artisans were often present in politically precarious situations in sufficient numbers to tip the balance in favor of radical policies. But their ability to mold events and decide policies was patently limited. Only a few of their names appear on lists of members of sectional committees, which commonly met in the afternoon and consumed full days of tedious work. Thus, members of the civil committees of the sections usually had independent incomes, and only fairly well-off or highly dedicated citizens could afford to staff the sectional institutions, still less participate in their demanding activities.

That is not to say that there were no paid officials in the sections. The police commissioner was normally paid a living salary by the Commune, as were the justices of the peace, who handled minor legal disputes, such as defaults of debts, petty fraud, broken contracts, and damage suits. In September 1792 these jobs brought in annual salaries of 3,000 and 2,400 livres respectively, roughly the wage of a highly skilled artisan. Recording secretaries received more modest salaries, approximately 800 livres a year. Other *sectionnaires* who did public business, whether as part of a civil or revolutionary committee, were given stipends for the hours or days they lost in doing their regular work. But on the whole, most section officials were not regularly paid and received only minimal incomes.

THE *ENRAGÉS*

In February and March 1793, the worsening military situation reduced the already straitened condition of the Parisian *sans-culottes* to crisis proportions. British warships successfully blockaded France to a point where the capital was experiencing severe shortages of basic goods and high prices; grain was once again scarce, and the price of bread rose steeply in Paris as elsewhere in France. The *assignats* were losing value so precipitously that a laborer in Reveillon's wallpaper factory, for example, spent 80 percent of his income on bread.[70] On February 24, when the cost

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[69] Sebastian Merrier quoted *ibid.,* p. 16.

[70] Morris Slavin, *The French Revolution in Miniature: Section Droits-de-l'Homme, 1789–1795* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 128.

of soap rose sharply, laundresses simply seized whatever soap they could lay their hands on and sold it at pre-1789 prices. Riots were becoming commonplace as crowds in large numbers looted shops and warehouses.

This growing crisis provided fertile ground for populist orators and writers, particularly the *enragis,* who tried to articulate the ideas and suspicions of the *sans-culottes.* By no means did the *enrages* form a united political group with a coherent social program; what they did share were naive, often formless commitments to what Anglo-American radicals would generically call "levelling." That is to say, they believed in a broad redistribution of goods favoring the poor at the expense of the wealthy. Owing to the Le Chapelier law of 1791, the laboring *sans-culottes* were not permitted to organize themselves to strike for higher wages; accordingly, the *enrages* demanded that the Convention impose heavy taxes on the wealthy, fix the price of foodstuffs with a maximum, requisition food from the countryside, and stringently enforce the laws against speculation in wheat (a practice that was very widespread). Basically, they placed blame for the worsening economic conditions on those who intrigued against the Revolution, especially speculators and war profiteers, whom they often associated politically with the Girondins.

Not that better-known propagandists such as Marat and Hubert failed to attack speculators and profiteers; in fact, this theme was central to their speeches and writings. But their propaganda was marked more by moral outrage than by demands for social measures to relieve economic distress. By contrast, a few *enrages* flirted with quasi-socialistic beliefs, in some cases hinting that the property of the wealthy should be shared among the poor according to material need. In any case, vague as their social views may have been, they carried on an intense and effective agitation in the poorer sections of Paris and generated deep-seated fears in the Commune as well as the Convention.

Perhaps the most clear-sighted of this inchoate group of *enrages* was JeanFran^ois Varlet, an active *sectionnaire* and the secretary of the radical section Droits de l'Homme (Rights of Man). Varlet worked in the post office, despite the fact that he had an independent income. A young man in his early twenties, he was a prolific pamphleteer, as well as a revolutionary songwriter and orator; his works were immensely popular among the *sans-culottes,* of whom he wrote, "The poor devils of the garret... reason more surely, more boldly than the best gentlemen, the great speech-makers, the groping savants; if they wish to attain true knowledge, let them go as I among the people."[71] Early on, Varlet came to loathe the Jacobins, as well as the Convention and the Paris Commune, for their political opportunism and centralistic policies.

In fact, Varlet had no faith in representative forms of government. He was fascinated by theories of direct democracy, which he drew in part from his readings of Rousseau. As Morris Slavin puts it, "Varlet consistently advocated direct democracy as a practical alternative to the newly established parliamentary system, which he found corrupt and neglectful of the needs of the sans-culottes for whom he spoke. He dreamt of a universal democracy."[72] This view dominated his political thinking. At the time of his election as secretary to the section Droits-de-l'Homme, he is reported to have said, "We [the sections] have... unlimited powers; we are the sovereign [bodies]. We shall break the (established) authority; we shall reconstruct it and give it sovereignty. It will smash the Convention. What is more legal?"[73]

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[71] Quoted in Morris Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 134.

[72] *Ibid.,* pp. 131–2.

[73] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 133.

Varlet's maximum program aimed at nothing less than the abolition of the Convention and establishment of a revolutionary committee, structured provisionally around ten bureaus, whose strictly defined functions would be dictated by the Paris sections. The sectional assemblies were to meet *en permanence,* that is, either daily, or whenever the people cared to convoke them without having to gain permission from higher authorities. The delegates that the assembly elected to his proposed revolutionary committee had to be clearly mandated and subject to recall, a doctrine embodied in the term *mandat impératif.* Thus, the committee would be directly accountable to the general assemblies of the sections. Essentially, Varlet and his supporters sought to replace the Convention and its ministers with a direct communal democracy, a "Commune of communes" (to use the revolutionary vocabulary of a later era) of a kind that was to find considerable favor with nineteenth-century anarchists.

These democratic views gained Varlet little if any support from the Commune or the influential factions in the Convention, be they Montagnards or Girondins. The Commune's General Council openly denounced him as "an intriguer," while Marat expressly dissociated himself from the young *enragi.* The Jacobins expelled him from their club for "an excess of *civisme* ."

Another leading *enragi* was Jacques Roux, a constitutional priest whose profession brought him into daily contact with the poor. Vigorously castigating hoarders, speculators, and the *ttouveaux riches* who were immorally profiting from the Revolution, he openly advocated a policy of terror against the wealthy and the counterrevolutionaries. His rhetoric, marked by bloody threats against the rich and resplendent, was filled with appeals to liberty and equality, which easily assured him a warm reception from the poor.

> Speculators, show me your pocket-books; your sudden wealth will attest without retort to your larcenies, your betrayals, your crimes. Before the capture of the Bastille, you were covered with nothing but rags; today you inhabit palaces; you owned but a plow and now you are rich landlords.[74]

The more radical sectional assemblies, in fact, voted to read aloud his speeches, normally delivered at the Gravilliers section, twice weekly, while his writings sold widely in Paris.

Roux's zealotry in behalf of the people's real concerns disquieted not only the authorities but other ostensible popular spokesmen, particularly Marat, whom Roux, in fact, adored and to whom he gave refuge when the "friend of the people" was pursued by the police. Marat was by no means flattered by the attention of his overly enthusiastic acolyte, who often acted politically as well as personally from impulse and failed tragically to provide his supporters with the far-seeing leadership they so desperately needed. His social concepts were naive: they consisted largely of a moral commitment to alleviate hunger and furious, often tactless, attacks upon the rich, whom he blamed for the afflictions of the poor. Curiously, he found no inconsistency in the fact that he was a constitutional priest who continued to retain his parish and state-subsidized income, while advancing eminently un-Christian and bloody methods for purging the Revolution of profiteers and careerists. In every sense a man of blood, Roux was a radical inquisitor who frightened his Montagnard enemies as much as he frightened the hoarders and speculators against whom he railed.

Nor is it surprising to learn that the eminently egalitarian *etiragis* included fiery Parisian women, such as Pauline Léon and Claire Lacombe, who cofounded the Society of Revolutionary

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[74] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 140.

Republican Women and energetically guided it through its brief but stormy existence from May to October of 1793. Léon, married to Théophile Leclerc, an *enragd* journalist in his early twenties, managed her own family's chocolate-making business, and had been radicalized during the fall of the Bastille. With the characteristic boldness of a Parisienne, she did not hesitate to stand before the bar of the all-male National Assembly and declare that the Rights of Man applied to women, who should also be able to bear arms so that they too could defend themselves and the Revolution. Her associate, Claire Lacombe, had been an actress of some distinction in Toulon, where her avowal of militant republican views displeased her director, and she came to Paris in 1792 in time to participate in the August *journde.* The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women self-consciously advanced the rights of women as equals of men in every respect, and one of its orators who appeared before the Jacobin Club bluntly asserted that she and her fellow members had ceased to be "servile women, domestic animals."

But France was still a patriarchal society during the Revolution, and neither the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women nor its leading figures were permitted to play any important role in the *sans-culottes* movement. Indeed, the Society often evoked the anger of the market women in Les Halles—especially peasant women who came from the countryside to sell their produce—by demanding that they wear tricolor cockades and trying to gain their support for the republic. Not that the market women were counterrevolutionary or necessarily lacking in revolutionary zeal: they had, after all, been among the crowds who marched to Versailles in October 1789 and incited many of the food riots that rocked Paris over the years. But a deep disenchantment with the Revolution was setting in among the poorer people of the capital, men and women alike. They deeply mistrusted the Convention, the Commune, and even the more demonstrative republicans who fed them rhetoric instead of bread.

This distrust was partly justified. For the *sans-culottes* generally, the most profound institutional problems of the Revolution lay in the conflict between their own popular democracy and those who attempted to centralize authority, be they the leaders of the Convention or the Commune. Nor were the heroic figures in the early days of the Revolution immune to the lure of power. Danton, one of the founders of the sectional democracy, had long abandoned the Cordeliers district and entered the ruling ministry. Robespierre and Hubert, at least in the eyes of Jacques Roux, were little more than careerists who masked their appetite for power in radical verbiage. As "the men at the bottom rose in the political hierarchy," observes Norman Hampson, "they became impressed by the virtues of centralisation, only to find a new generation of aspiring grassroots politicians turning their old weapons against them."[75] The growing conservatism of major revolutionary leaders did not escape the attention of the lower classes, for which the Revolution had yet to supply even modest rations or plots of land.

CHAPTER 20. The Insurrection of June 2, 1793

THE REVOLUTION IN LIMBO

The period from late 1792 to early 1793 was marked by an uneasy truce, broken by growing eruptions of differences between the Girondins and the Montagnards in the Convention, and increasing tension between the radical sections and all other governmental institutions.

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[75] Norman Hampson, *Danton* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 33–4.

The direct democracy, embodied by the Parisian sections, had essentially become a popular dual power that confronted the republican state, embodied by the Convention. This historic confrontation was blurred by the political conflict between the two parliamentary factions in the national government. The Girondins now detested Paris and addressed themselves primarily to the provinces in harsh opposition to the radicals in the capital. The Montagnards, in turn, did not hesitate to appeal to the radical *sans-culottes* when they needed them, albeit not without fear that the Revolution might slip out of the hands of the *Conventionnels* into those of the *sectionnaires.* Thus, when the sections early in March 1793 demanded the establishment of a Revolutionary Tribunal to exact swift justice on all suspects, it was Danton, speaking for the Montagnards, who took up the call in the Convention and saw to its formation. Alas, months later, it was to be this institution that began to try the popular leaders of the sections and, in the following year, to send Danton and his supporters to the scaffold.

The Girondins, for their part, were becoming increasingly loathsome to the radical sections. Basically, these provincial deputies were convinced that the Revolution had gone far enough in fulfilling its tasks and that it should be arrested, even rolled back, if possible, to a moderate republic. By the same token, the radical sections were convinced that the Revolution had not gone far enough in fostering democracy, and demanded a more equitable distribution of the means of life, such as the greater availability of consumer goods at reasonable prices.

The fact that the Convention met in Paris continued to dismay the Girondins, since it left the body vulnerable to popular pressure from armed radical *sansculottes.* At each opportunity, the deputies not only portrayed the Paris Commune and the sections as irresponsible extremists and bloodthirsty "Septembrists," but steadily escalated their attempts to turn the departments against the capital.

Moreover, the conflict between the sectional democracy and the central authorities was also complicated by the civil war raging in the western part of the country. After the Convention issued a military levy for 300,000 men on February 23, 1793, the west of France erupted in violent defiance of the Republic's call to arms, to the anger of the radicals and even many moderates. In the Vendee department and in Brittany, major revolts broke out, as peasants, led by local refractory priests, refused to be conscripted into the revolutionary army. Massacring local republicans, they openly fought the National Guard and connived with Britain against revolutionary France. Nor were other parts of the country spared similar peasant uprisings, which in Paris were generally blamed on the Girondins—in some cases not without good reason.

The Convention responded to the revolts by further centralizing its authority through a series of important emergency decrees. On March 9, it selected eighty Convention members, most of whom were Jacobins, to function as "representatives on mission" to the army and the troubled areas of the country, endowing them with powers to crush the rebellions at any cost and by any means whatever. Still another decree empowered military commissions to execute anyone who resisted the levy, as well as *tmigris* who returned to France. All rebels who were captured bearing arms were to be killed, and any priest who had been denounced by six citizens was to be deported.

Barely two weeks later, on March 21, the Convention charged each section and commune in the country to elect a watch committee *(comiti de surveillance)* with a view toward maintaining local surveillance, searching houses for hoarders, rounding up suspected counterrevolutionaries, and enforcing obedience to sectional decisions. On April 6 it created a nine-member Committee of Public Safety which was soon to become its famous—and much maligned—executive authority,

with sweeping powers to crush the counterrevolution and innovate new social policies for the Revolution.

Initially, these repressive and centralizing measures had little effect on dealing with the counterrevolution or the war. The provincial rebels, undeterred by actions in Paris, proceeded rapidly to capture town after town and soon swelled into a major force, mobilizing an estimated forty-five thousand men, who vastly outnumbered the fifteen thousand republicans who had been sent from Paris to quell them. The Paris Commune, in turn, was drawn into the sections' revolutionary vortex as the political crisis in the capital intensified and as the counterrevolution deepened in the provinces. No longer did the Commune embody the increasingly radicalized sectional democracy, as had been the case after the August 10 *journde.* To the degree that the radical ordinary laborers or *bras tius* moved to the forefront of the conflict with other institutions, its General Council—which was composed of three more or less well-to-do delegates from each section—became more fearful of the masses and more moderate in its policies.

This growing vortex of tendencies and countertendencies in the Revolution produced major changes, particularly in Paris, that began to throw once-united political forces into growing conflict with each other. With its influential deputy *procureur* Hubert, no less than its *procureur* Anaxagoras Chaumette, sitting on its General Council, the Commune tried to maintain ties both to the *enragds* in the sections *and* to the relatively prudent Montagnards in the Convention. These two tendencies were basically hostile toward each other and were never to be reconciled. The Commune, in turn, like the Montagnards, increasingly distrusted the sections that were influenced by the *enrages;* in fact, it seemed to fear any sections that it could no longer control. Yet, if it could trust neither the *enragds* nor the Jacobins, it was obliged to retain sufficient influence over the popular movement in Paris to maintain itself against complete Montagnard control, which would have destroyed its independence, if not its very identity. Thus, apart from the Girondins, who relied for support on the moderate center in the Convention (or "marsh," as it was called), the provinces, and a few of the conservative sections, all the different tendencies in Paris were making fragile ad hoc alliances that were readily broken, and basically played one political group against another in order to retain or enhance their power. Put bluntly: the Revolution had come to a crossroads, and its direction—whether it would move leftward or rightward—was patently uncertain.

As the war effort faltered, as bread prices rose, and as counterrevolution spread in the provinces, the discontent of the *sans-culottes,* especially the *bras nus,* in Paris increased in direct proportion to the evident instability of all the existing institutions—the Commune no less than the Convention—to carry the Revolution forward. At length, on March 10,1793,Varlet and other enrages tried to stage an insurrection against the Convention, presumably with the intention of removing its Girondin members and ministers, as well as army officers whose loyalty to the republic was suspect. The failure of the *journde can* be attributed to lack of support which the insurrectionaries had hoped to receive from the Jacobin Club, the National Guard and, to be sure, the Commune, which Varlet did not hesitate to accuse of "infection with aristocracy."[76] In fact, Santerre, the National Guard commander, mobilized nine thousand Guardsmen to deploy against the rebels and restore order.

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[76] Quoted in Morris Slavin, *The French Revolution in Miniature: Section Droits-de-l'Homme, 1789–1795* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 132.

Despite its failure, however, the *journde* established a precedent: the sections might one day, by sheer force of numbers, be able to intimidate the seemingly inviolable Convention and get it to do their bidding. In Convention debates the failed *journie* became more fodder for the growing rivalry between the Girondins and the Montagnards. The Girondins portrayed it as yet another attempt on the part of the bloodthirsty Parisian deputies to massacre them, while the Montagnards could truthfully claim that they had nothing to do with it. Within the Commune, Hubert and Chaumette, not to be outdone by the Girondins and the Mountain, charged the insurrectionaries of plotting with Prussia and Britain, a preposterous accusation among the many that were being made at the time, and one that further alienated the radicals from the municipal body.

A few days after the aborted insurrection, Varlet defiantly appeared before the Jacobin Club and chastised its members for their failure to support the uprising, harshly contrasting their behavior with the bold women of the October 5 *journie* who had brought the king back to Paris. Nor would the March insurrection be the last one, Varlet pointedly warned them. It was now clear that the March uprising was essentially a dress rehearsal for a more far-reaching one: a final reckoning between all the contending forces, particularly the *bras nus* and the Convention.

And, indeed, the differences between the radical sections and the Convention could be resolved in favor of the sections only by a new insurrection: that is, a "third revolution." In early 1793, this expression was much in vogue among various political tendencies. For the Girondins, who used it in their oratory at the Convention, the third revolution portended an insurrectionary resurgence of the Parisian "*anarchistes*." "As I have been saying ever since this Convention began," Brissot observed on March 24,1793,

> we have to put an end to the third revolution, the revolution of anarchy. We will only be able to finish it off by establishing a good constitution in place of this system of disorganization and of despotism, which some people would like to perpetuate.[77]

To Danton, in his more militant Jacobin posture, a third revolution would have meant a curtailing of the Girondins, who, despite his overtures to them, persistently refused to collaborate with the Mountain. To Hubert and his associates on the Paris Commune and in the war ministry, the expression would have summarized their attempts to enhance their own waning revolutionary prestige and find ministerial places in the national government. But to Varlet and his supporters, a third revolution clearly meant an insurrection that would successfully overthrow the Convention and establish a direct democracy throughout France.

THE ÉVÉCHÉ ASSEMBLY

If any single event could be said to have broken the political deadlock that existed in Paris, it was probably General Dumouriez's denunciation of the Revolution and his attempt at the beginning of April to march on the capital, restore the king, and reestablish the Constitution of 1791. Only the refusal of the army to follow him prevented the country from plunging into a civil war of monumental proportions, possibly leading to the defeat of the Republic. That Dumouriez was wrongly identified in the public mind with the Girondins (he was, in fact, more of a constitutional monarchist than a republican) heightened the sentiment that there was treason at home,

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[77] Quoted in J.M. Thompson, *The French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 338.

in the very heart of the Revolution, and that extraordinary measures were needed to extirpate the dangers that confronted Paris from "royalist" *Conventionnels* and from suspect military leaders.

Faced with the rising political fever of the people, the Paris Commune, roused out of its lethargy, began to round up more suspected counterrevolutionaries and conduct more house searches. But many sections now felt that such measures were half-hearted—that they needed an extralegal body to meet the coming crisis, one that was more resolute and revolutionary than the Commune; in fact, a body that could bypass the Paris municipal authorities, the Convention, and its executive committees to engage in effective political and economic action.

On March 27 the section Droits de l'Homme, strongly influenced by its secretary, Varlet, passed a resolution decrying "the dangers facing France" and summoning Parisians to "save the country and liberty" from the "liberty-killing faction."[78] It called upon all the sections to send commissioners to a meeting at the fiveche, the expropriated palace of the city's archbishop.

Nominally, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a forced loan that had been imposed in order to wage the war. But the real, and decidedly secret, intention of the meeting was to take forceful measures to purge the Convention of the Girondins and their supporters who were fomenting civil war in the country. Indeed, if Varlet had his way, the Évéché Committee would try to overthrow the Convention itself. On April 1, delegates from the twenty-seven Parisian sections that had sent commissioners to the Évéché formally constituted themselves into an extralegal but public "Central Assembly of Public Safety and of Correspondence with the Departments," which, in short order, opened the doors of the fiveche to some five or six hundred people. This Évéché assembly left little doubt that it intended not only to make food requisitions, levy contributions on the wealthy, and round up counterrevolutionary suspects, but also to purge the Girondins from the Convention.

As news of the Évéché assembly and its committee spread through Paris, the Girondins were infuriated and the Mountain felt very uneasy over an emerging movement it did not control; indeed, as we have seen, it was no more eager to see a sectional democracy than its rivals in the Convention. Marat, the "friend of the people," speaking at the Jacobin Club, denounced the meeting as "unpatriotic" (*anticivique*), nor did it gain any support from the General Council of the Commune, least of all its Hébertist members. Even earlier, on April 2, the Commune had set up its own committee of correspondence with other municipalities throughout the country, to countervail any initiative of the kind that actually occurred with the establishment of the Évéché assembly.

THE ROAD TO INSURRECTION

The events that were to follow the convocation of the Évéché assembly and the various efforts by the Girondins, Montagnards, and members of the Commune's General Council to cope with the *joumie* of June 2 form one of the muddiest chapters in the history of the Revolution, based on unclear facts, some conjecture, unrecorded negotiations, concealed compromises, and mutual betrayals. Indeed, it is often necessary for any history of this brief but remarkable period to speculate about the intentions as well as the actions of the various actors and committees that soon became involved in this decisive *joumie,* which was to set a new and fateful course for the Revolution and the lives of its most important figures. The one guiding thread that explains what

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[78] Quoted in Slavin, *French Revolution,* p. 135.

little is known about the events leading up to the *journie* is the fact that all of the Montagnard deputies, leaders of the Jacobin club, major figures in the General Council of the Commune, and even many moderates in the sections were determined to prevent Varlet and his supporters from establishing a sectional democracy; and by all means, fair and foul, they employed whatever measures were at their disposal to neutralize the influence of the radicals in the Évéché assembly—which itself was far from unified in its social goals.

Perhaps the best foil at the disposal of these moderate worthies in dealing with Varlet and his supporters was the Girondin leaders, who, with incredible political ineptness, inadvertently diverted public attention away from the social goals of the Évéché radicals toward themselves. The Girondins, in effect, proceeded by their tactics in the Convention to make themselves appear to be the cause of all that was going wrong with the Revolution, from Dumouriez's defection to the Austrians to the counterrevolution that was spreading through the provinces.

The events in the mid-spring of 1793 have an almost funereal quality about them and were grim in the inexorability of their development. Following news of Dumouriez's defection, a majority of the sections petitioned the Convention to expel the Girondin leaders, who were "guilty of the crime of treason against the sovereign people."[79] In fact, even the Montagnard deputies were now in the unenviable position of seeming to be reticent about removing the twenty-two Girondins who figured most in the public mind, for to do so would have been a gross violation of republican legality that could have been used against the Mountain itself.

But the radical sections were adamant. Addressing the Mountain directly, they bluntly declared that if the Convention refused to do so, they would take on the task themselves. Although the petition was signed by thirty-three of the fortyeight sections, the Convention denounced it as "slanderous" five days later. Indeed, with predictable ineptness, the Girondins retaliated against the sections by ordering the arrest of Marat, who was not only a Montagnard deputy but one of the Girondins' most consistent critics. To the fury of the *sans-culottes* , the "friend of the people" was arraigned before the new Revolutionary Tribunal. Again, the thirty-three sections adamantly demanded that he be released, repeating their call for the expulsion of the twenty-two Girondins. As the Girondins should have foreseen, not only did the Tribunal acquit Marat, but he was returned to his seat at the Convention borne on the shoulders of *sansculottes,* amid even greater public acclaim than before.

Spurred on by their victory over the Girondins, the radical sections pressed the demand that the Convention impose controls on the price of bread, which was now skyrocketing, and in mid-April the Commune and the mayor met at the Jacobin Club to draw up a petition demanding the setting of a maximum price. When the petition was presented at the Convention, the Girondins, in yet another political blunder, tried to bury the demand by referring it to the agricultural committee. Adding insult to injury, they reproved the *sans-culottes* for failing to understand the sublime economics of free trade—this at a time when bread prices were soaring and hunger was rampant in the capital, in no small part owing to speculators and to ineptness in the distribution of food.

For many radicals and even moderates, these tactics of delay and factionalism were unendurable. On May 1, eight thousand outraged *sans-culottes* from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in-

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[79] Quoted in Daniel Guerin, *La Lutte de clas ses sous la Premiire Ripublique,* vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1946), p. 116. A highly abridged version of the first volume has been translated by Ian Patterson under the title *Class Struggle in the First French Republic* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), p. 73, hereinafter referred to as "the English translation."

vaded the Convention and declared themselves in a state of insurrection until controls were established, and the Commune's General Council, mindful of the importance of the issue to the sections, proclaimed itself "in a state of insurrection" in an effort to place itself at the head of the popular movement. The Montagnards, it should be noted, were not at all sympathetic to the price maximum. Like the Girondins, they too had been arguing in favor of free markets against feudal restrictions, but, faced with the popularity of the demand, they demagogically expressed their support for the maximum, to which the Convention capitulated three days later by imposing price controls on grain and bread prices.

The month of May 1793 was marked by a steady radicalizing of many sections, opening the prospect for a new *journie.* Most of the Faubourg Saint Antoine sections (albeit by no means all of them) were probably controlled by the radicals, as was the section La Cité and, on the Left Bank, the sections Marseilles and Sans-Culotte. Often in pitched battles in assembly meetings, five more sections, including the Gravilliers and Bon Conseil, finally purged themselves of moderate members, as did eight others, many of which voted to grant the Évéché assembly "unlimited powers."

These developments served only to spur the Girondins and their moderate supporters into more foolhardy behavior. Having decided that the sections had acquired too much power through the intolerably radical Commune—a gross misjudgment on their part of the relationships of forces in Paris—they set about to eliminate it once and for all, and, in the process, to curtail the power of the sections. Amid proposals that the Commune be suppressed and the Convention be moved away from Paris to Bourges, on May 21 the Girondins established a Commission of Twelve, composed mainly of their own deputies, to investigate the vexatious conduct of the Commune, the sections, and their committee at the Évéché. Over the protests of Danton, the Convention provocatively ordered the sections to turn over all their minutes and registers to the new Commission for scrutiny.

The Commission had little difficulty in showing that a *journée* was being planned; the evidence of insurrectionary activity was apparently abundant enough in the sectional minutes. When several Girondin commissioners attended a meeting of the Paris Commune, they encountered an agenda laden with items such as "Identify members of the Convention to be expelled" and "Compile lists of suspects." After only four days of work, the Commission issued its conclusions and recommendations, which the Girondins followed to the letter. It ordered that the National Guard contingents stationed around the Convention for the security of its members be reinforced, and that all section meetings be adjourned by ten in the evening to make it difficult for the *bras nus,* who worked long hours, to attend them. Amusingly, the latter stricture failed to produce its desired effect: when a sectional assembly wished to continue a session beyond the legal hour, it simply declared the assembly adjourned and thereupon resumed its proceedings as a meeting of a popular society.

Additionally, the Girondins issued orders for the arrest and imprisonment of those individuals whom the Commission had identified as the main plotters of insurrection; in all, four men, including Varlet and Hubert. Hubert was brought before the Commission to answer for his last issue of *Ptre Duchesne,* in which, with his usual vitriol, he had encouraged the *sans-culottes* to rise up against the Girondin "plotters against the republic," alleging that they were conspiring with Britain in the war against France and with the Vendee in the revolt against Paris.[80] On May 25

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[80] Quoted in William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 233.

the president of the Convention, the exasperated Girondin Henri Isnard, countered the threats to the Convention by issuing a threat of his own: "If harm should ever befall the national representation, I declare in the name of all France, Paris would be reduced to nothing; it would not be long before people had to search the banks of the Seine for evidence that Paris ever existed."[81] With this warning, which scandalously echoed the Duke of Brunswick's earlier manifesto, the Girondins were openly threatening to foment a civil war against the capital.

Nor did Paris have any reason to doubt the reality of such a threat. The counterrevolution, which many Parisians attributed in part to the Girondins, was spreading throughout the provinces. Rebellious communes overthrew the local Jacobin leadership, not without bloodshed in many cases. In Marseilles, where the thirty-two sections had previously constituted a well-known Jacobin stronghold, port workers joined with merchants in the face of shared economic distress to overthrow the local Jacobin commune and declare the city in a "state of insurrection" against the Convention. Other cities specifically went into revolt against Paris itself: on May 21, Bordeaux, a Girondin stronghold, declared that it would overthrow the *sans-culottes* authorities in the capital, followed two weeks later by Caen, also Girondin in sentiment, which declared itself in a state of insurrection to "resist oppression."

This "federalist" revolt, as it was to be called, attained serious proportions in the last days of May, especially in Lyon, the second-largest city in France, which, before 1789, had been the silk-manufacturing center of the country. The loss of the industry's wealthy customers, who had emigrated in great numbers as a result of the Revolution, left little employment for the silk workers. This was a problem that the local Jacobins could hardly be expected to solve for a city based on the production of a luxury fabric. On May 24 warehouses of provisions intended for the armies were ransacked, and the goods were then sold off by crowds of women at prices they judged to be fair. Four days later, the Jacobin commune at Lyon was overthrown.

When news of these revolts reached Paris, the *enrages* and *sans-culottes* in the sections decided that they had to remove the Girondins, whom they accused of summoning the provinces to rebel against the capital. Again, radical *sectionnaires* found themselves allied uneasily with the Montagnards. "Deputies of the Mountain," wrote Jacques Roux on May 29,

> we implore you to save the country. If you can and do not want to do so, you are cowards and traitors. If you want to but cannot, say so. This is the purpose of our mission. One hundred thousand men are armed to defend you.[82]

In fact, even before Roux's threatening plea, on May 27 a crowd of *bras nus* burst into the Convention and demanded that Hebert, Varlet, and the other prisoners be promptly released and that the Commission of Twelve be abolished for exceeding its authority—a demand with which the cajoled Convention temporarily complied, only to restore the Commission on the next day. The backtracking, furious factionalism, realigning of positions, and repeated interventions of the *sans-culottes* had brought the political crisis in the capital to an impasse which only the victory—or defeat—of a popular *journie* could resolve.

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[81] Quoted in Guerin, *La Lutte de classes,* vol. 1, p. 127; English translation, p. 90.

[82] Quoted in Morris Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 139.

THE MAY 31-JUNE 2 *JOURNEE*

The actual steps that led to this unavoidable *journie* are among the most difficult to unravel from the skein of events that immediately preceded it.

On May 28, delegates to the Évéché, speaking for thirty-three sections, began to take decisive steps toward a *journie,* empowering a secret Committee of Six to act as an executive for planning the uprising. As Morris Slavin observes:

> There seem to have been two plans under deliberation when the [Évéché] assembly met the following day (May 29]. The first was public and was discussed openly (and] on the whole was moderate in tone and was noncommittal about the insurrection. The second plan, in contrast, was formulated by commissioners who were tacitly invested with a sort of executive mandate to determine the course of action. This plan was meant to launch an insurrection.[83]

And, in fact, during the night of May 30 and early morning of May 31, the Évéché assembly announced that Paris was in a state of insurrection against "the aristocratic and liberty oppressive faction," notably the Girondins.[84] Declaring itself to be in permanence, the Évéché delegates elected a Committee of Nine, which supplanted the Committee of Six, and placed Varlet at its head. It was this new committee, the authentic "insurrectionary committee," as the Évéché Committee of Nine was loosely called, that laid the initial plans for the *journie,* while a second assembly, convoked by the Commune, was established shortly afterward, and included representatives from the Paris department as well as the General Assembly of the Commune itself.

The night of May 30–31 was marked by considerable confusion, for two committees now occupying separate rooms in the Évéché palace were apparently at odds with each other. In one, la Grande Salle, could be heard the mixed voices of Marat, who detested the *enragis,* and Varlet, who had been the original head of the Committee of Nine. Less explicably, the Committee of Nine sat in "a neighboring hall," Slavin tells us, "about to declare itself in a state of permanence and insurrection." Apparently, it was out of these two committees that the "Évéché committee" was composed, which "organized itself into ten different departments" corresponding with the Convention's own executive and administrative bodies. "Exercising the powers embodied in these department made the Évéché committee the real government of France," Slavin concludes. "For a few days, it was just that."[85]

Which raises the question: precisely what was this "Évéché committee," as it has been broadly called, during the night of May 30–31? How did it function when it was under the guidance of Varlet, and how was its character changed in the days, indeed hours, that followed?

The difficulty in answering these questions arises from the multitude of meetings that were being held throughout Paris: at the Évéché palace, the H6tel de Ville, and the Jacobin and Cordelier clubs among other places, where one group often combined with another or met independently, if not secretly, as a faction. Very few of these meetings left any records behind, and what little we do know about them was only to be disclosed in obviously tendentious and selfjustifying letters, pamphlets, and memoirs, particularly after the Revolution. Nor is there any reason to believe that

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[83] *Ibid.,* p. 72
[84] *Ibid.,* p. 73.
[85] *Ibid.,* p. 74.

Varlet and his supporters on the old "insurrectionary committee" ceased to meet after two committees were merged under the rubric of a broad Central Revolutionary Committee; indeed, there is sketchy evidence that its radical members were to retain close ties with each other and function, to the extent that it was possible, as a caucus within the Central Revolutionary Committee itself, together with such presumably supportive organs as the General Council of the Commune. What can be said with reasonable certainty is that the Évêché militants surrounding Varlet on the committee wanted the insurrection to accomplish aims radically different from those of the moderates.

Most immediately, the new Central Revolutionary Committee wanted the Girondin leaders expelled from the Convention. The *bras nus* among the *sansculottes* wanted to put an end to speculation and hoarding, and to make bread and other staples available; and they prepared a petition demanding not only price controls on basic goods but the establishment of a "revolutionary army" to search out suspects in the countryside, to impose measures against "suspects" in the city, to purge the army and civil service of unreliable elements, and to levy a forced loan on the rich.

Varlet, for his part, obviously wanted to go much further. He saw the coming insurrection as an opportunity to dissolve the entire Convention and even the Paris Commune, replacing both bodies with a direct sectional democracy. In this respect, he was carrying out what R.B. Rose, in his study of the *sans-culotte* movement, calls the "basic principles" of the sectional movement:

> the inalienable embodiment of sovereignty in the primary [face-to-face] assemblies of the people, popular legislation by referendum, binding mandates for the people's deputies and the constant right of recall; *in extremis* the reserved right of insurrection to dislodge usurping governments and to insure the effective continuity of the sovereignty of the people. This fiercely intransigent interpretation of the meaning of democracy would remain a central feature of the sans-culotte movement during its period of greatest solidarity and influence, in 1793 and 1794.[86]

It was the realization of the democracy that the Montagnards, no less than the Girondins; the Commune, no less than the Convention; posturing Huberts, no less than staid Robespierres; "friends of the people" like Marat, no less than disdainful opponents of "*/es anarchistes"* like Vergniaud—all were resolutely determined to prevent. The conflict between the Committee of Nine and its largely Jacobin opponents was joined during the fateful night of May 30–31, when the committee, on Varlet's proposal, voted to abolish the Paris Commune and its General Council and to suspend the authority of Mayor Pache and the Paris Department. That the Évêché's "programme failed," observes Rose,

> was due to two things: the stubborn resistance of the Commune and the municipal administration, who refused to disband on the orders of the Évêché, and refused to back the insurrection on the Évêché's terms, and the skillful tactics of the Mountain, particularly Marat and some of the rank-and-file Jacobins, who managed to divert the popular pressure for the dispersal of the Convention into the more manageable

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86 R.B. Rose, *The Making of the Sans-Culottes: Democratic Ideas and Institutions in Paris, 1789–92* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 171–2.

channel of a demand for a purge of a handful of Girondin "public enemies." Meanwhile Varlet and his supporters gradually lost control of the central insurrectionary committee.[87]

How were Varlet and the *enrages* on the Committee of Nine outmaneuvered? This question is one of the most vexing of the Revolution, given the decisive shift it produced in the uprising's aims and its dismal sequelae.

In the absence of written evidence, we may surmise that during the night of May 30–31 the Montagnards, the Commune, and the Department of Paris recognized the potential danger of the Committee of Nine and were frantically looking for a way to neutralize it. The *enrages,* they rightly suspected, were taking the upcoming insurrection out of the government's control, and the fact that a committee headed by Varlet might set masses of armed men in motion gave this fear an intense urgency. On this score, there could be little doubt that the Commune, particularly Hubert and his supporters, openly sided with the Montagnards in usurping the influence of the radical elements on the committee and, in time, quashing their influence.

Casting around for an emissary to the Committee, the Montagnards and Commune seem to have settled on Claude-Emmanuel Dobsen, the influential president of the revolutionary section de-la-Cité—the section in which the Évéché palace was physically located. Dobsen was immensely popular with the *sans-culottes,* not only for his revolutionary fervor but because during the investigations of the Commission of Twelve he had defiantly refused to surrender his section's registers to the Convention. The fact that he had been one of the four who were arrested by the Girondins greatly enhanced his status among the *sans-culottes.*

On the critical night of May 30–31, persons unknown (did they include Marat, who seems to have been showing up everywhere?) approached Dobsen while he was still in prison, presumably with pleas to neutralize the influence of the *enragis* on the Committee of Nine—a task which he apparently agreed to perform. Released from captivity on that fateful night, Dobsen wasted no time in going to the meeting of the Évéché palace, where the nine-member committee welcomed him and made him its tenth member.

Again, the sequence and causes of the events that immediately followed are not entirely clear. But we do know that Varlet thereafter ceased to be president of the committee and was replaced in that crucial office by Dobsen. We also know that the actions of the new Committee of Ten, as the original Évéché Committee was now known, were abruptly moderated. From his new position of power Dobsen seems to have set about redirecting the militants from their fairly radical goals toward policies more congenial to the Commune and the Montagnards. It is easy to speculate that he brought about this shift—over Varlet's furious objections—by persuading his fellow committeemen that the need for "unity" with the Commune and the Mountain must override their seemingly "minor" differences. As in so many radical movements since, the plea for "unity" to create a "broad-based" movement that presumably could be more "effective" has been one of the most common techniques for disarming the left wing of a movement and persuading naive elements in moments of decision to acquiesce to less principled, safer, and more socially congenial policies.

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[87] R.B. Rose, *The Enrages: Socialists of the French Revolution?* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965), p. 25. Rose wisely puts a question mark after his subtitle. There is very little reason, if any, to believe that the *enragis* were "socialists" in any sense comparable to the word's meaning, which was created a generation later.

Finally, it was probably on Dobsen's motion that the Committee of Ten was supplanted by a newly created and presumably broader Central Revolutionary Committee, which consisted not only of the Committee of Ten but fifteen additional members from the Commune, an assembly of moderate sections, and the Jacobin-controlled department of Paris.[88] Since the new Central Revolutionary Committee had a total of twenty-five members, the *enrages* found themselves in the minority. The Central Revolutionary Committee now took control of the insurrection, shunting the *enragis* to the side. "There was no question," writes Slavin,"that the Jacobins, with the connivance of the departmental authorities, aimed at subordinating the Évéché committee to their own" in order to keep the insurrection within existing institutional boundaries.[89]

One of the new Committee's first acts, at nine in the morning of May 31, was to neutralize the order of the former Committee of Nine—the one Varlet had signed before the arrival of Dobsen—to abolish the Paris Commune, which they symbolically "dissolved" and immediately reinstated after it took an oath recognizing the authority of the "sovereign people." Varlet's intention of abolishing the Commune was now turned into a purely ceremonial act and became—wrongly, as R.B. Rose points out—little more than a farcical gesture rather than a major betrayal of the Committee of Nine's original revolutionary intentions.[90]

The process of diluting the influence of the radicals in the Central Revolutionary Committee and the BvSchd Assembly proceeded at a steady pace, until their impact was soon negligible. When a citizen (who Daniel Guerin opines may have been Varlet) came forward at the General Council of the Commune and offered to lead the Paris battalions in their march on the Convention, the Council's prudent majority expressed "their complete indignation, their complete horror at such a proposal."[91] Mayor Pache pompously asserted that "the people of Paris can distinguish between their true friends and the fools and imbeciles who try to mislead them and embroil them in perverted schemes." When a young radical, S6bastien de Lacroix, tried to present a "certain very violent project," Dobsen cut him off, and some months later he was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal on charges that on that night, he "almost went beyond the limit at which the revolution stopped." When still another citizen raised the question of the arrest of the Girondin leaders, which the Jacobins were later obliged to do, the Jacobin Anaxagoras Chaumette at the time tried to quell all discussion of the subject, while another member proposed to censure anyone who brought it up. The Central Revolutionary Committee, as Chaumette later wrote, did all it could to "moderate the volcanic activity" of the *sans-culottes.*[92]

It was now apparent to Varlet and his supporters that they had been deceived. In a pamphlet published much later, in the fall of 1794, Varlet recalled the day: "The insurrectionary committee contained the germ of a revolutionary government, conceived secretly at the very beginning. The

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[88] The complex events have been ably researched by Morris Slavin in his *French Revolution in Miniature* and *Making of an Insurrection.*

[89] Slavin, *Making of an Insurrection,* p. 143.

[90] See R.B. Rose, *Enragis,* p. 25, note 2, which cites original sources to disprove the flippant treatment of a number of historians of the Committee of Nine's original intentions to completely abolish the Commune.

[91] Guerin's opinion that it may have been Varlet appears in *La Lutte de classes,* vol. 1, p. 121; it is not presented in the English translation. Guerin's opinion seems highly plausible; it is very unlikely that the meeting would have exhibited *"indignation"* and "horreur" if the citizen were just an ordinary individual rather than a prominent radical like Varlet.

[92] All quotations in this paragraph are from Gulrin, *La Lutte de classes,* vol. 1, pp. 121–2; English translation, pp. 86–7.

false insurgents substituted Robespierre for Brissot; for federalism, a revolutionary dictatorship, decreed in the name of public safety."[93]

Yet for all its moderation, the real power in Paris now lay in the hands of the Central Revolutionary Committee. It shut the gates of the city and installed the Jacobin Francois Hanriot as commander of the National Guard. Since the 31st was a Friday and therefore a work day, which would prevent many needy *sansculottes* from participating in the *joumie,* the Central Committee decreed that all armed working men would be compensated in the amount of forty sous per day from funds levied on the wealthy. Early that morning, Varlet ordered the tocsin sounded (this act has wrongly been imputed to Marat), and thousands of *sans-culottes* from the radical sections streamed toward the Tuileries.

Their numbers, however, were small, and the *joumie* was more a demonstration than an intimidating insurrection. The Central Revolutionary Committee apparently had been remiss in reaching the *sans-culottes,* who were already at work when the *joumie* started in the afternoon. The Convention, in turn, disdainfully ordered that the "insurrection" be investigated, even as it was still under way, and some Girondins even proposed disarming the people and transferring control of the armed forces from the sections to the Convention.

The Montagnards, to retain the support the *sans-culottes,* were obliged to take action against the Girondins, however irresolutely. Marat moved that the Committee of Public Safety report in three days on the possibility of arresting the twenty-two Girondins—a remarkably tame proposal in view of the excoriations he heaped upon them—and later in the day, Robespierre finally proposed that the twenty-two Girondin leaders be impeached. By that time, the crowd, which numbered several thousand, was already dissipating. The Convention's only real concession was to abolish the despised Commission of Twelve once and for all, a concession to which the Montagnards readily agreed.

This done, some moderates tried to portray the events on the Friday as a success. Although it could hardly be compared with the *journee* of August 10, one speaker extolled it as a nonviolent *"insurrection morale"* as opposed to a violent *"insurrection brutale."* The normally volatile Hubert called it one of the most "beautiful" *journies* of the entire Revolution, and he commended the citizens of Paris, who, he declared, "always counted on the force of reason rather than on that of arms."[94]

Yet the twenty-two Girondin delegates still sat in the Convention, and no motion had been passed to expel them. Faced with Girondin intransigence and Montagnard equivocation, the fiveche militants around Varlet patently felt that the insurrection had miscarried, and they persevered in their demands for resolute action. On June 1, a Saturday, crowds of *sans-culottes* came out into the street, complaining of the Montagnards' sluggishness the day before. Indeed, the section Piques, to which Robespierre belonged, issued a statement announcing that the Central Revolutionary Committee was "unworthy of the confidence of the section" and warned that

> If, within twenty-four hours, the country is not saved, the sections will be invited to elect new commissioners worthy of their confidence, who will meet in the Évéché, and who, invested with unlimited powers, shall be charged with taking sweeping measures which alone can save public affairs.[95]

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[93] Quoted in Slavin, *French Revolution,* p. 155.

[94] Quoted in Slavin, *Making of an Insurrection,* p. 105.

[95] *Ibid.,* p. 104.

The *sans-culottes* movement had reached a boiling point. That there would now be an insurrection seemed unquestionable; all that had to be settled was its aim. Would it be content to force the expulsion of the twenty-two, or would it overthrow the Convention altogether, possibly establishing Varlet's coveted sectional democracy?

That same Saturday morning, the Committee of Public Safety expressed its alarm at the events of the day before and its fear that another insurrection was in the offing, this time a violent one. The Central Revolutionary Committee, in turn, dispatched Dobsen to the Committee of Public Safety to consider "means to save the country."[96] There he conferred with the Committee members, and if he received instructions from them, which is very likely, the Committee of Public Safety and by extension the Convention itself were brought into active complicity with a committee—the Central Revolutionary Committee—that had initially been created out of the earlier Committee of Nine to overthrow them. That very evening, in fact, Varlet openly accused Dobsen of obstructing the work of the Committee—to which Mayor Pache responded, "This is what happens… every time you place a Varlet at your head; he will go beyond you."[97]

A completely uncertain situation existed the next day, on June 2, a Sunday. Hanriot had been ordered to ring the Tuileries with sixty cannon and handpicked, heavily armed battalions of National Guardsmen, some five to six thousand strong. Once again, Varlet had the tocsin sounded, and since the *sansculottes* did not have to be at work, an overwhelming crowd of citizens— estimates range from 75,000 to 100,000—assembled behind the National Guardsmen, who were stationed between them and the Convention. In an arrangement typical of the ambiguity of the situation that existed, the Guardsmen were so positioned that, given the appropriate order, they could either attack the Convention together with the *sans-culottes,* or effectively defend the Convention from the crowd. To further complicate the situation, Hanriot ordered his men to arrest any deputy who left the Tuileries before the twenty-two were expelled. A delegation of *sans-culottes* thereupon entered the palace headed by a member of the Central Revolutionary Committee to demand the arrest of the Girondins "and threatened to have the people save public affairs should the Convention refuse."[98]

In the raucous debate that followed, some deputies tried discreetly to leave the palace, only to find their passage at the gate barred by National Guardsmen. Infuriated at this behavior, the Convention ordered that the National Guards be withdrawn, only to be told in no uncertain terms by Hanriot: "Tell your f- president that I f- him and his Assembly, and that if within one hour, he doesn't deliver to me the twenty-two, I'm going to blast it."[99]

Faced with this earthy challenge to the Convention's dignity, the deputy Barére now suggested that the deputies dramatically demonstrate their defiance of the Guard and the *sans-culottes* by leaving the building *en masse,* much to the horror of Robespierre, who is reported to have reproached Barfere: "What are you doing? You're making a mess of it."[100] In any case, the deputies of the right and the center—the majority—rose forthwith and headed toward the Tuileries courtyard. The Montagnards remained seated. But after being scolded for not braving the common danger with their fellow deputies, the majority of them rose and joined the others.

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96 Quoted *ibid.,* p. 146.
97 Quoted *ibid.,* p. 105.
98 Quoted *ibid.,* p. 111.
99 Quoted *ibid.,* p. 144.
100 Quoted *ibid.,* p. 115.

Scarcely had the Convention deputies reached the outside of the palace when armed *sans-culottes* furiously shouted at them to remain in the Tuileries until they decreed the arrest of the Girondins. Indeed, Hanriot told the president of the Convention, Herault de Sechelles, a fellow Jacobin, to "swear to me on your head that the twenty-two members will be surrendered within twenty-four hours." When Herault de Sechelles refused, Hanriot responded menacingly, "In that case, I shall not say anything." With a gesture to his troops, he was heard to order: "To arms, gunners, to your cannon!"[101] Some of the Guards cried, "Down with the Right! Long live the Montagnards! To the Guillotine with the Girondins! Long live Marat!"[102] A crucial moment of truth, as it were, seems to have arrived when the artillerymen were prepared to fire, while the cavalrymen, with drawn sabres, and infantrymen at the ready, pointed their weapons at the *Conventionnels.*

So delicate was the situation, now, that even a slight altercation between the deputies and the Guards might have led the crowd as well as the militia to fire on the *Conventionnels.* Indeed, had a single shot been fired, all the guns and artillery ringing the Tuileries could have gone off at once. The *sans-culottes* might very well have dissolved the Convention and possibly tried to establish a sectional democracy in France.[103] Varlet reportedly shouted at Hanriot to fire and was beside himself when the commander failed to do so.

At this point, Marat, the "friend of the people," stepped in and defused the crisis by shouting to Herault de Sechelles, "I call on you and your followers to return to the posts which you have abandoned like cowards."[104] This was a clever ruse. It gave the deputies the excuse they needed to return to the Tuileries with the Montagnards in the lead. To Varlet's alarm, Hanriot permitted the delegates to make their retreat without firing a shot. Even though the deputies had been humiliated, the decisive moment had passed. Viewed from the standpoint of the *enrages,* the nearest France had come to a third revolution had failed.

Having escaped dissolution, the Convention deputies resumed their seats and nervously debated the fate of the Girondins, a debate whose outcome was essentially decided as soon as news arrived that the Jacobin commune in Lyon had been overthrown. Marat proposed that thirty-one Girondin deputies be arrested. Despite resistance from most of the center and right deputies, who were unwilling to make such a decision under duress, the Montagnards resolutely pressed their demand until Marat's motion prevailed.

Not only would a failure to remove the Girondins have reopened a confrontation between the Convention and the people, but the Mountain was only too aware that, had it failed to support Marat's motion, it would have lost the allegiance of the *sans-culottes.* Nor was the vote wholly distasteful to them, politically; by voting for the arrests of their opponents' leaders, they were assured of becoming the dominant party in the Convention.

The expelled Girondins were treated with extraordinary leniency. At most, they were placed under house arrest and watched over by a gendarme, while others simply slipped away and fled to the provinces, where they were to produce mayhem for the new Jacobin republic. A messenger

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[101] Quoted Guerin, *La Lutte de classes,* vol. l,p. 125; English translation, p. 89.

[102] Quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York; William Morrow *&* Co., 1980), p. 201.

[103] It is worth noting that Slavin draws much the same conclusion as mine: "If a few hotheads among the *Conventionnels* had made a threatening move and their counterparts among the troops had fired on them, the whole Convention could have been massacred on the spot." *Making of an Insurrection,* p. 115.

[104] Quoted in Hibbert, *Days of the French Revolution,* p. 201.

was sent outside to inform the crowd of the vote, and the way was cleared for the deputies to leave. Marat, in effect, had shrewdly manipulated the situation to contain the insurrection within institutional boundaries and in the process had awarded political supremacy to the Montagnards. His assassination by Charlotte Corday several weeks later, on July 13, was no great loss for the *sans-culottes,* particularly the *bras nus,* who revered him—and whom he betrayed in the May 31 and June 2 *journees.*

The initiative for the insurrection on Sunday had been taken by the *enragis* and their *sans-culotte* allies. And it was they alone who had formulated its demands and propelled it forward toward a revolutionary confrontation with the Convention over the preceding weeks. Moreover, as Slavin points out, "It was the sectionnaires who composed the bulk of the armed crowd that surrounded the National Assembly. It was their insistence that forced the Convention to bow before them."[105] The Montagnards trailed behind the *enrages* and the *sansculottes* with fearful trepidation. Apart from opposing the Girondins, Robespierre had kept discreetly silent during much of the affair, while Marat had turned a potentially decisive *sans-culottes* uprising into mere Jacobin *coup d'itat.* In Paris, at least, the Girondins were either expelled or silenced, and they ceased to be to be a viable political grouping after June 2.

AFTERMATH

Although the Montagnards now controlled the Convention, the most immediate demands of the *sans-culottes* and the *enragis* remained unfulfilled. Bread was still scarce, and speculation and hoarding continued. The Montagnards now had to perform the delicate task of quelling the power of the *sans-culottes* without thoroughly alienating them. They still required the support of the sections, albeit with their powers trimmed. The first task of the Jacobin-controlled Convention was to reclaim for itself all the authority that the Central Revolutionary Committee had acquired, where the "dangerous elements," as they were called, still found an institutional home in addition to the sections. The fact that the Committee had no funds gave the Jacobins their initial opening in dissolving it. Before the June 2 *journie,* it should be recalled, the Committee had promised the *sans-culottes* that, in compensation for lost wages, they would receive forty sous for each day (May 31 to June 2) on which they were involved in the insurrections. This responsibility was now given to the Committee of Public Safety, which agreed to approve compensatory funds provided that the Central Revolutionary Committee disband—a requirement with which Dobsen and his supporters complied only too willingly. To close the sordid chapter on Dobsen and company, shortly afterward, on June 8, the Department of Paris, in collusion with the Montagnards, created a new, completely innocuous "Committee of Public Safety for the Department of Paris," which provided sinecures for the members of the former Central Revolutionary Committee. The *enragis* were conspicuously excluded from it.

What can be said about the remarkable miscarriage of the *journtes* of May 31 to June 2? The failure of the *enragis* to create a well-organized political force and advance a coherent program had not only been their undoing; it had cost the radical *sans-culottes,* particularly the *bras nus,* the Revolution. Although the Girondins had been finally expelled from the Convention, the *journees* had simply replaced them with a government dominated by vigorous Jacobin centralizers—one that differed from the preceding government by virtue of its greater resoluteness and its seemingly unlimited willingness to employ violence. Unlike the insurrection of August 10, which had

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[105] Slavin, *Making of an Insurrection,* p. 162.

dethroned the monarchy, created the republic, and broadened the powers of the sections and the Commune, the uprising of June 2 merely replaced the authority of one faction in the Convention by another—the Girondins by the Montagnards. Institutionally, the Montagnards left the Convention intact. Indeed, nothing could have been further from their minds than the direct democracy that Varlet and his supporters envisioned.

Chapter 21. Terror and Thermidor

The power gained by the Montagnards as a result of the June 2 *journie* was considerable and increased with every passing month. Even before the insurrection, the central government had already vastly expanded its authority over France by means of the February conscription decree, the establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the imposition of the maximum price for bread, and the formation of a powerful executive, the Committee of Public Safety, which worked in tandem with the Committee of General Security. Once the Jacobins were the dominant faction in the Convention, the government became even more centralized than it had ever been in the past, and commensurately more authoritarian.

Perhaps the most immediate problem the government faced was to counter the revolt in the countryside. Throughout the provinces, the news that the people of Paris had intimidated the legitimate, elected Convention and driven out the Girondins met with widespread outrage. "Federalist" uprisings had already displaced republicans in Marseilles and Lyon in the spring; they now spread to Bordeaux in June and Toulon in July. Lyon fell under the control of Royalists, who initiated a "white terror" by executing their republican predecessors. By mid-June, sixty out of the eighty-three departments were in varying degrees of open revolt against Paris, and civil wars raged around Lyon, Marseilles, and Toulon as well as in the Vendee, where the counterrevolutionary peasants, priests, and nobles gained notable victories.

Eager to gain peasant support, which had been dwindling steadily after 1792, the Convention on June 3 confiscated the lands of *imigris* and divided them up into small lots for sale on fairly advantageous terms to the rural poor—a policy that had been previously avowed but not enforced. On July 17 it finally abolished what remained of seigneurial dues, without compensation to the landlords.

Moreover, to assure the *sans-culottes* in Paris and the provinces generally that a dictatorship was not in the offing, the Convention rapidly completed its work on a new republican constitution and accepted the final document on June 24. Given the era, this famous "Constitution of '93" was an enlightened document indeed. Echoing the American Declaration of Independence, it declared that society was instituted for the happiness of the people, and it expanded the original Declaration of Rights by including the right to worship and to acquire gainful employment. The state, so the Constitution declared, had a duty to provide work to those who could not acquire jobs, even public assistance to disabled persons. It affirmed the universality of public education for all the children of citizens and established annual national elections based on universal manhood suffrage. When the "Constitution of '93" was submitted to a national plebiscite in July, it was approved overwhelmingly by the voters.

But the Convention was patently troubled by this constitution, which, had it been put into effect, would have meant the dissolution of the Jacobin republic. Indeed, it is doubtful whether national elections during the hectic years of 1793 and 1794 would have made the Mountain the

majority in the proposed assembly. Thus Robespierre and his fellow Montagnards saw to it that the Constitution was stored away in a place of honor in the Convention and discreetly held in abeyance as long as various crises continued to beleaguer the country. Nor was it ever put into effect. Its authors were only too eager to retain the highly centralized state and emergency decrees that kept them in power. The Constitution thus became little more than a symbol for militant *sans-culottes* who increasingly opposed the Jacobin government and sought to replace the Convention by a sectional democracy.

THE ASSAULT AGAINST THE *ENRAGÉS*

Although the Girondin deputies were gone and the Jacobins had agreed to some *enrage* demands, most of these demands remained unfulfilled. No additional measures against hoarding and speculation were taken by the Convention, nor was price-fixing extended to all staples of life, as the *enrages* had called for. On June 25, Jacques Roux led a deputation of the radical sections to the Convention, where he scathingly denounced all the deputies for their failure to take action against hoarders and speculators, singling out the Montagnards for behaving much like their now-overthrown Girondin predecessors. To Roux the Jacobins were all the more treacherous because, unlike the Girondins, they opportunistically appealed to the *sans-culottes* with radical rhetoric but little action. Somberly warning that the Convention was ignoring the material needs of the *sans-culottes,* he stridently declaimed to the Mountain: "Do not end your career in ignominy!"[106] The threat particularly unnerved the Montagnards, who were acutely aware of public unrest over Paris's economic difficulties. Once again, the poorer women of Paris were sacking soap suppliers and selling off the merchandise, while other *sans-culottes* broke into the shops of grocers, demanding lower prices for the means of life.

By the summer of 1793, such expropriate *taxations populates,* as the pillaging was called, aroused the Convention's fears that the radical *sans-culottes* were regaining their political vigor, and the jacobins made a concerted effort to remove Roux and other *enrages* from the political scene. On the initiative of Robespierre, the Committee of Public Safety instituted a massive propaganda campaign against them, maligning Roux and discrediting his supporters. Roux was expelled from the Cordeliers Club and from his position as the Paris Commune's news editor. Rather ineptly, he tried to countervail this attack after Marat was assassinated (July 13) by laying claim to the martyr's mantle (although Marat had attacked him vituperatively while he was alive) through the adoption of the sobriquet "friend of the people." Theophile Leclerc, in turn, started up a newspaper of the same name. Appealing to Marat's memory, the *enrages* generally demanded that granaries be constructed in each district of Paris and that funds be allocated to the people to purchase from it. Further, they called upon the Committee of Public Safety to extend price controls to all basic articles for general consumption: a *maximum giniral.*

Nor were the *enragis* the only contenders for Marat's mantle. The Jacobins too tried to exploit the memory of the revered "friend of the people" by crudely memorializing his name. Streets were designated in his honor, and his bust was placed in the Convention, together with David's memorable painting of his dead body. Marat's companion, Simone fivrard, was trotted out to denounce Roux before the Convention for perpetrating the "murderous calumny" that Marat

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[106] *"Ne terminez pas votre carritre avec ignominie!"* Roux's belligerent speech appears as "Convention nationale, stance du 25 juin (soir)," in Jacques Roux, *Scripta et acta: Textes prisentis par Walter Markov* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969), pp. 488–90.

had been "an insane apostle of disorder and anarchy"[107] comparable, as they saw it, to Roux himself.

To effectively wage a propaganda campaign against the *enragis* without alienating the *sans-culottes,* the Jacobins were obliged to make concrete concessions to at least some of their demands, which they did in an attenuated form. The two great executive committees, the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee for General Security, introduced some experimental economic measures that contravened the doctrine of free trade and the sanctity of property, to which the Jacobins were normally committed. Some efforts were made to see to the needs of the indigent, and they even proposed to turn a number of enterprises owned by "enemies of the republic" into state-run industries. These initiatives were clothed in radical rhetoric, which vaguely suggested overall visions of economic justice.

However, the two committees refused to depart entirely from the *laissez-faire* economics of the Physiocrats or to adopt the *enragis'* more radical demand for a *maximum giniral.* Here, the Montagnards balked; general price controls were too blatant a violation of their free-trade principles. The price of bread continued to be a major bone of contention, and the city remained restive. Rather than imposing the dreaded *maximum giniral[* the Montagnards chose the less distasteful alternative of establishing public granaries and allocating a hundred thousand livres so that the public could purchase it. "In this way," observes Albert Goodwin, "the committee managed to avoid a renewal of sectional disturbances in the capital without capitulating completely to the economic demands of the Enrages."[108]

Yet the growing attacks upon them notwithstanding, the enrages continued to press for Jacques Roux's demand that the Convention make it a capital crime to hoard food and speculate on the price of items necessary for life, which the Convention was Anally obliged to do on July 26, even establishing municipal commissions to enforce antihoarding measures. It was a poorly written law: not only were its terms ill-defined, but death still seemed like an unduly harsh punishment for speculators. Moreover, the law was difficult to enforce, and many arrested merchants were ultimately acquitted, with the result that the embarrassed and conflicted Jacobins had essentially tried to co-opt the *enragés'* demand with legislation that was largely ineffective. The *sans-culottes,* for their part, demanded that the law be resolutely enforced. Juries, they enjoined, should be composed entirely of *sans-culottes,* who presumably would not flinch at imposing the death penalty. To the hesitant Jacobins, they firmly responded: "The sans-culottes are rich in virtue, and hence can best apply the law."[109]

Nor did it add to the credibility of the Jacobins that the Convention passed a sweeping Law of Suspects, in which all individuals who were under suspicion of being counterrevolutionaries were to be arrested and tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Yet not even the much-hated Marie Antoinette, as the *ettragis* noted, had been tried and sentenced, let alone the Girondin leaders. After Claire Lacombe scathingly attacked the Montagnards in the Convention for their lax treatment of counterrevolutionaries, on August 12, Danton, now president of the Convention, finally introduced a motion that all suspects be indiscriminately arrested and tried, which the cowed

[107] Quoted in Louis R. Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat: A Study in Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 188.

[108] Albert Goodwin, *The French Revolution, rev.* ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 143.

[109] Quoted in Morris Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 139.

Convention duly passed. But again the definition of a suspect remained troublingly vague, with the result that this law was also difficult to enforce.

While the Jacobins were cynically playing carrot-and-stick with the *enragis* and their *sans-culotte* allies, the military situation worsened seriously following Dumouriez's defection in the spring. Alsace and Lorraine as well as Savoy were now highly vulnerable to invasion, and the possibility that Paris would fall to the Austrians loomed once again. The Committee of Public Safety under Danton's leadership had been following a fruitless policy of conciliation toward the enemy, with the result that the great orator, who had rallied France a year earlier against foreign invaders, was suspected of seeking a compromise with France's enemies. He was finally removed, and in mid-August retired to a semi-private life at his country home in Arceis with his young new wife, to be replaced by the more implacable Robespierre. The reconstituted Committee now prosecuted the war with renewed vigor and eventually reversed its course, which made it possible to move a sizable number of troops from the foreign front to the Vendee, where they laid waste to large areas of the department. Republican battalions also marched on Lyon and finally deposed the royalist counterrevolutionaries who controlled the city. The Revolution was thus scoring military successes on all of its fronts, diminishing the dangers of foreign invasions and internal counterrevolution.

The radical sections, in turn, had been waging a petition campaign for a law to require the permanent and universal enlistment of the French people in defense of the republic. On August 23 the Convention acceded—this time fully—to the *sans-culotte* demand and declared the *levde en masse,* a decree that was to enter into history as the most revolutionary mobilization of an entire people against invaders and counterrevolutionaries. With the *levee,* the Convention could requisition the entire adult population, male and female, as well as all material resources whatsoever, for the military defense of the Revolution. Not only were all able and single young men conscripted into the army, but the republic could call up for service anyone in any occupation, and commandeer any resource it needed to defeat enemies on the frontiers and counterrevolution at home. Funds were authorized to construct armaments factories in the city, where married able-bodied men were expected to produce a thousand muskets daily, while women were called upon to sew, old men to give inspiring republican speeches, and their children to collect rags. The *levie,* to be sure, was more sweeping on paper than it could possibly have been in practice, but its scope satisfied the *sans-culottes,* while simultaneously filling the military needs of the army. At length, French forces prevailed at the Battle of Hondschoote on September 8, 1793, replaying the major defeat of the invaders at Valmy at year earlier and vastly raising republican morale.

On September 17, an all-embracing Law of Suspects was passed, according to which vigilance committees could now arrest anyone who "by their conduct, associations, talk, or writings have shown themselves partisans of tyranny, of federalism and enemies of liberty."[110] In fact, they could arrest anyone who seemed to oppose the Revolution even passively, including individuals who had not been able to obtain a "certificate of good citizenship (*civisme*)" from their section's vigilance committee. This sweeping law soon became a mandate for trying anyone who might express the least complaint against Jacobin rule.

At the same time, the Montagnards in concert with the H6bertist Commune united their efforts to finally crush the *enragis.* Not only had the Cordeliers been persuaded by Robespierre and

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[110] "The Law of Suspects," September 17,1793, in *Documentary Survey of the French Revolution,* ed. John Hall Stewart (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 478.

Hubert to expel Roux, but two days later, a resolution by the Commune's General Council expressed its strong disapproval of his activities. Attacks upon him now followed one after another, including denunciations by Marat and others. Following Marat's assassination on July 14, Roux was temporarily arrested as part of a roundup of "suspects," and was arrested again on August 22 for a few days as a warning against his agitation on food shortages in Paris. In September, after still further persecution by the authorities, Roux found himself in prison, from where he continued to publish his criticisms of the Jacobin regime. When, at length, it became clear that even his supporters at the section Gravilliers were being imprisoned, he humbly petitioned the Robespierrists for release, asserting his good intentions as a *patriote,* but his appeal was ignored. As the Terror began to reach its height, the Robespierrists, who had finally taken full control of the state, seemed determined to crush the *enrage* movement definitively. On February 10, 1794, Roux succeeded in mortally stabbing himself in Bicfltre prison rather than face a humiliating trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

The other well-known *enrages,* notably Varlet, Lederc, Pauline Leon, and Claire Lacombc, barely managed to survive the Terror. On September 18, only one day after the Law of Suspects was passed, Varlet was arrested for openly opposing new limitations on the sectional democracy, and he remained in prison for nearly two months before he was released as a result of Hubert's attempt to curry favor with the radical sections. When Lacombe publicly denounced the Committee for General Security for its "infamous policy of imprisoning the best patriots" (a clear reference to Roux and Varlet), she too was temporarily arrested.

While nearly all the *enrages* were to fade from the scene as the Terror intensified in 1794, Varlet was to reenter revolutionary politics with the fall of Robespierre—again trying to revive his cherished sectional democracy when it seemed less perilous to do so. But as the waning Revolution was finally replaced by triumphant reaction, and his efforts brought him only extended and tormenting imprisonment, Varlet seems to have lost all hope for the Revolution. Although broken and penniless, he remained a political suspect as late as 1813, living well into the nineteenth century as a relic of a bygone era rather than the prophetic voice that he really had been.

In this respect, Varlet stands almost alone among the leading *enrages* of his time. Jacques Roux's vision of social justice rarely went beyond a simplistic, levelling impulse to correct the gross economic inequalities that the Revolution never resolved and, in this respect, was not unlike that of radical agitators in previous and later social conflicts who demanded a hazy "equalization" of the necessities of life. Varlet, by contrast, educated in what he construed to be the social egalitarianism of Rousseau, looked far beyond the formal republicanism of even the most extreme Jacobins and called for a revolutionary social democracy based on the direct participation of all citizens in political and economic affairs.

THE HÉBERTIST INTERLUDE

By undermining the *enragt* opposition, the Jacobins were producing a political vacuum, particularly among the *bras nus,* that Hubert and his circle were eager to fill. The Hébertists were not particularly close to the sections; their main strength lay in the Paris Commune's executive bodies, in the War Ministry, and in the Jacobin and Cordeliers clubs. Indeed, Hubert himself had even joined in the clamor against the *enrages* and helped to suppress them. His radicalism found its expression more in rambunctious oratory and journalism than in serious measures to mobilize popular support for a coherent goal. But having been defeated in an electoral bid to become

Minister of the Interior on August 20, he began to turn for support to the sections—an effort in which he was aided by serious revolutionaries like Antoine Momoro and Francois Vincent, who led the left wing of the Cordeliers.

Thus, Hubert now took up many of the *enrage* demands, such as the enactment of harsh measures against speculators, suspects, the Girondins, and the queen. He also called for the *maximum general* and the formation of a Parisian "revolutionary army," or militia, to go into the countryside to punish hoarders and confiscate their grain. Having incorporated these *enrage* goals into his own program, his *Pbre Duchesne* succeeded Marat's *L'Ami du Peuple* as the bestselling newspaper among the *sans-culottes.*

Hébertist policies were faced with a serious challenge in the summer of 1793, when a severe drought brought the flour mills in the countryside to a virtual halt, and a severe shortage of bread produced widespread discontent in the capital. The price of all basic goods rose sharply during July and August. By September, the *bras nus* and poorer *sans-culottes* held massive, almost, insurrectionary, demonstrations, demanding bread and higher wages. The shortages were blamed on the "moderates" in the municipal establishments, and demands for the establishment of a Parisian "revolutionary army" to get more grain for the capital from the countryside intensified sharply.

Addressing demonstrators at the Hotel de Ville in September 4, Hubert and his supporters in the Commune called upon them to march to the Convention on the following day, where a delegation of Hdbertists from the Jacobin Club pointedly declared that terror was the order of the day. Moreover, they called upon the Convention to accept the *sans-culotte* agenda, notably, that the Girondins be tried, that suspects be thrown in prison and speedily judged, that a *maximum gdndral* be established. They also called for a huge forced loan to be levied on the rich. Although Robespierre, who was now president of the Convention, tried to mollify the delegation by proposing diluted versions of these demands, the Convention's deputies were so intimidated that they assented to most of the proposals precisely as they were submitted.

Nor was it lost on anyone that the frightened Convention, for the second time in only a few months, had yielded to popular demands under crowd pressure— so much so, in fact, that two Hlbertists were elected to the Committee of Public Safety. Once a Parisian "revolutionary army" was organized and departed for the countryside, other "revolutionary armies" surfaced in different parts of France as well. These "armies" were militias rather than professional military forces; they contained the most zealous of patriots who, apart from requisitioning supplies for the cities, were empowered to arrest any provincial whose activities, in their view, seemed hostile to the Revolution.

At length, at the end of September, the *maximum g&ntoral* was enacted. The Convention imposed price controls on a wide range of basic goods including food, fuel, clothing, and even wine and tobacco, placing the "sacred Terror," as it was to be called, on the agenda of the regime.

AGAINST THE SECTIONS

Even as the Hébertists tried to benefit from the elimination of the *enrages,* the Jacobin regime took advantage of the same opportunity by moving resolutely against the sectional democracy. In the autumn of 1793, the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security transformed volunteer or elected sectional officers and commissioners into salaried bureaucrats

answerable to the centralized bodies of the nation-state and decided to pay the revolutionary committeemen a daily three-livre salary.

As Soboul observes:

> Payment of revolutionary commissars transformed the job. Until now they had been elected by the general assemblies, and seemed to be agents of the sections, acting independently of administrative authorities. Now they became salaried officials, responsible to the Commune; on September 5, at the same time that the Convention gave the commissars the three-livre payment, it ordered them to submit to an investigation of the General Council [of the Commune], which was authorized to dismiss and replace them if necessary.[111]

In fact, elected officials soon came to be appointed by the state, and powers that were once exercised by sectional committees were transferred to agencies of the Jacobin republic.

As in the case of the *enragis,* the Montagnards now adopted a carrot-and-stick technique for dealing with the sections. On September 5, Danton proposed that all *sans-culottes* who attended the sectional assemblies be indemnified for losing time from work. Taken by itself, this proposal might have increased *sans~culotte* participation in sectional activities, but his proposal contained a highly restrictive proviso: their assemblies—which had heretofore been meeting *en permanence,* for consecutive evenings and even days at a time—were not permitted to meet more than twice a week, and their hours were limited to between five and ten in the evening. This ploy was patently designed to trim the activity of the assemblies and effectively reduce the participation of the *bras nus* in public affairs.

In fact, before Danton's proposal could be adopted, the Convention restricted its forty-sou indemnity exclusively to poor citizens, "notably those who have nothing to live on but their daily work," or, as the recording secretary of the Convention put it: "every citizen who has no other source of income save his daily wages was entitled, *in case of need,* to an indemnity."[112] (Original emphasis.)

This indemnity was given with patent disdain for its recipients. The Convention even appointed sectional commissioners to determine "the eligibility of those citizens" who qualified for the forty sous, often challenging the eligibility of *sans-culottes* who were clearly in need of the indemnity. Others were obliged to obtain certificates or letters or cards that attested to their poverty, making the indemnity process all the more humiliating. Indeed, some *sans-culottes* who were eligible to receive the indemnity flatly rejected it, refusing to become what was disdainfully known as "forty-sou patriots," *"quarante sous."*

Considerable tension developed during the following months between the nonpaid and therefore presumably more "patriotic" citizens, and the " *quarante sous,"* who seemed to benefit materially from attending sectional assemblies. Lists of recipients were prepared, revised, curtailed, and repeatedly purged until the Committee of Public Safety finally treated the forty-sou stipend more as a form of charity than as a modest recompense for public activity. The Hebertists, it is worth noting, offered only limited resistance to the antisectional drive.

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[111] Albert Soboul, *The Sans Culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793–1794,* trans. R6my Inglis Hall (1968; New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 190.
[112] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 172.

Thus, after Danton's law was passed, sectional meetings were hardly flooded with indigent *sans-culottes* ; in fact, behind the welter of revolutionary decrees, the sectional militants could clearly see a concerted attempt by the authorities to limit their powers. The section Th6atre-Fran<;ais, which had led the others in eliminating the barrier between active and passive citizens, provided the forty sous for only eighty-four recipients, although nearly 850 citizens were known to be indigent. Some sections, to be sure, paid the stipend to a large number of citizens, but this figure rarely exceeded more than a third of the indigents who were entitled to the forty sous. Radical sections such as Varlet's Droits de l'Homme and Jacques Roux's Gravilliers petitioned the Convention to abolish the two-meeting restriction and the forty-sou stipend, which they regarded as an insult to genuine patriots, but the Jacobin regime, intent on weakening the sectional democracy, insisted on retaining the humiliating practice.

Thereafter, the *sans-culottes'* later battles were mainly defensive ones. With each passing month their power waned steadily, despite the formation of the "revolutionary armies" and the general arming of the people. The winter of 179394 saw the marked eclipse of the *sans-culottes* as a major force in the Revolution.

TERROR

At the same time, the centralization of the state proceeded at a rapid pace. For some time the Committee of Public Safety under Robespierre had been usurping the authority of the Committee of General Security to summon and arrest people. Finally, on October 10, the Committee of Public Safety, advancing the excuse that mounting emergencies required a government that had to function quickly and efficiently, declared that it would take over the entire state structure and be accountable only to the Convention. By December, the Committee had gained complete control over all the ministries of the government and acquired the power to choose the army's generals (subject to the Convention's approval) and the right to conduct foreign policy.

Perhaps most portentously, during the same month the Committee gained the power to purge local authorities. The departments of France were reduced to mere administrative entities, while the local districts were limited to the job of executing "revolutionary" decrees. Like every other commune in France, Paris now had to submit to the Committee of Public Safety, obey its decrees, and issue a report on municipal affairs to it every ten days. In fact, the leading officials (*procureurs*) of the districts and communes, including those in Paris, were replaced by "national agents," who were essentially functionaries of the Committee. Thus, all the municipal gains that the towns and cities of France had made from 1789 onward were essentially undone, and France was now governed by an administrative system that was even more centralized than any structure that had existed under the monarchy.

Ironically, Robespierre, who did much to centralize the republic, ordinarily respected governmental legality almost to a fault. He had played no active role in the *journies* that pushed the revolution in a leftward direction, and he seemed to respond to the insurrection of June 2 with outright fear. The opinions he normally voiced had been moderate and appeared eminently reasonable to bourgeois Paris. That he seemed more like an ideologue than a demagogue— indeed, his demeanor was puritanical and he modestly boarded at the home of the master joiner Duplay— earned him the sobriquet of "the Incorruptible." If his moral zeal reached lofty dimensions, even during the bloodsoaked heights of the Terror, he appeared nevertheless to be thoroughly imbued with a deeply felt and lofty sense of "republican virtue" and idealism.

This outlook, in many respects, may have been his undoing. He tended to respond to the material demands of the *sans-culottes* with almost blind disdain, extolling the claims of virtue over those of survival. Nor did he accede to the egalitarian currents that flowed through the Revolution; indeed, his idealism notwithstanding, he seems to have regarded equality as little more than a utopian human condition. He never decried the ownership of property as such, however much he dismissed a concern for material things. His speech on property on April 24, 1794, before the Convention represents a traditionalist contempt for wealth even as it subtly accepts it. "You souls of mud who value nothing but gold," he declaimed, "I am not going to touch your treasure, however foul its source. You should know that this agrarian law"—which notoriously, at the time, called for the equal or common allotment of land for all in France—"of which you have spoken so much is only a bogey raised by knaves to frighten fools."

What dispensation, then, did he propose to the "souls of mud" whose "gold" he simultaneously vowed to protect? His message was basically a moral one. "Certainly, a revolution is not necessary to convince us that the extremes of wealth and poverty are the source of many evils and many crimes," he declared. "For myself I think it even less necessary for private good than for public happiness. It is much more important to make poverty honourable than to proscribe riches."[113]

But these accolades to virtue and poverty did not put bread on the table of the poorer *sans-culottes* and peasants. Although many *sans-culottes* adhered to strong republican views, even rejecting the forty-sou indemnity despite their need for it, they were hardly prepared to sacrifice themselves and their families for moral ideals that left them hungrier than ever, especially as economic conditions worsened almost daily. To the last, Robespierre maintained his distance from these *bras nus,* however much they all but revered him in the early years of the Revolution. He retained the costume and bearing of the ancien regime: a powdered wig, meticulously tailored clothing, and traditional knee breeches. We have no pictures of "the Incorruptible" in the long trousers and wearing the *bonnet rouge* of the *sans-culottes,* nor is there any evidence that he adopted the more familiar personal mannerisms initiated by the Revolution.

As hunger became more widespread, moreover, the Terror grimly continued through the autumn of 1793 and into the winter of the following year, bringing some three thousand people to the guillotine in Paris and about fourteen thousand in the provinces. The Committee of Public Safety incessantly justified these executions by declaring they were needed to eliminate the intrigues of royalists and "federalists." Louis de Saint-Just, an astute but icily unfeeling young man, who by this time had become Robespierre's *alter ego,* now regarded all "dissidents" as criminals and treated them as such, while another Jacobin, Brichet, wanted the Law of Suspects to apply to everyone who was well-to-do. In each village, he argued, the richest farmer should be identified, detained, and guillotined immediately.

By the spring of 1794, the Terrorist government had created an atmosphere of fear so far-reaching that in many respects it anticipated the terror produced by the Stalinist regime a century and a half later. Ordinary citizens, not to speak of politically prominent ones, were afraid to speak their mind on any public issues that might antagonize the Jacobin authorities—even to behave in a manner that might cast suspicion upon them as lacking in *civisme.* A general fear, in which each person suspected another as a possible informer, permeated Paris and extended in diminishing degrees to outlying areas of the capital. Even the *enragds,* such as Jacques Roux, who had been an

[113] Maximilien Robespierre, "Speech on Property in the National Convention, April 24, 1793," in Raymond Postgate, ed., *Revolution from 1789 to 1906* (London: Grant Richards, 1920), pp. 43–4.

advocate of stringent, frankly terrorist measures against counterrevolutionaries and the wealthy, were to turn against the Robespierrists for the fear they generated by the "sacred Terror." Varlet was outspoken in denouncing its scope and the paralyzing effect it had on public life.

In practice, moreover, the poor were no less victims of the Terror than the rich, whether they were young or old, women or men. Suspects were guillotined for "depraving public morals," for failing to "testify properly," for provisioning soldiers with sour wine, or even for losing their temper at the wrong moment. Some were executed through clerical errors, when their names resembled those of actual prisoners, and, typically, others were denounced by neighbors who had personal grudges against them.

Although the Terror embraced all potential counterrevolutionaries, its largest numbers of victims were in areas of the so-called "federalist revolt." At Lyon, three hundred condemned suspects were executed by cannonfire. Thousands died in overcrowded prisons at Nantes, while two thousand were drowned in barges in the Loire. The many thousands who perished in the provincial cities by far outnumbered the thousands who died on scaffolds at the Place de la République and other squares of Paris. In all, only a small percentage of those executed in the Terror were nobles, well-to-do, or clergy; most were members of the former Third Estate, often speculators, tradesmen, dissidents, and ordinary working people.

THE FALL OF THE HÉBERTISTS

The Hébertists, having triumphed in September 1793 as champions of the *sansculottes* , in November and December now shifted their attention from menacing economic issues to fairly safe ideological ones by launching a campaign to eliminate Christianity. That the Church was not popular among the Parisian *sans-culottes* was understandable in view of its collusion with the aristocracy, but Hubert's denunciations of its "superstition and hypocrisy" were more of a distraction than an attempt to address the real material problems of the ordinary people. Accordingly, the Hlbertists began publicly to destroy crucifixes and church monuments, advancing a cult of reason and replacing statues of Mary by busts of Marat. Streets that bore names of saints were secularized, as were those of entire towns and villages, and notices were placed outside cemeteries saying that "death is an eternal sleep."

The Revolution had tried to modernize the calendar to reflect seasons, fruits, and flowers, and, following the introduction of the decimal system, weeks were changed from seven to ten days. Ironically, in fact, de-Christianization reduced the number of free days because the Sabbath now fell every ten days instead of every seven, and the abolition of religious holidays added to the grinding work the *sans-culottes,* had to perform. No less disturbing, the H6bertists closed churches, where they could, or converted them into temples of reason. Indeed, the de-Christianization campaign assumed such extravagant proportions that it did more to alienate the incurably Catholic French peasantry than to secure the Hebertists the support of the sections, whose afflictions in early 1794 were overwhelmingly economic.

Mindful that many of the French, certainly in the countryside, were still devout Catholics, the Jacobins, viewing the Hebertists as troublesome rivals, denounced de-Christianization in increasingly harsh terms. At the same time, Saint-Just proposed the famous Laws of Ventdse, enacted on February 26 and March 6, 1794, which called for the sequestration of property owned by detained and convicted "enemies to the Revolution," which were then to be distributed among "indigent patriots."

Neither Saint-Just nor Robespierre, to be sure, was a socialist in any presentday sense of the word. They were not prepared to challenge property as a basic human right; nor did they advance views that opened so radical a prospect. The Ventdse laws, which have been celebrated by certain socialist historians of the Revolution, might very well be interpreted as a stratagem on the part of the Robespierrists to wean radical *sans-culottes,* who supported the Hebertists, to their own camp. In no way did the laws propose to significantly alter the mode of production in France by collectivizing shops and land, which might have provided a definitive solution to society's economic problems. Rather, it was directed primarily toward rendering access to the means of life somewhat more equitable or, at least, not too desperate a problem for the very poor. This secondary approach to the economic problems of the country was a typical strategy of even the most radical elements in the French Revolution, and it would require another generation to raise the key problem of rearranging the productive apparatus of the country along socialized lines.

Alternately wooing and circumscribing the *sans-culottes,* Robespierre opened his attack on the Hebertists, denouncing them as atheists and warning that their de-Christianization campaign would encourage hatred of the Revolution both within France and abroad. Nor did "the Incorruptible" hesitate to form an unsavory alliance with Danton and his supporters to eliminate the Hebertists, curb the powers of the Commune's executive, and defang the Cordeliers Club. Using the customary wild charges of counterrevolutionary conspiracies that were now being leveled by one faction against another in the government, this alliance took steps to bring the de-Christianizing Hebertists before the Revolutionary Tribunal as agents in a "foreign plot" against the government.

Hebert seems to have been panicked by the prospect of seriously confronting the Jacobin leaders, even as he kept making reckless charges against them. He vainly called for the "completion" of the Revolution—that is, for a third revolution—and with the support of Momoro and Vincent attempted irresolutely to initiate a *jourttie* at the beginning of March 1794. This effort, faint as it was, miscarried completely. Badly planned and equivocal in its goals, its instigators made no serious attempt to determine the extent to which they could gain *sansculotte* support, of which they had very little.

Although the Cordeliers draped the Declaration of the Rights of Man in a black shroud, indicating their support for the upcoming enterprise, their more moderate members soon fraternized with the Montagnards and quickly subverted what support the Hebertists had in the club. Most of the sections did not respond to the insurrectionary appeal; only Momoro's section showed any will to act.

A cowering Hebert, pushed to the forefront by his own rhetoric, retreated before the prospect of a conflict became real, typically defusing his support by trivializing the *journie* as "hypothetical."[114] Momoro and Vincent, who were made of sterner stuff, patently despised him. Before the *journie* could be initiated, the Jacobins used the effort, such as it was, as a pretext to move against Hebert and his supporters. In the early hours of March 14, 1794, Hubert, Momoro, and Vincent were arrested, brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal on trumpedup charges, and guillotined on March 24, before a crowd of insulting spectators.

With the defeat of the leading Hebertists, the Jacobins stripped the Commune of Hebert's remaining supporters and replaced them with Robespierrists. Now that the Commune was largely

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[114] Quoted in Daniel Gu6rin, *La Lutte de classes sous la Premitre Rtpublique,* vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1946), p. 101.

neutralized, the Jacobins were free to eviscerate the sections. By appointing sectional police commissioners, justices of the peace, and their secretaries, they further eroded the remaining elective functions of the general assemblies. The "revolutionary armies" were essentially disbanded, and all who were suspected of being too zealous by the Mountain's standards were removed from their offices, if not jailed outright. The Left—or at least the popular movement—had been crushed, and the Robespierrists, who were now ascendant among the Jacobins, were obliged to turn to the Right to retain their credibility as a revolutionary group.

THE FALL OF THE DANTONISTS

The French Revolution now began to unwind in reverse order. Even the memory of Marat was so desacralized and defamed by the authorities that, as a police spy reported, a citizen warily declared, "Alas, who can one put one's trust in now?"[115]

To the extent that it is possible to speak of a Right among the Jacobins, it was embodied by the figure of Danton, who had sought to compromise with the Girondins, conclude peace with France's foreign enemies, and end the Terror. For some months during the fall of 1793 Danton had been living in the countryside with his new sixteen-year-old wife. He returned to Paris when he heard that the Girondins had been executed—wrongly, in his view—only to find himself in the midst of the de-Christianization campaign conducted by the Hébertists. Although he had allied himself with Robespierre and the committees to arrest the Hebertists as perpetrators of a religious terror, he was no less opposed to the extensive spilling of blood in the capital. His policies were distinctly conciliatory or "indulgent," to cite the accusation that the Robespierrists were to direct against him and his supporters, although his views earned him considerable sympathy among moderate Jacobins and *Conventionnels,* who regarded the Terror and war as needless.

A clash between the Dantonists and the Robespierrists, who emphatically favored the Terror, was inevitable, even though some historians tend to reduce their differences merely to personal rivalries. "Having decided on the elimination of the Hebertists," observes Goodwin, "the government could not have allowed the Dantonists to survive, for their acquittal would have meant its downfall."[116] The destruction of the Left, in effect, had to be balanced by the destruction of the Right if the Jacobins were to retain popular support. The case that Robespierre could develop against Danton was considerable. Over the years Danton had notoriously tried to find common ground with constitutional monarchists, including Dumouriez, certainly with moderates, and possibly even with foreign agents to end the war. He made an effort to come to terms with the Girondins, only to be arrogantly rebuffed by them in the Convention. It was even suspected, perhaps not without reason, that he had offered advice to the royal family until their intransigence became too obvious to endure. And he had amassed a suspiciously large fortune in landholdings, whose sources were dubious. His shady financial adventures and sybaritic tastes during a time that favored republican simplicity and virtue opened him to charges of moral and financial corruption.

Yet the Dantonists were hardly an inconsequential faction politically. Both Danton and his close supporter, Desmoulins, had stood at the forefront of the revolution since 1789. It was Danton who, more than anyone else, had paved the way in the Cordeliers district for the sectional democracy that followed, and whose oratory rallied France against its invaders in September

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[115] *"Htlas! it qui se fier maintenant?'* Quoted *ibid.,* p. 131.

[116] Albert Goodwin, *The French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1953; New York: Harper &Row, 1966), p. 156.

1792. Now in 1794, Dan ton and his supporters gave expression to a growing sentiment within the Convention and among the people generally against the Terror, which seemed to be getting out of hand, and the hope for stability in the country. Wearied by Robespierre's perpetual invocations of "revolutionary virtue," Danton once exclaimed, "I'll tell you what this Virtue you talk about really is. It's what I do to my wife every night!" Such talk infuriated Robespierre, who declared: "Danton derides the word Virtue as though it were a joke. How can a man with so little conception of morality ever be a champion of freedom?"[117]

Nor could Danton's vocal public objections to the present course of the Revolution fail to evoke the concern of the Robespierrists. His advocacy of a Committee of Clemency to reconsider the guilt of suspects already thrown in prison challenged the very integrity of the "sacred" Terror as an unimpeachable "purifying" endeavor that allowed for no compromises, while Desmoulins's public expression against the demise of the Girondins constituted a flagrant reproach of Robespierre. "Love of country cannot exist when there is neither pity nor love for one's fellow countrymen," Desmoulins boldly declared, "but only a soul dried up and withered by self-adulation."[118] Given the undisguised description of Robespierre that the closing lines of this passage contained, these words amounted to an open declaration of war against "the Incorruptible." Saint-Just responded in kind by virtually calling Danton a traitor. "A man is guilty of a crime against the Republic when he takes pity on prisoners," he stated pointedly. "He is guilty because he has no desire for virtue. He is guilty because he is opposed to the Terror."[119] In time, Robespierre himself concluded that the "Indulgents" were overt counterrevolutionaries and that Danton, who was always distasteful to "the Incorruptible," would have to be eliminated together with his supporters.

On the night of March 30, scarcely more than two weeks after the Hébertists had been dispatched, the Dantonists were rounded up and arrested on charges largely fabricated by Saint-Just. Upon learning that his arrest was forthcoming, Danton is said to have remarked, "It was at this time of year that I had the Revolutionary Tribunal set up. I pray to God and men to forgive me for it." But he made no attempt to escape, despite the pleas of his friends. "A man cannot carry his country away with him on the soles of his shoes," he is reported to have resolutely declared.[120]

That the "Indulgents" would be found guilty seemed like a foregone conclusion; but the charges brought against Danton himself were so flimsy that his oratory nearly turned the tide against a seemingly predetermined verdict. Denied the opportunity to call witnesses and explore the evidence against him, he nevertheless nearly succeeded in winning the crowd inside and outside the Tribunal against his accusers. It is said that his voice could be heard across the very banks of the Seine. "You are murderers," he cried out. "Murderers! Look at them! They have hounded us to our deaths! … But the people will tear my enemies to pieces within three months."[121] So forceful was his defense that the Robespierrists had to peremptorily cut the trial short and, lest he be rescued by the people, were obliged to sentence the defendants to death *in absentia.*

The verdict was returned on April 5, 1794. As the tumbrels took Danton and Desmoulins—both only thirty-four years old—to the guillotine, they passed the Duplays' home, where Robespierre boarded. "You will follow us, Robespierre," Danton cried out prophetically. They were executed

[117] Danton and Robespierre quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow 8t Co., 1980), p. 237.

[118] Desmoulins quoted *ibid.,* p. 236.

[119] Saint-Just quoted *ibid.,* p. 236.

[120] Danton quoted *ibid.,* pp. 238–9.

[121] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 243.

at the end of the day, before a crowd that clearly admired them. Danton's last words to his executioner were characteristic of the man. "Don't forget to show my head to the people," he said peremptorily. "It's well worth having a look at."[122]

Thereafter, the Robespierrists began to execute people less for specific acts than for being potential opponents—indeed, for failing to live up to the vague republican moral standards advanced by Robespierre himself. On April 16 the government decreed that all alleged conspiracy cases in France were to be tried exclusively in Paris, partly to close down the provincial revolutionary tribunals and pardy to dilute whatever tolerance for dissenters existed outside the Parisian courts. The jails became overcrowded with suspects brought to Paris from the provinces. On June 10, the Convention passed the notorious Law of Prairial to speed up the Tribunal's proceedings, a law that broadened the definition of counterrevolutionary crimes enormously, often giving them a vague and ineffable character. The Revolutionary Tribunal was exempted from having to interrogate accused people before bringing them to trial, since, it was claimed, that only "confused the conscience of the judges," and the accused were deprived of all defense counsel and virtually denied the right to call witnesses on their behalf. The Tribunal was no longer required to provide positive proof of guilt; "moral proof" was regarded as evidence for a capital sentence. In fact, the Tribunal could deliver only one of two verdicts: guilty or not guilty; and there was only one sentence for those whom it found guilty: immediate execution. No longer was the Tribunal even the semblance of a court of justice. As the Jacobin Couthon observed, it was "less a question of punishing" the "enemies of the Republic" than of "annihilating" them.[123] Accordingly, from June onward, the rate of executions soared, and fifteen hundred people were executed in the eight weeks before the end of July.

THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE

To strengthen their popular base, the Jacobins now adopted measures favoring the poorer strata of the population, among both the peasantry in the countryside and the *sans-culottes* in the cities. Church lands were sold off on terms more favorable to the poorer peasantry. And the Laws of Vent6se remained in effect even as Marat's former Jacobin admirers were dragging his portrait through the mud and removing his bust from prominent places in the capital. Yet to the *sans-culottes,* the Ventdse laws were made less credible when the Robespierrist regime imposed wage controls on July 5, 1794, undercutting what popular support it had, while providing little consolation for its overall conduct to the well-to-do. Perhaps no *maximum* raised a greater furor among the *bras nus* and poorer *sans-culottes* of the city than the one that placed a ceiling on their already miserable earnings. Cries against it were to follow the tumbrels that later carried the Robespierrists to the scaffold, whose execution evoked hoots and shouts from a bitterly hostile crowd of poor and wealthy alike.

Indeed, less than three weeks after wage controls were established, Robespierre and his supporters fell, with virtually no support from the sections. To foresee the blow that finally came would not have been difficult, and Robespierre was not insensitive to the reaction he was producing. Yet he remained overconfident, even petulant, with respect to his authority. To counteract the atheistic reputation that the Hebertists had given to the government, he staged a public Festival of the Supreme Being on June 8, in which his pomposity was equaled only by his arrogance.

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[122] Quoted *ibid.,* pp. 248,244.
[123] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 246.

To many *Conventionnels,* it now seemed that "the Incorruptible" had completely succumbed to the lures of power and aspired to be a dictator. Nor were they reconciled to the expulsion of the Girondin leaders and the execution of the Dantonists. The guillotine seemed relentless in its claims of victims, and never had the Terror seemed more intolerable than in the spring of 1794.

On June 26, after six weeks of a strange absence from the Convention, "the Incorruptible" appeared before the assembly and delivered a rambling speech including threats to unspecified counterrevolutionaries. The Convention, having recovered its own confidence while he was gone, was no longer docile. It responded with angry demands that he name the "enemies" who were apparently slated for the guillotine, which Robespierre adamantly refused to do, leaving the unruly hall in a cold fury. During the night of July 26 and well into the next morning, Jacobins and moderates alike from the two great committees desperately mobilized supporters to unseat him. When the following morning came, Robespierre and his supporters were furiously denounced, and "the Incorruptible" was even denied the opportunity to respond to his attackers.

It is ironical, perhaps, that Robespierre was still not prepared to violate republican legality. Even after the Convention voted unanimously for his arrest and execution, he procrastinated before calling upon the sections for support. Indeed, like many revolutionaries in periods of crisis that lead to their downfall, he seems almost to have been sleepwalking, roused to action only by his immediate supporters. Rescued from the Convention by the Commune, where he still had support, he withdrew to the Hdtel de Ville and almost indifferently permitted his aides to call for an insurrection against the *Converttionnels.* The response by the sections indicates that his support among them had virtually disappeared; scarcely seventeen out of forty-eight sectional battalions of the National Guard answered the calls of the Robespierrists, and even then only falteringly. During the night, most of the National Guards who responded simply drifted away. Even the sections that had been most strongly committed to the Left, like Roux's Gravilliers and the H^bertist L'Unite, eagerly joined the Convention to attack the Hotel de Ville, which in the early morning hours was virtually unguarded. On the afternoon of July 28 "the Incorruptible," his brother Augustin, Saint-Just, Couthon, Hanriot, and several others were led to the guillotine, where they were executed amidst the hoots and insults of a huge crowd. The fall of the Robespierrist regime occurred on 10 Thermidor, according to the revolutionary calendar, a date that thereafter gave his moderate successors in the Convention the name of "Thermidorians"—a term that was to find a dishonorable place in the revolutionary vocabulary for generations to come.

THERMIDOR

Although the Thermidorian regime was politically moderate, the destruction of the Robespierrist regime allowed the Left to recover again. The *journees* of the *sans-culottes* and the conspiracies of the revolutionary societies revived, albeit on a scale much smaller than in the past. Worsening economic conditions, provocations by Parisian gangs of royalist gilded youth, the growing centralization of power in the ruling Directory (the small handful of men who increasingly became the principal governmental power in France) and the steady undoing of the gains that the masses had achieved during 1793 all served to foster popular unrest that culminated in two *sans-culotte,* largely *bras nus,* uprisings. The first, in April 1795, in which the Convention was briefly occupied by the masses, rapidly fizzled out into what Soboul has aptly called a demonstration rather than an insurrection. It served merely to alert the Directory to the more important one that followed a month later. This *jourtide,* organized by the radical sections, had all the trappings of the older,

more organized uprisings of the past. On May 21, the tocsin and church bells sounded throughout the capital, followed by the alarm cannon and the march of sectional battalions to the Convention, which, after several skirmishes, was taken over by the armed masses. But apart from a good deal of oratory, simulated concessions by the frightened deputies, and the passing of resolutions demanding a return to the old revolutionary democracy, the Directory, and the great committees of 1793–94, which still remained in the aftermath of the Thermidor, were permitted to muster their own sympathetic troops. They finally drove the insurrectionary people back to their neighborhoods, where they soon surrendered their arms to the Directory's better-disciplined and more determined military forces. Apart from limited riots and expressions of protest, the period of the *jourtties* had come to an end.

A "white terror" followed the May uprising, and the radicals who were not rounded up were now obliged to turn to secret conspiracies against the increasingly reactionary regime. Of these diffuse conspiracies, the most notable and legendary was the Conspiracy of Equals, led by Gracchus Babeuf, which tried to stage a communistic coup in 1796. Babeuf's vision of communism has been aptly described as a levelling of the great economic disparities that the Revolution had not eliminated. The Babouvist ideal of a new society consisted of an economic order in which the distribution of goods would guarantee to all the satisfaction of the people's needs under fairly spartan material conditions. This distributive communism was to be administered by a centralized system of nationalized property, not unlike the visions of a new society that were later advanced by the followers of Auguste Blanqui and by Karl Marx.

The execution of Babeuf and several of his supporters in May 1796, after a lengthy trial, might very well have passed as just another tragic episode had not Philippe-Michel Buonarroti, one of Babeuf's collaborators who escaped the death penalty, written a full account of the event and the ideas that guided the conspiracy. Buonarroti's account, published early in the nineteenth century, became a program and an organizational guide for conspiratorial movements that proliferated well beyond the Revolution and shaped the radicalism of the new century—the nineteenth—that was emerging out of the debris of the one that had passed.

Following the Napoleonic Wars and attempts to restore the ancien regime at the Congress of Vienna, radically new ideals began to replace the republican goals of the Jacobins: some, redolent of Varlet's image of a confederation of communes, under the rubric of anarchism; others, inspired partly by Babeuf, turning to a new and highly economistic body of ideas under the rubric of socialism. These conceptual frameworks, however, belong to the century that followed, and were to live well beyond the mystique of the "republican virtue" propounded by the Jacobins.

Bibliographical Essay

GENERAL WORKS

The revolutions discussed in this book raise issues that are still alive today. Their histories shade into broad debates about the value, feasibility, and limitations of a direct democracy; alternative ways of owning, controlling, and sharing property; the institutionalization of expansive ideas of liberty and equality; and the importance of leadership in focusing the often inchoate feelings of an insurrectionary people. The number of books that deal with these and related issues are immense in number. The writings of major "left-of-center" thinkers such as Karl Marx, Mikhail Bakunin, and John Stuart Mill provide a mere framework for dealing with these problems. The reader may gain a more complete understanding of the great revolutions and their importance from the immense number of contemporary pamphlets, broadsides, and programs written by revolutionary publicists and authors.

