

Viewpoint 5

“Landowners, the bourgeoisie, bureaucrats, soldiers—all these groups did well out of the Revolution.”

The French Revolution Transformed Many Elements of French Society

William Doyle

In the following viewpoint William Doyle asserts that although the French Revolution had some negative consequences, such as increased governmental intrusion into personal lives, it ultimately benefited much of French society. According to Doyle, groups who gained economic, political, and social power included property owners, soldiers, Jews, Protestants, and middle-class professionals. Doyle also notes that slaves in the French colony of Saint-Domingue benefited from the revolution. Civil rights proponents active in the revolution called for the abolishment of slavery in all French colonies, and the French government complied in 1794. Ten years later Saint-Domingue be-

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came the independent nation of Haiti. Doyle is the chairman of the School of History at the University of Bristol in England.

Was . . . the Revolution worth it in material terms? For most ordinary French subjects turned by it into citizens, it cannot have been. It had made their lives infinitely more precarious, when they had expected the reverse. It had bidden fair to destroy the religious, cultural, and moral underpinnings of the communities in which they lived. The *cahiers* [letters] of 1789 make overwhelmingly clear that most French people wanted less state interference in their lives, yet it brought far more, and fiercer. Government by terror scarcely outlasted the Year II [September 1793 to September 1794], but nothing like it had ever occurred before. When it ebbed, the power of the State remained, permanently augmented and disposing of coercive powers not dreamed of by the old monarchy. It was no wonder therefore, that the most persistent and massive resistance that the Revolution encountered came not from the former so-called ‘privileged orders’ but from ordinary people who simply wanted to call a halt. In alienating so many of their fellow citizens, the revolutionaries furnished counter-revolutionaries with constant hope and encouragement. But most popular resistance was anti- rather than counter-revolutionary. Though they might mouth slogans about restoring Church and king, all most anti-revolutionaries wanted was stability and autonomy after years of upheaval and intrusion by outsiders. Their resistance, however, only too often pushed France’s new authorities to further extremes of repression, gouging existing wounds yet wider and deeper.

Popular rejection of what the Revolution had become . . . was endemic throughout the south, where the Revolution was perceived as designed to benefit rich Protestants; and broke out periodically in rioting on local issues in many other areas. The statistics of emigration and terror are also suggestive. Almost 32,000, a third of all registered *émigrés*, were peasants or workers turning their backs on the land of liberty. Of the official victims of the Terror,¹ 8,350, or almost 60 per cent, were from the same groups, dying for their re-

sistance. Deserters or draft-dodgers, tellingly defined as 'insubordinate' (*insoumis*), were another gauge. In 1789 drawing for the militia, one of the most hated institutions of the old order, had been abolished. By 1793 it was back, and in 1798 conscription assumed a far more systematic character. Evasion of military service was universally agreed to be a major ingredient in the rural crime wave which marked the directorial period. 'Many deserters are lurking about the woods', wrote an English traveller through Chantilly in 1796, 'and there are continual robberies and murders. We have not travelled half an hour in the dark.' Banditti, he called them later on: bandits—a category social scientists have learned to recognize as a classic form of protest against an established order. . . .

Yet some groups undoubtedly gained. In any list of them, pride of place must go to the owners of land. Freed in August 1789 from the burdens of feudalism and the tithe, they were able to proclaim property as the supreme social and political commodity. The Civil Code, when it was completed, consolidated and clarified their rights, and the means of transmitting them. Successive constitutions, in one way or another, made the effective exercise of political rights dependent in turn on property. Property would define the class of Notables who ruled France, as electors, from the Consulate down to the late nineteenth century. The social profile of property owners was little altered by the Revolution. The amount of land held by the nobility inevitably fell, although in the 1800s they still dominated the ranks of the largest and richest proprietors. At the other end of the scale the sale of national lands, especially in the mid-1790s when they had been marketed in small lots, had produced an increase in the number of petty peasant owners, though their overall share scarcely rose. The great gainers from the redistribution of church and noble property were the bourgeoisie. More than anything else, their fears about the security of their gains finally pushed the Revolution into the hands of a dictator [Napoleon] who imposed stability and offered all property owners unconditional recognition of their title. By the time he fell, their grip on their gains was beyond challenge, and the re-

1. between 1793 and 1794, when the radical Jacobin government authorized more than twenty thousand executions

stored Bourbons, though they returned *émigré* lands still unsold and organized a fund to compensate those whose property had gone, never seriously thought of undoing the land settlement bequeathed by the Revolution.