The French Revolution of 1789–94 immensely influenced revolutionary analyses throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. Several books of varying value—whose authors are not necessarily socialists— have attempted to interpret modern revolutions in its general terms, even schematically. Perhaps the best known is Crane Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1952). Since Brinton essentially adopted this approach, his book is valuable as a guide to revolutionary thinking in the first half of our century. Lyford P. Edwards's *The Natural History of Revolutions* (New York: Russell *&* Russell, 1965) has a pattern very similar to Brinton's.

Of a broader and more flexible nature is Mark N. Hagopion's *The Phenomenon of Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1974). E.H. Carr's *Studies in Revolution* (New York: Universal Library Edition, 1964) should probably have been called *Studies in Revolutionaries,* since it fleshes out Brinton's scheme with biographies of major revolutionaries. Howard Mumford Jones's *Revolution and Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974) is a highly stimulating discussion of the individualism that was emphasized in the Romantic movement generally as well as in the great eighteenth-century revolutions. Lawrence Kaplan and Carol Kaplan's *Revolution: A Comparative Study* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) is a useful compilation of papers on various revolutions, beginning with the English and continuing through more recent, largely nationalistic upheavals. The opening essay by the Kaplans is valuable. *Revolutions: 1775–1830,* edited by Merryn Williams (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), opens with an informative introductory essay, then gets down to specific documents of major revolutions and revolutionaries. *Socialist Thought* , edited by Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964) contains a wide range of revolutionary documents and introductory sketches. These overviews of the revolutionary era constitute only a small number of the many general books on revolutions and the ideas of outstanding revolutionaries.

PART I: PEASANT REVOLTS

The outstanding—certainly the most informative—book on the early revolutions is Perez Zagorin's *Rebels and Rulers: 1500–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). It has no equal for this period, to my knowledge, and deserves the closest study. Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, revised and enlarged) is highly tendentious but has become a hardy perennial emphasizing the so-called "anarchic" element in millenarian movements, including the English Revolution.

The radical historical literature often represents these important movements as "premature"— tragically, in my view, since they constitute suppressed potentialities that might have changed the course of Western history. The reader should not disdain Barbara Tuchman's popular *A Distant Mirror* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), which gives a vivid and informative account of the English and French peasant uprisings. Jean Froissart's *Chronicles* is one of the principal original sources for the outlook of the ruling elites of the time. *The Cambridge Modern History,* vol. 2 (specifically the 1904 edition, "planned by Lord Acton") and Anne-Marie Cazalis's *1358: La Jacquerie de Paris: Le destin tragique du "maire" Etienne Marcel* (Paris: Société de Production Literaire, 1977) are very valuable discussions, as is Rodney Hilton's *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (New York and London: Methuen, 1977). The materials on late medieval peasant uprisings from recent years are too numerous to adduce, but the reader may wish to consult the pages of the distinguished British quarterly *Past and Present.*

Among the numerous books on the Reformation uprisings, Friedrich Engels's classic *The Peasant War in Germany* (New York: International Publishers, 1926) incorporates the war into Germany's revolutionary tradition but tends to subordinate it to the proletarian movements that he cherished. George H. Williams's substantial overview, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) covers various radical clerics and movements in considerable, informative detail, while Kenneth Rexroth's *Communalism* (New York, Seabury Press, 1974) has been unduly neglected. Notable in the most recent general literature are Peter Blickle's *The Revolution of 1525* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); *The German Peasant War of 1525: New Viewpoints* , edited by Bob Scribner and Gerhard Benecke (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979); and *The German Peasant War of 1525,* edited by Janos Bak (London: Frank Cass, 1976).

PART II: THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

On the religious background on the English Revolution, Michael Walzer's *The Revolution of the Saints* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), Robert Ashton's *Reformation and Revolution: 1558–1660* (London: Paladin Books, 1985), the opening chapters of William Haller's *Liberty and Revolution in the Puritan Revolution* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1955), and Christopher Hill's *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolution England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) are very valuable accounts. Early-seventeenth-century English thought is explored in Gerald R. Cragg's *Freedom and Authority* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975). Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 15581641* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) is a balanced account of the social background of the elite classes.

The best short overview of the Revolution itself from a radical viewpoint is Christopher Hill's pamphlet-size *The English Revolution* (London: Lawrence 8c Wishart, 1976), which takes the reader up to Cromwell's establishment of the Commonwealth. Hill, a Marxist, tends to provide a rather simplistic "historical materialist" interpretation of the English Revolution as a "bourgeois" affair. But this able historian nonetheless often exhibits a sympathetic understanding of the "ideologies" of the Puritans and the cultural features of their revolution. His *Puritanism and Revolution* (New York: Schocken, 1964) is a superb account of early modern England and the ideas that nourished the revolutionary period, as is his *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Hill's *Century of Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton 8c Co., 1966) is a more detailed overview of the revolutionary period from 1603 to 1714. His memorable *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Viking Press, 1972) deals with the libertarian tendencies that surfaced in revolutionary England between 1640 and 1660. Hill and Edmund Dell have excerpted and collated a splendid collection of original documents under the title *The Good Old Cause: Documents of the English Revolution of 1640–1660* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969).

Lawrence Stone's *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529 to 1642* (London: Routledge 8c Kegan Paul, 1972) deals very ably and less schematically with the English Revolution than Hill's major works. A number of papers written on the Revolution from a grassroots standpoint appear in *History from Below,* edited by Frederick Krantz (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). Although Eduard Bernstein's *Cromwell and Communism* (New York: Schocken, 1963), written in 1895, is dated, it can still be read with considerable profit. (Its German title is *Sozialismus und Demokratie in der grossen englischen Revolution.)* The times of the Revolution are captured in David Underdow's *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

The Levellers produced numerous tracts, manifestos, and broadsides, which appear in several collections. *The Levellers in the English Revolution,* edited by

G. E. Aylmer (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975; London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), contains a good selection of original documents, as does A.L. Morton's selection in *Freedom in Arms* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975; New York: International Publishers, 1975), with a fine introduction. The best collection, however, is Don M. Wolfe, ed., *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (originally published in 1944, New York: Humanities Press, 1967).

H. N. Brailsford's thorough study of the Levellers, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (Nottingham: Spokesman University Press, 1976), is of outstanding quality, the best available account of this movement and its ideas. (Brailsford left it unfinished at his death, but it was completed by Christopher Hill.) On the Levellers in the context of English political thought, G.P. Gooch's *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927) remains outstanding.

Undoubtedly the best detailed account of the New Model Army is C.H. Firth's *Cromwell's Army* (London: Methuen 8c Co., 1962). The transcript of the Putney Debates taken by William Clarke is found in C.H. Firth, ed., *The Clarke Papers* (London: Camden Society, 1891–1901).

A.L. Morton's *The World of the Ranters* (London: Lawrence 8c Wishart, 1970) is an excellent and ably researched account, equalled by P.G. Rogers's *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973). Gerrard Winstanley's often bittersweet writings appear in *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings,* ed. Christopher Hill (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

On major figures in the Revolution, Jasper Ridley's biographical sketches in *The Roundheads* (London: Constable 8c Co., 1976) are valuable, as are Christopher Hill's *God's Englishman: Oliver*

Cromwell and the English Revolution (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) and his superb account of John Milton's ideas and activities, *Milton and the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979). The extent to which the elite classes retained considerable power after the Revolution is explored in Jerome Blum's *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978) and Arno J. Mayer's very readable *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon, 1981). The shading of the English Revolution into the American can best be understood by the papers assembled in *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776,* ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

PART III: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The question of whether the American Revolution was a war for independence or a revolution has long been subject to debate. Readers who care to explore conflicting views should examine the essays in *The American Revolution: How Revolutionary Was It?,* ed. George Athan Billias (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1970) and *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution: 1763–1789,* ed. Jack P. Greene (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

Among general histories of the American Revolution, the chapters devoted to the Revolution in Charles and Mary Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949) are still insightful and eminently readable, despite the book's economistic thrust. Outright Marxist works on the subject include Herbert Aptheker's *The American Revolution, 1763–1783* (New York: International Publishers, 1960) and Jack Hardy's *The First American Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1937). The tendentiousness of these books should not cause us to overlook the considerable value of their accounts of class conflicts in the emerging United States. Nor should the reader overlook the section on the American Revolution in R. R. Palmer's splendid *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959).

The innovative, quasi-democratic town meetings of colonial New England are explored in several highly readable accounts. Sumner Chilton Powell's pioneering *Puritan Village* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1965) traces the social and political origins of New England towns to English villages from which the inhabitants emigrated. On the institutional origins of the Massachusetts town meeting, Edmund S. Morgan's *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown *& Co.,* 1958) is lucid and insightful. Kenneth Lockridge's outstanding *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970) traces the development of one Massachusetts town, Dedham, over the course of the colonial period. Michael Zuckerman's *The Peaceable Kingdom: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Random House, 1970) overemphasizes the degree of consensus in New England town meetings but vividly conveys the remarkable autonomy that the town meetings enjoyed in the eighteenth century.

I cannot recommend too highly T. H. Breen's *Puritans and Adventurers: Change and Persistence in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) for its explorations of the commonalities and differences between the colonies and Britain. David S. Lovejoy's *The Glorious Revolution in America* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), an excellent and eminently readable account of early conflicts with Britain, provides fascinating material on republican ideology. The ideological ferment that led to republicanism in the colonies is discussed in detail in Ralph Ketchum's *From Colony to Country* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), while Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univer-

sity Press, 1967) lucidly expounds the importance of the True Whigs to American revolutionary thought. Nor can the reader ignore Staughton Lynd's *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (New York: Random House, 1969).

The colonial drift toward conflict with Britain is well chronicled in Pauline Maier's *From Resistance to Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1974). On the role of Massachusetts in the Revolution, Robert E. Brown's *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691– 1780* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955) is informative albeit neoconservative. The activities of the Boston Town Meeting and Boston Committee of Correspondence are covered in Richard D. Brown's *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772–74* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970) and Dirk Hoerder's *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts: 1765–1780* (New York: Academic Press, 1977). The agrarian revolutionary environment in New England is developed with considerable sensitivity in Robert A. Gross's *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill 8c Wang, 1976). For the mid-Atlantic coast and southern colonies, Charles S. Snyder provides a pithy account of Virginia's revolutionary politics in *American Revolutionaries in the Making* (New York: Collier Books, 1962). Elisha P. Douglass's *Rebels and Democrats* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Books, 1955) is highly recommended, ably covering class conflicts in all parts of the colonial America. The chapters on the southern colonies are particularly fine.

On the issues, passions, and conflicts that surged up in the Revolution, there is no substitute for *Common Sense* and *The Crisis,* works by the greatest polemicist and propagandist of the period, Tom Paine. Carl L. Becker's study of the natural rights doctrines that imbued radicals in British America, *The Declaration of Independence* (New York: Random House, 1942) is insightful. Salient documents, declarations, and polemics of the time are gathered in Samuel Eliot Morison's *Sources and Documents Illustrating the American Revolution and the Formation of the Federal Constitution: 1764–1788,* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) and a *Documentary History of the United States: The American Revolution, 1763–1783,* ed. Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper 8c Row, 1970).

The revolutionary leaders come to life in a multitude of biographies and collections of their correspondence. Two of exceptional value are Pauline Maier's *The Old Revolutionaries* (New York: Random House, 1982), which includes some of the lesser-known figures of the Revolution such as the admirable Thomas Young, and A.J. Langguth's *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon 8c Schuster, 1988). For further studies into the living aspects of the Revolution, the reader may want to consult the *American Archives,* easily available in a respectable university library, and the papers that appear in the *William and Mary Quarterly.*

Essential for an understanding of the popular movement are Jesse Lemisch's essays "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., vol. 25, no. 3 (July 1968) and "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in *Towards a New Past,* ed. Barton Bernstein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968). Charles G. Steffen's *The Mechanics of Baltimore* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984) is an in-depth account of one city, as is Ronald Hoffman's *A Spirit of Dissension* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), on Maryland as a whole.

The literature on the Committees of Safety is regrettably sparse and scattered. Agnes Hunt's slender *The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution,* originally published in 1904 (reprinted by New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968), is still the most comprehensive account of this revolutionary engine, although its focus is on the committees at the provincial

level rather than at the more local levels. The opening chapters of Margaret Burnham Macmillan's *The War Governors in the American Revolution* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965) also contain a valuable discussion of the formation of the Provincial Committees throughout the colonies. Ironically, the literature sympathetic to the Loyalists during the Revolution often tells us a great deal about the patriot committees that "persecuted" them. The best works of this kind are Alexander Clarence Flick's *Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution* (originally published around 1900; republished by New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969) and Claude Halstead Van Tyne's *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1902).

The best source for the local committees is accounts of the popular revolutionary upsurges in the individual provinces. For Pennsylvania, Richard Alan Ryerson has explored in detail the social makeup and revolutionary role of the radical committees in Philadelphia in his remarkable *The Revolution Is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765–1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978). This book, together with J. Paul Selsam's *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1942) and Robert L. Brunhouse's *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), gives a fine picture of the internal conflicts, grievances, and the committees that surfaced in that stormy province.

Robert J. Taylor's *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1954, reprinted in 1967 by Kraus Reprint Corp.) provides a comprehensive background of the social changes that led to Daniel Shays's rebellion. The latter event is presented very perceptively in David P. Szatmary's *Shays' Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), which details the significance of the uprising fully and sympathetically.

The conflicts and issues surrounding the Constitution of 1787 and its ratification in 1789 are vividly depicted in Merrill Jensen's *The Making of the American Constitution* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1964). The public debates that followed the convention are examined in the famous *Federalist Papers* of James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, which are available in a large number of editions, most recently and outstandingly in *The Debate on the Constitution,* ed. Bernard Bailyn (New York: Library of America, 1993). Also essential for understanding the public consideration of the Constitution is Jackson Turner Main's *The Anti-Federalists: 1781–1788* (New York: W.W. Norton 8c Co., 1961), along with the fine documentary source *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates,* edited with a valuable introduction by Ralph Ketchum (New York: New American Library, 1986). Merrill Jensen's *The Articles of Confederation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), in conjunction with same author's *The New Nation: A History of the United States during the Confederation, 1781–1789* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), is an outstanding study.

PART IV: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

An overview of the Revolution that covers its salient events is Albert Goodwin's brief *The French Revolution* (New York: Harper 8c Row, 1966), which provides more valuable interpretative material than one might expect from so short a work. J.M. Thompson's *The French Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) is another fine introductory account and is particularly valuable because of the details it supplies on the popular sectional assemblies and the direct democracy

of the Parisian *sans-culottes.* Georges Lefebvre's two-volume *The French Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962) is one of the best of the contentious narrations of the events. A highly absorbing account is William Doyle's *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

The narrative events and important *journies* of the Revolution are well covered in Jacques Godechot's *The Taking of the Bastille, July 14, 1789* (New York: Charles Scribner 8c Sons, 1970); Christopher Hibbert's *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow 8c Co., 1980); R.R. Palmer's *Twelve Who Ruled* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969); and Stanley Loomis's *Paris in the Terror* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1964). These narrative works also give serious interpretation to the Revolution's events, but, most important, they bring the reader into the streets of Paris at various times during the Revolution.

The system of privileges, the various social and economic crises, and the declining legitimacy of the ancien regime prior to the Revolution are taken up in C.B.A. Behrens's *The Ancien Regime* (London: Thames 8c Hudson, 1967; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967,1975); Franco Venturi's *The End of the Old Regime in Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); and George Rudd's *Europe in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Broadly social accounts of the Revolution include Alfred Cobban's controversial *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), a "revisionist" account of changes in privilege and property relationships during the Revolution, that is of inestimable value and interpretive importance. Norman Hampson's *A Social History of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) and Lynn Hunt's *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and her *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) are outstanding. Linda Kelly's *Women of the French Revolution* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) helps fill a major void in accounts of the Revolution, although a great deal can be found about militant *sans-culottes* women in works specifically on the *enrages.* The opening chapters of H. Sewell, Jr.'s, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) provide an exceptionally insightful, indeed bedrock discussion of the *sans-culotte* artisans. Gwyn A. Williams's comparative study of popular movements in Britain and France during the Revolution, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968) is a small but nonetheless immensely rewarding study. Yves-Marie Berce's *History of Peasant Revolts* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990) provides a fine analysis of peasant revolts in the centuries before the French Revolution, while P.M. Jones's *The Peasantry in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) accounts for the Revolution in rural areas. Jacques Godechot's *The Counter-Revolution: Doctrine and Action, 1789–1804* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971) shows the "other side" of the Revolution.

Albert Mathiez's *The French Revolution* (New York: Russell 8c Russell, 1962), originally published in Paris in 1922, is favorable to Robespierre and was the progenitor of more radical histories of the Revolution later in this century. Other radical interpretations of the French Revolution include a Trotskyist version by Daniel Guerin, *La Lutte de classes sous la Premiere Republique* in two fully documented volumes (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1946); a highly abridged version has been translated into English under the title *Class Struggles in the First French Republic* (London: Pluto Press, 1977). For an anarchist interpretation of the Revolution, Peter Kropotkin's *The Great French Revolution* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989) remains eminently readable, despite its datedness.

Albert Soboul, an outstanding Marxist scholar of the Revolution, has provided a veritable library of his own on the subject. His *Short History of the French Revolution: 1789–1799* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) qualifies less as a history than as five interpretative essays. His massive *Precis* has been translated into English under the title *The French Revolution: From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon* (New York: Random House, 1974). But Soboul's most pioneering work—a masterpiece by any political standards—is his monumental reconstruction of the Parisian sectional novement, *Les Sansculottes parisiens en I'An II: Histoire politique et sociale des sections de Paris, 2juin 1793–9 thermidor An II* (La Roche-sur-Yon: Henri Potier, 1958). Part II of this important work has been translated into English as *The Sans Culottes* by R6my Inglis Hall (New York: Doubleday 8c Co., 1972), along with the Marxist generalizations in the original French introduction and conclusion. Soboul and Walter Markov have assembled a remarkable set of documents from 1793–94, with the original French side by side with a German translation, under the title *Die Sansculotten von Paris* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957).

The social background, lives, views, and activities of individual revolutionary leaders are sketched out in biographical surveys such as J.M. Thompson's *Leaders of the French Revolution* (New York: Harper 8c Row, 1929) and *Robespierre and the French Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1962). Thompson's biography *Robespierre* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) is expansive. Norman Hampson has also written a series of fine biographies, notably *Danton* (1978), *The Life and Opinions of Maximilien Robespierre* (1988), and *Saint-Just* (1991), all of which are published by Basil Blackwell at Oxford. A modest biography of Marat is Louis Gottschalk's *Jean Paul Marat: A Study in Radicalism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

A stunning monographic literature on the Revolution has appeared in English in recent years. Particular note should be made of R. B. Rose's *The Making of the Sans-Culottes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983) as well as his *The Enragis: Socialists of the French Revolution*? (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965). Morris Slavin's *The French Revolution in Miniature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984) is a remarkable reconstruction of the activities of the section Droits-de-l'Homme, where Jean Varlet served as secretary, throughout the Revolution. Slavin's *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1986) explores in detail the abortive *sans-culotte* insurrection of June 2, 1793. Richard Cobb's *The People's Armies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987) is a fascinating, detailed account of the revolutionary militia that the Committee of Public Safety used to deal with its opponents in the countryside; Cobb's *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) is also valuable. Marc Bouloiseau's *The Jacobin Republic: 1792–1794* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) is an up-to-date account of the interaction between the Jacobins, the Girondins, and the popular movement.

Recent revisions advanced by Francois Furet appear in his essay "The French Revolution Is Over," in Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution,* trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge University Press, 1981). Alfred Cobban provides a cursory survey of recent interpretations of the Revolution in the second chapter of *Aspects of the French Revolution* (London: Granada Publishing, 1971), while a selection of readings from different interpretive viewpoints appears in *New Perspectives on the French Revolution,* edited by Jeffrey Kaplan (New York: John Wiley 8c Sons, 1965).

Accounts of the period between Thermidor and the emergence of Napoleon appear in Albert Mathiez's *After Robespierre: The Thermidorian Reaction* (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1965),

which gives a good account of the *sans-culottes'* last rising in the Prairal Insurrection of 1795. Georges Lefebvre's *The Thermidorians* (New York: Random House, 1966) is more a summary account than Mathiez's. On the Babeuf conspiracy, David Thompson's *The Babeuf Plot: The Making of a Republican Legend* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner 8c Co., 1947) includes a pertinent discussion of the ramifications of the conspiracy into the nineteenth century. R.B. Rose's *Gracchus Babeuf: The First Revolutionary Communist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978) is a detailed intellectual biography. Babeuf's own statements from his trial appear direcdy in *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf,* edited and translated by John Anthony Scott (New York: Schocken, 1972).

For documents, pamphlets, *cahiers,* articles and official documents for each phase of the Revolution in English translation, an outstanding selection is *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution,* a massive work selected and annotated by John Hall Stewart (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965). *Le Moniteur,* the periodical that contained much of the official material and reports during the revolutionary period, is available in good university libraries.

VOLUME TWO

For my granddaughter Katya

Preface

This volume, the second of *The Third Revolution,* deals primarily with the major nineteenth-century uprisings of the French working class, from the Revolution of 1830 through the Revolution of 1848 to the Paris Commune of 1871. It also necessarily examines the origins and history of the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA) or First International and the Second International, primarily a Marxist social democratic association heavily influenced by the German Social Democratic Party. The increasingly ideological nature of nineteenth-century workers' movements and the emergence of a modem proletariat and an industrial capitalist class made it necessary for me to explore in some detail the transition from Jacobinism, a radical republican ideology and movement, to various socialisms oriented toward the working class. During the first half of the century a modem class conflict really appeared in both England and France and, with it, various socialist and anarchist ideologies that were already sprouting in the immediate aftermath of the Great French Revolution. Hence, in addition to covering the revolutions themselves, I provide summary accounts of the ideological transition from left-wing Jacobinism to outright socialism.

In a sense, this volume is not only an account of one of the stormiest periods of popular insurrections in modem history but also an account of nineteenth- century France, as seen through the lens of its great revolutionary movements and ideologies. The revolutions of 1830, 1848, and 1871 in Paris were, in great part, extensions of the Revolution of 1789 to 1794, which is also how many of their participants regarded them. In contrast to most conventional historians, I share Roger V. Gould's view that the June 1848 insurrection of the Parisian workers was the most class-conscious of all nineteenth-century French revolutions, even more than the dramatic Paris Commune of 1871, which was by no means socialist or exclusively working class in character—it was actually less a class revolution than a municipal, political, and patriotic phenomenon, precipitated by the Prussian siege of Paris. But the June insurrection of 1848 can be seen, as many of its participants saw it, as the "third revolution" that the *sans<ulottes* had hoped to make in 1793.

This volume is also an account of the transition from artisanal socialism to proletarian socialism. The two forms of socialism, while overlapping in many respects, were also different in their goals and methods. Indeed, the book's narrative pivots on this transition, as well as on the shift from the small handicraft workshop to the modem capital-intensive factory, with the differences in sensibility and politics that the transformation produced. In 1789 and 1830, the militants were primarily artisans, especially journeymen, and by trade were often carpenters, masons, furniture makers (particularly in the Saint-Antoine district of Paris), and printers, rather than factory workers. By the turn of the twentieth century, the leading militant members of the working classes were metalworkers, who retained the independent spirit of skilled artisans while simultaneously forming an integral part of the factory environment. Among the thousands of semiskilled or unskilled and poorly educated proletarians in factories, it was these "artisan-proletarians," so to speak, who were the most educated, forceful, and independent and to whom the others turned for leadership. They begin to appear as early as June 1848, and as the reader of volume 3 will find,

they played a very prominent role in the great revolutionary wave that swept over Russia and Germany between 1917 and 1921.

I share the view of Bernard H. Moss, William H. Sewell, Jr., and other recent historians of the nineteenth-century French working class that ideas of cooperative, indeed collective production and distribution (as distinguished from individualistic forms) became very widespread in Paris in the years after 1830, and especially following the 1848 Revolution. These ideas varied greatly and were often vague in conception, ranging from simple trade unions with guildlike features to cooperatives with egalitarian and collectivist methods of production and distribution. It is highly unlikely that Parisian artisans or even "skilled workers," as Moss calls them, moved unerringly in the direction of developing collective forms of work. After all, about fifty percent of the enterprises in Paris during the 1840s were owned by artisanal masters, often aided by one or more assistants.

But many of these master craftsmen aspired to secure their independent status against the efforts of merchant capitalists to control them, and against the encroachments of the factory system which, judging from the unsavory English example, threatened one day to proletarianize them as well. The need to defend their trades, or *etats,* from merchant control and industrial competition alike made them eager to unite with their fellow masters in cooperative societies. But it is unlikely that most of these artisan masters aspired to create a full-blown socialist society based on the collective ownership of property.

On the other hand, a large number of artisans were employees rather than employers—indeed, only ten percent of the masters employed ten or more workers—and these ordinary workers or journeymen appear to have been far more open to radical egalitarian ideas about collective property ownership and cooperative production. Thus, the Parisian working class initially had no coherent, let alone shared concept of association and the "organization of work"; from masters to journeymen to outright unskilled proletarians who were little more than laborers, their demands probably varied considerably.

In the 1830s and 1840s, any attempt to establish a truly collectivist basis for industrial production would have encountered great difficulties. But many French artisans devised ingenious schemes for establishing productive associations of a socialistic kind based on their existing workshops. Hence their earliest calls for a new "organization of work" often came down to demands for shared resources for credit; insurance funds to tide individual artisans over in times of unemployment, illness, and old age; and legislation to protect their small workshops against competition from the growing factory system.

In time, however, and in growing numbers, the most sophisticated worker "militants," comprising both artisans and journeymen laborers, did seek to collectivize most of the French economy. Many historians of the French labor movement maintain that nineteenth-century French craftsmen were genuine proletarians who were fervently committed to collectivist ideas of socialism based on free associations. Marxist historians, on the other hand, regard most of the Parisian craftsmen as "petty bourgeois" remnants of a preindustrial society, whose "associationist" ideas were based on the private ownership of small-scale property. 1 have accepted neither viewpoint in *toto* but have tried to steer a middle course between the two. *Pace* Marx, collectivist goals did emerge among many French artisans after the Revolution of 1830. But these goals were diverse, often confused, and ultimately unworkable within the context of the small-scale production that prevailed in French industry for most of the nineteenth century.

One wing of the collectivist ideology of artisanal socialism called for the nationalization of railroads, banks, and major industrial enterprises, to be managed by the men and women who worked in them. But in the main, French socialists, not to speak of anarchists, were generally more enamored of federalist ideas of association than centralist ones, an affinity that, well into the next century, in conjunction with their commitment to workers' control of industry, would make them either conscious or intuitive supporters of anarchosyndicalism, with its creed of bottom-up industrial management within the framework of libertarian trade unions. Hence the failure of French Marxists to establish a secure basis in the French working class or to consistendy abide by Marx's views, either during or after his lifetime.

Unlike Moss, I have eschewed the appellations "skilled workers" and "skilled proletarians" in favor of "artisans" and "artisan proletarians." I believe that what distinguished most Parisian workers from the emerging factory proletariat was primarily their characteristically strong sense of personal independence and self-reliance, not simply their possession of skills. Doubtless, the artisans' independent sensibility was reinforced and partly formed by their skills. But theirs was also a culture and community that harked back to an older era, possessed of civic as well as class consciousness. Revolutions are very territorial events: the class antagonisms they express occur within distinctive communities, with their own cafes, civic halls, squares, and even streets as well as workplaces. In France in particular, a revolution would actually consist of many local revolts, each based in a particular neighborhood. Hence the fatal tendency of French workers, especially Parisians, to scatter to barricades in their own neighborhoods during times of insurrection, instead of organizing a citywide and regional coordination against counterrevolutionary military forces.

It had been my hope to encompass this history of the popular movements in the revolutionary era within two volumes. But as my preparation of the second volume continued, it became clear that a third volume would be required. To have limited *The Third* Revolution to only two volumes, I discovered, would have obliged me to omit crucial events, ideas, and developments within the revolutionary tradition. I can only hope that the reader finds that this three- volume book has been worth his or her attention and that it evokes a sense of the great events that are fading from memory today—and the lessons they have to teach present and future generations.

The writing of this volume was very often burdened by the formidable problem of factual discrepancies among the various histories upon which I drew. Many accounts, I found, differed on everything from names to dates to sequences of events, as well as omitting important details of the revolutions at the grassroots level. Not even contemporary eyewitnesses and participants agreed on all the basic facts: Lamartine's and Blanc's histories of the February 1848 Revolution, for example, diverged even on simple details regarding major events. These discrepancies, which recurred again and again, obliged me to consult many memoirs, contemporary documents, and other histories before I felt I could make reasonable judgments and present a responsible picture of these nineteenth-century insurrections. Under such circumstances, errors are difficult to avoid, and I can only hope that any that may persist in the pages that follow are minimal and inconsequential.

Several staff members of the Bailey-Howe Library at the University of Vermont in Burlington were also very helpful. Not only did Dean Leary and June Trayah go out of their way to make available books from the library's excellent collection, but Craig Chalone and Rebecca Gould actually brought some of them to my home after their working hours in the dead of a Vermont winter. Being seriously disabled, I could not pick them up myself. Fred G. Hill of the Fletcher Free Library did me a similar kindness and managed to acquire several indispensable but difficult-to-find books through the interlibrary loan system for me. To all of these kind Vermonters, I owe my warmest gratitude. Finally, I wish to express my immense debt to Jane Greenwood, my editor at Cassell, for her generous support for the book, and for making it possible for me to go to a third volume. I also remember with fondness my former editor, Steve Cook, for his interest in and encouragement of the entire project.

Murray Bookchin Burlington, Vermont May 18, 1997

PART V. THE RISE OF ARTISANAL SOCIALISM

Chapter 22 From Jacobinism to Socialism

The influence of the French Revolution did not end with the fall of the Robespierrists on July 28, 1794—or, by the revolutionary calendar, with the tenth of Thermidor in Year Two of the Republic. Among a minority of radical conspirators, the Great Revolution, as it came to be called, was to haunt the Napoleonic era and the Bourbon Restoration that followed it. Although it was given a grisly image by the returning monarchy and nobility and clergy as the incarnation of terror and bloody civil war, the Revolution lived on among beleaguered republicans, and later among socialists, as a valiant attempt to create a new era of freedom for the oppressed masses of France and even for humanity as a whole.

Indeed, as I have noted, it remained an imperishable source of lessons for revolutionaries of every kind who, well into the twentieth century, would model their strategies on the attainments and failings of 1789 to 1794. Later generations of revolutionaries would sing the "Marseillaise" as an international hymn at gatherings throughout Europe, and they would employ the term citizen (until it was supplanted by *comrade* among socialists and anarchists) as a form of address in correspondence, manifestos, and public orations well into the nineteenth century. In nearly all Western European countries, selfdesignated Jacobins were to proclaim a stridendy republican ideology and establish Jacobin-type societies.

But some of these societies took their views beyond the expansive principles of legal equality embodied in the "Constitution of '93." They began to demand not only personal equality but economic equality as well, in what came to be known as red republicanism. Such advances over a stricdy political Jacobinism consisted of notions of distributive economic justice, according to which wealth was to be equitably shared within the existing system of property ownership.

In this respect, the political and economic oudook of nineteenth-century red republicans did not go much beyond that of the radical English Levellers of two centuries earlier. The good society, according to Levellers and red republicans alike, was to consist of small-scale producers, such as peasants and artisans, each of whom was entitled to the basic means of life according to traditional principles of "natural law," such as those advocated by Colonel Rainborough in the Putney debates.[1] Economic inequities, radical Levellers and red republicans argued, could be eliminated by sharing the resources of society in a just manner, especially by providing a material competence—commonly, a parcel of land—to every poor man and his family. Every "he," as Rainborough put it, should enjoy the right in a free society to secure a beneficent future as an independent food cultivator or even as a small entrepreneur.

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[1] See volume 1 of *The Third Revolution,* pp. 112–16.

Neither the Levellers nor the red republicans, however, challenged the existence of private property as such. Quite to the contrary, they believed property should be freed of medieval encumbrances that impeded its equitable distribution among the peasantry and the urban poor. What they opposed was the system of privilege, based on birth and the purchase of tides, that formed the social infrastructure of the ancien regime.

These views, of course, were not socialist. They did not call for the collective ownership of property or demand that the products of labor be distributed according to needs. The red republicans, even more decidedly than the Levellers, desired an economically as well as politically equitable society in which artisans, owning their own tools, and peasants, owning their own plots of land, would gain the full rewards of their labor without the exploitation of a propertyless class. In short, they desired a social order that would equalize the ownership of property rather than collectivize it, guaranteeing full economic and political liberty for all.

This basically individualistic system of small-scale production, carefully tuned by a friendly state and/or by cooperatively managed credit institutions to foster equality in the ownership of the means of production, was to become very popular among artisans early in the nineteenth century in Britain and especially in France, whose economy was mainly structured around handicraft production and a peasant agrarian society. Its most famous advocate was Pierre- Joseph Proudhon, whose ideas and influence we shall examine in due course.

Inasmuch as many of these French artisans had to cooperate to defend themselves against the invasion of their markets by cheaper factory goods and to find ample credit to tide themselves over difficult times, they early formed associations or corporations for mutual aid. Such corporations were no more socialist in the present-day sense of the word than, for example, contemporary trade unions or credit unions; but the very fact that they seemed like authentic producers' cooperatives easily induced social thinkers in the last century to view them as a form of socialism. And in fact, these corporations often engaged in many common activities, ranging from the innocently festive to the militantly defensive, that imparted to them a seemingly socialistic character. Indeed, as they became a sort of programmatic movement, with forceful demands for the rectification of serious injustices, they were often pejoratively called socialists. Thus, following the custom of the day, they may conveniently be included under the general rubric of *artisanal socialism.*

The earliest authentic artisanal socialists, however, were those artisans and theorists who demanded more than the equitable ownership of private property.[2] They began to challenge the existence of private property as such, calling for the *collective* ownership of the means of production wherever feasible. (Prudendy and for sound political reasons, these early authentic socialists exempted from collectivization the peasantry, which viewed its ownership of family plots as a sacred right.) As to the distribution of goods produced, these socialists initially believed that the produce of their work should be shared according to the labor contributed by each artisan.

Still other socialists, who by the 1840s were to be called communists, believed in a more ethical system of labor and distribution, one that would avoid the inequities produced by un-

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[2] For a fuller discussion of artisanal socialism, see Chapter 24. As G.D.H. Cole observes, the word *socialism* in the early nineteenth century acquired a family of meanings. Minimally, it meant "collective regulation of men's affairs on a cooperative basis." Socialists at that time might make no reference to class conflict, for example, and "they all attacked the undue inequality of property and income and they demanded the regulation and limitation of property rights"—which did not necessarily mean its abolition. G.D.H. Cole, A *History of Socialist Thought,* vol. 1: *The Forerunners* (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 4–5.

avoidable differences in individuals' abilities to contribute their labor to the common society and in individuals' needs. Guided by the maxim "From each according to his (or her) abilities, to each according to his (or her) needs," the communists held that a truly egalitarian society had to take full account of the different physical capacities and needs of its members. Accordingly, the distribution of goods should be based not on the labor expended by a worker in the process of production but on the specific needs that he or she had to satisfy—needs that inevitably varied according to the producer's familial and personal responsibilities.

CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES

During the course of the nineteenth century, the artisanal world of small shops and handicraft production in which these ideas evolved was gradually replaced by the proletarian world of large factories and machine production, giving rise to a class of mainly unskilled machine operatives. Given the emergence of factories that were too large to be owned by a single craftsman, socialism had to change its "scale," so to speak. Socialist ideologies appeared that emphasized the integration of production on a regional and national level. Socialization soon began to mean the complete takeover of the economy either by the state (nationalization) or by worker-controlled, confederally organized trade unions (syndicalism). Particularly after the Paris Commune of 1871, artisanal socialism steadily gave way, albeit never completely, to proletarian socialism, with corresponding changes in the forms of organization that workers favored and by which their revolutionary leaders hoped to change society.

The strategies that artisanal and proletarian socialists used in their struggles for social change commonly stood in marked contrast to each other. Aside from their corporations, artisans normally belonged to clubs and often to secret societies. They tended to denigrate parliamentary activity, even where they were allowed to vote, and turned to direct action in the form of crowd assaults against the police and military. In periods of serious crisis, they often reared barricades and engaged in outright insurrection. Their organizations were generally transitory, they appeared and disappeared with changes in political and economic conditions.

By contrast, proletarians tended to form trade unions and political parties. When major social crises produced insurrectionary situations, and even in periods of social revolution, industrial workers generally functioned through mass parties, labor unions, and councils, which were often extensions of their coordinating strike committees. Where artisans built barricades, proletarians created paramilitary organizations. Where artisans tended to confine their insurrections to their own neighborhoods, proletarians, united by their factories, rose on a citywide, regional, and national scale, preceded by general strikes that in some cases paralyzed an entire country. These differences in strategy and forms of organization between artisans and proletarians, to be sure, were by no means ironclad. As early as the 1820s, and especially in the 1830s, French artisans took recourse not only to insurrections but to strikes on an increasing scale, and they organized trade unions as well as clubs to pursue their ends. Nor did they eschew the use of political organizations to elect deputies to parliamentary bodies.

But the transition from artisanal to proletarian socialism belongs to a later chapter. In the early nineteenth century artisanal socialists had yet to decipher such problems as their relationship to the ruling elites of their time, the nature of exploitation, and the role of classes in creating a new society. Their theorists viewed the formation of a cooperative world almost entirely as a problem of moral suasion. They were convinced that the wealthy had to be persuaded by ethical arguments

to foster the various socialistic schemes that abounded after the French Revolution. The good offices of the rich and powerful, they believed, were necessary to bring about total change—hence the importance of offering compelling examples of cooperative living and production as a means to gain the backing of elites.

Obviously, this view of social change discouraged the spread of class consciousness, still less notions of class struggle. In the eyes of early socialist theorists, the old and new potentates of the world were expected to lend their support and wisdom to the innovation of socialistic schemes that in fact were expressly opposed to their interests. Various socialist theorists even tried to find a place for the old elites in their new world, whether as the financiers of socialist projects, administrators of socialist schemes, or even as the potential leaders of a socialist society. Hence the early socialist theorists emphasized not class struggle but one or another form of class reconciliation—where the existence of class exploitation was acknowledged at all.

Thus, with such amiable views toward the wealthy and powerful, the utmost confusion existed among early socialists about how the owners of private property acquired their profits. Did they do it by overcharging consumers? By exacting interest from borrowers who needed credit to buy raw materials and pay wages? By working their hired laborers to the limits of their physical endurance (an explanation that conflicted with the desire of many socialist theorists to foster class harmony)? By reaping surpluses from sound agricultural practices? Or simply as just rewards for their contribution to the productive process? These were some of the more popular notions that the economists of the day floated for public consideration and that many early socialists incorporated into their analyses.

The ideological transition from Jacobinism to socialism was gready complicated by republican myths and conspiratorial organizations. The prevailing radical ideology during the Bourbon Restoration, especially in the 1820s, was still republican—and in many countries it remained so for the rest of the century. Monarchies and aristocracies still appeared as the principal obstacles to political reform, as they would up to the First World War. The distinction between republican and socialist aims was not as immediately clear, at that time, as it is in retrospect The largely republican rhetoric of the French Revolution colored the oratory and literature of red republicans and socialists alike. Indeed, for a time the two movements engaged together in the same uprisings and conspiracies and their members often belonged to the same secret societies.

Adding to the confusion, some minimally socialistic ideas could be coaxed out of the Great Revolution itself. Saint-Just's proposal, in Ventose (February and March) 1794, that the property of "recognized enemies" of the republic be sequestered and distributed among "indigent patriots," later seemed like a socialistic willingness to redistribute property. But these Ventose Laws, which the Convention enacted some four months before their sponsor was brought to the guillotine, proved unworkable, especially since enormous difficulties stood in the way of determining which enemies were "recognized" and which patriots were "indigent" Nor were these laws socialistic in nature: they involved a simple transfer of property from a very limited number of "enemies" to a very large number of poor, which left only a pittance to each eligible patriot. The Ventose Laws could better be regarded as a form of charity for the impoverished masses.

Far more socialistic in nature were the demands of Gracchus Babeuf and his supporters who formed the "the Conspiracy of the Equals" during the spring of 1796, in the wake of the Great Revolution. The "Manifesto of the Equals," written in April by Sylvain Marechal as a definitive statement of their aims, represented a sharp discontinuity with the French Revolution, even as it resonated with all the Jacobin verbal flourishes of 1793. "The French Revolution is only the herald

of another revolution," declared Marechal in the spirited language of the time, one "far greater, far more solemn, which will be the last of them all." The Constitution of 1793, the manifesto concluded, "was a great *de facto* step toward real equality; never had anything come so near to real equality. Yet even this latter Constitution did not reach the goal and bring about the common welfare, the great principle of which it nevertheless solemnly consecrated."

Giving reality to this "great principle," according to the manifesto, would involve nothing less than creating a **"REPUBLIC OF EQUALS,"** in which all discrepancies of wealth would be abolished by establishing "the **community of GOODS!** No more individual ownership of land: *the land belongs to no one.* We are demanding, we desire, communal enjoyment of the fruits of the earth: *the fruits belong to all."*[3]

This was heady language indeed. If doubts remain among historians of socialism that the Babouvists demanded the eventual abolition of propertied society, they may be dispelled by Babeufs own defense at his trial, after the Babouvist conspiracy was betrayed and its leaders arrested. As Babeuf read into his trial record passages from his periodical, *Tribune of the People,* he unequivocally asserted:

> The sole means of arriving at [the Republic of Equals] is to establish a *common ad-ministration;* to suppress private property; to place every man of talent in the line of work he knows best; to oblige him to deposit the fruit of his work in the common store, to establish a simple *administration of needs,* which, keeping a record of all individuals and all the things that are available to them, will distribute these available goods with the most scrupulous equality, and will see to it that they make their way into the home of every citizen.[4]

But Babeuf s appeal for socialism and even communism was stillborn; after the suppression of the conspiracy, these ideas fell victim to the social and political amnesia that gripped most of France during the Napoleonic and Restoration years. It was not until the 1830s, more than a generation after Babeuf was executed by the Thermidorian Directory, that socialism arose in Europe as a lasting concept, and even then the word *socialism* was not minted in the country of the Great Revolution—rather, it first appeared in print in England in 1827, in a periodical committed to Robert Owen's vision of a new society. During the Restoration, from 1815 to 1830, French radicals were still largely occupied with various neo-Jacobin republican conspiracies against the Bourbons.

Although Babeufs conspiracy was largely forgotten after its leaders were executed or imprisoned, one of the last surviving Babouvists, Philippe Buonarotti, published in 1828 a two-volume documentary history of the Conspiracy of Equals—the *Histoire de la conspiration pour legalite, dite de Babeuf*—that catapulted the plot and its drama into public attention and stimulated the development of *revolutionary* socialist ideas in France, in contrast to the tamer notions that artisanal and similar socialist theorists were propagating. Buonarotti, a fiery Italian of noble ancestry, had been caught up in the Great Revolution while studying law in Paris and was granted French citizenship by the Convention in 1793. Although he subsequendy became involved in the Babeuf

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[3] Sylvain Marechal, "Manifesto of Equals" (April 1796), in *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History,* ed. Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders (New York Doubleday, 1964), pp. 52, 55, 53; emphases in the original.

[4] "Babeuf's Defense" (Vendome, February-May 1797), in *Socialist Thought,* ed. Fried and Sanders, pp. 67–8; emphases in the original.

conspiracy, he was spared the guillotine after its suppression and was imprisoned. Eventually he went into exile in Geneva, but he remained a volatile insurrectionary whose ideas melded old political *enrage* sentiments with new artisanal socialistic ideas. For nearly thirty years, the massive cultural and political backlash against revolutionary activity notwithstanding, he actively participated in Italian and French republican conspiracies.

Buonarotti lived long enough to gain the awe of young romantic revolutionaries of all kinds— republican and nationalist as well as socialist— as they began to proliferate once again in the late 1820s. His book may not have been the kindling that fed the socialistic fire that burned in the breast of French youth, but it was almost certainly the spark that set it alight By the time of his death in 1837, he had played a major role in transforming the simple Jacobinism of many of his young followers into the vigorous revolutionary socialism of Babeuf and his supporters that stressed insurrection and class war. Indeed, before he died, Buonarotti would see the tricolor of the First Republic replaced by the red flag of socialism in the streets of Lyon and Paris.

LABORIST RADICALISM IN BRITAIN

To the socialist ideologies that were percolating in France in the early nineteenth century, British radicals added a new and more theoretically sophisticated dimension. In the 1790s many self-styled Jacobins in England had demonstratively hailed the French Revolution from across the Channel, but Britain's own first steps toward socialism were drawn from uniquely English sources, reflecting a significantly different economic and social dispensation.

Where early French economic theorists such as the Physiocrats, living in a predominandy agrarian and preindustrial society, appropriately regarded agriculture as the source of value and material surpluses, British economic theorists, faced with an era of industrial growth, adopted a labor theory of value. So pervasive was this orientation in English economic theory that many economists in Britain may properly be called "laborists," as George Lichtheim called them.[5] The centrality that English economics gave to labor can be traced from William Petty in the late seventeenth century to Adam Smith in the eighteenth, but it was David Ricardo a generation later, living in the full tide of the Industrial Revolution, who drew from laborist theories their broad social and economic implications.

The notion that labor is the source of all "wealth," as the laborist theorists put it, could lead to very radical conclusions. By enhancing the centrality of the worker, laborist theory gained a tremendous explanatory power that was more appropriate for socialist ideas than earlier, more simplistic notions. Indeed, before Ricardo, English socialism had been little more than a moral theory that enjoined the exploited and their exploiters to behave with a decent regard for each other's needs. This largely subjectivistic approach nourished very naive and reformist notions of social change. Most "utopian socialists," as later generations of socialists would call them, were content to appeal to employers, the state, and even despots to institute various reforms and gradualist strategies, often in ways that were simply patronizing to the "lower orders" and in awe of their social "betters."

Ricardo, who as a man of wealth was anything but a social radical, imparted to the labor theory of value a degree of theoretical consistency that none of his predecessors had achieved. Not only did he conceive of labor as a commodity, much like any other commodity on the market,

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[5] George Lichtheim, *The Origins of Socialism* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1969), p. 135.

but he cast the labor theory of value in terms of *subsistence.* As a commodity, he said, a worker's labor was worth no more than the minimum costs of maintaining that worker in everyday life and of reproducing future workers for the production of agrarian and industrial commodities (leaving aside wage fluctuations that may arise from supply and demand and other factors). To use Ricardo's own formulations in his pivotal 1817 work, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation,* the "natural price" of labor is precisely what is "necessary to enable the labourers, one with another, to subsist and to perpetuate their race, without either increase or diminution." Hence the value of labor—that is, the wages to which laborers are entitled—depends "on the quantity of food, necessaries, and conveniences [that] become essential to him from habit"[6]

Followed to its logical conclusion, this "iron law of wages," as it came to be called, meant that poverty was a systemic—and endemic—condition of capitalist society. Poverty, in effect, was caused not merely by the greed of the rich; it stemmed above all from compelling laws of the marketplace, including those described in Malthusian theory that maintain that surplus population always drives wages down to the barest minimum needed to keep the labor force alive..

Although socialists were very critical of Ricardo's implicit justification for the existence of poverty, his subsistence theory of wages provided them with the means by which they could construct a highly impressive case against capitalism. Without abandoning their moral condemnation of the self-seeking bourgeoisie, especially as the Industrial Revolution and all its horrors began to crest in Britain, they could now support their demands for a complete reordering of society along cooperative lines by pointing to trends *inherent* within capitalism *as such.* Armed with this analysis, socialists influenced by Ricardo's labor theory, or "left Ricardians," could now demystify the hidden nature of capitalist exploitation. They could dispel the characteristic claim of capitalists to the profits that accrued in their factories and banks as a form of fairly earned "remuneration"—the "wages" of capital—for the services they provided to the economy. Ricardo's laborist theory created the basis for understanding that wage labor, as a distinct social relationship between the capitalist and the proletarian, was not only exploitative but necessarily resulted in the impoverishment, indeed the destitution, of the industrial worker.

Even among radicals who had studied Ricardo's works, to be sure, these ideas remained somewhat hazy: they were not to be fully clarified until Marx brilliantly synthesized English economic theory with French socialist ideas, while in France itself, no such argument existed until these theories crossed the Channel. But awareness, among early British socialists, of the unique features of capitalism was growing, as a result of new economic developments. Far more than any country in the early part of the century, Britain was witnessing a steady erosion in the status of traditional artisans, the substitution of machines for handwork, and the undermining of the family cottage industry by the factory system—in short, the Industrial Revolution. Unavoidably, these basic changes in British society—and the searingly harsh social conditions they generated—obliged early British socialists to transcend the political limits of Jacobinism. But it was above all the early appearance of the Industrial Revolution in England that profoundly influenced the rise of socialism, and not only at home, where its impact—the degradation of the proletariat—was immediate, but in time on the continent, where capitalist social relations were poised to penetrate as well, wreaking a similar transformation on continental working classes.

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[6] David Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817; London: Everyman, 1926), p. 52.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: ENGLAND

England is justly cited by most historians as the country of origin for the Industrial Revolution, since it was here that most of the technological innovations were developed that laid the basis for the factory system and rationalized forms of large-scale agriculture. Beginning with James Watt's sophistication of the steam engine, they eventually transformed the entire structure of social life both in Britain and on the continent But the Industrial Revolution was not only a process of mechanization of production: it also meant the rise of capitalist social relations, which had already begun before mechanization, when relatively independent cottage workers, using fairly traditional tools and machines, were grouped together into sheds or factories (so named after the traveling "factors," who provided them with raw materials and bought up their semifinished goods) so that their output and working hours could be regulated. A large cottage industry of artisans was to coexist with these factories well into the nineteenth century, but other processes were under way that would finally transform the nature of production in the modem world.

Any account of the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the revolutionary tradition must draw a clear distinction between the striking technological innovations that made the Industrial Revolution *possible,* and the *actual* changes that industrialization brought into the everyday lives of ordinary people. Although technical innovations were obviously necessary for the emergence of an industrial capitalist economy, their impact on society itself was often very uneven—an unevenness that partly explains the varying tensions that pervaded the entire era. The discovery of a new technique, it is important to note, was not immediately followed by its application to industry. Often a considerable lag existed between a technological discovery and its practical use in the economy. Because of this lag, the "proletarianization" of the preindustrial artisan world was often relatively slow—providing time for the emergence of widespread and often stormy resistance to the factory system.

The development of new machines, well beyond the resources of the artisan and too large to be used effectively in cottages, began modesdy. In 1733 John Kay invented the so-called flying shuttle, a simple device that made it possible for a cotton weaver to produce twice as much cloth as a single individual could. Thereafter necessity clearly became the mother of invention, as each innovation in the textile industry created a major disequilibrium in the various stages of doth production. Kay's flying shuttle, for example, created an enormous demand for thread, a demand that could not be satisfied until new techniques for spinning became available. A full thirty years later, in 1764, this disparity was still only partly resolved when James Hargreaves designed a simple spinning jenny that could turn eight spindles instead of the single spindle of the traditional spinning wheel. Five more years then had to pass before Richard Arkwright, in 1769, patented the water-powered spinning frame, which, based on the rotary motion of two sets of rollers, could produce a finer and tighter thread. The water frame allowed for the use of as many as four hundred spindles, which could produce inexpensively in England the fine handspun yam and cloth that fashion-conscious Britons had previously had to import from India.

It was not until a decade later that Hargreaves's spinning jenny and Arkwright's water frame were improved still further by Samuel Crompton's spinning mule in 1779. Now the English textile industry had a surplus of thread but not enough mechanized weavers to turn it into cloth. Until mechanized weaving machines came into use, mechanically spun thread was still woven by artisans using handlooms. Indeed, the intervals between each successive but partial technical innovation were filled by using the labor of many traditional artisans and cottage workers.

Small producers who wholly or partly finished machine-produced commodities were thus long indispensable to the operations of large mills. Some six years after Crompton, in 1785, Edmund Cartwright finally patented the power loom, which, after important refinements, laid the basis for the mechanization of the entire cotton cloth industry.

None of these inventions could have been sufficient to assure England's industrial hegemony if the prime mover had been only water power, an unreliable source of energy that limited factory sites to streams that were often remote from commercial centers and ports. This crucial problem was ultimately resolved by James Watt's modem steam engine, patented in 1769, which in time was to become the pulsating heart of factories, locomotives, and steamships. Yet Watt's steam engine was still too inefficient and fragile, even decades after it had been invented, to completely free factories from their reliance on water power. Indeed, many of the eighteenth-century inventions, in their original form, were very cumbersome and crude and constantly in need of repair. Mining operations were plagued by flooded pits, and cheap steel long remained unavailable, despite improvements in smelting.

Not until the next century did further improvements, especially more sophisticated techniques of instrumentation, make these innovations eminently feasible and economically predominant. Indeed, it was not until the 1830s, a century after Kay's flying shuttle and some sixty years after Watt's steam engine, that modem industry in England finally arrived. By that decade more than 270,000 operatives were producing cotton goods, many in factories in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Still another generation had to pass before the new system crowded out nearly all handworkers and cottage producers—by which time England had earned its title "the workshop of the world."

The technological changes introduced by the Industrial Revolution produced major changes in the class configuration of England as well. For some four or five generations before the Industrial Revolution triumphed, the traditional working class had been divided among masters, journeymen, and apprentices: now it underwent a sweeping metamorphosis. "Workers" included not only artisans (preindustrial journeymen as well as masters), who worked in fairly small installations with tools and hand-operated machines, but industrial workers who were unskilled adjuncts of huge, highly rationalized, capital-intensive factories, closely supervised by foremen and managers.

Although both artisans and proletarians were regarded as workers and although both assumed the name *proletarians* (particularly in France), their interests, behavioral patterns, and degree of militancy diverged markedly. Generally artisans, working outside the industrial environment, had a certain latitude in determining their working hours, and they enjoyed a degree of independence in producing a fairly complete product—imparting to them a sense of craftsmanship and pride that was denied to factory proletarians. Not surprisingly, these artisans opposed the encroaching industrial system with a militancy that was rare among early factory proletarians, many of whom were more subdued and deferential toward factory owners.

A similar differentiation occurred within the "bourgeoisie." Initially meaning "burgher" or city dweller, the word *bourgeois* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was increasingly applied to professionals, merchants, financiers, and well-to-do retailers who enjoyed a comfortable income and held property— especially land—in amounts that now set them apart from ordinary city dwellers. Within even this fairly amorphous category, the Industrial Revolution slowly produced another cleavage. The new industrial class, which more appropriately should be called *capitalists,* began to develop interests that were separate from—indeed, in collision with—those

of the traditional bourgeoisie. The term *bourgeois* was thus more appropriately applied to non-industrial upper classes—until a capitalist ruling class with shared social interests emerged that encompassed financiers and merchants as well as industrialists.[7]

These distinctions are far from semantic quibbles. The social metabolism of the early nineteenth century was profoundly guided by struggles between craftsmen, landed bourgeois, merchants, proletarians, and industrial capitalists.

As new situations arose, these strata variously worked with each other at some times and opposed each other at other times. By the end of the century, when artisans had all but disappeared as an important productive force in England and Germany, the words *bourgeois* and *capitalist* came to denote a broad but single social group—such as factory owners, bankers, and large commercial wholesalers and retailers—whose interests were not only basically shared but organically interlocked.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

On the continent, the lag in industrialization, producing uneven levels of technology in the various stages of production, was even more marked than in England. Where, by 1810, England could boast of possessing some five thousand steam engines, for example, France had only two hundred. Comparable divergences in mechanization applied to nearly all branches of French industry. Generally, too, in the replacement of cottage and artisanal production by the factory system, France lagged far behind England. In the England of 1850, for example, nearly a quarter of a million power looms were in operation, compared with about 40,000 handlooms; in 1848 in France, by contrast, despite its substantially larger population, there were only 31,000 power looms. (Nonetheless, France had a large textile output, which suggests that French handlooms—whose scale we can only guess at because of the decentralized nature of cottage production—were enormously productive.)

To be sure, France, like England, had a number of large industrial installations. The multistoried British factories like the Boulton and Watt engine works were matched by the Le Creusot foundries as early as the 1790s. But if small firms and cottage production lingered precariously in Britain even until the middle of the nineteenth century, they remained dominant in France, and for a much longer period of time. The hand production of garments and luxury items that gave French goods their worldwide reputation for artistry and quality played a major economic role even into the twentieth century.

The marked lag in the spread of factories in France by comparison with Britain is accountable partly, perhaps decisively, by what Tom Kemp has aptly called "the essential paradox of nineteenth-century France."[8] As a result of the Great Revolution, France had one of the most individualistic political and juridical systems in Europe—which, other things being equal, should have supplied an enormous impetus to the rise of industrial capitalism there. Yet the same Revolution, by removing the feudal burdens on agriculture and contributing to a widespread redistribution of

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[7] In this connection, Marx and Engels, in their early writings, used a vocabulary that was more anticipatory of future developments than it was applicable in their day. In the midnineteenth century on the continent, artisans predominated in manufacturing and industrial proletarians were still comparatively rare, yet Marx often used the word *proletarian* to refer to the working class even when its was still artisanal. By the same token, he used the word *bourgeoisie* even at a time when the "bourgeoisie" was more invested in land than in industry. In the 1870s, especially after his fights with the followers of Proudhon, Marx used these terms with greater discrimination.

[8] Tom Kemp, *Economic Forces* in *French History* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1971), p. 102.

land, also furnished the material underpinnings for one of the most self-sufficient peasantries in Western Europe. By its very self-sufficiency, this peasantry closed off much of France's domestic market to factory-made goods, creating little incentive for the mass production of commodities such as textiles, leather products, and the like.

To exacerbate the situation, the very individual rights that the Revolution had expanded "confirmed the peasant custom of [land] division on inheritance," Kemp notes, "and thus prevented the development of a really individualist agriculture over the country as a whole." The inheritance clauses of the revolutionary and Napoleonic civil codes

> contributed to *morcellement* [parcelling] of the peasants' lands where they did not encourage the limitation of family size. No doubt they helped to conserve the peasantry, albeit at a low standard of living, but at the price of impeding the expansion of the internal market and the creation of an urban, industrial proletariat.[9]

Thus, despite the seemingly "bourgeois" revolution of 1789–94, French industrial capitalists actually found themselves at a considerable disadvantage with respect to their English competitors, whose government was engaged in a frenzy of land enclosures that virtually destroyed the British peasantry, leaving "deserted villages" in their wake. French industrial capitalism was significandy impeded by the very revolution that has been described as classically bourgeois.

Nor was the French bourgeoisie itself disposed to foster industrial development along British lines. In the early nineteenth century the big bourgeoisie, largely centered in Paris, continued to expend its funds on the purchase of land, on mortgages and state bonds, and on monetary speculation, to the general neglect of the industrial economy. Still predominantly agrarian, the French economy was hidebound by tradition—parochial, craft-oriented, and above all, fixated on the value of land—the very traits that had marked the economy of the ancien regime. As for the expansion of the internal market and the overcoming of regional isolation, few statistics highlight the differences between England and France in these years better than the numbers for railway mileage laid down. In 1843 British rails extended for 2,036 miles, compared with only 268 miles in France—a nearly tenfold difference that remained significantly undiminished for decades. The extent to which regional distinctions, so pronounced in the preindustrial era of both countries, were diminished by industrialization and by railroads strongly affected the kinds of socialist ideas and practices that would develop on each side of the Channel.

BRITAIN'S SOCIALIST TRAJECTORY

Economic factors alone, to be sure, cannot account for the differences in the socialist movements that emerged in Britain and France: political traditions, the flexibility of existing institutions, and the cultural elan of the laboring classes had significant effects as well. But the role of economic factors should not be underrated.

Reaching unprecedented peaks early in the century, British land enclosures produced a labor force that was inchoate and demoralized, one that eventually fell prey to ruthless exploitation on the part of fiercely competitive factory owners. In England itself, between 1800 and 1820, about 300,000 acres of open land, on which many villagers depended for wood and pasturage, were enclosed, leaving incalculable numbers of rural folk at the mercy of industrial capitalists. The labor

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[9] Ibid., pp. 103–4.

force that entered the new English factories was thus made up of broken people, disheartened by the loss not only of their homes but of the traditional protections that had once been supplied by the landed nobility and by guilds. Like the independent artisanal handworkers who were faced with extinction by power-driven machinery, the new industrial proletariat was caught in the harsh tension between a rationalized factory system and the more organic lifeways, however miserable they had been materially, of preindustrial village society.

Cannily, British industrial capitalists exploited the weaknesses of this proletariat by playing its religious and gender differences against each other. About twenty percent of the new English proletariat was composed of Irish peasants who had fled devastating economic conditions in their own country. Acrimony flared up easily between Irish Catholics and English Protestants, despite the misery that both groups shared in factories and slums. Such differences kept proletarians sufficiendy divided among themselves that their potential to unite in opposition to their employers was, for a time, diverted into mutual hatred—until class consciousness began to dilute the malice English workers harbored toward "foreigners" and "papists."

Moreover, an estimated three-quarters of the factory labor force was made up of women and children. Socially vulnerable and relatively docile, these groups could be reduced to submission to factory owners with relative ease. No section of the working population, during the entire Industrial Revolution, was more ruthlessly exploited and more effectively controlled by the industrial bourgeoisie. Female workers, generally intimidated by their employers, could be hired instead of militant males inclined to trade union organizing. Children, for similar reasons, were worked to exhaustion, growing up into an adult generation physically weak and deformed by rickets. So warped were their bodies that they unnerved even the ruling classes, who required a supply of physically able recruits, not only for England's factories but for its military forces as well.

The more independent artisans, still rooted in the cultural lifeways of the preindustrial past, were far less accepting of their deteriorating social condition than these industrial workers. Riots and near-insurrections over food shortages and social abuses were their typical forms of protest. Even strikes began to occur, although they were to become more characteristic of industrial than artisanal workers. The skilled keelmen of Newcastle went on strike as early as 1750, as did London tailors a year later, both actions lasting several weeks. In 1753 in Manchester, carpenters, joiners, and bricklayers—that is to say, artisans—as well as construction laborers engaged in a work stoppage for higher wages, even raising money to defend their imprisoned leaders. Above all, great hunger riots swept over Britain in 1795–96, marked by virtual insurrections and attacks on the person of the king in London, led by craftspeople whose belligerency was redolent of the waning noncapitalistic world.

Other artisan revolts were more organized. The stormy Luddite movement, which tried to preserve old artisanal lifeways by damaging new labor-saving machines, was initiated mainly by cottage lace and hosiery workers in the Midlands, spreading to croppers and cotton weavers in 1811–12. These artisans and cottagers were hardly a riotous crowd but were made up of a number of well-organized groups who secretly directed their activities against carefully selected industrial targets. During the summer of 1812 the government had to station more than 12,000 troops in places where machine-breaking disturbances and riots had occurred. After a brief hiatus late in 1813, the movement resumed, panicking industrial capitalists into fears of a well-organized insurrection. Not until a major trial in York Casde was their movement effectively put down, resulting in the hanging of twenty of their leaders and the penal transportation of seven to Australia.

Such behavior and values, as Gwyn A. Williams so perceptively concludes, were essentially *pre-industrial* in a deeper sense than the merely technical.

> "Long have we been endeavoring to find ourselves men," said the sailors of the British fleet in 1797. "We now find ourselves so. We will be treated as such." They learned this tone from others. The first *political* statement of this instinct was made by men who, however poor, could not conceive of themselves as [factory] "hands" or a "labour force," men with the dignity of a skill and the mystery of a craft, men who polished tools and knew the "fine points," men whose wage was a "selling price" and whose property was labour, men whose values, even in adversity, were fixed by an earned independence. The statement, once made, was universal—since, to quote another of them—"a man's a man for a' that"—but its origin should not be overlooked. This is the central truth... The ideology of democracy was preindustrial and its first serious practitioners were artisans.[10]

Which is not to say that the new industrial proletariat was completely passive in the face of the terrible abuses inflicted upon it. The first "modem" industrial strike seems to have occurred in 1810, when Manchester cotton spinners left their factories by the thousands—disbursing among themselves, for their subsistence, £1,500 a week in strike funds that they had accumulated. It was a harbinger of later strikes that were to sweep up industrial proletarians in great movements for higher wages, shorter hours, and improved working conditions. Yet at the beginning of the century the English industrial proletariat was already making itself felt, opening expectations that would make it the focus of socialist ideology for several generations.

Nevertheless, neither the industrial proletariat nor the artisan craftworkers in England challenged the existing structure of society as such, despite the attempts of many radical theorists to impute such aims to them. In the wake of Cromwell's rule, the ruling classes in Britain had developed a sufficient degree of institutional flexibility to keep mass movements under control, their willingness to use force against rebels notwithstanding. The great movements of the English working classes, including Luddism, were effectively contained within the parliamentary system—to an extent that comparable movements in France were not. Unlike monarchical government in France, parliamentary government in England always held out the prospect that it could be reformed to benefit the poor and disenfranchised, with the result that any social or political upheaval, far from intensifying into a revolutionary situation, could ultimately be settled by compromise. In the 1790s the landed classes, in an attempt to keep the rural poor from migrating to the cities, agreed at Speenhamland to provide a basic, albeit meager income to the most underprivileged residents of the countryside. This measure, which remained in effect for decades, did not prevent all hungry and dispossessed villagers from migrating to the new industrial towns. But by providing a semblance of patronal concern and by giving traditional rural society an extended lease on life, it helped keep revolt in abeyance.

The Chartist movement and its outcome exemplify this containment of popular opposition. Adopted in 1838 by the London Workingmen's Association, the People's Charter raised basic demands for reforms like universal manhood suffrage, payment for members of Parliament, a secret ballot, fairly divided electoral districts, the abolition of property qualifications for membership

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[10] Gwyn A Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes* (London: Edward A Arnold, 1968), p. 114.

in the House, and annual parliaments—demands that more or less had already been granted in the United States.

Support for the Chartist movement came from almost every sector of the English working class—factory workers as well as artisans, laborers as well as intellectuals, clerks as well as ale-house proprietors. The movement had a certain volatility, and some of its actions took threatening forms: in July 1839, after the House of Commons rejected the Charter despite the million and a quarter signatures attached to it, the ensuing popular anger generated riots, strikes, and even local uprisings. Talk of outright civil war was rife but not frightening enough to prevent the House from rejecting a second Chartist petition in 1842. In April 1848—itself a year of armed insurrection on the continent—a plan to present Chartist demands to Parliament in yet another great petition, accompanied by a mass demonstration, generated a veritable panic among the ruling classes. Expecting hundreds of thousands of Chartists to all but invade London, they proceeded to turn the capital into an armed camp. A large civilian constabulary was recruited from the middle classes; the aged Duke of Wellington was entrusted with the command of an army to defend the city; and even the queen was spirited off to the Isle of Wight for protection against the anticipated insurrection.

But the panic, as it turned out, was unfounded. Since its high point in the early 1840s, the Chartist movement had actually been waning. In advance of the 1848 effort, its leaders were sharply divided over strategy, and the relatively small crowd that massed to present the petition was patently intimidated by the government's enormous show of force. The middle-class elements who had formerly supported the Chartists had by now turned their attention to other pressing issues, especially an effort to abolish the Com Laws, which had been enacted in 1815 to restrict the importation of com in the interests of the landed classes, but which were keeping domestic food prices and wages inordinately high. Industrial workers, for their part, had shifted from Charter agitation to the formation of trade unions (which the repeal of the Combination Acts had permitted) as the most promising means for achieving their material goals. Finally, the artisans, newly harnessed by the industrial system, were turning to peaceful forms of action to preserve their waning status and lifeways.

In fact, a strong prima facie case can be made for correlating the rise of Chartism with worsening economic conditions, and its ebb with material improvements. It was when the price of com increased enormously in 1838 and when a severe depression developed in 1842 that Chartism became a major force, as working-class fury reached near-insurrectionary proportions— only to wane during the intervening years and virtually fade away after 1846, when bread-and-butter trade unionism began to supplant Chartist influence among the proletariat.

Moreover, even as Parliament was using a firm stick to intimidate the Chartist movement, it was also offering the working classes a carrot in the form of ameliorative labor legislation. In 1844 a Tory parliament passed a law reducing the working time of children between the ages of eight and thirteen to six and a half hours daily. Young people between thirteen and eighteen could not work more than eleven hours, and child and female labor was prohibited completely in mines. Three years later a ten-hour working day for everyone was enacted, making English labor legislation among the most advanced in the world. Factory inspectors were appointed to oversee working conditions, issuing reports that would gain a reputation for an unprecedented critical frankness. In the years that followed, the middle classes and ever larger sectors of the working class gained the franchise. Apart from a few flare-ups—which themselves never seriously threatened the social order—the English proletariat was ultimately domesticated.

The trajectory of English socialist movements was no more revolutionary than Chartism. Socialist proletarians and artisans put their efforts into the formation of cooperatives, benefit and educational societies, and conventional trade unions rather than the fomenting of insurrections. Later generations of socialists pinned their hopes on the formation of the Labour Party, which professed to seek a socialistic society by electoral means. Nonetheless, before English socialism was entirely tamed, many early English socialists and their anarchist affines were committed to less parliamentary approaches. In October 1833 delegates to a Cooperative Congress in London, called by Robert Owen to unite the cooperative and trade union movements, flirted with the formation of a "Grand National Moral Union of the Productive Classes" (the presence of the word "Moral" is worth noting) and with waging a general strike as a means to achieve a cooperative society. In the same month a meeting of Glasgow workers endorsed a resolution for a general strike in terms that Harry W. Laidler calls "like a modern syndicalist manifesto."[11]

But the strike plan they discussed was not general in any syndicalist sense; on the contrary, it was intermittent and fragmentary. Workers would set aside some of their income, and when they had accumulated sufficient funds to cover their living expenses for an extra week or month, they would remain at home for that period of time. Afterward they would return to work, repeating the same alternating sequence of work and idleness. This "direct action" was intended to eventually reduce capitalism to a shambles. Laidler's opinion of its militancy notwithstanding, the notion was naive and never carried out. Later, a more resolute notion of a "Grand National Holiday" of one month's duration would capture the imagination of many Chartists, who actually managed to bring out workers for several days on the "holiday." But the strike had no staying power, nor did it assume national dimensions. Following harsh persecution by the authorities and a lack of conventional trade union support, the effort—and the idea of a general strike—fizzled out.

For all his single-mindedness and idealism, the great "utopian socialist" Robert Owen was by no means a firebrand. He resolutely opposed the notions of class conflict that were percolating through the English working class. Initially a textile manufacturer, he had introduced sweeping reforms in his factory at New Lanark to show that capitalism could be managed beneficently and humanely, while still making a profit—and New Lanark quickly became a showplace for visiting statesmen and industrialists. In his later endeavors he hoped to create a new society structured around "villages of cooperation." As Owen envisioned it, these self-sufficient "villages," initially peopled by the unemployed, would combine agriculture with industry to produce for members' needs and then exchange their surpluses with one another in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition. In time, he hoped, the "villages" would peacefully replace capitalism and its industrial installations, opening an era of harmony and brotherly love. Owen even tried to gain governmental assistance to realize his plan, which, needless to say, was not forthcoming.

Although he devoted the rest of his life to realizing this essentially preindustrial vision of a new society, none of his practical schemes succeeded—least of all his attempt to finance, establish, and maintain a utopian community in the United States. Yet his tireless efforts to improve the condition of the working class made him, for a time, the indubitable leader of early English trade unionism, while his propaganda on behalf of cooperatives helped inspire various communitarian movements that flourished well into the next century, both at home and abroad. (In the late twentieth century Owen's cooperative vision continues to be recycled by communitarians who

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[11] Harry W. Laidler, *History of Socialism* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), p. 97.

appear to know nothing of the "villages of cooperation" or the lessons to be drawn from their failure.)

For the rest of the nineteenth century, British socialism proliferated into a variety of tendencies: guild socialism, with its emphasis on localism; Fabian socialism, with its emphasis on gradualism and education; and even a small Marxian socialist tendency and a fairly respectable anarchist scene. But all of them culminated in the creation of a parliamentarian labor movement of sizable proportions. As for the laborist ideas of David Ricardo and the socialists who had drawn out their radical implications, they were absorbed into the synthesis produced by Marx, whose economics were far more Ricardian than many of his supporters acknowledged.

Ironically, the greatest single achievement of English socialism—or at least the English radical milieu—was the work of an exiled German who, ensconced in the British Museum, produced a masterpiece, *Capital,* that profoundly shaped socialism in most of the world—except, perhaps, in Britain. The passing of the artisans—and with them their strong sense of independence, their sometimes benign traditional lifeways, and their commitment to a moral economy—had done much to devitalize the British working classes and steer them toward parliamentary solutions for social problems. Idealistic social goals were consistendy replaced with pragmatic reforms to limit working hours in factories, expand the franchise, and allow for trade unions and a social democratic labor party. In England it was ultimately in parliamentary legislation that social changes were registered.

THE FRENCH SOCIALIST TRAJECTORY

In France, by contrast, social changes were ultimately registered in armed insurrections that, even as failures, left a legacy of radical idealism with enormous international influence.

From an ideological and emotional standpoint, the foremost fact about French socialism was the drama of the Great Revolution itself. Haunting every aspect of Gallic political life— reactionary as well as revolutionary—it was fought and refought in the very writing of history. Historians of various revolutionary sympathies wrote accounts of the Revolution as Dantonists, Robespierrists, Hebertists, and even (albeit rarely) as *enrages.* On the other side of the debate were historians who admired the Bourbons, the Girondins, and even the contemptible Directory, not to speak of Bonapartists who claimed the revolutionary mantle for their Emperor, and moderate republicans who were ecumenically inspired by the monumental events of 1789 and afterward.

Indeed, until the 1860s, when Baron Haussmann began to destroy the city's revolutionary character and its many landmarks by building broad avenues— so useful for providing a clear line of fire for artillery to rout demonstrators— the Revolution was inscribed on the city of Paris itself. The Tuileries, in whose magnificent gardens fighting had broken out in July 1789 and whose palace Louis XVI and his family had occupied after the women's march on Versailles in 1789, was still the official center of the national government. The Hotel de Ville still stood as a testament to the revolutionary Commune, where Hebertists, *enrages,* and *sectionnaires* had debated furiously and where Robespierre had briefly taken refuge after his fall. Inasmuch as the Parisian city hall became the traditional site for the sanctification of revolutionary governments, radical insurrectionaries would repeatedly try to occupy it in the name of popular sovereignty, recapitulating its importance in the Great Revolution.

The *quartiers,* houses, and streets that would form settings for nineteenth-century barricades—and the paving stones that would be their building material—bore testimony to Paris as the world center of revolution, but especially for the people of France. To live in Paris in the early nineteenth century was to drink at the very fountain of revolution, to feel its presence in every street, alley, cul-de-sac, and avenue. There one could encounter the sons and daughters of the *sans-culottes* who had driven forward the Great Revolution—and even elderly men and women who themselves had played a role in its events. Physically, despite Napoleon's self-celebratory monuments, Paris remained an oversize medieval city with narrow alleys, cul-de-sacs, and twisting streets, shaded by overhanging tenements as many as seven stories high—the ideal urban landscape for barricade fighters as well as for snipers. However poorly armed, civilians could defend themselves in this city with telling effect even against trained professional troops.

Paris, too, was the center of the most vigorous cafe life in Europe. During the Empire and the Bourbon Restoration, despite repeated attempts to suppress their political and oratorical ebullience, radical Parisians took every opportunity to express their caustic views of the current regime. Centered in the cafes where they dined, drank wine, played chess, and read periodicals, ardent young intellectuals mixed with literate artisans—although seldom with ordinary workers—to create a highly spirited public forum. As wine loosened both tongues and passions, they transported one another to visions of a France that would once again uphold the torch of an enlightened Europe against the Holy Alliance, the union of powers that Mettemich of Austria, after the Napoleonic wars, had fashioned with the complicity of Prussia and Russia.

Particularly after the Bourbon Charles X was dislodged from the throne in July 1830, Paris became a fertile ground for republican and socialist clubs. Attracting especially intellectuals, these political clubs proliferated with a new vitality in the temporarily freer atmosphere of the Orleanist monarchy. Young Parisians gave avid support to Poland's efforts to emancipate herself from Russian tyranny, to Greek struggles against the grip of Turkish rule, and to Italian attempts to forge a nation out of the many territories that fractured the peninsula. Poring over the pamphlets that passed from hand to eagerly waiting hand in the radical demimonde, their ferment did not go unnoticed by police agents.

Broad conceptions of a socialist society were to come slowly, generally from intellectuals and journalists. Apart from Babeuf, whose Conspiracy of Equals was resurrected by Buonarotti in 1828, the earliest important socialistic visionary in France was the Comte de Saint-Simon, who, despite his tide and claim to direct descent from Charlemagne, had managed to survive the full fury of the French Revolution. Saint-Simon remained throughout his life dedicated to the interests of *la classe la plus nombreuse et la plus pauvre,* as he put it—the downtrodden French working class, which was indeed the "most numerous and the poorest"

His intentions and his fantasies of a perfect harmonious society aside, Saint- Simon was the most conspicuous of the Utopians to make a hardheaded assessment of the Industrial Revolution and to extol its economic promise. Welcoming advances in technology, he viewed *les industries* as the elite of the future who would, in a world guided by reason, reorder society to alleviate the material misery of the masses. *Les industries* included not only the workers but practical scientists, managers of industry, engineers, factory owners, and especially bankers, who Saint-Simon believed could be persuaded to channel their financial resources into socially benign enterprises. Any conflicts between these groups, he contended, were needless, the results of a socially distorted society that his utopia would remedy.

The changing emphases of Saint-Simon's ideas belongs to a history of socialist ideology rather than to the present book, as does their evolution over a span of some thirty years into a justification for a technocratic oligarchy (Saint- Simon held no brief for democracy) and a planned economy. Here it is necessary only to note that, in certain superficial respects, he anticipated Marx's economistic views; further, he was the earliest thinker to advance the basic propositions of a state-guided socialism, which were not to be taken up and put into practice for generations. In the early 1820s Saint-Simon's disciples remained ideologically entirely within his essentially technocratic framework. But after their master's death in 1825, they set out on a course of their own, expanding his call for the moral regeneration of society and even for a "New Christianity" into the establishment of a full-fledged Saint-Simonian church, replete with rituals, hymns, costumes, a quasi-religious hierarchy, sermons, and scriptural compilations of his writings, supplemented by additions of their own. Although Saint-Simonism sank no lasting roots in the French working classes, it exercised a certain fascination on some of the *industries* to whom its founder appealed—notably the banker Jacques Laffitte; the Perier brothers, financiers who founded the Credit Mobilier; a number of big manufacturers; and the gifted journalist Pierre Leroux, whose Saint-Simonian journal *Le Globe* "coined" the word *socialisme* (whether independendy of the British or not) in November 1832.

Of lesser importance in their day but nonetheless of considerable long-range influence, particularly among radical bohemians, were the Fourierists, whose *maitre,* Charles Fourier, devoted most of his life to formulating a science of human nature based on "universal" laws of attraction and repulsion, and a corresponding plan for social reconstruction. A brilliant pamphleteer and a biting critic of bourgeois pretensions, Fourier remained a loner in the often arid fields of utopian socialism. His spare time—he worked as a traveling salesman—was devoted to creating extraordinarily innovative schemes for social regeneration. Wilder fantasies that he harbored, such as "anti-lions" that were to replace existing carnivores, seas to be filled with lemonade, and stages of human advancement that sometimes resembled science fiction, are easily derided. Yet Fourier, who gauged the progress of humanity by the status of women in society, drew up serious plans for self-sufficient cooperative communities, which he called phalansteries, composed of individuals whose natures would complement each other in exact mathematical ratios. Instead of boring toil, work, in Fourier's utopia, would be an enjoyable and varied activity, with an almost hourly rotation of tasks in horticultural as well as artisanal work. His originality in this respect surpassed that of socialistic theorists who followed him—indeed, many ideas that he nourished about the social organization of creative work are relevant to this day.

Fourier's utopia was by no means an egalitarian one: members of a phalanstery were to be rewarded, not on the basis of their labor or their needs, but according to the financial investment they had made in the community. In this respect it is difficult to call Fourier a socialist Yet he was vigorously opposed to capitalism, whose abuses he never ceased to chronicle and attack. Moreover, his phalansteries very closely resembled Owen's "villages of cooperation" (so much so that copious ink was spilled, among Owenites and Fourierists, over the tiresome issue of who had "plagiarized" from whom). Significantly, and in stark contrast to Saint-Simon, Fourier eschewed all notions of a centralized, state-managed economy, a feature of his work that endeared him to anarchists later in the century.

Although only a small number of Fourierists clustered around the lonely man in the 1820s, during the years following the Revolution of 1830 Fourier's ideas gained a respectable following among craftspeople as well as intellectuals. Like the Saint-Simonians, the Fourierists after

the master's death propagated his ideas in a socialistic form. Nor did Fourierism lack for distinguished admirers in the English-speaking world. In varying degrees American journalists and authors such as Albert Brisbane, Horace Greeley, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Ralph Waldo Emerson disseminated his ideas among their readers as well as their peers in the progressive New England elite. Some of his followers created phalansteries in the United States, of which Brook Farm, outside Boston, is the most famous.

Prior to the 1830 Revolution in France, the leading utopian socialists, including Saint-Simon and Fourier, vigorously opposed insurrections and eschewed a class analysis that focused on conflict between the working class and the bourgeoisie. To be sure, they despised the exploiters of their day. Saint- Simon, for example, detested the idle and reactionary landed aristocracy that, during the Restoration, was the preeminent social class (which may account for the support he earned from financiers and manufacturers). Fourier, for his part, feared the impact of competition upon preindustrial society, and the very nature of his phalansteries reflected his disposition to favor rural life organized along communal lines. That later socialists turned their attention away from these ideas and toward the working class is due less to their utopian nature than to the great upheavals, early in the century, that occurred in France— notably the insurrections of the early 1830s and the Revolution of 1848. These events and the stirring demands of the working classes for more freedom could not be ignored, least of all because they were backed up with barricades and muskets.

To French artisans, most of whom worked in small shops and who often aspired to independent enterprises, the institutionalized trade unionism that would soon gain a stronghold among English factory workers was irrelevant Nor did the French parliamentary tradition, in contrast to the British, open avenues for the expression of working-class discontent. As a result, French workers, like radical intellectuals, tended to view direct, even armed confrontation with an oppressive regime as the principal means for resolving social injustices. French socialist movements, in effect, differed profoundly from their British counterparts, not only because they appeared later but because, the pacifism of early socialist theorists notwithstanding, they were much more insurrectionary.

The counterrevolutionary backlash against the French Revolution, especially under the Bourbon monarchs Louis XVIII and Charles X, also brought the repression of republican and socialist movements. Young radicals were obliged to form secret conspiratorial groups, many of which favored as their ideal a "democratic and social republic." This slogan, which was to resound through much of French revolutionary history during the century, fused radical political Jacobinism with clearly socialistic ends, pointing to a change not only in the governing regime but in the social order itself. A "democratic and social republic" would be one that provided for the poor, the underprivileged, and the helpless, and one that protected craft workers from the depredations of the privileged and powerful, and from the inroads of industrial capitalism. For many ordinary Parisians, prior to the 1830s, it was thus essentially a defensive concept, in which government would rectify gross economic inequities and protect artisans in their traditional vocations. Nonetheless, so intense was the reactionary backlash during the Restoration that even this moderate idea could be advanced only in secret conspiratorial societies.

How widespread republican conspiratorial groups were in this period, and how many were socialistic, is hard to judge, given the demimonde they inhabited. But the underground world clearly became a training ground for the formation of expressly insurrectionary secret societies. Although the Italian name for these societies, *carbonari,* is the more familiar one in present-

day accounts, the French name, *charbonnerie* may be more appropriate because the societies probably originated in French-speaking areas of the Jura Mountains among militant charcoal burners. Their name comes from the carbon they produced, not from any use of carbine weapons. And their rituals and hierarchical structures were redolent of the Masons, albeit without any quasimetaphysical language.

The affinity between their names notwithstanding, the two movements were of a considerably different nature in the two countries. Where the Italian *carbonari* were primarily nationalists, the French *charbonnerie* brought together red republicans, embittered Bonapartists, and socialists like Buonarotti (who actually played a major role in both the Italian and French groups). "At its height [the *charbonnerie]* had about 60,000 members in sixty departments [of France], the majority in the east," observes Pamela Pilbeam. "Its aims were vaguely subversive, stressing the brotherhood and equality of man, and it attracted young idealists as well as republicans and Bonapartists unreconciled to the new regime."[12] To circumvent the Restoration penal code that required any organization of more than twenty people to be officially approved, the *charbonnerie* limited each component group, or *vente,* to twenty or fewer members. Again like the Masons, their network was structured hierarchically, culminating in a commanding *vente supreme* in Paris.

Although the *charbonnerie* had been formed by Jura workmen, the movement in Restoration France became essentially an elite phenomenon. Its red republican and other members tended to be not artisans but students, former Napoleonic officers, romantic writers and poets, and even liberals who preferred an Orleanist throne to a Bourbon one. Artisans, who constituted the great majority of French workers at the time, created their own societies based on fellowship and mutual aid, quite apart from intellectuals and professionals. Despite legislation that had been passed during the Revolution banning the traditional guild system and all kinds of trade unions, master craftsmen and journeymen established benefit and mutual aid groups to advance their own interests. Here concepts of mutuellisme were nourished into a specifically artisanal socialism well in advance of Proudhon's writings on mutualism in the 1840s.

The most conspicuous and rambunctious mutual benefit societies at this time were the *compagnonnages,* which were formed by journeymen artisans. *Compagnons,* or bachelor journeymen, wandered around France seeking work and gaining skills, finding temporary housing in hostels. Although their societies were formed for their mutual benefit, *compagnons,* organized according to their trades and housed together in close quarters, were imbued with a strong sense of craft exclusivity and arrogance. *Compagnons* from different trades frequendy clashed with one another, often violently and riotously expressing their trade parochialism as well as their social discontents. In the cafes and streets of small towns and cities they were a perennial source of working-class divisiveness—although in times of social crisis, they might unite to fight the authorities as well. Nonetheless, as their infighting illustrates, craft distinctions still divided French workers. Indeed, it should be noted that the slogan on which the *Communist Manifesto* ended— "Workingmen of all countries, unite!"—was a plea not only for international class solidarity but also for internal class unity.

By the 1830s, however, a new mood was in the air. There was a growing feeling among workers that the term citizen, so commonly used as a mode of address during the Great Revolution, had a dual meaning; it meant one thing for those who worked and another for those who idly enjoyed the fruits of the workers' labor. If economists and utopian socialists still puzzled over the

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[12] Pamela Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution in France* (New York: Si Martin's Press, 1991), p. 21.

sources of profits and preached class conciliation, ordinary workers instinctively knew that they were being exploited, in effect robbed of their labor time. A realization was growing, ever more clearly, that Jacobinism, with its message of political freedom, was inadequate to address the needs of workers, skilled and unskilled alike. Workers in England and France were coming to understand that freedom was incomplete if they were insecure, ill- fed, ill-housed, short-lived, and denied the simplest amenities of life. This understanding did not, in itself, render workers, least of all master artisans, receptive to sophisticated ideas of socialism, but it did open their minds to ideas of cooperative production, spelling an end to Jacobinism as the dominant ideology of social rebellion.

As the nineteenth century approached its midpoint, it was evident to the clearest minds of the time, be they communists such as Marx or astute conservatives such as Alexis de Tocqueville, that the future would be shaped by class conflicts, in which the propertyless masses would be aligned against their propertied opponents. In France, the transition from Jacobinism to socialism, while painfully slow, was to be completed in the fourth decade of the century, when the red flag was pitted in open insurrection against the tricolor of 1789.

Chapter 23. From Restoration to Revolution

France was to enjoy pride of place in producing the principal, indeed the legendary revolutions of the nineteenth century, virtually overshadowing uprisings elsewhere on the European continent. The French knew it— particularly the Parisians—and so did other peoples, who either loved or detested the city of the Great Revolution accordingly. Among those who loved it was Arnold Ruge, the German publicist and co-editor with the young Marx of the *Deutsch-Franzdsische Jahrbucher,* who exclaimed at the outset of a journey to Paris in 1846:

> We are going to France, the threshold of a new world. May it live up to our dreams! At the end of our journey we will find the vast valley of Paris, the cradle of the new Europe, the great laboratory where world history is formed and has its ever fresh source. It is in Paris that we shall live our victories and our defeats. Even our philosophy, the field where we are in advance of our time, will only be able to triumph proclaimed in Paris and impregnated with the French spirit.[13]

Nor was Ruge's romantic buoyancy without historical justification. If Paris never became the center of Young Hegelian philosophy that Ruge naively hoped for, it was certainly the theater for at least three revolutions within a span of forty-odd years. Its romantic aura as the revolutionary center of Europe, indeed of the world, made the city a magnet for radicals from all parts of the continent German, Polish, Italian, and Russian exiles, among many others, mingled and established secret societies in the artisanal neighborhoods of the French capital even during the Bourbon Restoration, despite close surveillance by the French police. Following the substitution of the Orleanist Louis-Philippe for the Bourbons in 1830, the city became the mecca of revolutionary romantics who either permanently—like Chopin—or episodically—like Garibaldi— nourished themselves on the "French spirit" of conspiracy and insurrection.

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[13] Arnold Ruge, Zwei *Jahre in Paris* (Leipzig, 1846), quoted in David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 62.

Of enormous importance were the city's eastern districts on the right bank of the Seine, which were crowded with *ateliers,* a word that refers both to the workshops of craftspeople and to the studios of artists. Moreover, planted in these same districts, roughly between the Place Vendome and the Place de la Bastille, lay the principal administrative and financial buildings of the French national government, immense royal palaces and grim bureaucratic edifices, the national bank and the bourse. In times of crisis, the very proximity of this state and capitalistic apparatus to the *ateliers* invited the discontented to seize the buildings, indeed to do nothing less than seize control of the government The city's romantic aura, however, was engendered by very real social tensions that prevailed within its gates. The capital was a magnet not only for revolutionaries of all nationalities but for impoverished individuals from other parts of France—for artisans who were being displaced by new technologies, and for peasants displaced by the continual parceling of family-owned land into ever smaller plots that were ever less economically sustainable. Immigrants speaking French in foreign accents increasingly intermingled with uprooted craftspeople and peasants who spoke in the heavy accents of distant provinces. In the two generations following the Great Revolution, the population of Paris soared from about 600,000 to well over a million; many of the newcomers planted no firm roots in the city's economy and lived in destitution. Wandering nomads, as they were called, from the Auvergne, in south-central France, and other provinces performed the most menial jobs, mainly as construction laborers, usually arriving in the city for work in spring and summer and returning to their villages in winter. Those who remained behind during the colder months tended to drift into the disease-ridden and criminalized slums around the Rue Saint-Denis and other eastern *quartiers.*

The social volatility brought on by these numerous semi- and unemployed people was heightened by the archaic structure of the French economy itself. However cosmopolitan Paris seemed to foreigners, even to visitors from slum- ridden London, its working classes were highly differentiated. By far the largest number of producers, as we have seen, were artisans, such as printers, tailors, furniture makers, masons, jewelers, and carpenters. The majority were employed by masters, who worked alongside their employees in the *ateliers.* Accustomed to relatively relaxed work rhythms, they should be clearly distinguished from the proletarians who toiled in the new factories that were emerging on the outskirts of the capital.

On the next lower rung of the working class were those who worked in what we would now call sweatshops: dressmakers, lace workers, spinners, and dyers. Mainly women and children, their status was similar to that of factory workers, and like women and children in English factories, they were difficult to organize in opposition to their ruthless exploiters. At the bottom of the economic ladder were the laborers (redolent of the *bras nus* of the Great Revolution), a multitude of transient nomads and more permanently settled workers who filled odd jobs on a daily or weekly basis. Finally, residing in their midst was a large lumpenproletariat whose lives were desperate, often criminal, as they preyed on each other and on more fortunate members of the working class. Congested in slums, they were illiterate, short-lived, overworked when not underworked, and half-starved—the victims of epidemics and food shortages. As Louis Chevalier laconically notes in his study of the Parisian lower classes, "No one [in authority] cared what the working class was doing and what was to become of it"[14]

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[14] Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,* trans. Frank Jellinek (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 189.

Despite these strong social differentiations, the various classes of the capital were not strongly demarcated by residence or by a lack of contact with each other. To be sure, the worst slums of Paris were filled with the "dangerous classes," which might include poor and respectable workers and students, as well as nomads, thieves, and prostitutes, often packed together in extremely unhealthy rooms and apartments. But in the "better" neighborhoods individuals of markedly different social positions intermingled with one another physically, even residing in the same buildings. The first floor (or in American parlance, the second) of such a building might be rented by an affluent bourgeois family, its spacious living room adorned with chandeliers and cosdy furniture. The next floor up would house a more modest but still well-to-do family, while on successively higher floors lived craftspeople of limited means. Finally the small, grim, and virtually unfurnished rooms on the top floor would be occupied by the impoverished, who lived in virtual destitution. During the early years of the Restoration, the intermingling of the well-to-do with the poor seems to have been the rule rather than the exception.

Despite this physical proximity, however, social intercourse was becoming ever rarer in the 1820s and 1830s. Increasingly, the middle classes and the better-off workers were migrating to newly constructed open areas, especially in the western sectors, where dwellings were more suitable to their needs and tastes, thereby physically segregating the affluent from the poor. It was a differentiation that would culminate in later uprisings, when the western half of the city would be considered bourgeois and the eastern half working class.

CABET, BLANQUI, BUCHEZ, BLANC, AND PROUDHON

To the radical members of this differentiated population, socialism, as we have seen, was coming to mean a "democratic and social republic," one in which the state would be responsible for the public welfare. But in the Napoleonic and Restoration eras, few if any of the utopian socialists, like Saint-Simon and Fourier, had a lasting influence on the artisanal workers and the industrial proletariat, with their imaginary utopias and phalansteries. It was the concretely political ideas of socialism that gained far more influence among the working classes, addressing as they did the workers' lived concerns. Along with the writings and activities of transitional socialists like Cabet, those of Blanqui, Buchez, Blanc, and the individualistic Proudhon played varying roles in the revolutionary upheaval of 1848 and in some cases the Paris Commune of 1871, after which their influence dwindled in favor of anarchistic and Marxian ideologies.

Etienne Cabet, a transitional utopian thinker, still had one foot in Owenite and Fourierist schemes and another in down-to-earth radicalism. His utopian novel *Voyage en Icarie* (Voyage to Icaria), published in 1840, was based very much on Thomas More's classic *Utopia:* it advanced a state-communistic vision of production and distribution, guided by the maxim that adorned the novel's opening page: "From each according to his strength; to each according to his needs." The book, which popularized the word *communiste* nearly a decade before Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto,* enjoyed an immense readership when it appeared.

But the book's generous social ideas were marred by the author's preferences for uniformity in clothing, shelter, and almost every detail of daily life—a degree of standardization that anticipates dystopias rather than their opposite. The lives of Cabet's Icarians are shaped by an elite of technicians, who rule the utopia firmly. Indeed, Cabet's version of communism was so authoritarian that it gave the word a dictatorial and statist connotation that it never fully shed. Cabet himself firmly opposed insurrections; nor did his sincerity in trying to advance the interests of

the working class outweigh his failings in its behalf. Yet despite the comparative harmlessness of his views, he was to be hounded out of France as a rabid *communiste.*

Among the other radicals who surfaced in France during the first half of the nineteenth century, three figures should be singled out because of their direct influence on Parisian workers and radical intellectuals: Louis-Auguste Blanqui, Louis Blanc, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Blanqui, although he had a mesmerizing effect on young romantic revolutionaries as a mysterious fomenter and dark genius of insurrectionary putsches, was less popular among workers themselves in the early years of his revolutionary activities. By contrast, Louis Blanc, the sober statesman of the Parisian working class, exercised a brief but considerable influence on the workers of 1848, in spite of his distaste for insurrection. Finally, Proudhon, a latecomer to French revolutionary politics, known to his admirers as the father of anarchism and syndicalism, exercised a considerable international influence well beyond his lifetime. Despite Proudhon's imprisonment and his flights into exile to escape persecution, he was more of a writer than an activist like Blanqui; nor was he by any means as consistent a thinker as Blanc.

Blanqui's life is so enmeshed with the history of nineteenth-century French revolutionary and working-class insurgencies that an account of one is integrally an account of both. He deservedly personifies the era of French revolutionary politics in which conspiracies persistently attempted—and failed—to violendy replace capitalism with what would have been a fairly authoritarian socialist order. Bom in 1805, he was a fiery product of the Great Revolution: his father, a Bonapartist official, had been a Girondin member of the Convention. A stunningly brilliant student, the young Blanqui received a classical education at the *lycee*, from which he graduated with honors, and went on to study law and medicine in Paris. Like his father, he had a passion for revolutionary politics and early in his youth joined the *charbonnerie.*

The young Blanqui was the very incarnation of the committed and unrelenting revolutionary activist. In 1827, while reporting for the liberal periodical *Le Globe,* he was wounded in popular riots. After the publication of Buonarotti's history of the Conspiracy of Equals in 1828, he gave up on a conventional journalistic career, adopting essentially Babouvist political views. After the revolution of 1830 he helped organize several of the conspiracies that jolted the reign of Louis-Philippe, and by 1848 he had gained a widespread reputation for his intractable revolutionary activities, which sent him in and out of prison for most of his adult life. Only imprisonment prevented him from participating in the Paris Commune of 1871. Altogether Blanqui spent some thirty-one of his seventy-six years behind the bars of one jail or another.

The French bourgeoisie reacted to this dedicated man as if he were a nineteenth-century Marat Writing of an event during the 1848 Revolution in which the National Assembly was invaded by a "mob," the aristocratic Alexis de Tocqueville gave a patendy hateful description of him:

> It was then that I saw appear, in his turn, in the tribune a man [Blanqui] whom I have never seen since, but the recollection of whom has always filled me with horror and disgust. He had wan, emaciated cheeks, white lips, a sickly, wicked and repulsive expression, a dirty pallor, the appearance of a mouldy frock corpse; he wore no visible linen; an old black frock coat tighdy covered his lean, withered limbs; he seemed to have passed his life in a sewer, and to have just left it 1 was told it was Blanqui.[15]

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[15] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Recollections of* Alexis *de Tocqueville,* trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), p. 163.

The words of the fastidious *comte* reek with class hatred and social arrogance toward a man whose health had been all but destroyed by the maltreatment of his jailers. Yet as a complete product of the French Enlightenment Blanqui was a committed materialist a strong believer in the power of education to change human behavior, and a bitter opponent of all forms of oppression. He regarded belief in a supernatural being as the greatest ideological impediment to the development of a revolutionary mentality and spirit Contrary to the conventional notion that Blanqui expected to achieve a socialist or communist society by sudden putsches, he actually thought that, while putsches and conspiracies played an important role, a long period of moral education would be necessary to abolish cupidity and material greed in favor of a communistic economy.

Like Marx, Blanqui abjured giving a detailed description of the kind of communist society he hoped would succeed the present one. "One of our most grotesque presumptions is that we barbarians, we ignoramuses, pose as legislators for future generations," he wrote in response to utopian socialists who tried to chart out the contours of a future society. Cabet's communism and Proudhonism "argue vigorously on the bank of a stream over whether there is a field of com or wheat on the other side. Let us cross first, we will see when we get there."[16]

Yet Blanqui's proclivity for agitation of a practical nature often concealed a relatively insightful theory of class conflict and its role in history, including a recognition that "toilers" were a class distinct from the old Third Estate. In this respect, he was unique among the French socialists of his day. He unequivocally opposed the ownership of private property, particularly in its capitalist forms, and he vigorously despised reforms as soporifics that narcotized the desire for revolutionary change. But like many Parisian socialist writers before Marx, his economic theories were fixated not so much on industrial capital as on finance capital, which he believed drained the poor and exploited of society. For him, the source of capitalist profit lay not with the exploitation of the working class but with the ability of capitalists to overcharge buyers—a view that dovetailed closely with the prevailing socialist tendency to make moral condemnations of the profit system.

Contrary to many histories that attribute it to him, Blanqui decidedly did not invent the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat." The notion that the industrial proletariat (as yet a very small minority in France) was a hegemonic class that would lead all other "toiling" strata in transforming society was alien to his thinking. But he emphatically did believe that a temporary dictatorship by an elite of single-minded republicans—more precisely, a dictatorship of socially progressive Paris over the peasantry, which seemed to impede any social advances in France—would be needed to abolish the existing society. His Marxist and anarchist critics were not wrong when they described Blanqui as a man who envisioned the seizure of political power as the work of a small, well- educated, and highly committed conspiratorial group. The secret societies he formed in the 1830s were impressive *military* organizations, with command systems based on complete obedience to a secret central committee. However indirectly, they were to inspire, if not prefigure, the underground organizations established or envisioned years later by Russian populists, even anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin, and the Bolshevik leader Lenin, despite his firm opposition to Blanqui's putschist tactics.

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[16] Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *Critique sociale* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1885), quoted in Alan B. Spitzer, *The Revolutionary Theories of Louis Auguste Blanqui* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 105 and 108.

In fairness to Blanqui, this dedicated revolutionary did not regard putsches as *substitutes* for popular uprisings. Nor did he seek to replace mass action with the actions of a small elite. Quite the contrary the essential function of a Blanquist putsch was to ignite the masses into a widespread uprising against the social order. In this respect, Blanqui was actually following an image of revolution that was widely shared in France, namely, that revolutions were essentially spontaneous popular actions in which a mere spark, like the seizure of the Hotel de Ville or the rearing of barricades in workers' districts, was all that was needed to set the oppressed in motion. Had not the Great Revolution begun as an irrepressible mass uprising initiated by Desmoulins's cry to insurrection at the Palais Bourbon in July 1789? Had not the spontaneous barricades of 1830 toppled a king? A Blanquist putsch was intended essentially as a gesture of the same kind as Desmoulins's cry, both depending for their success on the enthusiastic response of the masses. This vision of revolution as basically spontaneous was cherished by thousands of ordinary French workers and middle-class republicans up to the Paris Commune of 1871, after which it faded away in favor of organized socialist parties.

Finally, what is less known is that later in life, Blanqui wavered in his emphasis on putsches and secret conspiracies as the means for social change. In the 1870s he began to stress the importance of popular education and popular social movements based in large part on the industrial working class. But he always retained a consistent commitment to revolutionary action, and it was this commitment rather than his social theories—which he left unclear or continually modified—that finally endeared him to the masses, especially the young, who revered *le Vieux* (the "Old Man") for his unswerving dedication, honesty, and decisiveness. It is not surprising that this extraordinary and selfless man suddenly died of a stroke shortly after addressing a mass meeting on behalf of imprisoned Communards of 1871. Although he was most beloved by radical intellectuals and publicists, a vast crowd of workers accompanied his remains to their resting place in January 1881. French workers cherished him not only as a legendary symbol of the struggle for socialism but as a committed revolutionary who made no compromises with the oppression and exploitation of the masses.

Even before Blanqui's red republican views yielded to a clearly socialistic outlook, Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez, a physician and former *charbon- naire,* was propagandizing socialistic ideas of association among French workers, based on Christian principles of charity, fraternity, and equality. A populist, Buchez responded with considerable sensitivity to the plight of the workers and gave them practical help in forming associations. Known as the founder of the French cooperative movement, what made him distinctive among the theorists of the 1830s was his emphasis on working-class independence and cooperation in resistance to the encroachments of finance and industrial capitalism.

Buchez was sufficiently tame politically to write for the moderate republican periodical, Le *National,* and to be elected briefly to the presidency of the Constituent Assembly that emerged out of the 1848 Revolution. But in contrast to top-down Saint-Simonian ideas that favored economic associations controlled by entrepreneurs, he was convinced that the workers must form and control their own associations. And in contrast to his collectivist contemporaries Constantin Pecqueur and Francois Vidal, who envisioned the rise of large-scale industry, called for the nationalization of the economy, and relied on the state for the establishment of an associationist economy, Buchez relied on the workers themselves, to whom he turned for the financial contributions necessary to create productive associations.

Buchez's notion of association was, in many respects, radically collectivist. An association, in his view, should be established by collecting dues from workers, which would then constitute its common capital, free of any individualistic encumbrances or claims. Means of production would belong to no individual but exclusively to the association as a whole. Nor could they be restored, even in part, to an individual worker who decided to withdraw from the association. The proceeds derived from this inalienable capital would be used to purchase raw materials and machines, with which the members, working cooperatively, would produce goods for the market. The earnings would then be shared among all the association's members in an equitable and democratic manner.

Buchez's scheme was wholly oriented toward artisans and small-scale forms of production, not toward industrial proletarians and factories. His system of artisanal socialism was anachronistically counterposed to the industrial system and the advanced technology that were percolating into France. But perhaps Buchez's most important heir was Louis Blanc, whose place in the history of socialism greatly eclipsed his and who figured very significantly in the 1848 Revolution.

Characterized in his own day as a utopian socialist, Blanc's political behavior was that of a prudent parliamentarian with generous but moderate social ideals. Like Blanqui, Blanc was the son of a French Bonapartist official; he was born in Madrid in 1811 and educated in Corsica. In 1837, having made his way to Paris, he founded a radical democratic periodical, *La Revue du progres,* and during the 1830s and early 1840s he acquired a measure of scholarly distinction for his historical works, particularly his account of the French Revolution, in which he was partial to the Jacobin republic. But Blanc was no insurrectionary. He opposed the uprising of the Parisian workers in June 1848 and the Commune of 1871, and in 1872 he even supported legislation against the International Workingmen's Association, or First International. By the time of his death in 1882, he had become so domesticated politically that the Chamber of Deputies, of which he was a member, voted to give him a state funeral.

What initially won Blanc wide acclaim among the working class was his book *Organisation du travail* (The Organization of Work), initially published as a series in his *Revue* in 1840, in which he elaborated his scheme of *ateliers sociaux,* or sodal workshops as a cooperative alternative to a capitalist economy. In the final form in which Blanc envisioned them, these workshops would be governed by the workers themselves and would be federated into large worker- controlled productive associations.

But initially, Blanc's social workshops were to be aided by benevolent banks and a sympathetic state, which would provide the credit needed to subsidize them. Insofar as this scheme depended at first upon state subsidies, it has been regarded as an early form of state socialism. By cooperating with each other and fostering a high level of morale, the *ateliers* would ultimately be able to gain a stronger competitive edge over capitalist enterprises. Gradually, Blanc hoped, capitalist firms would find it more profitable to merge with the more efficient social workshops, for which they would receive a suitable profit and the assurance of a more stable society. Class conflict, in effect, would be abolished by the sheer play of market forces.

The competitive success Blanc envisioned for his *ateliers* should not be taken as an indication that he thought highly of either competition or the market Quite to the contrary, his horror at the effects of the *laissez-faire* economy's impact on the English proletariat made him into a communist although he carefully eschewed this word in favor of *socialist.* Nevertheless, he was clearly guided by communist principles of production and distribution. Natural inequalities, he

believed, existed among individuals, but these inequalities must be compensated for in a free and humane society.

> All men are not equal in physical force, in intelligence; all have not the same tastes, the same inclinations, the same aptitudes, any more than they have the same visage or the same figure;... but each one should be placed in a condition to derive the greatest possible advantage from his faculties, in so far as this can be done with due regard to others, and to satisfy as completely as possible, without injuring others, the needs which nature has given him.[17]

The moral improvement of humanity, Blanc believed, would spawn an entirely new set of values that would recognize the need to compensate individuals for these inequalities. He was voicing, in effect, a communistic critique of the liberal assumption (previously held by Jacobins) that freedom exists when everyone, irrespective of capacity, is equal before the law and is compensated by society according to the work they have performed. Blanc, on the contrary, argued that under this system, some would suffer privation regardless of their performance, because they would be beset by greater material requirements. Instead, he maintained, an individual's remuneration should depend upon his or her needs and those of their families, irrespective of their labor and skills.

Like Cabet before him and like Marx after him, Blanc rejected the contractarian notion of compensation according to the amount of work people performed—or what Marx would later call "bourgeois right"—and replaced it with the notion of compensation according to the needs that they had to satisfy. Or as Blanc was among the first to put it: "From every man according to his faculties" (which Blanc designated as "duty") and "To every man—within the limits of the resources of the community—according to his wants" (which he called "right").[18] This principle by far outweighs in importance Blanc's naive prescriptions for class collaboration and renders his name highly significant in the history of socialist ideas. For Blanc had stated more clearly than any theorist of his day the basic maxim of a communist society: "From each according to ability, to each according to need."

But given his reliance on the state for initial financing and for technical and managerial expertise for his *ateliers,* was Blanc committed to permanent state control over society? Surprisingly, he was not: he never intended that his social workshops would be nationalized or placed in the hands of a bureaucracy. Quite to the contrary, he was one of the earliest French socialists to advocate workers' control of production. An earnest advocate of voluntary association, he fervently believed that social workshops would be impossible unless the workers were strongly committed to socialist ideas and unless all the workshops were equally committed to acting cooperatively

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[17] Louis Blanc, *Organisation du travail* quoted in Hany W. Laidler. *History of Socialism* (New York Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), p. 63. Mane gave a very similar discussion in his *Critique of the Gotha Program.*

[18] Louis Blanc, 1848. *Historical Revelations: Inscribed to Lord Normanby* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), p. 109. This virtually forgotten account of the 1848 Revolution contains one of the ablest expositions of "wants" written by any communist and warrants careful rereading. The rather sophomoric criticism of communism is sometimes made that individuals who are free to take as much as they want might very well exhaust the common pool and render a communist society impossible; a coercive authority, such as a state bureaucracy, would therefore be necessary to allocate available goods. Blanc's qualification that "wants" or "needs" would be circumscribed by the "resources of the community" answers this claim. It would obviously be the responsibility of the community to decide, in a rational and democratic manner, what was available.

in their common interest—ethically as well as materially—to produce a cooperative society. As such, his views more closely resemble those of syndicalism, which places a high premium on libertarian networks of worker-controlled enterprises. His plan for *ateliers sociaux,* more than any socialist ideas advanced in the 1840s, approximated the most socialistic goals that could have been achieved by the artisanal society of his day, and in later decades, in continental Europe as a whole, they indirectly influenced many confederal and decentralistic notions of a socialist economy.

By contrast, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who himself has been credited with fostering syndicalist ideas under the name of "mutualism," seems to have taken a remarkably jaundiced view of the "principle of association."[19] Like Fourier nearly forty years earlier, Proudhon was born in Besangon, in his case to parents of a working-class and peasant background. Unlike Fourier, however, he seems to have been incapable of transcending the provincialism and parochialism of small-town France. A firm paterfamilias (indeed, a misogynist), Proudhon mystified the peasant family as the basic unit of social life, and like many French peasants, whose notion of exploitation seldom extended beyond the necessity of paying interest to moneylenders, he thought of economic ills as caused primarily by finance capital—particularly by Jewish lenders. In fact, long after his death, his bitter anti-Semitism, combined with his patriarchal outlook, were to make many of his views congenial to European reactionaries, including outright fascists.

These limitations did not prevent Proudhon from acquiring the lofty title of the "father of anarchism." His avowed hostility toward government and politics, however, was by no means unique; it was very much in harmony with a rural mentality that resented tax collectors and notaries as oppressors. Nor was his attitude toward the state consistently negative. Despite his frequent denunciations of state power and authority in general, he often softened his attitude with changing circumstances and even whims. Nevertheless, his defiant rejection of many economic and political shibboleths of the day gave him notoriety as a provocative contrarian, an image that he carefully cultivated, despite his numerous ideological self-contradictions and pedestrian views.

Proudhon, in fact, was not quite the *enfant terrible* he made himself out to be. It is true that he holds a place in the trajectory of French socialism—if socialist he was—by virtue of his commitment to a labor theory of value. By calling for exchange based on the amount of labor that was required to manufacture the products involved, his ideas potentially gave an important centrality to the proletariat, although he was strongly focused on artisans and their concerns. Despite his famous cry, "Property is theft!" however, Proudhon was no socialist: he definitely favored private property, advancing an economy structured around small privately owned enterprises that would be linked together by contracts untainted either by profit considerations or by exploitation.

By making a distinction between "property" acquired by exploitation and "possession" acquired by labor, Proudhon essentially smuggled into his vision a belief in private property, albeit with a moral aura. His statement "property is theft" did not refer strictly to tangible economic property; nor was it intended to lead to the abolition of private property. Rather, in Proudhon's thinking, property was a vague moral category—and had it been generally understood for what it was by his capitalist critics in 1840, when *What Is Property*? was published, Proudhon would not

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[19] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851), trans. John Beverly Robinson (London: Pluto Press, 1989), pp. 78–80. The word mutuaiist was minted by the silk weavers of Lyons, who waged two great insurrections in the early 1830s, long before Proudhon came to prominence. They used the term to denote a kind of guild communalism that emerged from their own experience, rather than from the ideas of Proudhon or any other thinker.

have been considered "the terror of the French bourgeoisie," as George Lichtheim sardonically observes.[20]

In fact, Proudhon was a committed individualist and proprietarian who expressly denounced "the *principle* of association" because it "necessarily implies obligation, common responsibility, fusion of rights and duties in relation to outsiders." As such, he argued, it inhibits the allegedly "stimulating" effects of competition in advancing technological development In fact, in order to denounce association, Proudhon invoked nearly every philistine argument that could be drawn from the bourgeois repertory, including the canard that association rewards "the weak and lazy associate." Association requires, much to his outrage, that "all are responsible for all: the smallest is as great as the greatest: the last comer has the same rights as the oldest member."[21] As for communism, he considered it authoritarian in all its forms, presumably because of Cabet's statism and Blanc's associationism.

Proudhon consistendy condemned the communist principle of distribution according to needs rather than ability "as unproductive and harassing, applicable to quite special conditions, its inconveniences growing much more rapidly than its benefits, … equally opposed to the advantageous use of labor and to the liberty of the workman."[22] The worker's salvation, he argued, lies in "competition which gives [skill and talent] life."[23] One may reasonably wonder why Proudhon felt it necessary to promote this viewpoint among French workers when bourgeois economists everywhere were also hailing competition as humanity's salvation. Nor is it quite clear that workers, rather than the Parisian bourgeoisie, made Proudhon's *General Idea of the* Revolution in *the Nineteenth Century* (from which the foregoing passages are taken) a publishing success upon its appearance in July 1851.

The "reciprocity" that Proudhon favored seems to have been nothing more than the solid bourgeois principle of equivalence: each person should receive exactly what is his or her due, exclusively on the basis of an "equal" exchange of commodities. His anarchism, if such it can be called, rewarded hard, virtuous toil but made no *social* allowance for the care of the weak, infirm, aged, or even physically impaired who were unable to perform such toiL These unequal individuals would be left to the ministrations of charity or, more likely, to care by the family, the basic unit of Proudhonist social life. There is nothing in Proudhon's image of the good society that obliges a collective concern for their fate. The systemic "equalization" of inequalities in ability among real people under a communist system seems, if anything, to have affronted Proudhon, since it violated his sacred precept of the exchange of equivalences.

The sinew of Proudhon's social vision was his commitment to contract: not, let it be emphasized, a Rousseauean "social contract" but the mundane everyday contracts that uphold the capitalist economy. Only one moral provision distinguished the Proudhonist contract from the capitalist contract: it abjured profit and exploitation. In Proudhon's anarchist society, free and completely autonomous individuals, indeed property owners, would contract to exchange of goods and services with one another, taking exacdy their due— no more and no less—in terms of the value of labor involved in producing the goods exchanged. Nor was contract, for Proudhon, merely an economic instrument for assuring fair trade—rather, it was the mainstay of industrial labor as well. Workers within factories would contract with one another to exchange their labor,

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[20] George Lichtheim, *The Origins of Socialism* (New York Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 90.

[21] Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution*, pp 83–4.

[22] Ibid, pp 84–5.

[23] Ibid, p. 89

and factories would contract with one another to form federations, as would communities, all on the basis of the equal exchange of goods and services. The notion of associating on an ethical basis seems to have eluded Proudhon's social vision. At the core of his "mutualism" lay not a moral concept but a plan to finance these enterprises by means of a People's Bank, or Bank of Exchange, which would afford small proprietors low-interest loans drawn from the savings and investments of ordinary workers.

Obviously, Proudhon's proprietarian views, based above all on the patriarchal family and individual possession, brought him into opposition to communism in all its forms. What made him seem socialistic was his hectoring rhetoric, his slogans formulated more for their shock value than for their substance, and his moral injunctions against the exploitation of labor and the pursuit of profit But his strong emphasis on individual ownership, self-interest, contractual market relationships, and distribution based on ability rather than need—and his implacable hostility to assodationism and communism—all were surprisingly indistinguishable from the conventional bourgeois wisdom of his day.

Nor were his acolytes by any means the most radical in France, rarely designating themselves as anarchists but preferring the milder and more socially acceptable term *mutualists.* Where Proudhon opposed strikes and insurrections as too coercive, his dosest adherents were only too eager to follow in their *maitre's* path. Bakunin, who regarded Proudhon as a pioneering theorist of anarchism, was nonetheless sharply critical of "Proudhonist individualists." Some Proudhonists, like his own heir apparent, Henri Tolain, were actually very conservative in their sodal views. Tolain, a true contractarian, not only opposed dvil rights for women but sat in the very Chamber of Deputies that presided over the suppression of the Paris Commune of 1871, for which he was understandably reviled by French workers, many of them his former admirers.

Given Proudhon's gradualist approach to sodal change and his opposition to militant actions of almost any sort, his ideas required major surgery before they could be accepted by neo-Proudhonist supporters of the Paris Commune of 1871. What Proudhonist Communards absorbed from his work was his emphasis on federalism as the basic structure of social life, rather than his strident individualism. Indeed, the dwindling number of Proudhonists who helped establish the syndicalist movement in France during the dosing decades of the nineteenth century, based on the general or mass strike, would have shocked their *maitre,* had he not died six years before the Commune. The fact is that Proudhon's connection with syndicalism rests on an artificially generated myth. As Bernard H. Moss notes,

> During the height of revolutionary syndicalism, a circle of French intellectuals, in opposition to Germanic Marxism, sought to define the French socialist tradition as Proudhonian. While they found no historical filiation between Proudhonism and syndicalism, they established the myth of a Proudhonian labor movement, shared by liberal and Marxist historians alike, which has never been confirmed by historical investigation. In only one period, the early 1860s, did Proudhonism have a definite impact upon labor militants, but this was in the early stages of a movement that soon violated its precepts in theory and practice. The goal of trade socialism, the collective ownership of industry by trade federations, was incompatible with Proudhon's anarchism of small independent producers. If one is to attach trade socialism to the

anarchist tradition, then it is surely closer to the "collectivist" anarchism of Bakunin than to the individualistic anarchism of Proudhon.[24]

Although syndicalists were to borrow certain key ideas from Proudhon, as we shall see, libertarian working-class movements, especially in Spain, were obliged to shed Proudhon's essential gradualism and proprietarianism. His notion of a low-interest People's Bank, which he tried in vain to establish, was all but dropped from the theoretical armamentarium of anarchism and syndicalism (see Chapter 32). Later anarchists were obliged to turn to figures like Bakunin and Kropotkin for inspiration, both of whose oudooks were not only collectivistic and communistic but decidedly revolutionary.

By the 1850s, Proudhon's influence on French workers had declined to a near vanishing point; his opposition to strikes, his on-off support of Louis Bonaparte, and other such retreats from his seemingly militant stance left him, after his death in 1865, with a dwindling following. Only because anarchists, by sorting out ideas that he had left vague or contradictory, turned him into one of their saints did his work manage to gain posthumous fame. A number of his ideas affected the thinking of Tolstoy, Martin Buber, and Gandhi—as well as corporatist tendencies on the right that were to feed into the fascism of Mussolini and of Vichy France. In more recent times he has been revived by anarchists drifting toward "market socialism," a phrase that may reasonably be considered a contradiction in terms.

It was not until well after the Revolution of 1830, when a self-conscious workers' movement appeared, that Blanqui, Cabet, Buchez, Blanc, and Proudhon were to become voices, to one degree or another, of a class-oriented social movement. Although both Cabet and Blanqui were participants in local upheavals during the Restoration, Blanc and Proudhon were much too young to have become involved in the early revolutionary movements of the period. Nor did any of them exercise influence among actual French working people, be they artisans or industrial proletarians, in the 1820s. In fact, what mainly concerned French workers at the end of the decade was economic difficulties and the increasingly repressive behavior of Charles X.

THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

The fragility of the Bourbon Restoration is perhaps most dramatically revealed by the ease with which Napoleon Bonaparte, on his sudden return from exile in Elba, temporarily deposed Louis XV11I in the famous one hundred days of the emperor's rule in 1815. Only the exhaustion of France after Waterloo — the last battle in the seemingly interminable wars associated with Bonaparte's name — gave the Bourbon monarchy any staying power in the country.

France wanted peace—peace from imperial conflicts, as well as peace from revolution. The Congress of Vienna that followed Napoleon's defeat—a concert of Europe's principal powers—left no doubt that any renewal of revolution or warfare on the part of the French would meet with swift repression and a stern occupation. A Holy Alliance among Prussia, Russia, and Austria, fashioned by Alexander I of Russia and Metteraich of Austria, was established to forestall any Bonapartist ambitions and, more significandy, to prevent France from once again initiating a revolutionary wave across the European continent.

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[24] Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement, 1830–1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California PTess, 1976), pp. 6–7. Among the "circle of French intellectuals" who gave Proudhonism this syndicalist spin, Moss cites Jules L. Puech, Gaetan Pirou, and Maxime Leroy.

Yet nothing was farther from the minds of the French people than revolution. Neither the peasantry, who were major recipients of the Revolution's and Bonaparte's agrarian policies, nor the bourgeoisie—and least of all the great financiers, its most powerful stratum—wanted a continuation of war and social instability. The rest of French society, in turn, had been drained by taxes and demands for military service. Despite certain technological advances, industry had gained very little from the Napoleonic wars. On the contrary, the British blockade had appreciably reduced France's international markets and domestic standard of living, setting back the country's economic development for all strata of the population.

Thus Louis XVlll's nine-year reign, from 1815 to 1824, was one of economic retrenchment and peace at any cost Fat and clumsy, the brother of Louis XVI must have known he was not loved, not even by the contemptuous and arrogant emigres whom he eventually remunerated for the loss of their estates during the Great Revolution and who, together with an accommodating nobility that had arisen under Napoleon, formed the predominant land-owning ruling class during the Restoration. The country, in short, needed to catch its breath and recover a measure of normality, which a stable monarchy seemed able to provide. The king, in turn, was shrewd enough to realize that, while his status was shaky, the monarchy was desirable, and the better part of wisdom was to govern his country with fairly loose reins.

The economic changes produced by the Revolution, he realized, could not be undone. Although he remunerated the emigres, the peasants and land speculators would never give up the holdings they had gained. Nor would the bourgeoisie allow the juridical rights it had acquired since 1789 to be completely effaced. Yet the very republic that had initiated the new agrarian dispensation and the new individual rights was hardly spoken of in polite company. Clerics and secular educators saw to it that republicanism was identified with terror, civil war, social instability, material deprivation, and foreign conflict. Even in the 1820s there were young men who knew nothing whatever about the Girondins and Jacobins, including many whose fathers had been among their strongest adherents.

But the old nobility was not to be stilled. The first year of Louis's reign saw the emergence of bitter fury on the part of the aristocracy, which sought redress for its smoldering grievances and reprisals against the revolutionaries who had driven them from France a generation earlier. Injuly 1815 the ostensibly "free" elections to the Chamber of Deputies, based on a scandalously restricted electorate, brought a vindictive royalist majority (or "ultras," as they were called) of 350 legislators out of 420 to power. A "white terror" ensued that placed stringent restrictions on the press and removed innumerable Bonapartists from the bureaucracy and other public offices. Thousands of highly qualified officials—from the municipal level, through the departmental, to the highest national offices—were sent into a counterrevolutionary limbo, where they were left to seethe in fury against their old opponents. Special military tribunals were established throughout the country that delivered not only prison but death sentences. Even Marshall Ney, Napoleon's most popular commander, who had received a peerage from Louis XVIII but defected to the emperor during the "hundred days," was executed after a trial in the Chamber of Peers.

Louis XVIII, however, was still committed to making compromises with social changes that he knew could not be undone without plunging the country into civil war. Even before Napoleon's "hundred days," Louis had adopted the Charter of 1814, or *Charte*, which allowed for a carefully selected hereditary Chamber of Peers, an elected Chamber of Deputies, and guarantees of equality before the law and freedoms of expression, conscience, and worship, as well as the inviolability of citizens from arbitrary arrest and seizure of property. The Napoleonic Code, which had ra-

tionalized the country's legal system, was kept intact, and gifted men like Talleyrand, who had served not only the early revolutionary government but the Directory and Bonaparte, retained important offices. Louis, in fact, took umbrage at his Chamber of Deputies, whose ultraroyalist convictions were so extreme that, in pursuing monarchical absolutism, it gathered parliamentary power for itself at the expense of the throne's authority, not unlike the notables who tried to weaken Louis XVI's power in 1789.

Finally, little more than a year after the Chamber of Deputies of 1815 was installed, Louis had had enough of its proscriptive legislation, and he dissolved the *Chambre introuvable* ("Incomparable Chamber," as it was maliciously called). The elections that followed returned a majority of moderate royalists who, under various ministries, remained in power until 1821, providing France with a period of relative prosperity and stability.

This quiet period also allowed for a political regroupment in the Chamber of Deputies, yielding a "Left" composed of reconstructed republicans such as the aging Marquis de Lafayette, as well as moderate constitutional monarchists such as Benjamin Constant, Hippolyte Carnot (whose father had been an outstanding general during the Revolution and a member of the Directory), and other men who were loathed by the ultraroyalist minority in the Chamber. This quasi-factional "Left" worked in conjunction with the larger group of moderate parliamentarians, or "Independents," in the Chamber, including wealthy bourgeois elements such as the banker Jacques Laffitte, the cotton and sugar baron Benjamin Delessert, the merchant Temaux, and the entrepreneur Casimir Perier.

The moderate or liberal governments of these years provided the country with sufficient economic prosperity to keep the bourgeoisie and the working class fairly quiescent Although the wrangling between the liberal coalition and the ultraroyalists in the Chamber of Deputies continued, it was not serious enough to be of major concern to the lower classes. France was still ruled by landowners. The nobility and its minions exercised their most effective power through the prefects and subprefects who administered the departments, the provincial judges, and the municipal hirelings who genuflected before their agrarian masters. Craftsmen and peasants, living in their own self-enclosed world, were indifferent to a national regime over which they had no influence whatever. The electoral base for the Chamber of Deputies was brazenly limited to well-to-do individuals who paid a minimum of 300 francs in taxes—which meant that only 110,000 out of a population of about nine million adults had the right to vote.

But this basically stable situation came to an end in 1820, when the Duke of Berri, the king's nephew, was assassinated, unleashing a furious royalist backlash. Louis, who was also outraged, restricted the franchise even further by establishing the so-called "double vote," according to which the wealthiest quarter of the electorate—about 25,000 men—were given the exclusive right to select 165 deputies out of the 265 chosen by the "general" electorate for the Chamber. (In the elections of 1823 the ultras were to gain a huge legislative majority—not only by means of the new franchise restrictions, but because local notables, state-appointed prefects of the departments, and local ultra thugs engaged in crass manipulation and fraud to assure their victory. They did not hesitate to use the names of dead royalists to pack the electoral lists in support of their candidates. That the elections were blatantly rigged was a widely known fact to which the government turned a blind eye.)

In 1821 Louis XV1I1 replaced the moderate ministry of Eli Decazes with one presided over by the extremely reactionary Count of Villele, the leader of the ultraroyalists in the Chamber of Deputies. As president of the king's council, Villele floated a state loan to further recompense

emigres and others who had lost their lands during the Republic—a gesture that many peasant and bourgeois who had purchased *biens nationaux* in the 1790s feared might lead to a whole-sale restoration of the old noble estates. His ministry stroked the Catholic Church by making obeisances to its authority, giving it emoluments and an enhanced status as "the religion of Frenchmen." Above all, it increased clerical control over education, which created widespread uneasiness among many secular citizens, especially those who had benefited from the sale of Church lands during the Revolution. Restrictions, including unbridled acts of censorship, were placed on the liberal press; the term of service for members of the Chamber of Deputies was extended from four to seven years; and to the fury of liberals who still claimed some filiations with the cause of freedom, French troops were used in support of the Spanish monarchy against Spanish revolutionaries during the peninsular uprising of 1823. His ministry spanning Louis's and Charles X's reigns, Villele personified the new *Chambre retrouvee,* much to the approval of the reactionary ultras.

Under Villele, the Right could also settle its scores with its liberal opponents by making use of loopholes in the *Charte* of 1814 that favored the king. Although nearly all deputies avowed their allegiance to the document, its preamble averred that the monarch had granted it "voluntarily" to France, "by the free exercise of our royal authority." This phrase coupled the *Charte* to the will of the monarch, who theoretically could rescind it just as freely as he had granted it. Additionally, the *Charte* averred that the government ministers were "responsible," but to whom—the king or the Chamber of Deputies?—it did not specify. Thus ministerial responsibility seemed to float freely in the air, at the discretion of the king, as the ultras claimed, or the Chamber of Deputies, as the opposition claimed. Finally, the *Charte* contained a stipulation, Article 14, that gave the king the authority to dispatch the entire constitutional system at will, should he choose:

> The king is the supreme head of the state. He commands the land and sea forces, declares war, makes treaties of peace, alliance, and commerce, appoints all public officials, and makes all regulations and ordinances for the execution of the laws, and the security of the state.[25]

Under Louis, all of these royalist formulations had been regarded as mere rhetoric that asserted France's monarchical status. But Article 14 was waiting in the wings, at the disposal of any authoritarian monarch who might choose to exercise it. And it was precisely such a monarch, Charles X, aided by an entourage of unforgiving ultras, who took control of the French throne upon the death of Louis in 1824.

If Louis likely knew he was not beloved, Charles at least should have suspected that most of the French people thoroughly detested him. Only the most fanatical ultras of the emigre population and their offspring—those who abominated the Revolution and republicanism in any form—rallied around the new king, feeding his worst fears of revolutionary conspiracies. Ascending the throne at the age of sixty-seven, Charles had been an emigre for twenty-five years as the Count of Artois. Having left France as early as 1789, he subsequendy plotted with Bourbon loyalists abroad against the Republic, the Directory, and the Empire. In 1824, once Charles became king, he and Villele matched each other like a royal hand and a perfectly fitting ministerial glove.

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[25] Quoted in David H. Pinkney, *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. lln.

But even within the limited and wealthy electorate on which Villele based his authority, a major split soon appeared. Many voters felt that the president of the king's council was spinning too far to the nght, while the zealous ultras in the legislature felt that he was not going far enough. By 1827 Villele had alienated his ultra supporters as much as his liberal opponents in the Chamber, making it difficult, if not impossible, for his ministry to govern the country effectively. Although it is difficult to see how he could have hoped to realign French political life in his favor, he was obliged to urge Charles to call new elections.

The liberals, in turn, had learned only too well that they had to organize at a grassroots level to prevent more outrageous electoral malfeasances from the right. In 1827 lawyers, journalists, and the editors of the liberal periodical *Le Globe* created a public supervisory and educational group with the name *Aide- toi, le del t'aidera* ("God helps those who help themselves," or more loosely, "self-help"), to disencumber the forthcoming elections of manipulation by notables and royal prefects. A large network of *Aide-toi* committees was established all over France to oversee the electoral lists, obstruct ultra interference in voting assemblies, and propagandize voters in support of liberal candidates. Their highly effective activities successfully augmented the number of liberal voters who participated in the elections of November 1827, reducing the ultras in the Chamber to a small bloc of 60 to 80, as against 180 liberals. Villele resigned and was replaced by a the liberal Viscount of Martignac (albeit officially as the minister of interior rather than as president of the council, leaving the king free to run the ministry as he chose).

The liberal victory in 1828 had causes that went far beyond ultra political intransigence alone. Since 1827 and even since 1825 in the north, France had been sinking into a deep-seated economic crisis. Especially in the north, bad harvests, particularly of grain and of potatoes, deprived industrial workers and the poor of staple foods. These shortages, combined with a major financial crisis and unemployment (partly due to imports of cheap British iron), deepened the popular hatred of Villele and Martignac and stoked widespread riots and denunciations of the regime—in some cases the king. Textile workers in Normandy and Alsace were either thrown out of work owing to foreign imports or suffered cuts in their already low wages. These economic afflictions induced further rioting, and many city workers, having lost their jobs, were obliged to return to the villages from which they had drifted in economically more halcyon days. Although the workers most deeply affected by the economic crisis had no stake in the political world that denied them the vote, their actions unnerved all the middle and upper classes of the country, inspiring fears of a new social upsurge by the lower classes.

And for good reason: the 1820s had seen a revival of strong public interest in the Great Revolution. Memoirs by participants had begun to appear, and even Adolphe Thiers, a gifted journalist for the liberal press, published his *Histoire de la revolution Jran<;aise* between 1823 and 1827, which dealt sympathetically with the Convention, even trying to account for the Terror objectively, despite the author's predilection for constitutional monarchy. Literate young people for whom the Revolution had been shrouded in mystery could now become acquainted with the events of 1789 to 1794, and they did so with genuine zest.

The death of Napoleon in his St. Helena exile in 1821, moreover, rendered the emperor a safe subject for public adulation as well, adding to the fascination with France's revolutionary past. A flood of memoirs by Bonapartists were published, and memorabilia from the era before Waterloo, generally in the form of insignias, songs, and busts of the emperor, became popular consumer items. Napoleon, reviled by the Bourbon monarchy as a "monster," now became a popular hero, initiating the Napoleonic legend that was to haunt France for generations. The government was

continually on the watch for republican and Bonapartist conspiracies, whose importance Villele cynically exaggerated to retain his hold on his royalist constituency. In reality, the danger from republicans and Bonapartries was negligible during the Villele and Martignac ministries, but as the 1820s drew to their end, exaggerations of their danger added to a growing public sense of social crisis.

In fact, it was Charles himself who was the immediate source of the crisis. The king, ever mindful of 1789, viewed the growing militancy of the liberal press and liberal organizations as evidence of a looming revolution. Despite his avowal of adherence to the *Charte,* the king at heart was a devout supporter of the traditional institutions and values of the ancien regime: the quasi-feudal nobility, the moral authority of the Catholic Church, and the absolute supremacy of the monarch over all other institutions of the realm. Almost blind to the social changes in France since the Great Revolution, he retained an unswerving commitment to the very views that had sent his brother Louis XVI to the scaffold several decades earlier.

Perhaps no king was less suited to occupy the French throne than Charles, whose social vision extended no further than that of his guillotined brother. His unreconstructed worldview stood in flat opposition to the discontent of the liberals, who felt in varying degrees that France had yet to catch up with Britain as a constitutional monarchy. If the French king regarded liberal views as political heresy, indeed outright treason, the liberals and their various supporters, even moderate royalists, regarded the king as a political retrograde, with a chilling incapacity to stabilize the country, still less to rule it.

In 1829, when the minister, Martignac, attempted to allay liberal hostility to the crown by abolishing press censorship and curbing Jesuit control of education, the king replaced him with Jules Armand, the prince of Polignac—a reactionary so extreme and a Catholic so devout that he flady refused to take the constitutional oath to obey the *Charte.* The Polignac ministry and the Chamber of Deputies were now on a direct collision course. Even a bloc of royalists led by Frangois-Rene de Chateaubriand, a prominent romantic writer of the day, angrily defected from the ultra camp, leaving the king with a hostile majority against the ministry. The liberal press, in turn, particularly *Le National,* raised a howl against the new regime, comparing Charles with James II of England, the monarch whose harsh reactionism had induced the English ruling classes to unseat him in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688.

Nor was the comparison between the late Stuarts and the late Bourbons unwarranted. In England, after Cromwell's Protectorate, the compliant Charles II had been succeeded by his brother James II, whose absolutism led to the definitive end of the Stuart kings. In France Louis XVIII, who had seemed willing to compromise, was succeeded by the unbending reactionary Charles X. A replay of 1789 now appeared to be in the offing. When a shuffling of cabinet positions and some feeble attempts by Charles to limit the Chamber of Deputies' legislative agenda to safe budgetary issues failed to quell the discontent, it became clear that the king would have to resort to his Article 14 powers and take dictatorial control of the state to annul the legislative powers of the Chamber.

In a threatening address on March 2 to a packed meeting of the legislature in the Louvre, the king significandy denounced "criminal maneuvers" against the government and issued warnings that he would "maintain public order." To this announcement the Chamber defiandy drafted a sharp reply. "The permanent accord" between the wishes of the people and the government, the liberal deputies decided to say to the king, "does not now exist," and the people viewed his regime

as "a threat to their liberties."[26] After two days of secret discussion by the Chamber over the reply, 221 deputies voted to support the reply, and 181 voted against.

The die was now cast between the king and the Chamber. Further negotiations, in which the king averred that his "resolves are unalterable," ended in predictable collapse, after which, on March 19, Charles dissolved the legislature, amid furious liberal cries of *"Vive la Charte!"* and exultant royalist cries of *"Vive le roi!"* The constitution was now unmistakably pitted against the arbitrary authority of an absolutist monarch.

Although the king had dismissed the Chamber of Deputies, the July 1830 election returned a new Chamber with a greatly increased liberal opposition, from 221 to 274—reelecting 201 of the 221 defiant deputies from the previous legislature—as against a mere 145 for the king's ministry. To deepen the crisis, on July 25 the monarch and his supporting council issued five ordinances, four of which amounted to a *de facto* cancellation of the *Charte*'s provisions for limited constitutional government One ordinance annulled the new election by dissolving the new Chamber even before it had an opportunity to convene, while another reduced the electorate for deputies to include only the wealthiest, generally landed men of the realm, disenfranchising most businessmen, lawyers, and professionals. Still another ordinance required editors and printers to acquire preliminary authorization before publishing any periodical, subject to review every three months, essentially suspending freedom of the press.

To the liberals and many moderate royalists, as well as the politically aware public, the ordinances—essentially monarchical decrees—amounted to nothing less than a reactionary coup d'etat that effectively nullified the *Charte* of 1814. By turning back the clock to the days of Louis XVI, the five ordinances, so peremptorily issued by Charles, opened the door to revolution.

Chapter 24. The Revolution of 1830

None of the leading liberals, still less the ultras, had any suspicion that Charles's coup d'etat would induce Paris to explode in revolution. Nor did the opposition factions in the Chamber of Deputies have any desire to see the return of armed masses—so redolent of the *journees* of the Great Revolution— with their capacity for violence against the well-to-do and against property. In 1830, bourgeois and nobles were still alive who could vividly recall the great masses of *sans-culottes* who had stormed the Bastille, battled the king's troops in the Luxembourg Garden, and roared approvingly at the drop of the guillotine's blade. Yet despite rumors that the king might use his Article 14 powers to act sternly against the new, more liberal Chamber of Deputies, the full scope of his repressive plans was virtually unknown to anyone outside the circle of his closest ministers. The new ordinances had been composed in such complete secrecy that Polignac kept the sole copy of them on his own person, even refusing to place them in a locked drawer in his desk.

Nor did Charles need to be convinced by any of his ministers that he had to act forcefully against the opposition in the Chamber. According to one recollection, the king, who soon left for his summer residence at Saint-Cloud, firmly declared on signing the ordinances: "The more I think about it the more I am convinced that it is impossible to do otherwise."[27]

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[26] Quoted in ibid., p. 20.

[27] Martial de Guemon-Ranville, *Journal d'un ministre* (Caen, 1873), quoted in David H. Pinkney, *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 75.

"THREE GLORIOUS DAYS"

But if the king was resolute, his liberal opponents were not. For them, the official publication of the ordinances—in the *Moniteur* on July 26—arrived like a thunderclap, sending them scurrying around, disoriented, to the homes and editorial offices of their allies. Even the commander of the Parisian Gendarmerie was taken completely by surprise; no one in the ministry had seen fit to inform him that his police forces might soon be needed to curb public violence. Many liberals and royalists in their country homes learned about the king's coup d'etat from visitors streaming in panic from the capital. The public that did not subscribe to the *Moniteur* heard the news in reading rooms and cafes. The leading and lesser lights of the Parisian business, journalistic, and political communities nervously gathered—in small numbers or large—to discuss the implications of the king's action, fearful of acting in a manner that would destabilize the monarchy.

Reports that were later published stated that owners of printing establishments had closed their shops to protest the restrictive press ordinance, but these accounts have no basis in reality. The establishments that did close down seem to have done so more because they feared prosecution by the authorities than as a "strike" against the king's directives. In short, the middle classes behaved with the characteristic cowardice that marked their behavior in the face of any assault on their freedoms.

Initially, in fact, the Parisian public seemed to be quite indifferent to the coup. Monday, July 26, was a very hot day and, for workers in certain trades, a holiday. Large crowds flocked out of doors, seeking relief from the sweltering weather. They were not protestors, let alone insurgents, and seemed completely indifferent to the king's ordinances, which, after all, affected only a small well-to-do minority of the population. Journalists and editors from a variety of periodicals, to be sure, did flock to the offices of the moderate *National*, which published a protest calling upon the people of France to refuse to pay taxes (a futile gesture that was not obeyed). Once the excited gathering at the National's offices managed to sort itself out, it established a committee to draw up a protest against the ordinances. Written by the young Adolphe Thiers, a constitutional monarchist, it vaguely called for disobedience in response to the king's action. After a great deal of bickering, the document was signed by journalists and editors of eleven leading periodicals in the capital, but beyond this gesture, none of the meetings that ensued in the late afternoon and evening, or even the following day, could produce agreement on a concrete form of action.

In the meantime, the king, his ministers, and officials in various governmental departments rested in the serene belief that the ordinances would evoke very little public response. None of the commanding generals in the country's military districts were ordered to mobilize any troops, nor were any special measures taken to prepare the police for public disorders. On Monday the king, confident that the country was indifferent to his coup, followed his normal daily routine: he attended morning mass and then went hunting with the dauphin. In the evening the royal party returned to the palace, where they dined and spent the evening playing cards.

As for the holiday crowds in the streets, they too were quiescent for most of that Monday, July 26. Not even printers, faced with the loss of work, who took to the streets in angry protest, could persuade passersby to join them. But whatever catalyst it is that turns mildly curious crowds into protestors and protestors into insurrectionaries was very much at work on Monday evening. In the garden of the Palais Royal, a small crowd gathered before a print shop to read some verses posted in the window, when police officers arrived to close down the establishment, presumably because of an offense it had committed against the new press restrictions. As the curious crowd

multiplied in number, it became unruly, booing the officers and shouting, "Long live the *Charte*\"\ and, striking a new and dangerous note, "Down with the Bourbons!" An entirely spontaneous demonstration sprang up. The gendarmes, trained for crowd control, arrived in force, arrested eight resisting demonstrators, and cleared the garden and closed its gates.

But the crowd did not disperse—indeed, it reformed in the square of the Palais Royal. A number of rioters ran up the Rue de Rivoli, breaking streetlamps and shouting denunciations of the ministry, singling out Polignac in particular for condemnation. When the crowd reached the Ministry of Finance, it became violent, throwing stones at the guards and breaking office windows. Still another group, chanting denunciations of the ordinances, marched past the Ministry of Justice, where Polignac and four of his ministers were conferring on how to control the growing unrest. After moving off to the main boulevards, it dispersed. By midnight, in fact, the city was deceptively calm, and the Prefect of Police reported that tranquillity had been restored. Small-scale riots had been seen before in Paris, and the authorities thought they had no reason to view these ones with any alarm.

But a major insurrection was in the offing. On the morning of Tuesday, June 27, crowds more menacing than those of the day before began to collect in the streets and squares of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the crucible of Parisian *journees* during the Great Revolution, while bands of printers roamed the streets of the capital, calling on workers to support their protest. As the Palais Royal filled once again with angry crowds, the police tried to close the gates, scattering protestors into the surrounding squares and streets. The mounted gendarmes, whom the authorities had sent to the square to prevent further trouble, themselves provoked unrest: irritated by the heat and losing patience with the taunting crowds, they began to fire on the people. Fatally, the government had spilled blood, and the bodies of the revolution's first martyrs were paraded through the streets with cries of "Death to the ministers!" and "Death to Polignac!"

What had begun as protests and scattered riots soon turned into an armed confrontation between the government and especially the workers of Paris. The king reacted to the gendarmerie's shootings by appointing Auguste de Marmont, Duke of Raguse, to command the security forces. Among most Parisians, Marmont was particularly detested for abandoning Napoleon in April 1814 and defecting to the Allies. In fact, his very name had become a synonym (a "Ragusard") for "opportunist" and "traitor." The duke reacted forcefully to the shootings by sending out the entire Parisian garrison—royal guards, gendarmes, and troops of the line—to occupy the capital's major squares and avenues—a provocative action that only stoked the crowd's fury.

Finally, on Tuesday, July 27, the sporadic demonstrations ignited into a widespread insurrection. To slow down the movement of Marmont's columns toward their prescribed destinations, barricades were reared all over the working-class districts in the central part of the right bank, where most of the government buildings were located. By seven o'clock in the evening, the troops were indiscriminately using their firearms against crowds that pelted them with stones, adding to the toll of the revolution's martyrs. At twilight, far from diminishing, the crowds swelled, using the cover of night to ransack gun shops. Systematically blotting out the streetlamps, they plunged the insurrectionary parts of the capital into total darkness, enabling them to build their defenses and find weapons with impunity.

The crowd behaved with remarkable judiciousness and discrimination toward the various armed forces deployed against them, probably because many of the older insurrectionaries were veterans of the Napoleonic Wars and were possessed of a degree of political consciousness. They realized that in this situation the loyalties of the troops of the line—ordinary soldiers—were un-

certain, as those of the hated gendarmes and royal guards were not. If the crowd behaved well toward the soldiers, they might cross over to the side of the people. Shrewdly they raised the cry, "Long live the line! Down with the gendarmes and the guard!" Demonstrators stayed at their barricades until around ten o'clock, when they began to return home for the night. By midnight, the crowds had all but disappeared. The authorities, thinking the lull meant the end of resistance, reduced their troop levels to mere street patrols near the Tuileries and the Place de la Bastille, while Marmont assured the imperturbable king that the uprising had been snuffed out.

But on Wednesday morning, July 28, the crowds reappeared in full force in the central districts. Indeed, they were even more numerous and threatening, as Marmont nervously reported, than they had been before. They were building ever more elaborate barricades in ever greater earnest— felling trees, pulling up paving stones, and overturning wagons and market stalls to construct them. Troops that tried to pass through the insurrectionary *arrondisscments* met with furious resistance. In the narrow streets adjoining the squares and boulevards, the columns were blocked by one barricade after another along their lines of advance. Each time they were halted, they were exposed to fire from insurgent muskets in adjacent houses and to barrages of paving stones, furniture, and tiles from the rooftops. Even when the troops succeeded in demolishing a barricade, a new one would quickly spring up in their rear, trapping them, so that they were sandwiched within the narrow streets and caught in murderous crossfire.

At around eleven a.m. a crowd in the Place de Greve overwhelmed the guard post before the Hotel de Ville, forced open the gates, and invaded the aged labyrinthine building, causing the prefect to flee. The National Guard, which Charles had disbanded in 1827 as a politically unreliable force, reappeared and occupied the city hall. Atop the building, in the central cupola, they replaced the white Bourbon flag with the oudawed tricolor as a symbol of revolutionary victory. Indeed, in one of their most inspired actions, the insurgents raised the tricolor on a tower of Notre Dame as well, where it could be seen by most residents of the city. The soldiers of the line, surrounded by friendly crowds, began to fraternize with the workers. By noon Marmont, hearing reports of this dangerous development, sent out his troops in larger units, in order to prevent small groups of soldiers from defecting. Battalion- and regiment-sized columns supported by artillery thus sallied forth to reclaim the city's center, its strategic avenues, and the Hotel de Ville. Despite some short-lived advances, the results were disastrous for the Bourbon monarchy.

The Napoleonic veterans seem to have provided the insurgents with a degree of tactical flexibility that was lacking among their opponents' officers. A direct confrontation on an open battlefield would have surely led to their defeat, but from the roofs and windows of their own apartment buildings, the insurgents could rain tiles and *paves* as well as bullets onto the hated guards and gendarmerie. With their intimate knowledge of their mazelike neighborhoods, they could establish communication links between barricades and strong- points, transforming large parts of the city into one vast revolutionary fortress. Troops were lured into confusing blind alleys and intricate passages where, despite their superior arms and training, they were placed on the defensive against the knowledgeable and agile insurgents. By July 29, a traveler who walked from the northern part of Paris toward the center of the city would have encountered barricades on nearly every street, at intervals of thirty feet or so, some of formidable size. Rareties during the Great Revolution, more barricades were reared in July 1830 than in any Parisian insurrection before or since.

Everywhere insurgent sniper fire took its demoralizing toll. Some commanders, especially those of the Swiss mercenary units in the Royal Guard, were unfamiliar with the winding streets,

alleys, and cul-de-sacs of Paris, so that their forces lost nearly all communication with nearby troops. Even protective structures proved to be traps. The Swiss Guards seeking to retake the Hotel de Ville from the National Guards found themselves hopelessly surrounded by armed crowds in the Place de Greve and fired upon from the building. When the Swiss finally succeeded in taking the city hall, they soon found that they could get no reinforcements or supplies. Ordered to depart, most of the Swiss had to fight their way back to the outskirts of the city, once again barraged by fire from nearby buildings and narrow streets.

Finally, lacking food, drink, and even ammunition, Marmont's forces grew ever more demoralized. The widespread revolt of the populace now seemed beyond their power to vanquish. At length, before Wednesday was out, nearly all the key government areas had fallen into insurgent hands, leaving only a single route open to troop movements. The columns that Marmont had sent into strategic areas during the previous day were thinned out not only by casualties but—perhaps more importandy—by a steady flow of defections. The loyalty of entire regiments was now totally unreliable. Units that had managed to pass through the barricaded streets found that they were confined to mere plazas, a few broad avenues, and government buildings, while the maze of streets surrounding them were held fast by the insurgents. Attempts by Marmont's troops to subdue the densely populated areas that surrounded the seats of government were met with fierce but calculated resistance, and even the neighborhoods that Marmont's troops had apparendy conquered were quickly reclaimed after the soldiers moved on.

By Thursday, July 29, the army had essentially been defeated. Even units of the normally reliable Royal Guards now refused to fight the populace. Moreover, any fears that loyal troops from the provinces would arrive to reinforce the Parisian garrison were dispelled as the provincials en route not only refused to supply the troops with food and drink but even attacked them along the roads. What remained of Marmont's forces on this last day of the insurrection were either withdrawn to the outskirts of the city or fled of their own accord.

Some 2,000 people had died during the "three glorious days," from Tuesday to Thursday. The overwhelming majority, some 1,800, were artisans, principally carpenters and joiners, cabinetmakers, stonemasons, shoemakers, locksmiths, jewelry makers, printers, and tailors. The middle classes do not seem to have played a consequential role in the fighting, judging from claims for compensation that wounded insurgents put in to the Commission des Recompenses Nationales after the uprising. During the street fighting class divisions had been marked, even in single buildings, let alone neighborhoods. Well-to-do royalists who rented apartments on the lower floors of the tenements, for example, provided food and drink for the troops trying to suppress the insurrection, while the workers who lived on the upper floors fought the same troops with weapons and stones from their windows and roofs. As David H. Pinkney sardonically observes:

> In the so-called Bourgeois Revolution of 1830 the middle and upper bourgeoisie were either immune to bullets or absent from the firing line. Immunity is improbable, however, for some bourgeois met their ends as uninvolved bystanders... On the ... list of dead [compiled by the Commission des Recompenses Nationales) were one doctor and one teacher but no bankers, no lawyers, no deputies, no publishers or journalists, although one source listed one journalist dead. A few from this class do figure among the wounded and other combatants—four doctors, one lawyer, and eight teachers but no journalists, no publishers, no deputies— and all combined their numbers do not even approach the number of masons or of cabinetmakers alone. The top-hatted

bourgeois on the barricade in Ferdinand Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" scarcely deserves his conspicuous place, certainly not as a symbol of his land in this perilous spot.[28]

THE UNRESOLVED REVOLUTION

In the week that followed the uprising, the defeated king and his entourage departed Paris, drifting slowly to the Channel ports and exile in England. To replace him, journalists, publishers, deputies, and, above all, dispossessed Bonapartist bureaucrats and officers were only too eager to use the popular uprising carried on and won by the workers of Paris to erect a regime that would be sympathetic to their own interests and prestige.

As we have seen, the Parisian liberals were republicans of various hues, some of them ostensibly Jacobin in spirit. Onjuly 29 they were still nervously debating the course of the revolution, rather than leading it on the barricades. But with the collapse of the royal defense of the city, they hastily draped themselves in the old tricolor and, joining with the constitutional monarchists, took the step of choosing a Municipal Commission, with members including Perier, the banker. Charged by the subdued Chamber of Deputies to provision and defend the capital and maintain order, this Commission—and it noticeably did not call itself a Commune, as revolutionary tradition prescribed—installed itself in the Hotel de Ville and began to sort out the extent of its authority.

The military power in Paris now consisted of two forces: the unorganized armed workers and the National Guard. As the only organized military force in Paris, the Guard was commanded by a constitutional monarchist, the Marquis de Lafayette, who, in his dubious transformation into a republican leader, had assiduously undertaken the job of holding at bay the more radical tendencies among the republican students, workers, National Guards, and Bonapartists. Among the disorganized forces of the worker-insurgents, there was no potential leader who could match Lafayette's prestige and reputation. Thus when Lafayette ordered the muskets of the National Guard to back up the Municipal Commission, he ensured that the Commission was the sole administrative power in Paris. Like the Chamber of Deputies, the Commission favored the establishment of a liberal constitutional monarchy along the British parliamentary model. But who would fill the required role of monarch? The choice was made not by the insurrectionaries but by the banker Laffitte, his journalist colleague Thiers, and the historian Francois Guizot, who formed a cabal to promote the candidacy of Louis-Philippe, the Duke of Orleans. The duke was the son of Louis XVl's rival, Philippe Egalite, who during the Great Revolution had abandoned his lofty tide to support the First Republic

Egalite's renunciation, however, had not saved him from the guillotine, a fate that made his son, Louis-Philippe, all the more prudent. The Orleanists, as his supporters were called, and the republican "men of order" such as Lafayette, who upheld the leadership of the Municipal Commission, feared that any republic would necessarily become a terroristic Jacobin regime. Laffitte and Thiers thereupon entered into negotiations to bring Louis-Philippe to the throne under the tide "citizen king" or, more absurdly, the "king of the barricades"—despite the fact that during the street fighting the Duke of Orleans had abandoned the embattleed capital for his safe retreat at Neuilly. In the political labyrinth after the insurrection, posters all over Paris were hailing him as

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[28] Pinkney, *French Revolution oj 1830,* pp. 255–6.

the most suitable successor to Charles—a propaganda enterprise guided by Thiers and apparendy financed by Laffitte. Finally, with the guidance of his liberal advisers, none of whom had been active participants in the uprising, the duke began to sidle his way toward the throne.

What finally validated Louis-Philippe as a king "surrounded by republican institutions" (as his supporters were to put it) was Lafayette's public embrace of him at the Hotel de Ville on July 31. Lest the crowd that gathered outside— which seemed to prefer a republic—get out of control and act on its own, Lafayette, as Chateaubriand tells us in his memoirs, "gave the Due d'Orleans a tncolor flag, went out on the balcony of the Hotel de Ville, and embraced the Prince before the eyes of the astounded crowd, while the Duke waved the national flag." One of the more principled royalists, Chateaubriand sardonically concludes: "The republican kiss of Lafayette created a king."[29]

Far from exhibiting any reluctance, Lafayette was only too willing to accept the duke as a monarch, a crass betrayal of the hopes of many of the workers who had made the 1830 Revolution. Indeed, Chateaubriand's account takes note of the astonishment of the crowd at the action, not the "cheers" that some historians attribute to them. Thus, Lafayette once again showed himself to be a constitutional monarchist whose commitment to a republican government was largely rhetorical. Soon thereafter, nearly everyone in the new government apparendy wanted to be rid of this relic of 1789. After being granted the vacuous tide of "Honorary Commanding-General of the National Guard of the Kingdom," which the seventy-three-year-old marquis considered an insult, he resigned from his command and virtually disappeared from the political scene.

On August 9, scarcely a week after Lafayette's demonstrative blessing, Louis-Philippe, with the agreement of the Chambers of Deputies and Peers, was crowned sovereign. The coronation, which took place at the Palais Bourbon (the seat of the Chamber), was deliberately marked by an almost puritanical simplicity, in stark contrast to Charles's ornate ceremony at the Cathedral of Rheims. In a largely civil ceremony that referred to "the will of the people" rather than "divine right," the new monarch pledged to uphold the *Charte,* which itself was liberalized by the removal of the noxious preamble stating the document was a "voluntary" gift from the crown. The revisions also limited hereditary membership in the Chamber of Peers, lowered the voting age from 30 to 25, and reduced the tax qualifications for the franchise from 300 francs to 200. The Chamber of Deputies was instructed to pass laws to abolish press censorship and require jury trials instead of arbitrary judgments for journalistic malfeasances. Even education was made a state rather than a Church affair throughout the country, when the Chamber of Deputies appropriated funds to afford secular primary schools to communes instead of churches.

In deference to romantic nostalgia, the tricolor was made the official symbol of France. Louis-Philippe, in turn, pledged to "govern only by the laws and according to the laws."[30] Amid cries of "Long live the king!" and "Long live Louis-Philippe I," the duke accepted the crown, the scepter, and the royal sword from the peers and deputies, dutifully signing in triplicate the declarations endowing him with his new status, much as though they were a commercial contract. In this prosaic businesslike fashion, which presumably represented the triumph of republican virtue over absolutism, the duke accepted the throne as "king of the French" rather than "king of France."

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[29] Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand, *Memoires d'outre-tombe* (Paris, n.d.), quoted in Arnold Whitridge, *Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 21.

[30] Quoted in Pinkney, *French Revolution of 1830,* p. 194.

A calculating man, Louis-Philippe had traveled widely during his years of exile, even to the United States, and had spent his time patiently waiting for events to unfold on his behalf. When Villele's compensation law was passed in 1825, he had duly regained the considerable landed properties that had been expropriated from his family, recouping much of his family fortune, and he rose to high position in the Bourbon regime. Indeed, the king's behavior reflected a new kind of Frenchman that Honore de Balzac was depicting in his novels. Despite his aristocratic pedigree, in his habits Louis-Philippe was a parsimonious and stolid bourgeois, cautious about advancing himself; indeed, even after he was established as king, he retained a cordial attitude toward ordinary people, who freely visited the royal palace as though it were a public institution. In his dress the "citizen king" was plain, and his reign—the July Monarchy, as it was called—was free of ostentation. Fortunately for the new monarch, moreover, France began to recover from the economic depression that had plagued her in the late 1820s and early 1830s and began to enjoy a period of relative prosperity.

But the new electoral law of April 1831, heralded as an Orleanist reform measure, still deprived the vast majority of adults of the franchise: only 166,000 out of 9 million adults were able to meet the 200-franc *cens* that made them eligible to vote. "The situation may have been even worse than the figures show," notes Priscilla Robertson, "but at any rate small and middling businessmen were excluded along with the learned and professional classes and, of course, the workers and peasants."[31] Disqualified Frenchmen could look with envy across the Channel, where the Reform Bill of 1832, for all its shortcomings, had expanded the English electorate by about 50 percent to some 750,000. Although 32 per thousand now had the franchise in Britain, a mere 5 per thousand could vote in France. To demands for a more representative suffrage, Guizot, the king's premier, arrogantly responded, "Enrich yourselves; then you can vote," with the result that as late as 1836, the Chamber of Deputies contained only 45 bankers, industrial capitalists, and merchants, as against 116 landed proprietors and parasitic rentiers.

Indeed, Marx's analysis of the 1830 Revolution as a shift in power from the landed nobility to the financial bourgeoisie is not supported by the reality that, apart from a few individuals, the financial and certainly the industrial bourgeoisie gained little power from the July Monarchy. The same landed nobility, especially local notables, who had formed the base of the Bourbon Restoration continued to constitute the base of the new monarchy, although their numbers were augmented by ex-Bonapartist officials and a few bourgeois. As William L. Langer remarks,

> It is true that the July Revolution of 1830, which was started by Paris printers and fought out by craftsmen and artisans, was taken over by a group of adroit bankers, of whom Laffitte, Casimir-Perier, and Delessert were the most prominent But when the excitement was over, it turned out that for the next eighteen years France was to be ruled not by bankers and industrialists but by provincial notables, by lawyers and by bureaucrats, many of whom were officers or officials of the Napoleonic regime. In 1837 there were hardly more than forty deputies who could be fairly described as members of the new industrial class.[32]

And as Pinkney tersely observes,

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[31] Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), p. 15.
[32] William L. Langer, *Political and Social Upheaval, 1832–1852* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 52.

The new regime did differ from its predecessor in that there was a larger place in it for businessmen like Laffitte and Perier... Nonetheless, political power was still firmly in the hands of the landed proprietors, the officeholders, and the professional men.[33]

On the other hand, the workers who had done all the fighting gained nothing whatsoever, politically or materially, from the very uprising that made possible the Orleanist regime. Having shattered Marmont's army in an insurrection, the "heroes of July" (as the artisans were called) were saddled with an electoral law that, in 1831, slammed the political door in their faces. Indeed, from the July days onward, the Orleanist regime was wary of working people, not only in Paris but in the rest of France as well. Actually, in December 1830 the heated conflict over the fate of the former Bourbon ministers, who were treated fairly benignly by the new monarchy, nearly threw the capital into another insurrection. By putting up a strong show of force, mobilizing the National Guard, and placing ordinary troops on alert, the government showed that it was quite prepared to use all the military force at its disposal to control the *"anarchistes"* (a word that cropped up in ministerial deliberations) who threatened public order. Following the crisis of the ex-ministers' trial, a rash of strikes and economic dislocations obliged the Parisian Municipal Commission to provide public works for thousands of unemployed, in order to allay public unrest.

Indeed, as radical republican groups began to conspire against the Orleanist regime and as assassins stalked the king, the government became more and more conservative. In April 1831, in response to riots and demonstrations, the Chamber of Deputies enacted legislation against un-lawful meetings or so-called *attroupements* and resumed the prosecution of oppositional leaders. That most sacred cow of the liberals, namely freedom of the press, which had been affirmed by Louis-Philippe on accepting the throne, was repeatedly abridged from the autumn of 1830 until September 1834, when press limitations forbade not only the use of the word *republic* but even political caricatures. A Law on Association passed in 1834 required most societies—even those that contained fewer than twenty members, which the Bourbons had tolerated—to be authorized by the state before they could function legally. This law effectively quashed not only republican societies but even early trade unions seeking higher wages and better working conditions, as well as mutual aid societies. As Pamela Pilbeam observes, the Orleanists pursued "a policy of surveillance, prosecution and ultimately changes in the law on associations which made the new liberal regime even less tolerant than the Restoration."[34] Between ministries headed alternately by Guizot, the ever-adaptable Nicolas Soult (formerly a marshal of Napoleon), and the perennial enemy of rebellious workers Thiers, Orleanist commitments to freedom were steadily abridged.

Inasmuch as "political power was still firmly in the hands of the landed proprietors, the officeholders, and the professional men," Pinkney concludes,

.. the July Days had effected no revolution in France." But the uprising had made "one revolutionary change, one that its principal beneficiaries had not intended and thoroughly deplored. It had brought the people, particularly the people of Paris, back into politics in a way they had not been involved since the 1790s."[35]

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[33] Pinkney, *French* Revolution *of 1830,* p. 367.

[34] Pamela Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution in France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 93.

[35] Pinkney, *French Revolution of 1830,* p. 367.

THE SECRET SOCIETIES

The crowds who watched Lafayette embrace the Duke of Orleans at the Hotel de Ville chafed at the incompleteness of the July events, whose victory they reasonably felt was being brazenly snatched from them. Having risen against the detested Bourbon monarchy and defeated it once, working people were now acutely aware of their power. It was almost certainly the Revolution of 1830 that created the sizable French public for Buonarotti's account of the Babouvist conspiracy, which was published only two years before the July days. Buonarotti's book now fed a growing desire to turn to conspiratorial methods to overthrow the July Monarchy—and among the French revolutionaries of the period, none embodied this tendency more consistendy and militandy than Blanqui. When the July insurrection exploded, Blanqui may already have been a republican—in any case, he abandoned his moderate journalist colleagues at the *Globe* and threw himself into the street fighting, brandishing a musket in one hand and a tricolor in the other. He was wounded, for which the Orleans government awarded him a decoration, but he emerged from the fighting as a red republican and rapidly evolved into a socialist.

In January 1832, while defending himself at a highly publicized trial for his radical views, he delivered a passionate speech that J. Tchemoff describes as "the first socialist manifesto of this epoch."[36] The July Monarchy, Blanqui said, was "the government of the bourgeois classes," and society was in "a state of war between rich and poor."[37] Asked by the president of the court to name his own "estate," or class, Blanqui answered forthrighdy, *"Proletaire."* When the president denied that the proletariat was an estate, Blanqui roared, "How is it not an estate! It is the estate of thirty million Frenchmen who five by their labor and are deprived of political rights!"[38] The language of socialism was already very much in his mind as well as in the minds of a growing number of ordinary republicans in France.

An early arena for generating socialists was the secret republican society *Societe des Amis du Peuple* (Society of the Friends of the People), inspired by the republican publicist Godefroy Cavaignac. The Amis, who were organized on July 30, immediately after the Paris street fighting, demanded that France be permitted to elect a new constituent assembly to decide the nature of the state, instead of restoring the old Chamber of Deputies. The many republican banquets and oratorical tournaments the society held challenged the legitimacy of the new monarchy, even attracting as many as a thousand people to their meetings. In reality the Amis had only 150 committed members in Paris— Buonarotti was among them, as was Blanqui, although how intimate they were remains unclear. More radical and larger than the Amis was the *Societe des Droits de I'Homme* (Society for the Rights of Man), a highly disciplined offshoot of the Amis that, after 1832, managed to collect a considerable working-class following and extend its reach throughout the *arrondissements* of Paris and into some of the provinces. Hierarchically structured,

[36] J. Tchemoff, *Le Parti republicaine* sous *la monarchic de Juillet* (Paris: A Pedone, 1901), p. 261; quoted by Alan B. Spitzer, *The Revolutionary Theories of* Louis Auguste *Blanqui* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 6.

[37] Blanqui quoted in Samuel Bernstein, *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 47.

[38] Quoted by Maurice Dommanget, *Auguste Blanqui: Des Origines a la revolution de 1848: Premiers combats et premieres prisons* (Paris and La Haye: Mouton, 1969), p. 99.

Even more than Danton a half-century earlier, Blanqui developed the technique of turning the tables on prosecutors and judges, transforming the accused into the accuser and his trials into forums for advancing his ideas. His stays in prison, too, became educational experiences for other political prisoners, many of whom he recruited to his ideas.

the top level of the *Droits* was an eleven-man central committee, below which came twelve commissioners, one for each *arrondissement*, and below them another forty-eight commissioners, one for each of the four *quarters* into which each *arrondissement* was divided. The *quarters*, in turn, were subdivided into sections, whose clubs claimed to be independent in order to evade government restrictions on membership in societies.

Clubs like the Amis and the *Droits*, which proliferated throughout France, were expressly republican and sometimes even socialistic in outlook. By 1833 the *Droits* claimed a total membership of 4000 in Paris, while its branch in Chalons, one of several outside the capital, had as many as 1500. Nor were these republican clubs mere debating societies. A number of them, including certain sections of the *Droits*, were armed, while others, particularly in the provinces, drilled and held target practice. The mushrooming of such revolutionary societies among artisans provided the upper classes with the excuse—and the need—to accept the repressive measures on association imposed by the Orleanist government

On June 5, 1832, a funeral was held for Maximilien Lamarque, an immensely popular Bonapartist general on whom the exiled Napoleon had looked with such favor that he bequeathed upon him, on his deathbed at St. Helena, the honorific title of marshal. Now a cortege of thousands, led by several distinguished military men, including Lafayette, followed Lamarque's coffin as it wound its way to the Pantheon. Many who followed behind in the procession were members of revolutionary societies who expected, in the aftermath of the funeral, to stage a full-scale republican insurrection against the monarchy.

> One of a party of students having exclaimed, "But, after all, whither are they leading us?" "To the republic," replied a person, wearing the July decoration, who was acting as chief of the troop, "and make yourself sure of this, that tonight we will sup in the Tuileries."[39]

The cortege stopped before a specially prepared scaffold to hear dignitaries deliver solemn eulogies to Lamarque, when suddenly, as Louis Blanc recounts,

> a stranger came up, mounted on a horse, which he had great difficulty in getting through the immense concourse. The appearance of this man was most sinister; he was dressed in black, and held in his hand a red flag, surmounted by a cap of liberty. It was the symbol of '93 that was thus revived before the eyes of the bourgeoisie.

The flag so disconcerted Lafayette that, although he was a close associate of Lamarque's, he abruptly left the funeral.

> The indignation which this spectacle excited, was extreme, especially on the part of the republicans, whose principles this fearful apparition tended to misrepresent and throw a slur upon. One shout of reprobation burst from all present, with the exception of a few, who applauded, either with imbecile fanaticism, or with the treacherous purpose of throwing odium on the cause of the republic.

The man's appearance, in Blanc's view, succeeded in turning many members of the cortege against the prospective insurrection, by associating republicanism with "sanguinary jacobinism."

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[39] Louis Blanc, *The History of Ten Yean: 1830 to 1840*, vol. 2 (London: Chapman & Hall, 1845), p. 30.

> The red flag had produced its effect: he who bore it immediately disappeared; and from that moment, the republicans had to renounce the hope of drawing after their steps the bulk of the bourgeoisie.[40]

We will never know whether the horseman was a police provocateur or not, but his action did succeed in preventing a wide-scale insurrection that day.[41] The more militant republicans in Paris, however, were not to be deterred: they went on, in spite of the horseman, to stage an uprising, raising huge barricades at some of the capital's key cross sections (vividly described by Victor Hugo in *Les Miserables*), exhibiting exceptional courage and panicking many members of the government. As it turned out, however, Louis-Philippe was well prepared to confront any insurrection: he had about 24,000 troops at his disposal, as well as most of the National Guard On June 6, after two days of valiant but futile street fighting on the part of the rebels, the uprising was crushed.

Following the June 1832 uprising, societies that had enjoyed a semilegal status were driven completely underground, but the more stringently the societies were repressed, the more broadly socialistic ideas spread among the red republicans. Soon the newly formed socialist societies were collaborating with the older republican societies, interpenetrating one another with joint conspiracies and actions. By hounding these republican and socialist groups alike, the Orleanist regime forced them to take desperate and often adventuristic actions. But perhaps the most memorable of the underground societies, serving pardy as an inspiration and pardy as a model, were those created by Blanqui and his supporters. In the summer of 1834 (or 1835, according to some sources), Blanqui founded the *Socidte des Families* (Society of the Families), a secret conspiratorial organization that was avowedly committed to orchestrating a coup d'etat against the Orleanist monarchy. By 1836, the membership of the society, it has been estimated, numbered about 1200.

The structure of the Families, again, was hierarchical, patterning itself on the classical organizational forms of the *charbonnerie.* Its basic unit was a six- to-twelve-member "family"; five or six families constituted a "section" under a chief; three or four sections made up a "quarter," led by a *commandant de quartier* several quarters were led by an *agent revolutionnaire.* Finally, guiding this apparatus from above was a *Comite secret*, or central committee, whose membership was unknown to the rest of the organization. Actually, the central committee was more or less a fiction. The real command of the society consisted of three "revolutionary agents," the most notable of whom were Blanqui and Armand Barbes. Barbes, whom Max Nomad describes as "young, rich, enthusiastic, good-natured, and heroic—the idol of the student youth and popular with all the republic opponents of the regime,"[42] long remained, in his revolutionary career, a perpetual adolescent and reckless romantic. In fact, the *Families* did not acquire much significance until Blanqui joined it around 1835.

Each member of a "family" was expected to join the National Guard, in order to gain military training, propagandize among the Guards, and if possible acquire a weapon and gunpowder. This typically Blanquist society had its own gunpowder laboratory (possibly two) in the very heart of

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[40] Ibid., pp. 31–2 Blanc's apparently firsthand account seems more reliable than others that place the red flag, not in the hand of the anonymous "stranger," but on Lamarque's coffin. This would have been impossible, especially since Lafayette, one of the leading figures in the cortege, certainly would never have assented to such a gesture.

[41] Although the appearance of the horseman at Lamarque's funeral cortege has been cited as the first time the red flag was raised in Paris, it had already been raised the year before, in 1831, in an insurrection at Lyon, and it was to reappear in French uprisings throughout the 1830s.

[42] Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 27.

Paris, as well as arms caches in different parts of the capital, and before the police learned of its existence, it had even begun to infiltrate two regiments of the Paris garrison. Upon its discovery Blanqui was arrested and jailed, but a year later he was released under a general amnesty and sent into a rather pleasant semibanishment near Paris, where he had a brief period of domestic happiness with his beloved wife, Amelie-Suzanne (whose early death only a few years later cast a pall over Blanqui's many remaining years).

In exile Blanqui formed still another secret network, the *Societe des Saisons* (Society of the Seasons), in collaboration with, once again, Barbes, and the printer Martin Bernard. More than the *Families,* its membership grew to consist of a large percentage of workers. (Marx, in fact, regarded the society as exclusively proletarian, but this is probably a simplification.) Once again the Saisons, following the *Charbonnerie,* was organized into a hierarchy of levels of groups. This time individual conspirators were each named after a weekday, six of whom together constituted a "week," led by "Sunday." Four weeks formed a "month"—under the command of "July"—and three months formed a "season," led by "spring." All four seasons together constituted a "year," which was directed by a "revolutionary agent" Since the society had about a thousand members, it consisted of three "years," each of which was led by a "revolutionary agent"—who happened, in fact, to be Blanqui, Barbes, and Bernard. This elaborate system of small units and centralized control was meant to neutralize any police infiltration and at the same time maximize the organization's coordination during the coup that it intended to stage, the date of which was known to no one but the top leaders.

Members of the *Saisons* engaged in training exercises for the coup amid the unknowing Sunday-afternoon crowds of Parisians who were enjoying their day off out of doors. These insurrectionary exercises were conducted under the close supervision of Blanqui, who, in his black coat and black gloves, would calmly assess the strengths and weakness of his future insurgents, often from a cafe window as they passed by. The moment of truth for the *Saisons* finally came on the morning of May 12, 1839, when the conspirators raided gunsmith shops and seized the Palais de Justice and the Hotel de Ville, proclaiming a republic and wildly singing the "Marseillaise." The National and Municipal Guards were quickly mobilized, driving the insurgents behind barricades in the workers' districts. Despite the *Saisons'* largely working-class following, ordinary working people remained passive, abstaining from participation in the uprising. Two patently hopeless days later, the entire enterprise collapsed, with no impact upon the Parisian working class.

After five months of hiding in cellars and attics, Blanqui was caught and condemned to death, a sentence that was commuted to life imprisonment. The conspirator was confined to the island fortress of Mont Saint-Michel and later to a prison hospital at Tours, from which he was released in 1844 because of his fragile health. Although he had planned the May uprising in every detail, he seems to have developed doubts about its chances for success once it was under way. In any case, when it became clear to Blanqui that the uprising would be a failure, he prudently but reprehensibly withdrew himself from the action—an act that led to an irreconcilable break between himself and the more adventurous Barbes, who had been wounded in the fighting.

Despite its failure, the *Saisons* conspiracy was to seize the imagination of later revolutionaries, including anarchists, and it may have supplied the conspiratorial atmosphere for novels on anarchist terrorism written by distinguished authors from Dostoyevsky to Conrad. Blanqui, to be sure, was no anarchist; indeed, the leaders of the Saisons hoped ultimately to preside over a highly centralized revolutionary state. But the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will or People's Freedom—the Russian word *volya* has both meanings), the populist and terrorist organization

that assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881, was influenced by Peter Tkachev, one of Blanqui's collaborators. The notion that small groups, if not individual conspirators, could initiate sweeping revolutionary events through heroic actions is a legacy of early Blanquism—however much Blanqui himself, over time, arrived at a more realistic appraisal of the limits of secret conspiratorial organizations.

In fact, by the 1840s, in the face of repeated defeats, arrests, and repression, popular belief in the effectiveness of Blanquist conspiratorialism was diminishing. The regime shrewdly exploited the conspiracies and various attempts to assassinate Louis-Philippe in order to arouse public opinion against republicanism and socialism. Whether because of this repression or for other reasons, the secret societies awakened no mass movement against the July Monarchy. For the most part, the workers of France had a traditional agenda of their own—to retain control over their working conditions, indeed to establish cooperative workshops that implicitly challenged the legitimacy of the property system itself, as well as to live decently and with self-respect. In time, once sweeping transformations had occurred in the economic and political landscape of Western Europe, they were to flock into socialistic organizations that sought to create a better society by other means.

PART VI. THE BARRICADES OF PARIS

Chapter 25. The Revolution of February 1848

The French Revolution of 1830 sent shock waves throughout Europe. In Britain, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain, as well as a number of states in the German Confederation, movements for the reform of dynasties or monarchies flared up, sometimes taking the form of insurrections. But most of these reforms were nationalist in character, or liberal—seeking to broaden political rights—or both, rather than social uprisings, in which the masses fought for a radically new economic as well as political dispensation. In time, nagging problems of national unification were resolved, not by popular insurgencies but by forceful statesmen, such as Cavour in Italy and Bismarck in Germany, who fulfilled the aspirations of established monarchs rather than those of quasi- democratic popular movements.

It was almost exclusively in France, in the nineteenth century, and usually in Paris, that mass armed revolts transcended essentially nationalist goals and focused on the "social question" of economic exploitation, class rule, and property ownership. As we have seen, the Great Revolution had by no means eliminated all of the social arrangements of the ancien regime. Ironically, in fact, it was not only the traditions of 1789 but France's very economic backwardness, at least by comparison with England, that made it a hotbed of revolution and radical ideologies.

THE PERSISTENCE OF OLD FRANCE

Despite the economic and technological changes that took place very noticeably in the 1840s, the propertied classes of France—the middle classes as well as the nobility—still equated prestige and power with the ownership of land. Even the bourgeoisie, with or without titles, aspired to the ownership of large estates, which alone would gain it a privileged position in the management of the country. Admittedly, this high regard for land ownership was diminished in French cities, particularly in Paris, where commerce and banking flourished. Certainly in the capital, talented men with fairly plebeian origins such as Jacques Laffitte, Casimir Perier, Adolphe Thiers, and Francois Guizot—bankers, journalists, and academics—attained positions of prominence in national affairs; nor were these men denied entry into aristocratic circles, or even the opportunity to marry into the nobility, as trade and finance became ever more lucrative sources of income.

But in the rural areas and the small towns, French provincial and municipal affairs were almost completely controlled by landed notables, who despised urban businessmen and ruled over the peasantry and craftsmen of their districts with prerevolutionary arrogance. Together with the clergy, they dispensed favors and issued directives as though the Revolution of 1789 had never occurred. Nor were their claims to local sovereignty seriously challenged by the peasantry and lesser urban classes, who viewed tides and the ownership of landed property with subservient awe, especially in the royalist hotbeds of the west and south.

That a great deal of power was exercised on the provincial and even the local level was not politically trivial. During the 1830s France was still a comparatively decentralized country—in some respects barely a modern nation-state. Travel conditions outside the great urban hubs were very primitive, leaving many parts of the country isolated and under the dominion of local landowners. Despite a considerable amount of road and canal construction during the Restoration, "in the 1830s the nation's transportation system … was still that of the eighteenth century," as David Pinkney pointedly observes.[1]

In 1830, for example, stagecoaches still moved at an average speed of four miles per hour, and it took ten to twenty days for freight wagons to move from Paris to Orleans. A steamship journey up the Rhone from Arles to Lyon required three to four days, and even more if the river was swollen by flooding or shrouded in fog. In winter, when ice clogged the waterway, traffic might be suspended entirely for a week. Travel along canals, whose construction tripled under the Orleans monarchy, still faced all the riverine difficulties of weather, flooding, and drought Rural France thus had only limited, and usually very little, contact with the capital. The affairs of large areas of the country were necessarily left in the hands of the local aristocracy—many of whom remained Legitimists, that is, supporters of the old Bourbon dynasty to which Louis XVI and his brothers belonged.

The continuities with the past, it should be emphasized, encompassed not only regional isolation, poor roads, and strong feelings of provincialism but a fairly primitive banking system. By continuing to invest mainly in safe government bonds and low-risk securities that brought short-term returns, this system impeded the growth of more mechanized, capital-intensive enterprises. Even small enterprises such as the production of iron in charcoal-fueled furnaces (which still supplied most of the country's iron) had to rely on overly cautious local banks or else be self-financed. The larger coal-fueled plants, so necessary for the production of iron for locomotives and railroad tracks, required large capital investments that vastly exceeded the capacity of most local financial institutions. Indeed, not until the Paris—Saint-Germain Railroad proved to be a financial success were the large Parisian banks prepared to invest heavily in railroad construction or trade in railroad shares on the Paris Bourse.

Finally, any attempt by a peasant household to improve its lot beyond subsistence farming came up against the resistance of local financial institutions, which were extremely reluctant to make low-interest loans to small-scale food cultivators. French peasant agriculture consequently stagnated, imprisoned in quasi-medieval forms of finance, such as high-interest loans from small-town notaries, with the result that peasants were still easy prey to their traditional vicissitudes, such as bad harvests and droughts. Indeed, even in an age of railroads, steamships, and factories, food shortages, so redolent of the ancien regime, were still serious problems.

For those who had wealth, the purchase of land usually left insufficient capital for industrial growth or even sophisticated agricultural techniques. The real measure of a family's wealth continued to be the amount of acreage it owned rather than the level of its agricultural productivity. "The values and aspirations of the bourgeoisie were still predominantly those associated with landowners and not those of businessmen or the English captains of industry," notes Pinkney, "fully committed to the pursuit of profit and to a regimen of work."[2]

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[1] David H. Pinkney, *Decisive Years in France: 1840–47* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 13.
[2] Ibid, p. 19.

Nevertheless France could not resist change altogether, least of all during the latter decade of the July Monarchy. Economically, despite the overwhelmingly artisanal nature of the manufacturing economy, industrial advances could not be avoided, but by no means could they be instituted on a scale comparable to English industry. The north was home to the mechanized production of cotton cloth; the Loire basin was greatly expanding its production of coal; and the small forges that had formerly accounted for much of the country's iron output were consolidated into large-scale foundries, presaging the Industrial Revolution that had already swept over parts of Britain.

Perhaps of greatest significance, railroads began to come into their own, reaching isolated regions that had previously been all but completely closed off to trade. The passage of the 1842 Dufaure railway law mandated the formation of a national railway network, in which land, track, and stations were to be supplied by the government, then leased to private companies that would provide the necessary operating equipment and rolling stock. Between 1842 and 1848, the amount of track in France tripled from roughly 600 to 1800 kilometers. It was a first step in overcoming the isolation of the French regions and at the same time provided a stimulus to the metallurgical industry, so indispensable to modernization.

Politically, however, the regime of Louis-Philippe was closed to everyone but a few wealthy citizens; by the election law of 1831, only those Frenchmen could vote who paid taxes of at least 200 francs—a franchise qualification that effectively barred all but 250,000 out of 9 million adult males from voting. Such franchise reforms as were proposed in the Chamber of Deputies did not apply to the working class, which all parties in the government seemed to assume should be barred from electoral participation. Morally, the regime had become scandalously corrupt, with bribery and dishonesty rampant at all levels of government, including the military. The July Monarchy was, in effect, a huge holding company, as Marx called it, for stockbrokers and financiers who had been reaping immense fortunes ever since Louis-Philippe ascended the throne. It baldly justified its existence by the extremely favorable and privileged environment it created for the rising bourgeoisie and rural nouveaux riches. Commercialism had become the ruling ethos of the elite, and the propertied classes proceeded to gorge themselves financially, through shamelessly lucrative contracts, reckless speculation, and shady loans, generating enormous discrepancies in wealth throughout the country.

THE ASSOCIATIONS DEMANDS OF THE 1840s

In the years direcdy following the Great Revolution, France had preserved its predominandy artisanal economy, so that the manufacturing sector of the French economy was still overwhelmingly made up of craftsmen. Although their economic position had changed somewhat between 1789 and 1840, the interests and status of artisans had remained surprisingly constant. Even Paris, as we have seen, had hardly changed during the fifty years that passed since the Bastille was taken, and the methods of manufacturing production, even working-class lifeways, were remarkably similar to those of two generations earlier.

Master artisans usually owned their own tools and managed their own shops, using the labor of their families, apprentices, and journeymen for assistance in production. Allowing for differences among individuals, they shared certain basic values, habits, and hopes. Those who did not own property aspired, in time, to acquire their own workshops and enjoy the status of master craftsmen. The more well-to-do master artisans worked side by side with apprentices, journey-

men, and hired workers, who not only shared their ideas, hopes, and lifeways but often lived in their homes and shared their meals.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, social forces emerged to threaten these independent artisanal lifeways: new technologies, most notably rail transportation, opened hitherto isolated markets to cheap mass-produced goods from abroad and at home. Merchant capitalists were becoming more central figures in economic life, especially those who paid for the artisans' products at a given rate, then traveled elsewhere to sell them. Increasingly these merchants began to control the allocation of jobs and the prices that artisans received for their goods, often with little or no concern for the needs of their producers. As the merchants' role became even more pronounced with the expansion of trade, they threatened to reduce the artisans to a lowly, dependent status, at the beck and call of bourgeois masters. At the same time the industrial capitalist world was poised to invade their craft world, threatening to replace it with the factory system.

These looming changes raised several basic questions that urgendy had to be addressed. What would be the place of artisanal workers in the changing economic and political life of France? How could they deflect the cruel impact of a harshly competitive market economy? Could they, as artisans, create an alternative to the emerging predatory and competitive capitalist economy?

A spate of communist and socialist books and pamphlets were published that tried to address these searing questions. But following the Revolution of 1830, experience and need counted almost as much as theory in persuading militant French workers to join together in organizations of associated or cooperative production that were known as "associations." The popularity of the word *association,* instead of the more archaic, prerevolutionary word *corporation,* was due in no small part to the writings of Fourierists, and especially Buchez, in his very popular public lectures in the autumn of 1830.

Precisely when French workers began to form associations differs from one historian to another. According to Bernard Moss, "Associationism was bom during the wave of strikes and organized protests provoked by the Revolution of 1830"—specifically, with the large wave of strikes that swept over French cities, particularly Paris, in 1833.[3] William Sewell, on the other hand, dates associations back to workers' philanthropic societies of the previous century, which were then revived after 1831. What is clear is that in 1833 an economic upswing, and an accompanying strike wave, began to generate a strong associationist movement among French workers. Idled by work stoppages, the strikers formed cooperative associations simply in order to earn an income.

It was worker-militants who formulated the organizational contours of these new entities. In 1833 a militant shoemaker known to us only as Efrahem called upon the "workers of an *etat* [to] form a corps among themselves; they must choose, from the midst of that society, a commission charged with representing it in debates with the masters, to fix wages according to *tarifs* [contracts specifying wage rates], discussed and decreed by its members."[4] The words *etat* and *corps are* evidence of the archaisms that persisted in artisans' language and thinking, but the intention of an association like Efrahem's is patendy clear: essentially it was to be a labor union. Although

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[3] Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement, 1830–1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 32.

[4] Quoted in William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution* in *France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 210.

such associations were often marked by initiation ceremonies, rites, secret signals, and shared festivities, they were hardly socialistic entities.

Indeed, associations seem to have emerged out of the simple trade unions that workers formed to advance their interests during the course of the strikes. To conduct a strike, workers had to eat and provide their families with the means of life. Associations that functioned as labor unions or mutual aid societies could make some such provisions for their survival. But as strikes intensified, striking workers took the function of their associations further. Striking shoemakers, tailors, and cabinetmakers in various French cities actually formed producers' associations or cooperative *workshops*, by which they could gain employment to support themselves during strikes, until their masters or the merchants to whom they sold their goods agreed to an acceptable *tarif*. Most of these producers' cooperatives were not long-lived; as Sewell tells us, they

> were not envisaged as continuing beyond the end of the strike. Even the most ambitious—such as the "national workshop" that was formed by the Parisian tailors during their long strike of October and November [1833], which they saw as becoming a permanent part of the tailors' corporation— were conceived of as stricdy a subordinate arm of the overall workers' corporation [Le., trade union of a single trade].[5]

Significantly, a limited form of association, that had been little more than a prototypical trade union, had mutated under strike conditions into a collectivistic producers' association. In response to the discontent of workers expressed in such strikes and associations, the government passed a Law of Association in 1834 that prohibited associations of all but the most innocuous sort For the rest of the 1830s and the 1840s, producers' cooperatives and collectivist associations, which had been formed only during strikes in actual practice, were elevated to a major component of the ideology of artisanal socialism. This ideology envisioned a socialist society based on cooperative production and distribution, whose economy would be structured around producers' associations.

Moreover, these associations would be confederally interlinked into a "fraternity" of *all* trades. In a pamphlet tided *On the Association of Workers of All Trades*, the shoemaker Efrahem cast his sights beyond one particular *etat* to a confraternity of the working class as a whole. Without broader association, he warned, individual "corporations" would "dissipate and dissolve … annihilate themselves in the individualism and egoism of isolation." Associations, this remarkable worker went on to write, should instead elect delegates to represent all trades in a coordinating "central committee." When strikes took place, the central committee would collect and disburse funds among strikers.[6]

That practical structure seems to have been about as far as Efrahem was prepared to take his proposed confraternity. But it was one that the most revolutionary Parisian workers came to regard as the alternative structure to industrial capitalism: a central committee of workers' delegates from all trades that would coordinate the funding of collectivist producers' associations and the distribution of their earnings in as egalitarian a manner as possible. In the years to come, they would debate further aspects of this artisanal socialism. Would the earnings in such collectivist cooperatives be shared among the workers in an individual association, or among the

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5 Ibid.
6 Quoted in ibid, p. 212.

members of a trade, or among the working class as a whole? Would they be shared according to work performed (socialism) or according to the needs of the worker and his or her family (communism)? Would producers' cooperatives depend upon the state for start-up credit, or on contributions from the pockets of its members? Would the confraternity of the associations be supervised—temporarily or permanently—by the state (in what later socialist movements might call a "workers' state") or by confederal councils of delegates from the workshops themselves?

In the 1840s, in addition to these expressly associationist forms of socialism, Parisian workers also encountered the highly individualistic, so-called "anarchistic" scheme proposed by Proudhon, which, as we have seen, was based on the personal ownership of property and the use of contracts to knit producers and consumers together. A bitter foe of collectivism of any kind, Proudhon was nonetheless obliged in 1851, in the wake of the associationist ferment of 1848 and after, to acknowledge that association of some sort was unavoidable for large-scale enterprises:

> Association has indeed its use in the economy of nations. The workmen's associations are indeed called upon to play an important part in the near future; and are full of hope both as a protest against the wage system, and as an affirmation of *reciprocity*. This part will consist chiefly in the management of large instruments of labor, and in the carrying out of certain large undertakings, which require at once minute division of functions, together with great united efficiency; and which would be so many schools for the laboring class if association, or better, participation, were introduced. Such undertakings, among others, are railroads.[7]

Proudhon's large-scale associations were to be owned by the men who worked in them, and their components were to be bound together by contracts rather than by ethical or fraternal sentiments.

By 1848, all of these associations—be they trade unions, cooperatives, or producers' associations of a socialistic or communistic type, and their confraternities or confederations—were part of the variegated but passionately held ideology of artisanal socialism: they were to constitute the economic infrastructure of the "democratic and social republic." The most revolutionary militants in Paris adopted a vision of a republic based on the "organization of work," consisting of producers' associations that were socialistic or communistic in nature. The less socially sophisticated workers adopted a vision of a republic that would be managed by associations ranging from mutual aid socieds and simple producers' associations to confederations of trade associations.

In general, in the 1830s and 1840s, it was the sophisticated militants who set the tone for working-class demands, and it was Louis Blanc's *Organization of Work,* that synthesized many of these ideas, which became what G.D.H. Cole calls "the rallying cry for the main body of the Paris workers."[8] So nearly did the "organization of labor" into associations acquire quasi-mystical proportions that even republican societies such as the Droits *de VHomme* called for a republic whose primary task would be to hand over to workers the means by which they could refashion their trades into cooperative associations that they themselves controlled.

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[7] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century,* trans. John Beverley Robinson (1923; London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 98.

[8] G.D.H. Cole, A History *of Socialist Thought,* vol. 1: *The Forerunners, 1789–1850* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 168.

By the winter of 1848, the social cauldron of France was already boiling over with the menace of revolution. In January of that year, Alexis de Tocqueville warned his colleagues in the Chamber of Deputies that the revolution they feared was already looming on the horizon:

> See what is passing in the breasts of the working classes, who, 1 grant, are at present quiet... Do you not see that there are gradually forming in their breasts opinions and ideas which are destined not only to upset this or that law, ministry, or even form of government, but society itself, until it totters upon the foundations on which it rests today? Do you not listen to what they say to themselves each day? Do you not hear them repeating unceasingly that all that is above them is incapable and unworthy of governing them; that the present distribution of goods throughout the world is unjust; that property rests on a foundation which is not an equitable foundation? And do you not realize that when such opinions take root, when they spread in an almost universal manner, when they sink deeply into the masses, they are bound to bring with them sooner or later, I know not when nor how, a most formidable revolution?[9]

Nor was Tocqueville wrong in this warning that France was faced with a social as well as a political revolution. Having been robbed of their victory in the 1830 uprising by a clique of constitutional royalists and liberals, French workers were not eager to mount barricades and spill blood once again for mere changes in government. The majority of veterans of 1830 were determined, at a minimum, to gain the freedom to form associations, which had been prohibited by the Le Chapelier law of 1791, and by the 1834 Law of Associations. Their demand seemed to threaten in the minds of the bourgeoisie a sweeping social revolution against property and wealth as such. Moreover, workers were listening more intently to the ideas that the militants proffered in working-class cafes and sifted them through with greater care, while reading and discussing works by Blanc, Cabet, and Proudhon, as well as lesser-known socialists. It was their debates that Tocqueville urged the Chamber to heed when he rose to address it, barely a month before Paris exploded in the February Revolution of 1848.

PRELUDE TO REVOLUTION

Nevertheless, despite the debates among Parisian workers about social change, it is doubtful that socialistic ideas alone would have sufficed to plunge Paris into insurrection. In February 1848 what certainly primed the people of the capital for a new revolutionary upheaval was the prolonged economic crisis that had begun two years before. Reaching serious proportions between 1846 and 1848, it significandy threatened the well-being not only of the working classes but of the middle classes, especially the multitude of small shopkeepers who formed an integral part of the mass movements in the cities. The depression began with agricultural shortages, such as had been so common during the ancien regime—namely, a potato blight in 1845, followed by a bad wheat harvest in 1846—inciting food and tax riots. It soon extended to commerce, finance, and industry, producing major social instability among ordinarily moderate sectors of French society. Unemployment soared among the working class, seriously affecting the well-being of the petty bourgeoisie as well. As Mark Traugott notes:

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[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville,* trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), p. 14.

the crisis was more severe in Paris than in France as a whole. The annual total of bankruptcies in the capital rose from 691 in 1845 to 931 in 1846 and 1,139 in 1847. A disproportionate share of these failures occurred in small businesses.[10]

In the absence of work, the artisans and the poor suffered enormously, as can be judged by the fact that petty thefts in Paris rose "by more than 60 percent and arrests for begging nearly trebled."[11] During the winter of 1846–47 about a third of the capital's million residents were obliged to rely on some form of charity to maintain themselves, while the number of children abandoned by their parents soared. By far the greater number of conscripts for the army had to be rejected because they were too undernourished and physically unfit to be suitable as soldiers. Astonishingly, the ministry did little to alleviate the human suffering; as a result, when the crisis abated at the end of 1847, it not only left thousands of paupers in its wake but, among ordinary Parisians, an ominous mistrust of the regime.

Adding to these dissatisfactions were the restrictive policies of the July Monarchy itself. Indeed, the most pressing issue that the government faced in the Chamber was the demand for extending the suffrage. The Legitimists deputies, who considered Louis-Philippe a usurper, tried to embarrass his regime and attempted to curry public favor by calling for nothing less than universal suffrage. No one in the Chamber took this spiteful demand seriously except for the most radical republican deputies, whose number, because of the suffrage restrictions, was insignificant. But the numerically much larger Orleanist Center—the so-called "dynastic opposition," those who, like Odilon Barrot, were loyal to Louis-Philippe although not to his minister, Guizot— advocated broadening the electorate to include talented and educated as well as wealthy men, in the hope of widening the electoral base for the monarchy among a politically reliable sector of the population. Finally, in March 1847, Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne, a protege of Thiers and a constitutional monarchist, presented a reform proposal that would have added 200,000 "men of talent" to the electoral rolls. So well received was this proposal that it even gained the enthusiastic support of Barrot, the leader of the dynastic opposition, as well as other deputies.

Increasing the urgency of these demands, Frangois Guizot, a conservative Calvinist, had for some eight years been presiding over the government of Louis-Philippe, creating an impressive record of reactionary obduracy and public distrust. With mindless provocation, the minister consistently opposed all the suffrage proposals, with the result that virtually the entire Chamber galvanized against him. Collectively, the opposition deputies and their extraparliamentary supporters resolved to remove him from his position and demand a broadened franchise.

The proponents of electoral reform resolved to take their concerns to the people of France, to gain a base of popular support for their goals. But inasmuch as it was illegal to hold large-scale political assemblies without the permission of the authorities, they devised a stratagem to skirt the law. Starting in June 1847, they organized and conducted a series of public banquets, whose purpose was ostensibly apolitical, to promote civic fraternity, but during the lengthy "toasts" participants in the banquets freely used the occasion to air their grievances and even excoriate the government policies on suffrage and other questions. At least fifty such banquets were held throughout France in the second half of 1847, stirring up public sentiment in favor of limited electoral reform. Although largely attended by the middle class—the price of admission, six francs,

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[10] Mark Traugott, Armies *of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 11.
[11] Ibid.

excluded the poor—the sullen and desperate workers, suffering bitterly from the economic crisis, closely followed reports of the speeches in their cafes and in the press.

Notwithstanding the popularity of the banquet campaign, the government adamandy resisted demands for reform. As if to fan the flames stirred up by the banquet movement, Guizot, who composed the king's customary addresses to the legislature, added an incendiary passage to Louis-Philippe's otherwise innocuous speech to the Chamber of December 28, 1847:

> In the midst of the agitation fermented by blind or hostile passions one conviction animates and sustains me, that we possess in the constitutional monarchy, in the union of the great powers of the State, the sure means of surmounting these obstacles and of satisfying all the moral and material interests of our dear country.[12]

Guizot could have conveyed the same message—notably, that the government would countenance no reforms—without openly insulting the opposition deputies. But his reference to "blind or hostile passions" induced by "agitation" not only affronted the opposition deputies but was entirely gratuitous. Neither the Legitimists, nor the liberals, nor the dynastic opposition—all the alleged bearers of these "passions"—had the least intention of challenging the constitutional monarchy, nor, for that matter, were most of them trying to unseat Louis-Philippe as king. However much they wanted the franchise extended, deputies such as Thiers and Barrot were equally fearful of instability, which might well have given the surly working classes the opportunity to impose themselves on the political scene. In fact, the greater part of the Chamber's hostility was directed against Guizot, not against Louis-Philippe, who remained in their eyes a tolerable monarch.

Ironically, it was precisely in the month that the speech was made— December 1847—that a banquet was planned for Paris for February 20 of the following year. This banquet was intended to be somewhat different from the others: in the first place, it was organized not by the opposition deputies but by officers from the twelfth legion of the National Guard, the legion recruited from the twelfth Parisian *arrondissement,* which included the working-class neighborhoods of Saint-Victor and Saint-Marcel. And not only was the planned banquet to be held in this volatile neighborhood, but it was to occur on a Sunday, a day of rest, precisely to enable working people to attend. The price of admission, moreover, was set at a mere three francs, a sum that was within the means of many craftsmen. Finally, the banquet was to be preceded by a (hopefully) dignified demonstration winding through the streets of Paris. Almost provocatively, the organizers planned for unarmed but fully uniformed National Guards—most of whom, to be sure, were shopkeepers and members of the lower middle classes—to maintain order during the occasion.

Needless to say, when permission for this dangerous banquet was requested, the authorities flatly refused to grant it The city had already seen "hunger demonstrations" by the poor, portending trouble and possibly uprisings. Despite this rejection, the organizers proceeded with their plans to hold the banquet, even if it was to be done illegally. The royal administration was by no means alone in its unease about having a banquet in a working-class neighborhood: the opposition deputies, fearful that the banquet would air radical views, themselves intervened to sidetrack the plan by persuading the *twelfth-arrondissement* organizers to allow a new organizing committee to be formed.

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[12] Quoted in Arnold Whitridge, Men in Crisis: *The Revolutions of 1848* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 28.

Conveniently for the deputies and the royal administration, the new committee contained a majority of more respectable members, who succeeded in shifting the venue of the demonstration and banquet to the middle-class Champs-Elysees dislricL Moreover, the price of admission was raised from three to sue francs, and the date of the affair was rescheduled for Tuesday, February 22, a work day, which—together with the higher admission price— would hopefully keep working people from attending. A government official was to be stationed at the opening of the banquet tent to advise the banqueters that they were engaging in an illegal action. Despite these significant changes in the plan, however, the government, fearing that danger still lurked, proceeded to strengthen the Paris garrison by 50,000 troops.