The bourgeoisie also gained by the Revolution, in the end, as the group from which the professions were recruited. The men of 1789 had proclaimed careers open to the talents, believing that neither birth nor wealth should give privileged access to any employment. At first the implementation of this principle looked like developing into a disaster for the professions. . . . The Revolution was early hostile to professional associations in general, interpreting their commitment to maintaining standards as a hangover from the now abandoned world of corporatism and privilege. 'This was one of the first abuses of freedom', recalled a distinguished lawyer, 'that the right was left to anyone, without scrutiny, or any apprenticeship, to practise the liberal professions.' Medicine, the bar, and the law in general were thrown open to the market, with minimal qualifications required from practitioners. Most of the former validating bodies, like universities, were abolished in any case. Revolutionary France was therefore a happy hunting ground for quacks and charlatans of every sort—most of them, to be sure, members of the bourgeoisie too. Not until Napoleonic times did the State take the situation in hand and reintroduce a rigorous system of licensing to restore professional standards. The solution was more bureaucratic than before 1789—but then so was France. . . .

Another group who did well out of the Revolution were soldiers. In no sphere were careers thrown more open to the talents, as the most successful careerist of them all was always ready to testify. Although military careers continued to attract high numbers of nobles still throughout the nineteenth century, the aristocratic monopoly of the officer corps had gone for ever. Proclaimed in 1789, equal opportunity in the army became a reality far more suddenly than could have been naturally expected when discipline collapsed and a large proportion of officers emigrated over the next two years. By 1793, accordingly, 70 per cent of officers in service had risen from the ranks. Even the officer-entry nobles who were left had their promotional chances improved by the departure of so many of their fellows. And for more than two decades

after this, the vastly expanded army, first of the Great Nation, then of the Napoleonic Empire, would offer glory and good prospects to those who joined it and stayed with the colours. It was, of course, dangerous. By 1802 400,000 French men had fallen in battle, and another million, perhaps, would follow them before night fell on the field of Waterloo [site of Napoleon's final defeat]. The thousands of draft-dodgers and deserters who evaded each call-up showed clearly enough that the army's appeal was far from universal. Yet there was no mistaking the enthusiasm, commitment, and revolutionary arrogance of the Republic's armies. From the start soldiers were among the most fervent and extreme revolutionaries, scorning officers who still behaved like aristocrats, lynching generals suspected of treachery, cheering on dechristianization, and vigorously imposing the bracing discipline of liberty on defeated enemies. By 1795 and 1796, the opportunities for looting and plunder were limitless, and those lucky enough to be in the army of Italy had the unique privilege of being paid in coin. By 1797 the armies saw themselves in the former sansculotte² mantle as guardians of the Revolution's purity, standing ready to intervene in domestic politics under any successful general who would mouth slogans about saving the Republic from feckless babblers. When eventually the luckiest of such generals took power, military style was imposed on the State. . . .

Increased Religious Freedom

Landowners, the bourgeoisie, bureaucrats, soldiers—all these groups did well out of the Revolution, taking advantage of the circumstances it had brought about. Certain others benefited from deliberate and conscious acts of emancipation. Most prominent among them were the Protestants. Although the monarchy had been moving towards a more tolerant attitude with its grant of civil status in 1787, French Protestants welcomed the Revolution almost unanimously as their true benefactor, proclaiming as it did freedom of thought and worship and full equality of civil rights between all French citizens. They were quick to lay claim to these

2. Sansculottes were politically radical workers who wore long trousers, in opposition to the breeches worn by aristocrats.

rights, too—with inflammatory results in the cities of the south where old Catholic élites lost power as a result. Their triumph there merely confirmed their age-old reputation in Catholic eyes as subversives and troublemakers. Their early commitment did not save them in 1793 from the ravages of terror and dechristianization. . . . In the cities churches opened only a couple of years earlier (often in premises formerly the property of the Catholic Church) were closed or transformed into temples of reason. . . . Yet the annexation of Geneva in 1798 added the most famous Calvinist centre of all to French territory, and consular realism refused to countenance any return to Catholic legal dominance. In fact, under [Napoleon] Bonaparte, the Protestant churches were established on a parallel basis to the Catholic, with salaried pastors. . . . [By 1815,] there was no going back on the rights and status accorded to Protestants at the start of the Revolution, and confirmed by Bonaparte when he ended it.

The Revolution also brought emancipation to France's 39,000 Jews. Here again there had been signs of change before 1789. The name of [Henri] Grégoire first came to public notice when in 1784 he won the Academy of Metz's essay competition on the theme of how the lot of Jews could be improved. In the same year a number of legal disadvantages borne by the Jews of Alsace were lifted, and when the Revolution began the government was planning further concessions in what it, and Jewish leaders too, regarded as a natural corollary to the moves in favour of Protestants. Yet the National Assembly³ proved in much less of a hurry to grant Jews the full rights of French citizens. When the issue was debated (which it was not until the last days of 1789) it became clear that many did not regard them as French at all. . . . Not until . . . 27 September 1791 were they admitted to full citizenship, against the vocal opposition of the Alsatian future Director, [Jean-François] Reubell. Strictly speaking, dechristianization could not be applied to Jews; but the practice of their religion was still persecuted in 1793 and 1794 by the Montagnard zealots of Alsace, who remembered that Jewish fanaticism and superstition were as much condemned by Voltaire

3. This was the name adopted by the Estates-General (a legislature that met occasionally in pre-Revolutionary France) during the early stages of Revolution.

and other prophets of progress as by undiminished popular prejudice. Prejudice remained when terror ended. . . . Not, however, until 1805 did the government intervene again in Jewish affairs, and then Napoleon's aim was to consolidate their position as citizens, if only by imposing closer state control on their activities. There was to be no return to the marginal status of before the 1780s—much to the disgust of the anti-Semites who continued to be found throughout French society.

Finally, reluctantly and belatedly, the Revolution also abolished slavery. In contrast to the case of Protestants and Jews, there was little expectation of change in this sphere before 1789. Although most of the *philosophes* had condemned slavery and the trade which sustained it, the first French abolition society, the Amis des Noirs, was not founded by Brissot until 1788. Only a handful of *cahiers* mentioned the issue, and the defenders of slavery were well organized and funded by the wealth of the colonial trade. They dominated the colonial committee of the National Assembly. But when the Assembly voted, in July 1789, to admit unconvoked deputies from Saint-Domingue [the Caribbean island originally called Hispaniola and now made up of the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic] did so only after a long and bitter debate about whom they represented. It had raised the question of the political rights of the numerous and increasingly well-organized free coloured population, not to mention the black slaves. And whereas, its decision made, the Assembly passed on to pressing metropolitan business, the impact on the colony itself was volcanic. Struggles for political control now began there between whites and free coloureds, culminating in an uprising of the latter in October 1790 which the whites put down with great brutality.

. . . News of these clashes provoked a new debate in Paris, and in May 1791 the Assembly, at the urging of deputies like Grégoire and [Maximilien] Robespierre, granted civil rights to coloureds born of two free parents. It was the Revolution's first gesture towards racial equality; but before news of it could reach Saint-Domingue, the slaves, stirred up by the ferocity of the political conflicts around them, had risen in the great rebellion of August 1791. It was the progress of this uprising that forced the pace on racial issues. In April 1791 the Legislative, of which [Jacques-Pierre] Brissot was

the most prominent member, granted full rights to all free coloureds regardless of parentage. But when commissioners sent out to enforce the new law arrived in the colony, they found the situation so envenomed that it made little impact. Within months of their arrival, France was at war with Great Britain, and communications with home perilous. Willy-nilly the commissioners were forced to use their own initiative in responding to a complex and shifting situation. Thus . . . by the beginning of February 1793 Commissioner [Leger Felicite] Sonthonax was beginning to denounce 'aristocrats of the skin'. The latter responded by trying to drive the commissioners from the colony by force. Only nonwhites defended Sonthonax, and in recognition of this in June 1793 he offered freedom to all blacks who would fight for the Republic. 'It is', he declared, 'with the natives of the country, that is, the Africans, that we will save Saint-Domingue for France.' Two months later, as Spaniards from the other part of the island invaded the troubled colony, he took the final step. On 29 August, slavery itself was abolished in the northern province. In October general freedom was proclaimed for all Saint-Domingue. None of this had been authorized by the Convention. . . . But when news of the emancipation arrived in Paris in January 1794 the Convention greeted it with enthusiasm, if only because, like Sonthonax, the deputies saw it as a way to defeat the Republic's British and Spanish enemies in the Caribbean. On 4 February, accordingly, the Convention framed its own decree: Negro slavery was abolished in all French colonies, and all men living there were citizens with full rights.