Had the demonstration and banquet been publicized merely as the tepid, informal protest that the opposition intended, the entire charade might have succeeded. But Armand Marrast, a moderate but erratic republican who edited the widely read opposition newspaper *Le National,* decided to publish the details of the next day's demonstration in his February 21 issue, and in a way that made it seem like a veritable battle plan. Indeed, to the readers of *Le National,* the plan must have seemed more like orders for a *journee* than a call for a mild protesL Peremptorily, Marrast spelled out every feature of the demonstration in detail: its assembly point (the Place de la Madeleine), its line of march to the Champs-Elysees, the order of the procession, and even the exact positions to be taken by units of the National Guard. The plan was published not only in Marrast's own paper but in *La Reforme,* the most radical of the republican periodicals, and even in the Fourierist *La Democratic pacifique.*

Marrast almost certainly acted on his own initiative, apparently with the support of his fellow republican journalists, but without consultation with the opposition deputies. The banquet program, according to de Tocqueville,

> was resolved upon, drawn up and published without the participation or the knowledge of the members of Parliament who considered themselves to be still leading the movement which they had called into existence. The programme was the hurried work of a nocturnal gathering of journalists and Radicals, and the leaders of the Dynastic Opposition heard of it at the same time as the public, by reading it in the papers in the morning ... M. Odilon Barrot, who disapproved of the programme as much as anyone, dared not disclaim it for fear of offending the men who, till then, had seemed to be moving with him.[13]

The fat was now in the fire. Marrast's battle plan, wittingly or not, had provocatively transformed the affair from a domesticated demonstration into a confrontation with the regime, indeed a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the government. To the ministry, it must have sounded like an ultimatum. Moreover, by summoning the National Guard, an authority that the government regarded as its own exclusive prerogative, the banquet committee had ostentatiously preempted the state's own police powers.

The government reacted accordingly—and with characteristic stupidity. On the afternoon of Monday, February 21, the ministry forbade the banquet by suspending all public meetings in Paris. The police chief of the capital declared that if a demonstration took place the next day as planned, it would be viewed as an effort to create an illegal governmental power, which amounted

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[13] Tocqueville, *Recollections,* pp. 30–1.

to declaring a state of siege. That evening, the unnerved opposition deputies met fearfully in Barrot's home and voted unanimously to submit to the ban by calling off the entire affair.

But by now the plans for the next day were no longer in their hands: their immediate and abject surrender utterly disappointed, among others, the many students who had their hearts set on the banquet and were resolved to hold a demonstration the next day regardless of the consequences. The many republican and socialistic groups that were intent not only on dislodging Guizot but on toppling the monarchy were no less disgusted; indeed, that evening, as the socialist Marc Caussidiere recalls,

Committees of insurrection sat constandy in the secret societies, and in the offices of the Republican journals. We are ignorant of what passed there. They were probably rather engaged in observation than in action. The limited power of the conspirator, who has but scanty numbers at his disposal, only possesses influence as it ministers to a sentiment generally entertained, or a pre-existing passion.

In reality, the aggrieved sentiment upon which activists depended was present among ordinary people as well. In the editorial offices of *La Reforme* a hundred people anxiously gathered to discuss what was in the offing when daylight broke, and as Caussidiere puts it, each man resolved to

> betake himself separately, and with his hands in his pockets, to the Place de la Madeleine, to watch the course of events, and to gain over public opinion against royalty. In case of an outbreak, each member was to repair immediately to the office of *La Reforme,* to organize the movement with vigour, and to give it a Republican character.[14]

Despite its military precautions, the government radically underestimated the consequences of the ban. In an eerie reprise of Charles's nonchalance some eighteen years earlier, Louis-Philippe, peering out the windows of the Tuileries on the cold, rainswept streets of the capital, nonchalandy remarked that Parisians never made revolutions in the wintertime, taking comfort in the hope that the calendar would assure his safety.

On February 22 the banquet did not, in fact, take place. Most workers took the day off to walk through the streets, sometimes gathering in small crowds to discuss the events of the previous week. In some areas, barricades were actually built, but no republican luminaries led these efforts; indeed, one of the most strikingly consistent features among the eyewitness accounts was the absence of any prominent leader among the radicals. Blanqui, most notably, was still in semibanishment in Blois, some distance from the main theater of events. Other stories have it that, during the night, secret societies gathered to plot insurrectionary acts, but there is no substantial evidence that they were quite as active as police agents claim or that they played a leading role in the events.

Actually, during the morning, a large crowd of students assembled in protest at the Place du Pantheon, on the Left Bank, infuriated mainly because three popular teachers—the historians Jules Michelet and Edgar Quinet and the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz—had been banned from lecturing. After a while the students set out for the Palais Bourbon, where the Chamber of Deputies normally convened, on a route that passed through the working-class districts across

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[14] Louis Marc Caussidiere, Memoires (London, 1848), in *1848* in *France,* ed. Roger Price, Documents of Revolution series (London: Thames & Hudson; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 54–5.

the Seine. Singing the "Marseillaise" and "Mourir de la Patrie" (a Girondin chorus from a popular play by Dumas) and shouting "Down with Guizot!" and "Long live reform!" they were joined by workers, forming a huge crowd that made its way through the streets to the Chamber of Deputies. When they arrived at the Palais Bourbon, a small group tried, unsuccessfully, to invade the building, but that morning it was empty. A serious assault was made on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, but also without success.

That afternoon, almost inexplicably, a frenzy of spontaneous barricade building swept over the city, inducing the government to send troops out to occupy key positions and buildings to abort any incipient uprising. At the Palais Bourbon a unit of dragoons advanced with drawn swords against a crowd. But before they reached the people, they abruptly halted and, probably on the orders of their officers, sheathed their weapons, to the ecstatic cheers of the people. It would not have required a very perceptive observer to see in this behavior by the king's most reliable forces a portent of his downfall. Although the troops did capture one barricade, at dusk the fighting, such as it was, seemed to subside, and the government, confident that it was in control of the city, ordered the soldiers to return to their barracks. Yet whatever Louis- Philippe might suppose Parisians did during the winter, his regime, so thoroughly despised after nearly two decades of misrule and demagogy, was now on the verge of an insurrection that would shake the foundations of the established order in all of Europe.

THE BARRICADES OF FEBRUARY

The next day, Wednesday, February 23, a deep sense of expectation still pervaded Paris, since the previous day had seen neither the banquet nor a major protest. Shops remained closed and shuttered; the streets were empty; and the Comedie-Frangais bolted its doors—a sure sign that trouble was afoot. The journalists of *La Rejorme* kept their "hands in their pockets," meaning that they were scattered through the city, more as observers than participants. The clubs of the Right were rife with ominous fears of impending massacres and "communist" conspiracies—a "red specter" that was becoming a highly fashionable object of fear among the upper classes. Generally, deputies of all factions sought the safety of their homes or the Palais Bourbon, which was well guarded by troops and artillery.

But even more barricades now began to appear—in all, more than 1500 were erected throughout Paris, some of which reached stupendous heights in the main boulevards and squares. Priscilla Robertson's account of these traditional barriers is too colorful not to quote at length:

> Enthusiastic Paris citizens had used barricades ever since 1588 (against the Duke of Guise) and now they went methodically to work with crowbars to dig up the foot-square paving stones. They politely stopped omnibuses, untied the horses, assisted the passengers to alight, and turned the vehicles over to be weighted down with stones. They tore iron railings from houses, cut down four thousand trees along the boulevards and destroyed nearly as many lampposts, so that afterward the streets looked as if they had been swept by a tornado. Between the barricades men crouched around huge fires casting lead balls [for muskets]. All over town, houses had been ransacked for arms, and chalked on doors one could read, "Arms Given Up"—some

added, "With Pleasure." Through the incessant tocsin, the *Marseillaise* sounded everywhere, or *Mourir pour la Patrie.*[15]

The vast heaps of *paves,* vehicles, furniture, trees, and lampposts with which the insurgents blocked entire boulevards far surpassed in size all previous barricades. Lithographs of the time show barricades as tall as multistoried buildings, generally surmounted by a tricolor and armed citizens clutching muskets over their heads.

During the morning the government, mindful that there might be disturbances in the capital, called out its forces to occupy strategic places such as the Place de la Concorde, the Hotel de Ville, the Porte de Saint-Denis, and the Porte Saint-Martin—traditional trouble spots in times of unrest. Drummers were ordered to different parts of the city to beat out the *rappel,* to summon to arms the National Guard from the various *arrondissements.* The National Guard was a force in which the government felt it could have confidence: it had been revived for the express purpose of protecting and defending the July Monarchy. The Guards had been "the chosen, especially created instrument of bourgeois ascendancy and defence," as John Plamenatz puts it.[16] Every citizen between the ages of twenty and sixty who paid a property tax, however modest, was required to enroll in this legendary citizens' militia. Inasmuch as a Guard was required to buy his own uniform and, if he wished to be in the cavalry, supply his own horse, most Guards were necessarily of bourgeois origin, in order to be able to cover these expenses. Notwithstanding the costs of belonging to the Guard, however, its members included a sizable number of shopkeepers, professionals, and other members of the lower middle class.

Ironically, however, for want of paying the 200-franc *cens,* many of the Guards were denied the franchise under the very monarchy they were expected to defend, and except for the elite units of well-to-do members, they would have benefited from the electoral reform proposed by the Chamber opposition. Hence any plan to quell disturbances that relied on their support rested on very questionable foundations. In fact, when the *rappel* summoned the Guards on the morning of February 23, only a few units responded. The Cavalry Legion, whose members were relatively wealthy, answered the call, and so did a mere three of the twelve infantry units, but the remaining units mustered on their own, hostile to the purpose for which the government now sought to use them.

In the Chamber, meanwhile, the dynastic opposition, to the catcalls of the conservative majority, was demanding the resignation of Guizot and the enactment of moderate electoral reform. Louis-Philippe now realized that he had to heed the cry of "Down with Guizot!" if the dynasty was to survive. On Wednesday afternoon the sovereign, tears freely flowing down his cheeks, informed a sullen Guizot that he and his ministry were dismissed This concession to popular pressure appalled—and thoroughly alienated—the conservative deputies, who had wrongly decided that the uprising could easily be put down by the military.

The news that Guizot had been forced to resign, however, brought plaudits from the liberal leaders. They were quite prepared to live with the monarchy, which, having fulfilled the wishes of the middle classes, seemed to distance them further from giving support to any uprising. But the news was greeted with joy by the working classes, bringing crowds into the streets, jubilant at the demise of the hated minister. In fact, Paris was enraptured by a spirit of *fraternite*, as people

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[15] Priscilla Robertson. *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 35.

[16] John Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement* in *France, 1815–71* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952), p. 64.

of different classes embraced each other in the streets, while the National Guard fraternized with the population. It seemed that a new dawn was breaking upon the country, and many found reason to hope that the republic for which they had longed was not far off, even though the king still occupied the throne; indeed, if Guizot could fall, then perhaps the "democratic and social republic" itself was on the horizon.

But this festive atmosphere did not last long. Around nine-thirty in the evening, according to the Countess d'Agoult, an acute eyewitness, a joyous "long column, waving torches and a red flag, appeared on the heights of the rue Montmartre."[17] Almost certainly a working-class column, accompanied by enthusiastic children, it had come from the plebeian Faubourg Saint-Antoine. The column was soon joined by popular processions coming from other directions. The merged crowds stopped outside the offices of the republican *National,* where they were greeted by Armand Marrast, the paper's editor, who "by turns delighted as a wit and hurled in thunder the sarcasms and the indignation of the republican opposition"[18]—but also lauded the pacific nature of the *journee.* Then they continued on their way, reinforced by still more demonstrators, until they arrived before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the Boulevard des Capuchins. There they encountered a guard consisting of some 200 men of the fourteenth regiment of the line.

The commander of the guard, one Lieutenant-Colonel Courant, was apparendy panicked by so large a crowd and ordered his troops to form a firing square, which thoroughly astonished the festive merrymakers. Worse still, as the resdess people were pressed forward against the troops by their own numbers, an order was given for the soldiers to fix bayonets. Suddenly an unforeseeable event occurred that transformed the demand for Guizot's removal into a demand for the removal of the monarchy. The Countess d'Agoult tells us what happened:

> Amidst the movements occasioned by the execution of this order, a shot went off; a soldier was hit. Instandy, without any preliminary summons, without any drum roll, without anyone later being able to recall having heard the command, … a volley of murderous firing hit the mass of the people.

It was unclear whether the first shot was an accident or a deliberate provocation by one side or the other; most likely it was an accident But whatever the cause,

> it was enough to make the soldiers feel themselves under attack. No one had given the order for their volley. When the cloud of smoke cleared, it revealed a spectacle whose horror nothing can convey. A hundred men were lying on the pavement; some were dead, others mortally wounded; a great number had been knocked over by the commotion; several had been thrust face-down in an instinctive flight for safety. Blood flowed in torrents. The groaning of the wounded, the choked murmurings of those who were trying to move away from the melee of the dead and dying, tore at

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[17] Daniel Stem (pseud, for the Countess d'Agoult), *Histoire de la revolution de 1848* (Paris: Gustave Sandre, 1850), vol. 1, p. 135. The appearance of this red flag was in "formal contravention of the orders given by the office of the R*iforme* and in other centers," which had explicitly prohibited the "hoisting of any flag other than the tricolor, and against uttering any cry other than 'Vive la reforme!'" If D'Agoult's account is accurate, the self-appointed leaders of the *journee* were trying to confine the masses to stricdy legislative demands, rather than demands to alter the structure of the government. Lamartine agrees with her that a red flag was present; see Alphonse de Lamartine, *History of the French Revolution of 1848* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1871), p. 56.

[18] Lamartine, *French Revolution of 1848,* p. 54.

the heart of the soldier who was the innocent author of this massacre, who watched it with eyes of dismay.[19]

Fifty-two were killed, and the wounded were not even counted. News that the soldiers had fired on the people spread like wildfire. Blame was instanly placed on the ministry—and on the king himself, the very sovereign who had come to power as a result of the people's uprising in 1830. Numb with horror and disbelief, working people collected the bodies of the dead, piled them onto wagons, and paraded them through the streets of the capital, to display the results of the government's brutality to everyone. D'Agoult tells us that "a worker in bare arms" —*aux bras nus*—led a white horse by the bridle, pulling a wagon, atop which

> five corpses are arranged in a horrible symmetry. Standing on the shaft [of the wagon] a child of the people—of pallid complexion, his eyes ardent and staring fixedly, his arms extended, almost immobile, as one might portray the spirit of vengeance—is illuminating with the reddish glow of his torch, the body of a young woman whose neck and bruised chest have been stained by a long trail of blood. From time to time another worker, at the rear of the wagon, embraces the inanimate corpse with his muscular arms, lifting iL From his shaking torch escape sparks, and he exclaims, as they make their way through the crowd, "Vengeance! Vengeance! They are slaughtering the people!" The crowd responds, "To arms!" and the corpse falls back to the bottom of the wagon, which continues on, followed by silence.[20]

Such scenes were probably repeated throughout the city as wagons passed from neighborhood to neighborhood. In the working-class neighborhoods, armed men appeared at the doors of homes, summoning the residents to vengeance, and joined by members of the lower middle classes, thereby forming the key alliance between the workers and the lower petty bourgeoisie that turned the uprising into a popular movement. "Soon the dry noises of pick axes could be heard on the pavements," d'Agoult tells us, "and the heavy felling of trees on the boulevard."[21] The people were pulling up *paves,* erecting more barricades, and sounding the tocsin. The peaceful *journee* of February 22 had become the February Revolution.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE MONARCHY

With the massacre on the Boulevard des Capuchins, the very fate of the monarchy hung in the balance. Oblivious to the seriousness of the situation, however, that Wednesday Louis-Philippe was still making ministerial changes: having dismissed Guizot, he was searching for a minister to replace him. His first choice was a vacuous and reactionary Empire courtier, Count Mole, who around midnight refused the offer, mindful that no conservative could handle the situation that was exploding in the streets. A few hours later, in desperation, Louis-Philippe turned to Thiers, the indubitable leader of the dynastic opposition, whose appointment, the king hoped, would conciliate the people. He seems not to have considered that Thiers himself was despised by the masses for his willingness to suppress insurrections. (Thiers had been primarily

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[19] Stem, *Histoire de la revolution,* pp. 137–8.

[20] Ibid, pp. 140–1.

[21] Ibid, p. 140.

to blame for perpetrating an infamous massacre at the Rue Transnonain in 1834.) Before he would agree to form a ministry for Louis-Philippe, Thiers laid down a number of demands for reform, among which was that his fellow opposition leader Odilon Barrot be brought into the government. Despite his distaste for Barrot, the king finally had no alternative but to yield, whereupon Thiers became the last minister of the July Monarchy.

Meanwhile, the troops of the line as well as the National Guards who were ordered to occupy strategic parts of the city were becoming uneasy; they were not eager to crush a resolute and vociferous public insurgency. Although some accounts put their number at 50,000, Alphonse de Lamartine, the poet who later became head of government, held that there were no more than 25,000. Whatever their number may have been, the troops of Louis-Philippe, like those that Charles X had sent out to quell the July 1830 uprising, were hungry, fatigued, and demoralized from having huddled in the February cold for forty-eight hours—and they were deeply torn by doubts about their purpose.

Late Wednesday evening the king was informed of the massacre and the escalating insurrectionary situation in the streets. The reports coming into the Tuileries now seemed to justify decisive military action by the monarchy against its citizens. Early on the morning of February 24, the king placed all the city's military forces under the command of the ruthless Marshal Thomas Bugeaud, who was also loathed by the people for his leading role in suppressing the 1834 Parisian riots. Accordingly, in the early hours of Thursday morning, at one- thirty a.m., Marshal Bugeaud held a council of war at the Tuileries in which he laid out a plan to sweep the capital clean of all insurgents. Four columns of line troops, artillery, and Municipal Guards were ordered, within hours, to leave their barracks and try to cut through the barricades, taking the sleeping insurgents by surprise. Setting out at five in the moming, the first column, under the command of General Sebastiani, was to make its way past the Hotel de Ville, eliminating any obstacles in the main streets and occupying the area around the Bank of France. At the same time, a second column, led by General Bedeau, was to march through the Grands Boulevards and the Bourse to the Bastille area. Both columns, in turn, were expected to provide cover for a third column that was to clear away any barricades that might be raised again in the aftermath of their passage, while a fourth was dispatched to occupy the strategic Pantheon area.

Allowing for minor losses, all the columns reached their destinations except for Bedeau's, which was stopped short by a large and well-defended barricade that stretched across the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, not far from the Bank of France. To avoid bloodshed, the general entered into parley with the insurgents, with the aid of an intermediary National Guard officer, one Fauvelle-Delabarre, a local businessman who had gone over to the insurgents. But Bedeau could think of no better argument to persuade the insurgents of the government's good intentions than to tell them that Barrot had ascended to power.

Fauvelle-Delabarre shrewdly got the two sides to agree to a delay, so that he could go to the Tuileries and seek a compromise with Marshal Bugeaud. When the wily merchant met with the marshal, however, he got more than he bargained for: Bugeaud wearily consented to withdraw his column entirely. In the meantime, most of the waiting troops, already demoralized and lisdess, began to go over to the insurgents, while others handed over their weapons and withdrew to the Tuileries. The king, having agreed to Thiers's condition to recall the troops, ordered all the columns that had been sent out that moming to return to their barracks. Eventually the entire army was obliged to withdraw from Paris. The capital was placed in the hands of the National Guard, which by now openly supported the insurrection.

The February Revolution was far from bloodless. Serious fighting occurred between workers and Municipal Guards (a militarized police force that should not be confused with the citizen National Guard) at the Chateau d'Eau and the Palais-Royal. Both conflicts ended with a victory for the insurgents. Demonstrators fought Municipal Guards before the Hotel de Ville, while General Sebastiani merely stood by and watched; at around eleven a.m, the city hall was taken over effortlessly by a National Guard officer and a small group of students, whereupon General Sebastiani and his column returned to their barracks. For all practical purposes, Paris had fallen to the insurgents without any serious resistance from the government. The main problem the insurgents now faced was the capture of the monarch and his remaining followers.

Louis-Philippe, ensconced in the Tuileries, could hear firing muskets steadily approaching the palace, the scene of so many memorable civil conflicts. Surrounded by despairing ministers, courtiers, and princes of the blood, he took one last step to save his crown. At eleven o'clock in the morning on Thursday, February 24, bedecked in a general's uniform and accompanied by his two sons and a small retinue, he decided to review the troops and National Guards that were lined up in the square outside the palace. Initially, the troops greeted the king with supportive cheers. But amid cries of "Long live the king!" one rebellious contingent of National Guards thrust itself before the sovereign with cries of "Long live reform!" and "Down with the system!"—even brandishing their weapons in the monarch's face. Instantly the discouraged king veered his horse back toward the palace and disappeared into its interior. The collapse of the monarchy was now complete.

Before the day was out, Louis-Philippe, his family, and his retinue had left Paris for England, and never again did any member of the Bourbon or Orleans dynasty occupy a throne in France. The barricades had prevailed and the nation would soon declare itself a republic. But what kind of republic would it be—a conventional, formal republic, or the "democratic and social republic" for which the artisans longed? The remaining months of the 1848 revolution saw an intensifying and finally explosive conflict over this issue, between the working classes of Paris and the upper classes who tried to contain them.

Chapter 26. The Incomplete Revolution

The conflict over what kind of republic would follow the monarchy began almost at the very moment the king fled Paris. Some insurgents, to be sure, were content to occupy the Tuileries and caricature the nobility by sitting at Louis-Philippe's vacated dining table and playfully addressing one another as "duke" and "marquis." But thousands of others, armed with muskets, bayonets, pikes, and swords, raced to the Palais Bourbon, where the panicked Chamber of Deputies was in session, and to the Hotel de Ville, where Paris traditionally established its revolutionary governments. The city's main streets and boulevards were clogged with people joyously shouting huzzahs, singing the "Marseillaise," and calling for a republic. They waved red flags as well as the tricolor—symbolic portents of the differences that were soon to divide the capital between supporters of a conventional middle-class republic and those of a "democratic and social republic."

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

For guidance, those insurgents who sought political direction in forming a new government turned to the editors of the two major republican newspapers. The more middle-class elements

clustered around *Le National,* whose editor was the moderate but anti-socialist republican Armand Marrast; the workers gravitated toward the offices of *La Reforme,* whose editor, Ferdinand Flocon, exhibited more radical republican tendencies. The two periodicals had been bitter rivals before the uprising, but now the need to arrive at a common list of republicans who would make up a provisional government was imperative. According to Blanc, the job of negotiating such a list was undertaken by himself, representing *La Reforme,* and by one M. Martin of Strasbourg, for *Le National.*

The two men arrived at a mutually agreeable list that both newspapers found acceptable, and scarcely before the fighting had come to an end on February 24, Blanc read it out to the huge crowd gathered before the office of *La Reforme.* The list included several longstanding republicans, as one might expect, including the venerable Jacques Dupont de L'Eure, who had been politically active in the Directory during the dosing years of the Great Revolution; Francois Arago, whose principal credential was his reputation as an outstanding astronomer; Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, generally regarded as a radical republican; Louis Blanc, the socialist; and Marrast and Flocon, who represented the constituencies of their respective newspapers.

But the list also contained many erstwhile constitutional monarchists who had suddenly undergone a conversion to republicanism in the last day or two. Alphonse de Lamartine, a poet and aristocrat, had been a monarchist sympathizer until the evening of February 24 and perhaps later, but his name was placed on the list, as were the names of Alexandre Thomas Marie, a lawyer and opposition deputy whose conversion to moderate republicanism was as newborn and tenuous as Lamartine's; Adolphe Cremieux, a deputy who had initially supported a monarchical regency to replace Louis-Philippe; Louis-Antoine Gamier-Pages, another opposition deputy, whose dubious republicanism represented the interests of the well-to-do middle classes. Gamier-Pages, in fact, had no sympathy for radical republicans, and whatever prestige he had among working people came from the reflected glory of his late brother, who had been an ardent republican leader.

Massive crowds gathered beneath the windows of the *Reforme* offices, Blanc recounts, and the names of the proposed government members were read out for their approval. Although the names of Blanc and Flocon pleased the crowd, they were disinclined to accept a government made up of so many former monarchists and moderate republicans. They recalled only too vividly how just such moderates had stolen their uprising of 1830, and they considered it a matter of the utmost urgency that the same thing should not be permitted to happen again. A cry went up to add the name of Albert, the *nom de guerre* of Alexandre Martin, a buttonmaker who was highly regarded by the Parisian workers for his revolutionary views and activities. A well-known socialist, he had close ties to the secret societies. With a worker like him sitting in the government, the crowd assumed, no measure detrimental to the interests of working people would go unchallenged. And when a rumor spread that over at the Palais Bourbon, the Chamber of Deputies was preparing to accept the regency of the Duchess of Orleans and her young son, the Count of Paris, the crowd flew into a rage and headed over to the palace to put an end to this prospecL

The rumor was more than justified. At the Palais Bourbon the Orleanists and the old dynastic opposition were still hoping that the old king could be replaced by a regency of the duchess and the count. It was during the debate over this regency that the insurgent crowd burst into the Chamber. Weapons in hand, they provocatively aimed some of them at the speaker's rostrum. As Tocqueville tells us:

Loud blows were heard at the door of one of [the galleries,] and yielding to the strain, the door burst into atoms. In a moment the gallery was invaded by an armed mob of men, who noisily filled it and soon afterwards all the others. A man of the lower orders, placing one foot on the comice, pointed his gun at the President and the speaker; others seemed to level theirs at the assembly.[22]

Amid the melee, the duchess and her son extricated themselves from the scene as quickly as they could, followed by deputies of the Right and many moderate factions, leaving the chamber half empty. Almost all the remaining legislators were unnerved and tried to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible. The president of the Chamber, after trying in vain to formally close the session, simply handed over the palace to the crowd, which reconstituted itself as a popular legislature irrespective of any legalities.

Partly at the prompting of Tocqueville, the poet Lamartine had taken the speaker's rostrum. Lamartine had initially favored the duchess's bid for the throne, but ever pliable and adaptable, the elegant aristocrat was nothing if not a careerist. A former monarchist, this political flirt now exuded a spirit of *fraternite*—draping himself in the tricolor and applauding the republic, at a time when its ascendancy was clearly irresistible.

Tocqueville, who had momentarily left the Chamber to see to the safety of the duchess, returned to find that "confusion was at its height" Lamartine was conversing with the crowd around him rather than orating, and several speakers were trying to make their points all at once, so that "there seemed to be almost as many orators as listeners." Finally someone, apparendy Ledru-Rollin, handed Lamartine the list of names that had been endorsed by the crowd before *La Reforme* a few hours earlier.[23] "In a moment of semi-silence," recounts Tocqueville, "Lamartine began to read out a list containing the names of people proposed by I don't know whom to take share in the Provisional Government that had just been decreed, nobody knows how."[24] As each name was called, the crowd shouted its approval.

But wiser heads in the Palais Bourbon knew that this endorsement by what remained of the Chamber of Deputies could hardly suffice to consecrate an insurgent government in Paris. Revolutionary protocol required that any new government had to be sworn in at the Hotel de Ville and only at the Hotel de Ville. Moreover, in this situation, those who wished to harness the revolution and put it in a conventional middle-class bridle had not a moment to lose: in their absence a more revolutionary regime could establish itself at the Hotel de Ville at any time. From somewhere in the Palais Bourbon, as Tocqueville tells us, the cry went up: "To the Hotel de Ville!" To which "Lamartine echoed, 'Yes, to the Hotel de Ville,' and went out forthwith, taking half the crowd with him."[25]

Lamartine's own memoirs give us a slightly different account—one that self- flatteringly claims that the wiser head that initiated the departure was his own. Consistendy referring to himself in the third person, he writes with impeccable hindsight,

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[22] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville,* trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), pp. 66–7.

[23] According to Neil Stewart, the list did not include the names of Flocon, Marrast, Blanc, and Albert, and it was read out to the crowd at the Palais-Bourbon by Ledru- Rollin. See Neil Stewart, *Blanqui* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), p. 99.1 have chosen to follow Tocqueville's account, as he was in attendance.

[24] Tocqueville, *Recollections,* p. 70.

[25] Ibid, p. 71.

Lamartine had intuitively felt that if this provisional government were installed at the Chamber of Deputies, or at the office of the minister of the interior, it would probably be attacked and annihilated before night. The civil strife which had been extinguished by the proclamation of this government would be rekindled in the evening between two rival administrations. The Hotel de Ville, the head quarters of the revolution, the Palace of the People, the Mount Aventine of sediuons, was occupied by innumerable multitudes of people from the surrounding quarters, and from the armed faubourgs. These masses, directed by the most enterprising and intrepid men, would not fail, on hearing the defeat of royalty, the flight of the regency, and the triumph of the revolution, to name a government for themselves. The sanguinary anarchies and tyrannies of the Commons of Paris under the first republic naturally occurred in the thoughts of Lamartine. He instandy saw them afresh in all their horror, still further augmented by those elements of social strife which the absurd doctrines of communism, socialism, and expropriation were causing to ferment, and would cause to burst forth in these masses of workmen, destitute of food, but possessed of arms.[26]

On the other side of the Seine a new insurrecdon was indeed brewing in the Place de Greve, the huge square that opened out before the Hotel de Ville, as well as inside the labyrinthine city hall itself. Huge crowds of armed workers, brandishing muskets, bayonets, pikes, and swords, carrying torches, and waving red flags, had massed in the area, occupying the building and the square and spilling over into the nearby streets, in order to complete their revolution with a government of their own choosing.

Hardly anyone at this "Mount Aventine of seditions" seemed aware that at the Palais Bourbon, "the revolution"—that is, Lamartine and the others on the list, some of whom had been trying to install the duchess as regent only a few hours earlier—had established a provisional government in their absence and without their consent Moreover, had they known of it, the immense number of insurgents surrounding the sprawling city hall, their clothing spattered with blood and their faces smeared with gunpowder, might well have dispersed the Chamber of Deputies with their weapons. It was the prospect of forming a social republic, or at least a broader democratic republic, that held the attention of the workers, who seem to have formed the great bulk of the crowd.

Meanwhile, the new members of the Provisional Government, en route from the Chamber to the Hotel de Ville, had to push and shove their way through this crowd to reach their destination. The diminutive Louis Blanc, a virtual dwarf in stature, actually had to be carried on the shoulders of brawny workers. In fact, setting out as a single group from the Palais Bourbon, they and their escorts soon lost contact with one another and finally arrived in small groups of twos or threes.

Upon their arrival at the city hall a large meeting of insurgents was under way in an assembly chamber known as the Salle Saint-Jean. When the news got out that a provisional government had been selected, the new ministers, as they arrived, were obliged to submit themselves and their principles to the crowd in the Salle for its approval. Gamier-Pages, Ledru-Rollin, Dupont, Arago, and Lamartine arrived first, whereupon they came before the generally orderly assembly and were pilloried by often argumentative queries. Their responses were written down and passed out through the windows to the crowd in the Place de Greve. The people, both inside the city

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[26] Alphonse de Lamartine, *History of the French* Revolution *of 1848,* trans. unknown (London: Bell & Daldy, 1851), p. 128. Aside from Lamartine's insufferable verbosity and tendentiousness, his is one of the most detailed accounts of the establishment of the Provisional Government.

hall and in the square, constituted a remarkable mass jury, as it were, questioning and disputing with the various would-be ministers and roaring their approval where they agreed.

This mass jury was far from sympathetic to Lamartine, especially since he refused to commit himself to declaring a republic immediately. Shordy before Blanc was borne into the Salle by "muscular workmen," as he calls them, Lamartine had explained his refusal. "Strikingly cautious and involved was his exordium," Blanc notes dryly. Lamartine

> said that the question [of declaring France a republic] was one of paramount importance, one which the nation would naturally be called upon to examine, and which he, Lamartine, did not mean to prejudge. These words gave rise to a violent tumult. A tremendous shout of *Vive la Republique!* shook the walls of the building.

Amid the tumult, one of the militants managed to interrupt Lamartine, warning the poet that he must not "cheat the people of what they had so dearly paid for," if he was to serve as a republican minister. Nimbly Lamartine modified his position, and when he resumed his speech, says Blanc, "he took great care to deviate by degrees from the path he had got into, and he concluded by declaring for the Republican form of Government, whereupon he was warmly applauded."[27] When it came to be Blanc's turn to speak before the insurgents, he called not only for a formal republic but for the abolition of economic as well as juridical injustice. His own speech, Blanc tells us, was greeted with the cry "Vive *la rcpublique sociale!"*

Once the first group of government members—Lamartine, Ledru-Rollin, and the others—had been approved, they were led by a sympathetic guide through endless passages in the mazelike Hotel de Ville to a small chamber in another part of the building. Here they shut the door and convened to assert their authority, posting a group of armed students from the Ecole Polytechnique outside to stand guard. Meanwhile Blanc, Flocon, and Marrast, who had arrived later, were obliged to find their own way to the remote chamber. "It was not without difficulty," Blanc notes, "that we succeeded in finding [the government members] out, through the winding passages of the Hotel de Ville."[28] The absence of their more radical colleagues had not prevented Lamartine and his clique from proceeding without them, and their arrival was not received cordially. In his memoir Lamartine writes of Blanc's arrival as if he were an alien being who had suddenly intruded. Although the poet greeted them with his characteristically "radiant" expression, to use Blanc's adjective, others glared at them sullenly or even with hostility. They could scarcely bring themselves to accept Blanc, Marrast, Flocon, and Albert (who arrived still later) as part of the government. But then, the new ministers could ignore the radical members only at their peril, as it would have produced a storm in the crowd outside. At the bright suggestion of Garnier-Pages, the late arrivals were designated as "secretaries," leaving their status in the government ambiguous.[29]

Yet even Lamartine leaves no doubt that the legitimacy of the government as a whole was arguable. Lacking any real foundation apart from the sheer effrontery of its members, the Provisional Government, at this point, could have been dispersed by any resolute body of armed men,

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[27] Louis Blanc, *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), pp. 16–17.

[28] Ibid, p. 19.

[29] Albert's name and background gave a plebeian veneer to the Provisional Government. The ministers consistently called him Albert, to the point that he threatened to resign if they continued to address him disdainfully by only a Christian name, as though he were not their social equal.

such as the workers milling around in the square below their window. And before the night was over, the challenges to the new government's authority would come thick, fast, and furious.

The first issue of contention was whether the Provisional Government would declare the republic that the crowd outside was demanding so vehemendy, a step that the moderate majority were not eager to take. The thought of a republic still evoked images of the Great Revolution, with its mass mobilization of the poor and dispossessed. There can be little doubt that, fearing the influence of the urban workers, the majority of the ministers wanted rural France, particularly the reactionary peasantry, to decide the question of the governmental form. Accordingly, the ministers offered a tepid statement of intention written by Lamartine, declaring that the government "prefers" a republic, which Blanc altered to say that the government "stands by" a republic.

By now, the delays and equivocations on this crucial question were beginning to anger the masses in the square below. Accordingly, the government finally promulgated its first decree. It proclaimed that the Provisional Government existed "in the name of the French people" and declared that "the government desires a republic, pending ratification by the people, who will be immediately consulted."[30] But a statement of "desire" was not enough. In short order, the popular revolutionary socialist Francois Raspail *"commanded* the Provisional Government to proclaim a republic," observes Marx; "if this order of the people were not fulfilled within two hours, he would return at the head of 200,000 men."[31] Blanc was obliged to go out to the Place de Greve and assure the people that "the Provisional Government *will[s]* the Republic"—which they took to mean that the government had actually proclaimed the republic.

> The grim faces I had before me, made still more terrible by the glare of numberless torches, expressed on a sudden a feeling of indescribable satisfaction, and this feeling burst out into a triumphant roar... Some workmen having found in a comer of the Hotel de Ville a large piece of linen, took a bit of charcoal and traced on it in colossal letters: *La Re'publique une et indivisible est proclamee en France.*[32]

The banner was hoisted up to a window in the Hotel de Ville, where it was illuminated by torches for all those below to see.

Having made this declaration, the Provisional Government parceled out the ministries among its various members. Although most histories of 1848 treat Lamartine as the head of state, officially he was merely the minister of foreign affairs. Nonetheless he was certainly the most conspicuous figure in the new government, even in the eyes of his opponents. The elderly Dupont de l'Eure was made the official president of the ministerial council, his name lending the government an aura of the First Republic, in which he had participated, and an air of republican virtue. Cremieux acquired the ministry of justice, and Marie public works. Arago became minister of the navy, and Ledru-Rollin was made the minister of the interior, while the so-called "secretaries" received no ministerial pordolios at all.

The remaining ministries were allotted to men who had not been on the lists compiled by the two republican newspapers. The banker Michel Goudchaux was made minister of finance (to be replaced a few days later by Gamier-Pages); Baron Subervie, an Empire general, became

[30] Quoted in ibid, pp. 29, 30, 32.

[31] Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles* in *France,* in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 10: *Marx and Engels 1849–1851* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), p. 54.

[32] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* p. 31.

minister of war; Eugene Bethmont, a liberal republican lawyer well known for defending left-wing republicans, was given the ministry of agriculture and trade; and the Vicomte de Courtais became the commander of the National Guard. Finally, one Hippolyte Samot was granted the ministry of education.

Marrast took over the mayoralty of Paris without further ado. Marc Caussidiere, a Jacobin who had been close to Blanqui in the 1830s and then became a journalist for *La Reforme,* simply went to the prefecture and boldly declared himself chief of police, a declaration that aroused no opposition from the tremulous occupants of the police headquarters. He obliged all the officers to swear their allegiance to the republic, warning them that they would be shot if they violated their oath, then issued a proclamation urging the people to retain their arms, since they had been betrayed in the past by those who had ridden to power on their backs. In short order Caussidiere created a small army, called the "Montagnards," who were pledged to protect the revolution from its enemies, including potential opportunists in its ranks. Finally, Etienne Arago (brother of the astronomer Francois) became minister of the post, bringing another *Reforme* journalist into the govemmenL

The Provisional Government now engaged in a marathon night of decree- writing, abolishing monarchical institutions and creating new republican ones. One decree simply eliminated the Chamber of Peers; another guaranteed the freedom of speech and the press, ending the censorship that had vexed so many opposition periodicals, while another established the rights of free assembly and association. Still another "democratized" the National Guard by opening its ranks to all adult males and by providing uniforms for those who could not afford them. As the ministers scrawled out decree after decree, the documents were recopied a hundredfold by hand, then tossed out of the windows to the waiting crowd below. A while later, printing presses were brought to the dty hall to publish the decrees, which were then placarded all over Paris. Overnight, the government seemed to become a machine for producing one decree after another. Indeed, more than sixty decrees, by Lamartine's count, were written on that night of February 24.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE HOTEL DE VILLE

In the meantime, during the evening, people continued to stream into the Place de Greve from the neighborhoods and suburbs—according to Lamartine, their numbers soared to about 200,000 men and women in all. By the thousands they flooded into the huge Hotel de Ville itself, packing its salons, halls, and vestibules. At every turn a different orator, it seemed, exhorted the masses—primarily workers—to assert their rights.

Lamartine apdy calls the Hotel de Ville on the night of February 24 a "field of battle."[33] Especially to the workers newly arrived from the faubourgs, the earlier rounds of queries and debates in the Salle Saint-Jean had by no means endowed the ministers with the right to function as the chief officers of the republic. In fact, the new arrivals, red flags fluttering from the points of their bayonets, seemed on the point of expelling the government members from the Hotel altogether, and perhaps thrashing them in the bargain.

Their most persistent sentiment was the fear that they would be cheated of a revolution they had made at the sacrifice of their own blood and lives. When they learned that the government

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[33] Lamartine, *French Revolution of 1848,* p. 180.

radicals—Blanc, Flocon, and Albert, men whom they had come to respect during the years of agitation against the monarchy in favor of a "democratic and social republic"—were to serve only as secretaries tn the government, while those who had the real power were moderates or even former monarchists, they were outraged and demanded that the title "secretary" be struck from their names on all decrees. Just as surely as Lamartine and his clique feared the demands of the huge crowd in the Place de Greve, so the workers feared the intentions of the small clique that had installed itself as the Provisional Government. And both sides behaved as though they were girding themselves for a confrontation.

Finally, by the sheer thrust of their bodies, some members of the crowd reached the doors of the remote chamber where the new government was meeting. They beat on the doors insistently, demanding that the ministers inside heed their wishes and carry out their demands, repeatedly charging the entryway with muskets and swords in hand. But the new ministers had pushed furniture up against the doors and in the vestibules to keep the crowds out Somehow, despite the urgency of their demands, the surging crowd was rebuffed—partly by the furniture, but partly too by persuasion, as periodically Lamartine would emerge from the room to soothe them with his rhetoric. Then, to the sounds of muskets firing, the government members relumed to work, churning out decrees and signing them, as if each one were a brick in a wall that could safeguard them from the assault of the plebeian crowd. One decree abolished the death penalty for political crimes (apparently the government wished to demonstrate its intention of avoiding a Jacobin terror), and another repealed the Le Chapelier Law, giving the workers the right to form associations and trade unions. Another called for a national Constituent Assembly, to be composed of nine hundred "representatives of the people" endowed with the authority to write a new, presumably republican constitution. Still another proclaimed universal suffrage for all males over twenty-one years of age, the broadest franchise France had ever seen. (Like the call for a Constituent Assembly, this decree was certain to diminish the political influence of the urban workers in favor of the peasantry.)

In the Place de Greve the threats and knock-down fights between workers and supporters of the government continued up to midnight and beyond. Finally, exhausted, the crowds departed from the square, and the entire quarter fell silent. All the clamor, threats, and pushing notwithstanding, the ministers had held their own, and they steadfastly refused to leave the Hotel de Ville, rotating their sleeping hours until daybreak, lest it be reclaimed by radical workers.

As moming dawned on February 25, groups of fifteen to twenty men drifted from the working-class quarters back into the Place de Greve, each group carrying a red flag. Armed with muskets and swords, they distributed red strips of cloth to the rest of the people as they arrived, until a large crowd had assembled, flecked with red. When other groups of workers showed up bearing the tricolor, they skirmished, but red triumphed over the tricolor.

The fighting that continued on this day was over the issue of which flag would be adopted as the symbol of the Second Republic. The government, the propertied classes, and the middle classes, as well as the more nationalistic of the workers, wanted to retain the old tricolor, with its overtones of the Great Revolution, the First Republic, and French national pride. To the politically aware minority of workers, however, the tricolor had been sullied by its association with Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy. Instead, they demanded the red flag as the symbol of the "democratic and social republic."

Finally, just when the crowd attacking the Hotel de Ville to establish the red flag seemed on the point of overcoming his guards, Lamartine emerged to deliver an oration in defense of the

tricolor as the symbol of the republic The red flag, he intoned, was the flag not of France but of "a party," one composed of "Terrorists and Communists." It was the "flag of terror," the flag of blood and strife,[34] and had been "dragged through the mud and blood around the Champ de Mars" (a reference to Lafayette's massacre of 1791). But the tricolor was the accepted national flag of France among nations, having "gone around the world in triumph."[35] Largely as a result of Lamartine's rhetoric, the tricolor finally carried the day as the republican standard, if only because most of the people succumbed to his appeal to national glory. As a concession to the sizable minority of militants who were still unappeased, the government agreed to add a red rosette to the staff of the national flag and require all members of the government to wear one in their buttonholes.

Even now, however, the victory of the tricolor did not seem certain to Lamartine, and to play it safe, he decided he needed a large crowd that would demonstrate its warm enthusiasm for the established national flag. That evening he sent out his young guardians and other students from the Ecole Polytechnique to mobilize support for the government. They, aided by other middle-class elements, fanned out through the capital, calling upon the propertied classes to rally with arms in hand at the Hotel de Ville the next morning. On the morning of February 26, when workers with red flags reappeared to resume their battle, they found the Place de Greve filled with conventional republicans waving tricolors, not to speak of at least 5000 men surrounding the Hotel de Ville with bayoneted muskets. As the day wore on, by Lamartine's account, the red flags virtually disappeared in the sea of tricolors.

With or without a red flag as an adornment, the workers' desire for the "democratic and social republic" was very real, and even under the tricolor their hopes persisted. All day on the twenty-fifth they pressured the government to establish the "right to work"—that is, to guarantee employment—and a Ministry of Labor and Progress to look after the workers' interests.

Around noon, the people chose as their spokesman a young workman, a militant named Marche—"the Spartacus of this army of the intelligent poor," Lamartine calls him—to head a delegation to impress their demands upon the ministers. According to Lamartine, Marche entered the government chamber,

> a man of twenty or twenty-five years of age, of middle stature, but erect and strong, with limbs firmly knit and strongly moulded; his face, partially blackened with powder, appeared pale with emotion; his lips trembled with anger, and his eyes, sunk under his projecting forehead, darted fire. In his look the electricity of a whole people was concentrated... He waved in his left hand a strip of red ribbon or cloth, and in his right held the barrel of a carbine, the butt-end of which, at every word he spoke, he caused to ring upon the pavement... He spoke not as a man, but as a people, who will be obeyed, and will brook no delay... He repeated, in accents of increasing energy, all the conditions of the manifesto of impossibilities, which the vociferations of the people enjoined it to accept and to realize on the instant—the overthrow of all known social order, the extermination of property, and of capitalists, spoliation, the immediate installation of the destitute in the community of goods, the proscription of bankers, of the rich, the manufacturers, the bourgeois of every condition.[36]

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[34] Ibid, p. 234.

[35] Ibid, p. 230.

[36] Ibid, pp. 218, 219–20.

Marche appears to have said no such things; Lamartine's crassly tendentious account is valuable primarily as a reflection of the extreme polarization that existed between the workers of Paris and the privileged classes. Blanc's account of the incident is almost certainly closer to the truth: speaking briefly and firmly, Marche simply

> presented himself in the name of the people, pointed with an imperious gesture to the Place de Greve, and making the butt of his musket ring upon the floor, demanded the recognition of the *"Droit du Travail"* [right to work], … I [Blanc] drew [him] aside, and showed him a paper on which, while M. de Lamartine was speaking, I had written the following decree:—"The provisional Government … engage themselves to guarantee labor to every citizen."[37]

To this overture, officially establishing the "right to work," Marche replied to Blanc, "The People offers the Republic three months of poverty"—by which he clearly meant that they would endure three more months of hardship to give the government time to make significant changes. Then, presumably, if their demands were not met, the workers would rise in earnest.[38]

THE PARADOXES OF 1848

Marche's warning is evidence of an unprecedented turn in France's revolutionary behavior by comparison with earlier uprisings. "How thoroughly things had changed since 1830 was made clear in 1848," observes William H. Sewell, Jr., in his account of the workers' movement in that remarkable year.

> Whereas the July revolution of 1830 had caught the workers unaware and incapable of articulating an independent program until it was too late, the February revolution of 1848 immediately provoked a massive classconscious workers' movement, not only in Paris, but in cities throughout France. From the beginning, the workers of Paris pushed the revolution to the left, forcing the provisional government to proclaim a republic on February 24, to proclaim the "right to labor" and the establishment of National Workshops on February 25, and set up the famous Luxembourg Commission on February 28.[39]

The National Workshops and the Luxembourg Commission will be discussed presently. What is important to note here is that, generally speaking, the French Revolution of 1848 was the most class-oriented civil conflict of the entire nineteenth century. The workers and the propertied classes confronted each other with greater directness and a stronger sense of their social identity and their conflicting interests than was to be the case even in the Paris Commune of 1871, which socialists and anarchists have, for generations, erroneously depicted as a classical proletarian revolution. In contrast to the *sans-culottes* of 1793, who had vaguely thought of themselves as "the

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[37] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* pp. 81–2.

[38] Quoted in Georges Duveau, *1848: The Making of a Revolution,* trans. Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 66.

[39] William H. Sewell, Jr., "Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789–1848," in *Working-Class Formations: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 65–6.

people," the workers of 1848 were far more aware of themselves as a social class, distinct from "the people" as a whole. And as a class, they had very specific social and economic demands. Although few of them were actually industrial proletarians, these artisans who formed the majority of the working class in the French capital did not hesitate to call themselves *proletaries* or, more commonly, *ouvriers* and *travailleurs,* who opposed a distinct class enemy, les *capitalistes* or *la bourgeoisie.*

The militant *ouvriers* of 1848 had two demands of historic proportions: the right to form associations, and the "right to work" The right to form associations, as we have seen, meant the repeal of all laws curtailing or banning associations, including producers' cooperatives, mutual aid societies, and trade unions. With the repeal of the Le Chapelier Law, the government had granted the first part of this right; it remained to be seen whether it would cany out the second by encouraging the growth of associations. The "right to work" meant that workers who could not find employment in their own trade should be provided with the means of life until such employment was to be acquired. This demand was particularly urgent in 1848, since Paris was filled with unemployed workers who lived from hand to mouth, pawned or sold even their most necessary possessions, stole, prosdtuted themselves, slept in parks, and huddled against inclement weather in doorways, sewers, and under the bridges of the Seine. And workers who fled local famine conditions in the provinces to seek work in the city often had the appearance of scarecrows. Hunger was pervasive in the working-class districts. One of the ministerial council's most important decrees established the right of the poor to reclaim articles from pawnshops for which they had been paid less than ten francs. But it was manifesdy necessary for the Provisional Government to do more and translate the "right to work" into pracdcal reality.

These rights were not simply ordinary demands that might be raised in demonstrations and riots. The workers who raised them, rather, conceived them as *inherent* natural rights, comparable to the inalienable rights of "liberty, equality, fraternity" demanded by the radicals in the Great Revolution. The workers saw themselves as claiming rights that gready expanded society's concepts of justice, revealing how far beyond the juridical rights of 1789 their consciousness had advanced. Politically, the militants wanted representation, by universal manhood suffrage, in all organs of government, largely to ensure that the "democratic and social republic" would satisfy their economic demands. However unclear the structure of this republic may have been, they keenly desired that working men with "calloused hands" (as they put it) should occupy many, if not most, of the seats in the Palais Bourbon and the Hotel de Ville. Despite the large number of radical intellectuals who rallied to their cause and whose support they accepted willingly, they were eager to see trusted *proletaires* in the new government, such as Alexandre Martin (to use Albert's real name), who came out of the workshops and the secret societies.

At the risk of repetition, however, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the Parisian workers of 1848 did not oppose the existence of private property as such. Lamartine's effort to paint them as enemies of "property," not to speak of "society," was knowingly demagogic, intended to curry favor with the bourgeoisie and, later, to justify repressive measures against the working class. Parisian workers themselves were still rooted economically in the preindustrial age, and as artisans, many were small proprietors in their own right. The majority of artisans who worked for master craftsmen generally aspired to establish small workshops of their own, which they could run with or without hired labor.

But the demand for the "right to work" left open the question of what institutional form this inalienable right would take. How would society be organized to give it material reality? Other

rights could be given tangibility in relatively obvious and straightforward ways, within the framework of the republic's legal system. Liberty could be institutionalized by passing laws to protect freedoms of the press, speech, and assembly. Equality (of opportunity, not condition) could be embodied in a juridical process that regarded everyone as equal before the law, irrespective of wealth or status. But what would it actually mean to institutionalize the "right to work"?

The theorist whose ideas seemed to answer this question best was Louis Blanc, who advanced a notion of social workshops (as we saw in Chapter 23) that were oriented toward production to meet human needs rather than toward the acquisition of profit, and that would federate in associations of mutual support to create a cooperative society. His *Organization of Work* had been immensely popular, and in the weeks following the February Revolution, militant French workers regarded him as their most outstanding spokesman. It was to Blanc, in fact, that many workers looked for practical direction in creating a cooperative alternative to industrial capitalism and from whom they received a fairly workable scheme.

On February 28, three days after Blanc wrote the "right to work" decree in response to Marche's demand, the Provisional Government established a Government Commission of Labor to develop various projects on behalf of workers and to study the means to provide workers with the fruits of their labor. To gild this Commission with pomp, the government housed it in the distinguished Luxembourg Palace, which had formerly accommodated the Chamber of Peers, ostensibly to convey the impression that the Commission was labor's "upper house," and that the workers had a major institutional place in the new republic.

The Luxembourg Commission, as it came to be known, was essentially an executive committee composed of a number of notable economists, socialist theorists, and publicists, including, among others, the Fourierist Victor Considerant, the economist Charles Dupont-White, and the Saint-Simonian Constantin Pecqueur. In addition to the Labor Commission, Blanc established what he pompously called the Labor Parliament, which was actually an ad hoc Labor Assembly, composed of three delegates from every trade corporation or union. Of the three delegates, one was to function as part of the Labor Commission itself, while the other two would attend the meetings of the Labor Assembly.

On March 1, the first meeting of the Luxembourg Commission drew about 200 deputies (in time they were to number more than 700) from "various trade unions," as Blanc says, to take "places formerly occupied by the peers of France,"[40] an allusion to the Luxembourg Palace. Almost immediately after opening this first official session, however, Blanc came up against militant workers' demands for an appreciable reduction in the length of the work day and for the abolition of the *marchandage,* a system in which parasitic middlemen, standing between the employers and the workers, distributed jobs to workers in return for a slice of their earnings. Fearful of antagonizing the propertied classes, Blanc says in his memoir, he did not want to act on these two demands right away, "without having previously appealed to the employers for their advice on so delicate a subject."[41] He tried to persuade the workers to drop their demands, an effort, he confesses, that was not "warmly received."

> There was a gloomy silence, forerunner of some coming struggle, and indeed,
> scarcely had a minute elapsed, when a great number of workmen, rising altogether

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[40] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* p. 126.
[41] Ibid, p. 129.

and talking loud, declared that no kind of labor should be resumed until the two demands had been conceded.[42]

Indeed, Blanc tried earnestly to get employers to participate as equals in discussions with workers at the Luxembourg Palace. Over the next months he successfully negotiated agreements to end strikes, which had become fairly commonplace in France. Blanc appears to have had virtually no understanding that capitalists and workers were irreconcilable opponents, and he consistently opposed class conflicts as socially harmful. Nevertheless, the Luxembourg Commission, with the Labor Assembly, was the nearest thing to an institutionalized counterpower against the Provisional Government that the Parisian working class had. In William Sewell's judgment the Commission constituted the "focus and organizational center of the workers' movement in 1848."

> Although its official function was only advisory, revolutionary workers saw its role in much loftier terms. In the words of the cabinet makers' delegates, its task was nothing less than elaborating "the constitution of labor," and Louis Blanc himself characterized the commission as "the Estates General of the people."[43]

Indeed the Labor Assembly ultimately was able to compel the Provisional Government not only to abolish the *marchandage* but to adopt a ten-hour day for Parisian workers and eleven for those in the provinces. (The Provisional Government, to be sure, resisted these demands, but when the delegates threatened to leave the Labor Assembly en masse—which would have eliminated the Assembly altogether—it submitted.) Moreover, the Commission could celebrate its role in successfully initiating several social workshops, most notably a journeymen tailors' cooperative at the abandoned Clichy prison, which turned out cloaks for the National Guard. But despite much talk about its function as France's second legislative house, the Luxembourg Commission had none of the power, let alone the resources possessed by the old Chamber of Peers. In the early days of the February Revolution, Blanc had initially proposed the creation of a Ministry of Labor and Progress as part of the government itself, with full authority to carry out the policies it deemed necessary. But the other ministers had found the prospect of Blanc playing a significant role in the government to be intolerable, despite his basically moderate views. Minister of Public Works Mane later celebrated the fact that, in response to Blanc's proposal, the government had been

> sufficiendy energetic to refuse this claim, behind which it saw clearly both the dictatorship of this man and the complete and immediate upheaval of the sodal order, yet was unable to do otherwise than accord him the foundation of the [Luxembourg] Commission.[44]

Created by Lamartine and his cronies, the Luxembourg Commission was soon reduced to a largely decorative and insubstantial entity whose purpose was to appease militant workers who

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[42] Ibid, pp. 129–30.

[43] William H. Sewell, Jr., "Property, Labor, and the Emergence of Socialism in France, 1789–1848," in *Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe,* ed. John M. Merriman (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1979), p. 59.

[44] Emile Thomas, "Conversations with M. Marie," from *Histoire des ateliers nationaux*; in *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* ed. Raymond Postgate (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 201–2.

wanted a social republic Moreover, by making Blanc its chairman and Albert its vice-chairman, Lamartine shrewdly shunted the two radicals out of the cabinet and marooned them in the palace, a powerless if massive showpiece. As Marx was to put it, through the Luxembourg Commission,

> the representatives of the working class were banished from the seat of the Provisional Government, the bourgeois part of which retained the real state power and the reins of administration exclusively in its hands; and *side by side* with the ministries of Finance, Trade and Public Works, *side by side* with the Bank and the Bourse, there arose a *socialist synagogue* whose high priests, Louis Blanc and Albert, had the task of discovering the promised land, of preaching the new gospel and of providing work for the Paris proletariat. Unlike any profane state power, they had no budget, no executive authority at their disposal— While the Luxembourg sought the philosopher's stone, in the *Hotel de Ville* they minted the current coinage.[45]

Nonetheless it should be noted that with the Luxembourg Commission, Blanc was genuinely trying to create the only socialistic alternative that a predominandy artisanal economy could have adopted to countervail the growth of industrial capitalism. Blanc's "socialist synagogue" sought to create producers' cooperatives, nationalize the Bank of France and the railroads, provide financial aid to a few experimental social workshops, encourage labor associations, and guarantee the "right to work". In its report to the government, clearly prepared by Blanc, the Luxembourg Commission proposed to establish agricultural colonies in every department of France, each to be composed of a hundred families, with common kitchens and laundries, and also model housing complexes with their own schools, nurseries, libraries, baths, and gardens. Long anticipating reforms that were to be adopted generations later, Blanc hoped to see all workers provided with old-age pensions and state- sponsored insurance for the ill and financially deprived. Reformist and modest as these goals seem today, such proposals were innovative and even radical in 1840s France.

No other kind of socialism could have constituted an alternative to capitalism during the middle of the nineteenth century, when France was in a transition from a preindustrial economy to a modem industrial capitalist one. Socialism in the later sense of a nationalized economy would have been out of the question: few substantial branches of production existed, apart from railroads and banks, that could be taken over by a republican state. Nor was a factory-based socialism feasible: the factory system, while it had grown by leaps and bounds in Britain, had not yet rendered the French artisanal workshop a marginal and subordinate form of productive activity. Silk textiles were still made mainly in small workshops in Lyon; and although cotton goods were spun and woven by machine in large factories, the industry was still of secondary importance. As for Proudhonism, that alternative amounted to retreating to an economy that was already obsolete. If any cooperative economy was to come to France, it could not have been in a Marxist, Proudhonist, or Cabetian form; it would have to be a scheme that, like Blanc's, was suited to an artisanal economy, all its weaknesses and statism not withstanding.

But at best, the social workshops could have been only a brake on the growth of the factory system—they could hardly have been a substitute for it Once England had introduced machinery for mass production, no country could compete with British goods. To create a cooperative economy, France's only alternative would have been to isolate itself from the world market, on which

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[45] Marx, Class Struggles in *France,* p 55.

many of her artisans, especially her silk workers, depended for their prosperity. By the nineteenth century, the ascent of capitalism was all but impossible to arrest, and nothing short of complete economic isolation—a ruinous economic autarchy—could have prevented cheaply manufactured commodities from ultimately subverting most preindustrial systems of production.

In any case, Blanc's social workshops, although the most important plan to slow the advance of industrial capitalism, were never seriously adopted. As we will see in the next chapter, a scheme of "National Workshops" was introduced that, despite its similarity in name to Blanc's social workshops, bore no relationship whatever to his own socialist goal and, if anything, was used to discredit it.

Even before the February Revolution, as we have seen, Paris had been the center of secret societies and illegal working-class organizations. The success of the revolution produced a politically active club movement that was unprecedented in France since the heyday of the Great Revolution. Clubs, as well as workers' corporations, educational societies, and rudimentary trade unions, emerged everywhere. Located in all the neighborhoods of Paris, many of these clubs bore a superficial resemblance to the old sectional assemblies of 1793, and they quickly became thriving centers for educating, discussing, and mobilizing the city's most militant workers and intellectuals, often with a view toward direcdy intervening in the city's political life.

In the weeks following the February barricades, few people understood the potentiality of the club movement more clearly than Auguste Blanqui, who had been freed from his domestic exile in Blois on February 24 and was hastening to Paris as the Provisional Government was being formed. On February 25, scarcely a day after the king's abdication, Blanqui spoke before the Club de Prado in a large dance hall, where he forcefully declared that under the new Provisional Government,

> France is not republican. The Revolution that has just passed is nothing more than a happy surprise ... Leave the men in the Hotel-de-Ville to their impotence; their feebleness is a sure sign of their fall. Their power is but ephemeral: we—we have the people and the clubs, where we shall organize them in revolutionary fashion, as was the way of the Jacobins of old.[46]

For a time it seemed that this prediction of club empowerment might soon be fulfilled. Shordy after the monarchy fell, at least 203 political clubs were formed in the greater Paris area, 149 of which belonged to a common federation. Peter H. Amann, in his study of this mass democracy, conservatively estimates that total membership in the Parisian clubs numbered from 50,000 to 70,000, but "a somewhat higher figure in the neighborhood of one hundred thousand seems more likely." So avidly involved were workers in the club movement that in mid-March, when the novelist George Sand found herself locked out of her apartment, she had the greatest difficulty finding a locksmith. They were all attending club meetings. As Amann puts it, "Within a few weeks a mass movement had taken root"— and an organized mass movement at that.[47]

By mid-April, every neighborhood and *arrondissement* in the capital had clubs, mainly workers' clubs, whose meetings often drew thousands of members and informal participants. The

[46] Blanqui quoted in Alphonse Lucas, *Les Clubs et les clubistes* (Paris, 1851), in *1848* in *France,* ed. Roger Price, Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 72.

[47] Peter H. Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement* in *1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 34, 35.

larger clubs usually met in school buildings, churches, dance halls, municipal buildings, and even in cafes. They varied considerably in structure: some were very formally organized, such as the *Societe des Droits de I'Homme,* while others were quite informal and even free-wheeling. A few clubs consciously maintained continuities with the past. Some had members who had belonged to the secret societies: of seventeen dub presidents in mid-March 1848 whose political backgrounds are known, ten were veterans of the prerevolutionary secret societies, most notably Blanqui and Barbes, who had been the leading figures in the *Saisons* during the 1830s. The more radical clubs tended to subdivide themselves into "sections" or "cells," just as the illegal societies under the monarchy had done, despite the fact that such subdivisions were now superfluous. Other clubs consciously invoked names drawn from the Great Revolution, such as *Jacobins, Montagnards, Amis du Peuple, Egalite et fraternite,* and *Commune.* Among the revolutionary periodicals that appeared were those tided *Pere Duchesne* and *Vieux Cordelier,* invoking the memory of Hebert's and Desmoulins's papers of more than a half century earlier.

But most of the clubs had no roots in the earlier secret societies. Significandy, a large number of them had names including the words *Work* and *Workers.* Moreover, the class composition of the clubs was striking. Among half of the 178 club presidents whose occupations are known,

> 23 percent were workers, 22 percent intellectuals (writers, journalists, professors), 21 percent bourgeois (employers, proprietors, managers, *rentiers*—though this last category is ambiguous); 18 percent white-collar workers (ranging from clerk through bookkeeper to priest): 9 percent members of the "popular bourgeoisie" of wineshop owners, rooming house operators, modest greengrocers; and 5 percent university students.[48]

At least half of the club presidents thus consisted of workers and intellectuals, if students are included among the latter. This high proportion of workers and intellectuals is classical in revolutionary situations; in later uprisings revolutionary groups were often marked by even more radical intellectuals, in fact, than workers. Indeed, the intelligentsia—mainly public individuals and professionals—supplied the leaders of organizations that were predominandy working class in composition and orientation.

In 1848 the clubs held their meetings with extraordinary frequency. It was not uncommon for them to convene as often as four or five nights a week, a frequency redolent of the numerous section meetings during the Great Revolution. Most of the clubs still formally limited their meetings to twice a week, but this semiweekly schedule was commonly ignored during February and March. Blanqui's Central Republican Society—or Club Blanqui, as it was familiarly called—met every evening with the exception of Sundays. Rules were often honored in the breach; many clubs functioned with minimal formality, especially those whose meetings were packed with thousands of tumultuous workers, and attendance in the more important clubs often ran into the thousands.

In addition to the numerous clubs, the radical political culture of 1848 included a burgeoning revolutionary press, which formed a vital lifeline between the clubs and the people. The clubs used both posters and periodicals, especially neighborhood ones, to announce their meetings and publish their minutes. The avidly read journals also published passionate orations. According to an official count, there were 171 newspapers in the capital, although only a minority were able

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[48] Ibid., p. 41.

to survive more than a few weeks. Working- class neighborhoods in particular were flooded with posters voicing a host of opinions, pamphlets advancing criticisms and demands, and the speeches of lecturers and street orators. Along with organized club meetings, this electrifying level of discussion produced a delirium of radical fervor. To the privileged classes it seemed that the Revolution had unleashed a social monster that only force could finally subdue.

Several of the clubs enjoyed enormous prestige, pardy because famous radical leaders had helped to create them, and pardy because of their radical views. Among the most important was Blanqui's Central Republican Society, which attracted hundreds, possibly thousands to a single meeting, including many spectators curious to see the notorious black-coated and black-gloved revolutionary par excellence. By shifting its meeting places to various locations in the capital, the Club Blanqui managed to reach a large cross-section of the Parisian working class. Its meetings were notable for their open and often heated discussions of ideas, and for the profusion of oratory that, as Amann observes, "Blanqui made no attempt to dominate."[49] But to join the Club Blanqui was no frivolous affair: a prospective member had to have two members as backers and sign a written oath of support.

Etienne Cabet's Central Fraternal Society, on the other hand, was notable for the formality of its proceedings and the authoritarian behavior of its founder. Cabet had created a dogmatic sect—the Icarians—based on his immensely popular novel, *Voyage to Icaria,* and his widely read periodical, *Le Populaire.* Some 4000 men and 1000 women belonged to the club, the majority of whom were working people and were apparently mesmerized by their famous leader. In the weeks immediately following the February uprising, the Central Fraternal Society drew enormous working-class audiences, possibly larger than any other club. By this time the word *communiste* was being used throughout Paris, and as a term of opprobrium it was replacing *anarchiste,* which had been used so promiscuously in the Great Revolution. Although Cabet himself was anything but a militant, *communisme* terrified the respectable strata of society, much to the glee of the workers. Cabet's Central Fraternal Society was basically nonrevolutionary and his views were surprisingly tepid, but in the spring of 1848 Parisian workers revered him. In March and April the sect's discipline would temporarily propel Cabet and *communisme* to the forefront of events. Comparable in its didactic tone to Cabet's club was Frangois Raspail's *Sodete des Amis du Peuple* (Friends of the People), which was more an educational forum than a political arena. Raspail was widely respected by the workers for his tested commitment to their interests, but unlike Blanqui he tended to lecture his audiences rather than listen to them. At times his "courses," as he called them, drew as many as 4000 people. But none of these clubs compared in size with the older *Societe des Droits de I'Homme,* which claimed nearly a 100,000 members, 34,000 of them in Paris. The club, reborn in 1848 after its suppression in the 1830s, was a neo-Jacobin association that vaguely espoused the ideals of political equality contained in Robespierre's Preamble to the Constitution of 1793, tinged with quasi-socialistic 1840s concepts of justice. Its central committee included Armand Barbes, and it received subsidies from Ledru-Rollin's Ministry of Interior. Despite its attempt to make itself into a disciplined military organization, the *Droits* was marked more by ideological confusion than by coherence. In addition to his role in the *Droits* club, Barbes also collected a following in the *Club de la Revolution,* or Club Barbes, which gained a measure of fame mainly because he was its leader.

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[49] Ibid., p. 62.

Apart from these "big name" clubs, many smaller and more transient clubs abounded everywhere. Attempts to unite them into a common revolutionary movement gave rise to various organizational alliances, but the effectiveness of these alliances was limited. The most famous was the Revolutionary Committee of the Club of Clubs, which played an important role in bringing various clubs into contact with one another, both within Paris and without. Like the *Droits,* the Club of Clubs took subsidies from the Ministry of Interior and was strongly inspired by Ledru-Rollin, but its most important function seems to have been to bring republican ideas and propaganda to the provinces, and to provide information about the provinces to Paris. Indeed, the many accounts of provincial revolutionary activity that appeared in the Club's reports provide the historian with one of the main sources of information about political activity outside Paris. Other federative clubs, like the Central Democratic Society and its rival, the Central Committee for the General Elections, were little more than temporary electoral coalitions, mainly designed to promote the middle-class republican candidates to the Constituent Assembly.

With all its many rivalries, coalitions, interactions, functions, and secret supporters, what is important about the club movement is that, in conjunction with the Luxembourg's Labor Assembly, it formed part of an independent working-class power that was emerging against the Provisional Government. As Amann observes, the clubs "constituted the apex, the revolution *en permanence,* the popular will organized, institutionalized, hardened.''[50] Indeed, some of the clubs saw themselves as performing precisely this sort of role. The Democratic Club of Blancs Manteaux, for example, openly declared:

> The members of the [Constituent] Assembly are our delegates, yet the sovereign people does not relinquish its powers and must watch over the discussions of the deputies. The clubs must necessarily be the voice of the people and the expression of its will.[51]

The strong implication of this statement is that the clubs were indeed a separate power, counterposed to the Provisional Government, as were the workers' corporations whose delegates gathered in the Luxembourg Palace. Nor did the government itself fail to ignore the danger that the clubs, together with the Luxembourg's Labor Assembly, posed to its sovereignty. WUliam H. Sewell, Jr., in fact, has argued that the "workers' corporations were the closest equivalent, in 1848, to the secuons of 1792–94."[52] Whether the workers' corporations and the clubs could have actually become a dual power is arguable. Eventually, the Luxembourg Assembly was dissolved (in fact, it was always a completely powerless body), and the corporations that made it up ceased to constitute "units of government," as Sewell has called them, comparable to the sections of the Great Revolution.[53] Many clubs, on the other hand, remained rooted in the neighborhoods of Paris, as the earlier sections had been, and discussed a wide range of political as well as economic issues.

Proudhon made the bright suggestion, in his periodical Le *Representant du peuple* (April 28, 1848), that the mass democracy of the clubs could become a popular forum where the social

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[50] Ibid., p. 200.

[51] Ibid

[52] William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 255.

[53] Ibid.

agenda of the revolution could be prepared for use by the Constituent Assembly—a proposal that would essentially have defused the potency of the clubs as a potentially rebellious dual power. Owing to the intransigence of the government, which refused to yield the least amount of its power to any popular authority, Proudhon's suggestion came to nothing.

The Revolution, patently incomplete, was being pulled in two directions: by distincdy working-class demands on one side and a conventional middle- class republic on the other. This growing tension between mutually suspicious classes could not continue to exist for long, but could easily ignite into an open conflict at any time. In the days and weeks following the February barricades, the government had secretly built up its military forces, while the workers, for whom the passage of time without victory was an enemy, girded themselves for a renewed confrontation. In revolutions, where weeks telescope months and months telescope years, the confrontation was to come with rapidity and fury.

Chapter 27. "Defeat of the Revolution!"

Every revolution that fails to complete its social tasks immediately opens the way to counterrevolution and finally its own bloody annihilation. This principle can be taken as absolutely fixed. The vacuum that an unfinished revolution leaves behind is quickly filled by its enemies, who, sometimes presenting themselves as "compromisers," "realists," and "reasonable" men, try to harness the revolution and steer the energy it has churned up toward its own destruction. In the English Revolution irresolute Levellers such as Lilbume failed to use their influence with the army to move decisively against Cromwell; and in the Great French Revolution the *enrages,* lacking any coordinating leadership, were manipulated by Marat and delivered over to the Committee of Public Safety. A hesitant revolution is a doomed revolution.

The moment when a revolutionary situation crests and the insurgents are psychologically prepared to take control of society is therefore crucial. Even a delay of several days may result in the ebbing of the revolutionary tide. Few revolutionary leaders understood this more clearly than Lenin, who on the eve of the October Revolution demanded an immediate insurrection, in opposition to most of his own colleagues, and threatened to resign from the Bolshevik Central Committee because of its dilatory behavior.

The Parisian workers of 1848, having overthrown the monarchy, had arrived at just such a moment, yet their leaders were unwilling to seize it and replace the government that Lamartine and his allies had set up with a truly social republic. Like the July Monarchy, the Provisional Government had been brought to power by an insurrection, and its principal leaders—with the exception of Blanqui, Raspail, and possibly the weary Caussidiere—were once again committed gradualists. Blanc, with his hazy notions of fraternity between employers and their employees, was wholly unwilling to try to match the growing armed forces of the government with an independent working- class force. Mesmerized by the ideal of *la Republique,* hamstrung by a limited notion of socialism—artisanal associationism—and led by the irresolute Blanc, the revolution that the workers made in February was left tragically incomplete.

To be sure, ordinary Parisian workers understood the need to continue the revolution, or at least to accumulate their own stores of weapons, in anticipation of a struggle to defend it In turn, the new government and the classes it represented realized that the arms possessed by the working people constituted the greatest potential threat they faced. On the moming of

February 25, the day of the conflict over the red flag, a group of workers in the Place de Greve had demanded that the immense arsenal of the old regime at Vincennes be turned over to the people—a demand the government firmly opposed: convinced that the workers must not be permitted to accumulate even more weapons than they had, Lamartine sent out Flocon to quiet them. Flocon then accompanied a group of workers to Vincennes, where he allowed them to take only a few thousand muskets, carefully withholding the great bulk of the weapons and ammunition that were stored in the fortress. Lamartine, it is worth noting, afterward clasped Flocon's hands and fervendy thanked him for "preserving the national arsenals"—and for using his radical credentials to pacify the Faubourg Saint-Antoine.[54] Once in power, Flocon, ostensibly a radical only days before, made every effort to control the masses and to place the reins of government securely in the hands of the privileged classes.

REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

The new ruling classes also realized that to retain power they would have to create a reliable military force superior to anything the working class could organize. From the very moment they took office, even as Blanc was naively echoing Lamartine's appeals to *fraternite,* class cooperation, and republican unity, the rest of the Provisional Government's ministers began to systematically assemble a variety of military forces that could be used to control the working-class movement Lamartine, in particular, had noticed that unruly working-class boys and teenagers played a major role in the barricade fighting; owing to their youth, they were the boldest and most reckless of the insurrectionaries. Sensing that their adventurous behavior could propel any popular unrest into an armed insurrection, the foreign minister shrewdly decided to harness them into a special force in the government's service. In one of his earliest decrees during the early moming of February 25, Lamartine established the Mobile Guard, a force to be composed of youths between sixteen and thirty years of age. In the next few weeks, some 25,000 youths, almost entirely from the working class, were recruited into twenty-four battalions and placed at the disposition of the government.

The Mobile Guard, unlike the National Guard, was no citizens' militia: on the contrary, its members were single men housed in their own barracks and isolated as much as possible from the general population. The government took every precaution to keep them from fraternizing with their fellow citizens in the neighborhoods. They were given distinctive uniforms and were armed and equipped at the state's expense. Carefully trained in urban fighting, they were treated as an elite corps, flattered as the government's praetorians, and slowly weaned from any loyalty to their own social class. They were even paid a wage of a franc and a half daily—a relatively comfortable sum for single young men. Although they were allowed to elect their own officers, the officers they elected had to be approved by the commanding general and the minister of war, who were professional military men detached from the regular army.

Almost alone among the republican leaders, Blanqui recognized that the *mobiles* were precisely the praetorian guard of the privileged classes and that they constituted a sword pointed at the very heart of working-class resistance. From the first meetings of his Central Republican Society, he vigorously denounced the recruitment of this extremely dangerous force, calling not only for its disbandment but for that of all other professional military forces. For their part, the

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[54] Alphonse de Lamartine, *History of the French* Revolution *of 1848,* trans. unknown (London: Bell & Daldy, 1871), p. 226.

ruling classes knew that they were taking a dangerous gamble in creating the Mobile Guard. As working-class "children" or youths in the main, their political allegiances were uncertain. In the event of a working-class insurrection, would these young men stand with their families and neighbors in their districts? Or would they obey their officers? This ambiguity was heightened precisely by their youthful bravado, which had verged on uncontrollable elation in the face of battle. Whoever gained the loyalty of the *mobiles,* it was suspected, would control Paris. Upon viewing a parade of the Mobile Guard and other military units on the Champ de Mars, Tocqueville nervously opined:

> The battalions of the Garde Mobile uttered various exclamations, which left us full of doubt and anxiety as to the intention of these lads, or rather children, who at that time more than any other held our destinies in their hands.[55]

The workers, for their part, uneasily observed the Provisional Government sequestering their "children" in barracks, then using regular army officers to Indoctrinate them. They tried, as best they could, to reach their sons and restore their sense of class identity. But for the first months of the force's existence, their political ideas—if they had any—remained hidden in their barracks.

As for the social aims of the Revolution, the workers, who knew their enemies well, were becoming guarded, even as Blanc tried to establish a few token social workshops. They viewed with alarm not only the formation of the Mobile Guard but the resistance and increasing arrogance of the well-equipped bourgeois National Guards toward the common people. And they took note of the growing belligerence of the employers and the seething hatred of the privileged classes toward the workers' social aims. Even if Blanc did not, workers of the Luxembourg and the militant workers in Paris generally realized they might well be thrown into a serious collision with the privileged classes of the realm.

THE NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Shortly after the Place de Greve had been cleared of insurgents in February, a young engineer, Emile Thomas, formerly a student at the Ecole Centrale, approached the minister of public works, Marie, with a proposal. Thomas, an ambitious man, had a fanciful vision of a new France in which all workers would eventually become prosperous enough to become members of the bourgeoisie. As a step in the realization of this utopia, he suggested that the unemployed be rounded up and given temporary employment in public works through a state- subsidized and state-controlled system of "National Workshops."

To Marie, a member of the erstwhile dynastic opposition, the prospect of neutralizing unrest among the unemployed by transforming them into clients of the state was irresistible. On March 23 the minister of public works advised the young engineer (Thomas was only twenty-six at the time) that the government was prepared to accept his proposal and give a five-million-franc subsidy to establish the Workshops.[56] The minister then took Thomas aside and told him to take the unemployed "in hand" and "attach them" to himself. He should spare no expense in creating his workshops, he advised Thomas, and he placed the ministry's "secret fund" at his disposal.

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[55] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville,* trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), p. 179.

[56] Emile Thomas, "Conversations with M. Marie," from *Historic des ateliers nationaux,* Document 85 in *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* ed. Raymond Postgate (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 201–2.

Naively, the new director asked Marie, "What object, other than public calm, have your recommendations?" To which the minister replied: "Public safety. Do you think you can manage to command your men altogether? It may be that the day is near when it will be necessary to march them into the streets"—that is, against their fellow workers. In fact, Thomas proceeded to follow Marie's recommendation and organize the Workshop enrollees, numbering some 120,000 at their peak, into military-style units—such as companies, battalions, and brigades—under his own command, with subordinate officials composed of his middle-class student friends. In effect, with Thomas's assistance, Marie had created still another potentially counterrevolutionary army.

The immediate impact of the announcement of the National Workshops was to draw a 100,000 unemployed Frenchmen from the provinces into the capital, seeking temporary work Those who were given jobs were paid two francs daily, a very modest wage for men with families and other expenses. But an additional 50,000 provincials arrived for whom there were no National Workshop jobs at all. Once in Paris, they lingered in the city, adding to the hunger and resdessness that existed among the working class generally. Some Nauonal Workshop enrollees were given no actual work to perform, as Georges Duveau observes:

> The workers enrolled in the National Workshops spent most of their time playing billiards and making speeches in praise of the social-democrat Republic. Here and there a few were to be found carting one or two barrowloads of sand on the Champ de Mars or the heights of Belleville. They did a bit of digging and then went back to their games or talk.[57]

Duveau's description more closely reflects the image of the National Workshops fostered by the bourgeois press than reality; thousands of National Workshop employees were, in fact, fully occupied with useful jobs. They replanted the trees that had been felled to form the February barricades, leveled the Champ de Mars into an attractive public mall, manufactured clothing and shoes for other unemployed workers, and, in Marseilles, helped to dig a much- needed canal. Nor were the unemployed artists of Paris neglected; they were put to work painting republican propaganda posters and creating other politically inspirational artwork.

Yet the invidious image of the Workshops as a dole for idlers soon became prevalent among the middle classes, an image that, like the Luxembourg, was pointedly used against the radicals. "Marie told me," says Thomas,

> that it was the determined intention of the Government to allow the experiment (of the Luxembourg) to have its run; that in itself it would have the good result of convincing the workmen of the emptiness of Louis Blanc's inapplicable theories; ... that in this manner the working classes would be disabused by the experience; that their idolatry of Louis Blanc would of itself crumble to pieces, and that he would lose for ever all his influence, all his prestige, and cease to be a danger.[58]

Predictably, the press had a field day with the National Workshops, sneeringly identifying them with the Luxembourg Commission and socialism. Indeed, the project was given the name National Workshops in a calculated move to confuse it in the public mind with Blanc's social

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[57] Georges Duveau, *1848: The Making of a Revolution,* trans. Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 67.
[58] Emile Thomas quoted in Louis Blanc, *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858), p. 146.

workshops. Marie and the bourgeoisie spared no effort to turn the workers' demands for the "right to work" into a socialistic chimera. By vitiating this major demand, Marie divested the uprising of February 24 of much of its social meaning.

Blanc, for his part, responded with vitriol against Marie's cynical debasement of his socialistic plans. He condemned the National Workshops as a

> rabble of paupers, who it was enough to feed, from the want of knowing how to employ them, and who had to live together without any other ties than a military organisation, and under chiefs who bore the name, at once so strange and yet so characteristic, of sergeant-majors—*brigadiers.*[59]

But his attacks against the National Workshops as cesspools of idleness and militarism were as inept as they were self-defeating. To Marie's delight, Blanc's denunciations served to pit the Luxembourg Commission and its Labor Assembly against the tens of thousands of workers who were drawing their sole livelihood from Thomas's brigades, thereby opening a dangerous rift within the ranks of the working class itself.

Yet the normally employed workers had reason to resent the National Workshops, which had become a mercenary military force intended for use on behalf of the privileged classes. In fact, by mid-spring, Emile Thomas had effectively rallied the sympathies of most of the National Workshop workers behind the Provisional GovemmenL Materially, he purchased their support by paying them a regular wage; psychologically, he gained their enthusiasm by staging celebratory festivals that were carefully designed to inculcate a strong military spirit that could be placed at the service of the state. A little more than a month after the February barricades were dismantled, the Ministry of Public Works and the Provisional Government generally were lavishly spending public funds to create a counterrevolutionary army that could be deployed against the same Parisian workers who had shed their blood to bring the Republic into existence.

THE JOURNEE OF MARCH 17

By no means had the Republic as yet sunk deep roots into the country's middle classes, still less into people at all levels of rural society. Royalism was still widespread in France, and the masses in the countryside and in a few provincial capitals viewed the events in Paris, and the radical working class that propelled them, with deep hostility. Yet with each month that passed after the February Days, the influence of radical ideas in Paris itself receded, and the workers' faith even in a "formal" democratic republic, let alone a social republic, began to wane. At the same time the forces of reaction were regaining their confidence and mobilizing against the limited social achievements of the February republic. In the opening passage of his *Class Struggles in France,* a remarkable work that has been the point of departure for many historians of the 1848 Revolution, Marx observed that, "with the exception of only a few chapters, every more important part of the annals of the revolution from 1848 to 1849 carries the heading: *Defeat of the Revolution!*"[60]

Marx appropriately identified the various stages that led to this defeat with four major *journees* that the Parisian working dass carried out that spring, at almost one-month intervals:

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[59] Ibid., p. 198.

[60] Karl Marx, *The* Class *Struggles in France,* in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 10: M*arx-Engels: 1849–51* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), p. 47.

namely, those of March 17, April 16, and May 15, culminating in the working-class insurrection of June 23. With each *journee,* the influence of the radicals declined, and the power of the counterrevolution became stronger and its policies more resolute.

The first *journee,* which took place on March 17, began when the clubs and the various trade organizations made plans for a demonstration against the government, in support of three demands that the clubs had generally agreed upon. First, they wanted to postpone the date for the national elections to the Constituent Assembly. The Provisional Government had originally set these elections for April 9, but the close proximity of that date did not give the republicans in the cities sufficient time to bring the message of the Revolution to people in the countryside, least of all to the peasantry, which was still strongly influenced by the country priesthood and fearful of the local gentry. The republicans strongly felt that before the national elections were held—and especially since the new assembly would be authorized to write a new constitution for France—the Republic should have the opportunity to establish its legitimacy in the provinces and to educate the peasantry about republican ideas. The election date of April 9 was little more than three weeks away. A revolution that had yet to fully define itself even in progressive Paris could hardly be expected, in so short a time, to gain the support of illiterate peasants, most of whom looked to highly reactionary clerics for leadership.

In fact, the Republic itself, far from reaching out to the peasants for support, had taken a step that grievously and irreconcilably alienated them. On March 16, strapped by mounting financial problems, it had voted to impose a levy of forty-five centimes on every franc due not in income taxes but in property taxes. Agreeable as this measure was to the bankers of Paris, the levy increased by nearly fifty percent the tax burden on small landholders, effectively turning poor, hardworking peasants against the cities.

Nor was the peasantry sympathetic with the workers' demands for a social republic. The press was largely succeeding in turning public opinion in the provinces against the "reds" in Paris, and the National Workshops in particular were used by periodicals and pulpits to stoke deep resentment among the peasants. Goaded by the propaganda of rural reactionaries as well as urban ones, these small parochial proprietors were convinced that the new property tax was meant to subsidize idlers in the Workshops. Blanqui, realizing that the tax would be "the death sentence of the republic," fought it vigorously.[61] As Priscilla Robertson observes,

> The 45-centime tax may have saved the republic from bankruptcy, but it also killed it by arousing the hatred of the countryside. From that day all the propagandists, including Louis Napoleon, who tried to win the peasants, promised its repeal.[62]

Thus it was imperative that the Left and even moderate republicans gain more time to win over the country as a whole to republicanism, lest reactionary represen tadves gain the majority in the Consutuent Assembly. The demonstrators of March 17, on Cabet's suggestion, made it a cardinal demand that the elections be postponed to May 31, although even that delay was clearly too short to get rural voters to shed their well-entrenched rural prejudices and adopt views advanced by urban radicals.

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[61] Blanqui quoted in Samuel Bernstein, Auguste *Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 150.

[62] Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; 1952), p. 66.

An issue of almost equal importance—and in Blanqui's eyes, of more importance—was the date for the election of National Guard officers. In accordance with the new policy of democratizing the Guard, its amiable commanding general in Paris, the Viscount de Courtais, had offered to open fourteen positions on his staff exclusively to workers. But from the radicals' perspective, the date of the election of these officers, like the date of the Assembly elections, was set too early. It did not allow sufficient time for fraternization between the newly enlisted workers and the veteran middle-class Guards to make possible the election of authentic republican officers. More fully than any of his associates, Blanqui, the most class-conscious and able tactician among the club leaders, grasped that more time would be needed for the new working-class Guards to overcome the traditional class prejudices of the bourgeois veterans. The demonstrators of March 17, again on Cabet's suggestion, demanded that the National Guard elections be postponed from late March to April 5, which was still a minimal and ineffectual delay.

The third and final issue for the planned demonstration involved the presence of regular army contingents in Paris, which deeply vexed the workers. Although these residual troops, according to Ledru-Rollin, numbered only about 2000, the workers were wary of the government's reasons for keeping them in the capital at all. Moreover, they had reason to suspect that Lamartine was in secret communication with the commander of regular army troops in Lille and with other officers who commanded full-sized brigades, some of which could quickly arrive at the capital by rail. The size and position of the military forces at the government's disposal thus was a troubling issue in the minds of the militant workers, who had no well-organized force of their own to defend their interests. They wanted the army contingents to be removed.

All of these concerns were reinforced on March 9, when a demonstration of three thousand businessmen marched from the Bourse, or Parisian stock exchange, to the Hotel de Ville, threatening to lock out their workers if their maturing notes were not granted a three-month extension. Although their demonstration was followed by a crowd of students who voiced their support for the government against the Bourse, it was apparent that reactionary discontent was now migrating from private homes and cafes to the streets, vitiating the *fraternite* that had prevailed during the February barricades.

Blanqui, mindful of the gravity of the situation, tried on March 14 to bring the republican clubs together to make a common public show of strength. At a meeting in the home of Benjamin Flotte, he helped form a central committee that consisted of representatives of 14 clubs and 300 labor organizations, with the goal of petitioning the government for the satisfaction of their three demands. When the council of ministers refused to receive the committee's spokesmen, the working-class leaders decided that the time had arrived to give open expression to their demands by calling a mass demonstration in the capital.

This demonstration probably would have been held later than March 17, but it was precipitated by a parade of elite units of the National Guard who were determined to protest what they regarded as the excessively egalitarian principles of the Revolution. By the Provisional Government's decree of February 24 opening the Guard to all able-bodied adult males, some 90,000 newcomers were now poised to enter the militia's ranks. Most of them were workers, raising the possibility that they might outnumber the middle-class Guards. Mass pressure from the workers, moreover, compelled the Provisional Government to dissolve the Guard's elite bourgeois grenadier battalions— distinguished by their ornate uniforms and high bearskin hats, or *bonnets a poil*—and disperse them among socially mixed legions. These disbanded "bearskins," as they were called, were now faced with the socially humiliating prospect of having to serve in units

composed of members of the lower classes—and the prospect of marching alongside shabby workers with calloused hands made them shudder.

On March 16, in protest of this threatened degradation, some 30,000 *bonnets a poil,* resplendendy uniformed, marched through the streets of the capital to the Hotel de Ville. En route, when the "bearskins" reached the Pont au Change (near Notre Dame), they encountered an angry group of cabinetmakers, mechanics, and typographers who vigorously shouted: "Down with the *bonnets a poil!*" This counterdemonstration of the workers may not have been entirely spontaneous; some reports have it that Caussidiere, the police prefect and a close associate of Ledru-Rollin, had rallied the working-class hecklers to humiliate the elite Guards and give them a public tongue-lashing.

Nonetheless, the demonstration of the "bearskins" in support of their elite status revealed once again that, less than a month after the February Days, reaction was already openly mobilizing its supporters. To the heckling of the workers on the Pont au Change, the Guards flung back, with equal hostility, "Down with the communists!" and "Down with Ledru-Rollin!" These imprecations were peculiarly hollow: the word *communist* at this time denoted the followers of the pacifist ideas of Cabet, who in February, despite his communist beliefs, had enjoined the insurgents to scrupulously respect private property and support the middle-class republic. Indeed, in the opinion of the Countess d'Agoult and even Lamartine, Cabet's generally moderate views had played a role in restraining the Parisian workers from challenging the Provisional GovemmenL Even more absurdly, Ledru-Rollin, a founder of the moderate *La Reforme,* was drifting steadily to the right and trying to shed his image as a radical. Nonetheless, that thousands of Guards would openly denounce the tepid acolytes of Cabet and the left-leaning liberalism of Ledru- Rollin would have been inconceivable a few weeks earlier. As Georges Duveau notes, the cry "Down with Ledru-Rollin!" is "worth remembering, for it was the first time the reactionary element had raised its voice."[63]

The March 16 demonstration of the elite Guards failed to alter the ministers' decision to eliminate their special status: the Provisional Government was still republican enough to stand by its own decree and the egalitarian principles it embodied. The Guards were informed that the democratization of their ranks would proceed as planned, and they had no choice but to submit to the government's changes. But the Parisian working class could not permit the arrogant behavior of the elite Guards to go unanswered, and on the night of March 16, the clubs were feverishly planning for a massive counterprotest against the "bearskins" and in support of their three basic demands.

The next morning, on March 17, an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 people, mainly workers, rallied in the Place de la Concorde. The leadership of the march belongs not only to Cabet but also to Blanqui, who more than any single individual articulated the deeply felt concerns of the workers. The demonstrators carried a petition, drawn up by Cabet, to withdraw the remaining regular troops from Paris and postpone the National Guard and Constituent Assembly elections. Beating drums, singing the "Marseillaise," and chanting slogans, the crowd wound its way through the very center of bourgeois Paris to the Hotel de Ville. In a solemn and orderly fashion, they strode behind the banners of their various trade organizations and clubs—indeed, a sea of banners, denoting the tide of associationism that had swept over the Parisian workers since the February Revolution—as well as a multitude of tricolors, and the national flags of all the exiles in Paris,

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[63] Duveau, *Making of a* Revolution, p. 82.

including the Russian flag, for among the exiles in the march were the novelist Ivan Turgenev and the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin.

The procession was massive. Indeed, the enormity of the crowd and its very orderliness were redolent of the great journees of 1792–93 and testimony to the latent power of the working classes and their extraordinary capacity for organization. Yet the demonstration struck panic into the hearts of the notables and bourgeoisie, who long associated republicanism with bloodthirsty mobs, riots, and terror. Ironically, although many of the demonstrators were merely expressing their support for the new Republic, this massive turnout stunned not only the middle classes but even moderate socialists who fancied the demonstration too massive for their liking. Indeed, Blanc panicked at the size of the *journee* and began to tilt toward the government's side as soon as the first demonstrators reached the Place de Greve.

In retrospect, the March 17 demonstration was the largest show of republican strength in 1848. Moreover, it may well have been the only moment that spring when the working classes could actually have taken over the government with very little bloodshed. Such an insurrectionary plan, in fact, does seem to have existed: police chief Caussidiere was eager to enlist Ledru- Rollin, the darling of the lower middle class, and Armand Barbes to join their old *Saisons* colleague Blanqui and mobilize the workers for an uprising. The revolt he envisioned was to purge the government of its conservative members and turn the Revolution leftward.

Such an attempt, had it been made, could well have succeeded, since no military force yet existed in Paris that was strong enough to prevent it. But Ledru-Rollin was too eager to curry favor with the moderate republicans to collaborate with Blanqui. Nor would Barbes even think of joining forces with his old co-conspirator, who he had come to hate with an almost manic frenzy. Indeed, in Max Nomad's judgment, "the fate of the Revolution of 1848 was sealed by the contemptuous attitude toward Blanqui of Ledru-Rollin and Blanc, and the growing hatred of Barbes.

> The moment was very favorable for a well-nigh bloodless revolution which would have removed the Right from the Provisional Government. But such a victory would have meant the ascendancy of the Richelieu of the Revolution, as some historians have called Blanqui... As a result, not only near radical- Liberals like Ledru-Rollin, and moderate socialists like Louis Blanc, but even revolutionary communists like Armand Barbes, who incidentally had a personal grudge [against Blanqui], preferred to remain passive—thus paving the way for a complete victory of the Right.[64]

Blanqui, whose strategic sense of revolutionary possibilities had become more sophisticated over the years, may well have been unwilling to do more than purge the Provisional Government of reactionaries. But if Nomad's speculations are correct, then it would seem that the Revolution of 1848 was doomed to failure in part, at least, by the pettiness and irresolution of its key radical leaders. The result was that the demonstration did nothing but terrify the bourgeoisie without gaining much for the workers.

When the parade reached the Hotel de Ville, the meeting that took place between the workers' delegation and the Provisional Government ministers was a study in pathos. The ministers, including Blanc, were obliged to leave the safety of the Hotel de Ville and descend its steps to face the crowded Place de Greve as a visible acknowledgment of the demonstrators' petition. The

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[64] Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 42.

more militant workers in the square were hardly deceived by this gesture. As Blanc was to later recount, "a man of energetic mein, and whose flashing eyes lit up the extreme paleness of his face, rushed impetuously towards me, and seizing me by the arm, wrathfully exclaimed, 'You are then a traitor, even you!'"[65]

This angry accusation was not without justification. To be sure, the ministers did accede to some of the demonstrators' demands. Mainly on the insistence of Blanc and Albert, they agreed to postpone the National Guard elections to April 5, and they agreed to postpone the national elections—although not to May 31, as the demonstrators had wanted, but to April 23, leaving committed republicans and socialists with little more than a month to produce a sea change in the peasantry. But the ministers adamandy refused to budge on the demand for the removal of the remaining army troops, ostensibly on the grounds that the bulk of the army was outside the capital—which in itself was very unnerving to the workers.

Thus, in retrospect, the March 17 *journee* was a failure. It had achieved only a few concessions from the Provisional Government, and it left the split within the National Guard unhealed. The revolution remained incomplete, not only in a social sense but even in a formal sense. The democratic gains of the February period had been extremely fragile to begin with and could easily be swept away by a reactionary Constituent Assembly. Finally, having frightened the bourgeoisie and notables by its size and force, the *journee* propelled them into taking serious action against any prospective working-class challenge. The history of revolutions shows repeatedly that there is nothing more dangerous than a terrified middle class, whose vindictiveness is matched only by its cowardice. The militant workers in the clubs seemed to understand this, and for nearly a month after March 17, they placarded the city with warnings that Lamartine and his ministers were risking a serious confrontation with the masses.

THE JOURNEE OF APRIL 16

If the March 17 *journee* was "the last glorious day of the democratic party," to use the words of Louis Menard,[66] thereafter the shaky bloc of moderate republicans, radical republicans, socialists, and communists—of workers and middle classes—who had supported the republic despite their mutual distrust, began to fall apart as each divided against the others, along not only class but even vocational lines.

This process of disintegration was accelerated two weeks after the *journee,* when a sensational effort was made to defame Blanqui and to divide the radical movement. Almost ten years earlier, according to one Jules Taschereau, Blanqui, while in police custody, had confessed confidential information about the *Saisons* putsch of May 1839. This seemingly compromising "confession," which Taschereau published in his *La Revue retrospective,* contained information about the alleged plot that only Blanqui and a few of his co-conspirators could have known. Barbes, whom Blanqui had dragged from his sybaritic lifestyle at his estate in the south to participate in the 1839 uprising, was now only too eager to corroborate Taschereau's questionable claims and thoroughly blacken his old comrade's name.

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[65] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* p. 309. Actually, this man was Benjamin Flotte, one of the demonstration's organizers.

[66] Menard quoted in Mark Traugott, *The Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working- Class* Participation in *the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 20.

In Paris the sensational document became a widely discussed topic in cafes and salons, even leading to street brawls. Appearing as it did in the aftermath of the March 17 *journee,* its authenticity might reasonably have been viewed with deep suspicion. Taschereau himself had been a suspected police informer under Louis-Philippe, while Barbes was by now Blanqui's sworn foe. Above all, the "revelation" came at a very convenient time for the government: it knew only too well that its greatest danger came from Blanqui and his associates. Nothing could have served its purposes better than to defame the old revolutionary and thereby foment a serious division in the radical camp.

There is no compelling evidence, however, that Blanqui actually made the confession published by Taschereau. The document was not written in his hand, nor was his name even mentioned in it. Moreover, even if Blanqui had made it, he certainly gained absolutely nothing from doing so—neither the police nor the judicial system treated him with any leniency whatever. A close study of the document, in fact, revealed that it contained very little that was not already known to other people in the *Saisons* or to the police spies who had infiltrated the organization.

Blanqui's reply, as logical and powerful as it was, might have blasted his opponents to the lower depths and laid to rest most of the accusations against him, had he not been beleaguered by so many opponents who were eager to believe the document, discredit him personally, and above all divide the revolutionary movement that he had done so much to organize. Although the Taschereau document cast a shadow over him that persisted to the end of his days, it did little to diminish Blanqui's influence with the workers, many of whom all but revered him for his dedication and sacrifices.

While the Taschereau document was generating mistrust and inciting acrimony among the various republican factions, the government was busily engaged in bolstering the military forces at its command, bringing the Mobile Guard up to full strength. At the same time it tried to fan the prejudicial flames that divided the working-class and bourgeois units of the National Guard. The privileged classes, frightened by the March 17 *journee,* were soon spoiling for another confrontation. When it finally came, it was under circumstances that were so idiosyncratic that, were its effects not so tragic, it might well have constituted a comedy of absurd errors.

On April 5, the general elections for the National Guard officers were held as scheduled. But for a variety of reasons, republican and working-class candidates who were challenging the veteran Guard officers did not receive enough votes to prevail. The commander of the National Guard, Courtais, thereupon decided to allocate fourteen staff officer positions specifically for working-class members, in a special election that was to take place at the Champ de Mars on the morning of April 16.

Moreover, apparendy on Blanc's inspiration, the workers at the Champ de Mars were also expected to express their goodwill toward the republic by taking up a monetary collection in the government's behalf. It was then planned that they would march in a peaceful procession along the Right Bank to transport this "patriotic donation" to the Hotel de Ville, carrying tricolors and trade banners in an orderly array. There they were also expected to present the government with a petition that mildly appealed for more socially oriented policies. The ministers were not in the dark about these plans: Blanc had advised them the day before that they should expect a peaceful march, and that the crowd would bring them not only a "patriotic donation" but a number of social demands as well.