The effect was dramatic. As soon as the news arrived in the colony, late in April, black rebel leaders began to rally to the Republic. The free black Toussaint L'Ouverture, who had joined the Spanish invaders, switched sides. The Spaniards were driven out by black forces, who proceeded to massacre whites who had welcomed the invaders. Under the peace of 1795 Spain ceded all of Hispaniola to France. . . . Slavery lasted . . . in French colonies down to 1848. But it was never re-established in Saint-Domingue, which proclaimed itself, on 1 January 1804, the Republic of Haiti. . . .

French control over the former richest colony in the world was never regained. Haiti was thus the only truly independent state to come into being as a result of the French Revolution.

Viewpoint 6

“The ‘modern men’ who seemed poised to capture government under Louis XVI . . . resumed their march to power once the irritations of revolutionary politics were brushed aside.”

The French Revolution Did Not Transform French Society

Simon Schama

In the following viewpoint Simon Schama asserts that the French Revolution did not significantly transform that nation’s society. According to Schama, the landed classes remained wealthy while the rural poor made virtually no economic advances. He also notes that the revolutionary governments did not solve the financial problems that had been associated with the monarchy. Schama concludes that upon Napoleon’s declaration in 1799 that the revolution had ended, the men who were poised to take power prior to 1789 were able to resume their march to power. Schama is a professor of history at Columbia University in New York City and the author of *Citizens: A*

Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. Copyright © 1989 by Simon Schama. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.

Chronicle of the French Revolution, the source of the following viewpoint.

Was the world of the village in 1799 so very different from what it had been ten years before? In particular regions of France where there had been heavy emigration and repression, rural life had indeed been emptied of noble dominance. But this obvious rupture disguises a continuity of some importance. It was exactly those sections of the population who had been gaining economically under the old regime that profited most from the sale of noble and church lands. Those sales were declared irreversible, so there was indeed a substantial transfer of wealth. But much of that transfer was *within* the landed classes—extending from well-to-do farmers up to “patriot” nobles who had managed to stay put and actually benefited from the confiscations. Fat cats got fatter. In Puiseux-Pontoise in the Seine-et-Oise, the Marquis de Girardin’s biggest tenant and neighbor, Charles-Antoine Thomassin, was well positioned to snap up available lots and did so well that he competed with his former landlord for any remaining parcels. There were, to be sure, many regions of France where the nobility as a group lost a considerable part of their fortune. But there were also others—in the west, the center and the south—where, as Jean Tulard has shown, lands that remained unsold could be recovered by families who returned in substantial numbers after 1796. Thus, while many of the leading figures in this history ended their lives on the guillotine, many others stayed put and reemerged as the leading notables of their department. The callow young *maître de cérémonies* who wilted before [political leader Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, count of] Mirabeau’s wrath on June 23, 1789, the Marquis de Dreux-Brezé, was still the fourth richest man in the department of the Sarthe during the Consulate and Empire. Barral de Montferrat, the ex-president of the Parlement of the Dauphiné who became mayor of Grenoble during the Revolution, remained one of the great powers of the Isère well into the nineteenth century. In the Eure-et-Loir the Noailles family remained the great landed dynasty; in the Oise, the Rochefoucauld-Liancourts were still among

the greatest proprietors, notwithstanding the disasters that had befallen the citizen-nobles of the clan.

Few Gains for the Poor

By contrast, the rural poor gained very little at all from the Revolution. Saint-Just's Ventôse laws¹ remained a dead letter and it became harder than ever to pasture animals on common land or gather fuel from the open woods. In all these respects the Revolution was just an interlude in the inexorable modernization of property rights that had been well under way before 1789. No government—that of the Jacobins any more than that of the King—had really answered the cries for help that echoed through the rural *cahiers de doléances* [letters of grievance] in 1789.

Likewise, the brutal rupture of religious continuities under the Terror² was only a passing phenomenon—though never forgotten in the villages. Liberty hats that had replaced crosses on spires and towers were abruptly removed and destroyed in the year III [September 1794 to September 1795]. The cult of the Supreme Being gradually gave way to open profession of the old faith, often pressed by women, who, in many parts of France, embarked on an angry campaign of reconsecration, forcing juring priests to scrape clean the tongue of anyone who had been polluted by a constitutional communion. Bells began to chime again over the fields and cottages and traditional festivals were restored, even if they had to be celebrated in Nivôse and Germinal rather than December and April.