The conservative ministers, however, were only too eager to treat this planned march as an insurrectionary *journee.* Feeding this strategy was a particularly reckless article in the *Bulletin*

de la Republique on April 14, published while its editor was absent from his office. Written by George Sand, the article's provocative language threatened insurrection unless the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections, only a week away, returned a radical majority. As the famous novelist luridly put it:

> Unless the elections bring about the triumph of *social truth,* if they are no more than an expression of the interests of one class, wrenched from the loyal and trusting people, then the elections which should be the salvation of the Republic will be its destruction, of that there can be no doubL Then there will be only one road to the salvation for the people who set up the barricades, and that will be to demonstrate their wishes for a second time and put off the decisions taken by a false *national representation.*[67]

In anticipation of an insurrection, Lamartine says in his memoir, he frantically prepared his will and burned his secret papers, while still other ministers scurried around the capital, making preparations to counter a working-class uprising.

Sand also alleged that Blanqui was conspiring (this time without Barbes, Caussidiere, and Flocon) to use the upcoming "insurrection" to forcibly replace Lamartine with—of all people— that paragon of wayward radicalism, Ledru- Rollin. The month before, of course, Ledru-Rollin had contemptuously rejected any collaboration with Blanqui and was himself moving steadily toward the right. Indeed, that Blanqui was conspiring to overthrow the government at all on April 16 is hardly credible. As Blanc has convincingly documented, on the day before the march the revolutionary spent several hours conversing in a rather amiable manner with Lamardne in the minister's home, who apparendy was trying to use his irresistible charms—as he supposed— to win the radicals to his side. Marx, more realistically, writes that the government needed "an excuse *for recalling the army to Paris,"* which seems the most probable reason for its show of hysteria in reaction to the proposed demonstration.[68]

When the morning of April 16 arrived, tens of thousands of unarmed workers gathered at the Champ de Mars, wholly unaware that insurrectionary intentions were being imputed to them. In a festive but organized mass, they cast their ballots for their fourteen Guard officers, then took up the "patriotic donation" and began their march to the Hotel de Ville. The demonstration was entirely peaceful, indeed almost solemn. Their trade banners and signs called for the "organization of labor" and an end to "the exploitation of man by man," general slogans that were anything but provocative, still less menacing. Finally, the tone of their petition was anything but belligerent:

> Citizens, the re-action raises its head; calumny, the favourite weapon of unprincipled and dishonourable men, is on all sides assailing with its venomous falsehoods the true friends of the people. It is for us, the men of the Revolution, men of action and devotedness, to declare to the Provisional Government that the people decree the Democratic Republic; that the people desire the abolition of man's servitude to man; that the people desire the organization of labor by association. Vive *la Re'publique! Vive le Gouvemement Provisoire!*[69]

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[67] Sand quoted in Duveau, *Making of a* Revolution, p. 89.

[68] Marx, Class Struggles *in France,* p. 65; emphasis in the original. Blanc's evidence about the secret meeting between Blanqui and Lamartine appears in his *Historical Revelations,* pp. 338–42.

[69] Blanc, Historical Revelations, pp. 316–17; emphasis in the original.

Despite this exclamatory closing endorsement of the Provisional Government, a rumor was spread through Paris during the march that the workers were planning to seize the city hall and proclaim a "communist" government Precisely who spread this rumor remains a mystery, but one of the ministers immediately authorized that the National Guard be summoned to arms, not by the usual *rappel* but by a "general alarm," a rare drumbeat and bugle call that was sounded only in an extreme emergency or general state of siege.

The peaceful, mostly placid and unarmed demonstrators made their way from the Champ de Mars across the Pont Royal. As they moved toward the Hotel de Ville, however, they suddenly ran up against some 50,000 armed and extremely hostile National Guards with muskets and brisding bayonets. The city hall was surrounded by a veritable army of Guards and even hostile workers from the National Workshops. Indeed, to reach the city hall, the demonstrators were obliged to file through a gaundet of jeering Guards, who derided them as "communists," while Mobile Guard units, which had been interspersed among the marchers, sectioned off the demonstrators into small groups, ostensibly to prevent a coup.

Who had ordered the provocative mobilization? Although several ministers later claimed this very dubious honor, it was actually none other than Ledru- Rollin, in consultation with Lamartine, who had placed the capital in a state of siege. The minister of the interior had now definitively cast his lot with Lamartine against the workers. Nor was he the only prominent radical to thoroughly discredit himself on April 16: Barbes, as a colonel in the National Guard, marched in full uniform at the head of his unit, prepared to defend the Hotel de Ville against an attack by workers.

The workers were astonished by this reception, and they were no less astonished to leam that their delegation, bearing the "patriotic donation" for the Provisional Government, had been received not by the council's ministers but by the deputy mayor of the city. They were humiliated, even degraded by this behavior and by the large show of military force, which treated an orderly march as a virtual insurrection. It was now clear that two distinct worlds had emerged out of the February barricades—the masses of people who worked with their hands and the privileged population that lived off their labor. The government could no longer be trusted to defend the workers' interests, nor did the presence of Blanc and Albert alleviate the fact that it was bourgeois to the core. As Duveau metaphorically puts it,

> The shop counter had carried the day over the factory bench, and from April 16 on-ward a great wave of social reaction began to spread over the country. "All devoted republicans," wrote Caussidiere, "are lumped together under the name of communists."[70]

After April 16, the "party of order"—the privileged classes and the small shopkeepers, united in common hostility to the workers' demands—emerged with increasing strength and confidence. In fact, five days later, on April 21, the government predictably used the specious *journee* as an excuse to bring five army regiments—three infantry and two cavalry—into Paris. Although Albert, at the council of ministers, vehemendy protested this provocative move, the ministers refused even to record their decision in the official *Moniteur.* Thus the decision to bring in army troops was legally withheld from the public at large, but ordinary citizens could soon see troop contingents and cavalry patrols at various strategic places in Paris. If the militants of April needed any evidence that the revolution was slipping from their hands, the steady tramp of line troops

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[70] Duveau, Making *of a Revolution,* p. 92.

and the clatter of cavalry hooves on the cobbled streets was an everpresent reminder of their loss of power.

THE GROWING CRISIS

In the days before the election of representatives to the Constituent Assembly, delegates from the Club of Clubs began to send to the capital ominous reports on the political state of mind in the rural areas of France. Writing on April 13 from Saint-Cloud, outside Paris, one delegate's report provided a remarkable description:

> The farther I go from the big cities the more I come across memories of the past and incomprehension of the present … In Paris among those great enlightened people who overturned the government of vested interests it is appreciated that social inequality is a thing of the past. People hope for the future that was proclaimed by the man from Nazareth. In the principal towns of the various departments you also find noble, loyal hearts, spirits that foresee the future opened up for us by the coming of the Republic. But in the smaller places everything is different The citizens are the victims of their own selfishness, or narrow-mindedness and of deplorable prejudices.

The writer then went on to emphasize that the

> bourgeoisie, nobles and money-grubbers, who yesterday were divided into many different camps, today make common cause in order to change the nature of the Revolution and to stem the tide of reform… The workers who are still dependent on these people—and who feel it—do not dare to lift up their heads. In public or in the clubs they protest only by their silence against the anti-liberal sentiments expressed by the aristocrats.[71]

On April 23, Easter Sunday, adult males all over France went to the polls, most of them for the first time, to elect a Constituent Assembly. In accordance with the Provisional Government's decree mandating universal manhood suffrage, eighty-two percent of Frenchmen over twenty-one years of age participated in the elections. As Blanqui had warned most of the provincial voters followed the guidance of their social betters, such as the notables, clergy, and employers, and in some backward areas peasants were marched in troops by priests to polling places or voted under the watchful eyes of local notables.

If the April 16 demonstration was a humiliating failure for the Parisian radicals, the results of these elections were a disaster for all conscientious French republicans. The new Constituent Assembly, a body of 900 representatives, was composed mostly of men from provincial France; in fact, it contained a larger proportion of landowners, priests, and nobles than any assembly that had been elected even under the highly restrictive suffrage permitted by Louis-Philippe. At least half of the new Assembly consisted of "moderate republicans"—in many cases, a euphemism for former monarchists who, while voicing support for the republic, had not forsaken their reactionary convictions. Less than ten percent of the seats were gained by radical republicans (who

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[71] M. Prat (delegate of the Club of Clubs), Report from Saint-Cloud (April 13,1848); in *1848* in *France,* ed. Roger Price, Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 90.

thenceforth called themselves "Montagnards," after the Jacobins of 1793), and at least a third of the representatives were expressly monarchist in their leanings, mosdy Orleanists and a small number of Bourbon Legitimists.

By no means was this reactionary Assembly willing to let Louis Blanc and Albert retain leading positions in the government, although both men did win seats in the Assembly. Indeed, however fainthearted Blanc may have been in advancing the interests of the workers, the new government wasted no time, after it convened on May 4, in eliminating him and Albert from its executive body. It dispensed with the Provisional Government's council of ministers and created a new council, the Executive Commission, to manage the country's affairs. Like the Directory during the First Republic, the Commission was composed of five men (a "Pentarchy," as its critics labeled it disdainfully) and was placed completely under the thumb of the reactionary Assembly.

The members of the five-man Commission were all representatives of the ruling classes: Lamartine, Arago, Marie, Gamier-Pages, and Ledru-Rollin. (The once-radical Ledru-Rollin was made a member of the government only on the insistence of Lamartine, as an expression of appreciation for the minister's betrayal of the workers on April 16.) The Parisian workers, who had carried the brunt of the February fighting and, more than any other part of the population, had created the republic, had no representatives on the Commission at all. On May 4, as if to declare that the February Revolution was definitively over so far as the ruling classes were concerned, the Assembly officially proclaimed that France was merely a "formal" rather than a "social" republic, thus ending any hopes among the workers that their economic needs would be satisfied.

But the election of the predominandy reactionary Assembly cannot be blamed exclusively on the provincial vote alone. All of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Paris—indeed, all men of property—had come out in force to defeat the working-class candidates, and their numbers were considerable. Out of the twenty radical candidates nominated by the Luxembourg Labor Assembly, Parisians elected only one, while Blanqui was defeated with a humiliating vote. Even the generally amiable and theatrical Barbes lost out in Paris and acquired a seat in the Assembly only because he was chosen by voters from a different departmenL As a whole, the Parisian electorate gave more votes to conservative ministers like Gamier-Pages and Marie than to Louis Blanc. Although Blanc was elected as a representative, he received less than half the vote that was given to Lamartine, while Cabet, the darling of March 17, and the Fourierist Considerant suffered crushing defeats. The result was an Assembly that had little sympathy for the Parisian workers. As Samuel Bernstein observes,

> A no-man's-land lay between the Assembly and workers. The Chamber was heavily committed to abide by the status *quo*. Consequently it made no advances to the workers, did nothing to ease their pains or to disarm their wrath. Theirs were fallen hopes. The illusions that had mantled the National Workshops were dispelled. Only their charitable character remained to chide human dignity; and even this source of relief, rumour had it, would soon stop... Workers were dispirited, nearly desperate.[72]

After the elections, popular participation in the club movement dropped precipitously; out of 200 clubs in the greater Paris area during March and April, fewer than sixty continued to meet in May and June, and clubs that had formerly attracted thousands of members shriveled to only a few hundred or less. Perhaps one reason for the decline was that many workers had regarded

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[72] Bernstein, *Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection,* p. 176.

the clubs primarily as a means of preparing for the elections, abandoning them once the voting, with its disappointing results, was over. But the decline in the clubs also seems to have reflected the sense of defeat that the workers felt after the April 15 journee. But the clubs that remained were radical ones: they held discussions that ranged far beyond issues of parliamentary power to more social issues, giving greater attention than before to wealth differentials, the organization of work, and the need for a "democratic and social republic." The reactionary complexion of the Constituent Assembly nurtured their radicalism enormously. Militants felt they had little reason to follow a parliamentary course of action, and they increasingly sensed that Blanc's and Cabet's balms offered no possibility for improving their miserable condition. Even the cautious Blanqui returned to favoring organizations that resembled the secret societies of the 1840s. The demimonde that gained renewed vigor in the slums of Paris was one that favored armed working-class resistance.

THE JOURNEE OF MAY 15

The working-class radicals in the clubs made one last desperate effort to retake the initiative from the growing counterrevolution—notably, in the *journee* of May 15.

This *journee* centered on two issues. The most important was the question of Polish liberation, a cause that was very popular in the capital. At that moment Prussia was occupied with brutally mopping up a bloody insurrection in Polish Posen, while Austria had been bombarding the venerable Polish city of Cracow. A Polish Emigre committee petitioned France for help, since immediate assistance by French troops would be able to prevent serious reprisals against the rebels. The clubs demanded urgenty that, unless Russia and Prussia freed Poland in the next twenty-four hours, France should declare war against the two countries.

But the Constituent Assembly was continuing a policy of nonintervention abroad, a policy that had been established by the Provisional Government shortly after the February Days. Lamartine, as minister of foreign affairs, had then informed the European powers that

> the proclamation of the French Republic is not an act of aggression against any sort of government in the world. There are differences between forms of government which are as legitimate as the different sorts of character, of geographical situation, and of intellectual, moral and material development seen in various nations.[73]

With this reassurance to the continent's despots of their legitimacy, Lamartine had reduced the February Revolution to a purely national affair, peculiar to France in character and geography. But to militant French republicans, his statement stood in sharp contrast to the universalistic claims of the Great Revolution. It seemed to deny that France was the "mother of republics" and hence the foremost defender of liberty everywhere in the world. By all rights, they insisted, France must intervene to assist the cause of Polish liberty.

The second issue that gave rise to the *journee* was the demand, originally made by Blanc and Albert, that the Constituent Assembly create a Ministry of Labor and Progress. The demand had considerable support among the clubists, for whom it constituted a basic test of the Assembly's politics, determining whether the Second Republic would go beyond a purely formal republic to create a social republic as well. On May 11, when the Assembly fladly, indeed derisively, refused

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[73] *Les Murailles revohitionnaire de 1848,* in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 70.

to create such a ministry, the workers knew that their interests had no place on the government's agenda.

Another *journee* was now unavoidable. The Parisian clubs, particularly infuriated by the refusal to help Poland, scheduled a demonstration for May 15, the day the Constituent Assembly was expected to debate French policy toward the desperate Polish situation. But did they also plan an insurrection? The increasingly reactionary *Le National* decided in retrospect that an uprising had indeed been planned. The day after the *journee,* the newspaper fumed that, under the cover of a demonstration "in support of Poland," a "plot was being mounted against the assembly, against the whole nation, whose life, essence, thought, and energy is expressed by the assembly."[74] But the closest anyone came to making a public call for an insurrection was Joseph Sobrier, a socialistic republican who was actively involved in organizing the demonstration.

Sobrier had briefly occupied the position of prefect of police in February and, shordy after the February uprising, had helped Caussidiere organize the auxiliary "Montagnards" force (not to be confused with the Montagnards in the Assembly). He was now editor of the important club newspaper *La Commune de Paris.* On May 11, after the constituent assembly rejected Blanc's Ministry of Labor and Progress, Sobrier editorially declared that "the time of vain hopes has passed." "Will the hour of justice perhaps soon strike?" he asked ominously, ending his warning with the same battle cry that had been voiced by insurgent silk workers in Lyon in 1834: "Live working or die fighting!" Moreover, Sobrier's house seems to have served not only as the editorial offices of the *Commune de Paris* but as an informal headquarters for a *journee,* where weapons were deliberately stockpiled to arm the demonstrators in the event of an insurrection. Seven draft decrees, written by a journalist for *La Commune de Paris,* one Seigneuret, were later discovered in Sobrier's home, announcing that representatives in the Assembly were "excluded from all power" and that a Committee of Public Safety was to be appointed. One decree irresponsibly listed as committee members individuals who had no truck whatsoever with his plans.[75]

Although accusations were made afterward that Blanqui had played a key role in planning the insurrection, his admonitions against rash action and his call for patience clearly belie such charges. The draft decrees found in Sobrier's house provide no evidence of his involvement in any attempted uprising. Nor does the fact that he appeared in the crowd on May 15 constitute evidence that he planned even to participate in a coup, let alone lead one. In fact, Blanqui was quite convinced that an attempted coup at that time would be a failure. Loyal to his club, he seems to have obeyed its decision to participate in the *journee* only reluctandy. Indeed, according to one newspaper account, Blanqui argued fervendy for restraint. In response to a speaker who

> demanded that the people should take action immediately,... the president of the club, M. Blanqui himself, has spoken out against him two days running, declaring that it would be imprudent to embark on matters in so hasty and drastic a fashion, that the working masses have so far no firm principles, and that by trying to press on so fast there was a risk of bringing everything into jeopardy.[76]

[74] *Le National,* May 16, 1848, in *1848* in *France,* ed. Price, p. 98.

[75] "Documents Prepared for Issue in the Event of the Success of the Revolt of May 15," Document 91, reproduced in Revolution *from 1789 to 1906,* ed. Postgate, pp. 207–9.

[76] As reported in *La Liberte* (Rouen, May 17, 1848), in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 99.

Whatever plans for an insurrection were afoot, not only did Blanqui oppose them but so did Barbes and even Sobrier, who was reported to have soon been depressed about its prospects for success.

When May 15 came, a crowd assembled at the Place de la Bastille and began a solemn march to the Palais Bourbon. Estimates of the size of the column range from about 10,000 to 20,000. The actual number was likely somewhere in between, probably toward the lower end of the numerical spectrum. In any case, it was substantially smaller than the huge journee of March 17, and few of the demonstrators carried any arms. According to the plan, such as it may have been, if the crowd was fired upon, the demonstrators were expected to rush home to retrieve their weapons, and only then return to fight—a logistically difficult if not absurd scenario.

No sooner did the demonstrators reach the Palais Bourbon than they came up against contingents of the Mobile Guard and National Guard, which had been deployed to protect the Assembly. General Courtais, who still commanded the National Guard, was disposed, because of his republican sentiments, to treat the demonstrators in a genial, if firm, manner. He tactfully ordered the Guards not to fire on the crowd and instead agreed to admit into the Chamber a delegation of twenty-five demonstrators, bearing a petition that called for a war in support of the Poles. But once the doors to the Palais Bourbon were opened thousands of agitated demonstrators burst through, flooding the galleries to a point where the floors began to collapse. Some of the insurgents were forced to drop to the floor below, while others were swept direcdy into the assembly hall, where the deputies sat in frozen silence. Whether Blanqui cried "Forward!" to the surging crowd, as he is alleged to have done, is arguable; if he did, the old insurrectionist may have been temporarily carried away by the excitement of the moment. In any case, if there is any truth to the allegation, he seems to have quickly regained his composure and selfpossession and behaved with considerable prudence.

Although the mayhem that followed this invasion seemed, to all appearances, like the kind of insurrectionary *journee* that had marked the Great Revolution, the appearance was entirely deceptive. Since the crowd was neither armed nor voiced any intention of disbanding the Assembly, it obviously had no plans to take over the government. It was moved more by a generous passion to aid the Poles than by any clearly formulated putschist intentions. If anything, the club leader Frangois Raspail, an ardent revolutionary, read the petition on behalf of the Poles with deliberate and monotonous slowness (as he later told the court that tried him for his role in the May 15 events) in order to calm the crowd. Indeed, so much was Poland on the crowd's mind that when Blanqui, all but swept up to the dias of the Assembly, attempted to shift its attention from Poland to the organization of labor, he was quickly interrupted by Sobrier with the cry; "No, this is not what matters. Poland! Tell us about Poland!" This cry was echoed throughout the Chamber, compelling Blanqui to return to the main subject of public interest. As Duveau emphasizes, what the crowd wanted, despite its economic desperation, "was to sweep oppressive kings and oppressed peoples from the face of Europe. They wanted Ireland, Italy, Poland to be free."[77] Even the British ambassador Lord Normanby, a bitter enemy of the insurgents, noted that the crowd was anything but ill-humored and dangerous. In no way did they threaten the immobilized deputies who remained behind many of whom, like Tocqueville, calmly sat out the Assembly's session with dignified imperturbability.

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[77] Duveau, Making *of a Revolution*, p. 120.

But the clubists who called the *journee* did not count on the emotional instability of one of their leaders, Aloysius Huber, a fixture from the old demimonde of the secret societies, who seems to have been completely carried away by the uproar. Shoving Blanqui aside, Huber almost hysterically declared that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved. His declaration was echoed by calls from unknown individuals calling on the crowd to march to the Hotel de Ville. This was indeed an open call for an insurrection. The excited crowd instandy set off for the city hall, with memories of the February uprising and its itinerary still fresh in their minds. In the background, they could hear the *rappel* being beaten, summoning the National Guard to arms to quell their action.

The *journee* was part mayhem, part farce—part, perhaps, the work of government agents as well—while the "takeover" of the Parisian city hall verged on opera bouffe. Barbes, notwithstanding his initial opposition to the whole affair, rushed to the forefront of the march, probably to upstage his old rival Blanqui—who, in fact, wisely lingered behind and soon drifted away. Under Barbes's leadership, and with Albert's support, the demonstrators arrived at the Hotel de Ville and took over one wing of the building. They encountered no resistance: the officer commanding the guard of the huge structure, one Colonel Rey, was an old friend of Barbes and made no attempt to forcibly prevent the unarmed crowd from occupying the city hall.

Meanwhile the mayor of Paris, Marrast, simply shifted over to the other wing of the Hotel de Ville, where he printed counterstatements against the "insurrection" and dropped them from windows to the crowd below. Barbes, from his own wing, proceeded to issue two decrees. "The people having dissolved the National Assembly, there remains no power but that of the People itself," announced one, so the existing Constituent Assembly was replaced with a new "Commission of Government." A second decree declared that "the Russian and German governments" were faced with war if they failed "to reconstitute Poland."[78]

What emerges from the various conflicting accounts of this event is that, after an hour of such operatics, a National Guard artillery officer arrested Barbes, and he, together with Raspail, Sobrier, Albert, and other working-class leaders, were carted off to jail. Blanqui managed to elude the police for ten days until he too was jailed. As to the crowd, it quickly dispersed once the Guard arrived, and its leaders were hauled away without resistance.

The demonstration of May 15 and its farcical "insurrection" provided the government with exacdy the pretext it needed for curtailing working-class activities. Caussidiere, who had stayed out of the entire adventure, was compelled to surrender his strategic position as chief of police to a "moderate republican," and his armed "Montagnard" forces were disbanded. Blanc, who had barely escaped serious injury at the hands of the National Guards in the Palais Bourbon, had to use all his eloquence to retain his seat in the Assembly. In all, several hundred people were temporarily rounded up. All the militant clubs and even the moderate ones were dosed down for a time, and leaders such as Blanqui and Raspail, whose guidance would have been invaluable to the workers in the battles that lay ahead, were imprisoned.

Early in June, the Assembly passed a general law banning all street gatherings. This law, as Robertson observes, was so "ferocious" that "to stand unknowingly next to a person bearing a concealed weapon became a crime. The monarchy's decrees seemed mild in comparison." But the ban on gatherings did not subdue the workers of Paris. Indeed, having been pricked by the thorns

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[78] "Decrees Actually Issued by Barbes During his One-Hour Occupation of the Hotel de Ville, May 15," Document 92 in Revolution *From 1789 to 1906,* ed. Postgate, p. 2C9.

of a reactionary parliamentary republic, the workers, Robertson adds, "began making cartridges again in their suburbs."[79]

In the weeks before the May 15 *journee,* the Executive Commission decided to prodaim a "Festival of Concord," summoning all Parisians and provincials to the Champ de Mars in order to publidy express their feelings of national *fraternite*— and, above all, their solidarity with the government. The date had been set for Sunday, May 14. But when the fourteenth came around, the government and the Luxembourg Commission were locked in an angry battle, which obliged the Executive Commission to defer the festival to the following Sunday, May 21. On that blessed day, the festival finally took place. Lanterns lined the buildings from the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe, and floats representing arts and industry were paraded before a huge crowd of onlookers. But *fraternite* was the sentiment most notably absent from the festival. Many Parisians ridiculed the floats and the pageantry, especially deriding the slogans supporting the government. As the Countess d'Agoult notes,

> People laughed at the float that depicted agriculture, which the program described as being drawn by oxen with gilded horns. In fact it was pulled by twenty carthorses. They hooted at the five hundred maidens crowned with oak leaves who followed the cart. They jeered at the statue of the Republic with four lions crouched at her feet, and they generally regarded the Festival of Concord as a bad imitation of the Festival of the Supreme Being [which had been staged by Robespierre shordy before his fall from power].[80]

The climax of the festival was to be a huge military review before the new Executive Commission, headed by Lamartine, and the Assembly representatives. But the review miscarried woefully. When the resplendently uniformed National Guards paraded by shouting "Long live the National Assembly!" their fellows in working-class blue *blouses* (or smocks) responded with the cry. "Long live the democratic and social republic!" Alongside the silent troops of the line marched the strangely unpredictable Mobile Guard, whose political loyalties aroused such concern in Tocqueville.

Thus, within a span of only three months, the veneer of *fraternite'* that had existed in February had been replaced by a spirit of furious class hatred. The liberals had behaved true to form: having patronized the working class when they needed their support against the July Monarchy, they quickly turned against the "blue *blouses*" once the workers demanded minimal social improvements for themselves and their families. Nor were the bourgeoisie and the notables prepared to permit any modification of the status quo. The pleas of the more decent elements of society—-journalists, professionals, and even clerics like the Archbishop of Paris, who was deeply sensitive to the miserable lives of the workers—had no credibility with the employing and privileged classes. It was now apparent that there could be no reconciliation between the possessing and dispossessed classes of society. An explosion was looming on the horizon, one that would be the workers' last attempt to establish a "democratic and social republic" in 1848.

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[79] Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848,* p. 86.

[80] Daniel Stem (pseud, for Countess d'Agoult), *Histoire de la revolution francaise,* vol. 3 (Paris: Gustave Sandre Librairie, 1853), p. 125.

Chapter 28. The Insurrection of June 1848

Although the immediate cause of the insurrection of June 23 to 26 was the government's decision to terminate the National Workshops, it was a profound underlying class conflict that brought it about. Militant and class conscious, women as well as men, the June insurgents had reached a complete impasse with the Assembly, and they were left with no recourse but to rise up in armed revolt

In an extraordinary statement that appears to date from June, the workers of the nineteenth brigade of the National Workshops warned the Assembly.

> Do not forget, Monarchists, that it was not that we could remain your slaves that we brought about a third revolution. We fought your social system, the sole cause of the disorder and poverty that devours and swallows contemporary society.[81]

The first revolution had overthrown the absolute monarchy in 1789; the second, in 1830, had given rise to a royal constitutional system In the third, the uprising of February 1848, the workers had hoped to achieve their "democratic and social republic," a hope that had gone unfulfilled because of the usurpers at the Hotel de Ville. The workers had now exhausted every legal and moral means at their disposal to gain that republic, but the demand for the "third revolution" still persisted—that is, for the historical realization of the promise of the February barricades.

Many, perhaps the majority, of those who rose to complete the "third revolution" of June were essentially demanding basic economic changes, which they regarded as constituting a social republic: the expansion of the National Workshops into cooperatives with state assistance, universal compulsory education, living standards commensurate with their work, and free associations to govern their own economic and political affairs. As a placard on the Porte Saint-Marceau pronounced on June 23, the "democratic and social republic" was "democratic in that all citizens are electors, … social in that all citizens are permitted to form associations for work."[82]

To be sure, among the insurgents, there were undoubtedly many workers with broader social aspirations—socialists and communists, including Fourierists, Saint-Simonians, and Cabetists—who dreamed that the insurrection would usher in the public ownership of property in one form or another. Bu these men and women were probably a minority. Radical legends to the contrary notwithstanding, many of the insurgents thought of themselves as good republicans, and the tricolor was at least as conspicuous on the barricades as the red flag. Individuals from different walks of life participated in the June Days (even the poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire fought with the insurgents), but it was above all a historic and desperate working-class uprising—the first in revolutionary history.

Indeed, however limited were the immediate goals of the June insurrection, its implications were far broader, and again, no one saw them more clearly than Tocqueville:

> What distinguished [the June insurrection], among all the events of this kind which have succeeded one another in France for sixty years, is that it did not aim at changing the form of government, but at altering the order of society. It was not, stricdy

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[81] Workers of the nineteenth brigade of the National Workshops, "Reponse des ouvriers a Dupin" (undated); in Roger Price, ed., 1848 in *France,* Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; and London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 104.

[82] Quoted in John M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left* in *Revolutionary France, 1848–1851* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 51.

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speaking, a political struggle, in the sense which until then we had given to the word, but a combat of class against class, a sort of Servile War. It represented the facts of the Revolution of February in the same manner as the theories of Socialism represented its ideas; or rather it issued naturally from these ideas, as a son does from his mother...

It must also be observed that this formidable insurrection was not the enterprise of a certain number of conspirators, but the revolt of one whole section of the population against another.[83]

The fact is that the "servile war" that broke out on the barricades of June 23 was overwhelmingly a class war, indeed the first selfconscious and explicit working-class insurrection in history, and it was seen as such by the workers as well as by their opponents. It dissolved the myth of *fraternite,* which the conventional "formal" republicans had emblazoned together with their most sacred claims to *egalite* and *liberie,* and it added to them a right born of the social question. Or as Marx put it: "Only after being dipped in the blood of the *June insurgents* did the tricolor become the flag of the European revolution—the *red flag.*"[84]

"LIVE WORKING OR DIE FIGHTING"

If the workers were trying to achieve a "third revolution," the counterrevolutionary Constituent Assembly was trying to turn back the clock of history to the state of affairs that had existed prior to February 24. How far back they wanted to turn it varied from one Assembly representative to another, a difficulty that sometimes confused the train of events. But the deputies, however much they disagreed with each other, were united in the conviction that the Parisian workers had to be suppressed. First, the Assembly officially disbanded the Luxembourg Commission, although the Luxembourg Labor Assembly continued to exist on its own as an extralegal body under the name *Societe des Corporations* Reunies; indeed, adding insult to injury, the Executive Commission proceeded to occupy the Luxembourg Palace for its own sittings.

Once the Luxembourg was out of the way, the remaining clubs and trade corporations were next in line for repression. In the second week of June, Marrast, as mayor of Paris, took systematic steps to close down the corporations as well as the clubs by eliminating their municipally controlled meeting places. "Between June 12 and 16," notes Peter H. Amann,

clubs still meeting in schools, hospitals, asylums, and palaces had their municipal authorization canceled. In some instances they simply found the school building where they met locked and barred... The fact that organized craft workers were being denied public meeting places while employer groups were not, or that a displaced conservative club like the Democratic Club of the National Guard could turn to Marrast for help in finding a new home, lends weight to the charge of class discrimination.[85]

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[83] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville,* trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), pp. 187–8.

[84] Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France,* in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 10: *Marx-Engels 1849–1851* (New York International Publishers, 1978), p. 70.

[85] Peter H. Amann, Revolution *and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement* in *1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 290–2.

Ironically, Marrast's restriction was counterproductive from his own perspective because many of the clubs, which had recovered after the repression following May 15, were actually calling upon the workers for restraint. These clubs had constituted an arena for the peaceful expression of working-class grievances, in contrast to open areas such as the Portes Saint-Martin and Saint- Denis, where workers who still congregated during the evenings voiced their anger in more vitriolic phrases, sometimes leading to violent arguments and near riots.

Meanwhile, late in May, behind closed doors, the government had begun its most consequential act of repression: the assault on the National Workshops. The Executive Commission ordered Emile Thomas to "invite" young unmarried male workers to either enlist in the army or be dropped from the Workshops' rolls. Older or married workers who could not "formally prove residence in Paris for six months before May 24" were to be dismissed. Employers, in turn, were free to "requisition any number of employees" from the Workshops—apparently at whatever wage rates they chose—and a worker's refusal to accept such a job would result in dismissal. The rates, moreover, that the workers were obliged to accept were not hourly wages but piecework rates, which they hated as unduly exploitative. Finally, "brigades of workers" were to be sent to provincial departments, there to engage in "public works under the direction of the Engineers of Bridges and Roads."[86]

Thomas, apparendy appalled by the massive transformation in his project, asked that the issuance of the decree be delayed. On May 26, for this insolence, the young director was arrested by the minister of the interior and bundled off to Bordeaux under an armed escort. The explanation given to the public was that Thomas had been assigned to study canals in the provinces. So sudden and surreptitious was this "reassignment'' that Thomas was denied any opportunity to visit with or even write to his mother before his departure. The director had, by then, become a thorn in the side of the Executive Commission. Although no friend of Blanc's, Thomas was idealistic and seems to have come around to the Luxembourg's way of thinking about the "organization of labor." Had he remained in Paris, he might even have stirred up the workers. Once he arrived in Bordeaux, the government kept him under surveillance until late June—"a procedure so high-handed," notes Priscilla Robertson, "that Louis- Philippe's police would never have dared to try it''[87] In its arrogance and indifference to the rights of its citizenry, the Second Republic had outdone even the July Monarchy.

Before the decree of the Executive Commission could actually be issued, however, a second assault on the Workshops was being prepared from another governmental quarter a group of Catholic reactionaries in the Assembly led by Count Falloux, a believer in a theocratic government who had been disposed to defend the Inquisition until political circumstances obliged him to veil his real views in a republican veneer. Falloux now proposed to close down the National Workshops completely, without the elaborate arrangements detailed in the Pentarchy's plan.

Incredibly, Falloux's proposal gained the support of Proudhon, as well as of the naive Victor Hugo. Proudhon later acknowledged that he had behaved like an imbecile, yet the content of the Falloux decree was consistent with his own hatred of doles, which was how he saw the National Workshops; hence his support for the proposal would have been no great departure for him in principle. In any case, the majority of the Assembly rejected Falloux's proposal as too

[86] "Decree on the Workshops Prepared for May 24, Issued June 21," Document 93 in *Revolution from 1789 to 1905,* ed. Raymond Postgate (New York: Harper & Row, 1920), p. 210.
[87] Priscilla Robertson, Revolutions *of 1848: A Social History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), p. 85.

provocative, yet the rejection made littie difference to the workers. The proposal had already been widely publicized, and the workers were only too aware that the workshops would be abolished by one means or another.

The measures against the National Workshops, however, could not have occurred at a worse time for the Parisian working class. Their economic straits were now desperate. Not only was a cholera epidemic raging in the city, afflicting its poorer districts more severely than the wealthier ones, but unemployment had produced a desperate situauon. In the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, about two-thirds of the workers were without jobs. Many of them relied entirely on their two-franc wage from the National Workshops to feed their families. Almost three-quarters of the furniture makers in the Faubourg, a very important craft in that area, were without regular work and were faced with outright starvation. These men and women were the most revolutionary people in Paris. Among the most active participants in the February rising, the men were probably the best trained in the use of arms and in street fighting, and later, as members of National Guard legions, National Workshop battalions, clubs, and trade unions, they had grown accustomed to acting with discipline and forethought. When Marrast closed the municipal buildings that had housed their club meetings, the workers of the Saint-Antoine held their own "open-air clubs," as they called them, to listen to orations, engage in debates, and formulate and discuss practical decisions.

In the meantime, the Luxembourg workers and the National Workshops workers, who had formerly been divided against each other, finally recognized their common grievances as a class. On June 18, the extralegal Luxembourg Assembly, led by Pierre Vincard and August Blum, now united with working-class leaders of the National Workshops and issued a joint statement declaring that "nothing is possible now in France but the Democratic and Social Republic."[88] Although their statement was intended to calm the workers, their declaration was doubdess regarded as a challenge to the Constituent Assembly. As Blanc observed, the "three months" grace period that the workers, in February, had given to Lamartine to introduce major social changes "was past!"[89] Finally, on June 21 the Executive Commission's sweeping decree dissolving the National Workshops was finally issued and published in *Le Moniteur,* producing a sensation among the workers. Crowds gathered throughout the poorer quarters of the city, debating, demonstrating, and slowly gathering into ever larger groups that clearly portended an uprising. Even the reactionary Le *Constitutionnel* belatedly (on June 23) disapproved of the government's handling of the decree.

> More effort could have been made, in our view, to prepare opinion for the announcement; more prudence could have been shown. Because the announcement was sudden and because there was a lack of reassuring comment, there is a danger of jeopardizing this decision which has been staved off for so long.[90]

Nevertheless, even if the government had behaved more prudendy in dissolving the Workshops, it is extremely unlikely that the result would have been significandy different.

[88] Louis Blanc, *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858), pp. 425–6.
[89] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* p. 427.
[90] Le *Constitutional* (June 23, 1848), in *1848* in *France,* ed. Price, p. 103.

THE BARRICADES OF JUNE

On Thursday morning, June 22, nearly 300 workers marched toward the Place du Palais-National carrying banners with the insignia "National Workshops" and singing the stirring *"Chant du depart."* Other crowds marched to the Hotel de Ville, denouncing plans to ship former Workshop workers off to drain the unhealthy marshes of Sologne.

They appear to have chosen a spokesman in the person of a lieutenant from the National Workshops, Louis Pujol. Pujol was an apocalyptic mystic, whose scriptural-sounding *Prophecy of* Days *oj Blood* seemed like a proletarian Book of Revelation. At nine o'clock that morning, he and four working men were delegated to question the Executive Commission about its plans for the workers under the newly published decree. Pujol asked Marie what the government would do if the workers resisted the decree. As Blanc tells the story, Marie responded that

> "The workmen … who do not submit to the decree will be sent out of Paris by force."…
>
> The reply of M. Pujol … was as follows: "Citizen Representatives, you insult men invested with a sacred character as delegates of the people; we withdraw with the profound conviction that you neither desire the organisation of labor, nor the prosperity of the French people."[91]

By late afternoon, after the story of the interchange had circulated, thousands of workers from all parts of the city gravitated toward the Place du Pantheon and assembled there by torchlight, in great agitation. As if to add even greater drama to the events, the dark sky flashed with lightning and resounded with thunder. At the Palais Bourbon, Blanc could hear one continuous chant: "Du *pain ou du plomb!"* (Bread or lead!) By nine o'clock, according to police reports, the crowd before the Pantheon numbered in the tens of thousands. Pujol told the newly arrived workers what Marie had said and called upon them to swear vengeance, which they solemnly did. On the initiative of radical National Guards from the Twelfth Legion, they agreed to return to the Pantheon at six the next morning, Friday, June 23.

Despite the inclement weather, a huge crowd gathered again at the Place du Pantheon the next morning. There, at Pujol's direction, they marched with grave determination through the rain to the Place de la Bastille, their numbers swelling along the way. At the site where the Bastille had been besieged some sixty years before, the great mass of men and women uncovered their heads and kneeled in homage to the revolutionary heroes and heroines who had fallen on July 14, 1789. Then, breaking up into columns and groups, they scattered to all the working-class neighborhoods and began to build barricades.

Over the next few days more than a 1000 barricades were built, according to a count made after the hostilities came to an end. They were concentrated mainly in the northeast, in the traditional working-class areas of Paris: the Faubourgs Saint-Martin, du Temple, and Poissoniere, extending into the heights of Montmartre; the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Place de la Bastille. But others sprang up in the Faubourg du Pantheon, the Latin Quarter, and Gentilly in the south; and in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques and the Cite in the center—with its well-guarded prize, the Hotel de Ville. Thirty-eight were erected in the Rue Saint-Jacques alone, and nearly thirty along the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine.

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[91] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* p. 429.

Although many of them were little more than tentative barriers to obstruct the movement of the government's troops, a large number were imposing structures, in some cases reaching as high as fifteen feet, with portholes for muskets, strongly reinforced by bulky objects, even trams and wagons. Tocqueville marveled at the workers' meticulousness in preparing their defenses:

> In all the little streets surrounding [the Hotel de Ville], 1 found people engaged in making barricades; they proceeded in their work with the cunning and regularity of an engineer, not unpaving more stones than were necessary to lay the foundations of a very thick, solid and even neady-built wall, in which they generally left a small opening by the side of the houses to permit of ingress and egress.[92]

The grim determination, self-discipline, and courage with which the Parisian workers set about their task is attested by virtually all honest observers on both sides of this desperate social war. Walking along the right bank of the Seine at four o'clock on the afternoon of June 23, Alexander Herzen, the Russian revolutionary exile, noticed that as "the shops were shutting, columns of the National Guard with sinister faces were marching in different directions." A bell sounded from Saint-Suplice, summoning the workers to arms.

> On the other side of the river, barricades were being thrown up in all the streets and alleys. I can see now those gloomy figures dragging the stones, women and children helping them. A young Polytechnic student climbed one barricade that apparenUy was finished, unfurled the flag and began singing the Marseillaise in a mournfully solemn voice, all who were working joined in, and the chorus of the grand song resounding over the stones of the barricades made the heart throb... The alarm bell still rang out Meanwhile, there was the thud of artillery over the bridge, and General Beguot on the bridge scanned through a field-glass the enemy's position.[93]

A coalescence was taking place among the crowds roaming around the capital, chanting slogans that grimly vowed to resist the government's decrees and policies. Had any coordinated leadership created this coalescence? Certainly various organizations spoke for various strata within the working population, such as the Union of Brigadiers of the National Workshops and the now-semimilitary *Societe des Droits de* I 'Homme, which lived on memories of the great *journees* of 1792–93. But there was no overall plan for an insurrection, and no guiding military strategy or organization—still less a party that had a strategy for taking over the government With their ablest leaders jailed in the Vincennes, the workers rose up mainly on their own, and local militants— usually men with military training, such as insurgent National Guards— provided them with leadership. Every serious account of the June insurrection indicates that the insurgents acted with extraordinary spontaneity and ingenuity. Tocqueville notes that they "fought without a war-cry, without leaders, without flags, and yet with a marvellous harmony and an amount of military experience that astonished the oldest officers."[94] About half of the insurgents seem to have been National Workshop workers.

[92] Tocqueville, *Recollections,* p. 191.

[93] Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts,* trans. Constance Gamett (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925), vol. 4, pp. 3–4.

[94] Tocqueville, *Recollections,* p. 187.

Within a given street or its environs, the spontaneous coordination of the workers was astonishing. Women and children took over noncombative tasks, such as repairing damaged barricades, provisioning supplies and water for the combatants, caring for the wounded, and the like. Each neighborhood tried to cast lead and zinc bullets for its fighters, and to produce black gunpowder—often compelling reluctant local chemists to help them. But even as the neighborhoods coordinated their activities peacefully and efficiendy, no coordination existed between the *quartiers* or even between barricades only a few streets distant. In its structure, the insurrection almost seemed a matter of individual neighborhoods rising up, rather than large sections of the city as a whole. As Blanc tells us,

> This insurrection, so general in its causes and in its spirit, assumed at almost every point the character of a local protest In many districts, the inhabitants reserved to themselves exclusively the guard of their own barricades, rejected the assistance of strangers, and after closing all access to their streets, refused to cooperate in the general attack,[95]

Even barricades that could have easily spared men commonly refused to send them to support insurgents in other faubourgs who were being hard pressed by government troops.

This orientation was not the result of myopia, or of a failure to understand that the fate of each barricade depended ultimately on the fate of all. It was due in great part to recent radical history, as Amann notes, which associated coordination and strategy with failure, as exemplified by impotent conspirators like Barbes and Blanqui and with the abortive conspiracies of secret societies like the Satsons.

> Successful revolutions, on the contrary, were assumed to be spontaneous (and therefore unplannable) upheavals of the masses—witness July 1789, July 1830, and February 1848. By June 1848 everyone foresaw violence, widespread popular violence provoked by a hostile government. But no revolutionary organization dreamed that it could control the direction, intensity, and timing of that violence.[96]

The insurgents, fearing any degree of coordination that might demand even a modest sacrifice of local autonomy, veered to the extreme of almost pure spontaneity and independent decision-making. This highly anarchistic mentality was to make the uprising disastrously vulnerable to attacks by the government and its troops, which carefully coordinated its strategy on a citywide scale. The June insurgents seemed unwilling to take conscious control of the coming storm and draw up plans for dealing with it on a wider scale so that their uprising, while retaining considerable local flexibility, could make systematic headway against the well-disciplined troops that confronted them. This fetishization of untempered localism and spontaneity sealed the fate of the insurrection.

Nevertheless, for a time the question of whether the government would be able to hold Paris at all was very much in question. The Mobile Guard, the army, and the bourgeois units of the National Guard were placed under the command of General Eugene Cavaignac, who had acquired a reputation for ferocity in campaigns against Algerian tribesmen. Cavaignac decided not to

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[95] Blanc, *Historical Revelations,* p. 436.
[96] Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy,* pp. 298–9.

attack the insurgents or obstruct their barricade building until he had completely equipped and massed his own troops. As a result of his inaction, on Friday, fully half of Paris fell into the hands of the insurgents.

Tocqueville, amazed that the army had permitted this to happen, asked General Lamoriciere why his troops had not engaged the insurgents.

> "What are you doing?" 1 asked him. "They have already been fighting at the Porte Saint-Denis, and barricades are being built all round the Hotel de Ville."
>
> "Patience," he replied, "we are going there. Do you think we are such fools as to scatter our soldiers on such a day as this over the small streets of the suburbs? No, no! we shall let the insurgents concentrate in the quarters which we can't keep them out of, and then we will go and destroy them. They sha'n't escape us this time."[97]

Shrewdly, Cavaignac aimed to avoid a guerrilla war against numerous elusive bands of workers. In such fighting, in the capital's intricate streets and alleys, even his well-disciplined troops would dearly have been at a disadvantage. Rather, he preferred to corral as many of the insurgents as he could into fixed positions that could be easily encircled and fight them like one field army opposing another, striking annihilating blows against a relatively small number of well-defended positions.

Despite their desperation, the insurgents behaved with exemplary decency, respecting the well-being and property of people whose neighborhoods they occupied. They committed no serious crimes; even jewelry shops remained untouched, and Victor Hugo could report that although his house was searched, probably for arms and ammunition, all his personal belongings remained in place, including his manuscript for *Les Miserables.* The workers were eager to show that they were not the riff-raff that their enemies had depicted them as being. They continued to collect the usual taxes at the city's tollgates, permit anyone to use the semaphore telegraph (as long as they did not report on the battle), and even set free a number of prisoners, who were duly permitted to cover their uniforms with workmen's *blouses.*

THE FOUR DAYS

At around ten o'clock on Friday morning, June 23, Cavaignac finally put his troops into action, starting a conflict that lasted until Monday, June 26, when the last barricade in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine was taken. For much of that time, the insurgents held their own, with astonishing boldness, against substantially larger and better-equipped military forces. Barricades were taken and retaken as the fighting surged and ebbed furiously in the squares, boulevards, and narrow streets.

As described by the novelist and Assembly member Victor Hugo, the first skirmish took place at a barricade near the Porte Saint-Denis. When the loyalist National Guards ordered its defenders to surrender, the barricade fighters responded by opening fire, killing thirty Guards. Soon "a young woman, beautiful, disheveled, and terrible" climbed to the top of the barricade.

> The girl, who was a woman of the streets, hoisted her skirts up to her waist and yelled at the National Guards, "Cowards, fire, if you dare, at the belly of a woman."

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[97] Tocqueville, *Recollections,* p. 192.

A volley of fire hurled the unfortunate creature down. She gave a loud scream and fell. Immediately, a second woman appeared. This one was younger and lovelier still, little more than a child, seventeen at most She too was a woman of the streets. Like the other she showed her stomach and screamed, "Fire brigands!" They fired and she fell, riddled with bullets, on the body of the first.[98]

The novelist's judgment that the women were prostitutes may well have been the product of a middle-class prejudice, but his account decidedly reveals the incredible courage and bravery of the insurgents.

To reconquer the city, Cavaignac divided his forces into three columns, sending the first and largest, under the command of General Lamoriciere, into the heart of the insurgent center, between the Faubourg Poissoniere and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. It made slow progress and encountered such furious resistance that at least part of the column had to retreat. The second column, under General Bedeau, was dispatched to relieve the troops at the Hotel de Ville, which the insurgents had nearly succeeded in capturing. The third, commanded by General Damesme, was ordered into the Left Bank to march toward the Pantheon and take the twelfth *arrondissement.*

Surrounded by mazes of barricades, the three columns were soon isolated from each other, easy prey to insurgent sniper fire. As the city settled down to a relatively quiet night, the commanders were obliged to hold a council of war to reassess their strategy, while the insurgents repaired existing barricades and built new ones.

On the second day, Saturday, the fighting was bloody and inconclusive but generally went even better for the insurgents than it had the day before. The government's attempts to take the northern districts met with more failures than successes. The insurgents captured the local city halls *(mairies)* of the eighth and ninth *arrondissements,* coming within striking distance of the Hotel de Ville. Indeed, after expelling the eighth *arrondissement* mayor, the seemingly ubiquitous Victor Hugo, they set up a revolutionary government in its place. Here the able leadership of Leon Lacollonge, the president of the club named *L'Organisation du travail* and editor of its eponymous newspaper, was essential, organizing the efforts of the members of the Club des Antonins. The revolutionary government issued a manifesto calling for a "social and democratic Republic; Free association of Labour, aided by the State; the impeachment of the Representatives of the People and of the ministers, ... the immediate arrest of the Executive Commission," and "the removal of troops from Paris."[99] Only the Mobile Guards, on the Left Bank in the Pantheon area, made significant progress for the government Their political loyalties were no longer indeterminate—they fought eagerly on behalf of the generals. Meanwhile the Assembly used the uncertain military situation—what it called a "state of siege"—to unseat Lamartine and the rest of the Pentarchy and to make Cavaignac dictator, endowing him with extraordinary powers to crush the insurrection.

The third day, Sunday, started out badly for the government troops once again, when Lamoriciere's forces failed to make any advances against the insurgents in the northern sector. Nor could the army, at first, dislodge the insurgents from the eighth *arrondissement.* But by the late

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[98] Victor Hugo, *Choses vues* (Paris, 1918), quoted in Georges Duveau, *1848: The Making of a Revolution,* trans. Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 134.

[99] J.-J. Guillet, "On Behalf of the Citizens on Guard at the Maine of the 8th *Arrondissement"* (n.d.), Document 96a in *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* ed. Postgate, p. 214.

afternoon, the captured *mairie* had fallen to regular army troops, and the tide of battle turned against the insurgents. In vigorous fighting supported by artillery, government forces overcame the barricades in nearly every district, leaving only the Bastille and the Place du Trone in insurgent hands. Meanwhile, on Sunday night, eager National Guards from the provinces flocked into Paris in great numbers. (Apart from Marseilles, most other French cities, including Lyon, remained quiet during the June insurrection.) As a result of the railroads, Tocqueville notes, it was possible to bring rural Guards—mainly young nobles, shopkeepers, and peasants—from distances of about a 150 miles to the capital only a day after the fighting had begun. By Monday morning, June 26, the defeat of the insurrection was imminent Troops were closing in on the Place de Bastille and the Place du Trone, while insurgent resistance in other pockets of the city had become sporadic. At some barricades the insurgents fought to the last but most of the remaining workers, owing pardy to spurious promises by the army of an honorable surrender, laid down their muskets. The Faubourg Saint-Antoine was the last holdout, but finally it too surrendered.

Apart from General Bedeau, who eamesdy tried to negotiate an honorable surrender with the insurgents, and General Duvivier, who expressed genuine compassion for the material plight of the workers as he lay dying from his wounds, there is no evidence that the bourgeois National Guard or the Mobile Guard felt any sympathy for their opponents. The regular soldiers, by contrast, seem to have fought with no strong conviction, and in all likelihood some individual Guards acted with a modicum of decency toward their insurgent captives. But the nearly crazed young Mobile Guards killed workers as wantonly as they had risked their lives in battle. To these "children" of the working class, a battle was a festival, and they killed members of their own class without remorse.

The behavior of the Mobile Guards has always been a puzzle to historians of the Revolution. Marx dismissed them as members of the lumpenproletariat, whose services were for sale to any purchaser, but this view, as recent research has shown, can no longer be supported. In fact, their occupational background closely parallels that of Parisian workers as a whole. Recruited from the February barricades, their working-class identity seems to have been dissolved into a stricdy military identity, reinforced by decent pay, strict training, isolation, and above all a strong *esprit de corps.* By June, their sense of belonging was to a corps rather than to a class. As for their ardor, it is perhaps more explicable by their youth—their average age was about twenty-one—than by any social or political convictions.

By contrast the National Guards who fought for the government functioned as the armed force of a class—specifically, merchants, retailers, professionals, some artisans, and outright capitalists—for whom the defeat of the insurgents would be a victory over "communism." Unlike the Mobile Guard units, however, a number of National Guard units, especially from the eastern sector of Paris, did defect to the insurgents, while others were politically ambivalent and therefore untrustworthy in the eyes of their officers.

The workers who fought on the barricades were nothing if not bold. They certainly numbered no more than 50,000—that is to say, barely a quarter of the more than 200,000 male workers in Paris. Against them were arrayed at least an equal or greater number of well-trained and well-equipped troops of all kinds, supported by devastating artillery, with provincial forces flowing into the capital to support them. In fact, the willingness of these forces to slaughter as many of the defeated Parisian workers as they could is a shocking testimony to the provincial hatred of Paris—or to rural idiocy.

Pardy as a result of the provincial infusion, the June insurrection became one of the bloodiest of all Parisian *journees.* Statistics on the number of insurgents who were killed vary widely. Some claim that only 1500 workers were killed in all, including about 150 insurgent prisoners. But contemporary accounts make this overall figure difficult to accept. The most plausible toll comes from Georges Duveau:

> Only four or five hundred of the rebels appear to have perished on the barricades, but more than three thousand were massacred by the soldiers of the *garde mobile* and the regular army after the fighting was over. In all, 11,671 persons were arrested. A few of these were executed and some were sentenced to forced labor, but by far the most common penalty was deportation [to Algeria].[100]

Alexander Herzen, the famous Russian revolutionary, witnessed the June uprising with his family, noting the brutality of the counterrevolution in his diary;

> On the evening of the 26th of June, after the victory of the Nationale over Paris, we heard shots being fired at short regular intervals... We glanced at one another, all our faces were livid... "They are shooting prisoners," we said with one voice, and turned away from one another. 1 pressed my forehead against the window-pane. Such moments provoke ten years of hatred, a lifetime of revenge: woe to him who *forgives at such moments!*[101]

And according to Louis Blanc:

> Prisoners were being shot in the plain of Grenelle, at the Montparnasse Cemetery, in the racecourse of Montmartre. Prisoners were being shot in the Place du Pantheon. Prisoners were being shot at the Cloister of St. Benedict and in the court of the Hotel de Cluny. A wounded rebel was stretched on a bed of straw. Some monsters fired it and burnt the dying man alive.[102]

The Luxembourg Gardens had to be dosed until rain could wash away the blood of the unknown number of prisoners who had been executed there.

THE AFTERMATH OF JUNE

Histories of 1848, the most revolutionary year of the entire nineteenth century, usually recount, in addition to the events in Paris, the revolutionary upheavals that occurred in Hungary, Austria, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere in Europe. But it was above all in France that the revolution's aims went far beyond the nationalistic goals that marked other insurgencies, as a revolution made in the name of universal principles. In this sense the June insurrection in Paris marks both the beginning of the revolutionary year and its finale.

Even after the June uprising, however, insurgencies of workers and even peasants continued in other parts of France for a few more years. The most important urban working-class uprising of 1849 occurred in Lyon, which was the silk-producing center of Europe.

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[100] Duveau, *Making of a Revolution,* p. 156.
[101] Herzen, My *Past and Thoughts,* vol. 4, pp. 4–5.
[102] Louis Blanc, untitled excerpt, Document 100 in *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* ed. Postgate, p. 216.

Predominandy artisanal in its production methods, Lyon had begun to seriously feel the impact of commercial capitalism almost a century earlier, when the silk trade had been taken over by merchants who distributed jobs and bought the produce of master craftsmen and journeymen—many of whom yearned for the guild-type corporate society that had existed before the Great Revolution. In 1831, the silk-weaving artisans, or *canuts,* rose in armed conflict to gain a better *tarif,* or contract, from the merchants. For a brief time they actually took control of the city, under red and black flags—which made their insurrection a memorable event in the history of revolutionary symbols. Their use of the word *mutuellisme* to denote the associative disposition of society that they preferred made their insurrection a memorable event in the history of anarchist thought as well, since Proudhon appears to have picked up the word from them during his brief stay in the city in 1843–44 to describe his own essentially contractual vision of a just society.

In 1834, the Lyon *canuts* rose once again—this time led mainly by the journeymen rather than the master weavers—to gain better working conditions both from the merchants and from their employers. This short-lived revolt probably inspired a republican uprising in Paris in the same year. In 1848, however, although the silk workers were the target of considerable socialistic and communistic propaganda, the June insurrection in Paris did not provoke a corresponding uprising in Lyon. Whatever revolutionary sympathy the *canuts* might have felt for their Parisian fellow workers was undermined by the local government's carrot-and-stick policy of permitting the clubs to continue to meet while blanketing the city with troops—and the clubists were not eager to suffer the repression inflicted upon their counterparts in Paris. In the main, the preoccupation of many *canuts* with harmless cooperatives absorbed much of their energy, leaving the city's political sphere in the hands of moderates and outright reactionaries.

Meanwhile, in the Paris of June 1848, once the smoke and debris had been cleared away and the shattered bodies removed from the barricades, the Revolution began a journey backward, from its "red" peaks, over its republican plain, and ultimately back down toward its monarchical swamp, made even more odious by the presence of a Bonapartist adventurer whose "repulsive face" (in Marx's words) was covered with the "iron mask" of the original emperor.

General Cavaignac's brief dictatorship—technically a "state of siege"— remained in force all summer, until October 29. In July a decree was issued permitting clubs to meet—but only under conditions that prevented any significant political activity. Any club that wished to meet had to provide the police with a "declaration" of its intention twenty-four hours in advance. Club members could engage in discussions only under the surveillance of "a judicial or administrative official"—that is, the police—and they had to desist from talking about "any proposition contrary to public order or public morality." After the meeting the club had to hand over to the police a summary of the meeting's actions and discussions and provide a list of the members in attendance. It also had to provide "reports, addresses and all other communications between clubs." The organization of "secret societies," of course, was stricdy forbidden.[103] The decree, in fact, struck at the very heart of one of the workers' most basic demands: the right to form associations. Revolutionary organizers were now obliged to go underground, where they had so often been since the Bourbon Restoration.

Additionally, Cavaignac required newspapers, in order to continue publishing, to deposit caution money *(cautionnement)* to guarantee their future "good conduct"—that is, to guarantee that they would avoid publishing politically offensive articles, such as those that discussed a "social

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[103] "Decree of 28 July 1848," in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, pp. 119–20.

republic" or criticized the government This was a revival of Louis-Philippe's hated policy of suppressing dissident literature. In 1848 the *cautionnements* imposed were so high (up to 24,000 francs) that only papers like the conservative *Constitutionnel* could afford to pay. Finally, the ten-hour day was raised to twelve hours, returning the workers to the workday that existed before the February barricades. As the reactionary *Memorial bordelais* put it, "France needs moral order and material order, and any force determined to provide her with both is entitled to the sympathy and collaboration of right-thinking men."[104] The Party of Order had openly emerged, not as an organization but as a coalition of Legitimists, Orleanists, and complete reactionaries—deputies and notables who would not have dared breathe a word about their views three months earlier.

In opposition there developed a coalition of diverse leftists, notably socialists and radical republicans who shifted increasingly to the left, as the "state of seige" became more repressive. Their numbers included the left-republican representatives in the Assembly, as well as militants who inhabited what was once the thriving club scene and who remained in the much-curtailed clubs and societies. They were collectively known as *democ-socs,* for democratic socialists, or interchangeably as Montagnards. Their political program centered on demands for a social as well as democratic republic. "The political problem is no longer the problem of the future," even *La Reforme*—the liberal republican newspaper having moved to the left—declared in August, "A new problem has come to the fore, and democracy has had to emblazon its banner with the words: 'The democratic and social Republic.' "[105] Despite the "caution" laws, the *democ-socs* managed to generate a huge amount of propaganda—political pamphlets, brochures, satirical engravings—with which they flooded the provinces, shipping it out by any means they could, including the sending of agitators to small towns and villages in all parts of France.

Moreover, despite the repression of strikes and the working-class political activity that followed the June insurrection—or perhaps because of it—the militant French workers took refuge in associationism. Producers' associations and various mutual aid and cooperative activities were still legally permitted as economic and commercial enterprises, and they now proliferated in Paris and nearly all the cities of France. The fortunes of these associations changed with the shifting political moods of the Constituent Assembly: a Union of Associations was established in November 1849, embracing 104 member associations, that planned to provide credit and open channels for commercial exchange between its component entities. In May 1850, before the Union could carry out its plan to issue bonds toward these ends, a panicked government raided its headquarters, jailed its leaders, and made it illegal.

In Paris alone, an estimated 300 workers' associations of various kinds emerged, in 120 trades with about 50,000 people. A typical association was open to any member of a trade who could make a nominal investment in its capital funds and was guided by the principles that had been oudined by Buchez and the producers' cooperatives represented in the Luxembourg Labor Assembly.

In the years that followed, these associations failed to establish a cooperative and egalitarian system. More often than not, associations that could compete successfully with privately owned enterprises were those that became capitalistic themselves. Even those with the best intentions had to join the capitalist system as collective capitalistic enterprises, if only to remain viable. One of the most successful such enterprises was the association established by a group of Parisian

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[104] *Memorial bordelais,* July 18, 1848, in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 122.
[105] La *Reforme,* August 21, 1848, in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 126.

masons in 1848, with shares valued at fifty-five francs apiece, and with visions of freeing all construction workers from wage labor. By 1852 these visions were all but dead, but the association was so successful economically that the value of its shares had soared to 3,000 francs each, and it finally closed its doors to new members. To meet the needs of its expanding operations, it hired 1,600 wage earners. To complete its capitalistic turn, during the masons' strike of 1866, it took the side of the employers against the strikers.

Another problem that producers' associations faced were the difficulties arising from the conditions of dire material scarcity in which they existed. Mismanagement, disputes over distributions of earnings, desultory attitudes toward work obligations, and even theft became cardinal problems in keeping the associations alive. As Bernard Moss observes:

> For most associations life was hard and short. Lacking credit and customers, many were also beset with administrative problems and disputes. Elected managers did not always possess the requisite managerial and commercial skills. Internal disputes over managerial authority and the distribution of earnings often led to the dismissal of managers and exclusion and resignation of members. [Of those for which there are records], most remained marginal operations, comprising fewer members in 1851 than when they began... Of forty-nine trades that started associations in 1849, only twenty-six had them in 1851. Since new ones were constandy being created, there were still 200 in that year.[106]

Understandably, workers in producers' associations did not expect to receive the low wages that masters and capitalists typically paid; nor was the working class in an economic position to purchase the consumer goods produced by the associations, when associations tried to equalize the incomes of their members by raising their prices. No amount of ethical commitment or working-class solidarity could override the rumblings of empty stomachs.

But, in the end, it was the tugging and pushing of market forces which worked against the socialistic aspirations of the producers' associations, cooperatives, mutual aid societies, workers' credit institutions, and the like, and made it impossible for them to succeed in ending competition or replacing the hard core of the capitalist entrepreneurial and market system with a cooperative and egalitarian one, let alone with their vision of a socialistic society. The most the associations could finally hope to accomplish was to ease the working conditions of their artisan members, establishing federations of producers' associations and reasonably endowed credit institutions through which the more successful enterprises could assist those in difficulty. But even this was something the government was not prepared to let them do on a large scale. Louis Bonaparte suppressed most workers' associations when he became emperor, although in the 1860s the empire began to encourage a number of them (often with the aid of the more tepid Proudhonists). During the 1860s, too, to curry favor with the workers, even Orleanists, not to be outdone by Bonapartists and moderate republicans, established their own cooperative-oriented bank. Clearly, the state had nothing to fear from the assodationist movement; however large and mutualistic they became, associations could never have supplanted the capitalist and market system that was gaining increasing command over the French economy. Blanc's assodationist vision could have led

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[106] Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor* Movement, *1830–1914: The* Socialism *of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 45–6.

only to a slowed entry of the industrial system into France and a mitigation of its worst abuses. But in no sense could it have replaced the capitalist system in France.

"THE LITTLE NAPOLEON"

In September a by-election finally injected a Bonaparte into the Assembly where, with appropriate modesty, he betrayed no inkling of any aspirations to greater power. *"Napoleon le petit"* ("the little Napoleon," as Victor Hugo called him) was the son of Napoleon's brother, Louis Bonaparte. Following the early death of Napoleon's own son, Louis Napoleon had become head of the Bonaparte family, and with it he inherited all the Napoleonic pretensions that came with the name. His youth had been spent in Switzerland and Germany— like all Bonaparte notables, he spoke French with a foreign accent—after which he drifted to Italy and then France, where a comic attempt at insurrection obliged him to seek exile in the United States and England The "prince," as he was known to his supporters, returned to France as a "citizen" rather than as a pretender to the throne, and his ability to hold his tongue, to listen politely, and to behave almost demurely earned him support among the more guileless deputies of the Assembly, including Hugo and Proudhon. Having been in exile during the most hectic events of 1848, including the June Days, Louis—unlike the liberals who had so abjectly failed the workers—appeared untarnished and almost virginal politically. When it became apparent that his presence as an Assembly representative was an embarrassment to nearly all factions in the government, he politely withdrew from the Constituent Assembly and seemed to hold his peace, although no one could forget that he was waiting in the wings.

Prince Louis prudently steered a course between all of the contending classes in France—a policy that was to be called Bonapartism—concentrating his efforts on restoring the Bonaparte dynasty and its fortunes. Indeed, the essence of his success was his ability to seem to be everything to everybody. To the workers, who began to vote for him in droves, he professed an interest in socialism, even a willingness to make the rich pay the expenses of the government. To the bourgeoisie and notables, he promised order and an intention to discipline the masses, particularly the working class. As for the peasants, they associated him with the original Napoleon, who had consolidated the gains of the Great Revolution on their behalf against feudal exactions. In fact, the forty-five-centime tax that had so infuriated the peasantry encouraged a revival of the mystique of *Napoleon le grand,* who had once provided the French with *la gloire,* internal stability, and decisive if authoritarian leadership. The original Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz was remembered far more vividly than the terrible losses suffered by the Grand Army in its retreat from Moscow.

Meanwhile the Constituent Assembly had written a constitution for the tom and mutilated nation, which it finally proclaimed on November 21, 1848. It established the office of president, but in an effort to fend off the possible reemergence of monarchy, it stipulated that the president could not be reelected after the expiration of his single four-year term. It also created a single-chamber Legislative Assembly that, like the president, was to be elected by universal adult male suffrage. Nearly everyone could see that the constitution would inevitably self-destruct, since the authors had failed to establish any way in which the two branches of government could possibly adjudicate their differences in the event of a serious clash of authority.

Finally, on December 10, 1848, the nation went to the polls to elect the officials to inhabit this governmental structure—and the vast majority of Frenchmen seemed to want to take their

revenge on the nearly moribund Second Republic. Of the three men of national stature who ran for the presidency, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte received 5.5 million votes out of 7.5 cast His most important opponent, General Cavaignac, the darling of the moderate republicans, received only 1.5 million, and Lamartine, a humiliating 18,000. A Bonaparte— Louis Napoleon—was now president of the French Republic.

In the meantime, the Left was still an active presence in France. In anticipation of elections for Assembly representatives in May 1849, the Montagnards and *democ-socs* went to work in earnest, holding banquets, creating electoral alliances, and offering joint candidacies for the Assembly. The country was sharply polarized politically. As *Le National* summarized it: "Today there are only two parties left in Europe—the Party of Revolution and the party of counter-Revolution... The days for middle-of-the-road policies and hesitation have passed."[107] Although die May election results packed the Palais Bourbon with monarchists—nearly two-thirds of them Legitimists—it also constituted a victory for the Left by returning 150 Montagnard representatives, a proportion that surpassed that of the moderates. The center was beginning to wither away, its constituents drifting to the Right or to the Left—a characteristic feature of a growing political crisis.

Meanwhile in Rome, a revolutionary republic, inspired by the French example, had emerged in February 1849, as a result of what was "the nearest thing to a social revolution in 1848 outside France." Although the republic was presided over by the romantic republican nationalist Mazzini, it made social advances as well, particularly weakening the power of the Church; the carriages of cardinals, whose red robes were said to be the blood of the poor, were overturned and set ablaze, the offices of the Holy Inquisition were converted to housing for the poor, and most significantly, some of the landholdings of the Church were confiscated and distributed to the peasants as leaseholds. "Rome and Venice," says Robertson, "were the only places in Europe that dared to carry their revolutions to the very limit set by France."[108]

The Pope, horrified by this state of affairs, called upon Catholic France for assistance, and Louis Napoleon, who was courting the support of the Church and of French Catholics generally, was only too happy to come to his aid. Five months after the declaration of the Roman Republic, on April 30, he sent a French expeditionary force south to Rome, there to crush the insurgency.

Even the moderate Republicans in the Assembly exploded at this outrage. This use of military force was a violation not only of the Assembly's wishes but of the constitution itself, which obliged the president to gain the Assembly's consent before using the army abroad. On June 11, Ledru-Rollin—the last prominent, ostensibly republican leader in France—tried to bring a bill of impeachment against the president and his ministers. The next day the majority Party of Order placidly rejected this defense of its own constitutional power, in what can only have been an act of provocation against the Left The Montagnards fell for it and stormed out of the Assembly in petulant protest—a fatal tactic that left the government entirely in the hands of the Left's opponents in the midst of a major crisis.

Two days later the Montagnards proclaimed that the government was "outside the Constitution," and on June 13 they organized a peaceful demonstration to protest the Roman expedition. Thirty thousand people participated, mainly unarmed National Guards, as well as middle-class republicans and members of the workers' secret societies, marching collectively to the cry of

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[107] *Le Nationale,* May 22, 1849, in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 137.
[108] Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848,* pp. 365, 367.

"Long live the Constitution!" But awaiting the demonstrators at the end of the Rue de la Paix were the dragoons and chasseurs of General Changamier, who swiftly scattered the crowd into the side streets. The more resolute Montagnards and workers tried to make an armed stand at the Museum of Arts and Trades, but it collapsed miserably when the National Guard failed to support them. Where the workers in the June 1848 insurrection had called for the "organization of work" under the slogan "bread or lead"— that is, for basic demands of the working class—the demonstration of June 1849 raised the formal republican demands of the middle classes. Or as Marx observed: "If June 23, 1848, was the insurrection of the revolutionary proletariat, June 13, 1849, was the insurrection of the democratic petty bourgeois, each of these two insurrections being the *classically pure* expression of the class which had been its vehicle."[109] It marked the definitive defeat of the Left in French politics for more than a decade. The government used the occasion to declare a state of siege, pass a new law that banned the clubs completely, and tighten the press laws still further, until no paper more radical than Le *National* could appear. As repression dragged the Revolution backward, the "leaders" of the June 13 demonstration were tried, and the jails were filled with Montagnards and real or suspected socialists.

When news of the events in Paris reached Lyon, together with the news that the French army had been used against the Roman republicans, insurgency once again stirred the city. The Lyonnais rose in insurrection on June 14, 1849, erecting barricades and raiding gun shops, but the well-organized line troops of the government and particularly their artillery put an end to the uprising in only two days. As a historian of the revolt observes:

> The carrot-and-stick approach of encouraging economic dependence and discouraging political opposition, initiated under the Second Republic and elaborated under the Second Empire [of Louis Bonaparte], seemed to have extinguished the radical movement of Lyon.[110]

The prince-president now made a tour of the provinces, drumming up support for his administration and, above all, himself, while the Legislative Assembly, completely controlled by Party of Order, prepared to restrict the franchise. On May 31, 1850, the Assembly disenfranchised some three million voters, mainly mobile workers who would have voted for the *democ-socs,* by requiring evidence of a three-year residence in a given electoral constituency. It also enacted an educational "reform," proposed by the overzealous Falloux, that granted considerable power to the Church in the schools, while adherents of the prince-president circulated petitions to allow him to run for a second presidential term, again in flat violation of the constitution.

Bonaparte had garnered wide popular support among the peasants, and he had even lured many workers into his camp by calling for a return of exiled June insurgents and a restoration of universal suffrage. So confident was he of popular support that he now felt that he could dissolve the Assembly. On the fateful night of December 1,1851, assured of the army's aid and the quiescence of the Parisian workers, he arrested the major Assembly leaders and ordered the military to occupy the Palais Bourbon. In a proclamation the next day, December 2, justifying this coup d'etat, he condemned the Assembly for being "a hot-bed of sedition," for "forging weapons for civil war," indeed, for "making a bid for the power which I wield directly by virtue of the people's

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[109] Marx, *Class Struggles in France,* p. 106.

[110] Mary Lynn Steward-McDougall, The *Artisan Republic: Revolution, Reaction, and Resistance in Lyon, 1848–1851* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1984), p. 154.

will."[111] Louis Bonaparte, in effect, accused the Assembly of damaging the very constitution that he himself was in the process of jettisoning.

Police accounts report that, amid cries of "To arms!" barricades went up in the Rue Rambuteau, at the intersection of the Rue Saint-Denis and the Rue Saint-Martin. But by December 4, the army could laconically report: "Paris is quiet. The barricades that were erected last night were removed without difficulty."[112] A staff captain of the National Guard tried to account for the lack of resistance to the coup:

the unpopularity of the chamber, the surprise and the remarkable way the arrests were timed to take place at the same moment—the attitude of the army, too, perhaps—meant that in the end nothing very nasty happened... You know, moreover, that those gentlemen [the deputies] were arrested without any show of resistance Among the workers—indifference, almost approbation.[113]

Even Lyon, which had risen on March 13 of the previous year, made virtually no effort to resist the prince-president's coup, and reports from other provincial cities suggest that they had been awaiting news of resistance in Paris before undertaking it themselves.

It was mainly in more remote southern areas, such as Provence, that serious resistance to the coup occurred. Ever since June 1848, Montagnard and *democ- soc* agitators had been working hard to loosen the grasp of extreme conservatism on the French peasants. They succeeded, to a great extent, fulfilling Blanqui's hopes from the spring of 1848 that the peasants, given enough time, could become receptive to the new political ideas. In fact, they had learned about the democratic-socialist ideas that had been popular in the Parisian neighborhoods and clubs of 1848, and they proved to be even more responsive than the Parisian workers could have expected. Peasants in about thirteen departments, particularly in southern and central France, actually took up arms in support of the Republic against Bonaparte and embattled themselves with the superior forces of the government.

But the regime struck back swiftly and effectively: approximately 27,000 people were arrested or prosecuted in *absentia,* of whom some 15,000 were sentenced to imprisonment and 9,000 deported. Many of the workers' associations, including trade unions, were closed down. After two plebiscites (on December 21, 1851, and November 21, 1852) staged by *Napoleon le petit,* France became an empire, if nothing else than in name, and Louis Napoleon Bonaparte an emperor. In much of France, the events of 1848–49 faded from collective memory, opening two decades of mediocrity and banality in French history.

Chapter 29. Reaction and Revival

Even as Louis Napoleon brought the Revolution of 1848 to a definitive end in France, the high hopes that swept over Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, and even the Slavic countries under Turkish and Austrian rule were smothered by counterrevolution and the triumph of reaction. Dreams of a unified Germany and Italy, a sovereign Hungary, a constitutional monarchy in Austria, and independent Czech, Slovak, and south Slav nations were effaced by a renewal of authoritarian rule, press censorship, increased surveillance, the arrest of countless nationalists

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[111] "Proclamation by the President of the Republic" (December 2, 1851), in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 154.

[112] "Report from the Armee de Paris" (December 4, 1851), in *1848* in *France,* ed. Price, p. 157.

[113] Raymond de Breda, letter to General Pelissier (December 14, 1851), in *1848 in France,* ed. Price, p. 157.

and republicans, and the fading of social ideals. Throughout the 1850s the French, Prussian, Austrian, and Russian governments unrelentingly persecuted their domestic radicals, suppressing their writings and lectures, censoring their press, and honeycombing their meetings with police and spies when they did not execute, jail, or exile them. The dark cloud of repression settled over the continent, instilling listlessness in the masses and despair among their leaders.

Blanqui, convicted for his participation in the May 15 *joume'e,* spent ten years in prison, often under unbearable conditions. Cooped up with his rival Barbes in the penitentiary of Belle-Ue-en-Mer, his futile attempts at escape from their mutual harassment resulted in transfers to even more punitive dungeons. A forgiving Louis Napoleon finally pardoned the innocuous if adventuristic Barbes and allowed him to return to his comfortable life on his southern estate. But Blanqui himself remained in debilitating confinement until 1859.

As for Proudhon, he had not supported the June insurrection. But in the Assembly, of which he was still a member, he rallied to the defense of the insurgents, making fiery speeches on their behalf and attacking the regime in his newspaper *Le Peuple,* which had acquired an immense readership among the working class for its militancy. When he published an article accusing Louis Napoleon of plotting to enslave the people of France, both Le *Peuple* and his other paper, Le R*epresentant du peuple,* were suppressed, and he was expelled from the Assembly. Faced with arrest, Proudhon fled to Belgium but was detected upon his return to Paris and sentenced to prison for three years, a term that he served out in various jails. There, in contrast to Blanqui, he spent

> some of the best years of his life. French political prisoners in that happy age underwent a mild confinement. Proudhon was well-housed and well-fed; he could write, study, and receive his friends; he was even allowed to go out of his prison once a week to look after his affairs.[114]

Other revolutionists fled to England, Switzerland, or the United States. Cabet had returned to his utopian experiment in the United States even before the June insurrection; he died there, unknown, and was soon forgotten even in the land of his birth. Louis Blanc fled to England and became increasingly reformist; when he returned to France, upon on the overthrow of Napoleon III in 1870, he would participate in the National Assembly and oppose the Paris Commune of 1871. When Blanqui, by contrast, was released from prison in 1859, he immediately renewed his conspiratorial activities against the Second Empire; jailed again in 1861, he escaped from a prison hospital four years later and took refuge in Belgium.

Nothing so clearly conjures up the reactionary nightmare that descended on Europe in the 1850s than the treatment of Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian aristocrat-turned-revolutionary who became one of the most important anarchist leaders of the century. Owing to his violent rhetoric and behavior Bakunin had earned the bitter acrimony of Tsar Nicholas I, the spearhead of reaction in Europe. Although the Russian anarchist was by no means a regicide, his impassioned words and his collectivist views separated him markedly from the basically pacifistic and individualistic Proudhon, despite his encomiums to the Frenchman, whose anti-authoritarian ideas remained a lifelong inspiration to him

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[114] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: World Publishing Co, 1962), p. 130. Woodcock's reference to "that happy age" is quite inaccurate. Many French prisoners, including Blanqui, were treated very harshly and either became seriously ill or died as a result of their suffering.

But following an abortive uprising in Dresden in March 1849, in which he participated with Richard Wagner, Bakunin was captured by Saxon authorities and imprisoned for a year. The Saxons sentenced him to death, only to issue a reprieve so that he could be handed over to the Austrians, who in turn chained him to a dungeon wall for eleven months before sentencing him once again to death. Finally they commuted his sentence at the request of the tsar, and he was sent back to Russia, where Nicholas immured him in the recesses of the dreaded Peter and Paul Fortress, in St Petersburg. Bakunin languished in the fortress for six years, often under harsh conditions, neglected and plagued by scurvy, his isolation broken only by occasional visits from members of his family. With the advent of a more enlightened tsar, Alexander II, he was sent into exile in Siberia, where he remained for still another four years, after which he escaped, making his way back to Europe by crossing the Pacific Ocean to North America and then journeying eastward to London.

EXILE IN LONDON

London had become the home of many exiles, who gravitated toward the English capital because of the freedom England offered to refugees from the counterrevolutionary governments on the continent. Nevertheless, the exiles—Prussian, French, Russian, and Austrian—were all the targets of continental police spies, who infiltrated their radical groups and reported on them in detail to their respective governments. These governments, in turn, tried to persuade the British home secretary to crack down on the exiles. They embroidered their reports with lurid plots, accusing some exiles of planning to assassinate Queen Victoria and, more absurdly, all the crowned heads of Europe. In 1850 the Austrian ambassador warned the home secretary that "the members of the Communist League, whose leaders were Marx, Engels, Bauer, and Wolff, discussed even regicide," while the next year the Prussian interior minister pressed the home secretary to take "decisive measures against the chief revolutionaries known by name" and transport them to the colonies. Happily for the exiles, the British authorities usually ignored these police accounts. As David McClellan notes in his biography of Marx, the Austrian ambassador

> got the reply: "under our laws, mere discussion of regicide, so long as it does not concern the Queen of England and so long as there is no definite plan, does not constitute sufficient grounds for the arrest of the conspirators". The most the Home Office was prepared to do in answer to these demands was to give financial assistance to those refugees willing to emigrate to the United States.[115]

Marx himself had by no means played a radical role in the German Revolution of 1848–49. Enamored of his "stages" theory of revolution, he had decided that the liberal German bourgeoisie, struggling to assert its supremacy over the feudal classes of the ancien regime, must take the lead in the unfolding revolutionary events. According to this theory, the bourgeoisie had to carry out its own revolution and establish a highly centralized republic, free of all feudal encumbrances, subdivisions, and obstacles to free trade and nationhood, before the workers could hope to achieve their own socialist goals.

Although Marx's writings from the 1840s had often spoken of the need for the workers to create their own revolutionary parties, independently of the bourgeoisie, during the 1848–49

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[115] David McClellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 231.

revolutions he expressly advised them to subordinate their demands to those of bourgeois parties. The working class, he felt, was obliged to render critical support to the creation of a middle-class republic and assist the bourgeoisie in pushing the revolution toward the goal of a unified, industrialized, and commercially viable Germany. "The proletariat has not the right to isolate itself," he declared; "however hard it may seem, it must reject anything that could separate it from its allies."[116] Accordingly, he suppressed *The Communist Manifesto* (which he had co-written with Engels in 1847) and essentially disbanded the Communist League (which he had headed) in all but name. This policy of middle-class liberalism aroused the bitter opposition of the militant labor organizer Stephan Bom, who was trying to form an all-German workers' movement, into which, as P. H. Noyes tells us, "such revolutionary force as workers had in 1848 was channeled."[117]

In contrast to Bom, Marx was determined to have nothing to do with an independent workers' movement and instead became editor of the Neue *Rheinische Zeitung,* a Cologne newspaper (backed by Engels) that called itself "An Organ of Democracy" and dedicated itself to the emancipation of the bourgeoisie **from feudal exactions.** As editor, **Marx pandered** to the **middle-** class Cologne Democratic Union—the *Zeitung* even contained stock market reports—and established an editorial line that was hardly distinguishable from that of the liberal bourgeoisie, thoroughly antagonizing the workers of the city. Andreas Gottschalk, the militant leader of the Cologne Workers' Union, a socialist labor organization, excoriated the newspaper for being "in the hands of confirmed aristocrats, indeed the most dangerous of all, the aristocrats of money" and took Marx sharply to task for his essentially liberal editorial role.[118]

Upon the collapse of the German revolution in the spring of 1849, the newspaper was shut down, and Marx was expelled from Prussia. He and his family arrived in Paris in time for the June 13 demonstration against Louis Napoleon's breach of the constitution by invading Rome. But in August disappointment with Bonaparte's reactionary regime forced him to go to London, where he encountered various exile groups from the continent.

Soon after his arrival in London, however, Marx radically altered his policy. In an 1850 "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (which had been revived in 1849), he and Engels essentially adopted Gottschalk's view of the relations between the workers and the "democratic" bourgeoisie, calling for an independent workers' party that would establish its own "revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees and municipal councils or in the form of workers' clubs and workers' committees."[119] Moreover, in any revolutionary situation, the "Address" argued, the workers' party must be distrustful and strictly independent of its presumed bourgeois and peasant allies. At best, it could ally itself with sectors of the bourgeoisie, but only cautiously and only with the most radical sectors. Following the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, such an alliance, the "Address" warned, must come to an end. The working class must retain its independence and compete electorally for positions in the new republic, seeking the "strictest centralization" of governmental power

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[116] Marx quoted in Stephan Bom, *Erinnerungen,* p. 102, in ibid, p. 202.

[117] P. H. Noyes, *Organization and Revolution: Working-Class Associations in the German Revolutions of 1848–1849* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 123.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (March 1850); in Marx and Engels, *Collected* Works, vol. 10: Marx *and Engels 1849–1851* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), p. 283.1 am using the standard English title for this work, despite the title given it in *Collected Works,* "Address of the Central Authority to the League."

and opposing any federalist schemes that would increase "the autonomy and independence for the [local] communities."[120]

This document is one of the most important in the theoretical armamentarium of what in time would be called Marxism, and its strictures were to be followed—or argued about—by Marxian movements, well into the 1900s. Based on this "Address," Marxist parties were expressly prohibited from participating in the cabinets and ministries of bourgeois governments or from forming coalition governments even with radical middle-class parties. This emphasis on the independence of the workers' parties remained a guiding policy of Marxist parties, often leading, in periods of crisis that erupted after 1848, to bitter factional disputes and cleavages within the fold of international Marxism.

Notwithstanding popular wisdom to the contrary, Marx's exile in London was not devoted exclusively to theoretical work. Indeed, he could hardly avoid becoming drawn into the internecine warfare that went on among his fellow exiles of various nationalities. During the 1850s and 1860s they battled each other incessantly over issues both trivial and major. Thus, republicans fought with each other and with socialists; putschist Blanquists crossed swords with advocates of a mass workers' movement; proto-anarchists, or at least opponents of political action, denounced "authoritarian socialists," or those who believed in parliamentary activity; and even the parliamentarian wing of the various socialist groups was divided over how and to what degree legislative activity could produce basic social change. *Socialist* became an ecumenical word denoting everyone from social reformers to social revolutionaries; communist was increasingly identified with those who shared Marx's basically insurrectionary strategy; and *anarchist* encompassed the highly individualistic ideas of personal rebellion pioneered by Max Stirner and the Proudhonist mutualists.

Yet these conflicts should not be dismissed as mere wrangling. On the contrary, they were enormously important in sorting out major issues in revolutionary theory and strategy that had not been resolved—indeed, that could not have been resolved—during the heat of conflict The workers who reared barricades in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna in 1848 had often had no clear idea of their goals, the best methods to achieve them, the divergent interests of their middle-class "allies," or the nature of the social forces they opposed. A man like Lamartine had been able to gain acceptance among many Parisian workers because he could veil his moderate policies in radical rhetoric, while Blanqui's followers hurled themselves into putsches that were doomed to failure because they failed to properly assess either the mood of the workers or the power of their class opponents. If they were not to repeat the miscalculations that had cost them the revolutions of 1848, the exiles had to use the hiatus to resolve a multitude of such unsettled problems and issues. If there was to be a new revolutionary wave, as everyone expected, "exile wrangling" would be indispensable to its success.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE INDUSTRIAL PROLETARIAT

It was also necessary for the exiles to analyze the deep and lasting transformations that Europe was undergoing: the spread of the Industrial Revolution to the continent, the expansion of the market economy, the emergence of still more new technologies, and the rise of a new type of worker—the factory-based industrial proletarian.

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[120] Ibid, p. 285.

In England the Industrial Revolution, already under way for decades, catapulted her to global economic dominance, earning the country the appellation "the workshop of the world." But in France it would not become a considerable force until the 1880s. Even during the Second Empire, the country was still rooted in an artisanal and peasant economy. Under Louis Napoleon craft production still retained a firm hold on French manufacturing, especially since the country had uniquely positioned itself as the producer of fine handcrafted products, which necessitated the purposeful retention of traditional skills. But the authoritarian regime of Louis Napoleon, undisturbed by political factions, clubs, or legislatures, laid the basis for the Industrial Revolution by greatly expanding French markets and, above all, the country's transportation infrastructure. Steam engines, which in 1850 had numbered around 5,300, increased to 14,000 in 1860, and to 26,200 in 1869. Most important, French railway mileage soared between 1850 and 1870— from a mere 1,800 miles to 10,800. Before the establishment of the Second Empire, railroad lines had radiated out from Paris in only a few abbreviated trunk lines, but Louis Napoleon's twenty-year regime produced a full-fledged national railway system. Between 1852 and 1870 rail lines were extended to Bayonne on the Spanish frontier, Brest on the Atlantic, Cherbourg on the Channel coast, and Grenoble near Luxembourg—and the spaces between were filled with a complex network of subbranches.

The spread of railways would soon open up hitherto untouched areas of the country to economic development, enlarging the domestic market for consumer goods and undermining traditional ties between peasants, craftspeople, and notables by drawing them into the competitive cash economy. The growing industries in the north and northeast now had relatively easy access to remote parts of the countryside, whose inhabitants, in turn, could sell their produce in markets beyond their immediate locales. Trade was breaking down old provincial barriers between regions that had barely advanced beyond barter exchange, bringing them first handmade and later factory-made commodities. By lowering its own often-prohibitive tariffs in return for lowered tariffs abroad, France greatly increased its volume of foreign trade—the value of French imports and exports increased from 2.6 billion francs in 1851 to about 8 billion in 1869, further impelling French capitalists to acquire modem machinery and use new methods of industrial production. The Paris Exposition of 1855 was a celebration not only of much-coveted French luxury goods but of French machinery and technical know-how.

Germany, for its part, was beginning to see significant industrial development as well. Although the German industrial revolution did not fully take off until the 1870s, the Zollverein, a customs union initially comprising seventeen German states, had already been established in 1834, removing internal barriers to trade, while in 1831 the Prussian government established the Gewerbe-lnstitut (Trade Institute) to stimulate the development and use of new industrial methods.

Slowly, factory machinery was introduced into the Prussian economy, especially for the weaving of cotton, while the military, recognizing the enormous importance of railroad lines in times of war, strongly encouraged their construction as well. In 1840, only 340 miles of railway track had been laid in all of the German states; in 1850, the mileage reached 3,700, nearly doubled a decade later, and even exceeded that of France, at 12,237, in 1870. Strikingly, in the same year Germany also exceeded France in output of pig iron. Despite wave after wave of emigration to the New World, Germany's population was growing rapidly—from 35 million in 1849 to 41 million in 1871. Before the century was out, England and Germany would both be engaged in

mass production, and after the 1870s German industry would outstrip the British in chemicals, electrical goods, and sophisticated machines.

As the demand for steel increased—necessary as it was for engines, railroad tracks, and other metallic goods (including arms)—the inventions that made it more plentiful and less expensive followed apace. Coal and coke, available in huge quantities, had replaced charcoal early in the nineteenth century. In 1828 the Scottish inventor James B. Neilson built a blast furnace to spurt hot air over melting iron ore, which greatly economized the smelting process and increased the height of the small furnaces of the day to forty or even sixty feet. Traditional techniques for hammering the impurities out of pig iron were replaced by puddling, in which molten iron was stirred continually to produce a more malleable metal. Finally in 1856 Henry Bessemer patented the process that bears his name, in which cold air driven through molten iron rapidly removes the impurities. The cost of producing steel now dropped precipitously, as did the amount of time required to produce it: what had formerly taken ten days with charcoal and puddling now took only ten minutes with the Bessemer process. The price of steel plummeted to a fraction of its former cost, and the metal's availability made it a commonplace in industry, homes, and construction. At the same time the rural European landscape was changing into a modem industrial panorama, complete with tall chimneys belching smoke, and huge furnaces that produced a fiery glare against the dark polluted sky.

The technological changes of the second half of the century were comparable in every way to those of cloth production and transportation that had driven the earlier stages of the industrial revolution. But the advent of electric power and synthetic chemicals, as well as advances in mining, brought ruin to many artisans, who were in no position to compete with the cheap goods produced by capital-intensive factories. By midcentury, except in France, merchants and industrialists were vastly diminishing both the status and function of independent masters and journeymen, increasingly making them ancillary to the larger industrial economy.

Nor could the power of the autocrats of Europe—large or small, pernicious or gentle—withstand the onslaught of industrialization. News now traveled faster than ever, over electric wires and by mail trains; printing presses became ever more automatic, disseminating ideas in the form of cheap books and periodicals to all parts of Europe and the entire world. The bourgeoisie wanted free trade, open borders, "free" workers, and a major say in affairs of state. As geographical barriers began to crumble, so too did the ideological barriers of the parochial quasi-feudal past, and the obstacles to new goods and new ideas, opening the way to mass nationwide movements such as trade unions and political parties.

By the 1860s European autocrats found that they had to make concessions not only to the bourgeoisie but also to the working classes, as they awakened from the torpor of their defeats of the late 1840s and early 1850s. Working- class militancy indeed began to revive, although it took a different form from what it had been in the 1840s. The ideas of associationism—the formation of cooperatives of artisans in similar trades in order to control those trades—and mutualism—the provision of low-interest credit to small entrepreneurs, linked by nonexploitative contracts—were acquiring an expanded meaning. The very social context of labor was undergoing significant changes. Artisans, who had hitherto been pitted against small factories and merchants, could hardly expect individually to supplant the industrial bourgeoisie, with its ever-larger plants, its multitude of unskilled or partly skilled proletarians, and its vast economic resources. The word association increasingly came to include the unity of the working class *as a whole*—internationally as well as nationally, despite differences in craft and status groups. In addition to cooperatives

and trade associations, workers began to envision powerful "armies of labor," to use a phrase from proletarian socialism—namely, great unions, confederations, and even political parties that were sufficiently encompassing to confront the enormous power of the industrial bourgeoisie.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

Among the monarchs of continental Europe, none seems to have more acutely sensed that changes were in the offing than Louis Bonaparte. After 1860, under increasing fire from the French bourgeoisie, who wanted a greater say in the state, Louis was obliged to loosen his Ught grip on France's political life. He now gave greater freedom to the press and allowed government measures to be openly criticized in the Corps Legislatif (the lower legislative house), while the throne's annual speech could be freely debated by the parliamentarians. Indeed, before the decade was out, a republican opposition had even been permitted to emerge and enjoy a certain measure of political autonomy.

To countervail the demands of the new industrialists, Bonaparte also tried to gain working-class support, thereby pitting one class against the other— another typically Bonapartist feature. In 1860 he allowed workers to form mutual aid and benefit associations, restored their legal right to strike, and permitted individual workers to run for public office on labor-oriented platforms— provided, to be sure, that they did not form a political party. (When the government made overtures to offer better credit terms, the Proudhonist mutualists, with their demand for the low-interest loans for artisans, were surprisingly responsive and flirted politically with members of the royal family.)

To placate the bourgeoisie, between 1860 and 1862 the emperor concluded a series of commercial treaties with Britain, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and Prussia that reduced trade barriers and provided a strong stimulus to French industry. Key French companies were concentrated in fewer hands, leading to more large-scale production and technological modernization. But Bonaparte's motives were not entirely economic. Closer cooperation between the French and English economies was spurred not only by commercial considerations but by the emperor's own diplomacy, which was oriented, despite centuries of bitter enmity, toward forging an alliance between the two major Channel countries.

The growing entente between Britain and France nurtured not only closer economic and diplomatic ties but a closer affinity between the French and British working classes. The interlocking of English with French economic interests and the introduction of English technological innovations into French industry meant that the working classes of the two countries shared a new community of interest But French unskilled workers lagged far behind their British counterparts in self-organization and in concrete economic gains: in Britain the working day had been reduced to ten hours, but when the Bonapartist regime tried to pass similar legislation in France, the bourgeoisie was able to circumvent it. Although French workers acquired a limited right to strike, they were not permitted to organize trade unions like their class brothers and sisters in England

In 1862 a delegation of French workers crossed the Channel to attend the London International Exhibition. Their trip was subsidized by the government, which probably hoped that the moderate reform-oriented mentality that prevailed among English workers would make an impression on the more volatile French. Actually, the visit resulted in a renewed liaison between militant English trade unionists and French insurrectionists. In December 1863 British workers

dispatched an appeal to their French counterparts to take common action in support of the emancipation of Poland, a cause that was almost as popular in London as it was in Paris. The British workers also had a very practical self-interest in international working-class comity: their employers had been importing continental strikebreakers during labor disputers, a practice that severely obstructed their struggles for better pay and working conditions. The trade unions were particularly eager to enlist French working-class support, in order to bring this practice to a definitive end.

As a result, contacts between working-class leaders on both sides of the Channel became more frequent; not only was the solidarity between the French and English greatly strengthened, but each contributed to the other's strike funds. Finally, they decided to hold a joint public meeting in London to strengthen their ties and to support the Poles. The meeting, which was held on September 28, 1864, in Saint Martin's Hall, was packed with 2,000 people, many of whom claimed to represent British, Irish, and continental European workers. It proved to be of historic importance: even as almost all the governments of continental Europe were trying to crush any incipient workers' movement, or perhaps because they were trying to do so, the working classes of various countries eagerly met to mobilize their forces and create their own unified international movement.

Ideologically, the assembly in Saint Martin's Hall was very mixed: it consisted mainly of English trade unionists, including former Chartists and Owenites, who were eager to eliminate continental strikebreaking, but there were also French Proudhonist mutualists, Italian and Polish nationalists, and a medley of exiles from other countries. After much oratory, largely focused on solidarity with the Poles and the need for working-class unity, the meeting enthusiastically resolved to found what was to be called the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA), which eventually entered into the history of socialism as the First International.

Listed last among the distinguished supporters invited to sit on the platform was one "Dr. Marx," who had been asked to address the meeting on behalf of the German workers. Rather than speak himself, however, he gave the floor to Johann George Eccarius, his fellow exile and member of the old Communist League, who ably acquitted himself while Marx remained in the background. Thus Marx played no direct role in convening or addressing the meeting, claims that he founded the First Intemadonal (made by some historians of the labor movement) notwithstanding.

After much oratory and enthusiasm, the meeting elected a Central Committee (later renamed the General Council) to administer the organization's affairs, consisting half of English trade unionists and the remaining half of the diverse radical and nationalist exiles in London. The Committee quickly established a subcommittee to draw up the declaration of principles and a set of governing rules for the new Association. Several plainly tendentious declarations and sets of statutes were submitted, including the provisional regulations of Mazzini's Italian Workers Association, a highly centralized organization, strongly nationalistic in orientation, that actually had very little standing among Italian workers. This document, despite its literary crudity and its ideological confusion, was nearly adopted by the subcommittee, but fortunately, due largely to Marx's remonstrances, it was agreed that the proposed document should be "edited," a task that finally fell to Marx himself, who proceeded to rewrite large portions of the declaration of principles and reduce the rules from forty to ten. The new draft, patently superior to its Mazzinian precursor, was unanimously adopted by the Committee at its next meeting and published widely as a penny pamphlet In this respect Marx deserves the credit, if not for founding the

IWMA, at least for writing its founding document, the historic "Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association." More than half of the address is occupied with contrasting the enormous increase in the wealth of the capitalist countries with the absence of progress in the material condition of workers and detailing the miseries they suffer. In its closing pages it celebrates recent working-class victories, such as the passage of the ten-hour working day by the British parliament and the growth of the cooperative movement. Marx's hand can be seen very clearly when the address calls upon workers to unite to "conquer political power," and very dramatically in its closing appeal, "Proletarians of all countries, Unite!" As for the "provisional rules," its preamble opens with the assertion that "the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves," and it closes with the slogan: "No rights without duties, no duties without rights."[121]

This last slogan—which would later adorn the mastheads of socialist and anarchist periodicals worldwide—did not come easily from Marx's pen; it was foisted on him, and he seems to have accepted it only reluctantly. As he wrote to Engels, shortly after the adoption of documents, he had been "obliged to insert two sentences about *'duty'* and *'right'* and ditto about *'truth, morality and justice'* in the preamble to the rules, but these are so placed that they can do no harm."[122] This passage reveals the aversion that both men shared toward any socialism that was even vaguely moralistic, in contrast to the materialistic approach they hoped to foster.

The actual role that the 1WMA played in the struggle for socialism has been greatly exaggerated over the years, in no small part by the bourgeois press, which tried to frighten its readers by invoking a perilous "red specter" that threatened to undermine society itself. In fact, many of its national sections could not even be regarded as collectivist in oulook, let alone socialist. The English trade unionists were primarily looking for ways to make their strikes more effective, while the Proudhonist mutualists, who were hostile to strikes, loathed all forms of collectivism and regarded small-scale property and the patriarchal family as the building blocks of a new society. The Italian nationalists, following Mazzini, almost entirely eschewed socialism. It is noteworthy that neither the "Inaugural Address" nor the preamble to the rules makes any mention of collectivism, still less of socialism and communism—notions that would have been offensive to many of its members. Rather, the documents contain encomia to cooperatives, which were popular among workers in England and France at the time. As for Marx's call to "conquer political power," it must have been essentially smuggled into the document during an unguarded moment, for it could only have survived the scrutiny of the Proudhonists on the committee because their enthusiasm momentarily swept away their critical faculties.

Despite its many different, often bitterly conflicting tendencies, the IWMA managed to remain intact until 1876, after which it was formally dissolved. During the 1860s it consisted largely of a loose agglomeration of national and local sections or "federations," many of which were at odds with each other over a host of political and organizational issues. Admittedly, the IWMA played a valuable practical and inspirational role in mobilizing, educating, and leading workers, often in large numbers, in common struggles to improve their material conditions. But it was largely a defensive organization: more often than not, its national sections were fighting with their backs

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[121] Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association" and "Provisional Rules of the Association," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 20: *Marx-Engels 1864–1868* (New York: International Publishers, 1985), pp. 5–16.

[122] Karl Marx, letter to Engels, November 4, 1864, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 42: *Marx-Engels 1864–1868* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), p. 18.

to the wall against the assaults of their respective governments and various employers. By its very existence, however, the International gave workers a boost in morale and a sense that they were not completely isolated in their specific local struggles.

Many actions, be they strikes or uprisings, were imputed to the International with little or no regard as to whether it was actually involved in them. Although it was falsely accused of leading the Paris Commune of 1871, the International never staged an uprising anywhere in the world; nor did it lead any sizable strike or strike movement of its own. Many of the strikes that swept over Britain and the continent during the 1860s, to be sure, involved members of the International—in England, even members of the General Council—but they functioned primarily as trade unionists rather than as Internationalists. For the most part, the federations of the International tried to assist strikes and protests by publicizing workers' grievances, opposing foreign strikebreakers, and gathering funds among other workers' organizations for the support of their striking comrades. While these activities greatly enhanced the prestige of the International among workers throughout the world, they hardly constituted a danger to bourgeois society.

During its short existence, the IWMA held four major congresses between its founding meeting in London and its Hague Congress, where it was split irreparably in 1872, and its General Council was transferred to the United States. At no time did the delegates to these congresses ever number more than a hundred people, and although they presumably represented affiliated federations in about eleven countries, a number of delegates represented only token sections. Some delegations were merely individual exiles from countries in which all working-class activity had been completely suppressed, while others represented groups so small that they barely qualified as more than nuclei of national federations. In fact, the size of a national delegation at an IWMA congress usually depended upon the country where the congress was held. At the Geneva (1866) and Lausanne (1867) congresses, for example, the largest delegations were Franco-Swiss, more or less reflecting the general population of the area in which the congress was convened, while at Brussels (1868) the largest was, not surprisingly, the Belgian delegation. These annual congresses were often riven by a multitude of important theoretical issues that were furiously debated, often culminating in IWMA resolutions that were adopted by a majority vote. In practice, the national groups, on their return home, frequently went their own way, irrespective of the congresses' decisions. Nevertheless, the congresses were grappling, slowly, painfully, and sometimes indecisively, with issues that would be of enormous significance for the labor movement for generations to come— indeed, because of their theoretical and practical consequences in later years, their proceedings deserve closer study than is possible here.

In the early congresses (Geneva in 1866, Lausanne in 1867, and Brussels in 1868), the most compelling issue was the debate between the so-called "Marx party" (few of whom, in fact, were Marxists doctrinally), which favored socialism, and Proudhonist individualists, who hoped to supplant capitalism by fostering small-scale peasant and artisan proprietors. The Proudhonists, whose views reflected the interests of an archaic and waning stratum of artisans and small food cultivators, were convinced that the principal causes of their economic difficulties lay with moneylenders and bankers, and that the problems of the working class could be removed by having worker- or state- controlled People's Banks provide proprietors with low-interest credit This analysis minimized the social relations embodied in the capitalist market and industry and instead regarded the main enemy of small entrepreneurs as finance capitalists and bankers, who lived off interest rather than the fruits of productive labor. Often this emphasis took an expressly anti-

Semitic turn when Jews, such as the Rothschilds, were cast as the main villains of society, rather than manufacturers and the system of capitalist social relations as such.

Proudhon bequeathed a very mixed legacy to his disciples in his On *the Political Capacity oj the Working* Classes, published in 1865, the year of his death. Here, as in the *General Idea* in 1851, he softened his aversion for associationism by allowing that it could not be avoided in large-scale industries. In a passage that had an immense influence on many Proudhonists, the *maitre* wrote:

> Mutualism intends men to associate only *insofar* as this is required by the demands of production, the cheapness of goods, the needs of consumption and the security of the producers themselves, i.e. in those cases where it is not possible for the public to rely on private industry, nor for private industry to accept the responsibility and risks involved in running the concerns on their own— There is undoubtedly a case for association in the large-scale manufacturing, extractive and metallurgical industries... What is the position if we think of the thousands of crafts and trades proliferating in the towns and even in the rural areas? For these I do not think association offers any advantages; all the more so since any benefits that might follow are already assured by the network of reciprocal guarantees, mutual credit and insurance, market control, etc. etc.[123]

Proudhon's reluctant acknowledgment of the need for association was a pragmatic response to the rise of large-scale production and modem transportation. Although he was a federalist (as distinguished from a statist), it did not supplant in any way his commitment to individual entrepreneurship. Not surprisingly, when the anarchist Bakunin, at congresses of the International, supported collectivism, the major Proudhonist spokesmen furiously opposed him. But many workers read Proudhon's remarks not as a circumstantial endorsement of associations (or cooperatives) in only certain large-scale industries, but as a general endorsement of them as an alternative to modem capitalist industry—that is, they wrongly concluded that economic cooperatives, confederally organized by means of contracts and credit networks, lay at the heart of Proudhon's vision for the good society.

Nor was this the only respect in which Proudhon exhibited a regressive influence. Owing to their emphasis on the patriarchal family as the basic unit of social life, the Proudhonists rejected any role in the productive process for women (although most artisans freely used the labor of their wives, daughters, and female domestics in their workshops). Seeming to oppose all civil rights for women, they argued that woman's place was in the home, where her "natural" limitations destined her to rear children and see to family needs, while the civil realm fell "naturally" within the purview of men. Finally, as we have seen, the Proudhonists also objected to local strikes, which they regarded as coercive and potentially violent. But life repeatedly intruded on this Proudhonist shibboleth, and the Proudhonists at the Lausanne Congress reluctantly surrendered it, together with their opposition to political action. The French delegation to the IWMA, it should be emphasized, was predominantly Proudhonist, led by Henri Tolain, a bronze engraver; Pierre Coullery, a physician from French-speaking Switzerland; and even Charles Longuet, later Marx's son-in-law and devout supporter. Opposed to the Proudhonists were the collectivists or socialists, who called for participation in elections and the public ownership of land, railways,

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[123] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes* (1865); excerpted in *Selected Writings of P.-]. Proudhon,* ed. Stewart Edwards (New York: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 62–3; emphasis added.

mines, and forests and tended to make more searching analyses of capitalism. Marx, from London, provided much of their theoretical framework, although many groups within the IWMA supported socialistic views on their own initiative. Even in France, notable collectivists appeared, as Henryk Katz notes in his highly objective account of the International:

> The repressions in France [in the 1860s] pushed the [labor] movement toward resistance societies and syndical chambers, the types of organization tolerated by the government. This was in line with the continuing trend from classical Proudhonianism toward militant syndicalism.[124]

This shift was typified most notably by the bookbinder Eugene Varlin and the dyer Benoit Malon, who had begun as Proudhonists but were drifting away from many of its key tenets.[125] Not only were they prepared to engage in political activity, in violation of Proudhon's ideas (if not his practice), they were also committed to trade-union organization, strikes, and armed insurgency.

Most at odds with Proudhon's views were the revolutionary syndicalist ideas that these men began to advance. Indeed, Varlin, as the ablest and most militant trade-union leader in France, may well be regarded as the father of revolutionary syndicalism. But their ideas also had a communalist dimension: they opposed both mutualism and "authoritarian Communism"—that is, both Proudhon and Marx. Varlin and Malon called themselves "collectivists" and were committed to a form of socialism or anarchism based on communal confederations as well as trade unions.[126] How far they had moved from Proudhonism may be judged by the acrimony of their clashes with their former comrades: the French Proudhonist Ernst Fribourg disdainfully described them as a strong "party of liberal communists *[communistes liberaux],*" words that were as close as one could come in the 1860s to "libertarian communists,"[127] while Varlin, for his part, did not hesitate to dismiss Tolain and his following as "Proudhonist enrages." In the new labor movement, says Katz,

> Varlin was the recognized national leader and enjoyed increasing international prestige. He was in continuous correspondence with provincial centers and various organizations and leaders in Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany... More than anyone else, Varlin was capable of articulating the ideas of the radicalized movement that was variously described as "Socialisme collectiviste," "Communisme liberale," "Communisme anti- autoritaire," and "Socialisme revolutionnaire."[128]

Significantly, Marx and Bakunin were both to describe Varlin as their comrade in their writings on the Paris Commune.

At its early congresses the International wrangled repeatedly over the distinctions between collectivism and Proudhonist individualism. At Geneva and Lausanne, both in French-speaking Switzerland, a sufficient number of Proudhonist delegates were in attendance to pass resolutions

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[124] Henryk Katz, *The Emancipation of Labor: A* History *of the* First International (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 44.

[125] Eugene Varlin was erroneously referred to as "Jean Varlin" on page vii of volume 1 of *The Third Revolution.*

[126] Quoted in Katz, *The Emancipation of Labor,* p. 45.

[127] Ibid, p. 25.

[128] Ibid, p. 44.

that favored their view, but at the Brussels Congress of 1868, the majority adopted a collectivist resolution on public ownership. At that point most—albeit not all—of the Proudhonists ceased to attend congresses of the International.

The IWMA congresses also debated other issues, such the role of violence in transforming society, the formation of popular militias, the coalitions (if any) that federations of the International could validly make with radical bourgeois or petty bourgeois organizations, and even the legitimacy of the presence of nonworkers in congresses and the General Council. (Excluding nonworkers would have made all intellectuals, including Marx and Bakunin, ineligible for membership.)

But the next explosive issue to confront the International was that of the state and parliamentary politics. In fact, this issue haunted every one of its later congresses and was raised repeatedly—explicitly or implicitly—in debates among socialists, collectivists, Proudhonists, trade unionists, nationalists, and anarchists. By opposing all forms of collectivism, the large contingent of Proudhonists in the early years had averted a direct confrontation between statist socialists and antistatist socialists, since all socialists felt the need to unite against the individualists. But the departure of most of the Proudhonists at Brussels freed statist and antistatist socialists for an open collision that was finally to tear the International apart.

MARX AND BAKUNIN

This conflict was shaped overwhelmingly by the duel between Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin for the control of the International. Bakunin did not join the International until fairly late, in July 1868, while to all appearances he and Marx were still on excellent terms. In the 1840s Bakunin had been a friend and collaborator of Marx and Engels around the publication of Arnold Ruge's *Deutsch-Franzdsische Jahrbucher.* Removed from European politics for twelve years after 1849 by his imprisonment and exile in Russia, he finally escaped from Siberia and reappeared in London at the end of 1861. In November 1864, shortly before Bakunin's departure for Italy, Marx exhibited a very amiable attitude toward the Russian and assured Bakunin that, rumors to the contrary, he had defended Bakunin against a slander that he had been a Russian spy. Writing to Engels, Marx noted that "I liked [Bakunin] very much, more so than previously," and said that he was "one of the few people whom after sixteen years I find to have moved forward and not backward."[129] As a sign of friendship, Marx even sent Bakunin an inscribed copy of his newly published *Capital.*

Bakunin did not respond to this gesture for quite some time. He had been occupied with establishing his own international anarchist organization, the International Alliance for Socialist Democracy, a network with a central bureau in Geneva and sections in Italy, France, and Switzerland. (At the same time he was also trying to create a secret, elite, and highly disciplined vanguard group, the International Brotherhood.) The Alliance had its own statutes and program, calling for an end to religion, equality of the sexes, the abolition of inheritance, and a scattered number of other proposals. Bakunin seems to have intended that it function both inside and outside the International, ostensibly to compensate for the IWMA's emphasis on economic questions by placing a special emphasis on philosophical and religious matters. In November 1868 he applied to the General Council in London for admittance of his Alliance to the International as a relatively autonomous branch.

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[129] Marx, letter to Engels, November 4, 1864, *Collected Works,* vol. 42, pp. 18–19.

Up to this point, as Franz Mehring observes, Marx had "continued to harbour feelings of friendship for the old revolutionary Bakunin, and he opposed various attacks which were made or planned against Bakunin amongst his, Marx's, immediate circle."[130] But Marx had strong disagreements with the formulations in the program and statutes of the Alliance, producing a disaffection toward Bakunin that was exacerbated by personal gossip. Moreover, the Alliance's application for admittance appeared to be a *de facto* proposal for the existence of two parallel internationals, each with its own central body, that would inevitably come to loggerheads. This caused Marx to develop strong suspicions about Bakunin's intentions in joining the International.

Needless to say, the General Council decided to reject the Alliance's application—and ironically, it was on this very day that Bakunin finally responded to inquiries that Marx had indirectly passed on to Bakunin about his intentions. "You ask whether I am still your friend," Bakunin wrote.

> Yes, more than ever, my dear Marx, for I understand better than ever how right you were to walk along the broad avenue of the economic revolution, to invite us all to follow you, and to denounce all those who wandered off into the byways of nationalist or exclusively political enterprise… My fatherland is now the International, whose chief founder you have been. You see, then, dear friend that 1 am your pupil—and 1 am proud to be this.[131]

Marx may very well have perceived in the letter a Proudhonist subtext that denied the importance of "political enterprise." Be that as it may, the General Councd did not reject the Alliance altogether: rather, it permitted Bakunin and his supporters to enter the International—on the condition that they disband the Alliance as an international organization and convert its sections into branches of the IWMA. Bakunin agreed, but whether he really intended to dissolve the only successful international organization he had created up to that time is a much-disputed issue. Surprisingly, however, the Council agreed to let him retain his central bureau in Geneva as a propaganda group, which Bakunin and his supporters readily accepted, allowing as it did a distinctive organizational center for themselves. There is ample evidence to show that in 1870–71, as the dispute between Bakunin and Marx escalated, the old Alliance sections generally retained their libertarian identity and ideas. But that they continued to exist as a parallel organization, as Marx maintained, is arguable.

Many accounts of the dispute between the Bakuninists and Marxists tend to focus so strongly on the unsavory machinations by both sides that their important theoretical and organizational differences are often neglected. In principle, Marx was committed to a strong, highly centralized workers' movement, ultimately a workers' party, that would use the political arena to mobilize the entire working class to attain state power. Where artisanal socialists in the 1840s had merely called upon the state to foster the development of associations, Marx persistently argued for the nationalization of the economy and for planned production and distribution Following the success of the workers in a revolutionary confrontation with capitalism, there would eventually

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[130] Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Covici, Friede, 1935), p. 434.

[131] The word for confederalism commonly used in Europe at this time was *federalism.* I am using *confederalism* here because *federalism* has since come to mean an association of small states held together by a fairly centralized nation-state.

emerge a communist society that would be guided not by profit but by the principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

This approach, for Marx, presupposed the existence of the state—a workers' state, to be sure, but a state nonetheless—that would initially exercise dictatorial powers to suppress the bourgeoisie and rapidly develop the productive forces to eliminate material want and reduce the long working hours that inhibited the community's participation in public life. Writing in the 1850s and 1860s, Marx assigned a "historically progressive role" to capitalism, namely the development of modem industrial technology, without which arduous toil and material scarcity could not be eliminated. Moreover, the modem factory, in Marx's view, would play the additional role of organizing the working dass in huge industrial units and bringing it into direct confrontation with the industrial bourgeoisie.

This theoretical orientation had distinct political consequences. Marxian socialists welcomed the elimination of archaic barriers to capitalism such as guild restrictions, artisanship, small-scale peasant agriculture, and the like, indeed all decentralized political and economic entities that might impede the centralization of the state and the economy, and the opening of the domestic market for capitalist expansion. Hence, Marx vehemendy championed the formation of centralized nation-states as the most suitable economic terrain for the growth of industry and technology.

By the same token, he favored the formation of a highly centralized workers' party that would ultimately challenge the political sovereignty of the bourgeoisie, through elections where possible, through insurrection, or both. In the "Inaugural Address" for the International, Marx had consciously compromised his basic views in order to satisfy the largely artisanal working dass, at a time when forging unity among workers was a far more important task than highlighting doctrinal differences. But it was precisely the industrial proletariat that he believed was capable of bringing about the demolition of capitalism and ultimately the achievement of a communist society.

To be sure, Bakunin shared many views with Marx—his materialistic approach to history and contemporary social problems, his emphasis on class struggle, and his advocacy of the collective ownership of property. Allowing for many ambiguities, both men championed a collectivist society that, be it gradually or rapidly, would lead to the elimination of private property and classes and to the resolution of the historic "social question"—notably, the existence of oppression, exploitation, poverty, and domination. But Bakunin's differences with Marx were also enormous. In contrast to Marx's reliance on the industrial proletariat, Bakunin, drawing on his experiences in Russia and Italy, favored small-scale artisans, peasants, and even lumpenproletarians (whom Marx despised) as constituting the hegemonic strata for the destruction of capitalism. Moreover, Bakunin considered the state as the principal support of oppression and saw no need for it in any form—bourgeois or proletarian. Indeed, in his view, the centralization of the state, far from advancing the workers' and peasants' prospects for social change, would have detrimental effects on them, remaking them in its own technocratic and bureaucratic image. It subverted their "instinct" for resistance and revolution, as he put it, blunting their "natural" impulse for freedom. Engaging in politics, Bakunin held, and especially forming centralized parties, would oblige workers and peasants to create centralized political bureaucracies that would eventually bring them into complicity with their own oppression in the political as well as the economic sphere.

To Marx's centralistic and statist views, Bakunin, taking his cue from Proudhon, opposed a confederal system of production and social administration.[132] Confederalism denoted a system of contractual agreements among workshops, factories, and communities that were collectively controlled by their members, in which collective affairs are managed through confederal councils of mandated and recallable delegates. These councils, Bakunin believed, would not constitute a state: their principal functions would be administrative, coordinating the decisions of the people in a given commune and among communes at the various regional, national, and international levels of confederation.

Bakunin's vision of an anarchist society was most succincdy expressed in "Principles and Organization of the International Brotherhood," where he sketched out a "federal government," based on "the absolutely autonomous commune, always represented by the majority vote of all the inhabitants," as well as "workers' associations," which would be pyramidally structured into regional and national confederations. This society would have its own libertarian "social consti- tution," with "laws," "courts," and "parliaments"— structures that are by no means compatible with the "absolute and complete freedom" of the individual that Bakunin, like Proudhon, also prized[133]

It is difficult to say whether Bakunin used words such as "social constitutions," "laws," "courts," and "parliaments" literally or metaphorically. Well versed neither in economics nor in history, he seems ultimately to have relied on the "revolutionary instinct" of the masses to achieve work- able collectivist agreements, and on their "revolutionary spontaneity" and on public opinion to administer an equitable anarchist society based on quasi- communistic principles. Marx, for his part, maintained that the proletariat would be compelled toward class consciousness and revo- lution not by any "revolutionary instinct" but by the "inexorable laws" of capitalist economic development.

The differences between Marx's centralistic, political, and statist approach and Bakunin's de- centralistic, antipolitical, and confederalist approach were to be hardened into dogmas by their disciples, opening a chasm between them that seemed unbridgeable, far greater, perhaps, than either man ever intended But before this hardening took place, Marx and Bakunin were extraor- dinarily flexible and open to the effects of new social developments on their political ideas. Occa- sionally they also advanced ideas, especially concerning methods of changing society, that were very much at odds with their seemingly rigid ideological premises.

Despite his affirmations of "revolutionary spontaneity," for example, Bakunin clearly believed that a well-disciplined, secret vanguard organization, indeed a "general staff" (as he called it in one of his several programs for the International Brotherhood), would be necessary to shepherd the masses through a social revolution. He explicitly rejected endowing it with powers of "dicta- torship and custodial control," but in achieving the overthrow of capitalism, it would doubdess have to play a guiding role at the very least[134] Moreover, although abstention from participation in the institutions of the state was a cardinal principle of Bakunin's libertarian faith, one that he

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[132] Bakunin to Marx, December 22, 1868, quoted in Anthony Masters, *Bakunin: The Father of Anarchism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974), p. 181.

[133] See Michael Bakunin, "Principles and Organization of the International Brotherhood" (1866), in *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings,* ed. Arthur Lehning (New York: Grove Press, n.d.), pp. 64–93, esp. pp. 69, 70–1.

[134] Michael Bakunin, "Programme and Purpose of the Revolutionary Organization of International Brothers," in *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings,* ed. Arthur Lehning (New York: Grove Press, n.d.), p. 172. There is a good deal of confusion over which program of the International Brotherhood is more definitive. Certainly the more comprehensive is the "Principles and Organization of the International Brotherhood" (also in the Lehning collection), which is nearly

propounded with all his vigor, he sometimes encouraged his own supporters to stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. In a letter to one of his adherents, Carlo Gambuzzi, Bakunin seemed to fully agree that he should run for the Italian Chamber of Deputies. "You will perhaps be surprised that I, a determined and passionate abstentionist from politics," he wrote,

> should now advise my friends [members of the Alliance] to become deputies—this because circumstances have changed. First, all my friends, and most assuredly yourself, are so inspired by our ideas, our principles, that there is no danger that you will forget, deform, or abandon them, or that you will fall back into the old political habits. Second, times have become so grave, the danger menacing the liberty of all countries so formidable, that all men of goodwill must step into the breach, and especially our friends, who must be in a position to exercise the greatest possible influence on events.[135]

Bakunin's confidence in the anarchistic integrity of his supporters was surely misplaced—he had already seen more than one of them become Marxists, strict parliamentarians, or worse, over the passage of time.

Again, despite his decentralist views, Bakunin was quite prepared, even eager, to grant the IWMA's General Council enormous powers—-powers that, in fact, were later to be used with serious effect against him. The Basel Congress of 1869 gave the Council the right to admit or refuse entry to individuals or groups, and to suspend any section that it regarded as working against the interests of the International. Such actions on the part of the Council, to be sure, could be appealed to the International's congresses, which alone had the authority to reverse them. But the measure, passed with Bakunin's strong

By the same token, Marx could seem, at times, almost as libertarian as Bakunin. In *The Civil War in France,* a set of addresses that he wrote on behalf of the General Council, Marx extolled the Paris Commune of 1871 in extraordinarily quasi-libertarian terms. The Commune, as we will see, was a revolt against state centralization *as such* and was deeply influenced by antiauthoritarian concepts of confederalism. Surprisingly, Marx decidedly did not reject this opposition to state centralization—indeed, the libertarianism of this book is highly unusual in the bulk of his writings concerning the state and stands very much at odds with the centralized ideas that dominate the "Address" of 1850. As we shall see, he hailed the Commune's decentralized organizational structure profusely and for a time seemed to regard it as a model structure to be followed by proletarian revolutions.

After 1868 the conflicts between Marx and Bakunin played themselves out at the congresses of the International. In 1868–69 it became clear that despite Bakunin's concessions to the General Council, the Alliance had not fully merged into the International. Bakunin continued to champion the Alliance's program, especially its antipolitical views and its call for the abolition of inheritance as a decisive step in attaining the abolition of private property. To Marx, abolishing inheritance first, before private property, was like placing the cart before the horse: inheritance was merely a peripheral issue, in his analysis, and like all aspects of capitalist relations, it would

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four times as long as the "Programme and Purpose." support as well as Marx's, centralized the International far more than it had been in the past.

[135] *Bakunin on Anarchy,* ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 21819.

obviously be swept away when the proletariat became the majority in a given country and diredly abolished private property as such.

Bakunin also continued to recognize the right to the private ownership of land (a Proudhonist precept), which, he maintained, would finally disappear only when inherited property reverted to the community. It seems very likely that, while personally supporting the abolition of private property, he camouflaged his antipropnetarian views (which conflicted with Proudhon) in order to avoid antagonizing the peasantry and possibly his artisan supporters. Once again, Marx argued that land ownership would necessarily be abolished along with all private property. Indeed, capitalism, Marx held, would eventually eliminate nearly all preindustrial classes, or at least draw them into the orbit of the capitalist market. Hence only the proletariat would be capable of abolishing capitalist society, possibly with the aid of other oppressed strata.

These conflicts came into the open at the Basel Congress of 1869, where Bakunin and his supporters made the abolition of inheritance "the most hody contested issue" on the agenda, as G.D.H. Cole puts it.[136] After considerable debate, a plurality of the delegates voted in favor of Bakunin's position, but they failed to acquire the absolute majority that was necessary for the position to be officially adopted by the International. The respective supporters of Marx and Bakunin now girded themselves for a bitter confrontation at the next congress—but only two weeks before the 1870 congress was to convene, Louis Napoleon was provoked into declaring war against Prussia.

History, as it were, now intervened to push the International to the background, for searing events not only rendered all abstract theoretical discussions academic, they led to the creation of the Paris Commune of 1871, an uprising that was to acquire legendary proportions in the history of Marxism and anarchism alike.

Chapter 30. Prelude to the Paris Commune

The Franco -Prussian War marked the clash of two contrasting but hitherto parallel developments in nineteenth-century Europe.

In 1870 both France and Germany—in its various stages of unification— were still predominandy rural. Although both countries were on the threshold of the industrial revolution, nearly seventy per cent of the French population and sixty per cent of the German population lived in rural areas. In the two decades that Louis Napoleon sat on the throne, as we have seen, he did not decisively alter this basic economic landscape: even when the Second Empire came to an end, artisanal labor still produced the bulk of French goods, and the peasants still accounted for the great majority of the French population. Unskilled proletarians producing machine-made commodities were becoming much more numerous, but in 1870 French artisans still occupied a considerable place in the economic life of their country—particularly in Paris, which remained a world center of artisanal excellence, and its working class still consisted mainly of artisans rather than industrial proletarians.

Politically, after the bloodletting of June 1848, the Parisian workers had retreated back to their neighborhoods, apathetic and disdainful of the bourgeoisie that had condemned their rising. The years of repression, accompanied by improved economic conditions, left France politically inert—

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[136] G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought,* vol. 2: *Marxism and Anarchism, 1850–1890* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 130.

its provincials largely Bonapartist, its city residents smoldering with bitter disillusionment or turning inward to cope with problems of material well-being. The reputation of the Second Empire as not only dissolute and pleasure-loving but crassly mean-spirited and egoistic has a strong basis in fact. In the 1850s, much to the satisfaction of the ruling classes, Bonaparte delivered on his promise to provide a stable authoritarian state, control over the working classes, and economic growth.

Most notably, as we have seen, Napoleon III laid the infrastructure for France's leap forward into an industrial economy in the closing decades of the century. Much of the new economic prosperity he gave France came as a result of the massive public works programs he instituted. His government borrowed great sums to build or improve the country's roads, railways, bridges, canals, and cities. But the years of growth in the Second Empire were gained essentially by mortgaging France's economic future to achieve a buoyant present By concentrating its economic resources on constructing transportation and infrastructure—and equipping a large French army—Bonaparte's regime failed to generate an industrial revolution in France. In effect, the emperor had laid the groundwork for the transformation of France to an industrial society, rather than produce it direcdy.

Which is not to say that industry was absent—on the contrary, Bonaparte himself did import English-style factories to the country and foster their development at home. Indeed, if Paris itself was still artisanal, the Parisian suburbs were filling up with factories. Locomotive works, railway repair shops, chemical plants, and metallurgical works materialized outside the capital's walls, utilizing the labor of a new type of working class, the industrial proletariat. These men and women, instead of selling wares they had made to merchants and the public, were paid hourly or piecework wages for producing goods according to increasingly rationalized systems of production, and commodities that had once been crafted by skilled handworkers were increasingly fabricated by relatively unskilled workers mobilized in highly mechanized factories. Moreover, many French and German artisans were now *de facto* subsidiary employees of factory owners who, since they still required their skills, permitted them to work at home or in small workshops. Try as they might to hold on to their independence and maintain their corporations (in Germany, guilds were still common), these workers occupied an intermediate position between traditional craftspeople and the modern industrial proletariat Nevertheless, even as factories multiplied, these artisans were steadily absorbed into the industrial world and reduced to mere proletarians.

During the two Bonapartist decades, the population of all of France's industrial cities ballooned. Roubaix, a major textile center in the north, trebled in population; Toulouse, Lille, and Lyon doubled; and the great port cities of Marseilles and Bordeaux were half again as large, despite the fact that the French population as a whole rose by only two million between 1851 and 1861 and in fact by 1872 decreased by more than a million, which suggested that much of the urban population increase was primarily the result of internal migration from the countryside and the conversion of peasants into proletarians.

In Paris in particular, as David H. Pinkney tells us, population growth was so rapid that in 1850 congestion was already an immensely serious problem:

> the area within the inner ring of boulevards on the Right Bank, the seventeenth century line of fortifications, was an almost impenetrable hive of tenements and shops. Here in an area not twice the size of New York's Central Park, piled one

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above another in rooms or tiny apartments, lived more than a third of the city's one million inhabitants. The density of the population was higher than on the lower East Side of New York in the 1930s.[137]

The size of the city expanded enormously in the next two decades, especially in 1861, when the oudying suburbs were annexed to the existing twelve *arrondissements*, bringing the total to twenty, so that by 1870, an estimated 1.9 million people lived in an area that barely exceeded six miles at its widest diameter.

Yet in physical and logistical terms, the city could scarcely support such a large population. In 1851, the year Louis Napoleon performed his coup, Paris had still been an agglomeration of largely medieval villages. Its boundaries scarcely extended beyond the old eighteenth-century "General Farmers' Wall," at whose sixty gates the city taxes *(octroi)* were imposed on all goods entering the capital. The city's narrow, winding streets, its dark caverns of houses crammed together with open sewers running alongside, were virtually impossible for visitors to negotiate, and many parts were unknown even to native Parisians.

In the face of these problems of congestion and sanitation, Louis Napoleon undertook a massive rebuilding program, assigning the task in 1853 to Baron Georges Haussmann, the prefect of the Seine department who became, under the Second Empire, the virtual ruler of Paris. Over the course of seventeen years, Haussmann cleared and enlarged the narrow streets, opening them up to create wide boulevards with sweeping vistas and immense squares whose great expanses made the capital one of the civic splendors of the world. Parisians who had formerly lived, worked, and met all their needs within their immediate neighborhood, as Balzac and Eugene Sue portrayed them in their novels, now had easy access to the central areas of the city.

But beautification, mobility, and improved sanitary conditions were not the only motivations that impelled Haussmann and Louis Bonaparte. The highly congested Parisian neighborhoods had been notorious hotbeds of sedition and insurrection, and the narrow streets in the working-class neighborhoods were famously suited for the construction of barricades in periods of insurrection. Between 1827 and 1849, in a span of a single generation, barricades had been reared eight times in the eastern half of the city; in 1830 and twice more in 1848, they had been used in insurrections. That the city was physically congenial to insurgency had been a source of vexation to regime after regime. The problem had been raised in the Chamber of Deputies as long ago as the rising of the *Saisons* in 1839 and as recendy as the street fighting of 1851; indeed, some measures had already been taken to push wider streets into the most intractable of the working-class areas. There can be little doubt, as Haussmann himself attests in his memoirs, that the Bonapartist regime straightened, widened, and lengthened the streets and boulevards of Paris so that it could more effectively deploy its artillery and cavalry against barricades. With extraordinary determination and sometimes guile, Haussmann transformed Paris into a city that was not only remarkably beautiful but that was far more defensible against future insurgencies.

To perform the massive construction work required to rebuild the dty, Haussmann brought in from the provinces thousands of unskilled workers, or *gros metiers* (as distinguished from skilled artisans), who added greatly to the restiveness of the Parisian working class. Moreover, the reconstruction worsened rather than improved working-class housing, exacerbating workers' anger and militancy; indeed, by tearing down their hovels and entire districts, it produced an

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[137] David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 7.

upward spiral of rents that ultimately forced the removal of many to new slums in annexed suburban areas. These changes were not without their political consequences: in the 1860s many cities in France began to return republican deputies to the Corps Legislatif, where they joined the opposition of bourgeois critics to Louis Napoleon. Despite the high esteem in which the French bourgeoisie held their free-trading English counterparts, they had long been nurtured in protectionism, and they now tended to blame every setback in the French economy on trade agreements that Louis Napoleon had signed with Britain to lower tariffs. Indeed, many industries, particularly small firms, openly criticized the emperor's policies for their mounting economic difficulties. As rumblings against the government mounted in the Corps Legislatif, the liberal deputies began to demand more participation for the middle classes in state affairs, with the result that the imperial government had to face discontent by all but the most reactionary social classes in the realm.

As the 1860s drew to an end, great cracks were opening in the Empire's facade and challenges to the government were everywhere on the increase. The huge debts that Bonaparte had piled up to make possible his massive infrastructure and reconstruction projects were destabilizing the economy without increasing the productive capacity of the country, as were the emperor's costly war against Russia in the Crimea and his futile imperialist adventures in Mexico (from which French troops were evicted in 1867 by a combination of Benito Juarez's peon armies and American pressure). Money that went into roads and urban development was money that did not go into industry as a whole, lining the pockets of French financiers without dramatically advancing industrial development

Moreover, the end of the building boom in the late 1860s left thousands of workers unemployed, and the heavy bank speculation in real estate that had pardy underwritten Haussmann's civic improvements led to the virtual collapse of the financial structure. In 1868 France slipped into an economic crisis that,

although relatively mild, was the most serious the Empire had experienced. Credit tightened up, the reckless financial improvisations of the previous decade came to an end, and the French bourgeoisie beat a quick retreat to what Tom Kemp has called its traditional system of "orthodox finance." By withholding funds from the state or else charging it high interest rates, the bankers now "staged a kind of strike against the regime as the expression of [their] disapproval."[138]

Bonaparte's response to these difficulties was typical of his temporizing policies: in 1868 he put an end to the economic and imperialist adventurism that had previously characterized his regime's behavior and converted the "Authoritarian Empire" into what has been called the "Liberal Empire," essentially creating a limited monarchy under the premiership of the liberal deputy Emile Ollivier. The Corps Legislatif now became an increasingly authentic parliamentary forum in which deputies openly challenged policies of the emperor's ministers—challenges that found their way into an ever-freer press and that were echoed in open public meetings and discussions. Indeed, a critical republican opposition, which had been emerging since the mid-1860s, now crystallized around three flamboyant deputies: Leon Gambetta, Jules Favre, and Jules Ferry. Even the archreactionary Orleanist Adolphe Thiers prudenly aided the opposition with advice and votes when he deemed it politically expedient to do so.

The emperor's declining status in the country can be judged by the election results for the Corps Legislatif since 1857. In that year only seven opposition candidates had been elected to

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[138] Tom Kemp, *Economic* Forces *in French History* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1971), p. 178.

the chamber; only a few years later, in 1863, this number leaped to thirty-five; and by 1869, the last election prior to Louis Napoleon's abdication, opposition deputies soared to ninety-three. In this last election, all the large cities—Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles—returned deputies for the opposition; in Paris the opposition got 234,000 votes, to the government's paltry 70,000. In 1868, to lessen public discontent, the nervous government further liberalized press controls, and before the year was out, 140 new periodicals mushroomed in the capital alone, including Le *Rappel* (an unmistakably militant name), with a circulation of at least 120,000. Finally, the 1860s witnessed the revival of the socialist left and the labor movement and the reactivation of the secret societies, many of which were Blanquist and Jacobin in their orientation, leading to conspiracies to overthrow the regime, even to assassinate the emperor. To ease working- class hostility, the government completely legalized trade unions in 1864, whereupon the ever-zealous Eugene Varlin toured the country in a campaign to establish combative working-class associations, or *societes de resistance* (as distinguished from the fairly tepid trade councils, or *chambres syndicates,* favored by the Proudhonist mutualists).

Although he was always deferential to the bourgeoisie, Louis Napoleon varied his policies toward the workers, allowing for reforms that were often followed by acts of repression. In the 1860s, as we have seen, he courted the workers in order to countervail the demands of the bourgeoisie, on the hopeful assumption that the workers had abandoned their bloody insurrectionary course of June 1848. Yet despite the legalization of unions, men of Varlin's stripe were frequendy arrested and sent to prison or to exile in North Africa. In March 1868 fifteen leaders of the Paris bureau of the International were tried and convicted, followed two months later by a second trial, and still a third one in June 1870. The International had been banned and its members were ruthlessly persecuted by the police—in fact, by the last year of the Empire, it was effectively suppressed. Varlin was obliged to seek refuge in Belgium, where he ceaselessly attacked the regime and tried, even from a distance, to strengthen the French working-class opposition to the regime.

These feverish shifts in the emperor's policy earned him only the contempt of nearly all classes in France; indeed, by 1869, the Bonapartist system was on the brink of toppling. Louis Napoleon was a sick man—physically (due to a massive kidney stone) as well as politically, and his regime was clouded by economic instability, a resdess working class, and a dissatisfied bourgeoisie. It was haunted by financial scandals and painful defeats, most recendy his humiliating failure to turn Mexico into a colony.

Moreover, despite his thirst for "glory" and his incongruous posturing over a decaying regime, the emperor was afflicted with a bumbling and sclerotic officer corps and an army that, despite cosdy military expenses, was ill trained and, by comparison with the developments in weaponry that were being made elsewhere, especially in Prussia, poorly armed. The French *chassepot* rifle, to be sure, was immensely superior in range and accuracy to the Prussian needle gun, but the emperor's army had not advanced appreciably in heavy equipment beyond the 1840s. Where the Prussian artillery, thanks to Alfred Krupp, was the most advanced in Europe, Prussian logistics and training made the French army, despite its celebrated elan, seem almost amateurish by comparison. Prussian officers, although less colorful and dashing than their French counterparts, were typically efficient, and the Prussian cavalry was perhaps the most superbly trained in Europe, certainly far more able to reconnoiter enemy terrain than the French. The "Iron Chancellor" of the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation, Otto von Bismarck, having already united many of the northern German states under a Prussian king, was only too eager to estab-

lish a still more powerful German empire by annexing the long-cherished territories of Alsace and Lorraine, which were under French rule.

VIVE LA REPUBLIQUE!

That Bismarck wanted a war with France can hardly be doubted. All his geopolitical aspirations demanded it. Filled with pride in their country's economic expansion and Prussian military efficiency, the north Germans regarded France as effete, even dissolute, and disdained her pretensions to leadership of the European continent as archaic. Louis Napoleon, in turn, was eager to restore national unity by using war to mobilize popular support for his throne. But the French were by no means enthusiastic about engaging the Germans; indeed, even reactionaries like Thiers feared for the ability of the military, led principally by the intransigent monarchist Marshal MacMahon, to take on the more able Prussian army.

For Bismarck, the question of war with France was simply how to provoke one. The opportunity came as a result of an affront that France suffered, or seemed to suffer, at the hands of Prussia in a dynastic quarrel in Spain. In July 1869, the Spaniards had had enough of their bumbling queen, Isabella II, and called upon the Hohenzollern rulers of Prussia to provide them with a new sovereign. The Prussians were delighted to oblige, anticipating the wealth and power that a dynastic alliance with Spain would bring. Following a series of secret negotiations, Prince Leopold of Sigmaringen, a Hohenzollern notable, was made available. But the prospect of a Hohenzollern dynasty on the other side of the Pyrenees was not only a slap in France's face, it seemed to open the French southern flank to Prussian encirclement. Indeed, in Paris's eyes, for the Prussians to try to extend their influence to France's southern frontier was absolutely intolerable.

After much diplomatic maneuvering, in the course of which the prince withdrew his own candidacy, the French issued a virtual ultimatum stipulating that Leopold would never be allowed to sit on the Spanish throne. Although the Prussian king's telegram in reply to the ultimatum was fairly tepid, Bismarck shrewdly reworded it to make it appear that the king had rebuffed the French ambassador. He then released the doctored telegram to the press, knowing it would provoke the French. The French, confident of their military superiority over the Prussians, allowed themselves to be infuriated by this manufactured snub, and on July 19, 1870, Louis Bonaparte declared war on the Prussian- controlled North German Confederation. As French troops marched out of Paris, jubilant crowds lined the streets, certain that a vibrant Gallic military would surely rout the dour Teutons.

Their hopes were grossly misplaced. Within weeks, the poorly mobilized French armies, led by incompetent generals who lacked any realistic offensive strategy against the well-coordinated Prussian forces, were surrounded. Where Bismarck's well-trained infantry and ubiquitous Uhlan cavalry did not crush them, they fled in a near panic. By August 7, news reached Paris that the Prussians had pushed back both Generals MacMahon and Frossard, resulting on August 9 in an angry demonstration before the Palais Bourbon, where the Corps Legislatif was obliged to protect itself with troops against its own citizens. With a crisis at hand, the ministry was changed, with Thiers installed at its head. But now outraged, even defiant calls to replace the empire with a republic and save France from the Prussians were heard throughout the city, redolent of past revolutionary situations and insurrections.

In mid-August Blanquist hotheads decided that the time was ripe for another putsch and called upon Blanqui himself to return to Paris from his refuge in Brussels. Their plan was, first,

to attack the barracks of the Villette fire station, where the firemen had stored a number of rifles, and with arms in hand to arouse the people in the streets against the government Inasmuch as the fire station and barracks were located in a radical working-class district, the Blanquists naively thought the residents would instantly rise up and rally to their support. From there they would capture other key points in the city and march on the center of Paris. Blanqui, recalling the defeats he had suffered earlier, objected to the plan, warning that the time was still not propitious for an uprising—but he was overruled by his followers and was obliged to yield to their wishes.

On August 14, armed with little more than a handful of revolvers and daggers, the putschists and perhaps a hundred supporters launched their attack on the barracks—only to be met with a refusal by the firemen to surrender their weapons. The Blanquists withdrew, mindful of Blanqui's injunction against spilling any blood in the attack, and proceeded down the Boulevard Villette toward the Belleville district shouting "Long live the Republic!" and "To arms!" to a starded crowd along the way. Needless to say, hardly anyone responded to their cries. The "uprising" was patendy a fiasco, and its initiators scattered before either the police or the troops could arrive in force. Two were captured and sentenced to death, but their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment after a number of notable Parisians called for administrative clemency. The Villette fiasco definitively revealed the failure of Blanquist putschism. Without trying to gamer mass support for their tiny conspiracy, Blanqui's elitist followers were simply stranded. Parisians had understandably remained unmoved when a small group of revolutionaries, planning behind their backs, tried suddenly to stir them into an adventuristic action. But the putsch also provided the authorities with an excuse to crack down on the entire revolutionary movement in Paris, which they did with all the energy at their disposal.

With the revolutionary movement in retreat, the privileged classes found they had little to fear but their Bonapartist emperor. Even this problem was resolved when, on September 2, the last of the operational French armies—107,000 troops—capitulated to the Prussian army at Sedan, and the ailing and listless emperor, who accompanied rather than led them, gave his sword over to the Prussian king. The cities of Strasbourg and Metz managed to hold out longer against the German juggernaut and were duly besieged. But Louis Napoleon was now Bismarck's prisoner, a shock that, back in Paris, threw the Corps Legislatif into an uproar. The proclamation of a republic now seemed unavoidable, but both Orleanists and republicans tried in every way to delay it the Orleanists were monarchists, still committed to an Orleans dynasty, and the republicans feared the Paris "mob," which was already demanding radical change.

On September 4, a demonstration with vague patriotic themes was planned for the Place de la Concorde, but the night before, the Blanquists, who still managed to retain an organized presence in Paris, combed the working-class quarters, fervently urging the workers and the National Guard to follow them, with arms in hand, in a popular insurrection the next day. Nor were the workers alone in taking to the streets; this time, the largely bourgeois National Guard, long neglected and humiliated by Louis Napoleon, joined them. Thus, on September 4, while the deputies were trying to decide on the future of the government, a huge crowd burst into the Palais Bourbon, with the Blanquists at their head, and demanded the immediate creation of a republican regime.

In a replay of the invasion of the Palais Bourbon in February 1848, Jules Favre acted out Lamartine's role as the reluctant republican leader. Although Favre was no last-minute convert to republicanism, as Lamartine had been, he clearly did not want the republic to be proclaimed in the heat of another insurrection, that is, when the workers might sweep the entire government away and possibly proclaim a social republic. To distract the invading crowd, the nervous Favre,

aided by several deputies, once again led the workers and the National Guards in a march to the Hotel de Ville to proclaim the republic, and once again, he and his procession found the Place de Greve filled with workers. The Hotel was occupied by jacobins and Blanquists who were already busily forming their own government, dropping from the windows to the crowd below lists of proposed names, including those of the old Jacobin Charles Delescluze, Blanqui, and the heady republican journalist Henri Rochefort, among other radical candidates. And like Lamartine before him, Favre, who had been a moderate republican in 1848, slyly proposed, to placate the radicals in the crowd, that until a permanent republican legislature could be established by national elections, a provisional Government of National Defense should be created, composed exclusively of the existing legislature's Parisian deputies—presumably in emulation of the "Mountain" of 1793. By seeming to promise the restoration of a Commune, the proposal quieted potential popular objections to the fact that such a government would in reality be filled with Orleanist deputies left over from the old regime. Finally, as if to complete the parody of February 1848, a younger republican, Leon Gambetta, persuaded the crowd in the Place de Greve to retain the tricolor in preference to the red flag—a task that, in the wake of national military humiliation at Prussian hands, was not very difficult to achieve.

Gambetta's symbolic victory acquired political reality when the coterie established the Government of National Defense, politically not unlike the Provisional Government that had emerged from the February Revolution of 1848. The new government, working closely with the old monarchist and republican rump of the Corps Legislatif—many of whose deputies had fled Paris for the safety of their respective departments—immediately set about to eliminate the potential for further revolutionary changes. Installed at the head of the government was a dour Breton, General Jules Trochu, who was not only a devout Catholic but a firm Legitimist. His political beliefs alone would hardly have made him acceptable to working-class Parisians. But because he had had the foresight to criticize the army for its unpreparedness—even before the war—he had been rewarded with the military governorship of Paris and, known to be a mild man, was fairly popular with the crowd.

The real leaders of the government, however, were Favre and Gambetta. As vice-president and minister of foreign affairs, Favre was situated to negotiate an armistice with the Prussians, which he was only too eager to do to restore normality in France. Gambetta, whose militant republicanism made him popular with the crowd, was given the equally strategic Ministry of Interior, from which he ostensibly "republicanized" France by appointing men of republican sympathies to the departmental prefectures as well as the Paris *mairies.* Emest Picard, a major opposition leader in the Corps Legislatif, became minister of finance; General LeFlo was selected for the Ministry of Defense; and Etienne Arago, the aging playwright who had headed the Paris Post Office in 1848, was made the mayor of Paris. Still another remnant of 1848, Gamier-Pages, also found his way into the government. Less known to the public was Pierre Dorian, an industrialist who apparendy prided himself on his good labor relations and his efficiency, he became the minister of works, a position largely concerned with fortifying the capital. The prefecture of the police was given to Edmund Adam who, in time, proved a fairly honorable man in a dubious crew of naifs and cynics.

As a concession to the Left, Favre and Gambetta appointed Rochefort to a sinecure position in the government. A prominent opposition journalist during the Second Empire, Rochefort had opened his newspaper, *La Marseillais,* to Blanquist and Jacobin writers; moreover, he had the distinction of being imprisoned for his oppositional activities under Bonaparte and had just now

been freed by the rebellious crowd. But it speaks volumes about the provisional government that it even offered a post to Adolphe Thiers, the aging counterrevolutionary reprobate of Louis-Philippe's reign. At a time of potential danger to his person, however, this architect of counterrevolution and notorious coward discreedy refused any post and professed to withdraw into political retirement.

To the bitter disappointment of the socialists, Jacobins, and Blanquists, the February Revolution of 1848 seemed to be replaying itself. Once again the moderates had, by deft manipulation, trickery, and persuasion, captured the power from the popular movement. Bitterly, the old Jacobin writer Delescluze remarked to a friend that evening, "We are lost."[139]

Indeed, as Samuel Bernstein points out, "Except in decor, the government was not a sharp departure from the Liberal Empire" of the 1860s. In fact, several of the government members, in 1848, had contributed to the destruction of the Second Republic: "Favre, for example, had drafted the decree ordering the deportation, without trial, of the June insurgents; and Gamier-Pages had been the author of the ill-starred supertax of forty-five centimes."[140] Marx put it well when he wrote that the Government of National Defense neither replaced the monarchy nor introduced social measures of worth, but merely occupied Louis Bonaparte's vacant throne in the guise of republicanism.

PARIS UNDER SIEGE

The military defeat that France had just suffered was as total as it was unexpected. Once the emperor surrendered his sword in September, Prussian armies moved rapidly toward Paris, a move for which the capital was woefully unprepared. Of the regular army, only 60,000 effectives remained in Paris, along with 100,000 Mobile Guards who were now ill-trained reserves or "territorials" from the provinces, and a miscellany of police, firemen, and sailors. Short of an outright surrender of the capital, a Prussian siege was unavoidable.

Yet even as Prussian artillery moved ever closer to Paris, the significant event, for the citizens of the capital, seems to have been less the danger of the military defeat than the new prospects opened by the fall of the imperial regime. A heady air of expectancy buoyed up the city—another republic had been created, this time bloodlessly, and a carnival of fraternity prevailed. To be sure, patriotism and wartime chauvinism also infected Parisians—even Blanqui succumbed to it and called for unity among all Frenchmen, if need be at the expense of social conflict, editing a newspaper called *La Patrie en danger.* But in the main, Parisians seem to have assumed that the fall of Louis Napoleon had been the fulfillment of the Prussians' own military goals as well as the consummation of their own wishes.

In fact, this was not at all the case. The Prussians were seeking France's complete humiliation and a sizable chunk of French territory. As the weeks went by, reality set in for the Parisians, and faced with the danger of a siege, the National Guard ballooned from 20,000 into a huge force of 350,000 in Paris alone. Once again, as in 1848, the Guard was opened up to all able-bodied men, including large contingents of workers, who received a franc and a half a day for their service and, as tradition dictated, had the right to elect their own officers. Moreover, Paris was very well fortified: surrounding the city was a thirty-foot wall, outside of which was a moat and, spaced at strategic intervals, sixteen powerful forts, each mounted with fifty to seventy heavy

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[139] Quoted in Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune: 1871* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 54.

[140] Samuel Bernstein, *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 320.

guns that could rain fire on much of the surrounding landscape. About 3000 cannons of varying types were available for the city's defense, many of them purchased by popular subscription, with funds contributed by the workers and middle classes.

Trochu saw to it that the city was as well provisioned as possible for a siege. Inside the city walls sheep by the thousands were permitted to graze on any open spaces that were not under cultivation, from the Bois de Boulogne to the small plazas. Cattle roamed everywhere. Farmers brought their vegetables and poultry into the capital, not only to feed Parisians but to prevent the Prussians from living off the land. The Tuileries became an artillery emplacement, factories were converted to cannon foundries, and the Louvre was emptied of art treasures and transformed into an arsenal. With all these preparations, it seemed certain that Paris could hold out against the Prussians almost indefinitely, with the result that the city was flooded with foreign tourists as well as provincials. The looming siege thus took on the air of an exciting festival rather than a painful ordeal.

Finally, on September 20, the Prussian armies completed their encirclement, or investment, of the capital, and the siege was under way in earnest But apart from skirmishes and some artillery duels, initially the two armies scarcely engaged each other. In fact, it is entirely possible that the Prussians might have succumbed to a concerted, well-planned, and resolute offensive, had the French launched one early on, when they were still positioning themselves around the city. But no such undertaking was mounted. Rather, a siege mentality pervaded the government's thinking; far from mounting an offensive against the Prussians, the government eagerly hoped to reach an armistice with them. The Government of National Defense was already betraying a greater fear of its own armed people—particularly the workers—than of the artillery and infantry of the invaders it was expected to repel.

Although by their behavior most Parisian bourgeois exhibited little serious inclination to resist the Prussians, they bombastically declaimed their refusal to allow "even one inch" of French territory to pass to the enemy. It was generally assumed that some other military force would eventually rally to the capital's defense, most likely one gathered from the provinces. To organize such a force, an extension of the government was established some distance from Paris, in Tours, known as the Delegation of Tours. There was also some hope that a foreign power, such as England, might come to the aid of Paris and bring the insufferable investment of Europe's most glorious city to its rightful end. Favre and Thiers all but begged the English to provide assistance, even invoking the danger of a possible "red revolt" by an enemy more terrifying than even the Prussians, namely the revolutionary elements of the working class. But the Prussians had suffidendy intimidated Europe with their victory over the French to render international aid to Paris implausible, assuming it was ever contemplated.

In contrast to the passivity and defeatism of the government, the workers— or at least their most socially conscious leaders—were determined not to surrender the capital to the Prussians. On the contrary, they were eager to defend the new republic—the fruit of the most recent of France's revolutions—to the bitter end if necessary. With understandable suspicion, they regarded the government, with all its passivity, as treacherous and demanded that Paris continue to resist by calling a *levee en masse,* or general mobilization and arming of the population, such as the Jacobins had done in 1793. This demand was forcefully articulated on September 5, a day after the formation of the new government, when a delegation met with Gambetta at the Hotel de Ville. Composed of members of the Paris Council of the IWMA, the Trade Union Federation (a loosely formed group of *chambres syndicates),* and a miscellany of socialists, the delegation's demands

were not limited only to the military situation. In fact they bluntly called for municipal elections (stirring memories of the Commune of 1792–93) and, even more disturbingly, the substitution of the National Guard for the police, complete freedom of speech and the press, and the election of all judges.

Gambetta received them politely, but he was conspicuously evasive in his response. The next day the International, together with the trade unions, convened a meeting that was attended by 400 to 500 people. This meeting called upon Parisians to establish a defense and vigilance committee (so redolent of similar committees in the Great Revolution) in each of the twenty *arrondissements.* The committees, in turn, were to be coordinated by a Republican Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements for National Defense, consisting of four elected delegates from each local vigilance committee. These committees were duly formed over the next few days, under a Central Committee headed by Eugene Varlin. Significantly, the Central Committee met in the same building—a hall in the Rue de la Corderie—that housed the International and the Trade Union Federation and in time became a center for the most revolutionary tendencies in Paris. With the support of the unions, the Central Committee would virtually turn the "Corderie" (as it was called) into a dual power against the Government of National Defense.

Nor were the Committee and its supporters without a radical program. On September 15, members of the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements issued a proclamation that was posted on the walls of Paris, listing the full range of its demands.[141] In addition to the demands of September 5, it called for a complete inventory of all the essential commodities in the city, and demanded that these goods be shared equitably among the people according to need. Moreover, it called for the arming of all citizens (including the provision of ammunition), for placing the police under popular control, and for housing for all, including the "appropriation" of all empty apartments and buildings for "various defence services." Without explicitly using the language of the Great Revolution, it called for "national delegates" to be sent out to the departments, with functions similar to those of the old Representatives on Mission of 1793.

The government, fearful that the terror of 1793–94 would return—this time as a "red" specter, with an implicit challenge to property and exploitation— clearly viewed the Prussians as the lesser enemy and began to extend feelers for an armistice. In fact Favre, as the foreign minister, had already called for an armistice shortly after the Government of National Defense was established. On September 18, he secretly met with Bismarck, only to find the Prussian terms so demanding that he rode back to Paris in complete despair. Not only would Prussia require France to cede Alsace, parts of Lorraine, and Metz, as well as provide a huge indemnity, but even during the siege itself, Favre was warned, Paris would no longer have access to outside provisions unless the government gave up Strasbourg and permitted the Prussians to occupy Mont-Valerien, the massive French fort to the west of the city walls. The news of these terms incited widespread protests in the capital, and on September 20 the Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements sent a delegation to the Hotel de Ville to make known its objections to any armistice with the hated invaders. Even the ever- resourceful Thiers failed to persuade the Prussians to preserve French honor in the peace terms; indeed, he encountered the same difficulties that confronted Favre.

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[141] "First Proclamation of the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements" (September 15, 1870), in *The Communards of Paris, 1871,* ed. Stewart Edwards, Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 44–6.

In the fall of 1870, the people of Paris stood firm against the Prussians— although very much alone. On October 7, in the hope of mobilizing support from the rest of France for the defense of the capital, Gambetta left for Tours in a hot-air balloon (this was the only way he could cross the Prussian lines) to head the government's delegation there. Taking over the ministry of war from the elderly Cremieux, he bestirred the delegation's somnolent members with his usual bluster and energy and tried to mobilize new troops from the provinces to create an Army of the Loire. But until this force could prove itself to be effective in the field, Paris was still isolated militarily and politically. Indeed, to many of its citizens, it seemed that the city would be left to function as a sovereign municipality in its own right.

But what political structure would such a sovereign municipality have? Would it continue to be led by a politically mixed group of leaders who were committed to capitulation to the Prussians, as well as to a counterrevolutionary domestic agenda? Or would it be a Commune, revived for the first time since the Great Revolution, with a municipal council of elected representatives? Or would it be a direct democracy of the more radical kind, like the sectional democracy of 1793, which had variously supported and later opposed the old Commune?

The Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements now became the arena for a debate over the nature of the prospective Commune. With the support of many Blanquists, Gustave Lefrangais, one of the committee's most militant and socialistic members, bluntly demanded that a future Commune be structured around a direct democracy like that of 1793. The defense and vigilance committee of the eighteenth *arrondissement* declared in *Le Combat* of September 21 that "the *quartiers* are the fundamental base of the democratic Republic,"[142] thereby voicing a radical demand for mass democracy and the possible reconstruction of the old sections. In the end, however, moderates on the Central Committee succeeded in toning down this proposal: the final version, as published in *Le Combat* of October 5, simply called upon citizens to use their local assemblies as vehicles for the election of members to a citywide Municipal Council: "at your public meetings, in your arrondissement committees, in your National Guard battalions, right now you must select the men most worthy to represent you at the Hotel de Ville."[143] The proposal was not received enthusiastically by the Corderie—the International, the Trade Union Federation, and the National Guard Central Committee—but the idea of a Commune structured around sectional assemblies faded permanendy from the political horizon.

October, however, was to be filled with continued demonstradons and stormy events. On October 5, a young National Guard officer named Gustave Flourens (who had written an account of an ideal society in which "men, freed from their chains, governed themselves"[144]) led a march of Guard battalions to the Hotel de Ville, where he repeated the demands for a *levee en masse,* municipal elections, and a fair distribution of rations in the besieged city, only to be pleasandy escorted out by the government, which made no commitments. This escapade was followed three days later (October 8) by a demonstration, held by the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements, to demand municipal elections. As yet, few Parisians responded to the call, and the turnout was embarrassingly meager. Delighted by this failure, the government used the opportunity to ban demonstrations and postpone municipal elections until the siege was lifted, but as Stewart Edwards puts it, the defense and vigilance committees "were constandy crossing

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[142] *Le Combat* (September 21, 1870), quoted in Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 73.

[143] "Appeal to the Paris Population by the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements to Hold Elections," *Le Combat* (October 5, 1870), in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 47.

[144] Quoted in Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 72.

the border between active attempts to 'aid' the Government in conducting the defence and attempts to supplant the official administration because it was not vigorous enough" in pursuing the war.[145] By now it was only a matter of time before these small skirmishes would give rise to a major clash between the government and its radical critics.

The occasion for the clash was provided, in part, by the surrender of Metz to its Prussian besiegers. With nearly a 100,000 troops under his command, Marshal Bazaine had been quiedy sitting out the siege of the city by surrounding Prussian forces. A Bonapartist general, the marshal detested the republic, and when Louis Napoleon surrendered at Sedan, he had made little effort even to engage the Prussians, let alone raise the siege. Finally, on October 27, after seventy days, he capitulated to his besiegers—an act that freed an entire Prussian army to reinforce the siege of Paris and engage in operations against growing French provincial resistance. Everywhere across the French political spectrum, the cry of "treachery" went up—not only from the Left but from Gambetta himself, who openly denounced Bazaine as a traitor.

To exacerbate an already turbulent situation, at the end of October the government announced not only the fall of Metz but the news that Thiers was traveling abroad once again to seek an armistice with Bismarck. However much the announcement may have pleased the bourgeoisie, which was eager to return to businesslike normality, the news sent a shock wave through the city. The prospect of Paris falling as Metz had just done, of a Bazaine surrender followed by a Thiers armistice, was intolerable to the infuriated working and lower-middle classes, who alone seemed prepared to defend France against Prussian aggression.

At length, at midday on October 31, about 150,000 Parisians, many of them National Guards, gathered in the Place de Greve in pouring rain, furiously denouncing the military setback and crying "No armistice!" and "Vive *la Commune!*" The demonstration was spontaneous and so large that the mayors of the capital's *arrondissements* hastened to the Hotel de Ville to demand that the government call municipal elections, presumably to calm the situation and hold out hope to the demonstrators for the prospect of a Commune. The government, in turn, fearful that the huge demonstration would encourage radicals to take over the Hotel de Ville, beat the *rappel* in the bourgeois districts of the capital, hopefully to rally the reliable or "good" battalions of the National Guard to its defense. But even these "good" battalions failed to respond. Indeed, it now seemed that almost everyone in Paris was fed up with the treachery of Trochu's coterie in the Hotel de Ville, if not the entire Government of National Defense.

For his part, the hot-headed Gustave Flourens decided that the demonstration had created an opportunity for establishing a Commune. Despite the objections of his more prudent fellow officers, he took it upon himself to rally his Belleville battalions of the National Guard—they included a contingent of sharpshooters equipped at his own expense with *chassepot* rifles—in an advance on the Hotel de Ville, clearly with the intention of deposing the existing government and replacing it with a revolutionary Commune composed of, among others, Delescluze, Blanqui, the radical republican Felix Pyat, the socialist Jean-Baptiste Milliere, and, oddly, Victor Hugo (who declined the honor as soon as he learned of it).

Meanwhile in the early afternoon, a rumor—wrong, as it turned out—spread among the demonstrators that Mayor Arago had consented to call municipal elections and that Trochu would be replaced as president of the government by Pierre Dorian, the more popular minister of works. Viewing the concession on municipal elections as a victory, the crowd now began

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[145] Ibid., p. 71.

to disperse, and the situation once again seemed under control. Suddenly Flourens and his sharpshooters burst into the room in the Hotel de Ville where the government was meeting, leaped up on to the long baize table around which the members were seated, and flamboyandy began to march up and down, his spurs tearing the fabric. He firmly demanded the formation of a Commune, to which he gave the chilling name Committee of Public Safety, and he furnished the ministers with his list of committee members. In their eyes, the names Blanqui and Delescluze might just as well have been Robespierre and Saint-Just.

At six-thirty Blanqui, learning that he had been anointed for the new Commune, very reluctandy appeared at the Hotel de Ville but with his usual decisiveness quickly sat down to write decrees, requisitioning food and closing the city's gates, lest the Prussians take advantage of the disarray in the city and attack. When the remaining members arrived—Delescluze, Milliere, and Pyat, among others—it seemed that a "red republic" had indeed been established, with Blanqui and Delescluze at the helm. But as it turned out, the appearance was entirely deceptive and provided the occasion that the government needed to strike back at the Parisian Left.

The table upon which Flourens was striding collapsed when a defender of the government leaped up to challenge him. In the general melee that followed, Trochu, as well as other ministers, escaped from the room and, making their way to the Louvre, where their panicky supporters were assembling, laid plans to retake the Hotel de Ville. In the meantime, the news that the city hall had been seized by "the reds" galvanized middle-class opinion in favor of the government. By early evening contingents of "good" bourgeois National Guards appeared before the Hotel de Ville and demanded of Delescluze, who had come out to parley, that the building be evacuated. In return, they said that the government's promise to hold municipal elections would be scrupulously kept. Delescluze returned inside to tell his fellow insurgents of the proposal and persuade them to leave. Meanwhile Mobile Guards, who had been brought to the scene by the government, infiltrated the building by passing through a little-known subterranean passageway from a nearby barracks. The would-be Commune established by Flourens was now in a hopeless situation, facing hostile National Guards outside the building and *mobiles* within.

Peace was finally established when the government agreed to call municipal elections the very next day and promised to take no reprisals against the confused insurgents. This agreement was vouchsafed by Jules Ferry and Adam, the police prefect. Finally, at three o'clock on the morning of November 1, the leaders of both sides amiably walked out of the city hall arm in arm—Blanqui with General Tamasier (the commander of the National Guard), Delescluze with Dorian, and so forth—each insurgent linked with a military or government leader. After politely shaking hands with their opposites in the nearly empty Place de Greve, the insurgents wisely hastened to the Belleville, there to find safety from the reprisals that were certain to follow if the government broke its agreement

THE WINTER OF REACTION

Needless to say, less than twenty-four hours after the agreement was made, the government broke it. Before Prefect Adam was even awake the next morning, a ruthless crackdown against the insurgents was under way. Orders were issued for the immediate arrest of Blanqui, Delescluze, Pyat, Flourens, and Milliere, among others. (Blanqui managed to elude the authorities for several months, as did his second in command, Gustave Tridon, and the future leader of the Blanquists in the 1880s, Edouard Vaillant.)

Creditably, Adam angrily resigned his post in protest over this breach of promise. He was replaced by a far less honorable police prefect, Cresson, who proceeded to ferret out insurgent leaders. Rochefort also resigned, as could have been expected, while the honorable General Tamasier turned in his command of the National Guard. He was replaced by the reactionary General Clement Thomas, who promptly cashiered sixteen of the more radical Guard commanders. On November 3, almost as an afterthought, the government defaulted on its promise to hold municipal elections by conducting a mere vote of confidence. In this Bonaparte-style plebiscite, it received 560,000 affirmative votes as against 63,000 negative ones. The plebiscite was followed the next day by an election simply for *arrondissement* mayors—and beyond these steps the government refused to budge.

With the failure of the October 31 insurgency at the Hotel de Ville, the influence of the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements quickly waned, and the members of the defense and vigilance committees disappeared into their respective republican, Jacobin, and Blanquist clubs, which for their part underwent a sudden revival. Clubs such as the Club des Montagnards and Club de la Patrie en Danger (both Blanquist) and the Club de la Commune (Jacobin) replaced the *arrondissement* committees and the public assemblies that had grown up around them. In a sense, the Parisian militants were becoming more politicized and revolutionary, a change that would not become evident until the beginning of 1871.

In the meantime, the pressure mounted on Trochu, as commander of the defense of Paris, to carry out an offensive against the Prussians, who seemed to be waiting patiently for the siege to starve the city into submission. This pressure was inspired in part by Gambetta's efforts to raise an army in the provinces, efforts that were now showing some success. On November 9, in an engagement against Bavarian forces, his troops won the first French victory in the war, recapturing the city of Orleans. Indeed, had the cavalry pressed its advantage over the retreating Prussian forces, the French army might very well have routed them completely.

As much as the news of Gambetta's success delighted Paris, it threw Trochu's own plans for a military offensive into disarray. The general had massed a large army with considerable equipment in the northwestern part of the capital and planned to break through the Prussian lines—which were weak in this sector—and try to drive toward the Channel ports. But having captured Orleans in the south, Gambetta now demanded that Trochu link up his forces with those of the Army of the Loire, which required that Trochu transport all his troops and supplies across the city to the southwestern part of the capital— where the Prussians were very numerous and well entrenched. Nor could Trochu take the Prussians by surprise there: the movement of a large French army across an open city could easily be seen from the high ground outside the besieged capital.

On November 29, having obliged Gambetta and moved his troops and supplies to the southwest despite his own doubts, Trochu initiated a "great sortie" against the Prussian forces to the south. It was a disaster. Despite the undeniable courage of the French troops, everything seemed to work against them: the weather, which had swollen the Mame to flood level (which they then had to cross under Prussian fire), the lack of command coordination, the poor logistics, and the treacherous terrain, which gave the Prussians the high ground, all assured a complete rout. The fighting was bloody, presaging the kind of losses the French would suffer in the First World War— in only three days of combat, they lost some 12,000 men and officers. The results for the French were pitiful: the siege was still intact, and to add insult to injury, Orleans was soon recaptured by

counterattacking Prussians, causing Gambetta to shift his government from Tours to Bordeaux, farther to the south of France.

With the arrival of the winter months, the siege of Paris now took its terrible toll in hunger, disease, and cold. Although wealthy Parisians still had access to premium foodstuffs, the poor, already accustomed to horsemeat, were reduced to eating dogs, cats, and even rats. So high were prices, especially of necessities, that Blanqui's newspaper, *La Patrie en danger,* folded on December 8, due in part to the limited resources of his subscribers. Although few adults actually succumbed to outright starvation, long lines of small coffins, containing the bodies of children, moved in a steady train to the Pere Lachaise cemetery.

Military failures now brought the Government of National Defense and the people of Paris into open conflict. The government was desperate for an armistice, in marked contrast to most Parisians, who astonishingly were still prepared to fight on against the Prussians. On December 21, compelled by popular opinion, Trochu launched a second "sortie" toward the northeast, this time in bitterly cold weather. This attack, too, failed miserably, at a cost of 2,000 casualties, removing whatever remaining confidence Parisians had in the government and especially in Trochu. On December 27, intensifying the demoralization that had settled into the city, the Prussians began to bombard Paris—barely a week after the failed sortie. For several weeks shells fell on the capital at the rate of 300 to 400 daily, mosdy exploding in the Left Bank, where they did surprisingly little damage. Indeed, no more than 97 people were actually killed and 278 wounded, and by early January, Parisians were taking the bombardment in their stride, as a routine and virtually harmless assault.

What really plunged the city into despair was the lack of fuel. The winter of 1870–71 was the most brutal in memory, and virtually every tree in the parks and along the avenues of Paris was cut down to provide warmth. The weekly death rate from infections (principally smallpox, typhoid, and respiratory ailments) soared from 1,200 during the first week of the siege to 4,444 between January 14 and 21. The prestige of the Government of National Defense had reached its nadir, and it was only a matter of time before Parisian workers would try to replace it with a Commune. Indeed, on January 6 the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements plastered Paris with an *affiche rouge* (or "red poster"), declaring that "the Municipality or the Commune, whatever one chooses to call it, is the only salvation of the people, their only guarantee against destruction," and it closed with the call: "MAKE WAY FOR THE commune!"[146]

Anticipating that an uprising was in the offing, the blundering government cynically decided to bleed the National Guard by sending it out on a completely useless sortie. Having abandoned all hope of lifting the siege, the government had made no effort to train the Guards, whose main function had been crowd control, for combat in open warfare against a highly disciplined and well- officered foreign army. To send them out against the Prussians, who had already routed well-trained regular armies, was a transparent attempt to teach revolutionary Paris a bloody lesson. As one member of the government is quoted as declaring, "there must be a big sortie of the National Guard because opinion will only be appeased when there are 10,000 National Guards dead on the ground."[147]

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[146] Poster Issued by the Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements, January 6, 1871, in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 49.

[147] A A Ducrot, *La Defense de Paris (1870–1871),* vol. 4 (Paris, 1875–78), quoted in Edwards, *Paris Commune,* pp. 104–5.

Surprisingly, despite this lack of training, the National Guards were eager to take up arms against the enemy. Filled with patriotic and revolutionary ardor, they hoped to overcome the Prussians with an overwhelming "torrential" charge, or *sortie torrentielle,* sweeping them away by sheer force of numbers and bayoneted rifles. The sortie, directed against Buzenval, to the west of the city, began on January 19—and from the start, the Guards were badly coordinated and plagued by delays. They were faced with the logistical nightmare of getting as many as a 100,000 men across two narrow bridges. Within a short time, the attack degenerated into confusion. Ironically, only a few National Guard battalions were sent into the heat of battle, bourgeois units rather than popular ones. Once Trochu decided that the National Guard had had enough of combat and bloodshed, he quickly ordered them to retreat—an order that astonished the popular battalions, who had hardly had a chance to take on the Prussians. When it was noticed that most of the sortie's six hundred casualties were from the bourgeois units, the rumor spread that the bourgeois units had fought with heroism, while the popular units had behaved with cowardice—a falsehood that only contributed to divisiveness among the Guards and their overall anger toward Trochu and his government

Ordinary Parisians, in turn, were infuriated by the fact that the Guards had scarcely been permitted to see battle. The government was more detested than ever, by nearly all sectors of popular opinion. In their outrage, the Jacobins of the Republican Alliance, led by veterans of 1848 such as Delescluze and Ledru- Rollin, even made sympathetic overtures to the largely Blanquist "reds" of Belleville and Montmartre, offering to join forces in a common alliance against the government. No such alliance was actually made, and the Belleville revolutionaries decided that the time for an uprising against the government was finally at hand.

On the night of January 21, a public meeting of Club de la Revolution in Montmartre solemnly vowed to take the Hotel de Ville at noon on the following day. (The government had shifted its proceedings to the safety of the Louvre, but the Commune, it was felt, could not properly be proclaimed anywhere but in the city hall.) When other groups were told of this solemn oath, they responded warily; the International and the Trade Union Federation, convinced that the time was not right for a *journee,* did not join them, while the Republican Alliance, which opposed socialism, decided to content itself with making a plea for municipal elections. Even Blanqui kept his distance from the uprising, regarding the attack as hopeless, although he went to a cafe near the Hotel de Ville to observe it, as did Delescluze elsewhere near the Place de Greve.

If the time for a full-scale uprising had not yet arrived, however, the idea did have a measure of popular support. So thoroughly disgusted was the population with the government that when the National Guard commander sounded the *rappel* summoning the Guards to come out against the uprising, very few responded. At noon on January 22 the most radical Guard battalions showed up at the Place de Greve, not to defend the government but to take it over in alliance with the young Blanquists Vaillant and Theophile Ferre, and the Internationalist Benoit Malon. Not unexpectedly, the anarchist Louise Michel, an unfailing insurgent, also appeared in her customary National Guard uniform, with rifle in hand.

To guard the city hall, the government had left behind contingents of Mobile Guards within the building. These *mobiles* were not Parisians: deeply religious Catholics who barely spoke French, they had been recruited from Brittany and dutifully hated the atheistic, dissolute, and urbane Parisians. Barely had Vaillant, Ferre, and Malon's National Guards been reinforced by the radical battalions, when the *mobiles* suddenly opened fire from the windows—not only on the Guards but on everyone in sight, including bystanders. The murderous firing continued for

a full half hour before it came to an end, leaving thirty dead and at least as many wounded. The National Guards tried to return their fire from neighboring houses but were completely routed.

Up to this point in the siege, no blood had been shed between Parisians, but at least two score workers had now been shot down by troops of the Government of National Defense, a toll that was impossible to overlook So extreme was the polarization that civil war between the government and the people was now a realistic possibility. Immediately, General Joseph Vinoy, who had just replaced Trochu as commander of the Paris garrison, outlawed the clubs, suspended the newspapers of Delescluze and Pyat, and ordered the mass arrest of known and suspected revolutionaries. It was clear to all that the siege, if it continued, would lead to Parisians turning their weapons on each other. Accordingly, the next day Favre visited Bismarck at Versailles, where the German command was ensconced, and on January 28 the Government of National Defense put an end to the four-month siege by signing an ostensible armistice that was in fact a capitulation to the Prussian army. The siege was to be lifted, and Paris was to receive food and other provisions from outside, but at a price that was very high. The Government of National Defense was obliged to pay the Prussians an armistice indemnity of 200 million francs, followed by a full indemnity, whose amount would be set in formal peace negotiations. Paris was to surrender its perimeter forts, and a National Assembly was to be convened at Bordeaux within three weeks, to negotiate the final peace treaty with the Prussians. The French army was permitted to retain only one division within the walls of the capital. The National Guards were allowed to keep their arms, but only because, as Favre fully realized, any attempt to disarm them would certainly lead to an open civil war.

When the harsh terms of the armistice were made known, they infuriated the capital. Gambetta, who had been kept in the dark about the armistice negotiations and was still mobilizing the Army of the Loire, went into a rage; after much soul-searching, he resigned, filled with hatred for the monarchists on whom he blamed the detestable agreement. The radical workers were equally outraged, which created a problem for the government, since the *arrondissements* had acquired so much political and administrative autonomy during the four months of the siege that the revolutionary sectors of Paris were now a force to be reckoned with, especially since the National Guard was still under arms. As Stewart Edwards notes:

> The war ... had broken up the political forces of repression so gready relied on by the highly centralized system of government in France. Instead the Paris population had begun to assert itself. It was also a population that was armed, and the National Guard did not feel it had been defeated. On the contrary, it was spoiling for a fight and needed little to turn it completely against a Government that was held to have betrayed the nation. This frustrated patriotism was important in providing a general animosity which extended to a wider section of the population than just the regular revolutionaries.[148]

The air in Paris was fraught with tension, and only by showing some understanding and making some concessions to the long-suffering working class could the powers in control of the city avoid a bloody confrontation with the masses.

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[148] Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 113.

THE COMING STORM

No such understanding was shown or concessions made. Instead, the government set February 8 as the day for elections to the National Assembly, which would negotiate the final treaty. The Paris clubs were permitted to reopen only as electoral organizations, in order to present their Assembly candidates. Once again, as occurred so often in the past when Parisian radicalism became too menacing, the government tried to counter it by holding Assembly elections, which would invariably permit the peasants to determine the policy of the country. This time the peasantry would be joined by many members of the lower middle class, who had had all they could take of the war.

The voting results were as disastrous as they had been in April 1848, and far worse than even the most pessimistic Parisian revolutionaries could have anticipated. Out of 675 deputies, the country at large returned about 400 Legitimists and Orleanists. Despite the fact that France was a republic, only 150 authentic republican deputies were elected. Far from recognizing the legitimate complaints and needs of the Parisian working classes, rural France took its revenge on them by filling the Assembly with upper-class reactionaries and bourgeois elements.

Not even Paris as a whole acquitted itself well. Parisian voters accorded Louis Blanc the single largest number of votes, followed by Victor Hugo, Garibaldi (who had fought in support of France against Prussia), Edgar Quinet (a romantic nationalist), Gambetta, Rochefort, Delescluze, Ledru-Rollin, Milliere, and the Proudhonist Jerome Langlois. Of the "revolutionary socialist slate" put forth by the "Corderie"—namely the International in alliance with the Delegation of the Twenty Arrondissements (as the guiding body of the vigilance committees was now renamed)—the only candidates elected to the Assembly were those whose names also appeared on the slates of other groups, such as Garibaldi, Gambon, Pyat, Tolain, and Malon. Blanqui, the most important of the socialist nominees, received only 50,000 votes—which was not enough to earn him even the last place in the list of Parisian deputies to the Assembly. Although Thiers received a deservedly low vote in Paris, he headed the list in twenty-six provincial departments of the country.

The National Assembly that convened at Bordeaux on February 13 was not only reactionary but unruly and spiteful. It selected Thiers as chief of state, whereupon the old Orleanist formed a determinedly conservative government, composed of monarchists and, for decorative reasons, moderate republicans. So suffused was the Assembly with venom toward all liberal, let alone radical, deputies, that the moment Garibaldi tried to speak, the delegates rose from their seats and tried to silence him with shouts of "No Italian!" and "No Garibaldi!" When spectators in the chamber's galleries protested this treatment, diey were rudely cleared from the chamber. Garibaldi, in turn, left with them and returned to Italy in sheer disgust.

Thereafter the Assembly, faced with Bismarck's February 19 deadline, turned to the issue of a peace treaty. It was hardly necessary for Thiers to warn the deputies that he would resign if the German terms were not met; the Assembly accepted the terms he had negotiated with little hesitation. These terms required France to give to Bismarck Alsace, Lorraine, Metz, and Strasbourg, as well as five billion gold francs as the full indemnity, and to permit the Germans to conduct a military parade through the French capital, as part of a token occupation of the city. Indeed, until the indemnity was paid in full, the German troops would occupy the northern part of France, including the outskirts of Paris. The treaty, with all these humiliating stipulations, was ratified by a staggering majority vote of 546 to 107.

The Assembly now turned its attention to Paris, with a degree of hostility that it had not shown toward the Prussians. To many rural deputies—or ruraux, as they were called—the capital was a far greater danger than a foreign occupying army. General d'Aurelle de Paladines, a violendy anti- Parisian Bonapartist, was named as commander of the Paris National Guard, and Blanqui and Flourens, among others, were sentenced to death for their roles in the October 31 uprising. Six left-wing journals were proscribed, and the one-and-a-half-franc daily wage for National Guard service was voided, a decision that would make it virtually impossible for working-class members to remain in the militia.

But the most provocative behavior of the Assembly—and, in terms of its own goal of quelling the Parisian workers, the stupidest—was the passage of a series of acts so punitive that they ultimately delivered over the most politically indifferent sectors of the lower middle classes, let alone the workers, to the Left During the siege, the poorest of the poor had been obliged, to keep themselves alive, to deposit goods (often little more than mattresses and the scissors of seamstresses) in the state-run pawnshop, Mont de Piete. To protect these items, a moratorium had been placed on the selling of unredeemed goods. The Assembly, with insensate cruelty, now abolished the moratorium, so that any items that were not instantly redeemed by their owners would be put up for sale. In a second act, the Assembly allowed landlords to immediately claim from their impoverished tenants all the back rent that had come due to them during the terrible months of the siege. And as if these measures were not brutal enough to infuriate the poorer sectors of Paris, the Assembly delivered its *coup de grace:* during the economically grim months of the war, when few could afford the basic means of life, Parisian shopkeepers, independent artisans, and small merchants had had to depend on promissory notes *(echeances)* from their customers. The Assembly now decreed that these had to be fully paid, with interest, within four months.

Just as the forty-five-centime tax of 1848 had infuriated the peasantry, the Assembly's abrogation of the credit moratorium now infuriated the middle classes. Innumerable small entrepreneurs who had built up a crushing backlog of loans were faced with the complete loss of their livelihood. Middle-class Parisians, many of whom had formerly regarded the workers, unemployed and poor as "rabble," now joined forces with the poor, bringing the middle class back into an alliance with the workers. In fact, the Assembly made it clear that it viewed the very existence of a republic in France as merely "provisional," implying that the gains of the September 4 uprising might soon be annulled and a monarchy restored. Having done their handiwork, these malicious reactionaries, presided over by Thiers, adjourned, to meet again on March 20 in Versailles.

More than any single factor, the Assembly's behavior (which frustrated even Thiers) revived the radicals of Paris. The clubs came back to life with renewed vigor, and during February 20 and 23, a general meeting of the Delegation of the Twenty Arrondissements adopted a resolution to create a Revolutionary Socialist Party. The avowed aim of the new party was

> the abolition of the privileges of the bourgeoisie, its elimination as a ruling caste and the advent of the workers to political power. In a word, social equality: no more employers, no more proletariat, no more classes."[149]

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[149] "Formation by the Vigilance Committees of a 'Revolutionary Socialist party'" (February 20 and 23, 1871), in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 54.

It would difficult not to see the hand of the International in this resolution. A meeting of delegates from the local vigilance committees approved the document, and membership in a vigilance committee now became contingent on acceptance of the resolution.

At the same time, the National Guard began to form its own decidedly leftist federation. After the armistice, some 140,000 people, mainly from the well-to-do classes of Paris, had fled the hardships of the city for the provinces, appreciably reducing the number of bourgeois or "good" National Guards. On February 6, the popular battalions sent delegates to a general meeting that endorsed the most radical of the republican candidates for the Assembly. At a second meeting, on February 16, they laid the basis for a Federation of the Paris National Guard, whose existence was confirmed a week later by 2,000 delegates from the majority of the battalions. This step-by-step process of consolidation was completed on March 15, when delegates to the new Federation of the National Guard established an officially mandated Central Committee, consisting of representatives from battalions in more than half of the *arrondissements.* Significantly, at the same time many local Guard battalions were forming their own committees to maintain a vigil in all the *arrondissements* of the capital, ready to alert Paris to any attempt by the Prussians to enter the city—and any attempt to disarm the city.

The Guard Federation was now the most formidable citizen army in France, numbering perhaps 200,000 armed men—or *federes,* as they preferred to call themselves, following in the traditions of the Great Revolution—with more than 200 cannons at their disposal. In late February and early March, what remained of the official government in Paris had collapsed, and the Guard Federation, with its Central Committee, and its members drawn from various local committees, effectively became the real government in the capital. Indeed, the Federation and its Central Committee now constituted themselves into an independent power—a revolutionary *dual* power—that, as Thiers and his government properly saw, had the potential to replace the official government. As long as the Central Committee remained a dual power, civil war with the new government, now based in Versailles, was inevitable. The sole question that faced Thiers and the *Versaillais* (as the government and the National Assembly came to be called) was the specific circumstances that would bring this latent conflict into the open.

Chapter 31. The Paris Commune of 1871

The peace treaty between Bismarck and the National Assembly, it has been noted, permitted the Prussian army to stage a formal march into the French capital on March 1 and "occupy" it (more as a symbolic gesture than a reality) until the first payment on the indemnity was met—which the national government prompdy proceeded to pay. Prior to the parade, Parisians furiously debated whether they should violendy resist this military insult to the city or treat it with disdainful indifference. After much discussion in the Central Committee of the National Guard and the Delegation of the Twenty Arrondissements, it was wisely decided not to provoke the Prussians, who, after their parade, confined their occupation of Paris to the north of the capital's perimeter.

At the same time, the more radical sectors of the populace were mindful that Thiers and his government were only too eager to disarm Paris, indeed to disband any potentially revolutionary National Guard units that might challenge the authority of the National Assembly over the French capital. Accordingly, workers in Paris began to seize weapons wherever they were stored,

especially the *chassepdts* and early machine guns, or *mitrailleuses,* that had been denied to radical Guard battalions during the siege. Above all, they began to collect the cannons that had been parked in the middle-class districts of western Paris for use against the Prussians. Since large numbers of these cannons had been purchased by patriotic popular subscription, they were now seen as, by all rights, belonging to the people. Hence the cannons in the western half of Paris were dragged by them across the city and installed on the working-class heights of Belleville and Montmartre, presumably to keep them out of the clutches of the Prussians.

Ironically, the peace treaty was to prove very serviceable to the radicals in Paris. Not only did it give them the excuse they needed to park as many cannons as they could in the eastern working-class areas, but inasmuch as the agreement between Thiers and Bismarck obliged the French national government to significantly reduce its garrison in the capital to some 60,000 men, most of the French army regulars in and around the city were demobilized. As a result, the largest military force remaining in Paris was the National Guard—which had been allowed, under the terms of the earlier armistice, to keep all of its weapons. The army demobilization left some 200,000 well-trained line soldiers and *mobiles* in the city without income, and although many of them returned to their home provinces, others remained behind and fraternized with the National Guard, in many cases joining its ranks.

If the National Assembly had ever had any possibility of regaining the cannons from the potential insurgents in Paris, it had foreclosed it when it ended the moratorium on rental payments and overdue loans. Having just emerged from an agonizing siege, ordinary Parisians were now expected to make payments that they could not possibly afford. On March 15, as we have seen, the National Guard angrily responded to these provocations by forming a Federation of its local battalions and electing a guiding Central Committee. This Central Committee was determined to keep the cannons in Paris under its own control. Negotiations between the Central Committee and the National Assembly—mediated by the *arrondissement* mayors—ultimately failed, and the city's artillery remained in the hands of the people.

THE CANNONS OF MONTMARTRE

Thiers fully understood that the cannons had to be removed and Paris disarmed if the government was to exercise control over the capital. On March 16 he arrived in Paris with his ministers, and a day later, at a government council meeting, they formulated a plan to seize the cannons in the working- class districts. Regiments of line troops were to occupy all the major squares, buildings, railroad stations, bridges, and strategic points in the center and eastern half of the capital. Generals Lecomte and Paturel were to enter the city from the north and scale the steep heights of Montmartre and Belleville, which together had 245 cannons out of the 417 guns held by the Guard. It is apparent that Thiers intended not only to confiscate the Guard's artillery but to establish military control over revolutionary Paris, stationing troops in considerable force in strategic positions and, if necessary, subduing any resistance in the working- class districts. The police were authorized to arrest and imprison some thirty members of the Central Committee and to seize every known radical that they could find in the capital.

The success of Thiers's coup would depend entirely on secrecy, speed, and surprise. At three a.m. on March 18, while most of Paris was asleep, the troops were ordered out of their barracks, without even eating breakfast, and swifdy marched to their assigned positions. When they arrived at the artillery park at Montmartre, they found it poorly guarded and occupied it easily, taking

complete possession of the guns. They then settled down to await the horses that were to come to cart them away. Owing to a lack of coordination as well as horses, however, the soldiers found themselves waiting for hours.

At dawn, the unsuspecting neighborhood around them began to stir. Incredibly, the soldiers were still sitting in the park as late as eight a.m., famished and chilled by the night mist Many men had left their posts and weapons to get something to eat at the opening bistros. No sooner did the working-class women emerge from their houses and see the soldiers than they set off a furious alarm—Louise Michel ran though the neighborhood, calling out the National Guard, who quickly arrived in their kepis and assembled in columns to protect the artillery. The demoralized regular soldiers were no more eager to fight the Guards than the Guards were eager to fight them When General Lecomte ordered his men to fire, they flady refused, and troops on both sides began to fraternize. The entire operation soon collapsed. By nine in the morning, government soldiers, National Guards, and workers—female as well as male—were toasting each other and the republic in joyous celebration.

Thiers's foray into the revolutionary heart of Paris had been a complete fiasco. Allowing for minor variations, much the same story was repeated throughout the city, either horses came too late to be used, or National Guards were alerted in time to prevent the government troops from seizing the cannons. Everywhere soldiers of the line fraternized with the Guards. The Parisians' victory was not entirely bloodless, to be sure—it cost the life of General Clement Thomas, the former Guard commander who, dressed in civilian clothing, had been drawn into the streets out of curiosity. There he was recognized and pursued by a crowd who remembered his bloody role in repressing the *journee* of May 15, more than two decades earlier. Despite earnest efforts by National Guards to protect him—he was a republican now— he was killed, as was General Lecomte, who had provocatively unsheathed his sword against an angry crowd. An autopsy later revealed that dozens of bullets from army *chassqjots* accounted for their deaths, which suggests that they had been shot by troops. This evidence notwithstanding, Thiers would claim that they had been brutally murdered by the "reds" of Paris.

At three in the afternoon, Thiers and his ministers convened at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where they decided that, in the light of the fiasco, the government would evacuate the dty. Suddenly, looking down from a window, the minister of war saw a battalion of National Guards marching in the street below. Fearing that the Guards intended to capture them, all the ministers were thrown into a panic. Although the Guard battalion marched past the Ministry, with no inkling of the haul they could have scooped up by taking the building, the ministers scattered in different directions. Thiers, scurrying down the back stairs to a carriage and cavalry escort, paused only to confirm the order to evacuate the capital, then made his way as quickly as possible to Versailles.

Despite furious opposition from Jules Ferry, the mayor of Paris, and by some of the *arrondissement* mayors, Thiers's decision to abandon the capital was irrevocable. Behind it lay a strategy that the chief of state had advocated as far back as 1848, when in the last days of Louis-Philippe's reign he had urged the king to retreat with all his troops outside the capital, regroup his forces, and then return to retake the city in a bloody conquest. Where Louis-Philippe had declined to follow his advice, Thiers himself was now free to carry it out himself. Once he had built up his forces at Versailles, his hand, Thiers reasoned, would be free to eliminate the revolutionary "pest" once and for all. As time was soon to reveal, he considered the Parisian working class to be little more than vermin who had to be ruthlessly driven back to their holes in the slums.

PARIS UNDER THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Once the ministers had departed, control over Paris and its environs, for all practical purposes, lay in the hands of the Central Committee of the National Guard Federation. Barely had the government fled, however, when the Committee, apparently stunned by its own success, performed the first of the many blunders that were to mark its actions—or lack of them—during the two weeks when it was the governing body in Paris, with potentially enormous power. It did virtually nothing against the fleeing government or its troops. Even as Thiers and his cabinet were hurrying to Versailles, the Committee behaved as though it were faced with the need to defend itself. Rather than mount an attack to crush its opponents, the Committee ordered the Guard's battalion officers to build barricades to protect themselves against an attack, indeed to withdraw if the government undertook a resolute assault.

On the following Sunday night, March 19, the Central Committee convened at the Hotel de Ville to decide on its next step. Two energetic Blanquists, Emile Eudes, a steelworker, and Paul Brunei, a student, called on the Committee to make an immediate attack upon the retreating and demoralized government troops and march on Versailles, demands that were supported by the Montmartre committee of the National Guard. At the very least, the two Blanquists demanded that the city gates be closed—as Blanqui himself had ordered during the attempted coup of October 31—to prevent the troops from escaping to Versailles. Lissagaray, whose *History of the Commune of 1871* has long been regarded by the Left as the official account of the Commune, notes that at the very time of the Committee's meeting, "files of soldiers were still marching off [to Versailles] through the gates of the left bank."[150] Had the Central Committee mounted such an attack on Thiers's fleeing troops, it is fairly certain that the Guards could have defeated them and taken Versailles. Indeed, as Edwards observes,

The retreat of the army to Versailles was chaotic. The troops were insubordinate to their officers, and it was only the gendarmes who could keep some sort of order. So hasty was the withdrawal that several regiments were forgotten and left stranded in Paris.[151]

Possibly because the two Blanquists were too young to be treated with the respect that their mentor had earned by his long years of experience and imprisonment, their pleas were ignored. Lissagaray describes how their demands to immediately march on Versailles were answered: "No. We have only the mandate to secure the rights of Paris. If the provinces share our views, let them imitate our example."[152] The Committee, apparently suffering a disastrous failure of nerve, gave every excuse it could muster for doing almost nothing. Far from mounting an attack, it procrastinated, even allowing the demoralized Versailles troops to retreat by failing to close the city's gates.

Moreover, most of the forts, which had originally been held by regular army troops outside the city during the war, were unoccupied. It seems not to have occurred to the National Guard at least to claim Mont-Valerien, the most important stronghold in the whole Parisian defensive system, while it could still be easily taken. Indeed, for two whole days it lay virtually unoccupied; not until Monday did Thiers's forces take over this vital outpost and foreclose the possibility that the Central Committee could claim it.

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[150] Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, *History of the Commune of 1871,* trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), p. 91. Lissagaray was a participant in the Commune.

[151] Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (New York Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 150.

[152] Lissagaray, *History of the Commune,* p. 90.

What the Central Committee lacked that Sunday night and for much of its remaining existence was the presence of Louis-Auguste Blanqui, who had acted so decisively in the uprising the previous October. But Blanqui, still at large since that failure, had finally been captured by the government in the provinces on March 17, only a day before the attack upon Montmartre and Belleville. Thiers, who was only too familiar with Blanqui's resoluteness, would keep him imprisoned throughout the entire period of the Commune. Perhaps more than anyone else, he knew that no one could have better given it clear direction, at least in military affairs, than the old revolutionary.

In fact, few revolutionary institutions were more confused about their immediate goals and functions than the Central Committee of the National Guard Federation. As Lissagaray observes, the Committee "saw not—very few saw as yet—that this was a death struggle with the Assembly at Versailles."[153] Instead, hesitant, overly cautious, and reluctant to confront Thiers and the National Assembly, it was preoccupied with clarifying the scope of its own powers and its own legal status. Finally the members decided to call, as quickly as possible, for the election of a Commune to replace their own Committee. Thus, in its "Appeal to the Departments," the Committee declared that its "existing powers are essentially provisional, and will be replaced by an elected Communal Council."[154] At a dme when the Committee should have been subduing Thiers, it issued a statement limiting its own authority.

"Let the provinces therefore hasten to imitate the example of the capital by organizing themselves in a republican fashion," the "Appeal" continued. Herein, as Edwards emphasizes, lay another of the great failings of the Paris Commune of 1871: the parochial mentality of its officers and men. On the afternoon of March 18, when the Central Committee was busy issuing defensive orders to Guard battalions and ordering the battalions of the seventeenth and eighteenth *arrondissements* to take the Place de Vendome, "the local commanders hesitated to lead their men into the centre of Paris away from the safety of their own districts," Edwards notes dryly.[155] And indeed it was not until eight that evening, nearly six hours after the order was given, that the battalions had moved toward the plaza in the heart of the capital. Moreover, the Central Committee's strategic vision of a revolution, in many cases, did not extend further than the immediate neighborhoods in which its members lived, let alone beyond the walls of Paris. As in June 1848 they were imbued with a notion of revolutionary spontaneity that precluded any serious attempt to give their revolutions guidance, still less direction.

The Committee's "Appeal to the Departments" also reveals the nature of the political thinking that guided the members of the Committee. After calling upon the provinces to imitate the capital, it declared: "We have only one hope, one end: the safety of the country and the final triumph of the democratic Republic, one and indivisible."[156] Like many other proclamations of the Central Committee and of the Commune that followed it, the "Appeal" echoes the republican appeals of the Great Revolution more than the class-oriented proclamations of the June insurgents of 1848.

But in a less tepid and more class-oriented vein, Central Committee delegates to the government's *Journal officiel* declared that

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[153] Ibid., p. 92.

[154] "Appeal to the Departments," *Journal ojfiael* (March 20, 1871), quoted in Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 155.

[155] Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 146.

[156] Ibid., p. 155.

the proletarians of the capital, faced with the incompetence and treachery of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has come for them to save the situation by taking direction of public affairs ... Will the workers, who produce everything and enjoy nothing in return, who endure poverty in the midst of wealth which they have produced by the sweat of their brow, always be subjected to abuse? ... The proletariat, faced with a constant threat to its rights, a total denial of all its legitimate aspirations, along with the imminent destruction of the country and of all its hopes, has realized that it is its imperative duty and absolute right to take its destiny in its own hands by seizing political power.[157]

The two statements seem strangely at odds with each other. The first emphasizes civic autonomy and political rights, speaking to the citizens of Paris in the same way that the Great Revolution addressed *"la Nation,"* without any reference to economic or class issues. The second statement speaks to a specific oppressed class, the "proletariat," referring to the bitter economic war between workers and their exploiters. Since these two classes could hardly be expected to live amicably together under the existing economy, let alone share the management of a municipality, the statement stakes out a claim for the proletariat to seize "political power."

Taken together, the two statements reveal the confusion that existed not only in the Central Committee but in the Paris Commune itself which was the all-inclusive name given to the institutions and events in Paris in the spring of 1871. The two statements were addressed to very different strata: the first to citizens of Paris, irrespective of their class status; the second, to radical workers in the eastern parts of the capital. The working class, principally the impoverished residents in the eastern half of Paris who worked with their hands, were the backbone of the Commune. By appealing to them in statements like the second one, with its militant class-oriented phrases, the Commune acquired the image of being a stricdy working-class phenomenon.

But if the working class formed the pillar that supported the Commune, its support was also more broadly based than the working class alone. Many middle-class people—shopkeepers, small-scale producers, merchants of all kinds—actively supported the emerging Commune, which clearly issued statements to satisfy their sentiments and interests as well. The republican statements were directed toward the large numbers of bourgeois patriots as well as workers who tacitly or actively supported the Commune because they opposed the treaty that Thiers had negotiated with the Germans.

Nor did such republican appeals contradict the predominant sentiment among Commune members: the Proudhonists and Jacobins who composed a sizable part of the Central Committee and later the Commune of Paris were not opposed to the private ownership of property and hoped merely to achieve its widest distribution. Given its respect for property and legality, the Committee (and later the Commune) made no attempt to appropriate the vast gold holdings in the Bank of France; leaving the Bank's treasury completely untouched, they simply negotiated a substantial bank loan. Nor did the new officials even touch the substantial funds that lay in the safes of various ministries, which the government had left behind—despite their desperate need for money, they never broke open the locks. Instead of expropriating property, they used very moderate means to bring in much-needed funds, such as the collection of the *octroi* (the tax on goods entering the capital's gates). Republican legality seems to have had a paralyzing effect

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[157] *Journal officiel* (March 21, 1871), in *The Communards of Paris, 1871,* ed. Stewart Edwards, Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), pp. 68–9.

upon these ostensible revolutionaries who, once they were in power, despite their federalist and sometimes socialist rhetoric, were virtually hypnotized by the mystical ambience that surrounded the French state and its financial institutions.

Where the Central Committee fretted over the legality of every action it undertook, even questioning its right to meet in the Hotel de Ville, the *Versaillais* threw all conventional restrictions to the winds. In this respect the contrast between the behavior of Paris and Versailles is arresting. Despite bloody altercations between the National Guards and supporters of the *Versaillais,* the Committee—unwilling to impede freedom of speech—placed few if any restrictions on the circulation of essentially pro-Versailles propaganda in the capital. For their part, by contrast, the *Versaillais* used every measure at their disposal to prevent news from Paris from reaching the provinces, especially pamphlets and other literature that tried to rally provincial support for the capital. Thiers's control over information was a major obstacle to the Commune's vague injunctions that other French cities and towns should follow its own example. No mere republican legalities would deter him from his goal of suppressing revolutionary Paris.

THE CREATION OF THE COMMUNE

Finally, on March 26, Parisians went to the polls to elect their Commune. For once, they could choose their delegates in proportion to their numbers rather than by district, so that in the final tally, the densely populated working-class neighborhoods gained a representation that reflected their actual size. Out of a presumed electorate of 480,000, it was reported that some 229,000 men voted—ostensibly a rather small proportion, and one that Thiers used in order to argue that over half the voting population had abstained from the elections, in sympathy for his Versailles government. In fact, the proportion of Parisian men who voted was actually much higher; the 480,000 figure was based on the voting lists for the 1870 plebiscite—after which a large number of bourgeois had fled Paris during the siege and the armistice for nonpolitical as well as political reasons.