Had the Revolution, at least, created state institutions which resolved the problems that brought down the monarchy? Here, too, as [nineteenth-century historian Alexis] de Tocqueville emphasized, it is easier to discern continuities, especially of centralization, than any overwhelming change. In public finance, the creation of a paper currency came to be recognized as a catastrophe beside which the insolvencies of the old regime looked almost picayune. Eventually the Bonapartist Consulate (whose finances were ad-

1. Under the Ventôse laws, devised by revolutionary Louis de Saint-Just, needy citizens would share seized property. 2. between 1793 and 1794, during the rule of the radical Jacobin government, when more than twenty thousand people were executed

ministered overwhelmingly by surviving bureaucrats of the old regime) returned to a metallic system based on [Charles Alexandre de] Calonne's important monetary reform of 1785 fixing the ratio of silver to gold. Fiscally, too, post-Jacobin France slid inexorably back to the former mixture of loans and indirect as well as direct taxes. The Republic and Empire did no better funding a large army and navy from these domestic sources than had the monarchy and depended crucially on institutionalized extortion from occupied countries to keep the military pump primed.

A Brutal but Brief Interruption

The Napoleonic prefects have always been recognized as the heirs of the royal *intendants* (and the revolutionary *représentants-en-mission*),³ brokering administration between central government priorities and the interest of the local notability. Without any question that notability had suffered a violent shock during the height of the Jacobin Terror, especially in the great provincial cities, where, after the federalist revolt, they were virtually exterminated. The constitution of the year III, however, with its reintroduction of tax qualifications for the electoral assemblies, returned authority to those who had, in many places, exercised it continuously between the mid-1780s and 1792. As we have seen, in some small towns, such as Calais, where adroit mayors paid lip service to passing regimes, there was unbroken continuity of office from 1789 through to the Restoration. Looking at the department of the Orne, Louis Bergeron has found an extraordinary degree of continuity in the notability, whether measured by income, status or office. Goupil de Prefeln, for example, had been a *conseiller du Parlement* at Rouen and deputy to the Constituent, and became *procureur-général* of the Napoleonic court at Caen in 1812. Descorches de Sainte-Croix, who had been *maréchal de camp* in the old royal army, was now a prefect and baron of the Empire. For these men and countless others like them, the Revolution had been but a brutal though mercifully ephemeral inter-

3. *Intendants* were the main agents of the crown in the provinces under the Old Regime. *Représentants-en-mission* were deputies who helped supervise the war effort in 1793.

ruption of their social and institutional power.

The Dictatorship of Virtue had also threatened the growing orthodoxy in the reign of Louis XVI according to which public officials ought to have a modicum of professional expertise, and at high levels should make full use of the “modern” professions: engineering, chemistry, mathematics. The great exponent of a state in which science and virtue would be mutually reinforcing, the Marquis de Condorcet, died in abject defeat, escaping from house arrest in Paris in May 1794 and walking all the way to Clamart only to arouse suspicion at an inn when he ordered an omelette. “How many eggs?” asked the *patronne*. “Twelve,” replied Condorcet, suggesting a damaging unfamiliarity with the cuisine of the common man. He was locked up for the Revolutionary Tribunal but was found dead in his cell before he could be transported to Paris. A choice of legends is available to explain the disaster: exhausted starvation or the more glamorous end of poison



Permanent Elements in French Society

If . . . we look with all open mind on the society that emerged from the revolution, we will be most struck by the permanent elements in the French social pattern. We will see a society with many new elements it is true, but bearing on it like a palimpsest the inadequately effaced writing of the *ancien régime*. The whole development of French society appears in a different light if we recognise that the revolution was a triumph for the conservative, propertied, land-owning classes, large and small. This was one of the factors—of course not the only one—contributing to the economic backwardness of France in the following century. It helps us to see that in the course of the revolution the social hierarchy, modified and based more openly on wealth, particularly landed wealth, and political influence, and less on birth and aristocratic connections, was strengthened and reasserted.

Albert Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, 1965.

taken from a ring. If the latter is true, it would have been in keeping with the rage for suicide that swept through the Girondins after their proscription.