The Commune of Paris was finally proclaimed on March 28 on the steps of the Hotel de Ville. As the radical journalist Jules Valles described the momentous occasion in his newspaper, *Le Cri du peuple:*

> The artillery thunders a salute from the quays; the grey smoke is gilded by the sun. A crowd has gathered to greet the triumphal procession; men wave their hats and women their handkerchiefs while from the barricades the cannon humbly bow their bronze muzzles lest they threaten the joyful onlookers... The Commune is proclaimed by a revolutionary, patriotic celebration, a day of peace and joy, excitement and solemnity, splendor and merriment worthy of the days lived by men of '91... Today is the festive wedding day of the Idea and the Revolution.[158]

Indeed, the festive mood of the population seemed irrepressible and continued throughout the life of the Commune. So joyous were the people, even as the threat of the *Versaillais* loomed over them, that Villiers de l'lsle-Adam wrote:

> Would you believe it? Paris is fighting and singing! Paris is about to be attacked by a ruthless and furious army and she laughs! Paris is hemmed in on all sides by

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[158] Jules Valles, in *Le Cri du Peuple* (March 30, 1871); in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 74.

trenches and fortifications, and yet there are corners within these formidable walls where people laugh![159]

More insighdully, L. Barron emphasized that underlying the festivity lay an idealistic revolutionary exaltation:

> In these solemn ceremonies, these festivities, these battles joyously fought, are bom the great and sublime movements that cause people to break out of their habits and set their sight on a new ideal. The educated and positive- thinking, the sceptically and the spiritually inclined, all find themselves involved in spite of themselves, carried along with the sublime multitude. This is how viable revolutions begin and develop. One returns from each exalted experience as one would awake from a dream, but the memory remains of a brief moment of ecstasy, an illusion of fraternity.[160]

But what in fact was the Commune? The word has multiple meanings that depend upon the context in which it is used. Derived from the medieval Latin *communa,* it originally meant a communality or a corporate community, that is, a municipality. As European towns and cities had developed self-governing institutions since the medieval era, *commune* had also come to mean a dty council. Finally, French revolutionary history imparted to the Commune a uniquely radical connotation: the popular city council of 1793 was generally regarded as the most radical municipal force in the Great Revolution, until it was purged by Robespierre. The Paris Commune of 1793 included not only the communality and the city council but also the supporters and institutions of the extreme Left, which implicidy included the sections and even the radical clubs into which the *sans-culottes* were mobilized.

As for 1871, the "Commune of Paris," which appeared at the bottom of decrees and called for mobilization in the spring of that year, meant, stricdy speaking, the Communal Council, the assembly of delegates who had been elected to the dty council. As a substitute for the ministries that existed under the Government of National Defense, the Communal Coundl created nine commissions, whose operations were supervised and coordinated by an Executive Commission. Although each commission was charged with a specific governmental portfolio, the Communal Council as a whole tended to preempt most of the activities of its commissions, which often meant that many practical details were neglected except in emergencies.

Coexisting with the Communal Council was the Central Committee of the National Guard (which had welcomed the Commune and surrendered all of its powers to it with much fanfare— only to continue meeting on its own afterward), as well as the Delegation of the Twenty Arrondissements, and the Trade Union Federation. In addition, popular clubs existed in every *arrondissement* of Paris, which also could be placed, together with the other organizations, under the rubric of "the Commune."

In a broad sense, then, *all* of these institutions constituted the Paris Commune of 1871: the Council and the Commissions that met at the Hotel de Ville, the Central Committee of the National Guard Federation, the Delegation of the Twenty Arrondissements, the trade unions, the International, the multitude of clubs, the various committees of the National Guard battalions, and the vigilance committees—in short, the richly articulated body of organizations that gave

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[159] Document 50 in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 140.

[160] L. Barron, *Sous le drapeau rouge* (Paris, 1889); Document 51 in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 142.

immense vitality to Parisian political life. To define the Paris Commune exclusively in terms of the Communal Council and its commissions is to lose sight of the wealth of public activity that engaged all the socially conscious people of the capital—activity that the privileged class profoundly feared as evidence of rampant and revolutionary anarchy.

But who were the delegates who were elected to the Commune, or more specifically the Communal Council, the body that met for some thirty-one sessions at the Hotel de Ville? Out of a total of ninety-two seats, a good number actually went unoccupied: roughly fifteen to twenty were vacant, having been awarded to moderate republicans from the western, bourgeois half of Paris who resigned immediately after they were elected in protest of the Commune's formation. Other seats were held by delegates in absentia, such as Blanqui, who was in prison, or by Garibaldi, who was no longer in France; both had been elected for entirely honorific reasons.

How working class were the delegates? Only the roughest occupational estimates are available—hence only a general sense of the Commune's class composition can be given. About thirty-five were artisans, such as carpenters, house decorators, masons, metalworkers, bookbinders and the like. Thirty or so could be classed as intellectuals of sorts, such as journalists, and another eleven were professionals, notably doctors, lawyers, and teachers. The remainder were clerks, even businessmen, and two were soldiers. Only four or five industrial workers, from factories on the outskirts of Paris and railway shops, can be identified—indeed, the French industrial proletariat had still to find its identity and assert its interests in the largely artisanal capital. The average age of the delegates has been placed at thirty-seven, but no single generational group predominated.

What was the political composition of the Commune? Some twenty-five of the delegates were neo-Jacobins, followed by fifteen or twenty neo-Proudho- nists and protosyndicalists like Varlin, nine or ten Blanquists, a miscellany of radical republicans, and a few Internationalists who were influenced by Marx— namely Leo Frankel and Auguste Seraillier, the latter having been dispatched by the General Council as an observer. When by-elections were held on April 16 to fill the seats of those who had resigned, the Jacobin contingent was increased by nine delegates, the Proudhonists by six (including affiliates of the International), and the Blanquists by two.

Although the Blanquists were a minority, it was they who gave the Communal Council whatever fiery militancy it had. Having urgently demanded an attack on Versailles when Thiers fled, they continued to argue that the Council should undertake a military offensive against the *Versaillais* and exercise repressive measures against *Versaillais* propaganda inside Paris—even calling, late in the Council's life, for the formation of a Committee of Public Safety. As decisive as they were militarily—they believed in a dictatorship of Paris over the rest of France—the Blanquists had little in the way of a concrete social or economic program, apart from a militant if vague socialism.

The Jacobins, inchoate politically, were opposed to socialism, but their radical republicanism admitted the use of measures that the bourgeoisie would have regarded as socialistic, at a time when laissez-faire capitalism was becoming the ideology of the day. The most prominent Jacobin in the Council, the venerable Charles Delescluze, believed that France should be a "social democracy," by which he meant a politically (and to some extent economically) more "egalitarian" society. But the word *egalitarianism* may connote anything from equality of opportunity to equality of condition—and it is not at all clear that Delescluze meant anything more than equality of opportunity, reinforced by a humane concern for the plight of the poor and downtrodden. His

supporters do not appear to have advanced much further in their thinking than Robespierrist ideas of political egalitarianism, the Committee of Public Safety, and the Commune of 1793. The policies they called for, in the main, would have been acceptable to the earlier Commune. They generally looked askance upon any measures that were more radical than Saint-Just's old Ventose decrees, which had pledged to divide the property of suspects and convicted opponents of the Convention among needy patriots. Their opposition to socialism notwithstanding, however, when it came to practical details, especially in military matters and the formation of a Committee of Public Safety, the Jacobins joined with the Blanquists and the more radical Internationalists to form the majority voting bloc in the Communal Council.

The Proudhonist Internationalists and more moderate republicans formed the Communal Council's minority, and as we have seen, they believed in the private ownership of property. Indeed, to soothe unfounded bourgeois fears that the Commune was about to expropriate the wealthy, Proudhonist periodicals assured the public that the Commune held private property in "sacred" regard and would fully respect it. A few days after the Commune was established, one newspaper, the *Sociale,* wrote soothingly: "Be assured, bourgeois and peasants, there is no question of robbing you of your conquests. You legitimately possess what you have gained."[161] Although the Proudhonists were in the minority on the Council, they had reason to make such an assurance in the name of the Commune because, as Samuel Bernstein observes:

> Whatever social and economic programme the Commune had, stemmed from the [Proudhonist Internationalists], The primary demands were Proudhonist, such as free credit, co-operation, a peoples's bank and free exchange of the products of labour... History, to be sure, had pulled them into strikes and political action. But they preferred autonomy and federalism to centralism, a cardinal point with neojacobins and Blanquists.[162]

In practice, the concrete Proudhonist demands did not add up to much; the Commune was too besieged, quarrelsome, and short-lived to effectuate much of an economic program before it was crushed.

If socialism is to be defined in any modem sense (especially as proletarian socialism), as a cooperative society involving the public ownership of the means of production—including workshops, factories, and land—then apart possibly from Leo Frankel and the other non-Proudhonist Internationalists on the Council, the Paris Commune of 1871 was not socialist. Certainly, the Commune's practices were neither Babouvist nor Marxist, let alone anarchist in Bakunin's collectivist sense of the word. If, more stricdy speaking, the Commune is conceived as a government of workers or a "workers' state," the student of the Commune encounters even more ambiguities. Most strikingly, the Council did not expropriate the bourgeoisie or try to socialize the many workshops and industrial facilities of Paris. There is nothing, in fact, to show that most of its delegates ever intended to do so—as we have seen, most of the delegates on the Council were Jacobins, followed by Proudhonists, who together believed in private property.

The only official program that the Commune ever promulgated, published in the *Journal qfficiel* of April 20, was notable not only for its brevity but for its largely political demands.[163] It called

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[161] *Le Sociale* (Mar. 31, 1871); quoted in Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 261.

[162] Samuel Bernstein, *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 337.

[163] "Declaration to the French People," originally published in English in the *London Times* (April 21, 1871); republished with corrections in *Communards of 1871,* ed. Edwards, pp. 81–3.

for the recognition of the republic (which the National Assembly, as yet, had not formally proclaimed), and many of its affirmations were municipalist in nature, invoking the "inherent rights" of the Commune itself. It asserted the right of French communes to function autonomously based on a Proudhonist "contract of association" to "secure the unity of France," affirming the Commune's "inherent right" to vote its own budgets and taxes, and to create its own administrative, judicial, and police apparatus. Not only were elections to be free, but voters would also have "the permanent right of control and revocation" of all magistrates. Citizens were to enjoy the right of "permanent intervention into Communal affairs by the free manifestation of their ideas and the free defense of their interests."[164]

But the program expressed no commitment whatsoever to the collective ownership of property—a lacuna that was of deep concern to the anarchist communist Peter Kropotkin in his discussion of the Commune. Nowhere did the Commune's program even make basic assertions of artisanal socialism for the "organization of work" or the "right to work," which was unusual considering that most radical French socialists of the time were still mainly associationist To be sure, it cited the "liberty of work" and expressed the Commune's intention to "universalize power and property according to the necessities of the moment." But such a right could have been exercised by any bourgeois government as a response to the exigencies of war.[165]

The essentially nonsocialist nature of the Paris Commune is somewhat ironic, considering that the Commune quickly became legendary in the international socialist movement as a socialist uprising, perhaps because of the rhetoric articulated by its more radical adherents, especially the Blanquists and the non-Proudhonist Internationalists, as well as miscellaneous class-conscious workers and intellectuals. Yet to call the Commune "socialist" in any modem, proletarian sense is to stretch the meaning of the term beyond recognition until it is lost in a foggy notion of "equally" modest nonexploitative enterprises. The actual social practices of the Commune, if anything, were oriented toward artisanal socialism, but even in this respect, as we will see, its efforts toward sponsoring the creation of a cooperative society, along the lines of Louis Blanc, were half-hearted at best. (Ironically, Blanc himself, having returned to Paris from England with the fall of Louis-Napoleon, was quiedy sitting as a representative in the National Assembly at Versailles.)

Although there is no important evidence that most members of the Communal Council meant to expropriate the bourgeoisie, there was much talk in the capital about the possibilities for workers' control of production, particularly in the large factories on the outskirts of Paris, and for a more equitable distribution of goods and the wealth of the country. But this talk was not formulated into a systematic program that went beyond moral cries for economic justice and denunciations of class exploitation. The most broadly felt view of the artisanal socialists in Paris was that the means of life should be distributed based on toil, not on the ownership of capital. Put colloquially: they stood for the "workers against the bosses"—a deeply *moral* class consciousness, to be sure, but hardly the programmatic or theoretical foundations for ending the power of capital in France.

What, then, were the concrete economic policies of the Commune? The first item on the Council's economic agenda was to counteract the specific pieces of unfeeling legislation that the National Assembly had visited upon the workers and middle classes. On March 30, only two days after it was inaugurated, the Council reinstated the moratorium on overdue rents, much to the re-

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[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

lief of ordinary Parisians. On April 12, not without considerable wrangling, it also reinstated the moratorium on overdue commercial bills, but pardy because of its qualms about offending the sensibilities of Parisian "commercial interests"— the more well-to-do entrepreneurs who were least friendly to the Commune— the Council did not officially announce this measure until April 18. The delay undoubtedly induced the financially vulnerable to wonder how real was the concern of the Commune for their own interests. Insofar as both these moratoriums had been enacted by the old bourgeois Government of National Defense in a time of national emergency, then abrogated by a vindictive National Assembly, their reinstatement, however humane it was, can hardly be regarded as revolutionary. The moratoriums were both popular, but the Council's qualms about rushing to reinstate the delay on overdue bills is a striking example of its economic conservatism, reflecting the awe in which the Proudhonists held property, credit, and banking practices. Indeed, it was not until April 25—nearly a month after its establishment—that the Council requisitioned vacant lodgings for the homeless.

Nor did it behave with conspicuous zeal in dealing with one of the issues most vexing for the working class—the National Assembly's heardess law permitting the sale of goods that had been pawned in the state pawnshop, Mont de Piete. For ordinary Parisians, cancellation of the Assembly's legislation was imperative—indeed, many of the poorest artisans had pawned their tools and even their clothing during the most difficult moments of the siege. Not that the pawnshop had been much of a boon to working people. Although Mont de Piete was the city's largest recipient of workers' pawned goods, it had been particularly biased, as has been noted, against the poorest workers, charging the highest interest rates for loans on the least expensive items, and the lowest rates for those on the most expensive items. Nonetheless, allowing the pawned goods to be sold had been a cruel blow on the part of the Assembly, divesting workers of the much-needed personal possessions and tools.

Once the Commune was in power, the cancellation of the Assembly's legislation was held up by a lively debate in the Council over the issue of socializing the pawnshop. The Council's delegates argued intensely among themselves about whether the pawnshop should be nationalized (as the Blanquists thought), modified (the Jacobins), abolished (the revolutionary socialists), turned into a workers' bank (the Proudhonists), or simply left as it was (a variety of republicans). Not until May 7, more than five weeks after the Commune had been brought into existence, was the decree canceling the Assembly's law proclaimed, and in the end, the Council made no change in the pawnshop's directorship; it simply renewed the old moratorium, allowing for the restitution of work tools and household items of up to twenty francs in value.

To be sure, many workers benefited from the Council's decrees. Thus on April 27, employers were forbidden to deduct fines from workers' wages, and the next day, April 28, the exacting nightwork hours imposed on bakers were abolished. But even this measure was delayed because of the protests of bakery owners. Moreover, the Council also abolished the *livret de travail,* the personal record of employment that every worker had been obliged to carry and show to any new employer.

From a leftist perspective, the most celebrated of the Council's decrees was the one issued on April 16 that concerned the empty factories and workshops whose owners had fled Paris during the siege. These vacated premises, according to the new law, could be transformed into self-managed cooperatives. To radicals of the time the measure on cooperatives seemed a remarkable instance of associationism, but the fact remains that the besieged regime had to mobilize production in any way it could, and any bourgeois regime under similar circumstances of impending

military threat could have created cooperatives to do so. In all, about ten factories were taken over and run as cooperatives by the trade unions. The new industrial cooperatives, it should be emphasized, were not created as a result of expropriations; in fact, although the former owners were scathingly denounced as cowards for fleeing Paris, they were promised financial restitution for their property when they returned. By contrast, the large Cail factory, which had been continually troubled by strikes and class antagonisms, was left completely untouched.

To be sure, the Commune did try to promote voluntary producers' associations, in which privately owned workshops cooperated with each other in sharing resources and fixing prices. About forty-three such craft cooperatives were established, but few of them were able to get under way before their workers were obliged to mount barricades against the *Versaillais.* Moreover, they faced problems typical of later attempts at what came to be called workers' control: the market threw them into competition with completely independent enterprises. Generally, in fact, such producers' cooperatives have a disconcerting tendency to drift toward "collective capitalism." Not only do they tend to become part of the capitalist system, but their ability to survive as cooperatives is impaired when conventional independent workshops can charge less for their products than the cooperatives, thereby driving them out of business or forcing them to compete with each other

Unfortunately, Proudhon had not explained in his writings how this problem of marketplace competition could be overcome, but capitalist economic imperatives reigned no less in "red" Paris than in "white" Versailles. Contrary to all ideas of artisanal socialism, the Commune tended to buy not from the cooperatives, which badly needed paying customers, but from the cheapest vendors—the conventional independent firms. Not until May 12, in response to a surge of complaints, did the Commune change its policy to favor cooperatives and instruct its various agencies to buy primarily from them. That it had to be pressured into adhering to a basic tenet of artisanal socialism is revealing of the Commune's fiscal conservatism and limited economic oudook.

The Commune's dealings with the Bank of France were no bolder than those of the Central Committee, more closely resembling comic opera than a challenge to a major financial institution. On March 29, the day after the Commune's inauguration, the Commune sent the seventy-six-year-old Charles Beslay, an engineer, to the Bank as its delegate. Contrary to what one might have expected from a revolutionary socialist body, the Council did not authorize Beslay to assert the Commune's control over this immensely important institution, still less to hold it hostage against the entire bourgeoisie of France. Rather, his task was to exercise a vague surveillance over the Bank's activities. Beslay was not predisposed to be confrontational, least of all toward so austere and powerful an enterprise as a national bank. The old man had been a friend of Proudhon, indeed a fervent disciple, an association that appears to have disarmed what fortitude he might have possessed in dealing with a large bank. Ironically, where Proudhon had once demanded the "organization of credit" on behalf of artisans, his friend Beslay now stood in awe of the most important credit institution in France—which might have been expropriated and even transformed into a Proudhonist People's Bank.

Instead, the meeting between Beslay and the Marquis de Ploeuc, the Bank's acting governor, was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. The crafty marquis, chatting amiably, managed to establish a rapport with the old man that was to last the entire life of the Commune. Personally, Beslay thanked the marquis for his public-spiritedness in heading an ambulance service during the siege, and the two warmly agreed that the financial integrity of France, not to speak of her business interests, depended upon retaining the integrity of her financial institution—especially

after the day the National Guards rudely entered the bank to search it for arms. The vigilant Beslay, wrapped in the authority of his red sash, dissuaded the Guards from intervening in the Bank's business and even took up residence there in order to prevent further intrusions. Meanwhile, for the remainder of the spring, the marquis, while honoring the financial requests of the Commune, systematically smuggled sizable amounts of gold out to the *Versaillais*—under the very nose of Beslay. The Council, for its part, seemed satisfied with the Bank as long as it was loaning it the relatively modest sums it requested.

Marx was later to claim that the Commune would have needed more time than it had to unfold its internal logic—presumably a socialistic logic. But would the Commune have evolved toward socialism, even if time had been on its side? To radical artisans, the most humane alternatives to the existing economy were still associations—cooperatives—whether owned and managed by a sizable number of factory workers or by cooperatives of craftspeople in small privately owned workshops. At most, the Commune might have evolved toward fostering cooperatives more aggressively. But as we have seen, any notion of the ownership and control of the means of production even by the municipality as a whole, still less the nationalization of property, was far from the minds of the majority of delegates. The Commune either ignored or eschewed the need to create a society in which private ownership, the market, and even profit would be replaced by the social ownership of the means of production and the distribution of goods according to needs—in short, a communistic society.

Despite the abundance of red flags on the Communard barricades and the wealth of legends that have grown up around the Commune itself, it was not the climax or even necessarily the most class-conscious of the nineteenth- century revolutions. The June insurrection of 1848—which, by comparison with the Commune, the revolutionary tradition has all but forgotten—was far more class-conscious and far more committed to making basic changes in the "organization of work"; it was even more audacious in its demands to replace capitalist relations of production with cooperative ones. In his closely researched comparative study of the June insurrection of 1848 and the Commune of 1871, Roger V. Gould has shown that the class nature of the Commune has been overemphasized at the expense of its civic features—to which 1 would add, its patriotic features. Where the June 1848 uprising widely demanded the emancipation of workers, the Communal Council (and the Central Committee of the National Guard Federation) addressed themselves overwhelmingly to the citizenry as a whole. The Commune's "demands for municipal liberties and the safeguarding of the Republic," Gould observes, were far different from the class-oriented statements and proclamations common in 1848:

> The Central Committee of the National Guard Federation, in its own carefully drafted announcement of elections to the Commune, made it abundanly clear that the constituency on whose behalf it saw itself as acting—the constituency, in other words, of the revolution itself—was the entire city of Paris, irrespective of class position.[166]

What the insurgency of June 1848 and the Commune have in common is that they were both expressions of artisanal socialism, one coming early, during its period of hegemony, and the other at its waning phase. In marked contrast to the insurgents of June, the Commune's approach, both in its declarations and in its practices, was notable for its moderation. In this respect—contrary

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[166] Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 168.

to the prominent place it has been given in the history of socialism—the Commune marked a retreat from the high point of the artisanal socialist agitation that had been reached in 1848.

On the day following its inauguration, the Commune created commissions corresponding to the regular ministries of the national government The most important of these, during the early weeks, were the Executive Commission and the Military Commission. The Executive Commission was composed of four civilians and three military officers. The civilians were Gustave Lefrangais, a Proudhonist schoolteacher; Gustave Tridon, a fervent Blanquist and joumalist- historian; Edouard Vaillant, a Blanquist engineering student; and the mischievous Felix Pyat, whose ultraradical rhetoric was equaled only by his cunning in extricating himself from dangerous situations. The three military members were Jules Bergeret, a bookshop worker whose main military qualification was that he had been elected to a leading position in the National Guard; Emile Duval, a committed Blanquist steelworker who had urged an immediate attack on Versailles after March 18; and Emile Eudes, the Blanquist student who had also urged an attack on Versailles.

The Military Commission, for its part, contained all three of the Executive Commission officers—Bergeret, Duval, and Eudes—as well as Gustave Flourens, whose flamboyant role in the October 31 attack on the Hotel de Ville had gained him a reputation for courage and militancy. Raoul Rigault and Theophile Ferre, both young Blanquists, took charge of Security—that is, of the Parisian police.

Unlike the Provisional Government in 1848, the Commune also created a Labor and Exchange Commission, as evidence of its concern for the interests of the Parisian working class. Sitting on this commission and the Industry Commission were three of the Commune's most prominent Internationalists and socialists: the jeweler Leo Frankel (who was in close touch with Marx), the bronze worker Albert Thiesz, and the publicist Benoit Malon. The syndicalist and Internationalist Eugene Varlin sat on the Finance Commission, together with the Internationalist Victor Clement and the bumbling Proudhonist Charles Beslay. Mention should also be made of one of the Commune's most impressive figures, the aging and ailing Jacobin journalist Charles Delescluze, who tried to let younger, more energetic individuals take leading roles in the Commune but was continually drawn into it by the demanding problems it faced.

As a whole, the Communal Council and its commissions were too disparate ideologically and included too many prickly intellectuals and even bohemians to function effectively. The Proudhonists were embattled with the socialists, while the Jacobins dueled with almost everyone, including each other. Moreover, many of the Commune's members were answerable to multiple constituencies. Too often, when the Commune attempted to cope with the city's needs in an orderly fashion, its efforts were impeded by the presence of many groups and institutions claiming jurisdiction over different aspects of the capital's life. In reality, however, the inauguration of the Communal Council on March 28 had been of no great significance to the various committees, clubs, and other local institutions that embodied the Commune in the everyday life of the neighborhoods. For one, the local mayors of the *arrondissements* were a constant nuisance to the Council, challenging its legality, claiming that they alone were the sole legal governing authority in Paris—a claim that they did not give up until local National Guard committees, acting on their own initiative, simply expelled the mayors from the *mairies.* For its part, the Central Committee of the National Guard Federation—although it welcomed the Council and with much fanfare surrendered all its legal powers to it—still continued to exist, almost as a parallel power to the Hotel de Ville, its preoccupation with legal niceties notwithstanding. Another constant presence

was the Delegation of the Twenty Arrondissements, which issued local challenges to many of the Communal Council's policies at the neighborhood level.

The plethora of committees and clubs that flourished in the neighborhoods constituted still another level of local power. Attendance must have varied enormously from one meeting to another, but some involved thousands of people. The political oudook of the clubs seems to have ranged across the whole political spectrum and often constituted a strange mix of centralistic Jacobin and extreme libertarian views akin to those of Varlet in 1783. The Club des Proletaires, meeting in the Church of Saint-Ambroise, for example, emulating the radical sections of the Great Revolution, demanded that the Commune desist from issuing decrees and seek popular sanction for its proposals, a view that was echoed by the Club Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs.

But sectional democracy or not, the clubs seem to have been very conscious of themselves as an important political phenomenon. The Club Saint-Nicolas- des-Champs exhibited a great deal of initiative in promoting a federation of the clubs: it published a daily *Bulletin communal* to provide accounts of debates in the different clubs and present the various proposals that they had accepted. In fact a short-lived Federation of Clubs was established, as Edwards tells us, whose committee held daily meetings in the public assistance building and whose individual component clubs began "to circulate motions among themselves."[167] When the time came for the Commune to resist the troops of the National Assembly in the streets of Paris, the clubs played a vital role in mobilizing popular local support for the struggle.

All of these various committees, as well as the Council and its commissions, were plagued by disagreements—political, social, and unfortunately, personal—that frequendy threw them against one another and wracked them internally as well. The Parisian municipality was direly in need of a communal constitution that clearly delineated the jurisdictions of its many committees and that established ways to coordinate its administration. No such constitution existed. Where the Assembly was centralistic and statist, the Commune was decentralistic and confederal, not only in administering the city but in its militia, or *Jederes,* as the National Guard was appropriately called. For the first time since 1793, Varlet's day, Paris had created a loosely libertarian alternative to central government in France. But in the face of a military emergency it would have been difficult enough to maintain this libertarian structure, and even the most libertarian institutions require a degree of centralization to defeat a well-organized military force. Unfortunately, the *Jederes* were often as local in their orientation as the rest of the clubs and *arrondissement* organizations. Their decisions were usually based on the will of individual neighborhood committees, which often acted entirely on their own.

To add to these problems, the Communal Council's authority was subverted when the Central Committee of the National Guard Federation adamandy refused to accept the fact that responsibility for *the Jederes*—the military arm of the Commune of Paris—no longer belonged to itself but was now the province of the Military Commission. The Central Committee regarded the Commune as a purely political and administrative body—and an inadequate one at that— rather than a military one and thus tried to recover the control over the Guard that it had surrendered with the installation of the Communal Council.

Finally, even among the *Jederes*, the National Guard battalions often disregarded orders they received, whether they came from the Commune's Military Commission or from the Central Committee itself. Some artillery battalions acted entirely on their own, obeying no one but their

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[167] Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 281.

own independent *arrondissement* committees. Others went so far as to arrest their own commanders if they suspected them of any dereliction of duty Indeed, so chaotic was their behavior that they often made the Commune's military force essentially dysfunctional. Even in a time of dire emergency, when the Commune's military commanders tried to mobilize the city against the *Versaillais,* battalions of *Jederes* were often unresponsive to their commands. Ironically, the Central Committee's attempt to assert itself against the Commune diverted its attention and energy from the task of bringing military discipline to the ranks, and turning them into the effective fighting force that the city needed so desperately.

Not only was the National Guard undisciplined and chaotic, but as Lissagaray emphasizes, it was not trained to fight as a field army, despite its valiant showing during the sortie of January 19. *The Jederes* were at their best as a defensive force, not in attacks upon regular troops. A well-trained, experienced, and disciplined force might have had a good chance of defeating Thiers's troops—especially in the early days of the Commune—and the Guards were certainly more motivated than their opponents, but they had none of the qualities that would have made them effective against a well-organized army. Despite small successes and acts of extraordinary heroism, the *federes* never won any major victories against the well-disciplined *Versaillais.*

THE COMMUNE AT WAR

The Commune's inability to coordinate the Guards and train them to become an offensive fighting force was particularly troubling in light of the fact that the National Assembly and the head of state in Versailles had absolutely no intention of allowing the Commune to continue to exist for any longer than it was obliged to. As the history of revolutionary movements over the centuries has repeatedly revealed, counterrevolution takes no quarter in any class war, and as such, if the Commune could hope to survive at all, it was obliged to throw the *federes* against the *Versaillais* quickly, before Thiers could mobilize his regular army.

This the Commune did not do. Nothing reveals the Commune's naivete better than its public response to a limited foray that the Versaillais made on April 2, to occupy a temporary barracks at Courbevoie, some six miles to the northwest of Paris. When the National Guards engaged Thiers's forces that day, they acquitted themselves poorly—in fact, they fled in a pell-mell retreat. Thiers could have ordered his troops to pursue the fleeing *fideres* into Paris, but as yet he did not feel his forces were strong enough: two weeks after he had vacated Paris, he still had a total of only 35,000 disorganized troops and 3,000 gendarmes at his disposal.

But he did give evidence of his deadly intentions by executing five captured Communards, which caused the Commune to explode in injured outrage. In a genuinely shocked denunciation, the Executive Commission declared, "Royalist conspirators have ATTACKED. In spite of our moderate attitude, they have ATTACKED."[168] This reaction was surely highly symptomatic of a larger problem: that the Commune expressed shock at being attacked in the midst of a conflict that was, if not a clear-cut class war, then clearly a social war, was self-deceptive in the extreme. That it could have been so shocked revealed an absence of psychological fortitude and political sophistication, not to speak of an unpreparedness to determinedly resist its resolute and committed enemy.

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[168] Cited in Arthur Adamov, *La Commune de Paris, 18 Mars-28 Mai 1871* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1959), p. 30, emphasis in the original.

The Commune had not yet accepted the reality that it was facing a civil war, led by a ruthless enemy that was remorselessly planning its extermination. Not until it was too late did it come to terms with this fact—or realize the necessity for confronting its enemy while it still had a chance to prevail. The failure of the Central Committee and then the Communal Council to perceive the intentions of the *Versaillais* in the weeks after March 18; their continued quibbling over republican legality; the uncertainty that surrounded almost every action they took outside a strictly "constitutional" framework that had yet to be defined; their trepidation in dealing with the Bank of France; their respect for the money that lay untouched in various ministries; and their qualms over expropriating property (which even many bourgeois states would have done in wartime)—all guaranteed the doom of the Paris Commune of 1871.

The failings of the National Guards—as well as their courage—were demonstrated very clearly on April 3–4, just after the *Versaillais* incursion on Courbevoie. In blind outrage against the attack, instinctively understanding that it was necessary to mount a counterattack, the Commune undertook a "grand sortie" against Thiers's troops. Apart from his incursion of the day before, Thiers had helped this endeavor along by making belligerently provocative statements and sending shells into the capital. The prospect of a full-scale civil war, which had still seemed somewhat of an abstraction, now became searingly real.

At a meeting the night before the sortie, the Communal Council gave command of the *Jederes* to Gustave-Paul Cluseret, a professional officer who, oddly enough, had begun his military career as a reactionary, capturing barricades in June 1848, but later developed more liberal sympathies. He served as a Union officer in the American Civil War, then shifted his allegiance to the International. His detractors often called him "the Yankee" because, like many American officers, his uniform was slovenly and his demeanor easygoing—and he sported a cheroot, in the fashion of General U.S. Grant. Despite his democratic "Yankee" mannerisms, however, Cluseret was a stem disciplinarian who vowed to shape the National Guard into a highly disciplined military force. But he regarded the "grand sortie" that was planned for the next day as a reckless and doomed endeavor, led by officers who were wholly unqualified to mount it. In any case, having been appointed the Commune's war delegate only at the last minute, there was little he could do to improve its prospects. As Edwards notes, he "wisely avoided taking responsibility, leaving the other generals to see through what they had so rashly begun."[169]

And rash it was. The most ardent proponents of the sortie were the members of the Military Commission: Duval, Eudes, and the former bookseller Bergeret. According to the plan of attack, each of these inexperienced officers was to head a column, lead it out of one of the western gates, march to Versailles, then converge with the other two columns to make a common assault As Lissagaray bitterly observes, this simple plan would have been "easy of execution" had there been "experienced officers and solid heads of column."

> But most of the battalions had been without chiefs since the 18th March, the National Guards without *cadres,* and the generals who assumed the responsibility of leading 40,000 men had never conducted a single battalion into the field. They neglected even the most elementary precautions, knew not how to collect artillery, ammunition-waggons, or ambulances, forgot to make an order of the day, and left the men for several hours without food in a penetrating fog. Every Federal chose the

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[169] Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 198.

chief he liked best. Many had no cartridges, and believed the sortie to be a simple demonstration.[170]

The columns departed from Paris in a festive mood, even accompanied by women and children, naively assuming that when they encountered the *Versaillais* soldiers, the rank-and-file, rather than fight them, would instanly fraternize with their National Guard brothers, as they had done on March 18. As a result, the *federes* were poorly equipped and thoroughly unprepared for any serious fighting.

Not surprisingly, everything went wrong. When the northernmost column— the 15,000*federes* under Bergeret's command—marched northwest toward the village of Rueil (with only eight cannons!), they were obliged to pass by Mont- Valerien, the most pivotal fort on the Parisian military perimeter—the one that the Central Committee had neglected to take when it lay virtually unoccupied immediately after March 18. A rumor was circulating among *the federes* that the fort was now back in the Commune's hands, but this rumor was entirely false. As Bergeret's column passed the fort, *Versaillais* artillery fire erupted and rained on the Guards, producing complete panic Bergeret's *federes,* wholly astonished, scattered into the fields shouting "Treachery!" and the entire right flank fled in haste, heading back to Paris as quickly as their feet could carry them. Bergeret continued on with a few troops, coming within four miles of Versailles, after which he finally had to withdraw. Flourens, who was attached to this column, reached Rueil with a handful of men, but there he was killed, sword in hand, by a Versailles cavalry officer.

On the extreme left flank of the march, the column under Duval did no better. Lacking artillery and sufficient cartridges, the *federes* retreated, abandoning Duval to the *Versaillais,* who executed him. As for the center, the 10,000 Guards under Eudes managed to push due west to Meudon, but lacking sufficient artillery and ammunition to take the well-fortified *Versaillais* garrison, they retreated back to a strong point near Paris. Fortunately, guns were rushed from the capital in time to prevent the Versailles troops from taking the offensive.

The sortie was a decisive turning point in the military fortunes of Paris and Versailles. The Paris Commune was never again to undertake a major offensive against Thiers, and the National Guard, despite limited successes and individual acts of extraordinary heroism, won no major victories over its enemies. The *Versaillais,* in turn, emboldened by their victory, moved steadily doser to Paris, taking crudal forts such as Issy on May 9 and Vanves on May 13. Within a matter of days, Thiers's forces—reinforced by the thousands of French war prisoners that Bismarck had released precisely for this purpose— were only a few hundred yards from the city's walls.

On April 6, in response to the executions of the captured Communards, the Commune passed a Law on Hostages, which permitted it to arrest and try potential "hostages of the people of Paris." Indeed, a few individuals, including the archbishop of Paris, were taken into custody, and in mid-April the Commune offered all of these hostages to Thiers in exchange for the release of Blanqui. But Thiers cannily refused, observing that to give the old revolutionary to the Commune would be equivalent to providing it with an army corps.

On May 1, due to internal disputes, the Commune arrested Cluseret and replaced him as war delegate with Louis Rossel, an able officer who had turned against the National Assembly because of its capitulation to the Prussians. Rossel tried to transform the National Guard into a disdplined force but encountered the usual obstructions over autonomy. A less flamboyant and

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[170] Lissagaray, *History of the Commune,* pp. 164–5.

inspiring commander than his predecessor, he quickly lost the confidence of the *federes* as well as his credibility with the Commune. Only nine days after he was appointed, he resigned, in part because of the fall of Issy—the linchpin of the dty's defense—and fled into the warrens of Paris before he had to answer for real or imagined malfeasances against the Commune. Indeed, in the three weeks left to the Communard leaders, the quarrels among them intensified. On May 1, in the wake of the fall of Issy, the Jacobin-Blanquist majority split with the Proudhonists and some of the Internationalists over whether to tighten central control by establishing a Committee of Public Safety.

In the face of the military emergency, there could be few disputes that at least some degree of centralized control was vital, but a rancorous conflict arose over the committee's name. The Jacobins and Blanquists favored calling it the Committee of Public Safety, invoking the tradition of which they saw themselves the continuation; but the Proudhonists and many Internationalists pointed out that it was the Committee of Public Safety that, in 1793, had destroyed the Paris Commune of that era. So bitter was the acrimony that Jules Miot, ajacobin, demanded that the minority who opposed the name be tried as "Girondins." Although Miot's demand was happily not fulfilled, the majority in the Commune-—by six votes—finally voted in favor of the ill-starred name.

Although its name raised alarms about a new terror, the new Committee of Public Safety inflicted no mass executions on the Commune's opponents. In fact, it did little more than dose down critical or hostile periodicals, enforce conscription (which the local battalions of the *federes* carried out with considerable zest), and issue identity cards as a safeguard against the many agents in Paris who were working for Versailles. Some of its actions were merely symbolic, such as the pulling down of Napoleon I's Vendome column, a symbol of Bonapartist imperialism and militarism that had been forged from cannons captured by the emperor after the battle of Austerlitz. Influenced by Delescluze, however, the committee did manage to bring the majority and minority together in the waning days of the Commune, although they were by no means reconciled ideologically or even freed of mutual distrust. The Central Committee of the National Guard, now essentially a corpse, came to terms with the Commune on issues of their respective authority. But this agreement no longer had any meaning: the *Versaillais,* reinforced by newly released prisoners of war, were about to break into the streets of Paris.

On May 21 the fully assembled Commune was meeting at the Hotel de Ville, preoccupied with a malicious attempt by Jules Miot to put Cluseret on trial for the loss of Issy. Suddenly, at seven o'clock in the evening, a member of the Committee of Public Safety broke in with the cry "Stop! Stop! I have a communication of the utmost importance, for which I demand a secret session."[171] The *Versaillais,* he informed the Commune, had found an entry into Paris and were pouring into the city in force.

It might have been expected that at this point the Commune would finally rally itself to take immediate and decisive military action. In reality, stunned, it managed to acquit Cluseret of the charges against him; whereupon its members quickly dispersed, each to his own *arrondissement* "Thus the council of the Commune disappeared from history and the Hotel de Ville at the moment of supreme danger, when the Versaillese penetrated Paris." As Lissagaray emphasizes in disgust,

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[171] Cited in Alistair Home, *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune of 1871* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 364.

there was no one to demand a permanent committee; no one to call on his colleague to wait here for news... There was no one to insist at this critical moment of uncertainty, when it might be necessary to improvise a plan of defence at a moment's notice or take a great resolution in case of disaster.[172]

It was the ultimate ineptitude of a conflicted, often confused, and tragic group of men lacking any dear political or organizational direction.

THE BLOODY WEEK OF MAY 22–28

By mid-May, Thiers's troops had moved so close to the southwestern wall of Paris that their conversation could be overheard by *the jederes* on the other side, only a few yards away. Despite these advances, however, they still could not breach the wall: thdr previous attempts to enter the dty had been repelled often enough to render them extremely prudent about launching a direct frontal attack. Instead, they continued their heavy artillery bombardment of the city. Unknown to them, however, they might well have made a successful foray into the dty because the *federes* had carelessly failed to guard key parts of the wall that were highly vulnerable to attack.

On Sunday, May 21, one Ducatel was taking an afternoon stroll near the Porte de Point du Jour, in the southwestern part of the city. An engineer for the Department of Public Works, Ducatel had no sympathies for the Commune. In the course of his walk, he happened to notice that no *federes* were defending an immensely strategic area—indeed, that a gate was unguarded and available for the taking. At three o'clock he climbed to the top of the wall, waved a white handkerchief to the Versailles troops on the other side, and shouted, "Come!" The *Versaillais* hesitated; they had been deceived twice before in similar situations, entering the city only to encounter fire from the *federes.* A naval officer prudendy made his way over to Ducatel—and was astonished to find that a whole secdon of the wall and its ramparts were indeed completely deserted. Returning to his troops, the naval officer telegraphed the news to General Douay, the commanding divisional officer, who took careful precautions to confirm that the call was not a ruse. Ending the artillery bombardment of the area, he ordered his troops to advance carefully into the city in small groups. Before the day was out, some 60,000 *Versaillais* had entered Paris, and a full-scale assault upon the capital was under way.

That night Delescluze, head of the Committee of Public Safety and the *federes'* nominal commander, exhibited the Commune's fatal proclivity for a stricdy localized defense by plastering Paris with posters calling to the people and the Guards to take to the streets in decentralized barricade fighting. "Enough of militarism, no more staff-officers," the poster declaimed, evoking the myth of popular spontaneity in military engagements.

> Make way for the people, the bare-armed fighters! The hour of revolutionary war has struck. The people know nothing of elaborate manoeuvres, but when they have a rifle in their hands and cobble-stones under their feet they have no fear for the strategists of the monarchist school.[173]

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[172] Lissagaray, *History of the Commune,* p. 309.

[173] Charles Delescluze, "To the People of Paris, to the National Guards" (May 21,1871), in *Communards of Paris,* ed. Edwards, p. 160.

The Parisian working class responded to the call, as they had before, by building barricades. Starting that night and continuing for several days, the Communards built a total of 600, in all parts of the city but especially in the eastern half. As in June 1848, everyone helped—women and children as well as men, piling not only paves but buses, cabs, furnishings, mattresses, and even soil from the streets. In the working-class districts in particular, they formed an individually strong but disorganized network, entirely defensive in nature.

Unfortunately, the *federes* had much to fear from "the strategists of the monarchical school." As Cluseret and Rossel understood but Delescluze did not, strategy and meticulous planning count for a great deal in war, and these features were conspicuously lacking among the Communards. "When the Minister of War [Delescluze] thus stigmatises all discipline," Lissagaray observes trenchandy, "who will henceforth obey?"

> When he repudiates all method, who will listen to reason? Thus we shall see hundreds of men refusing to quit the pavement of their street, paying no heed to the neighbouring quarter in agonies, remaining motionless up to the last hour waiting for the army to come and overwhelm them.[174]

The *Versaillais* divided themselves into two major columns, one for each bank of the Seine. In the western half, they had relatively little difficulty moving down Haussmann's boulevards and overcoming the *federes'* resistance. Much of the resistance they encountered was heroic: Paul Brunei, in particular, comported himself with extraordinary bravery. No less striking was the brilliant defense put up by General Jaroslav Dombrowski, a Polish nationalist of aristocratic lineage, who had completely identified with the Commune and held back the *Versaillais* for nearly two months at Neuilly with remarkable courage.

But these heroic cases do not alter the fact that many working-class *federes* defended the bourgeois portions of the city with less zeal than they would have defended their own *quartiers.* Most of the barricades in western and central Paris gave way fairly rapidly to the superior firepower and tactics of the *Versaillais.* In addition, Haussmann's broad avenues enabled Thiers's men to execute pincer movements, unexpectedly taking barricade after barricade from the rear. In fact, the days when a frontal attack upon a barricade was the rule had come to an end; henceforth the barricade would be merely a symbolic structure rather than a military one.

Thiers knew, however, that the most ferocious battles still lay ahead, in the eastern half of the city. Those battles would have been even more ferocious if the Communards had been able to use the eighty-five cannons and two dozen machine guns that they had collected on the heights of Montmartre. But since Thiers's abortive attempt to retrieve them in mid-March, the guns had been neglected and left to corrode—indeed, they were all but useless just when they were most needed. For the few that were serviceable, there was hardly enough ammunition. The same was true of the cannons in the artillery park at the Ecole Militaire. The disorder in the National Guard, to which all the generals appointed by the Commune had consistendy objected week after week, now left them with relatively few usable cannons—the weapons par excellence that Thiers was using to demolish the capital's defenses.

At nine o'clock on the moming of May 22, the Commune—or rather, twenty of its members—assembled again at the Hotel de Ville. Apart from rhetoric and Pyat's histrionics—he pledged, with tears in his eyes, to die on the barricades (but disappeared before the fighting came too near

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[174] Lissagaray, *History of the Commune,* p. 314.

and was next seen in London, after the conflict)—the Communal Council had little to offer its beleaguered *Jederes.*

On May 23, fires broke out in many important government buildings in the center of the city, including the Tuileries, the Finance Ministry, and the Hotel de Ville, among many others. Variously caused by the artillery of the *Versaillais* or by *Jederes,* the burnings cleared the way for guns to arrest the flanking movements of both sides. Later, Thiers was only too eager to claim that the fires had been the work of *petroleuses,* or "women incendiaries," an accusation that, like so many others generated by the *Versaillais,* has been shown to be entirely spurious. To be sure, few Communards would have wept to see the symbols of French royalism, such as the Tuileries and the Louvre, go up in flames; but **neither the Commune** nor **the workers** tried to **systematically** bum down **Paris.** In all likelihood, the bombardment of the city by the *Versaillais* destroyed more structures than the Communards did.

But what is indubitably true is that the bloody repression now conducted by the *Versaillais*—the purge that Thiers had urged upon Louis-Philippe in 1848— led to the most wanton slaughter of men, women, and even children in the history of nineteenth-century counterrevolutions. Every time the *Versaillais* took a barricade, they would line up its defenders against a wall and shoot them, even those suspected merely of helping the actual fighters. Anyone found with a weapon, or wearing a portion of a National Guard uniform—such as a kepi, jacket, or cartridge belt—indeed, anyone with darkened hands that resembled powder burns—was executed at once, as were outright captives who had been cajoled into surrendering with promises of clemency. One working-class child begged an officer to temporarily release him so that he could give his watch to his mother: when the officer consented, he left, then was shot on his return. The savagery perpetrated by the Versailles troops as they advanced through the boulevards and streets of the capital beggars all description.

The executions increased the fury of *the Jederes* and made their resistance so desperate that they sometimes retaliated in kind. Not surprisingly, the six notable hostages taken by the Commune, including the archbishop of Paris, were executed in reprisal. A furious crowd, incensed by the wanton butchery by the *Versaillais* of the Communards, massacred fifty-one prisoners—mainly police and priests—despite vigorous efforts by Varlin to save them.

But the advance of Thiers's troops was relendess. Like the June insurgents of 1848, the Communards at nearly every barricade fought desperately in their own neighborhoods, sparing little or no effort to assist nearby insurgents in greater need of aid. "The troops of Versailles could only be seriously checked," Edwards observes, "if there had been a coordinated line of barricades across Paris, covering each other and preventing any given position from being outflanked and taken from behind."[175] No such line was formed.

The imprisoned Blanqui had long urged the Parisian working class to overcome its neighborhood parochialism at such moments and recognize the importance of developing a coordinated strategy—"above all, not to become shut up, each in his *quartier,* as all uprisings have never failed to do, to their great loss."[176] But in the seventeenth *arrondissement,* when Malon called on adjacent Montmartre for help, the *Jederes* there refused to leave their home district. Despite the Communards' ferocious resistance, their neighborhood focus allowed the Versaillats to vanquish

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[175] Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 319.
[176] Blanqui, "Instruction for an Armed Uprising," quoted in Edwards, *Paris Commune,* p. 319.

them barricade by barricade, with little fear of having to face reinforcements from other districts before each barricade fell.

Belleville was the last neighborhood to hold out against the *Versaillais,* but by Saturday, May 27, the entire district was invested by Thiers's troops. At the end of the day the *Versaillais* broke into the Pere Lachaise cemetery, where the Communards were making their last stand. Despite fierce hand- to-hand fighting, the Communards failed to halt the advancing troops. On Sunday, they were finally compelled to surrender—and the last important engagement of the Commune was over. The *Versaillais,* almost as a matter of course, lined the prisoners up against a cemetery wall—the mur *des jederes*, as it came to be called—and shot them. Thousands of corpses, including those of men and women who had had to surrender because they lacked ammunition, littered the gravesites. Dramatically, the very last barricade fell on Sunday in Belleville, on the Rue Ramponeau, where one man held out alone, as long as he could, coolly defending his position against hopeless odds. After a quarter of an hour, he fired a parting shot in the direction of the attacking *Versaillais,* then calmly stepped down from the barricade and disappeared into the streets.

Charles Delescluze went to his death with all the nobility that had marked his life and character. On Thursday, May 25, dressed in an unassuming black hat, coat, and trousers, with a red scarf around his waist, the venerable Jacobin leader walked with great dignity toward a barricade at what is now the Place de la Republique and mounted it in full sight of the *Versaillais* guns. He was shot down. Two Communards who tried to rescue his body were also killed. Eugene Varlin, on the last day of the fighting, led a column of fifty men under a huge red flag to a barricade at the intersection of the Rue de la Fontaine and the Rue du Faubourg du Temple. After Thiers's troops took the barricade, this remarkable man wandered through the streets, dazed by the fury of the fighting. When he was recognized and taken, his captors beat him with their rifle butts, and an enraged crowd of bourgeois surrounded him and mercilessly pelted him with stones. Finally, with his face smashed and one eye out of its socket, he was placed before a firing squad. Despite his battered condition, Varlin managed to raise his head high and defiantly shout, "Long live the Commune!" It took two volleys to finish him off. Well-dressed bourgeois ladies prodded his body as it lay in the street, until it was finally carted off with the rest of the dead.

Women had played a crucial role in the Paris Commune. Not only did they aid in building the barricades, but they readily took up arms against the *Versaillais,* for which a large number paid with their lives, either in battle or at the hands of the government's executioners. The roster of women Communards is impressive, including Elisabeth Dmitrieff, who organized the Women's Union for the Defense of Paris, as well as uncounted working-class women whose names are lost to us forever. Perhaps the most outstanding and militant among them was Louise Michel, who seems to have been everywhere during each of the Commune's major crises: participating in the October uprising after the surrender of Metz; orating at the clubs, where she was a familiar and inspiring figure; rousing the workers of Montmartre on March 18, when the cannons were about to be taken away, and fighting in various battles, wearing a kepi and carrying a weapon. After March 18, during the controversy over whether to pursue Thiers out of the city, Michel had even made her way to Versailles itself, merely to demonstrate that the head of state could be assassinated.

By the time the fighting came to an end, Michel had achieved a degree of distinction unequaled by any other female Communard. Since the authorities had singled her out as the leader of the mythic *petroleuses,* who ostensibly set fire to the buildings, the troops and police combed Paris to find her. She managed to elude them completely and take refuge in the recesses of the capital. Not

until December 16, when the government took her mother hostage, did she voluntarily surrender herself to the Sixth Council of War. Placed on trial, Michel defiandy shouted back at her judges:

> Since it seems that every heart that beats for freedom has no right to anything but a little slug of lead, I demand my share. If you let me live, I shall never cease to cry for vengeance.[177]

Louise Michel's courage so impressed the spectators at her trial that she was prudendy sentenced to exile instead of death. When it was suggested that she lodge an appeal for clemency, she refused, declaring that she "would have preferred death."[178]

Brunei, Cluseret, Eudes, Frankel, Longuet, Lefrangais, Miot, and Vaillant—all survived, and several of them later became prominent figures in the French Socialist Party. Ferre, Moreau, Rigault, Rossel, and Clement Thomas were shot by the *Versaillais*—although Rossel was executed after leaving his hideout, a refugee from the Commune as well as the *Versaillais.* The many thousands who were shot or killed in the barricade fighting and afterward remain an anonymous mass, their names forgotten in the history of humanity's fight for social justice. Yet they died in huge numbers as heroically as their better-known leaders.

After the barricade fighting was over, the carnage continued without respite. The prisoners of the *Versaillais* were slaughtered by the hundreds, even thousands, without any discrimination. Commanders like the Marquis de Galliffet simply strode up and down the ranks of the captives and arbitrarily selected individuals for immediate execution. The Paris correspondent of the London *Daily News,* observing the marquis's behavior, wrote:

> It was not a good thing on that day to be noticeably taller, dirtier, cleaner, older, or uglier than one's neighbours. One individual in particular struck me as probably owing his speedy release from ills of this world to his having a broken nose... Over a hundred being thus chosen, a firing party told off, and the column resumed its march, leaving them behind.[179]

In June 1871 the British *Standard* correspondent reported that two courts- martial were shooting people at the rate of 500 a day, including women and children. Thousands of captives, marched off to the Satory encampment at Versailles, were shot indiscriminately or perished from exhaustion. The Lobeau barracks were turned into a killing ground and the corpses thrown into a shallow grave at the Place Saint Jacques or into the Seine. In some places, blood ran in a steady trickle into the gutters. So chilling and grotesque were the reports coming out of France that revulsion gave rise to protests against the slaughter, even in conventional newspapers abroad, and in time the government was obliged to replace outright executions with transportation to New Caledonia, a French colony where more than 3,000 Communards were forced to live in huts under the eyes of brutal wardens. In all, 10,000 people were condemned and confined, either within France or in French possessions abroad. Twenty thousand more, who suffered terribly through the winter of 1871–72 in ad hoc forms of confinement, were released without ever being formally charged.

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[177] Quoted in Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries,* trans. James and Starr Atkinson (London: Seeker & Warburg, 1967), p. 170.

[178] Ibid.

[179] London *Daily News* (June 8, 1871), quoted in Karl Marx, *The* Civil War in *France,* note 1, in Karl Marx and Fredenck Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 22: Marx *and Engels, 1870–71* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), p. 356.

As for fatalities, the most commonly accepted estimate is that 25,000 Communards were killed, although a figure of 30,000 would not be unreasonable. The *Versaillais* lost only 877 dead and 6,454 wounded. Most by far of the Communards who perished were executed by Thiers's troops, usually summarily, without even a pretense of courts-martial. For months after the suppression of the Commune, Paris suffered from a labor shortage due to the murder and imprisonment of its best artisans. Thiers did complete his purge of Paris—with far more brutality than even the Terror of the Great Revolution, in which, during 1793–94, about 2,600 were killed in Paris and about 17,000 in the rest of France.

Chapter. 32 The Rise of Proletarian Socialisms

In the wake of the Commune, French socialism would never be the same. The Jacobin mystique, which had lingered among workers and radical intellectuals for so many decades, disappeared almost completely, and the antiroyalism and andclericalism that had formerly been the province of the Jacobins were absorbed by the more conventional republican parties— notably the so-called Radicals—who commanded a considerable following among shopkeepers, professionals, well-to-do peasants, and even workers. Proudhon's individualistic "mutualism," with its hostility to associations, strikes, and even trade unions, also lost its popular following, to be replaced by syndicalism—an explicitly collectivistic form of federalism structured around trade unions and the most sweeping of working-class initiatives, the general strike. This shift, as we have seen, had been under way well in advance of the Paris Commune. As G.D.H. Cole observes,

> against the Proudhonists in the French Trade Union movement were ranged the "collectivists," headed by Eugene Varlin; and by 1871 the collectivists were the dominant group in the Paris area, as well as at Lyons and Marseilles. Varlin, no doubt, had at bottom a great deal more in common with Proudhon than with Marx; but on the issue that was uppermost in the 1860s he and his group found themselves on the same side as Marx because they favoured collective ownership of the means of production.

Varlin, as we have seen, also advanced a program that was distincdy communalistic, with its emphasis on confederations of municipalities, as well as syndicalistic, opening a new vista for libertarians who had formerly been focused on individualistic forms of action. But Varlin and his associates were by no means "collectivists" in the sense of standing for *State* ownership of land and other means of production. They wanted the land and the instruments of large-scale production to be owned by the local Communes, or when necessary, by federal agencies set up by the communes. They wanted the actual operations of production to be carried on as far as possible by Co-operative societies emanating from the Trade Unions;... the Trade Unions were thus of fundamental importance in their vision of the new society, indeed they tended, although not very explicidy, to think of the Commune of the future as resting rather on the federated *syndicate* [trade unions] of the locality than on any political foundations.[180]

Tragically, however, Varlin was only thirty-two when he was murdered by the *Versaillais.* Had he lived for another thirty years, this immensely gifted man—in view of his level of insight and his personal popularity with workers—might have had an incalculable effect upon the trajectory

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[180] G.D.H. Cole, ***Socialist Thought,*** vol. ***2: Marxism and Anarchism*** (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 168.

of European socialism, possibly pushing it toward a communalistic development as well as a syndicalist one.

LESSONS OF THE COMMUNE

Significandy, most of the interpretations of the Commune—the "lessons" that the revolutionary theorists of the day derived from it—were institutional rather than economic. The Blanquists pointed to its failures as evidence of the need for a highly centralized, indeed dictatorial, type of regime to ruthlessly crush the bourgeoisie, and they were still enamored of the idea of a Committee of Public Safety. Anarchists, for their part, emphasized the federalist orientation of the Commune and criticized its statist "deformations," as they saw them—namely, its system of representation, as distinguished from a mass democracy—and in varying degrees, Bakunin and Kropotkin lamented its failure to take more socialistic economic measures.

But the Commune's anarchist supporters seemed to understand that Paris had made a clearly communalist revolution in the spring of 1871. Despite its failure to place a strong emphasis on class differences, its hazy celebration of republicanism, and its appeals to patriotism, the Commune, taken as a whole, was as close to a "libertarian municipalist"[181] phenomenon as Paris had come since the heyday of the sectional democracy in 1793. The April 20 program, as we have seen, asserted the right of French communes to function autonomously based on the "contract of association" to "secure the unity of France"; it affirmed the "inherent rights" of the Paris Commune to vote its own budgets and taxes, and to create its own administrative, judicial, and police apparatus; not only would elections be free, but voters would also have "the permanent right of control and revocation" of all magistrates—in short, the *mandat imperatif,* in which delegates were subject to recall if they failed to follow the wishes of their electors. Citizens were to enjoy the right of "permanent intervention into Communal affairs by the free manifestation of their ideas and the free defense of their interests."[182]

Marx's appraisal of the Commune in *The Civil War in France,* while understandably supportive of it against the imprecations rained upon it by the international bourgeoisie, was anomalous in his work as a whole, at least in terms of its attitude toward state power. These writings, which he prepared for the London bureau of the International (and which form most of the Civil *War* book), tend to downplay state power.

> The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members

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[181] **For an exposition of libertarian municipalism, see Murray Bookchin,** *From Urbanization to Cities* (1986; London: Cassell, 1996).

[182] Originally published in English in the ***London Times*** (April 21, 1871), with corrections in Stewart Edwards, ed., ***The Communards of 1871,*** Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), pp. 81–3.

of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages.* The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune.[183]

Marx was careful not to claim that the Commune had abandoned all the functions of a state— quite to the contrary, he took note of its statist features— but the libertarian ambience of his description is evident, contrasting sharply with his normally centralistic statist views. So deprecatory of the state generally was this book, however, and so ebullient was it about the Commune's anarchistic demand for communal liberties that James Guillaume, Bakunin's closest collaborator in the International, ironically regarded it as evidence of a capitulation to anarchists in the IWMA Later Marxist leaders even cited Marx's description of the Commune as the model par excellence of a proletarian dictatorship.

Actually, what Marx regarded as important about the Commune was not that it had eliminated the state as such but that it had completely smashed the *bourgeois* state, with its huge bureaucracy, its military and judicial institutions, and its executive and legislative apparatus, replacing it, so he believed, with a more or less *working<lass state* based on broad popular involvement. What he heralded in the Commune was not any antistatism but in fact a new statist dispensation, one in which the working class and its supporters acquired sweeping political rights and authority—or what he called "the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat"[184] What makes Marx's praise of the Commune in *The Civil War* in *France* anomalous is that he appears to have envisioned this "dictatorship" as institutionally *communalistic* rather than republican, for in nearly all his earlier writings on the state, the "workers' state" was to be marked more by republican features than by quasi-anarchistic, communalistic, and confederalistic ones.

Another consequence of the Commune's defeat was that it opened the way for the introduction of Marxism into France, although it did not take a firm hold among the working class for several generations. And perhaps no single individual contributed more to its dissemination in the country than Jules Guesde, who edited the newspaper *Les Droits de l'homme* in 1870–71. Because his newspaper had expressed support for the Commune, Guesde was obliged to take refuge in Switzerland after its defeat There he initially became an anarchist, but he was soon won over to Marx's ideas of socialism and became one of its most zealous proselytizers. Indeed, although Marx had a coterie in France that dated back to the beginnings of the International (including two sons-in-law, Paul Lafargue and Charles Longuet), it was Guesde who ultimately gave the French labor movement a strong Marxist imprint Starting in 1877, as soon as he returned to France, he began publishing a periodical, *L'Egalite,* which gradually evolved from a politically hybrid journal influenced by Blanquism, anarchism, and reformist socialism to a Marxist one. After visiting Marx and Engels in London in 1880, he returned to France determined to build a centralized, unified Marxist party modeled entirely on the German Socialist Workers' Party, and within five years he managed to pull together the centralized, even authoritarian Parti Ou-

[183] Karl Marx, The Civil *War* in *France,* in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, **Collected Works,** vol. 22: **Marx-Engels 1870–71** (New York: International Publishers, 1986), p. 331.

[184] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, **Collected Works,** vol. 24: **Marx and Engels 1874–1883** (New York: International Publishers, 1989), p. 95.

vrier Frangais (French Workers' Party). Although a centralized political party was alien to the markedly decentralistic spirit of the French working class, the Parti Ouvrier prospered, and the Guesdists became a major force on the French revolutionary socialist landscape.

Finally, the Commune was instrumental in bringing about the end of the 1WMA With the suppression of the Commune, the revolutionary elements in the French working class were either massacred, imprisoned, or sent into exile, where they remained for most of the 1870s. Their absence from the International immensely weakened the federalist influences within it, and the balance of forces shifted markedly in Marx's favor. He made the most of it—in a manner that was far from laudable—to expel his Bakuninist opponents.

This confrontation occurred at the International's last united congress, which met at the Hague in September 1872. Breaking with precedent, Marx personally attended the Hague Congress and, with Engels's support, dredged up gossipy allegations that Bakunin had used fraudulent methods to gain money. Nor did he dissociate himself from unsavory rumors that the Russian had been a secret tsarist agent. Marx was now able to use the very power that the Basel Congress had granted to the General Council—ironically, with Bakunin's ardent support—to decide what organizations could legitimately belong to the International. Single-mindedly determined to have Bakunin expelled, Marx and the Blanquists (in a completely unholy and short-lived alliance) outmaneuvered the anarchist patriarch and succeeded in expelling him from the International, together with his supporter James Guillaume. (The majority that Marx mustered against Bakunin included the votes of five delegates from specious organizations who represented nothing but themselves.) Thereafter, in a deliberate attempt to kill off the International, which had been threatening to drift toward Bakunin's anarchism, Marx gained the Congress's assent to move the General Council to the United States, where eventually, as he had expected, the IWMA faded into oblivion.

If this measure essentially ended the International, it did not put an end to the conflicting tendencies in socialism that followed upon the failure of the Commune. To the contrary: Marx's renown as the "Red Terrorist Doctor" (as he was called in the British press) was now assured. Bakunin's supporters, in turn, tried to create a more decentralized "Antiauthoritarian International" on the continent. Shordy after the Hague Congress, the new International convened at SL-Imier in Switzerland, composed not only of anarchists and anarchist sympathizers but moderate British trade unionists, united primarily by their enmity for the General Council. Unlike the Council-dominated IWMA, the successor St.-Imier International was intended to be a voluntary federation of autonomous national federations, each of which was free to follow the policy it preferred. In time, the British moderates drifted away, leaving the anarchists almost entirely on their own.

The last essentially anarchist congress, held a year after Bakunin's death in 1876, was marked by the ascendancy of Kropotkin's anarchist communism. In contrast to Proudhon and Bakunin, with their tolerance for nonexploitative forms of private property, Kropotkin's tendency called for the complete socialization of the means of production and adopted the old communist maxim "From each according to ability, to each according to need." The individualistic artisanal socialism of Proudhon and the collectivistic artisanal socialism of Bakunin thus gave way among many anarchists to libertarian communism.

What is significant about this shift is that Kropotkin's libertarian communism expressly or implicitly presupposed a technologically advanced society. Its underpinning was the conviction that industry and science had advanced sufficiendy to allow the distribution of goods to be guided

by needs rather than by the amount of work individuals contributed to society. Anarcho- communists, as they came to be called, no longer thought in terms of the private ownership and association of small-scale enterprises (although Kropotkin himself was a strong proponent of a human scale in all things, from machines to communities); rather, they held the view that the distribution of goods in a communistic society would require advanced technologies, at the very least, and did not oppose the establishment of factories and mass production, with which Proudhon and to some extent Bakunin had been uncomfortable. In short, Kropotkin's version of anarchism made it possible for anarchists to adapt themselves to the new working class, the industrial proletariat, and even hoped to play a leading role in its activities. This adaptation was all the more necessary because capitalism was now transforming not only European society but the very nature of the European labor movement itself.

THE NEW ECONOMY

In 1870 France and Germany, as we have seen, were both still structured around a predominandy artisan and peasant economy, like the French artisans, the majority of German workers were either masters who owned small workshops or else journeymen who learned their crafts by going from town to town in what was an essentially preindustrial economy. During the 1870s, however, new enterprises were expanding enormously in both countries. Following the Franco-Prussian War, German industry leaped forward at a dazzling pace, so that within only a matter of decades, Germany was the industrial giant of the European continent— followed by French industry as a laggard cousin.

A comparison of the industrial growth in both countries is basic to assessing not only their respective economies but their respective labor movements and social ideologies. In 1870 Germany produced only slighdy more pig iron (1.2 million tons) than France (1.1 million), although it was still only about a fifth of Britain's output (nearly 6 million). But by 1913, German pig iron production had vasdy outstripped not only French production (16.7 million tons compared with 5.1 million) but British (10.2 million) and was exceeded only by American production (nearly 31 million). Germany also took the lead throughout Europe in the production of the new dyes and chemical compounds that were becoming indispensable to modem industrial production, and soon led the continent in production of electrical goods. By 1913, German concerns produced approximately three-quarters of all the dyes used in the world, as well as new medicinals. Of huge importance in this economic tableau was the size of the German industrial enterprises and their degree of capital concentration. As pig iron and steel production soared, the number of enterprises that produced them became smaller, while those few grew ever larger in plant size and number of workers employed. Although the number of blast furnaces declined over time, between 1880 to 1912 their output rocketed from 11,000 to 50,000 tons per furnace—a nearly five-fold increase in productivity. Similar developments occurred at varying paces throughout most German industrial enterprises as a whole. The number of German workers in factories employing 51 or more increased from 1.5 million in 1882 to nearly 5 million in 1907, while the number employed in smaller enterprises (up to 50 persons) remained substantially the same.

Craft manufacturing, by the same token, declined precipitously. In 1875 the number of German woolen handloom weavers numbered 47,000, but by 1907 it had declined to only 19,000. (By contrast, in 1903 French handlooms still outnumbered French power looms by 50,000 to 38,000.) Thus, although German artisans were still a presence in the years immediately preceding the

First World War, they were dwarfed in numbers and importance by industrial proletarians, who were now becoming predominant in the European working class as a whole.

France's development was more complex. Small-scale French manufacturing tenaciously held on to its traditional ground and its artisanal labor force remained sizable. The lead that France retained in quality luxury goods and artistic works gave the country cultural hegemony over other industrial countries, but it now lagged behind in economic power. Doubtless geographical factors militated against the expansion of French steel production: although France was very rich in iron ore, the lack of good coal from which to produce coke and the considerable distances that lay between iron and coal mines made French steel production less profitable than German. France thus tended to export her excellent ores rather than smelt them and was obliged to turn to Belgium and Germany for a large part of her coal. Thus, even as the nineteenth century drew to close, a two-tiered economy still persisted in France with relatively little change. To some extent French peasants drifted from the land to cities and industrial centers, as rural people did throughout Western Europe, but the number of food cultivators did not decline significandy: from 48 percent of the French population in 1866, they fell to only 41 percent in 1911—that is to say, a mere 7 percent decline in about half a century of hectic change in most of Western Europe. The number of small landholdings actually increased between 1892 and 1908, from 28.6 million to 31.5 million acres, and traditional rural constraints on the expansion of the domestic market were still very much at work, albeit less tenaciously than in past years.

But the French economy was gearing up to produce an appreciable number of industrial proletarians. By the turn of the century, mechanization almost completely replaced handwork in the manufacture of most fabrics (although the silk industry still used a large number of handlooms), giving rise to large textile factories. In Normandy, for example, the production of cotton cloth, from spinning to weaving, was performed completely by machines, as were woolen fabrics in mills in various parts France. The number of steam engines more than tripled between 1870 and 1913, from 27,000 to 81,000. The giant steel—and armaments—plants in the center of the country, such as the Le Creusot works, as well as the textile plants in the west and the rich iron-ore mines in French Lorraine, involved very large-scale operations. Although France uniquely retained its tier of relatively small workshops and a patronal form of capitalism, the country nonetheless ranked second on the continent as an industrial power and fourth in the world in terms of economic strength.

The lead on the continent in all these fields fell to Germany, whose giant steel plants, machine shops, and chemical and electrical enterprises by far overshadowed those of France and England. In the years leading up to the First World War, Germany, united into an immense empire by the Hohenzollem monarchs of Prussia, became the greatest industrial power in the world after the United States. Her industries were not only highly concentrated but highly rationalized, equipped with the most advanced technologies. By the same token, the German industrial proletariat was proportionately larger, with respect to the rest of the population, than was the French, where industrial workers were still a minority. Thus, within the span of little more than a generation, a new economy had emerged, and with it a new working class—an unskilled proletariat that brought nothing but its own labor power (or capacity to work) to the service of a new kind of bourgeoisie— the owners of large capital-intensive factories, whose operations were based on a narrowing division of labor in which mechanization replaced skills. In this mutually interdependent industrial machine, it became impossible to identify the specific contribution of the worker to the making of a finished product, in contrast to the artisanal worker. Moreover, the

industrial worker had no independent means of obtaining an income apart from factory earnings, in contrast to the traditional artisan, who often owned his own workshop and marketed his own products.

The personal independence of the skillful artisan, the deep sense of selfworth that comes with the possession of tools and handworked machines, and the pride and dignity of the self-sustained craftsman all but disappeared from the sensibility of the unskilled modem industrial worker. Where the artisan was able to encounter his own kind in favored cafes frequented by men of his own trade, and where he possessed an extraordinary degree of literacy that made radical ideas accessible to him, the proletarian commonly frequented a tavern where alcohol was a source of solace rather than the occasion for sociability. Neglected by society, even viewed haughtily by skilled artisans, the industrial worker was woefully uneducated, often even rustic—uncomfortable with industrial lifeways and their rhythms.

THE CHANGE IN SOCIALISM

This growing shift from an artisanal to an industrial economy gave rise to a gradual but major shift in socialism itself. For the artisan, socialism had meant producers' cooperatives composed of men who worked together in small shared collectivist associations, although for master craftsmen it meant mutual aid societies that acknowledged their autonomy as private producers. For the industrial proletarian, by contrast, socialism came to mean the formation of a mass organization that gave factory workers the collective power to expropriate a plant that no single worker could properly own. These distinctions led to two different interpretations of the "social question" or, in the language of 1848, the nature of a "democratic and social republic." The more progressive craftsmen of the nineteenth century had tried to form networks of cooperatives, based on individually or collectively owned shops, and a market knitted together by a moral agreement to sell commodities according to a "just price" or the amount of labor that was necessary to produce them. Presumably such small-scale ownership and shared moral precepts would abolish exploitation and greedy profit-taking. The classconscious proletarian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, on the other hand, thought in terms of the complete socialization of the means of production, including land, and even of abolishing the market as such, distributing goods according to needs rather than labor.

It was partly in adaptation to the industrial worker, engaged in mass production by the thousands in single plants, that the new kinds of socialism were formulated. They advocated *public* ownership of the means of production, whether by the state or by the working class organized in trade unions. A socialist movement that tried to advance this program to workers necessarily had to create a mass organization, such as a trade union, party, council, or all of these to one degree or another. It would have been difficult, albeit not impossible, to address thousands of industrial workers, let alone mobilize them in loosely organized local societies, clubs, or mutual benefit societies of the kind that existed among artisans. But such mass organizations tended to become breeding grounds for bureaucracies, whose functionaries often had professional interests that stood at odds with those of the workers they were supposed to service, and statesmenlike leaders who often resembled in mentality and behavior the very bourgeois politicians they were expected to oppose. Thus it was capitalism *itself* that was changing both the scale and the visions on which socialists of all kinds—revolutionary anarchists and Marxists as well as moderate socialists—based their social theories and organizing practices.

Whether these changes were an improvement over past conditions or a deterioration, their development was inexorable as the nineteenth century phased into the twentieth. But the shift from a predominandy artisan economy to an industrial one should not be permitted to obscure the fact that modem industry—the huge plants and mills as well as the adjunct workshops that were still needed—overwhelmingly employed untrained and often illiterate proletarians, who were engaged in routinized and unskilled labor. In fact, the artisan persisted even within the factory as well as in the specialized workshops adjacent to iL He was usually a skilled metalworker or fabric designer, a maintenance man or a schooled technician—that is, an *artisan-proletarian,* who shared an independent spirit and a high degree of literacy with the craft masters and journeymen of the old ardsanal economy.

Commonly this artisan-proletarian, who appears in the historical record as early as 1848 under the name of *mechanicien* in France, was a metalworker who operated complex machinery within the factory, he could also be a printer, furniture maker, leather worker, or similar skilled craftsman. According to Charles Tilly and Lynn N. Lees in their monograph "The People of June, 1848," surveying those who were arrested and convicted for participating in the June uprising, the artisan-proletarian cohort constituted the second-largest trade group, second only to construction workers.[185] It was principally from these artisan-proletarians that worker militants were recruited, providing both the factory and the neighborhood with their authentic proletarian vanguard. More often males than females (women were rarely permitted to acquire the skills and schooling needed to engage in well-paying, complex productive tasks), they were most susceptible to socialistic ideas and were likely to be consulted by unskilled workers for guidance in demonstrations, strikes, and uprisings as well as to articulate their demands. They would come into their own as the most militant, indeed revolutionary workers by the turn of the century, especially during the Russian and German revolutions between 1917 and 1923.

PROLETARIAN SOCIALISM: SYNDICALISM

The ideas of Karl Marx were by no means the only tendency in socialism to provide guidance for a movement appropriate for the industrial proletariat While Marx's contribution was indeed enormous, other proletarian socialisms coexisted with it until the success of the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917 gave sweeping preeminence to Lenin's version of Marxist ideas over all other movements for proletarian emancipation.

In fact, Marxian socialism never gained a major footing in Great Britain. The English proletariat was drawn to other socialisms, especially to notions of a peaceful transformation to the public ownership of property, ranging from the municipal to the parliamentary level, and commonly structured around cooperatives and associations. British socialist movements largely based their hopes for a new society on legislative means, not on strikes and insurrections. By contrast, in France, proletarian socialism still retained strong federalist and antipolitical tendencies that were antithetical to Guesde's emphasis on centralism and participation in national elections, slowly giving rise, in the 1880s and 1890s, to a major movement—revolutionary syndicalism—that advanced the general strike as the main weapon for basic social change.

Doctrinally, syndicalists opposed the capitalist system and all its instruments of power, particularly the state, which they viewed as the principal source of society's ills. They strongly believed

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[185] Charles Tilly and Lynn H. Lees, "The People of June, 1848," in *Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the Second French Republic,* ed. Roger Price (London: Croom Helm, 1975).

it had to be completely dismanded if humanity were to be freed of exploitation and oppression. Eschewing parliamentarism as a corruptive strategy for a revolutionary movement, they condemned political attempts to participate in, let alone reform, the state apparatus, as a way of honoring its legitimacy. Hence they opposed the establishment of political parties and firmly refused to participate in elections. Rather, they called for the collective acquisition of economic power by the proletariat, the outright expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and the management of industrial and agricultural enterprises through democratically elected workers' and farmers' committees, all of whose delegates were expected to function according to the *mandat imperatif*— that is, subject to instant recall. A socialistic society that was structured around syndicalist principles would be one that was managed by industrial, craft, and agricultural workers through confederated enterprises organized into *syndicate* or trade unions.

Syndicalist unions, in turn, were to be organized in two parallel structures (a Proudhonist scheme) based respectively on geography and industry. Geographically, the syndicates would link together workers' delegates in a given town, region, and country in administrative confederal labor councils. Industrially, the syndicates would unite the delegates from enterprises within the same trade or industry in a pyramid of industrial confederal councils. Thus the diverse plants in a given region, preferably a municipality, each managed by its own duly elected factory committee, would be linked by one labor council with all the other industries and agricultural enterprises in that area. Simultaneously, each particular factory—say, a steel plant—would be linked to all the other steel plants in the country in a confederal council of delegates from their specific industry. At the apex of this parallel system of confederated unions, there were to be two "chambers" of delegates—one for the geographical confederation, the other for the trade confederadon. Together they would administer a syndicalist society. These bodies at the higher levels of the confederation, syndicalists argued—the municipal, regional, and national councils—would diminish in decision-making authority the farther removed they were from the municipal or local councils. Indeed, all the important policy decisions affecting society would be made by the factories, farms, and shops that formed the economic base of a given area and industry.

How was this confederal syndicalist society, based on trade unions, to be attained? Syndicalists were generally agreed that once the working class—rural as well as industrial—was mobilized into confederal labor unions in sufficient numbers, they would declare a revolutionary general strike that would paralyze the capitalist system. The army would have difficulty attacking the strikers because syndicalist transportation workers would block the movement of troops; the state would be unable to function in other respects because its administration would be brought to a halt by the general strike; and finally the bourgeoisie would be brought to its knees because it would cease to make profit or even acquire the raw materials needed to keep its enterprises working.

Capitalism and the state, in effect, would be paralyzed and therefore compelled to capitulate to a united, purposeful, and revolutionary working class. Few syndicalists were so naive as to believe that this capitulation would be brought about peacefully, almost certainly, the state would try to use every means at its disposal to break the general strike, employing troops wherever it could to forcefully cajole the workers back to their factories. But the workers, simultaneously arming themselves and appealing to the soldiers as "brothers," could hope to eventually win out by a combination of strikes, propaganda, and where necessary, outright force. At that point the new society would emerge in which the stratified confederations—geographical and trade—

would administer all economic and public affairs within their given municipalities, regions, and nations.[186]

This account of syndicalist theory is admittedly highly schematic and even idealized. Syndicalist ideas emerged gradually over the nineteenth century, from the "Grand Holiday" proposed by British workers in 1833, through the multitude of ideas proposed by artisanal socialists, to the use of general strikes against an impending war. Syndicalism was neither predominantly English nor French in origin but developed accretively over the span of nearly a century. It emerged in a transitional period, when there were still enough artisans—and certainly enough of the artisanal tradition—to create a union movement that was localist in its orientation, even expressly decentralistic. At the same time, industrial workers were becoming suffidendy numerous to require a high degree of coordination in their actions, culminating if necessary in regional or even national general strikes.

As a result of this gradual development, the specific ideas of syndicalism were highly diverse by the time the doctrine became preeminent among French workers in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Nor was it accepted in a very clear- cut form even by self-avowed syndicalist workers, let alone by the French working class as a whole. Some workers within the syndicalist fold wanted their unions to be concerned exclusively with conventional bread-and-butter issues and simply ignored the goal of the general strike. Other workers were attracted by the movement's emphasis on localism, reflecting the artisans' customary orientation toward their own communities. Finally, still others adopted the general strike more as an alternative to political measures than because of its revolutionary implications. They were sufficiendy disenchanted with the Third Republic to be alienated from political action in any form; indeed, at the time when syndicalism emerged, the French government was wracked by internal scandals, monarchist and clerical attacks, an attempt at a Bonapartist-type coup, and the ugly Dreyfus affair, a patent judicial frame-up in which the hated general staff of the French army falsely accused a Jewish officer of performing acts of espionage, for which he was convicted and sent to Devil's Island.

In 1884 the Third Republic once again legalized the right of workers to form trade unions, which quickly gave rise to the establishment of a wide variety of them. Although the largest unions were controlled by the Church and the employers, two years later, in 1886, French workers established the independent National Federation of Syndicates (NFS), or trade unions, which was quickly taken over by the Guesdists, finally providing Marxists with a tangible base in the French labor movement. Not surprisingly, the NFS became closely associated with the Guesdist Parti Ouvrier.

In addition to trade unions, the late 1880s and the 1890s also saw a revival of the *bourses du travail*, or employment centers, where workers and potential employers met to negotiate wages and working conditions for jobs. Subsidized by the municipalities, these labor exchanges had been in existence in many towns in France for years, but after the legalization of unions, they expanded their functions enormously, becoming centers where the new unions held meetings, organized educational courses and lectures, established libraries, and disseminated information about jobs and social ideas. They were usually under the control of the various unions in a given

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[186] The idea of two parallel confederations—one linking local or municipal trades, the other linking industries—was pioneered by Proudhon in Du ***Principe federatif*** (1863), volume 15 of ***Oeuvres completes de P.-J. Proudhon*** (Paris: Librairie Marcel Riviere et Cie, 1959). He called the industrial structure ***"federation agricole-industrielle."*** But Proudhon would have, opposed the general strike, insurrections, local economic strikes, and revolutionary militancy associated with syndicalism, which makes the extent of his contribution to the doctrine highly arguable.

trade—such as baking or tailoring—within a particular city. Finally a Federation of Bourses du Travail was set up in 1892, which became the leading syndicalistic rival of Guesde's National Federation of Syndicates.

The guiding spirit behind the newly expanded *bourses* was Fernand Pelloutier, a tubercular young intellectual who managed to break away from his stringent Catholic background and bring his talents to the service of working-class causes. Initially a member of the Parti Ouvrier, Pelloutier broke with its injunction against the general strike as a revolutionary tactic and in 1893 became an adherent of Kropotkin's anarchist communism. More than any single individual, this devoted man promoted the *bourses* as educational nuclei for a libertarian communist society, indeed, firmly opposing all attempts to turn them into political entities for parliamentary ends. The task of the *bourses,* in his eyes, was to inform and educate workers, encourage them to take the initiative in fostering social change, and impart to them the skills and knowledge they would need to administer a syndicalist society. Between 1894 and 1902, largely under his direction, the Federation of Bourses du Travail became the largest independent workers' organization in France. Although Pelloutier was not an insurrectionary, the Federation became the rallying center for militants who favored revolutionary industrial action over the parliamentary strategy of Guesde's socialists. After Pelloutier died in 1901 at the age of thirty-four, he was to be revered by the French working class, which treasured his memory for generations to come.

Throughout the 1890s, between the syndicalistic Federation of Bourses du Travail and the Marxian-socialistic National Federation of Syndicates, the question of strategy—of direct economic action through the general strike versus strict parliamentarism—was debated intensively. The Marxists, in fact, were no less critical of the syndicalists than the syndicalists were of the Marxists. In a sharp attack on Spanish Bakuninists, Engels had mocked syndicalism as completely unrealistic, because, as he wrote, the workers would quickly use up their strike funds before the capitalists would surrender their control of the economy. Engels, like Marx after him, totally ignored the insurrectionary role that the strike was meant to play. Guesde, for his part, vehemendy opposed the strike as a step toward insurrection, which he felt was no longer feasible in Western societies in view of the sophistication of armaments and military tactics.

Neither Engels nor Guesde, however, were able to lay these differences to rest At the 1892 Congress of the National Federation of Syndicates at Marseille, a bitter conflict erupted between the proponents of the general strike and supporters of parliamentarism, and over the furious objections of the Guesdists, the Congress passed a resolution favoring the general strike. Since 1890, the struggle for support of the general strike within the Parti Ouvrier had been led by Jean Allemane, a worker-Communard who had been deported to New Caledonia after being taken prisoner on a barricade. Along with his supporters, the Allemanists, he figured very significandy in the subsequent syndicalist radicalization of the French trade union movement Although the Allemanists accepted many basic theoretical concepts of the Marxists, they were virtual anarchists in their oudook and consistent revolutionaries. They fought their way to the leadership of the Parti Ouvrier against the Guesdists and the so- called "Possibilists," led by the former anarchist-terrorist Paul Brousse, who was moving steadily toward a reformist position—advocating local municipal control within the framework of the nation-state.

At length, at a congress in Nantes in 1894, the Guesdists withdrew entirely from the National Federation of Syndicates and tried to form a labor organization of their own. The sentiments of the workers in the NFS, however, remained mainly with the syndicalists. In 1895, the NFS and the Federation of Bourses du Travail merged to establish an entirely new organization, the

Confederation General du Travail (CGT) or National Confederation of Labor. It was a complete victory for syndicalism over parliamentarism. As a revolutionary syndicalist federation, the CGT eschewed all reliance on parliamentary measures to advance the interests of the working class and adopted the general strike as its cardinal weapon for the transformation of society.

Before the establishment of a unified French Socialist Party in 1905 under the leadership of Jean Jaures, the socialist parties in France numbered five: Guesdists, Allemanists (who had split from their syndicalistic comrades), Broussists, Blanquists, and independents. Their history, laden with internecine warfare, is too tangled to unscramble in a few sentences, but in 1896 they were at least able to agree that in elections, while they could oppose one another on the first ballot, whichever socialist candidate survived would gain their united votes on the second.

These divisions and the growing parliamentary orientation of the socialists had little influence on the newly formed Confederation National du Travail. For nearly two decades after its formation, the CGT remained a revolutionary syndicalist union, repeatedly advocating the strategy of the general strike as an alternative to parliamentary socialism. Serious French anarchists—those who were not enamored of terrorism—gained union positions in its growing apparatus and added enormously to its militancy, imbuing the CGT with a spirit of direct action and even sabotage. But the CGT was very loosely organized and marked by considerable local autonomy, its individual *syndicats* pulling the confederation in many different directions. Its militant, indeed revolutionary appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, the confederation remained a battle-ground between reformists and revolutionaries, as well as those who preached a compromise between the two wings, and still others who adventuristically demanded small strikes as a kind of revolutionary gymnastics for the working class.

During its predominantly syndicalist period, the CGT conducted many major strikes that involved hundreds of thousands of workers. As Peter Stearns observes:

> Despite important fluctuations, all indices of strike activity showed growing intensity during most of the [pre-World War I] period. The first attempt at a nation-wide strike occurred in 1906; the first effective industry-side strike began with the miners' rising of 1902. During the two decades before World War I, almost every conceivable method of striking was tried, often for the first time. None of this involved more than a minority of the working dass, but it was a sizeable minority. During the whole period from 1899 through 1914, strikes by industrial and transport workers involved a total of 3,304,482 participants. Many workers struck several different times, of course; but it can be assumed that at least a million manufacturing workers went on strike at least once.[187]

Indeed, at its peak membership in 1912, the CGT daimed to have 600,000 members, although only 450,000 paid dues to the organization. During the same years, well over fifty percent of all French unionized workers belonged to the CGT, making it the largest labor organization in the country.

But by no means should this statistic be interpreted as evidence of strong syndicalist sentiment among the French industrial proletariat CGT militancy was undeniably attractive to the growing industrial workforce, as is evidenced by the large number of strikes that swept over the

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[187] Peter A. Steams, ***Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor*** (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1971), p. 5.

country in 1912; but it is highly unlikely that most CGT members were committed to syndical-ism as a sodal doctrine and a revolutionary general strike. In fact, despite the fiery oratory of syndicalist leaders and the resolutions of their congresses, the CGT never tried to stage a revolutionary general strike. Nor, for that matter, did its rhetoric about direct action and calls for sabotage ever amount to much more than a nuisance for the French bourgeoisie. At the turn of the century, French workers were more prudent in dealing with their employers than their artisanal forefathers had been; indeed, many did not accept syndicalism or dse they gave it a nodding acknowledgment Of the strikes conducted by the CGT between 1899 and 1913, by far the greatest number, involving the most workers, occurred early on, in 1900, when French artisans still formed a very large percentage of the working class.

The nearest the CGT militants ever came to conducting a revolution or a initiating a revolutionary general strike was in 1910, when the railway workers on the Paris-Nord system went on strike in October. A strike committee thereupon called for a general strike, hoping that the Paris-Nord action would spread to the western division of the railroad system and finally to all industries in the country. But the strike in the western division was quickly crushed by Prime Minister Aristide Briand, himself a former anarchist and fervent advocate of the general strike who had since become a socialist parliamentarian, and what was even more demoralizing, the workers in the eastern and southern railroad divisions simply refused to join their fellow workers in the west in a strike, even within the railway system. The union's defeat was thus complete and humiliating.

Finally, as the war approached, the CGT leadership, induding its bureaucratic infrastructure, drifted more and more toward the conventional trade unionism of the British variety. During and after the war the CGT turned into a conventional bread-and-butter trade union, mainly addressing economic issues within the framework of the capitalist economy. Its anarchist and syndicalist components split away and became marginalized within the working class. Following the Russian Revoluuon, the French Communists took control of the union, overloading it with labor bureaucrats and a leadership that warily accommodated itself to changing Communist policies while maintaining a steady, quasi-independent hold of the union's reins. Syndicalism, which had shown so much promise in the first decade of the twentieth century, receded almost everywhere in the postwar period—except in Spain, where it became the ideology of the country's huge labor movement well into the civil war of 1936–39.

Although the French proletariat did carry out general strikes later in the twentieth century, even as late as 1995, it did not link them to revolutionary demands on any serious scale. Barricades appeared from time to time, but merely as symbols of protest, not as ramparts of insurrection. Ebullient and aggressive as the French workers remained, they have never again returned to revolutionary action.

PROLETARIAN SOCIALISM: MARXISM

Karl Marx did not live long enough to see the profound impact his ideas had upon the world. Nor did he witness the schematization of his ideas into a quasireligious dogma in the years following the Bolshevik seizure of power—a debasement that would certainly have appalled him. After spending about half his life in exile, mosdy in London, deeply involved in organizational as well as scholarly activities, he died in 1883, and the staggering body of then- unpublished manuscripts, notes, and correspondence that he left behind, as well as the works he published

during his lifetime, attest to a single-minded and remarkable commitment: to formulate a thoroughgoing critical analysis of social development, particularly of capitalism, and to advance a politics that would provide workers with the guidance needed to replace bourgeois society with socialism.

The value of his endeavor cannot be measured simply by the sheer volume of his work. Proudhon published as much, if not more, in a shorter lifespan. But in contrast to Proudhon, who often leaped into print with any passing idea that occurred to him, Marx usually published his views only after long and careful reflection. His theoretical goal was *coherence,* and he disdained the patently incomplete, often hazy, and poorly formulated ideas of his radical contemporaries.

From a distance of a century and a half, Marx is difficult to read today partly because the theoretical standards and literacy characteristic of his era—influenced as it was by the high intellectual level and hopes of the Enlightenment—suffered a steady attrition in the years following his lifetime. Yet the rich insights in his writings are an immeasurable treasure that, for all their failings, thinking people can ignore only at the cost of their cultural and intellectual development

Marx seems to have set himself two principal tasks: the first, to unmask the hidden nature of capitalist exploitation and the trajectory of the capitalist development; the second, to establish the theoretical basis for a consistently revolutionary practice. Before his writings gained influence, capitalism had successfully fashioned an image of itself as the natural economic framework for a free, juridically egalitarian, and basically just society. Despite the vast and obvious differences in wealth between bourgeois and proletarian, capitalist ideology had considerable success in presenting its economic order as based on a fixed conception of "human nature" rather than on historically conditioned class interests. Society was understood to be guided by a "natural" desire for personal gain, by which every parsimonious and hardworking individual could hope to attain material security, independence, and even wealth, irrespective of the social status into which (usually) he was born. Bourgeois apologists, in effect, regarded capitalist society not so much as a system of social relations as an agglomeration of competitive individuals, each autonomously capable of making his (or less commonly, her) fortune through free enterprise.

Adam Smith, perhaps the most moralistic of the classical economists, had added to this ideology the notion of an "invisible hand" of competition, in which the self-interest of each individual allegedly redounded to the general good. Capitalism was thus extolled as the rational fulfillment of thousands of years of human development—a truly free society in the sense of finally giving full expression to individual self-interest. Self-interest itself acquired a beneficent and socially constructive form, since the maximization of an individual's interests was said to ultimately advance the material conditions of life for all, promoting invaluable technological advances that ultimately benefited humanity, and fostering peace and mutual understanding through the worldwide growth of commerce.

Marx shattered this image, not only by decrying the injustices and cruelties of capitalism but by systematically demonstrating its inherent irrationality. Profoundly influenced by Hegel's historical and developmental way of thinking, he demonstrated that capitalism was neither naturally expressive of a basic human desire for gain nor free of inherent and potentially fatal contradictions. Far from being a classless agglomeration of self-interested individuals, Marx argued, capitalist society was torn by bitter conflicts between the proletariat and the industrial bourgeoisie. These two fundamental *classes* had irreconcilable interests, and their conflict would result either in the overthrow of the capitalist social order by the industrial workers, opening the way to so-

cialism, or—as Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*— in the common ruin of both classes and, by inference, the breakdown of civilized social life.

Hence, far from being a uniquely natural society that marked the culmination of history, capitalism was historically transitory, a phase (indeed, the closing phase) in humanity's long attempt to rise from animality to the full realization of its creative powers and consciousness in a rational society—one in which property would be communally owned and the production and distribution of goods would be guided entirely by the satisfaction of human needs.

Had Marx argued for communism in merely ethical terms, he would have been no more or less important than many other socialist and communist thinkers of his day. But his argument was instead far more historical and economic or, as he conceived of it, "scientific," than those of his socialist contemporaries. Not only did his writings denude capitalism of all its benign but mythic pretensions, showing how it had emerged out of the breakdown of feudalism and how the wealth and property that became socially dominant were accumulated by theft and violence. He further showed that capitalism was far more than merely a system to reward the capitalist with profit for his entrepreneurial abilities. Rather, he said, it was based on the hidden exploitation of the working class. What appeared on the surface to be a fair transaction—the exchange of wages for labor power—actually concealed the expropriation of "surplus" labor, or labor over and beyond that which workers actually required to satisfy their own needs, delivering it unknowingly to the bourgeoisie. It was precisely this objective analysis of capitalist exploitation—as opposed to moral denunciations of injustice or unfairness, intuitive criticisms of capitalism, or various notions about interest as the source of profit, often made by his socialist and Proudhonist contemporaries—that Marx regarded as the scientific component of his analysis.

In unmasking capitalism as a system of exploitation—whose real operations were concealed by myths of personal autonomy, or by the administrative contributions of capitalists to the process of production—Marx tried to show that the success of individual entrepreneurs in a necessarily competitive marketplace *inevitably* led to the elimination of rival capitalists and, by absorption as well as growth, to the concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands. Their "anarchic" competition for an ever greater share of the market not only gave rise to periodic economic dislocations, or crises; it was ultimately destined to produce a general, indeed chronic crisis in the entire system, in which the great mass of proletarianized people would be pitted against ever fewer capitalist magnates. In *Capital,* in a ringing passage that culminates his chapter on the "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation," Marx declared that in the course of capitalist competition,

> One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of production only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and this, the international character of the capitalistic regime. Along with the constandy diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working- class, a class

always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter on the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.[188]

History has yet to render a verdict on all the prognoses that Marx advanced in this passage. But what is arresting is that a book published in 1867, when artisanal production and peasant agriculture still dominated the European economy, contained such an extraordinary insight into the trajectory of capitalism, even its transformation from a relatively localized form into a global economy.

More than any contemporary work of revolutionary socialism, Marx's prognoses were overwhelmingly premised on the industrial capitalist economy; the centralization and mechanization of industry; the impossibility of managing production except along socialized lines; and the abolition of private property in all major spheres of production. Most contemporary socialist and Proudhonist theorists, by contrast, gained their support from artisans and grounded their ideas within the framework of an artisanal economy. They were unprepared to demand such a sweeping transformation of society, least of all the complete abolition of private property. As we have seen, nearly all so-called "utopian" socialists, even Owen—the most labor-oriented—as well as Proudhon—essentially sought the equitable distribution of property. Very few were prepared to exclude all capitalistic forms of private property ownership from a socialist society. Indeed, at one time or another, many socialists and Proudhonists essentially voiced the aspirations of the small-scale producer in a preindustrial world, even by appealing for collaboration between artisans and industrial capitalists. Marx, however, addressed himself not to artisans (although he often referred to them as "proletarians") but to the industrial working class. Not surprisingly, the large proletarian parties of the late nineteenth century, like Guesde's Parti Ouvrier, found his views more relevant than those of any other theorist of the time.

Had Marx confined his work to the critique of capitalism and the sources of class struggle in modem society, his work would still have been of imperishable value. But contrary to the myth that he was only a theorist, Marx was deeply involved throughout his life with the workers' movements of his day, and he also advanced a concrete practice, or politics. This constitutes what he considered to be his second major contribution to socialism. Unfortunately, his politics was filled with so many ambiguities that after his death it created a mixed legacy for his followers. Indeed, clarifying what Marx had meant became a source of conflict among individuals who shared the name Marxist. As a result, various tendencies within "scientific socialism" were pitted against one another, often with grim effects on the workers' movement as a whole.

With the outbreak of the First World War, verbal disputes over Marxist politics escalated into major splits in the movement. Within the Marxist fold an immense literature emerged that denounced not only other socialist tendencies but also other Marxists, eventually leading not only to divisions but ultimately to armed struggles between self-professed Marxian movements.

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[188] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy,* voL 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels (Charles H. Kerr, 1906; republished by New York: Modem Library, n.d.), pp. 836–7. Due in no small part to Engels's role in preparing it, this translation preserves Marx's Hegelian modes of expression better than others.

In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Marxists inflicted repressive actions against those who claimed to provide more authentic versions of Marx's ideas, not to speak of conflicts with non-Marxist schools of socialism.

The source of the conflict was not Marx's political writings alone. Marxist movements were by no means insulated from the bourgeois society they opposed—indeed, like the former anarchist Aristide Briand, they easily became integrated into it and eventually worked to countervail the revolutionary milieu from which they had originally emerged. Their decidedly parliamentary orientation made them particularly vulnerable to cooptation by bourgeois society, especially in the years following the defeat of the Paris Commune.

Moreover, contradictory as it may seem, Marx himself strongly favored the further development of capitalism in the nineteenth century, an oudook that excused or fostered in his followers a tendency toward accommodation to the capitalist system. Throughout his life, Marx had advanced a theory of historical development that assigned to capitalism the role of advancing technology, hopefully to a point where it would be possible to free humanity from the demanding "socially necessary" work needed for subsistence. The achievement of socialism—or more properly, its most advanced stage, communism— required that the means of production be developed to a point where human beings could be freed from material scarcity and toil to manage society and cultivate their intellectual and artistic sensibilities. Thus the development of capitalism, particularly its revolutionary role in advancing labor-saving technology, was seen by most Marxists as a historical and economic prerequisite for the emergence of socialism.

During the revolutions of 1848–49, Marx felt that workers were obliged to render critical support for the creation of a bourgeois republic, free of all feudal encumbrances and obstacles to free trade and nationhood. They were even expected to subordinate their own movements in the interest of advancing capitalist development in relatively undeveloped countries. Only later, in the "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," did Marx and Engels call for the establishment of a workers' party that aimed to establish its own "revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees and municipal councils or in the form of workers' clubs and workers' committees."[189] This party, Marx and Engels now believed, should remain independent of all permanent alliances with the bourgeoisie and well- off peasants.

But this document, which became pivotal in decades of disputes among Marxists, was itself a source of ambiguity. It trailed off in programmatic demands to escalate bourgeois-democratic proposals for more equitable taxes, the nationalization of railways and factories, and state debts. No further mention was made of "revolutionary workers' governments" or workers' "municipal committees and municipal councils." Indeed, the workers were abjured from proposing "any direcdy communistic measures."[190] Thus, except for their writings on the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels advanced the demand for a highly centralized—indeed antifederalist—republic as the political goal of a workers' party.

Marx's writings on the Commune, as we have seen, were a further source of ambiguity. At best, they may be regarded as a short-lived flirtation with federalism. And in a letter to Domela Nieuwenhuis that he wrote shordy before his death, Marx dismissed the Commune as a needless and wasteful municipal uprising, "of one dty in exceptional circumstances," that could have been

[189] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (or "Address of the Central Authority to the League") in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, **Collected Works,** vol. 10: Marx-Engels *1849–1851* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), pp. 277–87.

[190] Ibid. p. 286.

avoided—and should have been—had the Communards shown better judgment in their dealings with the National Assembly.[191]

To complicate matters further: a cardinal theme in Marx's praise for the Commune was the need to completely smash the bourgeois parliamentary state. But he later expressed ambiguous views about even that goal and suggested instead that in certain capitalist countries the working class could take power through the existing capitalistic electoral machinery—removing the very need for insurrection. In September 1872, Marx noted that there are different roads by which the working dass could achieve "political supremacy."

> We know that the institutions, customs and traditions in the different countries have to be taken into account, and we do not deny the existence of countries like America, England, and … Holland, where the workers may achieve their aims by *peaceful* means. That being true we must also admit that in most countries on the Continent it is force which must be the lever of our revolution; it is force which will have to be resorted to *for a time* in order to establish the rule of the workers.[192]

This ambiguity became even more disturbing when Engels, later in life, added France to Marx's list. In fact, shordy before his death in 1895, Engels wrote a new introduction to *The Class Struggles in France*—Marx's work on the 1848 Revolution—that seemed to deprecate the military feasibility of street fighting by armed workers against trained armies. Others were even more eager to vitiate insurrection: over Engels's protests, Karl Kautsky, the editor of the German Social Democratic theoretical organ, *Die Neue Zeit,* watered down the introduction, leaving the impression that insurrectionary measures were completely obsolete—and, by inference, that parliamentary means were the preferred road to "revolutionary" social change. In a remarkably pedestrian interpretation of syndicalist doctrines, Engels, as we have seen, also contended that the general strike was destined to fail as a means for changing society because the workers would run out of strike funds.