Though the author of the *Esquisse du Progrès Humain* (The Sketch of Human Progress) had perished, the intellectual elite of the academies continued the colonization of government they had begun in the reign of Louis XVI. The great reforms of higher education that embodied the thought of the late Enlightenment took place under the Directory with the creation of the *écoles centrales* [central schools]. And the world of the *musées* [museums] and academies in both Paris and the provinces resumed its intellectual energy free from political intimidation (though not from infighting, since that is in the nature of the beasts) during the 1790s. The councils of state and ministries under the Consulate and Empire⁴ were filled with the intellectual eminences of the 1780s. Some had been, en route, ardent revolutionaries; some had not. [Jean Antoine] Chaptal, the royal inspector of mines and professor of chemistry, ennobled by Louis XVI in 1788 on the usual meritocratic ladder, became a Napoleonic minister of the interior. Charles Gaudin, the Minister of Finance, was the son of a Parlementaire lawyer who had worked for the administration of the *vingtième* tax before 1789. Two ministers of justice, Abrial and Regnier, had both likewise been Parlementaires before the Revolution, had public careers early in the Revolution, survived the Terror and sailed on to power and status in the Directory and Consulate.

Creating a New Government

What killed the monarchy was its inability to create representative institutions through which the state could execute its program of reform. Had the Revolution done any better? On one level, the succession of elected legislatures, from the Estates-General to the National Convention, was one of the most impressive innovations of the Revolution. They took the intensive debate on shape of governing institutions in France, which had been going on for at least

4. The Consulate was the government established after the coup of 18 Brumaire; Napoleon Bonaparte was one of the three consuls. He eventually gained complete control and named himself emperor of France.

half a century, into the arena of representation itself and articulated its principles with unparalleled eloquence. But for all their virtues as theaters of debate, none of the legislatures ever managed to solve the issue that had bedeviled the old regime: how to create a viable working partnership between the executive and the legislature? Once the Constituent had rejected [Jean-Joseph] Mounier and Mirabeau's "British" proposal of drawing ministers from the assembly, it regarded the executive not as the administration of the country, working in good faith, but as a fifth column bent on subverting national sovereignty. With this doomed beginning, the executive and legislative branches of the constitution of 1791 simply intensified the war with each other until their mutual destruction in 1792. The Terror effectively reversed matters by putting the Convention under the thrall of the committees, but still made it impossible to change governments except by violence.

The framers of the constitution of the year III (1795) obviously learned something from this unhappy experience. A two-chamber legislature was introduced, elected indirectly from colleges in which property was the criterion for membership. A governing council was in theory accountable to the legislature (as indeed the committees had been). In practice, however, the experiment remained darkened by the long shadow of the Revolution itself, so that factions inevitably crystallized, not around specific issues of government but plans for the overthrow of the state, hatched either by royalists or neo-Jacobins.⁵ With the separate organs of the constitution in paralyzing conflict with each other, violence continued to determine the political direction of the state far more than did elections.

But the violence was, after the year III, no longer coming from the streets and *sections* but from the uniformed army. If one had to look for one indisputable story of transformation in the French Revolution, it would be the creation of the juridical entity of the citizen. But no sooner had this hypothetically free person been invented than his liberties were circumscribed by the police power

5. Neo-Jacobins were a radical political group who formed in the latter years of the revolution, several years after the original Jacobins, including Maximilien Robespierre, had been overthrown.

of the state. This was always done in the name of republican patriotism, but the constraints were no less oppressive for that. Just as Mirabeau—and the [Maximilien] Robespierre of 1791—had feared, liberties were held hostage to the authority of the warrior state. Though this conclusion might be depressing, it should not really be all that surprising. The Revolution, after all, had begun as a response to a patriotism wounded by the humiliations of the Seven Years' War. It was [Charles Gravier, count of] Vergennes' decision to promote, at the same time, maritime imperialism continental military power which generated the sense of fiscal panic that overcame the monarchy in its last days. A crucial element—perhaps, indeed, *the* crucial element—in the claim of the revolutionaries of 1789 was that they could better regenerate the *patrie* than could the appointees of the King. From the outset, then, the great continuing strand of militancy was patriotic. Militarized nationalism was not, in some accidental way, the unintended consequence of the French Revolution: it was its heart and soul. It was wholly logical that the multimillionaire inheritors of revolutionary power—the true "new class" of this period of French history—were not some *bourgeoisie conquérante* [middle-class conquerors] but *real* conquerors: the Napoleonic marshals, whose fortunes made even those of the surviving dynasts of the nobility look paltry by comparison.

For better or worse, the "modern men" who seemed poised to capture government under Louis XVI—engineers, noble industrialists, scientists, bureaucrats and generals—resumed their march to power once the irritations of revolutionary politics were brushed aside. "*La tragédie, maintenant, c'est la politique,*" ["Politics are now the tragedy"] claimed Napoleon, who, after the coup d'état that brought him to power in 1799, added his claim to that which had been made by so many optimistic governments before him, that "the Revolution is completed."