There are sufficient passages in their collected works to justify a portrayal of Marx and Engels as either evolutionary or revolutionary in their views about the transformation of capitalism into socialism. Nor can we tell with certainty what kinds of institutions they finally thought would replace the parliamentary system if a workers' party took power: the equivalent of a workers' House of Representatives or Chamber of Deputies? Municipal committees and councils? Workers' clubs (the institutions of choice in Parisian revolutions) and committees? What can be said with certainty is that Marx favored a strongly centralized workers' state, as distinguished from confederations, to administer economic and social life—and, as his behavior in the International showed, a highly centralized party apparatus to lead the socialist movement.

The Marx-Engels writings provided ample justification for the Guesdist argument that the sole way for the workers to gain state power was by parliamentary methods rather than by a general strike or insurrection, as they also did for Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin's commitment to an armed proletarian uprising. It is not surprising that, as European Marxist parties were established, they became primarily parliamentary machines for electing candidates to public office

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[191] Marx to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (February 22, 1881), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, **Collected Works,** vol. 46: Marx and **Engels 1880–1883** (New York. International Publishers, 1992), p. 66.

[192] Karl Marx, "On the Hague Congress," originally published in La Li**berte,** no. 37 (September 15,1872), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, **Collected Works,** vol. 23: **Marx and Engels, 1871–1874** (New York: International Publishers, 1988), p. 255; emphasis added.

in the bourgeois state—leading to bitter disputes with the remaining minority of Marxian revolutionaries who, with growing anguish, felt that their most cherished ideals were being betrayed by reformists.

Chapter 33. The Social Democratic Interregnum

Despite the considerable public reputation Karl Marx acquired as the "red terrorist doctor" who guided the International during the Paris Commune, his most important writings and theories had only limited influence during his lifetime. By the time of his death in 1883 in London, *Capital* had been translated into only two languages—Russian and French—and Marxism as a credo was largely unknown except among small groups of radical intellectuals. Virtually ignored in England, it was popularized to a limited extent in France due to the efforts of the indefatigable Guesde. For the rest of the continent, Marxism was too exodc to gain wide acceptance. Italians, Spaniards, and Russians were more strongly influenced by anarchism, as were a sizable number of French syndicalists, who, around the turn of the century, formed the most militant and impressive working-class movement in Europe.

Apart from Guesde's small Parti Ouvrier, founded in 1882, no Marxist party came into existence while Marx was alive. In 1875, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, Marx's principal spokesmen in Germany, had muted the old man's more radical ideas in order to create a unified German socialist party at Gotha—but to Marx's fury, the new party's program was so reformist that he and Engels seriously thought of denouncing it and had to be persuaded to limit themselves to criticizing it iniramurally. Indeed, Marx's Critique *of the Gotha Program* was not published until a decade after his death and only at Engels's insistence. Thus not even German workers, in whose political activities Marx took a strong interest, formed a Marxist party during his lifetime. Yet within a decade of his death, his works were widely translated and carefully studied, and in many parts of the Western world they had come to be viewed reverentially as an indispensable guide to creating a socialist society. In time, social democratic parties that expressly adhered to Marxism were formed, or were in the process of formation, in many European countries, among them Germany, Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

As these parties emerged, a strong sentiment developed to link them together in another International, with conferences, congresses, and a secretariat to coordinate their international relations. Although international labor congresses of one kind or another had been held since the demise of the First International in 1872—mainly to coordinate a joint struggle for the eight-hour day—a Marxist-oriented Second International did not come into being until 1889. In that year two congresses were called in Paris on the centenary of Bastille Day, both of which were intent on creating a new International. One congress, overwhelmingly French, met at a hall in the Rue Lancry, under the auspices of a socialist tendency known as the Possibilists, inspired by Paul Brousse. Brousse, a former anarchist whose enthusiastic embrace of "propaganda by the deed" had made him a zealous supporter of terrorism, became in the 1870s a mild- mannered, even respectable advocate of municipal socialism, based on reforms and the pursuit of what was "possible"—hence the name that was given to his movement.

The other congress convened within walking distance of the first, at a hall in the Rue Petrelle. Although its participants were fewer in number, they were far more international in composition: they included men and women who were to become the major figures in international Marxism, such as Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Eduard Bernstein (who had not yet become a Revisionist), Carl Legien (the head of the German Free Unions), and Clara Zetkin, from Germany, Eleanor Marx-Aveling; Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, Charles Longuet, and Edouard Vaillant, from France; William Morris, from Britain; George Plekhanov, the "father" of Russian Marxism; and Victor Adler, whose formative role in Austrian social democracy was comparable to Bebel's in Germany. It was from this gathering that the so-called Second International, greatly influenced by the Marxism of these delegates, was formed, with branches—consisting mainly of political parties—in all major countries where workers' parties were legal.

What pardy induced the Second International to constitute itself as a formal organization was an appeal from the American labor movement to endorse a new proletarian "holiday," to be commemorated on May 1, 1890, with the object of gaining the eight-hour working day. The Americans had called upon workers all over the world to simultaneously go on strike on behalf of the demand—and in the process to demonstrate proletarian strength, international solidarity, and militancy. (As we shall see, however, the "May Day" resolution that the congress passed was not exactly the one that its American proponents had advocated.) Thereafter the annual congresses that the International held passed resolutions not only for an eight-hour working day and the improvement of living conditions for the proletariat, but also for far more radical demands, such as the substitution of citizens' militias for regular armies. It also made commitments to fight for universal suffrage and engage in parliamentary activity, resolutions that were markedly distinct from the demands of anarchists and syndicalists. Finally, at its Zurich Congress of 1893, the International formally adopted Marxism as its doctrine of choice, in the presence of a beaming Engels, who thus lived to see his name, together with Marx's, enshrined as co-founders of the largest socialist movement in history, indeed one that, in the decades following his own death two years later, would achieve an influence comparable to that of a world religion.

It says something about the political mood of the time, however, that the congress in the Rue Petrelle was also very ecumenical. The International's founding members included not only most of the world's leading Marxists but also Peter Lavrov, a leading Russian Populist; Domela Nieuwenhuis, who was soon to become the most outstanding anarchist in the Netherlands; and Gustav Landauer, one of Germany's most celebrated libertarian socialists. To the chagrin of the German social democrats, the congress also had a complement of highly demonstrative individualistic anarchists. Even after the International officially adopted Marxism in 1893, anarchists—principally the sizable number of French syndicalists with an expressly anarchist orientation—doggedly continued to reappear at International congresses. Only in 1896, at a stormy meeting of the congress in London, where the two opposing camps from the old First International resurfaced, were all anarchists expelled, whereupon they abandoned any attempt to re-enter the International and turned variously to terrorism and to syndicalism as their strategies of choice.

BACKGROUND TO COMPROMISE

As early as the founding meeting in the Rue Petrelle, the Germans began to establish organizational and programmatic hegemony over the new International. Indeed, the sweep of Marxism over the world actually had its beginnings in Germany, where its popularity clearly stemmed

from the failure of the German ruling classes to arrive at a modus vivendi with the industrial proletariat. Whatever power and appropriateness Marx's ideas may have had on their own for mobilizing the industrial working class, they were given an enormous impetus by Bismarck's manic fear of socialism and his attempt to suppress it As it turned out, the spread of socialist ideas had no better friend than the "Iron Chancellor," whose unrelenting efforts to efface their influence over a span of twelve years—from 1878 to 1890—ultimately did more to invigorate the revolutionary tone of social democracy than its own most eloquent agitators and organizers.

Ironically, once the factory system took hold in central Europe, Germany might well have followed a social trajectory comparable to that of Britain, whose nobility and bourgeoisie had shrewdly coopted the industrial proletariat, eventually absorbing it into the emerging capitalist social order. In principle there was no reason why this could not also happen in Germany. The German workers were not particularly militant, let alone revolutionary like the French; nor did they suffer as bitterly as did British workers during the transition to an industrial economy. In the decades following the suppression of the Paris Commune, when the German industrial revolution got fully under way, Europe enjoyed a considerable degree of social peace. In fact, the passivity of the German workers can be traced to the revolutionary years of 1848–49, when German craftsmen—the working class of that day—allowed themselves, for the most part, to be led by middle-class liberals in their assault upon the despotic monarchies and duchies of central Europe. In contrast to their French brethren, the Germans produced no major independent working-class movement of their own, still less an uprising comparable to the June insurrection in Paris. Thus, German workers remained fairly tame well into the latter half of the nineteenth century; indeed, such working-class organizations that they formed were mainly educational and welfare associations, many of them influenced by Catholic and Protestant clerics.

The writings of socialists like Moses Hess, Wilhelm Weiding, and Karl Grun had far more influence among German exiles and journeymen abroad than they did at home, playing only a minor role among craftsmen in the German uprisings of 1848 and 1849. Radical artisanal organizations such as the *Verbniderung* (literally, "fraternization") did surface during the revolution, particularly in Berlin and Leipzig, but most German workers followed in the tow of the liberals—notably, academics, professionals, and bureaucrats who had been recruited from the existing parliaments of various German sovereignties to form a short-lived pan-German national legislature. Meeting in Frankfurt, this Assembly, obsessed with legalisms and constitutional niceties, ineffectually squandered its opportunity to create a modern unified nation out of the innumerable quasi-feudal states, duchies, free cities, and bishoprics of the German-speaking world outside of Austria. In the end, the Assembly tried to bestow the role of all-German constitutional monarch on Frederick William IV of Prussia, who soon brushed the offer aside, after which the Assembly disappeared in the flood of reaction that followed the revolutions of the period.

The failure of the 1848–49 revolutions in the various German-speaking states, particularly in Prussia and Austria, left open the problem of forming a united German nation. Unification, when it did occur, was ultimately brought about not from below, by liberals and socialists, but from above, by the Prussian monarchy, under the stem guidance of Otto von Bismarck and his cohort of semifeudal reactionary militarists, the Junker landowners from east of the Elbe River. Indeed, for more than a quarter of a century, from 1862 to 1890, Bismarck presided over German affairs in a career that was little less than cyclonic. Having been elevated to the position of Prussian prime minister in 1862, he soon turned his well-trained Prussian armies on Austria in 1866, victoriously removing Vienna from the race for German hegemony and in the same year absorbed Hanover,

Schleswig, and Holstein into the Prussian creation known as the North German Confederation. These annexations were followed, between 1868 and 1871, by the absorption of major southern German sovereignties such as Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, and Wurttemburg and, after the Franco-Prussian War, Alsace and Lorraine. In less than two decades, Bismarck had created a powerful German Empire, or Reich, under the Prussian emperor (or Kaiser) Wilhelm 1, while he himself became its first chancellor in 1871. That it was Bismarck and the militaristic and authoritarian Prussian Junkers who established and ruled the Reich—rather than the liberal democrats, who were hapless spectators to the militaristic unification—was tragic not only for Germany but for Europe as a whole.

In the same year that Bismarck embarked on his career, a determined workers' movement finally began to emerge in Germany, soon to be led by a brilliant young Jewish lawyer, Ferdinand Lassalle. Lassalle, invited to address a German artisans' organization in Berlin on April 12, 1862, delivered a peroration, later published as the "Workers' Program," that was pardy rooted in Marx's ideas and that drew its inspiration from the *Communist Manifesto.* Not only had Lassalle read Marx's available writings, he had known Marx fairly well from the 1840s onward. Later, as the young lawyer began to gain considerable prestige among the German workers, he visited Marx in London, and the two men maintained an ongoing correspondence. To all appearances, in fact, Lassalle seemed to regard Marx as his theoretical mentor and tried to find German publishers for his work.

Moreover, Lassalle's career as a labor leader was truly meteoric. In the mere two years that passed between his emergence as a workers' leader and his death in a duel over a love affair in 1864, his activities gained him a legendary status in the history of social democracy. During that short time span he toured Germany, stirring up the latent sentiment for a working-class party that would function independendy of the liberals in parliamentary politics. Idolized by thousands of workers, his fervent, often theatrical oratory, his organizational talents (which he exercised quite high-handedly), and his manifesto direcdy inspired thousands of German workers to create their own organizations and, under his guidance, to gather at an ad hoc workers' congress in Frankfurt in May 1863, where they agreed to establish the General German Workers Association (Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterverein, or ADAV). Thus, within a single year, Lassalle found himself at the head of the largest—and for a brief time, the only—working-class party in Germany, as a result of which he left a profound imprint upon the German workers' movement for decades after his death.

But his close personal ties to Marx notwithstanding, Lassalle was not in fact a Marxist. Indeed, he and Marx embodied two distinct, even opposing tendencies in the German working-class movements. Where Marx was a revolutionary and a socialist, Lassalle was basically a reformist, parliamentarian, and cooperativisL These differences in political orientation were rooted in profound differences in philosophy and sodal theory. Where Marx's large body of economic writings were nothing if not sodal, Lassalle's sparse economic theories were rooted far more in pseudo-biological facts—especially in Malthus's theories of population. Lassalle more or less believed that population numbers direcdy influenced the availability of the means of subsistence, and he agreed with Ricardo's scxalled "iron law of wages," according to which workers' wages fluctuated around the barest subsistence level necessary to sustain life. If population increased more rapidly than food supply, an overabundance of workers available for exploitation would ensue and wages would decline. This wage decline would then reduce the number of available workers, causing a renewed demand for labor that would increase wages once again. Although these os-

cillations would recur indefinitely, workers' wages would remain as low as possible, altered only by changes in the availability of labor. To Marx, this "iron law of wages" was entirely spedous: he attributed the decline in working-class living standards primarily to capitalist competition and the capitalist imperative to increase profits. The "iron law" served only to conceal the real role of capitalist sodal relations by subsuming them to pseudo- biological factors.

The main source of conflicting tendencies that would persist in German social democracy for decades, however, was the profound political differences that existed between the two men. According to Lassalle, the only way that workers could avoid the impact of the "iron law of wages" was to gain control of the state for themselves and establish a government that would foster producers' cooperatives under workers' control. Such a state would provide capital and credit to a network of producers' and consumers' cooperatives, which hopefully would eventually replace the capitalist economy.

In fairness, it should be noted that Lassalle contrasted his state-subsidized cooperatives to voluntary private attempts to establish them. Voluntary endeavors, he believed, were too limited to produce more than isolated enterprises, with little effect upon capitalism as a whole. He even regarded trade unions as too limited in scope to provide a basis for recreating society along co-operative lines. By contrast, Marx held that unions were important for attaining better working conditions and as living schools for instilling class consciousness in the proletariat. As for Lassalle's emphasis on state-subsidized producers' cooperatives, Marx saw it as a naive archaism redolent of Louis Blanc's social workshops.

Nor did Marx agree with Lassalle's expectation that the working class could use the state on its own behalf. As we have seen, Marx viewed the state as a historical phenomenon rooted in class rule and, his own statist socialism notwithstanding, he generally rejected the notion that the bourgeois state apparatus could be an instrument for any class but the bourgeoisie. Lassalle, by contrast, contended that the state could be used by workers to enhance their interests and even transform society along cooperativist lines. This belief stemmed from his reverential, even quasi-mystical view of the state, largely rooted in the tradition of German philosophical idealism, as a national expression of the German *Volk* and hence as a neutral force that could serve the interest of the people as well as their rulers. In the context of conflicting class interests, Lassalle's acceptance of the state served to foster reformist tendencies within the German labor movement, while his tendency to think in terms of a German *Volksgeist* was essentially reactionary in its implications.

Moreover, Lassalle shared Bismarck's view that German national unification should be guided by Prussia. Marx, who eamesdy believed in the need for German national unification, deeply distrusted the Iron Chancellor's attempts to achieve national hegemony, especially with the backing of Prussian militarists. Indeed, Lassalle so detested the liberals, who represented the interests of capitalism, that he came perilously close to making common cause with the Prussian Junkers who, for their own reasons, affected to be antibourgeois, with the result that Lassalle's behavior was often highly unprincipled and included private negotiations with Bismarck against German liberals.

How would the workers create a state that would foster worker-controlled cooperatives? Lassalle's strategy, as we have seen, was mainly electoral and reformist. Lassalleans contended that workers should establish their own party and fight above all for universal adult male suffrage, in order be able to elect their own candidates to the legislative bodies of the existing state. This essentially reformist parliamentary strategy contrasted dramatically with Marx's revolutionary

view that the workers had to take power, if necessary by insurrection, smash the old state machinery, and replace it with a new worker-controlled state apparatus. According to Marx, such a workers' state would exist only long enough to subdue bourgeois opposition, nationalize property, and plan production to meet human needs, after which it would fade away for want of any other function to perform. To use the famous aphorism of the time: the administration of men would be replaced by the administration of things. Apart from the exceptions Marx made regarding the United States, England, and perhaps Holland, there is no reason to believe that he gave up on these strategic goals, the many ambiguities in his writings notwithstanding.

Lassalle's ADAV did not long remain the only or even the principal workers' party in Germany. On May 17, 1863, a hundred and ten delegates from workers' educadonal associations in forty-five cities throughout Germany convened at Frankfurt to form the Union of German Workers' Leagues (Verband Deutscher Arbeiterverein, or VDAV) with a view toward coordinating their efforts along political lines. By contrast to the Lassallean ADAV, which was highly centralized and managed, as many workers complained, along dictatorial lines, the Verband was more of a federation than a party, allowing its constituent groups to enjoy considerable local autonomy. In fact VDAV groups were not necessarily socialist and, if they so wished, were free to ally themselves politically with progressive bourgeois parues.

Initially, the Verband's goals were diffuse. But the socialists within the VDAV steadily radicalized its goals, and at the two congresses that followed its founding (1867 and 1868), it tightened its structure, began to function as a political party, and very significandy, joined the First International, which meant that the Verband was expected to demand social ownership of the means of production. As its leader, the Verband elected a young wood-tumer from Leipzig, the twenty-seven-year-old August Bebel, who would go on to become the most dynamic and influential figure in German socialism after Lassalle died.

In fact, Bebel had been won over to Marxism by Wilhelm Liebknecht, and between them the two men were to do for German socialism what Guesde did to foster Marxism in France. Following in Marx's footsteps, the Verband, in contrast to the ADAV, rejected state aid in any form as well as the formation of cooperatives. Instead the organization called for the formation of trade unions, which placed it squarely in the emerging tendency of proletarian socialism, rather than artisanal socialism. In 1869 at Eisenach, the Verband merged with the Saxon People's Party, originally a populist party composed predominandy of workers, to form an explicidy workers' socialist party, the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, or SDAP).

Owing to Bebel's and Liebknecht's convictions, the SDAP was undoubtedly the first working-class organization in Germany to be led by avowed Marxists, although its program still resembled the relatively ecumenical manifestos that Marx had written for the First International rather than the expressly revolutionary views he had been advancing in the pamphlets and books published under his own imprimatur. But if the SDAP was not formally Marxist, it was the first German party, since the old Communist League, with which Marx and Engels had a direct association and on which they exercised a major influence.

The relationship between the SDAP and the ADAV was anything but cordial. So bitter was the rivaliy between the two workers' parties and so acrimonious the relations between their leaders that any prospect of collaboration seemed completely foreclosed. It was not only its more radical positions—its strong internationalism and its bitter hostility to the Prussian government—that distinguished the SDAP from the reformistic ADAV. In 1870, for example, from his seat in

the Reichstag of the North German Confederation, Liebknecht abstained from voting for war credits to support the Franco-Prussian War. (His reason for abstaining was that he refused to abet the imperialism of Louis Napoleon as well as Bismarck, which earned him two years of imprisonment for high treason.) Indeed, once the treaty terms were announced, he adamantly opposed the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. By contrast, the ADAV accommodatingly went along with Bismarck and gave the war its full support—an act that the SDAP regarded as a betrayal of proletarian internationalism.

The Paris Commune, however, unnerved the Iron Chancellor, who now began to denounce and harass all socialist organizations in Germany. Both socialist parties were confronted by a state that meant to suppress them if it could, and it was only by overcoming their bitter rivalry and joining forces that they could hope to mount an effective resistance to the increasingly repressive imperial regime. Between May 22 and 27, 1875, in the Thuringian town of Gotha, the ADAV (or Lassalleans, as they were generally known) and the SDAP (Bebel and Liebknecht's Eisenachers) finally convened to form a united Social Democratic Party of Germany, initially under the name of Socialist Workers' Party (Sozialistiche Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, or SAPD). Attended by 130 delegates, this Gotha Congress represented 25,000 members, of whom sixty percent were Lassalleans and the remainder Eisenachers.

What probably made possible the establishment of the SAPD was the enormous ideological concessions that the Eisenachers (led by Liebknecht in the negotiations) made to the Lassalleans. For the Eisenachers, the program of the new party—known as the Gotha Program—marked a definite retreat for the Eisenachers. As Gary P. Steenson tells it:

> Judged by its program, the new party was a victory for the ADAV, and this was certainly the evaluation of Marx and Engels, who were sitting in England. In fact, the two "old ones," as they were called in party circles, had tried to forestall the program by sending severe criticisms of the draft to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and others in the SDAP with whom they had some influence. Ever jealous of their old nemesis Lassalle, and of what they considered their special relationship with the German workers' movement, Marx and Engels denounced the new program as confused, state-socialistic, and too great a concession for the unity even they considered necessary. Although Marx's criticism is now more famous … , Engels too sent detailed commentary to Bebel and Liebknecht. Attacking the notion of "one reactionary mass," the iron law of wages (with its implicit anti-trade unionism), the concept of a free people's state, and many other aspects of the program, Engels predicted that unity on this basis would not last a year.[193]

Actually, it was hardly jealousy that induced Marx and Engels to reject the new program. The Gotha Program, which Marx trenchandy critiqued in a lengthy letter to a few of his leading supporters, contained major formulations that were so reformist, as we have seen, that he and Engels seriously considered publicly dissodadng themselves from the documenL Aside from relatively minor errors, Marx found statements that were opaque at best and intolerable at worst. The program committed the members of the new party to "strive" for their "emancipation … within

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[193] Gary P. Steenson, ''Not *One Man! Not One Penny!*'': *German Social Democracy, 1863‒1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), pp. 31–2.

the framework of the present-day national state"—a demand that Marx regarded as totally inconsistent with the worldwide unity of the working class. He might have added that the program's emphasis on the "present-day" bourgeois state as the arena of working-class "emancipation" explicidy acknowledged the legitimacy of the existing state as a decisive realm of struggle and impliddy rejected the need for revolution. Additionally, the program contained a reference to a "free state," as though the state were ever anything but an instrument of class rule (even by the working class), whose ultimate abolition would necessarily follow from the abolition of class society. Finally, to cite its most compromising features, the program described the "solution of the social question" as "the establishment of producers' cooperatives with state aid under the democratic control of the working people," a completely Lassallean, indeed a Blanc-esque assertion of an artisanal socialism, which allowed that the state could be a source of cooperative networks under "democratic" control.

Marx's critique of the program was withering; but more important, the few pages that constitute the brilliant *Critique of the Gotha Program* form a landmark document in the theoretical underpinnings of Marxian communism.[194] Little did Marx know, ironically, that some of the most objectionable formulations in the Gotha Program had been written by Liebknecht to please the Lassalleans, but the Eisenachers generally sloughed off Marx's criticism with the prediction that they would not seriously affect the workings and policies of the new party.

Engels's prediction that the unified party would not last the year proved wrong. Liebknecht and Bebel assured the "old ones" that time would ultimately bring the new party over to a Marxist point of view, particularly in view of the more democratic organization that the SAPD had by comparison with the ADAV. Whether Marx's views could have prevailed over Lassalle's is hard to judge: in the SAPD (and in the later SPD, as the party finally came to be known in 1891), the Lassallean approach reflected in the Gotha Program persisted— certainly in the party's behavior if not its program, albeit not only because of Lassalle's legacy.

In the year following the founding congress, Marx's early supporters in the SAPD never decisively confronted the reformist oudook that dominated the program, pardy because the antisocialist law of 1878, initiated by Bismarck, made party unity at all costs a vital necessity. In effect, for the social democrats, the antisocialist law was a mixed blessing: although it exposed them to over a decade of repression, it also kept them from confronting the latent conflict that simmered within their party from the day of its founding.

REFORM OR REVOLUTION

The political edifice of the new Reich was designed to prevent an independent working class or any serious democratic movement from gaining substantial power in Germany. But the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Europe was a particularly balmy era of general social and political reform, and neither the German Kaiser nor Bismarck wanted the Reich to be viewed as a tsarist-style tyranny or an archaic despotism. Hence, with the establishment of the empire in 1871, the Prussian-run government gave the newly united German Reich the superficial trappings of a constitutional monarchy.

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[194] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 24: *Marx-Engels 1874–1883* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), pp. 77–99. A full English translation of the Gotha Program appears as an appendix in Steenson's book. I have taken the liberty of using the quotations from Marx's *Critique* for my account of the program here.

For the Reich as a whole, Bismarck established a lower legislative house, the Reichstag, based on universal adult male suffrage. In theory, this pan-German body, with deputies from 397 electoral districts, was supposed to represent the will of all male citizens, regardless of property or status—although subject, to be sure, to the paternal oversight of the monarch. In practice, however, the Reichstag was virtually powerless, a fig leaf for autocracy, as the social democrats called it. Except for military and foreign policy questions, which fell entirely within the purview of the chancellor and the monarch, the Reichstag was free to debate all political issues. But it could not pass laws on its own initiative, and the main authority it had was confined to accepting or rejecting the national budget—which, of course, was drawn up entirely by the chancellor and his ministers. Even in this capacity, moreover, the Reichstag's wishes could simply be ignored by the Kaiser, who retained the authority to handle all military expenditures at his own discretion.

The real power in the empire was shared among the Bundesrat (Federal Council), an upper house composed entirely of ministers from the formerly independent German states; the chancellor, who was appointed by the Kaiser and was answerable exclusively to him rather than to any legislative body; the ubiquitous and thoroughly domesticated bureaucracy; the Prussian army, the strongest and the most socially entrenched military machine in Europe; and the Kaiser himself who, when he so chose, could exercise complete personal power over the government With such a structure and so-called constitution, the empire could hardly be mistaken for even the most limited of constitutional monarchies. Its constitution, far from emanating from the people, was in fact a dispensation of the monarchy. Using the authority of the pliant Bundesrat, the Kaiser could disband the Reichstag at his will, appoint or remove the chancellor, and ultimately dictate whatever policy he chose to make, including decisions on war and peace, whether the Reichstag approved or not.

The existence of the Bundesrat preserved the arguable image of the Bismarcltian empire as a federation of states, each with its own legislative dieL The federation was not entirely mythical—these old states did retain some powers of their own, resting partly on law and pardy on tradition. Some states, particularly in southern Germany, had a relatively tolerant political atmosphere and occasionally allowed socialists to gain seats in the state legislature. In the Reichstag, the now-united SAPD began to get large numbers of votes in national elections, increasing from 352,000 in 1874 to 493,000 in 1877, while its Reichstag deputies increased from nine to twelve. Moreover, local socialist newspapers proliferated with unnerving rapidity, from twenty-three in 1876 to forty-one only a year later. Shordy after the formation of the SAPD in 1875, the Lassalleans and Eisenachers combined their two newspapers to establish *Vorwarts* (Forward), which became the party's official national organ

In 1878 the Iron Chancellor finally succeeded in making the SAPD illegal. Ever fearful of a class war in Germany, Bismarck was eager to nip the growing party in the bud; indeed, as he put it in his own words, "the Social Democrats produced, more than foreign countries, a danger for war for monarchy and state, and ... they should be viewed by the government in terms of a military and power problem, not a legal problem."[195] But before he could oudaw the social democrats, Bismarck needed an excuse, and in 1878 he found just such a pretext when two unsuccessful attempts were made to assassinate the Kaiser, each within a month of the other. Although the assassins were not socialists, on October 21, 1878, having generated a furious "red

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[195] Quoted by Guenther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1963), p. 79.

scare," Bismarck induced the imperial Reichstag to pass the antisocialist law, or "Law Against the Publicly Dangerous Endeavors of Social Democracy," which empowered local police authorities in German states to dissolve all organizations, meetings, periodicals, public activities, and festive events that were even slighdy tinted with socialist colors. Taverns that were suspected of being frequented by socialist workers could be and were closed down. The property and assets of suppressed organizations and periodicals were freely confiscated, and ordinary participants in any of the proscribed activities were subject to fines of 500 marks or three months' imprisonment Leaders or initiators of these activities, in turn, could be jailed for as long as a year, obliging many of them, including ordinary workers, to take flight to Switzerland, England, and the United States.

The same prohibitions against overdy political socialist organizations were extended to all other working-class associations that could be regarded as sympathetic to the socialists, including the Free Unions, which were generally socialistic. Even nonpolitical associations were prohibited, such as cultural, calisthenic, and literary groups. The prohibition was so patendy discriminatory against the working classes that it infuriated many workers who were neither members of the SAPD nor even necessarily sympathetic to it Oddly, however, **the anusodalist** laws, **harsh** as **they** were for **their** day, did **not** deprive **the** SAPD of its voice within the chambers of the Reichstag. Socialists could run for office, provided they presented themselves to the electorate as individual candidates rather than as representatives of the banned party, and the party itself, for a time, was able to funcdon as a vote-getting machine by reconstituting many of its national, regional, and municipal committees as mere electoral organizations. The party's national *Vorstand* or Executive Committee continued to exist, for example, by calling itself the electoral commission of the Hamburg area. Many party organizations of lesser importance followed suit—at least until Bismarck finally hounded them out of the public arena and drove them underground.

Thus, while the SAPD was forbidden to have headquarters, hold meetings, or own an official press, its candidates and spokespersons could wage individual electoral campaigns and reach a wide public through printing establishments that seemed to be privately owned but that were actually owned or controlled by party members and party sympathizers. Significandy, electoral campaigns became one of the main—if not the leading—means by which the party could maintain any kind of public existence, however surreptitiously, which gready pushed it toward parliamentarism, despite the fact that its revolutionary rhetoric was heightened in tone and form by the overdy repressive behavior of the bourgeois state.

Although the antisocialist laws were applied with varying degrees of intensity over the twelve years of their existence, the persecution suffered by social democrats was nevertheless very real and costly. The government tried and/or imprisoned all the party's leaders it could find—more than 1,500 people were arrested in all, some of whom served lengthy sentences. By mid-1879, it had closed down 414 periodicals for their known or suspected socialist sympathies, obliging the party press to move to Switzerland, and in its efforts to build an underground network within Germany, the party faced continual losses in leaders and resources. Even more effective were the government's assaults upon the Free Unions, which necessarily had to function more openly than the party in order to reach nonsocialist as well as socialist workers, a task that made them very vulnerable to government repression, with a resulting, even precipitous, drop in their numbers.

Yet even as Bismarck was trying to extirpate the SAPD, he was also attempting, between 1881 and 1884, to buy off the working class by establishing state-run social insurance programs, covering health, old age, and accidents. Although many Lassalleans in the party's Reichstag delegates

were inclined to vote in favor of these bills, presumably in order to help the lot of the workers and gain their votes, the left within the party saw these reforms as an attempt by the Chancellor to lure the workers' sympathies away from socialism and toward the Reich. After internal disputes, the great majority of social democratic deputies, as a matter of principle, finally did vote against the Chancellor's reforms and refused to enter into complicity with a capitalist, indeed reactionary state that was trying to crush an avowedly anticapitalist workers' party.

In time, of course, the antisocialist law proved to be a boomerang. Its obvious class bias only served to increase socialist influence among a broad spectrum of workers, many of whom knew very little about socialism, and to cement the SAPD's ties with nonparty labor organizations, which were often equally uninformed about socialist ideas but in time became very influential in party affairs. Thus in the Reichstag elections of 1884, after six years of repression, the socialists won more than half a million votes, and in 1890, shordy before the antisocialist law was permitted to lapse, their electoral tally soared to a stunning 1.4 million, larger than any other Reichstag party and ten percent of the electorate. Bismarck, in effect, by trying to suppress the socialists, created a growing and angry constituency for them among the general voting public as well as in radical organizations, which in time would flood the party and mobilize constituencies for candidates who were hardly committed to the socialist principles that its leaders avowed.

Finally, in 1890, Bismarck was obliged to resign his position—not least because of temperamental differences with the new, headstrong young Kaiser, Wilhelm II, who was eager to rid himself of the arrogant and patronizing Chancellor. Nor was the new Kaiser eager to antagonize a large number of his subjects who were voting for, if not joining, a party and a union movement that the government had banned. Accordingly, in the same year that Bismarck left office, Wilhelm lifted the ban and restored the party's legal status. In the long run, the antisotialist law, far from weakening social democracy, gave it an aura of heroic glamour, and a tradition of having suffered persecution that made it an object of reverence to its members and extended its influence enormously not only in Germany but also abroad.

Moreover, even as the party attracted many ordinary Germans—middle class as well as proletarian—who were more sympathetic to its plight and to its call for reforms than to its core social ideas, the antisocialist law, by revealing the dass nature of the German state, also increased the influence of the more revolutionary tendencies in the party, namely the Marxists. By 1890 many German social democratic workers not only regarded the state as an undisguised enemy but had veered further to the left because of continual government harassment of their trade unions. Thus, the antisocialist law served to give the party a revolutionary veneer that, unknown to its more radical leaders and worker militants, concealed the presence of many members and electoral supporters who were basically reformist in their ideas and behavior. This tension between reformist behavior and radical veneer, which had existed in the party since the adoption of the Gotha Program, was the source of the seemingly inexplicable ambiguities and contradictory behavior of the party up to the outbreak of the First World War.

In the meantime, at its 1891 Congress in Erfurt, in Thuringia, the party changed its name for the last time, to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or SPD), as well as its program. The passages in the Gotha Program to which Marx and Engels had so strongly objected were discarded, and an entirely new document, pithy and entirely committed to Marx's ideas, was adopted. Framed by Karl Kautsky, with whom Engels had personally collaborated in preparing Marx's posthumous *Theories of Surplus Value,* it freely bor-

rowed its analysis and phraseology from *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital,* often with little modification of Marx's sweeping prose style.

The opening passages of the Erfurt Program virtually repeat, in the same ringing language, Marx's lines on capitalist accumulation (see Chapter 32) that close with the demand, "The expropriators are expropriated."

> Ever greater grows the number of proletarians, ever more enormous the army of surplus workers, ever sharper the opposition between exploiters and exploited, ever bitterer the class war between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which divides modem society into two hostile camps and is the common characteristic of all industrial countries.[196]

The language is strident and combative. There is no mention of Lassallean cooperatives or state support, still less any notion that the state can stand above society as a neutral arbiter of social differences. In its historical demands, the program is sweepingly revolutionary:

> Only the transformation of capitalistic private ownership of the means of production—the soil, mines, raw materials, tools, machines, and means of transport— into social ownership and the transformation of production of goods for sale into socialistic production managed for and through society, can bring it about that the great industry and the steadily growing productive capacity of social labor shall for the hitherto exploited classes be changed from a source of misery and oppression to a source of the highest welfare and of all-around harmonious perfection.[197]

This radical tone was maintained in the party's programmatic literature and in party pronouncements by Liebknecht (albeit somewhat equivocally) up to his death in 1900 and by Bebel who, at the turn of the century, became the real leader of the party's organization. Kautsky, as the party's principal theoretician (and editor of its main theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit,* or New Time), played the role of the guardian of Marxist orthodoxy up to the First World War. All three of these men, to be sure, repeatedly vacillated in their political views and, as we will see, engineered reformist compromises with the existing social order. Nonetheless, for several decades they advanced a stirring Marxian rhetoric, of a kind that did not vary greatly from the speech that Bebel gave before the Reichstag shordy after the fall of the Paris Commune:

> You should be firmly convinced that the whole European proletariat and everyone else who has still within him a feeling for freedom and independence looks to Paris. And though Paris is suppressed at the moment, 1 would like to remind you that the battle in Paris is merely a small skirmish of outposts, that the decisive events are still to come, and that within a few decades the battle cry of the Paris proletariat—"War on the palaces, peace for the huts, down with misery and idleness"—will be the battle cry of the whole European proletariat.[198]

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[196] Erfurt Program (1891), in Steenson, *"Not One Man!"* p. 247.

[197] Steenson, "*Not One Man!*" p. 248.

[198] Quoted in Roth, *Social Democrats* in *Imperial Germany,* p. 87.

This kind of rhetoric had persisted throughout the "oudaw period," and even Eduard Bernstein, who later appealed for a reformist orientation within the party, initially echoed Bebel's words, opposing any tendency within the SPD to accommodate itself to the status quo.

But the party's enormous successes at the polls, even during the period of its illegality, suggested that an underlying conservatism still existed among large sectors of the party and especially the trade union membership. Bebel's words had been appropriately heroic for the 1870s and the "oudaw period." But once the party became a fully legal organization with an immense following (often poorly educated in socialist ideas) and possessed of considerable material holdings, as befit a major parliamentary organization, the behavior of the party became less confrontational and more liberal. During the 1890s in southern Germany, where Bismarck's repressive measures had been less severe, social democratic deputies to the state legislatures were already making opportunistic compromises with their liberal colleagues and trying to tone down the revolutionary rhetoric of the national party leaders.

Among the social democratic Reichstag deputies, too, an explicit right wing began to appear, which was willing to accede to Bismarckian policies when they seemed to benefit its working-class electorate, even during conditions of illegality—as we have seen, when Bismarck was making his social insurance reforms. It surfaced even more markedly, during the mid-1880s, over the question of government subsidies for the ship-building industry. Where the Left opposed the subsidies as an attempt to further German imperialism by extending shipping routes to colonial countries, especially Africa, the new right- wing social democratic deputies viewed them as a source of jobs for German workers, arguing for their support within the parliamentary caucus. By the 1890s, the party was becoming excessively successful, by promoting cosmetic reforms entirely within the framework of the Reich—reforms that properly should have been the concerns mainly of liberals and progressives. It is fair to say that by championing the material well-being of its working-class voters without challenging the social order, the Social Democratic Party in Germany was becoming more democratic than socialist and more reformist than revolutionary.

This rightward shift—including an attempt by moderate social democratic deputies to muzzle the radical rhetoric of one of the party's newspapers, the *Sozialdemokrat*—can be expected to emerge in any ostensibly revolutionary movement whose demands for reform coincide with those of liberals on specific issues. With the SPD, this overlapping of interests was unavoidable, given the party's huge and often socially mixed constituency. But the party could also have chosen to use reformist issues to heighten the importance of its revolutionary socialist vision. As early as 1850, in their "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," Marx and Engels had suggested that a revolutionary working-class party like the League should advance reformist demands by continually escalating them into revolutionary ones. Accordingly, they wrote that if the bourgeois democrats wanted the state to regulate aspects of the economy, the League should demand its outright nationalization; if the bourgeois democrats called upon the state to purchase railroads, the League should demand that the state confiscate the railroads outright. The League, they argued, "must drive the proposals of the democrats, who in any case will not act in a revolutionary but reformist manner, to the extreme and transform them into direct attacks upon private property."[199]

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[199] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (or "Address of the Central Authority to the League") in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 10: *Marx-Engels 1849–1851* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), pp. 286.

This policy of escalating reformist demands into increasingly revolutionary ones was completely lost on the new officialdom that the SPD was spawning in the Reichstag and the state legislatures. A pragmatic political leadership, expressly disdainful of theory and principles, it preferred to consider the merits of reforms in their own right, often precisely as the government presented them. Instead of challenging their authenticity or revealing their limitations—let alone expanding them into more radical demands—more and more social democratic deputies tended to vote yea or nay with little critical perspective.

Eventually, the contradictions between the party's rhetorical adherence to Marxism and its growing opportunistic pragmatism came out in the open in a theoretical debate, which raged furiously from about 1898 to 1904, between Eduard Bernstein's Revisionism and the upholders of the Erfurt Program's revolutionism. Bernstein had been an orthodox Marxist until the early 1890s, and up to his death in 1932, he insisted that he remained one and had never challenged the core social insights of Marx. During the twelve years of the antisocialist law he had spent in London, exiled by a prison sentence, he had lived almost reverentially in Engels's shadow. At the same time he had quiedy been imbibing the gradualist doctrines of the British Fabians, a small number of prominent intellectuals who had rejected revolution as impractical, indeed as undesirable, because capitalism seemed to open immeasurable prospects for reform and ultimately a peaceful road to socialism.

Yet it would be naive to assume that Fabian doctrines alone turned Bernstein from a Marxian revolutionary into a social democratic reformist. The last quarter of the nineteenth century as a whole was a time of considerable social improvement Far from fulfilling Marx's predictions in *Capital* that the capitalist economy would drive the working class to destitution and produce growing economic crises, workers in the 1890s visibly enjoyed a relatively high degree of economic prosperity. The period, if anything, was marked by considerable social stability and a strong belief in the certainty of unimpeded progress. Working within the existing state structure, it seemed, might be a far better strategy for attaining a socialist society than waging a cosdy, precarious, and bloody armed revolt. It was precisely this evolutionary strategy that Bernstein began to advance in a letter to the SPD in October 1898: instead of trying to make a revolution to attain a socialist society, socialists should work to make incremental gains that would lead to a slow and peaceful transition to socialism.

Bernstein, to be sure, was not the first German social democrat to challenge Marx's revolutionary doctrines. As early as 1891, in opposition to the adoption of the Erfurt Program, Georg von Vollmar of Munich had voiced the belief that socialism could be attained through a slow organic evolution of society, and like many Bavarian and other south German members (who had never surrendered this view), he urged the party to adopt reformist measures that were tabooed by orthodox Marxism. His arguments had fallen on deaf ears, especially in Prussia, which harbored the most left-wing theorists and workers in the party. Owing primarily to his distinguished position in the party and his more sophisticated critique of Marxism, Bernstein had managed to turn his Revisionist doctrines (as they were called) into a vocal and growing tendency, which, in fact, often gave a theoretical patina to practices that differed little from those of the pragmatists in the party and the unions and the leading trade unionists.

What is very significant about Bernstein's Revisionism, moreover, is that it opened up a long-standing debate over reform versus revolution not only in German social democracy but among socialist pardes abroad. All the party's big guns, such as Kautsky and Bebel, and especially its brilliant theorists such as Rosa Luxemburg, denounced Bernstein, and some even tried to drive

him out the party itself. Bebel clearly recognized that Bernstein's views, which were first expressed at the Stuttgart Congress of the SPD in 1898, were by no means the aberration of a single man: they spoke to a wider segment of the party than his opponents' leaders were willing to acknowledge. Accordingly, with Bebel's aid, Bernstein remained in the party and even became a Reichstag deputy, revealing that changes were occurring not only in Bebel's mind but in those of leading theorists who sdll publicly professed to oppose Bernstein's views. Although the Revisionists always remained a minority at the party congresses up to the outbreak of the First World War, they had a much larger following than the votes they gained at SPD congresses would seem to indicate, and they even managed to attain a very important standing in world socialism.

This silent following included an important sector within the party—the trade union leadership, who were socialists in name only. In 1889, with the founding of the Second International, the union leadership had been infuriated by the call for a worldwide general strike on May 1. In order to avoid a work stoppage, they demanded that the German party be given the leeway to call its May Day meetings during an evening or on a weekend, rather than strike on May 1. Significandy, Bebel and his supporters in the party acceded to their wishes, thereby reducing the symbolic significance of the day from an expression of social protest to a tame, celebratory festival. Indeed, in later years it was union delegates to congresses of the Second International who turned the German social democratic delegation into a conservative force that generally opposed militant responses to major problems confronting the working class, including radical antiwar resolutions. Repeatedly, the union leadership played a major role in collusion with party moderates in bridling the social democratic youth movement, which supported the radicals in the party on democratic issues and against militarism.

Otherwise, the union leaders, for the most part, remained aloof from party debates on Revisionism—not because they opposed Bernstein but because of their indifference to theoretical issues. The intraparty debates between the Revisionists and the orthodox Marxists generally provided the trade unions with intellectual justification for their cautious behavior, if and when they needed theoretical support; reformist party candidates, in turn, drew upon these debates to gain ideological justification for their policies in Germany's various legislative bodies. By degrees, despite the majority votes that the orthodox Marxists gained against Bernstein at party congresses, it became evident that a chronic malaise afflicted European socialism—one that was to turn into an illness, fatal to social democracy, in 1914.

THE GROWING ACCOMMODATION

The most serious portent of the conservative shift—one that challenged the capacity of social democracy to act as a revolutionary movement—did not occur in the realm of theory. Rather, it was the result of a stormy and innovative revolution, of a kind that Europe had not seen since the days of the Paris Commune.

In 1905, after the tsar's misbegotten war against Japan ended in defeat for Russia, the Russian working dass rose in an uprising that sent tremors around the world. Although the Russian workers engaged in considerable street fighting in the cities, particularly in St. Petersburg and Moscow, their primary weapon in destabilizing Europe's most hated autocracy was the general strike— or "mass strike," as it was called by the Germans. In wielding this quintessentially syndicalist weapon, the workers demonstrated for all to see that they could completely paralyze

the country's major industrial centers— and create a revolutionary situation unequaled by any upsurge for more than a generation.

No sooner did news of the 1905 Revolution come to light, than a furious debate opened within the German Sodal Democratic Party about the merits and demerits of general strikes— particularly those waged not merely for economic but above all for political ends—indeed, as a means for overthrowing capitalism. The most radical proponents of the "mass strike" were relatively young social democrats in the party and the Second International—Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht (Wilhelm's son), and Clara Zetkin, among others—as well as distinguished elders such as Franz Mehring and, more equivocally, Karl Kautsky.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 brought the SPD—indeed, the entire Second International— face to face with its revolutionary conscience and traditions. The "mass strike" dispute now replaced the Revisionism debate—or more precisely, gave it concrete meaning. Like Revisionism, the Revolution challenged the very image of the Social Democratic Party as a revolutionary force, by focusing attention on the increasing apathy of the German working class toward revolution. The issue of the "mass strike" was not simply a theoretical question among a few intellectually minded leftist leaders. Rather, it forced members of the unions and their leaders to reconsider the role that unions as *such* would play in overthrowing capitalism. Blundy put: how would the unions respond if the party called a general strike to achieve political ends rather than merdy economic goals?

Marx, as we have seen, had always regarded unions as mere schools for educating workers in socialist, especially Marxian politics. He invariably gave priority to working-class political parties as the more sophisticated and able organizations of the labor movement Before the 1905 Revolution, Marxist theorists in Germany could reasonably support this view without fear of contradiction, thereby focusing the party's attention on electoral contests and parliamentary acrobatics. Strikes for economic ends had been left to the unions to decide upon and finance, an emphasis that allowed bureaucrats in the Free Unions to occupy themselves with pragmatic problems of day-to-day organization and labor relations while they disdainfully let the theorists duel with each other over fine points of Marxian theory.

But in 1905 the problem of the general strike, by raising an issue that bore direcdy on the role of trade unions in revolutionary action, could not be ignored. It invaded the very recesses of the union bureaucracy by requiring that the role of **unions** in a revolutionary situation be defined. **As Steenson** observes, "Probably no other issue in the history of the German working-class movement prior to the outbreak of world war in 1914 had such a far-reaching impact on internal relationships [in the SPD] as did the mass-strike debate of 1905–1906."[200] Predictably, the union leaders categorically opposed the right of the SPD to commit them to any mass action that confronted the social order, let alone the mass strike. So touchy was the union leadership on this issue that a Free Trade Union Congress at Cologne in May 1905 not only denounced the use of the general strike but blatandy forbade the union press and locals even to discuss it.

For their part, the party radicals saw the mass strike not only as a revolutionary weapon in its own right but as a way to revive a combative, revolutionary spirit in an increasingly sedate and parliamentary party. In response to the trade unions, they published a defense of the general strike written by the Dutch socialist Henriette Roland-Holst, with a preface by Karl Kautsky, as well as their own literature, including Rosa Luxemburg's 1906 pamphlet *The Mass Strike.* Bebel, for

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[200] Steenson, *"Not One Man!"* p. 103–4.

his part, straddling the unions and the radicals, opposed the general strike as more than a purely pragmatic and reformistic tactic, but he allowed for its use under restricted circumstances—a formula that satisfied neither camp in the party.

Inasmuch as the general strike had been a weapon of choice among Bakuninist anarchists, who had resolved to use the measure as a revolutionary weapon at their Geneva Congress of 1873, and in France was the revolutionary strategy par excellence advocated by the syndicalist CGT, local SPD branches throughout Germany began to invite anarchists to their meetings, primarily to educate them on the subject. In fact, the idea of the mass strike was far more appealing to the rank-and-file members than it was to the union leaders. Thus even after the Russian Revolution of 1905 went down in defeat, the notion of mass strikes lived on vigorously at SPD meetings and conferences. "The debate thus launched was long and acrimonious," Steenson concludes, "and despite the best efforts of the party and trade-union leaders, the issue would continue to cause problems right up to 1914."[201]

The crude measures used by SPD and union leaders to dampen any radical, let alone revolutionary sentiments among their followers is little short of appalling. In 1906, to neutralize any support for the mass strike, Bebel, whose revolutionary ardor was dwindling as rapidly as he was aging, and Carl Legien, the social democratic chieftain of the Free Unions, conspired behind the backs of their respective memberships to draw up a secret agreement on the financial responsibility for strikes. Strikes that were called for political reasons were to be the financial responsibility of the party alone, while strikes for economic goals were to be funded by the unions. Inasmuch as general strikes were expected to be political in nature, they obviously fell within the purview of the SPD, and to add insult to injury, the agreement stipulated that political general strikes were to be firmly discouraged by the party's Central Committee.

In fact, under the guise of dividing up responsibility for general strikes, the unions by this agreement effectively annulled the ability of the party to wage general strikes of any duration longer than a week or so. Possessed of only a quarter of the dues-paying membership of the unions, the SPD had far fewer financial resources, and since the party was precluded from calling upon the well-funded unions for assistance, even a large-scale political stnke of any length, still less a general strike, was now beyond its financial means. The agreement thus gave the union leaders, most of whom were bureaucratic moderates with political views far to the right of the party leaders, the means to exercise inordinate financial leverage on the party's strike activities. Understandably, the SPD radicals were concerned that the union leadership would now be more prone to negotiate with employers than to engage in strike actions of *any* kind, not to speak of a general strike even for economic ends.

As alarming as this agreement was to the radicals, a similar agreement, also worked out by Bebel, went even further in according power to the trade unions at the expense of the party. For years the union leadership had resented its secondary role to the party leadership in matters concerning the policies of the social democratic movement as a whole. With the aid of rising party pragmatists such as Friedrich Ebert, Bebel now negotiated an agreement with the union leaders that would give parity to the party's Executive Committee and the unions' General Commission in all matters of policy—a virtual abdication of the political leadership to institutions that were supposed to function merely as the "schools" for social democracy.

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[201] Ibid, p. 104.

Introduced to the SPD's Mannheim Congress of 1906, the resolutions approving these agreements produced a furor in the party's Left, led by Luxemburg and Kautsky, who appropriately regarded them as outright betrayals of basic Marxist principles. In response, Bebel engaged in verbal acrobatics that outdid his most sublime feats of logical manipulation. Simultaneously damning and praising all parties to the dispute, the old man eventually relegated the general strike for use as a strictly defensive weapon, despite its patently revolutionary role in Russia. And the fact that he managed to win the overwhelming majority of the delegates to his position (323 to 62) revealed how far the SPD as well as its most important living founder had moved to the right, clearly placing narrow organizational considerations above once-sacrosanct principles. Like it or not, the German Social Democratic Party had ceased to be a revolutionary organization and in fact was permeated by reformist, even conservative sentiments.

The Mannheim Congress was a decisive event: it provided official confirmation that the union leadership was now dominant in party affairs. As Peter Gay observes:

> The labor leaders had good cause for celebration [at Mannheim]; their great victory gave them far more than equality: in effect, it meant the surrender of the party to the unions. It prepared the way for the ascendancy of party bureaucrats who were not "theorists" and who "could get along" with the union leaders... In short, it set the stage for the failure of the party in 1914 and for its breakup during the war.[202]

Needless to say, the new agreements marked a *de facto* rupture with what remained of Marxism within the party. The General Commission of the Free Unions, expressing its satisfaction at the vanquishing of revolutionary politics within the party, commented:

> It is to be hoped that the frequent ructions during the Party and the trade unions between 1905 and 1906 will have a lasting good effect in that the complete co-operation, which now exists, will never again be endangered *by theorists and writers* who attach a greater value to mere revolutionary slogans than to practical work inside the labor movement.[203]

Moreover, the party's preoccupation with parliamentarism was taking it ever farther away from anything Marx had envisioned. Instead of working to overthrow the bourgeois state, the SPD, with its intense focus on elections, had virtually become an engine for getting votes and increasing its Reichstag representation within the bourgeois state. Education along socialist lines was giving way to mobilization along pragmatic lines, with the result that the party devoted ever more of its attention to immediate, everyday reforms at the expense of fundamental change. The more ardul the SPD became in these realms, the more its membership and electorate increased and, with the growth of new pragmatic and opportunistic adherents, the more it came to resemble a bureaucratic machine for acquiring power under capitalism rather than a revolutionary organization to eliminate it.

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[202] Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* (New York: Columbia University **Press, 1952), p. 127.**

[203] Quoted by Selig Perlman, A *Theory of the Labor Movement* (1928; Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1979), p. 100. The emphasis in this quotation is probably Perlman's.

THE "MASS PARTY"

By 1914, the German Social Democratic Party had around a million members, and its affairs were managed by more than 4,000 paid functionaries and 11,000 ordinary salaried employees. It supported innumerable periodicals— local, regional, and national—many of which were dailies, others weeklies, still others monthlies, with a collective circulation of a million and a half readers. The pleasures of being a social democrat are suggested by the multitude of different hobbies and vocadons to which the party's periodicals appealed: cyclists could read the *Arbeiter-Radfahrer* (The Worker-Cyclist), the organ of the Worker-Cyclist Federation in Offenbach; choral groups could read the *Deutsche Arbeiter-Sangerzeitung* (The German Worker-Singers' News), the organ of the German Worker-Singers' Union. There were periodicals and organizations for gymnasts, temperance advocates, even stenographers and innkeepers. All of these papers were published in the thousands of copies, some exceeding 100,000. Social democratic societies, clubs, associations, and groups abounded everywhere to meet every personal need, taste, or proclivity. The official circulation of the party's humor magazine, the *Wahre Jakob,* soared to nearly 400,000. So frequendy was it passed from hand to hand that its total readership is estimated to have been about 1.5 million devoted readers. Significandy, the party's theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit,* founded by Kautsky, did not exceed 11,000 readers, although it was the most intellectually sophisticated Marxist periodical in the world. The official social democratic newspaper, the *Vorwarts,* had a peak circulation of 165,000—a high figure for the organ of a national Social Democratic Party, to be sure, but trivial by comparison with *Wahre Jakob,* which addressed the tastes of the ordinary SPD member in search of lighter fare.

Joining the SPD meant entering an all-encompassing subculture, with activities to account for almost all of one's spare time. A member could attend his or her monthly local party meeting; a union meeting; lectures; local and district conferences; and the meetings of various cultural and professional associations devoted to ancillary activities from health to sports. There were festivals to enjoy, demonstrations in which to march—especially May Day parades, which were safely held on weekends, even if May 1 fell on a weekday—and protest meetings and electoral rallies to attend. Social democratic youths could go on hikes and encampments, and hold their own conferences, meetings, and rallies.

All of this made social democracy a veritable way of life for the ordinary worker. It fostered a commitment to the party that was not easily swayed by dissident ideas nor easily troubled by breaches of political integrity. One's friends and even one's family members were often social democrats, and one's political rivals were the Catholic adherents of the Center Party—which had its own array of popular associations. The two groups could be distinguished from each other by their insignias, modes of dress, and even modes of expression as well as by their political opinions.

On the eve of the First World War, the German Social Democratic Party polled 34 percent of the votes for the Reichstag and gained 110 out of the 396 seats, thus making it the largest party in Germany. About 220 party members sat in state legislatures, more than 2,800 in city parliaments, and some 9,000 in rural town and village councils. Although social democratic deputies at all levels of government made themselves accessible to their constituents— especially during elections, when party members might be induced to campaign in their behalf—members of the Reichstag *Fraktion* (or caucus) in particular had become more and more removed from any lived contact with the membership. Consummately moderate in oudook, these deputies detested the

"wild" radicals whose theories were aired in the party press and whose confrontational notions discredited them with Germany's "better classes." In time, some deputies even took issue with moderates within the party leadership itself who, in their eyes, were not quite moderate enough.

Indeed, far too many SPD Reichstag deputies (over twenty percent) were not only party members but leaders of the increasingly conservative trade unions. Their long climb through the trade-union apparatus to positions of state power and their deadening pragmatism made them disdainful of theories, principles, and, above all, seemingly impractical intellectuals. Placing a strong emphasis on *realpolitik,* they despised the idealism that had cemented the party during its "outlaw period," and they disdained—sometimes with a bad conscience—party figures who still embodied the radical beliefs of their younger days. At the same time, like most parvenus, many of them harbored a covert admiration for the very nobility, the wealthy bourgeoisie, and even the military, which their program committed them to oppose.

The Reichstag *Fraktion,* in turn, became an independent power in its own right, literally standing apart from the party and party members and demanding political autonomy from the party's institutions. They seemed to regard themselves as representatives not of the regular SPD voters alone but of all their constituents, including transitory supporters and the less politicized and radicalized ones. With the passage of time, the results of this devolution of party leadership and parliamentary deputation alike toward accommodation with the existing system were to prove ruinous, both to social democracy and to Germany.

Despite its enormous size and following, the German Social Democratic Party was by no means amorphous. Contrary to conventional myth, it was a highly centralized party whose congresses enforced strict discipline when necessary and had full authority to expel dissidents who they felt diverged sharply from the party's doctrine. This discipline was especially enforced within the Reichstag *Fraktion,* where on any given issue the delegates were obliged to vote in favor of the policy adopted by the caucus's majority, whether they personally agreed with it or not—and no matter how raucous and even bitter the debate within the caucus had been. In certain respects, this centralisdc structure set a precedent for Lenin's views of how a socialist party should be structured in the face of opponents and in dmes of crisis. Although the party culture nurtured broad participation by members in its many social activities, the centralism and the discipline of the party structure served to restrict members' involvement in making important decisions, as witness the leadership's back-room concessions to the unions and the enormous power accrued by the party bureaucracy.

Taken as a whole, the history of the German Social Democratic Party and its unions from 1905 to 1914 is a gray story of moral decomposition amid stupendous economic growth, and of the primacy of quantity—in the form of members, Reichstag deputies, and financial resources (more than 20 million marks, an enormous sum in those days, were tied up in party business investments)—over quality, in the form of talent, revolutionary resoluteness, and theoretical insight By 1914, the party was largely a conservative organization, despite its radical rhetoric. Its rejection of the general strike, as well as its pragmatic agreements with the government on dubious legislation, which compromised the party's principles, foreshadowed its collapse with the coming of the First World War.

Nonetheless, it is possible, indeed customary, to speak of a discemable Left, Right, and Center in the German Social Democratic Party during the years before the First World War. David W. Morgan, in his fascinating account, describes these three basic divisions. The Left, by remaining within the party instead of forming a new one, inadvertendy perpetuated the illusion that the

SPD was in some way the inheritor of the Marxian legacy. It was led primarily by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Clara Zetkin, as well as the aging and feeble Franz Mehring and a younger generation led by the little-known Paul Levi, Wilhelm Pieck, and other future founders of the German Communist Party.[204] These leftists consistendy opposed the Revisionists' attempts to ease social democrats into positions of power or even to use the existing state to create a socialist society. To be sure, they themselves did not reject parliamentarism as such; rather, they regarded election campaigns as educational endeavors and Reichstag deputies primarily as public educators, not as mere legislators. Nor did the leftists, unlike the Revisionists, accept any agreements with bourgeois parties in the Reichstag. They adamandy adhered to the party's traditional precept of refusing to occupy ministerial positions in the government Again, following a traditional party precept the Left opposed any vote in support of the government's budgets, as an indication of its noncooperation with the bourgeois state. In 1914 it would firmly oppose the war as imperialist, calling for international proletarian solidarity against all the contending governments and the ultimate overthrow of the capitalist system.

As for the political temperature of the party membership—the ordinary rank- and-file members—by far the majority could be found in the broad Center, very often content with the social insurance and other benefits in the existing society that the party defended on their behalf. Most of the party executive, editors, and leading bureaucrats were also part of the Center, as were Friedrich Ebert, the most colorless, supremely bureaucratic embodiment of the party's pragmatic malaise, and Carl Legien, the chieftain of the Free Unions, who in fact belonged to its right wing.

The most important leaders of the SPD's Center, ironically, were some of the very men who presented themselves rhetorically as guardians of Marxist orthodoxy, namely Bebel up to his death in 1913, Hugo Haase who replaced him as party chairman, and Karl Kautsky. While the Center, in theory, accepted the basic party precepts upheld by the Left, in practice it dealt with them as naive and idealistic encumbrances. Like a congregation reciting the Decalogue, the Center mouthed the party's basic precepts all the more to ignore them in daily life. As the SPD aged into growing respectability, it thus reinforced an ugly reification of language: even the most stolid of its bureaucrats and many of its members could rhetorically hail the struggle against war, invoke proletarian solidarity, and pay lip service to class conflict—only to follow an opportunistic direction in the face of a crisis, with lowered banners and sullied placards.

There is little doubt that this Center, giving due allowance to all its gradations, never accepted insurrection as a means to achieve a socialist society. Even in the 1890s, Wilhelm Liebknecht (he died in 1900 at the age of seventy- four) had mouthed phrases about the need to use force in dislodging capitalism, only to waver and make compromises with reformists to preserve party stability. Kautsky, ostensibly a bastion of Marxist orthodoxy, abhorred violence and civil war; his own ideas of a revolutionary strategy did not go beyond the need to gain an electoral majority in the Reichstag and confront the government with his highly centralistic version of socialism. Bebel, as we have seen, was the architect of the most significant compromise that the party made with its Marxian heritage. His popularity as a leader of the Center, however, remained undiminished. Perhaps most accurate is the comment that George Ledebour, a left-centrist Reichstag deputy, once made to the young Leon Trotsky; the SPD, he declared, consists of "twenty per cent

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[204] David W. Morgan, *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917–1922* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1975).

radicals, thirty per cent opportunists—and the rest follow Bebel," honoring radical rhetoric in the breach.[205]

Reformism sank such deep roots into the SPD that when a successful takeover of Germany by an armed proletariat actually became feasible, the party completely failed the revolutionary workers in its most basic commitments. The party leadership showed itself to be, at best, liberal democratic in orientation, seeking to change an empire into a republic by making a number of social reforms, and at worst, overdy counterrevolutionary, a prop for reaction cynically draped in a red flag, mouthing empty radical verbiage to confuse its followers.

The party's ideological right wing, notably Bernstein's Revisionists, needless to say, made no attempt to espouse revolutionary Marxian principles. It expressly viewed capitalism as a long-lived, stable social order that could not be overthrown by revolution and sought to jettison Marxist theories of growing economic immiseration *(Verelendung)* and impending class war. So numerous were the votes cast against Revisionist proposals at party and International congresses that the followers of Bernstein sometimes seemed to exist merely as a foil for the Left and the Center to attack. But despite their numerous defeats, Revisionists shared more common ground with the party membership than the party's Marxian rhetoric allowed most observers of the SPD to perceive.

More disturbing—and dangerous—than the Revisionists themselves were outright, run-of-mill reformists such as the trade unionists and the members from the southern German states, who sat in the state legislatures, made shady deals with bourgeois parties, and voted for legislative reforms in virtual disregard of party precepts and Marxian theory. Indeed, more accurately than the Left and the Center, this Right reflected by its behavior the growing drift within the party away from appeals for social revolution and toward appeals for democratic reform.

The consistendy poor showing of the extreme Left can be pardy explained by the enormous economic and social benefits the German working class had gained by the turn of the century. Bismarck had shrewdly courted the proletariat with the most advanced social legislation in the world, and the SPD, by virtue of the additional reforms it gained, provided the German working class with a vested interest in the preservation of capitalism. Approximately eleven million German workers acquired retirement benefits and medical insurance; and eighteen million were insured against accidents—benefits that were virtually unknown to workers elsewhere in Europe. Almost every detail of workplace life, from maximum hours to the number of latrines in a shop, were regulated by governmental legislation. Bebel, who had a canny ability to understand the German proletariat and seemingly read its mind, acidly noted as he watched a parade of Prussian Guards in 1892, "Look at those fellows; eighty per cent of them are Berliners and Social Democrats but if there was trouble they would shoot me down at a word of command from above."[206] In any case, as long as no major crisis compelled the German Social Democratic Party to finally cast off its radical rhetoric and show itself fully as a reformist party, nearly all its leading members could smugly pay tribute to Marxian ideas and radical party precepts. Although the SPD's annual congresses had become an ongoing battleground for debates over everything from Revisionism to the role of the general strike, the party managed to maintain a facade of ideological unity up to 1913, when Bebel died after years of balancing the Left and Right without any major defections.

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[205] Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 215.
[206] Quoted by Sir Valentine Chirol, *Fifty Years in a Changing World* (New York: Harcourt, 1928), p. 274.

His death marked the end of an era and the overt collapse of the SPD's revolutionary facade. Only a year later, in August 1914, the long-dreaded challenge came, when the Kaiser demanded that the Reichstag vote for war credits to support the army in the First World War. How would the SPD deputies vote? Would they remain true to their Marxian internationalism and reject the war as imperialist? Or would they succumb to nationalism and vote to support the war effort? The party was too heavily invested in its presses, offices, and properties, and too committed to reforming and thereby preserving the very society it was sworn to undo, to respond to the crisis of 1914 in a revolutionary manner. Its parliamentary *Fraktion*, despite bitter disagreements by a minority of deputies, voted as a bloc in favor of credits to finance the war.

The only surprising aspect of this vote was the incredulity expressed by many radicals both within and without the party when they heard of the SPD's vote in the Reichstag in August 1914. Its capitulation could have been foreseen years earlier, especially after it gave in to the trade unions at Mannheim, and its own tepid behavior at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the International, where a sizable part of the SPD delegation hesitated to take an adamant stand against the Reich in the event of a war. The astonishment of the socialist Left is perhaps understandable only because the German Social Democratic Party was internationally regarded as the foundation, indeed the model party, of a Marxist International—indeed, "the party of Marx"—whose congresses brought together the most advanced revolutionaries of the period.

THE SPD AND THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The German Social Democratic Party enjoyed enormous eminence among the delegates to the Second International and shaped the organization, structurally and politically, in its own image. As a result, the International became heir to many of the same conservative tendencies that beleaguered the German party.

The first indication that the SPD's influence on the International would mark a drift to the right appeared as early as the founding congress on the Rue Petrelle in 1889. The issue, as we have seen, was May Day, the proletarian "holiday" intended to express international working-class solidarity and militancy. The militants at the congress wanted to pass a resolution supporting full participation in the protests, calling on workers' organizations to join in strikes and demonstrations on May 1. By contrast, the Germans, as we have seen, were adamantly opposed to any work stoppage that might be suggestive of a general strike, even if only for a single day. May Day, according to the SPD, was to be a "holiday" or at most a weekend or evening display of working-class strength.

Accordingly, when the Rue Petrelle congress passed a resolution supporting May Day, the SPD delegates added a rider that left it to the discretion of the individual national parties to determine what kind of specific action would take place. The SPD's anemic rider was adopted, although it produced considerable resentment among the more militant organizations in the new International. That the German position could have been adopted at all demonstrated how shaky, as early as 1889, were the revolutionary commitments of the professed revolutionary movements of Europe—even in the matter of a symbolic one-day work stoppage. The resentment of the militants resurfaced during the International's Congress at Zurich in 1893, when Victor Adler, challenging the SPD's cautious behavior, carried a vote in favor of demonstrations on May 1, irrespective of whether it was a workday. The German delegation furiously opposed Adler's resolution. Shortly afterward, in Germany itself, the SPD turned the Adler resolution into a dead

letter at its annual party congress at Cologne, where it openly rejected the use of the general strike except for very restricted goals. As it turned out, the inability of the Second International to commit itself to participation in an international day of proletarian solidarity augured the conservative drift that was soon to come.

Once the International adopted Marxism as its official ideology in 1893 and expelled the anarchists in 1896, its meetings became highly stylized, with well- ordered speeches, committees, and resolutions, and of course, the prescribed and highly decorative red banners of socialism. Form increasingly dominated substance, and loyalties were often based as much on the delegates' feelings of awe for particular socialist leaders as on the content of their orations. After 1900 an International Socialist Bureau in Brussels functioned as a clearinghouse for reports and data on the labor movement, chaired by Emile Vandervelde, the stormy petrel of the Belgian Workers' Party. It was as close to a permanent coordinating body as the Second International would ever create in its nearly three decades of active existence, and its powers were minimal, even meager, leaving all the associated parties to follow their own whims and desires, with little or no regard for one another's behavior.

In all, the Second International held nine congresses between 1889 and 1912. Its resolutions at these congresses, to be sure, established certain standards of revolutionary political behavior—an emphasis on revolution over reform, the rejection in principle of entry into bourgeois governments, opposition to a European war and to militarism generally, and even support for the general arming of the people. But like the resolutions of the SPD, these standards defined revolutionary Marxian socialism only on paper and were often honored in the breach.

Not only did the International became a replica of the German Social Democratic Party in its rhetorical commitment to revolution and internationalism, but to a great extent it too was bedeviled by Revisionist tendencies, especially over the issue of the general strike. When the strike issue came up, the International essentially threw it back into the laps of the individual parties, which fatally removed it from the arena of worldwide proletarian action. But the general strike issue refused to disappear from the International's agenda, any more than it could elude the agenda of the German party, especially after the 1905 Revolution in Russia. As in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg and her comrades continually pushed, in the International, for the right to use the general strike as a revolutionary weapon rather than as a means to gain limited ends such as the eight-hour day or suffrage. Her efforts were entirely without avail—but the issue hovered over the International like a ghost, especially as a worldwide war approached.

In fact, the all-important question of how the International would respond to a world war produced a major division between Left and Right at several congresses. The Left should, in fact, have produced an open split, but it failed to do so because of a misplaced commitment to the fetish of organizational "unity." At the 1907 Stuttgart Congress, following the passage of a tepid antiwar resolution introduced by Bebel, Rosa Luxemburg and the principal Russian delegates at the Congress, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Julius Martov, introduced a more militant amendment, which the delegates dutifully adopted. The International thus declared:

> If a war threatens to break out, it is a duty of the working class in the countries affected … to make every effort to prevent the war by all means which seem to them appropriate… Should a war none the less break out, it is their duty to … make use of

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the economic and political crisis created by the war to stir up the deepest strata of the people and precipitate the fall of capitalist domination.[207]

This resolution was of crucial importance. It went beyond purely defensive action to prevent or oppose a war, such as a refusal to vote for war credits and engage in demonstrations. Indeed, it essentially called upon social democrats to *use* the conflict and its socially destabilizing effects to promote an outright proletarian insurrection against capitalism itself. But even this leftist resolution was diluted, as G.D.H. Cole points out:

> Nothing was said about the general strike, or about insurrection—the Germans saw to that; but thanks to the Russian addition the prescription for action went a long way beyond the mere parliamentary protests which alone had been explicidy set forth in Bebel's draft. The general strike was not ruled out—it was passed over in silence; and the same can be said of insurrection, which can indeed be regarded as implicit in the final resolution.[208]

Hence, on the war issue, the International committed itself to nothing—and as time was to show, it would do nothing when hostilities broke out, to its lasting disgrace.

No less haunting than the general strike issue was the failure of the International to decisively reject the entry of social democrats into bourgeois cabinets, a crisis that was precipitated by Alexandre Millerand a socialist member of the French Chamber of Deputies, who agreed to become a minister in Rene Waldeck-Rousseau's government in 1899. Although Millerand was eventually expelled from the French Socialist Party, the International at its Fifth Congress in Paris in 1900 passed a resolution (prepared by Kautsky) against "entrism," as it was called—but very noticeably, without condemning it entirely. The resolution, shepherded through the Congress by jean Jaures (who later became the indubitable leader of the French Socialists), was symptomatic of the inability of the Left revolutionaries to shake off the influence of governmental opportunists within the International. The equivocal resolution satisfied neither the Right nor the Left at the Congress: while the Left was appalled by any participation in the bourgeois state, French and south German reformists were piqued that any restriction at all was placed on their freedom to form governing coalitions with bourgeois parties.

To be sure, the International repeatedly and ritualistically condemned Bernstein's Revisionism and thereby declared its nominal adherence to revolutionary socialism. But as in the case of the German SPD, such routine declarations carried less and less weight in practice. In nearly every European social democratic party, revolutionaries of the word were making parliamentary and political compromises that amounted to a *de facto* acceptance of Bernstein's approach. Millerand's entry into the French government was followed by that of Aristide Briand, who became minister of education in 1906; then by John Bums, the British labor leader, who simply abandoned socialism altogether and entered the Liberal ministry (ironically, resigning from it because of his opposition to the war in 1914). These were only the more notable and explicit defections to "Millerandism," as the disease was called. Bernstein's Revisionism reflected practices that were already adopted in nearly all the parties of the International well in advance of

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[207] Quoted by G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialism,* vol. 3, part 1: *The Second International, 1889–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 67–8.
[208] Ibid, p. 69.

the outbreak of war in 1914. Indeed, many of the parties affiliated with the Second International eventually provided Europe, during and after the war years, with prominent bourgeois statesmen, some of whom became outright patriotic chauvinists.

As the first decade of the new century drew to its close, the International was faced with the grimmest practical test of all. The likelihood of war challenged it to take an antiwar position less tepid than the one it had adopted at Stuttgart. At its Copenhagen Congress in 1910, Keir Hardie, the British socialist, together with the French socialists and delegates of the British Labour Party, introduced an amendment to the antiwar resolution that recommended the use of a general strike in case of war. Although Hardie tried to limit the applicability of the general strike to workers engaged only in war industries and only in belligerent countries rather than the international working class as a whole, his resolution foundered on the objections of the right-wing tendencies within the International, which regarded the general strike as too provocative. Nor did the resolution proposed by Hardie (who was more of a pacifist than a revolutionist) satisfy the Left, which supported the general strike but also thought the resolution should state, as Luxemburg and Lenin's did, that a war would almost certainly weaken capitalism and provide the opportunity for a proletarian insurrection. After much stormy debate, all mention of a general strike was eventually written out of the antiwar resolution, and the International went on with business as usual.

In the end, the Copenhagen Congress did what it all too often did: it left the question of antiwar activities to the discretion of its individual member parties. This repeated avoidance of the most pressing issue facing the world proletariat—by shifting its responsibility for opposing war to its constituent organizations—clearly revealed the International's refusal to deal with a war crisis that concerned all of Europe: indeed, it abdicated its duty to act in the interests of the proletariat as a whole, crassly subverting the very internationalism on which its existence was predicated. In this respect, the Second International had committed suicide long before Europe's armies were sent into a horrifying four-year bloodbath in August 1914. An emergency congress held at Basel in November 1912 to take up the war issue again produced nothing more than ruminations about the importance of preventing a then-raging Balkan conflict from turning into a continental war. Apart from pious platitudes about international working-class solidarity, the International still had no firm strategy in place should a general European war erupt.

The spirit of internationalism, however, was not entirely dead in European social democracy. Shordy before the outbreak of the war, Leon Jouhaux, the chief of the French syndicalist CGT, appealed to Carl Legien, the chief of the social democratic German Free Unions, to join him in calling for a general strike against the oncoming conflict. So deeply was German social democracy afflicted with the pathologies of nationalism and expediency that Legien responded only with an icy silence. Indeed, Legien's silence in the face of Jouhaux's plea was brutally eloquent: so corrupt was the German party that it indirecdy promoted the outbreak of war by freeing the Kaiser's hands to send his armies plunging into Belgium.

In August 1914 the internationalist effusions of European social democracy became chaff in the wind, as social democrats in most countries voted in their legislatures or resolved in their parties to support the war effort of their respective countries. Shaped largely by the German social democrats, the Second International ignominiously dissolved; indeed, many of its leaders, with a rudeness bom of chauvinism, refused even to speak to their erstwhile colleagues in belligerent countries, who had suddenly been transformed by the war from comrades into enemies. "Western Marxism," as its academic acolytes were to call it some seventy years later, proved completely

bankrupt in the face of the first great crisis of the twentieth century. When the SPD decided to vote for war credits in August 1914, uniformed German socialists, with the blessing of their party, marched off to slaughter their Belgian and French comrades in the trenches of the Western FronL Even many leading anarchists, men of the stature of Peter Kropotkin, supported the Allied cause, to the consternation of their antistatist comrades. The International disappeared without a whimper, leaving its carefully forged proclamations of class solidarity to the gnawing teeth of mice.

The forty-three-year period between the crushing of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the outbreak of the First World War proved to be a tragic interregnum in the history of revolutionary movements. Yet despite the basic conservatism of the Second International, the spirit of revolt did not disappear completely. It resurfaced with furious intensity in Russia, where capitalism had only begun to intrude, ending the paralysis that had been produced by European social democracy for nearly three decades.

Bibliographical Essay

GENERAL WORKS

It would be difficult to gain an understanding of the revolutions discussed in this book without placing them in the general context of nineteenth-century European history. The range of historical works covering this immensely important period, of course, is enormous, but several general histories are exceptional. The latter half of R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton's *A History of the Modem World* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1965) and particularly David Thomson's *Europe Since Napoleon,* 2nd edn revised (New York McGraw-Hill, 1982), are invaluable sources for the social environment in which the classical nineteenth-century revolutions occurred. An excellent overall history of the first half of the century is William L. Langer's *Political and Social Upheaval, 18321852* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), in the Rise of Modem Europe series.

Among the economic histories, few equaled Ernest L. Bogart's *Economic History of Europe, 1760–1939* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1942), with its wealth of information about the nineteenth century. Fernand Braudel's *Capitalism and Material Life, MOO-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) provides a valuable historical background to the conditions that led to the Industrial Revolution. The classic work on the development of the industrial economy is Arnold Toynbee's *The Industrial* Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956, originally published in 1914), which was actually based on the notes of students and friends who attended his lectures between 1880 and 1881. This small book managed to raise most of the important issues that stemmed from the Industrial Revolution and, more than a century after the original lectures, is still rewarding reading. Alan S. Milward and S. B. Saul's *The Economic Development of Continental Europe, 1780–1870* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) is to be recommended, as are J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond's somewhat dated but still eminendy informative and readable *The* Rise *of Modem Industry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969, originally published in 1925) and their *The Town Labourer* (New York: Anchor Books, 1968). Eminendy readable and useful as a corrective for accounts that overemphasize the extent of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, focusing instead on the persistence of precapitalist agrarian lifeways and feudal and aristocratic institutions during the century prior to the First World War, is Amo J. Mayer's *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

Many original documents that I have cited were drawn from document collections, of which the most notable are *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* well selected and edited by Raymond Postgate (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History,* edited by Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders (New York: Doubleday, 1964); and the Documents of Revolution series, published by Thames and Hudson in Great Britain and Cornell University Press in the United States.

Nothing in English equals G.D.H. Cole's superb six-volume A *History of Socialist Thought* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 19531960), a truly outstanding treatment of socialistic thinkers. Max Beer's two- volume work of *The General History of Socialism and Social*

Struggles (New York: Russell & Russell, 1957) is a highly readable contribution to the history of socialism and revolutionary uprisings from earliest times in the West to the early twentieth century. As a one-volume history of various socialisms, Harry W. Laidler's *History of Socialism* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968) is a very readable, highly accurate, and a generally outstanding achievement. One of the most elegant and insightful studies of socialism and anarchism is George Lichtheim's *The Origins of Socialism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969); although it is essentially an interpretation of Cole's six-volume work, Lichtheim's perspective is provocative. Wolfgang Abendroth's A *Short History of the European Working Class* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972) is a synoptic overview of the workers' movement from 1848 to the Second World War, while James H. Billington's *Fire in the Minds of Men* (New York: Basic Books, 1980) is a rather frantic and scattered compilation of important data as well as gossip about revolutionaries and revolutionary movements, from which the reader will leam such esoterica as the origins of the "Marseillaise" and the "Internationale" as well as key movements such as the Society of the Seasons. Although some of its facts are arguable, it is still a mine of information as well as rapid-fire accounts of events and ideas. Although Alexander Gray's *The Socialist Tradition: Moses to Lenin* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) is informative, the author so patendy hates his subject that he tends to alienate the reader and render his account inaccessible to all but outright antisocialists.

So much does the span of Louis-Auguste Blanqui's life cover the nineteenth century that his biographies—alas, still loo few in number—can be cited under the heading of "general reading." His most devoted and informed biographer was Maurice Dommanget, whose several books on Blanqui are available in French. 1 have found most useful for my purposes his *Auguste Blanqui: Des Origines a la revolution de 1848: Premiers combats et premieres prisons* (Paris and Le Haye: Mouton, 1969). The earliest English-language biography of Blanqui seems to be Neil Stewart's *Blanqui* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), a highly dramatized account with a number of doubdul facts, but an entertaining Marxist interpretation of the great revolutionary. Less tendentious and more accurate is Samuel Bernstein's Auguste *Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971). Finally, Max Nomad gave a highly readable account of Blanqui's life in *Apostles of Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1961). A very good exposition of Blanqui's social ideas is Alan B. Spitzer's *The Revolutionary Theories of Louis Auguste Blanqui* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), which also provides a limited amount of biographical material.

Biographies of other major thinkers and revolutionary leaders of the nineteenth century are invaluable as accounts of nineteenth-century social conditions and socialist ideas. To this day, I still regard Franz Mehring's *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life,* translated by Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Coviti, Friede, 1935), as the best account of Marx's life and thoughL It is based, in part, on personal interviews with some of Marx's closest collaborators, and a portion of the book was written by Rosa Luxemburg. David McClellan's *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) is more up to date but lacks the vividness and warmth that Mehring brought to his own endeavor.

Histories of anarchism are rather plentiful, but the most recent and comprehensive is Peter Marshall's *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992). G.D.H. Cole has written extensively and sympathetically on nineteenth-century anarchism in *Marxism and Anarchism, 1850–1890,* the second volume of his *History of Socialist Thought* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961). The original edition of George Woodcock's *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1962)

treated anarchism as a ghost that offered social democrats useful notions and little more; its revision (Harmonds- worth: Penguin Books, 1986) was much needed. Daniel Guerin's *Anarchism* (New York and London: Monthly Review, 1970) is a remarkably informative summary of anarchist history and ideas. Out of print at this writing, it is soon to be republished by AK. Press of San Francisco and Edinburgh.

A comprehensive English-language biography of Mikhail Bakunin has yet to be written. Although E. H. Carr's *Michael Bakunin* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1938) has been often cited as the "authoritative" account of Bakunin's life, it is so hostile and even intemperate that it deserves the neglect it is currendy receiving. More useful and sympathetic biographies include Brian Morris's *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1993) and Richard B. Saltman's *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* (London and Westport: Greenwood, 1983). The best selection of Bakunin's writings is *Michael Bakunin: Selected* Writings, translated by Steven Cox and Olive Stevens and edited and introduced by Arthur Lehning (New York: Grove Press, 1973). Lehning was the editor of the Bakunin Archives at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. The most comprehensive collection of Bakunin's writings in English is G. P. Maximoff s *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: Free Press, 1953), a tour de force of careful selection of excerpts from Bakunin's writings, organized by subject matter. *Bakunin on Anarchy,* edited and translated by Sam Dolgoff (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1972), contains many of Bakunin's most important writings, but the editor, a committed anarchosyndicalist, tended to overemphasize this aspect of Bakunin's thinking.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's life and ideas have received reverential treatment from his admirers, especially Edward Hyams's *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind, and Works* (London: John Murray, 1979) and George Woodcock's *Proudhon* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1987). The best selection of his writings in English translation is *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon,* translated by Elizabeth Fraser and edited by Stewart Edwards (New York: Doubleday, 1969). Only a few of Proudhon's books are available in English; the most important ones are *What is Property?* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century,* translated by John Beverly Robinson (London: Pluto Press, 1989)—in my view, Proudhon's most coherent expression of his ideas—and *The Principle of Federation,* translated and introduced by Richard Vernon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). Robert Graham's introduction to *General Idea of* Revolution generally gives a fair summary of Proudhon's ideas.

PART V; ARTISANAL SOCIALISM

The best single account of the ideological transition from Jacobinism to socialism is G.D.H. Cole's Socialist *Thought: The Forerunners 1789–1850,* the first volume of his *History of Socialist Thought.* The squalor and hardship that the Industrial Revolution inflicted on the British working class is superbly presented in Frederick Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England,* in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 4: *Marx and Engels 1844–1845* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 295–596. This very important book, originally published in 1845, is ably revisited by Steven Marcus in *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962) provides a very valuable comparative picture of the rise of capitalism and the working classes in Britain and France, as well as significant cultural changes in both coun-

tries. Hobsbawm's *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) is useful on the changing economic and social conditions that fostered artisanal socialism in Britain and France. E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York Vintage Books, 1963) is a masterpiece. One of the most responsible studies of the Luddites is Malcolm I. Thomas, *The Luddites: Machine-Breaking in Regency England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). A dramatic account of the Luddite movement appears in the first half of Kirkpatrick Sale's *Rebels Against the Future* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1995), but the second half deteriorates into technophobia and appeals for deindustrialization. Dorothy Thompson's *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) is a masterful overview of the subject, and her collection of studies on Chartism, coedited with James Epstein, *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture 1830–60* (London: Macmillan, 1982) is a feast of literature on almost every aspect of Chartism. A city-by-city account will be found in *Chartist Studies,* edited by Asa Briggs (New York and London: Macmillan, 1959).

For economic development and working-class movements in France, William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) and Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement, 1830–1914: The* Socialism *of Skilled* Workers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) are both of immense value. They are filled with invaluable information and challenging analyses, although each goes too far in reading contemporary notions of collectivism into the largely artisanal world of the nineteenth century.

Excellent essays on the formation of the French working class appear in *Working-Class Formations: Nineteenth-Century Patterns* in *Western Europe and the United States,* edited by Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Tom Kemp's *Economic Forces* in *French History* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1971) is a fine survey of the unique development of the French economy in the strategic period between the Great Revolution and the rise of Louis Napoleon. A valuable account of the interaction between French factory owners and proletarians is Peter N. Steams, *Paths to Authority: The Middle Class and the Industrial Labor Force* in *France, 1820–48* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1978). John Plamenatz's *The Revolutionary Movement in France* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952) is a brief but insightful study of three great revolutions (1830, 1848, and the Commune of 1871), with good accounts of the events that led up to them. But perhaps the most remarkable comparison of French and British artisans, and their respective courses of development, is in Gwyn A Williams's superbly written Artisans *and Sans-Culottes* (London: Edward A Arnold, 1986). George Rude's *The Crowd* in *History: A Study oj Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730–1848* (New York and London: John Wiley and Sons, 1964) is a classic account of insurrectionary crowds.

A good English-language account of the Babeuf conspiracy is David Thomson's *The Babeuf Plot: The Making of a Republican Legend* (London: Kegan Paul, 1947), while Babeufs own voice can be heard in *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf,* edited and translated by John Anthony Scott (New York: Schocken Books, 1975). Selections from the writings of early French socialists appear in Fried and Sanders's Socialist *Thought,* and Frank E. Manuel's excellent essays on Saint-Simon and Fourier have been collected in *The Prophets of Paris* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Cabet and his Icarian movement are explored in great detail by Christopher H. Johnson in *Utopian Communism* in *France* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974). Louis Blanc's ideas on artisanal socialism are expounded in his *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858).

The two most outstanding accounts in English of the French Revolution of 1830 are Pamela Pilbeam's *The 1830 Revolution in France* (New York: Sl Martin's Press, 1991) and David H. Pinkney's *The French* Revolution *of 1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972). These works may be supplemented by the invaluable collection of studies, *1830 in France,* edited and introduced by John M. Merriman (New York and London: Franklin Watts, 1973). The two major insurrections that exploded in the silk-weaving center of Lyon, in 1831 and 1834, are well detailed in Robert Bezucha's *The Lyon Uprising of 1834: Social and Political Conflict* in *the Early July Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974). Bezucha's is one of the best accounts of artisanal socialism or assodationism in the literature. The great and tragic insurrectionary history of the Lyon working class is completed by Mary Lynn Steward-McDougall's *The* Artisan *Republic: Revolution, Reaction, and Resistance in Lyon, 1848–1851* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984).

PART VI: THE BARRICADES OF PARIS

A major source for the first decade of the July Monarchy is Louis Blanc's two- volume *The History of Ten Years: 1830 to 1840* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1845), which deals with all aspects of French life under Louis-Philippe, including many important events to which Blanc was a witness. Some of the realistic novels of the period provide excellent contemporary glimpses of Parisian working-class life, especially Eugene Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris* (New York: Hippocrene Books, n.d), and Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables,* available in many editions. The social conditions of working-class Paris during this period are explored in considerable detail in Louis Chevalier's *Laboring* Classes *and Dangerous Class* in Paris *During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Frank Jellinek (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

The literature on the 1848 Revolution in France is considerable, but of immense importance are the reminiscences and historical accounts set down by participants and eyewitnesses. Writing under the pseudonym Daniel Stem, the Countess d'Agoult's fine *Histoire de la revolution de 1848* provides a wealth of description and dramatic detail by a perceptive and astute observer. This work, originally published in three volumes between 1850 and 1853 (Paris: Gustave Sandre) and subsequendy republished by other French houses, has been an invaluable source for nearly all later histories of the Revolution in Paris; lamentably, it has not been translated into English. Alexis de Tocqueville, another eyewitness to the Revolution, narrates the events in *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville,* translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), providing rich personal characterizations as well as insighdul analyses that reach many of the same conclusions as Marx, but from the other side of the barricades. Alphonse de Lamartine's *History of the French Revolution of 1848* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1871) is more a self-serving memoir, in which all events seem to center around himself and his cronies. Although it is sometimes factually unreliable, as revealed by cross-references with other sources, it vividly conveys the heated atmosphere of the time and recounts the desperate attempt by the Provisional Government to keep the workers out of power. By contrast, Louis Blanc's *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858), an indispensable account by a leading participant, appears to be marked by considerable honesty, as well as by hostility to radicals such as Blanqui.

Valuable documentary material on the 1848 Revolution is collected in *1848* in *France,* edited by Roger Price as part of the Documents in Revolution series (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

1975) and Postgate's *Revolution from 1789 to 1906.* A superb collection of monographic papers is Roger Price's Revolution *and Reaction: 1848 and the Second French Republic* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), which includes studies on artisan unrest, the club movement, and the crushing of the *democ-socs,* as well Charles Tilly and Lynn H. Lees's fascinating research into the occupations and background of the June insurgents.

One of the most thoughdul overviews of the 1848 Revolution is in Priscilla Robertson's Revolutions *of 1848: A Social History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952)—the section on the French events manages to say more in 100 pages and provide a better interpretation of the French events than other books of a much larger size. Georges Duveau's 1848. *The Making of a Revolution,* translated by Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1967), dramatically presents the Revoluuon from the standpoint of three socially different members of French society. Finally, Arnold Whitridge's *Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949) fleshes out the Revolution with biographical characterizations that are rich in political meaning.

The specialized accounts of aspects of the 1848 Revolution by recent scholars are fascinating in their political and social implications. Peter H. Amann's Revolution *and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975) is unmatched as a study of the popular working-class democracy that was created through the clubs, showing how the working and lower middle classes sustained remarkable networks of mass organizations that acted as a powerful impetus to the Revoluuon. Donald Cope McKay's *The* National *Workshops: A Study* in *the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) is an excellent study of the workshops and their employees in that strategic year. Mark Traugott's *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) focuses in detail on the June insurrection, with particular emphasis on the methods that the privileged classes used to recruit from within the working class itself the Mobile Guards and, to an extent, the National Workshops, counter-revolutionary forces that would be deployed against the June insurrection.

John M. Merriman's *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left* in *Revolutionary France, 1848–1851* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978) takes up the crushing of the *democ-socs* both within and outside of Paris in the aftermath of the June insurrection, while Ted W. Margadant's *French Peasants* in *Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979) examines in detail the rural uprising that followed Bonaparte's coup in the aftermath of 1848. David H. Pinkney's account of Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris during the Second Empire is outstanding; along with providing statistical material, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958) vividly depicts important features of Parisian city life during the first half of the century.

No understanding of the 1848 period is possible without consulting Karl Marx's unequaled *The* Class Struggles in *France, 1848 to 1850* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* both of which are available in the Marx-Engels *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969) and in the multivolumed *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1978 and 1979), volumes 10 and 11 respectively. The best critical exploration of Marx's own ideas and activities during the German Revolution of 1848–49 is P. H. Noyes, *Organization and Revolution: Working-Class Associations* in *the German Revolution oj 1848–1849* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), which shows how Marx subordinated the workers' movement in Cologne to that of the liberal bourgeoisie. The book also provides an indispensable background on the shift Marx and Engels made in their "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," which

is available in the first volume of the three- volume *Selected Works* and volume 10 of the *Collected Works.* Oscar J. Hammen has also written a highly readable account of the background to and activities of Marx and Engels in the German Revolution in *The Red '48ers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

English-language accounts of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International) are more limited than those in French and German, but several of them give a good picture of its formation, congresses, and activities. The most comprehensive is G. M. Stekloffs *History of the First International,* translated from the Russian by Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Martin Lawrence, 1928). Unfortunately, Stekloff permitted his Marxist bias to interfere with his presentation, which seldom strays from the Communist, albeit preStalinist "line" on the subject. A fine nonpartisan history is Henryk Katz's *The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), which is concise and highly informative.

The first part of *The* Revolutionary *Internationals, 1864–1943,* edited by Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), is sketchy so far as the International as a whole is concerned, but it does contain the best account, albeit tongue in cheek, of the anarchist IWMA namely Max Nomad's "The Anarchist Tradition." The most definitive Bakuninist history of the First International is available only in French, despite the fact it has been published in the United States: James Guillaume's *L'lntemational: Documents et souvenirs (1864–1878)* (New York: B. Franklin, 1969) is a huge four-volume work that is labored in both style and form. Credit must be given to Franz Mehring, a German Marxist, for treating Bakunin very fairly and Marx rather critically, in his biography of Marx.

The literature—social, historical, and political—on the Paris Commune of 1871 is massive. A good place to start, for the nonspecialist reader, is Alistair Home's *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune of 1871* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), a lively, dramatic account of the events leading up to the Commune and the Commune itself. Roger L. Williams's *The French Revolution of 1870–1871* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969) is another summary history. For those who wish more detail, the most authoritative account of the Commune in English is Stewart Edwards's *The Paris Commune 1871* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971). Edwards's mastery and presentation are unsurpassed, and his fine book deserves the closest reading by students of revolutionary movements. We are also fortunate that it was Edwards who edited *The Communards of Paris, 1871* in the Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames and Hudson, 1973). Frank Jellinek's *The Paris Commune of 1871* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), an old standby, is guided by a Marxist viewpoint but is valuable as a supplement to Edwards's more authoritative work.

Lissagaray's *History of the Commune of 1871,* translated from the French by Eleanor Marx Aveling (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1967), is an excellent account written by a supporter of and participant in the Commune. Originally published in 1876, it is as much memoir as history and provides invaluable lived insights into the events; in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the Left considered it the official history of Commune. Lissagaray, it should be noted, was neither a Marxist nor an anarchist but a militant social revolutionary. Unfortunately, the English translation is overly literal, sacrificing much of the flavor of the original, but it also contains material by Lissagaray that does not appear in the French original, which was published most recendy as *Histoire de la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1970).

Eugene Schulkind's *The Paris Commune of 1871: The View From the Left* (New York: Grove Press, 1974) contains a wealth of contemporary documents and articles on the Commune and

analyses by all major socialist and anarchist thinkers, from Bakunin and Kropotkin to Marx and Engels. The Marxist viewpoint is presented in Karl Marx's *The Civil War* in *France,* in volume 2 of the Marx-Engels *Selected Works* and in volume 22 of the *Collected Works.* All the extant Marx-Engels letters and works on the Commune were compiled in the former Soviet Union and published under the tide *Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971). An invaluable comparative study of the participants and goals of the June 1848 uprising and the Commune is Roger V. Gould's *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest* in *Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Gould persuasively argues that the June insurrection was more class-oriented than the Commune, using considerable archival material to make his point

Among the specialized studies on the Commune, Edith Thomas's *The Women Incendiaries,* translated from the French by James and Starr Atkinson (London: Martin Seeker & Warburg, 1967), addresses the often neglected role that women played in the Commune. Thomas has also written a sympathetic biography of the anarchist *Louise Michel,* translated by Penelope Williams (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), which provides a libertarian perspective on the events of 1871 and an account of the life of an extraordinary woman of unforgettable heroism. The Commune is discussed, to some degree, in biographies of all revolutionary activists and thinkers who were involved with left-wing politics in 1871.

PART VII: PROLETARIAN SOCIALISM

On the emergence of the industrial proletariat, the reader would do well to examine the historical accounts of the Industrial Revoluuon cited above. In addition, *Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe,* edited by John M. Merriman (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1979), is a collection of useful essays on proletarianization in Britain and France; Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830–1930* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1975) is also to be recommended. A richly illustrated and valuable account of the proletarianization as well as acculturation of Europeans for more than a century before the First World War is W. O. Henderson's *The Industrialization of Europe 17801914* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969). Also of interest is Richard J. Evans's *Proletarians and* Politics: *Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990). Selig Perlman's A *Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 1928) is still a provocative exploradon of the modern labor movement in Britain, Germany, Russia, and the United States.

French syndicalism, especially its ideological roots, is examined in considerable detail by Jeremy Jennings in *Syndicalism* in *France: A* Study *of Ideas* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), while its trajectory as a labor movement is the subject of Peter Stearns's *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1971). Both G.D.H. Cole and Harry Laidler provide excellent summaries of syndicalism in their respective histories of socialism. The best account of anarchosyndicalism is Rudolf Rocker's *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (Indore, India: Modern Publishers, n.d.). Other summaries of anarchosyndicalism will be found in histories of anarchism cited above.

The finest single history of the Second International is G.D.H. Cole's *The Second International 1889–1914,* which makes up volume 3, part 1 of A *History of Socialist Thought.* James Joll's *The*

Second International (1889–1914) (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) is often unclear and tangled in its presentation but is still a useful summary. Another brief account of the International is Gerhart Niemeyer's "The Second International: 1889–1914," in Drachkovitch's Revolutionary *Internationals.*

The history of the Second International is so integrally tied to the emergence and development of German Social Democracy that excellent accounts of it appear in most serious discussions of the German socialist movement. General histories of Germany, in turn, are indispensable to an understanding of her socialist movements, as well as the central problems of nationalism and militarism. Geoffrey Barraclough's *The Origins of Modem Germany* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984) provides an excellent overview of how these problems took form from medieval to modem times. Arthur Rosenberg's *Imperial Germany : The Birth of the German Republic 1871–1918* (Boston: Beacon, 1963) is indispensable for an understanding of German unification and its consequences. The role of the Junkers in the consolidation and militarization of nineteenth-century Germany is explored in Edward Crankshaw's excellent biography, *Bismarck* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983). Nicholas Stargardt's *The German Ideal of Militarism: Radical and Socialist Critics 18661914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) is a searing account of German militarism and the criticisms voiced by Karl Kautsky, Karl Liebknecht, and other leading figures in the SPD.

A concise overall history of the German labor movement from its beginnings to the post-World War II period is in Helga Grebing's *The History of the German Labor* Movement: A *Survey,* abridged by Mary Saran and translated by Edith Koerner (Dover, N.H.: Berg Publishers, 1985). Several valuable histories of the German Social Democratic Party are available in English. The most comprehensive is Guenther Roth's *The Social Democrats* in *Imperial Germany: A Study* in *Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1963). Gary P. Steenson's *"Not One Man! Not One Penny!": German Social Democracy, 1863–1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981) is a straightforward and vivid account of the SPD up to the outbreak of the First World War. Carl E. Schorske's *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1955) is deservedly a classic, tracing the descent of the prewar SPD from a seemingly revolutionary party to a crassly opportunistic one. Peter Gay's *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) is an excellent account of Bernstein and Revisionism.

William A. Pelz has compiled and edited a very interesting anthology of writings by and about Karl Liebknecht's father, Wilhelm *Liebknecht and German Social Democracy,* translated by Erich Hahn (Westport, CN., and London: Greenwood Press, 1994), which casts light on the SPD and the major disputes that arose within the SPD prior to 1900, when the elder Liebknecht died. These and later disputes are also admirably explored by J. P. Netd in his two-volume biography, *Rosa Luxemburg* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1966). The best overall anthology of Luxemburg's works in English, reflecting the Left opposition within the SPD and the Second International, is Mary-Alice Waters's collection, *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), which contains a stirring essay by Trotsky, "Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg!" Helmut Trotnow's *Karl Liebknecht: A Political Biography* (Hamden, CN.: Archon, 1984) is a short account of the young German revolutionary whose life was entwined with Luxemburg's during the war years. No bibliography on German social democracy would be satisfactory without Marx's "Cri-

tique of the Gotha Programme" and related materials from his pen, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24 (New York: International Publishers, 1989)

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